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Editorial

The Second Vatican Ecumenical Council promoted a new Communion Ecclesiology and envisioned a Church in which the laity would share equal responsibility with the clergy for advancing God's Reign. *Lumen Gentium* declared that by virtue of their Baptism and incorporation into Christ, the laity share in the threefold office of Christ and therefore share with the clergy responsibility for the mission of the Church (Vatican II Forty Years Later, edited by William MADGES, *Introduction*, p. xvi).

The essays included in the issue have been chosen because they describe and analyze some of the most important themes and topics of that Council and show to what degree the implementation of this Dogmatic Constitution on the Church has been successful in South Africa. Prof. **Paul B. STEFFEN, SVD**, traces the history of the *LUMKO Institute: Towards Building a Participatory Church*. He says that: "Lumko mainly followed the renewed mission ecclesiology and pastoral vision of Vatican II. The main concern of the Lumko staff in the post-Vatican II period was to offer a vision and a practical method that would enable parishes and their leaders to implement the new communion ecclesiology of Vatican II and thus turn the parishes into outreaching, missionary-minded communities".

Klaus Vellguth is at present the leader of the Theological Department of MISSIO-Aachen, so he is well acquainted with the new pastoral approach of the churches in Africa and Asia. He has crystallized his experience in a very inspiring book: *A New Way of Being Church: The Beginning and the Spread of Small Christian Communities and Bible-Sharing in Africa and Asia*. Prof. **Paul STEFFEN, SVD**, after reading Vellguth's book has summarized its most salient features. The Asian Integral Pastoral Approach (AsIPA) is a contextualization of the Lumko Method. Another daring assertion is that the Western Churches can learn from the Asian Integral Pastoral Approach.

Taking into account the teaching of Vatican II, **Juan Manuel HURTADO LÓPEZ** in his essay on: *Los Desafíos Actuales: La Voz provocadora de Dios*, distinguishes three meaningful signs for our times. The Biblical dimension deals with the way God sends signals to reveal his will. The theological sense explains the events of history as God's action and the third meaning is the one found in *Gaudium et Spes*: all that pertains to the problems of this time, etc. He analyses the effects of climate change and of globalization. He then asserts in his very hope-filled conclusion that globalization from below is still possible and that Christians can discover the voice of God calling them to build a world for everyone, a world full of joy, harmony, dignity and life for all the inhabitants of our Mother Earth and all living things, as required by the Earth Charter, to ensure our indigenous brothers of a full life.

It is unthinkable, writes Fr. **Theodore Nyamuhaja CIMANUKA**, a Congolese doctoral student in Missiology at the Pontifical Urban University in Rome, that, in a country with a Catholic majority, we still see and witness all the evils that keep undermining the Congo's politics and economy from within, not even sparing the disciples of Christ. Therefore, to help Christians to fulfill their Christian and civic responsibilities, in order to ensure the sound management of the common good and fair governance, is a priority. This calls for the formation of consciences to assume responsibility in public affairs. Many Christians, despite the gruesome situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, one of the richest countries in Africa, show great commitment to the Gospel values. They demonstrate the diversity of the gifts received from God by their service to transform the country for the common good. The topic chosen encapsulates the dreadful reality in the Democratic Republic of the Congo: *Un paradis ou les anges meurent de faim. Pour une responsabilité chrétienne face à la misère en République Démocratique du Congo aujourd'hui*.

Rev. Fr. **Francis Perry AZAH** underlines some important components in his reflection entitled: *Psycho-Spiritual Unfolding of the Identity of the Human Person*, regarding identity and vocation in reference to the human journey. This is a momentous challenge for the formation of the young generations of our missionary Institutes: "whichever window is used initially, in the end the notion of both identity and vocation are needed to understand the human person on the profound human journey into the mystery of God which, at the same time, is the mystery of God ... made man and the mystery of human life transformed into the divine".

"I ask you to work concretely in welcoming refugees, by drawing near to the poor and finding creative ways to catechize, to proclaim the Gospel and to teach others how to pray".

(Pope Francis: Apostolic Letter to All Consecrated People)

We want to express our deep gratitude to all the SEDOS Members for their generous response to the challenges of celebrating the Christmas Party 2014 in Solidarity with Migrants. We were able to collect € 365,00 (three hundred and sixty-five Euro), which were entrusted to Fr. Arlindo Pereira DIAS, SVD, who serves poor Migrants.

Nzenzili Lucie MBOMA, FMM
SEDOS Executive Director

Lumko Institute: Towards Building a Participatory Church

Introduction

The people who were aware of the need to establish pastoral institutes to develop holistic approaches to evangelization were outstanding visionaries. Such approaches were based on new ways of formation of the laity and clergy at the service of the Christian community.

Ad Gentes paved the way for a lot of new places of formation and collaboration in different academic disciplines to create a better platform for a fruitful encounter between cultures and the Church's mission to proclaim the Gospel.

The Lumko Institute was one such set up to train the laity and clergy for a pastoral ministry of communion and evangelization for a participatory Church, according to the dominant ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council.¹

The Visionaries

Archbishop Martin Lucas, SVD, and Bishop John Baptist Rosenthal, SAC

In 1950 Archbishop Martin Lucas, SVD,² the Apostolic Delegate to Southern Africa from 1948 to 1952, had already proposed that a missiological institute be built. In 1952 the Bishops of South Africa strongly recommended the foundation of an Institute of Anthropology and Missiology. Even the necessary funding and staff were available. Bishop John Baptist Rosenthal, SAC,³ of the Diocese of Queenstown agreed to assume the formal responsibility for a Missiological Institute for the Catholic Church in South Africa, which was, especially among the Black population, still a missionary church, totally dependent on foreign missionary societies and their personnel.

Bishop Rosenthal, as a foreign missionary responsible for his flock of African Christians, immediately saw the need for such an Institute for South Africa, to develop a Church rooted on African soil and run by South Africans. The Catholic Church had a late start in comparison to various Protestant Churches. As a minority church in South Africa, it did not even reach above 5% of the total population. The missionary input of various Catholic Orders and mission societies was tremendous, but the goal of a Church with sufficient local vocations was not achieved. The Lumko Institute was formally opened in Queenstown with three Pallottine Priests (SAC) released for research work. Bishop John B. Rosenthal became the first director of Lumko, and at first the Lumko staff worked under his guidance from January 1952 to April 1953.

Bishop Rosenthal, the pioneering founder of the Lumko Missiological Institute, believed that founding such an institute would mean reading the signs of the times. Rome, however, in the person of Cardinal Giovanni Montini (later Pope Paul VI), withdrew permission to found such a Missiological Institute for the whole of South Africa fearing that the Propaganda Fide (Propagation of Faith) Institute in Rome would be left shouldering the financial burden. Bishop Rosenthal was forced to abandon his plan in 1952 but he continued to look for new possibilities to revive it.

In 1959 he approached the Irish Province of the Sacred Heart Missionaries (MSC) with the hope of solving the staffing problem of the institute. In August 1961 he was informed that the Irish MSC Provincial had decided "to take on the responsibility to staff the institute in accordance with the conditions you [Rosenthal] prescribed in your letter."⁶

With the Irish Province's promise to staff the Missiological Institute, it became a reality in 1962 on a property called Lumko, 13 kilometres east of Lady Frere in Cape Province. By 1958 Bishop Rosenthal had established a Catechist Training Centre there, which was the first of its kind in South Africa.

The first decade of the Lumko Institute's mission and service focused mainly on the needs of incoming missionaries. To meet these needs, it developed a scheme of language learning; produced church music in the languages of South Africa. The courses included studies in a local language, anthropology, catechetics, and homiletics.⁷

The contribution of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart (MSC)

The Lumko Institute would not have developed without the contribution of the Irish Sacred Heart Missionaries, who had their own mission territory in the Transvaal. For over 25

years that Congregation provided most of the qualified staff and were responsible for running, developing and securing the growth of the Missiological Institute Lumko in that period, which remains indebted to them for their dedication to the mission and ministry.

Fritz Lobinger and Oswald Hirmer

In 1969 Bishop Rosenthal invited Father Fritz Lobinger and Father Oswald Hirmer, two German *Fidei Donum* priests, to join the staff. Both had already worked since 1956 and 1957 respectively in mission parishes among the Xhosa people in the Eastern Cape Province in South Africa.

Fritz Lobinger⁹ had worked as a parish priest among mainly Xhosa speaking people in Aliwal Diocese from 1956 to 1969. From 1969 to 1972 he studied missiology at Münster University in Germany. In his dissertation he researched the role of lay catechists as community leaders. His research was of great relevance to the Church in South Africa and all African churches. After returning to the Lumko Institute in 1972 he was put in charge of the catechist training course. He changed the syllabus of the course. Previously trained catechists could attend a three-month course to adjust to the new role of the catechist favoured by Lumko. More than to the role of teacher importance was given to the role of animator of the respective Christian communities they served. Under Lobinger's influence the Lumko Institute changed its main focus to become "an instrument for implementing the new pastoral vision of ministry".¹⁰

The new Pastoral Department, opened by Lobinger in 1973, then became the prime mover of the new orientation of Lumko.

From the end of 1969 up to the middle of 1972 Oswald Hirmer did his doctoral studies at the Catholic Faculty of Theology in Münster, Germany. His aim was to understand better the role of the Catholic laity in Catholic communities by comparing it to that of the Protestant laity in their respective communities.¹¹ Hirmer based his research on twelve years of practical pastoral ministry in the Catholic parishes among the Xhosa people in the Diocese of Umtata. His dissertation revealed the outstanding deficiencies in the Catholic parish model, where the laity was mainly considered as the receiver of the sacramental services of the clergy.

On returning to South Africa in 1972 Fr. Hirmer had, before rejoining the Lumko staff at the end of 1975, to serve as Rector of the Minor Seminary in Umtata. Once again on the staff of Lumko, in 1977, Hirmer was given the task of starting the *Gospel Group Department*, later called *Department for the Promotion of the Gospel*. The aim of this department was to promote a practical approach to biblical ministry in parishes. Hirmer immediately started to develop methods which would bring the Holy Scripture closer to ordinary parishioners and Christians. In many places new Bible Sharing methods were being tried out. However, it was Fr. Hirmer and his team who finally presented and promoted the new international *Seven Steps Bible Sharing method* as part of the Neighbourhood Christian community model developed and promoted by Fritz Lobinger and the whole staff of Lumko.

In 1977 the South African Catholic Bishops' Conference (SACBC) appointed Fr. Hirmer as National Director of the Catholic Bible Federation (Catholic Biblical Federation – CBF). In this position he had to coordinate the biblical apostolate of all the Catholic dioceses of South Africa, and he had to represent the South African Dioceses at the international assemblies of the Catholic Biblical Federation.

"You should find ways in which the laity can take over real responsibility in our [Christian] communities!".

The President of the Bishops' Conference of South Africa, Archbishop Joseph Patrick Fitzgerald, OMI,¹² gave the following task and mission to the Missiological Institute Lumko:

The Lumko staff took the mission it had received from the President of the South African Bishops' Conference seriously and started to travel to the 30 Catholic Dioceses in South Africa giving speaking at conventions of priests throughout the country. They were keen to transmit the new vision of Church, which they had found in the Documents of the Second Vatican Council. The recurrent question of the priest in pastoral ministry was: "That surely sounds very well, but what can we do? How can we make this great theology comprehensible to our faithful people in our Christian communities? How can we give practical advice and training to our lay people?".¹³

Developing the various Lumko programmes and departments

The Awareness Programmes

Reading the signs of the times and knowing the urgent request of bishops and priests in pastoral ministry, the Lumko staff saw the need to develop various training programmes, whose focus and task were: To become a Christ-centered community that is enabled to participate and continue to proclaim God's Reign in our time.

To achieve this, the first step the Lumko staff took was to develop awareness programmes. The aim of these was to arouse awareness to the fact that the responsibility of all believers is necessary, and not just the service of ordained ministers and full-time pastoral workers and of certain ecclesial lay organisations like the Legion of Mary or the Catholic Women's Association. Lumko was convinced that the common responsibility of all members of the church would guarantee and activate the mission of Jesus Christ in our time. One of the main agents of the Lumko work in the 1970's and 1980's, Bishop Oswald Hirmer, wrote: "In other words, our awareness programmes wanted to provide the decisive impulse: We are all Church! We have a common vocation and a common mission!".¹⁴

The first Lumko courses in the 1970's were oriented towards the on-going formation of priests.

The focus on the training and discussions with priests were centred around the question of how to carry common responsibility and shared ministries in the parish communities.

Those enrolled asked for more practical formation material that could help the parish priest to train local community ministers and leaders. That is how the famous "Training for Community Ministries" series came into being. The self-discovery method was used for this approach to adult learning. The Lumko vision of parish renewal was mainly based on Bible sharing and as the parish seen as a communion of communities. The transformation from the model of a 'providing' church to a participatory church, as described in its published course materials, was welcomed by a great audience not only in South Africa but in most African countries and, under the heading of ASIPA, gained amazing popularity and recognition in many Local Churches in Asia as well.

Fr Lobinger was convinced that leadership, rather than provide for people, must build up people. The animator idea became the nucleus of all the manifold ministry training programmes Lumko developed since then. The priest's leadership role is very much that of the sign of unity through the common Sunday Eucharistic celebration, but his ministry is not merely in administering the sacraments, but is needed especially as animator and formator of the whole Christian community as such and the emerging new lay ministries. Fr Lumko was convinced that all the members of the community need appropriate formation and that the expectations of the faithful can be very helpful for the ministry of the priest as leader of the parish community and for the leaders of the neighbourhood communities. The expectations of the whole community and of the individual Christian are — according to the Lumko vision — being answered more profoundly and in accordance with the mission and ministry of Jesus and the Good News he proclaimed.

The need for training lay leaders

Fr. Lobinger was aware that many clergy in the decades after the Second Vatican Council who had expressed a need for training materials were still working with a "providing" model of leadership. Among other influences, they had been won over to the possibility of lay involvement through the spirit of updating in the Church, which had found expression in such popular concepts as the "People of God". However, he realized that if lay people could be trained to operate successfully as parish leaders, then the change would be long-lasting. If not, then the clerics would revert back to their previous role model if they saw that this new model of leadership did not work. For these reasons Fr Lobinger was convinced that the key to a changed ecclesiology lay in the training material. Proper training material would give both priest and people a feeling of security in the knowledge that the new type of leadership would work (Lobinger 1991).¹⁵

At a meeting with the clergy of Umtata (Mthatha) in 1974 Fr. Lobinger presented them with his vision of the "trainer catechist". The group accepted that more lay people could be trained for Church leadership. They had in mind practical skills, that is, to train people to perform duties such as leading the Sunday service in the absence of the priest, distributing Holy Communion to people during the Church service as well as to the sick at home and in hospital, going to visit the sick, and reading the Scriptures to the liturgical assembly. However, it would only work, the participants said, if they had the training material in their hands, and it would be the task of the Lumko personnel to produce this literature (1991). Fr. Lobinger immediately set to work on the first book which dealt with the training of leaders for conducting the Sunday service, ministers of Communion and readers.

Since Bishop Rosenthal insisted that Lumko should serve the whole Church in South Africa, and the South African Bishops were aware of the great support they would get from Lumko and the Institute's contribution to the renewal of pastoral ministry in all of the South African dioceses, he pushed for an increasing relationship between SACBC and the leaders and staff of the Lumko Institute.

From Catechist Training Centre to Catechetical Department

The Catechist Training Centre was opened in 1959 by Bishop Rosenthal, and it held its first course in 1959.

The shift from a regional Xhosa-speaking audience to a national audience, which occurred in 1974, proved the success of the new catechist model Lumko had implemented.¹⁹

Up to 1973 the Catechist training at Lumko served mainly Xhosa-speaking Catechists of the dioceses in the Eastern Cape Province. From 1974 onwards the three-month renewal courses also attracted participants from all the other provinces of South Africa to the dioceses of the Eastern Cape Province.

Contents of the Courses

Fr. Joseph Balzer, a German Pallottine priest, was responsible for the Catechist Training Centre at Lumko from 1959 to 1968. From 1969 to 1973 Fr. Arnold Fischer, SAC, Fr. F. Lobinger and Mr. B. Nofemela were on the staff²¹ and under their guidance the first six courses were held tailored to the needs of the mission dioceses among the Xhosa people in Eastern Cape Province.

The early courses, of two years duration, consisted of a general training in theology and catechetics to prepare catechists to teach the Catechism to children and catechumens under the guidance of a priest. The wives of the trainee catechists were also given some training in catechesis besides in domestic skills so that they could be of help to their husbands in their work.²²

It has to be said that it was very realistic of the Centre to introduce a holistic training methodology which included the wives of the trainee catechists. That the respective wives of the future catechists also received a certain amount of catechesis training, increased not only their educational knowledge, but it recognised the possible contribution wives could give to their respective husbands' catechetical ministry in the parish. The training of catechists' wives in domestic skills improved their professional skills and even offered an additional income to the family.

From 1974 onwards the Lumko Catechist Training Courses were increasingly geared to train or retrain catechists to fulfil their new role as trainer catechists. The catechists had to learn to cooperate with the priest in training parish leaders, such as: leaders of Sunday services, parish councillors, parent catechists, to conduct funereal rites, etc. In time the courses for the trainer catechists became shorter and more focused. They sought to give the participants a certain vision and outlook drawn from Scripture and the Theology of the Church as the Community of God's People. To try to implement this vision it was necessary to concentrate on the practical skills needed for the building up of the Christian Community. In training catechists extensive use was made of the Lumko Training Manuals for Community Ministries to foster awareness as well as impart skills.²³

This shows how closely the Lumko Catechist Training programme was linked to the new vision of Building Christian Communities as shown especially in the *Training for Community Ministries* series and the Bible-sharing methods developed and promoted by the Lumko Institute since the 1970s.

Another important shift took place in 1972. In the first period (1959-69) of its existence the Catechist Centre only trained male students. From 1972 to 1976 approximately 50% of the participants were African Sisters, a number which increased to 58% in 1978.

In the Lumko Report of 1990 we see a new title and obviously a new direction of the Catechetical Department of Lumko: now called the "Department of Animator Training". In 1990 the Department offered courses on the Catechumenate with an overall vision of the Rite for the Christian Initiation of Adults. In those workshops a catechetical approach, based on an adult education methodology, was also taught and practised. In 1990 Fr. Eoin Farwelly, SDB, conducted, as in the previous years, the annual seven weeks course on catechetics.²⁴

In the 1995 Lumko Institute Report a Department of Catechetics is mentioned, which was responsible for the Animator Training Course for 1995.²⁵

Lumko Language Department

It would be wrong to underestimate the significance of the contribution the Language Department made to the fruitful evangelizing ministry that was thus able to reach out to the various ethnic and linguistic communities in South Africa, even after the shift of the main emphasis to the newly established Pastoral and Gospel Group Department in the 1970s. The statistics published in the 1980 Lumko Report show that there was a total of 1,043 participants attending 102 courses²⁶ in African languages from 1965 to 1980 and 593 students in European languages, namely, Afrikaans (218) and English (375), in 19 courses in the same period.

From 1965 to 1980 there were 43 Zulu language courses with 437 students, 42 Xhosa Courses with 407; 13 Sotho courses with 177 participants, besides four smaller language courses in Venda, Tswana and Sepedi with a total of 22 participants.

The courses were by nature intensive crash courses focussing on pronunciation, simple conversational practise and basic grammar. Lumko Institute was a pioneer in African Language Courses in South Africa and Lumko installed the first language laboratory in South Africa. Those attending were predominantly Church personnel, mainly from the Catholic Church but also from other Churches particularly from the Anglican Church.

Several MSC priests made a special contribution to the Lumko Language Department by developing courses in Xhosa, Sotho and Zulu.²⁷ The Language Department also treated themes of Social Anthropology. From 1966 to 1973 Fr. Whooley gave courses in Social Anthropology in conjunction with African Language Courses. He also conducted research on African marriage. "The aim of these courses was to give an understanding of African culture through lectures and discussions on such topics as marriage, initiation; systems of belief, social change, etc. and also introduce people to important literature in these areas".²⁸

The 1980 Lumko Report made a critical self-evaluation of its commitment to teach African Languages:

While Lumko has been able to help Church personnel in the task of learning African languages it has not been able to meet the rapidly increasing needs in other sectors particularly in education and industry for courses and materials in the various African languages. It would seem that among Church personnel there are still many who do not fully appreciate the need to have a knowledge of at least one African Language.³⁰

The Pastoral Department

Since its inception in 1973 the Pastoral Department saw "its task mainly in assisting the dioceses of Southern Africa in their progress to build up truly Local Churches, since only such Churches could be of service to the people of this country. This aim was pursued through mobile courses and through publications".³¹

The Pastoral Department's approach was striking and outstanding for its mobility. First of all the Lumko staff were willing to reach out to all the dioceses and seminaries of South Africa, and even to dioceses and Pastoral Centres in other African countries. From 1974 to 1980 Fr. Lobinger and his staff gave courses in all South Africa's dioceses, often even several times. To some dioceses, like Port Elizabeth, Johannesburg, inputs were given four times, and to Durban even six times. Lumko described the methodology of the courses as: they are not lectures-series, but are designed as experienced-based learning and as group interaction. For this reason the majority of the courses were given not at centres but in the dioceses. Each diocese decided individually when to invite the Lumko team to give such seminars to its personnel. This was found to be the most effective way of assisting the bishop, priests and other pastoral leaders to find and implement a new pastoral plan.³²

Such an approach proved how much Lumko was at the service of the Local Church and its ministers.

Among the topics the staff treated in its courses: "Community ministries" was the most requested. However topics such as: Parish Councils, Community building, methods of Lay Training, Leading the Liturgy, the Message of Resurrection in the African Perspective, Pastoral Orientation in a Changing World, Church Administration, Communication media and building Small Christian Communities were taught frequently according to the requests of the dioceses of Southern Africa.³³

A major part of the Pastoral department's work was focussed on pastoral research. The department researched, for instance, the local Church structures in Catholic parishes, and the structures of other Churches. A survey was made of the diversification of lay ministries in the dioceses of Southern Africa, as well as a survey of the Pastoral and Catechetical Institutes of

the IMBISA countries.³⁴ Another survey studied the socio-catechetical work of the Catholic dioceses of the Xhosa-speaking area of South Africa.³⁵

The first programmatic publication of Fr. Fritz Lobinger was published by 1973: *How much can lay people do?*³⁶ In this book the main goal of all future publications of the *Training for Community Ministries* was already clearly expressed.³⁷ The whole Christian community is not only at the receiving end of pastoral care, but it is called to participate in the mission of the Church, the mission to bring the Good News to all sections of human society and this not only inside the church community but to all people beyond the borders of the visible church community. Only with the help of a laity which is encouraged to live up to its own vocation, a laity made co-responsible in the Church's evangelization work, is such a goal obtainable.

Gospel Group Department

The aim of the Gospel Group Department was described in 1980 as:

Through mobile courses for priests, pastoral workers and lay leaders, various Bible-sharing methods developed by the Institute were made known all over the country and spread internationally. The method was simple enough to be conducted by the average leader after very short training. It aims at discovering the message of Christ for our present-day situations, not as an academic study.

The department has chosen as its priority the establishment of Gospel Groups in the Local Churches of Southern Africa. It will assist such groups in their efforts to discover the message of Christ for us today, taking into account that such groups are established in very different environments, e.g. Basic Christian Communities, family groups, youth groups, convents or associations.³⁸

It aims also at interpersonal sharing which builds up community spirit. Beside courses given at Lumko and in all the dioceses of South Africa and beyond, the department pursued its aim through publications especially in the series of *Training for Community Ministries*. The Gospel Group Department published several training kits to assist pastoral workers in establishing Gospel Groups and in training leaders of such groups in the method of Gospel sharing. Other publications aimed at deepening such Gospel sharing, so that theological guidance was offered to these Gospel Groups.

The Lumko Missiological Department

Since the beginning missiological studies were part of the Lumko Missiological Institute. From 1977 Fr. H. Kuckertz was in charge of this department. "The emphasis in this department is on ground-level research and training for people with a tertiary education".³⁹ In other words, this department was especially involved in field research projects and in organizing and conducting seminars at Universities and Major Seminaries. From December 1977 till June 1978 Fr. Kuckertz,⁴⁰ and his African assistant Mr. S. Tsabe, B.A. (Fort Hare), conducted a field research study in an Mpondo village among Xhosa people in the Eastern Cape Province. The Lumko staff requested both of them to investigate questions relating to traditional African moral concepts. The transcribed research material served as a basis and was used in the courses given by Fr. Kuckertz at Witwatersrand University for students of social anthropology under the title of: "Ancestral Belief in Africa"; and in a course at John Vianney Seminary, Johannesburg, under the title: "Introduction to Social Anthropology". Based on the insights gained from these research studies, in February 1979 the Missiological Department of Lumko organized a seminar week at Lumko, and contributed two papers to the seminar. In addition four African social anthropologists from different South African Universities gave inputs.

It should be pointed out that the widespread number of speakers indicates a point of policy of this department in conducting courses. The type of research which is conducted here requires definite specialisation in a particular area so that co-operation with social anthropologists departments and hopefully with other related departments of studies on man becomes imperative.⁴¹

Lumko Music Department

In 1976 the South African priest composer David Dargie published, together with Fr. Hirmer:

Prior to that date, Fr. D. Dargie had begun the work which was continued by the Lumko Music Department, of activating African composers to compose music for the Liturgy and other religious occasions. This was done through composition workshops, following the example of pioneers in this work in Zimbabwe. It was at the request of the National Liturgical Commission of the SACBC that the work was begun in South Africa.⁴³

"The training of hymn-leaders" in the series of Training for community ministries.⁴² He had held many workshops at Lumko to promote African church music before the official opening of the Lumko Music Department on 1 January 1979.

The Lumko Music Department Report from 1980 states that since April 1977 thirty composition workshops had been conducted, over about 113 days. These workshops produced about 640 compositions and 163 adaptations in 13 African languages, and two European languages. Up to July 1980 the Music department had already published 30 cassette tape recordings, containing all the workshop music, and a further nine tapes containing variant combinations and music selections. In April 1979 the first 400 compositions, printed by offset, were published. Father David Dargie headed the African Music Department at Lumko for twelve years, and under his direction the Lumko Institute became a promoter of inculturation in the field of African Church music. In just three years over 1,600 musicians attended the Lumko workshops.⁴⁴

The Liturgical Centre

In 1990, after some years of hesitation the leadership and staff of Lumko Institute gave a positive answer to the request of the South African Bishops. "The Bishops' Board of the SACBC has requested Lumko to set up a liturgical centre at the institute for the purposes of liturgy research, the training of liturgical leaders in the country and to give assistance to parishes in the enrichment of their liturgical celebrations".⁴⁵ The Institute had quite legitimate concerns regarding the Bishops' request to open another department at Lumko Institute. "We hesitated for some years over this project because of its enormity — in commitment of personnel, funds and other resources, to say nothing of the wide area of competence required and large number of people to be contacted and trained".⁴⁶

Aim of Lumko as defined in 1980

The aim of Lumko is to be of assistance to the Church in the work of evangelization in Southern Africa by providing help in the key areas such as: Christian leadership training, incarnation of the Christian message in the local cultures and cross cultural communication. Lumko tries to react quickly to the various needs which arise in building and developing the local Church. In fulfilling its aim, Lumko does not hesitate to try out new initiatives, take on new tasks and pioneer new ventures.⁴⁷

In 1980 Lumko described its own activities thus:

Lumko is involved in three main inter-related activities: conducting courses, writing and publishing materials, and research work. Some of the courses are conducted at Lumko but most of them are conducted at various centres throughout Southern Africa at the invitation of Bishops and other Church leaders. Through its publications, especially its series of training manuals for community Ministries, Lumko has become known far beyond the confines of Southern Africa. We try to ensure the continuing relevance and fruitfulness of our courses and publications through on-going research and reflection.⁴⁸

This description of Lumko's programme was written only eighteen years after its foundation and eight years after its new orientation towards lay ministries, and six years after its Gospel Group promotion had started. In retrospect the 1980's can be seen as the most fruitful years of the Lumko Institute. The production of Lumko Material was at its height, it had become a bestseller, which had become known and was requested internationally from all parts of the worldwide Catholic Church and even from other Christian churches.

How did Lumko achieve such worldwide recognition? What was the secret of its obviously extremely successful networking? The Lumko Report of 1980 tries to answer these questions, at least to a certain degree, in an open and honest way.

In our activities we try to cooperate as much as possible with other bodies, learning from them and helping them wherever we can. We foster a close relationship with some of the Commissions of the SACBC, the Seminaries, Khanyisa, several of the Universities, various pastoral and catechetical centres, the South African Council of Priests, the Pastoral Conference of the Xhosa Region and also local educational authorities.⁴⁹

This description of Lumko reveals how much its self-developed relational approach to ministry had contributed to its own success. It also shows what a relatively small number of staff members, dedicated to this approach to ministry, inspired by a common vision and working for the same mission, was able to achieve.

The 1980 Lumko Report admits, that: "Our efforts, over the years, to have more Africans on the Staff have not met with the success we had hoped for". It must be said that the presence and contribution of the "African Precious Blood Sisters have played an increasingly important role in the administration and day-to-day running of the Institute and more recently on the Lumko staff".⁵⁰ According to the Lumko Report of 1980, it was very grateful, "for the valuable support and continual interest in the progress of the Institute", from the local Ordinary, Bishop Rosenthal and his successor Bishop Rosner, SAC,⁵¹ of the Diocese of Queenstown.

Evaluation Report of the Lumko Missiological Institute, July 1988 **An overview of the various stages of development**

The year 1988 was a remarkable year for the Lumko Institute. The need was felt to evaluate the mission, aim and work of the Lumko Institute professionally. The Lumko Institute had already undergone various stages of development in its history since 1962. The work of the 1960's was mainly geared towards the new incoming missionaries and the training of local catechists, since the previously founded Catechist Training Centre (1958) was made a part of the Institute. The Lumko staff helped to introduce the new missionaries to the pastoral ministry among the various ethnic and linguistic communities of South Africa by providing them with linguistic and anthropological skills and knowledge. Part of the main task of the Lumko staff in the 1960's was to translate the *Catechism* and to compose liturgical Song and Prayer Books. "Its main area of endeavour was in developing learning programmes in some five languages: Xhosa, Zulu, Tswana, Sotho, and Afrikaans. It had pioneered a new methodology in language teaching".⁵⁴ However, these functions were taken over by South African Universities. The lack of new missionaries coming to South Africa since the early 1970's demanded a new orientation of the Institute.

With the opening of a new Pastoral Department in 1973 by Fr. Lobinger a new era began for Lumko. The implementation of the new pastoral vision of ministry according to the communion ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council gave a new direction and purpose to the Institute. The Gospel Group Department started in 1977 by Fr. Oswald Hirmer and the African Church Music Department started in 1978 under the direction of the South African priest-composer Dave Dargie were, besides the Pastoral Department, very visible and effective instruments in promoting a new and contextualized approach to ministry for the dioceses in South Africa and, as time proved, far beyond the country. In 1982 the Faith and Life Department was added, headed by Fr. Richard Broderick, MSC. The task of this new department was to promote Justice and Peace Issues as an integral part of Christian faith and life. When the SACBC officially took over full responsibility for Lumko, the shift was immediately felt, because it was not really a change of direction but a needed recognition on the part of the SACBC and a taking over of the responsibility, which could in the long run not be shouldered by the Bishop of Queenstown and the MSC missionaries alone.

The shift of the location of the Lumko Institute from rural Eastern Cape Province to a place near Johannesburg in 1985 was a real watershed experience for the Lumko Institute and its staff.

The isolation of its first location also had advantages. The staff had a lot of time to do research and found time to prepare all the Lumko publications of those years. The staff members had time to concentrate on the courses and to relate to, and communicate with, the course participants. "Had it not been for the remoteness of the Institute, it is probable that the enormous output of written material would never have seen the light of the day."⁵⁵

Even before the move to Germistown in Transvaal at the end of 1985, the Lumko Institute had developed a strong network of relations with all the South African dioceses and the religious communities working in the country. Also, before 1985 a network of exchange and service to African churches outside of South Africa had developed.

It is interesting to observe how all the Pastoral Institutes in the non-Western World kept in very close contact and were ready to assist each other in their respective mission and ministry. In Africa such contacts and mutual help were strongly developed with the GABA Pastoral Institute at Eldoret in Kenya, the Pastoral Institute of AMECEA (Association of Members of the Episcopal Conferences of Eastern Africa). But good relations were also developed with NBCLC, the National Biblical, Catechetical and Liturgical Centre of the Indian Bishops' Conference in Bangalore, the Eastern Asian Pastoral Institute of the Jesuits in Manila and even the ecumenical Melanesian Institute for Socio-Pastoral Studies in Goroka, Papua New Guinea. All these Pastoral Institutes in the non-Western world were deeply involved in assisting their respective Local Churches to find new ways of contextualizing and inculturating the Gospel message among their peoples and non-Western cultures.

Lumko had concentrated on awareness programmes and very practical skills that would help the community leaders and the community members to build up a participatory parish community as a community of communities. This was called a "New Way of Being Church", a slogan which many regional and continental Bishops' Conferences in Africa, Asia and Latin America made their own.

In 1985 a decision was taken to risk transferring the Institute to Germiston in Transvaal,⁵⁶ where the SACBC was able to rent a suitable property from the Oblates of Mary Immaculate to host the National Pastoral Institute Lumko. The new location at Germiston had the advantage that the National Pastoral Institute was now nearer to the majority of the Catholic population, which was to be found in Transvaal and nearby Natal.⁵⁷

The findings of the Evaluation Report from 1988 indicated that "Lumko made an option for the pastoral training of Black communities. The decision was based on the fact that a disproportionate number of Church personnel were working with Whites",⁵⁸ who lived mainly in urban areas. The Evaluation Report recommended that Lumko material and courses concentrate more on the increasing urban society and its members. The 1988 Report addressed:

The chief problems confronting Christian consciences in South Africa at present are of a political order: they concern the acquisition and use of political power on the part of a clearly defined minority and the consequent powerlessness of the majority.... A Christian response to the challenge presented by this situation of political injustice can only be worked out with the aid of a biblical hermeneutic which involves a re-reading of the Bible in social and historical terms. This reading of the Bible is new to most Catholics who were used to individualistic and moralistic readings of Scripture.⁵⁹

With the Amos Programmes for Small Christian Communities, published by Fr. O. Hirmer in 1984 Lumko had already emphasized such a Scripture reading approach which should animate a community to become more involved in concrete peace and justice issues of society. But the third recommendation is nevertheless justified, which says:

The publication and courses of the Lumko Missiological Institute should: be clearly focused on the justice issues of Southern Africa; incorporate, explain and develop the statements of the SACBC related to *apartheid* and other forms of injustice; support Small Christian Communities; relate to the urban population of South Africa; cater for the Youth of Southern Africa; cater also for the pastoral needs of educated Black and White people in Southern Africa, be frequently evaluated and monitored for relevance by means of workshops attended by those who use the training materials and those who have attended Lumko courses; enlist the services of experts in Black theology....⁶⁰

With this statement the Report clearly indicated the neglected fields, in need of more attention and care, in the mission the Lumko Institute had received from the SACBC for the Church and society in Southern Africa. One question remains unanswered. Can one Pastoral Institute, working for all the dioceses of the SACBC, do justice to all the above-mentioned pastoral fields, or has it to be selective in specific pastoral fields? But the recommendation to focus more on the urban population, and especially on the Youth and the educated population, to address more the issues of injustice, especially those related to the *apartheid* system of those days in South Africa, were well founded and had to be given more attention and space in Lumko's work.

The new context of Lumko in a post-Apartheid society

Lumko never operated in a neutral zone, but it always fulfilled its mission for the Church and human society in a concrete cultural and political context, i.e. that of the Republic of South Africa with its policy of racial separation and exclusion of the majority of its population from the decision-making process. The majority of Lumko staff members were missionaries and priests from abroad, who had opted to work for the Black community in South Africa. In its first decade Lumko served two major groups: First, the catechists, mainly Xhosa-speaking South Africans, and second, the new missionaries, who were trained in South African languages and culture to serve normal Black African communities in South Africa. Naturally, Lumko's bias was for the Black community in South Africa. Fr. Oswald Hirmer admitted once, that he and Fr. Lobinger had had to undergo a learning process in their pastoral-missionary approach, moving from a colonial attitude of implementing a European church model to discover and promote a local Church.⁶⁵ The Catholic Church in South Africa had opposed the *Apartheid* system in principle for four decades. In June 1952 the Bishops of South Africa made

a public statement on *Race Relations*, followed by a statement on *Apartheid* in 1957, whereby the Bishops declared:

From this fundamental evil of *apartheid* flow the innumerable offences against charity and justice that are its inevitable consequences, for men must be hurt and injustice must be done when the practice of discrimination is enthroned as the supreme principle of the welfare of the State, the ultimate law from which all other laws derive.⁶⁶

Since 1976 the Catholic Church under Archbishop Denis Hurley started to challenge the *apartheid* system more openly.

The 1988 Evaluation Report already made the recommendation that Lumko should focus more on social problems. The booklet: "Discipleship in God's Family. Reflections on our call to development, empowerment and growth in Christ" in the Training for Community Ministries No. 21, published in 1996, aimed at addressing Social Issues in South Africa. In the preface the authors wrote:

It is in the spirit of working together for the holistic development of the peoples of Southern Africa in the light of the Gospel that we offer this book as a tool to help communities develop themselves.⁶⁸

Two more publications focused clearly on social issues and aimed at promoting more awareness in the Catholic communities for those issues. In 2000 Fr. Anselm Prior published in the Social Awareness Series: "Social Problems: What can we do? Amos Programmes", and Guy Theunis and in 2001 Gabriel Neville published: Acting against Poverty. An Economic Justice Workbook on HIV/Aids, Democracy and Peace for Parish Groups.⁷⁰

The International Course

The Lumko publications, especially the series Training for Community Ministries were not only in high demand in Southern Africa, but throughout the African continent and were increasingly ordered by church people involved in pastoral formation and renewal from Asia, Latin America and Oceania, orders even arrived from Europe and North America. The readers of the Lumko publications asked to be introduced to the Lumko material. The Lumko staff members would travel to certain places to respond to such demands, but it proved to be better to organize an introductory course to the Lumko Method in Southern Africa itself. In 1986 the first International Course was held in Lesotho, because the South African Government did not issue the needed visa for interested course participants. Lumko's work was under observation and its methodology to train community leaders was seen as a threat to the oppressive *Apartheid* system of the Government. Only after the collapse of the *Apartheid* system could the courses take place in South Africa itself. The influence Lumko exercised increased considerably with the introduction of the Annual International Course. Between 1986 and 1991 alone, 160

The general object of the course was to introduce us to the various kits that Lumko had produced to enable parishes and Small Christian Communities to fully live the Gospel in belief, worship and action. The specific object was to enable us to train group facilitators in the use of the kits. Pastoral teams trained in this method act as animators of the Christian communities. This means, that on a purely practical level priests and pastoral teams can multiply their effectiveness in these days of priest-shortage by sharing out their ministry with others.⁷¹

participants from 25 countries attended this course. Lumko courses could now be held all over the world. Martin Wilson, MSC describes the goal of the course he had followed in 1987:

... The method followed was one of learning by doing. There was very little formal lecturing, and what there was, was always accompanied by poster displays and 'chalk talk'.... Such a method drew upon the personal experience of the participants.... It was an intriguing combination of practise and real life. Our liturgies were both a learning experience and the real thing. The stable method was: Show, Do and Evaluate.⁷²

LUMKO at the service of the SACBC

Since its inception the Lumko Institute was at the service of the dioceses situated in the Republic of South Africa and of those in Botswana and Swaziland, which were all members of the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference (SACBC).

Within the Commission for the Laity a Department of Ministries headed by Fr. Lobinger, was established by the SACBC in the 1970s. Fr. Lobinger and the whole Lumko staff received the support of the SACBC Bishops for their Ministry Formation Programme and community building activities. In a similar way Fr. Hirmer was put in charge of the animation and coordination of the Bible Apostolate for all the Dioceses of the Southern African Bishops' Conference. The Bible-Sharing methods developed and promoted by Lumko as the core element of building Neighbourhood Christian Communities became in a similar way part of the pastoral approach favoured by the SACBC. "In this way the idea of a community-oriented Church began to be heard by the bishops of the country on a regular basis. At the meeting of the Bishops' Conference in February 1974 Lobinger and Balink addressed the assembly on the question of ministry".⁷⁵

The bishops established a commission to study the question of ministry. As a result of this study on ministry the bishops made the *Small Christian Communities* their pastoral priority in 1976. On the Day of Pentecost 1989, a few years before the fall of the *Apartheid* system, the SACBC published a Pastoral Plan called *Community Serving Humanity*. The plan shows what a great influence Lumko had in those years on the SACBC.⁷⁶ The same can be said about the document the SABC published in 1994: *We are the Church. Pastoral Directive on co-responsibility in the Church*.⁷⁷

The essence of the contribution of the Lumko Institute

The English Franciscan priest Anselm Prior joined the Lumko staff in 1987. From 1990 onwards he was the director of Lumko for ten years. Fr. Prior fully identified with the ministry, vision and concept developed by the Lumko staff, especially by the outstanding promoters of its ministry and practical biblical formation, teaching and publications. He followed up the work and vision of Fr. Fritz Lobinger by re-editing and improving his publications on ministry and community building. In 1993 Fr. Prior submitted his dissertation *A Communion of communities: The mission and growth of a local Church as reflected in the Lumko Institute*.⁷⁸ In his doctoral dissertation of 2001 he gave a very synthetic description of what the Lumko Institute had done and achieved:

The teaching of this Institute, as presented in its workshops and its publications, presents a distinctive ecclesial style. The Lumko Institute staff has taken the documents of Vatican II as the basis of their teaching and over the years have situated this, along with post-Vatican II thinking, in the context of the Church in South Africa. For their workshop they have employed an educational methodology from Paulo Freire and the corporate world. The fact that they have been successful is attested to by the enormous interest that the Institute's publications have aroused throughout the world. To date, these books have been sold in 78 countries.⁷⁹

What specific contribution has Lumko Institute made to the Church?

Fr. Oswald Hirmer summarizes the Lumko contribution in seven points which he called "impulses". He considered that Lumko gave a new impetus to the renewal of the pastoral mission and ministry of the Local Church. Principally at the level where the Christians live and come together to be built up into a Christ-centred community by the Word of God, which is called to promote God's Reign in the world.

The first impulse: We are Church — Lumko awareness programmes

The aim of these awareness programs was to make all members of the Church aware that the co-responsibility and cooperation of all Christians is not only needed but is both just and right by the very vocation a Christian receives at Baptism and Confirmation. The goal of all the programmes was to raise awareness among all Christians i.e., that they participate in the common responsibility of all Christians to continue Christ's mission in today's world.

The second impulse: To become a Christ-centred community through Gospel sharing.

There is no doubt that Lumko made an outstanding contribution to the renewal of the Church worldwide with various Bible-sharing methods. Bible Sharing became the heart of uncountable Small Christian or Neighbourhood communities. In Bible-sharing groups the members experience that the Risen Lord is among them. In the atmosphere of having Jesus in their midst the group

members can open themselves to God and each other; they grow together as a community with Jesus Christ in their midst. The various Bible-sharing methods Lumko has developed are complementary to each other. Whereas some are geared more to individual awareness, others stress social awareness and the responsibility of the whole community in society.

The third impulse Lumko gave is the promotion of Small Christian Communities.

The Small Christian Communities were not discovered by Lumko but they received through Lumko's programmes — courses and training materials — a lot of support and promotion. The Lumko programmes especially deepened the understanding of SCCs as the Church among the people where they live and where people can experience and practise their Christian faith.

The fourth impulse Lumko gave concerns the passing-on of faith.

The 47 catechetical sessions for the Christian initiation of adults (RCIA) in Hirmer's book: "Our Journey together", enable SCCs to deepen their Christian faith and empower them to accompany catechumens on their way to become full and mature members of the Church. The "Our Journey together" sessions always start from life situations and the Word of God helps them to experience the presence of Jesus among the catechumens. The whole catechumenate is experienced not so much as lessons but as common steps forward on the way of faith.

The fifth impulse concerns the training of lay people in the parish.

The Training for Ministries Series, like all the Lumko material, focuses on the training of lay people for pastoral service in the parish community. Here the Lumko approach aims especially to convey skills for the various services needed in a parish, e.g. funeral ministers, readers, communion ministers, prayer leaders, leading the liturgy without a priest, taking care of the sick, serving the neighbourhood. Instead of giving long theoretical explanations, the Lumko programmes help to train through practical exercises connecting them to theological insights. The candidates are trained to live their service in the parish with inner conviction, joy, perseverance and the conviction of being co-responsible for the evangelizing mission of the Church.

The sixth impulse of Lumko is the non-dominating leadership methodology

All the Lumko programmes have to be seen and understood in their intended entirety, because they represent an underlying common intention to renew the leadership style in the parish community. Lumko proposes the service-leader and a so-called non-dominant leadership style, which allows the community members to be more than passive receivers. They learn to become active participants in their own faith journey which is accompanied and animated by the community leader. The non-dominant service-leader always aims to discover and promote the charisms to be found in the community. His pastoral ministry consists especially in the task of promoting together with the whole Christian community the unique vocation each community member has received from God. The Lumko understanding of a leader seeks to overcome the provider model and favours especially the leader as animator of the Christian community. The parish priest has a special role to play as pastoral overseer of the parish and presider at the Eucharist Celebration each Sunday, which binds all SCCs together in a communion of love, openness to each other and the wider Church on the diocesan and worldwide level. Christian solidarity is not only lived inside the Christian community but reaches out to people who are in need of such solidarity. The parish priest has not only a liturgical and sacramental function, but he is particularly in demand as formator of services or apostolates that lay people can perform in and outside the Christian community. Likewise, the parish priest's role as reconciler and mediator for reconciliation between competing and fighting groups and individuals in the parish should not be underestimated. With his special ministry to lead people closer to Jesus, he is himself a guarantor of unity in the parish.

The community members' individual gifts are not discouraged but enhanced because they are given the chance to grow in, with and for the Christian community. At each stage the training of community ministers needs the fraternal support and correction of the community as a whole and its leaders.⁸¹

In an interview published in 1997 Bishop Oswald Hirmer of Umtata, explained the underlying vision the Lumko Institute had followed in all its activities since the 1970s.

Our main concern at the Lumko Institute was to build the local Church at the grassroots level. The programmes that we developed are directed toward making people aware and conscious of "We are the Church". It was an attempt to share with the people in the parishes the vision of the Second Vatican Council, which gives us the vision of the Church as a community. We stressed three major points in our approach. The first is being Christ-centred. The second is that we have to become community; and third is that together as a community, we have to carry on Christ's mission. From the community aspect, or from the common mission, we talked about the vision. The vision reflects the different functions of the clergy and laity. This is what we call "participatory Church". It is not just taking part in anything that is going on in the church, not just any kind of activity, but the starting point is that we take part in the common mission given to us by Christ – which means the Kingdom vision of changing this world according to the Gospel.⁸²

Lumko mainly followed the renewed mission ecclesiology and pastoral vision of Vatican II, as expressed in *Lumen Gentium*, *Gaudium et Spes*, and *Ad Gentes*. The main concern of the Lumko staff in the post-Vatican II period was to offer a vision and a practical method that would enable parishes and their leaders to implement the new communion ecclesiology of Vatican II and thus turn the parishes into outreaching, missionary-minded communities. That Lumko was so successful in doing so was to a great extent also due to the location of the Institute in Southern Africa, in a Church struggling to get rooted among the many African communities, where it had, when compared with the Protestant churches, a very late start. As a small minority church the Catholic dioceses in South Africa were much more under pressure to activate the laity if they wanted to be faithful to their mission to evangelize in the context of the complex and conflictive South African society, where the struggle for equality and human rights characterized the second half of the twentieth century. Among the post-Vatican II documents, the influence of the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelium Nuntiandii* of Pope Paul VI is very obvious in the Lumko vision and mission.

Fr. Anselm Prior gives Lumko the credit of having developed a renewed missiology. A look at the changed emphasis of Lumko in its first decade and the following decades shows that the service the Lumko staff offered underwent a great change. The first approach practised by Lumko was based on a pre-Vatican missionary theology, where "Personnel came to South Africa to bring the faith to the indigenous population. They needed to learn the language and something of the culture in which they were to labour. Catechetics and homiletics were important tools by means of which this missionary endeavour could succeed".⁸³

Lumko took a new direction, when it focused, since 1973, on community building and the training of emergent lay leaders. Lumko now wanted that the Christian community discover its missionary vocation. The promotion and training of lay ministers transformed the whole community into an evangelizing community in today's society.

The first attempts to develop skill training were eventually to flower into a renewed missiology. No longer are Church leaders to be seen as missionaries in the sense of people who bring the faith to others. Church leaders, whether foreign or indigenous, are servants of the Local Church. Their task is to serve and to enable members of the community to take responsibility for their own Church. The vision had grown from one of providing leadership to one in which all are called to participate actively in the Church's mission to the world.⁸⁴

Lumko clearly emphasises the image of the parish as a community of communities. The Small Christian Communities are favoured as Neighbourhood communities where Christian witness, solidarity and commitment can be best lived by all members of the church in the environment where they live. With this approach Lumko returns to the Christian community its dignity as an agent of the mission of the Church to evangelize. The Lumko approach can be summarized as an ecclesigenesis approach, an approach where the Word of God is recognized as the main force which calls people into communion with God and with each other. From the outreaching and liberating message of the Word of God the Christian community is born and only by listening and contemplating God's Word can the community fully discover its own vocation and the evangelizing mission it has in the world today.⁸⁵

NOTES

1. Cf. Paul B. Steffen, *Places of formation and evangelizing ministry. Pastoral institutes in Oceania and Africa*, Studia Missiologici SVD, 102. Franz Schmitt Verlag: Siegburg, Germany, 2014, ISBN 0562-2816; *id.*, "Places and Models for Formation and Ministry: Pastoral Institutes in Africa and Asia," *Verbum* 51, no. 4 (2010): 423-438; *id.*, "L'inizio dell'idea degli istituti culturali e pastorali," *Verbum SVD*, 52, no. 4 (2011) 427-451; *id.*, "Lieu de formation pour une pastorale de communion: Gaba, l'institut pastoral pour l'Afrique orientale," *SEDOS Bulletin*, n. 44, nos. 3-4 (2012): 70-88.
2. Martin Lucas, SVD, (1894-1969), born in The Netherlands, where he was ordained priest in 1924. He had served as Novice Master and Superior, before the Holy See appointed him Apostolic Delegate for South Africa, in September 1945. Then he was appointed Apostolic Inter-nuntius for India (December 1952) and Apostolic Delegate to the Scandinavian countries (1959-1961). His masterpiece as Apostolic Delegate was the preparation for the creation of four archdioceses, 16 dioceses, and five vicariates for 900,000 Catholics in 1951. See "Erzbischof Martinus Lucas 1894-1969", in J. Fleckner, *So waren Sie*, 2 (St. Augustin, 1995): 189-191. - John Baptist Rosenthal (1903-1975) was born in Germany. He entered the Pallottine (SAC) Congregation and was sent after his priestly ordination to the Pallottine mission in South Africa. In 1940 he was appointed Prefect Apostolic, and in 1948 Vicar Apostolic of Queenstown. From 1951 to 1972 he was Bishop of Queenstown.
6. See Wilson, 23. Bishop Rosenthal promised the MSCs that he would take care of their maintenance and livelihood.
7. See Wilson, 21-24.
9. Fritz Lobinger was born in 1929 in Germany. In 1955 he was ordained priest for the Diocese of Regensburg. In 1956 he went, as a *Fidei Donum* priest, to do pastoral work in the Diocese of Aliwal, South Africa. In 1969 he joined the staff of the Lumko Institute, but left in the same year for doctoral studies in Germany. From 1972 to 1986 he was a member of the Lumko staff. From 1986 to 1987 he was Apostolic Administrator of Aliwal Diocese and from 1987 to 2004 Bishop of Aliwal.
10. M. Wilson, 26.
11. His dissertation was on "The function of the laity in the Catholic [parish] community: Studies in the African Mission in consideration of respective experiences in non-Catholic communities among the Xhosa people in the Republic of South Africa".
12. Joseph Patrick Fitzgerald, OMI, (1907-1986) was born in Ireland. From 1966 to 1976 he was Archbishop of Bloemfontein and from 1976 to 1984 of Johannesburg. He was President of SACBC from 1974 to 1981.
13. Cf. O. Hirmer, *Von Südafrika über Asien nach Europa. Die Erfolgsgeschichte der Lumko-Programme: Katholische Missionen* 116:4 (1997) 128. - Oswald Hirmer (1930-2011). Since 1990 he gave courses on the Lumko Method of Building SCCs and Gospel Sharing groups in the Asian-Pacific Region. From 28 June 1997 to 2008 he was Bishop of Mthatha (Umtata), cf. P. Steffen, HIRMER Oswald: Biographisch-Bibliographisches Kirchenlexikon (BBKL) 34 (2013) 535-545.
14. *Ibid.*, 129.
15. Prior L.P., *A Communion of Communities: The Mission and Growth of a Local Church as reflected in the Publications of the Lumko Institute*, unpublished dissertation at the University of South Africa, 1993.
18. "During the period 1959-69 only one student came from outside the Xhosa region but from 1971 onwards they increased steadily. By 1976 no less than 60 % of the participants came from outside the Xhosa speaking area", Lumko Report 1980, 4.
19. Initially the courses were of two years duration aimed at giving a general catechetical training. In 1972 a one year course for Sisters was incorporated into the usual two year course. In 1973 and 1976 there was a one year course while in 1974-75 there were 4 courses of 3 months each. These were re-orientation courses with a strong emphasis on skills-training to help catechists become trainers rather than providers. This emphasis has been maintained in subsequent courses. in Lumko Report 1980, 3.
21. *Ibid.*, 5. In 1974
22. Lumko Report 1980, 4.
23. *Ibid.*
25. Lumko Institute 1995 Report, 1-2.
26. "In 1967 there was one four-month course in Xhosa, Zulu and Sotho. All the other courses were of 3 to 4 weeks duration and a few were as short as two weeks. Usually two or three short courses followed one another as stages in an introduction to a language and many participants enrolled for all the stages... Of the 102 Courses all except 13 were conducted at Lumko... If at all possible the language courses are best given in the areas where they are spoken", cf. Lumko Report 1980, 6.
27. "In 1974 Fr. H. Bucher following the methods of Social Anthropology, organised two seminars on the topic: "Pastoral Orientation in a Changing World". He then went for further studies after joining the Lumko staff with the aim of starting a Missiology Department at Lumko. On the completion of his studies towards the end of 1976 he became Bishop of Bethlehem. In 1977 he was replaced by Fr. Kuckertz, CSSp, who finally started the Missiology Department", *ibid.*
30. Lumko Report 1980, 6.
31. Lumko Report 1980, 19.
32. Lumko Report 1980, 20. - To allow parish priests to take part in such courses they lasted only four days.
33. *Ibid.*
34. IMBISA: The Inter-Regional Meeting of the Bishops of Southern Africa. Known as IMBISA it is an organ of Liaison and Pastoral Cooperation between the Episcopal Conferences of Angola and São Tome and Príncipe (CEAST), Lesotho (LCBC), Mozambique (CEM), Namibia (NCBC), South Africa which is made up of Botswana, South Africa and Swaziland (SACBC) and Zimbabwe (ZCBC). See: <http://www.imbisa.org.zw/Social%20Communications%20Department.html> (12-01-2014)
35. Cf. Lumko Report 1980, 20.
36. Fritz Lobinger: How much can lay people do? Lumko Institute: Lady Frere 1973.
37. Up to 1980 the series on Training for Community Ministries already counted 20 different training kits and booklets by various authors, which were widely used in Southern Africa. In 1980 the series was already translated in Bemba and Swahili, and had become a training model in many parts of Africa and in many churches worldwide.
38. Gospel Group Department, in the Report on the Aims and Activities of the Institute, Lumko Institute 1980, 21.

39. H. Kuckertz, Progress Report of Missiology Department, Lumko, in Lumko Report 1980, 9-10.
40. Heinz Kuckertz (1939-2013) a member of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit (CSSp) was born in Germany and served as a missionary priest in South Africa.
41. H. Kuckertz, Progress Report of Missiology Department, Lumko Report 1980, 10.
42. D. Dargie specialized in ethnomusicology and obtained a doctorate from Rhodes University in 1986.
43. Lumko Report 1980, 11; Lumko Report, Jan. – Dec. 1990, 9.
44. Cf. Lumko Report 1980, 11. — The publication "Workshops for composing local Church music: methods for conducting music workshops in local congregations / by D. Dargie. Lumko: Lumko Missiological Institute, 1983" was a result of Fr. Dargie's work at Lumko.
45. "The project will build on, and incorporate much of the work of Fr. Dave Dargie who headed the African Music Department for 12 years", in: Report on the Work of Lumko Institute, Jan. — Dec. 1990, 9.
46. *Ibid.* - The Lumko Institute was able to convince Fr. Alex Chima, the Malawian priest and anthropologist, known for his efforts in the field of inculturation in Catholic liturgy in Africa, to spend a minimum of three months a year for three years in South Africa at the service of the new department.
47. Lumko Institute Report on the Institute's Aims and Activities in 1980, p. 1.
48. *Ibid.*
49. *Ibid.*
50. Lumko Report 1980, 2.
51. Bishop John Baptist Rosner, SAC, (1908-2008) was born in Germany and ordained priest in 1934. In 1972 he succeeded Bishop Rosenthal as Bishop of Queenstown.
54. M. Wilson, 25-26.
55. Prior 1993, 17.
56. Nowadays Germiston is part of the 1994 newly founded Province of Gauteng. The former Transvaal Province ceased to exist after the fall of the Apartheid System in South Africa in 1994.
57. "According to the Government census taken in May 1980, of the 2,930,092 Roman Catholics in the country, 33% lived in the Transvaal and a further 27.6 % lived in [neighbouring] Natal", Prior 1993, 17. — In 1994 the former Natal Province was united with the former homeland of the KwaZulu and nowadays is the Province of KwaZulu-Natal.
58. *An Evaluation of the Lumko Missiological Institute, South Africa*, July 1988 15.
59. *Ibid.*, 15.
60. *Ibid.*, Recommendation 3, 12.
61. Laurence Paul Prior was born in 1944 in Ipswich, England. As a Franciscan friar he took the name *Anselm*. In 1967 he came to South Africa. From 1990 to 1999 he served Lumko as director.
65. See O. Hirmer, Von der Kolonialkirche zur afrikanischen Identität: *Ordensnachrichten* 27 (1988) 5-13.
66. <http://www.sacbc.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/STATEMENT-ON-APARTHEID-.pdf> (12-01-2014)
68. Sr. Avril Reynolds – Anselm Prior: *Discipleship in God's Family*. Training for Community Ministries No. 21, Lumko: Germiston 1996, 6.
69. SACBC, Jan. 1996, Resolution 4.2, quoted in *ibid.*, 10.
70. A. Prior, Social Problems: *What can we do? Amos Programmes*, (No. 024B – Social Awareness Series) Lumko: Germiston 2000; G. Theunis and G. Neville: *Acting against Poverty. An Economic Justice Workbook on HIV/Aids, Democracy and Peace for Parish Groups*, (No. 34B - Social Awareness Series) Lumko — SACBC Justice and Peace Department: Delmenville 2001.
71. M. Wilson, Lumko Institute, 8.
72. M. Wilson, Lumko Institute, 8.
74. <http://www.sacbc.org.za/about-us/> (12-01-2014)
75. A. Prior, *A Communion of communities*, 1993, 15.
76. *The Community Serving Humanity. Pastoral Plan of the Catholic Church in Southern Africa*, published by the SACBC Bishops, Pentecost 1989, (Series: Pastoral Action No. 50), Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference: Pretoria May 1989, 45 pp.
77. *We are the Church. Pastoral Directive on Co-responsibility in the Church*. Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference 1994, Pretoria 1994, 44 pp.
78. Laurence Paul Prior, University of South Africa, June 1993.
79. *Leadership as service of a parish in mission* by Laurence Paul Prior submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of Doctor in Theology on the subject of Missiology at the University of South Africa (Promoter: Prof. J.N.J. Kritzinger) June 2001, Manuscript, 12.
81. Cf. O. Hirmer, Von Südafrika über Asien nach Europa: *KM* 116:4(1997) 129.
82. 'Real reason for active laity is not "too few priests"'. Interview: Founder of Lumko Method: *Asia Focus*, 26 September 1997, 8.
83. Prior, *A Communion of Communities*, 1993, 20.
84. *Ibid.*, 20.
85. Cf. C. Torcevia, *La Parola edifica comunità. Un percorso di Teologia pastorale*, Trapani 2008; P. Milan (ed.) *Evan-gelizzazione e comunità. Perché il Concilio viva nelle chiese locali*, Roma 1978; E. Alberich – J. Vallabaraj, *Communicating a Faith that Transforms*, Bangalore 2004; J. Vallabaraj – S. Koroth, *Empowering through Animation. A Pastoral-Pedagogical Paradigm of Youth Ministry*, Bangalore 2010; F.-J. Eilers, *Communicating in Ministry and Mission*, third ed., Manila 2009; E. Hahnenberg, *Ministries. A Relational Approach*, New York 2003; E. Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation. A Theology of Christian Call*, Collegeville 2010.

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Klaus Vellguth*

A Reflective Book Review: A New Way of Being Church. The Beginning and the Spread of Small Christian Communities and Bible-Sharing in Africa and Asia

The current well-known slogan often used in Asian and African churches, 'A new way of being Church', is a well-chosen title for Klaus Vellguth's dissertation. When he wrote it Vellguth was a staff member of the Inland Service Department of the International Agency of MISSIO-Aachen, whereas he is now the leader of the Theological Department of MISSIO-Aachen. The author is familiar with the new pastoral approaches of the churches in Africa and Asia. It was more especially the contextualized Lumko Method — known in Asia as the Asian Integral Pastoral Approach (AsIPA) — which attracted his attention. His superior at MISSIO-Aachen permitted him to write his dissertation under Prof. Ottmar Fuchs at Tübingen University on: *The Beginning and the Spread of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) and Bible-Sharing in Africa and Asia*.

The author is convinced that the Asian Integral Pastoral Approach can also serve as a model for Western churches, especially during the present financial crisis in Local Churches/dioceses in Germany. In Western societies the Local Church is currently experiencing a decrease in the number of faithful for various reasons. Some of the reasons, such as demographic factors, are beyond the control or influence of pastoral ministers. But factors that ministers can influence — as well as every member of the Christian community — should be dealt with.

More and more Christians are finding the complicated and even bureaucratic organization of Western churches less and less meaningful for their own Christian life. Yet the lack of priests is forcing dioceses to create large 'pastoral units', in which several formerly independent parishes are united under the leadership of a pastoral team. The Second Vatican Council vision of the Church as communion has initiated a worldwide renewal movement whose aim it is to transform parishes into communities — or expressed even better, into a communion of communities. The term 'parish community' was born in the period following Vatican II, and the plan to transform parishes into communities has become widespread in Europe and elsewhere.

The development of the worldwide community movement has not been uniform, since it has been influenced by the different cultural, social and historical stages and background of civil society and by different inherited ecclesiastical realities within the Catholic Church. The inherited ecclesial models and traditions of pastoral life and praxis are not the same in countries of the millennium-old Christian parochial tradition and in countries of centuries-long colonial ecclesiastical traditions such as in Latin America and the Philippines. At the same time many African, Asian and Pacific churches seem to be relatively free of the experience of these ancient ecclesiastical traditions. Nevertheless, the influence of the more or less Tridentine Church model brought by Western missionaries in the 19th and 20th centuries should not be underestimated.

For many if not most Christians "Tradition" can be understood positively as knowledge and awareness which enables a person to be enriched by the sources of life-giving faith. However this dimension can only be passed on by people living in communion with one another. Christian ministry is only credible and life-enhancing when it is practiced in a relational approach.

In preparing the campaign of MISSIO-Aachen for World Mission Sunday Vellguth travelled to Sri Lanka. There, for the first time, he encountered the strong biblical spirituality of the Small Christian Communities of the Catholic Church, and learned about the dynamics of the AsIPA program in Local Asian Churches as well as about the Asian praxis and understanding of the 'new way of being church'.¹

The author cites Cardinal Stephen Kim (Seoul) on the relevance of AsIPA for Asia: "I have been to many conferences on evangelization where we received beautiful visions but no one told us how to put them into practice. This AsIPA course was the first one to contain not only a vision but also ways and methods to realize the vision in our parishes" (p. 24).

¹ Cf. Paul B. Steffen, *Places and Models for Formation and Ministry. Pastoral Institutes in Africa and Asia*, in *Verbum SVD* 51:4 (2010) 423-438.

After an introductory chapter the author develops his research in seven chapters. The second chapter is called 'Fundamental Studies'. Vellguth examines the learning process which the two *Fidei Donum* priests, Fritz Lobinger and Oswald Hirmer² underwent after their arrival in South Africa in 1956 and 1957. Initially both exercised a colonial missionary approach in their parishes. Then the Second Vatican Council's fresh approach countered the stagnancy of the parishes, which up to then had relied totally on the priests' ministry — in other words, they did not train the laity to be co-responsible and participative community members.

The two missionary priests were given the opportunity to update and deepen their pastoral and catechetical knowledge by writing a dissertation at German universities in the late 1960s. The dissertations of Fr. Lobinger (1969) and Fr. Hirmer (1970) were based on 13 years pastoral experience in South African parishes. Lobinger published his research in German in 1973 with the title *Catechists as Community Leaders: A Permanent or Temporary Solution?* Hirmer published his research in the same year on *The Function of Laity in the Catholic Parish*. Returning to South Africa they were asked by the South African Bishops' Conference to take over the pastoral, catechetical and biblical renewal programme of the National Pastoral Institute (Lumko). In particular, it was the role of the catechist and of lay people in general that were in need of a new model of formation, for their position and identity in the Local Church.

In 1977 Fr. Oswald Hirmer was appointed to the Biblical Apostolate of the South African Bishops' Conference which sharpened his focus on the Word of God. In 1988 he published a book for Catechumenate communities entitled: "Our Journey Together" which is now available in several Asian languages. In 1990, the FABC Office of Laity invited him to the Plenary Assembly of Asian Bishops in Bandung. That move opened a new apostolate to him and Asia's churches experienced in a new way the power of the Word of God which constitutes and nourishes Christian communities. "Many bishops were convinced of the need for the renewal of the Church through Small Christian Communities and the need for an approach that was participatory and Christ-centred. They asked the Lumko Institute to run a month-long programme to train Asian facilitators and in 1991 Bishop Oswald Hirmer came for the training programme which took place in Hua Hin, Thailand. Then Bishop Oswald Hirmer and Bishop Fritz Lobinger conducted a second month-long training programme in Taiwan with Mandarin translation. Subsequently they invited Bishop Oswald to their countries to continue the training programme. This brought him to Asia so often that he decided to make Singapore his base".³

The third chapter (pp. 45-146) deals with the emergence of a proper African Pastoral Approach in South Africa. This can be found in the emerging Small Christian Communities as well as in the development of Gospel-Sharing Methods in South Africa and their dissemination throughout Africa during the 1970s and 1980s. The author focuses especially on the developments in South Africa, where Lobinger and Hirmer became the protagonists of this development. As a result of this community renewal movement the South African Bishops' Conference was able to publish their pastoral plan: "Community Serving Humanity" in 1989 after a twelve-year consultation period. The consultation process started after the publication of the document "Declaration of Commitment in Social Justice and Race Relations within the Church" in 1977. Archbishop Dennis Hurley also published a paper in 1977 called: "Evangelization Today in Southern Africa". "Community Serving Humanity", in which he declared the Small Christian Community to be a pastoral priority. In 1992 and 1995 there were evaluations of this pastoral plan. These evaluations showed that 2/3 of the dioceses in South Africa had made the Small Christian Communities their priority and that they were already producing the first fruits.

In his fourth chapter (pp. 147-175) Vellguth presents a case study of Small Christian Communities in Sterkspruit, a parish in the Diocese of Aliwal. This study shows how the pastoral plan of "Community Serving Humanity" was realized in practice.

The fifth chapter (pp. 177-239) moves the focus to Asia and deals with the contextualization of the Lumko Pastoral Approach there under the title of the *Asian Integral Pastoral Approach*. The author investigates and analyzes the contextualization process from its beginning in July 1990 at the Fifth Plenary Assembly of the Asian Bishops' Conferences in Bandung (Indonesia) up to the Third AsIPA General Assembly in 2003.

² Bishop Hirmer, the "father" of Bible-Sharing, died on 5 March 2011. — Cf. K. Vellguth, *Vater des Bibel-Teilens*, in *Verbum* 52:4 (2012) 511-513.

³ Champion for Small Christian Communities — Bishop Oswald Hirmer returns to the Lord. A Tribute by Wendy Louis. In: http://www.fabc.org/offices/olaity/docs/Laity_mar11newsletter.pdf (13.07.2012).

Chapter 6 (pp. 241-270) gives an overview of the ongoing AsIPA process in various Asian countries (Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, South Korea, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Taiwan and Thailand). The author concludes that the AsIPA process in those Asian countries is rather heterogeneous, since the pastoral situation and the social-cultural context in each country are quite diverse. Basic ecclesial communities and structures had only been established in some parts of the Philippines, while in other countries they had been largely unknown before the arrival of the AsIPA process in the 1990s. In countries such as Sri Lanka and Korea the AsIPA model was accepted and promoted by the Bishops' Conference. In most other countries this model was promoted only by certain dioceses. AsIPA faced difficulties when priests feared a loss of power through the introduction of decentralized parish structures. The research found that the AsIPA approach works best when regional and diocesan AsIPA teams build up a support network.

In chapter 7 (pp. 271-305) the author presents a second case study, this time of Singapore, where life is determined mostly by economic factors. Singapore is conditioned by a highly urbanized, secular, individualistic, competitive and pluralistic society. It is composed of many ethnic communities, religions, and denominations. In this context the Singapore Pastoral Institute promoted AsIPA teams, which were commissioned in 2004 to guide a "Parish Pastoral Council Promotion" in the archdiocese. The Singapore Pastoral Institute was responsible for founding, consolidating, and accompanying approximately 150 urban Christian neighborhood communities.

Chapter 8 (pp. 307-331) is a summary of the study.

This study highlights the pastoral renewal process in African and Asian Local Churches (dioceses). This process is significant not only for these churches but also for older Western churches which struggle to build up credible faith communities in increasingly urbanized, secular and pluralistic societies. Even if the so-called neighborhood Christian Communities or Small Christian Communities never attract and integrate all the Christians of a nation or diocese, they nevertheless constitute a new and valid model of church which enables believers to live the Christian faith in credible communities which link their own life context to the living Word of God as an integrated part of the Church. Centuries-old parish structures are not enough to transmit the living flame of the Christian faith, and only Christians enkindled by this fire can pass on this experience. The Church will always need living communities of Christians as places to nurture such experiences.

The construction of formerly independent parishes into bigger pastoral units is not sufficient for building up evangelizing Christian communities with a prophetic mission in the pluralistic and secular world of today and tomorrow. The swift spread of such pastoral units can be justified and meaningful only if they ensure an effective administration of the sacraments (especially the Eucharist) and also promote ecclesial communities which have their own theological value and dignity. In Small Christian Communities the church is an appropriate place for living out the Christian faith in brotherly and sisterly communion (*koinonia*), in common witness by word and deed to its own members as well as to the whole of civil society (*martyria*), in concrete works and projects of solidarity with those in need (*diaconia*), and in communities which celebrate and nurture their faith in the celebration of the life-giving and salvific power of their Lord (*leitourgia*). Only such Christian Faith Communities can fulfill the command of the Lord to proclaim the Good News to all of Creation.

Klaus Vellguth's work describes the ongoing process of the renewal of the Church in various parts of the world very clearly. It also links this renewal process to the longing of Western churches for a credible solution to their own need for *oikodomé*, the building up of the Church in our own place and time.

Ref.: *Klaus Vellguth *Eine neue Art Kirche zu sein. Entstehung und Verbreitung der Kleinen Christlichen Gemeinschaften und des Bibel-Teilens in Afrika und Asien*. Freiburger theologische Studien 91, Herder: Freiburg i. Br. 2005, 394 pp., ISBN 3-451-28857-5.

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Los desafíos actuales: la voz provocadora de Dios

Una acotación al concepto "signos de los tiempos"

A partir del concilio vaticano ii, el lenguaje sobre los signos de los tiempos se ha expandido por el mundo, su uso es frecuente y corriente, no sólo en el campo de la teología y del magisterio eclesial, sino en otros espacios: la comunicación, el cine, el teatro, la economía, la cultura, el lenguaje y la historia. Por lo mismo, la determinación de su significado se ha ampliado, llegando a ser en muchos casos, algo impreciso, vago.

Signos de los tiempos es una categoría que entró en la sociedad en los siglos XX y XXI. De hecho, se designan como signos de los tiempos los grandes desafíos de la época actual, los grandes interrogantes, las principales características de nuestra época como la globalización, las corrientes de pensamiento que se van imponiendo; hasta las catástrofes son etiquetadas bajo esta denominación: así, los tsunamis, las sequías.

En el Documento de Santo Domingo se mencionan los nuevos signos de los tiempos en el campo de la promoción humana y se citan los siguientes: Los derechos humanos, la ecología, la tierra: don de Dios, el empobrecimiento y solidaridad, el trabajo, la movilidad humana, el orden democrático, el nuevo orden económico, la integración latino-americana, la familia y la vida.²

En un excelente libro sobre Jesús hoy, el teólogo sudafricano Albert Nolan describe, en una mirada panorámica, cuatro signos de los tiempos que caracterizan a su juicio la época actual: Hambre de espiritualidad, la crisis del individualismo, la globalización desde abajo y el cambio en la ciencia a partir de Einstein.³

Bajo un abanico tan amplio, crece la indeterminación. ¿Qué es un signo de los tiempos específicamente en el campo de la teología?

Vamos a distinguir tres acepciones diferentes sobre *signos* de los tiempos.

Inicialmente, en la Biblia se habla de los signos de Dios, las señales que Dios envía para mostrar su voluntad, como la señal del arco iris para sellar su alianza con la humanidad después del diluvio, la serpiente de bronce en el desierto, los truenos y relámpagos en el Sinaí: Signo de la presencia de Dios; la suave brisa que señala el paso de Dios en la escena del profeta Elías en el Horeb cuando va huyendo de Jezabel que lo busca para asesinarlo (1 Re 19,10-13); y muchas otras señales. Pero todas estas señales apuntan al signo definitivo de los tiempos que Dios va a dar a los hombres y que es el Mesías, el Cristo. Hay que atender, descubrir e interpretar este signo de los tiempos.

Esto es lo que el mismo Jesús quiere dejar en claro en su disputa con los fariseos y saduceos. Les echa en cara su miopía, su necedad: saben interpretar las señales del cielo, pero no saben interpretar las señales de los tiempos (Mt 16,1-4).⁴

El sentido exegético de signos de los tiempos en el evangelio de Mateo 16,3 es escatológico-mesiánico. Se refiere directamente a Cristo. Con él se hacen presentes los signos mesiánicos de la llegada del Reino, la nueva era de vida, de misericordia y victoria sobre el mal que se inicia con la predicación del Reino de Dios que hace Jesús y que culmina con su muerte y resurrección. Por lo tanto, Jesús es el Mesías, esto es lo que deben descubrir los fariseos y los saduceos y no lo hacen. Este es el signo de los tiempos por antonomasia⁵ y tiene una dimensión salvífica. Es liberación del mal, de la opresión del pecado, de la muerte.

El segundo sentido de signos de los tiempos se refiere a los acontecimientos de la historia en cuanto indican la acción de Dios. Este es el sentido teológico. *Gaudium et Spes* afirma que la Iglesia tiene el deber permanente de escrutar los signos de los tiempos y de interpretarlos a la luz del Evangelio (GS 1.4), pero no explica ni precisa qué son.

Una tercera acepción de signos de los tiempos se refiere a los problemas de nuestro tiempo o a los acontecimientos que caracterizan nuestra época. Este es el sentido comente en el lenguaje eclesial desde el Papa Juan XXIII. Signos de los tiempos en esta acepción es el nombre religioso de los hechos históricos, como las guerras, el progreso científico, la paz.⁶

Lo que hace al acontecimiento ser signo de los tiempos

Si queremos precisar teológicamente el concepto *signo de los tiempos*, debemos exigir por lo menos cuatro características principales:

a. Es un acontecimiento o un proceso de acontecimientos que marcan una época de la historia. Es decir, no es cualquier evento, por muy interesante que éste pueda parecer. Tampoco depende de la difusión del hecho. Es más bien algo profundo en la corriente de la historia.

b. Este acontecimiento provoca, por su impacto, una toma de conciencia colectiva sobre *algo* que está pasando en la historia, sin medir todavía las consecuencias de lo que ha iniciado. El ejemplo de la cresta de la ola en el mar nos puede ayudar. La ola inicia suavemente mar adentro; es casi imperceptible como la pequeña nube que se levanta en el mar en la escena del profeta Elías relatada en el Primer Libro de los Reyes. Poco a poco la ola va tomando fuerza, se va levantando, *jala* a otros millones de partículas de agua, se levanta hasta su máximo acompañada primero de un murmullo, después de un ruido cada vez más sordo e impetuoso, hasta que estalla en lo más alto con un estruendo ensordecedor y se descompone en un remanso con miles de puñados de agua y aureolas de espuma que van a dormir a la orilla del mar.

Es un poco lo que pasa con los signos de los tiempos en la historia. No brotan de repente, nacen como algo pequeño, tienen una preparación, un crecimiento y luego viene el estallido que desencadena una toma de conciencia colectiva por parte del pueblo.

c. Hay un punto decisivo en el momento del impacto, en la discontinuidad de los tiempos humanos, del tiempo lineal o evolutivo y la entrada del tiempo apocalíptico de ruptura. Justo en este momento de ruptura, la fe lee una manifestación de Dios, una llamada, una interpelación del Evangelio para vivir el pacto con Dios, los valores del Reino de Dios anunciado por Jesús. Por esta razón el acontecimiento puede ser equiparado con la Palabra de Dios, palabra profética. Y en este sentido se puede relacionar con Jesús, la Palabra viva que Dios dio a los hombres y mujeres para su salvación.

d. La respuesta humana que desencadena el signo de los tiempos y que se encamina en la búsqueda de un bien mayor para el pueblo. Es la manifestación de la responsabilidad humana ante la historia. Es la posibilidad del cambio que el signo de los tiempos anuncia, pide e indica. Porque los signos de los tiempos no sólo "despiertan posibilidades nuevas sino que manifiestan también una exigencia de plenitud".⁷ Ésta es la dimensión escatológica del signo. "El *eschaton* no es un momento determinado, ni el último momento de la historia, sino la presencia del fin definitivo en el seno del tiempo transitorio [...] es el horizonte insuperable de toda la historia [...] a los ojos de la fe esta función es ejercida por el hecho del Resucitado".⁸

A mi entender, creo que el proceso de liberación en América Latina en tiempos de las dictaduras militares de los setentas y ochentas es el mejor ejemplo y el mayor signo de los tiempos que nos ha tocado vivir en estas latitudes.

Con estas cuatro características que podemos aplicar a los signos de los tiempos, vemos que no todos los fenómenos de la historia son signos de los tiempos desde el punto de vista de la teología. Mucho menos son aquellas manifestaciones de orden deportivo, político, artístico o de modas.

Leer e interpretar los signos de los tiempos desde esta óptica

Vamos a acercarnos a dos de estos signos de los tiempos del momento presente, desde el punto de vista teológico.

a) El cambio climático

Algo que viene preocupando fuertemente la conciencia de la humanidad en las últimas décadas es el cambio climático. Pero como muestra un mensaje reciente de Caritas del 2008, la reacción de la humanidad a esta problemática, es, como dice el dicho popular: "Porque el toro ya se nos echó encima". Es decir, nos dimos cuenta del cambio climático cuando ya las causas y los efectos iban muy avanzados y entreverados: el daño a la capa de ozono — las emisiones a la atmósfera de dióxido de carbono alcanzan los 25 mil millones de toneladas cada año —;⁹ el calentamiento de la tierra — aumento de 0,74° en la temperatura media mundial en los últimos cien años, intensificándose en más del doble desde 1970 en adelante. Las proyecciones para el siglo XXI

plantean un aumento de la temperatura de entre 2.4° y 6.4 —,¹⁰ el efecto invernadero, la desertificación, los huracanes, los tsunamis, el descongelamiento de los polos, aumentando el nivel de los *océanos*, la contaminación del agua, del aire, de la tierra, los desechos tóxicos, la muerte prematura de peces, aves, cáncer en la piel, etc.



Ya son muchos los congresos, las conferencias que se han realizado sobre medio ambiente y ecología. El problema es de tal magnitud, que esta vez el diagnóstico sobre la salud de la madre tierra, del aire, del agua, de los animales, es el diagnóstico sobre la viabilidad de la vida humana sobre la tierra y sobre su posible extinción o duración. Es decir, el diagnóstico es sobre cuánto vivimos o cuándo morimos.

Por la última reunión de los países que integran el G20, llevada a cabo en junio pasado en Río de Janeiro, y en la cual debían

tomar medidas adecuadas para detener el deterioro ambiental y el cambio climático, se ve que los intereses económicos y de poder pesan más que la conciencia que hemos ganado sobre la ecología.

Bien sabemos que esta violencia cometida contra la madre tierra tiene su origen en la sed insaciable del sistema capitalista que etiqueta todo lo que existe como mercancía, como objeto de lucro, como acumulación de capital. Ya Marx denunció con firmeza la idolatría del dinero y su irracionalidad en su obra clásica *El Capital*.¹¹

Esta lógica perversa se acentuó en las últimas décadas con la *versión* del capitalismo en su fase llamada neoliberal. Sus efectos son de todos y de todas conocidos: Acumulación inaudita de bienes materiales, lujos, despilfarros, por una lado; y por el otro lado: Exclusión para grandes mayorías, pobreza, guerras, depredación de los recursos naturales, contaminación y muerte para muchas especies animales y vegetales y para el hombre.

En un coloquio teológico realizado últimamente en México y en San Cristóbal de Las Casas,¹² se analizaban las causas de la violencia y se llegaba a identificar, como una de fondo, la economía. Pero no sólo por las leyes injustas del mercado, por la mala distribución de la riqueza, por los sistemas económicos de los países o por el capital financiero de los Bancos... sino por una causa peor y más profunda. Jean Pierre Dupuy afirmaba que, al no ser Dios o la religión quienes ayuden a poner paz en las sociedades en la época de la postmodernidad, la economía ha venido a ocupar su lugar y se le sacraliza, sólo que no puede contener la violencia.¹³ La economía es el nuevo dios que regula y exige la sangre del sacrificio. Sus leyes son inapelables: el comercio, la ganancia, el capital financiero, las tasas de interés. Nada ni nadie pueden apelar contra esta ley del destino: El capital, la economía. Sobre este punto ya otros autores habían llamado la atención, como Gustavo Gutiérrez, Hinkelamert y Jon Mo Sung.

El cambio climático, entonces, tiene raíces muy hondas y a veces ocultas. De hecho, a estudiosos del cambio climático y de la ecología a nivel planetario como Leonardo Boff, les parecen pobres e insuficientes todas las medidas que se han tomado hasta ahora por todos los gobiernos en relación al cambio climático. Tal fue el caso de la reunión de Cancún, hace un par de años, y ahora en junio pasado en la convención de Río de Janeiro del G20. Boff afirmó ahí que los gobernantes se han quedado anclados en una visión mercantilista de la tierra propia del siglo XVI como mero almacén de recursos, y no haber aprendido nada de visiones posteriores que nos muestran una madre tierra que produce, mantiene y reproduce la vida.¹⁴

Nos encontramos, pues, con un motivo de la violencia al que se le ha dado el carácter de sagrado. Por esta razón, tanto más peligroso y profundo. Al parecer, no caminan al mismo ritmo el daño ambiental a los bienes de la creación — incluido el hombre y la mujer — que la conciencia que la humanidad ha ido tomando sobre este problema.

Llegados a este punto nos podemos preguntar: ¿Qué puede hacer del cambio climático un signo de los tiempos?

En marzo de 2000 se presentó la versión final de la *Carta de la Tierra* y en el 2002, se presentó en la ONU para su aprobación. Ahí se señalan los grandes principios que deben normar la vida de las naciones, los bienes de la creación, incluidos el agua y la tierra, el aire y los animales, las plantas y los minerales, pero también el hombre y las religiones, el arte y las

tradiciones de los pueblos originarios, el canto y la danza, la oración y las grandes obras de la humanidad construidas en miles de años.¹⁵ ¿Cuánto ha penetrado el contenido de esta *Carta* en la conciencia de la humanidad? No lo sabemos; en los gobiernos que dirigen el mundo parece que no mucho, y en las transnacionales parece que muy poco. Siguen los programas económicos dañando el medio ambiente en forma irreparable. Como ejemplo se puede ver el daño que están haciendo las compañías mineras canadienses en el Estado de Chiapas.

Además de los tsunamis están las fugas de radiación nuclear en Chernobil y en Fukushima, la desertificación en África, las enfermedades como el cáncer. Pero no basta, según parece, para que se dé el quiebre del tiempo lineal de la humanidad para la toma de conciencia.

¿Pueden las catástrofes desatar una toma de conciencia? ¿Puede la escasez de hidrocarburos y del agua despertar la conciencia de la humanidad? ¿Puede la violencia humana y contra la tierra desatar la toma de conciencia? ¿Qué lenguaje podríamos entender: El mesiánico o el apocalíptico? Los judíos no entendieron el signo de Jonás los tres días en el vientre de la ballena — la resurrección de Cristo, pero los ninivitas sí entendieron el signo de la predicación del profeta e hicieron penitencia y se convirtieron: hombres y animales.

¿Cuál signo entenderíamos mejor hoy: La multiplicación de los panes en un comercio desigual y en un sistema injusto y excluyente o la expulsión del demonio en un mundo posmoderno sin demonios? ¿El signo mesiánico o el signo apocalíptico? Ante la modernidad y el concepto lineal evolutivo del tiempo, Johann Baptist Metz cuestionó con fuerza esa racionalidad que no da respuesta de las víctimas de los holocaustos de todos los siglos.¹⁶ Lo mismo hicieron los intelectuales de la escuela crítica de Frankfurt. ¿No es la racionalidad misma la que está en cuestión, o mejor dicho, *esa racionalidad* inmisericorde e inhumana?

¿No se parecerá la sociedad posmoderna a esos niños que pone de ejemplo Jesús para describir a la generación de los judíos de su tiempo? Jesús les dice: "¿Con quién compararé a los hombres de esta época? ¿A quién se parecen? Se parecen a esos niños que se sientan a jugar en la plaza y se gritan los unos a los otros: *Tocamos la flauta y no han bailado, cantamos canciones tristes y no han llorado*" (Lc 7,31-32).

La respuesta a esta pregunta quizá la podemos encontrar en la globalización desde abajo, en los movimientos altermundistas, en el Foro Social Mundial, en los movimientos ecologistas de los pequeños, en la propuesta y en la cosmovisión de los pueblos indígenas, en las Comunidades Eclesiales de Base, y en muchos otros grupos que empiezan a tener una relación diferente con la madre tierra, con el agua, con el aire, con los bienes de la creación. Es una relación de admiración, cuidado, defensa, denuncia y acción. Por fortuna sí hay grupos en la tierra que "empiezan a bailar al son de la flauta", siguiendo el símil que pone Jesús en el Evangelio. Esto podría generar del cambio climático un auténtico signo de los tiempos.

La globalización desde abajo

Ante la irracionalidad del mercado y de la exclusión del banquete de la vida de millones de seres humanos y ante su sufrimiento, va 'iniciando otra globalización. Aquí voy a seguir de cerca la propuesta del teólogo sudafricano Albert Nolan.

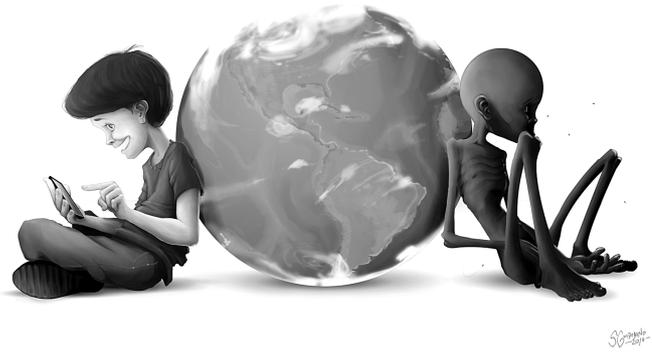
En los últimos 200 años se han dado cambios importantes: La abolición de la esclavitud, las luchas contra el racismo, las luchas por la igualdad de género en todo el mundo y contra el poder patriarcal, la lucha de los pobres, de los indígenas, campesinos, ONG'S, Iglesias, grupos de la sociedad civil. Estas son algunas de las voces que buscan liberación. Y existen otras luchas en el marco de la ONU: UNSIDA, que lucha contra la pandemia del sida; la FAO, en cuestión de alimentos; la ACNUR sobre refugiados; PNUMA, el medio ambiente; TJMCEF, los derechos de los niños y la UNESCO, que atiende la educación, ciencia y cultura.

Pero la voz de los sin voz es todavía opaca; no suena dentro de las estructuras de la ONU. La voz de millones de seres humanos excluidos de la economía no se escucha todavía con fuerza. ¿Cómo emprender otra globalización que no sea la del capital financiero, la del comercio, la del consumo?

Algunos analistas como Chomsky, Wallerstein, Jean Pierre Dupuy señalan que el capital financiero no es tan poderoso, sino que tiene grietas, contradicciones internas. Wallerstein anuncia ya otro sistema-mundo.¹⁷

Por su parte, Albert Nolan afirma que hay un poder más grande que el poder del imperialismo norteamericano y lo que él representa, es el poder de la paz, de la compasión y la justicia.¹⁸

Ante la guerra emprendida por el gobierno de Estados Unidos contra Irak ha surgido un movimiento poderoso por la paz y contra la guerra en todo el mundo. En cuanto a la compasión, hoy más que nunca hay una conciencia generalizada de solidarizarse con las víctimas de la pandemia del VIH-SIDA. Lo mismo sucedió en la lucha contra la pobreza en el 2005 o con las víctimas del tsunami en diciembre del 2004. Respecto de la lucha por la paz, hay ejemplos maravillosos de diálogo entre mujeres israelíes y palestinas.¹⁹ Al respecto afirma René Girard que nuestro mundo no inventó la compasión, pero la ha universalizado.²⁰



La expresión más lograda de todas estas luchas desde abajo es el FSM. Ahí se unen etnias, pueblos, hombres y mujeres, religiones, QNG'S, grupos de la sociedad civil para luchar por la vida, la dignidad, la equidad para todos y todas y contra las estructuras de dominación. Esta globalización desde abajo va siendo posible y ahí podemos descubrir los cristianos la voz de Dios que nos interpela para construir un mundo para todos y todas, un mundo donde quepa la alegría, el gozo, la convivencia, la dignidad y la vida para todos los habitantes de nuestra madre tierra y para todos los seres vivos, como lo exige la *Carta de la Tierra, el buen vivir, lequil cuxlejailil* de nuestros hermanos indígenas tseltales.

Podríamos mencionar otros signos de los tiempos como la migración, el cambio de época, el diálogo inter-religioso, además de los que cita Albert Nolan en su libro. Con todo, ya al final de nuestra reflexión, afirmamos que los signos de los tiempos son siempre ambiguos, confusos; por esta razón es necesario explicitarlos, interpretarlos y señalar sus alcances.

End Notes

¹ Teólogo de la *Asociación Teológica Ecuménica de México* (ATEM).

² Documento de Santo Domingo (SD), 164-227.

³ Albert NOLAN, *Jesús, hoy. Una espiritualidad de libertad radical*, Santander: Sal Terrae, 2011, pp. 25-78.

⁴ Juan Manuel HURTADO, *Signos de los tiempos*, tesis doctoral, 1982, pp.32-36.

⁵ Clodovis BOFF, *Sinais dos tempos. Princípios de leitura*, São Paulo: Loyola 1979, p. 93; HURTADO, *Signos*, pp. 33-48.

⁶ BOFF, *Sinais*, pp. 44-45 y 94; HURTADO, *Signos*, pp. 6-12.

⁷ L. LADRIERE, *Vie Sociale et Destinée*, Bélgica: Duculot, Gembloux, 1973, p. 216; citado en BOFF, *Sinais*, p. 131.

⁸ BOFF, *Sinais*, p.131.

⁹ NOLAN, *Jesús*, p. 47. Así lo considera Leonardo Boff en su conferencia en el Congreso Teológico Continental en San Leopoldo, Brasil del 7 al 11 de octubre de 2012.

¹⁰ Horacio MACHADO, *Crisis ecológica: una mirada a las raíces desde el ecologismo popular*, Estudio presentado en San Pedro Sula, Honduras 2012.

¹¹ Karl MARX, *Das Kapital*, Berlín: Dietz-Verlag, 1975; Machado, *Crisis ecológica*.

¹² Véase el libro colectivo que reúne las memorias de dicho coloquio en: Carlos MENDOZA ÁLVAREZ (comp.), *Caminos de paz: teoría mimética y construcción social*, México: Universidad Iberoamericana, 2013.

¹³ Jean Pierre DUPUY, *La crisis y lo sagrado*, Chiapas: Universidad de la Tierra-CIDESI, 2012

¹⁴ Leonardo BOFF, Intervención en la Cumbre de los Pueblos en Río de Janeiro, tomado de: ecoticias.com/RED/AGENCIAS, 18/06/2012

¹⁵ ONU, *Carta de la tierra*, 1992-2002.

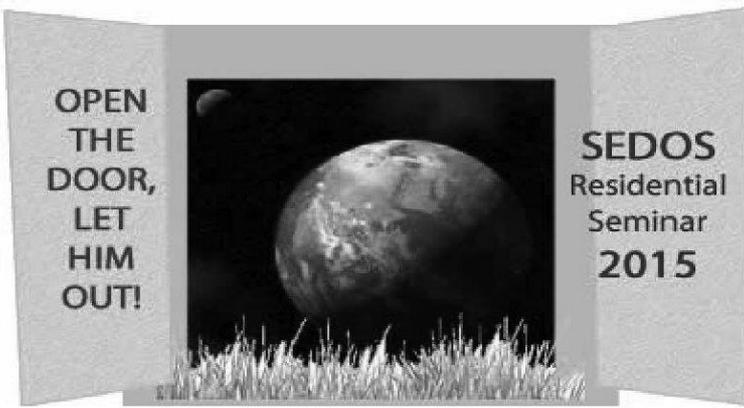
¹⁶ Johann METZ, *Glaube in Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, Mainz: Güneward, 1977. Johann METZ, *Memoria passionis. Una evocación provocadora en una sociedad pluralista*, Santander: Sal Terrae, 2007, pp. 46-54; 94-107.

¹⁷ Immanuel WALLERSTEIN, "Estados Unidos, América Latina y el futuro de los movimientos anti-sistémicos", en: *Primer Coloquio Internacional In Memoriam Andrés Aubry*, CIDECI Unitierra: San Cristóbal de Las Casas, 2009, pp. 13-19; Immanuel WALLERSTEIN, *Análisis de sistemas mundo*, México: Siglo xxi, 2006.

¹⁸ NOLAN, *Jesús*, p. 61.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 61-63.

²⁰ Citado en NOLAN, *Jesús*, p. 63.



SEDOS
Residential Seminar
4-8 May 2015
Centro Ad Gentes
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Open the Door, Let Him Out
"The self-referential Church keeps Jesus Christ within herself and does not let him out" (Pope Francis)

Outlines of the Seminar 2015
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Monday, 4 May 2015

Welcome address by Bro. **Emili Turú, FMS**, SEDOS President
Opening of the Seminar followed by the talk of Fr. **Felix Körner, SJ**

As the whole world is experiencing the rise of Islamic fundamentalism Fr. Felix Körner will develop the theme about: "**Understanding Islam**". Fr. Felix Körner teaches also Islamology at the Pontifical Gregorian University.

Tuesday, 5 May 2015

Mary McAleese, the former President of Ireland, prefers to have a conversation with the participants; she suggested to set up a team of panelists who will prepare their questions. It sounds very interesting, so come prepared.

Fr. **Alfredo J. Gonçalves, CS**, is the Vicar General of the Scalabriniani Fathers; he will be dealing with the theme: *Migration and Mission*. He still has to articulate the different aspects he will develop.

Wednesday, 6 May 2015

Empowering the Youth:

1. The Lutheran Church (30 min.) — Rev. Pastor **Jens-Martin Kruse**
2. The Orthodox church in Russia (30 min.) — Prof. **Alexey Maksimov**
3. *The Youth of the Light - Bilenge Mwinda* — Abbé **Noël Mpati**

"Created in the context of a conflict between church and state in order to counter the abolition of Christian youth movements, the initiation of *Bilenge Mwinda (The Youth of the Light)* is a successful synthesis of Christian values and traditional relating to the socialization of young people. In view of the mutation taking place in the society in Kinshasa and the current socio-political challenges, my contribution thematizes the issue of the contribution of Bilenge Mwinda, 40 years after its foundation; and this, in the reconstruction of the RD CONGO, of building the family of God Church and to the catholicity of the universal of the Church".

Thursday, 7 May 2015

We will share the way we are empowering the young generation of our congregation and the lay people who share the charism of the congregation, and so embrace the future with much hope (30 min. for each one).

Sr. **Georgianne Marie Donovan, SMSM**, Superior General, and former President of SEDOS: "*Empowering the Young Generation and so build a hope-filled future*".

Bro. **Emili Turú, FMS**, Superior General, the incumbent President of SEDOS: "*Empowering the lay people sharing the charism of the Congregation*".

Sr. **Jeanne d'Arc**, Sisters Servants of the Lord, (BENE-UMUKAMA) of Burundi is writing her doctoral thesis on Re-Reading of the charism of the Founder and its contextualization.

Friday, 8 May 2015

Planning for the future
Concluding Address by Bro. **Emili Turú, FMS**, SEDOS President.

Un paradis ou les anges meurent de faim. Pour une responsabilité chrétienne face à la misère en République Démocratique du Congo aujourd'hui

INTRODUCTION

Dans cet article, nous voudrions offrir brièvement, certains aspects de la responsabilité des chrétiens congolais dans le combat contre la misère et la pauvreté¹, qui enfouissent le pays, la République Démocratique du Congo (RDC),² dans une situation socio-économique dramatique et chaotique malgré les nombreuses richesses minières³ et beaucoup d'autres atouts économiques dont regorge le pays.

Est-il possible d'y parvenir? Nous pensons qu'avec les ressources, les capacités humaines, matérielles et techniques dont dispose la RDC, il est possible d'y parvenir. Il ne manque que la volonté politique et la responsabilité personnelle de chaque congolais avec un esprit solidaire pour promouvoir le bien commun et l'ordre social juste.

Ma prétention n'est pas de présenter une analyse détaillée ni d'embrasser toute la réalité pastorale de l'engagement du laïcat congolais face à la souffrance du peuple; moins encore un excès de diagnostic sociologique de toute la réalité sociopolitique et économique de la RDC. Il s'agit plutôt de jeter le regard d'un disciple missionnaire sur la responsabilité grave de tous les chrétiens, l'urgence d'un engagement social, dans une attention constamment éveillée aux signes des temps et aux défis de la RDC d'aujourd'hui.

Dans un pays à majorité catholique, nous sommes désolés de constater que tous les maux qui minent de l'intérieur l'ensemble de la politique et de l'économie du Congo, n'épargnent pas les disciples du Christ. La responsabilité chrétienne est nettement mise en cause par l'ampleur et la profondeur de tels maux surtout quand les acteurs internes sont chrétiens.⁴

¹ Pour ne citer que certains indicateurs de développement humain, le congolais vit actuellement avec moins d'1\$ par jour, le taux d'analphabétisme est de 66%, le taux de scolarisation est de 33%, le taux d'accès à l'eau potable est de 46,7%, l'espérance de vie est basse et le taux de mortalité très élevé à cause du taux d'accès aux soins très bas. Cf. J. FONTAINE SAMBWE, *République Démocratique du Congo: dernier pays pauvre du monde. Rapport de l'observation de conjoncture économique et social*, Editions Presses Universitaires, Belcampus 2001.

² Il est très utile de faire le point sur la dénomination de notre pays, aujourd'hui République Démocratique du Congo. En effet, il a changé plusieurs fois d'appellations : avant 1885, il s'appelait *Association Internationale Africaine (A.I.A)*. Après la Conférence de Berlin, il devient *Etat Indépendant du Congo (E.I.C)*, à cette époque, le Congo était une propriété personnelle de la couronne de Belgique. En 1908, il s'appela *Congo Belge* et fut annexé à la Belgique jusqu'en 1960 lors de son indépendance. De 1960 à 1965, il est nommé *République du Congo*; de 1965 à 1972, il prend le nom de *République Démocratique du Congo (RDC)*. Le 27 octobre 1971, lors de la politique du recours à l'authenticité instaurée par le président Mobutu, il reçoit le nom de *République du Zaïre*. Enfin, avec l'accession au pouvoir de Laurent-Désiré Kabila, il sera de nouveau renommé *République Démocratique du Congo (RDC)* que nous adoptons dans la suite de cet article.

La RD Congo est un vaste pays de 2.345.000 km² et sa population est estimée à 66 millions d'habitants. Ce qui représente presque 1% de la population mondiale. C'est une jeune population car le 2/3 a moins de 25 ans et la moitié a moins de 15 ans. Ses potentialités sont énormes. C'est le cœur du continent africain: troisième pays de l'Afrique par sa dimension, quatrième par sa population et sixième par son PNB, il englobe l'immense bassin du fleuve Zaïre. Il relie le Soudan à l'Afrique arabe, la Zambie au sud du continent, ainsi que le Congo sur l'Atlantique, et la Tanzanie sur l'Océan indien. Un Etat africain sur cinq possède une frontière avec lui (Rwanda, Burundi, Ouganda, Angola, la République Centrafricaine). Cf. I. WILLIAM ZARTMAN, *La résolution des conflits en Afrique*, L'Harmattan, Paris 1990, 130 et A. FOGUE TEDOM, *Enjeux géostratégiques et conflits politiques en Afrique noire*, L'Harmattan, Paris 2008, 148. On peut lire dans les statistiques L. REYCHLER - J. MIGABO KALERE, *RD Congo. Pays de l'avenir. Construisons ensemble une paix durable pour un meilleur destin. Livre ouvert*, CPRS (Center of Peace Research and Strategic Studies), Leuven 2010, 12.

³ En RDC, l'exploitation des matières premières ne profite pas au bien-être du peuple congolais. Au contraire, les ressources naturelles sont un facteur qui aggrave les violences et les guerres. Dans un état fragile, en faillite, faible, au sol richissime, le pays ne peut que s'attirer les convoitises et les problèmes. Voilà pourquoi, depuis 1996, la RDC a souffert de la première et de la deuxième guerre qui, officiellement, s'est terminée en 2003, mais continue de causer des victimes.

En 2010, la guerre et ses conséquences sont à l'origine de la mort de plus de 6 millions de personnes, la majorité des victimes ayant souffert de maladies et de la faim. Contrairement aux autres pays dont l'Etat et le peuple tirent une belle source de revenus des matières premières, en RDC, elles constituent une malédiction plus qu'une bénédiction. Cf. L. REYCHLER - J. MIGABO KALERE, *RD Congo. Pays de l'avenir. Construisons ensemble une paix durable pour un meilleur destin. Livre ouvert*, CPRS (Center of Peace Research and Strategic Studies), Leuven 2010, 24-26 ; lire aussi VAN REYBROUCK D., *Congo. Une histoire*, Babel, Actes Sud 2012, 582.

⁴ Dans sa lettre pastorale aux chrétiens de Lubumbashi, Monseigneur Kabanga Eugène, reconnaissant la responsabilité commune de tous dans la dégradation de la situation socio-économique du pays, lançait un cri d'alarme : « Nous sommes tous responsables, écrit-il, qui que nous soyons, soit par nos exactions, soit par notre silence. La misère qui s'installe dans les zones avec tout ce qui l'accompagne : la faim, le chômage, la sous-alimentation des enfants, la

Avant de proposer la vraie responsabilité des chrétiens dans le contexte congolais d'aujourd'hui, il convient de circonscrire brièvement le contexte dramatique de la RDC, où les chrétiens sont invités par Jésus-Christ à être «le sel de la terre et la lumière du monde (Mt 5,13-14)».

1. ANALYSE DE LA REALITE ACTUELLE DE LA RDC

Pour comprendre la responsabilité des chrétiens congolais dans la lutte pour la libération et la promotion du peuple, emprisonné dans la misère et la pauvreté, il est utile de connaître la situation actuelle du pays.

1.1. Sur le plan politique

Il y a déjà 54 ans, la RDC accédait à son indépendance par rapport à la Belgique, puissance coloniale, et cet événement avait suscité de grands espoirs de paix et de développement sociopolitique et économique du peuple congolais. Malheureusement, après la décolonisation, la situation ne semble guère avoir changé substantiellement. Pire encore, elle présente un panorama en majeure partie négatif.⁵

Aujourd'hui, tout l'environnement politique de la RDC est caractérisé par l'échec généralisé des politiques mises en place par l'Etat congolais.⁶ De l'Etat colonial jusqu'à celui dirigé par Kabila aujourd'hui, les pratiques dictatoriales et clientélistes, suivies des maladroites et de vexations à l'encontre de la population congolaise, ont dominé la politique congolaise.

Il faut aussi noter qu'à cause de la mauvaise gouvernance politique et du caractère prédateur de l'Etat,⁷ le pays se pervertit dans des violences multiples, dans l'absence du droit, de l'ordre et de la justice; dans la mauvaise gestion, la cupidité, le pillage, les tueries, les arrestations arbitraires, le népotisme et la corruption.⁸

En bref, toute la scène politique congolaise actuelle se caractérise par une dictature camouflée,⁹ des limitations de la liberté d'expression, la corruption, la faiblesse de l'Etat,



mortalité infantile et surtout la corruption à tous les niveaux, la dégradation des mœurs (...)»- KABANGA E., « Je suis un homme. Lettre pastorale aux chrétiens de Lubumbashi de Mars 1976 », in *DC 1700* (1976) 576-586.

⁵ Aujourd'hui, la RD Congo est un pays très abîmé, exclu du centre fonctionnel dans le processus de la mondialisation; un pays pauvre dont l'index du développement humain est évalué à 0.389 (dans le rapport sur le développement humain en 2009, la RD Congo occupe le 176^{ème} rang sur un total de 182 pays), et où la vie est très difficile car les droits politiques et civils sont restreints. Pour ne souligner qu'un cas, l'index des libertés économiques diminue sensiblement et en 2010, cet index est de 41.4 et la RD Congo occupe la 172^{ème} place sur un total de 179 pays. En RD Congo, la vie est courte car l'espérance de vie à la naissance est de 47,6 de sorte que la RD Congo occupe le 168^{ème} rang mondial sur 182 pays (Cf. UNDP, *Human Development Report 2009. Overcoming Barriers : Human Mobility and Development*, UNDP, New York 2009). La vie est violente à cause des guerres et conflits armés, viols, massacres, pillages et vols. Selon le rapport de 2010 de l'Université de Maryland sur la paix et la sécurité, la RD Congo est le 3^{ème} pays à plus haut risque en Afrique après le Niger et le Burundi. Dans ce même rapport, elle occupe la première place sur la liste des états présentant une rapide augmentation des risques d'instabilité dans le monde. Enfin, la RD Congo appartient au groupe des Etats faiblement connectés ou globalisés dans le monde. Cf. L. REYCHLER - J. MIGABO KALERE, *RD Congo. Pays de l'avenir. Construisons ensemble une paix durable pour un meilleur destin. Livre ouvert*, CPRS (Center of Peace Research and Strategic Studies), Leuven 2010, 12.

⁶ Cf. I. WILLIAM ZARTMAN, *La résolution des conflits en Afrique*, L'Harmattan, Paris 1990, 8. La RDC comme les autres pays de l'Afrique n'a pas d'autonomie politique.

⁷ Parlant de la politique africaine, Fogue Tedom attribue l'instabilité chronique et le dysfonctionnement des Etats africains au manque d'autonomie politique et stratégique dont ils sont victimes depuis la décolonisation. Cf. A. FOGUE TEDOM, *Enjeux géostratégiques et conflits politiques en Afrique noire*, L'Harmattan, Paris 2008, 26. Lire aussi avec intérêt M. VAISSE, *Les relations internationales depuis 1945*¹⁰, Armand Colin, Paris 2005, 157.

⁸ . Cf. L. REYCHLER - J. MIGABO KALERE, *RD Congo. Pays de l'avenir. Construisons ensemble une paix durable pour un meilleur destin. Livre ouvert*, CPRS (Center of Peace Research and Strategic Studies), Leuven 2010, 11-31.

⁹ Depuis la première République, coordonnée par les occidentaux (1960-1965), en passant par la deuxième République dominée par le règne totalitaire du président Mobutu (1965-1997), jusqu'à la turbulente période de 1997-2006 dite troisième République et durant la période allant des premières élections dites démocratiques (2006) jusqu'à nos jours, tous les régimes politiques sont dictatoriaux, autoritaires ou cleptocratiques, servant les intérêts des puissances mondiales pour se maintenir au pouvoir. Tous ces politiques ont largement contribué à l'augmentation des tensions, des conflits, des guerres et à l'affaiblissement de l'Etat. Cf. L. REYCHLER - J. MIGABO KALERE, *RD Congo. Pays de l'avenir. Construisons ensemble une paix durable pour un meilleur destin. Livre ouvert*, CPRS (Center of Peace Research and Strategic Studies), Leuven 2010, 119-120.

l'absence d'une bonne gouvernance, le non-respect du droit, de la justice et de l'ordre, des conflits armés meurtriers et des violences multiples. On y observe une mauvaise gestion des ressources humaines et naturelles du pays et une apparente démocratie qui ne respecte pas les règles de la vraie démocratie.¹⁰

1.2. Sur le plan socioéconomique

La RDC est confrontée à toute une série des problèmes économiques et sociaux causés, non seulement par l'exploitation illégale de ses ressources naturelles mais aussi par des systèmes économiques et politiques locaux et internationaux moins équitables. On doit reconnaître qu'il existe une relation radicale entre la manière de gouverner et l'économie (équation gouvernement-économie). Un mauvais gouvernement provoque une mauvaise économie. Ceci explique le paradoxe de la pauvreté dans le pays le plus riche d'Afrique.

En effet, à cause de l'instabilité politique, l'économie de la RDC est caractérisée par la mauvaise gestion des ressources disponibles, l'aggravation de la crise économique, et la déliquescence de l'appareil de l'Etat. On parle aujourd'hui de descente aux enfers dans ce domaine. Notre pays est le dernier sur l'échiquier de la croissance.

Pays très riche en ressources minérales et possédant la plupart des minéraux précieux comme le diamant, le cuivre, l'or, le cobalt, l'uranium, le coltan, le pétrole et d'autres métaux, la RDC ne bénéficie pas de ses richesses. Ce sont les pays occidentaux, les grandes multinationales et récemment certaines grandes puissances asiatiques¹¹ qui en bénéficient. Pire encore, ces métaux ont des incidences sur les stratégies politiques mondiales. On sait qu'au Kivu, à l'Est du pays, à cause des intérêts économiques et de l'exploitation illégale de ces minerais, la guerre gratifie les seigneurs de guerre et laisse croupir le peuple dans la misère.

Comme on le voit, les conséquences de cette situation cruciale sont sous nos yeux: des personnes qui meurent de faim, des commerçants qui bloquent volontairement leurs marchandises un temps et les débloquent ensuite pour gagner 500% d'intérêt. Partout règnent l'individualisme, l'égoïsme et des corruptions flagrantes dénommées «débrouillage». Beaucoup d'enfants restent condamnés à l'analphabétisme, manquent des soins médicaux les plus élémentaires et meurent du choléra, du paludisme et de tant d'autres maladies curables. Beaucoup d'hommes et des femmes n'ont pas de maison où s'abriter, etc. Le tableau de la pauvreté peut être étendu indéfiniment.

Vu cette situation, les disciples du Christ ne peuvent pas fermer les yeux et se passer des actions concrètes de transformation pour la promotion de la dignité et du développement intégral de l'homme.¹²

Dans le contexte congolais, la responsabilité des chrétiens devant cette situation sociopolitique et économique dramatique s'avère indispensable afin d'appliquer l'Evangile à la vie concrète et de relever ce grand défi.

2. LA RESPONSABILITE DES CHRETIENS FACE A LA MISERE CONGOLAISE

Les chrétiens de la RDC doivent saisir, répondre positivement et vivre l'invitation lancée par le Pape François dans son exhortation apostolique *Evangelii Gaudium*: «*Chaque chrétien et chaque communauté sont appelés à être instruments de Dieu pour la libération et la promotion des pauvres, de manière à ce qu'ils puissent s'intégrer pleinement dans la société; ceci suppose que nous soyons attentifs à écouter le cri du pauvre et à le secourir*».¹³

Partant de cette exhortation du pape, nous pouvons résumer la responsabilité des chrétiens de la RDC en trois défis auxquels toute l'Eglise du pays est confrontée : fidélité au Christ, solidarité et respect du Bien commun.

¹⁰ Cf. L. REYCHLER – J. MIGABO KALERE, *RD Congo. Pays de l'avenir. Construisons ensemble une paix durable pour un meilleur destin. Livre ouvert*, CPRS (Center of Peace Research and Strategic Studies), Leuven 2010, 11-18. 143.

¹¹Cf. L. RICHER, *L'offensive chinoise en Afrique*, Karthala, Paris 2008, 143-161.

¹² C'est la même exhortation que Bosch suggérait globalement à la mission chrétienne parlant du monde d'aujourd'hui confronté à des situations difficiles. Cf. D. BOSCH, *Transforming Mission. Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, Orbis Books, New York-Maryknoll 1991 (Ed. française: *Dynamique de la mission chrétienne. Histoire et avenir des modèles missionnaires*, Lomé- Paris- Genève, Haho- Karthala- Labor et Fides, 1995,250-251. En effet, Bosch suggère d'«être en mesure de comprendre le monde d'aujourd'hui si l'on veut trouver une réponse chrétienne appropriée à ses difficultés», 253. Continuant sa réflexion, il ajoute qu'« aujourd'hui l'Eglise chrétienne en général et la mission chrétienne en particulier se trouvent confrontées à des situations qu'elles n'auraient jamais imaginées jadis. Elles doivent leur trouver des solutions à la fois pertinentes pour notre époque et conformes à l'essence de la foi chrétienne».

¹³ FRANÇOIS, Exhort. apost. *Evangelii Gaudium*, Salvator, Paris 2013, 145.

2.1. Fidélité au Christ face au défi de la misère en RDC

Face au paradoxe congolais, le modèle par excellence à partir duquel l'Eglise du Congo devra penser, raisonner et qu'il devra proposer à la société congolaise, c'est le Christ, Vérité par excellence. Partir de Jésus «comme contenu et noyau de tout le projet missionnaire en vue de la reconstruction» de la RDC. En ce sens, la tâche des chrétiens congolais est avant tout un «témoignage explicite de l'amour salvifique du Seigneur qui, bien au-delà de nos imperfections, nous donne sa proximité, sa Parole, sa force, et donne sens à notre vie».¹⁴

C'est pourquoi, en vertu du baptême reçu, chaque chrétien, par fidélité au Christ et à sa leçon de vie, doit être présent et participer honnêtement à la vie publique du pays afin de contribuer personnellement à la transformation des services publics de base tels que la sécurité, la bonne gestion, le droit, l'ordre, l'éducation, la santé des pauvres, etc. En reconnaissant le visage du Christ dans celui du congolais, surtout le marginalisé, le chrétien doit contribuer à forger lentement mais sûrement un Congo nouveau.¹⁵

La fidélité au Christ, remet l'homme au centre de tout système et de toute structure politique et économique, et reconnaît que l'être humain est une créature de Dieu, auteur, centre et fin de toute vie économique et sociale.¹⁶

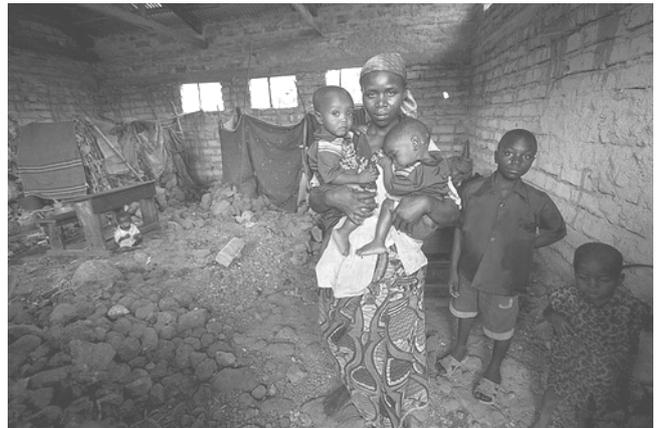
Un tel esprit exige du chrétien congolais, non seulement la responsabilité pour la construction d'un ordre juste mais aussi la tâche prophétique.

2.1.1. La responsabilité pour la construction d'un ordre social juste

L'idéal d'un ordre social juste, dans la logique des Béatitudes,¹⁷ remplacerait l'ordre ancien totalitaire, injuste et moins soucieux de l'intégration sociale des pauvres et des droits humains. L'on ne saurait passer sous silence, cette exhortation du pape Benoît XVI: «Le disciple du Christ, unit à son Maître, doit contribuer à former une société juste où tous pourront participer activement, avec leurs propres talents, à la vie sociale et économique. Ils pourront donc gagner ce qui leur est nécessaire pour vivre selon leur dignité humaine dans une société où la justice sera vivifiée par l'amour».¹⁸

Il s'agit en fait, de s'engager résolument en faveur d'une économie soucieuse du pauvre et résolument opposée à un ordre injuste, et de promouvoir une bonne gouvernance des Etats. Dans ce contexte, le défi à relever consiste à promouvoir une prise de conscience de tous les chrétiens et de tous les congolais, afin qu'ils s'impliquent dans la logique d'une culture démocratique pour la stabilité des institutions politiques et économiques en vue d'un développement authentique.

En bref, le concept-clé est celui de l'éducation à la responsabilité car nos misères proviennent en grande partie de l'indifférence manifeste à ce concept-clé de nos politiques et de notre économie. Que chaque congolais devienne responsable et consacre tous les efforts possibles à l'émergence d'un Congo juste où il fera bon vivre.



¹⁴ FRANÇOIS, Exhort. apost. *Evangelii Gaudium*, Salvator, Paris 2013, 97.

¹⁵ BENOIT XVI, Exhort. apost. post-synodale *Africae Munus* (19 novembre 2011), n.30: DC 2482(2012) 52-89. Et dans le même numéro, le pape déclare que «Dans la situation actuelle de l'Afrique, l'Eglise est appelée à faire entendre la voix du Christ». Le n.53 des *Lineamenta* du Deuxième Synode Africain, décrit la mission de l'Eglise-Famille de Dieu comme annonce du Salut qui libère l'homme, tout l'homme, l'homme dans toutes ses dimensions: spirituelle, morale, culturelle, économique et sociale.

¹⁶ CONSEIL PONTIFICAL JUSTICE ET PAIX, *Compendium de la doctrine sociale de l'Eglise*, Bayard-Fleurus-Mame, Paris 2005, n. 127- 130.

¹⁷ Cf. AM, n.26-27. Soucieux de l'attention préférentielle aux pauvres, le pape exhorte l'Eglise d'Afrique à s'appuyer sur l'enseignement des Béatitudes pour contribuer à former une société juste où tous pourront participer activement avec leurs propres talents à la vie économique, politique et sociale du continent.

¹⁸ AM, n.26. Au numéro 27, le pape demande à l'Afrique de commencer par introduire en son sein, de manière résolue, la justice politique, sociale et administrative, éléments de la culture politique nécessaire au développement et à la paix. Lire aussi EA, n. 44.

2.1.2. Une Eglise prophétique

Dans ce pays à feu et à sang, et au regard des défis socio-économiques et politiques que traverse la RDC, l'Eglise ne peut qu'être prophétique. Ainsi, en empathie et engagés dans les situations concrètes des peuples, ils doivent, comme des «sentinelles», veiller résolument pour la cause des pauvres en dénonçant ces pouvoirs politiques et économiques qui tuent des millions d'êtres humains dans notre pays.¹⁹ Par ailleurs, ils devront interpellier sans se lasser les responsables politiques et économiques du pays afin que les situations d'injustice et d'exploitation soient dénoncées. Qu'ils deviennent «la voix des sans voix».²⁰

Comme l'observe L. Santedi Kinkupu, l'Eglise «n'a le droit d'être ni absente, ni muette, ni hésitante là où il n'y a personne pour défendre les intérêts des pauvres, des faibles. Elle doit s'interroger, interroger, voire dénoncer les légitimités établies par l'égoïsme des puissants».²¹

A partir de cette fidélité au Christ et au congolais, il faudrait reconstituer la RDC sur la solidarité africaine.

2.2. La solidarité dans la promotion de la dignité humaine

Dans la vision culturelle africaine, certains comportements et habitudes tels l'individualisme, l'égoïsme, la corruption, le vol, l'aliénation des biens de la communauté compromettent le «vivre ensemble» et toutes les relations fraternelles.

Le congolais est actuellement détruit par l'individualisme et le refus des valeurs de la sagesse africaine. Voilà pourquoi, les chrétiens congolais, conscients de leur appartenance, non seulement à la culture africaine, mais aussi à la grande famille qu'est le nouveau clan c'est-à-dire, l'Eglise famille de Dieu, doivent bâtir leur responsabilité sur des relations de solidarité. Cette valeur



d'inspiration africaine rompt avec les antivaleurs qui ont désagrégé toute la situation existentielle en RDC. Par conséquent, cette valeur reconnue en Afrique, aidera le congolais à travailler pour le bien de tous et non pour des intérêts individuels.

C'est par solidarité que les chrétiens de la RDC devront lutter en communion avec tous les congolais pour remettre en question les politiques actuelles et leurs méfaits. La solidarité sera l'expression de la responsabilité de tous pour l'intérêt mutuel et le souci d'un support social des personnes marginalisées dans le groupe.

Certes, la solidarité que nous proposons est biblique et culturelle. Elle est une voie urgente et obligée pour le développement et la paix au Congo. Elle «est sous-tendue par le respect de toute personne, de la dignité humaine, et par l'égalité qui renforce le sentiment d'appartenance au même genre humain, au destin de la même société».²² Il nous faut passer d'un Etat caractérisé par l'égoïsme, l'accumulation individualiste des biens, l'exclusion des pauvres, à un Etat de solidarité c'est-à-dire un Etat où tous les citoyens se reconnaissent responsables de tous et s'engagent avec constance dans la réalisation du Bien commun.

En bref, nous devons reconnaître que dans notre pays, le défi à relever dans ce contexte de la solidarité est celui de la reconnaissance du fait que riches et pauvres, gouvernants et gouvernés, forment une seule famille qui collabore dans une véritable communion de personnes, vivant non seulement les unes à côté des autres mais aussi et surtout les unes avec les autres.²³

¹⁹ Dans son livre *Le Dieu crucifié en Afrique. Esquisse d'une christologie négro-africaine de la Libération Holistique*, Awazi Mbambi exhorte l'Eglise d'Afrique à ne pas rester passive en dénonçant tous les pouvoirs qui ne respectent pas la dignité humaine. Cf. B. AWAZI MBAMBI KUNGUA, *Le Dieu crucifié en Afrique. Esquisse d'une christologie négro-africaine de la Libération Holistique*, L'Harmattan, Paris 2008, 89.

²⁰ Cf. L. P. MBUYU, «La mission prophétique de l'Eglise», in M. CHEZA, *Le deuxième synode africain. Réconciliation, Justice et Paix*, 83.

²¹ L. SANTEDI KINKUPU, *Les défis de l'évangélisation dans l'Afrique contemporaine*, 61.

²² L. SANTEDI KINKUPU, *Les défis de l'évangélisation dans l'Afrique contemporaine*, 76.

²³ BENOIT XVI, Lett. Ency. *Caritas in veritate*, n. 53.

2.3. La recherche du Bien commun

Nous voulons évoquer une organisation sociale caractérisée par une juste distribution des revenus et respectueuse de la personne humaine créée à l'image et à la ressemblance de Dieu. Ces deux valeurs c'est-à-dire le Bien commun et la dignité humaine transcendent la tranquillité des privilégiés des politiques congolaises.

Voilà pourquoi, les chrétiens, en témoins de Jésus-Christ et de son Evangile, chacun selon sa responsabilité, doivent privilégier le Bien commun du peuple congolais plutôt que le soutien à des personnes ou à des intérêts de régimes politiques égoïstes.

On sait que malgré les situations dramatiques du pays, beaucoup de chrétiens montrent encore un grand attachement aux valeurs évangéliques et sont mieux placés pour manifester la diversité des dons reçus de Dieu au service de la transformation du pays et pour le Bien commun.²⁴

Par conséquent, pour aider les chrétiens à assumer leurs responsabilités chrétiennes et citoyennes en vue d'une saine gestion du bien commun et une gestion équitable des affaires publiques, il importe de former leur conscience et leur sens des responsabilités devant le bien commun et la chose publique.²⁵

CONCLUSION

La responsabilité de tout le peuple congolais s'impose pour relever les défis du paradoxe congolais. Mais elle s'impose plus encore aux chrétiens comme un devoir primordial et impérieux, une exigence même de leur vocation chrétienne.

Certes, les défis à relever en RDC sont énormes et nous les avons examinés. Toutefois, les chrétiens et chrétiennes du pays, en plus de leur prise de conscience de la responsabilité qui leur incombe dans cette mission, doivent encore inventer d'autres réponses et d'autres attitudes pour résoudre les problèmes cruciaux qui se posent à la nation. On sait déjà que les bases sont solides c'est-à-dire la fidélité au Christ, la solidarité dans la promotion de la dignité humaine et la recherche du Bien commun de toute la nation congolaise.

De toute évidence, face aux défis sociopolitiques et économiques, à l'irresponsabilité des dirigeants et à leurs systèmes économiques qui enferment les populations congolaises dans la marginalisation, la dépendance, la pauvreté et la misère alors qu'ils vivent dans un pays extrêmement riche, 'dans un paradis où les anges meurent de faim', les chrétiens à la suite du Christ et dans la fidélité à ce qu'il a fait²⁶ ont la responsabilité grave de prendre au sérieux leur engagement pour faire fructifier ce paradis et libérer intégralement les anges qui y meurent de faim. A l'heure actuelle en RDC, beaucoup souffrent et meurent. Il n'y a pas de temps à perdre. Soyons plus responsables et courageux. Prenons conscience de l'effort que chacun individuellement ou collectivement doit fournir pour surmonter ce fameux paradoxe congolais.

Réf.: Texte de l'auteur. Janvier 2015.

²⁴ Dans le pays, les fidèles laïcs, par association ou par individus, mènent un combat par des actions concrètes pour libérer tout l'homme sur tous les plans politique, économique, culturel et social. Parmi tant d'initiatives, on peut citer à titre d'exemple, la marche de l'espoir du 16 février 1992 par laquelle les chrétiens réclamaient la réouverture et la poursuite des travaux de la Conférence Nationale Souveraine suspendus par le despote président Mobutu. Cf. P. DE DORLODOT, *Marche de l'espoir. Kinshasa 16 février 1992. Non-violence pour la démocratie au Zaïre*, L'Harmattan, Paris 1994, 23-26.

²⁵ Cf. M. GAHUNGU, *Burundi et Rwanda: Lumières du 2^e Synode pour l'Afrique*, L'Harmattan, Paris 2013, 263-264.

²⁶ Cf. L. BOFF, *La nouvelle évangélisation. Perspectives des opprimés*, Cerf, Paris 1992, 110-111.



13-15 May 2015

**“MEETING GOD OF
DIALOGUE:**

***Reading the Holy Books of the
Abrahamic Religions”***

Centro ‘Ad Gentes’ Nemi (Rm)

Organized by:
The Society of the Divine Word (SVD)
and SEDOS

*More details will follow
(contact redacsed@sedosmission.org)*

Participants: Christians, Moslems
and Jews

Languages: English, Spanish,
French, Italian

Euro 100,00 (board and lodging)
Payment at the arrival

Background

The 50th anniversary of the Second Vatican Council is a golden occasion for the Church to reflect on its documents and to keep its spirit alive through proper celebrations, seminars, and workshops. The Council’s openness to the world is still relevant today and new initiatives should be taken to implement its teachings in the post-modern pluralistic world.

The openness to dialogue is more urgent now because of the religious and political fundamentalism which not only has threatened the harmony among communities of different religions, but also has given rise to many conflicts all over the world. In this context, members of the Abrahamic religions are called to enhance dialogue among them and with people of other religions in order to better know their commonalities and their differences.

Moreover, they are called to view their differences as a source of enrichment for their community life, rather than a source of conflicts. In this regard, a workshop on the documents of the Second Vatican Council and Scriptural Reasoning can significantly contribute to enhancing our openness toward our multicultural world and to a positive intercultural living.

Aim

The workshop aims at:

enhancing the quality of our intercultural life;
deepening our understanding of the documents of the Second Vatican Council;
enhancing the quality of religious dialogue among the Abrahamic religions;
enhancing a positive attitude toward differences by viewing them as a source of enrichment rather than a source of conflicts.

Daily Schedule:

Wednesday: registration and orientation

Thursday: Scriptural Reasoning

Friday: Scriptural Reasoning - Celebration

Rev. Dr. Francis Perry Azah

Psycho-Spiritual Unfolding of the Identity of the Human Person

Introduction

In some ways, then, all the standards involved in self-awareness have a social character that colours our knowledge of ourselves — not only is it the case that self-knowledge has a social dimension, however.

The motivation for self-knowledge usually has a social character to it as well" (Miller, 2005, p. 27).

We often speak of someone's "personal identity" as what makes someone the person who he/she is. A person's identity in this sense consists roughly of what makes a person unique as an individual and different from others. Or it is the way a person sees or defines him/herself, or the network of values and convictions that structure a person's life. This individual identity is a property (or set of properties). Presumably it is one the person has only contingently: a person might have had a different identity from the one he/she in fact has. It is also a property that someone might have only temporarily: he/she could swap his/her current individual identity for a new one, or perhaps even get by without one (Ludwig [1997] presents a typical discussion of this topic).

I began this paper by stating that the unique state of the conscious and unconscious life, from birth to adulthood, or even old age and death, the impact of immediate and extended families, peers, acquaintances, fellow students, professors, pastors, parishioners, the characteristics of socio-cultural and Judeo-Christian backgrounds, other significant cultures, the conditions of physical, emotional, cognitive, psychological and spiritual health, all have a role to play in determining the choices a person makes and the responsibilities that underscore them. As a human being made in the image and likeness of God, a person has freedom of choice, without which there is no sense of accountability or responsibility.

What Self Is and the Meaning of Life

In recent years, Victor Frankl (1964) has emerged as the leading proponent in psychotherapeutic circles of the centrality of the experience of "meaning" in mental health. Frankl dismissed Freud's inordinate emphasis upon the pleasure principle — what we might call here for the sake of symmetry the "will-to-pleasure" — contending that pleasure for the human person only has significance and purpose within the context of the individual's own grasp of life's meaning for him/herself, that is, life as personal.

Again Frankl (1961) differentiates meaning and value. Values are socially held meanings whereas meaning as the *sine qua non* of life is a unique experience and possession of every single individual at every moment of his/her life. Frankl (1953) contended that this will-to-meaning — as Freud argued for "pleasure" and Adler for "power" — pervades every theatrical stage as well as every secret recess of a person's personal life. Meaning, he pointed out, can be found in any situation within which people find themselves. Wherever human life exists, meaning can be found there.

In Frankl's logotherapy, not only is the human person portrayed as being in possession of a sense of meaningfulness but also of a personal sense of indebtedness. Not only is life charged with meaning, this meaning implies responsibility. Life provides an arena within which a person must discover meaning, and this discovery places upon the individual expectations. Let us quote Frankl exactly on this point: "Ultimately, man should not ask what the meaning of his life is, but rather must recognize that it is he who is asked. In a word, each man is questioned by life; and he can only answer to life by

"The glory of God is the living man, but the life of man is the vision of God", says St. Irenaeus, getting to the heart of what happens when man meets God on the mountain in the wilderness. Ultimately, it is the very life of man, man himself as living righteously, that is the true worship of God, but life only becomes real life when it receives its form from looking toward God" (Pope Benedict XVI, The Spirit of the Liturgy).

answering for his own life; to life he can only respond by being responsible. Thus, logotherapy sees in responsibility the very essence of human existence" (Frankl, 1964).

When we talk about someone's nature or personality, we are talking about what makes that person different from other people, perhaps even unique. This aspect of human nature is called individual differences. Some people are introverts while others are extroverts.

Since every man is a moral being after the image and likeness of God, *imago dei*, we should expect a similarity of values worldwide. The most elementary principle of right and wrong must be conceded to man as man, they are the birthrights of his being, not the legacy of a subsequent revelation. All men as men, therefore, possess an ineradicable ethical sense (cf. Rom 2:14 ff). Self starts with the body, but it soon develops far beyond that.



According to Kierkegaard, the self is a relation that relates itself to itself (Kierkegaard, 1849/1980). What he means to say here is that, to be a self is to have a reflexive awareness in which the activity of awareness is distinguished from the object of awareness. Kierkegaard goes

on to define the self in terms of its relations to what is outside the self: "Such a relation that relates itself to itself, a self must either have established itself or have been established by another" (Kierkegaard, 1849/1980, p.13). In effect, Kierkegaard is saying that, for human beings, the identity of the self is always grounded in relation to something outside the self.

For him, the failure to be a self, however, must always be seen against the backdrop of an ideal, healthy self, a self that is in proper relationship to that ideal. The human's life is rich in possible modes of presence. These are categorized under four main dimensions: socio-historical, vital, functional, and transcendent (Kierkegaard, 1849/1980).

The socio-historical form dimension is the way in which we give form to life and the world has been co-formed by our society, which has developed a form of tradition in regard to the ways in which people should give form to various life situations. Everything we do is influenced somehow by this formation history of our people. For example, society and its form traditions instill in us the idea of regular times of labour interspersed with times of recreation and exercise.

The vital form dimension: the embodiment of our presence in this socio-historical situation is evident. Our senses open up to this manifestation of the formation field in which we plunge ourselves.

The functional form dimension is the dimension of functional forming presence. We need to organize many things in our lives. A measure of organization compatible with our socio-historical position was thus necessary as a preparation for this recreation.

The transcendent form dimension: our socio-historical form traditions awaken us to certain experiences of peace and beauty communicated by painters and poets. It goes deeper than those dimensions of presence that enable us to form vital and functional experiences and to implement in our behaviour the form directives implied in them.

From the deeper, unknown life-form that we are, there emerges an intuition, a form of receptivity to the mystery of all that is. We may receive the gift of a spiritual experience. The spirit dimension of our life form, our transcendent form potency, is thus actuated.

According to Adrian van Kaam (1989), "the human body gives rise to a vital life manifesting itself in human vitality. The functional mind calls forth an effective functional life or functionality. The vital and the functional in mutual interaction bring about a unified vital-functional life or a kind of functioning personality. The health, strength, integration, and effectiveness of this vital-functional life depend on the distinctively human or transcendent dimension, called the spirit or higher reason. This transcendent dimension gives rise to the life of the spirit, or spirituality. It tends to express itself in our vitality and functionality and in various channels we provide and develop within the latter for such expression. This dialogue between vitality and functionality constantly nourishes human formation.

Human life is, in essence, emerging, that is, it is dynamic. It should not be misunderstood as

a static entity. On the contrary, to the extent that life tries to become static it seems less of a human life. It resembles a remnant or a decaying residue of what it was called to be. Hence, we can say that human life is meant to be a dialogue between functionality and vitality in steady interaction with formative events emerging in a person's formation field.

Our spirit gradually discloses what we should strive to become in the future. The human life-form as spirit is an unfolding intuition of what our own fundamental spiritual identity or life direction might be. The everyday manifestations of our pragmatic identity are signs, shadows, and partial embodiments of a deeper spiritual identity. Our vital-functional identity would lose its rootedness, stability, and meaningfulness without this spiritual identity at its core. It would become a shadow without substance, a phantom self, and we would suffer a spiritual identity crisis.

The vital, functional, and spiritual formation powers are three mutually interpenetrating centers of human formation or three crystallizations of one and the same movement of human life. They represent different modes of human presence in its formation field and are the principles of actualization and integration of a person's communal and unique life-form. All three foster integration within a person's life and formation field. All three are influenced by the ubiquitous socio-historical dimension within which human life must necessarily unfold.

The Journey of the Human Person

Although their departure points into the mystery may differ, both psychology and theology use the metaphor of journey to explore and describe the unfolding of the human person from infancy to death. Whereas psychology frequently starts with the identity of the person as it takes, and is given, shape through significant relationships and events, theology more often begins reflection upon identity by considering the vocation of the person. Whichever window is used initially, in the end the notion of both identity and vocation are needed to understand the human person on the profound human journey into the mystery of God which at the same time is the mystery of God made man and the mystery of human life transformed into the divine.



Sigmund Freud (1997) hypothesized the presence of a conscious and unconscious mental life. He viewed these like an iceberg, with the conscious part being the smaller part and the unconscious being the larger part. The conscious according to Freud, is the level of the mind that consists of those experiences that a person is aware of at any given time. The unconscious, on the other hand, is the level of the mind that consists of thoughts, urges, and memories that are not within a person's awareness.

It is to be hoped that as we age we develop a conscious awareness of our unconscious, particularly, our instinctual drives such as sexuality. This helps the ego to be in control. According to Freud, when a person is not aware of his/her unconscious drives, this is how neuroses develop. He views depression as "anger turned inward" and the psychoanalytic therapist would attempt to help the person identify and label their anger; by this process the person would no longer be driven by anger but could make more rational choices.

Defense Mechanisms

There are four defense mechanisms that are viewed as helpful and mature coping devices. These are: sublimation, altruism, suppression, and humour.

Sublimation channels one drive into another form, such as the athlete who does not have sexual relations before a big athletic contest in order to reserve all of his/her energy for the athletic arena. Art, music, architecture — in fact, any engrossing activity may be a form of sublimation. I would think that in religious life this is something that should be examined prior to ordination/vows, and reviewed in an ongoing manner.

Altruism is another positive motivation. One might think of the childless couple who devote their lives to helping others. Anne Anastasi (one of Fordham University's (NY) greatest professors) had a medical problem whereby she could not have children. Instead, she put all her energy into a remarkable career. The lonely person who volunteers to serve in a soup kitchen is using altruism in a positive way.

Suppression is good — it is the ego recognizing a strong, powerful, and negative emotion and choosing not to express this emotion. It differs greatly from repression, where the person does not know the underlying feeling and is driven by it. When the boss yells at someone unfairly, and the person decides to listen respectfully rather than answering back to the tirade — this is a good example of suppression. In religious life, I would think that it is important to use this drive as part of a healthy understanding of celibacy/chastity.

Finally, there is **humour**, which helps a person to deal with a situation that is out of his/her control. However care should be taken that humour does not degenerate into sarcasm or cynicism.

I think **projection** is one of the most harmful defense mechanisms, particularly in the Church and in religious life. This is when a person blames something else, outside of himself or herself, and is critical of another person or organization. Our Lord said, "How can you notice the speck in your neighbour's eye when there is a defect in your own eye" (cf. Mt 7:3). Projection is also very harmful in marriage. It can be deadly in societies where one group is scapegoated as causing all of the problems. The Nazis projected their own inferiority complex onto the Jewish people.

Repression involves the lack of conscious awareness of a prior experience. It may involve blocking out some childhood memories because of the pain experienced of abandonment or of abuse. Psychodynamic theorists see repression as being related to post-traumatic stress disorders. Undoing is another harmful mechanism. Rather than acknowledging realistic guilt and making proper amends and atonement, the person attempts to find some magical ritual that tries to 'undo' the previous action. Shakespeare's Lady Macbeth illustrated undoing when she said, "Out, out, damn spot!"

Denial can be both positive and negative. I once heard someone say, "Denial buys you time until you have enough support to deal with whatever is a great burden". I, as a pastor and a counsellor, have tried not to "hit people over the head with the truth", but have helped lead them to it in a gradual manner. People with alcohol and substance abuse often use denial to minimize or gloss over the extent of their use of such harmful substances and their effects on their life.

In Freud's theory, the ego is the region of the mind that seeks to satisfy instinctual needs in accordance with reality. The superego, on the other hand, is the region of the mind that comprises the ego ideal (what a person would like to be ideally) and the conscience (taught by parents and society). The superego commands that an act be performed for approval, in order to make oneself lovable, accepted, fear of love-withdrawal is the basis. Conscience on the other hand invites to action, to love and in this very act of other-directed commitment to co-create self-value.

William James (2009) has written about conversion and its relationship to developmental crises in a very moving manner in *Varieties of Religious Experience*. There are "first born" and "second born" stances toward religion; the "second born" exemplifies a conversion experience. He spoke of conversion when religious ideas, previously peripheral in a person's consciousness, take a central place, forming the habitual center of a person's energy. He goes on to say that there is a shift in the mental system, as the peripheral becomes central. Psychologists cannot account for this process. It cannot be fully explained by an outside observer or by the person who undergoes the transforming process. Conversion, either spiritual or temporal, is for the benefit of the person, his/her community, and society in general. There are many factors to be considered in any conversion experience. These factors include the family, environment, ideological beliefs and cultural values.

There are also psychological factors like: imagination, feelings, thoughts, emotions, etc. These all shape us. Conversion can happen from within or from without, it can be slow or sudden. Most people who are Christian believe that the Holy Spirit plays a vital role in conversion. Still, we have to be open to all the possibilities. To be converted, a person ought to recognize, accept, forgive, and learn to let go of whatever is held dear. The person needs to give way to a new reality. The other kind of conversion is a defense mechanism. It involves "converting" a troublesome feeling into a physical symptom. Ultimately, this demands that very great care be taken.

Private and Liturgical Prayer and Self Identity

Private prayer helps the person to see him/herself as separate from others. It is personal. It is to be hoped that prayer includes understanding of God's love and of God's great providence. "Remember the lilies of the field, even Solomon in all his glory was not adorned like one of these..." (Lk 12:27). I think that prayer can help a person to avoid the defense mechanisms of projection and repression. If a person is open to God with his/her petitions and requests, he/she will be aware of self and his/her own feelings, both positive and negative. Prayer, such as acts of contrition help to focus a person on his/her own sinfulness and imperfections and need for forgiveness rather than complaining about everyone else. As adulthood is reached, a deep prayer life helps a person to

stand up against many problems, some of which seem unbearable. This enhances and solidifies a person's identity.

We pray not to add anything to or change God. One of the Catholic Weekday Prefaces (IV) reads: "Our prayer of thanksgiving adds nothing to your greatness, but makes us grow in your grace". In the light of spiritual psychology, I feel that to pray means putting reason before the things hoped for in that prayer session and resolving to be a better person. People pray and acknowledge any loopholes in order that God may assist them to fill them or the lacuna created by their short-comings, change their bad ways, deplorable economic condition, to heal relationships, insecurity, sickness, keep his Ordinances and be better people in the way we perceive others. According to Kierkegaard in Mead (1965): "Prayer does not change God, but changes him who prays" (1965:342). God is good, truth, justice, love and peace. These are the basic values people share with him and the 'prayer points and results' expected from prayer. Eventually, these values determine whether the person's petitions are consented to or not. We are our own prayer points. Prayer is a reenactment and reliving



of belief, solidarity and identity with both the living and dead in keeping with the moral standard, values and societal expectations people share in general. In active spiritual meditations and reflections, prayer means listening to and looking at God while God listens to and looks at the one praying. Prayer is to call the attention of Eternity (Nwachukwu, 2010).

Now, let us focus our attention on liturgical prayer and self-identity. We can only exist in relation to other people and liturgical prayer helps this process in keeping us in contact with others. The Holy Mass, reading the Psalms throughout the liturgical cycle, and prayers of petition, thanksgiving, trust, and praise also help a person to understand his/her unique needs while praying with others in a supportive community. In hearing the Gospel we hope to find our identity — identify with our Lord — essential to our self-identity and identity as Christians. It helps a person to acknowledge sinfulness and the need for forgiveness before others and to accept his/her imperfections and not to get "stuck" in them. It frees a person for new healthy pursuits and relationships. Such risk-taking is very important as a person develops a mature identity. The blessing at the end of Mass in which the Minister says, "Go in peace to love and serve the Lord" reminds us that with the peace of Christ, which surpasses all understanding, we are free to make choices that lead to our own greatest authenticity in a supportive manner and also reminds us that our own self-identity is inextricably interwoven with that of others as we serve them.

Faith is a very great part of who we Catholics are and the Apostle's Creed reminds us that our faith is part of our inner core.

Many developmental psychologists say that the best parenting involves a love with set

limits. The same elements are found in liturgical prayer, we are present during Christ's sacrifice and experience his love for us, but at the same time we realize that we must set a limit to our drives, harmful emotions, or maladroit way of relating to others.

Again, in liturgical prayer the view that a person's identity must be interwoven with that of others is thematic. As the then Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger once said: "It means emerging from the state of separation, of apparent autonomy, of existing only for oneself and in oneself. It means losing oneself as the only possible way of finding oneself" (cf. Mk 8:35; Mt. 10:39), [Ratzinger, 1999, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*].

The Sacraments and the gestures in liturgical prayer lead people to mature self-identity. As we stand with our arms wide open during the 'Our Father' we are reminded that our identity cannot be attained by our own efforts but is and will be a gift and grace from God. The Sign of the Cross expresses to others and ourselves our core identity as Christians: "Thus we can say that in the Sign of the Cross, together with the invocation of the Trinity, the whole essence of Christianity is summed up; it displays what is distinctively Christian" (Ratzinger, 1999, p. 178).

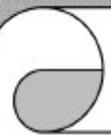
Existential philosophical theory postulates that a person's self-identity is made and affirmed by the authentic choices he/she makes. Again, the liturgy reminds us of our Christian values and that decisions must be made with these in mind. I think that what Karol Wojtyla meant with his existentialism was that: "when one freely chooses the truth one becomes a true person. I cannot think of any better way to explain self-identity than to be a 'true person'" (cf. Wojtyla, (1993), *Love and Responsibility*).

Music, Architecture and Art, etc. all speak to our unconscious feelings and help to make us aware of these as we take personal decisions. The Stations of the Cross remind us that no matter how secure our identity is, how comfortable we think we are, suffering and carrying our individual cross must be part of the way we see ourselves. At a funeral, the faithful are reminded (hopefully) of a life well lived, the loving memories help each person to review his/her identity in view of everyone's mortality.

Finally, reading and chanting the Divine Office (in monasteries, convents, etc.): As the year progresses, we learn of Saints who are role models for the entire history of the Church. The Saints each developed an unique identity that corresponded to the demands of that age. This leads us to question our own self-definition and to question whether we are on track or off track. For example, psychologists and social workers learn about St. Vincent de Paul and how he helped orphans in Paris. His example helps us to redouble our efforts to help those in need and make this a part of our identity.

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***Prayer for the Year of
Consecrated Life***

O God,
throughout the ages you have called
women and men to pursue lives of perfect
charity through the evangelical counsels of
poverty, chastity, and obedience. During this
Year of Consecrated Life, we give you thanks
for these courageous witnesses of Faith and
models of inspiration.
Their pursuit of holy lives teaches us
to make a more perfect offering of ourselves to you.
Continue to enrich your Church by calling forth sons and daughters
who,
having found the pearl of great price,
treasure the Kingdom of Heaven above all things.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. Amen

***Oración para el Año de la
Vida Consagrada***

Oh Dios, tú que a través de los tiempos has
llamado a mujeres y hombres a fin de que
vivan la caridad perfecta por medio de los
consejos evangélicos de la pobreza, la castidad
y la obediencia. Durante este Año de la Vida
Consagrada te damos gracias por estos valientes
testigos de la fe, que son también modelos de
inspiración. Con su empeño por lograr la santidad
ellos nos enseñan a ofrecerte nuestra vida de una manera más
perfecta.
Te pedimos que continúes enriqueciendo a tu Iglesia con hijos
e hijas que, habiendo encontrado la perla de gran valor,
atesoran el Reino de los cielos por encima de todas las cosas.
Por nuestro Señor Jesucristo, tu Hijo,
que vive y reina contigo en la unidad del Espíritu Santo
y es Dios por los siglos de los siglos, Amén.

Taken from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' Site
(www.usccb.org/cclv • www.usccb.org)

