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EDITORIAL

Every day is Christmas when
there is LOVE; because LOVE
Is FOREVER, is HERE and is
NOW!

We are dedicating this issue of the *SEDOS Bulletin* to Youth. "The time of youth is the season of spring in everyone's life. It is very easy to be active, transform the ordinary into the extraordinary".... The young people of today, whether they belong to the developed or developing countries, all excel in the use of modern technology. They are so fascinated by it that they become an easy prey to its negative effects. Young people are caught between the struggle for self-identity and the requirements to secure a successful life, more especially in the emerging urban setting. The few articles we have gathered all abound in the same sense: the future of the world and the Church belongs to youth; they are the future State leaders and ministers in the Church.

May the Lord shower on you
his abundant blessings
throughout the YEAR 2011!

Nevertheless, there is a kind of dichotomy/a gap between these beautiful statements: e.g. Youth as future instruments of change and the space allotted to them in the actual structures of Governments and within the Church. Government structures, in most of the developing countries and in some of the developed ones tend to promote a sort of gerontocracy excluding, ipso facto young people, how can they be prepared to assume the roles they will be assigned? The Church and civil society are certainly called to a conversion of their inner attitude.

The main challenge is to find the ways and means which can help young people to make room in their life, welcome the following exhortation and put it into practice: "What matters to young people, more than having "stability and security" is solid roots in faith, which offers prospects immeasurably greater in their scope than those which today's society tend to exalt, promising an almost" Heaven without God, "which in reality is a hell in which" selfishness, divisions in families, the hatred between people and between nations, lack of love, joy and hope prevail. "Hence the need to be" Planted and built up in Jesus Christ, firm in the faith", (Benedict XVI, 09-03-2010). Young people are experiencing these situations. What language does the Church need to learn so as to be able to communicate with young people today? Are we ready to listen to young people and learn from them?

*Christmas Greetings of Peace and Joy from the Executive
Committee to all our Friends*

***Merry Christmas and Happy New
Year! Buon Natale e Felice Anno Nuovo!***

***Feliz Navidad y Prospero Año Nuevo
Heureuse Année Nouvelle!***



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The Pastoral Challenges of Urbanization in Uganda - Response of the Church -

Introduction, Location and Background

L*ocation:* Uganda is located in the heart of the Great African high plateau that rolls from the Ethiopian highlands towards Southern Africa; it lies between the two arms of the Great East African Rift Valley and is crossed by the equator. It has 241,139 sq. kms of land with a tropical climate.¹ About 86.7% of its thirty-two million people live in rural areas and at an annual rate of 4-6% rural-urban migration, more than 12% live in urban areas. More than 70% of the population is Christian. At 3.2% per year, it has the seventh fastest population growth rate in the world. With a 6.1% female fertility rate, Uganda is third in the world. With about 50% of its population below the age of fifteen, the country has the highest average of teenage population in Africa South of the Sahara. It is a landlocked country, bordered by Kenya on the East, the D.R. Congo on the West, Tanzania to the South, Rwanda to the South-West, and Sudan to the North.

Background: Before the arrival of foreign colonialists and missionaries, this land was living a typical Traditional African lifestyle. Life was based on subsistence farming, hunting, fishing and fruit gathering. The traditional kingdoms and chiefdoms were headed by kings, chiefs, tribal leaders, councils of clan leaders and family elders; with a traditional African religion practiced according to the different cultural settings of the people. Uganda began to enter the modern phase of history basically through foreign influence. The 19th century witnessed an unparalleled interest in the acquisition of African territories by the industrialized countries of Europe. Present-day Uganda was forged by the British between 1890 and 1926 with its name being derived from the Buganda Kingdom.² During this period there was also an inflow of Christian missionaries from Europe into the heart of Africa, marking the third phase of the missionary endeavour on African territory. This period marked the entrance of European cultural practices which brought the Gospel.³ Uganda's first contact with the Christian world was on 30 June 1877 through the Protestant missionaries from the Church Missionary Society (CMS).⁴ Two years later on 17 February 1879 Catholic Missionaries began to flow into the country and evangelize it.

The introduction of primary factories especially for mining and warehouses for multinationals was facilitated by administrative centres and transport networks especially the railway line, which enabled people to migrate from rural areas in search of the new life brought by the West.⁵ Multi-ethnic populations were taken from villages as a cheap labour supply to the newly established production centres. When Uganda was declared a British Protectorate in 1894 it was followed by construction and the nationalization of institutions like schools, hospitals, military bases that tended to be concentrated in specific built-up areas. Massive populations were crowding into built-up areas with inadequate means of survival, creating uncomfortable living conditions.

Post-Independence era: With the fall of direct colonialism in the mid 20th century,

a new world was emerging; a great change was taking place. New challenging situations were coming to light through the political, industrial and urbanization processes. The political Independence of Uganda (9 October 1962) brought in new forms of socio-economic inter-dependence both locally and internationally. Large populations that had tasted the life of the White-man found themselves in less sustained built-up areas, without direction, living with gambling politicians and economists, juxtaposed cultural interests, and yet more and more people were flocking into the cities that had no industrial capacity to support their basic human needs.

Politically, the main challenge at this time was the division of the new country between the South and North blocs and the lack of a full comprehension of the new political system. Economically, the imbalance was caused by the increased in urban population and insufficient corresponding supportive industries. Socio-culturally it was the insecurity of “the other”, the people who did not belong to “my” ethnic group and yet there was inevitable coexistence. Religiously the struggle was between the different missionary camps, first within themselves and later with the non-Christian African Traditional Religious (ATR) beliefs. Agriculture was being abandoned in the villages while the new cities did not yet have enough industries to provide for the high number of immigrants. Modern urban life was beginning to replace the old African systems but at a weak point. This led to the over-crowding of towns and the subsequent appearance of slums and shantytowns. The colonial era had left behind a modern administration system which the Indigenous people were not well enough trained to handle.

The Church: Despite the tension between the missionaries and the local clergy at the time, the Church was still hanging on and building up slowly, maintaining her traditional structures amidst rapid social changes. Today the Church is immersed in a complex society where her comfortable pastoral zone of homogeneity is fast giving way to the challenges of heterogeneity on the social and religious levels. She struggles to fit into an urban operating system that mainly, developed, during the period when she seemed to have withdrawn from man’s earthly affairs thus creating an anti-urban bias. Today she is challenged by her realization of the need to share in the sorrows, joys and hopes of the People of God, many of whom are heavily influenced by urbanization.⁶ The missions, operating in the rural world largely immune to the impact of urbanization, had adapted — and they were correct to do so — methods and structures suitable to the rural setting. However, the methods and structures inherited by the Young Churches now run the risk of being too closely bound to the rural world.⁷ Some authors say that the Church is not well enough organized to deal with the urban scene. The population of the cities is growing rapidly and the Church is unable, with her present structures, to keep pace with that growth.⁸ The current state of urbanization in Uganda and the challenges it poses as discussed below are indicative of a country struggling to manage in an ever-changing modern ambient.

Pastoral Challenges

To summarize the challenges describe below are at a more secular level but since the Church is also meant to serve secular humanity, she cannot close her eyes to the material suffering of her children. Urban-related challenges can be identified in Uganda such as: rapid population growth with uncontrolled mobility, over-crowding coupled with insufficient social services, poor medical and sanitation facilities, high mortality rates, limited access to land, corruption, high unemployment rates, the burden of debt and lack of markets for local produce.⁹ We further observe further the increased growth of slums with all their dehumanizing elements, increased crime and injustice: street children; child/drug abuse; commerce-based human relationships; increased gap between rich and poor; negative influence of the Mass Media; prostitution; gambling and theft; the disappearance of positive traditional values; conflict between political and traditional institutions; neglect of the rural areas; influx of dangerous foreign cultures; environmental degradation,¹⁰ etc.

Direct Challenges to the Mission of the Church

The Structure of the Church vis-à-vis the city: The nineteenth century Christian expansion from Europe brought to Africa a well-structured hierarchical Church that was suitable to a rural ambient.¹¹ The system divided the territory into several parts under the direction of the mission and each was confined to the pastoral care of a Priest or a group of Priests. These mission stations, which today we call Parishes, were sub-divided into other stations which today we call out-stations, the number of which depended on the availability of Priests and the size of the area. They vary in size. The main out-stations are regularly visited by the Priest who comes from the main mission-post (parish centre) to administer the sacraments, gathering all the smaller sub-stations under that particular main out-station.

Catechists are appointed to the outstations as caretakers in the name of the Parish Priest.¹² This approach has served its time in the rural areas, but Uganda is now witnessing a change in life-styles.¹³ The same structures, oriented to the rural setting, cannot function in urban centers without modification. Today the challenge lies in the structural adjustment of the Church to suite the urban centres in Uganda where people are very mobile and heterogeneous and cannot be confined to one territorial zone. A new pastoral approach must be devised with the least risk of losing the universality of the Church.

Inter-ethnic relations: The process of urbanization has led to the presence of various ethnic people in built-up areas without a unifying philosophy to keep their diversity in unity. Tribal and political differences were brought into the Church as well from the new urban communities. It is common to hear of conflicts during the election of Church leaders because of tribal tendencies especially when the office involves material benefits. What results is mutual distrust, enmity, conflict and hardship and which man is at once the cause and the victim.¹⁴ More than being a challenge brought by urbanization, it is a sign that the Gospel message is not yet fully integrated into the cultures of the people and that both urbanization and evangelization have not yet succeeded in permeating the exclusive ethnocentricity of man.

Religious Syncretism: "A significant number of Christians prefer to keep some incompatible elements of the African Traditional Religion (ATR) while outwardly appearing to be committed Christians".¹⁵ If I may expand religious syncretism to include the search for the spiritual meaning of man's existence from different philosophies, I would not hesitate to include other forms of thought to which the urban mind turns in search of answers to its spiritual thirst. We can identify such forces as the new age theories, extreme pragmatism, relativism, Atheism, yoga, Pleasurism, humanism, etc. These theories, beyond being secular philosophies, present themselves as alternatives to the less or often misunderstood religious truths in which man fails to discover the full meaning of his life in the urban environment.

In Uganda (Africa) the gap between our fading traditional beliefs and the mysteries of our faith was not well covered in the missionary era and this situation makes us more vulnerable to such theories. A double standard of living in towns as well as in the villages is common, whereby Sunday is for God and the other days for gods. Human sacrifice, love portions, superstition, amulets, etc, are all signs that man still turns to traditional means in search of success, security and survival in the city.

The transitional period between the missionary era and the indigenization of the Ugandan Church (1879-1964) was not sufficient to transform a totally traditional and intrinsically cultural Ugandan into a full and united follower of Christ. It questions the level of the inculturation of the Gospel into Ugandan cultures. Christianity challenged the ATR with externally notable success, e.g. the Holy Martyrs of Uganda, but some ATR practices remained silently operational in the private lives of many Christians. Urbanization collects and uses such modern theories to fill the unsatisfied spiritual hunger within the heart of man. The gap between cultural beliefs and Christian practice is still wide, thus favouring religious syncretism.

Inconsistency between Faith and Practical Life: Many people in Uganda have received Baptism and are called Christian by the same fact; but on looking at some of the practices in daily life, one wonders how far Uganda is Christian. There seems to be a contradictory gap between what they profess on Sunday and what they actually live in the weekdays.¹⁶ An imbalance arises between the concern for practicality and efficiency, and the demands of moral conscience; also very often between the conditions of collective existence and the requirements of personal thought. Eventually an imbalance develops between specialized human activity and a comprehensive view of reality.¹⁷ Urbanization has not bettered the situation in this regard; if anything, it may be held responsible for its increase. This stems from the fact that modernization provides seemingly visible and practical workable solutions to man's daily challenges some of which contradict the teaching of the Church. I would just like to mention two such challenges:

Birth Control by Artificial Contraceptives: In a country where couples lack sufficient knowledge of their human sexuality to be able to determine the safe periods to avoid unplanned pregnancies; in a country where traditional beliefs still encourage a high number of children and yet faced with the ever-increasing cost of living, it is a testing moment for the spouses to decide between abstinence for natural birth control and the use of artificial contraceptives. The Church and other traditional cultural institutions seem to have lost the battle against artificial contraceptives in the developed countries. Unfortunately these ideas are being strongly promoted in the developing world as hands are held out for foreign aid. For individual couples, it is a hard choice between having more children due to their failure to identify the safe monthly periods and filling their homes with children they are not able to cater for financially. In most cases it is left to the conscience of the individuals, many of whom choose the contraceptives and ignore the Church's teaching.

The Use of Condoms: Africa South of the Sahara has 74% of the total world's HIV cases and in Uganda about 2 million people are living with this virus with the national spread rate of 6% per annum. In towns the spread is highest, given the lifestyle and conditions of life there. I have met Christian parents who advise their children to use condoms rather than face the risk of contracting diseases. Medical centres in Uganda and some institutions for higher learning freely distribute them to the youth; Government subsidizes taxes on condoms; they are cheap and can be bought in the remotest villages of Uganda even where the preservation conditions are not conducive. The conflict between losing the life of a child to AIDS and the uncertainty whether this child has actually taken note of the call to abstinence by the Church, presents a strong temptation to many to advocate the use of condoms.

Both Church and State hospitals give treatment and counselling to AIDS patients. The difference is in the preventive approach. The Church gives two alternatives (Abstinence and faithfulness in marriage) which our modern State considers the best approaches but the Government and other secular NGOs add the use of condoms as a preventive measure. There are more delicate issues like incompatible married couples who have the right to sexual satisfaction and the duty of rearing offspring and yet no practical solutions have been given them. Such a gap is covered either by rebellion against Church doctrine or the use of other sexual deviations like masturbation within marriage, adultery, surrogate parenthood, etc, which contradict the moral teaching of the Church. This defines the inconsistency between the practice of faith and the seemingly workable provisions given by modern life to modern challenges.

Liturgy, Inculturation and Cultural Pluralism: It is common to hear of inculturation by the local people but this is only in terms of the novelty that has been added to the usual form of liturgical celebration on a particular occasion. It does not go deeper to address issues of ancestral veneration, use of amulets as spiritual security,¹⁸ tribal linguistics, translation of liturgical books, etc. Uganda has about 56 ethnic groups under which we find different cultural orientations. With the mixture of these cultures in towns, it is not easy to find a common ground for liturgical inculturation without the risk of sidelining the small cultural groups within the same locality. The big question has always been 'which culture' should serve as model in the context where the selfish

tendencies of man persist as each thinks himself to be superior. The Church still faces the challenge of expounding inculturation to include not only language but the unification of common symbols found in each ethnic entity by which we can talk of a Ugandan culture. There is a need for a critical analysis of the universal values within the different cultures so as to avoid the risk of limiting the Gospel message to one single culture or tribe.¹⁹

Urban Catechesis: The missionaries had a three year programme for baptismal preparation whereby the catechumens boarded at the parish centre (Mugini) for the months they were in formation. With the introduction of boarding schools, increased expenses in maintaining the catechumens, child safety policies, religious pluralism in the cities, etc, it is no longer possible to have catechumens in formation boarding at the parish centre. Academic boarding schools take away the potential catechumens and keep them for a long period in schools and, since day-schools close late in the evening, there is little time left for catechesis in the parish. Not many parents let their children stay long at the parishes because at home too they have academic assignments and during the holidays many go to the villages to join the wider family. These parents do not even have the time to catechize their own children at home, less still of praying together. The towns are full of children but little time has been allocated for initial catechesis.



School Education: The Bishops of Uganda note: that "Because the full education of the child is beyond the capacity of the parents, the parents confide their children to teachers who complete the education begun in the home".²⁰ The boarding school system in Uganda is good for academic performance but it takes the children away for months from the direct guidance of their parents. The students academic and moral formation is greatly dependent on the school management with the risk of secularized tendencies. The religious education provided in most schools is more for passing exams than for strengthening the faith of the young people. The current moral decadence, abuse of office and lack of commitment to public service especially by the young is an indication of poor moral formation in schools.²¹ Catholic educational and social institutions provide the best services in the country but the majority poor Catholics are unable to afford the fees. In the face of negative modern trends youth have little resistance, and so immorality increases.

Pentecostalism and Sects: "Africa is characterized by a great variety of sects and religious movements of diverse origin".²² They are essentially an urban phenomenon since it is there that they find fertile ground to expound their teaching.²³ They fill a vacuum between the Catholics and their pastors. Their attractive pastoral approach capitalizes on the weak points within the Church's pastoral strategies and this highlights the challenge we have to face in the new approaches to evangelization in Uganda. "... New religious movements are arising in situations where the majority of people experience acute poverty and even desperation, while a minority is beginning to enjoy the benefits of the consumer society ... there is a desire for social healing as much as for inner healing".²⁴ Religious movements address the situations of everyday life such as failure to give birth or to get a spouse; issues about death, prosperity, long life, possessions, peace and tranquility are given much attention at a person to person level.

They help people to find in the word of God answers to the fundamental issues of life by constantly quoting the Bible, a practice with which many Catholics are still unfamiliar.²⁵ They have the ability to inculturate the Christian message. In a country where there are not sufficient scientific explanations as to the cause of suffering and other undesirable situations in life, man is apt to listen to anyone who seems able to answer such

complications. The spiritual response is more appealing especially in Africa where the traditional tendencies to superstition and spiritualism are still in transition to modern Western thinking. Since the Catholic Church's teaching has, to a great extent remained mysterious, any religious movement that seems able to interpret such mysteries into a concretely understandable language is given greater attention. So, they have managed to take great number of people away from the Catholic Church.

Human Sacrifice: The phenomenon of human sacrifice is an ancient method of using parts of the human body (especially the head and the genitals) as sacrifice demanded by witchdoctors in the belief that one will become wealthier or attain better health or greater security. Unfortunately those involved in the business are the rich townspeople who take away the lives of poor people as prescribed by their "doctors". This practice is rampant in the big towns of Uganda as people struggle to satisfy their greed for money in the name of fighting poverty. Uganda's 1957 Witchcraft Act prohibits acts of witchcraft that involve threatening others with death. Such sacrificing has been done in secrecy for a long time. Child sacrifice centres on witchcraft with witchdoctors preying on people's fear and greed for riches. The New Vision, Uganda, reported the following:

The number of people killed as a human sacrifice is on the rise. According to a report obtained from the Police, the number of people killed in human sacrifice increased from three in 2007 to 25 in 2008 and 29 in 2009. In addition, a total of 123 people were still missing by the end of 2009, the majority of them, or 90, were children. Most of them are suspected of having become victims of human sacrifice... Kampala district emerged as the most dangerous place, with 956 people gone missing for at least a few days during 2009.²⁶

These are devilish acts which the Church has to address, otherwise as the denial of God or of religions is becoming more rampant than in former days.²⁷ It is also an indication that some dangerous African traditional rituals have not yet fully given way to Christianity.

On the Institution of Marriage: "The urban family is immersed in a complex social environment that encompasses the entire breath of human experience. To be a family in the city is to hear and see and smell very vividly the best and the worst of humanity".²⁸ The Government of Uganda recognizes as legal three forms of marriage, i.e. customary, civil and religious marriages. In so far as Church wedding is concerned, there is a lot of irregularity caused by the fear of committing oneself to a life-long partner, bride wealth, fear of submission and lack of conviction about the importance of a Church marriage.²⁹ Marriage in Uganda today, as in many other developing countries, is facing particular challenges which lead many people to co-habit out of wedlock. There are many active and good-willed Christians living outside wedlock who have therefore incurred penalties like suspension from Holy Communion, and denial of a Funeral Mass after death.

"Unlike the marriage based on the ancient Roman and Germanic contractual marriage oriented to the nuclear family, the African traditional marriage is a process oriented to the extended family. All these factors, no doubt influence the status of marriage in Africa".³⁰ Traditionally in Uganda there are the introductory and bride price ceremonies which involve a lot of inter-family negotiations and financial requirements which the family of the male spouse has to meet. Bride price today has become a business in which the groom is made to incur great sums of expenses³¹ and yet the celebration of marriage in the Church is the last step after the preceding preparations. This causes the intending couples to wait for months or even years before completing the process. The question here is whether the Church journeys with the intending couple at each of these stages or just looks on awaiting her turn to give the nuptial blessing? In most, if not all, cases Mother Church in Uganda waits for the couple at her Church doors to fill up the documents, part of which serve as proof for clearance of the traditional bride wealth requirements.

Life expectancy in Uganda is 52.6 years for men and 53.8 years for women and yet one has to spend about half of this life at school trying to invest in human capital for a better future. After this education it is not easy to find a good enough job to meet some

of the marriage requirements. To a couple whose finances may not permit a quicker process, years of impatience and fear of losing the chosen partner result in simple agreements made between the families for co-habitation. Children may even be reared and baptized but the parents are barred from Holy Communion and in some parishes even from active participation in Church ceremonies. Moreover, after the customary requirements with the testimony of local Government representatives, the legality of the marriage is recognized and protected by the political State. Children are reared with legal rights to the inheritance of property even before the Church can sacramentally provide for their “illegal” state of marriage.

Church’s Response and the Way Forward

These and many other challenges are situations that the Church must constantly battle with at both the theoretical and practical levels. There may not be a definite and particular solution to each of the challenges highlighted above but the constant involvement of the Church in man’s affairs is a step towards a better life. The Church acknowledges and recognizes the current world changes in all spheres of life especially in the changing social relations among human beings as affected by the present wave of modern urbanization.³² She recognizes the need for the re-evaluation of pastoral approaches to respond to the changing times of man in the modern world. Her intervention in human affairs at both the theoretical and practical levels is an indication of her time-long interest in travelling with man as she shares in his sorrows, joys and hopes.

From antiquity, cities have been places of security against enemies; places of social interaction and improved conditions of life. They are meant to be: market-places, doorways to positive globalization, concentration of goods and distribution centres of wealth, centres of communication, places of opportunity and innovation, centres of social interaction and religious pluralism, centres of power,³³ etc. When this vision is lost due to man’s short sightedness, the city becomes a burden on man’s shoulders and an enemy to his very existence. The enemy in the city today is “everything visible or invisible that squeezes man to the margins of life and leaves him with the least of means to make a dignified living”. Such enmity deviates man from his journey to eternity and blurs the very essence of the city’s intended purpose.

God has made the city his tent, in which he wants to communicate with the city dwellers and He invites them to communicate among themselves. God becomes man (incarnation) so as to be one with us. The missionary mandate given to the Church to go out to the whole world (Mt 28:19) is the reason behind the Church’s presence in the city i.e. to continue the incarnation of Christ. The Church’s mission in the city is to mobilize all her baptized children and make them into true children of God thus making them feel that together they are the bearers of salvation which begins here on earth.³⁴ The Church is called to bring the Good News to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives and new sight to the blind; to set the down-trodden free and to proclaim the year of favour (*cf* Lk 4:18). The plight of the people in the cities cannot be left unattended to; it calls for the proclamation of favour from the Lord, a new life brought about by a new understanding of Evangelization.³⁵

There is a continuous call on the Church to get fully involved in the socio-economic, cultural and political life of man since these are the areas that affect him in the urban centres. The Church ministers and all the laity are called to be positive towards urban life and to embrace it as a new mode of life for today and for the times to come. Since the signs of the time read “urbanization as the new human environment”, there is an urgent need to inculturate the Gospel wisely into the new urban culture so that it can continue to be as relevant as it has always been to different generations. The Church has to introduce new approaches to the evangelization of the urban centers and soften her doctrine concerning modern issues like population control, disease prevention, preparation and reception of the sacraments, etc. We need to pay urgent pastoral attention to man to free him from its evils,³⁶ there is need to assess and put into place pastoral approaches and structures that will help man find his true self in the city. Evangelization in the city seeks to find a language that suites modern humanity without altering the essential message of Christ;

a language that addresses the new pluralistic society; a language that not only speaks the words of Jesus but interprets them to address man's actual situation; a language that not only speaks His words but equally does His work through a life of witness (Acts 1:8).

Urban evangelization will analyze the complexity of modern society with the help of the other human sciences and be able to come up with a pastoral approach which contains both universal and particular recommendations. The Church in the city is confronted with choices to make for the good of the people; she is the light of a people who are being consumed by secularism and many seem to have lost the Face of God. There is need for a theology that speaks to the urban dweller; need for practical relevance in every theological thought proposed by the pastoral agents. Within this theology, the Church must wisely see where and how to place the YES and the NO.

Africa: The specific African urban situation of poverty, disease, war, conflict, injustice, inequality and violence amidst the abundant natural and human wealth of the continent, calls for a pastoral paradigm that will make the Gospel message liberational.³⁷ The basic concepts of the New African Paradigm of Evangelization (NAPE) will include life, peace, human rights, security,³⁸ renewed faith, a reappraisal of the traditional religions, re-proposing the best of African traditional values, the fight against self-negation, dialogue with politics and other religions within the continent and cooperation with the rest of the global world.³⁹ Evangelization in Africa needs new fervour, method and expression.⁴⁰ Structurally speaking, the Church in the city must reorganize her pastoral structures; the urban parish must be open, flexible and missionary, giving space to trans-parochial cooperation. Community centres like libraries, sports centres, entertainment halls, Retreat Centres, centres for the Elderly, gyms, etc, run by the Church in different zones ensure her active presence among her people.

The 1994 Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops "considers inculturation an urgent priority in the life of the particular Churches, for a firm rooting of the Gospel in Africa".⁴¹ African cultures must seriously examine themselves to discover the values that can stay as they are, those values which need to be modified, the negative elements which need new worthy substitutes and the oppressive elements which must entirely go without any substitute.⁴² New catechetical programmes should be able to distinguish between catechesis for sacramental qualification and catechism for growth in faith.

Uganda: In Uganda a few such approaches are being applied although a lot still needs to be done for the total liberation of humanity. At the theoretical level, the Bishops of Uganda have written several Letters addressing different issues that affect the modern person, ranging from social to religious. The Letters are an appeal to all with stakes in human affairs to ensure the dignity of man. They put man at the centre of all human activity, condemning everything that abuses the image of God created in man and encouraging the positive achievements modernity is making in subduing the earth. At a practical level the Uganda Catholic Secretariat which is the executive arm of the Uganda Episcopal Conference, endeavours to promote and coordinate the social and pastoral ministry of the Church in building a united, just and peaceful society. The work is carried out through the 12 Commissions of the Episcopal Conference whose day-to-day work is taken care of by their respective Departments at the Uganda Catholic Secretariat under the guidance of the Secretary General. Of these Commissions and Departments the following can be said to be of direct social involvement: Lay Apostolate Commission (Youth & Adult), Justice and Peace Commission, Catholic Medical Commission, Education Commission, CARITAS-Uganda, Social Communications Commission, Ecumenism Commission, Inter-Religious Dialogue, Missionary Animation through the Pontifical Missionary Societies, HIV/AIDS Focal Point and Global Fund Initiatives Management Unit (GIFMU).

Conclusion

Human life today is influenced a lot by practical urban mechanisms; they renew man as he subdues the earth to make life more comfortable and manageable. In his struggle

to achieve this goal he is not totally free from vice; he sometimes misses out on basic human values which the city is ideally supposed to promote. "Today, as never before, the Church has the opportunity of bringing the Gospel, by witness and word to all people and nations. [There is a] dawning of a new missionary age, which will ... bear an abundant harvest, if all Christians, and missionaries and young Churches in particular, respond with generosity and holiness to the calls and challenges of our time".⁴³ The times of contemporary man indicate new forms of living, new forms of reasoning and new forms of interpreting reality. The Church has been sent out to the whole world to proclaim the Good News of liberty to all People of God (*cf.* Lk 4:18). "All people" means people of different beliefs and lifestyles; it also means the whole person. Today we find all the People of God with their diversities in the cities and this makes the city the most appropriate place for evangelization, but without ignoring the rural areas.

The challenges posed by urbanization to human life today call for new fronts of evangelization to address the rapidly changing situation of man. All issues concerning man on earth as he subdues the earth to make it a better place to live on, are issues pertaining to the mission of the Church for she is called to accompany man in his joys and hopes. In dealing with such challenges, the Church is not an onlooker but an active partner at both the local and international levels. The Face of Jesus has been blurred by the urban troubles and here the Church is invited to uncover the hidden Face of Christ and present it anew in a way that His liberation will penetrate both the material and spiritual lives of the people. This definitely calls for dialogue with the urban person in a bid to discover the hidden philosophy behind urban styles so as to continuously help him discover the fundamental purpose of his life here and hereafter.

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¹⁵ Cf. F. TUSINGIRE, *The Evangelization of Uganda, Challenges and Strategies*, Marianum Publishing Company, Kisubi, 2003, p. 166.

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¹⁸ Many Ugandan Christians have taken to holy articles, especially the rosary, as source of spiritual Security against evil omens. Many will be seen putting them around their necks or hanged in their cars both as a sign of security and Christian identity.

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S. Koilmani

Potentialities and Crises of Modern Youth and the Role of the Church

"Dear young people, you are the hope, the expectation of a more just, more dignified and more peaceful future" —
Pope John Paul II

1. Introduction

Our human life is basically a continuous search for something. Man searches for food, money, security, position, power, fame.... Still his search goes on and it knows no bounds. Youth too is a period of searching — a search for identity and meaning. Their search for meaning in the psychedelic culture, the drug culture, the dissenting culture, the violent culture and so on has proved to be fruitless. Youth, the future of humanity, have lost their taste for the present life. They find a vacuum in the depths of their hearts. Now a question arises: "Who can give meaning to their life?". Pope Benedict XVI answers this: "Dear young people, the happiness you are seeking, the happiness you have a right to enjoy, has a name and a face: it is Jesus of Nazareth, hidden in the Eucharist. Only he gives the fullness of life to humanity".¹ Youth constitute around one-third of the population of India. Serving such a great multitude of young people, endowed with various potentialities, who encounter constant challenges, is really a great challenge. That youth is a complex reality makes it all the harder. It is commonly accepted, "No single group in the history of mankind has ever been so problematic, so complex, so acutely studied and so seriously misunderstood, analyzed, so greatly admired and even loudly condemned as the youth of the world".² As the field is vast, let me limit my scope to Indian Youth in general and Indian Catholic Youth in particular.

2. Who are Youth?

There is no unanimous definition as to who youth are, stipulated by a period of age, because in different cultures people of different age groups are considered to be youth.³ However, it is agreed that those in the age group between 15 and 24 are called youth. According to the Report of the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations, 58.8 per cent of the total population of Asia are young people below the age of 24.⁴ Today's youth makes its presence felt in society by its giant strides in the field of science and technology, its search for meaning and purpose and in its vision of a just, fraternal and corruption-free society.

3. Potential of Modern Youth

Modern Youth with their intellectual caliber and burning zeal for the betterment of society have outdone the older generations in all spheres of life. The old generation is surprised at the enormous potential and capability today's youth possess. Everything is made possible with today's youth. Youth is a seed. The realization of its potential to grow to its fullest stature lies in the favourable atmosphere it has. What they need is a sufficient supply of opportunities, the rays of hope, warmth and the manure of encouragement and recognition.

Youth is Power

Youth experience a period of conflict and complexity; a period of crises — crisis of

identity and crisis of intimacy; a period of changes — changes in attitude and behaviour, physical, psychological and sexual growth; a period of storm and strife, stress and strain; a period of search for status symbols. At the same time, youth is a period of adventure and achievement. Pope John Paul II in his Apostolic Letter *Tertio Millennio Adveniente* (1994) says, “The future of the world and the Church belongs to the younger generation”. One of our nation's greatest assets is its young people. The ignited minds of the young are the greatest resource on earth, under earth and above earth.⁵ Youth are not useless but used less. The most powerful and useful resource that a nation has, not so far fully unearthed, the so-called “untapped source”, is Youth. Youth is power. It is like an atom bomb. A power, if not channeled, can have catastrophic effects.

Youth Means Creativity

This period of youth is a time of changes and innovations. To be young is to be optimistic, to be creative.⁶ “‘Change’ is their mantra, ‘new’ is their slogan and ‘better’ is their echo”. Youth do not do different things but do things differently. They do not perform extraordinary things but perform ordinary things in an extraordinary manner. Suppose a few groups of youths are given the same task to be performed, each group does something different from the other, because they think differently and act differently.

Youth — Promoters of Values

“Everybody wants to be a king and some want to be priests but nobody wants to be a prophet”. This is the real face of the Church and of society too. It is the young people who carry out the neglected prophetic role in every sphere of their lives. Youth can be rightly called “modern prophets”. They esteem the values of love, freedom, equality, fraternity and justice. Like the Old Testament prophets who are ever remembered as the champions of the poor and the oppressed, youth fight for their rights and work for social justice. They identify the voice of God who is calling them to act when the whole world is silent. They have prophetic eyes to see the agony of the suffering, prophetic ears to hear the cry of the oppressed and prophetic hands to stretch out to the needy. Martin Buber has pointed out that the youth of today are the megaphone of today's society, crying out against injustice and oppression, which most of us silently endure.⁷ The young Indian martyrs, Satyendra Dubey and Manjunath Shanmugam who stood up for justice in their profession now stand as teen idols.⁸ They are aware that injustice not only means doing wrong, but that it also means failing to do what is right, to set things right. Snapping all the traps the opportunistic politicians and selfish religious leaders set to divide youth in the name of religion, language and culture, youth build up a sense of unity among all Indian youth.



Youth — Agents of Social Transformation

"Young people exert a very important influence on modern society".⁹ Youth have contributed a lot to the betterment of society. Youth not only respect the values but also act as watchdogs to see that they are promoted and a just society built up. They look forward to the future more than anyone else. They know "If not, we are youth not for a social transformation but for social degradation".¹⁰ Youth create awareness among the marginalized of the injustice done to them through folklore, the powerful teacher. Whenever a natural calamity strikes the masses they are the first to lend a helping hand and when an oppressive structure forces something upon the voiceless, they raise their voices in unison. They strain every nerve to create a new society where justice is

respected; equality upheld; rights safeguarded; the poor taken care of and the class distinction narrowed down. They have brought transformations to society and revolutionized the hearts of the people.

4. Crises of E-Generation

Because their inner potential is not realized, youth drown in the sea of problems they face in life. Everyday modern youth face an ocean of problems and challenges. Unemployment impedes them; the cinema seduces them; communications engulf them; they are made slaves to drugs, drink and the internet; infatuation blinds their reason; politicians make them powerless puppets; materialism, consumerism and secularism carry them along; modern sensate culture has brought lots of entertainment and consequently exhaustion and frustration. The number of young people who commit suicide is on the rise. Thus they suffer from perpetual purposelessness in life. This is the grim reality of modern youth in India. Let me highlight some problems.

Religious Indifference

The most basic problem of the youth of today is a crisis of values in general, and a crisis of faith in particular.¹¹ Young people are more critical about their religious practices. They question each and everything about religion in order to find real meaning and relevance for their life today. The interest in religion varies during the life span of a person. The initial enthusiasm and interest present in the early adolescence die out in the period of youth and return when the young person becomes a responsible parent. It is disheartening that sometimes on failing to find any meaning in it, they lose the sense of religiosity and become spiritually indifferent. Religious indifferentism is a serious matter as Cardinal Paul Poupard, the President of the Pontifical Council for Culture, warns: "Religious indifference as a new face of unbelief or practical atheism is growing rapidly. It is a well-known psychological state of mind.... In the world of nature, subjugated and manipulated by all kinds of machines the marks of man become more and more evident, while the marks of God become less perceptible."¹² They don't find a way out of this faith-crisis.

Psychological Crises

Identity Crisis

Of the eight stages of personal and social development from birth to death, described by Erikson, there emerges in the fifth stage (age 12-20) the crisis of identity vs. identity diffusion, which may either be positively or negatively resolved. If one has positively resolved the previous developmental crises, one may develop a positive identity about oneself. Otherwise identity diffusion may take place or one may develop a negative identity. At this stage a person begins to explore him — herself asking, 'who am I?', and forms a self image, which is the core of one's personality. In the search for identity a person looks for role models to follow. The young person sees the peer group, the others who are significant at this stage, and compares him- herself to them. Failing to develop a personal identity, he tries to identify himself with virtual heroes, religious leaders and popular politicians, which may lead to an inferiority complex or diffused identity.

Relational Crisis

"To love and to be loved" is the inevitable yearning of every human being. From the media one tends to get the idea that teenage problems are only relational problems with the opposite sex. While this is one of the problems, however, it is not the only one.¹³ The person now widens the circle of relationship with his parents to include friends and dear ones, whom he wants to be friends with. His quest for independence causes a breakdown in the family ties and the rejection or betrayal of love leads him to isolation and despair.

Meaningless of Life

Dr. Viktor Frankl, the Founder of Logotherapy is of the opinion that an "existential

vacuum" — meaninglessness is rampant among youth, especially in students.¹⁴ Many of our youth don't find a strong reason to live for. When their dreams don't come true, their expectations fall short, their flame of hope is blown out, their education does not assure them of a secure life, the advent of globalization and privatization make their future bleak, and they fall into the pit of utter despair. Their vision is blurred; their step starts to lag; their life seems insipid. Then they may make the blunder of committing suicide. The most important reason behind suicide, the researchers' state, is meaninglessness, purposelessness and lack of vision.¹⁵ It is a shocking fact that 57 per cent of suicides of young people were due to sudden acts of frustration.¹⁶

Cultural Crises

Culture is viewed as the system of ideas, beliefs, values and hopes, which shape the conduct of the members of the community — the totality of the life of the people.¹⁷ Culture and life are reciprocal. One's own culture is the pristine glory of any society. But today the culture projected by the mass media is based on commercialism and consumerism. Youth are becoming slaves to the onslaught of Westernization in every sphere of life. As a result the longstanding family and societal values are questioned.

Modernism

Modernism is one of the dangerous tendencies prevalent among youth today. Though urban youth, whom the modern developments and ideas reach at top speed, are the most affected, it also touches the fringes of the life of rural youth. Modernism always orients towards newness. It does not even hesitate to throw away the long-standing traditional values and ethos of society, preserved from time immemorial. Emphasizing the role of reason over faith, it advocates freedom from religious authority, denies dogmas, the efficacy of the sacraments and the authority of the Scriptures.¹⁸

Materialism

Growing up in a materialistic world, today's youth seem to embrace hedonistic values which advocate pleasure as the norm of judgement. They take drugs, drink and go in search of 'red light' areas, which can only give ephemeral pleasure. Genuine relationship is lost. An undue attachment to possessions is common among the young people of today. Brought up in a scientific framework, they only accept what is empirically seen and experimented as real. The transcendent God does not find a meaningful place in their lives. The findings of Joe Arimpoor's research disclose a certain trend towards materialism in youth today. They have put economic values first in their order of values, followed by theoretical, social, political, aesthetic and religious values, in that order.¹⁹

Economic Crisis

The economy is the backbone of any society. It is neither muscle power nor mental power that rules the world but the power of money. The impact of industrialization and globalization is felt at every moment of life because it causes unemployment, which severely affects both the educated and uneducated. The total number of unemployed in India increased from 20 million in 1993-94 to 27 million in 1999-2000.²⁰ The mushrooming of multinational companies in the urban areas that offer lucrative jobs has in a way poisoned the minds of rural youth who earn their livelihood by hard physical work. Rural and semi-urban youth migrate by the masses to the cities in search of easy earning jobs. Men are replaced by machines, hard work by button pressing. Because many youth are unemployed, they get involved in anti-social activities disrupting the peace and harmony of society.

Another reason is the commodification of education and the inability of today's education to prepare the students to face life boldly. Present-day education is examination oriented, it encourages memory power, theoretical work rather than involving students in practical work, is more of a business venture than a process of character formation, and does not foster creativity.²¹ India has over 300 universities and over 3 million people graduate every year.²² Because this enormous resource of youth is not made full use of

many young people go abroad seeking recognition (the brain drain) and so India's economic growth still lags behind many countries.

Moral Relativism

"We are building a dictatorship of relativism that does not recognize anything as definitive and whose ultimate goal consists solely of one's own ego and desires", said Cardinal Ratzinger in a homily. Relativism advocates, "Whatever is good for me need not be good for you; whatever is good for you need not be good for me". It is a kind of subjectivism whereby the subject becomes the object of judgement. It is thus opposed to any kind of universal moral code. It results in moral degradation and chaos in society, as immoral behaviour such as crime, murder, premarital sex and sexual practices like homosexuality, lesbianism and gay marriage, are justified.

a. Premarital Sex

The survey taken by The Week from 516 unmarried men and women in Bangalore, Chennai, Delhi, Hyderabad, Kolkata and Mumbai in the 18-30 year age group reported the astonishing fact that 53% of them had had premarital sex,²³ with an increase in the number of unwed mothers and single people.

b. Drowned in Psychedelic Culture

Brought up in an instant culture, youth want instant gratification of their sexual desires. Many a time youth fall prey to the bait of ephemeral pleasures getting lost in the sway of sex and drugs. The Indian Express, dated 08-08-07, brings to light the bitter truth that 25 per cent of the college students in Bangalore are drug addicts. Drug abuse cuts across social and financial strata. No one is immune. Smoking, drinking and taking drugs has become the fashion of the day. They seek happiness through pleasure.

c. Crisis of Values

The mass media, a double-edged sword, more than serving as the social conscience of the people, has intruded young hearts and sown poisonous ideas in their minds. The impact of the electronic media in misleading youth is felt more clearly than any other. "Electronic media is by no means a value-free technology; it has invaded the home and changed our perception and our priorities — the way we perceive the world, as well as the way we relate to one another".²⁴ The mass media that has built bridges with 'others' has raised walls between 'neighbours' and even between people at home. Youth who spend a great deal of time with computers and on the internet find no time to be with their parents, family members and friends. Machines seem to be more useful than man. They present a set of values that are totally contrary to our value-system.

Social Idealism

Today's youth are the think-tanks of a better tomorrow, but many of their views remain in the air. They are burning with zeal to create a just, equal and harmonious society, but their far-sightedness blinds the near sightedness. They fail to realize the naked realities present in today's world. Their effort to create a completely new and different society remains imaginary and ideal. A new society is possible only out of the present society. Overwhelmed by such problems, in order to find a solution youth take refuge in a philosophy of negative protest, perverted sex and drugs; some are caged in the cinema; a large number join revolutionary movements and resort to violence and many become puppets in the hands of politicians. Caught in such fascinating traps, they find no way out. Bringing Christ to these youths can be the only antidote to the problems they face.

5. The Role of the Church

The problems that haunt modern youth become the context in which the Church carries out her mission. The Church is obliged to make strenuous efforts to help them out of their difficulties.

Church is Missionary by her Nature

God the Father sent his only Son to establish the Kingdom of God and thereby to bring liberation to all those in any sort of bondage. To continue his work of salvation, Jesus Christ founded the Church as a visible organism. Her mandate is to serve humanity until it reaches its fullness in Christ. The Church is defined in terms of the mission she carries out. "The Church on earth is by her very nature missionary".²⁵ The Church is called to be the leaven of society, being a powerful instrument for change and transformation.

Evangelizing Modern Youth

The mission of the Church is one but varied. She is a pioneer in every field that needs her attention. Whatever the Church carries out, she performs with a view to evangelization. Evangelization means to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ. Pope Paul VI also emphasized this view in *Evangelii Nuntiandi*; "For the Church, evangelizing means bringing the Good News into all strata of humanity, and through its influence transforming humanity from within and making it new" (n. 18). Thus every Christian has the binding duty to proclaim Christ and every person has the right to know Jesus. Taking Christ to modern youth, badly disfigured, has become the urgent need of the hour.

a. Faith Formation

"Youth will certainly be in a position to solve all their psychological or mental problems with the armour of faith. Even their problems of an economic and social nature can be solved by those youth who are imbued with a religious faith, because thereby, they would have acquired the inner strength to face those problems."²⁶ As youth are not happy with the way things are, we must look for some creative methods. The Gospel must be contextualized; dogmas must be simplified; the Liturgy is to be made alive and appealing to their taste with the use of modern technology. What we sow in hearts must bear fruit in the streets.

b. Agents of Socialization — the Primary Carriers of Jesus Christ

It has been proved that besides one's inbuilt qualities (Nature), the external environment (Nurture) exerts a greater influence in shaping the Family: Family is the first school of faith formation; parents are the first teachers. The parents who first introduce their children to the world must expose them to the good in the world. They must be examples to their children at every moment of life. They must sow in them the seeds of love, justice, peace, forgiveness, truthfulness and so on, which will bear thirty, sixty and a hundred fold in the near future.

Educational Institutions: schools and colleges are the custodians of holistic human formation. Impelled by the flavour of modern materialism, the present institutions give little importance to spiritual education. Physical, moral intellectual, emotional and social spheres alone do not constitute a mature and integrated person. The British psychologist R.D. Laing tells of the detrimental effect when the spiritual aspect is neglected, "Since the spiritual aspect of education was ignored, a child born in the West today stands a ten times greater chance of being admitted to a mental hospital than to a university... perhaps it is our way of educating them that is driving them mad". Foreseeing the danger awaiting us, our Catholic institutions must make religious education a compulsory subject, whereby the Gospel values too are instilled in the minds of the young people, despite the criticism levelled at our institutions as "Nurseries of conversion to Christianity".

Peer Group: Youngsters today are ready to do anything to be accepted by their peer group with which they identify. Every action of theirs — their way of dressing, eating and speaking, is in tune with their peer group. It is as if they had no will of their own. Their individuality is lost in their identity with the peer group. Their religious practice is also no exception. Youth involve themselves in collective forms of religious expressions and not merely as isolated individuals. Their spirituality is not individualistic but as a group or in a movement.²⁷ The parents must be very careful about the friends their children choose. We must create a favourable atmosphere in the parish, school or college where the student

comes into contact with persons of his/her own age to ensure that his/her faith in Jesus Christ may be strengthened by the peer group, e.g. Youth movements.

c. Evangelization on the Personal Level

Life is a collection of experiences. Every experience can become God experience if only we have the eyes to see, ears to hear, heart to believe and the will to accept. "The fundamental starting point of my faith experience nothing but my response to God calling me by name".²⁸ Today's youth are blind to the vision of Jesus and deaf to Jesus' call. They must be personally touched by Jesus. They must undergo the mountain experience of Moses and St Paul's Damascus experience. Once touched by Jesus, they can never stray from Jesus' sight and nothing can hinder their march towards Jesus. As every experience of God is personal, the faith formators can motivate them to have such an experience. Personal prayer, Word of God and the sacraments can be great sources of this faith experience.

Promoting Multifaceted Education

a. Education for Life

A.P.J. Abdul Kalam in his vision for Indian youth presents the functions education needs to perform in our society by teaching a value system, leading to the integration of capacity and the removal of social discrimination.²⁹ Education must be job-oriented and value-based. It has to teach life skills, to prepare young people to face life with all its challenges, to develop their own capabilities, to make them conscious of the 'other'. We must educate to empower the powerless and to eradicate the social evils. We must promote vocational education courses that guarantee immediate jobs.

b. Sex Education

Even today the word 'sex' makes many people shrink. Now that sex has been made a commodity, the sacredness of human sexuality must be emphasized. During his Visit to Brazil on 10 May 2007, Pope Benedict XVI met about 40,000 young people and warned them against sexual infidelity, drug abuse and unethical routes to success. Sexuality cannot be separated from who he/she is as a person, hence sex education is the basic right of our youth. Sex is not isolated from the rest of life, it is part and parcel of what it means to be human".³⁰ Though sex education has been made compulsory, it has not yet been fully executed. Parents and teachers must feel free to inform their children on this. The Church must encourage co-education in schools and colleges in order to nurture a healthy relation and abolish the gender bias.

c. Media Education

Today we are living in an age of information and media communication. With the great advances in the fields of science and technology, man has broken down the walls that kept him away from the other for years together and built bridges to relate them. Though man has achieved the much, on the other hand, he has widened the gap of communication with the Absolute. From the time we get up in the morning until we go to sleep, we are bombarded by the mass media. The media, which should teach moral values, sometimes propagate counter-values that are opposed to Christian ideals. Youth are simply carried away by the sway of violence and vulgarity. It is high time that parents educate their children to use the media in a positive way. The Message of Pope John Paul II for the 38th World Communications Day, 24th January 2004, is noteworthy: "Parents, as the primary and most important educators of their children, are also the first to teach them about the media. They are called to train their offspring in the 'moderate, critical, watchful and prudent use of the media'" in the home.

One of the great developments of our times is IT — the internet, which gives access to the worldwide web. The Catholic Church considers the internet as a gift of God and a useful medium to communicate the Good News of Jesus Christ to various groups of

people. The Document on the Church and Internet says: "The internet is relevant to many activities and programmes of the Church — evangelization including both re-evangelization and new evangelization" (n. 5). Any medium is a forum for evangelization. Appreciating the service rendered by the Church in the field of communication, to withstand the battle, it must launch many more TV channels, which can take the values of Christ to everybody especially to young people in an attractive manner. Films and television offer an immediate and extraordinary means, to communicate the Gospel to a global audience of both believers and non-believers. E-mails, blogs, chats and SMS can be used to disseminate the word of God to the young, to build digital communities and to form their character and faith. When the media becomes the symbol that mediates and communicates the divine grace to the people it indubitably attains the status of a sacrament".³¹ Youth must be taught to be critical and creative in their use of the mass media. We can form media awareness groups among youth who can criticize and analyze the activities of the media. From the virtual reality they must come to the actual reality.

d. Political and Legal Education

We lag behind in training youth to shoulder political and civic responsibilities because we consider them as corrupted. However, to abstain from politics is tantamount to encouraging corrupt professional politicians. Political consciousness has to be inculcated in the young so that they do not remain mere spectators of all the atrocities taking place in the political arena.³² The young people must be assigned many responsibilities to enable them to develop leadership qualities. Youth can play an active role in politics and civics by standing for election as the representatives of youth as a whole. They should strive to obtain the necessary administrative portfolios.

Working as an Efficient Catalyst

The Church's great service lies in its ability to make the young people realize their own latent abilities and talents. Once they are triggered with a gentle touch, they will effect tremendous changes in society. The Church can create the forums like cultural programmes, games and sports where the youth can display their talents.

Accompanying Youth

The formation of youth should not be envisaged in terms of 'I and thou', or 'I'll help you', or 'I'll form you', or 'You can learn from me?'. This way of looking at things has to be changed and replaced by the idea of accompaniment.³³ Accompanying youth is the most felt-need of today. Jesus accompanying the Disciples on the way to Emmaus can serve as the best model for youth ministry. The two Disciples who were leaving Jerusalem sad, disappointed, frustrated are transformed into two zealous missionaries. The process is very simple: Jesus takes the initiative to meet them, walks along with them, listens patiently to their sad story and enlightens them and at the end their eyes, closed by fear and frustration, are opened. Young people look for somebody who can listen to their inner longings and understand their feelings and emotions. They need hands to pat them when they do something good, and a stick to beat them when they go astray and signposts to direct them on the right way. Like any human being, they have the inner longing to be accepted and recognized as 'somebody' in society. It is only Jesus Christ who can open their eyes, blinded by hedonism, materialism and consumerism.

Let Life be a Lesson

It is said that the youth do not follow what their parents say, but they follow in their footprints. Parents should set an example to their children. More than numerous books, setting a good example can teach many lessons for life. Pope Paul VI used to say, "Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers it is because they are witnesses" (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, n. 41). The religious and those involved in youth ministry must lead an authentic life. They must bear witness to the values of Christ in their daily life. Everybody must become the Gospel to others.

From Work to Word

Young people feel a crying need to serve humanity. They may not feel at ease in a static Church, but they are happy to be part of a Church that is not afraid to go beyond its walls to pray and to witness to its faith publicly. Today's youth are action-oriented, for them 'work is worship'. They assert: 'love is religion' and 'service is prayer'.³⁴ To encourage them, Church leaders can introduce some charitable and social initiatives in their parishes like serving the sick, helping the poor, bringing the drop-outs back to school, conducting blood donation camps, organizing rallies to fight for justice when injustice is done, and eradicating social evils. Movements for each cause can be formed and the already existing youth movements like YCW, YCS, AICUF can be made active by plunging into newer activities. This may be an occasion to attract those youths who are not interested in religious practices. We have to make them realize that service to humanity — love of neighbour — is not opposed to love of God, action and contemplation

are complementary to each other. Any activity can be started with a relevant passage from the Bible and some reflections. This is also called "Informal Christian Education". Jesus stands as an informal educator par excellence.



Creating Christ-Culture

Today the young people are inundated by Western culture. To challenge the sway of this modern culture, carried all over the world by the virus of globalization, we need to create a counter-culture. Christ-culture can be the sole solution to the so-called cross-culture. Youth must be conscientized to have Christ as their only master. They must become people who are Christ-filled, Christ-conscious and Spirit-filled. This is only possible through personal friendship with Christ, which is formed day by day in personal prayer, habitual contact with the Word of God and a regular sacramental life. Then they can boldly say, "it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me" (Gal 2:20).

Jesus the Best Model for the Tenth Generation

In a world which looks for models to be followed, Jesus stands as the best model youth can imitate. Jesus had a special love for the young in his ministry of the word and of healing. In his address to the Youth of India on 10 February 1986, in Shivaji Park, Mumbai, Pope John Paul II said, "The Church offers you Christ. She will urge you to stay united with him, to remain in his love, because in him you will discover not only the source of life but also a model of authentic living" (n. 3). The different faces of Jesus Christ as a pious Jew, a social reformer, an obedient son, a friend of sinners and the voice of the poor must impress and inspire the aspirations of youth. They must be generous enough to embrace the lifestyle of Christ.

Recommendations

- We should recognize and affirm the activity of the youth in the parish and institutions.
- There must exist a friendly relationship between parents and children, the parish priest and youth.
- Youth must be motivated to work in the vineyard of God as priests and religious.
- The young must be given a chance to serve. We need to place them in situations of responsibility, e.g., BCC, Parish Council, etc. This was a deep insight on the part of Pope John Paul II who put this into action throughout his Pontificate.

- Youth movements can be enlivened by conducting regular seminars, youth camps and rallies when needed.
- Modern youth can be brought to Christ through youth conventions, retreats and prayer meetings.
- Likeminded youths can join groups to help others, e.g., prayer group, service group, study group....
- Jesus' or Gospel youth groups can be formed to evangelize other youths.
- Annual Youth Bible Festivals can be organized at the diocesan, regional and national levels, which can serve as an incentive to go deeper into the Word of God.
- Sound and light programmes highlighting the life of Jesus and of the Saints can be staged by the youth groups.
- In all the Formation Houses, youth ministry must be made obligatory.
- Religious people, after a few years of intensive formation, can be placed with secular students. Thus they can serve as leaven in society.
- Every parish, if possible, can publish a youth magazine, whereby the talents of the young are brought to light.
- Youth must be trained to write to the press about matters of public interest.
- Counselling and guidance centres can be opened in every parish.
- Meritorious young people can be encouraged with awards and recognition.
- Counseling centres can be launched in call centres and BPOs. It is surprising that 400,000 migrant youth are working day and night in the BPOs in Bangalore alone, but they have no time for spiritual growth or to improve their lifestyle.
- It is an imperative, in the context of religious pluralism, that Catholic youth know about the other religious traditions, have a good relationship with the youth of other religions and work with them in matters of social interest.

6. Conclusion

Serving the youth of today is a process of incarnation. The Church must become young to serve them. It demands initiative and commitment on the part of animators and the co-operation of the recipients. Once youths find the treasure — Christ, they cannot but proclaim him. Pope John Paul II emphasized this in his advice to youth, "After having met Christ, after having discovered who he is, you can't fail to feel the necessity of proclaiming him. Be real witnesses of Christ; live and proclaim your faith with deeds and words".³⁵ Pope Paul VI also exhorted them in *Evangelii Nundianti*: "Young people who are well trained in faith and prayer must become more and more the apostles of youth" (n. 72). The young must be motivated to evangelize their own peers. Thus each one becomes a messenger of the Good News. If each one evangelizes one person, it is not far away for the whole world to know Christ. Then the whole world will be overflowing with the knowledge of Christ and we can successfully form integral human persons. Let each one of us become a Gospel to others.

Endnotes

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Lucien Koffi Kouadio - Rodrigue Fahiraman Kone

Jeunesse : actrice du renouveau et de la renaissance africaine

Si l'on observe en 2010 les caractéristiques démographiques de la population africaine sub-saharienne, l'une des premières remarques que l'on peut faire est la jeunesse de celle-ci. Selon les projections, 63% de cette population a moins de 25 ans tandis que 20,4% couvre la tranche de 15 à 24 ans. Cinq ans avant, c'est-à-dire en 2005, 56% de la population ouest-africaine, avait moins de 20 ans et 65%, soit près des deux tiers, moins de 25 ans. Si l'on repousse l'âge de la jeunesse à 30 ans, comme c'est le cas dans bien des pays africains, on se rend compte que la population africaine est jeune à plus de 70% et qu'elle s'est accrue de manière exponentielle, en plusieurs années, à l'inverse des richesses, des revenus nationaux et des infrastructures de développement. Une telle réalité soulève des interrogations sur la manière dont les jeunes sont pris en compte dans les politiques nationales, et participent au développement des Etats africains.

Les décennies de l'abondance... 1960 à 1980

De nombreux pays africains ont connu leur indépendance dans la même décennie des années soixante, marquée par les pères fondateurs. Et pendant deux décennies, la plupart ont connu une situation économique favorable. Les populations étaient moins nombreuses et beaucoup d'acquis de la colonisation existaient encore. L'école, donc la formation, et l'accès à l'emploi n'étaient par conséquent pas un souci pour les personnes actives. Les nombreux postes abandonnés par les colons, le nombre réduit de diplômés ou de personnes qualifiées, de même que la mise en place des administrations ont favorisé la création de nombreux emplois. Toutes les personnes qualifiées ou diplômées, les jeunes en particulier, avaient accès à un emploi. C'est « l'époque de l'administration ou du fonctionariat » ; les jeunes qualifiés sont recrutés dans leur quasi-totalité au sein des différentes administrations émergentes. Les élèves, surtout les étudiants, bénéficient d'un traitement privilégié : existence de logements, de bourses alimentaires et de formation, excellentes conditions de travail, etc.

Les autres jeunes, non scolarisés ou non diplômés, vivaient quant à eux des cultures de rente, de la pêche, de l'élevage, etc. Les espaces de culture et d'élevage étaient disponibles de même que les ressources halieutiques qui étaient aussi abondantes. C'est une période paisible pour la population africaine en général et particulièrement pour la jeunesse, mais, dès la fin de la deuxième décennie, des difficultés de plusieurs ordres se font jour.

Les décennies de la rareté... 1980 à 2010

Quarante ans après les indépendances, plusieurs pays africains connaissent en effet des difficultés d'ordre économique, politique, démographique, etc. Le marché international enregistre une flambée des prix des matières premières tandis que la démographie reste galopante. Les conséquences de la crise économique, de l'endettement et de la mauvaise gouvernance que connaissent les Etats depuis le début des années quatre vingt, minent progressivement les dispositifs d'éducation et d'insertion socio-économique de la jeunesse, et les secteurs publics spécifiquement orientés vers la prise en charge des jeunes sont en panne. Le premier secteur à subir ces contrecoups est celui de l'éducation. Si l'investissement public a permis de définir des politiques cohérentes d'éducation et de formation des jeunes au début des années soixante, la plupart des Etats africains se désengagent progressivement de ce secteur en y réduisant leurs apports, sous l'effet des politiques d'ajustement structurel. Ce coup d'arrêt général pénalise les investissements

en infrastructures éducatives qui nécessitent en général de grandes dépenses financières. Même si la privatisation de ce secteur a contribué à apporter des solutions alternatives, il reste que de nombreux jeunes n'ont pas la chance d'accéder à l'éducation vu les coûts financiers des établissements privés, dans un contexte où les ménages sont également touchés par la crise économique. La conjugaison de la faiblesse des investissements et de la corruption dans le secteur de l'éducation a pour effet un notable affaiblissement de la qualité de la formation, ce qui rend difficile l'accès à l'emploi des jeunes.

Du fait de l'ensemble de ces facteurs, nombreux sont les jeunes Africains à devoir faire face à des problèmes majeurs qui entravent leur participation aux sphères économique, sociale et politique de leurs pays. La réalité actuelle est celle d'une crise de l'emploi qui frappe particulièrement la jeunesse africaine. D'après les Indicateurs du Développement en Afrique (IDA) pour 2008/09, un jeune Africain qui arrive sur le marché du travail risque d'avoir de plus en plus de mal à trouver un emploi sur le continent. Ce rapport précise que les jeunes représentent 37 % de la population en âge de travailler, mais 60 % du total des chômeurs. Le taux de chômage déclaré est en moyenne de 10 % en Afrique, mais les chiffres sont en réalité beaucoup plus élevés, certains pays ayant des taux de chômage de plus de 40%. Au Botswana, 43% des jeunes étaient officiellement au chômage en 1998, contre 13% des adultes. En Zambie, d'après les estimations récentes, le taux de chômage est de 30% chez les adultes, contre 60% chez les jeunes. Dans une grande partie de l'Afrique, il y a peu ou pas d'opportunités d'emploi stable pour les jeunes.

La crise de l'emploi des jeunes marquée par le chômage, le sous-emploi ou, pire, l'absence d'emploi pour les jeunes, a constitué un terreau fertile pour leur mobilisation et leur engagement en politique. Beaucoup d'entre eux sont au cœur des événements politiques qui secouent les pays africains. Dans le contexte du multipartisme et de la compétition politique, ils constituent la plus grande partie des militants de base des partis politiques, ou, au pire des cas, des groupes politiques armés, formant alors des milices. Dans la plupart des guerres et rebellions qui secouent les pays en Afrique, de nombreux jeunes sans emploi ont été enrôlés comme soldats, contribuant ainsi à envenimer les longs conflits dévastateurs et d'autres troubles sociaux. La crise de l'emploi des jeunes s'avère finalement une menace à la paix et à la stabilité des pays africains, et les rend très vulnérables.

De la vulnérabilité des jeunes...

La situation professionnelle, économique et sociale précaire des jeunes est exploitée à des diverses fins par des aventuriers politiques. Mais la perception que les dirigeants politiques africains ont de la jeunesse est la principale responsable de la définition sans doute inappropriée des politiques à leur égard. Les jeunes sont considérés comme de grands enfants. Si l'on dit d'eux qu'ils sont « l'avenir », on leur nie la capacité d'agir dans « le présent ». Par conséquent, on estime qu'ils n'ont pas la maturité pour prendre part aux décisions politiques. Les politiques publiques les concernant sont pensées sans eux, et même s'ils sont consultés, leurs avis sont moyennement considérés. Cette perception est la conséquence de certaines structures sociopolitiques africaines qui fondent la participation politique sur les critères de la gérontocratie. En d'autres termes, la plupart des représentants politiques estiment faire le bonheur des jeunes ou leur promotion en les confinant dans des activités uniquement sportives ou artistiques « pour les égayer », diront-ils. Et de fait, de nombreux jeux existent sur le continent, tels que les concours de musique, ceux de beauté, etc. pour occuper la jeunesse, la détournant des vrais problèmes de société. Si ces actions permettent aux jeunes de montrer leur dynamisme et leur créativité, toute chose importante pour la société globale, elles demeurent tout de même insuffisantes au vu de leurs potentialités. Mais face donc à cette absence de modèles plus inspirateurs, la jeunesse africaine tente, souvent toute seule, de relever le défi de la maturité.

... A l'activisme des jeunes...

Les jeunes Africains ne restent pas passifs face aux difficultés qui rythment leur environnement et compromettent les chances d'une intégration sociale réussie. Ils développent plusieurs stratégies pour se construire des trajectoires sociales plus

heureuses. Au nombre de ces stratégies, il faut noter surtout l'engagement politique et/ou économique.

A travers l'engagement politique, se profile la plupart du temps le rêve d'une réussite sociale que l'on ne peut obtenir faute d'emploi. Le choix de la violence est souvent un investissement, certes risqué, mais dont les bénéfices peuvent favoriser la mobilité dans l'échelle sociale. Il ne faut pas croire que les jeunes, manipulés et servant de bras séculiers aux aînés politiques, au risque de leur vie, sont totalement inconscients ou sont sans projet de vie. Il s'agit pour eux de ruser avec le système politique, qui concentre à lui seul, l'essentiel des richesses économiques produites par les actifs. En s'adaptant à la structure clientéliste qui caractérise l'offre politique des dirigeants africains, les jeunes investissent dans la violence comme ressource leur permettant de s'imposer sur l'espace politique, et arrachent ainsi leur part de ces ressources. Cette stratégie ne profite toutefois pleinement qu'aux jeunes meneurs ou leaders des groupes.

Les jeunes qui s'engagent en politique ne sont cependant pas représentatifs de toute la jeunesse africaine. D'autres choix, moins risqués, sont opérés pour s'adapter à la situation. Des jeunes, peut-être les plus nombreux, participent à leur manière au développement d'une économie locale. Certains, ayant acquis un minimum de savoir à l'école ou de savoir-faire dans des métiers, s'investissent dans la création de leur propre emploi, en mobilisant les solidarités familiales, comme capital d'investissement. La vitalité des secteurs des métiers artisanaux, du commerce, ainsi que des coopératives et des associations agricoles en milieu rural, est aussi le résultat de l'engagement économique des jeunes Africains. Parce qu'elles évoluent en marge des économies formelles, ces stratégies économiques sont souvent mal connues. Or, ces jeunes développent des compétences et des savoirs-faires particuliers, leur permettant de se vendre sur les marchés locaux du travail et d'assurer leur survie dans ce contexte de crise.

Les jeunes, acteurs d'une Afrique nouvelle

Au-delà du secteur informel et de certaines activités de survie, de nombreux jeunes Africains constituent une véritable force du changement de ce continent. Ils sont, de plus en plus, présents au premier plan sur la scène économique, politique, sociale, etc. Plusieurs pays africains leur doivent par ailleurs de s'être fait davantage connaître, hors du continent, grâce à leurs activités, notamment dans le milieu du football professionnel, dans le milieu de la musique moderne, dans le milieu de l'athlétisme, etc.

Il ne manque pas non plus de jeunes Africains qui excellent dans les métiers de l'hôtellerie, de la restauration, de la sécurité et de l'informatique qui relèvent tous de l'innovation et de diverses technologies de pointe. Sur le continent, ce sont très souvent de jeunes inventeurs informaticiens qui détiennent bon nombre de cabinets et centres informatiques. Ils sont souvent les meilleurs dans ce domaine et font naître des espoirs pour l'Afrique. Anciens étudiants, pour la plupart, en Europe, aux Etats-Unis ou en Asie, beaucoup ont révolutionné le secteur des NTIC et ont favorisé la création de quelques emplois. Parallèlement aux métiers modernes et innovants, le monde des affaires est investi par certains jeunes avec succès : le continent africain a, lui aussi, ses « jeunes loups aux dents longues »....

Alors que certains sont encore manipulés par divers hommes politiques, d'autres jeunes ont décidé de jouer avec succès les premiers rôles dans leur pays. Ces derniers, conscients des atouts de la jeunesse, veulent contribuer d'une façon positive à l'écriture d'une page nouvelle de l'Afrique.

Que, dans un premier temps, les stratégies développées par les jeunes apparaissent positives ou négatives, elles témoignent en tout cas d'un potentiel de créativité et d'ingéniosité. Et c'est justement sur ce dynamisme, cette réactivité et cette capacité d'adaptation qu'il convient sans doute de faire front pour construire les futures politiques de promotion d'une jeunesse capable de porter le développement de l'Afrique.

S. Britto Gerald Dhinakaran

Modern Youth and the Church

1. Introduction

No phase of life is as active as the time of youth, the season of spring in everyone's life. Memories of youth are so resilient that even age cannot wither them. This is the time when it is very easy to be active and difficult to remain idle. This is the age when one is full of potential. It is so miraculous that it can make the impossible possible and transform the ordinary into the extraordinary. It is here that one dare go beyond the fear of criticism. This is the appropriate time to realize one's potential and give expression to it.

The contemporary young generation has actualized all the above-mentioned characteristics and advanced in everything. The changing times have also facilitated youth with the best of everything in the world. In turn, they have responded well to whatever was given to them and risen to the occasion by adapting to the changing scenario of the scientific world. Modern youth have availed themselves of the technological advances of the epoch to the utmost and have become, and are acclaimed, the generation of generations. They have taken hold of the entire world, playing the lion's part in practically all walks of life. It is no exaggeration to say that they have attempted a revolution by leaving no stone unturned. The entire world is wonderstruck by the uncommon achievements of modern youth, which were unheard and undreamt of in the past. Thus they possess a great many accomplishments to boast of. As they soar high in the air to applause, they must never be heedless of the fact that too much of anything is good for nothing. Modern youth have avidly taken to modernity without realizing the fact that the so-called modernity, which has earned them the reckoning of the best, is also a bane in disguise, not with regard to finance or insufficiency but with regard to: value systems, morality, relationship and fidelity. This bipolar nature of modernity can be compared to what Charles Dickens said at the beginning of his novel *The Tale of Two Cities*: "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness".¹ Modernity is insidiously corroding human relationships, making things worse and in no time it is going to rock the entire world with the threat of growing individualism, the prospects of valuelessness and immorality in society.

The fear that the present generation is going off track is felt everywhere and concerns are expressed over the derailment of these modern youth who have been caught up in the whirl of modernity and are stranded. It is at this juncture that the role of the Church is needed to counter the sabotage of modernity in the lives of youths, the ministers of the future Church. It is not money or luxury that they need but genuine love and proper guidance from mother Church. It must be the primary duty of the Church to make youth realize their potentialities and to form them into mature individuals of the modern world.

2. Potential of Modern Youth

Any human being born into this world questions the meaning and purpose of his or her existence at one point of time or another. It is no wonder that youth of this fast-moving world arrive at this realization so early, because, the search for the meaning of life is strong in them since they are ready to affirm their identity and assert their existence. Their will to achieve meaning in life so early must not be neglected neither as a Utopian ideal nor as an immature decision, because, pragmatically speaking, youth is the spearheading time when energy and enthusiasm exist in the best proportions to

catapult them into a historic career as age is not a barrier to their achievements. The noted scientist Einstein, the Microsoft founder Bill Gates and the athlete Wilma Rudolf of America were inspired to greatness when they were young. It was then that they laid the foundations of their future glory. Hence, it is undoubtedly the period of youth that makes one perform miracles in life. Aligning themselves with such eminent figures, contemporary youth have emerged successfully in all walks of life.

Modern Youth Great Achievers in Science and Technology

Technology controls every aspect of human life on earth. It is technological growth that gives any nation the tag of 'developed'. It can be said to be the magic by the help of which this modern world claims to be 'modern'. But it is no exaggeration to say that modern youth are the masters of today's technology. Their intellectual and technical excellence places them at the top of the jobs wanted list for technological employment. IT and the related sectors like ITES, BPOs and Call Centers have opened international gateways to youth to work in multinational companies that vie with each other to employ skilled youths by offering them hefty pay and a sophisticated lifestyle. But we must never forget the fact that these young people are paid not for what they are but for what they produce. Much of the brain drain from one country to another also testifies to their creative and innovative potential that is needed for technological advancement. Their success in the field of IT demonstrates that they have mastered modern technology. However, it cannot be hastily concluded that their success is the sole cause of the technology but the indefatigable labour put into it to get them intellectually established as technocrats and techno savvies must be taken into account. Blake Ross, the inventor of Sabeer Bhatia, the founder of Hotmail and Sten Tamkivi who manages Skype are youths who have adapted themselves to this technology-run-world. Similarly, science has come to be the special domain of youth. The quality of being inquisitive has helped them shine not only as budding but also as proficient scientists. Modern youth have proved themselves to be increasingly successful as researchers as they have come up with useful inventions for humanity. Today's science would be lame without the help of modern youth. Kalpana Chawla's outstanding achievement is an example of the pivotal role played by youth in the fields of science and technology.

Youth as Self-reliant Individuals

Modern youth are future-oriented and so they have a high regard for learning. It is this realization that has triggered them to develop and channel their potential into various employable skills in today's environment which has turned out to be skill-oriented rather than setting store by educational credentials, formerly valued as the chief criteria for employment. What a youth could not do with his or her own educational qualifications in the past is done by a modern youth with good employable skills who starts earning from the age of 19 onwards. For a modern youth his or her skills in foreign languages are enough to be employed in a call centre. The youth from the colonized countries excel in English language skills to such an extent that they are employed as on-line tutors to teach English to English and American children. Many youths work as Medical Practitioners to foreign doctors. Because of these potentialities they are able to stand on their own feet besides shouldering the burden of the family. They start earning so early that they can meet the financial cares of a family and reduce the anxiety of their parents over their settlement in life.

Further, youth with their amazing potential have shown the world that they have massive reserves of innovative abilities. The strong sense of self motivation present in modern youth to prove their own worth has led them to be independent and prove themselves successful. No one can deny that modern youth have enormous potential if they look at the successful entrepreneur Suhas Gopinath who became an Executive Officer at the age of 14. Although he started his firm with a staff of two, today he has extended it to 11 countries offering employment to youths all over the world. His middleclass background did not prevent him from rising to the height of his carrier thereby rewriting the image of youth, as job creators instead of seekers.²

Youth as Responsible Citizens

Youths have always had a thirst for justice. Their youthful spirit assists them in giving vent to their emotions against injustice. They do not turn a deaf ear to the cries of the people. In the past, during the struggle for Independence, in India three young men, namely, Bagat Singh, Suga Dev and Raja Guru bravely fought against the British Government and sacrificed their lives for the nation. Their supreme sacrifice stands for their committed will to achieve freedom for the nation. Thus, they disproved the criticism of negligence and carelessness ascribed to them by exemplifying that they were also concerned about the needs of society. Similarly today, when politics is said to be the vocation of the experienced, young politicians like Milind Deora, Rahul Gandhi, etc., disproved the old conception by showing that today's youths are a rare combination of excellence and experience. The very fact that these youths have been elected by the people as their representatives affirms that they have won the confidence of the people, thus dispelling all the doubts expressed concerning their irresponsibility and inexperience. Modern youths are true patriots who bear great respect for their nations. They bring fame to their countries by their responsible service to society.



Optimistic and Persistent Youth

More significantly, these contemporary youth have an optimistic attitude of 'I can' that has helped them climb the ladder of success in all areas of life. They face life with a lot of confidence. It is this attitude that makes them foresee a bright and hopeful future and they prepare accordingly to measure up to the expectations of life. Their self-confidence is so high that when they meet with failure they do not flag but they try to learn the nuances of life and their vocation and to adapt accordingly. They grow highly resilient and adaptable. In addition, their high self-esteem, coupled with self-confidence, transforms them into competent individuals. This can be witnessed in the lives of youth who, in spite of starting from the lower strata in life, emerged to realize their inbuilt potential to rise in life.

Vinod Deora today stands out as an icon of the differently-abled people. His background was so humble that he found it difficult even to meet his education fees. In contrast with what he had before, today he earns Rs. 12,000 and supports a family of six. In the face of life's hardships he changed his sad story into a success.³

Modern women have courageously come out of the traditional cocoons that have so far denied them their personhood and considered them only as childbearing machines. Mali is a young woman who has fearlessly fought for her dignity and changed her terrible story of gang rape and cultural inhumanity into a narrative of hope and change and vision. She is today a beckon of light to many who are oppressed by the hardcore traditional society.⁴

They remained intact when tried by hardships. Their achievements remind us that as each seed is capable of bringing forth a tree, so every youth has got the inbuilt potential to blossom into an eminent individual when provided with the right conditions to thrive.

Youths Have Varied Potential

Still some young people have transcended their ordinary existence, realized themselves and come into the national limelight. They do not want to reduce their roles to merely being professionals and the breadwinners of the family but have established themselves

as youth icons. Kiran Desai, who was recently awarded the Booker Prize for her novel *The Inheritance of Loss*, manifests that modern young minds have a wealth of creative and imaginative abilities. Roger Federer, the Swiss tennis player topped the rankings for more than 160 consecutive weeks.⁵ These are only a few examples of what youths have achieved on all fronts of life. Today they represent a large number of young achievers who are a much envied group. Their impact is felt everywhere. They have carved a niche for themselves in every endeavour. All their potential and achievements state authentically that modern youth are synonymous with potential and so deserve the special appellation of the very best. Such youths who are teeming with the potential to become everything in the world certainly represent the invaluable assets of any nation. Especially in a developing country like India that, with a young population of 70 per cent, is fully dependent upon its young people.⁶ Truly, they are the pillars of tomorrow's world.

3. Crises of Youth

In spite of their outstanding achievements, modern youth are not duly recognized by society because of their deviation from social morality. They could not but fall a prey to the evils of modernity and thus incur the stigma of social negligence. They are easily elated by the outward beauty of modernity without being conscious of the insidious destruction it is attempting on them. The youth who were celebrated for their potential must also be understood for the crises they face at all levels.

The Impacts of Westernization and Globalization

The impacts of Westernization and globalization have taught the youth of today an altogether different value system. Westernization has glamorized socially disharmonious relationships like homosexuality and lesbianism which are a threat to the moral order. Globalization has introduced them to a culture of heightened consumerism which proves to be a menace to social well-being. While globalization offers space for the rich to participate and thus make them richer still more, it proves to be a bane to ordinary youth who become victims to the threatening growth of unemployment. The prospects of an unbalanced lifestyle, a godless society, a valueless life and the doomed family relationships become the order of the day.

The Flourishing of Individualistic Trends

The phenomena of economic sufficiency and independence have boosted contemporary youth to claim to be a successful generation. But they are oblivious of the fact that economic prosperity is only a part and cannot constitute the whole of human success because man is more than an economic being. While their economic status is strong, their mental, emotional, moral and spiritual well-being is at stake. Moreover being independent does not mean to be individualistic. As advocated by Bauman modern youth opt for "unadulterated individualism"⁷ and thus willfully deny the benefits of community. They grow up as separate islands breaking away even from the concept of Aristotle who considered human beings as social animals.

Moral Degradation

Modern living has assailed the truths of moral living. The youth of today become incapable of self-examination. Their individualistic notions guide them to follow their own whims and hence they do 'what they want to' and not 'what they ought to'. Thus morality sinks as the setting sun in the lives of modern youth. Besides this, their growth in seclusion has not taught them to withstand the tantalizing offers of modernity which have slowly led to a pornographic culture. The absence of moral guidance is reflected in their inability to channel their sexual impulses properly. That they have become addicts of a pornographic culture is demonstrated by the survey which asserts that the sex industry of India is worth Rs 4,000 crore and is growing at a furious rate.⁸ Another factor that mars the image of youth is that they do not consider sex as something sacred. They become sexually active at an early age and eventually end up in a dating culture and premarital affairs which are not healthy signs

of a growing generation. The lack of parental and social guidance too has resulted in a wrong understanding and mishandling of sexual drives. Having no one to confide in for sexual guidance they turn to their peer group for counsel from whom nothing good can be expected because they are also in the same cultural and social milieu with a similar way of modern thinking. The rapid growth of AIDS-affected youth is also a telling factor that underlines moral degradation in the lives of modern youth.

Long working hours, a heavy workload, tension-filled environment and the pressure of competition have made modern youth mechanical and thus caused their dismal failure in carrying out the functions of responsible homemakers. The nature of their work has made them dependent upon their colleagues for emotional support rather than on their life partners. This context has given rise to extra-marital affairs as an inevitable phenomenon in the lives of modern youth. Lack of fidelity, egoistic mindsets and the absence of quality time with the family has unavoidably resulted in an increase in the divorce rate. A survey reports that in New Delhi alone 8,000-9,000 couples every year file petitions for divorce.⁹ This is one of the most dangerous crises that modern youth are facing.

Youths as Growing Addicts

To aggravate the situation, the media today promote morality as a thing to be taken for granted and further spreads ideas of socially deviant relationships, violence and dehumanizing treatment. They have almost become addicted to the media which appeals mostly to the emotions and not to their reason. Apart from the media, youth are also given to internet addiction which is fast spreading. The Chinese Government is battling against this crisis at present in order to keep its youngsters away from this new evil. A survey affirms that internet users rose from virtually zero in the 1990s to 137 million by the end of 2006. Of these, at least 15 per cent are under the age of 18; and 2.3 million minors could be classified as addicts.

The Echoes of Deviant Living

Money has become the motivating factor of the modern world. The absence of a work ethic has isolated them from the mainstream of life. The distancing from society has led to the absence of socializing skills and increased aggressiveness. They do not form healthy relationships which enrich human life. They turn into beasts without any proper relationships. Such factors in all likelihood will mature into an unbalanced state of mind to which modern youth are becoming the unconscious subjects. The incident in Virginia Tech University in which Cho killed 32 students is a warning sign of modern youths' unbalanced state of mind.¹⁰ Further, isolation and their mechanical way of life have ended up in the development of frustrated and lonely individuals who nurture strong feelings of committing suicide. Instant success, magical growth and overnight achievements frame the mindset of modern youths. They also grow impatient with the realities of life. Haste now characterizes the youthful spirit. They would like to make leaps and bounds both in their career and life rather than climbing each rung of the ladder. Their mad rush after money has made them regard faith as something irrelevant and superstitious and discard love of the other as immaterial.

The Role of Society in the Crises of Modern Youth

However, the blame does not merely concern youth who only execute what is expected of them. The broader society has a part in it too. A child's instinct is to touch whatever it is exposed to, be it good or bad, because it does not know better. It is the elders' fault not to have shown it what is not good even though knowing the child's instinct. Similarly, if well-paid jobs, a luxurious lifestyle with modern gadgets, quick promotion, consumerism, incentives and foreign travel are proposed as a standard of living, youth are not to blame for having accepted the proposal and culminated in calamity. Modern society expects its offspring to bring in an income early. It cuts them to size to fit in with its expectations without giving them the opportunity to realize themselves. Many youths join call centers immediately after graduation because of social pressure and

poverty. They are forced to narrow down their future outlook. A survey states that 2,000 Bars in Mumbai employ about a Lakh of bar-girls who are abused sexually and drawn into adultery.¹¹ It is a sad fact that they lose their personhood in order to earn their livelihood. Although the youth of today are able to transcend the limits of caste and race, nevertheless the hardcore conservative society still binds them. Religion and politics exploit youth for their labour. They feed their emotions but are unconcerned about catering to their reason. This is how the wider society has also misled them.

Thus, being caught between their individual aspirations and social pressures, modern youth oscillate without being able to realize themselves. These are the crises which overwhelm them and soon their critical state will need the helping hand of a Good Samaritan to ensure their good living.

4. The Role of the Church

Now that we have arrived at a clear understanding of the potential and the crises of contemporary youth, it is essential to know what the Church proposes to do for her future ministers. A survey shows that by 2020, the average Indian will be only 29 years old, compared with 37 in China and the U.S., 45 in Western Europe, and 48 in Japan. It is these youngsters who are going to form the backbone of the future Church.¹² Hence, the Church can neglect neither the youths nor the crises they face because, if she abandons the youth of today, the future of the Church will be in question. If she accepts youth only for their labour and leaves their problems unaddressed, she will be just like an onlooker who ignores and passes by the state of the injured; and this does not augur well for the mission of the Church. Today, the structural Church tends to view modern youth with a conservative outlook. This has resulted in the vitiated relationship between the Church and the youth of today. Unless the Church comes out of her conservative slumber and looks at youth in the modern light, the status quo is bound to continue. Only when the Church accepts them as they are, can she carry on the redeeming mission of saving youth from the modern evils. What Pope John Paul II said regrettably was that: "The split between the Gospel and the culture is undoubtedly the tragedy of our time",¹³ it should not become the destiny of the contemporary Church. Rather, she has to review her old approach and make a real effort to redress it.

Towards a Holistic Formation

As seen above, modern youth, in spite of their amazing potential, have been enmeshed by the evils of modernity. At this juncture, how is the Church going to be an instrument to uplift modern youth towards a holistic growth? Modern youth look at morality as a restraining element, forgetting that in reality it is just like the string holding a kite keeping it high always. The chasm between the social institutions and youth is one of the reasons for their derailment from morality. The lack of proper guidance makes them fall hapless victims to peer group influence. Here the Church has the great responsibility for bringing back her future ministers and making them trust in the guidance and protection of social institutions. Catechism for youth must aim at giving them orientation for the communitarian aspect of life. The strength and the joy of living together must be emphasized to the youths. They must be made to understand that the Church exists as a community and hence the members of the Church are called to live in communion with Christ and their fellow human beings. Further, the youth ministers must develop intimacy with youth and help them to confide in the guidance of the Church by dealing with their problems with parental concern. The faith formation for youth should be the vital concern of the youth catechisms. Modern trends have made them forget God. Hence, the Church is in need of taking intensive steps to prevent them from falling into a godless condition which will turn them into beasts and make them forget the values of life.

Moreover, the Church needs to portray herself as a perfect example for the youth to emulate. The Church seems to set a bad example by being subject to internal factions, nepotism, jealousy, casteism and unhealthy competition. Such contradiction inside the

Church directly affects youth and contributes partly to their loss of faith. The Church has to do away with all these evils and ensure young people of her flawless guidance so that they are led towards a holistic growth. The Church must include youths in the ministry of God as active participants. Thus they will no longer merely be objects of ministry but it will enable them to act as subjects in the mission of the Church. Youths must be empowered in the Church. They must be respected as individuals with high potential. The Church must create a structural space for them to participate in decision-making. Respecting their freedom, the Church can create conditions for them to serve as co-workers in parishes. When youths are provided with space in the ministry it is an opportunity for them to use their potential constructively for the service of God and society. Youth empowerment also helps them to develop their leadership skills and thus enhance their personality.

At the same time, the Church must make known to youth that she is not only interested in their labour but also very much concerned about their spiritual, moral, mental, psychological and social well-being in a sincere and fervent way. Youth must be given to understand that the Church is not only an asylum for dejected souls but also a source of motivation for disoriented youth.

Towards Material Empowerment

Today's contexts of poverty and youth unemployment demand that the Church helps in the material empowerment of youth. When youth are left in the lurch with hardly any means to earn their livelihood, they are literally bought by the rich and criminals who exploit them and their state of nothingness. Are youths then to blame for their abject poverty that has left them as illiterate dropouts and unemployed? In the context of their poverty, how will the Church help the youth who are left uncared for both by society and by the State after the age of twenty?

Although the Church has all the potentials to educate and employ young people who are interested and enthusiastic but lack resources, she lacks the charismatic will to help youth. However, in the context of the growing unemployment, the Church needs to adapt herself to the changing times to illuminate the lives of her future pillars. Further, the quality education given by Church institutions is costly and accessible only to the rich minority and not to the poor majority. The Church must get rid of the economy-oriented aspect and alter the educational system to make it available to all, giving every one the benefit of a quality education. This will certainly ignite the aspirations and hopes of youths in a positive way. Similarly, the mission of the Church will be effective and more meaningful when the Church helps the youth realize their dreams by providing them with job opportunities, employment guidance and self-employment skills. The Church need not do this alone but can join hands with para Church organizations. Such concrete and beneficial measures of the Church in her true spirit will be helpful in bringing youth closer to the Church.

5. Conclusion

The massive progress of contemporary youth is moving ahead unchecked by any moral standards of life. There is no parallel growth but only a lopsided phenomenon. All their potential gets shaded and becomes invincible when they yield to the illusions of modern life. It is here that the Church has to take up the cudgels to salvage her future ministers. The potential they have may turn them into successful business people, scientists, techno savvies, politicians, athletes and what not. However, it is moral discipline that makes someone become a human person. Hence, the role of the Church is to turn modern youth into better people with the sincere help of her social institutions as their mentors and helpers. The practical initiatives of the Church must aim to make youth realize who they are and thus transform them into full-fledged individuals so that they do not become misfits or half-baked people.

However, any amount of medicine will be ineffective unless the patients themselves feel the need to be cured. Similarly, whatever may be the guidance given to them, it is the youths themselves who are the designers of their own destiny. One cannot go on

being a failure and blaming external factors as the cause. Nothing is beyond the purview of a person, who has got everything inbuilt. Therefore, unless they feel responsible for turning into dignified human beings, no effort by an external agency can effect anything in them, be it Church, State or society.

Footnotes

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- ⁷ Zygmunt Bauman, *Postmodern Ethics*, Oxford: Black Well Publisher Ltd., 1993, p. 2.
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Nzenzili Lucie Mboma, FMM

SEDOS ANNUAL REORT 2010

- ANNUAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY -

To *Build Communion is the Key to the Mission*” (Benedict XVI, 6 February 2010). This exhortation of the Holy Father Pope Benedict XVI is the guiding light of my reflection on the last ten months since I started serving as the new Executive Director of SEDOS.

As I was skimming through the Reports made by my predecessors, and particularly by Fr. Carlos Rodriguez Linera, OP, I realized that building communion, strengthening and sustaining friendship, among SEDOS members has been at the heart of all their different missionary endeavours. They found ways and means to stimulate members to continually renew their commitment, re-kindle their impetus, and so, further the going study and research in view of deepening their understanding of global mission in today’s world.

What strikes me most is the continuity of SEDOS’ activities, thanks to the active participation of all of you in the survey conducted by the Executive Committee in 2009 on the Mega Trends of Mission today. This synthesis remains an important and insightful source of inspiration as we continue our journey forward.

I want emphasize on the team spirit that prevails among the members of the Executive Committee. Together, we are able to harness all our energy, our missionary experience, in order to serve the purpose of SEDOS better. I would like to express my deep gratitude to the members of the Executive Committee for accompanying me during these first ten months. I am almost at the end of my first year of novitiate in SEDOS thanks to their close collaboration and patience.

Our deep gratitude goes to Sr. Monika Lita HASANAH, OSU, SEDOS Treasurer, for putting her talents and gifts at the service of SEDOS. We also say ‘thank you’ to Sr. Elisa KIDANE’, SMC, member of the Executive Committee for her active participation in building up our Forum, and we wish her a fruitful mission.

We maintain and sustain good and close relationship with the General Secretaries of the USG and UISG. We had the privilege to participate in the Plenary Assembly of UISG in May, 2010; and we are looking forward to attending the very important forth Seminar on “The Theology of Religious Life” to be held in February, 2011.

Having stated this, what about the year 2010? For SEDOS, this year marked a transition, and of a very important transition, thanks to the determination of Fr. Carlos Rodriguez Linera, OP, who broke the chain of male monopoly as Executive Directors and once again introduced a woman as the Executive Director, and by Divine harmony, the President of SEDOS is Sr. Maria Pilar Benavente Serrano, MSOLA, another woman!

The challenge we are facing is to bring a feminine touch into the SEDOS arena so that SEDOS may continue to be: “An oasis of fresh thinking in Rome” as one of our correspondents, has written recently.

In 2010 many among us celebrated the life of their congregations through General Chapters, elected new or renewed the members of their Congregational Leadership Team. We congratulate them and assure them of our prayers because it is not easy to assume the leadership in these chaotic times!

One of the most outstanding events of the year was the celebration of the centenary of

Edinburgh 1910-2010. Fr. Carlos Rodriguez Linera, OP, the SEDOS Executive Director made a significant contribution to its preparation starting in 2005 and he represented SEDOS at the diverse manifestations which marked the 100th of this first prophetic meeting in Edinburgh in 1910, prophetic because it paved the way to the Ecumenical Movement.

Previous to the Edinburgh festivities, SEDOS welcomed, in February 2010, Maria Aranzazu AGUADO, the Roman Catholic Consultant at WCC. She gave us an update on the events unfolding in Edinburgh. Maria Aranzazu then invited SEDOS to join the CWME Working Group on Mission and Spirituality, the 3rd Meeting in Athens from 22-27 March 2010. Sr. Mary Motte, FMM, from the USA, graciously accepted to represent SEDOS and presented her paper on the "Spirituality of Creation". Sr. Mary MOTTE was asked to draw inspiration from the Bulletin of the joint SEDOS-JPIC Residential Seminar in Assisi 2009.

The Church has celebrated the Special Assembly of Synod of Bishops of the Middle East: Communion and Witness. I was able to participate in one of the workshops conducted by Pax Romana, 6 October 2010.

To build communion is the key to the success in our missionary endeavors; with this aim we participate in some meetings and seminars organized by the Secretariat of the USG/UISG JPIC. In view of the preparation for the Residential Seminar 2010, we had to ask Sr. Begoña, MSOLA, member of the AEFJN, to find a speaker.

The SEDOS library has just received a new missionary Magazine: *Acta Missiologiæ: Journal for Reflection on Missiological Issues and Mission Practice in Central and Eastern Europe*.

It would be remiss of me, were I to fail to mention here the legendary moral and material supports and the generosity of the Fathers of the Society of Dei Verbum (SVD) as they do nothing but widen the horizons of the services they offer to SEDOS. Our warm thanks go to the Brothers of the Christian Schools (FSC) who widely open their doors to SEDOS and offer their facilities, for just a normal fee, to welcome participants in different activities organized by SEDOS. The words expressing our deep gratitude seem rather poor and inadequate.

SEDOS recent contact with Fr. Paul STEFFEN, SVD, Professor at the Pontifical Urban University, the crucible for Missiologists, enabled us to provide the foundations on which to build a bridge between SEDOS and the university. We continue receiving original articles from this laboratory on the study and research of Mission. We hope that this flow of information will become more regular and intense thanks to this bridge.

Laudable is the initiative of Sr. Mary Joan IWENOFU, CIHM, native of Nigeria, who is writing her doctorate on Missiology. She discovered SEDOS in the Philippines at the Fourth Plenary Assembly of the IACM; and she promised to visit SEDOS office. Sr. Mary Joan came to pay a visit to the SEDOS Office at the beginning of November. She was thrilled and so, as a genuine African woman, she decided to build another bridge. On 17 November, 2010, Sr. Mary Joan accompanied the African studying Missiology at the Pontifical Urban University. We hoped to see a great number come but demonstrations, often unforeseen in Rome, prevented several of them from attending the meeting. The 'Collegio del Verbo Divino' hosted the encounter. We, Sr. Celine KOKKAT, JMJ, in charge of the Documentation Center, Fr. Pio ESTEPA, SVD, member of the Executive Committee and I welcomed them. Our exchange was very rich and we hope that by the means of these African students we will be able to widen the circle and reach more students from other continents. These students moved from astonishment to joy on discovering this hidden treasure: SEDOS! Some made use of it by choosing several issues of the SEDOS Bulletin. Others were charmed on noting the quantity of **ORBI S Books** available. Sr. Mary Joan cast a stone in the river and so the circle is widening. Now our challenge is to be able to find ways and means to maintain the bridge.

We take this opportunity to say a big 'thank you' to the **Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers** and the **Editrice Missionaria Italiana** (EMI) for unceasingly sending new books to SEDOS.

We were able to meet SEDOS requirements thanks to the moral and financial support of MISEREOR. I still need to reconnect with Missio Achen and Missio Munich.

Fostering a spirit of communion has been a success in the SEDOS Office thanks to the close cooperation and the bonds of friendship which we wove between us: Sr. Monika Lita HASANAH, Treasurer of the SEDOS, Ilaria IADELUCA, very devoted Secretary of SEDOS, and we thank the Lord for Ilaria who is now waiting for a baby!

Sr. Celine KOKKAT, JMJ, in charge of the Documentation Center of SEDOS. To soothe the tensions inherent to a period of transition, we took time to look further into the wisdom contained in the book of Jonson SPENCER: "WHO MOVED MY CHEESE?". We work in close collaboration with Bernard Perez, the SEDOS Web Master, and Philippa, our excellent and meticulous proof-reader. And so equipped as we are today, we were able to organize the different activities of the year:

SEDOS RESIDENTIAL SEMINAR IN ARI CCI A

18- 22 May 2010: "The Prophetic Challenge of the African Churches"

The Residential Seminar turned out to be a very uplifting one, because the appreciation of the 126 participants, their insightful comments and concrete suggestions showed that the Seminar was in harmony with the goals and objectives of SEDOS. It was a good opportunity to exchange lived experiences related to our mission work in Africa; we shared our ideas and how to materialize them.

The Seminar was a **learning process** for all of the participants because almost all the participants affirmed that the Seminar kindled their passion for Christ and for the Continent of Africa. It highlighted the awareness of the Second African Synod theme and propositions, gained through insights from all the inputs and discussions. The Seminar enabled participants to return home with a greater knowledge and deeper understanding of Africa its beauty, its challenges, its reality and its hope and of the issues affecting it, as they had acquired a deeper and more objective vision of the African reality and concrete way of working in the congregations and in the Church. It fired a feeling of solidarity with their brothers and sisters in Africa. Ignited a stronger will to be an active bridge builder in Africa because there is a future full of hope; the universal Church has a future in Africa.

With regard to forgiveness and reconciliation, participants realized that forgiveness is an attitude of compassion, respect and love for all God's creation and we can cultivate a spirit of humility. They gained the conviction that reconciliation is not an option but a personal call to deepen our own spirituality of reconciliation Pardon is essential before reconciliation and Justice can be achieved. The Importance of change of attitudes and to cultivate the spirituality of reconciliation personally, in community and among the people I walk with Participants went home with renewed energy and the will to make a difference by implementing the values and hopes we shared regarding forgiveness, reconciliation, collaboration, etc.

SEDOS CONFERENCES FOR 2010

Drawing inspiration from the synthesis of the survey on Megatrends of Mission Today, we chose one theme: "**INTERGENERATIONAL DIALOGUE WITH THE POSTMODERN YOUTH WHO FEEL FROM INSTITUTIONALIZED RELIGIONS**", and organized the three Conferences in 2010. Heartfelt thanks to Marilù, Alessandra and Barbara, our faithful and excellent translators.

Friday, 4 June 2010 at 15.30 hrs: "Lending Ears to Young Believers without Belonging".

A Panel discussion (in Italian), FOUR OUT-OF-CHURCH YOUTH who come from Europe, Latin America, Africa and Asia, share their life stories and life projects.

Friday, 29 October 2010 at 15.30 hrs: "Challenges of the Youth for the Church

of Today", by Prof. Mario POLLO (talk in Italian). Mario POLLO is a lay person and teaches Sociology at LUMSA and at the Pontifical Salesian University. He is a man of deep faith.

Tuesday, 7 December 2010 at 15.30 hrs "Postmodern Youth and Narrative Evangelization", by Fr. Pio ESTEPA, SVD (Talk in English) Fr. Pio is the Mission Secretary of the Divine Word Missionaries, Consultant in the Pontifical Council for Culture.

As we journey together toward the future we need to take time to reflect on the following points:

Research must be carried on, innovative programmes developed. Businessmen, to ensure the viability of their enterprise speak of "social responsibility".

1. How do we go about re-kindling "the sensitivity to balancing the needs of the Congregation and the needs of SEDOS?"

2. How do you envision the role of your DELEGATE to SEDOS? Does she/he have to be a member of the Congregational Leadership Team (very busy men and women)?

3. How to activate the secgen@xxx.org file that does not respond to the invitation from SEDOS, so that we can reconnect and create a smooth flow of communication?

4. Do you believe in and care for the future of SEDOS? Then if you want to withdraw, kindly write a letter and share your reason for pulling out, so that we can do something to improve what needs to be improved.

The Executive Committee interprets the Statutes (cf. Statutes, art. 8:e); we feel an urgent need to revise the actual Statutes of SEDOS for a more effective functioning of its structures. We respectfully submit our request to this General Assembly.

SEDOS HOMEPAGE

Bernard Perez, the Webmaster, has just updated the site and it looks great! The number of individuals asking for free password so as to access the SEDOS webpage is increasing. The work of digitizing the contents of the Bulletins issues is down to 1971. We hope to finish it next year.

We are publishing articles in English, French and Spanish. We have discussing on the possibility of removing the SEDOS Bulletin from the circulation and continue publishing articles in the Internet because of the printing cost and postage. We have to realize that the SEDOS Bulletin is the only visible sign of the SEDOS IDENTITY. If we stop printing it, SEDOS will surely enter the phase of a slow but sure death. What do you think?

CONCLUSION

"We are called to make a leap of faith in a God who surprises our expectations".

These last ten months of this eventful year devoted to the service of SEDOS have clearly confirmed this crystal line thought laden with hope. I came with some apprehension, but the team spirit, materialized through active participation and a very close collaboration between the members of the Executive Committee, the Permanent Secretariat, has helped me come out of my shell, so to speak, and made room for an attitude of gratitude. However, being aware of the multicultural aspect of the composition of the Executive Committee, I recognize that I am living a very exhilarating experience as I realize that SEDOS can pride itself for being, soon after the Second Vatican Council II, a pioneer in inter-congregational collaboration. It is only ***in Building Ecclesial Communion*** that we will be successful in mission.

Peace and All Good to you!

Nzenzili Lucie MBOMA, FMM
SEDOS Executive Director

SEDOS RESIDENTI AL SEMINAR 2011



THE ASIAN AMONG US

***Obstacles
and Openings
for Mission
Inter Gentes***

17-21 May 2011

'Casa Divin Maestro' — Ariccia (Rome)

***Merry Christmas
and
Happy New Year 2011***

