

# Bulletin 2024

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**MISSION OF HOPE:**  
**Mission Gifts from**  
**Each Continent Today!**

## Mission of Hope: Mission Gifts from each Continent Today

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## *Editorial*



**Dear Members and Readers,**

The March-April issue of the SEDOS Bulletin is based on the theme, “Mission of Hope: Gifts from different Continents” which has been the theme of the

SEDOS Spring Seminar held, on 21 March, 2024 at the UISG. This topic is very relevant and significant as we see and experience all around us various escalating conflicts. In the tumultuous panorama of global conflict — ranging from territorial disputes to ideological clashes, the simmering tension of ethnic discord, and the ceaseless struggle for resources — a Mission of Hope emerges as a beacon of resilience and reconciliation. Indeed, in such a situation it is a challenge and opportunity for a missionary to be a real disciple of Christ, to bring his compassion and love to the world that is wounded.

Spring, that symbolizes hope and new life, was also the theme of the Opening Prayer prepared by Geni dos Santos Camargo, SFB, who said, “In this context of violence against Life, both human life and life in all its manifestations, we feel the effect of global warming. But Spring is a fact that fills us with hope.”

In a world rife with conflict that ranges from personal struggles to global confrontations, Christian Hope stands as a steadfast beacon, illuminating a path toward reconciliation and unity through the power of faith and love. This hope is rooted in the Teaching of Jesus Christ, emphasizing forgiveness, compassion, and in the relentless pursuit of justice and peace. It calls upon individuals and communities alike to transcend their differences, see the divine image in every person, and work tirelessly for the betterment of all humanity. Christian hope is not passive; it is active and transformative, inspiring acts of kindness, charity, and the courage to stand up against injustice. It embodies the belief that, even in the darkest of times, God's love prevails, guiding the world towards a future where harmony and understanding will triumph

over division and hatred. Through this hope, not only missionaries but all Christians worldwide are motivated to be agents of change, contributing to the healing and unification of our fractured world.

In her welcome Address, Mary Barron, OLA, President of SEDOS, put the theme in the right perspective saying, “Christian Hope, is the beacon that guides us.” She reminds every member that we need to learn from one another, celebrate our diversity, and cooperate in hope. The mission gifts are not meant to be hoarded but to be shared. Let us keep our hearts open to hope and our hands ready to serve.

In his keynote Address, His Eminence Graham Bell, spoke about the Jubilee Year 2025, which has an appropriate theme, “Pilgrims of Hope.” He spoke about the various programs that are being prepared to rekindle Hope among Christians.

Answering, from the theological perspective, the question of how missionaries, women and men of faith, bearers of Christian hope, can engage in these situations, Fr. Stanley Lubungo, M.Afr., in his article affirmed that, “As a theological virtue, hope is called to be the foundation of our missionary commitment. It is called to drive this commitment and to characterise it (CEC 1813). Thus, we understand that as missionaries we are called to become messengers of hope.” He further stated that “Christian Hope is not merely a communication of things that are known – it is one that makes things happen and is life changing.”

Christian Hope, as manifested across the different continents amidst rising conflicts, embodies a unique blend of universal faith and localized responses to adversity. In Africa, amidst ethnic tension and political strife, Christian communities often become sanctuaries of peace, advocating reconciliation and providing aid to those affected by conflict. Churches and faith-based organizations play a crucial role in mediation and peace-building efforts, drawing on Christian hope to inspire forgiveness and unity.

In Latin America, where social inequality and violence persist, Christian Hope fuels

movements for social justice and human rights. It motivates individuals and churches to challenge systemic injustices and to support the marginalized, reflecting Jesus' Teaching on love and solidarity for the poor and oppressed.

Reflecting upon the situation in Latin America, Márcio Flávio Martins, CICM, in his presentation entitled, "Hope from a Latin American Perspective", explains that, "Our hopes are similar to those of every human in any part of the planet. Our hopes are not different from the hopes of Jesus in the Gospel. "I came that they may have life, and may have it abundantly" (John 10:10). We hope for a missionary Church concerned with history. We hope for real human development. We hope for the dignity of everyone regardless of the colour of his/her skin and ethnic background. We hope for peace and reconciliation. We hope for just political and financial systems that will prevent corruption." He also alerts missionaries "to realize that material poverty is destructive and goes against Jesus' proposal that everyone should have life and life in abundance. We cannot spiritualize and undermine what deprives human beings of their dignity."

In Asia, facing religious persecution and geopolitical tensions, Christian Hope is often expressed through perseverance and resilience. Christians engage in interfaith dialogue, aiming to build bridges of understanding and respect among diverse religious communities. Their hope is a testimony to their faith, encouraging tolerance and peaceful coexistence in a region marked by religious diversity.

Speaking from the Asian perspective, Mikaelin Bupu, SSpS, in her presentation, "Missions Amid Natural Calamities", mentioned the disasters caused by natural calamities. She recalled the real experience of some missionaries who were scared, traumatized and left alone in darkness, which made them realize the plight of the people and the presence of God. She says, "In times of natural calamities, our hearts beat for those who suffer. We stand in solidarity with our brothers and sisters, feeling their pain as if it were our own. Our empathy binds us together, transcending the barriers of distance and difference."

In her presentation, "Mission of Hope: Mission gifts from each Continent Today" Virginie Habib, Congregation of the Rosary Sisters,

shared her experience of hope in Middle Eastern countries. She defined hope, as "the fruit of a firm belief that is nourished by the Word of God in the Bible, shown by our attitude towards daily life events, acts of charity, tolerance for those who practice different religions, who belong to other races, or cultures, and work to transform reality in accordance with God's plan for humanity." She spoke about the devastation caused by various wars in the past and now in Gaza. She said, "Today, as Christians in the Middle East, we find ourselves at a crossroads. Either we choose to deal with these circumstances out of our faith, keeping the flame of hope alive, or we surrender to frustration and despair." She added that in the face of all the tragedies, although "we may not be able to change the decisions of the powerful; or have a direct influence on them, we can, however, intervene where our communities work, by building alternative forms of peace, development, and progress in our local context." Emphasising the role of Christian educational institutions, she said that they are "factories" of hope and that each student is a glimpse of hope for the future of the Church and society. No matter how tiny and fatigued, our communities maybe they will not give up shaping the destiny of many of the least and poor on their territory. Affirming her hope, she says, "We Middle Eastern Christians are currently going through a period of hardship that is analogous to what Jesus' followers went through on Good Friday afternoon after his Crucifixion; we are experiencing it both in its spiritual and material forms, in the hope that the region of the Middle East will rise with the Risen Christ on Resurrection Sunday.

Europe, with its secularizing societies and the challenges of migration and integration, sees Christian Hope influencing efforts towards community cohesion and the support of refugees and migrants. Churches open their doors to provide not just spiritual solace but practical support, advocating policies that reflect compassion and human dignity.

In her presentation, "Speranza Missione In Europa", Giuliana Bolzan, OLA, explained the deeper meaning of hope, saying, "The term Hope, in addition to being a theological virtue, means: feeling of confident expectation that one can realise what is desired. We have learned

that everything starts from an ASPIRATION. From making faith more active and religion less. Have fewer precepts, more education in love.”

In North America, amidst political polarization and social divisions, Christian Hope inspires action for racial equality, environmental stewardship, and the protection of human rights. It propels believers towards community service and political engagement, motivated by a vision of a more just and merciful society.

In every context, Christian Hope transcends mere optimism. It is an active force for healing, justice, and reconciliation, grounded in the faith that, despite the darkest of circumstances, transformation and redemption are always possible with Divine guidance and human solidarity.

In such a context, the role of a missionary is not just to provide aid but to build a foundation for lasting peace and prosperity, in order to transcend traditional evangelism, embodying a holistic approach to address spiritual and temporal needs.

In these articles we have seen that a lot is being done by missionaries in various parts of the world. But there is still a long way to go. The challenge is to rekindle missionary zeal and refresh our commitment.

A missionary need to play the dynamic role of one who can advocate Peace and Reconciliation. Missionaries are called to be peacemakers in a world torn by conflict. This involves mediating between opposing groups, fostering dialogue, and encouraging forgiveness and understanding based on Christian Teaching. Their mission is to build bridges between divided communities, promote peace in line with the message of reconciliation central to the Gospel.

They need to reinforce their support for humanitarian efforts, providing food, shelter, medical care, and other essentials to those in need. They work through the churches, mission organizations, and international partnerships to mobilize resources and aid for the most vulnerable, reflecting Jesus’ command to care for the least among us.

They are called to be champions of Social Justice confronting issues like poverty, inequality, and the abuse of human rights. They need to be the voice of the voiceless. Inspired

by biblical principles, they uphold policies and practices that uplift the marginalized and oppressed, challenging systems that perpetuate injustice.

They need to combat Religious Fundamentalism in areas where religious fundamentalism threatens peace and security. They strive to promote religious freedom and tolerance. They engage in interfaith dialogue and educational initiatives that highlight the values of love, respect, and coexistence, countering extremism with messages of hope and unity.

Understanding that poverty and the lack of opportunity often lie at the heart of many conflicts, the missionaries need to engage in efforts to promote sustainable development. They should invest in community projects that enhance education, healthcare, and economic opportunity; aim to empower individuals and communities in order to break the cycle of poverty and dependence.

Recognizing the deep wounds conflict and loss inflict, they need to provide spiritual and sympathetic support. Through prayer, counselling, and community-building activities, they offer hope and healing, helping individuals to find strength and solace in their faith.

Missionaries need to play a crucial role in education, offering both formal and informal learning opportunities. By equipping people with knowledge and skills, they can empower them to improve their lives and communities, fostering a sense of dignity and self-reliance. Above all, the role of a Christian missionary must be modelled on Christ, and show unconditional love and compassion. Through their actions and interactions, missionaries embody a living testament to the transformative power of love, inspiring others to pursue a path of faith, hope, and love. In fulfilling these roles, Christian missionaries contribute significantly to addressing the multifaceted challenges of a world in conflict, offering not just immediate relief but working towards long-term change and reconciliation. Their mission is a reflection of the Christian call “to be the light and salt of the world” (Mt 5:13-16), making tangible the hope and love at the heart of the Gospel.

Dr. John Paul Herman, SVD  
Director of SEDOS

## **MORNING PRAYER**

### **INTRODUCTION**

As we know, this seminar is about Hope.

The Providence has given us the opportunity to hold the seminar on the first day of spring.

Spring is like the realisation of the hope of the seed.

So, let's start our day with a prayer about the hope that inhabits us and the spring in which we are.

In this context of violence against Life, both human life and life in all its manifestations, we felt the effect of global warming. But it is spring, that's a fact that fills us with hope.

Let's start with a popular song. It is an invitation to open our spirit to new possibilities.

**Video COLOR ESPERANZA** (Diego Torres)

Sé qué hay en tus ojos con solo mirar / Que estás cansado de andar y de andar / Y caminar  
Girando siempre en un lugar

Sé que las ventanas se pueden abrir / Cambiar el aire depende de ti / Te ayudará  
Vale la pena una vez más

Saber que se puede / Querer que se pueda  
Quitarse los miedos / Sacarlos afuera

Pintarse la cara / Color esperanza  
Tentar al futuro / Con el corazón

Es mejor perderse que nunca embarcar / Mejor tentarse a dejar de intentar / Aunque ya ves  
Que no es tan fácil empezar

Sé que lo imposible se puede lograr / Que la tristeza algún día se irá / Y así será  
La vida cambia y cambiará

Sentirás / Que el alma vuela / Por cantar una vez más

Saber que se puede / Querer que se pueda /  
Quitarse los miedos / Sacarlos afuera

Pintarse la cara / Color esperanza / Tentar al futuro / Con el corazón

Vale más / Poder brillar / Que solo buscar / Ver el sol

Pintarse la cara / Color esperanza / Tentar al futuro / Con el corazón

Saber que se puede / Querer que se pueda

Let's welcome the **WORD OF GOD.**

In front of you there is a small card.

On the other side of the photo of flowers, there is a verse from a Book of the Bible, in 4 languages.

Please, feel free to open the microphone and share the text you received. You can read in the language you prefer.

(Time to read the texts and short silence)

### **FINAL PRAYER**

We end with a prayer "At the beginning of spring".

The prayer is in French, English and Spanish. We can pray together the text that will appear in bold on each slide, in one of the three languages.

\*\*\*\*\*

**Al comienzo de la primavera, vuelvo a ponerme en tus manos, Señor de la Vida. Regálame una nueva vitalidad en este tiempo.**

Renuévame el corazón,  
libérame del espíritu derrotista,  
de fracasos pasados y desilusiones.  
Dame un corazón fresco, capaz de amar mucho,  
de entregarme y de ofrecermelo.

Amplíame los horizontes,  
sácame de mis encierros,  
anímate a entregarme en todo  
por construir el Reino.  
**Háblame, Señor, de los tiempos que vendrán,  
de tus promesas,  
de lo que soñaste desde siempre  
y que me invitas a construir contigo.**

Quiero ser perfume tuyo, alegría y entusiasmo  
para mis hermanos y hermanas  
con quienes comparto la vida.

Semilla que se esparce,  
que brota y que da vida a los demás.  
En primavera todo renace,  
y yo también quiero renacer en Ti.

(Adaptado del poema de Milagros Rodón)

At the beginning of Spring, I place myself in  
your hands again, Lord of Life.  
Give me a new vitality in this time.

**Renew my heart,  
free me from the defeatist spirit  
from past failures and disappointments.  
Give me a fresh heart, capable of loving  
much,  
to give myself and to offer myself.**

Broaden my horizons,  
bring me out of my confinements,  
encourage me to give myself  
in everything to build the Kingdom.

Speak to me, Lord, of the times to come,  
of your promises,  
of what you have always dreamed of  
and that you invite me to build with You.

**I want to be your perfume,  
joy and enthusiasm  
for my brothers and sisters  
with whom I share my life.**

Seed that spreads,  
that sprouts and gives life to others.  
In Spring everything is reborn,  
and I also want to be reborn in You.

Au début du printemps, je me remets entre tes  
mains, Seigneur de la Vie.  
Donne-moi une nouvelle vitalité en ce temps.



Renouvelle mon cœur,  
Libère-moi de l'esprit défaitiste  
des échecs et des déceptions du passé.  
Donne-moi un cœur frais, capable d'aimer  
beaucoup, de me donner et de m'offrir.

**Élargis mes horizons,  
Sors-moi de mes enfermements,  
Encourage-moi à me donner  
En tout pour construire le Royaume.**

Parle-moi, Seigneur, des temps à venir,  
De tes promesses,  
De ce dont tu as toujours rêvé  
Et que tu m'invites à construire avec Toi.

Je veux être ton parfum,  
Joie et enthousiasme  
Pour mes frères et sœurs avec qui  
Je partage ma vie.

**Une semence qui se répand,  
Qui germe et donne la vie aux autres.  
Au printemps, tout renaît,  
Et je veux aussi renaître en Toi.**

Mary T Barron, OLA

## Welcome Address

### Esteemed Speakers and Participants,

It is my pleasure as president of SEDOS to extend a warm and heartfelt welcome to the SEDOS Spring Session 2024! It is an honour to gather here today at the UISG (Union of International Superiors General) in the beautiful city of Rome to share on our theme: “Mission of Hope: Mission Gifts from Each Continent.”

As we embark on this journey of exploration and inspiration, we recognize that hope, and especially Christian Hope, is the beacon that guides us through the complexities of our world. It is hope that fuels our commitment to mission, and it is hope that propels us to share our gifts with one another across continents.

Today, we come together as representatives from diverse backgrounds, cultures, and traditions. Each of us carries unique gifts—gifts of faith, compassion, knowledge, and service. These gifts, like precious treasures, have been entrusted to us by our communities, our congregations, and our continents.

Mission gifts from each continent—what a powerful concept! It reminds us that our mission is not confined to geographical boundaries. It transcends oceans, mountains, and deserts. It reaches into the hearts of people, binding us in a common purpose—to bring hope, healing, and transformation to a world in need.

Let us take a moment to reflect on the richness of these gifts:

From Africa: The rhythm of the African drum echoes resilience, community, and the spirit of Ubuntu — “I am because we are.” Our African brothers and sisters gift us with their unwavering faith and vibrant cultures.

From Asia: The delicate brushstrokes of Asian calligraphy tell stories of ancient wisdom, mindfulness, and interconnectedness. Asian spirituality invites us to seek harmony within ourselves and with all creation.

From Europe: The soaring cathedrals, the Gregorian chants, and the works of great theologians remind us of our shared Christian heritage. European theologians have gifted us with profound insights into our faith.

From the Americas: The passionate rhythms of Latin American music, the prophetic voices of liberation theology, and the commitment to social justice inspire us to be agents of change. Our American sisters and brothers challenge us to live the Gospel boldly.

From Oceania: The vastness of the Pacific Ocean mirrors the expansiveness of Oceania’s spirituality. Indigenous wisdom, ecological stewardship, and a deep connection to land and sea are their precious gifts.

As we engage in dialogue, prayer, and reflection during this session, let us recognize that our mission gifts are not meant to be hoarded but shared. Let us learn from one another, celebrate our diversity, and collaborate in hope.

In the morning session, our first distinguished speaker, Msgr. Graham Bell, will guide us further in understanding how these gifts intersect with the fundamental questions of evangelization in our world. Fr. Stan Lubungo will then contextualize this a little from the African context.

The afternoon session will be a wonderful mix of testimonies from four other geographical locations...

Once again, welcome to this sacred space of learning, sharing, and hope. May our time together be fruitful, and may our mission gifts continue to ripple across continents, bringing light to the darkest corners of our global family.

Thank you, and let us begin this Spring Session with hearts open to hope and hands ready to serve.



## Mission of Hope



From what I was asked to present, our wish during the seminar is to deepen our understanding of mission in the forthcoming

year of hope, in the light of the conflict situations of war, violence, religious fundamentalism, epidemics, calamities, hunger and poverty. As missionaries, women and men of faith, bearers of Christian hope how do we engage these situations, appears to me the question that is put forward to this seminar.

The Director of SEDOS asked me to talk on Theology of Hope from a more theoretical perspective. My understanding is that I am expected to present here a reflection on the second theological virtue of the Christian faith (I Cor 13:13). As a theological virtue hope is called to be the foundation of our missionary commitment. It is called to drive this commitment and to characterise it (CEC 1813). We therefore understand that as missionaries we are called to become messengers of hope.

The question that I asked myself and that organises my presentation can be expressed as follows: what are the essential features of Christian hope and given the subject of this seminar, what can be the responsible exercise of this hope in thought and action in the world today. My presentation is fundamentally divided in two parts. The first, which is the longest captures some features of Christian hope based on the Second encyclical letter of Benedict XVI, *Spe Salvi*. The second part reflects on the articulation between eschatology and mission.

### Hope, within the Christian Faith.

The Christian mystery of salvation is about God the Father sharing his grace with men and women of all times. This gracious self-communication of God began with the creation of the universe and human beings. It culminated

in Christ's resurrection from the dead and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The Church teaches that history is moving to its consummation, the *Parousia* or final coming of Christ that will bring through the glorified Christ, the ultimate self-gift of God to human beings and the transformation of the universe. To understand Christian hope, It is helpful to situate it in this global context of the Good news of the Christian Faith as it is expressed in the Creed. The Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed can essentially be divided in three parts: the first dealing with the question of God as such. The second being Christological – it examines questions related to Jesus Christ. The third part treats of the Spirit and the Church, it ends with the explicit formulation of what should be understood as the ultimate Christian hope: *and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come.*

### I. Characteristics of Christian hope

In November 2007, Pope Benedict XVI published the encyclical letter *Spe Salvi* in which he saw as a distinguishing mark of Christians, the fact that they have a future. Though this does not mean that Christians know the details that await them, the Pope observed that they know in general terms that their lives will not end in emptiness. For Benedict XVI “Only when the future is certain as a positive reality does it become possible to live the present as well” (SpS n°2). Therefore, hope is the virtue that sustains and gives meaning to the present in the sense that it opens us to the future. In this significant encyclical letter Benedict XVI outlined essential features of Christian Hope that are useful to reflection on, for us to grow in faith and in view of a renewed commitment to our missionary vocation in today's world.

From the onset, the Pope states that “*redemption is offered to us in the sense that we have been given hope, trustworthy hope, by virtue of which we can face our present. The present, even if it is arduous can be lived and accepted if it leads towards a goal great enough to justify the effort*

of the journey” (SpS. n°1). Christian hope is trustworthy because its object is so important for Christian believers that it justifies the efforts of the journey.

Let us note here with the Jesuit André Cnockeart, the combination in the same sentence of two words that belong to the semantic field of dynamic action<sup>1</sup>. This combination is not without significance. By talking of ‘facing the present’ and of ‘the efforts of the journey’, the pope is reminding us that Christian hope is not just about the glorious fulfilment of the end of times as we may think often without paying much attention. It has also to do with the present world (SpS. n°15), we will come back to this later because it seems to me to be especially the point that concerns this seminar mostly. It is a perspective of Christian hope that is not often talked about. It is something Benedict XVI comes back to several times in the encyclical letter. Meditating on how the Gospel transformed the early Christians, he recalls and insists that Christianity is not just “good news”, the communication of a hitherto unknown content. The Christian message is not only “informative” but “performative.” That means: The Gospel, and indeed Christian hope is not merely a communication of things that are known – it is one that makes things happen and is life changing” (n°2).

The third thing I would like to point out is that hope directly refers to the Christian faith. I link this to the mention of redemption, of salvation, which is the domain of faith. Christians are hopeful people and the Christian faith is a hope-filled faith such that it is difficult, if not impossible, to talk of faith in God or in Christ without linking it to hope. Without hope, faith is void. Consequently, hope is actually primordial for the faith. We can understand then, that as one of the theological virtues, it accounts for a significant part in the basis that animates and gives to the Christian identity and existence their specific character.<sup>2</sup> This can be understood from the Letter to the Hebrews. In chapter 11, verse 1, the author defines faith as the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things that are not seen (Hb11:1).

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<sup>1</sup> *L'Espérance chrétienne dans son vécu spirituel*, In *Revue Telema*, 4/07, pp.47-62.

<sup>2</sup> See Catechism of the Catholic Church n°1813.

Hope belongs to what we are profoundly as human beings. It relates to our vocation. As humans, we are hoping beings, we are hopeful or full of hope because it is in our nature to be so. It is something we are given from the moment we exist. It is understandable to think that without hope we lose any sense to life. Hope derives from our being created in the image of God from which we recognise that our existence is destined for communion with God. This can be substantiated by meditating, for instance, on the benevolent plan of God's love as revealed in the act of creation according to the letter to the Ephesians. Saint Paul reminds us that it was well before the foundations of the world that God the Father chose us in Christ, to be holy and blameless before him. He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, to the good pleasure of his will (cf. 1:3-5).

Taking up Saint Thomas Aquinas's interpretation of the meaning of faith given in the Letter to the Hebrews 11:1 as being the *substance* (assurance) of things hoped for, where faith is understood as a stable disposition of the spirit, through which eternal life takes root in us and reason is led to consent to what it does not see, Benedict XVI observes that “through faith... or as we may say in embryo there are already present in us the things that are hoped for: the whole, true life (SpS 7). This, in a sense allows us to some extent to think that though they are invisible, we already carry within us the things we hope for. It equally serves us as a proof that what we hope for really exists otherwise we would not hope for it. It takes faith to see what we do not see and hope to be sure that it can by God's grace be accomplished.

### **The content of Christian Hope**

Christian hope stems from the encounter with God. To explain in what hope consists, Benedict XVI quotes Saint Josephine Bakhita, the Soudanese religious who was once captured and sold to slave merchants as a child. After, coming to know about God through lessons of catechism, as her Creator and knowing about Jesus Christ who loved her, and who was now seated at the “Father's right hand”, she had “hope” writes the Pope (SpS n°3), she now knew that she was definitely loved and

whatever happened to her, she was awaited by this love. And so her life was good.”

There are a number of significant things involved here to take note of: first there is what we can call the unfolding consciousness of being in the project or in the plans of someone bigger than us, who is God, thanks to, and this is the second thing I want to note, the transmission of faith through catechism which we should understand as the knowledge of God. Thirdly this is followed by the feeling and conviction that someone surely loves us and that he is waiting for us. All this brings us to the understanding that our life has a purpose worth living for. That purpose is to meet in the future the God who loves us. This is the hope that sustains and gives Christians a sense to their existence. The example of the story of Bakhita illustrates what we already noted concerning Christian hope: The present, even if it is laborious can be lived and accepted if it leads towards a goal great enough to justify the effort of the journey.

## **II. The eschatological dimension of the Christian faith**

Christian faith is essentially a faith that brings hope. To come to know God – the true God means to receive hope as Pope Benedict XVI affirms (SpS n°3). This hope is nourished by the general expectation of the fulfilment of God’s promises that is rooted in the lived experience of the encounter with God. The Judeo-Christian tradition is marked by an experience of the God of the promise. In the religious context of ancient Judaism in particular, the promise was deliberately used for the expectation from God which was characteristic of Israel, for their persevering faithfulness to God on the basis of the certainty of the covenant in a world which contradicts God (SpS n°9). The promise can be traced from the stories of the Patriarchs through Moses to the Prophets. In the New Testament the first writings of Paul show how the first communities lived with a vivid hope of the imminent coming of Jesus. ‘The Day of the Lord’ would ‘come like a thief in the night’ (I Thess 5:2). Nevertheless it would be soon (I Thess: 4:13-5:3).

Ultimately the perspective of Christian hope is eternal life. It is the sharing in God’s life that is given to us through Jesus Christ. Christian hope

is therefore evidently centred on Christ. He is the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end’ (Rev. 22:13) he is the origin of all things in the sense that could be understood from Jn. 1:13, he is also the ‘*Eschatos*’, the future and final one. Then as we read from Saint Paul’s letter to the Corinthians, the Christian hope will be fulfilled when “all will be made alive in Christ. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits and then, at his coming. He will come at the end when he will hand over the kingdom to God the Father, after he has destroyed every ruler and every authority and power. For he must reign until he put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death” (I Cor. 15: 22-26).

We can continue from here and go on to develop the many aspects of eschatology such as announced in the passage from the First Letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians. These would include for instance reflecting on what sense could be given to the idea of the resurrection of the dead, how it could be represented taking into account the dimensions of corporeity of the human being, but also the notion of time and many others. But these theoretical considerations, though useful to some extent for our intelligence of the faith, would not in my opinion directly connect with the existential situations of war, of violence of all types, of religious fundamentalism, epidemics, calamities, hunger and poverty that we see around and that we are challenged to face and confront in the name of faith and Christian hope. I am also convinced that our enumeration of those situations at this seminar is not just in view of encouraging with hope to endurance all those people touched by them. Our profound hope is to see these situations alleviated from life. It is the reason why I would like in this second part of my presentation to reflect on the eschatological hope as determination to commitment.

### **Eschatological hope a determination to commitment**

I would like to come back now to the observation made by Benedict XVI concerning the Christian message not being only “informative” but “performative.” Christian hope is not merely a communication of things

that are known – it is one that makes things happen and is life changing” (n°2).

Eschatology or the theology of Christian hope is of central significance in the Gospel message and it was in the life of the first Christians who had seen their lives transformed by the experience of the resurrection. They oriented their existence in reference to the imminent return of the risen Jesus.

Introducing his book *Theology of Hope*, Jürgen Moltmann remarks that eschatology was long called the ‘doctrine of the last things’ or the ‘doctrine of the end’. He goes on to say that “These end events were to break into the world from somewhere beyond history, and to put an end to the history in which all things here live and move. He then rightly observes that the relegation of these events to the ‘last day’ robbed them of their directive, uplifting and critical significance for all the days which are spent here, this side of the end in history”<sup>3</sup>

eschatology which has obscured the idea of early Christian eschatology and that does not seem to motivate us.

For Moltmann eschatology must become the medium and the starting point for all theological thinking as well as the paradigm for understanding and orienting Christian existence. Failure to do so will always create the condition that makes possible the adaptation of Christianity to its environment, resulting in the surrender of faith<sup>4</sup> that finally becomes complacent to the (an-evangelical) cultures of the places where it goes – the salt ceases to be salt or loses its taste – when the Church loses or distances itself from the eschatological message of Jesus, of the faith or hope in the promised things, it simply does not commit itself to the transformation of the world nor to evangelisation. It is no longer missionary. For our purposes, mission is engaging in evangelisation by drinking from the well of



Indeed, we may ask whether for many among us, the eschatological message of Jesus isn't taken to refer to somewhere beyond our 'history', a kind of supra-worldly reality that stands in exclusive contrast to this world. We represent ourselves the Kingdom of God in Jesus as something that will replace our own material world. We are accustomed to think of it as the moment that will bring all 'ordinary history' to a close. We have in this way, inherited a rather transcendentalist view of

eschatological hope! For Moltmann, eschatological hope is “powered with disquieting and critical power” and this is where

<sup>3</sup> See, Jürgen Moltmann, *op.cit.* p.15.

<sup>4</sup> Jürgen Moltmann, *op.cit.* discusses in pp. 37-45 the theological method that borrow a lot from categories of the Greek mind and advocates a theological construction based on the Word of God. He holds for instance that: “just as in the theological thought the blending of Christianity with the Greek mind made it no longer clear which God was really being spoken of, so Christianity in its social form took over the heritage of the ancient state religion. It installed itself as the crown society and its saving centre and lost the disquieting, critical power of its eschatological hope”.

we are called to apply concretely the theme of eschatological hope to the mission of the Church in order to remain faithful to the context of the world situation described that is put before us for this seminar.

Benedict XVI reminds us to consider the Christ event; the Incarnation, the Passion and Resurrection in the perspective of the accomplishment and therefore eschatological. Reflecting on God's promise in the New Testament where the expectation of God takes a new significance he puts forward the view that "in Christ God has revealed himself, he has already communicated to us the substance of things to come, and therefore the expectation of God acquires a new certainty. It is the expectation of things to come, from the perspective of a present that is already given. It is a looking forward in Christ's present, with Christ who is present, to the perfecting of his

with resignation and with escapism. In this hope, the soul does not soar above our vale of tears to some imagined heavenly bliss, nor does it sever itself from the earth (...) It sees in the resurrection not the eternity of heaven, but the future of the very humanity for which he died".<sup>5</sup> Between Jesus' resurrection from the dead and the end as described by Saint Paul in I Cor. 15: 20-28 lies a provisional period where the risen Christ is overcoming hostile forces and will abolish death, 'the last enemy'. The Holy Spirit is at work in and for humanity and the created universe while everyone and everything waits to be freed for the glory to come, as we read in the Letter to the Romans (8:18-25). That provisional period is the historical present governed by memory and hope. It is the time of the Church, our time, the time of mission.

For Moltmann, "All this must inevitably mean that the man who thus hopes will never be able



body, to his definitive coming" (SpS. 9). What that means for our lives and for the mission is a perspective of life as manifested in Jesus, the new Adam. The resurrection of Jesus in this sense did inaugurate newness in the life of humanity and of the missionary disciples of Jesus that we are.

The believing hope, in as far as the resurrection is concerned has communicated to us, the substance of things to come and the expectation of victory over death acquires a new certainty. Then we can understand mission from the perspective of the resurrection of Christ in the way Moltmann understands: "To believe means to cross in hope and anticipation the bounds that have been penetrated by the raising of the crucified. If we bear that in mind, then this faith can have nothing to do with fleeing the world,

to reconcile himself with the laws and constraints of the earth, neither with the inevitability of death (and all that it represents) nor with the evil that constantly bears further evil. The raising of Jesus is not merely a consolation to him in a life that is full of distress and doomed to die but it is also a contradiction of suffering and death, of humiliation and offence and of the wickedness of evil".<sup>6</sup>

Certain men and women, most of whom are our founders discovered Christ and entered in communion with him, they were able to welcome the power that God reveals to us. They allowed it to enter into play and were exceptionally able to become bearers of the hope capable of transforming the world.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* p.20-21.

<sup>6</sup> *Idem.*

*Msgr. Graham Bell*

## **Jubilee 2025 - Pilgrimage of Hope**



I am here to talk to you today about the Jubilee 2025, which I suppose you all know will be the whole year of 2025. This is a subject which is very dear to my heart as Fr.

Stanislaus Lazar representing me knows. I began working for the Holy See in the Office which prepared the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000. And that was a very, very interesting experience; very, very interesting because, at the end of the day, after all the very, very complicated preparations, which the Holy See and the Italian Government undertook, and the preoccupation felt, the success of the Jubilee of 2000, in particular of World Youth Day, and not just World Youth Day, really depended on God's holy people. The people who either came to Rome or made the Jubilee a success in their own local Churches. Obviously not everyone was able to come to Rome for the Jubilee, but the Jubilee had its origins in Rome, when Pope Boniface VIII established the first Jubilee in the Year 1300, a long, long time ago. Since the time of Pope Boniface VIII, I believe there have been about 26 Ordinary Jubilees. At the beginning the jubilee was held every 100 years, but very quickly we came to realize that if the 100 years rule remained very, very few people would be able to see a Jubilee in their lifetime. So, it was changed very, very quickly to every 25 years. So that every generation would be able to celebrate a Jubilee Year.

### **And what was the specificity of the Jubilee?**

I think it's very interesting to know that the word '*Indulgence*' and the word '*Mercy*' at that time were almost synonyms. And that from the beginning it was based on the Jubilee Indulgence. And the Jubilee Indulgence was a remission/forgiveness of sins, as Pope Boniface

VIII stated. The people of Roman wanted the Jubilee and ever since then, the Jubilee Year has been a fact. It has become a part of the Institutional Church. It's the people who really make it a success. As I said at the beginning, the jubilee came to be a synonym of a whole year. Now obviously, people wanted to develop the spiritual part of the jubilee, and so, the people tried to do this by going back to see if there were any records in Sacred Scripture, especially in the Old Testament. And of course, people immediately found a jubilee regulation in Leviticus Chapter 25:8-13, and I quote, "You shall count seven weeks of years, seven times seven years, so that the time of the seven weeks of years shall be to you forty-nine years. Then you shall sound abroad the loud trumpet on the tenth day of the seventh month; on the day of atonement; you shall send abroad the trumpet throughout all your land. And you shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants; It shall be a jubilee for you, when each of you shall return to his property, and each of you shall return to his family. You shall keep the fiftieth year as a jubilee; In it you shall neither sow, nor reap what grows of itself, nor gather the grapes from the undressed vines. For it is a jubilee; it shall be holy to you; you shall eat what it yields out of the field. In this year of jubilee each of you shall return to his property".

Now, the thing about the biblical Jubilee, as described in the Book of Leviticus, is that it was every 49 years and then a whole year. As far as we know from the documentation we have outside the Bible, it never really took place. This was never really put into practice. But what we know is that the way of jubilee was ordinary, an alternative way, broadcast by blowing a horn. This ram's horn trumpet was called *yobel*. And through the Greek version, of the Old Testament this came into the Latin language as *Jubila-eum*: jubilee. This is a synonym as I have said, of a whole year, now

whole years have been particularly important in the recent history of the churches in the Middle Ages. And before I go on, I'd like to remind you not just of the Great Jubilee Year 2000, in which many of you may have participated, at the time of John Paul II. Earlier there was the jubilee of 1975 with Pope Paul VI, as well as the Jubilee of 1950 celebrated by Pope Pious XII.

The Jubilee of 1950, for example, is very important, because of the Proclamation of the Dogma of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, only five years after the end of the Second World War. As you know, Europe had been devastated by the Second World War and people came to Rome, people from enemy countries who had fought each other. And the Jubilee of 1950 became extraordinary for Catholics and for reconciliation. Typically, the Church has always been carried forward by reconciliation. Reconciliation with God, through the forgiveness of our sins, but also reconciliation among ourselves because we cannot be reconciled to God, if we are not reconciled with our brothers and sisters. The Jubilee 2025 is an Ordinary Jubilee which will begin on Christmas Eve of this year. The Holy Father began thinking about it, I suppose in 2021. Then in February 2022 he wrote a Letter, you can find on the Vatican website, which has just published an article in *L'Osservatore Romano*. This Letter is addressed to Archbishop Rino Fisichella, the Pope's Prefect, of the Dicastery for the Evangelization of Peoples and Pope Francis literally talks about his idea for the jubilee. I can say right from the start that the Holy Father established a preparatory, a particular, year so that the Council's work should be known and heard about. The first day of the year 2023, he decided that the Church should dedicate that year to the study of the Documents of the Second Vatican Council.

### Why?

Because the Holy Father said the Second Vatican Council characterized, more than anything else, the life of the Church, and the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century; the history of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. But young people don't know very much about the Second Vatican Council. So, he wanted a year in which people may be encouraged to focus on the four major

Constitutions of the Council: The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, The Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum*, and The Pastoral Constitution of the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*. Our Office will prepare small booklets. So, these records are the four Constitutions. I think, obviously, there are Italian and Spanish, French and English versions being produced in India, and all that is available and I think you can find them on our website; beside other relevant material available. Our website is in Latin: [www.jubilaem.va](http://www.jubilaem.va), with all the information about the jubilee.

As the last year was supposed to be dedicated to the study of the Second Vatican Council Documents, the Holy Father wanted the year 2024 to be a Year of Prayer in preparation for the Jubilee. We have prepared a small series of books: a very, very small book, called in Italian, *Appunti Sulla Preghiera*, and I think these will be more widely published. For example, there is a Catholic Society in London; Our Sunday Visitor in the United States, and there are translations in all languages. A lot of these texts are designed to improve the life of prayer of the Christian faithful. The Italian version, thanks to Catholic efficiency, is by far the most popular; almost all of them were sold out as soon as they appeared, as soon as they were printed. I think that in the preparatory year is what Pope Francis wants to tell us about prayer, because I think in every endeavour, if a prayer does not touch the heart of people, then it may have little effect.

So, our Office which has also been the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization, also worked on the Year of Faith, and also on the *Jubilee of Mercy*. So, now I am working on the Jubilee of the Year 2025. The first thing we did was we set up a competition for the official Hymn, and we set up a competition to find a logo and we asked the Holy Father what he would like as a motto for the jubilee. And he immediately came up with a concise Latin guideline *Peregrinantes in spem*, which has been translated in English, as *Pilgrims of Hope*.

Now, the original Latin, translated into English as well as the other languages, is very particular, is particular for two reasons. First,

*Peregrinantes* is a verb, a verb followed by a participle which means on pilgrimage in English. We can speak of going on a pilgrimage, but we don't have to go on pilgrimage. But if we did, it would be on a *Pilgrimage into Hope*. In English as Pilgrims of Hope. So, we are journeying to hope.

And this idea is most likely at the basis of the celebration of the Jubilee: we are journeying to hope. Now, this morning you heard the homily before I came; you heard the theological presentation of hope. But I think we all know that it's very difficult to speak about *hope*.

It's one of the theological virtues, but we're not comfortable with it. I know for sure that to preach on hope is not like Faith or Charity. We all know what faith is. Faith is a man and a woman's response to God's revelation. And Charity, is above all because we have a very concrete example of Charity which is the Cross of Christ. So, we all know and can say something about Faith, and something about Charity. It is more difficult to speak about Hope because there is so little of it in the Church today. It is really not talked about and I think hope in many ways, like love, can be a very, very difficult thing to define, but then when it is absent, we know what we are talking about. And when we see the absence of love, and it often manifests itself as suffering and aches and pains we need to articulate it, using words we know instinctively in our hearts. We know what love and its absence mean which I think is also true of hope.

So many people today in our world have lost hope, that has to do for so many reasons with a fallen human nature. And this fallen human nature is reflected in the way we are governed, in the way families have developed, in the way relationships are developed and the way the economic and political systems are developed. And very often we have come up against agencies and people who have completely lost hope. We also see this in actions, which are apparent when it no longer characterizes peoples' existence. Look, for example, at the tremendous use of drugs; this problem really affects the whole world. For example, in the United States, a country I visited, I have often been taken aback by what is turning into a crisis.

People are addicted to painkillers; in my own country, I am taken aback by the number of people who find solace in alcohol, and all these facts point to a tremendous deficit of hope in our world. And of course, the hope of Christians is in Jesus Christ. But it's not just Christians who hope. St. Augustine, a theological genius, tells us that everybody loves charity. Everybody believes in faith and everybody hopes; the difference lies in what constitutes the object of our faith, hope and charity. And obviously for Christians Christ is our Hope. Christ is our Hope because he opens the gates of Eternal Life. And hope in the Christian Tradition always referred to Eternal Life. But that doesn't mean that we can forget our earthly existence and forget about everyday life because we're destined for eternal life. That does not mean that at all. Hope has to characterize not just by faith in eternal life, but also, you know, how we can get there? Also, the way we live here on earth? Life should be modelled on eternal life, but very rarely on terminology.

Talking about hope there's a French thinker called Shal Biggie. Shal Biggie you know, says that hope is like a little sister in the middle of her two big sisters. The big sisters are Faith and Charity and the little sister holds her two sisters by the hand, but she is really the most important one. I think if we reflect on the relationship between hope on the one hand, and faith and charity on the other, I think there is a tremendous amount to what Biggie says. So, this Jubilee, brothers and sisters, is to be based on Hope.

So as soon as we have the Hymn for the Jubilee we can listen to it on our website and it is translated into four languages. Then, as soon as we got the motto we all designed the logo and the logo you can find on the website. Basically, it is a Cross with an anchor underneath, and people are going towards the Cross, signifying the earthly pilgrimage towards Christ, while he comes towards us.

I think it is useful to remember that in the early Church, in the absence of churches, it was very often just a Cross, just to think of a Cross, because most of the early churches abroad couldn't be decorated with mosaics and all the things that came later. But that Cross stood outside the church with all it signified. Then the Liturgy was being celebrated in the presence of



the Coming of Christ and also a manifestation of the coming of Christ. I think that's very, very important considering our journey towards Christ as Pilgrims of Hope, because our life is based on Christian life and it is very much of a pilgrimage. We are going towards Christ as he moves towards us in human history.

So, this is what the Lord wants to signify by the jubilee for religious people. You are free to use the logo in your religious works, and your pastoral works, but you will need to contact our Office and we will give you a graphic file you can use. Any commercial use of our logo will be questioned.

And so, once we had got that on the way, we began working on the jubilee to be celebrated both in Rome and in the local Churches. The next jubilee event, I think is on 9 May, the solemnity of the Ascension which is essential. It is traditionally held before the Jubilee Year opens: and it will be proclaimed in front of the Holy Door of St. Peter's, when the people bow: the event is called the proclamation of the Bull of Induction of the Jubilee. We will have more precise information on the actual celebration of the Jubilee both in Rome and in the Local Churches.

Obviously, we began organizing the jubilee both at the level of Rome and the level of the universal churches. On the Rome level, in strict contact with the Italian Government, with the Lazio Region, in which the City of Rome is situated, we were talking about the preparation of the people: also, some information that has to be respected, because all this has to be finalized. We're talking about the equipment of people: Maybe some 32 million people will come to Rome for the Jubilee. so, you can imagine the complexity. So, areas have to be reserved for the celebrations because we have a very limited time and all we can do is trust. And many more people are expected than those who came for the Year 2000. We are more conscious of the safety requirements. In St. Peter's Square I think, there will be about forty-five thousand people. The Basilica can contain from five to seven thousand people.

So, the Jubilee will need public spaces, public areas, especially for the so-called Technical World Youth Day. The Jubilee of Youth will be very, very particular indeed. We are working

with the Italian Government, to find a suitable area for this Day.

The jubilee will be a very, very big event in Rome, but it's not just going to be a bigger thing in Rome, it will also be celebrated in all the Dioceses. And, you know, our Office, meeting today on the Youth Day. The opening of the Jubilee in all the churches, after the one on 24 December, will be some days later in the diocese. Now about the Jubilee Indulgences; obviously the poorer people will not be able to come, but it will be a little different in the dioceses.

### **What is the Scope of the Jubilee?**

I think Christians are very conscious of the universal call to holiness. I think that we are poorly informed about religious ideas, although we are conscious that we're all called to be holy, and I think the Jubilee is the manifestation of this. I'll put it like this. Maybe you are familiar with the political term in the New Testament, *Kairos*, the Greek language's term to define time. *Kairos* is the passing of minutes, hours, days, weeks, months. Now *Kairos* is a completely different thing. *Kairos* is time, but from a qualitative point of view. I think this is one of the most beautiful texts in the New Testament. It is the so-called stumbling block to the Hebrews, and there we see the essence of *Kairos*, the essence of this time, which is dear to God. You know that in many ways and in different ways, and in times past, God spoke to us through the prophets. In these days, these days are our days, he has spoken to us through the Person of his Beloved Son. Now you can say on the basis of this, that all the time which runs between the incarnation and the Second Coming of Christ at the end of a time is *Kairos*. It's about *Kairos*, it causes time, it causes time for mankind. The time we are to decide. In this time which we have called Christ's time, or to reject them, because it's not that way, not that way so you can see that all of Christian life is a *Kairos*, but we are human beings, and our nature is rhythmic. We like rhythms, and we respond to rhythms. We have a very acute sense of it passing, for example of the seasons. The seasons are not the same. We read its passage from a winter to spring, and from spring to summer. Our life is very much a succession of peaks and droughts, ups and downs. And we are very well used to this. So, it is with the life of

the Church: not every Sunday is Ordinary Time; not every Sunday is Easter Sunday.

We like rhythm and this also touches the religious aspect of our life and so it is with Jubilee. Every 25 years we have a whole year, not because we are holy every 25 years, but because we delight in essential things, and this is the year in which we want to make a special effort and see we are called to grow in holiness and called to help others to grow in holiness as religious and priests. Also, religious and also women religious have a role to play, which I consider to be unique; uniting the role of women religious in evangelization. A lot of people are talking about the evangelization which is similar to *propaganda fide*, and I am not talking about being just for show, as some people would say the new evangelization is, in a country like Italy, where the place of faith is ancient. But the churches are the same obviously. The religious have a tremendous role to play, because they can touch the heart of people more than priests or maybe male religious people are doing. And I think this is a resource, which really has to be brought into the open and the warmth of the religious. As Msgr. Rino Fisichella, prefect for 12 years and second to none in evangelization, says they will be able to emerge during the Jubilee Year, because people are willing to listen to women religious, and the way they are willing to engage is similar. Maybe it's got to do with a maternal sense, I don't know. But it's a fact of life. When I am in a parish, as a parish priest, most these very, very well indeed.

So, the jubilee is about *Kairos*. It's about getting back to the basics, it's about dusting down. It's about becoming better sons and daughters of both the Churches under the Blessed Lord. And I believe it's an occasion in which we can renew the Church, the face of the Church, ourselves. And we mustn't forget that the beauty of the Church, and the Church is a very, very beautiful institution because she is an emanation of the Blessed Trinity. The beauty of the Church depends a lot on us, because sinful life you know, and we keep on sinning, and if we do not seek forgiveness, means destruction. We ran down the face of the Church earlier, and we know all of us engaged pretty often in criticizing the Pope, the Bishops, our brothers and sisters, religious. We all have to remember

that we always have a solution in our own hands, because better times begin with us. Better times begin with our own personal conversion. And I think the jubilee is all about this and we need to do a lot more. It's a lot about this, about forgiveness, God's forgiveness to family and all our lives.

So, we can continue to reconcile with God and be reconciled to each other. And we know, we all know, that very often in religious communities, both male and female dynamics appear and the dynamics of unforgiveness appear. People are not capable of forgiving and what's worse very often we engage in forms of behaviour which prevent another person's return, which prevents them from being forgiven. And this concerns all of us. I think the Jubilee of 2025 is an occasion in which we are all called to briefly, because doing it for too long is not positive, and profoundly examine our conscience. Briefly and profoundly, when profound, less critical. There's no point in engaging in the examination of conscience in last month, that doesn't get you anywhere, briefly and profoundly. And I'll just conclude with saying something else.

We are very, very busy organizing, trying to organize the City of Rome, and trying to reserve the related necessities for the Universal Church, which involve the Jubilee of 2025. But the jubilee is beginning. It's a beginning because 2033 we will celebrate the two thousandth Anniversary of the Redemption. Pope Pius XI in 1933 convened a special Holy Year, an Extraordinary Holy Year for the 1900's Anniversary of the Redemption. It's very difficult to think, inconceivable almost, that the Pope in 2033, will do something similar, because it is 2000 years. It will be 2000 years which mark the precise date for it is coincidental that He died in 33.

Also, before the world, we are going to see what this means, what these 2000 years have been for mankind and for us, and what they mean for the future of mankind? We are going to have to represent Christ to ourselves and to the world. Now, you're here because you are occupying managerial positions in Religious Orders. The Africans are thinking about this, because it, too, is an important occasion to do this. And we have from 2025 to 2032 to think about this,

about what we are going to do. Because for the Religious Orders it is going to be another extremely important occasion. Not just for us as Christians, but also for humanity. So, it would be wonderful, if the plans which you have for your Order. Could in a certain way be guided by this: be guided by the consciousness of this. Do you know, what do you want to do for the Lord in 2033? So, we have to think certainly by 2025. But we have to look beyond this very, very important celebration, which is on the horizon. Can I just say something about this as I said earlier? The Jubilee, obviously, it's a Catholic thing, it's a very catholic concept.

As far as I know, and I come from the world of Protestantism. Protestantism doesn't really have something equivalent to the Orthodox, but that does not mean that other Christians and people who do not believe at all, exclude the Jubilee, because the Jubilee has always been a religious event. It's also a cultural event. And we are organizing events for 2025.

Also, this year for the second part of this year, there will be cultural events, not just for believers, but also for people of other faiths or no faith at all. Last year in the month of October, we had an offer to do some work. And so, we were lucky enough to be able to hold a conference in Spain where there were three paintings by El Greco with a very, very strong Christological reference. We have been brought three paintings by El Greco from Spain, and we

situated them in the visual part of the Church of Sant' Agnese in Agone in Piazza Navona.

We were astounded at the result of this special exhibition, with free entry, don't have to pay. And in the space of a month 300,000 people visited the church, and their testimonies are just incredible; particularly about the painting by El Greco.

The face of Christ carrying the Cross, and the face of Christ is incredible. But also, the Cross is incredible because El Greco, in that painting wanted to signify, that to Christ the Cross was light, it was something he wanted to carry. And the testimony we have shown that believers and non-believers alike were just completely taken aback. by what El Greco depicted. We are going to do more things of this kind during the Jubilee. And there also becomes of this kind. So, if you have a shortage in Rome, or elsewhere, please don't forget this cultural dimension. Because culture is a wonderful creation. It obviously allows us how to enter into contact with people. Both to share our ways, or not share our ways, or there's no way. Culture is very, very important for us. And the dimension of the Jubilee is among the most important.

Thank you for your attention. If you want to ask me any questions about the jubilee or anything else, please feel free.



## **Missions amid Natural Calamities**

**Good afternoon, Dear Brothers and Sisters,**

I am privileged to share stories from the Asian context that hopefully bring hope and strengthen our faith as religious missionaries. We work in areas where frequent natural disasters have become almost a daily occurrence. When Fr. John Paul Hermann, SVD, the Director of SEDOS, asked me to share stories, I felt



overwhelmed considering the varied realities of the 48 Asian countries with their blessings and challenges.

While on the

Congregational Leadership Team, I visited Sisters living in disaster-prone countries such as Japan, the Philippines, and Indonesia and heard their heart-touching stories.

I want to share with you the experience of Sr. Ursula Bura Bukan from Flores, Indonesia, and Sr. Leoncia Pregunta from Cebu, Philippines. They both faced natural disasters and were involved in helping the affected people. They understood well how these realities influenced their faith and life as missionaries.

The Philippines and Indonesia are two archipelagos located in the restless seas, and they are both familiar with the devastation caused by typhoons and earthquakes. The Philippines experiences around 20 typhoons yearly, making it a typhoon-prone country. On the other hand, Indonesia is home to approximately 400 volcanoes, with around 127 active - a third of all the world's active volcanoes. As a result, Indonesia is one of the most geologically active regions globally.

An eruption occurred recently in Lewotobi in Flores, Indonesia, forcing people to leave their places, houses, rice paddies fields, other cash crops, and livestock, and helplessly witnessed them gradually being engulfed by hot lava.

During this eruption of Lewotobi, Sr. Ursula reported that various groups in society, including the government and NGOs, set up camps to accommodate victims and facilitate aid distribution. The SSpS sisters collaborate primarily with the Society of the Divine Word (SVD) in such disaster situations because of our shared spirituality and charism. We must establish a sense of connection and belonging with each other while helping the victims. This togetherness strengthens, relieves, uplifts our hearts and fosters a spirit of bond needed to continue the services. Similarly, we work with other like-minded lay groups. Together, we search for those primarily affected by disasters and those who cannot be reached by vehicles due to damaged roads. We often walk for hours, braving the sun, rain, and wind, and sometimes even the fear of being caught in a disaster. The sense of togetherness, belonging and social responsibility grows in us as we uplift those in need.

**In the aftermath of the Eruption, generosity flows.**

In the face of our inconvenience and limited funds, such as during Typhoon Odette in Cebu and the Lewotobi eruption in January 2024, people showed generosity and care towards their suffering neighbours. They didn't just feel pity and pray for the victims but took meaningful action by providing financial and in-kind donations.

Sr. Leoncia Pregunta, SSpS, who experienced the strongest typhoon, witnessed the immediate contributions of various groups of people and colleagues from Cebu and Manila. Similarly, Sr. Ursula received aid from generous people who could not reach the victims entrusted the sisters to distribute the donations to the sufferers. The

Sisters and volunteers directly gave the aid to the victims.

The solidarity and humanity of the people both in the Philippines and Indonesia are high. The sisters were not alone in their struggles but were joined and assisted by many who generously shared their time, energy, and goods with their fellow brothers and sisters in times of difficulty.

### **Being first, then doing**

Both Sisters said their first call is to "be" before "do". Our Missionary presence resonates with love, solidarity, and compassion.

In times of natural calamities, our hearts beat for those who suffer. We stand in solidarity with our brothers and sisters, feeling their pain as if it were our own. Our empathy binds us together, transcending boundaries of distance and difference.

In these moments of crisis, our mission takes on a sacred urgency. We are called to offer aid and assistance and to be a source of comfort, hope, and strength. Our presence serves as a beacon of light amidst the darkness of despair.

We walk alongside those who have lost their homes, loved ones, and livelihoods. We offer material support, the solace of companionship, and the assurance of God's unwavering love. We listen to their stories, share their grief, and stand by their side.

### **Experience of God's presence**

Sr. Ursula Bura, SSpS, experienced that God was with her and her group, guiding them and giving them the strength to persevere. They were convinced God was there with those scared, traumatized, and alone in the darkness. Electricity and telecommunications facilities were down for almost a month.

Amidst the chaos and despair, Sr. Ursula felt a profound sense of God's presence. It wasn't in the raging lava or the smoky skies but rather in the resilience and strength of the survivors. As she and the sisters worked alongside local relief efforts, providing aid and comfort to those affected, they witnessed countless acts of courage and kindness.

In the eyes of the victims, Sr. Ursula saw the reflection of God's grace. Despite losing their homes, livelihoods, and sometimes even loved ones, they clung to hope and faith. The warm welcome of the disaster victims touched Sr.

Ursula. In their sharing, they expressed having been comforted and strengthened by the presence of Sr. Ursula and her group. They said, "When we saw the missionaries arrive in our village, we felt like God was visiting us." The Sisters saw inner joy radiating from the faces of the victims. They were still able to laugh and make fun of their limited situations. The happiness they felt was not because they were given goods or money but because of their experience of feeling equal as human beings, all loved by God, both in good and harmful situations.

In 2009, I, myself was at the eruption of another volcano called Rokatenda in Palue, Flores. I assisted the victims of this natural disaster and was amazed by the resilience of the human spirit and the power of faith that helped them through the darkest times. The selfless acts of service and the outpouring of compassion demonstrated by those around me made me feel God's presence more profoundly than ever. These remarkable individuals taught me the importance of faith, hope, and love in difficult times. As I continue to serve on my mission, I always remember these lessons and am reminded that God's presence is not limited to the walls of a church but is present in the hearts of those who suffer and those who serve.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

As we continue our mission of bringing hope and assistance to those affected by calamities, let us do so with hearts full of faith. Let us be instruments of God's love and mercy, offering solace to the suffering and bringing light to the world's darkest corners.

May our gathering today serve as a source of encouragement and renewal for all of us as we recommit ourselves to the service of others and the proclamation of the Gospel message. May our mission always reflect the heart of Christ, who came not to be served but to serve and who calls us to do likewise with humility, generosity, and boundless love.

Márcio Flávio Martins, CICM

## Hope from a Latin American Perspective



*“Mission of Hope: Gifts from Each Continent Today.”*

I am asked to share my reflection on hope from a Latin American perspective. I suppose this has to be done in the context of the seminar's main theme,

indigenous peoples and their cultures. Not so long ago, our countries achieved independence and the abolition of slavery. To a certain extent, the autochthones achieved their autonomy and freedom. Remembering my history lessons, my teachers differed on the Catholic Church's attitude towards the colonizers and the autochthones. While some said that the Catholic Church was prophetic and favored the locals, others inferred that the Catholic Church was complicit with the colonizers and contributed to the manipulation and exploitation of the local people. This is a subject that deserves further debate and research.

### **Situating my perspective**

I come from Itabira, Minas Gerais, southeast of Brazil. A city that has existed since 1720. As the name indicates, Minas Gerais (general mines) attracted the Portuguese colonizers because of their gold and iron minerals. The State of Minas Gerais is known for its traditional Catholicism inherited from the Portuguese. There, you find century-old churches resulting from a historical period known as the Brazilian Baroque, which emerged in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. A great stress on popular devotion, art, sacraments, and an extremely hierarchical and triumphant Church marked Catholicism in Minas Gerais for many decades. The Church in Minas Gerais resembles many parts of Brazil, Latin America, and Caribbean countries. From this perspective, I can affirm that the Portuguese and the Spanish missionaries had similar approaches to “implementing” the Christian Catholic faith in the region.

### **Colonization and Evangelization in Latin America and the Caribbean**

The colonizers came to explore our natural resources and brought along the Franciscans, the Dominicans, and the Jesuits to evangelize and educate the locals. Evangelization was overshadowed by the exploitation of natural resources, slavery, and the extinction of many

Many decades have passed since Latin American and Caribbean countries conquered independence, but they still haven't fully overcome the evils of social inequality, poverty, violence, and injustice. The extinction of indigenous peoples in many parts of the continent is still going on. The devastation of our forests and mountains continues. The international market controls our economy and enslaves our people. The sufferings of the Latin American and Caribbean people remain in a different time and context. Today, there is no more talk about maritime expansion led by Portugal and Spain, but we find ourselves at the mercy of the international financial market and the International Monetary Fund. Unemployment, homelessness, joblessness, and extreme social inequality show that our continent still has a lot to improve in terms of human and social development.

### **Vatican II and the Latin America and Caribbean Church**

At the level of the Roman Catholic Church, a significant paradigm shift occurred in Latin America and the Caribbean after Vatican II. It is common knowledge that this Council was an event of profound renewal (*aggiornamento*) for the Universal Church, thus motivating all the episcopal conferences in the world to look for

appropriate ways to respond seriously to this spirit of renewal. However, one of the fundamental intuitions brought about by the Council was the desire to build a “poor Church” at the service of the “poor.” Pope John XXIII expressed this intuition when he convened the Council. This was later taken up and developed during the Second General Conference of the Latin American Bishops in Medellín, Colombia, in 1968 and in the conferences that followed it.

For Saint John XXIII, “the Church presents herself as she is, and wants to be, the Church of all, particularly the Church of the poor.”<sup>1</sup> The expression “particularly the Church of the poor” is undoubtedly one of the Pope’s most important statements that paved the way for the emergence of the Liberation Theology developed in Latin America, whose central theme was, according to Gustavo Gutierrez, the “*irruption of the poor*.”<sup>2</sup> The poor in the world have become the Church’s most vehement concern.

The pontificate of Saint John XXIII showed considerable interest in many countries’ ecclesial and social realities. Bishops from poor countries began to be heard from the moment the Council saw the need to seek prophetic dialogue and solidarity, recognizing that the Church could not prevent itself from listening to the cries of the poor. This perception would contribute profoundly to the much-desired aggiornamento that went beyond the walls of the Vatican and reached a global scope, especially in the Church in the Third World.

In terms of Hope, the Church in Latin America and the Caribbean represents an audacious example for the Universal Church regarding the reception of the Second Vatican Council and the role of the poor in a Church that wants to renew itself. CELAM<sup>3</sup>’s documents represent an effort to give the Council a Latin American and Caribbean face. It is a question of creative fidelity to the Council, putting its call for the

Church’s pastoral renewal and dialogue with the world into practice.

The Second Vatican Council changed the course of the Church, placing it in a perennial process of ecclesial, pastoral, and theological renewal. With the Council, a legitimate awakening to the lethargy that the official Church had suffered before it took place, especially in the face of the suffering of the impoverished. The Council was received as a paradigmatic, innovative, and prophetic event in Latin America and the Caribbean. Bishops, theologians, and lay people began to think about the changes proposed by the Council from the perspective of their realities.

In the aftermath of the Council, the Church in Latin America and the Caribbean Church found itself refreshed, dynamic, and prophetic. The Church’s missionary activity in this period required an ecclesial experience incarnated in the reality of people. The social struggles, the culture, and the values of the ordinary people could not be ignored. It is important to mention that at this time (60s, 70s, 80s, and 90s), many countries were under dictatorship, and the Church stood as the voice of the voiceless.

The first missionaries of the Congregation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (Belgians and Dutch) arrived in Brazil in 1963. Their main purpose in going to the country was to help the local churches implement the pastoral renewal of the Church proposed by the Council. They were profoundly impressed and touched by the prophetic presence of the Church in Brazil. They discovered a new way of doing missions very different from what they had learned in Europe. They began to deepen an ecclesiology that considers the cry of the poor and a renewed approach to the Church’s mission that focuses on evangelization as journeying with the people.

### A “contextual hope”

The post-Vatican II period was a fructiferous period for theological reflection in the region. Several theologians emerged, one of them being the Peruvian Gustavo Gutiérrez. He is considered to be one of the fathers of Liberation Theology. Throughout his theology, he shows a great predilection for historical praxis. His

<sup>1</sup> Radio Address concerning the Second Vatican Council by Pope John XXIII on 11 September 1962.

<sup>2</sup> GUTIÉRREZ, Gustavo. *Teologia da libertação: perspectivas*. São Paulo: Loyola, 2000, p. 15.

<sup>3</sup> *Conferencia General del Episcopado Latinoamericano* (General Conference of the Latin American Bishops).

Christology was developed based on the historical Jesus. The same happens with his ecclesiology since the Church is seen through its insertion in history. However, his Christology and ecclesiology are not limited to historical factors. His theology is both historical and metahistorical. Thus, he affirms:

The mystery of God, however, does not end with history: 'For now, we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known' (1 Cor 13:12), the apostle Paul tells us. Looking in a mirror, and within this limitation, are these pages. They are animated by the hope that a time will come when the shadows and reflections will disappear and then we will see face to face, knowing as we are known. Charity, the virtue (meaning strength) that will prevail, leads us from now on to a joyful and grateful attitude to the gift of God's love.<sup>4</sup>

Hope is meta-historical. If memory serves me right, eschatology affirms that the final state or ultimate end of all things will not be fulfilled within history. All reality is moving towards an ultimate end beyond history, which is metahistorical but does not exclude history. The Kingdom of God, inaugurated by the ministry of Jesus of Nazareth and continued by the Christian Tradition, offers us an experience of what will be fully given at the end of time. It would be an "already" (realized eschatology) that constantly points to the "not yet," the completeness of time. Hope in the perspective of Liberation Theology is based on this structure, on this relationship between what can be expected in history and what is expected at the end of time

Hope nourishes human beings who long for something for this world and the world to come at the time (*kairos*) appointed by God. It's important to note here that this hope is not merely a subjective attitude, or one that focuses only on the person who hopes. Hope encompasses all of reality. There is communion between individuals, God, the cosmos, and all

created reality. Gustavo Gutiérrez's theology is based on this basic principle of eschatology.<sup>5</sup>

In his book *Para onde vai o mundo?* Edgar Morin, a French anthropologist, sociologist, and philosopher, offers us profound reflections on hope as something that can still be realized in history in a possible future. For him, "the future is born of the present. This means that the first difficulty in thinking about the future is the difficulty of thinking about the present. Blindness to the present makes us, *ipso facto*, blind to the future"<sup>6</sup>. On the relationship between the future and the present; he tells us that "it would not be enough to think correctly about the present to be able to predict the future. Certainly, the state of the present world carries with it the situations of the future world. But it contains microscopic embryos that have developed and are still invisible to our eyes"<sup>7</sup>.

### **Then what do we, Latin American and Caribbean's, hope for?**

Our hopes are similar to those of every human in any part of the planet. Our hopes are not different from the hopes of Jesus in the Gospel. "I came that they may have life, and may have it abundantly" (John 10:10). We hope for a missionary Church concerned with history. We hope for a real human development. We hope for the dignity of everyone regardless of the color of his/her skin and ethnical background. We hope for peace and reconciliation. We hope for just political and financial systems that will prevent corruption.

Once upon a time, the Latin American and the Caribbean Church woke up to the fact that poverty could not be seen essentially as a natural factor or the fruit of predestination but rather as an injustice. Decades have passed, and people's struggles and sufferings are still present. In its missionary activities in the region, the Church needs to realize that material poverty is destructive and goes against Jesus' proposal that everyone should have life and life in abundance. We cannot spiritualize and

<sup>4</sup> GUTIÉRREZ, Gustavo. *Falar de Deus a partir do sofrimento do inocente*. Petrópolis: Vozes, 1987, p. 49.

<sup>5</sup> LIBANIO, João Batista. *Gustavo Gutiérrez teólogos do século XX*, São Paulo: Loyola, 2004, p. 25.

<sup>6</sup> MORIN, Edgar. *Para onde vai o mundo?* Rio de Janeiro, Vozes, 2012, p. 13.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13-14.



undermine what deprives human beings of their dignity.

Pope Francis is a product of the Latin American Church. Each pontificate has a particular theological and pastoral foundation. The Argentinian Pope is a product of his Argentinian church. The poor have a very special place in his pontificate. The preferential option for the poor is rekindled through his papacy. This affirmation is supported by his writings, his gestures, and his austere way of living. The Pope is not tired of confronting the various scenarios of poverty in the world that are caused by corruption, war, and economic oppression. The first Latin American pontiff reveals the pastoral vitality of the Latin American Church and the exciting theological wealth produced in the region, especially that which places the poor at the center of reflection.

With his Latin American roots already mentioned, Pope Francis is moving in this direction, seeking harmony between the fight against poverty and protecting the environment. In *Laudato Si'* he states:

“A sense of deep communion with the rest of nature cannot be real if our hearts lack tenderness, compassion and concern for our fellow human beings. It is clearly inconsistent to combat trafficking in endangered species while remaining completely indifferent to human trafficking, unconcerned about the poor, or undertaking to destroy another human being deemed unwanted. This compromises the very meaning of our struggle for the sake of the environment. It is no coincidence that, in the canticle in which Saint Francis praises God for his creatures, he goes on to say: “Praised be you my Lord, through those who give pardon for your love”. Everything is connected. Concern for the environment thus needs to be joined to a sincere love for our fellow human beings and an unwavering commitment to resolving the problems of Society.” (LS n. 91).

To conclude my reflection, I want to share a beautiful song by Raul Alberto Antonio Gieco, an Argentinian performer, composer, and interpreter popularly known as León Gieco. The title of the song is *Sólo le Pido a Dios*; in English, I translated it as *I only ask God*. In summary, this song reminds us that there will always be hope for a better humanity as long as there is no indifference.



# Sólo le Pido a Dios (León Gieco)

## Spanish

Solo le pido a Dios  
que el dolor no me sea indiferente  
que la resaca muerte no me encuentre  
vacío y solo sin haber hecho lo suficiente.

Solo le pido a Dios  
que lo injusto no me sea indiferente  
que no me abofeteen la otra mejilla  
después que una garra me arañó esta suerte.

Solo le pido a Dios  
que la guerra no me sea indiferente.  
es un monstruo grande y pisa fuerte  
toda la pobre inocencia de la gente.  
Es un monstruo grande y pisa fuerte  
toda la pobre inocencia de la gente.

Solo le pido a Dios  
que el engaño no me sea indiferente  
si un traidor puede más que unos cuantos  
que esos cuantos no lo olviden fácilmente.

Solo le pido a Dios  
Que el futuro no me sea indiferente  
Desahuciado está el que tiene que marchar  
A vivir una cultura diferente

Solo le pido a Dios  
que la guerra no me sea indiferente.  
es un monstruo grande y pisa fuerte  
toda la pobre inocencia de la gente.  
Es un monstruo grande y pisa fuerte  
toda la pobre inocencia de la gente.

## English

I only ask God  
that pain will not be indifferent to me  
that the parched death will not find me  
empty and alone without having done enough

I only ask God  
that the unjust be not indifferent to me  
that they don't slap me on the other cheek  
after a claw scratched me at this fate

I only ask God  
that the war be not indifferent to me.  
It is a giant monster, and it treads hard  
on all the poor innocence of the people.  
It is a giant monster, and it treads hard  
on all the poor innocence of the people.

I only ask God  
that deceit may not be indifferent to me  
if one traitor can do more than a few  
may those few not easily forget.

I only ask God  
that the future be not indifferent to me  
the one who has to leave is evicted  
to live in a different culture.

I only ask God  
that the war be not indifferent to me.  
It is a giant monster, and it treads hard  
on all the poor innocence of the people.  
It is a giant monster, and it treads hard  
on all the poor innocence of the people.



## Speranza Missione in Europa



Missione di speranza in Europa. Il tema è bellissimo e pone l'accento sul positivo e non sul negativo in questo periodo storico che viviamo. È

la lente con cui leggere l'oggi della missione in Europa.

Soprattutto dopo il periodo covid e le guerre che si susseguono senza sosta, perché si tende a chiudersi sempre più in se stessi, nel proprio ambiente, rifiutando perfino l'incontro con chi è diverso da noi. Lo si fa anche per proteggersi da un bombardamento mediatico sempre più invadente, che arriva ogni istante sui nostri device tecnologici. Tutti siamo più ansiosi, più tristi, più pessimisti, così dice l'ultimo sondaggio del ministero fatto in Italia e in Europa.

Ecco perché ci sembra importante ripartire dalle **relazioni**: con Dio, con noi stessi, con gli altri, con il mondo, con il creato.

“CREARE CASA”. Significa per noi rendere concreti i valori appresi durante una vita in missione, le competenze imparate e la creatività continuamente messa in pratica.

Nell'animazione missionaria si vuole puntare oggi sul creare comunità accoglienti per i giovani, oasi di fraternità, dove si sentano a casa. La comunità come luogo di cura delle relazioni che aiuta i giovani attraverso:

- una spiritualità che risana il cuore e ridà senso alla vita, nel ritessere l'intimità con Dio
- la riscoperta di se stessi come 'un prodigio'
- legami che si costruiscono con gesti quotidiani
- il coltivare l'apertura al mondo, al cercare il bene degli altri

Le parole che ci guidano sono:

- **co-costruzione** tra animatori missionari
- **collaborazione** col territorio
- **linguaggio** nuovo

Ringrazio le belle esperienze di animazione missionaria di questi otto anni in Italia e quelle vissute insieme alle nostre suore, padri e laici in Francia e in Irlanda e in Polonia durante le GMG o altri incontri internazionali. Che ci hanno fatto crescere nella speranza.

Il termine Speranza, oltre ad essere una virtù teologale, significa: *Sentimento di attesa fiduciosa nella realizzazione di quanto si desidera*. Abbiamo imparato che tutto parte dal **DESIDERIO**. Dal far vivere di più la **fede** e meno la **religione**. Meno precetti, più educazione all'amore.

Non si può chiedere a qualcuno di rinunciare alle stelle se prima non gli si fa conoscere il sole.

L'Italia e l'Europa sono oggi 'terra di missione' dove spesso Gesù non è più conosciuto dai giovani. La nostra sfida qui è di far fare esperienza di Dio. Far conoscere il sole. Come?

Condivido oggi con voi due esperienze in Italia, ma che si fanno anche in altri luoghi d'Europa, seppure in modi diversi. Sono esperienze di animazione missionaria e sociale.

Condividerò poi cosa abbiamo imparato e quali frutti hanno dato.

### Viaggiare per condividere

È un percorso annuale proposto da un Centro Missionario in collaborazione con la pastorale dei giovani e vocazionale e alcuni Istituti religiosi. Ha come scopo di far cogliere l'incontro con altre culture, popolazioni, religioni come opportunità e dono nella vita. In appuntamenti mensili si accompagnano 40-60 giovani ogni anno, ad avvicinarsi e approfondire la dimensione missionaria, in vista di viaggi proposti dal CMD e dagli Istituti.

Le prime tappe affrontano temi di carattere generale legate al rapporto Nord/Sud del

mondo, globalizzazione, interculturalità, stile di viaggio e spiritualità missionaria. Gli incontri sono organizzati da un'équipe di diocesani, religiosi, laici e giovani, insieme.

Al ritorno dei viaggi i giovani passano al gruppo successivo di animazione del territorio, in un circolo virtuoso di missionarietà!

### - Festival della missione

Si svolge ogni 3 anni in una città italiana. Nel 2022 si è svolto a Milano.

E' organizzato dalla CIMI (i provinciali degli istituti missionari) e dalla Fondazione MISSIO della CEI. È un grande evento di più giornate in cui si cerca di coinvolgere persone credenti e non credenti. La formula è un insieme di incontri, animazioni e laboratori in una piazza pubblica e frequentata. E in scuole e università. Le tematiche sono quelle missionarie in ottica allargata: pace, creato, social, diritti, culture... insomma l'educazione alla mondialità.

Al suo interno: aperitivi al bar con missionari (che incontrano la gente e raccontano la missione), laboratori per ragazzi e giovani, libri, mostre, percorsi artistici, sport e attività musicale.

Si organizza un Pre-Festival e un Post-Festival per coinvolgere, in modo particolare, le parrocchie, le scuole, le università per collegarsi al festival successivo.

Questo è quello che abbiamo imparato.

- **COMPETENZE MISSIONARIE:** noi siamo missionari qui in Europa e quindi ci è chiesto di conoscere non solo la chiesa, ma anche la società, quella in cui vivono i giovani. E quindi imparare la lingua, non solo quella dello stato, ma anche la lingua della società. Cosa sta a cuore alla gente? Come vivono la spiritualità? Come è collegata al loro vivere quotidiano? Esattamente come quando siamo in missione in altri posti del mondo.

- **SINERGIA:** Pensare e lavorare insieme come Istituti, ma anche con laici, famiglie e con le associazioni non religiose. Pensare e lavorare con i fratelli cristiani separati e con le altre religioni, per avere idee diverse e creative, a dare testimonianza più incisiva

- **STARE, NON SOLO ANDARE:** dare continuità ai cammini con i giovani, creare relazioni che restino.

- **CONCENTRARCI SUL TERRITORIO:** essere vicini ai giovani dove vivono.

- **ASCOLTO, NON SOLO ANNUNCIO:** ascoltare i giovani e creare con loro gli eventi missionari.

- **DALL'INCONTRARE ALL'ACCOGLIERE:** non solo fare incontri, ma ospitare giovani in casa nostra attraverso settimane di fraternità 'vieni e vedi'.

- **TRASMETTERE IL POSITIVO DELLA MISSIONE:** Gli incontri in parrocchie e scuole hanno lo scopo di far conoscere i valori che gli altri continenti ci insegnano, non solo i problemi e le negatività.

- **INTERCETTARE I VALORI DEI GIOVANI** che si ricollegano ai valori evangelici: relazioni liberanti (contro femminicidi, bullismo, abusi, solitudini...), senso della vita, cura del creato, sobrietà, sguardo sul mondo, intercultura.

**I FRUTTI DI QUESTO CAMMINO:**

• **CONOSCENZA RECIPROCA,** tra noi e il territorio. Si tessono una rete di lavoro in sinergia.

• **GIOVANI IMPEGNATI,** alcuni continuano un cammino missionario successivo ai viaggi, altri fanno animazione con noi alle Giornate missionarie; altri ancora prendono impegni in parrocchia

• **GIOVANI IN DISCERNIMENTO:** una piccola parte si impegna nel discernimento vocazionale

Ci auguriamo che sempre più potremo far conoscere il sole ai nostri fratelli e sorelle europei.

Un proverbio africano infatti dice: *se coltivi bene l'albero, i frutti ti cadranno addosso!*

Grazie

*Virginie Habib, Rosary Sisters*

## **Mission of Hope**

### **Mission Gifts from each Continent Today**

#### **Middle East**



#### **Introduction**

To begin my presentation, I'd like to thank Father John Paul Herman, Director of the SEDOS Centre, for inviting me to share my mission's experience in Middle Eastern countries, an area plagued by constant wars, confrontations, and upheavals that rise and fall depending on who controls the strings of the game, with others from many continents so that we can gain insight from each other's various experiences, we encourage one another to remain committed to our mission as "pilgrims of hope."

The hope we speak of is not optimism or positivism; rather, it is the fruit of a firm belief that is nourished by the Word of God in the Bible, shown in our attitude towards daily life events, deeds of charity, tolerance for others who practice different religions, races, or cultures, and grounded in reality to transform it in accordance with God's plan for humanity. This hope is the motivation that keeps us dedicated to and committed to our mission, to be creative in our responses to difficulties and challenges, and to continually discover a way when it seems difficult to do so. It is the light that illuminates our dark moments and keeps us moving toward our ultimate goal so that we

become the light to those who are entrusted to our mission to follow the path that leads them to their salvation.

According to this concept of hope, I shall proceed with my presentation, attempting to structure my experience in a systematic pattern for clarity, and I make no claim to be exhaustive in any of the parts that I will unfold, given the time constraints and nature of this presentation.

In the first part of my speech, I'll provide brief overview of the context. In the second, I'll outline the areas we're striving to invest in so that we can sow seeds of hope for the day when our region can at last enjoy peace, prosperity, fraternity and harmony among all of its inhabitants.

#### **I. General Overview of the context**

I'm interested in starting this section with a quote from Pope Benedict XVI's Apostolic Exhortation, "**The church in the Middle East: communion and witness**". This document was released in Beirut, Lebanon on September 14, 2012, and it was the outcome of the Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops for the Middle East, which met from October 10 to 24, 2010, around the Successor of Peter. It states the following in (nr. 8):

"It is moving for me to recall my journeys to the Middle East. As a land especially chosen by God, it was the home of Patriarchs and Prophets. It was the glorious setting for the Incarnation of the Messiah; it saw the raising of the Saviour's cross and witnessed the resurrection of the Redeemer and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Traversed by the Apostles, saints and a number of the Fathers of the Church, it was the crucible of the earliest dogmatic formulations. Yet this blessed land and its peoples have tragically experienced human upheavals. How many deaths have there been, how many lives ravaged by human blindness, how many occasions of fear and humiliation! It would seem that there is no end

to the crime of Cain (cf. Gen 4:6-10 and 1 Jn 3:8-15) among the sons of Adam and Eve created in God's image (cf. Gen 1:27). Adam's transgression, reinforced by the sin of Cain, continues to produce thorns and thistles (cf. Gen 3:18) even today".

The countries of the Middle East, in general, and the Holy Land in particular, are going through tough and brutal political, social, economic, and human situations that frequently affect the most precious human being, whom God loved and created in his image and likeness. For many years, the people of this region have suffered in every aspect of their existence, namely history, heritage, civilization, culture, land, lives, and dignity.

If we conduct an inquiry among the generations born after World War II and those born today would have survived at least one war. Those who were fortunate enough not to have suffered war were subjected to displacement at least once, if not more.

Many of them suffered the transition from citizens to refugees, standing in front of the other countries' embassies to get a visa to an alternative country, spending the rest of their lives longing for their homeland country, and dying in the Diaspora without having the chance to return, or if happened to come back they will be visitors and not citizens.

While it is true, on the one hand, that Christians have been neither the primary nor the sole target of these tragedies, there is no denying, on the other hand, the very heavy cost paid in terms of human lives and the general impoverishment of the life of the Churches.

I cannot conclude this section without addressing the ongoing war in Gaza that began on October 7 and continues to this day. The number of women and children who have been killed is incredibly high. Rescue crews are still unable to reach many of the people under the rubble because they lack the tools needed. Hunger and thirst plague those who are still alive, many have already passed away.

Hospitals, universities, and schools including the School of the Rosary Sisters, were destroyed, this prominent educational project became a wreck and ash like others, as well as structures next to the Orthodox Church and the Holy Family Church of the Latin Patriarchate, were seriously destroyed.

During the war Gaza's small Christian community of around 1,000 people sought refuge in churches, twenty-eight of them were killed, while others were injured and are currently being treated in primitive methods in school buildings and classrooms, some of them died as a result of inadequate care.

This war has screened thousands of orphaned children, including those with lasting disabilities or who have lost a limb or more; one can say that what is happening is a devastating human catastrophe in all measures. Today, as Christians in the Middle East, we find ourselves at a crossroads. Either we choose to deal with these circumstances out of our faith, retaining the flame of hope alive, or we surrender to frustration and despair.

After hearing all of this news, you might wonder how these people, whose nations and peoples are encircled by suffering and tragedies on all sides, can talk of hope.

One thing I can guarantee you is that the number of Christians in our Middle East has decreased due to enduring events. As I previously stated, the subsequent wave of migration that follows every major conflict and crisis has never affected our will to live on, to emerge from each crisis and spread our message, to fulfil our dream of a respectable living in our country of origin, and to bring about the peace that has eluded the efforts of all world leaders to date.

We may not be able to change the decisions of the powerful; or have direct influence on them. We can, however, intervene where our communities are, building alternative forms of peace, development, and progress in our local contexts of life.

If current development models subordinate humanity to consumption and violence, we will continue to build communities and relationships that place human beings at the heart of all the contexts of what we do: in parishes, in schools, in hospitals, and in the countless peace and solidarity initiatives that, if they do not change the world, nonetheless contribute to creating contexts of peace and respect and are a witness to our Christian way of being within these difficult realities. No matter how tiny and fatigued, our communities will not give up shaping the destiny of the many last and poor ones in their territory.

## II- Mission of Hope

“**Witness and Mission**” is how the Catholic Patriarchs of the Middle East summed up the existence of Christians in the region in their second pastoral letter, “**The Presence of Christians in the Middle East: Witness and Mission**”, issued in 1992. They then elaborated the meaning of these terms in the letter Nr. 19 as follows:

“Our Lord Jesus' teaching invites us to this kind of presence when he urges us to be light (Mt 5:14-16), salt (Mt 5:13), and leaven (Mt 13:33). If the light is turned off in the home, it loses its meaning and existence. If the salt loses its flavour, it is useless. If the leaven is taken from the dough, it hardens and gets ruined. When we are not light, salt, and leaven, we become a petrified frozen being, a burden to ourselves and our societies”.

In this second section I will share with you some of the main privileged mediums where we are thriving to sow the seeds of hope in order to fulfil our witness and mission as Light, salt and leaven in our countries and communities.

### 1- Educational Institutions

Educational institutions are one of the privileged medium for sowing the seeds of hope in the soil of the new generations, Confucius the Chinese philosopher once said: “If your plan is for one year plant rice. If your plan is for ten years plant trees. If your plan is for one hundred years educate children”.

It's obvious that many religious founders and foundresses are inspired to start their congregations through the charisma of education.

In the Middle East, like in other countries, Catholic and Christian educational institutions, such as schools and colleges, play an essential and effective role in education, and they were previously the only educational institutions in several of our countries, like Palestine and Jordan. They tracked the evolution of society, constantly adapting to meet new needs. They continue to carry out their mission today in the face of continually changing situations in our societies and churches, which are often complex and demanding. They aim to improve their

performance in all aspects while keeping their uniqueness and distinction within many different challenges that are threaten their existence like in Lebanon.

After the general introduction in the previous paragraph about the role of educational institutions in the Middle East, in this second paragraph I would like to shed light on their role in educating generations in science, ethics, religion and the arts. Christian and Muslims students without discrimination are prepared to face the future and the actual society with readiness.

Also, our Christian educational institutions in general and Catholic in particular are a favourable environment and space for training in coexistence and religious dialogue in its life dimension, educating on human, evangelical, ethical values, and strengthening human ties through the educational policy pursued by our educational institutions, which is represented by several educational initiatives and activities to achieve these goals.

As an example, but not limited to, several Christian and Catholic schools arrange a joint weekly or monthly school session for Muslim and Christian students to learn about and discuss a common topic between the two religions, as well as to learn about each religion's point of view on this topic and the points of similarity between the two religions.

Another example that comes from Bethlehem University, Palestine's only Catholic university in which a course is required of all university students regardless of major. It introduces the students to the fundamentals of the Christian and Islamic religions, as well as some topics about Judaism, and it is followed by Muslim, Christian, and other students.

In addition, I wish to emphasize the vital part that our Catholic schools play in ensuring that students grow their Catholic faith while also emphasizing its ecumenical dimension since the Christian students who join our Catholic schools belong to the Orthodox, Greek Melkite, and Evangelical churches.

We succeeded in our diocese in the Holy Land in creating catechism textbooks with an ecumenical approach that addresses all Christian students regardless of their church affiliation, and they are currently taught in all Catholic, Christian, and even public schools.

Catholic educational institutions cannot overlook the social context in which they operate, which welcomes all students, not just Christian students. Our society is made up of a variety of churches and religions. The school must consider this reality; however, it must do so in such a way that it does not lose its Christian identity and originality, while also understanding this reality to organically incorporate it into its identity, mission, and educational vision.

To conclude this section, for the many years that I spent in the educational domain, I consider that our Christian educational institutions are “factories” of hope and each student is a glimpse of hope for the future of our churches and societies.

If you are interested to know more about this topic, there is a whole chapter on it, in **the International Handbook of Catholic Education: challenges for school systems in the 21st Century**, entitled: **Schooling and catechesis in the Holy Land, Challenges and responses (p. 695)**.

## **2. Consecrated people: presence, prayers, witness and mission**

“Monasticism in its different forms was born in the Middle East and gave rise to several of the Churches in the region” Pope Benedict XVI's Apostolic Exhortation (EMO/ nr.51).

Middle Eastern countries are blessed with the numerous and effective presence of various religious congregations for women and men, some of which have roots in our countries and some of which have a long history of mission.

Religious men and women have a significant and efficient role in keeping the flame of hope alive among our Christians and the entire inhabitants through their life witness and mission.

The presence of religious women and men in Middle Eastern societies has a positive impact on the entire Christian and Muslim people, who value their presence and mission. Through their total consecration to God, they bear witness; first of all, to the heavenly kingdom, and by living a communal life in communion, love, and brotherhood, they bear witness to the possibility of living in peace, love, and harmony among varied peoples, cultures, and religions.

They bear witness to the love of the one God for all of His children through their humanitarian mission with all people, regardless of race, religion, or colour, and through their care for the person in all of his/her human, spiritual, and social dimensions through the services they perform according to their special charisma.

Christians in the Middle East need to be assisted to stay rooted in their homeland, encourage them to persevere, and support them in holding onto hope for a better future so they don't surrender to hopelessness, frustration, loneliness, or despair. Those who are consecrated can be this witness to a brighter tomorrow through their life witness, prayers and mission.

## **3. Parishes: Pastoral Movements**

Parishes are recognized as the beating heart of dioceses since they host a wide range of apostolic movements for all ages, including children, adolescents, young mothers, the pastoral council, scouting, and choirs. Each of these groups has a unique annual program, meeting schedule, and events. Each of these Parishes is considered an oasis of peace and hope amidst a troubled zone where the faithful can receive spiritual nourishment for their faith as well as social and entertainment activities, whenever there are restrictions on movements between the towns or from one place to another, people can find in their parish a breath of hope.

## **4- Holy sites and pilgrims**

“As the land of biblical revelation, the Middle East soon became a major goal of pilgrimage for many Christians throughout world, who came to be strengthened in faith and to have a profoundly spiritual experience.” Pope Benedict XVI's Apostolic Exhortation (EMO/ nr.83).

The countries of the Middle East represent the geography of salvation, where the events of salvation history occurred. What has already been said about Middle Eastern countries in general can be applied more deeply and extensively to the Holy Land.

Only in this Holy Land can it be declared that the Son of God was incarnated, born, lived, preached, and performed miracles before being crucified for the sake of those he loved, and then rising again. The Holy Land witnessed the first meeting between man and God in the



mystery of the Incarnation, and everything in it: its water, air, sky, nature, stones, soil, flowers, trees, birds... echoes his words and reveals his love for humans, who were created in God's image and likeness.

According to the liturgical calendar, we are now in the fifth week of the Lenten season, and next Sunday is Palm Sunday, which prepares us for the Holy Week, in which the events revolve around Jesus' suffering, culminating in his death on the cross on Good Friday, and the world enters darkness until Sunday dawn, announcing the Lord's Resurrection. Jesus's resurrection from the dead was a tremendous occurrence that changed the course of history, events, and has impact on simple and great people.

We Middle Eastern Christians are currently going through a period of hardship that is analogous to what Jesus' followers went through on Good Friday afternoon after his crucifixion; we are experiencing it in both its spiritual and material forms, in the hope that the region of the Middle East will rise with the risen Christ on Resurrection Sunday.

Despite the injustice, oppression, and displacement that our countries and people are experiencing, we are convinced that this night will be cleared, no matter how long it lasts. Our trust and hope stem from our belief in Christ's resurrection, which defeated evil and death. Our faith defeated the world, and with our trust and hope, we will defeat evil through the grace of our Saviour's resurrection, Jesus Christ.

When hopelessness and frustration creep into our hearts, the empty tomb in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem reminds us that neither death nor evil have custody over our lives. These holy places, which abound in our countries with saints' shrines, are a source of faith, hope, and consolation, and it is a tremendous privilege that we can visit them to get blessings and strength to continue in our lives and mission.

At the same time, the holy places attract thousands of Christian pilgrims from all over the world who seek grace and blessings. Those pilgrims provide hope for Christians in the Middle East and strengthens their faith through their support and solidarity.

## **5. Synodal Journey: Continental Phase**

The Catholic Churches in the Middle East (Coptic, Maronite, Greek-Melkite, Syrian, Chaldean, Armenian and Latin) held their Continental Synodal Assembly in Bethania (Harissa, Lebanon) from 13 to 17 February 2023. These Churches participated through delegations from various countries: Egypt, the Holy Land, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Iraq, and the Arab Gulf countries. There were also Cardinal Mario Grech, Secretary General of the Synod of Bishops, Cardinal Jean-Claude Hollerich, Rapporteur of the synodal Assembly 2021-2024, and Sister Nathalie Becquart, Under-Secretary of the Synod. In addition to the Patriarchs, the delegations gathered bishops and priests, religious women and men, secular men and women of all ages. The total number of participants was one hundred and twenty-five persons, including forty secular and consecrated women, married and single, and forty lay men, adults and young people of all ages, husband and wife, and persons with disabilities. Friends from the Orthodox and Protestant Churches, the Council of Middle Eastern Churches (CEMO/MECC) and agnostic men and women also participated in this synodal assembly. Representatives of Muslim denominations participated in the opening session.

In the joy experienced at the idea of a meeting that allowed us to celebrate the One Church, and despite the sadness associated with the loss of the victims of the deadly earthquakes in Turkey and Syria, we have been given the grace of celebrating the Continental Synodal Assembly of the Catholic Churches of the Middle East and the Arab Gulf. Together, we listened to each other and to the message that the Spirit conveys to us today. All participants in this Assembly expressed their joys and hopes, as well as their fears and challenges. This encouraged them to undertake concrete initiatives for which they invested in their respective Churches. Moreover, their participation has made synodality a real experience and a space of free expression, especially for women and young people, as well as for many people whose voices were no longer heard; or for people with disabilities; and finally, for all those who have found themselves on the margins of pastoral life. The experience of this Synodal Assembly has been a kind of

remedy for many difficult situations within each Church, and for the tense relations between the different Churches. This Assembly clearly recognized two dimensions without which the Church would lose the reason for being and the soul of its existence in the East: the ecumenical dimension concerning relations with varied Churches; and the dialogue dimension which ensures openness and encounter with other religions.

It is clear that the People of God in the Middle East are led to bear witness to their faith through their life and hope, despite the complexity of the present context. The call for renewal to the journey together, to dialogue and to discernment is an urgent matter that cannot be postponed. To reap the fruits of synodality without delay is done in view of the constant commitment to walk together after Christ and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, as the People of God, animated by the will to promote human brotherhood. This is how the Eastern Catholic Churches will be able to respond to the call of His Holiness Pope Francis, to realize what God wants for his Church in the third millennium: that it be more synodal.

Avoid minority complexes and banish the associated fear, due to multiple trials endured through persecution, immigration and other difficult situations, so as not to succumb to temptations and preserve the Faith and Hope. Work should also be made to enable Christians to take root in the territories of their respective countries and to help halt the current process that empty the East of the Christian presence and threatens to change its demographic identity. This requires close cooperation with civil authorities. Moreover, in order for our Churches to be the Church of Hope in the Middle East, it is necessary to revive the prophetic spirit that listens to the Will of God and works towards its realization, for God is the true Master of history. Thus, the testimony of Hope remains until the end of time.

### **Conclusion**

I once read an expression suggesting: “If you can't change your circumstances, change your perspective to find other opportunities.” That applies to our present scenario in the Middle East.

We have to change our perspective regarding the fact that Christians are minorities in our societies, from a simple sociological reality into a reality of vocation, witness and mission which we live in the joy of faith.

“The church is evaluated not by figures and statistics, but by Faithful's proactive sense of their vocation and mission. The time has come to transform this quantitative reality into a qualitative reality, in which the spiritual and faith dimension take over numbers and figures, and thus we are liberated from all the social and psychological residues left behind by history's minority status, such as isolation, or dissolution.”

The first Christian community that was developed in Jerusalem was a small and humble minority yet was characterised by the vitality and of the new human person in their enthusiasm and joy. This led all people to look at them with surprise and admiration, and they “were looked up to by the whole people” (Act 2:47).

Our mission in the Middle East is about being light, salt, and leaven which implies that it does not matter how great the darkness is outside, how tasteless the world around us is, how little ferment there is in the absurdity that surrounds us. The really important thing is not this, but that the light, however small, is truly light and enlightens, that the salt does not lose its taste since it only takes a few pinches of real salt to impart flavour and that the leaven, however small, contains the ferment of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Such is our mission and we alone can fulfil it. Jesus Christ says: “you are the light of the world” (Mt 5:14-16), and “you are the salt of the earth” (Mt 5:13), as if to say that unless we are the ones to enlighten and salt the Middle East with Christ, it will remain dark and tasteless.

Despite everything, we shall live here with a renewed commitment to enlightening and flavouring the entire Middle East, where our roots are, and where we will continue to provide our beautiful witness of faith.

## La Fidélité à Jésus Christ et aux Algériens Présentation des Martyres de Tizi-Ouzou

L'histoire des martyrs d'Algérie du 20<sup>ème</sup> siècle dont font partie les 4 Missionnaires d'Afrique (Pères Blancs) n'est pas qu'une histoire de haine dont les protagonistes seraient des musulmans qui font souffrir des chrétiens. C'est une histoire de fidélité et d'amour pour un peuple dont le fondement se trouve dans le désir du missionnaire de toujours aimer comme le Christ et, comme Lui d'aimer jusqu'au prix de sa vie. C'est en effet autour du symbole du pélican, cet oiseau qui offre sa vie pour ses petits, que se comprend le drame vécu un 27 décembre 1994 par Christian Chessel et ses trois confrères Alain Dieulangard, Jean Chevillard et Charles Deckers. Ce don de leur vie était le couronnement d'une longue formation et d'une vie vécue à l'école de leur fondateur le cardinal Lavigerie dont les paroles et les pensées étaient devenues désormais les leurs : « j'ai tout aimé de cette Afrique », ou encore : « des saints, je veux des saints ! Donnez-moi des saints, et j'en ferai des martyrs »<sup>1</sup> ; « Je vous aime, comme des fils, même si vous ne me reconnaissez pas comme votre père » disait une fois Lavigerie aux enfants musulmans.<sup>2</sup>

Qui sont-ils ces quatre Pères Blancs qui ont donné ce témoignage du plus grand amour ?

### Christian Chessel

Parmi les 19 bienheureux martyrs de l'Algérie, Christian Chessel était le plus jeune, car il n'avait que 36 ans lors de leur assassinat le 27 décembre 1994. Il est né le 27 octobre 1958 d'une famille française de classe moyenne (son père était gendarme et sa mère enseignante) et d'une fratrie de 3. Christian a passé son enfance et ses années de lycée à Antibes avant de rejoindre Lyon où il obtint un diplôme d'ingénieur en génie civil. En 1981, il part en

Afrique pour deux années de coopération. A son retour en France il entendit l'appel à devenir prêtre. Il rentra au séminaire d'Avignon. Mais deux ans plus tard cet appel se précise pour une vocation missionnaire en Afrique et plus particulièrement dans le monde musulman. C'est ainsi qu'il contacta les Pères Blancs et commença sa formation avec eux en 1985. Après son stage, Il écrit : « *Je suis de plus en plus heureux d'être en Algérie et je réalise combien le fait d'apprendre une langue et de vivre dans un pays peut vous y attacher* »<sup>3</sup>. Au bout de ce temps de stage Christian est nommé en Angleterre pour ses études de théologie. En 1991 il arrive à Rome, à l'Institut Pontifical des Etudes Arabes pour approfondir sa connaissance du monde musulman. C'est au cours de ce séjour romain qu'il fait son serment missionnaire le 26 novembre 1991, la main droite posée sur les feuillets d'un évangile de Saint Jean en langue arabe, retrouvés sur la dépouille du P. Louis Richard assassiné lui aussi dans le Sahara en 1881. A peine une année plus tard, le 28 juin 1992, Christian est ordonné prêtre à Nice et envoyé en mission à Tizi-Ouzou. A son arrivée à Tizi, il se lança avec enthousiasme dans le projet d'une bibliothèque universitaire pour les étudiants de la ville. Ce projet le rendait si heureux au point qu'après son assassinat une algérienne écrit ces lignes à ces parents : « *Sachez que pendant ses derniers jours Christian était heureux. Il respirait la joie. Il avait pu mettre en route le projet si cher à son cœur, de construire une bibliothèque destinée à tous les jeunes, filles et garçons, de Tizi-Ouzou...* »<sup>4</sup>

Tous ceux qui ont connu Christian sont unanimes sur ses belles et nombreuses qualités : « *c'est un homme de grande maturité, son jugement est droit, réaliste et nuancé ; il est d'une extrême serviabilité, avec un grand souci*

<sup>1</sup> Cardinal Lavigerie, *Instructions aux missionnaires*, Editions Grands Lacs, Namur, 1950, p.13.

<sup>2</sup> Sur Lavigerie et les musulmans, notamment sa rencontre avec Abdel kader, cf. François Renault, *Le Cardinal Lavigerie, 1825-1892, L'Eglise, l'Afrique et la France*, Fayard, Paris 1992, p61.

<sup>3</sup> Armand Duval, *C'était une longue fidélité à l'Algérie, Médias Paul, Paris 2018*, p127. Notez qu'Armand Duval est la principale source écrite de notre récit.

<sup>4</sup> Armand Duval, p129.

*des autres ; c'est un homme de prière et de foi »<sup>5</sup>*

Cependant, pour mieux connaître Christian il faut lire ces deux méditations sur la compassion et la faiblesse dans la mission<sup>6</sup>. Là on découvre l'homme, le missionnaire, l'ami du Christ et de l'humanité. Pour lui, « *Une des approches possibles de la mission en monde arabo-musulman est de la considérer sous l'angle de la faiblesse* » Cette faiblesse est à la fois une louange au Dieu incarné qui, le premier, entra en dialogue avec notre humanité, et un langage du dialogue et de l'annonce. Contrairement à ce que l'on pourrait attendre d'un jeune de son âge, intelligent, plein de vie et de force, Christian Chessel était pour une **missiologie humble**, basée sur « *une spiritualité des mains vides, où l'on comprend que tout, jusqu'à nos faiblesses mêmes, peut devenir don et grâce de Dieu, manifestation de la puissance de son amour qui, seule, peut convertir la faiblesse humaine en force spirituelle* »<sup>7</sup>

Enfin, ce que je trouve encore beau chez lui est cette conviction que les relations dans la mission doivent être des **relations de non-puissance**. Cela est vrai dans la mission arabo-musulmane, mais elle est vraie aussi partout où l'on veut semer dans les cœurs des personnes les grains du royaume de Dieu.

### **Jean Chevillard, il ne fait pas des chrétiens, mais il conduit les hommes à Dieu !**

Jean Chevillard est issu d'une grande famille très catholique ! Cinquième de cette belle famille, Jean est né le 27 août 1925 à Angers. « *A 7 ans, il parlait déjà de vocation ; à 12 ans, la rencontre avec un Père Blanc (le Père Lecoindre) éveilla sans doute sa vocation missionnaire* »<sup>8</sup>. En 1941, en pleine seconde guerre mondiale, alors qu'il n'avait que 16 ans, il rejoint clandestinement la zone libre pour commencer sa formation chez les Pères Blancs. Il prononça son serment missionnaire le 29 juin 1949 et fut ordonné prêtre à Carthage le 1<sup>er</sup> février 1949 à l'âge de 24 ans. Depuis lors il passera l'essentiel de sa vie missionnaire en Algérie comme responsable de centre de

formation professionnelle, supérieur régional et économiste régional.

Jean était un homme de devoir avec un grand sens de responsabilité et d'initiative. Pierre Georgin qui fut son supérieur disait : « *ce sérieux de l'homme de devoir, je l'ai trouvé chez lui à un degré qui touchait à l'héroïsme.* »

Tous ceux qui l'ont connu, sont unanimes, c'était un chef-né, « *un homme de caractère, avec une autorité naturelle servie par une voix puissante* » ! C'était un bon vivant qui aimait blaguer et rire ! Il avait beaucoup de connaissances aussi bien dans les administrations algériennes que parmi les petits gens du peuple. C'est ainsi qu'il pouvait être la voix des sans voix : les veuves, les orphelins et les personnes âgées affluaient sans cesse dans son bureau social pour chercher son assistance face à leurs impasses administratives. Chaque personne comptait à ses yeux et il savait donner du temps à chacun. Au soir de sa mort, un de ses frères disait : « *je le croyais proche de moi, je le découvre proche de tous* » ! Un de ses anciens élèves disait : Jean était un « *Homme simple, dévoué à Dieu, il avait une grande pitié à mon endroit parce que j'étais faible et malade ; un jour il m'a offert le voyage Alger-Mosta par le train, aller-retour, pour passer les vacances en famille. C'était un homme très bon, comme seuls peuvent l'être les hommes fidèles à Dieu... C'est depuis cette époque de mon stage à El Harrach que j'ai gardé un saint respect pour le christianisme. Je sais que le Père Chevillard a sacrifié sa vie à Dieu* »<sup>9</sup>

Homme de compassion, il avait aussi de l'impact positif sur les personnes qu'il rencontrait. Un algérien écrit après sa mort : « *Le Père Jean n'a pas fait de moi un chrétien, mais il m'a conduit à Dieu sans me prendre par la main, sans m'en parler dans le langage propre aux hommes de religion. Il m'a suffi de le regarder vivre et de méditer sur sa conduite pour me convaincre que la bannière de Dieu est une, quelle que soit la couleur que lui donnent les hommes ici ou là, et j'ai pu exorciser le mal qui m'habitait. Ma raison et mon jeune cœur se sont inclinés devant cette droiture et cette extrême bonté que je ne soupçonnais pas chez les " autres " .* »

<sup>5</sup> ibid

<sup>6</sup> Armand Duval, pp199-205

<sup>7</sup> Ibid

<sup>8</sup> Armand Duval, p101;

<sup>9</sup> Armand Duval, p105

Enfin, tout en lui montrait l'infatigable missionnaire. Malgré le danger des années noires, il parcourait les montagnes de la Kabylie pour dire la messe à 2 ou 3 chrétiens. Bien qu'il se savait exposé, il disait toujours :

*« je sais que je peux mourir assassiné. Mais notre vocation, c'est de témoigner de la foi chrétienne en terre musulmane. Pour le reste, 'insha'allah'. »* Comme ses compagnons sa vie a été l'Évangile proclamé au cœur du peuple algérien !

En septembre 1994, quelques mois avant son assassinat, alors qu'il s'app préparait à retourner en Algérie, une de ses sœurs lui demandait : « pourquoi retournes-tu là-bas ? » il répondit « *Je retourne là-bas pour témoigner : là-bas, c'est chez moi, près de mes amis berbères. Surtout si je meurs je veux être enterré là-bas* ». Et sa sœur d'ajouter : « *j'espère que tu ne seras pas le deuxième martyr de la famille* » ! Et en effet, Jean fut le deuxième martyr, à la suite de son aïeule Françoise Menard, assassinée elle aussi un 27 avril 1794 à cause de sa fidélité au Christ en plein milieu d'une guerre civile française.

### **Charles Deckers<sup>10</sup>, l'homme du dialogue et de la charité jusqu'au bout !**

Issu d'une grande famille chrétienne d'Anvers, Charles Deckers est né le 26 décembre 1924. Il rentre chez les Pères Blancs en 1941. Il fait son serment la même année que Jean Chevillard et Alain Dieulangard, le 21 juillet 1949. Il est ordonné prêtre une année plus tard le 08 avril 1950. Comme Jean Chevillard, il souhaitait lui aussi être nommé en Afrique noire, mais il reçut une nomination pour le Maghreb. Pour se préparer à cette mission il étudia l'arabe et l'islamologie à Tunis. En 1955 il arrive à Tizi-Ouzou et se met avec succès dans l'apprentissage du berbère.

Depuis son temps de formation jusqu'à sa mort, tous ceux qui ont connu Charles disent que c'était un homme doux et calme ! Grand travailleur et tenace : il était imperturbable lorsqu'il avait une idée dans la tête ! Mais sa plus grande qualité restera sans doute son

dévouement extrême, sa générosité, et son sens du sacrifice pour l'autre !

Homme généreux, il était aussi un missionnaire obéissant : malgré son grand amour pour l'Algérie et les montagnes de la Kabylie, et son ancrage bien accepté dans l'association el-Kalima, en juin 1982 il accepta l'appel de ses supérieurs pour faire partie de la communauté des Pères Blancs au Yémen. Notre Supérieur qui lui avait donné cette nomination dit ceci à propos de Charles : « *quand je l'ai connu, il était précédé d'une réputation d'homme de prière, ce que j'ai pu constater ensuite par moi-même. Il était d'une générosité totale...* »<sup>11</sup>

C'est avec ce dévouement et cette générosité qui lui sont propres qu'il s'engagera toute sa vie pour le dialogue entre les religions et les cultures.

### **Pour lui, le dialogue était une démarche à la fois spirituelle et pratique.**

Ce qui fait qu'on trouvera chez lui très peu de textes ou d'écrits. Armand Duval nous a rapporté ce témoignage du Père Emilio Platti à son sujet : « *À El Kalima, le Père Charles Deckers avait amené un peu de l'Algérie par laquelle il s'était laissé apprivoiser... L'essentiel n'était pas pour lui dans l'étude et l'information, qu'il prodiguait avec compétence dans des sessions. L'essentiel était dans cette relation humaine qui rapproche et lie d'amitié les hommes entre eux.* »<sup>12</sup> C'était un homme de terrain avec un grand engagement auprès des personnes. Toutefois il reconnaissait aux études leurs valeurs et leurs places dans la préparation du missionnaire. « **Le dialogue**, écrivait-il lui-même, **comme toute démarche spirituelle, ne s'improvise pas** ; il se prépare sérieusement. » Ou encore : « *Avant d'entrer en contact avec celui vers qui on sera envoyé, il faut connaître sa culture artistique, littéraire, ses coutumes, ses façons de vivre, alors seulement peut commencer le véritable dialogue.* »

C'était un homme soucieux non seulement d'être pont entre les religions, mais soucieux également d'aider ses coreligionnaires et compatriotes à être eux aussi ponts de rencontres et de dialogues. Pour lui, disait-il, « La culture musulmane nous apportait beaucoup et dans la mesure où notre vie

<sup>10</sup> Cf Armand Duval, pp77-99.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, p84

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, p83

chrétienne était significative, nous étions en mesure de faire tomber de nombreux préjugés. »<sup>13</sup>

Les sœurs Clarisses qui l'ont connu à Notre Dame d'Afrique sont unanimes : « Le Père Deckers était d'un dévouement sans pareil ; il ne savait pas refuser. Que de jeunes étudiants, que de personnes diverses, de l'Afrique noire ou d'ailleurs, venaient sonner à la porte des Pères Blancs, à Notre-Dame d'Afrique ! Le matin nous avions la messe à six heures trente. Six heures trente, pas de Père... et, un instant après, il entre en coup de vent et s'excuse : "Voilà, au moment de partir, on est venu pour un conseil, un réconfort, ou bien il fallait vite accompagner un pauvre type à l'aéroport, et après filer dare-dare au monastère." (...) « Un jour, comme il faisait très froid, la prieure lui donne un beau pull-over, tout neuf et bien chaud. Il remercie. Le lendemain, le temps n'est pas meilleur et le Père arrive, en chemisette : "Mais Père, vous n'avez pas mis le pull. - Un pauvre garçon en avait bien plus besoin que moi !" Lui-même revenait de vacances, chargé de paquets ; il voulait rendre service à tous et ne refusait rien ; dans son auto, il avait à peine la place où s'asseoir. »<sup>14</sup>

Comme ses compagnons martyrs, Charles était conscient de la situation de terreur qui régnait en Algérie dans les années 90. Mais il avait lui aussi choisi de rester. A un ami, il disait : « *Je sais que mes activités sont dangereuses pour ma vie. Mais ici est ma vocation, je reste* » « *Nous mettons toute notre confiance en celui qui tient dans ses mains la destinée de tous les hommes* » « partir, ça sera de la lâcheté alors que tant de gens souffrent » « Par notre présence, nous souhaitons être des témoins et non des prêcheurs » ! Il a été en effet ce témoin de l'amour jusqu'en ce jour fatidique du 27 décembre 1994 quand il fut assassiné.

### **Alain Dieulangard<sup>15</sup>, chercheur de Dieu qui s'abandonne totalement en Lui !**

Alain est né le 21 mai 1919 à Saint Briec dans les Côtes d'Armor. Il est issu, lui aussi, d'une famille très pieuse qui donnera 5 de ses enfants, sur les 10 qu'ils étaient, à la vie religieuse. Et pourtant, rien pendant l'enfance d'Alain ne

présageait une vocation missionnaire. C'est seulement après ses études de droit qu'il demandera à entrer chez les Pères Blancs en 1943. Il fait son serment à Thibar le 29 juin 1949 et est ordonné prêtre le 1<sup>er</sup> février 1950.

Alain rêvait lui-aussi d'être envoyé en mission en Afrique subsaharienne, plus spécialement en Ouganda. Mais c'est en Algérie qu'il fut nommé par ces supérieurs. Cela supposait 4 années d'études supplémentaires de l'arabe et du kabyle. Il écrit lui-même : « *J'aurais préféré la mission en Afrique noire, mais puisque la Providence m'envoie ici, c'est la Kabylie que je dois désormais préférer... C'est d'ailleurs un pays magnifique et les Kabyles sont certainement très sympathiques... La seule chose qui m'effraie un peu, c'est cette perspective de quatre années d'études (au minimum) qui m'attendent à partir d'octobre (deux ans à la Manouba, Tunis, et deux ans au Centre d'Études Berbères, en Kabylie). J'espère au moins ne pas avoir à les redoubler toutes... ! Enfin, l'essentiel est de se donner tout entier au Bon Dieu là où Il le veut et comme Il le veut...* »<sup>16</sup>

Avec cet esprit d'abandon total à la volonté de Dieu qui le caractérisait, il passera les 44 années restantes de sa vie en Algérie, et plus particulièrement dans les montagnes de la Kabylie. Il a enseigné et dirigé des écoles à Djemaa-Saharidj, aux Ouadhias, à Béni-Yenni, Aïn el-Hammam et Azazga jusqu'à la nationalisation des écoles dans les années 1976. C'était également un homme donné à la communauté chrétienne car il assurait la catéchèse aux enfants, et les visites aux anciens chrétiens qui ne pouvaient pas quitter le pays.

Comme personnalité, Alain était peu bavard, discret et souvent en retrait ! Depuis sa formation, il avait reçu de ses condisciples le surnom de « *grand-père* », peut-être à cause de sa vocation tardive. Il avait fait des études de droits avant de rentrer chez les PB. Mais comme disait l'un de ceux qui l'avaient bien connu, si on l'appelait « *grand-père* » depuis sa jeunesse, c'est bien parce qu'il en avait aussi la tendresse. D'ailleurs, c'est ce que confirme une religieuse qui l'a bien connu : « *Il fait partie de ceux qui ont tout donné à Dieu et aux hommes. Son*

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, 79

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 87

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Armand Duval, pp59-75

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, p61

*sourire rayonnant nous dit la transparence de son âme. Le travail de tels apôtres continue bien au-delà de leur vie terrestre... »<sup>17</sup>*

Alain était à la fois un homme doux et profondément spirituel ! C'était un prêtre à la fois missionnaire et mystique. Amar, un témoin, rapporté par Armand Duval, disait : « *Quand le Père Alain commence à me parler de Dieu, je me rappelle qu'il ferme les yeux, et, avec douceur, il lâche ses mots à voix si basse qu'il me faut tendre l'oreille : "Il faut aimer Dieu notre Père, notre refuge et notre vie, en aimant aussi nos frères dans le Seigneur Jésus Christ" ; c'est ce qu'il nous répète sans cesse.* »<sup>18</sup>

Alain était un vrai chercheur de Dieu, toujours désireux de passer plus de temps dans le silence et le recueillement. Il y eut même un temps où il a fortement pensé à se retirer dans la vie contemplative. Mais Jean Chevillard qui était son supérieur à l'époque l'a convaincu que la vie contemplative était un « trop grand luxe » pour le dévoué apôtre qu'il était ! Revenu sur le terrain il gardera toujours cette soif d'une vie spirituelle plus profonde. On retrouve souvent chez lui cette phrase : « continuez à prier pour ma santé spirituelle (l'autre étant sans problème) » ou encore, comme dit Armand Duval, « quand il parle d'« une petite santé qui se porte à merveille » il ajoute ... « s'il pouvait en être de même au plan spirituel. »<sup>19</sup>

Pour moi, il était le soufi du groupe, le missionnaire à la fois mystique et actif, peu bavard ! On avait l'impression qu'il priait dans l'action. Une autre religieuse chez qui elle disait la messe témoigne : « *Après la lecture de l'Évangile, il s'asseyait, se ratatinait sur lui-même et prononçait quelques paroles presque inaudibles ; c'était un dialogue avec le Seigneur.* »

Un aspect très particulier chez Alain qu'on ne retrouve pas chez ses confrères de communauté ou même chez les Pères Blancs d'une façon générale, est son engagement dans le renouveau charismatique avec les chrétiens algériens. Il ne prêchait pas sur les routes, mais il accueillait bien volontiers ceux et celles qui voulaient connaître Jésus Christ et embrasser sa façon de vivre. Il en a accompagné au baptême, et il avait le souci de leur formation.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, 73

<sup>18</sup> Armand Duval, p64

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, p66

C'est un apôtre qui était tout donné à Dieu et aux autres. Une fois, à la fin d'une célébration de sacrements pour les néophytes, lorsqu'on lui donna la parole à la fin, il dit : « *Seigneur, maintenant, vous pouvez rappeler votre serviteur* ». Il paraît que le jeune Chessel était présent à cette célébration ; et il ajoute après Alain : « *Quant à moi, je veux mettre mes pas dans ceux du Père Alain !* »

## Conclusions

Il serait difficile de terminer cette présentation sans se poser la question que se posent beaucoup de gens qui apprennent l'histoire des martyres de Tizi-Ouzou. **Qu'est-ce qu'il y a de commun entre ces 4 missionnaires ? Ou encore cette question fondamentale : pourquoi rester alors qu'ils pouvaient bien partir, et se mettre à l'abri quelque part ailleurs ?**

Ce qu'il y a de commun entre ces apôtres de l'Amour, c'est la passion pour Dieu et pour l'Homme ! Ils avaient, dans leur diversité de caractères et de tempéraments, hérités et réalisés ces paroles fondamentales de Lavigerie : « j'ai tout aimé dans notre Afrique » ! Et c'est là précisément que se trouve aussi la réponse à la question : pourquoi sont-ils restés. Car lorsqu'on aime quelqu'un, on l'aime entièrement, dans le bonheur comme dans le malheur ! D'une façon plus profonde, ils ont fait ce que le Christ lui-même aurait fait s'il était physiquement à Tizi-Ouzou, i.e. rester auprès de ce peuple que Dieu aime.

Ils ne prétendaient pas du tout à être des héros ! Ils voulaient tout simplement vivre leur foi au milieu de ce peuple qui souffrait. Et leur foi était l'amour, amour de toute personne même s'il fallait en souffrir : « *Aimez, [Aimez] quoi que vous en ayez souffert, quoi que vous puissiez en souffrir encore* » disait notre fondateur Lavigerie.

Au-delà de l'amour passionné et fou pour l'Afrique on peut noter chez eux, comme chez tous les missionnaires qui s'engagent sur le chemin du dialogue, un autre héritage de Lavigerie : un profond respect pour la conscience et la religion de l'autre : « A aucun degré, leur disait Lavigerie, je ne veux ni de la force, ni de la contrainte, ni de la séduction, pour amener les âmes à une foi dont la condition

première est d'être libre. » Christian Chessel l'avait bien compris puisqu'il dit lui aussi : « Mon [ministère de prêtre missionnaire], s'il veut être un ministère de service de Dieu et de service des hommes, ne peut que s'enraciner dans un respect profond des consciences, des valeurs, des cultures, comme de l'histoire propre de chacun.

*Partir en mission, c'est d'abord apprendre à quitter ses sandales devant la terre sainte que représente l'autre ; c'est apprendre que le serviteur n'est pas plus grand que son maître (Jn 13, 16). »*





## **From Palm Sunday on the way to Easter**

The procession with the palm branches to remind us of the joyful entry of Jesus into Jerusalem also reminds me of the opportunism that plagues and often grips us all. People praise each other when they can get something from each other. When that possible advantage disappears or the person has lost a certain status due to circumstances, we see how quickly this praise disappears, the person is simply pushed aside and even vilified. No, the hypocrisy of Palm Sunday is not a story of long past, but remains its full actuality. A lot of friendship and appreciation are feigned and endure as long as one can take advantage of them. How many efforts are made to have a selfie with a supposedly important person, but how many selfies are taken with a poor one meets on the street or with a person with a disability?

The people of Jerusalem saw in Jesus their new king and were already dreaming of all that He could provide for them. Of the message He had brought them they had understood nothing. They saw only their opportunistic advantages, and so they stood their waving palm branches and certainly trying to be in the front row to be seen. Jesus did know how pathetic and vain that all was and already saw as in a dream how He would be reviled by those same people a few days later and how Sunday's "Hosanna" would distort into a "Crucify Him" on Friday. It teaches us not to attach too much importance to the many beautiful words that people speak to and about us, because these words are ephemeral and can change key very quickly according to their convenience. And perhaps we should not attach too much importance to the negative things that are said about us, because they often say more about the person who says them than about ourselves.

The One who looks into our eyes sincerely and without any ulterior motives is God Himself. And it is also in His eyes that we may look and lay off all masks and makeup with which we want to show ourselves a little better than we really are. With God, all masks may and must come off and we are invited to be who we really

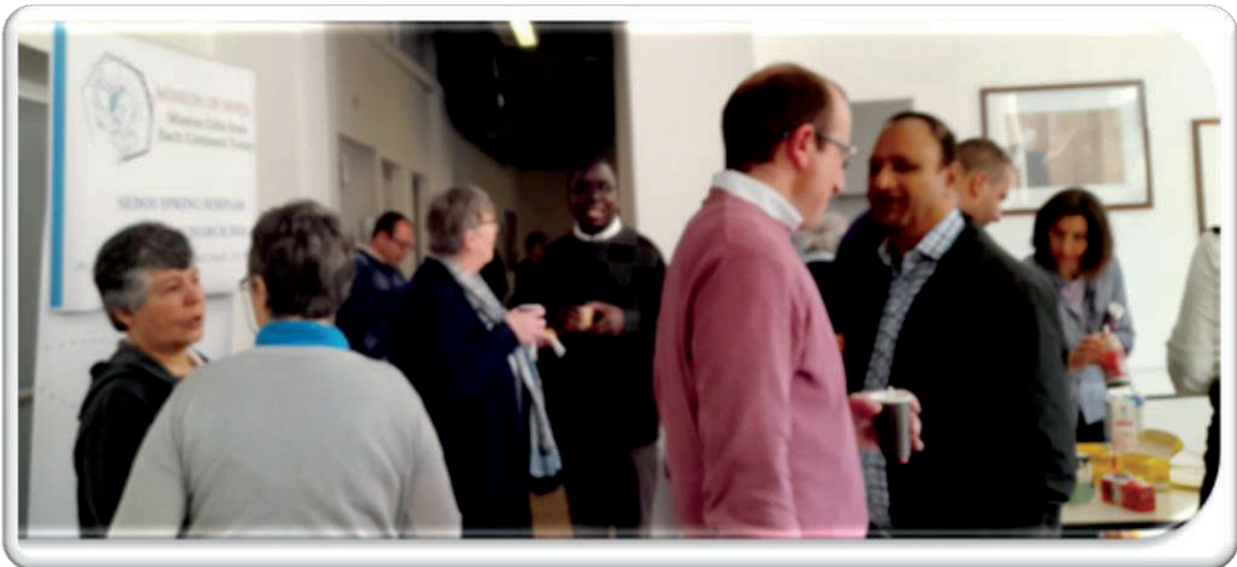
are and to implore His grace and mercy about it. We may appear before Him with our hurts, with our sins, with our faults that we cannot improve nor heal ourselves, but can confidently entrust to Him. It is He who helps us to discover the ideal image He has planted in us of Himself is all its beauty and greatness, and to find our true joy in it. And to be allowed to discover this image in others as well. Everything else is vanity, pure vanity.

Between Palm Sunday and Easter, much remains to be done, indeed, everything remains to be done. Again, it is not merely a remembrance of Christ's suffering, but also an invitation to live it with Him, from the observation that He also bore all the suffering that can happen to us. There is no suffering in the world with which He did not stand in solidarity, taking it on Himself and bearing it with Him. Here I want to dwell for a moment on the moment when Jesus was nailed to the cross after which the cross was erected. What must Jesus have been thinking about then? Perhaps of Judas who had betrayed Him. Is there anything worse that can happen to anyone than to be betrayed by his best friends? Jesus had put His full trust in Judas, otherwise He would not have entrusted him with the management of the money. One does not give that into the hands of the first, the best. What feeling He must have had at the moment when Judas appeared in the garden and betrayed Him with a kiss. Once again hypocrisy triumphs here by perverting a kiss as a sign of love into a sign of hatred. This was his "hosanna" which he distorted into his "crucify Him." And there hung the Son of Man, completely naked, stripped of the last shred of respect people could still give Him. When arrogance reigns supreme, any form of respect also fails. "But I am no longer a man, a worm, mocked and despised by men" (Psalm 22:7). Again, this is more than a story from the distant past, but daily people like Jesus are betrayed and humiliated, mocked and despised in this way. And it is Jesus who then meets them with his comfort and encouragement, with a compassion that has grown from his own deep

experience and therefore can only be authentic, stripped of all pretense.

But all that, as sad and discouraging as it may all sound, has not and is not the last word. Above all, the true "hosanna" breaks through that now culminates in an "alleluia" at the moment of the Resurrection. Not the opportunism and hypocrisy of fellow men have the last word, nor betrayal and total disrespect, but rather full confidence that God is there who never abandons man, even and especially not in death. What a wonderful perspective is given to us here, the perspective of resurrection. It is this perspective that we may cherish in the darkest days of our lives and that makes us realize that after every night, no matter how dark it may be, the sun will rise like a new dawn, to give a new perspective and a new meaning to our lives, perhaps in a completely different and totally unexpected way.

Jesus consciously did not cling to the pleasure that the cheering with palms tried to give Him. He knew that in this the true meaning of life could not be found. He let them rejoice and, in the meantime, moved on, knowing that through Golgotha He would find the way to the true joy, the joy of resurrection and eternal life that only God, His Father could give Him. Is it this joy that we seek in life, or do we still often allow ourselves to be blinded by the false pleasure that the world wants to present to us? It is for this reason that we speak of Easter peace and also Easter joy. For deep peace in our hearts also brings deep joy. Once this peace and joy has been allowed to find a place in our hearts, we will begin to see and experience everything that happens to us in a completely different way. Just as we took the time to prepare for Easter throughout Lent, we now also want to take the time, even liturgically some more time, to really let the reality of Easter penetrate us. To all, a good preparation for Easter and a blessed Easter season!



# SEDOS <sup>7</sup> EVENTS 2024

**Autumn Seminar**

**on 7th November, 2024**

**Theme: Intergenerational Living for  
Mission**

**Venue: UMSG**

**SEDOS General Assembly**

**&**

**Christmas Party**

**on 18th December, 2024**

**Venue: UMSG**

**SEDOS Residential Seminar will be**

**from 16-20 June, 2025 in Nemi**

**(Details will follow)**

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## SEDOS RESIDENTIAL SEMINAR

At Casa Divin Maestro, Ariccia  
Rome  
From 6-10 May, 2024

*Prophetic witness for universal  
communion:  
Mission in conflict zones and healing*

