SEDOS

Bulletin 2010

Vol. 42, No. 9/10
September-October

Editorial

> *"Autumn is a necessary transition between summer's fruitfulness and spring's new life. No new growth will come unless autumn agrees to let go of what has been. The same is true of our missionary lives"*
> (cf. *Joyce Rupp, May I have this Dance?, p. 133*)

There is a felt need to let go of what sounds conformist in the missionary pastoral approaches of the Church, the Family of God in Africa, and to be ready to undergo the process of a pastoral conversion in view of an in-depth evangelization of the emerging city cultures. Christian communities in the urban areas have to become missionary communities. Fr Patience MPAYEMBE NGANKWEY, presented his Doctoral theses in Missiology at the Pontifical Urbanian University, in 2010.

Fr Indunil JANAKA KODITHUWAKKU, from Sri Lanka, was a student of Missiology at the Pontifical Urbanian University and a visiting Lecturer. He conducted research on the booming phenomenon of fundamentalism today. If Asia is the cradle of world's major religions, then religions in Asia contain ideological resources both for violence and non-violence. How can we further dialogue, that is an important tool, to build a 'civilization of love? The article is very challenging.

Fr Domenico ARENA, OMI, working in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, gives important advice on how to counteract the negative effects of globalization, and offers his reflections on missionary communion as a framework of life and action. Missionary communion takes root when the positive values of different cultures are respected and channeled to bring forth the life-giving characteristics of globalization to liberate the new energy of solidarity and mutual enrichment.

Sr Caroline MBONU, HHCJ, Ph.D., from Nigeria affirms, in her fascinating article that spirituality is a liberative vehicle for women's promotion. Spirituality affects women's capacity and stimulates women's potential to think, feel and act, and fully participate in the sacred. The study of Achebe's masterpiece: *Things Fall Apart* reveals that *Igbo* women traditionally fulfilled the role of priestess, and were very much respected.

In the Part II of her article, Prof. Rita NORONHA exhorts the Church to recognize the strength of women who can make a contribution of quality to empower women in the Church and society. Prof. Rita suggests some concrete areas on which to concentrate so as to help women take their place in the Church.

The BULLETIN brings home a prayer for Priests by Sr Felicité YOGO, Sister of St Thérèse of Lisala, a local congregation, in the DR of the Congo. The Holy Father has officially closed the Year for Priests but we are continuing to pray for Priests called to actualize the Mystery of our Redemption.

Nzenzili MBOMA, FMM
SEDOS Executive Director

Fr Patience Mpayembe Ngankwey

Vers une conversion pastorale pour évangéliser en milieu urbain en Afrique

Introduction

À la première assemblée synodale des évêques pour l'Afrique (1994), la sœur Pierre Élise Gaffat affirmait que «parler d'évangélisation dans le contexte urbain africain, c'est aborder un des aspects majeurs de la mission sur le continent puisque les villes africaines sont au cœur des problèmes qui polarisent l'essentiel de nos préoccupations».[1] Et, plusieurs études et travaux ont tenté de proposer de pistes de solution aux défis de l'évangélisation en Afrique contemporaine.[2] C'est dans cette optique que notre réflexion portera sur les questions et les déplacements du milieu urbain qui s'imposent à l'Église-famille de Dieu en Afrique. Nous entendons mettre en évidence l'importance d'une pastorale missionnaire qui ouvre l'Église-famille de Dieu à la sensibilité kairologique en vue d'une cohérente orthopraxie en milieu urbain. Nous l'abordons en trois temps. Nous présenterons, dans un premier moment, l'urbanité comme un nouveau style de vie en milieu urbain; puis nous ferons ressortir ses caractéristiques qui peuvent constituer une aubaine à la mission évangélisatrice de l'Église-famille de Dieu. Et, enfin, nous traiterons de la pastorale missionnaire comme exigence d'une conversion pastorale en vue d'un renouveau ecclésial et d'une évangélisation en profondeur en Afrique.

1. L'urbanité : un nouveau style de vie en milieu urbain

Le milieu urbain est plus que la concentration des masses sur un espace physique. Il est un mode de vivre ensemble.[3] Et, perçu comme un fait global et total, il est un système social qui implique des relations interpersonnelles diversifiées. Il est caractérisé par un phénomène de mobilité, de circulation multidimensionnelle. On a l'impression que tout s'y meut à une vitesse vertigineuse. «Là où, au paravent, il y avait des situations humaines stables, tout se trouve aujourd'hui en mouvement» (*RM* 37). Rien ne se semble s'y dérober.

Et, cette mobilité est incitée par le fait que, sur cet espace ouvert, se concentre une population diversifiée, obligée à la cohabitation, à un cheminement commun. Cependant pour un continent à dominante rurale, le processus d'urbanisation suscite un sentiment d'hostilité et de réticence. Il paraît un phénomène déstabilisateur, sans doute, pour un système des références culturelles qui assuraient sécurité et équilibre tant psychologique, social, moral, culturel et religieux. Devant l'instabilité urbaine, la tentation est de reconstituer la quiétude rurale en construisant des petits villages imaginaires sur le territoire urbain. Ainsi, dans les villes africaines, on a l'impression d'être dans un grand village. Dans cette optique, la ville est perçue comme le «lieu des valeurs négatives, déstructurantes des personnes et des groupes. On a dit du processus d'urbanisation qu'il est essentiellement un processus de désorganisation! La ville est le lieu du déracinement, de l'anonymat, de la solitude, de la superficialité. Elle est le lieu de l'exacerbation des contradictions et des conflits».[4]

Cependant, partons d'un constant qui frappe. S'il y a une réalité que l'on ne peut nier, c'est le continuel exode rural qui fait exploser la démographie en milieu urbain. On a l'impression que «tout se passe comme si toutes les ethnies d'un pays se donnaient rendez-vous dans les capitales où elles se concentrent».[5] Dans le même ordre d'idée, l'historien Isidore Ndaywel affirmait que «des ethnies voisines, indépendantes les unes des autres dans le terrain d'origine, se découvraient en ville une fraternité particulière,

par opposition à d'autres groupes plus lointains. D'ailleurs, le spectacle d'une prolifération ethnique était en lui-même une nouveauté inhérente au milieu urbain».[6] Partant, on peut aussi se demander si le phénomène urbain, comme fait social, ne serait pas adopté par les sociétés africaines qui «se projettent majoritairement dans la ville, qui constitue leur nouvelle 'frontière', horizon de l'ouverture et du dépassement».[7] En outre, ces diverses culturelles qui cohabitent en milieu urbain, entrent dans une interaction qui donne lieu à une nouvelle logique sociale, à l'émergence d'une nouvelle culture.

Ainsi, le processus d'urbanisation mérite une attention spéciale dans la mesure où «les villes sont les lieux privilégiés où mijotent les signes des temps».[8] Pour Jean Marc Ela, «si l'on veut comprendre la société africaine dans son devenir, avec ses tensions et ses conflits internes, il n'est plus possible de laisser hors du champ d'études les multiples problèmes posés par l'essor urbain».[9] On peut alors noter que la culture urbaine modifie les formes de la médiation entre l'humain et le monde ainsi que le rapport de l'humain à lui-même. Elle influe sur la manière de voir le monde, sur le mode de vie, les mentalités, les attitudes et les valeurs.[10] Ce point de vue est aussi celui du sociologue Redfield qui a soutenu que la ville a toujours été un environnement favorable aux innovations culturelles.[11] Il y a donc une vraie dynamique de changement et de rencontre qui oblige l'individu à se découvrir, à se connaître pour entrer dans une nouvelle dimension vitale, un nouveau système des relations avec une prépondérante charge de significations sociales et culturelles.

De cette optique positive, nous pouvons insinuer que «la ville proclame que l'espèce humaine n'est pas une simple espèce animale, partie intégrante d'un écosystème, vivant dans une 'niche' écologique, mais que les hommes ont un pouvoir d'artificialisation des milieux naturels. Surtout la ville est le moyen par lequel s'affirme la socialisation de la terre, son organisation sociale».[12] Autrement dit, la ville offre à l'homme un espace pour s'exprimer et se réaliser. Le citadin est appelé à s'inventer et à inventer son environnement pour qu'il ne se réduise pas à un simple maillon de la chaîne d'un système qui le dépasse.

Qu'en est-il de cette nouvelle culture en milieu urbain ? Selon Joseph Comblin, «les dangers de la grande ville pour l'animal humain' sont tels que l'on a donné déjà un nom à la maladie spécifique qu'elles provoquent : l'urbanité».[13] Loin d'être une fatalité, cette maladie est l'expression d'un passage obligé si l'on veut vivre et prendre possession de l'espace urbain. Ainsi, Maurice Pivot nous illumine quand il affirme que l'urbanité est «l'ensemble des conduites que nous devons respecter les uns à l'égard des autres pour rendre possible un vrai-ensemble dans un espace urbain, dans la visée d'une entrée dans une nouvelle civilisation nécessitant de nouvelles valeurs sociétales».[14] On peut insinuer que, nouvelle culture ou style de vie en milieu urbain, l'urbanité est fonction même de la mobilité des personnes, des idées et des biens. Elle est constituée de contrastes qui seraient à la base d'une crise identitaire vécue comme une instabilité, une précarité.[15] Cependant, en favorisant les valeurs sociétales pour une vie harmonieuse, elle leur donne une profonde densité par rapport au nouvel environnement. À titre d'exemple, la solidarité, l'hospitalité, ne peuvent plus être conçues suivant les schèmes ruraux.

Par ailleurs, la crise générée par les contrastes urbains remet en question toute tendance conformiste dans la mesure où chaque individu ou chaque groupe est incité à évoluer en entrant en interaction avec d'autres. Une société en crise est celle qui vit continuellement le passage mouvementé d'un état uniformisant à un état pluriel. C'est le statut d'une société qui se veut un perpétuel «à-être». De ce fait, la crise générée par l'urbanité se veut être inhérente à la structure dynamique de l'homme et de sa société toujours et déjà tendu vers l'à-être.[16] Par contre, tout ce qui tend à être statique, absolutisant, totalisant, est voué à l'inefficacité et à la disparition. Car, par sa mobilité, le milieu urbain ne peut favoriser qu'un style de vie qui, par essence, se veut dynamique.

Ainsi, dans cet espace en mutation, «d'autres modes de vie apparaissent, des formes nouvelles de culture surgissent, constituant ce que nous appelons désormais une urbanité, pendant de la ruralité dominante des siècles précédents».[17] Par conséquent, l'Église-famille ne peut ignorer cette culture comme une nouvelle expression de l'homme et de sa collectivité en milieu urbain. L'urbanité concerne le devenir d'une grande portion de l'humanité.

2. Quelques éléments caractéristiques de l'urbanité

Le milieu urbain est une contrée des paradoxes, des contrastes, à l'instar de diffusion-concentration, fixation-déplacement, unicité-différenciation. Carrefour des échanges entre différentes cultures, on peut y côtoyer des milliers des personne, s'y retrouver à côté de plusieurs personnes et passer inaperçu.[18] Grâce à la concentration d'une population diversifiée et mobile, le milieu favorise la fluidité et l'accessibilité : entre les personnes, de différents lieux de vie, à la spécialisation des rôles, aux nombreuses participations et appartenances.

Le phénomène de la différenciation peut être perçu comme obstacle à l'unité dans la mesure où il tend à éloigner des individus, des groupes culturels. Mais, en même temps, il favorise la diversité qui constitue la richesse du milieu urbain. Ne pourrait en prendre conscience que celui qui s'émancipe d'un sentiment conformiste. Le deuxième élément est la concentration. L'explosion démographique contrait la population urbaine de partager un espace commun. Par le fait même, les individus ou les différents groupes culturels sont mis en interaction. Et cette rencontre produit un étincèle d'où jaillit la vie. Se soustraire de ce choc continuel rime à une marginalisation de soi. Ainsi, le sort des uns et des autres se trouvent être lié. Le troisième élément est la mobilité. L'espace urbain est un réseau constitué de différents lieux de vie. Pour les rejoindre, il faut une fluidité qui puisse favoriser une meilleure circulation des sens afin que les différences se rencontrent. Et cela est possible grâce à la porosité qui est inhérente au caractère pluriel du milieu urbain. Un autre élément spécifique à l'urbanité est l'accessibilité. L'individu est placé devant un considérable éventail des sollicitations. Rien ne semble briguer le monopole et occuper le centre régulateur dans ce milieu du pluralisme.

Bien que cette porosité du milieu urbain puisse susciter une réaction de défense due à la peur de s'exposer, la culture urbaine requiert un art pour sortir de soi-même, se «pro-jeter» dans l'espace commun afin de rencontrer l'autre et de saisir la complexité du monde, comme une chance pour mieux comprendre sa propre complexité.[19] La concentration d'une population diversifiée provoque un certain dynamisme, un mouvement qui se manifeste dans la mobilité des individus, des groupes culturels, des sens, des formes de médiation. On assiste à un jeu des relations qui naissent, changent d'intensité et disparaissent de fois. Donc, résultats d'une interaction des diversités, la fluidité et l'accessibilité constituent des éléments caractéristiques de l'urbanité. Si elles sont bien canalisées, comprises et acceptés, elles font du milieu urbain une école de la tolérance, de l'acceptation de la différence, du dialogue. En cela, il devient le lieu où le citadin apprend à se connaître, et connaître l'autre, à vivre avec «l'étranger».

L'émergence des groupes horizontaux constitue une autre caractéristique du milieu urbain. Il est important de considérer l'importance qu'acquièrent ces groupes en contraste avec les groupes verticaux de milieu fermé. L'horizontalité implique un autre type d'appartenance au groupe qui suppose la liberté et la coresponsabilité de différents membres. L'adhésion ne vient plus par voie héréditaire ou de la coercition. Du coup, les facteurs de localisation et de résidence diminuent en importance pour laisser libre cours aux intérêts partagés. Par ailleurs, il y a à se demander si ces caractéristiques concernent aussi les villes africaines. Peut-on les retrouver dans un environnement urbain comme Kinshasa ? Évidemment que le milieu urbain africain ne fait pas exception. Cependant il

serait vain de chercher à appliquer toutes ces caractéristiques d'une façon générale à tout espace urbain. Quoique l'on rencontre toutes ses caractéristiques aussi dans les villes africaines, il est recommandé de tenir présentes certaines nuances dues à la sensibilité africaine, au principe générateur des milieux urbains africains.

Comme tout espace urbain, la ville de Kinshasa rassemble en elle une diversité de cultures, des individus. Et, dans une telle diversité, la première nécessité est de se comprendre, d'échanger entre voisins. Il y a une accessibilité à l'autre favorisée par le fait qu'il se développe un besoin de communion, esprit de la communauté, de l'entraide, qui s'expriment dans l'hospitalité et la solidarité qui est souvent réservée aux émigrants (ceux qui viennent en ville). Ceux-ci trouvent un point de chute dans la parenté. Cela facilite l'intégration urbaine de nouveaux venus.[20] En effet, cette caractéristique des villes africaines constitue une possibilité de dépasser la sensation de l'isolement, de la solitude, de la figure de l'étranger du citadin. Mais seulement qu'elle ne doit pas annuler le sentiment de liberté et de responsabilité auquel est invité chacun dans son parcours de création, de re-création et d'insertion dans la culture urbaine.

En outre ce même esprit de communauté façonne les rapports urbains qui tendent souvent à la superficialité. Des rapports impersonnels, fonctionnels, structurels finissent par devenir personnels. Cela s'observe même dans les différents milieux de vie, de travail, etc. Ainsi plusieurs groupes secondaires, prédominés par des relations de statut et d'intérêt, peuvent mûrir et évoluer vers ceux dits primaires, prenant la forme d'une chaleur authentique même en l'absence d'intimité.[21] Cette caractéristique de milieu urbain africain permet de vivre l'urbanité d'une manière spécifique. Mais cela n'est pas une donné automatique. Il requiert un travail d'invention, de création au quotidien pour une accessibilité constructive.

Somme toute, «il ne s'agit pas de supprimer la ville parce qu'elle est malade, mais d'améliorer son état et surtout de prévenir la maladie. Les hommes semblent avoir perdu le secret de la création des villes».[22] Mais il convient d'éveiller à la conscience du dur labeur de réinventer l'urbanité comme un nouveau «vivre-ensemble» en milieu urbain selon le mouvement de l'ouverture, de la diversité, de la liberté, de la mobilité. En cela, l'urbanité sera une aubaine pour la mission évangélisatrice de l'Eglise-famille de Dieu, conviée à être sacrement du Royaume, signe et instrument de la réconciliation, de la justice et de la paix.

3. Vers une conversion pastorale comme exigence du renouveau ecclésial

Sacrement de l'union intime avec Dieu et l'unité de tout genre humain (*cf. LG* 1), «de sa nature, l'Eglise, durant son pèlerinage sur terre, est missionnaire, puisqu'elle-même tire son origine de la mission du Fils et de la mission du Saint-Esprit, selon le dessein de Dieu le Père» (*AG* 2). Envoyée pour manifester à tous les hommes et toutes les nations la charité de Dieu, le mystère du salut et la vie apportée par Dieu, l'Église «doit s'insérer dans ces groupes humains du même mouvement dont le Christ lui-même, par son incarnation, s'est lié aux conditions sociales et culturelles déterminées des hommes avec lesquels il a vécu» (*AG* 10).

Le phénomène urbain suscite des questions et des déplacements qui obligent l'Église à aller puiser, dans ses fonts, le dynamisme pour se situer dans cette nouvelle situation historique. Il s'agit d'une constante conversion qui l'implique sur le chemin de la maturation et de la cohérence fondamentale. Ainsi, «envoyée par Dieu aux peuples pour être 'le sacrement universel du salut', l'Église, en vertu des exigences intimes de sa propre catholicité, et obéissant au commandement de son Fondateur (*cf.* Mc 16,16), est tendue de tout son effort vers la prédication de l'Évangile à tous les hommes» (*AG* 1). Pour cela, «il s'agit donc (...) d'inventer et de créer, en dialogue avec le temps et la culture d'aujourd'hui, de nouveaux modes, de nouvelles méthodes pour l'Église d'être missionnaire».[23]

En effet, la conception d'une mission considérée comme une tâche accomplie a contribué, tout long de l'histoire, à une perte de la conscience missionnaire, à un affaiblissement du dynamisme missionnaire. Implantée, institutionnalisée, stabilisée, la tension de l'action ecclésiale s'est déplacée de l'extérieur vers son intérieur.[24] Ainsi, la charge pastorale des fidèles devenait la forme ordinaire de l'agir de l'Église. Et, l'accent

s'est déplacé de l'itinérance vers la sédentarisation, de la mission évangélisatrice pour susciter la foi au Christ vers la coercition comme manière pour incorporer les nouveaux membres dans une institution, l'unité des différences vers leur uniformisation.

Par contre, «notre époque, alors que l'humanité est en mouvement et en recherche, exige une impulsion nouvelle dans l'action missionnaire de l'Eglise. Les horizons et les possibilités de la mission s'étendent et, nous les chrétiens, nous sommes appelés au courage apostolique, fondé sur la confiance dans l'Esprit» (*RMi* 30). Ainsi, l'Eglise devra redécouvrir constamment, sous l'impulsion de l'Esprit Saint, le dynamisme missionnaire pour répondre aux nouveaux appels de la mission, pour rejoindre les nouvelles frontières de la mission, pour aller vers les nouveaux rivages. Contrairement à une mission évangélisatrice qui consisterait en un déplacement de la périphérie vers le centre, l'Église est appelée à opérer un mouvement en sens inverse : du centre vers la périphérie. Ainsi, Michel Denekew estime que beaucoup d'acteurs ecclésiaux de l'évangélisation semblent aujourd'hui se dérober d'un tel effort de penser la médiation et le déplacement.[25] Pour cela, il y a urgence d'une conversion pastorale pour évangéliser en milieu urbain.

Selon Esquedra Biffet, la pastorale est l'action évangélisatrice qui se réfère nécessairement au Christ ressuscité qui continue à envoyer ses disciples pour annoncer l'Évangile à tous les peuples (Mt 28,19-20). Et cette évangélisation se réalise dans l'histoire ponctuée des situations changeantes suivant les époques et les cultures.[26] Et l'Eglise est appelée à prolonger la mission du Christ dans la tâche de l'évangélisation totale et universelle. Elle consiste à se rapprocher de l'homme concret, dans son intégralité personnelle et sociale, pour lui offrir le message évangélique dans sa prospective salvifique.[27]

Devenant compagnon de route des hommes auxquels elle annonce la Bonne Nouvelle, elle vit l'urgence d'un exode afin de vaincre toute tentation d'évasion spiritualiste et d'enlisement dans le séculier.[28] En effet, ce type de pastorale rend missionnaire toute la communauté ecclésiale puisque c'est toute l'Église qui est responsable de l'évangélisation universelle. La communauté ecclésiale devient évangélisatrice. Ainsi, une telle conception missionnaire de la pastorale redimensionne, à la lumière de l'évangélisation universelle, tous les ministères et services apostoliques, toutes les vocations et les structures ecclésiales. Il vise à diffuser la joie de porter le mystère du Christ au monde.[29] Tournée vers le monde, la pastorale missionnaire n'est pas un désir de prosélytisme triomphant, un instinct de domination, elle est exigence interne de croissance de l'Esprit et de fidélité au Seigneur qui la convoque et l'envoie. Elle ouvre l'Église à une universalité consciente et libérée de toute exclusivité.

Par sa nature missionnaire, l'Église vit selon l'exigence de sa catholicité. La pastorale missionnaire n'est pas un opportunisme occasionnel, un additif de ce qui existe. Elle définit substantiellement l'être et l'agir de l'Église contre toute superficialité, à une action de vernissage. Pour Meo Elia, avec la dimension missionnaire, la pastorale acquiert sa perspective normale dans la mesure où l'Eglise répond à l'exigence de dépasser une praxis statique, répétitive et conservatrice. Elle promeut l'esprit de créativité qui favorise une pratique dynamique impliquant toute la communauté à la mission évangélisatrice qui suscite l'adhésion de foi et provoque la conversion.[31] Dans cette optique, la pastorale missionnaire est l'être de l'Église dans son devenir perpétuel totalement orientée vers le surgissement et la manifestation définitive de la présence divine dans l'éternité du salut.

Dans cette même optique, Francis-Vincent Antony soutient que la dimension missionnaire est cette force centrifuge qui anime l'Église de l'intérieur. Comme un feu dévorant, l'Église ne peut plus vivre la commodité, préoccupée de son positionnement social. Ainsi, le terme «Église centrifuge» indique le caractère dynamique de l'Église appelée à l'universalité afin de rejoindre tout groupe humain et tout espace vital où se retrouvent l'homme et sa communauté. L'aspect missionnaire de la pastorale implique le dépassement de tout centralisme : ecclésial, paroissial, religieux, diocésain. Toute structure devra s'organiser selon cette optique centrifuge afin de rejoindre tout homme et tout milieu vital.[32] Par ailleurs, insistant sur l'aspect centrifuge, F.V. Antony affirme que l'Église est destinée à annoncer la Bonne Nouvelle du Royaume à toute l'humanité. Pour cela, elle doit, comme son Seigneur, parcourir les rues du monde, rencontrer les nouvelles

frontières, dialoguer avec les nouvelles réalités socioculturelles, accompagner l'humanité dans sa recherche de la Vérité et dans la procession vers son achèvement. Dans cette optique, Franco Cagnasso affirmera qu'il ne s'agit donc pas d'une Église qui possède la vérité et qu'elle doit seulement la communiquer aux autres, mais d'une Église qui sert la vérité en l'annonçant, en la cherchant, en la partageant, en la découvrant.[33]

En effet, la dimension missionnaire permet à la pastorale, en tant qu'agir de l'Église, de s'incarner dans le contexte socioculturel, d'être une réponse adéquate de l'Église aux provocations et interpellations historiques du monde contemporain. Elle devient, en quelque sorte, cette conscience critique qui incite l'Église à repenser continuellement tout son agir en référence au Règne de Dieu et au contexte historique de la société humaine. Cette perpétuelle remise en question lui évite de s'absolutiser dans une tendance centripète, à se recroqueviller sur elle-même. Aussi, cette position est celle de Joseph David Bosch. Il soutenait que sans la dimension missionnaire, la théologie pastorale serait myope parce qu'elle s'occuperait seulement de l'étude de l'autoréalisation de l'Église relativement à sa prédication, catéchèse, liturgie, ministère d'enseignant, pastorale et diaconie. Le dynamisme missionnaire porte la théologie pastorale à avoir le regard ouvert sur le ministère dans le monde extérieur au mur de l'Église, d'élaborer une herméneutique de l'activité missionnaire, d'éveiller l'attention d'une théologie et d'une Église domestiquée sur le monde extérieur qui souffre et qui est aimé de Dieu.[34] Dans la même perspective missionnaire, Sergio Pintor affirme que la théologie pastorale doit assumer un dynamisme missionnaire parce qu'elle est la théologie pastorale de l'Église envoyée dans le monde entier.[35] Il appelle aussi à un dépassement d'une distinction très rigide entre la pastorale et l'action missionnaire. Car chaque Église s'oriente dans son devenir historique et dans le contexte humain grâce à une réflexion pastorale qui la rend consciente de sa mission universelle.

En outre, l'aspect missionnaire ouvre l'action ecclésiale au dialogue avec les cultures pour une adéquate inculturation respectueuse et libératrice. Une telle pastorale ne vise pas d'abord les résultats spectaculaires parce qu'elle se veut une approche à la personne dans le silence intérieur, la modestie en reconnaissant la valeur de petits gestes.[36] Elle n'est pas une reconquête de l'espace perdu ou de son hégémonie culturelle. Mais l'Église retrouve le chemin de l'humilité, de la croix que Jésus Christ a tracé par son incarnation et son mystère pascal. Il ne s'agit plus de placer la mission évangélisatrice sur le ton triomphaliste ecclésiocentriste mais de la replacer dans son origine théologique, c'est-à-dire trinitaire.[37]

Au regard de ce qui précède, la préoccupation qui doit animer toute l'Eglise, tout chrétien est celle de voir les communautés chrétiennes accomplir non seulement les activités dites missionnaires, mais de devenir elles-mêmes missionnaires.[38] En d'autres termes, il s'agit de passer d'une Église-stabilisée à une Eglise Mission. Et, par le fait qu'elle n'est plus une simple activité ecclésiale destinée à ceux qui sont étrangers ou en dehors de l'institution ecclésiale, la mission est alors, selon l'expression de Meo Elia, «l'extroversion» de l'Église, un aller vers le monde. L'Église se réalise dans la mesure où elle est portée vers le monde, à la rencontre des problèmes de l'humanité, à la rencontre des cultures humaines, dans lesquels elle exerce son service pour le Royaume de Dieu.[39] Ainsi, l'Église n'est pas d'abord une réalité constituée une fois pour toutes, elle est un devenir continuel dans la mesure où elle vit d'une parole qui est Vie. Elle demeure dynamique dans une histoire qui s'offre comme kairos. En effet, l'Église missionnaire qui se veut au service du Royaume de Dieu qui vient ne consiste pas dans une quête de l'extension, de l'implantation en phagocytant les nouvelles réalités culturelles. Elle est une éternelle sortie de soi pour une entrée dans la nouvelle culture humaine par la voie du témoignage, du dialogue, de l'annonce de la Bonne Nouvelle du Royaume qui vient.

Pour Meo Elia, l'Église naît là où la Parole de Dieu rencontre des hommes concrets qui réagissent à l'annonce en donnant leur réponse selon leur contexte historique, leur génie.[40] Une telle Église sera toujours «nouvelle» dans la mesure où elle sera constituée de personnes d'un contexte précis, de leur culture, de leur mentalité. Si le processus de l'inculturation qui consiste à assumer, purifier et élever en Jésus Christ les éléments

d'une culture, alors une pastorale missionnaire prendra au sérieux l'homme, l'histoire, le monde.[41] Pour lui, c'est le terrain où doit naître le Sauveur.[42]

Somme toute, pour une Église envoyée pour manifester à tous les hommes et à toutes les nations la charité de Dieu, le mystère du salut et la vie apportée par Dieu, il ne suffit plus une pastorale de l'accueil et de la conservation dans une société de mutation, de mobilité. Il faut apprendre à proposer la foi dans la société actuelle.[43] Pour cela, il y a donc urgence à redonner à la pastorale, action de l'Église dans l'histoire de l'humanité, son âme missionnaire. Il s'agit de substituer à une pastorale sédentaire ou domiciliaire, une pastorale de l'annonce, du témoignage avec des nouvelles formes et d'expressions.[44] La pastorale missionnaire s'offre comme exigence d'une vraie conversion pastorale qui permet une évangélisation en profondeur dans une société congolaise en mutation en proposant l'Évangile comme Bonne Nouvelle de la paix, justice et réconciliation entre les diverses ethnies.[45]

Conclusion

Prendre conscience d'être une Église missionnaire, c'est devenir une communauté des veilleurs qui annonce le lever du soleil de Dieu dans les ténèbres de l'histoire de l'humanité. Dans une culture de mobilité, la pastorale missionnaire n'est pas seulement une réponse aux défis, mais une contemporanéité critique qui oriente l'Église vers un nouvel être et agir. Elle est une pastorale qui «pré-vient», qui oriente, qui ouvre vers le devenir de l'Église dans ce monde en mutation. L'Évangile ne sera pas seulement une Parole de consolation, mais aussi et surtout une Parole qui «pré-vient», qui crée. Ainsi, la nouvelle évangélisation en Afrique sera une évangélisation dialogale, prophétique et inventive capable de proposer un christianisme de vie comme remède à la situation thanatologique d'une culture africaine en proie à l'ethnocentrisme, aux guerres fratricides.

Notes

[1] P.-E. Gaffat, «L'évangélisation dans les grandes villes», in M. Cheza, *Le Synode africain. Histoires et textes*, Karthala, Paris 1996, 72.

[2] *Cf.* L. Santedi Kinkupu, *Les défis de l'Évangélisation dans l'Afrique contemporaine*, Karthala, Paris, 2005.

[3] *Cf.* B. Tonna, *Un vangelo per la città, Il passaggio dalla missione rurale alla missione urbana nel Terzo Mondo*, EMI, Bologna, 1978, 29.

[4] Pinchemel, «Aspects de la vie urbaine», in *Études* 356/2 (1982), 214.

[5] J.-M. ELA, *La ville en Afrique noire*, Karthala, Paris, 1983, 51.

[6] I. N'Daywel, *Histoire générale du Congo. De l'héritage ancien à la République démocratique*, De Boeck and Larcier, Paris/Bruxelles 1998, 466.

[7] J.L. Piermay, «L'apprentissage de la ville en Afrique sub-saharienne», in *Le Mouvement Social* 204/1 (2003/3), 35-46.

[8] J. Pare, *Défis à la mission du troisième millénaire, Missionnaires de la Consolata*, Québec 2002, 132.

[9] J.-M. ELA, *La ville en Afrique noire*, 8.

[10] *Cf.* J.-G. Nadeau-M. Pelchat, «Présentation», in J.-G. Nadeau-M. Pelchat, *Dieu en ville. Évangile et Églises dans l'espace urbain. Textes du congrès de la société internationale de théologie pratique*, Les Editions du cerf, Paris, 1998, 9.

[11] *Cf.* A. Bagnasco, «Urbanizzazione», in *Enciclopedia delle scienze sociali*, 711.

[12] P. Pinchemel, «Aspects de la crise urbaine», 217.

[13] J. Comblin, T*héologie de la ville*, Éd. Universitaires, Paris, 1968, 250.

[14] M. Pivot, «Éditorial», in *Mission de l'Église* 146 (2005), 1; *cf.* J.-M. Ela, *La ville en Afrique noire*, 14.

[15] B. Tonna soutient que la théorie du «contraste», prônée par les sociologues comme Tönnies, Durkheim, Redfield, a généré deux effets contraires. Négativement, elle a créé le «mythe du village» qui serait meilleur et plus naturel que la ville. Mais positivement, elle a mis l'accent, avec idée précise, sur «le mode de vivre urbain», un mode divers de vivre, *cf.* B. Tonna, *Un vangelo per la città*, 54-55.

[16] *Cf.* Kämana, *L'Afrique va-t-elle mourir ? Bousculer l'imaginaire africain. Essai d'éthique politique*, Éd. du Cerf, Paris, 1993, 185.

[17] P. Chamard-Bois, «Défis de l'urbanité aujourd'hui et art de vivre selon l'Évangile», in *Mission de l'Église* 146 (2005), 66.

[18] *Cf.* T. Paquot, *Homo urbanus*, Félin, Paris, 1990, 85; W. Kasper, *Teologia e Chiesa,* Queriniana, Brescia, 1989, 284.

[19] *Cf.* R. Sennet, *La coscienza dell'occhio. Progetto e vita nelle città*, Milano, 1992, 12.

[20] *Cf.* B. Tonna, *Un vangelo per la città,* 39-40.

[21] *Cf.* E. Lapointe, *A ce monde aimé de Dieu proclamer l'Évangile. La mission aujourd'hui*, Médiaspaul, Montréal, 1997, 72.

[22] P. Pinchemel, «Aspects de la crise urbaine», 218.

[23] C. Sepe, *Message de son Eminence le cardinal C. Sepe, préfet de la congrégation pour l'évangélisation des peuples, au congrès international de missiologie* «Tertio millennio», Kinshasa du 11 au 17 juillet 2004, in T.T. Tshibangu (*éd.*), L'avenir de l'activité missionnaire 'Ad Gentes', 5.

[24] *Cf.* B. Forte, "Que signifie évangéliser?", in *DC* 2324 (2004), 990.

[25] *Cf.* M. Denekew, «La mission comme la nouvelle évangélisation», in *Revue des sciences religieuses* 80 (2006) 2, 230.

[26] *Cf.* Esquedra Biffet, *Pastorale per una chiesa missionaria*, PUU, Roma, 1991, 11.

[27] *Cf.* Esquedra Biffet, *Pastorale per una chiesa missionaria,* 52-55.

[28] *Cf.* B. Forte, "Que signifie évangéliser?", in *DC* 2324 (2004), 994.

[29] *Cf.* Esquedra Biffet, *Pastorale per una chiesa missionaria*, 22-24.

[30] *Cf.* E. Meo, *Cristo fuori le mura. Quale missione per le chiese italiane?*, Gribaudi, Torino, 1985, 8.

[31] *Cf.* G. Colombo, «Pastorale missionaria», in *Dizionario di missiologia*, EDB, Bologna, 1993, 393-393.

[32] *Cf.* F.-V. Antony, "Una pastorale in prospettiva missionaria", in *Istituto di Teologia Giovanile UPS*, Pastorale Giovanile, Elledici, Leumann (Torino), 2003, 97-109.

[33] *Cf.* F. Cagnaso, "La missione e le sfide del tempo presente", in *Mondo e Missione* 128 (1999), 8, 12.

[34] *Cf.* D.J. Bosch, *La trasformazione della missione. Mutamenti di paradigma in missiologica*, Queriniana, Brescia, 200, 684.

[35] *Cf.* S. Pintor, «Per una teologia pastorale in prospettiva missionaria», in *EUNTES Docete* 42 (1989), 427.

[36] *Ibidem*, 430-436.

[37] Se situant dans la prospective plus théologique qu'ecclésiologique de la Conférence protestante de Willingen de l'IMC (1952) qui traitait du devoir missionnaire de l'Église, J.-F. Zorn rapporte que la mission doit donc être rattachée à sa source-même, c'est-à-dire le Dieu trinitaire. *Cf.* J.-F. Zorn, *La missiologie. Émergence d'une discipline théologique*, Labor et Fides, Genève, 2004, 64.

[38] *Cf.* E. Meo, *Verso una pastorale missionaria. Note per gli animatori ed agenti di pastorale*, EMI, Bologna, 1989.

[39] *Ibidem*, 11.

[40] *Cf. Ibidem*, 22.

[41] *Ibidem*, 85.

[42] *Ibidem*, 22.

[43] *Cf.* Éveques de France, *Proposer la foi dans la société actuelle. Lettre aux catholiques de France*, Cerf, Paris, 1997.

[44] *Cf.* E. Meo, *Cristo fuori le mura. Quale missione per le chiese italiane?*, Gribaudi, Torino, 1985, 7.

[45] *Cf.* Cenco, *Nouvelle évangélisation et catéchèse dans la perspective de l'Église famille de Dieu en Afrique. Instructions à l'usage des agents de l'évangélisation et de la catéchèse en République démocratique du Congo*, Éd. Secrétariat Général de la CENC, Kinshasa, 2000, 10.

Indunil Janaka Kodithuwakku

Religious Fundamentalisms and Christian Mission as Dialogue

"Religious freedom, the path to peace" is the theme Pope Benedict XVI has chosen for the celebration of the *2011 World Day of Peace.* "In Jakarta, Christian priests and activists, first target of Islam terrorists".[1] "Two Christian women were killed in Mosul".[2] "Coptic Christians, women and other minorities are paying the price of increasing Islamisation in Egyptian society, says leading author and intellectual Tarek Heggy".[3] "Chaldean Bishops appeal for Mosul, emptying of Christians".[4] A group of Hindu fundamentalists with links to the Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP) attacked properties owned by Christians in Orissa.[5] The books "Buddhism and Politics in twentieth-century Asia"[6] and "Buddhist Fundamentalism and Minority Identities in Sri Lanka"[7] speak of the Buddhist fundamentalism in Asia. Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby analyze various fundamentalist groups in different religions and regions in the world as follows: Christian Fundamentalism, Jewish Fundamentalism, Islamic Fundamentalism, Hindu Fundamentalism in India, Buddhist fundamentalism in Sri Lanka.[8] The explosive situation in Sri Lanka reveals how fundamentalism breeds fundamentalism.[9]

The Paradox of Religions

A paradox of the era of globalization is the alliance between religion and violence, or acts of religious terrorism, as well as religion and peace. Thus, the modern world is characterized not only by martyrs for peace and non-violence but also for war and violence. Virtually every major religious tradition — Christian, Jewish, Hindu, Islam, Sikh and Buddhist — has served both as a source for violent actors and for non-violent militants and peacemakers. Religions are capable of providing the ideological resources for violence and non-violence. If Asia is the cradle of world's major religions, and if the rise of religious fundamentalism and violence is a social phenomenon in Asia, then naturally the Christian cannot turn a blind eye to this alarming factor. If the Christian evangelizing mission aims to build a harmonious society theologically and sociologically, as a religious minority in Asia, then Christians ought to enter into a healthy intra-Christian and interreligious dialogue. Yet, the Christians also have added fuel to the fire. The aggressive mission by some Christians, tantamount to the colonial epoch, has caused tensions not only among Christians and other religions but also among different Christian denominations.

Besides, "Religious genocide", "religious cleansing", "Christian phobia", "Islam phobia", "clash of civilizations" are neologisms often found today in the media. Mohammad Khatami (former President of Iran) introduced the idea of "Dialogue among Civilizations" as a response to the theory of "Clash of Civilizations". The term "Dialogue among Civilizations" became famous after the United Nations adopted a resolution to name the year 2001, the Year of Dialogue Among Civilizations. This article attempts to examine why fundamentalisms thrive today, what their characteristics are, how dialogue can contribute to build a "civilization of love" in place of the culture of death. Moreover, if religious fundamentalism is a serious social and missiological problem then one must discover what factors contributed to its birth and growth.

Accounting for Fundamentalisms

From the Latin fundamentum, (foundation), the term 'fundamentalism' refers to an attitude which emerged at the beginning of the 1900s among Protestant circles, particularly in North America. Today fundamentalism is more generally understood to refer to extreme conservatism. In assuming an attitude of inflexible superiority, and making religion the only reference point in human life, fundamentalists oppose pluralism and totally reject anyone and anything outside their world vision. The followers of fundamentalism fight for the restoration

of their religion, which they consider should also be imposed, at any price, as a political power. "Currently, Fundamentalism is seen to define a range of movements, either religious or socio-political (but more often both), in all religions of the world, which aims to impose specific traditions — whether religious, national, cultural, or ethnic — on societies thought to be in danger of straying from the 'fundamentals' that hold them together".[10] The Encyclopedia of Fundamentalism notes: "Fundamentalists advanced an absolutist claim to religious truth, and displayed an emphatic intolerance of other religiously inspired actors of their era. Fervent, exclusive, religious clarity achieved via an erasure of doubt […]".[11]

It is interesting to see the link between the birth of Fundamentalism and the change of the social system. "Historically […], the Fundamentalist movements were a popular means of revolt against modernism by the traditional Christians at serious odds with the dominant values of a rapidly developing modern, technological, capitalistic society, and often squeezed out of meaningful participation in it as well".[12] Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby in *Fundamentalisms Observed*, argue that even today, religious fundamentalism arises as a reaction to modern cultures. According to them, fundamentalists identify three principal threats from modern culture: "a preference for secular rationality; the adoption of religious tolerance with accompanying tendencies toward relativism; and individualism".[13] Nevertheless, the above-mentioned scholars affirm that fundamentalists do not reject modernity en masse, rather they use technology, mass media of communications and other instruments of modernity for their purposes.

Fundamentalisms and Globalization

There is a link between the birth of Fundamentalisms and the world disorder. Robert J. Schreiter, in "The New Catholicity, Theology between the Global and the Local", divides the evolution of the Church's modern missionary activity into three periods namely:

1. The period of Expansion (1492-1945)
2. The period of Solidarity (1945-1989)
3. The period of Globalization (1989-)[14]

Accordingly, since 1989 the world belongs to the history of globalization. Thus, it is correct to say that globalization is a contributory factor to the rebirth of Fundamentalisms, "In summary, it has been said that fundamentalism is a reactionary gesture in a world that is moving too fast toward conformity and unity; a world that demands tolerance for the sake of the "new world order".[15] "Globalization has been accused of helping to spark new religious wars by favouring conditions for the birth of quasi-religious movements, and the rebirth of fundamentalism".[16] "Perhaps, one could say that it (Fundamentalism) is the opposite pole of globalization".[17] Samir Dasgupta argues that due to the unevenness of globalization, the strong seem to be growing stronger and the weak even weaker. Hence, there are winners and losers.[18] Joseph E. Stiglitz's book, Globalization and its Discontents, reveals an insider's insights into the mismanaged globalization by the International Monetary Fund, World Bank, and World Trade Organization.

The proponents of globalization predicted that the "global village" would bring an end to parochialism and nationalism.[19] Yet, on the contrary, the rise of fundamentalism and nationalism are a social phenomenon not only in developing countries but in Europe as well.[20] Samuel Huntington argues that the progress of globalization will be severely constrained by religio-political barriers.[21] Thus, the clash of civilizations (religions/cultures/ethnic communities) have global roots. As a matter of fact, people who resort to fundamentalism seek security and stability in times of social and economic instability. Fundamentalisms arise or come to prominence in times of crisis, actual or perceived. The "shrinking global economic fortune has led to extreme human suffering and domestic political instability. In unstable political and economic situations, fundamentalists have encouraged their followers to take whatever personal control of their lives they could

and not to worry so much about the larger contexts".[22] The growing divide between the haves and the have-nots has left increasing numbers in the Third World in dire poverty, surving on less than a dollar a day. Joseph E. Stiglitz is correct when he says, "If globalization has not succeeded in reducing poverty, neither has it succeeded in ensuring stability".[23] Furthermore, the soul-searching question of Joseph E. Stiglitz has a direct impact on the mission of the Church. "What could we do about the 1.2 billion people around the world living on less than a dollar a day, or the 2.8 billion people living on less than $2 a day — more than 45 percent of the world's population?".[24] The former president of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace Cardinal Renato Martino says, that "Poverty and, above all, the growing inequality between areas, continents and countries, including within the latter, constitutes the most dramatic problem facing the world today".[25] Thus, the fertilizing factors for extremism in the world are inequality, despotism, stereotyping, poverty, sense of insecurity, disappointment from peaceful means, humiliation. Besides, Archbishop Migliore, speaking to the Third Committee of the 63rd session of the U.N. General Assembly on the promotion and protection of human rights, noted that "The current global economic collapse highlights and will surely exacerbate the plight of the so-called 'bottom billion', a figure which, due to the present aggravating conjuncture, is constantly on the rise".[26] Thus, the present global financial crisis adds fuel to the fire and thereby worsens the problem of fundamentalism.

Characteristics of Fundamentalisms

Santosh C. Saha identifies the characteristics commonly associated with religious fundamentalism as follows: **1.** A conscious effort to return to the core beliefs or values of a given religion or culture; **2.** Texts taken to be authoritative are used to justify the return to past beliefs or values; **3.** An attitude of ambivalence is expressed towards modernity and secularism; **4.** There is a self-appointed élite that assumes the leadership role in promoting the fundamentalist agenda; **5.** The goal of these élites is the transformation of society including the capture of State power; **6.** While some use violence to achieve their ends others reject it.[27] The theology of Protestant Fundamentalism active today demonstrates the following features; **1.** The idea that the human had the ability to convince people to be "saved" opened the floodgates of innovation to make converts. Success was based on the number of people an evangelist could "save". **2.** The individual has the ability to choose or reject God. **3.** The new eschatological system is called "dispensational pre-millennialism". Accordingly, the world was a lost cause, and so it was a Christian duty to save as many people as possible, because God was about to "rapture" all Christians out of the world, before a "great period of tribulation would begin on earth".[28]

In general the ideological characteristics of Fundamentalism are the following: **1)** Ideological characteristics of fundamentalism: — a reaction to the processes and consequences of secularization and modernization. Thus, a threat to the traditional religion may be posed by modernization and secularization; other religions and/or ethnic groups: a secular State seeking to secularize and delimit the domain of the sacred; Hindu versus Muslim in India, the Palestinian Muslims versus occupying Israel. Fundamentalism is a militant effort to counteract this trend. **2)** Selectivity: — for example Protestant fundamentalists select the apocalyptic prophesies in the Books of Daniel and Revelation. **3)** Moral Manichaeism or dualistic worldview: — the world outside is contaminated, sinful, doomed whereas the world inside is a pure and redeemed "remnant"; for instance for Shiite extremists the sinful world would include, first, the secularized Shiite Muslims, then, the Sunni Muslims, and then the various infidel Satans great and small. **4)** Particularly absolutism and inerrancy in all the sacred scriptures: - the Torah, the Talmud, the Halakha, the Qu'ran, the Shari'a, the Bible. **5)** Millennialism and Messianism promise victory to the believer at the end of time. Millennialism promises the end of suffering and waiting, whereas Messianism promises an all-powerful mediator. The promised outcome of the Hindu Movements and the Sinhala Buddhists is a nation safeguarded from threatening alien penetration. For example the Kingdom of Ram, Khalistan, and a purely Buddhist "kingdom" in Sri Lanka have millennial overtones.[29]

Religious Fundamentalism and Conversion Debate

Different understandings of conversion exist among the different churches and ecclesial groups and the Catholic Church.[30] Besides, the local religions often react to the new invasion of Christian fundamentalism. Sinhala Buddhist Fundamentalists see "Fundamentalists/ Evangelists as the modern version of the missionaries of the past, […] who wish to make a fresh attempt at Christianizing the now free, independent people of their former colonies to make them docile obedient servants in the new Global village, to the multi-nationals".[31] The political arm of the Sinhala Buddhist Fundamentalism, *Jatika Hela Urumaya* (JHU or National Heritage), presented to the parliament two Bills (21 July 2004 and 6 May 2005) for the "Prohibition of Forced Conversion of Religion", unsuccessfully. Twenty-two Petitions (Catholic and Anglican priests, Catholic Bishops, National Evangelical Alliance, civil society organizations) were filed in the Supreme Court citing the proposed Anti-Conversion Bill as a violation of Article 10 of the Constitution. The Catholic Church too names the new Christian movements as the "Fundamentalist Christian Sects" and refuses to associate with them. Furthermore, it complains that "They mostly peruse our Catholics, often with their own interpretations of the Bible".[32] Thus, some Christian groups become "far other/alien" to the Catholic Church as well. Moreover, The Catholic Bishops' Conference of Sri Lanka (CBCSL) proposes as a solution the establishment of an Inter-Religious Council by an Act of Parliament. National Christian Evangelical Alliance of Sri Lanka comprised of 45 members refuted the allegation that they use unethical methods of conversion. Their Reports reveal the island-wide destruction and harassment perpetrated on their members and properties. The same tension exists in India. The Indian Bishops on anti-Christian violence refute the allegation of "unethical conversion". "We are convinced that the allegation of forced conversions by Christian communities is merely a strategy developed by vested interests".[33]

Human Rights[34] and the Conversion Debate

John Witte, Jr., sees the modern human rights revolution as a paradox. On the one hand, it has awakened the religions around the world. "On the other hand, the very same human rights revolution today has helped to catalyze new forms of religious and ethnic conflict, oppression, and belligerence, of tragic proportions".[35] Thus, two absolute principles of human rights have come into direct conflict. The foreign religions demand freedom to share and expand its respective faith and the indigenous religions seek to ensure the liberty of conscience right (leave us alone in our own territory). Accordingly, it has given birth to a chain of conflicts.

I. "a theological war" defaming and demonizing rival Christian groups at the cost of the ecumenical spirit of the previous decades.

II. "interreligious conflicts" ruining the interreligious dialogue constructed with difficulty.

III. "a legal war" intervention of local political leaders often in favour of the local religion/s.

IV. "a global rights talk" intervention of international human rights bodies and some Western Governments in favour of the foreign religion, often Christianity.

Furthermore, John Witte Jr., argues that the rights talk alone cannot resolve this dispute, it has inspired the earnest search for additional resources to deter violence, resolve disputes, cultivate peace, ensure security — in dialogue, liturgical healing, ceremonies of reconciliation, and more.

Dialogue and Building a More Fraternal World

Dialogue is the obligatory path to the building of a reconciled world. Thus, intra-religious and inter-religious dialogue is a privileged means for building the "civilization of love". The wise words of Pope John Paul II shed much light on this matter. "In our march toward the Third Millennium, I have recalled that dialogue among religions is a way of creating a civilization of love, 'not to cause harmful misunderstanding, avoiding the risk of syncretism'" (*TMA*, n. 53). Pope Benedict XVI said to the International Jewish Committee on Interreligious Consultations that interreligious dialogue is becoming more and more of a sacred duty.

"In our troubled world, so frequently marked by poverty, violence and exploitation, dialogue between cultures and religions must more and more be seen as a sacred duty incumbent upon all those who are committed to building a world worthy of man. The ability to accept and respect one another, and to speak the truth in love, is essential for overcoming differences, preventing misunderstandings and avoiding needless confrontations. […] A sincere dialogue needs both openness and a firm sense of identity on both sides, in order for each to be enriched by the gifts of the other".[36]

In this perspective, Christians have a major role to play. It is tragic and scandalous to see that Christians, claiming to profess the one Gospel of Jesus, are split into so many confessions and fighting among themselves. This is not only a counter-witness but also contradicts the Christian vocation of reconciliation. "It is all God's work; he reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation. So we are ambassadors for Christ (I Cor 5:18-20)". Hence, unity among Christians is of paramount importance, prior to speaking of interreligious harmony. Therefore, all the churches need a conversion, metanoia, a return to God. "Churches as a whole should rather listen to what the Spirit of God is saying to them through other churches, instead of claiming the truth of the Spirit for themselves alone".[37] Christians, instead of aggressive and provocative evangelism and a fanatic conversion drive, need to collaborate with the *Missio Dei* in converting the whole of humanity and the unjust structures, which belittle the dignity of the human person created in God's own image and redeemed by Jesus Christ. God has been speaking to various people through many prophets and sages (Heb 1:1). Ever since Creation, the Spirit of God has been active in the world, in human beings, and in their religions. God is at work in our world, inviting all to participate in the healing and reconciling mission of God. Pope John Paul II observed, "there will be peace only to the extent that humanity as a whole rediscovers its fundamental calling to be one family, a family in which the dignity and the rights of individuals — whatever their status, race or religion — are accepted as prior and superior to any kind of difference or distinction".[38] The same Pope affirmed, "The Catholic Church has time and again expressed the conviction that all people, both believers and non believers, must unite and collaborate in the task of bettering this world where all live together".[39] We cannot have peace without justice and equality. Today, integral evangelization comprises the proclamation, dialogue, inculturation and liberation of the poor. Proclamation is the centre of missionary activity. In the context of globalization, the Church needs to denounce the false gods presented by globalization and the use of violence by fundamentalists in the name of religion. "Yet, great religious traditions have within them resources both for promoting peacemaking and for abetting violence".[40] Pope John Paul II reiterated that what is usually referred to as fundamentalism is an attitude radically opposed to belief in God. "Terrorism exploits not just people, it exploits God: it ends by making him an idol to be used for one's own purposes. Consequently, no religious leader can condone terrorism, and much less preach it".[41]

Conclusion

Religious fundamentalism often emerges as a result of socio-political, cultural and economic instability. Hence, religious leaders have a pressing duty to collaborate to eradicate the socio-political, cultural and economic causes which give rise to fundamentalisms. "This inter-religious collaboration must also be concerned with the struggle to eliminate hunger, poverty, ignorance, persecution, discrimination, and every form of enslavement of the human spirit".[42] Besides, globalization creates new opportunities and a new need to cooperate in the service of humanity: to help the poor, the weak,

and the needy, to promote development, to strive for justice and to work for peace in the world.[43] Thus, human promotion is not merely an economic or social issue, but a fundamental moral question. The human person created into the likeness and image of God suffers due to exploitation, manipulation, discrimination and exclusion by local and global actors. As a community witnessing to the Crucified Lord, the Church must stand on the side of the victims, the discontents and the excluded of globalization. "It is only when one can recognize Jesus as the victim, as the crucified subaltern who is raised by God, that meaning and salvation become possible".[44] Accordingly, the Church shows a preferential option for the poor and the voiceless, because the Lord has identified himself with them in a special way. The solidarity with the poor leads to the collaboration among the various religions, since poverty is a problem of the universal human family. Therefore, the benefits and fruits of inter-religious dialogue can be listed as follows:

1. It increases and deepens mutual respect and paves the way for relationships which are crucial in solving the problem of human suffering.

2. Respectful and broadminded dialogue can promote union and a commitment to this noble cause.

3. The experience of dialogue gives a sense of solidarity and courage for overcoming barriers and difficulties in the task of nation-building.

4. Without dialogue the barriers of prejudice, suspicion, and misunderstanding cannot be effectively removed.

5. With dialogue, each partner makes an honest attempt to deal with the common problems of life and receives courage to accept the challenge of pursuing truth and achieving good.

6. Dialogue is a means of seeking after truth and sharing it with others.

7. Dialogue is an apt means for establishing and developing mutual understanding, esteem and love, whether between individuals or groups.

8. The fruit of dialogue is union between people and union of people with God.

9. By dialogue, we let God be present in our midst, for as we open ourselves in dialogue to one another, we also open ourselves to God.

10. Dialogue leads to promoting and defending common ideals in social spheres of religious liberty, human brotherhood, education, culture, social welfare, and civic order.[45]

Notes

[1] http://www.asianews.it (29.10.2008).

[2] http://www.persecution.org (14.11.2008).

[3] http://www.persecution.org (14.11.2008).

[4] http://www.asianews.it (27.10.2008).

[5] *Cfr.* http://www.asianews.it (01.10.2008).

[6] Ian Harris (ed.), *Buddhism and Politics in Twentieth-Century Asia*, Continuum, London-New York, 1999.

[7] Tessa Bartholomeusz-Chandra De Silva, (eds.), *Buddhist Fundamentalism and Minority Identities in Sri Lanka*, State University of New York Press, 1998.

[8] Martin E. Marty–R. Scott Appleby (eds.), *Fundamentalisms Observed*, Chicago University Press, Chicago, 1991; Martin E. Marty–R. Scott Appleby (eds.), *Accounting for Fundamentalisms*, Chicago University Press, Chicago, 1994; Martin E. Marty–R. Scott Appleby (eds.), *Fundamentalisms Comprehended*, Chicago University Press, Chicago, 1995.

[9] Recently, Archbishop Malcolm Ranjith of Colombo, Sri Lanka, expressed his concern regarding the school texts which tend to defame Christians, the Church and the Pope. The new textbooks offered by the Ministry equate Christianity and Western culture, accused of trying to destroy the Sinhalese culture. (http://www.asianews.it/news-en/School-texts-in-Sri-Lanka-defame-Christians,-the-Church-and-the-Pope-18805.html#). It is also interesting to see the other side of the coin. The article entitled: "The Truth about the Attack on The Talahena Calvary Church in Sri Lanka", by The Centre for Buddhist Action, gives vent to the grievances of Buddhists. It is

not uncommon to find "Stories about 'attacks' on Christian fundamentalist groups circulated among Christian news networks because their intention, as always, is to portray Christian evangelists as 'martyrs', thus proclaimig to the world that Buddhists and Buddhist monks in Sri Lanka are intolerant people who do not respect minority religions. By spreading distorted half truths, certain Christian churches (both of the Orthodox and born again variety) hope to gain the sympathy of unsuspecting Christians in order to build up an anti-Sri Lankan/anti-Buddhist propaganda network that will further their aggressive agenda of conversion" (http://www.paklinks.com/gs/world-affairs/295044-christian-fundamentalism-in-sri-lanka.html). "Ethnic Identity, Religious Fundamentalism and Muslim Women in Sri Lanka" not only describes how one fundamentalism contributes to breed other religious fundamentalism but also their relationship with ethnic and cultural identities. "Ethnic consciousness seeks a separate ethnic identity for a community, based on its cultural ideology and traditional mythology. The Sinhalese sought their identity in Buddhism and their imaginative historical mythology and the Tamils sought their identity first in Hinduism especially in Saivaism and later in their glorious linguistic and cultural heritage. Similarly, Sri Lankan Muslims sought their identity in Islam and their glorious Islamic historical past" (http://www.wluml.org/node/322).

[10] Santosh C. Saha–Thomas K. Carr, *Religious Fundamentalism in Developing Countries*, Greenwood Press, Westport, London, 2001, p. 2.

[11] Brenda E. Brasher (ed.,) *Encyclopedia of Fundamentalism*, Routledge, New York, 2001, xv.

[12] *Ibidem*, xv.

[13] Martin E. Marty-R. Scott Appleby, *Fundamentalisms Observed*, Chicago University Press, Chicago, 1991, vii.

[14] *Cf.* Robert J. Schreiter, *The New Catholicity; Theology Between the Global and the Local*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, NY, 1997, pp. 122-126.

[15] Santosh C. Saha-Thomas K. Carr, R*eligious Fundamentalism in Developing Countries*, Greenwood Press, Westport, London, 2001, p. 4.

[16] Guido Bolaffi-Raffaele Bracalenti-Peter Braham-Sandro Gindro, *Dictionary of Race, Ethnicity and Culture*, SAGE Publications, London - Thousand Oaks - New Delhi, 2003, pp. 289-291.

[17] John Locke, "*The Call to a Renewed Church in Asia and the Challenges of Religious Fundamentalism*", Seventh Plenary Assembly, FABC Papers, n. 92m. This article also touches on themes like the causes of the rise of fundamentalism, political fundamentalism, religious fundamentalism including evangelical and Pentecostal groups and Catholic fundamentalism.

[18] *Cf.* Samir Dasgupta (ed.), *The Changing Face of Globalization*, SAGE Publications, New Delhi - Thousand Oaks - London, 2004, p. 15.

[19] Marshall McLuhan, *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1962. Kevin Kelly, *Out of Control*, Addison-Wesley, New York, 1994; Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, Penguin, 1992.

[20] See, Hubert Vedrine, *France in an Era of Globalization*, Brookings Institute Press, Washington, DC, 2001. S. Meunier, «*The French Exception*», Foreign Affairs 79 (4), pp. 104-116.

[21] Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remarking of the World Order*, Simon and Schuster, New York–London–Toronto–Sydney, 1996. According to him the post-Cold War World is dissolving into regional alliances based on religious belief and historical attachment to various civilizations. They are: Western Christianity (Catholicism and Protestantism) Orthodox Christianity (Russian and Greek), Islam, Hinduism and Confucianism.

[22] Martin E. Marty–R. Scott Appleby (eds.), *Accounting for Fundamentalisms,* Chicago University Press, Chicago, 1994, p. 32.

[23] Joseph E. Stiglitz, *Globalization and its Discontents*, W. W. Norton and Company, New York, 2003, p. 6.

[24] *Ibidem*, p. 25.

[25] http://www.zenit.org (02.09.2008)

[26] http://www.zenit.org (29.10.2008)

[27] *Cf.* Santosh C. Saha (ed.,) *Religious Fundamentalism in the Contemporary World, Critical Social and Political Issues*, Lexington Books, Lanham-Boulder-New York-Toronto-Oxford, 2004, p. 2.

[28] *Cf.* Martin E. Marty–R. Scott Appleby, *Fundamentalisms Observed*, Chicago University Press, Chicago, 1991, p. 461.

[29] *Cf.* Gabriel A. Almond–Emmanuel Silva–R. Scott Appleby, «Fundamentalism: Genus and Species», in Martin E. Marty–R. Scott Appleby, (eds.), *Fundamentalisms Comprehended*, pp. 405-407.

[30] The Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, "Roman Catholic/Pentecostal Dialogue: Final Report on Dialogue: 1972-1976", *Information Service*, 32 (1976/III), pp. 31-36. "Final Report Between SPCU and some Classical Pentecostals, 1977-1982", *Information Service*, 65 (1984/II-III), pp. 72-80. "Sects and New Religious Movements: Pastoral Challenge", *Information Service*, 61 (1986/III), p. 150. "Pentecostal-Catholic Dialogue", 1985-1989, *Information Service*, 75 (1990/IV), pp. 179-191. "Evangelization, Proselytism and Common Witness, The Report From the Fourth Phase of the International Dialogue 1990-1997 Between the Roman Catholic Church and Some Classical Pentecostal Churches and Leaders", *Information Service*, 97 (1998/I-II), pp. 38-57. "Church, Evangelization and the Bonds of Koinonia: A Report of the International Consultation Between the Catholic Church and the World Evangelical Alliance (1993-2002)", *Information Service*, 113 (2003/11/111), pp. 85-101.

[31] Report of the Sinhala Commission (Part II), *The National Joint Committee,* Colombo, Sri Lanka, 2001, p. 138.

[32] Catholic Bishops' Conference of Sri Lanka, *Our Catholic Stance on So-called "Unethical Conversion"*, 15 December 2003.

[33] http://www.zenit.org (26.09.2008).

[34] Article 18 of the 1948 Universal Declaration guarantees: "Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion; this right includes the right to change his religion and belief". Article 18 of the 1966: "International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights" also includes having or adopting a religion or belief of his choice. "The 1981 Declaration on Religious Intolerance and Discrimination Based upon Religion and Belief" also ensures religious liberty.

[35] John Witte, Jr.–Richard C. Martin (eds.), *Sharing the Book, Religious Perspectives on the Rights and Wrongs of Proselytism*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, NY, 1999, xii.

[36] www.zenit.org (30.10.2008).

[37] Anton Houtepen, "Conversion and the Religious Market: A Theological Perspective", in *Exchange, Journal of Missiological and Ecumenical Research*, 35 (2006), p. 37.

[38] John Paul II, "Message for the World Day of Peace 2000", n. 5, Rome, 8 December 1999, in Francesco Gioia (ed.), *PCID, Interreligious Dialogue, The Official Teaching of the Catholic Church From the Second Vatican Council to John Paul II (1963-2005)*, Pauline Books and Media, Boston, MA 2006, p. 739.

[39] John Paul II, "To the Religious Authorities in India", Calcutta, 3 February 1986, in Francesco Gioia (ed.), *Interreligious Dialogue, The Official Teaching of the Catholic Church From the Second Vatican Council to John Paul II (1963-2005)*, p. 365.

[40] Robert J. Schreiter, "Epilogue, Mission in the Third Millennium", in Robert J. Schreiter (ed.), *Mission in the Third Millennium*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, NY, 2001, p. 151.

[41] John Paul II, "Message for the World Day of Peace 2002", nn. 6,7, Rome, 8 December 2001, in Francesco Gioia (ed.), *PCID, Interreligious Dialogue, The Official Teaching of the Catholic Church From the Second Vatican Council to John Paul II (1963-2005)*, p. 923.

[42] John Paul II, "To Representatives of the Various Religious–Cultural Groups of India", n. 7, at Indira Gandhi Stadium, New Delhi, 2 February 1986, in I*nterreligious Dialogue, The Official Teaching of the Catholic Church From the Second Vatican Council to John Paul II (1963-2005)*, p. 356.

[43] *Cf. The Joint Colloquium* (*the World Islamic Call Society and the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue*), 16-18 March 2002, Tripoli-Libya, "A Culture of Dialogue in an Era of Globalization", in *Pro Dialogo*, 110 (2002/2), pp. 229-230.

[44] John A. Coleman–William F. Rayan (eds.), *Globalization and Catholic Social Thought, Present Crisis, Future Hope*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, NY, 2005, p. 190.

[45] *Cf.* John Paul II, "Discourse to non-Christian Representatives of the Various Religions of India", nn. 3, 4, at Rajaji Hall, Madras, 5 February 1986, in *Interreligious Dialogue, The Official Teaching of the Catholic Church from the Second Vatican Council to John Paul II (1963-2005)*, p. 365.

Fr Domenico Arena, OMI*

Proclamation and Witness in the Light of the Missionary Communion Facing a Globalized World: New Life in Jesus

Some of the most recent reflections on missionary communion have revealed an ideal of mission. This ideal provides good answers to the challenges of the globalized world of today. Consequently, missionary communion has a positive effect on the proclamation and the testimony of the Gospel, since any Christian, by the mandate of Christ, and as a member of the Church which by nature is missionary, has to give witness to all, everywhere and always.

Missionary communion facing a globalized World

This missionary communion is an ideal coming from the heart of the Trinity (communion on mission); and — well rooted in the Holy Scriptures (the missionary example of the God-man, the primitive Church, and Saint Paul); germinated and has been developped since the Second Vatican Council and launched after being ratified by the Church [*Christifideles Laici* (= *CL*) and other documents], pushing us to develop some of its missiological aspects. Thus, I propose to put this point of view: missionary communion can contribute to globalization as well as to the proclamation and the witness of the Gospel.

Indeed, in the context of a globalized world, this paradigm proposes the life of communion as a valid answer to avoid the risk, inherent in globalization, to operate a generalized cultural levelling whereby the respect due to the cultures of minorities would be missing. Thanks to the universal openness and ecumenical propensity, specific to its Trinitarian origin, this missionary paradigm introduces within the globalization phenomenon the added value of communion. This added value leads people and communities to seek to harmonise their various cultures for reciprocal enrichment while avoiding syncretistic — and sometimes palliative — solutions. Concerning the standardizing power of globalization, it is well known that there are two immediately possible solutions. The first, is to stoop to this standardizing levelling by sacrificing part of one's own identity. The second, is to decide to completely to reject it to guarantee one's own identity at all costs, with the risk of marginalising oneself in the present and thus missing the train to the future. Between these alternatives, we seek the answer provided by missionary communion. In fact, the latter solution seems to represent the best framework of life and action which, respecting all the cultural characteristics and valorising their positive aspects, seeks to stimulate globalization to increase solidarity between people. In that, missionary communion would operate in the various sectors of society (economics, politics, culture, religion ...) to make globalization a force to strengthen mutual enrichment rather than a tyrannical, oppressive force that impoverishes peoples and their cultures.

However, this possibility is primarily due to the fact that missionary communion is based on two dynamic principles, without which it would not be able to fulfill its promises. The first principle is love of God and of neighbour (*cf.* Mt 22:34-40; 7:2) that involves mutual love (*cf.* Jn 13:34-35) and thus the suitable outreach to unify the community (*cf.* Jn 17:21). It is about this love, coming from God the Father, expressed in his Son Jesus-Christ and imbued in us by the Holy Ghost. This love, practiced by the people concerned, dilates so that one opens and respects otherness and, by its unitive nature, seeks their harmonic and enriching composition. The second is the principle of the

kenosis (*cf.* Phil 2:6-11), the fact of emptying oneself through love for the other following Christ's example for a unifying co-penetration of divine and of human love. It is a principle of Christic life (the road followed even by God in order to restore communion with humanity and the world), which can become the path and the key to the solution of any conflict in the force of the Spirit for a life with even fuller communion. Practically, kenosis consists in the gift of life like the other's until the end (*cf.* Jn 13:1; 15:13). A gift of total love (death on the cross) which, as in the case of Christ, leads to the experience of new life (resurrection-exaltation) which appears in plenitude at the beginning of a community (Church). In such a community, a stronger communion can be carried out between individuals of various cultures in respect of the equal opportunities for the otherness involved. This is in accordance with the teachings of Saint Paul's missionary experience, verifiable in certain Letters of the Pauline Corpus (Galatians, I Corinthians, Philippians and Romans) and in the Acts of the Apostles (Arena 2009:19s).

All the conditions then are met so that communion becomes missionary in the globalized world of today: "And communion with others is the most magnificent fruit that the branches can give: in fact, it is the gift of Christ and His Spirit. At this point communion begets communion: essentially it is likened to a mission on behalf of communion [(missionary communion)]. [...] Communion and mission are profoundly connected with each other, they interpenetrate and mutually imply each other, to the point that communion represents both the source and the fruit of mission: communion gives rise to mission and mission is accomplished in communion. It is always the one and the same Spirit who calls together and unifies the Church and sends her to preach the Gospel 'to the ends of the earth' (Acts 1:8)" (CL 32, 35).

This approach to missionary communion, so well in tune with the context of the globalization of cultures in fact, sheds light on the topics of the proclamation and witness in mission, giving it a new dynamism.

Proclamation
One could see that missionary communion is ready to unify the multiple and various ways of mission compared to the different 'areopagi' of today; "Indeed missionary communion makes love the engine of mission. By doing this, it unifies, by harmonizing them in their complementarity, the principal ways of mission such as proclamation, witness, dialogue, inculturation and human promotion. But, at the same time, the spirit of communion is able to give to all these ways a surplus of dynamism and success" (*cf.* Arena Mupaya 2010:17).

Regarding proclamation in the light of missionary communion, one can say that it acquires or grows rich with other qualities and significances that legitimate it especially in regard to the mission *ad gentes*.

First of all, the paradigm of missionary communion raises awareness to the fact that the proclamation of the Gospel is fundamentally the proclamation of a message of communion (Arena 2008:249-256). *i.e.* the Gospel is proclaimed to create and establish communion between women and men (Church) and between the latter and God. This is theologically understood if it is thought that precisely this Gospel comes down from God who is communion of love; that it is revealed for the first time by Jesus-Christ, the missionary of the Trinitarian communion ("Master of the unity [...] and of harmony, who taught us unity" according to Saint Cyprian's statement); and that it is communicated to believers in all its intelligibility by the Spirit, bond and protagonist of unity and mission. This message of communion initially calls any missionary and those who receive this Word to convert and firmly opt for a life of communion. In this way, missionary communion, between missionaries and the receivers of the Gospel, would be the first witness of an evangelic force that accompanies the proclamation. Thus, it makes the Trinitarian significance of the Christian faith, as well as the *kerygma*, present and

actively lived. The kerygma which according to the Scriptures and the Ecclesial Tradition contains in its core the proclamation of the death (*kenosis*) and Resurrection of Christ (new life of communion in the Spirit). This means that the message of the Gospel contains in itself the *kenosis* and the communion. Consequently, in its proclamation, a witness of life conveys the essential elements of the *kerygma*. From this fact, the Gospel to be proclaimed is a true "Word of life" (Phil 2:16) which is required to remain and to bear the expected fruits, to be vitally announced in a spirit-witness of *kenosis* and communion, with the image of the death-life dynamism of the "grain of wheat that falls into the ground" (Jn 12:24). The evangelization is then carried out in words and acts, according to the example of Christ and the first Christians, and becomes the seed of communion which will bear its fruits accomplished in the 'eschaton' of universal fraternity, foreshadowing the Communion of the Saints, to which all humans are called by the eternal plan of God-Love (*cf.* I Jn 4:7-16).

However, this happy alliance, which is verified between proclamation and witness, thanks to missionary communion, makes us reconsider the function of inculturation as a factor of catholicity. On this matter, one may say first of all that such a Word, once proclaimed, is predisposed and immediately takes the path of inculturation like Christ in his kenosis to the cross-resurrection-exaltation. Evidently, the Word of God, who, from the richness of his Divine nature, emptied himself in the kenosis of love to embrace human nature, and thus make humanity take part in the victory of resurrection in the new culture of Trinitarian communion, becomes the luminous example to follow (*cf.* II Cor 8:9). The terrestrial parable of the Christ, who passes from the Incarnation to exaltation through death on the cross, holds together, on the one hand, the fair respect of any cultural expression in a given place, and on the other, the universal dimension of any attempt at inculturation. This relationship is achieved by the dynamic of mutual enrichment based on giving and receiving. Within the framework of missionary communion, any inculturation process is bound to balance locality and universality on the basis of alliance and a plan of enriching equality (*cf.* II Cor 8:13-15) so that inculturation can take place as a motivating factor of the catholicity of the Church which is intended to grow while integrating and enriching any culture by the salvation by Christ. This salvation is located in a perfect way in the participation in Trinitarian communion. Indeed, as some understand it, salvation in its plenitude consists in communion with God, our fellow men and creation: "For the biblical thought, such as the first centuries understood it, salvation is called communion";[1] communion which is manifested in its synonyms of peace, justice, reconciliation and universal fraternity, the values of the Kingdom.

On the whole, one can say that the ideal of missionary communion, based on a Gospel of communion to be proclaimed on the basis of witness in the same sense, gives as an immediate result an inculturated proclamation of the Word of God and that his inculturation becomes and can be called an "inculturation of communion'" (Arena 2007: 19-23). This communion, while respecting the culture which it meets until marrying it to form an alliance with it, transforms it (conversion) into a new human and divine synthesis rich with the new life of resurrection, located in a communion identifiable with the image of the Trinity which balances diversity and mysterious unity, without drifting towards imposed and unjustifiable uniformity. In ways still mysterious to us, it occurs like the seven colours of the rainbow which merge into the white colour and, under the effect of the refraction and reflection of sunlight, finds its identity in a harmonious composition with the other colours. In the same way, all cultures, by the force of love, fruit of Christ and gift of his resurrected Spirit, received and delivered following the proclamation of the Gospel, agree to be lost (kenosis) to find itself in a new harmonization-communion (resurrection), illustrated by the colour white that contains all the others. Here, it could be a question of an evangelic culture endowed with the greatest universality, precisely produced by the spread of the Gospel of communion, a culture that is mysteriously universal, but that does not belong to anybody. This is the result of the mysterious force of the Spirit of God

who is neither uniformity nor dispersion but, precisely, communion (Arena 2008:9-14). That is to say that missionary communion brings humanity into the Trinitarian mystery and brings this same mystery into the life of humanity, into human, even cultural issues, in which the mystery of the unity and the trinity of God is reflected and that from time to time, the members of a community, linked in love, is able to experience as a gift of God.

Thus, proclamation and inculturation of the Gospel proceed hand in hand to establish a Church and when Churches have firm cultural roots and albeit are always open to the horizon of catholicity. Thus the Church could avoid repeating the skids of "*tabula rasa*" which have affected its history for centuries and which are the cause of nationalist reactions and of cultural divisions that have often compromised the peaceful work of evangelization. These actions created resistance to the unconditional reception of the Gospel and slowed down the integral blooming of the faith among the people and their consciences. On the other hand, an inculturation of communion would take more into account the learned areopagi of the interculturality in the world of today by facilitating new enriching cultural syntheses within the Christian communities, superceeding the exaggerated absolutisation in their own cultures.[2] Moreover, inculturation has its place in mission as an expression of love and respect towards peoples and their cultures. From this dynamism of love, it links them and incorporates them in the Church as an element of catholicity and the "recapitulation of all things in Christ".[3] "You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:26-28; *cf.* Rom 10:12; I Cor 12:12-13; Col 3:11).

Witness

Thus fashioned by missionary communion, proclamation appears both as an announcement and a testimony of the Risen Lord in the force of the Holy Spirit (*cf.* Lk 24:46-49: Acts 1:8) in accordance with the practice of the community of the first Disciples of Christ (*cf.* Acts 1:22; 2: 32; 3:15; 4:33; 5:32).

Indeed, by looking at the first steps of the first Christians in their enthusiasm to proclaim and testify to the Risen Lord, one can recognize a personal testimony and a common testimony from the community. Thus, each apostle and disciple commits himself to give a personal testimony of the Risen Lord, but it also strongly accentuates the common testimony that in turn supplements and supports the personal testimony.

However, missionary communion precisely reinforces the duty to bear testimony among the missionaries of the Gospel and develops the common testimony of the evangelization and for the evangelization in an excellent way (*cf.* Acts 2:42-44; 4:31-34). Indeed, missionary communion allows the community to make present the Risen Christ among the disciples and thus to make God alive among them, as carried out in the community of Jerusalem (*cf.* Acts 2:47).

So by the appropriate evaluation of this testimony of communion given in the variety of its communities, the Church achieves its mission, which consists precisely in being a witness and thus introducing to the world the Risen Christ living in our midst through the power of the Spirit.

It is here that one can refer to the multiple passages of the Second Vatican Council which recall that the life of communion, fruit of the mutual love practiced by the faithful within their ecclesial communities, is the most beautiful testimony and most effective for the world [*cf. Ad Gentes* (*AG*), n. 30; also: *Apostolicam Auctositatem* (*AA*), nn. 8, 23: *Evangelii Nuntiandi (EN)*, n. 77; *Redemptoris Missio (RM)*, n. 75]. Indeed, in the spirit of Vatican II, this testimony has great effectiveness since it shows the vivifying presence of the Risen Lord among his people in and towards the world, (*cf. AA*, n. 18: *CL*, n. 64). It is a question here of the true achievement of the unique mission of the

Church, that is to show humanity, by means of its communion, that Christ is present and alive within itself, among its disciples [*cf. Gaudium et Spes (GS)*, nn. 21, 48; *AG*, nn. 5-6, 21; *Unitatis Redintegratio (UR)*, n. 12; *Perfectae Caritatis (PC)*, n. 15].

All in all, thanks to communion, God indeed becomes "Immanuel — which means, God-with-us" (Mt 1:23), lives '"among us"' (Jn 1:14), within the Church by his Spirit (*cf.* II Cor 3:17). The presence of Christ then becomes the true meeting point between communion (which makes him present) and mission (which announces his presence). In other words, that is why communion is identifiable with salvation. Then what prevents us from thinking that the presence of the Lord among his people — in agreement with the 'Shekinah' of the Hebrews in the Old Testament which meant "God-Who-Dwells-Within" and which tends to read the plan of salvation as the deployment of the will of God to live with his creation and people — finally it is the same mystery of salvation hidden from the beginning, but revealed in Christ present among his disciples: "Christ among you! The hope of glory" (Col 1:27).[4]

It is always the promise: "I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Mt 28:20), while remaining valid by the mysterious action of the Holy Spirit through the Gospel, the Eucharist, the sacraments and the mediation of the hierarchical ministry (*cf. Sacrosanctum Concilium*, n. 7), that can become effective in everyday life. It can be carried out at every moment by means of missionary communion, when in mission the fraternal communion of the brothers and sisters is established in the name of Jesus (*cf.* Mt 18:20). This is not insignificant in view of the realization of the vocation of all Christians who are invited to take part in the gift of the communion of God to be able to promote it and achieve it in Jesus Christ for the accomplishment of universal fraternity (*cf. GS*, nn. 32, 38, 42, 91, 92).

Conclusion

It is seen, by these same reflections, that missionary communion, as an ideal, also appears to be a plan of action, thanks to the beneficial effects obtained by missionary activity. It can certainly become the **primary methodology of mission** (*cf.* Jn 13:34-35; 17:21), especially if one thinks of its solid, faithful biblical roots; its exemplary connection with the Trinitarian horizon; and its innovating implications for Christology, Pneumatology and Ecclesiology.

After being gone into in-depth, one may even have the impression that missionary communion abounds with potential favourable to the faith and the spiritual progress of each Christian, at the very moment it stimulates the proclamation and the testimony of Christ whom the Church must give to the world. In a certain way, one could say that **communion became missionary to revive God among us, by infusing a divine dynamism into the life and mission of the Church.** In any event this paradigm seems a suitable theological place where *Missio Dei* and *Missio Ecclesiae* converge by harmoniously linking up.

Thus, the whole project, which contains, and is vivified by, the two biblical principles of kenosis and the communion of love, seems to be effectively able to support the evangelization to be carried out everywhere in the world. Moreover, missionary communion reminds us of the "New Evangelization" proposed by John-Paul II. Indeed, the topic of the new evangelization is mentioned several times in *Christifideles Laici*, indeed, this document immediately launched this ideal of missionary communion, indicating that the new evangelization would have in its heart the life of missionary communion as the aim of its inspiration and result. "This re-evangelization is directed not only to individual persons but also to entire portions of populations in the variety of their situations, surroundings and cultures. Its purpose is the formation of mature ecclesial communities, in which the faith might radiate and fulfill the basic meaning of adherence to the person of Christ and his Gospel, of an encounter and sacramental communion with him, and of an existence lived in charity and in service" (*CL*, n. 34).

Lastly, this body of theology and spirituality that missionary communion is, would be particularly advantageous if inserted into the mission of the Church of Africa and that of

the people committed to the religious life which, as it is known, constitute a vast portion of the missionary personnel.

Indeed, our ideal, ready to interact positively with the African cultural humus, can offer to the Church of Africa an inculturated orientation to achieve the evangelization of its peoples. Likewise, it could permit the men and women religious and missionaries to successfully carry out their specific mission. Lastly, since it will be within the mission of the Church it has to become the "leaven of missionary communion" (*cf. Vita Consecrata*, nn. 46-47).

Bibliography:

— Arena, D., "Mission et sainteté en Afrique dans la perspective de la communion missionnaire", Revue Africaine des Sciences de la Mission, (RASM), 12, no. 22/23 (2007), pp. 123-210.

— *Idem*, "Inculturazione di comunione", *Unità e Carismi*, n. 6 (2007), pp. 19-23.

— *Idem*, "L'Évangile de la communion: dynamisme pour une inculturalité africaine promotrice de fraternité universelle", SEDOS, n. 40 (2008), pp. 249-256.

— *Idem*, "Caratteristiche dell'inculturazione di comunione", in *Unità e Carismi*, 1 (2008), pp. 9-14.

— *Idem*, "La missione di Paolo tra kenosi e comunione: una via maestra dentro l'areopago dell'interculturalita". Contribution à la session plénière de la Congrégation pour l'Evangélisation des Peuples, 2009, p. 37, (inédit).

— Arena, D.-Mupaya K.D., "La communion missionnaire en perspective œcuménique. Mission et unité - Ecclésiologie et mission". Contribution de I'Institut Africain des Sciences de la Mission a la Conférence d'Edinburgh 2010, p. 20, publiée in www.edinburgh 2010.org.

Notes:

* African Institute of Sciences of the Mission Kinshasa (Democratic Republic of the Congo).

[1] Santedi, Kinkupu L., "Unity of Vocation and Diversity of the Ministries. Prospects For a New Relation Between Priests and Laity", in *For an Institution of Laity in the Church. Africans and Europeans in Conciliar Search of Revival.* Malolo, F., *et al*., Paris, 2004, p. 37. Other authors go so far as conceiving communion as the reality which produces safely in its totality ("holistic salvation"): "Salvation as such, however, is something that comes only through Christ (again, explicitly gold implicitly acknowledged), and consists in participation in God's triune communal life and mission": Bevans, S.B., and Schroeder, R.P., "Constants and Contexts", in *Theology of Mission for Today*, New York: Maryknoll, Orbis, 2005, p. 300.

[2] "So inculturation is neither a movement towards forming isolationism nor a war; it is, rather has, the tool for evangelization and pastoral efficiency.... Very importantly, the theological doctrines should also show that the practice enhances the catholicity and the universal communion of the Church which consist in unity in diversity": Mbam, E., "Method of Inculturation in Africa: With a Critique by Peter Schineller's the How of Inculturation", Mission, nn. 1/2, 2008, pp. 298-302.

[3] *Cf. International Theological Commission, Texts and Documents* (1969-1985), Paris, 1988, p. 338.

[4] *Cf.* Fitzmyer, J.A., "Will Letter It Has Colossesi", *Largo commentario biblico*, Brescia, Queriniana, 1973, p. 1267; Rosé, G., *Gesù in mezzo. Matteo 18:20 nell'esegesi contemporanea*. Roma, Città Nuova, 1972.

Caroline Mbonu, HHCJ, PhD

A Retrieval of Women's Religious Experience in "Things Fall Apart": Towards a Liberative Spirituality

Abstract:

Spirituality represents a conscious involvement in the project of life integration. Spirituality offers liberative potential for women. In the context of women's advancement, spirituality touches on women's positive experience with respect to their relationship with God, others, self, and the world. As a liberative vehicle, spirituality fits well with my interest in the agency and promotion of women. Indeed, liberative actions or events unburden, lift up, or promote the humanity of people, individually and communally. Spirituality as effecting a woman's personal agency, transformation, and commitment to social change will be the insight I shall seek to develop in my investigation. I employ agency to represent the human potential to think, feel and act. In this paper, I intend to utilize the insights of Chinua Achebe on women's religious experience in his book, *Things Fall Apart*. Achebe provides a window from which to view spirituality in traditional Igbo society. He portrays Chielo, the priestess of Agbala, the Oracle of the Hills and Caves of the land of Umuofia, in a delicate position of service and leadership. Characteristically, the social position of Chielo, a widow, places her among the traditional poor! But as priestess of the Agbala, the land of Umuofia most sacred of deities, the figure of Chielo takes on a redemptive quality. A retrieval of the complexity of the figure of Chielo together with certain elements in the Christian and Igbo religious traditions yield positive images in reconstructing women's role in religious and spiritual practices. Thus, the character of Chielo stands as a potential hermeneutical model that can bring to light the liberative potential of spirituality for women as well as men in contemporary Africa.

Introduction

The various social and cultural movements of the past five decades, among which the Womanist/Feminist and Liberation movements stand out, have in no small way influenced women's perceptions of themselves in society. Power management or rather the exercise of power at various levels of human endeavour constitutes a major component of these movements. The movements among other events, called into question the age-old patriarchal structures, which tended to breed and perpetuate the marginalisation of peoples. Marginalization, which results from one segment of a society dominating and exploiting another segment, has been a perennial problem in the history of the formation of human societies. Strangely, religion or the sense of the sacred also has been harnessed in the service of marginalization. Religion has, however, often been employed by the dominant group or culture as an instrument that "softens for the kill". But the practice of religion, through its various forms of expression, ought to be liberative.[1]

Undoubtedly, the role of religion in the history of humankind has been ambiguous. Religion can be a source of spiritual renewal of an individual or a group. Religion can also be a source of violence. The history of the Crusades and contemporary political scene in many countries, confirms as much. Undeniably, religion can as well be the ultimate legitimator of self-interest".[2] Furthermore, the fundamental belief of some religious traditions sets the stage for the alienation of many of its adherents. Doctrines such as the male image of the Deity represent one such alienating factor that has proved non-liberative, especially for many contemporary women. Thus, the male image of God and the patriarchal structure that this religious traditions supports has managed to instill in

women a sense of powerlessness; dependence, and distrust of their own experience, and knowledge.[3] Certain structures that maintain this image of the Deity demands reconstruction for all — women and men — to realize the full benefit of the Christian message. I write as a woman and a Christian and I can state that the significance of the Gospel message, for example, is fundamentally to unburden, lift up, or promote the humanity of persons, individually and communally (*cf.* Lk 4:18-19). In his novel, *Things Fall Apart*, Chinua Achebe claims a similar liberative stance for the Igbo religious traditions in his portrayal of Chielo, the priestess of *Agbala*, the Oracle of the Hills and Caves in the land of Umuofia. In creating a female character, a priestess of *Agbala*, Achebe pre-empts the contemporary question: How does the Igbo culture interpret the priesthood as well as the handling of sacred things? In a very subtle manner, the author also reinforces the gender neutrality of the Holy God, the Transcendence, in Igbo religious tradition. That is to say, for the Igbo, the maleness of God, which dominates Christian thought, making it difficult for women to become sacred ministers, does not seem to exist. In this regard, those scholars, who claim that the maleness of God supports patriarchy, would perhaps propound a different theory to support the prevalence of patriarchal structures in traditional Igbo society. One such scholar, English Anglican Clergyman, Paul Avis states "women cannot freely worship a male God, identify with a male savior and Lord or feel at home in a community whose leaders are all male and whose liturgy still takes for granted that male humanity is the norm, generic for humanity as such".[4]

The character of Chielo in *Things Fall Apart*, speaks of a reality that is retrievable. Although set in a novel, in reality, women in traditional Igbo life participated in leadership in sacred shrines. They handled sacred things on behalf of the community. In this regard, one can claim a healthy coexistence of matriarchy and patriarchy in traditional Igbo life.[5] Indeed. Nigerian anthropologist, Joseph Thérèse Agbasiere insisted that among the Igbo. "In matters of communal interest, a woman like a man is expected to speak her mind".[6] Thus, a patriarchal system that is furthered by religious practices does not seem to resonate with the traditional Igbo understanding of the Transcendence. For this reason, the retrieval and reweaving of the redeeming possibility of traditional religion can support contemporary women's quest for adult autonomy, responsibility and respect. In this paper, I argue for the liberative potential of spirituality for women as well as men. Chielo's transcendence over inhibiting social dictates of a seemingly patriarchal culture is illuminated by her role in "a woman's place" — the kitchen! This is what I will do in the four short sections that follow. First, I introduce an understanding of spirituality and spiritual practices. Second, I will offer a reading of the character of Chielo showing the liberative aspects of spiritual practices. Third, I will discuss one example each of women's spiritual practices in the Igbo religious tradition and Western spirituality that can be retrievable and made contemporaneous. Fourth, I conclude with a thought from Achebe on what I consider a significant spiritual practice in the novel *Things Fall Apart*.

Spirituality

In recent decades, a variety of ideological constructs parade as spirituality. Fundamentally, spirituality is a life lived or governed by the spirit. It is that which gives meaning to life and allows us to participate in the large whole.[7] Spirituality means that we see all things in God and respond to God in and through all things. That is to say, spirituality, represents a human response, an ascending gift to God's descending gift. According to an American ethicist, Richard Gula, spirituality entails a morality, a way of life; a life lived with a certain spirit.[8] In addition, another American

scholar of spirituality, Michael Downey, posits spirituality as is an "ongoing realization or actualization of the human capacity to move beyond the self with others and with God".[9] The capacity to move beyond the self with others and with God does not occur in a vacuum; this is rooted in a particular cultural context. That is to say, culture can shape spirituality and spiritual-practices. In *Things Fall Apart*, the author makes the point of cultural spiritual practices mediated by a female character, Chielo, the priestess.

The Character of Chielo in *Things Fall Apart*

Achebe sets his narrative in the land of Umuofia, a cluster of nine villages on the lower Niger. Umuofia is a powerful clan, skilled in war and with a great population, with proud traditions and advanced social institutions. Okonkwo, the protagonist, has risen from nothing to a high position in the land. His father, a lazy flutist named Unoka, has many debts with people throughout the village. Unoka's life represents everything Okonkwo strives to overcome. Through hard work, Okonkwo has become a great man among his people. He has taken three wives and had a barn full of yams. He rules his family with an iron fist, struggling to demonstrate that he does not have the laziness and weakness that characterized his father, Unoka. Okonkwo is constantly disappointed by Nwoye, his first son, but he has great love for his daughter, Ezinma, his child by his second wife, Ekwefi. Ekwefi bore ten children, but only Ezinma has survived. She loves the girl fiercely. Ezinma is sickly, and sometimes Ekwefi fears that Ezinma, too, will die. Late one night, the priestess of Agbala, the powerful oracle in the land of Umuofia, Chielo, brings Ezinma with her for a spiritual encounter with the oracle. No one goes before Agbala on their own accord, "lest he strike you in his anger".[10] Terrified, and determined to keep close to her only child, Ekwefi follows the priestess at a distance, fearing harm might come to her child. Okonkwo follows too, distantly. Achebe describes Chielo and her social relations thus:

> In ordinary life Chielo was a widow with two children. She was very friendly with Ekwefi and they shared a common shed in the market. She was particularly fond of Ekwefi's only daughter, Ezinma, whom she called "my daughter". Quite often she brought bean cakes and gave Ekwefi some to take home to Ezinma. Anyone seeing Chielo in ordinary life would hardly believe she was the same person who prophesied when the spirit of Agbala was upon her.[11]

Strikingly, Agbala is represented in the masculine gender. A male deity with a female priest!

If the measure of power or a sense of worth derives from performance of sacred duties, Chielo, the priestess of Agbala, the Oracle of the Hills and Caves, would perhaps be the most powerful person, male or female, in the town of Umuofia. For she alone had the authority to enter the most sacred shrine in the land, its "holy of holies". But Achebe describes her as ordinary, meaning she had no elitist tendency that seems to characterize a certain brand of the priesthood.

Chielo's function as priestess is not a relationship of power. Rather, her priesthood represents that of a humble servant of the people of Umuofia. The Nigerian theologian, Elochukwu Uzukwu, argues persuasively that the priesthood in Igbo religious traditions is essentially for service.[12] "Uzukwu contends that traditional spirituality or the ministry of the priests and healers are endowed with gifts for the service to the community and that ministry is not the ladder toward rank and privilege.[13] The Native American scholar, Jace Weave, supports the argument that native religious traditions are not practiced for personal empowerment or fulfillment, but, rather, they are practiced to ensure the corporate good.[14] Chielo's ministry bore comparable characteristics. The authoritarian concept of power is antithetical to the concept of service she espoused. Nothing in the text suggests that Chielo assumed the position of priestess of the nine villages of Umuofia on her own. Rather the narrative suggests a vocation, a call.[15] Vocation can mean where your greatest gifts meet the world's greatest needs and the community verifies your call. Okonkwo and Ekwefi recognized this call. They were powerless in preventing Chielo from taking, in the dead of the night, their daughter Ezinma away from their home to present her to the Oracle.

In the event that follows, Chielo swoops away Ezinma from her parent's home for a visit to the shrine of the Oracle of the Hills and Caves while Okonkwo follows. Achebe presents a scene that confounds the contemporary mind, which believes that the priestly ministry is solely a male function and that women should always follow. Okonkwo, the most powerful man in Umofia of his day, follows Chielo, the female who performs the priestly ministry. The paradox of male dominance is being overturned precisely in this symbolic ritual function. Indeed (even in the darkness of the night, Okonkwo was careful to conceal his presence from the woman, the priestess. A piercing female voice traversing the villages in the dead of night, and a man following stealthily from a distance is wrapped in significance. Chielo's encounter with Okonkwo stands in sharp contrast to Okonkwo's relationship to his wives. He ruled his womenfolk with an iron hand. But how could the female Chielo possess such influence over Umuofia's Okonkwo? A response to the inquiry may reside in the religious milieu in Umuofia. According to the narrative, the religious environment provided a liberative space for women as well as men to flourish.

Chielo flourished integrally. Widowhood, a position associated with a woman's subjugation and marginalisalion, played almost no role in her engagement with life. Her spiritual practices enable her to navigate effectively the cultural terrain that expected her, *nwanyi ishi mkpe* or a widow, to be at the bottom of the social ladder. The character of Chielo reverses the accepted imagination of widowhood and womanhood at that.

This priestess was also economically viable. An accomplished trader, she was very friendly with Ekwefi with whom she shared a common stall in the village market. Not every woman can own a stall in the market. To own a stall indicates a certain level of seriousness and viability in trade. This priestess and a mother of two, was gainfully self-employed. She worked like any other villager for a living. Friendly and sociable, she reaches beyond herself to Ekwefi and her daughter Ezinma. Achebe notes that Chielo not only calls Ezinma "my daughter", but sends presents to the girl: bean-cakes. Significantly, this eminent Umuofia woman is profoundly ordinary. Achebe states, "Anyone seeing Chielo in ordinary life would hardly believe she was the same person who prophesied when the spirit of Agbala was upon her". In this simple description of Chielo's character, a woman that was both the town's prophetess and priestess, a trader and a mother of two children, Achebe captures the very essence of spirituality, a positive experience with respect to one's relationship with God, others, self, and the world.

As priestess, Chielo is not only a servant, she is also a leader. Her priestly ministry had all the socially relevant norms of spiritual power and relevance. She prophetically warns Okonkwo, the most powerful man in the land of Umuofia, to "beware" of his attitude towards the deity. Okonkwo's disregard for the deity would eventually be his ruin.

The transformation that spiritual practices evoke stands out in the bare dissimilarity between the characters of Chielo and Okonkwo. The author contrasts the two in terms of gender, social ranking and status. The astute reader is prepared for the reversal that is about to be accomplished through the mediation of the holy, the Oracle of the Caves and Hills. Achebe builds the distinction by contrasting Okonkwo, with the vulnerability of a widow, Chielo. While the man represented the dominant version of full personhood, one who could participate fully in social processes, the widow became a participant in a greater process; she of all the inhabitants of Umuofia could traverse the land in the dead of the night without fear or favour. But most importantly, she alone can enter the most sacred shrine of the town's deity, the Oracle of the Caves and Hills. In this way, Chielo surpasses Okonkwo on all fronts; a sign of the aspect of spiritual practices. In the next section. I limit my discussion to an understanding of spirituality and spiritual practices in Igbo religious and Christian traditions aiming to find common ground that can further the cause of women's positive engagement in social processes.

Retrievable Spirituality Practices in Igbo Religious and Christian Traditions

The Igbo tradition offers a variety of spiritual practices that offer women opportunities for full participation in the sacred. In *Things Fall Apart,* the author showed the liberative potential of participation in the sacred. Although I think it better to avoid a lengthy

analysis on Igbo religious traditions and turn to discussing the thesis stated above, I would, however, state that traditional Igbo religious expressions make abundantly clear women's participation in the sacred. Indeed feminization of the earth in the notion of the Earth goddess, *Ala*, grounds my argument. The *Ala* is represented as a female. *Ala* embodies the community's core values: peace, love, and justice and as such her impact on the way life is lived and celebrated is enormous. Amadiume is compelling when she argues that the Earth goddess is the most important deity, the guardian of morality and the controller of the economy.[16] Furthermore, the Igbo propose a binary principle, *ihe di abuo abuo* or "things exist in pairs".[17] *Ihe di abuo abuo* means that the cult of *Ala* does not stand on its own. *Ala* is complemented by another deity, *Igwe* or *Elu*, the Sky. While *Ala* represents the female principles, *Igwe* represents the male.

There is a way in which the role of the female deity, a concept that is non-existent in Christianity, enhanced women's status in traditional Igbo life. The women in the Igbo world are not alone among those who experience the liberating effect of traditional religion. The Nigerian scholar, Joseph Omoyajowo, contends that West African women in general exerted influence in religious, political, economic, and domestic spheres of life.[18]

Women's participation in the sacred practice is ritualized in many forms. I employ an example of spiritual practice at the grassroots to make my point. In African-Igbo family life, the male is the undisputable head of the household. However, there can be no household without a hearth. The hearth or *mgbala/usoekwu* is not merely a fireplace; it is the soul of the household. The hearth is a woman's domain.[19] That is to say, men control the public sphere; women control the private sphere, an arrangement that reinforces the binary principle: "things exist in pairs".

Physically, the *mgbala* includes a woman's living room, bedrooms, kitchen space and a backyard. The kitchen space includes the circumscribed fireplace, the *ekwu* or *agbata-ekwu*. The *agbata-ekwu* constitutes another reality, which I discussed in another work.[20] Within this space the female passion, compassion, and imagination coalesce in the very art of birthing, sustaining, and preserving the community life energy. In other words, in the *mgbala*, life and hope are nurtured and celebrated; dignity protected and secured. This sacred space represents the primary institution for transmitting traditional morals. The head of the *mgbala* holds political, economic, and moral sway over every member of the hearth-hold. The Nigerian scholar, Chinwiezu, insists that the matriarchal authority in the nest (*mgbala*) is exercised not only over the children but over the husband as well for by this power, the woman distributes the resources, commodities and opportunities for her domain.[21] Religious life, an indispensible clement of Igbo life, emerges from the *mgbala*. In effect, within this space, the child learns essential human abilities to engage the world. Perhaps, the Igbo nomenclature *Nneka*, meaning, mother is supreme, derives from the interactions between mother and child in the *mgbala*. Achebe reflects on the significance of the name Nneka in an episode in *Things Fall Apart*.

In *Things Fall Apart*, Okonkwo, who inadvertently commits manslaughter, must go into exile from the land of Umuofia, for seven years in order to appease *Ala*, the Earth goddess, for innocently shedding blood. Naturally, when Okonkwo fled to his maternal home, *Mbanta*, his maternal uncle, *Uchendu*, received him and his family with great generosity. But this aspiring lord of Umuofia took his banishment from his fatherland acrimoniously. In a dialogue steeped in paradox, Achebe introduced the centrality of the female character in Igbo life.

On the second day of Okonkwo's exile, Uchendu assembles his sons and daughters to receive his nephew Okonkwo. Uchendu addressed Okonkwo thus: Can you tell me, Okonkwo, why it is that one of the commonest names we give our children is Nneka, or "Mother is Supreme?". Uchendu proposes a response to his question because neither Okonkwo nor his cousins could offer any. "Although a child belongs to the fatherland when things are good and life is sweet", Uchendu stated, "but when there is sorrow and bitterness he finds refuge in his motherland". I posit that Achebe's introduction of the role of motherland, in a sense, the hearth, at this point of the narrative sharply contrasts and demystifies the aura of maleness or masculinity that Okonkwo spent his entire life

building and protecting in his fatherland.[22]

Furthermore, the centrality of the hearth in family life resonates with William Ross Wallace's poem (1865) entitled "What Rules the World: The Hand That Rocks the Cradle Is the Hand That Rules the World". In essence Wallace highlights the hearth as the source of a child's socialized ethics and spirituality that shapes a child's imagination about how to understand herself or himself as well as how to experience life and death, success and failure, love and betrayal. Wallace leaves to the imagination to establish the *de facto* head of the "household".

Inaugurated by virtue of traditional marriage, the *mgbala* among the Ethe, for example, constitutes a ritual space. A young woman, at marriage, moves to her marital home with symbols of her family/ancestral deities, the *Chi*. This practice is in contradistinction to the Greco-Roman world from which Christianity received its cultural definition. The Greco-Roman culture denies competence to the woman to worship her clan deities in her marital home.[23] Although Greek myths such as the case of Medea and Jason[24] suggests otherwise, the practical reality is that married women worship the gods of their husbands.

The particularity of African cultures based on matriarchy enables women to carry their clan deities to their places of marriage. I attest to this practice having witnessed the enshrined icons of the *Chi* in my grandmother's *mgbala*. The altar of *Chi* also symbolizes a continued spiritual communion with the women's natal home, a particular connection with her maternal line. My grandmother, Nwaonu Nwanguma (Nwanguma is a family name), in speaking of the *Chi*, would always refer to *Chi nnem*, meaning the *Chi* of my foremothers. I draw support from the writings of the Senegalese historian, anthropologist, physicist, and politician, Cheikh Anta Diop. Diop, who studied the human race for a long time, clearly stated that in a society that is matriarchal, the wife kept her totem, meaning her domestic god, therefore, retained her natural family name, her legal identity, after marriage.[25] The practice of taking into marriage symbols of one's natal divinities is not peculiar to the Igbo. Such was the practice in ancient Israel, among the Canaanites, and their neighbours. Solomon's wives, for example, brought their tribal gods to Israel (*cf.* I Kgs 11).

The mother, head of the *mgbala*, represents its cultic priest in her ritual space. Together with her hearth-hold, she offers prayers and sacrifices to Chukwu and to the ancestors, before the altar of the Chi. My grandmother would personally offer a chicken, for example, to celebrate a birth, or a holy day. In Christian idiom, the mother is the priest of this "house church". This spiritual practice, which the traditional religious setting made possible, was indeed transforming. It represents adult spirituality, a term to which I shall return. Women's spiritual practices in the hearth represent one example of women's participation in the sacred in Igbo religious traditions.

But the contemporary religious and spiritual milieu represents a different scenario. There now seems to exist a contradiction between women's spiritual practices in contemporary Africa and their participation in the tradition. Some real issues that contributed to the present situation include Westernization and foreign religions. Of these, Christianity and Islam tend to further the agenda of their missionaries, particularly their condescending attitude to women. The most delimiting factor is the conceptualization of the Supreme Deity in masculine gender. Because the Deity in the contemporary dominant religious traditions is conceived to be male, they insist that their priests must be male. Amadiume notes that the earliest record of women's protest in Igboland in 1925 against foreign religion, notably Christianity. By Christianity introducing a male deity, religious beliefs and practices no longer focused on the female deity but on a male God, his son his [male] bishops and [male] priests.[26] Evidently, the new religion did not take into account the fundamental binary principle of *ihe di abuo abuo* or "things exist in pairs". The character of Chielo the priestess of Umuofia land reinterprets this profound principle that calls for equal worth that is related to balancing contrasting or opposing forces. Such balancing resonates with the foundational principles of Christian spiritual practices — a liberating vehicle. An example of the Christian spiritual practice from the Carmelite tradition will elucidate the point I make that spirituality can become a liberative vehicle that promotes women's agency. Agency employed here represents the ability to

act. To have agency means having a moral imperative because one has will.

Christian spirituality encompasses the intellectual, experiential, and affective dimensions of life. In the context of women's promotion, spirituality touches on women's positive experience in relationship with God, others, the self, and the world. Scholars distinguish between two kinds of spirituality that relate to women, namely, women's spirituality and "womanist"/feminist spirituality.

Women's spirituality is both related to and distinct from Feminist or Womanist spirituality. A spirituality that is often characterized as women's spirituality typically includes those kinds of spiritual practices such as prayer by rote and popular religiosity. Evidently, this kind of spirituality does not appear to engage deeply with life. This form of engagement tends to experience spirituality as a *quid pro quo* relationship with God. American John Shea terms this way of relating to God "adolescing spirituality".[27] A more mature form of spirituality, on the other hand, can be categorized in today's language as feminist or womanist. This form of spirituality tends to represent what Shea termed "adult" or "integral spirituality".[28] The present concern is the retrieving of strands from both Igbo traditions as well as Western spirituality that can be harnessed to articulate a spirituality that can have the potential to promote the humanity of persons, women and men alike.

Womanist/Feminist Spirituality

Feminist or womanist spirituality attends to women's experience and engages the imagination. This form of prayer also raises critical awareness of what prevents women from full humanity. Womanist or adult spirituality primarily engages such processes as meditation and contemplation that engender transformation and lead to action. I employ the term "womanist" as opposed to feminist to represent a theological current that takes into account the unique experience of women of African descent. Since the contemporary African women's spirituality is shaped not only by traditional imagery of religion and culture but also by the incorporation of the Western norms in the teaching of the Church, I utilize an example from the classics of Western spirituality, particularly the example of St Teresa of Avila (1515-1584), in order to shed more light on adult or integral spirituality.

Saint Teresa of Avila, a sixteenth century Spanish Carmelite nun, provides a good example of one who practiced adult spirituality. Notably, she practiced this form of spirituality in her cloister (her *mgbala*), of discalced Carmelites. The core of Teresa's spirituality was the "quiet" experience of God through recollection and mental prayer.[29] Teresa's "quiet" experience of God can also be traced to her interest in the legendary prophet of Carmel, Elijah (I Kings 19:12-13). Her attachment to the prophet was succinctly captured in the motto of her reformed order: "*Zelo zelatus sum pro Domino Deo exercituum*" — I am motivated by the zeal of the Lord God of Host (I Kings 19:10).

Mental prayer constituted a form of contemplation which women of those days were not allowed to practice, but which Teresa insisted upon. Mental prayer was thought to expand the mind creating an opportunity for independent thinking. Allowing women to engage in prayer of contemplation was considered a threat to the dominant group because of the possibility of its liberative effect that can challenge the status quo. Opposition to Teresa's form of prayer came from both ecclesiastical and the civil society. As Rowan Williams states:

> Not surprisingly, these nobles and principal citizens of Avila were among the most vocal and angry opponents of the project. These were, after all, the ones with the most to lose if the system they had always relied on for spiritual security and for prestige and dominance in the aristocratic circles of Avila were now to be challenged by Teresa and her collaborators.[30]

Europe at this time was caught up in ecclesiastical crises. The authorities stressed outward compliance with ecclesiastical ceremonies and rite.

Evidently, allowing women to engage in prayer that expanded the mind was considered as a threat to the establishment that kept women "in their place". Another reason for the prohibition of adult spirituality for women may be connected to women's acquisition of enlightenment which comes through reasoning. The dominant culture confines women to a position of dependency and independent thinking, considered as "crossing the boundary".

By introducing mental prayer in her monastery, Teresa undermined the traditional system that allowed women only the recitation of vocal prayer. In the practice of certain aspects of vocal prayer, more often, the intellect is not so much engaged as in mental prayer, so the level of personal awareness can become minimal. On the other hand, mental prayer tends to create avenues through which practitioners could have direct relationship with God without an intermediary. The transformative effect of mental prayer can make practitioners, women as well as men, become more aware of their deepest humanity and as such relate directly to God and to the realities of the world in which they live. An example from the history of Christian spirituality supports my assertion. Thus, the American Teresan scholar. Mary Luti, asserts:

> Teresa's movement gave many women a way to participate in the century's turbulent search for right relationship with God, to experience in a new way the mystery of transforming grace, to become, in short, important interlocutors in discussion of the fundamental questions of the age.[31]

Through introducing mental prayer, Teresa grounded her nuns in a spirituality that allowed them to develop their intellect and their mental ability to challenge inhibiting structures and also to build up a passion for active engagement with contemporary issues.

Convinced that God acts within human customs and traditions, Teresa could insist on her new form of prayer for women in her order.[32] She recognized that "divinity does not fit easily into a box", and so confronted the problematic situation of contemplative prayer. Thus, development and cultivation of prayer turned out to be Teresa's greatest asset in a society and in a Church where women's voices were to remain silent. Teresa's example shows that a true spiritual belief does not devalue women. Rather such principle represents order, restraint, reciprocity, mutuality, care for and non-exploitation of the weak and vulnerable. These values are not compatible with exploitation. They are radically subversive.[33] In recognition of her contribution to the Church and her tradition of prayer, Pope Paul VI in 1970, declared Saint Teresa of Avila, a Doctor of the Church. She is one of the three women Doctors of the Church.

The life and work of St Teresa supports the theory that an adult or integral spirituality can truly be liberative for women. In a way, Achebe's characterization of Chielo, the priestess of Agbala in *Things Fall Apart* suggests a similar reading of spirituality in Igbo religious traditions.

Several hermeneutical approaches would be relevant in constructing a spirituality that can be liberative for contemporary African women. Most importantly, a hermeneutics of appreciation for the religious past of our forebears and a hermeneutics of retrieval of positive strands from the traditional past can enable to us create a new narrative. The new narrative would consist in reweaving the religious traditions, African and Christian, to respond to the contemporary question of women's advancement. I contend that this undertaking represents the single greatest challenge facing women in contemporary Africa in their quest to develop a spirituality that can be liberative.

Conclusion
A retrieval of traditional religious experience provides critical strands that women in

Africa can weave with certain elements of Western religious experience to produce a spirituality that resonates with a contemporary spiritual quest. Most especially, the liberative potential of spirituality discredits the idea of powerlessness that is typically ascribed to widowhood and womanhood. For Chielo, spiritual practice was empowering and liberative as well. The transformation that spirituality engendered both in the life of St. Teresa of Avila, and in women in traditional Igbo life can enable contemporary women's transformative role in the society. These lines culled from an interview in the Newspaper, The Village Voice, marking the fiftieth anniversary of Things Fall Apart, captures the potential of spirituality in the novel. Achebe states:

> What I was doing was pointing out how unjust the Igbo society is to women. And how better to explore it than to make the hero of this story, Okonkwo ... all his problems are problems to do with the feminine. There's nothing else wrong with Okonkwo except his failure to understand that the gentleness, the compassion that we associate with women is even more important than strength ... Okonkwo was not able to learn... that women, compassion, music ... these things are as valuable — more valuable — than war and violence.[34]

In *Things Fall Apart,* therefore, the author paints a picture of a warrior who fails because he misses out on the fundamental principle of the land represented by Ala, the Earth goddess: a positive relationship between humans and the gods, i.e., spirituality.

———————————

Notes:

[1] Marcus, Borg J., *The God we Never Knew: Beyond Dogmatic Religion to a More Authentic Contemporary Faith* (San Francisco: Harper San Francesco, 1997), p. 114

[2] Borg, *The God We Never Knew*, p. 114.

[3] Richard Gula, *The Call to Holiness: Embracing a Fully Christian Life* (New York: Paulist Press, 2003), p. 137.

[4] Avis, Paul Avis, *Eros and the Sacred* (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 1989) p. 6.

[5] Nkiru Uwechia Nzegwu, "Recovering Igbo Tradition", in *Women, Culture and Development: A Study of Human Capabilities*, ed. Martha Nussbaum and Jonathan Glover (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), pp. 446-448.

[6] Joseph Thérèse Agbasiere, *Women in Igbo Life and Thought* (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 39.

[7] John J. Shea, *Finding God Again: Spirituality for Adults* (New York: Bowman and Littlefield, 2005), p. 97.

[8] Gula, *The Call to Holiness*, pp. 20-21.

[9] Michael Downey, *Understanding Christian Spirituality* (New York: Paulist Press, 1977), p. 35.

[10] Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* (New York: Anchor Books, 1994), p. 101.

[11] Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*, p. 49.

[12] Elochuhwu E. Uzukwu, *A Listening Church: Autonomy and Communion in African Churches* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996), p. 127.

[13] Uzukwu, *A Listening Church*, p. 127.

[14] Jace Weaver, "From I-Hermeneutics to We-Hermeneutics: Native American and the Post-Colonial," *Semeia* 75 (1996), p. 172.

[15] William C. Spohn, *and Do Likewise: Jesus and Ethics* (New York: Continuum, 2000) p. 156.

[16] Ifi Amadiume, "Igbo and Africa Religious Perspectives on Religious Conscience and the Global Economy", in *Subverting Greed: Religious Perspectives on the Global Economy*, Paul F. Knitter and Chandra Muzaffa (eds.) (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2002), p. 20.

[17] Amadiume, "Igbo and Africa", p. 19.

[18] Joseph Akinyele Omoyajowo, "The Role of Women in African Traditional Religion", in *African Spirituality: Forms, Meanings and Expressions*, ed. Jacob K. Olupona (New York: The

Crossroad Publishing Company, 2000), pp. 77-78.

[19] Chinweizu, *Anatomy of Female Power: A Masculinist Dissection of Matriarchy* (Lagos, Nigeria: Pero Press, 1990), pp. 111-112.

[20] Caroline Mbonu, *A Redemptive Reading of the Doulé in Luke 1:26-38: Towards a Liberative Process for Women in Igbo Society* (Ph.D. Diss., Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, California, 2009), pp. 252-253.

[21] Chinweizu, *Anatomy of Female Power*, p. 109.

[22] Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*, pp. 129-135.

[23] Cheikh Anta Diop, *Civilization or Barbarism: An Authentic Anthropology*, trans by Yaa-Lengi Meema Ngemi, Harold J. Salemson and Marjolijn de Jager *(eds*.) (New York: Lawrence Hill Books, 1991), p. 112.

[24] Medea from *Wikipedia*, *The Free Enciclopedia*. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Medea. Internet accessed, 1st December 2009.

[25] Diop, *Civilization or Barbarism*, p. 112.

[26] Ifi Amadiume, *Male Daughters, Female Husbands: Gender and Sex in an African Society* (Antlatic Highlands, NJ: Zed Books, 1987) p. 120.

[27] John J. Shea, F*inding God Again: Spirituality for Adults* (New York: Rowan & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2005), pp. 59-60.

[28] Shea, *Finding God Again*, pp. 95-102.

[29] Rown Williams, *Teresa of Avila* (Harrisburg, PA. Morehouse Publishing, 1990) p. 26. See also *The Collected Work of St Teresa of Avila.* Volume Two, trans by Kieran Kavanaugh and Otilio Rodriguez. Washington D. C.: ICS Publications, 1980) p. 499.

[30] Williams, *Teresa of Avila*, pp. 50-51.

[31] Mary Luti, *Teresa of Avila's Way* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1991), p. 53.

[32] Nayap-Pot, "Life in the Midst of Death", in *The Bible and Postcolonialism*, R.S. Sugirtharajah, ed. (Sheffield Academic Press, 1999) pp. 62-63.

[33] Paul Avis, *Eros and the Sacred* (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 1989), p. 97.

[34] Culled from "Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart turns 50 this year, An Interview With Chinua Achebe for the Village Voice", by Carol Cooper, *The Village Voice*, 19 February 2008.

Prof. Rita Noronha
Empowerment of Women in the Church and Society
(Part II)

---

*"Every type of discrimination, whether social or cultural, whether based on sex, race, colour, social condition, language or religion, is to be overcome and eradicated as contrary to God's intent" (*Gaudium et Spes, *1965).*

*"The hour is coming, in fact has come, when the vocation of women is being acknowledged in its fullness, the hour in which women acquire in the world an influence, an effect and a power never hitherto achieved. That is why, at this moment when the human race is undergoing so deep a transformation, women imbued with a Spirit of the Gospel can do so much to aid humanity in not falling" (*Mulieris Dignitatem, *n. 1, 1988),* [The Council's Message to Women, *8 December 1965*]).

"In all of Jesus' teaching, as well as in his behaviour, one can find nothing which reflects the discrimination against women so prevalent in his day. On the contrary, his words and works always express the honour and respect due to women ... (his) way of speaking to and about women, as well as his manner of treating them, clearly constitutes an "innovation" with respect to the prevailing customs at the time" (Mulieris Dignitatem, *n. 13, 15 August 1988).*

[….]

IV. The role of the Church in Facilitating Empowerment of Women

1. Positive Contribution of the Church

Through its social teachings and interventions (highlighted in Section I of this paper), the Church has revealed its commitment to the cause of empowerment of women. The social teachings highlighted in such documents as *Pacem in Terris*, 1963, *Gaudium et Spes*, 1965, *Mulieris Dignitatem,* 15 August 1988, papal letters and messages to women and men of the Church and documents of the Synods of Bishops, reiterate the need to promote the dignity and equality for women in the Church and society. It has been emphasised that "Since in our times women have an ever more active share in the whole life of society, it is very important that they participate more widely also in the various fields of the Church's apostolate" (*cf. Gaudium et Spes*, nn. 9, 60). The CBCI documents have also upheld the need to transform mindsets, cultural and social structures in order to ensure the equal dignity of women and men in the Church and society. Through interventions in the fields of education, health, welfare, development and mobilization and organization of women at the grassroots and its human rights advocacy, Church-based and related organizations have also contributed to the cause of empowerment of women. Many Church functionaries have undertaken a process of self-analysis, internal cultural and structural critique and deepened their critical consciousness (inclusive of gender sensitivity). Thus they are involved in the processes of promoting justice in general and equality for women in particular. This has been acknowledged by the Church that says that there are "an ever increasing number of men and women who are conscious that they themselves are the artisans and the authors of the culture of their community" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 7 December 1965). The interventions aimed at removing gender biases from some theological and liturgical sources also owe much too critical theologians (men and women) who have sought to highlight the early Church traditions of partnership between women and men and have expanded

the space for critique within the Church. The emergent critical consciousness among women, especially within the Church, was acknowledged as early as 1963 by Pope John XXIII in his encyclical *Pacem in Terris*. "... *it is obvious to everyone that women are now taking part in public life. This is happening more rapidly perhaps in nations with a Christian tradition, and more slowly, but broadly, among people who have inherited other traditions or cultures. Since women are becoming ever more conscious of their human dignity, they will not tolerate being treated as inanimate objects or merely instruments, but claim, both in domestic and in public life, the rights and duties that befit the human person*" (n. 41).

Church leaders have recognized the strengths of women. "They strengthen the bonds of relationship within the family, neighbourhood and between communities. With their person-oriented approach, they can give a human face to the scientific and technological endeavours, to economic and political activities. They can bring ethical values to a corruption-plagued society. With their great gift of intuition they can work out creative ways of bringing peace to violence-torn communities" (Archbishop Thomas Menamparampil).

The Church is very much part of a wider society and it reflects the historical and emerging trends in society. As a result, the contradictions and inequalities prevalent in the Church mirror those present in the wider society. So the Church alone cannot be blamed for all the biases that continue to permeate the mindsets of certain sections of its members/leaders and its cultural ambience and social structures. It is in this context that the Letter of our late Pope John Paul II on the eve of Fourth World Conference on Women at Beijing, 15 September 1995, in 1995, assumes significance. To quote him, "*Women's dignity has often been unacknowledged and their prerogatives misrepresented; they have often been relegated to the margins of society and even reduced to servitude. This has prevented women from truly being themselves and it has resulted in a spiritual impoverishment of humanity. Certainly it is no easy task to assign the blame to this ... And if objective blame, especially in particular historical contexts, has belonged to not just a few members of the Church, for this I am truly sorry. May this regret be transformed on the part of the whole Church into a renewed commitment of fidelity to the Gospel vision*" (*Letter to Women*, 29 June 1995, n. 3; *cf. Ecclesia in Asia*, 6 November 1999, n. 34). At the root of gender and other forms of discrimination are the widening inequalities that we see in all sites of social relationships. A critique of such a society is reflected in the *Message for World Day of Peace,* 6 January 2007, given by the Holy Father Pope Benedict XVI: "At the origin of many tensions that threaten peace are surely the many unjust inequalities still tragically present in our world. Particularly insidious among these are, on the one hand, inequality in access to essential goods like food, water, shelter, health; on the other hand, there are persistent inequalities between men and women in the exercise of basic human rights".

2. The Problem of Subordination of Women within the Church

Almost all the reports of the consultations and conferences (regional and national) held as preparation for the General Assembly of the Bishops have emphasized the low level of women's participation in the decision-making processes and structures of the Church.

o There are few women, including women religious, who occupy leadership positions, but most occupy subordinate positions and are sometimes treated as cheap labour. Their services are also poorly appreciated and remunerated. Adequate structures and opportunities for women's participation and leadership are sorely lacking in the Church. As a result, women very often remain at the margin and periphery of the Church structures, planning and decision-making.

o Few bishops, priests and male family members acknowledge the great potential of women and stand for gender equality. Many fail to encourage the contribution of women and to work in dialogue, cooperation and partnership with them. Many are not really committed to the implementation of relevant women's policies and programmes.

A lack of sensitivity to women's issues prevails. There is a serious lack of cooperation to promote Women's Commissions and Cells, and especially the participation of women who are economically and socially marginalized with little or no formal education. Women

have only a limited access to information and communication, and they are financially dependent on the hierarchy for expenses. *All this creates a lack of interest and motivation, and reduces their involvement and participation*.

These and other factors prevent or slow down the renewal process in the Church. In spite of a few repetitions, it is worth elaborating them:

o A Report states: "Nobody listens to women in the Church. *Women have 'no voice' in the Church*. Their problems are most often overlooked. Women thus get the feeling that they are put aside. The decisions of priests and patriarchal regulations are forced upon them. Women have no alternative but to remain silent". *This 'voicelessness' is particularly true for poor/uneducated women*.

o The significant contribution women have made to the Church and *society to raise standard of human existence, to make peace and to share their faith and love with people*, especially the poor, is not sufficiently recognized.

o *The Church hierarchy often fails to understand the sufferings, feelings and aspirations of women*. (In fact, the contacts of the Church leaders with the poor are too limited.) Hence, women's issues like domestic violence are bypassed by the Church. *The inferior status of women in society is thus reflected in the Church*. The hierarchy clings to tradition and is not ready to solve problems. *There is a lack of organized concerted effort to tackle women's issues.*

o The 'special' qualities that women have, such as: a sense of service and dedication; life-affirming qualities of care, nurturing, understanding, love and tenderness; sensitivity to others' needs and suffering; capacity for community-building, bonding, teamwork and management of multiple tasks; inner strength manifested by their resistance, endurance, perseverance, and tenacity — *such qualities are often taken advantage of and used to victimize and subjugate them, when they ought to constitute model values that should be emulated by all human beings.*

o *Tokenism*. The lay people who disagree with bishops and priests are said to "work against the Church" and are often ignored. Yes-men or Yes-women thus become the "voice of the people" at various diocesan/national meetings.

o A 'dictatorial'/'theocratic' understanding of the Church hierarchy, a 'patriarchal mindset', clericalism/ authoritarianism often hinder the effective participation of the laity in general and of women in the Church. This contradicts the teaching of Vatican II and of the CBCI on the role of the laity in the Church.

o *In short, there is a resistance to change in the Church*, an absence of unity and collaboration between men and women, a lack of commitment to implement relevant programmes and policies, as well as an absence of accountability and transparency, particularly in financial matters. Women have a limited access to information and they depend on the hierarchy for funds for their organizations and projects. They are denied leadership roles and training for the same. Sometimes, the recruitment/retention policies regarding employment are not gender- friendly: there is reluctance to employ women as they take leave for family responsibilities.

o Some NGOs also amass wealth in the name of women's empowerment. Most have a project-centric rather than a movement-centric approach.

o The composition and organization of the Women's Commissions often lack a proper vision and sense of mission, and their funds and infrastructure are insufficient.

o Women all too often lack a deep awareness of their rights and women's spirituality, and they suffer from a lack of confidence in women's strength and from a feeling of helplessness.

o *All in all, patriarchy, male domination/ideology, social conditioning, culture and traditions constitute serious obstacles to women's empowerment.*

o Moreover there is an absence of policies and structures to facilitate women's participation in decision-making to address issues of injustice and violence against women.

All these comments *highlight the fact that the Church has to take up women's issues seriously and recognize the capacity of women to contribute positively to the building up of the Church and Society (Summary of the regional and national consultations/*

conferences held in preparation for the CBCI General Assembly).

3. Two-Pronged Approach to Facilitate the Empowerment of Women

It is within this context of persistent inequalities based on gender, class and caste in India, reflected in the Church and its commitment to alter the same that the Church has to use a two-pronged approach to strengthen the following interrelated categories of intervention: 1. Those that are directed at critique and transformation of self, cultures and structures within the Church; 2. those that are directed at empowerment of women in the wider society.

1. Interventions directed at internal critique and transformation of self, cultural ambience and structures

The Church has to become further involved in a process of self-critique, cultural or ideational critique and structural critique to unearth the gender, caste and class biases that persist within it and to alter the same. This three-fold process is described below.

a*. Critique of Self-Change in Gender Stereotypes that Persist in the Church:* Some research studies reveal that gender stereotypes or gender insensitive mindsets continue to be present within the Church. By using a simple tool with variously qualified religious men and women, Fr McGrath found that negative stereotypes of women are held by

Female stereotype held by Religious Men and Women

	Male Religious	Male Collegians	Women Religious
Intelligent	83%	76%	66%
Dependent	87%	93%	85%
Gossiping	83%	88%	60%
Emotional	76%	76%	45%
Jealous	67%	-	70%
Petty	65%	80%	60%
Sensitive	65%	88%	100%
Total **Respondents**	**63/100**	**58/100**	**45/100**

[Source: Fr. Ed McGrath, SJ, Jivan: News and Views of Jesuits in India, Sept. 2006. (The table given by the author has been slightly modified to include the descriptive data given by him)]

various groups of male and female religious.

The data reveal that it is not only the men religious who hold these negative stereotypes of women, but also women religious themselves (the only exception being on the trait of intelligence). This is not surprising because both have internalized patriarchy and have not had the opportunity to question their internalized prejudices/biases.

Fr McGrath raises a very significant question here. Are we doing as much as we should to delete a mental virus in the area of gender? His sample size is small and may not be representative of all the religious in the Church. The statements of the CBCI on the situation of women manifest a higher degree of gender sensitivity among a section of Church leaders. However, it is important that the process of changing the mindset of the Church functionaries (religious/lay) be given a further thrust. Unless this happens how can we become the messengers of gender justice? Interventions that are directed at increasing the number of gender sensitive men and women are essential to alter their gender stereotyped mental maps, through a process of study, analysis, action and reflection. Change has to begin with the seeker wishing to change. Unless the one who seeks to change models change in her/his thinking/feeling and action behaviour, she/he cannot really become a sustainable change promoter. Jesus was a sustainable, systemic change promoter and he continues to inspire generation after generation because he was a model 'Servant Leader'. Many change promoters are there in society, across various cultures/religions. Their tribe has to increase.

b. Critique of Patriarchal Culture — Creating a Gender-Just Knowledge ambience: The patriarchal culture/ambience is not conducive to facilitate significant change in the subordinate situation of women. There is a need to collect, develop and use gender sensitive literature and other media products to alter the cultural ambience of patriarchy. In this connection removing the gender biases that persist in theological, catechetical and liturgical sources through careful study and concerted action by women and men who have attained a certain level of critical knowledge in this area acquires significance. Initiatives to analyze gender stereotypes and dominant class perspectives that are prevalent and making deliberate attempts to disseminate gender just messages (that uphold the dignity of women and men) through writings, scriptural readings, interpretations, hymns, songs, publications, audio-visual materials, films, messages, are an important task that we need to engage in.

Early Christian traditions have to be unearthed from the buried memories of the history of the Church, to provide inspiration to Church functionaries to build communities of collaboration and participation between women and men. It is important to rewrite and disseminate the life histories of the women who made an exemplary contribution to the struggle for liberation and served to the Church and society since early Biblical times, so that they may be models for the members of the Church at all levels. Such measures are necessary to promote a gender-just culture, which facilitates empowerment of women at all levels of the Church.

c. Modeling Gender-Just Structures: The Church-based initiators of change promote relational *milieus* or structures within their spheres of influence, namely, families, schools, colleges, health centres, development organizations, economic enterprises, community-based associations, could be targeted by them for winning over, persuading, motivating and pressuring others to participate in this change. Gender-just families and other institutional structures can become replicable models that could be emulated by others. There are gender-just models, historical and contemporary, across various cultural communities, that are worthy of emulation.

When the Church at various levels (CBCI, regional, diocesan and parish) is able to model gender-justice, it could trigger a positive social environment conducive to change in various aspects of Church life through example in the wider social *milieu*. Such structures should be characterized by participation, mutuality and reciprocity. Good governance based on consensus decision-making, transparency, accountability, effectiveness, efficiency, equity and rule of law is important to be integrated in all Church-run structures. The spiritual and human values of compassion, respect for differences, collaboration, openness to learning and option for the marginalized provide the value basis on which such structures could be built. Some areas in this respect could focus on:

a. Promoting Gender-Just Church Structures: At all levels from the national, regional, and diocesan to the parish, attempts should be made to provide opportunities for women (religious and lay) to participate as equals by holding positions of importance. There are many genuine grievances of religious women, lay women and men that have to be addressed. Developing a gender just personnel policy for all institutions may support the growth of gender-just structures. Recovery of the horizontal traditions of the Church which made house churches vibrant and creative ecclesiastical communities could help in inspiring Church leaders to build gender-just structures within their own relational *milieus*.

b. Building Gender-Just Inclusive Schools: Developing gender-just inclusive schools where children (girls/boys) learn values and life skills through collective learning activities and involvement in the life of communities is also important (examples: Loreto School near Sealdah station in Kolkata and the Kathalaya School in Delhi's Govindapuri slum reported by newspapers as being worthy of emulation *The Times of India*, 28/12/2007). Maybe there are many others within and outside the Church circle from where lessons could be drawn.

c. Building Gender-Just Families: We need families where there is security of life and livelihood, partnership, consensus decisions, respect and sharing of tasks (housework, child rearing, social mothering and fathering) and collective control over resources.

Families where an atmosphere of care, love and joy is nurtured have a better chance of staying together. It is a positive or a win-win outcome for men and women. It is heartening to see that such families are increasing in number. The domestic workers in such families are to be treated with justice, human respect and understanding.

d. Developing Gender-Just Centres of Healing: What we need are centres which heal the body, the mind and the soul. Many critics hold that the present networks of medical research, pharmaceuticals (global and indigenous), and hospitals by and large spread disease rather than promote health. These only address the symptoms of the disease through prescribed drugs and surgery, while not addressing the systemic causes responsible for physical, mental and ethical illness manifested in discrimination, violence, mental illness, corruption, criminality and hatred towards others, inclusive of other castes and religious groups. Life sustaining, disease preventive and curative healing therapies (traditional and modern) are now available in India and other parts of the world, which could address the specific needs of women as well. An integrated approach to healing may enable one to move away from the trap of health commodification, which is harmful to women and men. Many community-centric interventions tried by some Church institutions and others require strengthening.

e. Promoting Gender-Just Political Structures: Denial of opportunities for equal representation in the political structures that matter most, has been harmful not only to women but to society as a whole (less than 10 per cent of the seats are occupied by women in Indian parliaments. Many state legislative bodies fare worse). Women have to acquire visibility in top positions of the political ladder of democracy as ministers, members of the parliament and state legislatures, heads of government departments (district, state, central), chief justices and justices of Supreme Court and High Court in particular (one rare president or prime minister or party leader cannot alter structures, unless there is a strong force of women behind them). Educational, leadership building and legal measures to ensure such representation has to become a primary aim of the initiators of change.

The Creation of Gender-Just Political Structures involves:

o Bringing women's perspectives and values, their life nurturing and peace building sensitivities and experience to the centre stage in policy formulation and allocation of resources, tapped through the appropriation of labour (primarily of the marginalized groups such as subsistence farmers, informal sector labourers especially low paid and unpaid labour of women on productive as well as reproductive tasks).

o Ending those policies that are destructive of life (nature as a whole, including human life) in the name of economic prosperity (foreign exchange and investment, wealth accumulation with a minority of billionaires, share of the bounty with the broadening base of the middle class and pauperization of the majority of subalterns) and in the name of national security (militarization or arms race, used primarily against the marginalized).

o Facilitating the emergence of a political economy that would have just consequences for all by ending gender, caste and class inequalities (except those based on variations in endowed abilities, talents and creativity).

o Developing civic society organizations that model gender justice and good governance practices is another area of intervention that could be further strengthened.

f. Promoting Gender-Just Economic Structures: The widening economic divide between individuals and groups within a nation, gives rise to authoritarian trends and the violent repression of dissenters, incidence of which are reported every day by the Media (Nandigram is one example, there are many in Gujarat, Orissa, Karnataka and others). The deepening inequalities breeds hatred and prejudices and provokes the most violent instincts of human nature (even school children have started gunning down classmates). Unless there is economic democracy, there cannot be an authentic political or social democracy. Only when life-sustaining resources such as land, water bio-diversities and finances are equitably controlled, can people enjoy the benefits of these resources. Economic democracy means:

o Sharing control over productive assets (land, farms, industries, markets, finances) and the benefits of production by all (women and men).

o Creating and using life-sustaining technologies that safeguard and enhance healthy traditional livelihood systems and generate alternative modern sustainable livelihoods for the increasing number of youth — men and women.

o Organizing the work in such a way that it integrates life with work (but does not alienate the person from his or her labour) and resisting the process of becoming an appendage of the machine in the modern assembly line factory.

o Ending hunger and poverty on the one hand and obesity on the other. (One billion people in the world are reportedly obese: *The Week*, 27-8-2006). More than one *lakh* [a hundred thousand] anti-obesity surgeries were performed in the US in 2003 as against 16,000 in the early 1990's (*The Week*, 2-5-2004). As many as 15 million children around the world die of hunger every year (The Week, 7-8-2005). In India 18,000 children, mainly girls, die every day because of hunger and malnutrition according to FAO (*The Week*, 4-3-2007).

o Altering the situation that forces farmers into indebtedness (nearly 50% of farmers are in debts in India according to The National Sample Survey, and $1^{1/2}$ *lakh* farmers have been driven to commit suicide). Thus the problem of obesity and spiritual impoverishment of the rich on the one hand and hunger and alienation of the economically poor (mainly women and children) on the other could be resolved for the benefit of all human beings.

2. Interventions that are directed at the empowerment of women in the wider society

The Church has to find meaningful and appropriate ways to intervene in the wider society to facilitate the process of empowerment of women. Its policy must aim at creating a conducive atmosphere through positive economic and social policies for the development of women, fulfillment of their rights and freedoms, elimination of discrimination and violence on women, providing women and girls access to decision-making, and changing societal attitudes and community practices. Mainstreaming gender in the development process is necessary. However, the methods suggested to reach these laudable goals do not appear to be comprehensive enough to address the structural challenges responsible for discrimination against women. Moreover, the initiatives such as the inclusion of gender and human rights education, removal of references derogatory to the dignity of women from public documents and legal instruments, use of media to spread gender awareness, establishment of resource and studies centres in the national planning, have been initiated in various parts of the country which may have a positive outcome if such attempts are effectively sustained. However one cannot expect the state which itself is made up of patriarchal hierarchies to address systemic forces. A resurgent civil society with a strong women's movement may show the way. Since the last decade there is a growing realization among many organizations and their funding partners for the need to undertake gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting exercises so as to make gender a central issue in their structures and functioning. Unless there is serious effort at networking, most such organizations may not be of much relevance to the cause of empowerment of women. The following measures could be considered in this direction:

o Taking a critical look at all the interventions made so far by the Church in the field of education, health, mobilization and organization of the marginalized women

and men and their impact on ending discrimination and inequalities of all types, especially those based on gender, class and caste.

o Joining hands with the progressive forces and social movements of the marginalized groups especially *Dalits*, *Adivasis* and other subsistence farm-based communities to strengthen their struggle for livelihood security (which includes food, water, health, fuel, energy, health and educational security). The process of engaging women and men of the marginalized in the process of critical consciousness/gender sensitization, strengthening movements to access joint/ collective control over life-sustaining resources such as land, water, forests, common properties, local seeds and breeds has to be fostered. Unless the material basis of gender, class and caste discrimination and exclusion, and hunger is altered, there can be little or no empowerment. A broad-based movement of the marginalized for livelihood rights, water and food security has to impact the state and national polity and produce a substantial change in their lives. A recent memorable example: the five thousand women and men of the landless and most marginalized communities, especially *Dalits* and *Adivasis* including women, that moved on Delhi, to claim land rights succeeded in making the political Establishment listen and respond to their demands (Ghosh, 2007). The processes of western globalization that has co-opted the governments and elites and many civil networks of the non-western nations into its web, have to be countered to build a different world: "Another World is Possible" as the motto of the *World Social Forum* held in Mumbai, said.

o Promoting inclusive, gender-sensitive urban growth centres: The promotion of alternative livelihood opportunities for the numerically large youth population of the country, inclusive of women, requires many new city centres. Many natural cities amidst 30 to 40 villages need to emerge through qualitatively well-constructed roads/transport systems linking the village to the cities. Such a policy, which would require focused State investments and the participation of civil society, could control the migration to cities, while reducing the pressure on the mega cities, which are on the verge of collapse. The centre development paradigm that is capital intensive, corporate driven and unsustainable and includes policies such as exclusive Special Economic Zones (SEZ's) by accessing food-crop land from the marginalized groups, has to be countered in every way.

Networking: Through building broad based networks and solidarities with those who share a common vision, perspectives, values and long term goals, the Church functionaries could join in the process of building a critically conscious leadership and a mass base able to sustain and expand the struggle for building a society which is participatory, inclusive, just, humane, non-violent and ecologically sustainable.

o Establishment of Women Resource Centres: The establishment of Women Resource Centres, which engage in scholarly research, education and action, may serve a very useful purpose. Undertaking research into the situation of women and gender relations as well as the impact of the programmes implemented for their empowerment and disseminating the findings/interpretations of such studies are tasks that could be attended to by such resource centres. An academic programme to train effective animators to work among the people is another important task. To begin with, at least one resource centre at the CBCI level and 12 centres at the regional level could be set up. These centres could have access to books, internet facility and audio-visual materials. These could collate region specific information on women's situation, develop linkages with women's study centres at the universities and colleges in the region. These could also compile directories of civil society agents and organizations involved in the process of seeking to change the situation of women and facilitate networking and linkages. The participants who met at almost all national and regional consultations have made many useful recommendations to the Church, which need to be considered. Three of the major suggestions that emerged are described below:

3. Need of a Gender Policy for the Church in India

The participants involved in the process of consultations in preparing for the CBCI General Assembly have expressed consensus regarding the need for a ***n inclusive gender policy for the Catholic Church.*** Such a policy could direct the Church at all levels towards purposeful action by spelling out the Vision, Mission and Goals as well as structural mechanisms that have to be set up to enable the Church to facilitate both the internal and the external interventions noted above. The policy should spell out concrete time-bound measures that need to be undertaken by the Church at all levels through its various commissions/ ministries to promote gender justice (which incorporates the objective of justice for the marginalized groups of women and men, particularly *Adivasis* and *Dalits*) and other subsistence farm-based groups.

Strengthening the Women's Commissions: The Women's Commissions at the CBCI, regional and diocesan levels need to be strengthened with human and material resources to play a monitoring role in this respect. The issue of *providing adequate personnel and finances* for the Women's Commissions at the national and regional levels must be seriously addressed. Support should be given to form and sustain Women's Commissions at the diocesan level and *Women's Cells* at the parish level as well. Some men and professionals should be included. Core Groups could be formed to inspire and assist the Women's Commissions. (In fact, this holds good for all CBCI Commissions.) Special funds should be raised by the Church for various purposes like women's empowerment and the promotion of development, justice and peace. The right to information has to be respected and complete reports should be given to the people. Accountability and transparency must prevail everywhere.

A two-year campaign: The CBCI initiatives should not end with its Plenary Assembly. The Final Statement should mandate and empower the CBCI Women's Commission to plan and conduct a two-year campaign to implement the CBCI conclusions and resolutions. *The needed personnel, budget and infrastructure should be provided for the same.* The campaign should change people's mindset by creating a deeper awareness of women's issues and presenting a relevant vision of the role of women in the Church and society. It should also address some concrete issues such as domestic violence, female trafficking, the neglect of the girl child and women's participation in decision making. It could carry forward the process of thinking/dialogue that has already been set in motion as a preparation for this significant Assembly. A systematically planned and executed campaign to promote awareness of the situation and the rights of women in the Church and society could go a long way in creating a conducive environment for the change required in the situation of women at all levels.

4. Conclusion

The march towards dignity and equality of women as well as men is unstoppable in the civilizing process of humankind. This march has been sustained by the spirit of many women and men throughout history. Struggles of resistance have echoed at various stages in history. The Biblical literature and indigenous narratives give us stories of men and women who have died fighting for justice, providing us a glimpse into the spirit of resistance of our ancestors. In more recent times, the *Adivasi* struggles (i.e., the one led by Birsa Munda) and the *Chipko* movement (famous for women hugging the trees to protect their livelihoods and nature) provide examples of the human spirit of resistance against all forms of injustice and domination. Many social movements and struggles of people (women and men) though at first ruthlessly repressed by the oppressive forces often by eliminating their charismatic leaders, have succeeded in bringing a New Dawn, i.e., the end of slavery, the *apartheid*, dictatorship, monarchies and colonial rule.

These are the stories of people who stood up, spoke out, dug in, organized, connected, formed networks of resistance and alter the course of history. They are the stories of voices raised against the establishment through the course of history, voices of the marginalized, of the indigenous and the working class, trying to put an end to racial discrimination and class inequality [we can add here gender and caste inequality as well]. Acts of resistance are always underpinned by the creative power of the people fighting for social transformation. All cries by the Establishment, 'we will never give in,

we will never cut and run we will never end apartheid, etc. etc' have turned out to be hollow claims, because when movements of people grow and become overwhelming, things change. The central issue in the world of oppression is that the state power is inherently weak, depending as it does on the obedience of its citizens. And the moment this subservience to the state is refused, the fragility of the system becomes obvious. Often history has been quiet about these stories and consequently a collaborator with the state. The ability to resist lies within history. History can help our struggle, if not conclusively, then at least suggestively. History can dispell the idea that the government's interests [we can add here corporate interests] and the people's interests are the same (Howard Zin, 2007).

For we Christians, Jesus, our Saviour, standing against the Scribes and Pharisees in order to free the oppressed, marginalized, discriminated and dehumanized majority of the Jewish society, particularly women, from slavery of structures and traditions, is the model to _____ follow.

ANNEX-I

Masculine Boy

If I had had the slightest inkling of what being a 'man' really meant, I am quite sure I would not have spent a great deal of my childhood waiting for the 'Rewarding Day'.

Before I could reach the accomplished state of being the 'Masculine Man', I had to suffer the repressive and agonizing stage of being the 'Masculine Boy'.

I learnt fairly early in life that one of my first accomplishments was to be superior to that other little creature that inhabited the earth, the 'girl'. My parents guided me through this difficult period well. They gave me some helpful pointers. If I cried they told me not to, as only little girls cried. I had to avoid the usual girlie things: bright colours (especially pink), skipping ropes, dolls and ribbons. If my parents wanted to intimidate me because my hair was getting too long or untidy, all they had to say was "we will have to put a ribbon in your hair, won't we?" I would cringe at the mere thought. If I was too shy and quiet in company, I was being like a silly girl again (cringe). My name is Ian. If my father happened to be in a somewhat jovial, sadistic mood, he would call me Yvonne and my brother would give him a hand. I hated that so much I would end up throwing large boulders at my brother. Then I started school, where I soon realized how weak girls were. If any heavy objects were to be lifted, teacher always asked us 'boys'. Whenever a girl got the cane she always cried. We were strong: we at least tried to choke back our tears (figuratively speaking of course). That reminds me of a most humiliating experience. I was about eight years old: the teacher called me out to give me the cane on both hands. Ha! He didn't make me cry. I turned to walk away, my eyes swollen with tears. Then... crash! I felt the cane against the back of my legs and the tears streamed down my face. It wasn't too long before I became quite proficient at containing my feelings during moments of stress or pain. Being a boy, of course, meant playing all the rough games; football, rugby, boxing; wrestling, etc. I avoided any display of emotions. By the time I was 11, I felt I had achieved much success at being a Masculine Boy. But, alas, there was a small price to pay — repression.

Ian Douglas (*excerpt from Man Against Sexism*)

ANNEX-II

A Reading for Two Women

It hung there in the closet while she was dying, mother's red dress, like a gash in the row of dark, old clothes she had worn away her life in. They had called me home, and I knew when I saw her she wasn't going to last.

When I saw the dress, I said "Why mother - how beautiful! I've never seen it on you". "I've never worn it, sit down, Millie — I'd like to undo a lesson or two before I go, if I can." I sat by her bed. And she sighed a bigger breath than I thought she could hold. "Now that I'll soon be gone, I can see some things. Oh, I taught you well — but I taught you wrong". "Mother, whatever do you mean?". "Well, I always thought that a good woman never takes her turn, which she's just doing for somebody else. Yours are at the bottom of the heap. Maybe some day you'll get to them, but of course you never do. My life was like that — doing for your dad, doing for the boys, for your sisters, for you". "You did everything a mother could". "Oh, Millie, Millie, it was no good — for you — for him. Don't you see? I did you the worst of wrongs. I asked nothing for me! Your father in the other room, all stirred up and staring at the walls when the doctor told him, he took it badly — came to my bed and all but shook the life right out of me. 'You can't die, do you hear. What'll become of me? What'll become of me?'. It'll be hard, all right, when I go. He can't even find the frying pan, you know. And you children. I was a free ride for everybody, everywhere. I was the first one up and the last one to sleep — seven days out of the week. I looked at how some of your brothers treat their wives now, and it makes me sick, 'cause it was me that taught it to them. And they learned, they learned that a woman doesn't even exist except to give. Why, every penny that I could save went on your clothes, or your books, even when it wasn't necessary. Can't even remember once when I took myself downtown to buy something beautiful — for me. Except last year when I got that red dress. I found I had twenty dollars that wasn't especially bespoken. I was on my way to pay it extra on the washer. But somehow I came home with this big box. Your father really gave it to me then: 'Where you going to wear a thing like that to? — Soap opera or something?'. And he was right, I guess. I've never, except in the store, put on that dress".

"Oh, Millie — I always thought if you take nothing for yourself in this world, you'd have it all in the next somehow. I don't believe that anymore. I think the Lord wants us to have something. Here — and now. And I'm telling you, Millie, if some miracle could get me off this bed, you could look for a different mother, 'cause I would be one. Oh, I passed up my turn so long I would hardly know how to take it. But I'd learn. Millie. I would learn!".

It hung there in the closet while she was dying. Mother's red dress, like a gash in the row of dark, old clothes she had worn away her life in. Her last words to me were: "Do me the honour, Millie, of not following in my footsteps. Promise me that". I promised. She caught her breath, and then mother took her turn in death.

<div style="text-align:right">(Source: Adapted from Millie's Mother's Red Dress by Anita Canfield,
Self-Esteem for the Latter-day Saint Women).</div>

ANNEX-III

Understand the Concepts: Gender, Sex and Differences between the Two

Concept Sex: Sex is a biological term. It is a fact of human biology. We are born male or female. It is women who conceive; give birth and breastfeed the human baby. Biological and physical conditions (chromosomes, external and internal genitalia, hormonal states and secondary sex characteristics) lead to the determination of male or female sex.

Concept Gender: Gender is a psychological and cultural term. It is a cultural construct: the distinction in roles, behaviour and mental/emotional characteristics between females and males developed by a society (Tierney, 1991). Gender is an edifice of social attitudes, assumptions, behaviour and activities (our gender roles and identities) that are constructed on the biological differences between males and females. Gender is a concept which refers to a system of socially defined roles, privileges, attitudes and relationships between men and women, which are learned. Gender is about women, men and transgender groups and the power relations between them. Gender inequality, which sustains gender discrimination, is a manifestation of unequal power relations between women and men, girls and boys in all

spheres of their day to day living.

Sex and Gender: Distinctions

Sex: Natural/biological/anatomical/hormonal/gonadal differences between men and women. Nature-constructed

Differences are universal (same all over – homo sapiens manifests these differences).

Provides complementary strengths and potentials (i.e., sperms or eggs for the reproduction of species)

Relative differences in body muscles for carrying out various tasks associated with the human body.

Signifies relative biological strengths of the female and male species.

Signifies the prevalence of some genetic and hormonal differences, along with many commonalities between sex groups who belong to the human species.

Gender: Socio-cultural, socio-culturally constructed differences between women and men. Culture-constructed

Variations in time and Space (from one historical period to another from one locality or culture to another) in social-roles, tasks, positions, status associated with women and men. Institutionalized patterns of relations between men and women.

Customs, laws, rules, regulations that govern the relations between women and men and resultant practices, deeds and behaviour associated with women and men, often result in unequal access to, and control over, material resources (land, capital, technology) and opportunities among men and women.

Sustains domination of one sex over the other – i.e., men over women in patriarchal societies.

———————————————

References

Bhasin, K., 1993: *What is Patriarchy?,* New Delhi, Kali for Women.

Bhasin, K., 2004: *Exploring Masculinity*, New Delhi, Women Unlimited.

Desrochers, J. *et al.*, "The Women's Moments", *in Social Movements: Towards a Perspective*. Bangalore: Centre for Social Action.

Desrochers, J. *et al.*, "The Nature and Relevance of the Social Teaching of the Church", *Paper presented at NBCLC at South Asian Colloquium on "Discrimination, Gender Injustice and Pauperization"*, Bangalore, 16-19 Sept. 2007.

Frontline, 2007: "Articles on Women as Victims in Frontline", Vol. 24, n. 25, pp. 4-32. Writers focus on some regions of India such as New Delhi, Maharasthra, Tamilnadu and Assam.

Ghosh, J., 2007: "March for Land", *Frontline*, Nov. pp. 16, 95-96

Government of India, 2006: *Women and Men in India*, New Delhi: Central Statistical Organization.

Gross, D.R., 1987: Psychology: The Science of Mind and Behaviour. London: Edward, Arnold.

Kamla Bhasin and Kahn Nighat, 1986: Feminism and Its Relevance in South Asia. New Delhi: Kali for Women.

Kochurani, A., 1987: "Theology of Womanhood", *Word and Worship,* Bangalore: NBCLC, pp. 143-153.

Lerner, G., 1985: *The Creation of Patriarchy*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Noronha, R., 2007: "Women's Movements in India", *Word and Worship*, Bangalore: NBCLC; pp.154-63.

Noronha, R., 2002: "Cultural Action Towards Gender Sensitization", *Integral Liberatio*n, Bangalore: Centre for Social Action.

Noronha, R., 2004: "Women in Karnataka", in *Poverty, Marginalization and Empowerment in Karnataka,* ed. J. Desrochers, Bangalore: KRCR-JPC.

Omvedt, G., 1990: *Violence Against Women, New Social Movements and New Theories in India*, New Delhi: Kali for Women.

Rajalakshmi, 2007: The Global Gender Gap Report of the World Economic Forum (WEF) ranks India 114 in a list of 128 countries. The situation was no better in 2006; When India was ranked 98.

Tierney, H. (*ed.*), 1991: *Women's Studies Encyclopedia,* New York: Peter Bedrick Books.

Wilson, E.R., 2005: *Impact of Inequality*, London, New York, Routledge.

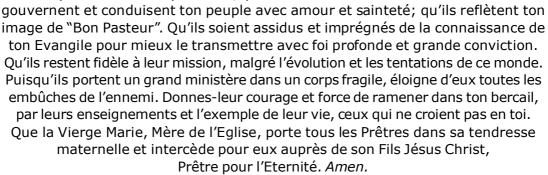Zinn, H., 2007: "A 'Power' the Government cannot Suppress", *Frontline*, 9 March.

Ma prière pour les Prêtres à l'occasion de l'année sacerdotale

Prière pour les Prêtres

Seigneur Jésus-Christ, nous te louons et
nous te bénissons car tu es Prêtre à jamais.
Nous te remercions pour le don de grâce que
tu as confié à ton Église: "les Prêtres".
Tu les a ainsi choisis,
pour perpétuer ta présence parmi les hommes
dans le mystère Eucharistique.
Remplis-les de ton Esprit Saint, qu'ils
gouvernent et conduisent ton peuple avec amour et sainteté; qu'ils reflètent ton
image de "Bon Pasteur". Qu'ils soient assidus et imprégnés de la connaissance de
ton Evangile pour mieux le transmettre avec foi profonde et grande conviction.
Qu'ils restent fidèle à leur mission, malgré l'évolution et les tentations de ce monde.
Puisqu'ils portent un grand ministère dans un corps fragile, éloigne d'eux toutes les
embûches de l'ennemi. Donnes-leur courage et force de ramener dans ton bercail,
par leurs enseignements et l'exemple de leur vie, ceux qui ne croient pas en toi.
Que la Vierge Marie, Mère de l'Eglise, porte tous les Prêtres dans sa tendresse
maternelle et intercède pour eux auprès de son Fils Jésus Christ,
Prêtre pour l'Eternité. *Amen.*

Notre Père qui es aux cieux, …
Je vous salue Marie, pleine de grâce, …
Gloire au Père et au Fils et au Saint Esprit.…

Pour les Prêtres qui ont quitté ce monde.
Donne-leur le repos éternel Seigneur, et que brille sur eux la lumière sans fin.
Qu'ils reposent en paix. *Amen*

[Sœur YOGO Félicité de Jésus,
Sœur de St Thérèse de l'Enfant Jésus de Lisala
Etudiante à l'Université Salésienne, Rome]

Events

NEXT SEDOS CONFERENCE 2010
INTERGENERATIONAL DIALOGUE
ON THE CHURCH AND THE GOSPEL

POSTMODERN YOUTH AND NARRATIVE EVANGELIZATION

Tuesday, 7 December 2010
15.30 hrs

Pio Estepa, SVD (talk in English)*
Mission Secretary of the Divine Word Missionaries. Consultant to the Pontifical Council for Culture

Brothers of the Christian Schools, Via Aurelia, 476 — 00165 ROMA

* Simultaneous translation in English, French, Spanish, and Italian
Entrance Fee: € 5.00

NEXT SEDOS CHRISTMAS PARTY 2010

Friday, 17 December 2010
19.30 hrs

For SEDOS Members only