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EDITORIAL

Saint Paul, apostle *par excellence*, tirelessly laboured to spread the Gospel, particularly to the Gentiles. His missionary travels and encounter with diverse peoples, cultures, and religions form the matrix or context of his missionary methods. A comprehensive examination of Paul's writings yields much mission wisdom and insight shaped by his apostolic experience and dynamic faith. In *"Paul's Dynamic Mission Principles – A Missioner Reflection",* **James H. Kroeger, M.M.**, suggests ten "mission principles" – derived from Pau's profound reflection — "applicable" to missionary engagements today.

Spreading the Gospel means to be living witnesses to the love of God that forgives and reconciles. **Indunil Janaka Kodithuwakk**, in *"Christian Mission as Reconciliation"*, analyses the roots of the conflict in Sri Lanka, while presenting forgiveness, reconciliation and peace as the path for all men and women of good will to meet this challenge.

Exploring the roots of conflicts and suffering brings us to analyse truth and justice in order to walk towards reconciliation. The Encyclical *Caritas in Veritate* amply discusses charity in the social field. **Tissa Balasuriya, OMI,** in his contribution:*"A Missing Dimension in Papal Encyclical"*, seeks to explore the truth of the global reality and the bold reforms needed to bring love and justice among human beings.

Munachi E. Ezeogu, **C.S.Sp.,** feels mission can bring reconciliation to Africa. The paper, *"From Evagelisation to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace: Towards a Paradigm Shift in African Mission Priorities"* analyses, from a biblical and theological perspective, what seems to be a radical shift of emphasis of the Church's mission in Africa: from spreading the faith to preaching reconciliation.

Reconciliation also means to recover our humanity by re-discovering our suffering brothers and sisters. *"Au Coeur de la pauvreté, devenir tous humains. Misère intolérable ou pauvres gênants?".* **Pierre Diarra** takes us to the heart of poverty to reflect on why we have an ever increasing number of poor among us, and on our responsibility to eradicate the causes of poverty.

Poverty and hunger favour the development of sickness. **Bomki Mathew** reminds us that it is the person who suffers when sickness strikes. *"Quand l'amour l'emporte …"* helps us discover the way to encounter the people suffering from AIDS and how to let love be the channel of our relationship with them.

P.M. Fernando reflects on the effort to reconcile man to nature and the cosmos throughout history. In his essay, *"The Earth is God's Temple: Ecological Spirituality"* he searches for a line of Christian eco-spirituality different from the pantheistic ideas of the past, through the Benedictine virtue of frugality, Franciscan poverty, the simplicity of communication with God's creatures, John Paul II's call for eco-responsibility, and the new age of eco-friendly gurus.

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Paul's Dynamic Mission Principles
- A Missioner Reflection -

The Apostle Paul is considered the greatest missionary of all time; he is called the Apostle to the Gentiles since he was mainly responsible for the spread of Christianity into the Gentile world. The Church owes much to Paul for its growth; he pioneered its early expansion through his mission labours and his theological reflection.

A brief synopsis of Paul's life includes the following approximate chronology: 5-10 (birth at Tarsus), 15-20 (studies in Jerusalem), 36 (conversion), 36-39 (Damascus, Arabia, Jerusalem), 39-43 (Tarsus), 43-44 (Antioch), 44-48 (first missionary journey), 49-50 (Council of Jerusalem; Antioch confrontation with Peter), 49-53 (second missionary journey), 53-58 (third missionary journey), 58-60 (prisoner in Caesarea), 60-63 (voyage to Rome; prisoner in Rome), 64-66 (Spain? Rome? Elsewhere?), 66-67 (prisoner in Rome), 67/68 (death in Rome). This brief chronology provides the *context* from which Paul's dynamic mission principles emerge; they are the result of both mission praxis and deep theological reflection. Paul's letters as well as the Acts of the Apostles provide much insight into Paul's missionary thinking and methods.

Over the centuries many authors have tried to digest Paul's mission thought and praxis, emphasizing the "central ideas" of this apostle. This effort may be admirable, but can result in a certain selectivity. Thus, this author is wary of claiming to capture the "essence" of Paul's insights. One cannot compose a "Cliff's Notes" or abbreviated version of Paul's thought; his letters were written over a span of ten years; they were based on a lengthy ministry of preaching the gospel message in an extraordinary variety of circumstances and to diverse groups of people.

Readers, consider this piece the personal reflections of a long-term *ad gentes* missionary based on a meditative reading of Saint Paul. Through a dynamic interaction of this writer's personal experience and the profound thought of Paul, ten "mission principles" are formulated. These insights, emerging from Paul's life and refracted through the experience of a contemporary missioner, remain eminently valid for the Church's missionary activity today — twenty centuries after Paul's birth.

I. DEPTH AWARENESS OF VOCATION. In Paul's mind there was not an iota of doubt about his calling, his vocation; for Paul and all missioners, **mission originates in the call of God.** Several passages in the Book of Acts describe Paul's conversion and call to mission: "The Lord said to him [Ananias], 'Go! This man [Paul] is my chosen instrument to bring my name before Gentiles'…" (Acts 9:15). "The God of our ancestors has chosen you … because you are to be his witness before all humanity, testifying to what you have seen and heard" (Acts 22:14-15). "I have appeared to you for this reason: to appoint you as my servant and as witness of this vision in which you have seen me…" (Acts 26:16).

In addition, the majority of Paul's Letters begin with a firm assertion of his identity as a chosen instrument of God. "From Paul … an apostle who does not owe his authority to men or his appointment to any human being, but who has been appointed by Jesus Christ and by God the Father who raised Jesus from the dead" (Gal 1:1-2). "From Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, who has been called to be an apostle, and specially chosen to preach the Good News…" (Rom 1:1). Several other Letters begin with almost the identical words: "From Paul, appointed

by God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus…" (II Cor 1:1); see also: I Cor 1:1; Eph 1:1; Col 1:1; Phil 1:1 and others. Writing to the Corinthians about Christ's Resurrection, Paul categorically states: "I am the least of the apostles; in fact, since I persecuted the Church of God, I hardly deserve the name apostle; but by God's grace that is what I am, and the grace that he gave me has not been fruitless" (I Cor 15:9-10).

II. RADICAL COMMITMENT TO CHRIST. Paul's experience on the Damascus road was, in fact, only the starting point of a life-long relationship; *mission envisions a totally Christ-centered life.* Paul expresses his life in Christ in various ways: "Life to me, of course, is Christ…" (Phil 1:21). "None of us lives to ourselves, and none of us dies to ourselves. If we live, we live to the Lord, if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's…" (Rom 14:7-8). "I have been crucified with Christ, and I live now not with my own life, but with the life of Christ who lives in me" (Gal 2:19-20).

All of Paul's writings speak of his love for Christ, his identification with Christ. So intimate was his relationship that he could even advise the Corinthians: "Imitate me as I imitate Christ" (I Cor 11:1). Paul tells the Thessalonians that they can follow his example: "You observed the sort of life we lived when we were with you, which was for your instruction; you were led to become imitators of us and of the Lord…" (I Thes 1:5-6). Paul, writing to the Philippians, makes a moving comparison of his previous life to his new-found existence in Christ: "I believe nothing can happen that will outweigh the supreme advantage of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For him I have accepted the loss of everything, and I look on everything as so much rubbish if only I can have Christ and be given a place in him" (Phil 3:8).

III. VOLUNTARY ACCEPTANCE OF SUFFERING. Not relying on words alone, the Apostle Paul preached the Gospel by his life and example. In a particular way, *vulnerability and acceptance of the Cross authenticate mission.* In imitation of Christ who gave himself up to death — even for sinners (Rom 5:8), Paul considers his suffering for the sake of the Gospel as a participation in the sufferings of Christ (II Cor 1:5-7). Paul saw himself sharing in Christ's *kenosis* (Phil 2:6-11) as he endured suffering. Writing to Timothy, he says: "… join with me in suffering for the Gospel, relying on the power of God, who saved us and called us with a holy calling" (II Tim 1:8-9).

Paul recounts his numerous trials in the service of the Gospel; he mentions his imprisonments, beatings, shipwrecks, travels, robberies, hard labour, sleeplessness, hunger, thirst, and nakedness (cf. II Cor 11:23-27). Paul also mentions that he had to bear "a thorn in the flesh" (II Cor 12:7). Yet, he notes, "I am quite content with my weaknesses, and with insults, hardships, persecutions, and the agonies I go through for Christ's sake. For it is when I am weak that I am strong" (II Cor 12:10). Of course, this vulnerability is intimately linked with the paradox of the cross; "continually we carry in our bodies the dying of Jesus, so that in our bodies the life of Jesus may also be revealed" (II Cor 4:10). All missionaries like Paul need to say: "May I never boast of anything but the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Gal 6:14).

IV. INSIGHTFUL MISSION METHODS. It is valid to affirm that all Paul's energies were mission-focused, yet one can also point out that he employed distinct methods to achieve his purpose. *Mission demands creative, inculturated, ever-renewed approaches*

to evangelization. Paul sought various occasions which would facilitate his proclamation; he attempted to suit his preaching to the people's context and worldview. Paul's approach at Ephesus (Acts 19) is exemplary; he would preach in the synagogue or a nearby house and attempt to bridge the Jewish faith with Christian revelation (cf. Acts 13:5, 14; 14:1, 17:1, etc.).

Acts 17:22-31 narrates Paul's famous speech in the Areopagus, the central assembly place in Athens, the cultural capital of the Greek islands. Paul mentions their altar to an unknown god (v. 23); he refers to the philosopher-poet Epimenides (v. 28). Although many mocked Paul, his intelligent method won some followers for Christ. Paul, the "practical" missioner, moved from the familiar to the unfamiliar, from the unknown to the known. Pope John Paul II has exhorted missionaries to move into new mission frontiers, "the modern equivalents of the Areopagus" (*Redemptoris Missio,* n. 37, c).

Paul's missionary sensitivities are manifested in his convictions that adaptation (inculturation in today's parlance) is essential when mission meets a new situation (Acts 15). He vigorously opposed the imposition of Jewish legal traditions, cultural observations, or external religious practices on Gentile Christians; these could hinder the spread of the gospel into the Gentile world. Paul even withstood James in Jerusalem (Acts 15) and Peter in Antioch (Gal 2:11-14).

Paul articulates his "inculturated" method of becoming "all things to everyone" (I Cor 9:19-23). He adapts himself to the Jews, to those outside the law, and to the weak. His vision is crystal clear: "I have made myself the slave of everyone so as to win as many as I could…. I made myself all things to everyone in order to save some at any cost; and I still do this, for the sake of the gospel, to have a share in its blessings".

V. URGENT GOSPEL PROCLAMATION. Paul did not understand "preaching" as giving a spiritual reflection in a liturgical assembly. Integral proclamation means heralding an urgent message from God that profoundly affects the destiny of all humankind. **Mission has lost none of its urgency in the contemporary world.** Paul's words possess a genuine, authentic ring — even in our ears today: "For if I preach the gospel, that gives me no ground for boasting. For necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel"! (I Cor 9:16). For all Christians, evangelization must be a "daily preoccupation" (II Cor 11:28). As Pope Paul VI has noted, "the presentation of the gospel message is not an optional contribution for the Church. It is a duty incumbent on her by the command of the Lord Jesus" (*Evangelii Nuntiandi,* n. 5).

This Pauline "mission principle" is actually a call for an examination of conscience on the part of the Church. Have many local Churches placed too much emphasis on administrative efficiency, pastoral management, economic accountability, liturgical practice, canonical and catechetical orthodoxy — all to the detriment of dynamic programs of renewed evangelization? Have inward (*ad intra*) concerns vitiated the Church's outward (*ad extra*) mission commitments? Paul's words contain a challenge to all Churches and religious communities: "All the way along, from Jerusalem to Illyricum, I have preached Christ's Good News to the utmost of my capacity" (Rom 15:19). Paul wrote these encouraging words to Timothy: "Make the preaching of the Good News your life's work, in thoroughgoing service" (II Tm 4:5).

VI. DEEP LOVE OF THE CHURCH. In examining Paul's apostolic methods, it is enlightening to probe his view of the Church. Paul primarily understands the Church as a local community of baptized followers of Jesus Christ; he was not opposed to the idea of a universal Church, but in his day the local congregation was central to his experience. **Mission and love of the people who constitute the Church go hand-in-hand.** This principle echoes the thought of an elderly Maryknoll missioner who never tired of repeating: *Mission is People.*

Paul had great love and concern for the ecclesial communities he founded with painstaking effort. His writings frequently and spontaneously express his affection. "It is only natural that I should feel like this towards you all, since you have shared the privileges which have

been mine: both my chains and my work defending and establishing the gospel. You have a permanent place in my heart, and God knows how much I miss you all, loving you as Christ Jesus loves you" (Phil 1:7-8).

When the Churches Paul established with patient, apostolic ministry were in trouble, Paul shared their pain; he speaks of his "daily preoccupation" for them (II Cor 11:28). He wonders loud: "I am afraid that my work for you may have been wasted" (Gal 4:11). "My children, I must go through the pain of giving birth to you all over again, until Christ is formed in you" (Gal 4:19). Although the Corinthian community had many internal problems (e.g. divisions, immorality, idolatry, etc.; see: I Cor 1:10-13, 5:1-5, 10:14-22), Paul, the affectionate missionary, loved them dearly: "You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, to be known and read by all" (II Cor 3:2). "Keep a place for us in your hearts…. As I have already told you, you are in our hearts — together we live or together we die. I have the very greatest confidence in you, and I am so proud of you that in all our trouble I am filled with consolation and my joy is overflowing" (II Cor 7:2-4).

VII. CLOSE COLLABORATION WITH CO-WORKERS. The Apostle Paul, though a strong individual, was a team-worker in the task of evangelization. Paul understood that ***all apostolic ministry is enhanced through collaborative efforts***. A few examples show that Paul saw great advantages in working together with other apostles. On his first missionary journey, Paul was accompanied by Barnabas and Mark (Acts 13-14). Timothy and Silvanus were his trusted co-workers in Corinth and elsewhere (II Cor 1:19). Titus was his appointed deputy in dealing with difficulties in the Corinthian community (II Cor 8:23). Among other co-workers and fellow-apostles were Luke, Erastus, Aristarchus, and Tychicus.

Paul considered teamwork and collaborative ministry important for a variety of reasons. Apostles working in partnership presented a visible image of the Church as community; it gave the people an example of common witness. A variety of apostles working for a common goal presented a more balanced picture of the Church than Paul alone could have given. In addition, the gifts of various individuals were put at the service of Gospel proclamation.

Paul frequently expressed his admiration and appreciation of his collaborators; he called Timothy his "co-worker" (Rom 16:21) and tenderly describes him as "my dear and faithful son" (I Cor 4:17) whose "worth you know, how like a son with a father he has served with me in the work of the gospel" (Phil 2:22). Paul referred to Titus as "my brother" (2Cor 2:13) and "my partner and co-worker" (II Cor 8:23). Even if disputes occasionally arose, Paul sought to promote communion-in-mission. Paul offers contemporary ministers a model of cooperative ministry.

VIII. COMMITMENT TO SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION. Paul preached a gospel of freedom and liberation along with his manifest concern and love for the poor and the suffering. ***The Gospel message of human dignity and equality, if embraced, leads to social transformation.*** Paul firmly believed in the transforming power of the Gospel message, and he proposed to his communities the model of Jesus Christ: "Remember how generous the Lord Jesus was: he was rich, but he became poor for your sake, to make you rich out of his poverty" (II Cor 8:9). And, for gospel credibility, Paul himself imitated Christ. Though he possessed citizenship in the Roman Empire, as a sign of his social concern and commitment, he chose the lot of ordinary working-class people and labored with his own hands for his livelihood (e.g. I Thes 2:9; I Cor 4:12).

Paul challenged many of the social, racial, religious, cultural, and economic barriers of his time. One brief example illustrates Paul's social message. In ancient times, there were three great blessings pronounced in the Jewish synagogue: "Blessed be thou, O Lord our God,… who has not made me a Gentile,… who has not made me a slave … who has not made me a woman!" Paul certainly had these barriers in mind when he expressed the new unity of those baptized in Christ: "There are no more distinctions between Jew and Greek, slave and free, male and female, but all of you are one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:28). All, without distinction, are to gather around the Eucharistic table, that great center of unity.

Numerous additional examples of Paul's social consciousness readily come to mind. He struggled to alleviate the suffering of the Christian communities in Jerusalem and Judea during a severe famine (I Cor 16:1-4). Paul laid down a clear apostolic principle: "The only thing insisted on was that we should remember to help the poor, as indeed I was anxious to do" (Gal 2:10). Paul converted the run-away slave Onesimus and then demanded that he be accepted "no longer as a slave but something much better than a slave, a beloved brother" (Philm 16). In a word, Paul preached authentic liberation: "When Christ freed us, he meant us to remain free" (Gal 5:1).

IX. EFFECTIVE, EXEMPLARY LIFE-STYLE. The Apostle Paul was always very careful that his personal life should encourage and facilitate the spread of the Gospel and never become a counter sign. ***The witness of a Christian life is the first and often most effective proclamation of the Gospel.*** When Paul speaks of imitation in his Letters (he is not being arrogant), he believes that Christians can encourage one another through their Christ-like words and deeds. An exemplary life-style is a very effective mode of proclamation. "Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ" (I Cor 11:1). Paul commends the Thessalonians because "you were led to become imitators of us and of the Lord" (I Thes 1:6). Paul, the exemplary missioner, is seeking to draw people to Christ, not to himself, through his encouragement to imitate model Christians; "I have sent you Timothy…, he will remind you of the way that I live in Christ" (I Cor 4:17).

Several of the foregoing sections of this presentation have unfolded key elements which coalesce to form Paul's life witness as an apostle: Christo-centric spirituality, voluntary vulnerability, innovative mission approaches, evangelical urgency, collaborative ministry, social engagement. To these elements one could add additional virtues as Paul himself does in his lists of spiritual gifts (*cf.* I Cor 12 and 13; Gal 5:22).

Read in a contemporary theology of mission, this holistic approach to mission exemplified in Paul's life would be termed "integral evangelization". Paul consistently struggled to successfully run the race and fight the battle (*cf.* I Cor 9:24-27). He kept his eyes fixed on Christ; he told the Philippians: "I am still running, trying to capture the prize for which Christ Jesus captured me" (Phil 3:12).

X. TOTAL RELIANCE ON GOD'S PROVIDENCE. Paul had full confidence in God's everlasting love and fidelity; the absolute guarantee of God's salvific love is manifested in Jesus Christ. Paul asks: "If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but handed him over for us all, how will he not also give us everything else along with him?" (Rom 8:31-32). ***Mission always remains "God's project" and evangelizers seek to be God's faith-filled, humble instruments.*** Paul so willingly and generously cooperated with God's grace, because he was firmly convinced that he was doing God's work. He asserts that he is only a servant of the Gospel; "I did the planting, Apollos did the watering, but God made things grow. Neither the planter nor the waterer matters: only God, who makes things grow" (I Cor 3:6-7).

Paul lived his apostolic life based on great confidence and full trust in God, whom we can call "Abba" (Rom 8:15; Gal 4:6-7). His life was filled with many sufferings, hardships, and challenges; he even faced Spirit-given "road-blocks" in his missionary journeys (cf. Acts 16:6-10). Fully convinced that his life and mission were dependent totally on God and the guidance of the Spirit, Paul laboured unceasingly, always ascribing any missionary success to God. "By the grace of God, I am what I am…. I worked harder than any of them — though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me" (I Cor 15:10). Paul asserts: "the love of Christ urges us on" (II Cor 5:14); "I can do all things in him who strengthens me" (Phil 4:13); "the Spirit comes to help us in our weakness" (Rom 8:26). Paul was a man of faith.

CONCLUDING REFLECTION. The dynamic Apostle Paul is undoubtedly the greatest missionary of all time. Based on his mission experience and profound theological insights, this presentation has surfaced ten "mission principles", valid for Paul of Tarsus as well as for all modern-day Pauls. Paul burned with the flame of God's love that was enkindled in his

heart during his conversion experience; that flame engulfed his whole existence — even until the final hour of his martyrdom in Rome.

This writer-missionary appreciates Paul as a fulfilled, joyful, Spirit-guided missioner — even in spite of all the affliction and suffering he endured. A deep, inner joy and peace filled the Apostle to the Gentiles. Paul was a "joy-filled evangelizer", and thus became an effective propagator of God's saving love. His awareness of God's transforming grace given to him in abundant measure (*cf.* I Cor 15:10) enabled him to joyfully proclaim Jesus as Lord.

Paul, exemplifying a genuinely missionary attitude, was filled with deep joy, not because of personal gratification or external success, but because he saw many communities accept the person of Jesus. He wrote to the Philippians: "my brothers and dear friends, do not give way but remain faithful in the Lord. I miss you very much, dear friends; you are my joy and my crown" (Phil 4:1). To the Thessalonians Paul wrote: "What do you think is our pride and our joy? You are; and you will be the crown of which we shall be prouest in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes; you are our pride and our joy" (I Thes 2:19-20). The Corinthians received this message from Paul: "I have the very greatest confidence in you, and I am so proud of you that in all our trouble I am filled with consolation and my joy is overflowing" (II Cor 7:4).

Paul's exhortations need to be heard by the missionary Church today: "Rejoice in the Lord always; again, I say rejoice" (Phil 4:4). "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances" (I Thes 5:16-18). "My brothers, rejoice in the Lord" (Phil 3:1). "Shine in the world like bright stars, because you are offering it the word of life" (Phil 2:15-16). Pastors, missionaries, catechists, religious, all ministers of the Church, imitate Paul, the joyful evangelizer!

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Indunil Janaka Kodithuwakk

Christian Mission as Reconciliation

The prolonged ethnic strife in Sri Lanka which lasted for over a quarter of a century has finally come to an end. Even though the war against the separatist rebels, namely, Liberation Tigers of Tamil Ealam (LTTE), is over, the dawn of a lasting peace will be a mirage unless the root causes, which gave birth to the ethnic conflict, are not properly diagnosed and remedied. The military victory over LTTE alone will not bring peace. Just as Sri Lanka won the war, it now has to work hard to win peace. As the then Archbishop of Colombo Rt. Rev. Dr Oswald Gomis rightly underlined, "In a sense we could say that we have won the battle but the war is not ended. The war would end only on the day that we grow in nationhood realizing that we are all one people in one country with equal rights". International leaders like Pope Benedict XVI, Ban Ki-moon and Hilary Clinton have emphasized the importance of reconciliation, rehabilitation and reconstruction in Sri Lanka. Therefore, unless and until the Tamil grievances that enabled the LTTE to flourish are properly dealt with and settled the prospect of a united Sri Lanka would only be an eye-wash. As a matter of fact, reconciliation is not only a matter of healing memories and receiving forgiveness, it is also about changing the structures in a society that provoked, prompted and sustained violence. It is a consolation to see that the President of Sri Lanka, His Excellency Mahinda Rajapaksha has admitted the historical blunders which contributed to the bloody ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka. "In the past several decades those people did not have the right to a meaningful life. They were denied the right to life, the right to freedom, the right to development. I shall give all of that to those people. I accept that responsibility (Ceremonial address declaring open the 4th Session of the current Parliament, 19 May 2009). Archbishop Rt. Rev. Dr Malcolm Ranjith, now of Colombo, hit the nail on the head when he mentioned the root causes of the Sri Lankan problem. "We must remember that at the root of this conflict is the attempt by the majority Sinhalese to decide by their own future governance of the country where for centuries they lived together with the Tamils".

How can Sri Lanka capitalize on its hard-earned military victory to seek inter-communal peace and to build a democratic and tolerant Sri Lanka? How can the country ease and iron out the fears and distrust that remain among ethnic Tamils, Muslims and Sinhalese after a war that has lasted three decades? The refugee camps have become a sore point because about 300,000 people, displaced by the war, are now confined to camps. Some 2,000 people have disappeared in the past few years. According to the military sources about 22,000 rebels were killed during the recent battles. Beginning from 23 July 1983, there have been over 80,000 people officially listed as killed during the 25 years. A research conducted by the Ministry of Nation Building has found that 33,000 women in the East under 30 years of age have been widowed due to the ethnic conflict. Moreover, the same Report has also revealed that 95 per cent of these widows are mothers. The Sri Lankan Army lost nearly 24,000 personnel in its three-decade long conflict with the LTTE rebels, including over 6,200 in the latest offensive which began in late 2006. These statistics reveal the horror and the barbarism of a prolonged civil war, the sacrifice of human lives and the plethora of social problems it has left behind. Answering these problems requires time, genuine effort and far-sighted vision. The whole nation, especially those who have directly experienced the terrors of violence, needs healing for its inner wounds. The violence they underwent is branded on their memory – perhaps repressed. Unless true reconciliation is achieved, there is a risk of the horrifying experiences of violence surfacing once more. As Christians we cannot just turn a blind eye to the cry of the victims of violence. Christian faith speaks of redemption, of liberation, and of the forgiveness of enemies. The message of Jesus, with those of other religions, must contribute to the building of

a new united Sri Lanka that is no longer dominated by violence. What do Christians mean by reconciliation? Today *reconciliation* is seen as an essential element of Christian mission. Robert Schreiter describes Christian reconciliation as follows: "For the heart of the Christian message — our deliverance from sin and the forces of evil, and God's offer of new life — is certainly at the centre in this concern for understanding better the meaning of reconciliation" (*Reconciliation, Mission and Ministry in a Changing Social Order,* p. 17). Thus, the Church by her very nature becomes an agent of reconciliation.

The Urgency of the Mission as Reconciliation

"The Church on earth is by its very nature missionary" (*Ad Gentes*, n. 2). It becomes missionary by attending to every context in which it finds itself. In other words, if Christianity is to be meaningful and relevant, it must address the issues affecting its life (church) and the lives of the people (whole humanity). Accordingly, theology must address its context. The Church is at the service of the Kingdom of God. It has no mission of its own. The mission is not ours, but it belongs to God. The mission of the local Church is to incarnate Christ in its context. In other words, what would Jesus teach and how would he behave if he were born in Sri Lanka today? "Jesus Christ is the same today as he was yesterday and as he will be for ever" (Heb 13:8). If a true Christian is another "Christ", then the Church (New people of God/Body of Christ/Temple of the Holy Spirit) becomes "Christian living". In other words, the Church strives to live as Christ woul live here and now, as he would behave, as he would teach here and now. What values and emotions, attitudes and drives would he have if he were alive today? Jesus said: "Blessed are the peacemakers: they shall be recognized as children of God" (Mt 5:9). The first words of the risen Lord addressed to his frightened, discouraged and hopeless Disciples were: "Peace be with you" and then he sends them on mission "As the Father has sent me so am I sending you" (Jn 20:19-21). If the mission of the Church Sri Lanka needs today is reconciliation let us see below how we can live this mission.

We saw above that the mission is urgent. In the Sri Lankan context what is the mission of the Church? What should be the "Good News" to a fractured, wounded, and bleeding Sri Lanka? How can the Catholic Church proclaim Luke 4:18 in the world? "The Spirit of the Lord is on me. He has anointed me to bring the good news to the afflicted. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives, new sight to the blind; to free the oppressed, to proclaim a year of favour from the Lord". How can the Church help to bring about a rapprochement among the Sinhalese and the Tamils? How can the Church contribute to the healing of the internal wounds caused by the war? How can the Church's influence change unhealthy structures and work for justice and peace? How can the Church contribute to eliminate the marginalization of, and discrimination against, minorities? How can the Church proclaim; "Peace be with you" or *shalom* (Jn 20:19,21) to all Sri Lankans? How can the Church restore the sight of the people blinded by the rabid chauvinism and communal politics? Briefly, where is God at work in Sri Lankan's war-ravaged society?

The Church lives in a multi-religious and multicultural society. Thus, to be effective its mission ought to be intra-Christian and inter-religious especially against the destructive and dehumanizing forces. In other words, as the saying goes, "United we stand, divided we fall". The mission must not be *counter*-mission or mission *against,* but mission *with* and mission *for.* Human misery is a clear sign of man's natural condition of frailty and of his need for salvation. The Church

as a sacrament of Christ has *a preferential option for the poor*, marginalized, voiceless, excluded, because Christ the Saviour showed compassion to them and also identified himself with them (Mt 25:40,45). The Church is also bound to propose, with the other religions and secular modern culture, alternatives to the logic of domination, egoism, economic rivalry, self-seeking interests, and violence. The cry of the poor, the excluded, and the groaning of the Earth have reached God. As the Father sent the Son, today the *Trinitarian God* sends the Church to liberate the whole of humanity. Therefore, the Church as Body of Christ or the new People of God has a divinely entrusted mission to build the *civilization of love* against *the culture of death*.

Mission as reconciliation

Sri Lanka today is ethnically, ecologically, economically and religiously torn apart and badly in need of reconciliation. Robert J. Schreiter presents reconciliation as a new paradigm of Mission. For humanity, broken and disheartened ethnically and religiously, economically, politically and ecologically, the need of reconciliation is indispensable. The ministry of reconciliation is "[…] about participating in God's healing of societies that have been wounded deeply and broken by oppression, injustice, discrimination, war, and wanton destruction", (Robert J. Schreiter, *Reconciliation as a New Paradigm of Mission*, Conference on World Mission and Evangelism, Athens (Greece), 9-16 May 2005, 3). The Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences cherishes harmony as one of the Asian cultural values and its vitality to bring about peace and reconciliation. "Asians live in an atmosphere charged with communal tensions. What is needed is a vision of unity and harmony, and a language of reconciled diversity that will enable people of different communities to work together for peace and the building of a more just society" (Franz-Josef Eilers, (ed.), *For All the Peoples of Asia, Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences Documents from 1997 to 2001,* Vol. 3. 330).

Robert J. Schreiter speaks of three ways of misunderstanding reconciliation which distort and even falsify its true sense.
1. Reconciliation as a hasty peace.
2. Reconciliation instead of liberation.
3. Reconciliation as a managed process

Let us pay attention to them briefly.
1. Reconciliation as a hasty peace: The peace process becomes a false reconciliation if it ignores the history of violence by suppressing its memory. The simple reason is that by forgetting the suffering, the victim is forgotten and thereby the causes of suffering are never uncovered and confronted. Unless the causes of suffering are properly addressed, the dawn of peace is unlikely in a foreseeable future. True reconciliation aims at restoring the human dignity of the victims of violence. Owing to the three decades of civil war in Sri Lanka, Tamils mostly and the Muslims and the Sinhalese to a certain extent suffered the bitterness of death, violence and destruction. The time is ripe to investigate the causes of the communal violence rather than sweep them under the carpet. Reconciliation is more than a cessation of violence. Instead, it seeks to repair human lives injured by the horror of violence. Furthermore, repentance by the perpetrators of past violence will encourage the victims to reconcile and forgive the wrongdoers.
2. Reconciliation instead of liberation: It is erroneous to promote reconciliation at the cost of liberation. As a matter of fact, liberation leads to reconciliation. Thus, we can conclude that there will be no reconciliation without liberation. Moreover, the liberation is not simply from the violent situation, but also from the evil structures and processes which permit and promote violence. If the sources of conflict are not named, examined, and taken away, reconciliation will not come about. We will have a truce, not peace.
3. Reconciliation as a managed process: Genuine reconciliation is also much more than conflict management which strives to minimize conflicts or get the parties to accept and live with the conflicts. Christian reconciliation goes beyond mediation, bargaining and other technicalities. According to the Christian understanding it is God who reconciles. Thus, reconciliation is not a skill to be mastered but rather, something discovered namely, the power

of God within oneself. The reconciliation process begins with the victims. They draw strength from experiencing the mercy and love of God. Accordingly, in the last analysis, reconciliation has a spiritual dimension as well.

History of the Problem

"History repeats itself" if the historical causes are not rightly identified and resolved. Therefore, let us briefly see some of the historical causes of the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka. President of Sri Lanka, His Excellency Mahinda Rajapaksha has admitted that the Tamils were denied the right to life, the right to freedom, the right to development in the past. If this is the case, it is worth succinctly analyzing the root causes of the conflict. In the late nineteenth century in the colonized Sri Lanka, **otherness** was determined by religion. Colonization brought about unity among Buddhists, Hindus, and Muslims against Christian proselytizing. Moreover, "under the British, Buddhists, Hindus, and Muslims shared a similar identity: they were all non-Christians" (Tessa Bartholomeusz - Chandra R. de Silva (eds.), *Buddhist Fundamentalism and Minority Identities in Sri Lanka*, 18). Nonetheless, the common struggle against Christian conversion later shifted to the dualism of colonial/colonizer and native/alien. In the late nineteenth-century, Buddhists, Hindus and Muslims began to fuse national or ethnic identities with religious identities. In the course of time, the Sinhala-Buddhist perception of the *"Other"* expanded. Thus, not only were the colonizers but also now the Tamils, Muslims and Christian Sinhala, moved from the centre to the periphery/alien. The indigenous revivalism, unfortunately, reaffirmed the traditional Sinhala-Buddhist identity of the pre-colonial era, excluding the newly developed identities of the colonial period (Sinhala-Christians, Tamils, Muslims, and Burghers) (Gananath Obeyesekare, *The Vicissitudes of the Sinhala-Buddhist Identity Through the Time and Change*, 381). Michael Roberts points out: "By *certain* Sinhalese nationalists, Christianity, Westernization and British Rule were placed along one continuum. All three had to be rejected" (Michael Roberts, "Stimulants and Ingredients in the awakening of Later-Day Nationalism", in Michael Roberts (ed.), *Sri Lanka. Collective Identities Revisited*, Vol. 1, 279).

Sinhala nationalism relies on Buddhism as a source for identity. Sinhala-Buddhist nationalists (SBNs) identify themselves as the custodians of Buddhism. Having linked religion to ethnicity, they join the religion to the country; Buddhism=Sinhala=country or Sri Lanka as *dhammadipa,* the island (*dipa*) and the Buddhist teaching (*dhamma*). Thus, SBNs become not only custodians of Buddhism but also the defenders of the country. This ideology sets up boundaries: who is a rightful heir to the island (*dhammadipa)* and who should dominate it? There is no uniform agreement on this matter among SBNs. A minority holds the opinion that only Sinhala-Buddhists are the true inheritors of the island. The majority group argues that "anyone can live in Sri Lanka as long as Sinhala-Buddhists can enjoy cultural, religious, economic, and linguistic hegemony" (Tessa, Bartholomeusz - Chandra R. de Silva (eds.), p. 3). Furthermore, this ideology introduces the purity and impurity demarcation as well. The SBNs perceive that impure internal and external forces are conspiring to destroy their religion (=country). The impure forces whether other Sinhalas, or non-Sinhala peoples, are seen as the enemy of the motherland and Buddhism. In the absence of a "sacred" text or scripture for Sinhala Buddhist Nationalism, *Mahavamsa,* a mythohistorical text, is used to draw up fundamentals for a righteous society and world order. The fusion of the past with the present reawakens the Sinhala historical consciousness towards non-Buddhist peoples: Tamils, Muslims, Burghers, Christians. Some groups of SBNs regard the above non-Buddhists as alien and threatening.

As every fundamentalism by its very nature often tends towards exclusivism and particularism, for SBNs all ethnic and religious minorities are distinguished by their *"Otherness"*. The ideology of the fundamentalism of the majority breeds fundamentalism of the minority and *vice versa*, "each minority group likewise sees Sinhala-Buddhist fundamentalists as the *Other"*. It must be mentioned that SBNs see the Tamils, the *"near Other"*, as more troublesome than the *"far Other* (Muslims, Christians)". When the proximity becomes more an issue of territoriality with exclusive claims, it generates division. Thus, the SBNs claim to be the inheritors of the entire island whereas the Tamil separatists claim the North and East of Sri Lanka as their homeland.

R.L. Stirrat's work on *Catholic Identity and Global Forces in Sinhala Sri Lanka* sheds much light on this study. Accordingly, self/other or centre/periphery dualism has created a division between Sinhala and Tamil Catholics; and this, in turn, has given birth to Sinhala Christian (Catholic) identity and Tamil Catholic identity. R.L. Stirrat argues that the homogeneous Catholic identity of the colonial era changed due to the decolonization process introduced by the Sinhala-Buddhist nationalism, by the Second Vatican Council and inculturation, and by the prolonged ethnic conflict. "So while the decline in the salience of a specific Catholic identity was in part a result of the rise of Sinhala nationalism and Buddhist fundamentalism, this was encouraged by the actions of the universal Church" (p. 56). The ailing ethnic conflict between Tamils and Sinhalese further contributed to fracture the "Catholic identity" in Sri Lanka. In the North and East, a considerable number of priests and nuns and also some members of the laity identify themselves with LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam), and its separatist war with the Sri Lankan Government. This is seen as a freedom struggle against the Sinhala hegemony. On the other hand, most of the Sinhala Catholics "see themselves first and foremost as Sinhala; only secondly do they identify themselves as Catholic […]. Whilst a shared religious affiliation is recognized, this does not generate any strong sense of identification with the Catholics of the North" (p. 152).

The Fundamentalism of the majority breeds fundamentalism(s) of the minority and *vice versa*. Fundamentalism of the majority may contribute to the birth of rival fundamentalism among minorities. This explains the rise of Sri Lankan Tamil nationalism, and its later development to Eelamist Tamil nationalism or Sri Lankan Tamil fundamentalism or Sri Lankan Tamil separatism. We will not be analyzing the historical development of the Sri Lankan Tamil nationalism in Sri Lanka. It is sufficient to say that the Sinhala=Buddhist=nation exclusivist ideology created the atmosphere for Sri Lankan Tamil Fundamentalism (SLTF). "Sinhala nationalism which seeks to pose as Ceylonese nationalism incorporates nothing of the Tamil tradition and is even seen to be in conflict with it" (S. Arasaratnam, "Nationalism in Sri Lanka and the Tamils", in Michael Roberts (ed.), *Sri Lanka. Collective Identities Revisited*, Vol. 1, 311).

We can therefore conclude that it was after the repeated failure of the Sinhalese majority to propose accommodations and a 'fair deal', and the growing violence of the Sinhalese, that Sri Lankan Tamils resorted to Eelam as the only alternative. The exclusivist doctrine of the SBNs gave birth to SLTF. Ironically, the ideology of LTTE, the powerful group of Tamil fundamentalists, put into practice the same exclusivist doctrine which contributed to its birth and growth. Sri Lankan Tamil=Hindu/Christian=nation and LTTE as the sole representative of SLTs. The expulsion of Muslims (especially from Jaffna and Mannar) and Sinhalese from the SLT- dominated Northern Province, the massacre of the dissidents, and the unwillingness to share power with the minorities (in the Northern and Eastern provinces SLTs are in the majority) reveal the ethno-cultural fundamentalism of SLTF.

The perception of the "*other*" as those who are "not like us", who are "them", projects the image of the "other", as the alien and the stranger. Such an ideology also creates boundaries of expulsion. Tamils in the Northern and Eastern provinces, Sinhalese in boarder villages and the Muslims expelled from the Northern provinces are victims of this divisive ideology. Robert Schreiter identifies different ways of perceiving the *other* and I will mention some of them as directly related to Sri Lanka.

  1. We can *demonize* the other, treating the other as someone to be feared and eliminated if possible.
  2. We can *colonize* the other, treating the other as inferior, worthy of pity or contempt.
  3. We can *generalize* the other, treating the other as non-individual and thus bereft of personal identity.
  4. We can *trivialize* the other by ignoring what makes the other disturbingly different.
  5. We can *vaporize* the other by refusing to acknowledge the presence of the other. (Reconciliation, Mission and Ministry in a Changing Social Order, pp. 52-53).

Unless and until the demarcation of the "we/other" relationship is broken a true reconciliation is most unlikely. The ministry of Christian reconciliation is to break down the dividing walls built within human hearts. "Remember that you were at that time without Christ, […]. But now, in

Christ Jesus you who have once been far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, hostility between us" (*cf.* Eph 2:12-15). As the saying goes "Charity begins at home", the Christians ought to demolish the walls they themselves have built in the course of history. Someone who is blind can't lead another blind person. A divided church interested only in one ethnic group is not a Christian Church. A church which fights only for human rights and justice is not a Christian Church. As St Paul puts it: "So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything is made new!" (*cf.* II Cor 5:17), the ministry of reconciliation seeks to elevate the victim and the oppressor to a new place: freedom for the oppressed and repentance for the oppressor. This inner change in the life of the oppressor as well as the victim brings forth a new creation, a new humanity. St Paul further continues: "So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God (*cf.* II Cor 5:20). All Christians are ambassadors on behalf of Christ with a message of reconciliation to pull down the walls of hostility. Thus, to be a Christian through baptism is a divine call/choice/election for a purpose: "to 'be sent out' (Mk 3:13-15), to engage actively in God's mission, to become a co-worker with God for the salvation-transformation of the world into God's final design" (John Fuellenbach, *Church, Community for the Kingdom*, 20). According to the vision of Jesus, God is the Father of the entire human family and all human persons are brothers and sisters. For this vision Jesus lived, laboured, and suffered and died. This is the vision he entrusted to his disciples: 'As the Father has sent me, even so I send you' (Jn 20:20). According to Jesus, the Kingdom of God contains the global transformation of the old world. It would become the new world without sin, sickness, hatred, and all alienating forces that affect both human life and the entire cosmos. "The Kingdom aims at transforming human relationships; it grows gradually as peoples slowly learn to love, forgive and serve one another…. The Kingdom's nature, therefore, is one of communion among all human beings — with one another and with God" (John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Missio*, n. 15, 7 December 1990).

Conclusion

Sri Lanka plagued by racial and religious bigots is in need of reconciliation, rehabilitation and reconstruction. The defeat of the LTTE on the ground heralds a new era in Sri Lanka. As President Mahinda Rajapaksha has said, "this country was saved by the blood, eyes, limbs, flesh and lives of our young people. The heroic and valiant sacrifices of the Sri Lankan troops should not be wasted. Pope John Paul II underlines that "Terrorism exploits not just people, it exploits God: it ends by making him an idol to be used for one's own purpose. Consequently, no religious leader can condone terrorism, and much less preach it. It is a profanation of religion to declare oneself a terrorist in the name of God, to do violence to others in his name" (World Day of Peace, 2002, nn. 6,7). The defeat of terrorism is not a defeat of the Tamils. Besides, terrorist movements do not emerge out of a vacuum. Thus, the social and cultural causes of terrorism have to be eliminated. The exaggerated euphoria over the war victory coupled with majoritarian triumphalism only hurts Tamil sensibilities. The country is in dire need of a political solution to the ethnic problem. Yet, for some politicians the devolution of power is like a red rag to a bull. In facing this situation, the disciples of Christ, Prince of Peace (Is 9:5), and ambassadors for Christ (*cf.* II Cor 5:20) are invited to shun violence and proclaim with constancy that any form of terrorist violence dishonours God's holiness and the sacredness of life. At the same time, crushing freedom movements, the violation of basic human rights, labelling as terrorists those who do not share the opinion of another are totally unacceptable. Let me conclude this article with the words of Pope John Paul II on the occasion of the Beatification of Fr Joseph Vaz: "These words are addressed to you — and to all who earnestly strive for peace in this country. St Paul insists: '*If someone has done you wrong, do not repay him with wrong. Try to do what everyone considers to be good*' (Rom 12:17). This is God's will for you. This is God's will for Sri Lanka! Forgiveness, reconciliation, peace: this is the challenge before you: all of you, Sinhalese and Tamils – Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims, Christians, and all men and women of good will. This is the challenge before you all" (*Homily*, Colombo, 21 January 1995, n. 7).

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A Missing Dimension in Papal Encyclical

The relationship between charity in truth and justice

The Encyclical *Caritas in Veritate* explains the terms "charity in truth". Charity is love of God and neighbour. The Pope discusses charity in the social field:

"This dynamic of charity received and given is what gives rise to the Church's social teaching, which is … the proclamation of the truth of Christ's love in society. This doctrine is a service to charity, but its locus is truth. Truth preserves and expresses charity's power to liberate in the ever changing events of history.… Development, social well being, the search for a satisfactory solution to the grave socio-economic problems besetting humanity, all need this truth…. Without truth, without trust and love for what is true, there is no social function and responsibility, and social action ends up serving private interests and the logic of power, resulting in social fragmentation, especially in a globalized society at difficult times like the present"(n. 5).…

"Justice is inseparable from charity, and intrinsic to it. Justice is a primary way of charity ... an integral part of the love 'in deed and in truth' (I Jn 3:18), to which St John exhorts us. On the one hand, charity demands justice: recognition and respect for the legitimate rights of the individual and peoples ... (n. 6).

"Another important consideration is the common good.… Besides the good of the individual, there is a good that is linked to living in society: the common good…. To desire the common good and strive towards it is a requirement of justice and charity. To take stands for the common good is on the one hand to be solicitous for, and on the other hand to avail oneself of, that complex of institutions that give structure to the life of society, juridically, civilly, politically and culturally, making it the *pólis,* or city. The more we strive to secure a common good corresponding to the real needs of our neighbours, the more effectively we love them. Every Christian is called to practise this charity, in a manner corresponding to his vocation and according to the degree of influence he wields in the *pólis*. This is the institutional path – we might also call it political path – of charity.… In an increasingly globalized society, the common good and the effort to obtain it cannot fail to assume the dimensions of the whole human family, that is to say, the community of peoples and nations"(n. 7). "Love in truth – *caritas in veritate* – is a great challenge for the Church in a world that is becoming progressively and pervasively globalized" ... (n. 9).

A Mission to Truth

"The Church does not have technical solutions to offer and does not claim 'to interfere in any way in the politics of States'". "She does, however, have a mission of truth to accomplish, in every time and circumstance, for a society that is attuned to man, to his dignity, to his vocation.… Fidelity to man requires fidelity to the truth, which alone is the guarantee of freedom (*cf.* Jn 8:32) and of the possibility of integral human development. For this reason the Church searches for truth, proclaims it tirelessly and recognizes it wherever it is manifested. The mission of truth is something that the Church can never renounce. Her social doctrine is a particular dimension of this proclamation: it is a service to the truth which sets us free"(n. 9).

The Pope presents charity as a primary function of Christian love of God and neighbour and this is to be *in truth*. Charity requires that justice be done first and the mission of the Church is to

help realize justice in society. The Church has throughout history inspired many of Her members to live life dedicated to justice, charitable service in different felids such as education, social service and caring for the needy. In the history of Western civilization Christian churches have inspired many to such unselfish service. All the same how far can the Church claim to have been always on the side of justice and truth?

What is The Truth of History ?

While the leadership of the Catholic Church claims to have the absolute truth concerning God and humanity and to enjoy close friendship with Christ, why is it that the official Church has erred so gravely and for so long in its history? Pope John Paul II, coming from Eastern Europe, was conscious of Western European Church history, without being involved in it. Despite the advice of his close collaborators, he apologized to various peoples on over 100 occasions for the wrongs done by the Church including the resort to violence in the name of the faith.

Pope John Paul II apologized for:
- the errors and methods of intolerance and violence of the Inquisition
- for the sins of the Crusades, conquest of Constantinople in 1204
- the execution of Jan Hus in 1415
- for the Church's role in prisoners being burnt at the stake
- for the religious wars following the Protestant Reformation,
- for the persecution of Galileo in the Church trial in 1633
- for involvement in the African Slave Trade from the 16th century
- for violating "the right of ethnic groups and peoples"
- and for having shown contempt for their cultures and religious traditions
- for the inactivity and silence of the Catholics during the *holocaust*
- via internet for missionary abuses of the past against indigenous peoples of the South Pacific
- in a Letter to every woman he apologized for the injustices committed against women in the name of Christ, the violation of women's rights and for the historical denigration of women
- Prayed for an end to conflicts and asked for a mutual pardon between Christians and Islam.
> (*cf.* Luigi Accattoli: *Quand le Pape Demande Pardon,* Albin Michel, Paris, 1997, pp. 295).

This list could be augmented to include the opposition of the Church to movements such as political democracy, and religious tolerance as in the *Syllabus of Errors*, of Pope Pius IX in 1864, and to some extent recent opposition to Latin American Liberation Theology.

Mention may be made also of Papal Bulls of the 15th Century, for instance,

"Therefore by apostolic authority, by the tenor of this latter, we grant you – the full and free faculty to capture and subjugate Saracens and pagans, and other unbelievers and enemies of Christ whomsoever and whosesoever settled;

To seize any goods whatsoever, whether moveable or immovable, which are held and possessed by these same Saracens, pagans, unbelievers, and enemies of Christ;

To invade and conquer the kingdoms, dukedoms, countries, principalities, and other dominions, lands, places, villages, camps, possessions and goods of this kind to whatever king or prince, or kings or princes, they may belong;

To reduce to slavery their inhabitants;
> (*Dum Diversas:* Nicholas V to Afonso V, Rome, 18 June 1452).

Appreciating the late Pope's frank and bold lead in asking pardon for the past errors and sins of the sons and daughters of the Church, it may be remarked that we have not yet gone the full round of what is required for a good confession: The Church has not undertaken an inquiry into the causes which led Christians to such grave and centennial wrongs. The causes would be not only human weakness. Could they not also be due to a mistaken perception

of the necessity of the Church for human salvation? If Catholics are convinced that we have the absolute truth on such matters, would we not be claiming to know things beyond human knowledge – and that with absolute certitude? Would we not be taking over the functions of God, or making a God to suit our own interests? Would we not be giving absolute objective value to our own relative perceptions?

We can also think of what was said earlier about the way Christians dealt with the indigenous peoples of the Americas and Oceania. This is regarded as the greatest genocide in human history. We can also mention the purchase of the lands of Louisiana, Texas and Alaska as among the largest land grabs in history. Thirdly, we can mention the millions of Africans taken as slaves to the Americas to build up their plantations and industries. Mention can also be made of the intolerance towards other religions and the plundering of the gold, silver and natural resources of the colonies. These are some instances recalled to underline that the Church and Christians have often not been on the side of justice and charity.

The Encyclical does not search for and present the truth in these matters. Has not the present world order of grave injustice been built up by the Western peoples largely by violence and exploitation, and the present world system is the continuation of such injustices? In this connection the Pope gives two reasons which may seem to overlook the human causality of these injustices. The first is *original sin:*

> "Sometimes modern man is wrongly convinced that he is the sole author of himself, his life and society. This is a presumption that follows from being selfishly closed in upon himself, and it is a consequence – to express it in faith terms – of *original sin.* The Church's wisdom has always pointed to the presence of original sin in social conditions and in the structure of society: 'Ignorance of the fact that man has a wounded nature inclined to evil, gives rise to serious errors in the areas of education, politics, social action and morals'" (n. 34).

The Pope explains truth as a gift of God,

> "Charity in truth feeds on hope and, at the same time, manifests it.… Truth – which is itself gift, in the same way as charity – is greater than we are, as St Augustine teaches. Likewise the truth of ourselves, of our personal conscience, is first of all *given* to us. In every cognitive process, truth is not something that we produce, it is always found, or better, received. Truth, like love, 'is neither planned nor willed, but somehow imposes itself upon human beings'" (*ibid.*) .

It may be asked whether these two references to original sin and to truth as a gift of God are not a way of escaping or avoiding the requirement of analyzing human history through the rational means available to us. Would not scholars of modern history be able to tell us how the modern world system came into being during the last 500 years?

The Pope in emphasizing the need of truth should inquire into the truth of world history and see the causes of this mass genocide, massive land grab and slavery. Can the Catholic Church avoid looking into these issues? Could it examine where we went wrong in our mission of love in truth?

The Pope deals very well with the issues of free market economic relations, its uses and inadequacies. He deals well with inter-State issues within the free market system and suggests the need of ethical regulation by the State for the sake of the common good.

The Pope notes that:

> "grave imbalances are produced when economic action, conceived merely as an engine for wealth creation, is detached from political action, conceived as a means for pursuing justice through redistribution" (n. 36).

The Pope here sees that political action is required for pursuing justice through redistribution. He stresses that the market alone will not bring about justice. He speaks of civilizing the economy. There is a growing view that the State has to regulate financial investment for the

common good and that it is necessary to go beyond the boundaries of nation States to ensure justice. The Pope sees the need of going beyond even the sovereignty of nation States to bring about a re-distribution of wealth and power.

While appreciating this positive approach we may ask how this is to be done in a world that considers itself to be an international community of sovereign States. The Encyclicals of the Popes since *Rerum Novarum* of 1891 do not deal explicitly with this question. They remain within the limited *status quo* of sovereign nation States. Throughout the last 120 years, since 1891, the Papal Encyclicals do not seriously question how the world system was set up. As we have mentioned, it was mainly by an extension of Western military and economic power based on violence and money. Therefore the solutions proposed by the Popes for the grave imbalances in the international order remain at the level of goodwill and depend on cooperation among the nation States. There seems to be no clear ethical judgment on the causes of this imbalance.

Not only the Popes but also most of the universities, social scientists and scholars seem to take the existing world order for granted. What we are pointing out is that the changes in population and the limitation of land for countries with a high population, as in Asia, will eventually lead to a breaking point, as people without food will want to move to the unpeopled fertile lands.

A major deficiency in the Pope's Encyclical is that he does not reflect critically on the truth and justice of the world system and thus, his solutions do not call for radical changes. He should proceed logically and radically from his statement about the need for the redistribution of wealth within a State to the redistribution of wealth and property within the global system, taking into account the control of the Multinational Corporations, that now help build a system of neo-colonialism.

The tragedy of the world situation is that there is no global, political authority capable of bringing about such a redistribution. This is a challenge for the whole international community in the coming decades. The present distribution of resources to population in the world favours the rich developed peoples.

The world religions give a similar message of sharing and caring for all, but they have not been working together to change the mindsets of the peoples according to the values of the religions. The Pope can promote inter-religious dialogue and cooperative action to bring about an equitable re-distribution of population and resources at the global level. As the population increases in the South, especially in Asian countries, the pressure for a fairer, better sharing of land and resources in the world will grow.

The same approach is recommended by the Pope concerning the care of "non-renewable natural resources". He advocates a worldwide redistribution of energy resources that should not be left open to "first come first served" if we want to construct a better world. In this context he also speaks of a world authority with institutional means for regulating the use of scarce resources such as oil. He points out the need of influencing the life-style of nations in order to provide for the needs of the poor and for the future generations. In this context also he is aware of the need for a united action of global solidarity, but he does not inquire into the morality of how this inequality developed in the world (*cf.* n. 49).

It would be useful if pluralist groups were to dialogue on these issues for our common good. The Pope recommends the setting-up of "a true world political authority" that is "universally recognized" (n. 67). Would it not be an inspiring leadership if the Pope were to set up a similar authority within the Church, at least as a truly consultative agency on socio-political issues? It would be in the direction of the Vatican II recommendation on collegiality. The Vatican would then be able to listen to, and learn from, activists and scholars from the South: Africa, Asia and Latin America. Then committed persons, like Eduardo Galeano, could contribute to the formation of Catholic Social Teaching with their sensitivity to the experience of the people in their localities. The Pope stated he wanted to listen to the Spirit in

the world. Secular society might be able to contribute much to the wisdom of the Church in such an opening to civil society and the basic ecclesial groups world-wide. This is all the more advisable since the majority of the younger and active Catholics are increasingly in the South – given the secularization in the North West and Oceania.

In the present situation the Pope could contribute much to finding out and announcing the truth of recent human history. He could gather together scholars and activists regarding the global situation as he has done so well concerning the economy and the financial crisis, clarifying principles and making recommendations for their solution. The Pope can find out the causes of the great inequalities and imbalances in the world situations concerning wealth and productivity, population and land, availability of technology and natural resources.

The Pope himself could continue his Predecessor's custom of apologizing for doing such harm to humanity. He could also speak of the necessity of repentance, reparation, compensation for such damage and reconciliation with the other religions and cultures. He could also present a vision of a new world order that is more human and humanizing. What the Pope says about the ethics of business and the solutions to the present crisis are very valuable and relevant to modern society; likewise his views concerning sustainable development and care of the earth. Our comment addresses the deficiency of one approach, namely the truth of the origin and consequences of the modern world social system. This is very important for the critical evaluation of human history since 1492.

The Encyclicals of the last 118 years need to be complemented with the addition of the history of the setting-up of the present world order. It would be useful for the Pope and the Church leadership to inquire into how and why such an omission has been made over a long period of time. Possibly is it because the consultants for the Encyclicals have not had much contact with the victims of history? It looks as if the Encyclicals had been written by and for the victors of history.

The Pope can help to articulate a vision of a just world. Within that framework there could be proposals for reducing inequality within the present system of nation States. Some such proposals are:
- The taxation, of land possessed by a nation State in relation to its population.
- International aid – that could be a form of compensation for past exploitation
- Reception of migrants from the poor countries with a high population and poverty to rich countries without many people, such as from Asia to Australia and Canada. In a planned manner. It would be required to safeguard the life and human rights of migrants, many of whom are women from Asian and African countries.
- Technology transfer from the developed countries to less developed ones – without domination by capital and trade through the Multinationals.
- Fair Trade – without protection by developed countries against imports from developing countries, and without subsidies for exports from the developed countries such as in the Common Agricultural Policy of the European Union.

The Pope is able to influence over a billion people through the Church. In this connection we could promote a catechesis on the equality of peoples, forgiveness by all sides of the wrongs of history. The Church could undertake a process of healing memories and of building goodwill among peoples so as to transform minds and hearts. In such a positive approach the Pope could promote a re-thinking of theology that does not discriminate against the others

and fosters a spirituality of love, caring and sharing of resources. This could be a true charity – love – in truth with effective global justice.
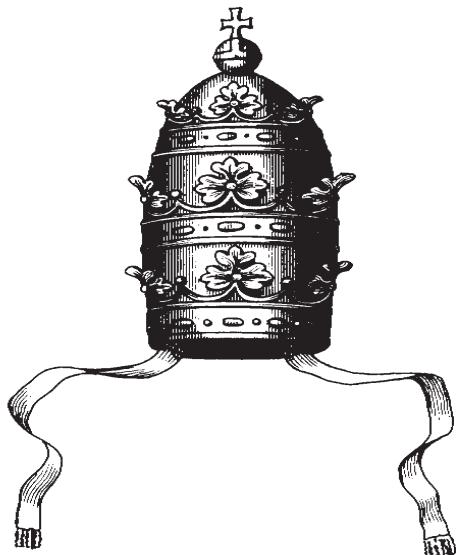
It may be necessary in the long term to think of more radical solutions, such as a planned sharing of land according to population. Thus the Chinese and South Asians who form about 40% of the world population could be provided with more land from areas that are not cultivated at present. For such a proposal to be considered and implemented, it will be necessary to have a global institution that is representative, enlightened and powerful enough to carry out such a reasonable plan. In the long term, such radical changes would be manifestly required based on changing population/land relationship.

The Encyclical could focus attention on such problems, and the Pope could suggest that inter-religious relations be in the direction of such solutions. The Pope could indicate that we are at a turning-point in human civilization, with the reduction of Western dominance and the coming of an age in which the peoples of the South namely, Asia, Africa and Latin America will increase in number and be younger in age. In such a process there will be more active world citizens and Christians in the South than in the North, as well as a corresponding transition of the authority pattern in the world and in the Church from mainly Western Europeans to those of other countries? Such a process will require a greater participation by authority in the nation States, the world community and the Churches.

The Pope can lead the way in both trends of sharing wealth and opportunity in the world and of the authority in the Church.

It is noteworthy that the Pope speaks highly of the Church's Social Teaching since 1891 in several Encyclicals of the Popes. It may be noted that during this period there has been no critical systemic analysis of colonization by the Western powers along with the alliance of the Church. It is necessary that we recognize the truth of world history and the lack of justice in this historical process.

We may also have to ask why Church documents on social teachings during these 118 years were not adequately enlightened concerning such global deficiencies. Is it because those who served the Vatican would have been Europeans, conscious of the rights of their workers but not of the oppressed peoples of the colonies. This situation requires that each one take the responsibility to remedy the situation according to his/her position and influence in a society or the world at large. These comments are offered in appreciation of the Encyclical's wise counsels towards – Charity in Truth – hoping for a future emphasis on the truth of the global reality and bold reforms to bring about love and justice among all humans and care of Nature in the coming decades.

Munachi E. Ezeogu, C.S.Sp.

From Evangelisation
to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace:
Towards a Paradigm Shift in African Mission Priorites

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Abstract

A Synod is a moment of re-evaluation of the life of a church, where it is and where it is heading. As such, the two ordinary assemblies of the Synod of Bishops for Africa held within a space fifteen years, 1994 and 2009, give us a rare opportunity to trace the trajectory of the growth in the self-understanding of the Catholic Church in Africa. The 1994 Synod of Bishops Special Assembly for Africa had as theme, "The Church in Africa and Her Evangelising Mission Towards the Year 2000". Evangelisation was its central theme. The Second Special Assembly for Africa has as theme, "The Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace". Why the radical shift of emphasis from spreading the faith to reconciliation? Is this perhaps a response to the changing socio-political and cultural development in the world and especially in Africa in the past fifteen years? Is this a tacit admission of the inadequacy of the traditional evangelising model of mission characteristic of the African Church in the 20th century? Is it possible that "reconciliation, justice and peace" articulates what should be the ideal vision and mission priority of the African Church in the 21st century? This paper is a biblical and theological investigation of the above questions.

INTRODUCTION

A Synod is a moment of re-evaluation of the life of a church, where it is and where it is heading. As such, the Two Ordinary Assemblies of the Synod of Bishops for Africa held within a space 15 years, 1994 and 2009, give us a rare opportunity to trace the trajectory of the growth of the Catholic Church in Africa.

The 1994 Synod of Bishops Special Assembly for Africa had as theme, "The Church in Africa and Her Evangelising Mission Towards the Year 2000". Evangelization was the central theme.[1] This overarching theme was broken down into five sub-themes:
Evangelisation as Proclamation
Evangelisation as Inculturation
Evangelisation as Dialogue
Evangelisation as Justice and Peace
Evangelisation as Communication.
Evangelization is a theme that is very familiar to the Church in Africa. The African Church in our day sees itself as the fruit of evangelisation and understands its mission and *raison d'être* mainly in terms of evangelization. This evangelization is understood in traditional terms as winning converts and spreading the Church as an organisation. The African Church is an evangelised and evangelising church. The theme of the 1994 Synod for Africa certainly falls within the comfort zone of the African Church.

The same cannot be said of the upcoming Synod of Bishops Second Special Assembly for Africa. The theme of the Synod will be, "The Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation,

Justice and Peace". When African Christians express their understanding of their role as church in the world, they hardly do so using the terms "reconciliation, justice, and peace". This is not to say that the church in African is unaware of its important role of reconciling people and peoples with God and with one another. As many pronouncements of the various Episcopal Conferences in Africa testify, the African Church sees reconciliation, justice and peace as an important part of its mission. Nevertheless, it has not been traditional for the African Church to express its essential mission in terms of reconciliation, justice and peace.

Why did the First Synod for Africa choose a theme that is familiar to the African Church and the Second Synod a theme that is rather unfamiliar? Why did the First Synod focus on a theme interested in the Church and its growth while the Second Synod focuses on a theme that is interested in the Church and its service to the wider community? Why did the First Synod focus on the mission of the Church *ad intra*, while the Second Synod focuses on the mission of the Church *ad extra*?

Is it possible that whereas the former Synod depicts the reality, the *status quo* of the African Church's self-understanding in the 20th century, the latter articulates what should be the ideal preoccupation, the vision of the same church in the 21st century? If the theme of the First Synod for Africa was a reaffirmation of the African Church, could it be that the theme of the Second Synod is an updating of the former, a challenge for the African Church to move quickly from where it is to where it ought to be? This paper answers in the affirmative to the above questions, with the proviso that the two themes be understood to be not in an either/or ... but in a both ... and relationship. The haste shown by the Universal Church in convoking a Second Synod for Africa whereas the decisions of the First Synod have hardly been disseminated, assimilated and implemented, might indicate the need to complement or supersede the First Synod with something more relevant to the situation in which the African Church finds itself today.

In his Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Ecclesia in Africa,* Pope John Paul II lamented the superficial commitment to the ministry of reconciliation, justice and peace in Africa as elsewhere:

> "Despite the modern civilization of the 'global village', in Africa as elsewhere in the world the spirit of dialogue, peace and reconciliation is far from dwelling in the hearts of everyone. Wars, conflicts and racist and xenophobic attitudes still play too large a role in the world of human relations".[2]

Evidently the Pope saw the ministry of reconciliation, justice and peace to be in the blind spot of the missionary vision of the African Church. The Second African Synod could, therefore, be seen as an attempt to correct the missionary imbalance of a church that it overly focussed on evangelisation as traditionally understood.

WHY IS A SECOND AFRICAN SYNOD SO URGENT?

Convoking a Second African Synod within fifteen years of the first suggests that the First Synod is perceived either as flawed or as incomplete. Consequently, the relationship of the Second African Synod to the First can be said either to be corrective – the vision of the Church's mission given in the First African Synod was defective and the Second African Synod has been called to correct the wrong impression, or as complementary – the vision of the church's mission given in First African Synod is correct but incomplete, the Second African Synod has been called to give a more complete picture. Either way, the First African Synod is seen as unsatisfactory and inadequate. In fact, both relationships are possible, as we can see from Pope John Paul II's teaching in *Ecclesia in Africa*, where he describes the dialogue of inculturation at the same time as "a requirement for evangelization" and as "a path toward full evangelization".[3] Seeing inculturation as "a requirement for evangelization" implies that evangelization without the dialogue of inculturation would be flawed. Seeing inculturation, on the other hand, as "a path toward full evangelization" could imply that evangelization without the dialogue of inculturation would only be incomplete, but not necessarily flawed.

In his address at the press conference on the occasion of the presentation of the *Lineamenta*

of the Second African Synod, Cardinal Arinze gave a justification for the Synod, which can be summarized under two broad headings, one positive and the other negative. According to the Cardinal, the Second African Synod is necessitated on the one hand by the "growth and deepening in the faith" in the continent and, on the other, by the "problems and challenges in society".[4] In this he implied that a new vision of the Church's mission engagement in Africa is required in order to keep pace with the growth and deepening of the faith and in order to address more adequately the formidable societal challenges, such as ethnicism, violence and war.

Between the calling of the First African Synod and the Second, so much has happened in Africa to question the adequacy of the traditional Church mission priority of evangelization. Among the defining events and realities that questioned the Church's mission priorities in Africa, we count the following:

The Rwanda-Burundi Genocide

In the old understanding of evangelization, Rwanda and Burundi were by far the most evangelized countries in Africa. Statistically they represented the two most Catholic countries of Africa. The Rwanda-Burundi genocide we talk about was essentially perpetrated by Catholics on fellow Catholics. Both the Hutu killers and their Tutsi victims attended the same Church and received the same communion every Sunday. The murderous involvement of priests and nuns in the genocide, many of whom have been convicted, raised the evil to a level of inconceivable abomination.[5] The challenge this raises for the mission of evangelization is obvious. If evangelized, baptized and certified Catholics are capable of such diabolical atrocities against those they claim to be their brothers and sisters in Christ, then something must definitely be wrong with the process that produced, screened and certified them as practising Catholics. What we saw in Rwanda and Burundi was a people evangelized, baptized and approved as Christians, who had no idea of reconciliation, justice and peace. This makes a new Synod based on reconciliation, justice and peace not only necessary but urgent.

Truth and Reconciliation Commissions

On the positive side, the amazing role played by the Bishop Desmond Tutu led Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa shows how much Christians can achieve when they bring Gospel principles to bear in the socio-political order. Following the example of South Africa, other African countries, such as Nigeria, have tried their own versions of Truth and Reconciliation commissions, albeit without a charismatic and committed leadership comparable to that of Desmond Tutu. The results have been mixed. Nevertheless, the inference has been unanimous: the church has a crucial role to play in the evolution of just and peaceable societies in Africa. As John Paul II stated in his Post-Synodal Exhortation:

> "The Church in Africa is aware that it has to become for all, through the witness borne by its own sons and daughters, a place of true reconciliation. Forgiven and mutually reconciled, these sons and daughters will thus be able to bring to the world the forgiveness and reconciliation which Christ our Peace (*cf.* Eph 2:14) offers to humanity through his Church".[6]

This awareness of what the Church in Africa has to become, which it is not yet, men and women of reconciliation, justice and peace, makes the need for this Synod at this point in time imperative.

The War On Terror and the Need For a Dialogue of Cultures

On the global scene, one of the most challenging realities of the period between the First and the Second African Synods is terrorism and the war against terror. As an antidote to a perceived clash of cultures, Pope Benedict XVI has called for a dialogue of cultures. True, the "ground zero" of the war against terror is not in Africa, yet Africa remains an important player in the global conflict, for better or for worse. Even if Africa is not yet engulfed in the conflict, a commitment to reconciliation, justice and peace could be what the African Church needs to douse the flames of

violence in Africa and beyond. Apart from the global war against terror, Africa still has more than its fair share of war and violence. Dafur and Sudan, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia, the Niger Delta conflict in Nigeria are just a few of the wars and conflicts that ravage the African continent. In the Second African Synod, it appears, the Pope is inviting the African Church to answer the call to join the global dialogue of cultures by thinking globally and acting locally.

The Urgent Need for Reconciliation, Justice and Peace Within the African Church

The need for reconciliation, justice and peace within the African Church could justify a full paper all by itself. In *Ecclesia in Africa*, Pope John Paul II itemized many areas in the life of the African Church that stand in need of reconciliation, and that could benefit from dialogue.

> "Dialogue is to be practised first of all within the family of the Church at all levels: between Bishops, Episcopal Conferences or Hierarchical Assemblies and the Apostolic See, between Conferences or Episcopal Assemblies of the different nations of the same continent and those of other continents, and within each particular Church between the Bishop, the presbyterate, consecrated persons, pastoral workers and the lay faithful; and also between different rites within the same Church. SECAM is to establish 'structures and means which will ensure the exercise of this dialogue', especially in order to foster an organic pastoral solidarity".[7]

To this list we add other areas that are a special challenge to the Local Church in Nigeria.

Dialogue Between Priests and Parishioners

The pastoral highhandedness that characterises the ministry of too many priests is a counter witness to the meekness of Christ. I know a parish where the priest banned an eighty-year-old man from communion just because the octogenarian dared to disagree with his building plans.

Collaborative Ministry with the Religious and the Laity

Women in our church have immense potentialities that are grossly under-utilized. When we see how much women of other Christian confessions are contributing to ministry, as tele-evangelists, prayer warriors, and pastoral agents, and compare this with the relative passivity of women in the Catholic fold, we wonder what Catholic women, especially the religious, who have received superior education, could achieve given the opportunity and encouragement.

Ethnic Conflict and Violence

Here we have a multi-faceted problem. Taking Nigeria as a test case, we have the sporadic uprisings of militant Muslims against Christians in parts of the country where Christians and Muslims live together. We have the occasional conflict between Christians and African Traditional Religionists, such as erupted in Nanka in Awka Diocese, that led to the "martyrdom" of the young woman, Scholastica. We even have conflicts between Christians and Christians, often based on disagreements regarding cultural practices, such as in Umuode in Enugu Diocese.

The Scandal of the Osu Caste System

Probably the longest lasting "cold war" in the Nigerian Church is that between the *diala* (free born) and the *osu* (divine slaves). The Osu caste system has been identified as an endemic cause of disunity and lack of progress not only in the Igbo church but also in the Igbo nation as a whole. Before we talk of reconciliation, justice and peace with and for the detainees at Guantanamo Bay, we should first talk of reconciliation, justice and peace with and for our next-door neighbours whose rights are denied them in the name of an institution that was put, and held, in place by a pre-Christian African traditional religious belief system.

Dialogue and Reconciliation with African Culture and Religion (Inculturation)

The evangelization that gave rise to the modern African Church did not see dialogue and reconciliation as high values. Expatriate missionaries, often compatriots with the agents of colonization in a given country, simply handed down values, and some of those values were more Western than Christian. Jay Carney, in a study of *Ecclesia in Africa* in the light of Rwanda sees this

confusion of Western and Gospel values in the missionary evangelization of Africa as problematic.

The potentially adverse impact of hundreds of years of Westernization on the Gospel message is also left unexamined; foreign missionaries (no matter their background) are assumed to be bringing an "authentic" Gospel message to Africa. When considered within the cauldron of Rwanda, such assumptions appear problematic to say the least.[8]

How have we as African theologians responded to these challenges of evangelization? Some African theologians see the need to broaden the understanding of evangelization while others simply embark on a search for a new mission paradigm. The move to broaden the understanding of evangelization is perhaps best represented in John Paul II's Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Ecclesia in Africa*. In this document evangelization is broadened to include proclamation, inculturation, dialogue, justice and peace, and communication. This represents a bold and innovative departure from the traditional understanding of evangelization, namely, preaching, conversion, baptism, and church membership. Pope Paul VI's 1975 Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Nuntiandi,* reminds us of the traditional view of evangelization when it says that "it has been possible to define evangelization in terms of proclaiming Christ to those who do not know Him, of preaching, of catechetics, of conferring Baptism and the other sacraments".[9] Even John Paul II in his consistent call for a "new evangelization" meant only that "evangelization can be new in its ardour, methods and expression".[10] He did not readily foresee the need for a new synthesis of the Church's message, resulting in new mission priorities.

THE CHURCH AND THE MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION

One way to go about the quest for what should be the mission priorities of the Church is to examine the mission priorities of Jesus. The mission of the Church cannot be other than a continuation in time of the mission of Christ. What was that mission of the Christ which he himself did and entrusted to his followers at the end of his earthly ministry? St Paul gives us the answer in one of the earliest writings of New Testament, his Second Letter to the Corinthians.

All this is from God, who *reconciled* us to himself through Christ, and has given us the *ministry of reconciliation*; that is, in Christ God was *reconciling* the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the *message of reconciliation* to us. So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be *reconciled* to God (II Cor 5:18,19,20 NRSV, emphasis mine).

The ministry entrusted to the Church is the ministry of reconciliation (*th.n diakoni,an th/j katallagh/j*) and the message that the Church proclaims is the message of reconciliation (*to.n lo, gon th/j katallagh/j*). Reconciliation is the mission of the Church, the mission that was entrusted to her by her founder, Jesus Christ. This reconciliation is presented in the Bible as having two dimensions. There is the vertical dimension of reconciliation, that is, reconciliation with God, and there is the horizontal dimension of reconciliation, with our neighbour.

In the Second Corinthians passage above, Paul presents vertical reconciliation as the primary reconciliation. All mankind need this reconciliation because we come into this world in a state of ruptured relationship with God (original sin). This rupture needs to be healed through the process of atonement (at-one-ment). Tension in our relationship with God leads to tension in our relationship with our neighbour, and tension with our neighbour that we can see is indicative of tension with God that we cannot see. Consequently, though reconciliation with God enjoys logical primacy, reconciliation with our neighbour is not less important. In practice the two aspects of reconciliation are like two sides of the same coin: one could hardly exist without the other. Hence the practical injunction in Matthew's Gospel:

"So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has

something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift" (*cf.* Mt 5:23-24).

Reconciliation of people in situations of conflict and tension, such as those in which many Africans live today, is, therefore an essential part of the Church's essential mission. Pope John Paul II thanked the African Church for its role "as a promoter of peace and reconciliation" in the continent. "I feel it my duty to express heartfelt thanks to the Church in Africa for the role which it has played over the years as a promoter of peace and reconciliation in many situations of conflict, political turmoil and civil war".[11] That is a way of saying, "Keep it up!".

RECONCILIATION AS A PARADIGM FOR MISSION IN AFRICA

The Church in Africa was conceived, born and bred in the missionary culture of evangelisation. In the experience of African Christianity, the essential mission of the Church is to spread the Gospel with a view to making new members and the Church grow. But spreading the Gospel with a view to making new members, and the Church grow as an institution, is precisely what defines proselytism. African theologians who are steeped in the traditional, African-style evangelisation, find it difficult to make a distinction between mission and proselytism. In the African Church experience, mission and proselytism come down to practically one and the same thing, namely, preach, attract new members, baptise them and expand the Church. This is a mistake. Mission and proselytism need not be the same thing. If mission is understood as the proclamation of the Good News, then it will be seen that the primary beneficiaries of mission are the evangelised, not the evangelisers or the sending Church. The Gospel is Good News, first and foremost, in the ears of the hearers. Proselytism, on the other hand, puts the interests of the evangelising agents first before those of the evangelized people.

Against this background, we can see how a mission of reconciliation, justice and peace can easily be perceived as Good News by evangelised peoples, more than a mission aimed at recruiting them as members of a new religious organisation. Central to the mission of God in the world is the idyllic vision of Isaiah. It is a picture of a world in which reconciliation, justice and peace have been achieved.

"The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall feed; their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den. They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain; for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea" (Is 11:6-9).

Working for reconciliation, justice and peace, of course, implies change or conversion. The lion has to change or convert from a carnivorous to a herbivorous animal. But the change we are talking about here is a change of mind, attitude and behaviour more than a change of religious affiliation. If the proclamation of the Christian message in Africa was geared towards achieving a situation such as that described in Isaiah 11:6-9, the peoples of Africa are likely to perceive the Gospel as Good News.

From this we can see that commitment to reconciliation, justice and peace is actually commitment to evangelisation, in the best sense of the word. Evangelisation is here understood as Jesus himself understood it, namely, "to bring Good News to the poor, to proclaim release to captives and new sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour" (Lk 4:18-19). One can, therefore, say that when Pope Benedict XVI calls the Bishops together for a Second Synod of Bishops on Africa on the theme: "The Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace", he is not calling the African Church to abandon evangelisation and focus on reconciliation. He is calling us to a deeper, more faithful and more effective understanding of

evangelisation. He is calling us to move from the old understanding of evangelisation as making more members, to a better understanding of evangelisation as commitment to reconciliation, justice and peace, which are tangible signs of the presence of God among His people.

CONCLUSION

This paper began with the observation that in 1994, almost 2,000 years into the Christian era, the Church called the First Synod of Bishops on Africa. Its theme was, "The Church in Africa and Her Evangelising Mission Towards the Year 2000". Barely fifteen years after that, the Church calls for a Second Synod on Africa, this time on the theme, "The Church in Africa at the Service of Reconciliation, Justice and Peace". With this observation, we raised the following questions: Why the radical shift of emphasis from spreading the faith to reconciliation? Is this perhaps a response to the changing socio-political and cultural development in the world and especially in Africa in the past fifteen years? Is this a tacit admission of the inadequacy of the traditional model of evangelisation characteristic of the African Church in the 20th century? Is it possible that "reconciliation, justice and peace" articulates what should be the ideal vision and mission priority of the African Church in the 21st century? This paper returns a positive verdict on all of these questions, giving biblical, theological and experiential reasons for doing so.

One final thing that needs to be added is that, properly understood, there is no contradiction between the First African Synod's call to evangelisation and the Second African Synod's call to reconciliation, justice and peace. The problem was in a certain understanding of evangelisation that was historically practised and continues to be practised in Africa, an understanding of evangelisation approximating proselytisation. What this paper has demonstrated is that Pope Benedict XVI's call to reconciliation, justice and peace is a more faithful and effective way of achieving Pope John Paul II's call for a new evangelisation in Africa. There is no doubt that the church in Africa needs to depart from the proselytism model of the 20th century to a reconciliation model if the peoples of Africa are to hear her proclamation as Good News, as we step into the third millennium with its formidable challenges for African peoples and the African Church.

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Footnotes

[1] *Cf.* Pope John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Ecclesia in Africa: On the Church in Africa and its Evangelizing Mission Towards the Year 2000* (1995), nn. 8, 18.

[2] Pope John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, n. 79.

[3] Pope John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, n. 59.

[4] Arinze, Card. Francis, 2006. Address at the Press Conference on the Occasion of the Presentation of the *Lineamenta* of the Second Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops, 27 June 2006. Available Online: http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/documents/rc_synod_doc_20060627_lineamenta-africa-conf_en.html

[5] Two Catholic priests, Jean Francois Kayiranga and Edouard Nkurikiye have been sentenced to death for their participation in the killings. Benedictine nuns, Sister Gertrude (née Consolata Mukangango) who was Mother Superior of her religious community, and Sister Maria Kisito (née Julienne Mukabutera) have been convicted and sentenced to serve time. Catholic Bishop Augustin Misago was charged, tried, and acquitted.

[6] Pope John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, n. 79.

[7] Pope John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, n. 65.

[8] Jay Carney, "Reconsidering Ecclesia in Africa in the Shadow of Rwanda" (2006). Accessed on 30 March 2009 from http://strssa.cua.edu/Papers/Carney%20Paper%203.pdf.

[9] Pope Paul VI 1975. Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, n. 17.

[10] "The Task of the Latin American Bishops" *Origins* 12 (24 March 1983) 661.

[11] Pope John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, n. 45.

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Pierre Diarra

Au cœur de la pauvreté, devenir tous humains
– Misère intolérable ou pauvres gênants ? –

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Les serviteurs et apôtres de Jésus Christ sont aussi ceux qui appellent à « repartir du Christ », repartir de Celui qui les ramène à l'origine, le respect de l'homme créé à l'image et à la ressemblance de Dieu et l'unité du genre humain, fondement de toutes choses dans la bonté de Dieu.

Est-ce le pauvre qui nous gêne ou plutôt la pauvreté ? Nous tourner vers ceux qui ont moins que nous, cela suscite diverses sortes de sentiments, provoquant différentes attitudes. Comment prétendre que Dieu est le libérateur des pauvres, des petits, alors que tant de victimes jalonnent l'histoire humaine, tant de pauvres et de petits gémissent, crient au secours ? Si Dieu agit vraiment en faveur des pauvres, qu'en est-il aujourd'hui ? Dieu est peut-être là, affamé et souffrant, sans abri, nu et malade, prisonnier voire pendu au gibet[1] ... Il n'y a peut-être pas d'action libératrice de Dieu qui se laisse voir ailleurs que dans l'action des hommes ?.... De quel Dieu et de quels hommes parlons-nous ?

Pour les Bambara du Mali, celui qui pose des questions, s'interroge, ne se trompe pas. La pauvreté renvoie avant tout aux personnes qualifiées de *pauvres* et aux *liens* que nous tissons avec « ces pauvres » ou ces personnes « plus pauvres que nous », qui parfois nous donnent « mauvaise conscience ». Certes, nous ne pouvons pas « aider » tous les pauvres du monde, mais pour parler d'eux, quelles expressions et attitudes privilégions-nous ? Pourquoi les pauvres sont-ils de plus en plus nombreux ? Comment se posent les questions de la responsabilité et de la justice,[2] à propos de la pauvreté ?

Le mot et les réalités qu'il recouvre

Quand on fait l'analyse linguistique et historique des mots « pauvre », «pauvreté », « appauvrir » dans la langue française, on se rend compte de la complexité des réalités désignées. Le pauvre désigne une personne qui est dans le besoin ; c'est le « nécessiteux », mais c'est peut-être aussi celui « qui produit peu », tout comme on le dirait d'une terre ou d'un animal. Le pauvre, c'est peut-être le « tout petit », celui à qui on attribue parfois une « qualité inférieure », à moins qu'il ne s'agisse d'une faiblesse ou d'une infirmité liée à son état.

« Dieu apparaît à ml de l'aveugle ».

Le mot « pauvre » qualifie une personne qui est dans l'indigence et ce qui est digne d'un pauvre, d'un misérable. « Pauvre » qualifie une réalité concrète qui n'a pas de valeur, une réalité piètre, pitoyable et, finalement, qui n'a pas d'importance. Ainsi, une manifestation de l'activité intellectuelle ou artistique peut être qualifiée de pauvre, car quelque chose, pas forcément très important, lui manque, d'où la note dépréciative que l'on retrouve un peu dans les expressions « langue pauvre », « vers pauvre » ou « pauvre type » ou encore « pauvre en » (pauvre en esprit, pauvre d'esprit) au sens de « qui manque de, qui a peu de ».[3] Une valeur affective un peu condescendante, voire franchement dépréciative, est développée, par exemple dans « pauvre homme ».

Aujourd'hui, le mot pauvreté désigne souvent l'état de misère, d'insuffisance de *biens matériels* et se dit par analogie de l'état d'une terre non productive. La nuance dépréciative renvoie au sens figuré de « ce qui est insuffisant, médiocre » : une parole vide, creuse, banale. Pauvreté a parfois le sens moral

de « malheur, tristesse » désignant « euphémiquement les parties honteuses de l'homme et de la femme une (en particulier dans l'expression *pauvreté de Dieu*) ».[4] Le pauvre évoque, plus que pauvreté, une idée forte de « misère », en sous-entendant que le pauvre ne vit que de charité. On préfère alors parler de « nouveaux pauvres », en reliant les aspects sociaux modernes de pauvreté au chômage notamment ou aux nouvelles formes sociales d'exploitation et d'esclavage[5] qui appauvrissent. Qu'en disent les pauvres ?

« Pauvreté », au-delà des langues du monde

L'analyse des termes renvoyant à la « pauvreté » dans diverses langues dévoile divers aspects. Quand les Bambara disent *« Faantan jigi ye Ala ye : l'espoir du pauvre, c'est Dieu »*, on peut penser que le pauvre est délaissé de tout le monde et qu'il ne peut compter que sur Dieu. Mais en disant *« Jigi ka fisa fa ye : l'espoir vaut mieux que la satiété »* ou encore *« Mogoninfinya ka fisa fen ye : être humain vaut mieux que les biens (qu'être riche) »,* ils mettent, au cœur des situations de pauvreté et de richesse, la question *« comment être humain ? »*. Un rapport plus ou moins « humain » est établi entre l'état de richesse ou de pauvreté et les chemins qui y conduisent, quand les Bambara disent : *« Segen ka fisa jonya ye ! : mieux vaut la pauvreté que l'esclavage ! »* ou encore *« Horonya ka fisa jonya ye : la dignité vaut mieux que l'esclavage »*. Certes, nous ne sommes pas maîtres de l'avenir, car *« demain est dans la main de Dieu : Sini bè Ala bolo »*, mais chaque jour qu'il nous est donné de vivre nous rapproche ou nous éloigne de la bonne manière « d'être humain »[6] avec tous nos semblables.

En Afrique de l'Ouest, le terme « pauvre » des diverses langues utilisées renvoie souvent à l'orphelin et à l'aveugle, souvent mis en scène par les proverbes et les contes, dévoilant à travers eux des êtres démunis, faibles, voués à un destin sans espérance d'aucune sorte. Le personnage de l'aveugle, populairement considéré comme l'être faible par excellence, joue le rôle de victime. Les Mossi disent : *« Que l'orphelin s'entende avec Dieu, et laisse ce qui arrive ».*[7] Est-ce à dire que, pour l'orphelin et peut-être toute personne vivant dans des conditions difficiles, comme l'aveugle, il n'y a d'appui possible et véritable qu'en *Wende* (Dieu), qui fixe le sort de chacun et en même temps console ?

Que le pauvre, plus que tout autre personne, se réfère à Dieu est une sagesse proposée presque partout en Afrique, comme s'il ne fallait pas aller contre « le bon vouloir » de Dieu. Ainsi, les Bwa du Mali et du Burkina disent : *« Si Debwenu (Dieu) a préparé ton couscous et l'a mis dans un panier, ne te plains pas ensuite de la personne qui met la sauce »*. La question ne se pose pas pour la personne qui n'aime pas la sauce ; l'enjeu se situe ailleurs : le peuple qui énonce ce proverbe ne conçoit pas de couscous à manger sans sauce. On aura beau mettre de la sauce, celle-ci ne restera pas au fond pour bien mouiller le couscous, puisque le panier a des trous. Est-ce vraiment aller contre « la volonté » de Dieu que d'aider l'orphelin, l'aveugle et, au-delà, toute personne en situation de précarité ?

Lutter contre la pauvreté et « la volonté » de Dieu ?

La solidarité n'est pas morte en Afrique même si elle est mise à mal par différents facteurs, en particulier les mutations socio-culturelles et politiques. Un individualisme s'impose de plus en plus, obligeant chacun à « se débrouiller », à mesurer ce qui lui est nécessaire pour vivre et lutter contre l'adversité.[8] Ce que chacun a, n'est-ce pas ce que la société lui octroie ? Responsabilité individuelle et imputation collective sont à prendre en compte.

« Si Debwenu (Dieu) rend l'oiseau aveugle, c'est lui aussi qui prendra soin de lui », disent les Bwa. Dans le même sens, les Mossi disent : *« Wende (Dieu) coupe le foin de la chèvre boiteuse »* ou encore *« Wende épierre le mil de l'aveugle »*. Que Dieu soit miséricordieux semble justifier que le faible puisse icibas s'appuyer vraiment sur lui. Ces peuples se déchargent-ils sur Dieu au lieu de lutter « efficacement », riches et pauvres alliés, contre la pauvreté ? Le pauvre, celui qui manque d'argent, de biens matériels, qui est dépourvu de ressources, est aussi celui qui est privé de parole ou, plus exactement, *celui dont on ne voit pas la souffrance, dont on n'entend pas la parole,* parce qu'il ne pèse pas lourd socialement. Souvent le pauvre n'a même pas la parole pour se défendre comme le feraient les femmes des Mossi : *« La*

bouche de la femme est son carquois ». La bouche serait à la femme (sans pouvoir ?) ce que le carquois est à l'homme; tout comme les flèches empoisonnées que décoche l'homme, les mots de la femme visent juste et peuvent faire mal. La langue aussi peut être poison.

Inégalité de situation, inégalité dans le traitement ?

Lutter tous ensemble contre la pauvreté, c'est situer les biens acquis ou reçus en héritage ou en cadeau dans une dynamique des relations sociales basée sur l'égalité des êtres humains. C'est aussi situer les pouvoirs dans une logique où chaque être humain devrait avoir de quoi satisfaire les besoins primaires. Ceux et celles qui exercent le pouvoir[9] pensent-ils à ces situations dramatiques, ces milliers de personnes qui meurent chaque jour de faim ou de maladies, parce qu'elles n'ont pas les moyens de se nourrir et de se soigner ? Sur qui le pauvre peut-il vraiment compter, sans risquer sa dignité, *pour vivre mieux* ?

Dieu n'aime pas les pauvres plus que les autres, mais il prend en compte la situation d'inégalité dans laquelle les pauvres se trouvent. La force du Dieu de Jésus Christ, en même temps que sa faiblesse, est peut-être d'être là quand le pauvre résiste, se lève comme lorsqu'il gît à terre.[10] Parce que Dieu aime tous les hommes, riches et pauvres, et qu'il veut le salut de tous sans exception, il accorde priorité aux pauvres. Il en va de même pour l'annonce de l'Évangile. Pour que celui-ci soit effectivement destiné à tous les hommes, il faut qu'il soit d'abord annoncé aux pauvres. Pour que l'amour de Dieu soit effectivement universel, il faut qu'il manifeste sa priorité aux pauvres, aux petits, à ceux qui sont en situation d'inégalité par rapport aux autres.

Au Jugement dernier (Mt 25:31-46), la différence ne portera pas sur la foi ou les croyances, mais entre ceux qui, croyants ou non-croyants, pratiquent la bonté envers les pauvres et ceux qui ne la pratiquent pas.[11] Le critère porte sur *la relation* à l'autre, à tout homme, à toute personne *démunie,* en laquelle se joue indistinctement la relation au Christ. L'ignorance du pauvre conduit irrémédiablement à la mort.[12] Chacun est donc invité à *se convertir maintenant* dans sa relation au pauvre ; c'est une mise en demeure. Ainsi, Dieu peut nourrir l'irrésistible espérance qui nous pousse à transformer la mondialisation qui fait de nombreuses victimes parmi les pauvres en une mondialisation solidaire, à visage humain, débouchant sur un bien-être partagé entre tous les hommes.

Notes

[1] Jürgen Moltmann. *Le Dieu crucifié,* Paris, Cerf et Maison Mame. 1974, p. 319.

[2] Joseph Ndi-Okalla et Mgr Antoine N'talou. *D'un synode africain à l'autre. Réception synodale et perspectives d'avenir : Église et société en Afrique,* Paris, Karthala, 2007 ; cf. *Lineamenta* de la IIe Assemblée spéciale pour l'Afrique et le questionnaire : « L'Église en Afrique au service de la réconciliation, de la justice et de la paix. Vous êtes le sel de la terre... Vous êtes la lumière du monde (Mt 5,13-14) », p. 165s : cf. *Hors-Série* du n. 160 de *Mission de l'Église* (juillet 2008).

[3] Alain Rey, *Le Robert. Dictionnaire historique de la langue française,* Paris, Dictionnaires Le Robert, 1992, p. 1455.

[4] Alain Rey. *op. cit.,* p. 1456.

[5] De nouvelles formes d'esclavage peuvent vite apparaître, quelles que soient *les lois* en vigueur ; cf. Louis Sala-Molins, *Le Code Noir,* Paris, PUF, 1987, p. 114.

[6] Apprendre à faire le bien, rechercher le droit, secourir l'opprimé, être juste pour l'orphelin, plaider pour la veuve, lutter contre l'oppression des petits et des pauvres, contre les injustices sociales et individuelles ... (Is 1,12-17 ; cf. Amos, Osée, Michée, Jérémie) : Alain Durand. *La foi chrétienne aux prises avec la mondialisation,* Paris, Cerf, 2003, pp. 30 et 46.

[7] Doris Bonnet, *Le proverbe chez les Mossi du Yatenga (Haute-Volta),* Paris, Société d'études linguistiques de France (SELAF), 1982, p. 80.

[8] Les Mossi disent : *« à chacun son habit de froid »* ; cf. Doris Bonnet, *op. cit.,* p. 116.

[9] Ceux qui ont *le pouvoir* n'ont peut-être que *la parole* pour se faire entendre, même quand ce qui leur revient, au fond de la sacoche, semble se réduire au « rien », car *Ce qui reste dans la sacoche est supérieur à ce qu'on eu a retranché :* cf. Doris Bonnet, *op. cit.,* p. 131. Ils ont la parole et, souvent à leur disposition, une partie du « bien commun », pour actualiser voire « réviser » des traditions et des orientations sociales, pour appauvrir ou enrichir qui ?

[10] Cf. Alain Durand, *La cause des pauvres. Société, éthique et foi,* Paris, Cerf, 1992, p. 76.

[11] « Pratiquer la bonté » ou « faire la justice » (première exigence de la bonté) renvoie au comportement du Samaritain (Lc 10,37).

[12] Quelles relations entretenons-nous avec les « pauvres », ceux qui ont moins que nous et quelles sont nos motivations ? Cf. Simon Legasse, " *Et qui est mon prochain ? Étude sur l'Agapè dans le Nouveau Testament,* Paris, Cerf, 1989, pp. 113-116 ; La parole des pauvres, *Cahiers de l'Atelier,* n. 518, juillet-septembre 2008.

Bomki Mathew

Quand l'amour l'emporte …

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Introduction

Autour de nous il y a de plus en plus de victimes du SIDA. Nul n'est indifférent devant les ravages de cette maladie dans le monde et en Afrique en particulier. Le SIDA est venu s'inscrire, lui aussi dans la cohorte des misères africaines : un continent de tristes records qui compte plus d'affamés, d'assoiffés, et d'analphabètes qu'aucun autre sur la planète.

Le SIDA, n'est-ce pas une croix de plus pour l'Afrique ? Il l'appauvrit davantage comme, il appauvrit le malade qui essaie de se faire soigner en le dépouillant de ses biens, meubles ou immeubles. Le malade se culpabilise, il est hanté par la peur des moqueries, il souffre de la stigmatisation, il a peur de la mort imminente, implacable et impitoyable. Il se dégrade physiquement et psychologiquement. Il perd son autonomie économique et politique. Il devient un objet de curiosité, d'attention, parfois de mépris. Au fait, il est moribond. Et alors la vie devient un lieu d'angoisse, de désespoir et d'amertume. L'espérance n'est plus qu'un vain mot, dépouillé de tout sens et vide. Dieu semble loin .

Dès lors, que faire ? Comment sortir de cette nuit de désespoir ? Une question difficile mais importante. Comment pourrions-nous aider ces victimes de SIDA, à la porte desquelles la mort frappe impitoyablement ? Comment les aider à assumer leur condition et à espérer à un avenir meilleur ?

L'importance de l'accompagnement psycho-spirituel

Parfois, le malade a seulement besoin de laisser parler son cœur, de dialoguer avec un homme de confiance. Il se sent alors soulagé. L'accompagnateur ainsi doit être patient, simple, un homme d'écoute et d'attention. La plupart des malades du SIDA sont souvent angoissés, tourmentés et hantés par la peur de la mort. A titre d'exemple, lorsqu'un malade se rend compte que sa maladie est due à la négligence de son partenaire, il s'exclame : « je pensais donner la vie et j'ai enfanté la mort ». N'est-ce pas un moment de cauchemar journalier et permanent ? L'angoisse devient sa nourriture de jour en jour. Et l'avenir s'assombrit. Un fardeau certes très lourd à porter seul. Le désespoir s'installe de manière têtue et partant la mort. Est-ce possible de porter seul un tel fardeau ou malheur ?

Nous voyons clairement l'importance capitale des visites à domicile. Le vrai accompagnateur est celui qui sait passer du temps avec un malade, tour à tour chez lui, à l'hôpital et à la maison de repos s'il en fréquente une. Inévitablement, il se lie au malade par un **contrat moral** de visites régulières plus au moins rapprochées selon la gravité du cas, jusqu'à la présence si possible à sa mort.

Comment échanger avec un malade dans cet état ?

Il est très souhaitable voire nécessaire que l'accompagnateur échange avec le malade selon ses centres d'intérêt. C'est peut-être la situation précaire de sa famille, ses problèmes de logement, l'achat des médicaments, etc. Il doit lui être toutes oreilles. De préférence, laisser le malade

parler plus. Il peut même lui proposer quelques promenades. Pourquoi pas, quelques petites courses, aller voir des films, etc. Pour un croyant, la prière est l'idéal. Ainsi, susciter les relations de sympathie et d'empathie avec les malades est aussi indispensable à notre avis que des médicaments. Nous parlons d'expérience. Il faut tout faire (autant que cela est possible), pour que le malade dépasse ou surmonte son angoisse et vive jusqu'au bout dans la dignité d'un homme ou d'une femme créé à l'image de Dieu.

Dieu nous aime, même quand nous sommes malades. Dieu nous aime même quand nous sommes angoissés. Dieu nous aime, même quand nous sommes mourants. D'ailleurs, selon Heidegger l'angoisse (Sorge) est une manière authentique de vivre notre finitude ou contingence. Telle est la sève de l'espérance qui doit jaillir des profondeurs de l'accompagnateur. N'est-ce pas donner une force morale au malade ? N'est-ce pas aider le malade à retrouver sa dignité humaine ? Un tel comportement témoigne du véritable amour qu'a enseigné le Christ. L'angoisse devient inéluctablement impuissante devant un si grand amour. La mort n'est plus une fatalité, mais une porte béante sur l'espérance. Ainsi donc accompagner le malade, c'est suivre la route de la personne qui vit avec le virus, être en mouvement avec elle, c'est donner au malade la preuve qu'il compte, qu'il est quelqu'un pour quelqu'un, reconnu, sollicité, considéré, qu'il a encore un avenir.[2]

Ainsi, le SIDA au lieu d'être un son de glas, devient une force, une force intérieure capable de redonner vie, capable de faire jaillir l'espérance quand le désespoir envahit.

Changement radical de notre comportement envers les PVVH[2]

D'habitude nos jugements au sujet des PVVH sont très sévères. Nous oublions parfois que Dieu seul est notre juge. Nous oublions notre cécité, nous oublions que nous sommes pécheurs. Pire, les membres des familles sont encore plus durs envers leurs frères souffrant de la maladie du SIDA. Heureusement, ce n'est pas le cas partout. Mais souvent, les malades du SIDA sont rejetés par les leurs. Nous pensons que le problème est ailleurs. Le SIDA n'est pas forcément la cause de ce rejet inopiné et douloureux. La cause profonde, ce sont des « nœuds de vipères » familiaux bien antérieurs au virus. L'avènement de la maladie n'est que la goutte d'eau qui fait déborder le vase.

Or, un changement de comportement envers nos malades du SIDA, un environnement affectif plutôt que d'accusation, un soutien moral, même sans guérir physiquement la maladie, aident incontestablement le malade à vivre mieux et à prolonger sa vie.

Les retrouvailles familiales surtout pendant les grandes fêtes peuvent aussi aider le malade à extirper de sa tête le sentiment de honte et de culpabilité. Nous savons tous les ravages que causent la réprobation et la stigmatisation. Or, Templier nous dit que « confronté à l'insupportable de son intime dévoilé sur la place publique, il voit dans le regard et les attentions de ceux à qui l'aiment qu'il est toujours aimé ».[3] N'est-ce pas le rôle d'un accompagnateur ou d'un membre de famille ? Vouloir être proche de ceux qui nous sont chers, même s'ils sont malades, témoigne de la puissance de l'amour gratuit :
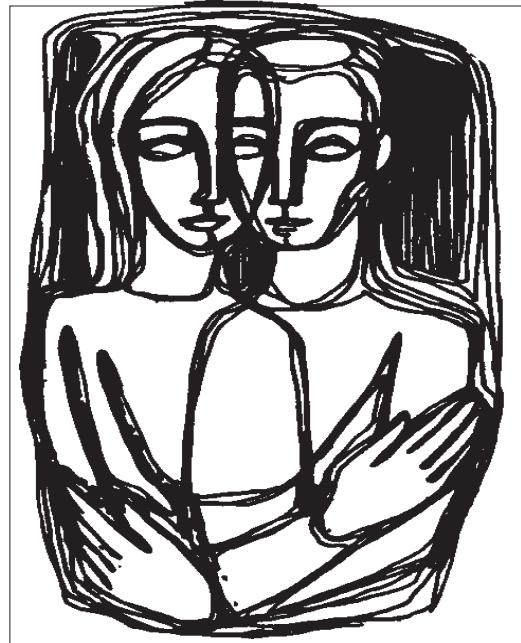
Ce qui est vital pour répondre aux besoins de ceux dont nous nous occupons, c'est le sacrement du toucher. Toucher, c'est en vérité, franchir le fossé qui nous sépare de l'autre, geste tellement essentiel pour ceux qui ne se sentent pas acceptés, qui se voient rejetés, qui ne sont même plus des vivants aux yeux des gens (…). Toucher, c'est libérer les énergies salvatrices qui sont en nous.[4]

Jésus a osé publiquement se laisser toucher par un lépreux, se laisser caresser les pieds par une prostituée, se laisser inviter à table par un publicain. N'est-ce pas un comportement atypique pour la société juive ? Mais le Christ se permet de faire comprendre à ses proches et à nous que l'accueil et l'approche de l'autre doivent avoir le dessus sur la tentation d'un index accusatif. Car Dieu n'est qu'amour et l'amour ne connaît pas la haine. L'amour embrasse tout le monde, malade ou pas.

Conclusion

A la fin près petite réflexion, nous pouvons nous poser cette question cachée au plus profond de nous-mêmes, si banale soit-elle : « Que diront les séropositifs et les malades de **ceux** qui se rendent proches d'eux pour les aider pendant leur épreuve accablante ? » Sûrement, ils nous donneront comme réponse la parole de l'Evangile de Mt 25,31-46 : *« Quand j'avais soif, vous m'avez donné à boire. Quand j'étais étranger, rejeté à cause de cette maladie lugubre que certains qualifient de maladie du siècle, vous m'avez accueilli ; dans la prison du rejet et du mépris vous m'avez visité. Vous m'avez donné l'espérance, quand j'étais au fond du gouffre du désespoir. L'angoisse et la culpabilité étaient ma nourriture quotidienne, mais vous m'avez redonné le réconfort, vous m'avez fait goûter à l'amour, à l'affection qui s'étaient obscurcis pour moi ».*

Nous voudrions terminer en disant que celui qui croit et celui qui ne croit pas, celui qui se retrouve à l'égard du Christ et de Dieu sans pensée, sans mots, sans foi, mais qui aime son frère qu'il voit (même malade), découvrira avec étonnement que, sans le savoir ni le vouloir, il sera lui aussi fait membre du Royaume d'amour préparé depuis les origines du monde. Car Dieu, dit François Varillion, n'est qu'amour. Quand l'amour l'emporte, la peur du SIDA, la peur d'être contaminé par un PVVH, la peur de visiter un PVVH, devient impuissante, et alors la vie vainque la mort. La vie triomphe !

Notes

[1] Djénane Kareh Tager, Joseph Templier, Chantal Joly, *Des chrétiens dans la nuit du Sida*, Paris, Desclée de Brouwer, 1994, p. 69.

[2] PVVH veut dire personnes vivant avec le VIH/SIDA.

[3] *ibid.* p. 75

[4] « Lumière et Vie », N° 197, Juillet 1990.

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P.M. Fernando, M.A.

The Earth is God's Temple: Ecological Spirituality

Eco-spiritualities have emerged primarily from Eco-New Age, Eco-Feminist, and Eco-Green Peace movements and they tend towards pantheism. There is a search in the Catholic Church for an authentic eco-spirituality different from confessional spiritualities and attempts have been made to accommodate pantheistic themes like "communion of all beings" and the "immanence of God". The Benedictine virtue of frugality is interpreted as "communion with the community of creatures"[1] and the Franciscan poverty, humility, and simplicity, as "communion with God's creatures".[2] Some have also attempted to incorporate justice issues and create a deeper sense of eco-responsibility.[3] Pope John Paul II too made appeals towards eco-responsibility.[4]

However, the spirituality of work that must be the main issue appears to eclipse eco-spiritualities. In this paper, using a humanist approach, I present a Christian eco-spirituality that gives a central place to "work" and its spiritual correlates of "love of God and humanity", "stewardship", and "impermanence", taking into consideration at the same time the contraposition of pantheist eco-spiritualities from anthropological and sociological perspectives.

Responding to the Ecological Crisis

Ecology has become the most popular concern of today and it is now fashionable to prefix "eco" to various fields of interest, i.e. eco-tourism, eco-farming, eco-feminism, etc. Such ecological concerns and ecological spiritualities emerged in response to the ecological crisis and it would be worthwhile to see what type of response would be most appropriate for solving the problem.

Approaches to the Ecological Crisis

The various responses to the crisis can be classified into two types: the ideological and the practical. The ideological approach represented by the Eco-Spiritualities of Eco-Green Peace, Eco-Feminist, and Eco-New Age movements consists of meaning systems that aim at changing values, attitudes, and beliefs and they are in conflict with the existing meaning systems and political orders. In the political struggle the ecological crisis becomes a source of justification for the meaning system.

The practical approach sees the crisis as a problem needing immediate and direct solutions. The scientists, industrialists, and policy-makers have been working out solutions and as a result, eco-friendly industries, markets, energy, city planning, architecture, waste management, eco-communities and eco-lifestyles have emerged. The Kyoto Protocol has been a landmark event in addressing the eco-crisis. European countries have already achieved satisfactory targets in the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. With the present level of concern, it is possible to reduce anthropogenic causes of the ecological crisis within a reasonable time. The Churches too, especially the American Church and its Religious Congregations have embarked upon eco-activism with their programmes of eco-justice, eco-villages, and the like. So, wouldn't it be enough to cooperate with the policy measures, adopt an eco-lifestyle, and advocate for more action without searching for an Eco-Spirituality?

The Influence of Pantheistic Eco-Spiritualities

Some pantheistic ideas from the East have been applied in the West by those who have been disillusioned with the structures of their religious institutions and the inability of their religious spiritualities to address the cultural decadence and related problems. Taken at the

highly abstract levels devoid of any empirical reference to the social and human realities that they have given rise to, the pantheistic ideas are being transformed into a new set of myths like "Community of all Beings", "Cosmic-consciousness", "Gaia" or the "Matrix of life", and "Integrity of Creations". It has been said that many American women religious now consider that the revelation in Jesus Christ has no unique and unrepeatable character and belongs to a fleeting period in history.[5] Even some theologians have become promoters of Theosophy.

Due to the prevailing global funding and intellectual structures, Asian sages have been borrowing from the West the recycled pantheistic myths while at the same time inviting the pantheistic sages from the West to fertilize the minds of the Asians. This is done in a context where the Asians themselves are disillusioned with their indigenous religious ideas and institutional structures that promote exploitative and oppressive feudal structures and are beginning to see the liberating character of the Christian faith, if not of the institutional structures. The dehumanizing caste system, heritage of the corrupt feudal political order, which is abusive of power and public resources, religio-nationalism, class, ethnic, and religious discriminations, are major evils from which many Asians have to be liberated.[6] But for the impact of Christianity, especially the Christian ideas of universal brotherhood, care for the poor and the needy, and respect for the individual, the people would not have had a hope of liberating themselves from the enslaving feudal structure. However, the attempts of the concerned locals to evangelize the local cultures and liberate people from slavery have been defeated by the inflow of pantheistic myths. This situation alone creates a need for a genuine Christian eco-spirituality.

In our response to the need, we attempt to discover a Christian eco-spirituality by **(a)** a clarification of Christian spirituality, **(b)** an examination of eco-spirituality, and **(c)** an exploration of the cosmic and societal ecology of Christian spirituality.

a). A Clarification of Christian Spirituality

Definition of Spirituality In order to clarify Christian spirituality, let us first define spirituality. It is defined by some as a relationship with an ultimate concern that is meaningful, and by others, as the feelings, thoughts, experiences, and behaviour that arise from a search for the sacred.[7] Still another may define it as becoming conscious of, and intentional about, a deepening relationship with God.[8] Yet others may define it as attitudes, beliefs, practices that animate people's lives and help them to reach out towards super-sensible realities.[9] If we are to derive a common definition from these diverse definitions, taking into consideration anthropological data, we may define it as feelings, attitudes, values and practices related to supernatural beings, to God, or to a horizon of meaning.

Types of spirituality From the above definitions, we may identify at least two types of spirituality: one characterized by a personal relationship to God and the other, characterized by a horizon of meaning. We may extend the first to include all relationships to supernatural beings consisting of feelings, attitudes, values and practices. The latter consists of rationalized and impersonal beliefs about ultimate realities. For example, pantheism, which believes everything to be deity, is a horizon of meaning.[10] Thus, we have two ideal types of spirituality. I would call the former "folk spirituality" because it is the most common among ordinary folk and the latter "intentional spirituality" because it is a rational horizon of meaning.

Christian Spirituality Christian spirituality is a folk spirituality because it emerges from the personal relationship to the historical person called Jesus and extends to God the Father and the Holy Spirit through the person of Jesus Christ. It is a very personal relationship to a person and consists of an emotional bonding with that person. It is not a relationship with some impersonal reality or a union with an impersonal force or a rationalized behaviour according to some frame of reference.

However, under the influence of other spiritualities, diverse spiritualities, even the intentional types emerged in Christianity and this situation prompted Orthodox theologian Alexander Schmemann[11] to substitute "spirituality" with "Christian Life". The diversity was confusing and most of them consisted of mysterious and self-contained activity that used

"spiritual techniques" to achieve self-empowerment, self-emancipation, and self-liberation. Schmemann insisted that Christian life was already a spiritual way of life God had given, renewed, transformed, and transfigured by the Holy Spirit, as in the case of Paul's new life.[12] If so, the question is, isn't it also an ecological spirituality?[13] Before, we answer, let us examine eco-spirituality.

b). Eco-spirituality

If spirituality is a relationship to God or to a horizon of meaning, then, eco-spirituality is a relationship to the cosmos as a horizon of meaning, or to the deity or the sacred. The tendency, however, is to make the cosmos the supreme divinity or the ultimate horizon of meaning. Let me illustrate this with a case.

A four-day eco-spirituality conference was held at the College of Mount St Joseph of the Sisters of Charity in Cincinnati on the theme of "Earth Spirit Rising: A Midwest Conference on Healing and Celebrating Planet Earth".[14] Some 400 people — including a bishop, religious men and women representing 31 religious Orders, two Catholic colleges and two Catholic retreat centres — attended the conference. The conference echoed the popular themes of ecological spirituality from the perspectives of the Eco-Feminist and the Eco-New Age movements. Let us examine them.

The keynote speaker wanted to save the Earth from the "patriarchal-minded, élite male humans" living in "ecological sin" and considered that Nature would be better off without the parasitic human beings utterly dependent on the rest of the food chain. She, even believed it was necessary "to seek the most compassionate way of weeding out people".[15] She blamed the Judeo-Christian traditions for being the sources of domination and subjugation and expected the Eastern religions of Taoism, Hinduism, and Buddhism that promoted "compassion for all sentient beings" to bring the "healing culture". In her "global theology", the cosmos was the real incarnation. She, as an eco-feminist, would reject the notion of a personal God above Creation and outside of time and promote a naturalistic pantheism of an impersonal divine force that is "in everything and is everything" or Gaia,[16] the "Matrix of life" in whom all life is subsumed.[17] A speaker from the New Age depth ecology movement claiming to be an eco-psychologist and a traveller in Asia, told the audience that the sorcerers, shamans, and witch doctors of indigenous communities had been able to maintain that primal communication with the Earth and all its creatures because they understood that everything on Earth was animate, including the non-living. He believed that the greatest problem in history was our evolution from primates into creatures who could speak and communicate with one another and that our evolution destroyed the equilibrium of the animal-human relationship.

Two significant beliefs of the New Age Ecology movement are that the cosmos is guided by a universal consciousness of its own, of which the humans are merely one part and that "God is in all and all is in God".[18]

Another deep-ecologist, promoting his Council of All Beings, who intended to reconcile the human community with the Earth, said, "Earth is our Text" and raised Mother Earth to a divinity when he asked his audience to project their energy fields down into the earth. He told the audience: "Will your energy to proceed down even further into the molten mass of inner earth, down into the solid iron crystal that forms the densely-packed core. Honour it as the heart of Mother Earth!".[19]
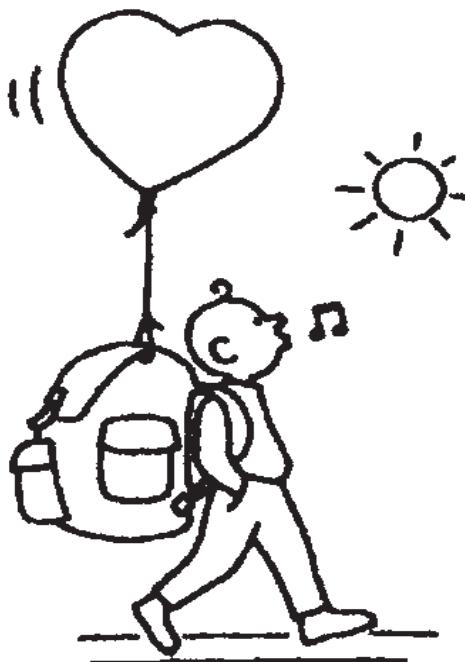
The ideas expressed by the Speakers had as their starting point a negative attitude toward humanity or a segment of humanity — males or the Christians and echoed, among others, at least three basic viewpoints common to pantheistic eco-spiritualities. One is the idea of the "Asian Harmony", the second, the idea of "Domination" as a Judeo-Christian Concept, and the third, the idea of Nature as an organic whole or a mystical force. Even though attempts have been made to ground them on a solid empirical basis, they have no empirical grounds at all and we need to expose the false assumptions regarding these ideas, if we are to clarify the problem of eco-spirituality.

The Idea of "Asian Harmony" It is one thing to say that Buddhism, Taoism, and Hinduism promote living in harmony with all beings and there is no argument about it, because they are ideologies. It is quite another to say that the basic reality of the masses, labelled under any of them, is characterized by harmony with all beings.[20] Anthropologically speaking, the basic reality is quite the opposite of ideologies of harmony and peace. The lives of the people are caught up in the struggle for survival and competition.

Fear of Survival: The traditional people were too dependent on Nature. One could imagine what would happen if the rains did not come on time. The people would die of famine. In society too, the ordinary folk depended too much on the mercy, favour, and benevolence of the higher powers. The refusal to submit to the will of the higher powers and to carry out their orders and lack of respect for them could incur sever punishments, even death.

Every geographical territory as well as every significant geographical feature like a rock was considered a domain of some higher power. One performed a ritual at the entrance in order not to incur the wrath of the territorial power.[21] If one did not cut some tree, it was out of fear of being harmed by the spirit inhabiting it. If one did not destroy a molehill inside the house, it was out of fear of being harmed by the dwarfs, goblins, and other spirits living in it.

Out of fear, they did everything to keep the powers – natural or human – at peace. They even sacrificed humans. In spite of being Buddhists many people still kill a rooster offered to some demon and take it around a new house being built, and sprinkle its blood on the doorposts. Sacrificing a chicken to some deity or a demon was an essential part of religious and cultural festivals in some Asian societies. If they worshiped Nature, it was not because of their being in communion with Nature. However, if they thought it was possible to placate the powers, they would readily do so. They would bargain with a demon demanding a human sacrifice, offering a chicken in place of a human.

Institutionalized violence: What has been called "black magic" by Christians is still endemic to some societies known to promote harmony, loving-kindness, and non-violence. The everyday life of the people is full of stories of charms, spells, zombies, and the evil eye associated with neighbours and relatives. If one cannot achieve what the other has achieved, one tries to destroy the other with the help of magic. If one wants the other to satisfy one's lust or wants to acquire what the other has, one resorts to magic, which is a covert means of violence against the other.

To avenge such harm, people use the same covert means of violence. The gods and the demons of vengeance are the most sought after. People who identify themselves as Buddhists still visit the temples of demons of vengeance more than a Buddhist temple. In order to attract people, small shrines to demons of vengeance and deities of fertility have been placed in Buddhist temples with a shaman to minister. In such cultural contexts, covert violence against the other is institutionalized in magical rituals where vengeance, jealousy, envy, hatred, and lust are acted out.

Confucian Harmony: The so-called "Asian harmony" is related to Confucianism, which is a social philosophy. Confucius introduced harmony as a principle of social organization to create a peaceful society regulated by the value of respect for those above in a hierarchically ordered society. It has continued up to today as the principle of social organization in some societies. It has nothing to do with Nature and the Chinese enjoy a variety of meat, perhaps more than any other nationality. Of course, Hindu monism and Taoist Ying-Yang are about being one with everything so that one may merge with the eternal energy. Yet, few are concerned with them, while for the ordinary people they are useful as long as they present some means of

procuring a material or social benefit.

The Question of Dominating Nature It is correct to say that the Judeo-Christian traditions have introduced the idea of dominating Nature and it is incorrect to say that the idea of dominating the earth is absent in cultures which have not been influenced by Judeo-Christian traditions. It is also incorrect to say that the Judeo-Christian traditions are responsible for the domination and exploitation of the earth that has led to the ecological crisis while the people living under the influence of both the great and minor traditions of Asia are living in communion with Nature.

Domination as Responsible Labour: According to the Bible, the earth God created was without the human being to till it. God formed the human being and placed him in the Garden to till the earth. This implied that the earth was something to be worked upon by applying human labour, in order to be made productive. It was not just to use the earth but also to bring out the best fruitfulness of the earth towards the abundance of life. The human being was given the responsibility to re-create the earth and protect it from forces of destruction like Noah. The virtue of responsible labour dominated the life of Christians who placed a high value on labour. The Christian ascetics lived by tilling the land instead of depending on the people to provide their food.

Magic in Place of Responsible Labour: In cultures which have not been influenced by the Judeo-Christian traditions, "labour" had been degraded and shied away from as unworthy of a dignified life. It was the lot of the lowliest of human beings. In place of labour, "magic" had been raised to a sacred status with sorcerers and shamans given a higher status among the élite who were also dependent on their services. Even the monks of the great traditions found it a worthy profession to be sorcerers and shamans. It is hard to believe and yet true that even the religious monks advertise their ability to get you any man or woman of your lustful desire by the power of charms. In one weekly paper, such advertisements filled a whole page.

Magic emerged and evolved from the dire need to control the uncontrollable forces of Nature. If the rain did not come in time, survival was at stake and the people had to find ways to produce rain. In a ritual performance, they imitated the way the rain occurred and tried to produce rain. To illustrate the point, in one such ritual, one would throw a pealed coconut in the air and another would hit it with another coconut producing the sound of cracking (thunder) and the spilling of water (rain) at the same time. The ritual was expected to produce rain.

Today, even with the availability of scientific instruments, magic continues to dominate some societies with the élite subscribing to it. Magic is used to procure marriage partners or sexual partners, to destroy potential rival contenders for power, to create misery for others in order to acquire their property, to avenge, and to destroy the talented and enterprising people climbing up the social ladder. It is used to destroy crops like rice and fruit, livestock – cattle, pigs, and chickens – the water resources, and the fertility of the land. In some societies labelled as belonging to a great Asian tradition, the greater majority resort to charms, and in some communities it is hard to find an older person who has not used some form of charm.

Magical Domination and Exploitation: In societies where labour is devalued and magic continues to dominate, the satisfying of greed and lust and the acquiring of wealth by any means like defrauding, bribing, stealing, misappropriating, fraudulently alienating, threatening, and the use of force or influence, are commonplace. Instead of using hard labour efficiently and providing trustworthy and efficient services, people tend to cheat and exploit their clients. Industrialists, businessmen, and politicians rely on magical powers, even on the powers of demons and devils, to get what they want. If they subscribe to a great religion, it is because its magical powers promise to satisfy their desires. It is for this reason that religious syncretism is endemic to Asian cultural contexts and that moral contradictions do not pose any cognitive problem.

Nature as an organic whole or a mystical force: Those who mystify natural phenomena into divinity view Nature as an organic whole with everything within it being interconnected and having a consciousness of its own, or as an impersonal deity that keeps life in balanced harmony as it continues to evolve itself. Yet, they find it difficult to reconcile cosmic

consciousness with moral consciousness. They try to base their arguments on a scientific conception of a cosmos governed by physical laws.

Organic Cosmos vs. the Stabilized War: Nature does not protect life but life must protect itself against Nature.[22] If the immune system of the human body fails in its battle against viruses, bacteria, and parasites, the person dies. Every life form has a defence system to fight against Nature. Turtles lay eggs by the hundred because only a few will survive the onslaught of Nature. There is so much violence in Nature. Instead of gazing at a tree from afar and exclaiming how beautiful it is, if you take a closer look at it, you will discover that much violence is being done to it by germs, parasites, and insects and how much violence is going on with carnivorous insects preying on others on the tree as the powerful dominate the weaker. The parasitic bacteria, plants, insects, and animals exploit others to death. There is so much deception in Nature with various creatures wearing masks, which we see as beautiful, to deceive others in order to prey upon them or to hide from predators. War is the way of life in Nature. Even if some species survive the war, destructive forces like meteors, comets, *tsunamis*, volcanic irruptions, floods, fire, and drought may exterminate it. What we see as harmony in Nature is actually a stabilized war of survival.

Cosmic Consciousness[23] vs. Moral Consciousness: Nature has no moral consciousness. The tectonic plates collided and produced a *tsunami* which indiscriminately destroyed more than two-hundred thousand lives within minutes. A meteor or a comet may strike the earth one day and wipe out most of the life forms as it did some millennia ago with the dinosaurs. An outbreak of some virus like Avian Flu could wipe out nations and animal species indiscriminately. Moral consciousness requires the distribution of negative rewards to be fair, just, and proportionate.

It is the human being that wants to bring into the wild natural world love, compassion, kindness for creatures, care for vegetation, beauty, harmony, meaning, and direction. Without the human being, the natural world would be nothing but a meaningless food chain that produces an over population of those at the top of the chain, until food supplies are exhausted and disease and disaster set in to exterminate it. Without the human being, the wild world has no purpose, beauty, sense, or healing. The human touch heals Nature, sick and dying, and turns the wilderness into a garden of beauty. One day, the humans might save the world by averting a meteor or comet.

It does not mean that humans cannot be destructive and in fact the human, with a natural inclination for greed, lust, jealousy, envy, pride, and hatred, is a destructive force. Yet, human destiny is to overcome Nature from within so it can grow into the full humanity of love, harmony, peace, justice, care, responsibility, honesty, and the unleashing of creative power to humanize Nature. Thus, it is by becoming fully human that the human being heals and humanizes Nature.

Cosmic Physical Laws vs. Scientific Probability: The fact is that science has never been able to go beyond probability and scientific theorizing is now limited to provisional mini theories useable "until further notice". Today we know that natural phenomena are the result of crisscrossing forces. Even with advanced technology, not all the consequences of natural events can be calculated since any event may have indeterminate, incalculable, chaotic consequences.

c). The Christian Eco-Spirituality

In contrast to non-Judeo-Christian traditions and neo-pantheism, Christianity liberates the human from the fear of Nature and supernatural forces and builds confidence in the human being as a history maker. Neither does it mystify Nature into a divinity with whom the human being can be symbiotically united to escape time and misery, but acknowledges Nature's fallen state and calls the human being to make the best of his transitory condition by transforming Nature into an expression of goodness embedded in the human heart or a temple to God. Let us now examine it in detail.

Elements of Christian Eco-Spirituality In His grand design, God, created the earth, formed man and placed him in the Garden to till and dominate it. He continued to intervene in history, and sent His Son to assume human form and inaugurate the Reign of God (the Rule of Goodness), which is to be consummated at the end of history. The incarnate Son, Jesus, drew people to himself

and to the Father and gave the Holy Spirit. His disciples did not preach the Kingdom of God but Jesus,[24] whom they loved, celebrated in the Eucharist, and gave their lives because their hearts found in Jesus the ultimate love object. It was the first element in their spiritual journey and mission.

The work of Jesus consisted of two things: inviting people to the Kingdom of God that had arrived in Him and the caring for people. His whole project could be summarized as Loving God and Loving people. Jesus entrusted his project to his Disciples and the work of the apostolic community consisted of preaching Jesus as the ultimate object of love and caring for the community. Thus, work was the second element. Two other significant elements of Christian spirituality were the sense of stewardship[25] over people and resources and the sense of being on a journey or the impermanence of earthly life. Each of these has an ecological dimension and taken together, they constitute the Christian eco-spirituality as we shall see below.

Ecology of the Love of God

God as the Ultimate Object of Love: Love is an attraction to and a bonding with another person[26] and in spite of the cultural phenomenon of seeing God as the ultimate power, there are cultural instances where God is also the ultimate object of love of the human heart.

Hindus would say, "*Satyam, Sivam, Sundaram*" or "Truth, Goodness, Beauty are one" and accordingly, we could say, "God is the most beautiful". Mircea Eliade too, one of the great anthropologists of the twentieth century observed hierophany to be a universal phenomenon of an enthralling experience of the *tremendum* (power), the *mysterium* (mystery*)*, and the *fascinans* (attraction or the beauty) of the WHOLLY OTHER or God. It was such a peak experience that the place where the experience occurred would become the *Axis Mundi* or the Centre of the World, not only of the one who experienced it but also of the whole community. Similarly, the existentialist psychologist, Abraham Maslow made his famous observation of peak experiences in which the individual experienced the Wholly Other in a most enthralling, enveloping, and self-fulfilling manner that would transform the individual into a new person characterized by an encompassing love, compassion, care for the other, harmony, peace, and authenticity.

These anthropological and psychological facts reveal that God is the ultimate object of love of the human heart. The reason for God becoming the ultimate object of love of the human heart is that God is ultimate goodness and truth and that the human heart's ultimate desire is for goodness and truth. The human heart is deeply touched by genuine love, compassion, forgiveness, and other virtues and falls in love with anyone displaying goodness. A person can forget and forgive a whole mountain of hurts because of one act of genuine love. More than physical beauty, an honest, sincere, humble and forgiving heart is attractive and satisfying to the human being.

The experience of the divine or the ultimate goodness transforms the individual into a self-fulfilled human being characterized by noble human virtues and becomes the *Axis Mundi* or the centre of his or her community, transforming the community as well as the place into sacredness. Thus, the place where God and people meet becomes holy ground, the Garden of Eden and Nature acquires true beauty and goodness through the dynamics of divine-human love.

Thus, the experience of God as the ultimate object of love of the human heart and the subsequent dynamics of the divine-human love relations take place within the cosmic reality and therefore, the divine-human love relationship is cosmically ecological.

Jesus as the Incarnated Object of Love: In non-Judeo-Christian contexts, the human heart searches for its love object and ordinary folk experience God in and through the medium of Nature,while those in the greater traditions go beyond Nature, which they consider an illusion, to mystical realms that exist in their minds. In the case of Christianity, God who made the whole Creation for humans and gave it to them as a garden to nurture and as a place to walk with God, spoke to the humans through his messengers, and visited humanity in bodily form in the person of his Son.

The very foundation of Christianity is the personal attraction to and bonding with the person of the incarnated Son of God and, in secular terms, Christianity in its early stage was a personality cult, not a search for a mystical union with an intangible reality. The followers were irresistibly attracted to the person of Jesus, lived for Jesus, and died for Jesus. This was

natural because Christ manifested the ultimate goodness as a tangible reality. Even today, when you read the Gospels, you become enthralled by the goodness of the person of Jesus and you fall in love with him in a very decisive manner. It is not an impersonal and intellectual doctrine that attracts you but the radiance of the virtue of ultimate goodness in the person of Jesus.

The attraction to Jesus naturally leads to God and to humanity. One who sees him as the embodiment of ultimate goodness sees the Father and one who loves him, loves the Father. God is no longer a mighty power but a loving father and humanity is one brotherhood. The person who loves Jesus is enriched by the goodness of Jesus and is transformed into the fullness of humanity that is the realization of the goodness of humanity. The goodness of the transformed person flows out to others, especially to the weak, the sick, the alienated, the oppressed, the exploited, and the victimized, in the form of love, compassion, care, forgiveness, peace, and healing. The love of Jesus transforms the individual into an instrument of divine rule against the forces of domination, exploitation, injustice, oppression, and discrimination. Thus, the love of Jesus is oriented towards the realization of a utopian society where justice, peace, harmony, truth, and the other virtues of sharing, caring, and self-giving would rule. Therefore, the love of Jesus is a societal ecology.

Nature, Community, and Body as Symbols of Love: Outside Christian traditions, the God-human encounter often takes place through Nature, i.e. hierophanies, while in Christianity, the human body, through incarnation, martyrdom, celibacy, matrimony, work and the community, becomes an important media of divine-human love. The body of Jesus in which humans encountered God became the *Axis Mundi*, symbolically present in the Eucharist. The martyred or celibate body that is a symbol of love of God becomes sacred. The community of people bonded with Jesus and with each other because of love becomes sacred (Mt18:20). Thus, the medium of divine encounter becomes sacred and yet, no symbol is identical to the deity or the human person.

Ecology of Work[27]

Work can be defined as an application of labour to modify some resources towards the production of something new, a provision for a need or some effect and yet, not all applications of labour are productive. There are different types of work: work to kill time, compulsory work, compulsive work, habitual work, work for self-promotion, consumptive work, destructive work, and creative and productive work.[28]

A Secular view of Work: In our common human experience, productive work has two functions: the maintenance and enrichment of life and the expression of creative powers towards the realization of goodness in self and in society. By contrast, non-productive and destructive work alienates individuals from themselves, others, and God as well as Nature. This view is supported by the Marxian understanding of, and research into, alienation.

In non-Judeo-Christian cultures, work is often stratified and manual labour is left to the lower strata. Those in the upper strata dominate and exploit those below. Manual labour has been treated as fate and Karma or the consequence of past sins. In the Biblical tradition too, work appears to be the disgrace which befell man after the fall. Nevertheless, the high esteem given to work in Judeo-Christian circles is very prominent.

Work as the Essential Mode of Existence: In the Bible, God the Creator was the first worker who shaped and formed the creation[29] by working for six days. Not only did the fruit of His work prove to be good but it was also to sing the Creator's glory (Ps 105 [104]). Then, He formed the human being in His image (Gn 1:27) and put the human being "in the Garden of Eden to till it and look after it" (Gn 2:15), and "to fill and subdue the earth" (Gn 1:28) making the human a co-creator in managing and recreating the Garden.[30] Bringing out the goodness and fruitfulness in Nature and beautifying it to sing the Creator's glory is now the duty of the human being.

A human might not be intelligent or full of wisdom. Yet he or she would "uphold creation and civilization" through work and his or her prayer would be "their life's work" (Sir 38:34). Work is the law of human condition (Dt 5:13) and one is not to have recourse to maintenance if one does not work (II Thes 3:10). Work has to be directed to eternity, the immutability,

and the holiness of God[31] and human beings are to be judged according their work.

Work as Loving Service: Jesus the Son of God too was a worker and he said, "My Father is unceasingly at work, and I myself, too, am at work (Jn 5:17). He insisted that he came to serve, and not to be served. By washing the feet of his disciples, he demonstrated the value of service, even of the lowliest work, and demanded that leaders be the servants of all (Mt 23:11). He made it clear that whatever work was to be done needed be done in love (Jn 13). He presented himself as a shepherd, a doctor, a farmer, teacher, and a servant, not as a professional but as a loving friend who would lay down his life for the sake of the ones he loved. Thus, Jesus defined work as loving service.

Jesus' criticism of the Pharisees and Sadducees was that they did not serve the people but made the people serve them and "lorded it over the people" or made people work while they themselves were content with the mere display of piety in public. In other words, the leaders were concerned with the maintenance of personality more than the duty of service and it created an unjust social order where domination, exploitation, injustice, and lies were institutionalized. Jesus' criticism of the leaders implied that without the duty of service, peace and justice, well-being could not exist. This is also one of the serious problems today. Those in leadership positions put themselves above the duty of service, take their office as a personal fiefdom, neglect their work, and function ineffectively and incompetently, preventing competent and talented people from taking over their positions.

Constructing a Human Society as a Work Priority: Jesus' Good News of the arrival of the Kingdom of Heaven in his person (Lk 17:21) accompanied a profound project of social reconstruction, to which theological reflection has not given much attention.[32] However, if you take the Matthean chapters from five, which is a key text in the Gospel containing the Sermon on the Mount, to eight, "Kingdom of Heaven" appears six times but all in relation to the right priorities in social life. The whole discourse from chapters five to eight is about reorganizing priorities regarding societal values and attitudes. In the Beatitudes, the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to the poor and to those persecuted for justice. In the rest of the discourse, Jesus reinterprets the traditional law to place the human person above the law. He insists on treating wives as persons (on divorce) and women with respect (on adultery), not judging people, loving enemies, being true to promises, not storing up the for future, not politicizing piety, and going beyond the pharisaic practice of law.
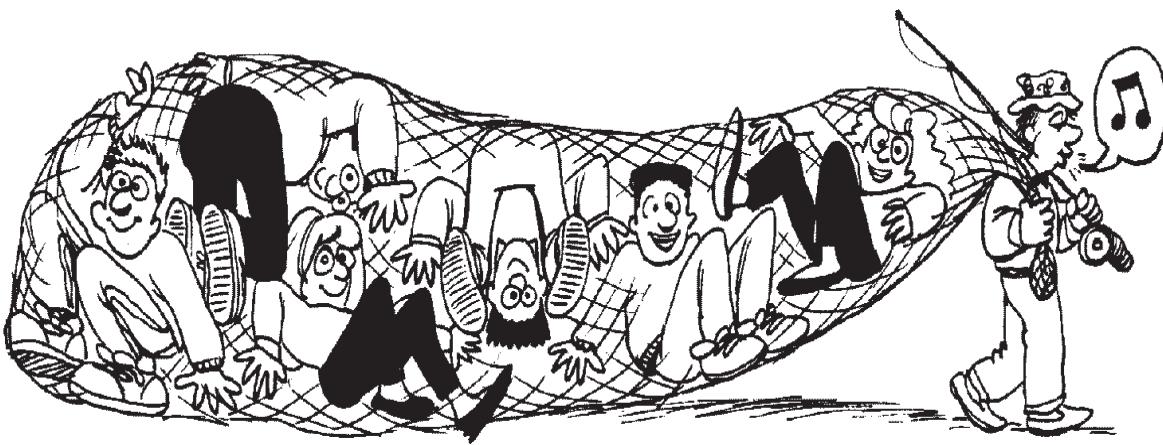
Two Dimensions of Jesus' Work: The work of Jesus, thus, had two dimensions: the bringing in of the Kingdom of Heaven manifested in the healing of various sicknesses, raising the dead, forgiving sins, and the love for humanity manifested in the removal of stigma, restoration of socially rejected people to society, feeding the hungry, and social reconstruction (reinterpreting law). The highest priority was the human person: the weeding would be postponed until the Last Judgment and animals (herds of pigs) and plants could be sacrificed for the sake of human well-being. This was the work entrusted to his disciples.

Cosmic and Societal Dimensions of Work: Work as service is societal-ecological while the Old Testament image of the gardener is Cosmic-ecological. Nevertheless, "All creation eagerly waits for the birth in glory the children of God" (Rom 8:19) or the birth of the Utopian society ruled by Goodness and God's design is to unite everything in heaven and on earth (Eph 1:10) and reconcile all things to himself (Col 1:20). Therefore, societal ecology and the cosmic ecology of work are two dimensions of the work of God and the work of humans who are co-creators with God participating, through Jesus, in his work of propagating the rule of Heaven, in salvation history,[33] not through eloquence but in justice, peace, and joy (I Cor 14:17; Col 2:16f).

Discretionary Criterion of Work: As an intervention in Nature and in society, work must be guided by some criterion because it can have negative consequences. In the past a common criterion in societal interventions, has been the "good of the people" and now it has extended to "good of the people and the future generations". The latter includes the consequences for the future and yet, not all the consequences of any action can be controlled. Every action has multiple consequences of which some are immediate, direct, observable, and predictable while the others are latent, random, mediate, unobservable, and unpredictable. Even well-intended actions may have unintended regrettable consequences. A person helps some poor students and there is a poor child who does not fit the selection criteria because of low grades and yet, is the one to make a great contribution to society. In such a case, charity constitutes an injustice. Scientists after carefully studying the consequences and taking all the precautions to avert negative consequences diverted a river to a dry region without water and yet, the vegetation of an unrelated geographical region is affected. The drugs produced to control sickness may result in future mutations.

If we are going to consider all the consequences of an action, we may never be able to act or work. In the human condition, we can only make limited rational choices with the knowledge and tools available to us, very often making reasonable guesses and taking reasonable risks. If some actions have negative and adverse consequences, even after thorough considerations, we cannot blame anybody but do the needful to remedy the situation. Work has to be done in these conditions and it is in these risky and challenging conditions that work becomes a process of realizing humanity by manifesting the goodness within salvation history or responding to the Divine call to participate in the Divine design, as people in a transitory condition.

Ecology of Stewardship

Functions of Stewardship: The placing of humans in the Garden to till and look after it and to subdue and make it fruitful implied not only responsible work but also the stewardship over the Garden and its resources.[34] Jesus, for his part, defined stewardship as managing the household which included both people and property, the appropriate distribution of resources, people-oriented functioning in offices without abusing them and using the resources selfishly (Lk 12:35-48). Thus, stewardship has two roles: the responsible management of the Garden/earth and the responsible management of people and societal resources with the utmost respect for the people.

Principles of Stewardship: There are at least three significant principles of stewardship: (1) bringing the best out of personal, human, societal, and natural resources (Mt 25:14-30); (2) distribution of resources according to the needs without hording or storing up for future security (Lk 12:16-20); and (3) sharing in the life and difficulties of others, i.e. suffering (Heb 13:1-4).

Productivity of Nature: If something that should bear fruit does not, it can be done away with like the barren fig tree (Lk 13:6-9), or the accursed barren fig tree (Mk 11:12-14). Apart from using them for food, animals can even be sacrificed to create a better world for humans beings (Mk 5:13). In managing the world's resources the priorities are the needs and well-being of humanity.

Limit to Utility: The management of the Garden did not confer a right to consume everything in the Garden: it excluded the tree of knowledge of good and evil (Gn 2:17) and it set a limit to consumption. The institution of the Sabbath set a limit to the overuse of resources (Lev 25:1-5).

Limits to consumption: In using goods, the ideal would be to give away all one's wealth to the needy and not to put one's trust in uncertain and perishable wealth, but in imperishable wealth. Those who had two tunics needed to share the extra one with someone without any and those who gave banquets needed to invite those who had nothing to eat. Yet, one needed at least to strive for equality at the present by sharing from one's abundance what the others were short of (II Cor 8:13-15).

Thus, the Christian spirituality of stewardship is the responsible management of human and natural resources that involves bringing out the best in all resources without exhausting them, and serving the needs of the people without abusing power and being selfish.

Ecology of Impermanence

"Heaven and earth will pass away" (Mt 24:35, Rv 21:1,4), therefore, Christians are on a journey to a destination beyond the earth. The passing away of the planet is a scientific fact and therefore, life has to be conducted as a journey through the impermanence of reality. However, the Christian idea of being on a journey has been blamed for the loss of contact with "Gaia" or the Matrix of life because of the dualism between matter and spirit that it creates. The fact is that belief in the survival of the spirit after death is a universal phenomenon. No culture has been reported not to have beliefs in spirits and even the early Judaic tradition that was not aware of the afterlife had beliefs in spirits. It is natural that the belief in spirits creates a dualistic worldview of an eternal spirit and a perishable world. Even in Taoism, Ying-Yang is a dualistic conception of reality without the moral dualism. Thus, dualism[35] is not uniquely a Christian idea but a truly human phenomenon.

The changes in the material world are illusions or "Maya" for the monistic philosopher who sees everything as eternal and for the Theravada believer the idea of an eternal soul is a belief mistaken for the material consciousness of the dependent origination: both are unable to reconcile the opposites in their systems of thought. For the ordinary people, the perishable material world and the imperishable spirits are real. They take them as they are without worrying about the duality or attempting to gain a synthetic view of reality, because they know that it is not possible to understand reality. Today, scientists too have come to the same position. They have given up the search for grand theories and limited themselves to provisional mini theories or workable mini theories.

On the other hand, in contrast to the *literati*'s belief, pantheistic and cyclical (*Samsara*) views lead to selfish greed to get the most out of life by any means because there is no moral evil to incur eternal punishment but suffering that can be overcome by a few good works or rituals. A mountain of karma of evil deeds can be offset by building a few temples.

In contrast, the Christian spirituality of impermanence is to leave everything behind on the journey towards the eternal destination, while at the same time, bringing out the best in people and Nature, turning the harshest conditions into beautiful gardens of life, and creating more life for all. It is a realistic spirituality that inspires people to take a great interest in time and space, others, society, and Nature.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we agree with Alexander Schmemann's proposition, but go a step further to say that Christianity is a way of life characterized by a cosmic-societal ecological spirituality manifested through the love of God and humanity, work that expresses love of God and humanity, the sense of stewardship over all the resources, and the sense of being on a journey. In this spirituality, Nature, the human body, and community are temples of God because of His presence in humanity as well as the human being's love for God that transforms Nature, the body, and society into something sacred.

Yet, the human love for God or the human efforts that transform Nature, the body, and the community into temples of God or the Garden of Eden, cannot hold God in Nature, the body, or society. "The Earth is God's Temple. However, the Most High does not live in houses made by men". God as a person is beyond the media of His presence as the human person is above his or her body.

The human person searching for his or her love object beyond the media of God's presence is

on a journey knowing that the media of human existence are transient. The beauty of this journey is that the human person transforms, through God-given creative powers as he or she journeys on, Nature, the body, and society into Gardens of Eden, knowing they won't be there tomorrow.

The opposite of such spirituality would be to pitch tents here on earth to perpetuate the self by the selfish exploitation of natural and human resources and by turning the body (pleasure), society (power), and Nature (resources) into ends in themselves or idols of pleasure, power, and wealth.

Endnotes:

[1] Terence G. Kardong, OSB, "Ecological Resources in the Benedictine Rule" in Albert J. LaChance and John E. Carroll, eds., *Embracing Earth* (New York: Orbis Books, 1994).

[2] Keith Warner, OFM, "Was St Francis a Deep Ecologist?", in Albert J. LaChance and John E, Carroll, eds., *Embracing Earth* (New York: Orbis Books, 1994).

[3] See "Towards an Authentic Eco-Spirituality", by Al Fritsch, http:// www.earthhealing.info/ecospte.pdf, accessed 25 September 2007.

[4] See "Peace with God the Creator, Peace with All of Creation", Message of Pope John Paul II for the Celebration of the World Day of Peace, 1 January 1990 (8 December 1989), http:// conservation.catholic.org/ the_ecological_crisis_page_2.htm.

[5] Michael S. Rose, Women Religious Embrace Eco-Spirituality, http:// www.catholicculture.org/libary/ view.cfm?recnum=797, accessed 30 September 2007.

[6] Hinduism whether it is the gnostic type or the mystic type has empowered the Brahmins to dominate others as teachers or priests and thus, Hinduism and the caste system are inseparable. In the case of Theravada Buddhism, monks, except for the Vanavasi or Forest monks, have had no independent existence apart from the feudal political order because of the material dependence of the temples on the benevolence of rulers and nobles. Outside the feudal system, Theravada Buddhist Church cannot exist. By claiming an absolute authority over moral order, monks have institutionalized a norm of inviolable respect for their authority and the worship of parents has been part of their pedagogy. We find it in three Theravada countries, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Myanmar in each of which, there is the tendency towards a Buddhocracy or Buddhist State. If some monks have been confined to their temples most of the time and if in recent times, some monks took up charitable work, it has been due to the impact of Christianity. The case of the uprising of monks in Myanmar was not due to their concern with social justice. The young monks, mostly from rural areas where the monks are totally dependent on the people for their sustenance had no choice but to do what they did while the leading and established monks remained with the political allies. As long as the traditional religious ideas continue to dominate, there is no hope for many Asians to liberate themselves from the oppressive and corrupt feudal social, economic, and political structures.

[7] Kevin A. Harrus, *Spirituality and Religiousness: Defining Concepts in Psychotherapy*, http://what-about-lifecoaching.com/definition-of-spirituality.

[7] Html, accessed 14 September 2007.

[8] J. Slingerland, *Defining Spirituality,* htt://www.msurf.org/UUViews/Vol1/num1/ slingerland.htm, accessed 14 September 2007.

[9] G.S., Wakefield "Spirituality", *The Westminster Dictionary of Christian Spirituality* (The Philippines: Claratian Publications, 1988), p. 361.

[10] Some pantheistic belivers, as cited in the Midwest conference on "Earth Spirit Rising", would insist on the impersonal character of the deity and for some others, specially, those coming from the background of transpersonal psychology, it is seems difficult to accept the impersonal deity while they subscribe to the monistic view of reality. The latter seems to remain conceptually confused as to the "impersonal" and the "personal".

[11] A. Schmemann, *Of Water and the Spirit* (USA, SVS Press, 1977), p. 107.

[12] Schmemann, *ibid.*

[13] There is a basic difference between monastic spiritualities and the lay spirituality. Our concern here is to find a common Christian Eco-Spirituality.

[14] The conference of its kind was held in May 1998 and since then there have been various conferences including another significant one in June 1997. The first conference is considered here.

[15] Michel S. Rose, *ibid.*

[16] Gaia Hypothesis states that the planet earth is not simply an environment, but a living organism, a self-sustaining system that modifies its surroundings so as to ensure its survival.

[17] "The small selves and the Great Selves are finally one, for as she bodies forth in us, all the beings respond in

the bodying forth of their diverse creative work that makes the world…. Then, like bread tossed upon the waters, we can be confident that our creative work will be nourishing to the community of life, even as we relinquish our small self back into the great self" (Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Gaia and God: An Ecofeminist Theology of Earth Healing*, Harper and Collins Publishers, 1992).

[18] John Hallwas, "Nature and the Sacred", Talk to the Macomb Unitarian-Universalist Church, 14 November 2004 http://www.wiu.edu/spirituality/presenters/hallwas_ essay.htm, accessed 20 November 2007.

[19] Michel, *ibid.*

[20] From the Biblical point of view, the harmony of the whole cosmos where the wolf dwells with the lamb, the leopard rests beside the child, and the calf and the lion cub feed together, cannot be achieved by man. It is a divine dream for man and the cosmos that only God can make a reality (Is 11:6-8).

[21] Worship of territorial deities and demons is still practiced in South Asian countries where one may even stop the vehicle at the entrance of a shrine to offer some sacrifice.

[22] Civilization has emerged as a result of the human struggle to survive despite the threats of Nature – in a battle against Nature. Even human counsciousness has evolved in the survival struggle against Nature and the human consciousness can, therefore, never be identified with a pantheistic cosmic consciousness of the cosmos as a whole.

[23] If evolution is a process of changing from simple to complex organisms, then, evolution of consciousness is a change from simple consciousness to a complex consciousness. There has been no such evolution in the case of human consciousness and the idea of the evolution of human consciousness is another myth of our times. Existential and moral consciousness have already been a part of human consciousness even before the period of Axial man as recoded in the Book of Amos that decries social injustice. What we observe even today is the lack of moral consciousness in a society that has developed subtle and complex ways of exploiting and enslaving people more than ever, without people knowing that they are exploited.

[24] O.E. Evans, "Kingdom of God", in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible – An Illustrated Encyclopedia*, ed. George Arthur Buttrick (NY: Abingdon Press, 1962).

[25] There is already an increasing use of the concept of "stewardship", especially in the USA, in environmental programmes and projects.

[26] P.M. Fernando, *Limits of Love* (Sri Lanka: Elation, 2006).

[27] See *Gaudium et Spes,* n. 34, *Laborem Exercens,* n. 25, for the Church's understanding of work.

[28] Those who do not know what to do with life, do this and that to kill time. Those who are compelled to work have no interest in what they are doing. Those who suffer from an inner compulsion to work, become workaholics swithout any aim. Some work in order to write their names in history books or to win positions, possessions, and privileges. For some people, work is either the consumption of goods, or the making of money to consume. There are also people who work to destroy life and resources. Genuine human work is work that is productive and creative, and productive means to produce for life and creative means it does not just produce but turns work into an expression of what is genuinely human.

[29] God's creative work is described in the language of a worker, i.e. "Fashioning" and forging heaven "by His fingers" (*cf.* Gn 2:7).

[30] Pointing out the need to beautify the environment, Pope John Paul II says, "More difficult perhaps, but no less profound, is the contemplation of the works of human ingenuity. Even the cities can have a beauty of their own" ("Peace With God the Creator, Peace With All of Creation", World Day of Peace Message, n. 14, 1 January 1990).

[31] *New Catholic Encyclopedia* , Vol. XIV (NY: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1967), p.1015.

[32] "The Kingdom of God" occurs 14 times in Mark and 39 times in Luke while "Kingdom of Heaven" occurs 32 times in Matthew (See: "Kingdom of God" in *Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Bible* , by Louis P. Hartman, CSSR, McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1963). Yet, the discourse on human relations constitutes a most prominent part of Christ's discourse.

[33] "God's word is profoundly marked by the fundamental truth that, man ... shares by his work in the activity of the Creator, and ... continues to develop and perfect that activity as he further discovers the resources and values of creation" (*Laborem Exercens,* n. 25).

[34] Bishop Robert Morneau, *Stewardship: A Disciple's Response* (Washingtom DC: United States National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1993).

[35] The so-called Western dualism was introduced to the West by an Asian sage, namely Zoroaster.

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**L'Église en Afrique
au service de la réconciliation, de la justice et de la paix
«Vous êtes le sel de la terre … Vous êtes la lumière du monde»
(Mt 5,13-14)**

Sainte Marie,
Mère de Dieu, Protectrice de l'Afrique,
tu as donné au monde la vraie Lumière,
Jésus-Christ.
Par ton obéissance au Père et par la grâce
de l'Esprit Saint
tu nous as donné la source de notre
réconciliation et de notre joie.
Mère de tendresse et de sagesse,
montre-nous Jésus, ton Fils et Fils de Dieu,
soutiens notre chemin de conversion
afin que Jésus fasse briller en nous et sur
nous sa Gloire
dans tous les lieux de notre vie personnelle,
familiale et sociale.
Mère, pleine de Miséricorde et de Justice,
par ta docilité à l'Esprit Consolateur,
obtiens pour nous la grâce d'être les
témoins du Seigneur Ressuscité,
pour que nous devenions toujours plus
le sel de la terre et la lumière du monde.
Mère du Perpétuel Secours,
à ton intercession maternelle nous confions
la préparation et les fruits du Deuxième Synode pour l'Afrique.
Reine de la Paix, priez pour nous!
Notre-Dame d'Afrique, priez pour nous!

Events

NEXT SEDOS SEMINAR 2010

18–22 May

"The Prophetic Challenge of the African Churches"

- ARICCIA -

"CASA DIVIN MAESTRO" -

Daily Sub-themes: (With emphasis on Formation)

Tuesday evening:
Overall situation of Africa: Political, Social, Economical, Religious

Wednesday:
Kerigma: Evangelizing for Non-Violence

Thursday:
Koinonia: Building Communites in Justice and Peace

Friday:
Diakonia: Being Instruments of Reconciliation

Saturday:
Guidelines for Formation

... more details will follow