

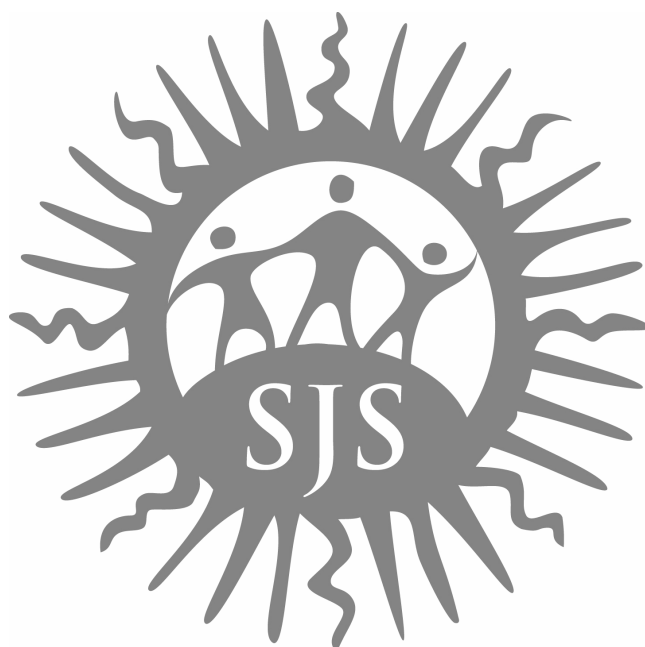
# Promotio Iustitiae

**The European Social Week - Piešťany (Slovakia)  
Towards a Common Spirituality in the Social Apostolate  
Frejek, Sievers, Izuzquiza, Jérôme, Thomasset, Rémon,  
O'Hanlon, Hainz, Magallón, MacPartlin, Franco**

**Interviews: General Congregation 35  
Alvarez (LOY), Bwanali (ZAM), Daccache (PRO), Fung (MAS),  
Gendron (CHN), Goussikindey (AOC), Mombé (AOC), Raj (MDU)**



**Social Justice Secretariat**



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## EDITORIAL

Our editorial team and the entire office of the Social Justice Secretariat have decided to bring out this issue before this year's Christmas mail floods the post offices of the whole world. The real truth is that we want to bring this issue out before the General Congregation 35 (GC 35) that awaits us at the turn of the New Year. The moment of truth and humility has arrived.

The European Social Week held at Piešťany (Slovakia) was convoked with the goal of bringing together the various families and traditions of Jesuits and friends engaged in the social apostolate in Europe. This issue of *Promotio Iustitiae* brings out the main interventions, some of the personal testimonies and a few concluding remarks in the hope that Jesuits all over the world will appreciate the effort to find together the roots of our apostolic commitment.

By publishing this material we are not moved only by anecdotal interest or even by a legitimate desire to highlight the novel ideas and practices of the social apostolate in different regions of the world. First and foremost, we believe that this desire to look for our common roots, our underlying spiritual force, is a sign of the new times, an expression of the wind that the Spirit blows whenever and wherever it wants. One senses all over the world the desire to root our social engagement in our faith; to foreground our commitment to justice in our identity as people who believe in the presence of our Lord active in the midst of our world. We all felt a deep consolation at the realisation that the waters quenching our inner thirst flow from the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius.

Secondly, this meeting of various families and traditions, so well prepared, is an honest attempt at learning how to walk together, respecting different histories and charisms. The difficulties facing the creation of a deeper political union among the 27 member countries of the European Union are well known. Similar obstacles lie in the way of constructing a European Jesuit Conference with well-defined apostolic plans and priorities. The meeting at Piešťany has been an important step ahead in that direction.

We complete here, before the General Congregation, the set of interviews initiated in the previous issue. In spite of the variety of contexts there is a commonality of desires and dreams: how to respond more generously to the greater universal good as one apostolic body.

Our next issue in 2008 will be dedicated to the Congregation and to the new leader that the Lord will give us. Merry Christmas and, this time more than ever for us Jesuits and members of the Ignatian family, God's blessing for the New Year 2008.

Fernando Franco SJ

# EUROPEAN SOCIAL WEEK

Towards a Common Spirituality in the Social Apostolate  
Piešťany (Slovakia), 24-28 August 2007

## An Introduction to the Social Week

Norbert Frejek SJ<sup>1</sup>

In the second half of August this year, men and women involved in the Jesuit social apostolate in Europe met in Piešťany (Slovak Republic) at the meeting that we had named the Social Week. This was an opportune moment to share our experiences of social work inside the Church and society. Pope Benedict XVI wrote in *Deus caritas est* that *caritas* is an important part of the Church's mission. Not only liturgy and prayer, but also action and engagement are at the centre of Christian community life.

We know now that we work with people but we need power and grace. Spirituality is also a source of this power and it provides human reflection on our engagement. Jesus said: "Whoever remains in me, with me in him, bears fruit in plenty." (John 15: 5). The theme of the Week was "Towards a Common Spirituality in the Social Apostolate." We shared our thoughts about our spiritual roots, reflected on key experiences that have made us live the social apostolate, and discovered where our individual missions come together.

To account for our mission and to promote justice in society and in the places where we live, we need as a first step to read and meditate on the Word of God. Jesus gives us the answer to the question of how to work and proclaim our mission as a part of the mission of the Church and the Society of Jesus. We met to collect our experiences, to share, to pray together, to discover hope as a theological concept, and further, to link our analysis of European societies with our mission.

How can we find a common spirituality for the social apostolate in Europe? And is it possible to find it? During the Social Week we wanted to find answers to these questions. The theme for the group sharing was "My personal foundational experience." Each participant was invited to condense his/her foundational experience in a word or brief phrase, which he/she was to write on a piece of paper, also noting down the year of the experience. An exercise like the Ignatian examination of conscience and also some spiritual exercises (like the one called Pentecost) helped each person to find an individual answer. Each participant was invited to recollect his or her experience and findings.

We aimed at linking the spirituality of the social apostolate with the European social context, which is rich and colourful but highly varied. Western and Southern Europe have problems very different from those of Eastern Europe and former communist countries. Listening to the testimonies we could

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<sup>1</sup>Fr. Norbert Frejek SJ is the Director of the Angelus Silesius House in Wroclaw (Poland). He was a member of the preparatory committee of the Social Week [Editor's Note].



recognize our experience and mission, but we also discovered that Eastern, Western and Southern experiences were often not compatible. Moreover, problems like unemployment, refugees, drugs, corruption, homeless people and social injustice, all look very different in the Western and Eastern parts of our continent. In looking for answers to contemporary questions in our apostolate, spirituality could be a guiding light showing the way.

Jesuits and our lay partners were participants at the Social Week. The following networks and works were represented: European Jesuits in Social Sciences (Eurojess), Jesuit Refugee Service, *Jésuites en monde populaire/Jesuitas en el Mundo Popular*, migrations, *Mission Ouvrière/Misión Obrera* and the Social Justice Secretariat (Rome).

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## Highlights from the Programme of the Social Week Uta Sievers

“**M**aybe this meeting is about discovering that our commitment to social justice is actually the *source* of our spirituality?” was the thought of one participant pondering on the first day of the Social Week 2007. The title of the four-day meeting, “Towards a Common Spirituality in the Social Apostolate”, had attracted 65 Jesuits and lay people to Piešťany, in Slovakia, among them almost all the provincial coordinators of the social apostolate in Europe; Marc Rotsaert SJ, the president of the Conference of European Provincials; a number of highly motivated scholastics; Brendan MacPartlin, the newly elected social apostolate coordinator for Europe, and people from the Social Justice Secretariat in Rome. Participants had come from Portugal, Spain, France, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Belgium, Switzerland, Austria, Germany, Italy, Malta, Greece, Croatia, Slovenia, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland and Ukraine. The Slovak Jesuits had opened up their retreat centre in Piešťany for the occasion, providing a space for plenary sessions and reflection in small groups at their pastoral centre next door. The scene was set for a truly European reflection on the spirituality of the social apostolate.

“Foundational Experiences” was the topic of the first day, looking at questions such as “Why are we in the Social Apostolate” and “What are the anthropological and theological concepts linked to this experience?” Daniel Izuzquiza SJ started the day with a presentation (see page 10) during which participants were challenged to open up their notions of spirituality. Three testimonies by Rosario Farmhouse (JRS Portugal), Jérôme SJ (*Mission Ouvrière*, France, see page 20) and Martín Iriberry SJ (social apostolate coordinator for Loyola province, Spain) helped participants connect or re-connect with their own foundational experiences, which they were asked to share in small groups afterwards. Collecting the where, what and when of those experiences on Post-It notes led to the creation of a big European ‘spirituality map’ which decorated the plenary room for the next few days as a point of reference. Participants reflected on the map and shared their insights:

“Many places and people have brought us where we are.”

“Foundational experiences often started from personal contact (friendship) or came out of a political context.”

“Some people have had their foundational experiences before others in this room were even born!”

“Encountering the poor and the desire to commit ourselves to social justice open us to a new image of God and of ourselves before God.”

“I would like to highlight the moment when one recognises this experience as a gift, as a grace received. We can only recognise it as foundational after we have lived it as an encounter.”

“If the Society of Jesus (in GC 32) had not committed itself to the option for the poor, we would not have had these experiences.”

In his reflection on spirituality from an anthropological point of view, Christoph Albrecht SJ (Switzerland) stressed that some aspects of the spirituality of the social apostolate are shared by all human beings, for example, the experience of burning out. But “Mother Teresa doesn’t burn out,” he said, because in the ‘real encounter,’ we are like burning bushes which are not themselves consumed. The experience of a real encounter with the other, the poor person, the stranger, is more important than ‘doing a lot’ (for the poor). Daniel Izuzquiza SJ took up the image of the burning bush as he continued the session from a theological perspective. He quoted Egide van Broekhoven, a Belgian worker priest: “In this place and at this time in Brussels, these concrete men, in this greasy foundry, our friends too, all this is reality and this reality is sacred, because it is the only situation through which God can reach us, and through which in fact He does reach us. Even if I had to choose between the burning bush and Brussels, I’d choose Brussels.” Referring to the ‘spirituality map,’ he expressed concern that people might feel they had ‘fixed’ their spirituality or even their foundational experience in one point in time and space, whereas it was more like a trajectory, bringing up images of pilgrimage, of an itinerary, better reflected in the term ‘foundational history.’

The second day of the meeting addressed the issues of crisis and transformation, facing questions like “What happens on a human and transcendent level as a result of the foundational experiences?” and “How do we access, live and describe processes of transformation?” The day started with three testimonies by Marcel Rémon SJ (Belgium, see page 31), Peter Zahoránsky SJ (Slovakia) and Leo De Weerd SJ (Belgium). All spoke about crises and moments of transformation they had been through in their lives. In his talk on the inter-relatedness of social action and Christian faith, Alain Thomasset SJ (France) outlined how crises can be opportunities to enter into a mode of compassion and to live in solidarity of hope; he cited many examples from lay people with whom he has worked (see page 25). Participants shared their own crises and transformations in small groups and brought them to the Sunday Eucharist to celebrate their life-giving potential.

Continuing with the topic of crisis and transformation, the following day started with a presentation on Hope as a theological concept present in the struggle for transformation, by Gerard O’Hanlon SJ (Ireland); his contribution may be found on page 33. Back in the small groups, the task was to prepare the final Eucharist with a prayer, gesture, item, song, poem, image of hope. The afternoon was dedicated to “Our Mission in the Social Apostolate.” As an introduction, Michael Hainz SJ (Germany) spoke about “Ways of Analysing European Society” (see page 42). Gathering in small groups, the participants then went through a process of analysing their own place in society from a personal point of view and the meaning they attach to that place.

The last day continued the topic of “Our Mission and the Social Apostolate” through an interactive exercise. Participants were asked to write on a piece of cardboard a word or a short phrase expressing the common mission of the social apostolate today. They then sat together in groups with those who had written down similar visions. A ‘map’ of the room was drawn which could be seen as the emerging map of the social apostolate of the future. With a final presentation, Brendan MacPartlin SJ, the new European coordinator of the social apostolate, and Fernando Franco SJ, the director of the Social Justice Secretariat, concluded the Social Week 2007 (see pages 55 and 57). During the final Eucharist, participants brought forward the prayers and items they had prepared the day before on the topic of hope.

At a homely function before departing, the whole group expressed our gratitude to all the employees of the retreat house and to all the Slovak scholastics who had made the Social Week possible. We extend our gratitude again to all of them. It is only right to end this overview of the process by expressing our appreciation to all the Jesuits who formed part of the preparatory committee. They worked hard for two years to prepare the meeting and functioned as a steering committee during the Week. Remembering with gratitude: Andreas Gösele (GER), Brendan MacPartlin (HIB), Dušan Bezák (SVK), Fernando Franco (GUJ), Josep Buades Fuster (ARA),

Lucien Descoffres (GAL), Michael Schöpf (GER), Norbert Frejek (PME) and Tony O'Riordan (HIB).

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## Opening up the Concept of Spirituality Daniel Izuzquiza SJ

I have been asked to open up the concept of spirituality as a way of framing the discussion for this week. There are two distinct tasks; they might even point in divergent directions. 'Opening up' an issue is opposed to closing it down, but at the same time, 'framing' is a way of limiting or 'closing' it. Given this ambiguity, I shall provide a general framework to initiate our discussion without developing any particular aspect in detail. An additional clarification. I don't feel very comfortable talking about the 'concept' of spirituality because it sounds too abstract. I prefer to talk about the *notion* of spirituality in a more intuitive (even impressionistic) way.

### **Anselm Kiefer, Tupac Shakur, and us**

A few days before coming to Slovakia I had the chance to visit Bilbao's Guggenheim Museum, where I could admire the work of the German artist Anselm Kiefer. I was struck by one of his sculptures, titled *Merkaba*, made out of various pieces of concrete forming a ladder that seemed to connect earth and heaven—with a clear and explicit reference to Jacob's experience in the Old Testament. The audio guide said that, back in 1966, Anselm Kiefer spent three weeks in France at the Dominican convent of La Tourette, built by the architect Le Corbusier. Kiefer said he wanted to learn "how to give concrete material appearance to abstract religious ideas." It appears that this short visit was a turning point for Kiefer, who decided to abandon his study of law and pursue his interest in art. Later on, Kiefer has referred to "the spirituality of the concrete" as one of the guiding principles of his art.

Let me point out that the word 'concrete' has a double meaning in English: as a noun it refers to a stone-like material used for various structural purposes,

while as an adjective it means something concerned with realities or actual instances rather than abstractions. Inspired by this word and image, I would like to start talking about a spirituality of the 'concrete' as a way of providing the basis for an urban spirituality and a non-abstract spirituality – a good start for a meeting concerned with the spirituality of the social apostolate in Europe.

I have also remembered a text by an American hip-hop composer and singer called Tupac Shakur. After a short and difficult life that led him to prison, he was killed in a drive-by shooting at the age of twenty-five.

*Did you hear about the rose that grew from a crack in the concrete?  
Proving nature's law is wrong it learned to walk without feet.  
Funny it seems, but by keeping its dreams, it learned to breathe fresh air.  
Long live the rose that grew from concrete when no one else ever cared.*  
(Tupac Shakur)

According to this urban poet, in the midst of violence, injustice, loneliness, loss, or desperation, in the concrete reality of urban life, roses may grow! Spirituality refers to the ability to *recognize* that reality and, at the same time, to the invitation to *make* that reality possible.

#### **A personal witness: Egide van Broeckhoven SJ**

I want to start my presentation referring to the testimony of a personal witness. He writes about transforming triviality into an experience of depth (*Journal spirituel d'un jésuite en usine* XIII, 65).

Some of you may be familiar with the life and writings of Egide van Broeckhoven. He was a Flemish Jesuit, a young worker priest who died in 1967 in a work-related accident at the age of 33. His diary has been published in several languages,<sup>1</sup> and offers a wonderful example of what a Spirit-filled life may look like in the midst of social engagement in an urban context. I have chosen him as a particular example not only because of his general value as a contemporary mystic, but also because I find him especially appropriate for our group.

On the one hand, he links us to the tradition of *Mission Ouvrière* in the 1960s, while on the other hand he offers the testimony of a young Jesuit during the last period of his formation and the first years as a priest. From this perspective, he offers a good initial working definition of spirituality as the ability "to transform trivial things into an experience of depth." Egide felt a

<sup>1</sup>Here are the references for the French, English, and Spanish editions. Egide van Broeckhoven SJ, *Journal spirituel d'un jésuite en usine. Du temps des études au temps du travail*. Présenté et traduit du néerlandais par George Neefs, SJ. Collection «Christus», n. 43, Desclée de Brouwer-Bellarmin: Paris 1976. Egide Van Broeckhoven SJ, *A Friend To All Men, The Diary Of A Worker-Priest*, Denville, NJ: Dimension Books 1977. Preface by Peter G. Van Breemen, edited and with introduction by George Neefs. Translated from the French by Thomas Matus. Josep Maria Rambla SJ, *Dios, la amistad y los pobres. La mística de Egide van Broeckhoven, jesuita obrero*, Santander: Sal Terrae 2007.

particular personal calling to friendship as a spiritual experience, and actually established strong relationships with fellow workers and neighbours. “The difference between a spirituality based on an ascetic flight from the world (*fuga mundis*) and one centred on the world lies in our incapacity to comprehend God’s breadth and depth” (*Journal I*, 73).

This quotation sounds like an invitation to a double movement—going deeper, going farther. Later on we read in his diary: “Friendship develops itself in two different directions that converge to some kind of unity: (i) an in-depth contact with the person; and (ii) updating that depth in the dimensions (length and breadth) of daily, ordinary life” (*Journal XXII*, 74). This is important for any Christian spirituality, since we are surrounded by God’s depth and breadth, and only by embracing both dimensions can a complete spirituality develop. This is of course a classical topic in our Christian tradition, as the letter to the Ephesians says: “I pray that you will, with all the saints, have strength to grasp the breadth and the length, the height and the depth, until, knowing the love of Christ, which is beyond all knowledge, you are filled with the utter fullness of God” (Eph 3: 17-19). Or, in the words of a 19<sup>th</sup> century hymn:

*There's a wideness in God's mercy  
like the wideness of the sea;  
there's a kindness in his justice,  
which is more than liberty.*  
(Frederick William Faber, 1862)

We Jesuits engaged in the social apostolate are invited to deepen our relationships, particularly with the poor and excluded persons in our societies, a movement of personal depth and social descent. And we are all invited to expand these relationships until we can embrace the whole of humanity in God’s love: a movement of universal breadth and structural dimensions. Let me quote Egide once again:

*The God of above, the God of beyond, the God of immense spaces, loves all human beings; the efficacious sign of this love is the realisation of his word: the Good News is announced to the poor people. The immense breadth of God's love has incarnated itself in Christ and in his will to save us all; this love is expanded by the evangelisation of the poor: a sine qua non condition for the Church to continue unfolding Christ's life, in its breadth, length, and depth, as a space where the deep sea, more powerful than the divine Ocean, can move and give life to all creation with the living Life of God (*Journal XXI*, 51).*

### **Water: a concrete symbol**

Our second approach to the notion of spirituality is symbolic. I use the image or symbol of water to introduce different aspects or levels of spirituality.

Notice that we are moving from a solid image (concrete) to a liquid one. Both solid and liquid images are good starting points for a spiritual reflection, which connects with a more airy reality—Spirit, *pneuma*, *ruah*. One of the most poignant sociologists of the moment (Zygmunt Bauman) describes our contemporary world as “liquid modernity.”

I decided to use this image a few weeks ago while swimming in Southern Spain. I went there to give a talk, but I invited an African migrant who lives in our Jesuit community in Madrid to come along. He was having a hard time those days—he was unemployed, had personal difficulties, was feeling depressed. So off we went. Once there, he told me he had never entered the ocean to swim and at the age of 35 he was afraid to do so. I finally convinced him to go to the beach, go into the water, and enjoy swimming. At that very moment, I realised we were sharing a spiritual experience—deep and wide as the Ocean.<sup>2</sup>

We all know that water is a key symbol in almost every culture and religion. This will help us to unfold four levels of spirituality.

Level	Image	Content	Key-word	Main 'actor'	Theological reflection	Egide's <i>Journal</i>
1	Thirst	We are water, we desire the Source	Spirituality	Human	Theology of <i>Surnaturel</i>	XXI, 17 XXV, 2
2	Ocean and Eyes	Mystical and prophetic religions. Nature and history	Religion	God	Theology of Religious pluralism	XXI, 25-27
3	River	Kenosis. Jordan, Cross.	Christianity	Christ	Dialectic Theology	VII, 3
4	Glass	Mercy and justice. Glass of water, water wars	Faith-justice	The poor	Theology of Liberation	XXI, 51

### First level: the thirst for the Source

On the first level, we acknowledge that human beings are made out of water, and a significant fraction (around 60-70%) of the human body is water. Every human person has a spiritual dimension. Not only we are made out of water, but we all thirst for the Source. In the words of the Psalmist, “O God, you are my God, am seeking you; my soul is thirsting for you, my flesh is longing for you, a land parched weary and waterless.” (Psalm 63: 1).

Not everyone would agree on the specific meaning of this thirst and source. Many of our neighbours would not be at ease with a religious or Christian interpretation of this spiritual dimension. Many opinion polls in different countries say that a majority of the current population in our countries agree

<sup>2</sup>I find it not at all surprising that the current of the Trinity running through our lives is one of the oft-repeated features in Egide's diary (this is a theme he derives from Jan van Ruusbroec and other traditional mystic authors, but he actualises it in contemporary ways).

with the statement “I’m not a religious person, but I am a spiritual person.” I think it would be good, however, to remember in this context a couple of well-known episodes from the Gospel of John in which Jesus addresses a Samaritan woman and a group of Greeks, that is to say, non-Jewish human seekers, searching for the Source.<sup>3</sup>

### Second level: the Ocean and the Eyes

Moving now from basic human spirituality to an explicitly religious one, our water image becomes the Ocean as a key symbol for God or the Divine

*I come to you not only asking for a glass of water, but looking for its very source.  
I come to you not only asking for somebody who can guide me to the door, but  
looking for a path to the very hearth of God’s house;  
I come not only looking for the gift of love but for Love itself.*  
(Tagore)

We need to keep in mind the classical distinction between mystical and prophetic religions. The image of the Ocean refers more directly to the traditional religions of the East (Buddhism, Hinduism) in which the spiritual experience tends to express itself in the oceanic feeling of being surrounded by the non-personal immensity of the Divine. This is not the Christian experience as such; we are always facing the immensity of God in a deep personal relationship. I agree with Séamus Murphy SJ when he describes the serious challenges posed by current talk of spirituality, particularly for a Christian spirituality committed to social justice. These are first, the challenge of an inward, therapeutic, psychologically-oriented spirituality; and second, the ideology of nature-worship inspired by some New Age views.<sup>4</sup>

For this reason I prefer to talk not only about the ocean, but also about the eyes. The eyes, also made out of water, refer to the deep personal character of our encounter with the Living God. Ours is not a religion (simply) of nature, but a religion of history. Our God reveals himself in the context of injustices, labour conflicts, struggles for the land, personal quests, and so on—always as the God who accompanies and liberates God’s people. Christian spirituality is always invited to embody this mystical-prophetic tradition.

<sup>3</sup>Jesus answered, “If you only knew what God is offering and who it is that is saying to you: Give me a drink, you would have been the one to ask and he would have given you living water (John 4: 10). A few lines later, we read: Jesus answered, Whoever drinks this water will get thirsty again, but anyone who drinks the water that I shall give will never be thirsty again. The water that I shall give will turn into a spring inside him, welling up to eternal life” (John 4: 13-14). “On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood up and cried out, ‘If any man is thirsty let him come to me. Let the man come and drink!’” (John 7: 37).

<sup>4</sup>Séamus Murphy SJ, “Two Challenges for Social Spirituality” in *Windows on Social Spirituality: Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice* (Dublin: Columba Press 2003), pp. 148-159.



*O spring like crystal!  
If only, on your silvered-over faces,  
you would suddenly form  
the eyes I have desired,  
which I bear sketched deep within my heart.<sup>5</sup>  
(St. John of the Cross, *Spiritual Canticle*)*

This image of the eyes has a particular meaning for a spirituality of the social apostolate. Water and eyes come together in tears. We are called to submerge ourselves in the Ocean of God's eyes, full of tears, full of the poor people's tears. We encounter God's presence in our midst when we share the sufferings and hopes of those excluded from society, of the victims of injustice. Their tears merge with our own tears into God's tears, the current of Trinitarian liberating Love. Lucho Espinal, a Jesuit martyr for faith and justice, killed in Bolivia in 1980, expressed it with these poetic words:

*We want to keep giving ourselves, because  
You are waiting in the night,  
with a thousand eyes filled with tears.*

### **Third level: the River**

*Down to the river we ride (Bruce Springsteen)*

Water receives definitive Christian meaning with Jesus' baptism at the river Jordan. He, along with sinner and outcasts, went down to that river to be submerged in the waters. The rich scene is familiar to all of us, and carries powerful consequences for our understanding of life from the perspective of Christian spirituality. Again, I find useful a poetic approach, taken from a modern-classical text that clearly expresses that dynamics of descent is the very core of Christian spirituality:

#### *The Water Song<sup>6</sup>*

*Come, oh come! let us away –  
Lower, lower every day  
Oh, what joy it is to race  
Down to find the lowest place.  
This is the dearest law we know –  
'It is happy to go low.'  
Sweetest urge and sweetest will,  
'Let us go down lower still.'*

*Hear the summons night and day,  
Calling us to come away.  
From the heights we leap and flow  
To the valleys down below.  
Always answering to the call,  
To the lowest place of all.  
Sweetest urge and sweetest pain,  
To go low and rise again.*

<sup>5</sup>[www.karmel.at/ics/john/cn\\_15.html](http://www.karmel.at/ics/john/cn_15.html)

<sup>6</sup>Hannah Hurnard, *Hinds' Feet on High Places*, Eastbourne: Kingsway 2001 (original edition 1955), pp. 36-37.

In a more theological way, we can recall the hymn cited by Paul in his letter to the Philippians (Phil 2: 5-11). It is well known as a powerful passage with deep reverberations for Christian life, which it understands as identification with Christ through radical self-emptying (*kenosis*) and constant service to others. Biblical scholars have shown clearly that it is a pre-Pauline hymn of baptismal origin. It is also fairly well recognised that it is a hymn in the literal sense, that it is a poetic composition used in the liturgy. Reading the hymn in a baptismal key and, reciprocally, understanding baptism as participation in the descending movement of Jesus Christ (*kenosis*) turn out to have extremely important consequences. If such interpretations are valid, then the Church is by essence and by definition constituted as a kenotic body.

The socio-political implications of this affirmation are only too evident in a society structured according to the totally opposed movements of dominion, power, oppression, social ascent, meritocracy, violence and injustice. In fact, a recent study has shown clearly that in Philippians Paul is at once defending a redefinition of the social order and attacking the social stratification of the Roman Empire, basing his argument precisely on the kenotic humbling of Christ.<sup>7</sup> This movement of radical descent in solidarity with the poor of this earth was lived by Jesus himself in an outstanding way.<sup>8</sup>

Let me add a final remark. The Greek word *theorein* (contemplation) is a key concept in Greek philosophy, but it is striking to realise that in the Gospels it is used only once—or, better, twice, but both in the same sentence—precisely at the moment of Jesus' death.<sup>9</sup> "And when all the people who had gathered for the spectacle saw what had happened, they went home beating their breasts." (Luke 23: 48). The importance of this detail lays in that searching for a common spirituality in the social apostolate, we ought to remember that God's revelation—and, thus, human contemplation—takes place precisely at the Cross, in the reverse of history, outside the city, in the midst of suffering. We are together called to go there, down to the river, and to drink from Jesus' outpouring love.

#### Fourth level: a glass of water

*If anyone gives so much as a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is a disciple, then I tell you solemnly, he will most certainly not lose his reward.*  
(Matthew 10: 42)

<sup>7</sup>Cf. Joseph H. Hellerman, "The Humiliation of Christ in the Social World of Roman Philippi": *Biblioteca Sacra* 160 (2003) 321-336 and 421-433. Some of the specific Ignatian overtones of this same approach, which I am not explicitly considering here, may be found in Dean Brackley SJ, "Downward mobility: social implications of St Ignatius' *Two Standards*", *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits* 20, 1 (January 1988).

<sup>8</sup>According to the Gospel of John, the scenes at the cross provide two additional scenes connected with water: "After this Jesus knew that everything had been completed and to fulfil the scripture perfectly he said 'I am thirsty!'" (John 19: 28); "One of the soldiers pierced his side with a lance; and immediately there came out blood and water" (John 19: 34).

<sup>9</sup>Irénée Hausherr SJ, "Tèn Theorían tauten. Un hapax eiréménon et ses conséquences" in id., *Hésychasme et prière*, (Rome: Orientalia Christiana Analecta 1966), pp. 247-253.

So far I have stressed the fact that we need to *discern* spirituality, since not 'everything goes'. Even within Christian spirituality, it is necessary to unmask some currents of "spiritualistic spirituality" that tend to forget social injustice and the situation of the poor of this earth. However, in the Gospel we find a firm criterion, clear as crystal water. Jesus himself put it bluntly:

*Come you whom my Father has blessed, take for your heritage the kingdom prepared for you since the foundation of the world For I was hungry and you gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave me drink. (Matthew 25: 34-35).*

Personal encounter with the Lord takes place in actual relationships with those in need, with those who are excluded. Authentic Christian spirituality recognises the option for the poor as one of its essential features. The option for the poor is not a vague idea, but needs to be embodied in practices of daily life, in works of mercy. As simple and concrete as giving a glass of cold water to anyone who is thirsty.

Furthermore, in our current world, over 1.5 billion people lack access to adequate water and sanitation. If poverty is bad, then poverty without water is hell on earth. The reasoning now becomes a little more complex. Providing a glass of fresh and clean water leads us to think about climate change, deforestation, pollution, "water wars" and other global issues.<sup>10</sup> In other words, the option for the poor means a struggle for justice. This belongs to the core of any spirituality of my 'social' clarification.

### **A theological reflection: the *Surnaturel***

A further clarification may be needed because one sometimes finds attempts to articulate faith and justice within a dualistic perspective; more rarely than some decades ago, but still too often. In my view, one of the most important debates in 20<sup>th</sup> century Catholic theology throws light on this issue. I refer to the question of the relation between human nature and divine grace. According to Henri de Lubac SJ and other authors, every human person has a natural desire to see God, but this human desire cannot be fulfilled unless the fulfilment is given by God—the paradox of the *Surnaturel*. While this basic assertion is generally affirmed nowadays, it is also true that the former extrinsic view of God's grace reappears—sometimes in an unconscious way—in a dualist scheme shown in the following pairs of terms:

<sup>10</sup>Cf. Vandana Shiva, *Water Wars: Privatization, Pollution, and Profit*, Cambridge, MA: South End Press 2002. See also the initiative for an *Ecumenical Water Network*, launched by the World Council of Churches in 2005.

Nature	Grace
Body	Soul
Human being	God
Reason	Faith
State	Church
Politics	Theology
Exterior	Interior
Public	Private
Justice	Faith
Social Action	Spirituality

With this approach it is very hard to develop a real spirituality of the social apostolate, because it seems that we talk about two different realities.<sup>11</sup> At most, one may 'force' the connection between the two columns, but others will see it as a failed attempt to 'politicise' spiritual life. On the contrary, contemporary theology of the *Surnaturel* has helped to realise that the absolute dominion of Jesus Christ, Lord of all reality and Lord of all history, is without divisions of any kind. Having said this, I just want to stress that grace is always dynamic, and that it refers to a downward movement of descent—with important consequences in the socio-political field.<sup>12</sup>

This reality is not a mere individual issue of devotion, but one with strong political implications. Let me add three brief comments, from three different authors, that will help to clarify this topic. First, Aloysius Pieris has convincingly argued that the real way to overcome the division between faith and justice is, precisely, the option for the poor.<sup>13</sup> Without it, we fall back again into dualism. Second, we would do well to remember Dorothy Day's powerful witness of a spirituality driven by the theology of the supernatural that led her to a strong commitment with the poor, a steadfast struggle for justice, and a non-violent dedication for peace. Her spiritual politics can be summarized as

<sup>11</sup>This possible risk can be seen even in some formulations coming from the spirituality of liberation. See a significant example in Pedro Casaldàliga y José M<sup>a</sup> Vigil, *Espiritualidad de la liberación*, Santander: Sal Terrae 1992. I have elsewhere proposed an alternative view that tries to overcome these difficulties. See Daniel Izuzquiza SJ, "Can a Gift Be Wrapped? John Milbank and Supernatural Sociology": *The Heythrop Journal* 47 (2006) 387-404.

<sup>12</sup>A few significant quotes will suffice for this purpose:

"Onward, and upward. Action is action only in that way" (Maurice Blondel, *Action*, p. 127).

"Grace is always kenotic" (John Milbank, *The Suspended Middle*, p. 6).

"Grace is the law of downward movement" (Simone Weil, *La pesanteur et la grâce*, p. 55 Spanish edition).

"No one, after all, can lead any spiritual life unless he himself participates in the downward ascent in Christ" (Hugo Rahner SJ, *Ignatius the Theologian*, p. 16).

<sup>13</sup>Aloysius Pieris SJ, *God's Reign for God's Poor: A Return to the Jesus Formula*, Kelaniya: Tulana Research Centre 1999. Aloysius Pieris SJ, "La integración de fe y justicia en la 34<sup>a</sup> Congregación General" in id., *El Reino de Dios para los pobres de Dios. Retorno a la fórmula de Jesús*, Bilbao: Mensajero 2006, pp. 65-85.

“revolutionary descent, revolution from below.”<sup>14</sup> Third, Dominique Bertrand’s classical study on the letters of Saint Ignatius shows that the key interpretative clue to understand Ignatian social analysis lies in the “effective election of extreme positions” –expressed in two families of words, two nuclear terms, two socio-spiritual movements.<sup>15</sup> One is the Lord/servant relationship<sup>16</sup> showing a movement of descent, both spiritual and social. The second one is the pupil/schoolmaster relationship<sup>17</sup> showing a firm resolution to serve and to empower our neighbours, as God desires: an ascendant movement. Descending as the way to serve better and to render all reality to the only Lord: this is the core of the Ignatian view of social dynamics, which of course is a spiritual dynamic.

### Closing remarks or, rather, “opening” notes

As I said at the beginning, I have not tried to offer a full-blown development of the concept of spirituality. I have not presented in detail any feature; rather I wanted to provide some inputs from different perspectives – personal witness, symbolic approach, theological reflection. In others words, this is not a keynote address, it is just an introductory talk. I hope that these remarks may help to open our conversation. Now it is our task to continue the dialogue.

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<sup>14</sup>See Daniel Izuzquiza SJ, *Revolución desde abajo, descenso revolucionario: La política espiritual de Dorothy Day* (Barcelona: Cristianisme i Justícia 2006). Available at [www.fespinal.com](http://www.fespinal.com)

<sup>15</sup>Dominique Bertrand SJ, *La politique de Sainte Ignace de Loyola. L'analyse sociale*, Paris: Ed. Du Cerf 1985. Dominique Bertrand SJ, *La política de San Ignacio de Loyola. El análisis social*, Bilbao-Santander: Mensajero-Sal Térrea 2003.

<sup>16</sup>Expressed in the phrase “*Mi señor en el Señor Nuestro*”, i.e. “My lord in Our Lord” (St Ignatius).

<sup>17</sup>Condensed in the expression “*De los niños se hazen los grandes*”, i.e. “Children grow into adults” (St Ignatius).

## Testimony: Foundational Experiences

### Jérôme SJ

I shall evoke for you some of the foundational experiences which make sense of my life today. First of all, let me introduce myself. I studied engineering, worked for two years in India, and then I entered the Society. After the novitiate I had four years of studies in Paris, after which I worked in an employment-training institution in the suburbs of Paris while I completed my theology studies. And now I have been in Toulouse eight years, where I have started a vocational school for troubled teenagers. I am excited by what I am living out, even if, by and large, the experiences I am going to tell you about seem rather banal.

#### Personal encounters

Since the age of 16 I have always had chances to meet people in poverty fairly regularly, through associations, during my studies, or right now, in my work—the old, the handicapped, Fourth-World families, rural families in India, Sri Lankan refugees in Paris, delinquent youth, street people, and residents of underprivileged areas. That in itself is nothing extraordinary. But many of those persons and my encounters with them remain in my memory to this day.

Why? To be honest, I was often apprehensive before meeting them,

for you never know what might happen; most of the time the meeting occurred spontaneously, and in any case I could not do much for them in their situation. But the fact is that very often something would happen to give me great joy. I believe these persons taught me fundamental things about life. Often one is at the heart of what is crucial in human life, and one is there in a simple way: violence, injustice, self-confidence, solidarity, hope, wonder, the choice of life or death.

I have often experienced a close interior proximity. For example, when, in the course of my work, I see a young person struggling with behavioural difficulties, I know clearly that I myself find it hard to adjust my life to what I want to be, and that it is not always easy to choose life. Everyone lives that out in different ways, with different burdens and wounds. Moreover, I often admire the courage of these young people, given their personal histories. In brief, I have found a kind of fraternity in humanity.

I could end my lecture here, for this is part of what is most important for me; you can forget the rest of what I am about to say.

#### The ATD Fourth World movement

By Fourth World we usually mean people who live in misery and exclusion, often over several generations.

One evening I was taking some people to a weekly meeting at the adult education centre in Paris, a

meeting we had prepared several days before, in one of the neighbourhoods of the suburb. In the car, one of the women was telling me that there had been no money at her house for three days, and she had been obliged to go to the city hall to ask for food for her family. They had thrown some packets of pasta and ham on the table, along with a great deal of humiliation. In the end she refused everything; she was very agitated. When we arrived at our destination, she wanted to take me to a restaurant, and a fairly fancy one at that. She sat down and ordered a superb *à la carte* meal. I can still hear the waiter asking, "Would you like your filet rare or well-done?" I didn't know what to do, I understood nothing. After a while I left her and joined the meeting, which had already begun. Afterwards I understood that she had been deeply humiliated and that she had wanted to show in this way that she was "somebody" while I just kept thinking about the cost of the meal and the fact that she didn't have money to feed her family. I often recall this experience when I cannot understand the logic of the person I am with.

While I was doing my engineering studies, my involvement with the ATD Fourth World movement gave me my real formation. I discovered the humiliation of misery and exclusion, and the need for a personal commitment and the mobilisation of all of society to struggle against it.

What is foundational and intolerable for me is the awareness

that misery is caused by people. It is hard to compare sufferings. But suffering caused by human actions has something more intolerable about it than suffering caused by illness or an earthquake. It is like war. Since that time there is in me a rejection of misery which translates not only into compassion but also into a desire to change society, to change the way people look at those who are excluded, to build society with them, from their perspective and such as will not create a new kind of exclusion. To build society like that, to build the Church like that, even the Society of Jesus, however modest might be my contribution.

### **Two years in India in a Gandhian rural development centre**

This was an experience that moved me deeply and still affects me very much today.

I will describe only one incident, and then the interior experience. I was at a summer station in the Himalayas learning Hindi. On a very steep street I watched a rickshaw pushed by four thin men, who could hardly manage to make the effort. Seated on the rickshaw was a corpulent Indian tourist with large rings on his fingers, who wanted to be carried up to the lookout above the village. That seemed intolerable to me. India is full of contrasts like that. Here, things are more muffled, more indirect. And, between our countries here and those countries there, the distance seems great, more complex. But why? Why such injustice?

Since then I have had this strong conviction that my life is worth no more than the lives of the poor, and with that I have the desire to share all I can, even my daily life. Later, living in some of the houses of the Society, I had the unhappy feeling of being obliged to sit atop that rickshaw – a feeling due to an experience in India which is hard for me to share. To be sure, this is a bit simplistic, but it is simple, and anchored in my bones.

The second experience is that of being profoundly affected by so much misery, violence and suffering, to the point that I could not see any sense in the world – a kind of dark night. And then, I found, upon looking carefully, that there were many small stars, many initiatives, many people who acted, who in their way struggled to attain more humanity. I still hold on to this interior experience. When confronting the violence of certain youths in my neighbourhood, and of society towards them, I cannot see where we are headed, we are truly in the dark, but there are some beautiful little stars to be seen, and these give fresh heart to the effort.

### **Commitment**

As in ATD Fourth World, I met people in India who were radically committed to the side of the poor for greater justice. They were very happy, impressive people, Hindus, Christians, atheists. That really struck me and I wanted to follow their example.

In addition, I wished to live a contemplative religious life,

consecrated to the love of God. That is also a major commitment.

When I entered the Society, even though they made me read Decree 4 about justice, I began with the feeling of having betrayed the first commitment. It took me a long time to experience a deep unity between the two. It is not my faith that invites me to work for justice; it is because I am a man who has lived the experiences I have just described. Nor is it for the sake of faith that I find myself working for justice. But in faith I strive to work for justice. It is in abandoning myself more and more to God, in the marvel of his love, that I live what today is given me to live, my work and my encounters.

Even though I did not have a precise call to the priesthood, I did all the studies. At the end, at the beginning of the third year, I did not ask to be a priest, feeling very comfortable simply as a religious and as a brother, which is what I eventually became. To live, and eventually thus to signify, a strong religious experience in the concreteness of human life, as much by the lifestyle and by the work, close to those who suffer.<sup>1</sup>

Now the tension between the two remains a live issue. A few years ago, at the time of my final vows, the following question remained: how can I be in solidarity with this group (the Society, by the vow of obedience), a group which, in my country as I experience it, despite all the documents of the last General

<sup>1</sup>There is obviously nothing exclusive about this; many priests live in this way.



Congregations, makes in reality an implicit choice to invest itself massively in the wealthier areas?<sup>2</sup> Thus I experience a tension between the need for solidarity with the poor (is this at the level of a personal call or of conscience?) and a commitment to the Society which can send me to any mission and which does not seem, in its concrete choices in my country, to be moved by the former need.<sup>3</sup>

Today however I have the chance to unite these two and I am very happy about this. It is for me a very great chance. And furthermore, the vow of obedience (the prospect of being assigned to another mission) has something liberating about it, probably liberating me from a disordered self-image and attachment to a particular mission.

### **The integration of excluded young people through work**

For 15 years I have worked in the area of integration through work. This means getting youth in difficulties to work in a supervised environment, allowing them to recover their dignity, and then take up formal employment in business. I am at once a company president, a social worker and a teacher. I enjoy this whole experience very much, even if it is not without stress....

As director I do not have a very intimate relationship with the youth, but there have been some profound encounters at key moments. Let me recount one of a rare type.

One evening a young man returned to see me some time after

leaving our school. For two hours he shared his whole career as a delinquent, drug dealer and prisoner, and how the year and a half he spent in our school had allowed him to escape that path, and how without that he would have fallen back into it.

I then thought to myself that all the work and all the trouble we had invested over the years in our school made sense, if only because of one young person. In other words, that comforts me in this kind of work, which consists of setting up and operating heavy equipment (a whole business with troubled youth, that is a lot of work), for it allows persons to free themselves through their own efforts, with their dignity intact.

Another memory is a word from the owner of a construction company at the time when the Society asked me to leave my integration work in order to set up an employment-training facility in Toulouse. We were part of a small group of business owners who met together socially and for mutual help. He told me, "With your school and the project, you remind us of the social role that all businesses have." When I question myself, saying that running a small business like this is not going to change society, I tell myself that that is part of a whole group of initiatives which promote a different mentality. And what gives it force is not the talk, but the concrete reality.

<sup>2</sup>In terms of numbers of Jesuits with a full time commitment.

<sup>3</sup>I am interested in all reflection about this tension and about discernment between personal call and conscience in this context.

### **A community project in the new town of Cergy**

I said that after my first studies I went to live in the suburbs of Paris. There I lived an extraordinary adventure for six years. Five or six of us Jesuits started up a new community with the coherent enough project of being present in poor neighbourhoods. Everyone had their activities, full time, part time or in evenings and weekends. It was a simple life, several Jesuit companions sharing together this project of presence in this milieu. I have never again found this side of community life: I work at a similar project today in Toulouse, but I only share it with one other companion in the community. I thus experienced a great richness in Cergy, which was very helpful in launching myself into the active life after studies.

This community did not bring Jesuit institutions into the city, but it had certain features that marked it as institution; that is, it was seen to be a Jesuit community, and I think it represented many things for some people in the city. I speak in the past tense, but this community continues its journey today. A visibility that is not institutional but communitarian. I see this with some of the religious communities in my city – visible through a simplicity that is not necessarily institutional (this is an observation and not a rejection of institutions; they too are necessary).

### **Friendships outside the Catholic enclave**

Social work leads you to team up with people of all types. Thus I have had the opportunity to form friendships with people who are atheists, anticlerical, Hindus, Muslims, all with important things in common. This experience makes me think about my own faith and of sharing it through words without religious connotations, and recognising in the other an experience of the same order, but not formulated in the same way. This experience of de-centring is vital for me and I am very happy to live it.

Original French

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## **Spiritual Experience and Social Commitment: Crises and transformations**

**Alain Thomasset SJ**

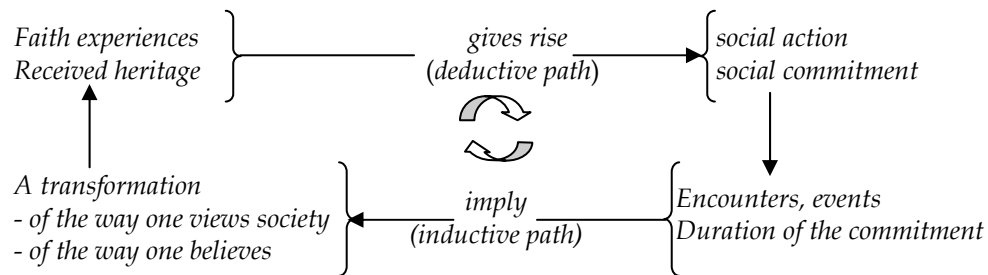
The following reflection is the result of a research study jointly conducted by the Centre d'étude et de recherche en action sociale (CERAS) and the Centre Sèvres during a study seminar entitled "Faith that is social: a theological locus." This seminar is an annual event held each year for about ten students. Since 2001, with Bertrand Cassaigne, we have been inviting 4 or 5 Christian witnesses each year; they are people involved in social, political or economic matters, and we attempt to highlight through their lives the various complex links between the witnesses' faith in Christ and their commitment to serving society. Our task consists mainly of analysing the witnesses' narratives and their answers to previously recorded and transcribed questions. During our research, we also study their words, the language they use, and we draw comparisons with such and such theologian and with such and such passage from the Bible. It is largely an empirical approach on the most rigorous analysis possible of the witnesses' texts.

### **Founding experiences and moments of crisis: a constitutive interaction between the experience of an encounter, of a commitment, and the experience of an encounter with God**

Analysis of the witnesses leads us to qualify the notion of "founding experience" since the social commitment of the witnesses often arises partly from a family heritage, which is slowly transformed and the fruits of which appear gradually. There are many stages in their journeys: it is not a case of one single experience determining everything, but several events that strengthen each other and take on meaning together. It would be more accurate to speak of a "founding history."

The stages also differ in nature. Sometimes it is a faith experience that leads one to a commitment in favour of the poorest (deductive path). But in other cases, it is an unexpected encounter that proves disrupting, leads to a commitment and to a questioning of one's faith (inductive path).

The following figure illustrates that double path of interaction between the lived experience of encountering the most destitute (or social commitment), and the personal experience of an encounter with God. Depending on the witnesses and on the experiences that constitute their references, the path begins at different ends:



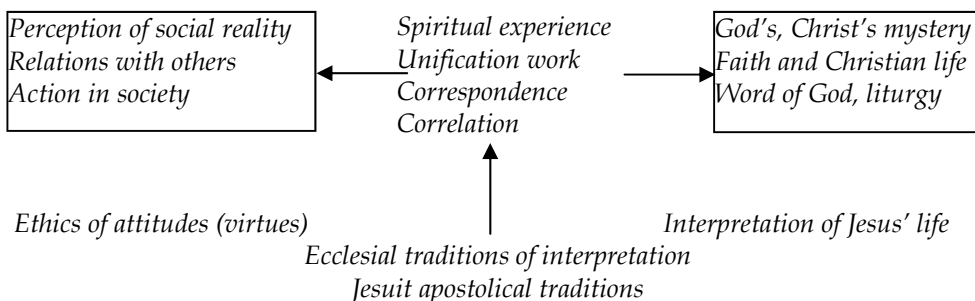
The commitment's founding experiences, when identifiable, or deep experiences that occur during the commitment often comprise crises and disruptions in the way one believes or views society. One's relationships with oneself, with others and with God are modified all at once.

**A gradual unification of the itinerary based on a received heritage and occurring through a personal spiritual experience**

The fundamental link between faith and commitment is often affirmed in an inchoative way at the beginning, and, thanks to a received heritage, that link may not be grasped other than through the subject's experience which is built up through life. It is precisely the telling of the narrative that makes it possible to approach that evolution and slowly draw the contours in what is not an explanation of external events nor a logical line but rather the interior unification of an itinerary scattered till now.

It is thanks to a personal spiritual experience that the link between faith and social commitment finds a certain unification. Single spiritual experiences make for discoveries which involve resources of Christian tradition (the Word of God, liturgy, prayer...) and are crucial to the understanding of action and its orientation. A correlation is thus made between the interpretation of Christ's life and an ethics of attitudes (virtues). The example of Michel, a senior officer in charity organisations, will help illustrate how this works (see box).

Figure 2 below shows how a coherent link between faith and commitment is achieved through a spiritual experience which correlates human relations and the perception of God's mystery.



This unification of the itinerary appears in different types of spiritual sensibilities which one can refer to different theologies (Rahner, Tillich, Schillebeeckx, Gutierrez, etc.). It is also influenced by various ecclesial traditions and apostolical prerequisites, which offer pre-interpretations of that correlation and on which the subject relies whether consciously or otherwise (Catholic Action, Charismatic Renewal, etc.). Concerning Jesuits, we can also talk of the influence from various apostolical traditions (Mission Ouvrière, youth education, popular pastoral activity, formation, etc.).

*Michel's route is marked by numerous periods of crisis. At first sight, it seems to be at odds with the unification movement for it carries a heavy tension. Nevertheless, it is the to-and-fro movement between life and understanding given by the spiritual life which makes his narrative cohesive. Michel, 44, married and father of four, is a senior officer in the social institutions that manage national solidarity. He was born into a devout family. A teenage crisis, which led to a break with traditional family faith, was overcome thanks to a double experience. First, he met, in the seventies, groups of young Baptists who lived an exciting and joyous faith life, engaged in a literal reading of the Gospel and living the effusion of the Holy Spirit; that gave him a new impulse. Next, while at a Paris engineering school, he took part in student chaplaincies and discovered Ignatian spirituality which calls one to love the world and re-evaluate one's experience. Thus he was able to bring faith and reason together. Having become a researcher in physics, he was confronted with a painful event in 1987—the birth of a son with developmental disability. His son underwent an exceptional surgery thanks to which he was saved and allowed to have a family life. Going through that experience led Michel to a change of profession so as to dedicate himself to solidarity.*

*Michel's life has been constantly confronted with crises: he speaks of a life full of tension, caught between faith life and active life, and of a religious life made up of "stability and instability" simultaneously. Michel shows a careful concern about finding the right attitude, which should not be a mere recourse to acquired habits. An attitude which is about welcoming the Gospel's "radicalness," about fostering "carefulness towards the poor, being poor himself and being with the poor." For him, "social commitment begins with our flaws and wounds." The shocks he received and the crises he underwent gave rise to reflection and motivated his choices. The care of his son led him to understand tangibly what solidarity, as a tactile experience of faith, is: "With my public health insurance thirteen-digit number, an ordinary file, without any privileges, I could offer my son the best health service... I experienced always that feeling of tangible solidarity, of financial, opaque, blind solidarity, because my fellow citizens had unknowingly paid for a serious operation that saved a little one... It was through public health insurance that the child had access to a life that was worth living. Thanks to that, we were touched by and became aware of what a collective solidarity system was. It was very different from the image of a public health insurance with its forms, its refund sheets..." And he added: "Commenting on Christ's appearance to Thomas, after the resurrection (John 20): 'come forth, put your hand in my side', someone said: faith is tactile, it is about touching... faith is not about seeing, about hearing, but about touching". We can long ponder that thought which seems insightful to me. I think social*

*commitment is also about touching, it is concerned with touching, one has access to it through that which has truly, physically touched him."*

*In the event of his son's birth and operation, Michel interprets the concrete experience of solidarity as a spiritual experience through which he grasps something of God's reality so far hidden and unknown. At the level of God's representations, that change occurs through the discovery of an "ontologically poor" God. "God is there, that's the way he is: poor." Thus faith springs from "the acknowledgement of flaws in the fact of loving." Matthew's Gospel, in which Jesus appears at the end as one who has been cared for by others, helps him understand in a new way that God is poor and "it is through such flaws that I am able to see God poor." The power of love is a power of weakness and of destitution. For Michel, faced with illness, also "had to get rid of the image of God as a miracle-worker, to convert it from the image of the all-powerful." It was a fundamental letting-go, so as to rediscover the image of God the Father who, as the father in the parable of the prodigal son, awaits his son (Luke 15).*

### **Crises and the transformation processes they entail: taking up an attitude of compassion, solidarity and hope**

For the witnesses, whatever the nature of their commitment, faith appears as the driving force behind their role as actors, be it in an association, a company, a political party or any other social structure. This 'deductive' dimension of faith towards action is always present. No narrative however is happy with just that first step. Each goes on to describe a faith experience which evolves as more encounters and more trials occur. As with Michel (see box), that faith is transformed thanks to spiritual experience, which allows one to meet new faces of God and the Church. Thus, social commitment is not merely an ethical consequence of faith, which is often lived out as a 'can-do' attitude in the first days of action, but rather a constitutive dimension of faith. The meeting of, and concern for, 'the other' through social life is not just a moral appendix to the fact of belonging to Christian community, but the crucible of a revelation and an authentication of the spiritual experience. Social action is an essential place where the witnesses discover a new face of God and a new way of believing which is peculiar to them.

One of the most frequent transformations is the acknowledgement of one's own weaknesses, an experience of deprivation and gradual access to humility. That leads to taking up an attitude of compassion, solidarity and hope towards others, together with a transformed image of God as a forgiving Father and of Christ who accompanies humans on their way. Paul's experience is significant in that respect (see box).

*Paul, an official in an association for aid to the destitute, experienced a stripping of faith and pride through meeting Fourth World people whose lives have been shattered. "Before such distressed humanity, it is another aspect of God that appears. One feels weaker, more dependent on God. All is spent". His idea of a rupture with society, which he lived with at the beginning, gave way to a larger openness and tolerance, in particular*

*towards those preoccupied by money concerns. It also led to a relativisation of his own commitment, and to seeking a compromise with his wife. God reveals himself in the disfigured face of wounded men and women who, in spite of all, are capable of fraternity and joy. It is worth noting that his narrative offers two different interpretations of the Gospel of the rich young man (cf. Matthew 10). He sees it, first, as a radical invitation to get rid of riches and a denunciation of family affluence. But at the end, the same passage is taken up to express compassion towards the young man who goes away sad, which he sees as an invitation to be tolerant towards those who are preoccupied with their own security. Jesus is, first, the one who puts us on the move, pushes us to leave our false securities; but he is also the one who considers every person as a human being, including villains such as Zacheus; he is the one whose face meets that of disfigured poor people, the one who is there wherever there is suffering. God is, thus, the one before whom it is a question of being disarmed, as is the case with families.*

The following table shows some kinds of evolution that were noted in the relationship with oneself, with others, and with God following periods of crises. A first stage (the moral threshold) brings together the various basic elements of the experience of commitment; it is often a result of a received heritage and deeply shaped by action, and sometimes a 'can-do' attitude. A second stage (that of hope) indicates the trials and crises gone through. From there comes an attitude of humility, of compassion and hope together with another relationship with God and the Church.

Stages	Images of self	Images of others and of the social field	Images of God	Images of the Church
"Moral" threshold or heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Autonomy</li> <li>•Power</li> <li>•Positive collective Experiences</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Strictness towards others</li> <li>•Ideal society project</li> <li>•Taking action for others, giving back what has been receive</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•"Moral", powerful, good, demanding God.</li> <li>•Jesus as a prophet who denounces injustices</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Assembly of the faithful, the "just"</li> <li>•"Natural" environment or strangeness</li> <li>•Family</li> </ul>
Threshold of hope Trials linked to the encounter, to duration, to violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Experience of fragility, of being limited, of flaws</li> <li>•Taking up humility, active passivity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Insistence on the interpersonal</li> <li>•Compassion, hope, fundamental solidarity</li> <li>•Transformation of attitudes, of approach</li> <li>•A place for everyone</li> <li>•Gratuitousness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Life favouring Father God of tenderness, who gives, forgives, accompanies</li> <li>•Trinity</li> <li>•Cross and Resurrection of Christ</li> <li>•God who is poor</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Community of sinners, people who walk though lame or shaky</li> <li>•Fraternity</li> <li>•Experience of differences</li> <li>•Communion</li> <li>•Enlarged Family</li> </ul>

*For those involved in social activities, as well as among those who confront the difficulties of life in business or in the roughness of political life, meeting others, both in their uniqueness and in complex structures of relations, gives rise to deep questioning. Certain images of oneself (with its illusory claim to power and to autonomy) or of social relationships (which are too idealised) are shaken, overturned. At a personal level, meeting people who suffer reveals an essential place of meaning and questioning. As the witnesses put it, it reveals "an otherness which is never completely known," something "incomprehensible and impossible to master." This particular other, the poor, sends us back "to fragilities and limits" appropriate to each one; she opens the "inner flaw" which displaces our attention and calls us to take into account suffering, evil, death and conflict. She also introduces us to happiness received, to the gift of a shared moment which brings meaning and enthusiasm. Similarly, at the social level, utopian visions of social transformation which may have driven action at the beginning can seem devalued, and that often leads to a new insistence on interpersonal relationships of proximity.*

*However, faith is inevitably affected. Thus, the other is discovered by surprise as it were, defies all grip and appears as the face of a God who becomes Altogether-Other, different from the God of childhood or of tradition "who is easier to seize, smoother" to use the words of a witness. That encounter is the crucible of a revelation. The other is seen as an image of God, God is seen as the Altogether-Other; the one reveals the other as two faces of a strangeness, each rousing a passivity so far little known. The discovery of personal limits and the humble acceptance of one's human flaws are also made possible through the access to a God who gives and forgives, who wants to make man stand up again.*

*If that face gives rise to trust, to a welcoming of life and a new acceptance of one's limits, then the relation with the other is transformed. In that respect, many witnesses speak of a new attitude towards the men and women they meet, an attitude which refuses to judge and joins in new hope towards everyone, in compassion that shows solidarity and no longer keeps people at bay but acknowledges that all belong to the same wounded humanity. The splits they have lived open the way to "a loss of what seemed before to be the main force," so as to live out an availability that leads to a new hope, similar to Christ's kenosis. Then, relating to others and engaging with them changes the modality of commitment: the concern is not so much about doing something myself ("pulling ahead") as about accompanying (backing); it is about adopting a new attitude towards people, which can at once "create," invite to live, and be filled with hope instead of an attitude that "shapes."*

### **Some other attitudes**

Having affirmed the principle that experienced transformations offer a new system of interpreting reality, one may briefly list a few other attitudes often mentioned in the narratives and which the witnesses consider as characteristic of their Christian faith and of their action

- Being passionate about the world and fighting in favour of human beings
- The experience of becoming free and the will to lead others to freedom



- The perception of a fundamental gratuitousness which accompanies human relationships
- The strength of standing trials and facing death
- Hope towards people, life and the future with no guarantee demanded
- The possibility of standing back and relativising one's action.

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## Testimony: Crisis and the Social Apostolate

### Marcel Rémon SJ<sup>1</sup>

The questions I was asking myself before coming here to tell you about crisis and the social apostolate were “Why do I feel spiritual joy when being with poor or excluded people?” “Did I experience crises in this way of following the humble Christ?” Whenever I am with marginalised people, when I share profound suffering or profound joy with them, I am no longer a professor or a Jesuit priest, or anyone else; I am just a human being like them, sharing humanity with them.

Christian Herwartz SJ speaks of a “Border Crossing” that happens when we come in contact with excluded or fragile people. The first border I crossed was in Kolkata, thirty years ago. On the sidewalk, I encountered a child that had been crippled on purpose by its parents so that it would

be more ‘efficient’ as a beggar. I wondered: “How can I reach this kid? How can I be his brother, a friend?” My answer was to enter the Society of Jesus (very briefly speaking). My first crisis and first “border crossing” was an individual move.

I am from a trade union background and was born in a working class neighbourhood. At the moment, I work a lot in international development cooperation, especially in Africa, in places like the Congo. For me, structural work is essential. In the Congo, there is a permanent and all-pervasive crisis, which means that structural problems have a deep effect on individual lives. For example, in Kamituga in East Congo, nearly all the teachers as well as the students drop out of school to work in the mines, searching for gold or cassiterite.

In Africa, for the first time in my life, I saw people killed from up close.

<sup>1</sup>The author is social apostolate coordinator for BML (Southern Belgium and Luxemburg) and professor of mathematics at Namur University [Editor's note].

What I felt was a profound sense that they – we – are all just people and the reason for killing them was completely absurd. Our common humanity and brotherhood are so much more important than these petty differences. I also understood that education is very important because it can – sometimes – keep people from doing absurd things. The second crisis, a permanent crisis, and a border crossing, was the move towards structural commitment.

My third experience that I want to share with you was the foundation of a Jesuit community in a suburban area of Namur. I needed to be in contact with the fragile humanity there, but not alone. That was another border crossing, since by then I was a university professor. It took a while to convince people within the Society of Jesus and at University that this was the right thing for me to do. Another crisis and another border crossing, from the centre of the city to the suburbs, from an individual engagement to a community involvement.

I am an optimistic person but often I feel powerless; I feel that all I do leads nowhere. Even if I do good things, sometimes they turn out to have bad effects. Let me give you an example. Some years ago, I had a friend who was a depressive and I wished to accompany him as far as possible on his deathly road. I get the same feeling when I meet people who have suffered very much in war and ask me to join their struggle and their hatred of enemies (which I

understand). I wish to be with them, to share everything with them. But it turns out I should not do that; I just have to let them go their way in their own loneliness, on their own road. I can only stay on my side of the river. Just as I had to let my good friend go into the silence of death. There is a time when no action can be taken. Sometimes, just to accept not to accompany someone calls for active resistance, if one is to remain a person of hope for the future, keeping faith in humanity even if one sees no reason for hope. This can lead to a very deep crisis, and a “non-border-crossing.” Or perhaps, the real “border crossing,” in the Gospel sense.

In Europe too, I see many clouds in the sky. Just think of all those people, women, children and men, dying in the Mediterranean Sea as they cross over to Europe. We have to resist but we are very few, even in the Society or in the Church; and sometimes nothing happens. I think we have to manage somehow through these very difficult times and keep seeing the good things. Resisting the general feeling of powerlessness is difficult. It is like throwing flowers into the sea, in memory of these ‘unlucky’ migrants. We have to keep hoping that ‘Another world is possible’ for future generations.

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## Hope

### Gerard O'Hanlon SJ

#### Introduction

**D**isappointed hopes, the daunting nature of the task, the pervasive banality and radicality of evil—you will have your own memories and experiences of all this. And in any case it is enough to open up the newspaper any day to have all this confirmed: accidents, crimes, structural injustice, terrorism, neo-imperialism... and, almost, it seems, to tease and deceive us into continuing to hope, the occasional success or good-news story.

One of the protagonists in Henckel von Donnersmarck's film *Das Leben der Anderen* (The Lives of Others) says cynically 'Hope is the last thing that dies.' He was referring to the repressive regime of the ironically named German Democratic Republic, where that ultimate signifier of loss of hope, suicide, occurred at such high rates. It is indeed ironic that now in parts of Europe, seemingly far from repressed but with a Liberal surfeit of 'freedom from' and sunk in what Metz refers to as a Postmodern 'cultural amnesia'<sup>1</sup> with regard to what 'freedom is for', rates of suicide have again soared. And for some, like Dostoyevsky's Ivan Karamazov, life is simply not worth the price if salvation involves the suffering and tears of even one innocent child.

And so we are tempted: maybe not to despair, for most of us, but perhaps to a kind of weary resignation, to see life in terms of a Sisyphus-like project where problems recur eternally and all effort seems in the end to be in vain. The temptation for an older generation is to pour cold water on the idealism of the generation that follows, to warn that all this has been tried before, that your hopes for a better life are bound to deceive, new problems will always arise, while the same dynamics of evil are everywhere at work. One can easily enough clothe this lack of hope in the kind of respectability referred to as 'realism' or, more easily available for older people, a kind of 'nesting' that is in effect a semi-retirement from the struggle, a Nicodemus-like restriction of activity to the night, away from the heat and light of the daily strife. The ultimate expression of this temptation is, vindicating Marx's critique of religion, to take refuge in a Christian hope which restricts itself to the next life.

On the other side, often more typically the attitude of young people, we can be tempted to try too hard—Prometheus and Pelagius now the role-models and Paradise on this earth the goal—to abuse power as a tactic, and to be reactively ideological in ways that are naïve (for example, to so stress the value of wealth distribution that wealth creation gets overlooked; or to believe uncritically in the inevitability of progress).

<sup>1</sup>J.B. Metz, "God: Against the Myth of the Eternity and Time" in *The End of Time*, eds. Tiemo Rainer Peters and Claus Urban, English translation (New York: Paulist Press 2004), pp. 30-31.

Burnout and demoralization have been occupational hazards of the social sector. Poet Seamus Heaney notes that 'Even if the hopes you started out with are dashed, hope has to be maintained'. But how? Can a theology of hope help? Let us try to "give an account of the hope that is in us" (1 Peter 3: 15-16). It must be a theology which takes account of disappointment and failure, of the need for the Long March through institutions and systems, and which gives nourishment for the long haul.

## **A Theology of Hope**

### *Theology and hope*

Theology has been traditionally spoken of as faith seeking understanding. However, our faith is in a God who loves us and encourages us to hope that this love will save us, set us free, raise us up to be a 'new creation'. Theology then is also hope seeking understanding. I offer some reflections on the complex nature of Christian hope.

### *Hope in the Hebrew Scriptures*

The Jewish people, with all their reverence for the transcendence of God, believed that God was involved in their history: in the Exodus Yahweh had brought them out from slavery. There was a relationship then with the People—a Covenant—and with it a Law, and in time Kingly governance, to see that this relationship was well lived. There were many lapses into idolatry and injustice, as the Prophets constantly reminded them. Gradually they came to understand that Yahweh was not just Lord of history but was also Creator, Lord of Heaven and earth, and wanted to extend this covenant more deeply to the hearts of each Jewish person but also more widely to all humankind. But the lapses continued, the poor continued to suffer and from outside there was the reality of imperial domination. And so there developed in the time before Christ both a messianic expectation and also an Apocalyptic sense in which many Jews hoped for the radical overthrow of the evil they endured.

### *Hope in the New Testament*

What was hinted at in the Hebrew Scriptures is radicalised in the New Testament in a way that both fulfils and subverts. We are put before the wonderful and shocking claim that God's involvement with us is so immanent and so intimate that the Son becomes man. We are given a glimpse into the inner love-life of God's own self, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, with the deeply significant gloss that this is a love which "empties itself" (*kenosis*: Phil 2: 7) so that creation, incarnation, and the cross are shown to be the free and

overflowing love of a God who chooses to become vulnerable to us and to our ability to say yes or no to that love. And so the Principle and Foundation of the life of Jesus, his *Ur-Erlebnis*, is his ability to address God as 'Abba'; and what he has by nature we are called to by adoption, by participation. This changes everything: we live now not according to the law of achievement or legal contract, but according to the gratuity of a love that is both passionate (erotic) and selfless (agapaic).

Jesus tells us about this love and its consequences for our personal and social lives in his preaching about the Kingdom of God. This Kingdom, often hidden like the seed in the ground, is very near, in fact is already among us, but its full coming is not yet—that 'new creation', that 'new heaven and earth', the 'heavenly Jerusalem' which will occur at the end of history when the 'form of this world has passed away'. It involves the forgiveness of sins, table fellowship with all and sundry, the overcoming of death, but also the establishment of peace and justice among peoples. In particular, consistent with that kenotic characteristic of God's Trinitarian love, it involves a solidarity with the least of us in the eyes of this world—the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick and the prisoner referred to in Matthew 25 (31-46) in that text which is such a breathtaking and seemingly impossible radicalisation of the Gospel revelation that love of God is expressed through love of neighbour. And not impossible only because through his incarnation, life, death and resurrection we have the assurance that this Kingdom has been definitively established and will ultimately come to fulfilment: and so if at times, like Abraham, we seem to be "hoping against hope" (Rom 4: 18), still this hope is certain, it will not disappoint (Rom 5: 5). The personal 'yes' to this hope in the Kingdom, with all its radical socio-political implications, is expressed joyfully in Mary's Magnificat: "He has put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted the lowly. The hungry he has filled with good things, the rich sent empty away" (Luke 1: 52-3). We see anticipations of this Kingdom in the sharing of goods with those in need of the early disciples (Acts 2: 42-47; 4: 32-37).

### *Faith and politics to be distinguished...*

It is evident from even a cursory glance at the history of Christianity that there have been many different forms of the relationship between faith, politics and social reality. Jesus himself confounded many of those, reared on the memory of the Exodus and the expectation of a politically-minded Messiah, who wanted him to engage directly against Roman imperial rule. He was not a revolutionary Zealot, and even if his Sermon on the Mount and his preaching on the Kingdom have deep social and political implications, still, his own practice and teaching ("render unto Caesar...") did not focus explicitly on what we might now call 'party politics'. The contrast with Islam is striking and, in

today's world, instructive. Unlike the focus on a society governed by Shariah law, there is no Christian blueprint for the ordering of society, much less politics. After that long Constantinian experiment, in different forms in the East and West, of a close alliance between Church and State, we have come to realise the benefits of separation, the blessings of the relative autonomy of the secular.

*...but not separated*

However this is not the full story. Church-State formal separation need not involve the separation of faith and politics. If it did, and if—as is the form of the current imbalance in Church-State relations in many parts of Europe—in the spirit of a Modernity that is dying away, we were to banish the voice of the Church and of Christians from the public square and limit it only to private life, then indeed we would be guilty of the Marxist critique that religion is the opium of the people. And we would have little to say to the Islamic focus on a just society and polity.

It is true that there has always been a dangerous tendency within Christian thought and praxis to over-emphasize the personal, the 'spiritual' (narrowly defined to exclude the social and material), the next life. It is a tendency reflected in John Courtney Murray's citing of the example of the early Christian monks and ascetics, part of that flight from the cities to the desert, who are supposed to have spent their days weaving baskets while thinking of God, and then their nights unravelling what they had done and starting again.<sup>2</sup> The clear message was that nothing that we do in this life is of any importance in itself. Of course there is a place for the purely contemplative in the life of the Church. But the 'daily bread' of the Our Father, not to mention love of neighbour, are central to the Gospel message and we—in particular lay people—are urged to find political and social forms and expression of that common good and preferential option for the poor which are an integral part of the agreed contemporary translations of the preaching of the Kingdom by Jesus. In his address to the general conference of Latin American bishops in San Paulo last May, Pope Benedict XVI is reported to have said: "...we inevitably speak of the problem of structures, especially those which create injustice...just structures are, as I have said, an indispensable condition for a just society."<sup>3</sup>

Society is wider than the State, the socio-cultural is distinct from the political. At the root of the many injustices of our world is that disputed question of the meaning of life which culture, morality and religion address. The voice of faith can have a particular resonance in this realm of civil society. We are all born with a conscience, with a sense of where truth and goodness lie, and we are drawn in this direction despite the counter-tendencies of evil.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. John Courtney Murray SJ, *We Hold These Truths*, London: Sheed and Ward 1960, chapter 8 'Is it Basket Weaving?'.  
<sup>3</sup>Benedict XVI, "Belief beyond the political": *The Tablet* (May 19, 2007) 16.

The Christian faith puts a face on this 'drawing' in the person of Jesus Christ. It offers a vision of life based on justice and forgiveness, leadership as service and not just power, trust in divine providence and in one another, a realistic appreciation of the power of evil and yet a confidence that it may be overcome—all these, and the other elements of the Good News, offer a powerful force for good in our world. At the root of all evil is a lack of intellectual, moral and religious conversion, with concomitant structural forms. The ultimately irresistible power of Jesus Christ—often working through others, indeed through other religions—to lure us to a conversion of mind, heart and social reality is the ground of our hope in a more just society and politics. We believe that this power, operating through the human desire for truth and goodness, is what has brought about peace between previously warring communities in Northern Ireland.

### *Faith seeking political form*

It is always arguable that, pushed to its logical conclusion, the thought of a certain theologian or theological movement (be it Liberation theologians on the one side, or the likes of Ratzinger or von Balthasar on the other) can err in its explication of the socio-political implications of the Gospel message. What is not questionable however is that there are such implications, and that it is our duty and mission to discover, in the concrete circumstances of our own particular lives, what these implications are and to strive to bring them about. Politics and the structural dimension of reality have become part of the differentiation of modern consciousness in a way that simply would not have been explicitly available to Jesus himself (no more than explicit knowledge of the theory of relativity would have been available to him). It seems to be a strange and egregious form of theological dualism to deny that the Good News extends to how we live our lives together now, in this life, and thus to deny that we may hope for a better world.<sup>4</sup> The corpus of Catholic Social teaching in particular, with its emphasis on notions like the common good, subsidiarity and solidarity are a powerful resource in the search for the construction of a just society, as the Founding Fathers of the European Union showed. There is no simple blueprint available from the Gospel then: but there is a vision, a set of principles and values, which are of enormous importance.

Our temptations are to look for solutions which bypass the ordinary messiness of human life (and, to console us, this is how Jesus too was tempted, in his time in the desert), and to give up when this is not possible. We want some kind of 'silver bullet', some kind of magic, which will absolve us from the responsible use of freedom. So, for example, when faced with the seeming impotence of constitutional democracies in face of the terrible injustices of our

<sup>4</sup>Cf. Gerard O'Hanlon SJ, "May Christians Hope for a Better World?": *Irish Theological Quarterly* 54 (1988), 175-189.

world, even good people have been known to at least secretly sigh for the coming of some benevolent dictator!

In God's providence our temptations become the kind of testing spoken of in Scripture whereby, through the endurance born of hope, we become intrinsically the kind of person who is fit for God's company, the sort who freely says yes to God's love with all the consequences that this involves. And these consequences inevitably involve the socio-economic-political shape of our lives: our dream for a better, more just world is also, and first, God's dream. And this was already the teaching of *Gaudium et Spes*: "...hope related to the end of time does not diminish the importance of intervening duties, but rather undergirds the acquittal of them with fresh incentives" (GS 21). The poor and suffering of our world deserve no less.

### *The often hidden manifestations of the Kingdom*

A somewhat similar text from *Gaudium et Spes* alerts us to the dimension of mystery about the socio-political aspect of the Gospel: "Earthly progress must be carefully distinguished from the growth of Christ's kingdom. Nevertheless, to the extent that the former can contribute to the better ordering of human society, it is of vital concern to the kingdom of God" (GS 39). There is a Christian realism about this statement. There is no earthly Paradise, no promise of a necessary confluence between a Teilhardian evolutionary history and the Kingdom of God.<sup>5</sup> The interaction of freedom, sin and grace are more dramatic than that. The classical expression of Christian thought on time and history does not speak of inevitable linear growth or a development that is cyclical, but rather a free going out (*exitus*) and return (*reditus*) to God, the hinge of this journey being the decisive coming of Jesus Christ. Within this journey there are processes of growth, decline and rebirth, deeply influenced by our use of freedom.<sup>6</sup> The wheat and the tares grow together; progress is often hidden so that what can seem like disaster turns out to be success. We live under the pattern of the Paschal Mystery.

Sometimes this results in visible anticipations of the resurrection after long experiences of the cross: for decades in Northern Ireland it seemed apt to speak in terms of desolation, but now "You shall no more be called forsaken...you are my chosen one, in you I delight" (Isaiah 62: 4) seems more apt. We know too that good can come from evil, we have experience of how the wonderfully surprising plan of God can be shot through with that element of the '*felix culpa*', God the artist and potter who can remodel the twisted shapes of our lives into something beautiful.

But what about the countless dead and innocent victims of violence, and indeed those who continue to suffer unimaginably today? What of the

<sup>5</sup>Cf. Larry S. Chapp, "Deus Caritas Est And The Retrieval Of A Christian Cosmology": *Communio* 33 (2006), note 30, p. 65.

<sup>6</sup>Cf. Joseph Ratzinger, "The End of Time" in *The End of Time*, op cit, pp. 18-19.



perpetrators, often caught in a rationalized social and cultural evil? The protests of Job and Ivan Karamazov have validity and cannot be dismissed by any easy recourse to some theological formula or aesthetic theodicy. One thinks as well of the righteous anger of Jesus when confronted with injustice, his cry of abandonment in the face of death. And yet Job at least was content at the last to be still before the mystery of God's plan, and we, with the revelation of Christ's death and resurrection pointing to the intimate sharing and yet overcoming by God of our suffering, may continue to dare to hope, even if it is true that for many this hope is vindicated fully only on the other side of the grave. Very often, of course, it is the poor and suffering themselves who, through God's goodness, are authors of the hope that is in us. Indeed it is they who through their genuine, if sometimes black, humour remind us of the Christian message that life is ultimately not tragic.

### *The notion of Christian realism*

It may seem that by speaking of Christian realism, of the unresolved issues that must await the next life, of the impossibility of an earthly Paradise, of the classical Christian thinking on history, of the lack of a blueprint to order society, we are putting unnecessarily strict limits to the scope of Christian hope. Invoking the rubric of Christian realism does alert one to certain important truths: there is no perfect society possible here on earth, "just structures will never be complete in a definitive way,"<sup>7</sup> one needs to work hard with practical reason and prudential judgment to come up with political approximations to ideals articulated in the Sermon on the Mount. All this is important: sometimes Christian rhetoric about a 'civilization of love' and even 'preferential option for the poor' gets carried away into supposing that a politics of altruism or some other easily available and simplistically radical solution can be applied to solve all the woes of the world. We need to remember that we live in a world shot through with the limitations imposed by nature (creation) and sin, as well as the wonderful possibilities offered by grace.

However, recourse to the rubric of Christian realism should emphatically not be used as putting any limits to what God may do in working in the world (Ignatius) with our cooperation—"whoever believes in me will perform the same works as I do myself, he will perform even greater works...if you ask for anything in my name, I will do it" (John 14: 12-14).

We are good as Christians about being "as gentle as doves" (Matthew 10: 16), advocating justice and love, and even protesting angrily and prophetically about injustice; and we need to go on doing this. But we also need to learn to be "as cunning as serpents," to do the hard thinking, advocacy and negotiation which are involved in bringing about change. This social action will be guided

<sup>7</sup>Pope Benedict XVI, "Belief beyond the political": *The Tablet*, op cit, 15-16.

by the “dangerous memory of Jesus” (Metz), which means, *inter alia*, that it will not resort to the use of power as a tactic which unjustifiably abuses the rights of others.<sup>8</sup> When we act in this committed and respectful way, we know that real, if fragile, achievement is possible. And with this in mind why should ‘the preferential option for the poor’ not be capable of translation into political and structural currency, as was the desire for peace in Europe and Northern Ireland? And as we work soberly and with practical intelligence for a more just world, we need as well to realise that a theology of hope is shot through with the logic of imagination as much as the logic of inference.<sup>9</sup> We need baptized imaginations and desires. Given all this, given the need to search for and decide on specific solutions from a wide range of possible ones, the importance of discernment becomes obvious.

### Challenges and Opportunities

I want to list briefly some challenges and opportunities which arise out of this discussion of our context and the theology of hope which addresses it.

#### *Communities of solidarity*

GC 34 spoke about ‘communities of solidarity’ and one still hears talk in Jesuit circles about ‘apostolic discernment in common.’ I think we still underuse the potential we have for mobilizing communities of solidarity. As an international organization with lay partners at all levels of society we need to find ways to tackle problems in a more cohesive, multi-disciplinary and focused way. Perhaps to aid this, since many problems are trans-national and cohesion will involve international collaboration, we need in the Society stronger inter-Provincial structures. And perhaps GC 35 will help us with this. This ties in well with the conventional secular analysis of the need in our globalised world for more robust international and global institutions.<sup>10</sup>

#### *Apostolic discernment in common*

And we need to be able to carry out our social mission in a spirit of prayerful discernment together. I don’t underestimate the difficulty of this. Prayer can be used to dull the brain and to soften the edges of necessary conflict in ways that are unhelpful. Above all we need always to keep in mind our friendship with the poor, the anger coming from the injustice they suffer

<sup>8</sup>Cf. Jean-Marie Faux (ed.), *La Democratie, pourquoi?*, Brussels: Couleur Livres 2006, pp. 41-43.

<sup>9</sup>Cf. D. Lane, “Eschatology” in *The New Dictionary of Theology*, eds. Joseph A. Komonchak, Mary Collins, Dermot A. Lane (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan 1990) 342.

<sup>10</sup>Cf. John Palmer, “European Integration, A Vital Step on the Road to a New World Order” in *The Future of Europe, Uniting Vision, Values and Citizens?*: Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice (Dublin: Veritas 2006), pp. 130-139.

which can be a powerful catalyst for personal and structural transformation. Nonetheless we lose perspective if our work together for justice is not permeated and nourished by its roots in faith. Pieris spoke about the danger that social activists who could not collaborate become 'pathological' Messiahs, and Gutierrez speaks of the lack of joy which can accompany a social programme without reference to God. Prayer and liturgical celebration can open us up to the liberating perspectives offered by the presence of God in our work with and for the poor, and open us up to each other in new respect and acceptance.

### *Other important issues*

I note, even more briefly, that it is increasingly clear that our social spirituality, theology and work for justice need to take account of the environmental issue. We are still at an early stage of inter-religious dialogue and the impact it may have on social issues: many have pointed out, in reference to Islam in particular, that the 'dialogue of action' (cooperation on shared social concerns) may be more feasible than the 'dialogue of theological exchange', even if one can easily see that the one inevitably leads to the other. And we have more to do on the gender issue: it is easy for a predominantly male organisation, with the best will in the world, to have a blind spot here.

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## Two Ways of Analysing European Societies

### Michael Hainz SJ

In this examination of European societies, I shall point to basic perspectives, questions and hypotheses rather than offer detailed information and empirical proofs. My first limitation is that the complex reality always transcends our efforts to understand it. A second basic limitation will be that I, a German Jesuit brother, will not be able to cope with the enormous, socio-cultural diversities in Europe; my text will almost certainly be biased by my German background. Thirdly, as I explain the two “ways of analysis” in a simplified manner, I invite you to ask yourself: what is different about, or more specific to, the concrete case of **my** country?

The two approaches I propose here differ in their perspectives: the first is based on the sociology of culture (Ulrich Beck), and the second on the sociology of religion. The latter will be a mixed approach (drawing on David Martin, José Casanova, Jörg Stolz, Steve Bruce and Ronald Inglehart) for the reason that there is no single convincing approach that deals with religion in all of Europe.

#### Ulrich Beck’s theory of individualisation<sup>1</sup>

I will begin with a theorem proposed by the German sociologist Ulrich Beck who teaches in Munich and London. He started his research with a critique of class-oriented theories of social inequality and labour relations, and went on to discuss gender issues, ecology and globalisation. He developed his theorem of individualisation in an article in 1983, and thereafter in his book *Risikogesellschaft* (The Risk Society), first published in 1986.

#### *What does ‘individualisation’ mean?*

Individualisation in Beck's sense has to be kept free from the neo-liberal idea of the free-market individual, of a totally autarkic ‘self-entrepreneur’ who alone masters his/her life (Beck 2001: xxi). Contrary to a mere subjectivity or an ‘unfettered logic of action’ juggling in a virtually empty space, Beck stresses his concept of individualisation as ‘institutionalised individualism’, a term coined by Talcott Parsons.<sup>2</sup>

On the one hand, individualisation means the decreasing influence or the disintegration of traditional meso-social forms, e.g. class, status, gender roles, family, neighbourhood, religious milieux, or, as in the Soviet bloc, state-

<sup>1</sup>Ulrich Beck/Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim, *Individualization. Institutional Individualism and its Social and Political Consequences*, London: Thousand Oaks; New Delhi: Sage 2001.

<sup>2</sup>Talcott Parsons, “Religion in Post-industrial Society” in id., *Action Theory and the Human Condition* (New York: Free Press 1978), p. 321.

sanctioned role-models (Beck 2001: 2). On the other hand, individualisation refers to the fact that new demands, and controls and constraints in modern societies on, for example, the job market and welfare state, challenge individuals and offers incentives to be active, to take decisions. Beck adapts Jean-Paul Sartre's phrase: People are 'condemned to individualisation'. Individualisation therefore is a compulsion, albeit a paradoxical one, to create, to stage-manage, not only one's own life, but also the bonds and networks surrounding it—and to do this amid changing preferences and at successive stages of life, while constantly adapting to the conditions of the labour market, the education system, the welfare state and so on (Beck 2001: 4). This paradoxical compulsion for everybody to live his or her own life is what is meant by 'institutionalised individualism.'

### *What do we mean by 'one's own life'*

Opportunities, dangers, life's uncertainties, earlier collectively predefined, tackled, opposed, endured and, possibly, changed within family, village community, religious milieu or social class, must now be perceived, interpreted, decided by individuals themselves. The consequences—opportunities and burdens alike—are shifted onto individuals. These individuals are, in the face of complex social situations, often unable to take the necessary decisions in a properly founded way, that is, according to their true interests or according to moral requirements. So, individualisation does not mean "individuation" or an individually successful or 'good' life. A self-made life can also mean 'a broken life' or 'failed life'.

To summarise the characteristics of individualised conduct of life: As Beck puts it, while one's personal life has to do with more personal activity ('condemned to activity', to a do-it-yourself-life-fashioning), it also entails complete dependence upon macro-institutions (instead of meso-traditions) and is characterised by an experimental style, by reflexivity, personal risk of failure, personal decisions and a break with tradition or de-traditionalisation.

I want to explain the last two points in greater detail.

- (1) The emphatic ascription of **self-responsibility** has one serious consequence when society is in a state of crisis. Unemployment, poverty or homelessness and other similar problems are no longer regarded as problems of the society, but are interpreted as consequences of individual decisions. "It is I who am responsible and I made a mistake", so people say, "not the society". This has two consequences: (a) public pressure to discover, discuss and implement political solutions might decrease; (b) if social crises are seen as the personal crises of the individual, it is no wonder that individual illnesses, especially mental health problems, are so widespread. Social crises immediately hit—and hurt—the individuals.

- (2) The other point that needs more explanation is that break which I call **de-traditionalisation**. This does not mean that traditional forms, of marriage for example, or religious rituals, would cease to exist. On the contrary, they may flourish even more than now. No, de-traditionalisation means only that such social forms lose their characteristic of being a matter of course, taken for granted; instead of being accepted without question as normal and mandatory, they are subjected to modern processes of reflection and decision-making. You can vote for traditional forms of marriage or authoritarian political convictions, but you have to argue your case when, for instance, you are asked by critical colleagues, and to decide yourself. Additionally, such “traditional” options may be propagated by modern technical means of the internet, mobile phone or techniques of marketing. Al-Quaeda spreads its traditions extremely efficiently by using such technical means.

### *Institutional framework of individualisation*

As individualisation means ‘institutionalised individualism’, Ulrich Beck considers macro-institutions as conditions of, or incentives for, individualisation. If we compare these conditions of individualisation between—let us say—the year 1983 and today, we get an analytical tool which helps us to analyse changes in society. 1983 was both the year when Beck first published his theorem of individualisation, and the stage, at least in Germany, when ‘welfare individualisation’ was replaced more and more by what Beck calls ‘individualisation against the background of precarious living conditions’.

For the sixties, seventies and early eighties of the 20<sup>th</sup> century we can reconstruct—each time—rising factors of individualisation.<sup>3</sup> Each of these factors gives incentives that allow or compel more individualisation. Particularly important is the labour market, which Beck calls the ‘motor of individualisation.’ You have to decide on a professional career, make and promote yourself as the best among competitors, prove your freedom from your local environment through mobility, and acquire an adequate education which itself gives you incentives of self-reflection. Uprooting, individualising effects were also induced in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but were then often foiled by collective labour experiences and mass protests. While these protests succeeded in the creation of social security and social state rules, such collectivisation effects have increasingly vanished; the social security systems themselves developed individualising effects, for example, pension insurance ‘liberates’ one from dependency on family ties.

What has changed in 2007 as compared with 1983? There are some minor changes. With the use of the internet, e-mail and mobile phones one can

<sup>3</sup>Michael Hainz SJ, *Dörfliches Sozialleben im Spannungsfeld der Individualisierung*, Bonn: Forschungsgesellschaft für Agrarpolitik und Agrarsoziologie 1999, p. 18.

presume more individualising communication effects. Leisure time and, especially, income tended in some Western European countries to stagnate or even decrease, thus having de-individualising effects; the opposite trend has begun in Eastern Europe.

Certain new contextual factors have to be added: intensified economic globalisation, security concerns and a rising awareness of global ecological problems, which certainly influence individualisation, maybe negatively. On the one hand, we can clearly say that due to globalised competition in the product and labour markets, individualising impulses have certainly increased. Perhaps more important however is the fact that welfare-state regulations have been reduced in the last decade. If one adds the rising consciousness of ecological problems and security concerns (the so-called 'war against terror', a phrase that masks the US-American struggle for oil and political domination), one can expect, indeed one already perceives, a more collective cultural move; in situations of perceived danger people tend to join communities for security reasons. Already control cameras have gained more legitimacy than the right of informational self-determination. Is there, or will there be, a much stronger trend towards collectivisation? Beck himself argues – only partly convincingly, I think – that one has to take seriously the already attained level of individualisation. Today individuals will create or access institutions not in a traditional, pre-scripted way, but with high claims on their own, free decision-making rights; this would mean a voluntary, freely chosen access to institutions and a liberal regime 'within' them.

### *Strengths and limits of Beck's approach*

Positively, one can say that the theory of individualisation is a helpful concept in order to better understand modern attitudes to life and many of the changes in family life, community patterns or religious *bricolage*. Professional sociologists acknowledge Beck's innovativeness in opening up new, more adequate concepts of sociology, but they criticise his lack of both empirical data and theoretical accuracy. Poverty researchers attack him for overstressing the special habitus of the educated middle-class and applying it to the whole of society.

From my point of view, his theory of individualisation is a great challenge to theology because he combines a true description of modern life conditions, an earthly promise of redemption and a limited idea of human beings, a combination that is not open to transcendence. I mention only two sociological problems: (i) Beck systematically underestimates the meso-level (e.g. social movements). (ii) With regard to the central importance of complex individual decision-making, Beck only looks in the direction of more individual options, which he generally values too positively. He overlooks what Ralf Dahrendorf<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup>*Lebenschancen. Anläufe zur sozialen und politischen Theorie*, Frankfurt: Suhrkamp 1979.

has called—in German—“*Ligaturen*”, which means bonds, values, cultural priorities that are necessary conditions for choosing between different options. The absence of such culturally-based criteria means that in his scheme (most) contemporary European societies are located in an untouched desert. Practically all directions are open to be chosen, but there are no indications to find the proper way.

Today, because of new reflectivity on such orientations for decision-making, and also because of structural reasons (reduced welfare state, ecology, security concerns), I think that we – at least in Germany and other Western European countries – have already exceeded the zenith of individualisation and are now moving backwards. Options are closing, or are now not so highly prized, whereas a sense of belonging, ‘good’ values, and a ‘meaningful life’ are more sought after today.

### New trends in religiosity

There is in Europe today a religious diversity which may be attributed to historical factors. More than in the economic or political domain, we find plurality in matters of religion. David Martin,<sup>5</sup> a British sociologist of religion, while determining the religious vitality in a given country or regional situation, always asks which crucial historical events have shaped religion in a given country or region.<sup>6</sup>

I propose to examine religious phenomena in three steps: (1) which phenomena do we perceive? (2) how do we interpret these? (3) what do their causes tell about present society.

### Contemporary religious phenomena

1. A **shrinking traditional, Church-related religiosity**, namely a melting of previously closed, strong denominational milieus and reduced religious

<sup>5</sup>*On Secularization: Towards a Revised General Theory* (Aldershot: Ashgate 2005).

<sup>6</sup>Some of the major historical factors are summarised below. (i) *The reaction to the Reformation*. Protestant countries are, as a rule, comparatively more secularised than Catholic countries. We must note, however, the effect of the kind of relationship existing between political power and religion. Strong alliances between throne and altar were negative for religion (for example, the revolutions in France and in Russia, and the state churches in Scandinavia). Former alliances between throne and altar were more negative for religion because the radicals then had to fight against a monolithic society held together by communitarian Catholic or Orthodox denominational bonds. Protestant societies, by contrast, allowed more room for pluralistic dissent, thus avoiding disastrous struggles against a whole state-church-complex. (ii) *The degree of religious monopolies vs. competition*. Competitive, entrepreneurial church situations are more vital than monopolistic ones regulated by the state. (iii) *The relation between nation and religion*. Where religion has acted as a force for ‘cultural defence’ (Steve Bruce), for example in Ireland, Poland, Croatia, Slovakia, it has been strong. (iv) *The power of secularised elites to penetrate society*. An example would be through education (more in France than in Turkey). (v) *The geographical location at the peripheries*. Nations at the border of other civilisations (like Greece or Poland) are more pious than nations located at the centre.



vocations, Church membership, sacramental or prayer practices and beliefs. Please note that this 'negative' trend has exceptions, as we will see later, and is not the only one, though for many the most painful one.

2. Research in different social contexts shows that phenomena of **more or less persistent secularity** may be perceived in certain groups.<sup>7</sup>
3. A **new emergence of multilayered religious symbols, practices and issues**: Is this a new religious springtime? Let us differentiate between seven distinct developments:
  - Religious topics and symbols get more visible in the cultural sphere: in vanguard theatres; as new religious impartiality in lyrics and novels; in the growing number of books on angels; as main themes in modern films like *Superman Returns* to Mel Gibson's *The Passion of The Christ*.<sup>8</sup>
  - In marketing and the presentation of consumer goods, religious symbols are often intentionally used: "Put on your Nike-shoes, because this is holy ground" (after Exodus 3: 5).
  - In sections of philosophy (e.g. Jürgen Habermas, Charles Taylor, philosophy of religion), psychology (e.g. new, religiously positive interpretation of Sigmund Freud's intentions), and even sociology (e.g. José Casanova, Hans Joas) we find religiously more open, even committed religious positions.
  - Religion and how to cope with religion have become burning issues in legal proceedings and in the media; the more religion has to do with conflict the more exotic it appears.
  - For more than twenty years we have found neo-spiritual scenes at the edges of Christianity. Esoteric movements may be of less public interest now, but 'spirituality' (often instead of 'religion'!) has become very influential in its aspirations and social forms. People long for 'deeper', touching experiences; they make spiritual experiments in private, fluid social settings. As 'pilgrims' they consequently follow their own individual spiritual way and cross borders of religious systems without any scruples whatever.

<sup>7</sup>(i) Examples would be particular groups like the 'generation of 1968', those people belonging to socially vulnerable groups, to the upper-class establishment and the young cultural avant-garde. Surprisingly, elderly people also show an unexpected high level of religious doubts, and atheistic tendencies are most clearly marked in certain geographical areas, e.g. East Germany, Czech Republic and Estonia. (ii) The most important disciplines and subsystems of society do not, according to their self-understanding, need "external" religious legitimisation, correction or supplements. Economics and science (especially biology and neural sciences) seem to be most reluctant, but other subsystems (politics, media, arts) also have immense self-assurance and less and less respect for traditional church positions. (iii) We may take note, too, of some sort of church-produced secularity, for example, the effects of sex scandals (e.g. Ireland, Austria), of authoritarian church government (e.g. the dioceses of Chur and Ratisbon), or lack of respect to the faithful by priests (e.g. occasionally in Poland).

<sup>8</sup>For Germany, see: Herderkorrespondenz Spezial Oktober 2006: *Renaissance der Religion - Mode oder Megatrend?*

- Other world religions are now more visible and influential within Europe: Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Pentecostal churches and African religious groups. Most frequently they are the religions of immigrants, but they also expand through marriage, tourism and other forms, thereby converting the locals.
- Within European Christianity, too, we find trends of new religious vitality: at mega-events (World Youth Days, visits by the Pope); in strongly pious, relatively conservative, authoritarian new religious orders or spiritual movements; and also in profiled pastoral settings (e.g. youth churches, city-pastoral, work with artists, online-retreats, retreats on the roads, new religious open-door offers, contemplation courses, new missionary activities).

### *Interpreting the new visibility of religious symbols and actors*

Epistemologically, the situation is much more open than it used to be some decades ago. People more readily accept what transcends reason as true. But be careful. Partially the boom of that which looks like 'religion' is in fact not a strengthening, but a weakening of the religious. This can be said of at least two cases:

1. The fact that religious symbols are more frequently used in advertisements and in films is indeed a signal that 'religion sells'; but at the same time it can substantially weaken religion because it uses the content and forms of traditional religion through representations that follow no religious logic, but serve only an economic or aesthetic end.
2. In addition, the more frequent public appearance of religious issues cannot be equated with growing religious convictions and practices, coming as they do from an outside, third-person-perspective. They may be derived from non-religious motives, for example, fear of conflicts attributed to Islam, or used to resist undesired societal developments such as the cloning of humans by mobilising the moral resources of religion. Similarly, the new impartiality of religious depictions in art follows partly from the fact that the churches have lost control of this field. With the exception of a committed or even fundamentalist group section, for the majority of people who call themselves 'religious' or 'spiritual' today, religiosity differs from what it was fifty years ago, and is, measured in traditional terms, weaker.
3. Religious socialisation today is less deep and 'imprints' the whole of life less effectively.
4. More important than dogma and morals is religious feeling: you have to be touched – in soul and body.

5. The link between religious beliefs on the one hand and behaviour, especially social behaviour, on the other hand, has considerably weakened. 'Spirituality' nowadays often is not associated with any interest in justice.

Taken together, rather than just a simple comeback of traditional religion, a patchy, inconsistent mix of contemporary religiousness emerges. This pluralisation will enlarge because of demographic changes. It will also politically get (more) radicalised where religious divisions and socio-economic exclusions overlap and massively reinforce themselves.

### *From religion back to society*

If we analyse the causes of central developments in the contemporary religious landscape, we can interpret important features of our European societies. But what, in the sociology of religion, are the central questions in need of explanation? I suggest the following. How is the phenomenon of simultaneous new religious interest and persistent secularity to be explained?

Starting from the latter aspect, I refer to José Casanova's fascinating book *Public Religions in the Modern World* (1994), especially to the first of his three theses on secularisation. This thesis of functional differentiation says that the emancipation and growing autonomy of the mundane spheres of economy, politics, science and art from Church influence is still a main practical problem for religious persons today – despite the helpful theological insights in *Gaudium et Spes* (nos. 36 and 76).

Deepening the differentiation-argument from a micro-perspective, Jörg Stolz (Lausanne, Switzerland) has recently argued that now an extensive range of secular competitors (ranging from the welfare state to the wellness industry and ritual entrepreneurs) offer more reliable and more effective immanent and also, according to the perception of some, transcendent goods than those offered by the Church. This has extensive secularising effects.

But at the same time, functional differentiation is also 'religiously productive'. It has liberated religious actors like bishops and abbots from economic and political functions, thus strengthening their specific religious role. The question arises, however, whether we have somehow lost the key to this religious logic. We may also ask whether the long-standing concentration on these emancipated, autonomous mundane spheres has caused a new religious longing: has modernity itself become religiously productive? This brings me directly to the first aspect of my question, namely how to explain the new interest in religion. I suggest a few hypotheses.

- At a deep cultural level one might speak of a **disillusionment with the promises of modernity** (see the critique of postmodernism by Jürgen

Habermas who speaks of '*entgleisender Modernisierung*' or the slipping up of modernisation). There is an ongoing controversy on how our developed societies take up position with regard to Modernity and the Enlightenment.

- At a more concrete level, one can, following the argument of Norris and Inglehart,<sup>9</sup> hold that **rising insecurities** (risks of unemployment, divorce, dismantling of the welfare state) foster a desire for a stable religious anchor. As the middle classes at risk have much to lose, it is they who, more than others, look for spirituality and religious 'protection'.
- A similar direction is supposed in Ralf Dahrendorf's **desert-argument** (see above). The new openness to religion can be understood as a trial to cope with that dilemma of modernity where we have to take decisions endlessly but lack criteria for making choices.
- Another concrete side effect of modernity is that **vis-à-vis the routine, one-dimensional, shallow rationality of modernity, the wish for re-enchantment** ("*Wiederverzauberung*", the reverse of Max Weber's argument) may grow. The longing for spirituality may come as a counter-effect of rationalised modernity. Insofar as the Church is perceived to be a rationalised, non-spiritual bureaucracy, withdrawal from the Church may be interpreted partly as a rejection of this aspect of modernity.
- **Globalisation and religious economics.** The fallout of globalisation (such as migration, tourism and the internet) makes new religious ideas and new religious actors like Buddhists, Moslems and Pentecostal preachers easily available. The more numerous religious suppliers there are in a given market, the harder they will try to offer attractive religious activities. In the end, religiosity and spirituality will get more vital, or so say Rodney Stark, Roger Finke, Laurence Iannacone and others. There is certainly a new competition between religions in Europe, but I am with those sociologists of religions (Steve Bruce, Jörg Stolz) who are critical of a non-reflective religious use of economic concepts like 'markets' and 'goods'. No colonisation of religion by means of economics!

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<sup>9</sup>*Sacred and secular: religion and politics worldwide*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2004.

## **Towards a Common Spirituality in the Social Apostolate**

**María del Mar Magallón<sup>1</sup>**

**T**his was the evocative title of the meeting I was invited to participate in on behalf of ALBOAN and the social sector of the Loyola Province: the Second European Meeting of the social apostolate held last August in Slovakia. Although somewhat daunted by the idea of meeting many unknown people, most of them Jesuits, I felt motivated by the title from the very start, for it frames the two terms that have been the foundation of my life: spirituality and the social apostolate. As the date of the meeting drew closer, I reflected on my personal experience in relation to these terms, and discovered that both had always gone hand in hand in the story of my life. They are not two independent topics for the spiritual has moved me towards social involvement, and through such involvement my faith has been challenged and has matured.

With these premises I travelled to the city of Piešťany, where a large number of people committed to social action would be meeting together to share their experience, hear one another, question one another and try to envision their common spirituality. Among those attending were representatives of the *Misión Obrera* movement, Eurojess, and the Jesuit Refugee Service; there were people dedicated to working with minors and immigrants, and others involved in international solidarity. Everyone was there to share an experience that starts off for each one as a personal calling but inevitably evolves into a communitarian questioning oriented to the transformation of social structures.

### **A spirituality de-centred by encounter**

If I had to use one word to describe the experience I had in the course of this week, I would prefer the word "ENCOUNTER." Many other terms appeared during the four intense days of work, but I think most of them revolved around the key concept of encounter: cultivating personal relations, being close to those who are excluded, working in the frontier regions...

We began the sessions by delving deep into whatever basic experience it was that impelled each of us at some moment in our lives to work in the social apostolate. As we told one another our different stories, we discovered that our relationships and our encounters had been a privileged medium (in many cases, even indispensable) for producing the experience. Contact with, and closeness to, excluded people, a shared community life (religious, familial,

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communal), encounters with people who live in extreme situations, leaving our familiar lives to meet up with the unknown—all these were experiences that we expressed and shared with one another as we tried to explain our life stories.

If we pause for a while to savour the word “encounter”, we discover that it has countless shades of meaning. On the one hand, encounter de-centres us, makes us step away from our selves, places us outdoors. At the same time, encounter becomes for us a source of hope and energy. The personal histories that we shared about our social involvement confirmed both aspects. When we enter into relations by placing ourselves at the service of excluded people, we become aware of our limitations and our vulnerability, we feel pain at their suffering, and we experience impotence; at the same time, though, those same relationships give us the courage to keep building the energy to overcome the crises and the hope to keep believing in life.

Spirituality, then, is encounter, an encounter that de-centres us, dis-locates us, makes us conscious of our fragility and propels us to accompany those who are suffering and to continue to work for justice. In this way justice and spirituality are not two independent concepts, separated by social or theological discourse; rather, they are two sides of the same coin. Both feed into one another and challenge one another mutually. My faith grounds my commitment to justice and requires it, while that commitment appeals to, questions and matures my faith. For Ignatian spirituality, it is not a case of faith on one side and justice on the other; rather, the two are entwined and united.

After recounting our basic experiences and becoming aware of the crises we have lived through, on the third day of the meeting we went a step further and asked: how do we progress from personal experience to community experience? How does our social action contribute to the transformation of the present power structures? Is there space for hope? Must we resign ourselves solely to resisting? All these questions led us finally to the definitive question: What should be our common mission as the European social sector?

### **From Ignatian spirituality to a common apostolate**

The social sector in Europe spreads over many different areas of work: assistance to refugees, work with minors and Gypsies, ministry in the prisons, *Misión Obrera*, development aid, social centres, assistance and training for immigrants. The meeting in Slovakia made it clear that this diversity of tasks does not represent a diversity of spiritualities; rather, all of it emerges from a common spirituality, and should therefore impel us towards a shared mission.

Consequently, as a first exercise of our common apostolate we should become aware of the diversity of works in which we are involved, but we should also recognise that we are all part of a European apostolic body with Ignatian spirituality.

Moreover, there are certain specific features of our shared mission which need to be cultivated and which in my opinion could give form and colour to this European apostolic body:

- **Listening to people:** We live in an epoch of great changes and uncertainties. Yesterday's solutions don't work today. Poverty has changed its appearances, and situations of injustice and inequality are easily camouflaged amidst new social structures. As a body we will have to be alert to the signs of the times and know how to discern them jointly, in order to be able to respond appropriately to the reality of the people most in need.
- **In companionship:** A spirituality of encounter cannot take the form of a solitary apostolate. Part of the essence of our social involvement is our recognition of the worth and the dignity of the people around us. Strangely, sometimes we are able to perceive that worth in the poor people we accompany more easily than we do in those with whom we share the mission (communities, families, groups...). Moreover, the social apostolate can sometimes exhaust us and leave us discouraged. On this journey we need to be able to count on companions who will support us in moments of crisis, listen to our concerns, celebrate with us and enhance our work. As regards lay people, the challenge is twofold. If we wish to maintain the spirituality of the works of the Society, we must involve lay people in the mission. If we are true to our convictions, they should be accompanied by training processes that will lead to lay people's assuming new responsibilities and becoming progressively more incorporated into the decision-making mechanisms of the works and the European apostolic body.
- **Constructing citizenship:** Most of the factors producing death and suffering for the persons we accompany are to be found in the countries of the global North. It is forces here in the North that stir up wars in remote places, create unjust market conditions and erect mechanisms of exclusion that favour the movement of capital but not that of persons. Even though the tasks of accompaniment and assistance remain essential, the European social apostolate cannot rest content just with these. The works that we represent have enormous potential, and they should be contributing to the construction of a committed European citizenship that is mobilised for the common good and the protection of people, over and above all particular interests.
- **In networks:** There exists a fairly generalised tendency to compartmentalise what we know: light and shadow, rich and poor, faith and justice... and we persist in that practice as we relate to other sectors and organisations. If we stop to think about it, these differentiations that we make do not lead us to the end we desire, but instead put tremendous

limits on our ability to act; furthermore, they cause poor coordination, inefficiencies and false comparisons. In these days when the problems are complex, the solutions must be the result of different disciplines working together – and who more able than the Society of Jesus to put them all in mutual interrelation?

I should not fail to mention the importance of the **communities of solidarity**, to which we referred on several occasions in the course of the meeting. In my opinion, these communities would be an ideal way to help these same characteristics develop and become manifest. These would be communities in which lay people and Jesuits live together **in companionship** in frontier situations, **on the lookout** for what is happening around them, **constructing a European citizenship** in solidarity with those who live on the margins of history and cooperating in **networks** with many other persons and communities who, like us, want to be candles shining in the midst of the darkness.

Many questions were left unanswered in Slovakia. To the extent that we progress toward finding answers, we will be creating a common apostolate.

Original Spanish

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## **The Social Apostolate in Europe**

### **A reflection by the new European coordinator**

#### **Brendan MacPartlin SJ**

*What is the role of the European Social Apostolate Coordinator, who is the person, and where is the social apostolate going?*

I had a traditional formation in the Society with some emphasis on the natural sciences. My awakening to social justice was gradual. An early insight came from the Haslemere Declaration of 1968 which claimed that “the roots of poverty and deprivation are in the structures and failures of our society, in our attitudes as individuals and in the institutions we have created that reflect them...a far-reaching transformation of the social structure has to take place”. A regency experience of living in a slum with the poor helped to connect faith with justice. Soon after GC 32 issued Decree 4 on Faith and Justice, I finished theology and went to work in our College of Industrial Relations in Dublin. This had originated as the Catholic Workers’ College based on Decree 29 of GC 29 on the social dimension of labour. I spent the following thirty years researching, lecturing and working practically with ‘the labour question’. Following Decree 4, the Irish Province developed other social centres and insertion communities.

Having spent more than half a century on the southside of Dublin, I was surprised to find myself in the role of coordinator and needed a quick introduction to the exotic mainland of Europe. Social Week 2007 kick-started me onto a steep learning curve. The richness, diversity and liveliness of the methodology of the Social Week created an experience that will take time to digest. The sharing of experiences and reflections by colleagues gave context and meaning to my own rather isolated experiences of the social sector. It was as if the risen Christ was pointing out how he has been leading.

During the Social Week I found many resonances. On the encounter with God in the midst of deprivation I associated the reference to van Broeckhoven’s focus on location to McVerry’s ‘the meaning is in the shadows’. I gained some language to express a common spirituality, words and relations to understand the working of God and models to guide apostolic action. We discovered that we did not just have individual foundational experiences but met through a network of itineraries. People and works were transformed by confronting danger and opportunity along a path opening up from friendship to community, from the particular to the universal. One could hope to join in God’s working in the world, sharing the perspective of a Trinity looking on struggling humanity with compassion, solidarity and hope.

But what are the places in society that we wish to occupy and where in this world are we to find our space? It is a world under re-formation by global

capitalism where power relations, social divisions, religious trends and the balance between individual and community are changing. How do we imagine our mission? It was evident in the gathering of people at the Social Week that there is energy in the sector to follow the leading of grace on these questions.

It is in this landscape that I see the role of the European Social Apostolate Coordinator acting. Some guidelines and institutional adjustments are to be expected from the 35<sup>th</sup> General Congregation. But already the Council of Provincials, the event that is called Social Week and the guidance of the European Coordinator's council, which meets four times a year, are creating a direction for action. My need for the moment is to get to know the people, the activities and the contexts of the sector and be ready to spot the emergence of opportunities for actions at the level of Europe.

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## Where do we want to go? Final reflections on the Social Week Fernando Franco SJ

I am grateful for the opportunity you have offered me to sum up these past days and look towards the future. For me personally these have been days of intense consolation. I am grateful to you and God for this gift. It seems inevitable that we look back three years and remember Celje, our first encounter. The road travelled has been long; the progress made considerable.

### Elements of our common spirituality

Based on what you have shared and lived these past three days I firmly believe that we, coming as we do from different traditions of the social apostolate in Europe, share a common spirituality. Let me describe briefly its main elements.

- (1) Our spirituality is marked by two complementary movements: a movement of **descent** coming down and a **lateral** horizontal movement. The first takes us closer to the poor and excluded; the second to those who are different. Both movements generate 'accompaniment', a term that has been used frequently to express our way of proceeding and being. These two movements form the cornerstone of our Jesuit spirituality, the *condition sine qua non* for being a Jesuit in the social apostolate.
- (2) Our spirituality is also marked simultaneously by a movement of **revelation**—may be a movement of ascent. A revelation, a discovery of the gift of love and friendship. **We are friends of the Lord and of the poor**—the very same words used by General Congregation 34, which came naturally into our conversation. They constitute the source of our joy and resistance. Our resistance, better perhaps, our endurance, is not fashioned through superhuman adventures like crossing deserts, but is borne out of a shared companionship with God and the poor; it is an endurance sustained by the hands extended to us in friendship and companionship.
- (3) Our spirituality lives finally **in action with them**; an action that respects them; an action that does not give from above, but is always an exchange of gifts among equals. An action characterised as *diakonia*, the service of one who is an intermediary, of one who serves by building bridges and putting people in contact with each other. An action that aims at transforming the type and quality of relationships among individuals and groups.

- (4) The presence of the Spirit among us is crucial. Remember the maps we have drawn. Remember we are maps of relationships, of lines joining us to networks of people and institutions. The Spirit today urges our action **to add synergies, and to enable inclusion.**

### Some reflections

- (1) Our shared reflections underlie the **close relationship existing between our identity and mission**; both are important and need to be affirmed. We cannot spend ourselves in either endless action or empty self-contemplation.
- (2) "Justice is the locus of Faith" as some of you have rightly said. Justice transforms faith, but faith leads us to discover new aspects of justice; for example, discovering our vulnerability, in the act of reconciliation, in the birth of a handicapped child. We have **ended a tragic period of duality** in the Society. We may even proclaim loudly that it is the end of a 'double life': the lives of faith and justice lived along parallel lines. It is the end of two types of apostolates and institutions: some engaged in faith and others in the works of justice. There is only one path and we need to respect and together hold each of the two poles.
- (3) This spirituality we have shared is **deeply Ignatian** and incarnational. Remember the meditation where God decides to become a human person. A spirituality marked by the *kenosis* of the crucified Christ and by Ignatius' insistence that we need to de-centre ourselves. This de-centring begins with "making offerings of greater value and greater importance" (Spiritual Exercises 97), continues with the two standards, the two categories of men and the three degrees of humility. The notion of friendship and love as an exchange among equals is Ignatius' definition of love; a love more in deeds than in words.

### A call to discern

Sharing our experiences we have also encountered some questions calling for discernment.

- (1) How transformative is our action? How political? With the Risen Christ active in transforming reality, how convinced are we that we can transform it? At a time when globalisation has succeeded in devaluing politics, is the Society following the same direction?
- (2) How much is our action communitarian? How much does it spring from a living community? Against the overwhelming presence of individualism,

are 'communities of solidarity' our response? How much of an apostolic body are we?

- (3) At a time when people speak of fragmentation and of a 'clash of civilisations', how much is our Christian identity open to other cultures and religions?
- (4) How far have we succeeded in reconciling ourselves to ourselves and to others? How much have we forgiven, healed and struggled for peace? How intensively do we feel the call to stitch again the torn social texture of our societies? To re-construct our broken biographies?

### **The future Mission: living at the frontiers**

What I have heard these days leads me to believe that our future mission lies on the frontiers. As you have repeatedly remarked, our future mission is "under construction."

Living at the frontiers means that our vocation impels us to cross these frontiers, to go over differences, to build bridges across artificial barriers. Living at the frontiers gives us the opportunity to denounce how artificially, and often unjustly, people have been kept divided on either side. It provides us with an occasion to propose solutions across the hidden fault lines separating our lives. Living at the frontier leads us always to the area of advocacy.

I speak of **two kinds of geographical frontiers: external and internal**. Let me be a little more concrete in pointing out where exactly I see our mission at the frontiers.

The first mission takes us to the frontiers of Europe with Africa: the entire Northern African belt, and Western Africa (Mali, Senegal, Mauritania). I am also thinking of the frontier of Eastern Europe with Russia (Ukraine, Turkey), and the frontier of the Atlantic ocean that separates us from our immigrant brothers and sisters from Ecuador, Bolivia and Central America. This mission must deal with the issue of externalising the frontiers of Europe, and with the issue of analysing the relationship between migration and development.

The second mission takes us to the real, though unacknowledged frontiers within our own European societies. I mention some of these now. We are already engaged in serious efforts to bridge the gap between young and old, especially with the young at risk and excluded. There is the silent work of prison chaplains working to establish a bridge between the 'free' and those behind bars. There is the work with migrants trying to establish a dialogue between those 'having papers' and those 'without papers' (*sans papiers*). Then there is the example of many working in poor areas (popular quarters) engaged in a dialogue between different urban territories and actors. I must finally mention those opening channels of inter-religious dialogue between those whom we call "ours" and those we name as "others."

The ensuing discussion insisted on the need perhaps to substitute the word encounter for the term descent; on the difficulty faced by Jesuits today in transforming structures because we ourselves are sometimes significant actors in the structures we want to change; on the imperative to integrate social research with social activism. One spoke about the frontier existing within the Society: there are some Jesuits exclusively working with the rich. Another remarked that we seem only to talk about communal discernment, but we find it tough to put the ideas into practical life. Mention was also made about the absence of any reflection on the ecological crisis.

I end remembering the consolation we all felt, and the feeling that the Lord had been accompanying us all along. We do share a common spirituality!

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## Questionnaire

- (1) How would you describe the situation existing in your country (region)? What are the main changes that have taken place in the last 10 years that call for a change (new discernment) in our apostolic strategy?
- (2) What are the main strengths and weaknesses (limitations) of the Society of Jesus in the region/country over the last 10 years?
- (3) As “servants of Christ mission,” what is the Lord asking the Society (and hence General Congregation 35) today? What is the most urgent task? You may consider the following aspects:
  - Our mission
  - Our identity
  - Our government (or our way of proceeding)
  - The future of apostolic partnership with others
  - Our communities

LOYOLA (SPAIN)

Patxi Alvarez SJ

### Renewing the Apostolic Body to Respond Better to Our Mission

#### Panoramic view of the social changes in our context

The last ten years in Spain have seen the consolidation of certain tendencies that first appeared in earlier decades. These years may be viewed, then, as a time when emerging social phenomena were confirmed. I will very briefly indicate some of these:

1. The 1980s were very difficult years economically. We experienced a harsh process of industrial re-conversion, with very high unemployment rates, a rough social climate and great uncertainty about the future. Today, however, we can affirm that **the phenomenon of globalisation has made us one of its net beneficiaries**. We are one of the countries that has obtained excellent returns in terms of social well-being. This does not mean that there are no negative signs in this globalising wave, such as the growth of inequality, a precarious labour market due to a set of flexibility norms introduced into labour legislation, and the slimming down of a welfare system that never attained the levels of other countries in the north of Europe. As a whole, however, our country has been favoured by an economy that helps the rich to become richer and makes poor people poorer still.

The fact that we are beneficiaries of this process prevents us from observing how the world as a whole is being submerged in the growing inequality

produced by globalisation as it presently functions. Our sensitivity is out of focus. We live in a small bubble of prosperity.

2. In the past decade we have gone from being a country of emigration to being a **country of immigration**. During the whole course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century many Spaniards migrated to countless countries in the Americas and in northern and central Europe, looking for ways to earn a living which they could not find here. Nowadays, however, we have become a state that receives a multitude of persons from Africa, Latin America and Eastern Europe. At the present time practically ten percent of Spain's population comes from other countries. I point out three characteristics of this phenomenon:
  - a. Our way of life has witnessed an acceleration, a process that has been going on in our country since it became modernised. Cultural pluralism has come to stay and will become more pronounced.
  - b. This pluralism generates antagonism toward any person who is different – sentiments that were latent in society. Outbreaks of xenophobia and antagonism toward immigrants are becoming ever more significant. The process of achieving the integration we need is encountering many difficulties, and these portend a gloomy future.
  - c. At present, immigrants are in fact a benefit for our society, although that is not the way most people see it. The immigrants fill jobs that native Spaniards do not want; they contribute more to the state treasury than they receive from it. Nevertheless, the treatment they receive in no way corresponds to this reality: Many people take advantage of them so as to maintain a buoyant submerged economy in which exploitation of labour is rampant. Immigrants are performing the domestic tasks no longer done by Spanish women, who have become incorporated into the workforce without having to revise their role in the family. Furthermore, the immigrants contribute children and young people to an increasingly ageing population.
3. The **process of secularisation**, which began in the 1960s and was reinforced by the transition to democracy after the death of Franco (1975), continues to advance strongly with ever more noticeable consequences. Individualism becomes more pronounced as people manage their private lives as they wish rather than according to older ways of life and traditional family models; traditional values are giving way to post-modern ones; there is a continuous decline in the Church's credibility and in manifestations of faith; traditional forms of authority are questioned... All these changes are now evident in educational settings, an indication of how deep the transformation has been. All around us there is also a growing alienation and **loss of credibility in politics**. Political questions seem not to matter to people, and citizen involvement is minimal. At the same time, poor neighbourhoods and popular organisations are losing their social role as local spaces have ceased to be the milieu where social relations are forged: they have ceded ground to networks of interests. Both these phenomena are leading to a reduced political sense, the



sense that people have of being citizens. People are apathetic about political participation.

### **The Society of Jesus: dwindling, but active and searching**

In the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the Spanish provinces could count on having great numbers of Jesuits, and Jesuits of extraordinary quality. Even now Jesuits from these provinces are working in countless countries, especially in Latin America, where many countries have as many native Jesuits as they have foreign ones.

These Spanish Jesuits have made very important contributions to cultural life and political transformation, as well as to post-conciliar renewal in the Church itself and in religious life. An especially valuable contribution to the life of the Society has been the in-depth study of Ignatian spirituality that these Jesuits have undertaken by returning to the original sources.

The post-conciliar period, however, was traumatic. No doubt a Spanish Church that was particularly traditional and a Spanish society in the midst of a turbulent political transition made the changes more painful still. Many Jesuits left the order, and the number of young men entering the order diminished greatly.

Today our provinces are ageing, and there does not appear to be any prospect of change in that regard. The reduction in the number of Jesuits is irreversible. The age of the generation with the greatest numbers is today about 70, which means that soon we will experience a rather sudden drop in our ability to respond to apostolic needs. A golden age is coming to its end.

In contrast with this situation, the apostolic works are very numerous, they increase in size and numbers, and for the most part they are recognised as important contributions to society, both for the quality of their service and their credibility.

Nor do the needs of the apostolic ministry decrease in number; rather, the demands are ever greater. It seems that the Lord is asking of us an additional effort in times of decline.

Below are some particularly relevant questions with respect to the future. I pose them separately for reasons of clarity, even though all of them are interrelated:

1. Leadership: Today we Jesuits are wondering how we will continue to direct our institutions when there are few Jesuits available, and sometimes none at all. We do not know if the apostolic works will remain aligned with the Society's mission. We would like them to remain so because we are confident of their potential, but we cannot be assured that, apart from their being juridically Jesuit, they continue to serve our mission.
2. Jesuit culture: A work is Jesuit not just by reason of its mission, but also by its way of proceeding. We wonder whether the style that formerly was diffused by osmosis because of the presence of Jesuits will be maintained in the future. We will have to continue working on Ignatian identity.
3. Incorporation of lay people: Many steps have been taken in the area of incorporating lay people in the works. Today they represent more than 95 per

cent of the personnel of the majority of our apostolic institutions. The variety of lay people is enormous: some are closely identified with Jesuits, others are very critical; some are believers, others are agnostics; some are reactionary, others are promoters of justice... The challenge of offering them a formation which will help them develop their personal views and attitudes is urgent.

4. Involvement in justice: We need more works that clearly manifest our involvement in the promotion of justice. There are still many institutions that continue to operate so as to reinforce a social order that favours the more affluent. We need more institutional renewal.
5. Communities: There was a greater variety of community arrangements before GC 32 than exists now. The large communities persist but the small, inserted communities are disappearing. This is perhaps due to our advanced average age and our customs, but still, we urgently need a prophetic presence in poor neighbourhoods to put us in touch with other realities.

#### **What does the Lord ask of the universal Society of Jesus today?**

Today, as in the times of Saint Ignatius, the Lord is asking us to “see the different persons: first, those on the face of the earth, in such great diversity of dress and in manner of acting. Some are white, some black; some at peace, and some at war; some weeping, some laughing; some well, some sick; some coming into the world, and some dying...” (Spiritual Exercises 106). We are asked to observe all this in order to unite ourselves to God’s compassionate dynamic of redeeming humankind. This text appears more relevant today than ever; it seems to be written almost specifically for our days.

The present apostolic challenges are essentially global. Perhaps for that reason we are now better than ever able to understand the meaning of the Society’s universality. It is no longer just a question of each Jesuit making himself available for the mission to which he is sent. Rather, now each and every one of the missions that we undertake, whether personal or institutional, must be understood as a service to the global reality of the world.

As Jesuits we have available to us a global mission that is a pure grace: the service of faith and promotion of justice, in dialogue with other cultures and religious traditions. This mission has been tested over the course of the last 30 or 40 years, and, even though it has experienced moments when failure seemed possible, it has emerged from the trials strengthened. Today we understand the meaning and the relevance of this mission better than ever before. We live in a broken world, one that is structurally and deliberately unjust, and one that benefits the wealthy at the expense of the poor. Lazarus and the rich man, the crumbs of one and the banquets of the other, and the abyss that separates them—once again this parable becomes a very suitable one for our day and age (Luke 16: 19-31). The world seeks compassionate justice, liberating faith, and companionship that generates hope and dignity.

In a word, very few international bodies are blessed with a mission that is so appropriate to our present epoch: promoting faith-justice in view of our world’s global dimensions. In my opinion, we have for the most part already realised the

task of clarifying our mission, though that mission must, of course, be continually updated and concretised in particular apostolic priorities—a matter that the next General Congregation should definitely consider.

Other tasks that remain point in basically two directions:

### **1. Building a true universal body**

We need structures that allow us to align our local forces with strategies that respond to the global challenges. The mission itself is what should determine the structuring. In many places we are trying to find answers to questions such as these:

- How do we position ourselves with respect to the present cultural diversity, which will not disappear but keep growing? Here we should find ourselves desiring to convert the cultural plurality into a fount of riches and cease considering it a threat. We should also feel the desire to protect endangered cultural identities and indigenous peoples.
- How do we generate alternatives to an economy that benefits those who are prosperous at the expense of the labour of the poor? Here is revealed our intention to struggle against the socio-economic structures that sustain a system favouring inequality and exploitation.
- How can we be present in conflicts in a way that fosters reconciliation and confronts violence? We live in the midst of many violent and murderous conflicts, and we desire that people become agents for building new societies.
- How will we collaborate in the construction of a global citizenship that is concerned with the world's problems? We see clearly here the need to incorporate the disadvantaged groups into the mechanisms of political decision-making.
- How will we demonstrate the credibility and the relevance of our faith as a sign of salvation and liberation? This is the challenge of continuing to announce our faith as a space which imbues life with meaning and allows people to flourish in newness.

All of us Jesuits are trying to respond to one or other of these questions through our activities, but we tend to do so each one separately. If we were to come together and act more as a united body, our impact, and indeed our hope, could be quite different.

The organisational structures that we have today do not seem to be the ones most suitable for enabling this global corporative action on our part. Perhaps we need to reform the present structures or create new ones. In any case, it is urgent that we organise ourselves so that by our multiple works we all contribute to a single mission.

Some of the new structures will go beyond the provincial frameworks: they will be assistancy-wide strategies possessed of sufficient authoritative leadership, or else bodies dedicated to some specific mission (as for example, the Jesuit Refugee Service).

Other structures will be clearly provincial: strategic planning should make possible a coordinated response on the part of the different provincial apostolates, and a coherent Jesuit presence should be created in each province, so that collaboration between all the different sectors is carried out effectively. To this end it will be necessary to contain institutional tendencies that pull in the direction of independence.

## 2. Building communities of solidarity

This was one of the great intuitions of our last General Congregation (GC 34, D 3, n. 10). We realise nowadays that the structures of sin in our world have socio-cultural roots. Only communities of people living out the values of justice and solidarity – communities of solidarity – will be able to transmit the new forms of life that foster dignity for all human beings and especially for the marginalised. Only such communities are capable of proclaiming the meaning and the reach of our faith. These communities will “already be an alternative way of life” (Pedro Trigo): viewed from within, they will be true parables of the Kingdom; viewed from without, they will be resolute promoters of justice.

We need communities like this throughout the Society, both in our own Jesuit communities and in our institutions.

We are called to form that kind of community, for today we understand community life to be in its own way a kind of mission. Communities are not simply lairs to which the warrior may retreat for rest; they are schools of life and venues of a renewed fraternal spirit; they are privileged ways of getting closer to poor people and of creating open spaces that are welcoming and hospitable, where we can truly savour the coming of the Kingdom.

But the challenge for our institutions is greater still. The Society is known for its earnestness: it offers credibility, work well done, a dose of renewal and another of prudence. Our apostolic platforms are generally well managed, and they offer quality service. But that is not enough.

Within the institutions we need to create spaces where Jesuits and lay people can come together to share our hopes, compare our visions and show one another affection and humanity. We need spaces in which we can share our faith and discern our mission together. With our lay collaborators we aspire to share not only our work, but also our lives; we want our respective charisms to clarify and enrich one another. Possibly through such sharing they will come to understand better the meaning of their lay vocation, and we the meaning of our religious one. Such spaces of real community are essential because we can offer to others only what we are. Our work is a reflection of the spirit that lives within us. As human communities committed to justice and fraternity, we will be able to make these ideals available to other people only insofar as we live them ourselves. Our work has much of the contagious in it – it is a kind of osmosis.

In similar fashion, our institutions will have to be imbued with qualities that are inspired by our way of proceeding: prayerful communal discernment at the decision-making level, ability to reflect on one’s personal experience, work on behalf of the people at the bottom, mission in accord with the Society.... Not all the

institutions will have these qualities. In this regard, we need to be honest. Our resources are limited. We will be able to dedicate ourselves only to those apostolic works that carry out the mission of the Society and have Ignatian attributes. In the next few years we must make a coherent selection of ministries, and we must do so with faith and courage.

In my view, the institutions of the Society will not be managed effectively if we do not succeed in creating healthy communities that promote our mission within them. For most institutions, that means the communities will be formed of both Jesuits and lay people. We simply will not be able to support the institutional leadership from the province level if within the institutions themselves there is not a community committed to carrying out this mission.

We most definitely have before us, then, the task of renewing the apostolic body of the Society, both in its provincial structures and at the level of assistancies and regions, so that we will be better able to respond as a universal body to the global apostolic challenges.

Original Spanish

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## ZAMBIA-MALAWI

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### Commercialisation of Education

#### The general situation

The Jesuit Province of Zambia-Malawi, as you may have guessed, comprises two countries: Zambia and Malawi, both of which are located in South East Central Africa. The two countries share borders, a common historical background and experience of colonialism. In general the cultures of the people of these countries are very similar. Indeed in the late fifties Zambia, Malawi and Zimbabwe were a federation then called Northern Rhodesia, Nyasaland and Southern Rhodesia respectively under British rule. This situation allowed for free movement and mixing of peoples and cultures. Such mixing was the inevitable result of political and economic compulsions, and had nothing to do with a desire to absorb other cultures or see other parts of the world.

Zambia and Malawi got their independence in 1964; in the late eighties and early nineties they were swept by the wind of multiparty politics, so that now both are

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on to their third republican presidents. Although there is some political wrangling in these countries it is important to emphasise that there has never been any civil war within, or any war with neighbouring countries. The peaceful nature of the two countries has, in recent years, turned them into host nations for refugees from other countries, whereas the endless political squabbles in both countries make for 'interesting times', to say the least. This latter fact, in my opinion, has led to poor governance and is responsible for the context in which Jesuits work today.

Despite the similarities, there are differences between Zambia and Malawi. For example, Malawi has an agriculture-based economy, with tobacco as its main cash crop, whereas Zambia relies on mining with copper as its main mineral product. The heavy reliance on agriculture in Malawi and mining in Zambia makes for unstable economies for both countries, especially when the products fail in the international market for whatever reason. Although Malawi and Zambia have about the same population of roughly twelve million people, Malawi is a much smaller country than Zambia, which means its population density is higher. Furthermore, Malawi's over-dependence on agriculture has led to a lot of deforestation and exhaustion of arable land.

Obviously there are some similarities between Zambia and Malawi which are neither political nor geographical but the result of the history of evangelisation. And this is my next concern.

The history of Catholic Christianity in both Zambia and Malawi is over a hundred years old, but the first missionaries to Malawi were Scottish Protestants who came to stop the practice of slave trade, which was being conducted by Arab Muslims. As it happened, it was the Muslims who brought the art of writing (education) to Malawi. The inevitable consequence of opposing the slave trade was that Islam had to be fought as well. A further consequence was that the art of writing, that is education, suffered, though not for very long. It was the Jesuits who brought the faith to Zambia whereas the White Fathers (M. Afr.) and the Montfort Fathers (SMM) evangelised Malawi. The Jesuits went to Malawi only about 16 years ago. Their specific mission was to teach in the diocesan theological seminary at the request of the Episcopal Conference of Malawi (ECM) through Fr. General.

Unlike in Malawi, the specific mission of the Jesuits in Zambia was primarily evangelisation. Like the White Fathers and the Montforts in Malawi, the Jesuits in Zambia soon got involved with the education apostolate. Thus, if we had to find a common link between the first Jesuits in Zambia and those in Malawi, we can claim education as that link. But we would have to bear in mind that the educational levels in both were different. For the Jesuits in Zambia education was part and parcel of primary evangelisation, whereas in Malawi it was the formation of the local clergy. These Jesuits came from Zambia Province, which later became Zambia-Malawi Province.

### **The current situation**

In those days it was common for religious involved in primary evangelisation to open schools. And so, for the Jesuits in Zambia, like the White Fathers and the Montforts in Malawi, education was key not only for the spreading of the Good

News but also for holistic human development. The Jesuits therefore started a large number of parochial primary schools in Lusaka, the capital of Zambia. In the Southern part of Zambia, the Jesuits opened a secondary school and a teachers' college for training primary school teachers.

With the coming of independence in the sixties the responsibility of primary education and, in some cases, secondary education shifted from the hands of religious to governments. It was only natural that the new governments in Zambia and Malawi should take responsibility for educating their people. Zambia opted for free education because the economy of that time could allow it. Although the economy of Malawi could not allow for free education, the evangelisation strategy of the White Fathers in Malawi was such that they 'delayed' baptism for any child whose parents demonstrated clear unwillingness to send their child to school. This was their effort of *cura personalis*.

The last ten to twenty years, however, tell an entirely different story. Malawi got its second republican president who opened up the market, let me say, too drastically. Nearly anybody who had anything, however little, could, and did, open a private school, mostly secondary schools. It was surely not the love of education but the love of money that drove them. There was little control, if any, of who taught in such schools. A fair number of unqualified teachers found their way into the classrooms to teach. The infrastructure was often poor. In some cases we saw old shop buildings converted into schools. Ironically, this happened at a time when the government decided to offer free primary school education. The result was that there were more pupils enrolling than schools could handle. School uniforms suddenly became more expensive than tuition, since tuition was free. Thus on the one hand, there was 'free' education in primary schools, while on the other hand, there was expensive and uncontrolled secondary school education in private schools. These private schools did not necessarily absorb all those completing primary school since they could not afford the high fees. The result was a bottleneck, a jammed education system. This was the beginning of what I call the *commercialisation of education* in Malawi. In the meantime, the private schools were eager to prove their worth. And although it is hard to prove, one wonders whether the widespread leakage of national examination papers at a time when private schools were mushrooming was simply coincidental.

Zambia may not have followed the same path of Malawi, but it cannot be denied that school standards have gone down in the last ten to fifteen years. Leakage of national examination question papers is quite common. Not too long ago, examinations at a bar school for lawyers (future custodians of the law) were cancelled due to leakages. For the past two years the government, which is the biggest employer in the country, stopped employing teachers because of the pressure to balance the budget and meet the HIPC<sup>2</sup> Initiative completion point.

Meanwhile, at the Jesuit College of Education in Zambia, we were busy producing teachers who had no guarantee of employment. Only in 2009 will this situation, so I am informed, be rectified. How can we have a nation where teaching is no longer a noble profession? The White Fathers in Malawi 'delayed' baptism if

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<sup>2</sup>Heavily Indebted Poor Countries [Editor's note].

parents showed no interest in sending their children to school. What are we going to 'delay' if a government is incapable of employing teachers? One can argue in favour of, or against, the Pastoral Theology of the White Fathers. But similarly, one can also argue against the President of Zambia who has said on record that those who cannot afford to send their children to school should not have children.

I have picked education as an example, and I am arguing that the low standards of education which we are experiencing now are not isolated. The solution to current educational problems does not lie simply in updating the syllabi. There is a political mentality which must change. Are Jesuits in Zambia and Malawi up to that challenge? I do not believe that they are. The changing attitude towards education is inextricably linked with the kind of political governance which we are experiencing in the two countries which compose our Jesuit Province. This, in my opinion, calls for a fresh apostolic strategy. GC 35 is an opportune time for the Universal Society to help our province respond effectively to this situation.

### **Strengths and limitations**

Should we ask for peace or do we have enough soldiers to fight the enemy king? Nearly fifty percent of Zambia-Malawi Province is composed of scholastics at various stages of formation. This is, and will be, a workforce to reckon with. This is our strength. Our young men are eager to work. The immediate limitation is of course the fact that they are not 'there' yet. Only those in regency have the chance to make an impact on the education apostolate. The fact that in the last fifteen years some scholastics left the Society after obtaining a Master's Degree in education has not helped matters. While there is little use crying over spilt milk, it remains a fact that our impact on education would have been different had they stayed. Obviously the first thing we need is competent personnel. The competence that we require is not just proficiency in teaching but also being able to influence government policies in education. In the face of commercialisation of education in Malawi, and the inability of the government to employ teachers for its own citizens in Zambia, we have not been able to do much that can be considered tangible. At a time when Jesuits are thinking of a university in Africa, we in Zambia and Malawi must combine that kind of thinking with the basics: primary education.

Currently, we have four Jesuits working in our teacher training college in Zambia. These Jesuits work alongside more than thirty 30 lecturers. In fact, not too long ago there were only two Jesuits on the staff. These men have shown that numbers may not be the only way to make an institution Jesuit. The college has taken on a true 'Jesuit Spirit' at the level of collaboration with the laity as well as with the government. This college, Charles Lwanga College of Education, is a grant-aided college, which means the government supports it financially, chiefly by paying the salaries of the lecturers. The lecturers are currently working on a syllabus which will ensure that its graduates receive university diplomas. In other words, the college is headed towards becoming a university college of sorts. I am sure the early Jesuits, those who combined primary evangelisation with education, would be proud of us today. This is undoubtedly our strength.



Where is Malawi in all this? After a ten-year effort of teaching theology, the Jesuits pulled out of the seminary in Malawi. We completed our initial contract. We even did the equivalent of a second contract. Thus we are no longer directly involved in education in Malawi except to work in the chaplaincy. If we have made mistakes in Zambia, maybe we can learn from them and not repeat them in Malawi. There is need for us to own a secondary school there. And perhaps we should open a primary school as well, which will supply pupils to the secondary school. Do we have the personnel for that? No, we do not. Or should we start by getting involved in education policy in Malawi before we open a school? Which do you buy first, the plough or the field?

### **What are we called to do?**

After more than a hundred years in Zambia, I believe the Society here needs to regroup and rethink its mission. Our numbers are few. Our apostolates are many, ranging from parish work, school work, formation, communication and so on. We need the courage to cut back on some of our apostolates and concentrate on a few where we can do well. On the other hand, the experience of Charles Lwanga College of Education has shown us that we can still be effective in pushing and strengthening our Jesuit identity in our institutions even with as few as two Jesuits. Is our problem really one of numbers or is it the problem of complacency resulting from age? Are we not enthusiastic enough in our apostolic efforts? Are we simply both too old and/or too young? Is this combination not working? Is the fact that we come from eleven nationalities slowing down the union of minds and hearts? Are our world-views too different? Does the fact that there is no Zambian/Malawian local superior pose a problem? What is our mission today?

I would like to make a suggestion that might be unpopular in some circles. I think we need to run a *private* secondary school where we can have greater control. It seems to me this would be the way to go, especially if we cannot influence the education policies of our countries effectively. I am not very well-versed in Malawi's education policies but from the little I have come to know about Zambia, I think there are too many roadblocks along the path. How different is this suggestion from the commercialisation of education against which I have been speaking? A Jesuit private school would not be a money-making business. It would only charge a realistic, reasonable fee and any excess money could be ploughed back into the school by subsidising those students who might be struggling financially. In the long run a Jesuit private school would de-commercialise education. This is one of our local needs, and I think local needs should dictate the direction of our apostolic priorities as a province. Where do we go from here? For now we go to GC 35. The rest will follow.

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## LEBANON

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(Q. 1) The current situation in Lebanon is one of high political, social instability, full of security risks. I will not mention other neighbouring countries, for Lebanon is a synthesis of the political problems that confront the other countries in the region. The instability stems from a political crisis following the resignation from the Lebanese government in October 2006 of five Shiite community ministers. That resignation was followed by an opposition campaign led by Shiite Muslims and some Christians who considered the government illegal and non-constitutional. From December 2006 to January 2007, protests turned to bloody fights for days, amidst fears of a civil war with Sunni Muslims and Shiite Muslims on opposite sides. From 2007 onwards, an occupation and sit-in have been going on in the city-centre of Beirut, leading to an standstill in large parts of the capital the effects of which are economically devastating.

We cannot end this description of the situation without mentioning two important and tragic facts:

- Since the Assassination of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri and his companions in February 2005, fourteen assassination attempts have been conducted against political personalities and journalists and have claimed more than 30 lives, creating in the country an enduring and heavy climate of fear and anguish. The vast majority of those killed were part of the March 14<sup>th</sup> independence movement, so named because of the great protest that brought about the departure of Syrian troops from Lebanon. The country is losing its living strength and the most gifted of its human resources, some of whom leave it for the West and many more for fast rising Arabian Gulf countries such as Dubai.
- Lebanon, the whole of Lebanon, has had to put up with terrorist atrocities from *Fatah al Islam*, the fundamentalist group in one of the biggest Palestinian camps in Lebanon, Nahr el-Bared camp, the home of some 30,000 Palestinian refugees. It took three months, from June to September, for the Lebanese army to put an end to that plague that threatened to spread to other (mainly Sunni) Muslim regions. The army paid dearly for that intervention since 170 of its troops lost their lives.

As a matter of fact, that political crisis has left its mark on the social and economic situation: year after year the population gets poorer and emigration rises. While Muslims and Christians emigrate at the same rate, Christians are the ones who become more and more a minority (35% today and 51% in 1990) with waning political influence. The election before November 22 of a new President of the Republic who traditionally comes from the Maronite community is a challenge for Christians. The political crisis could lead to losing that 'Christian' post and weaken them further.

<sup>1</sup>Fr. Salim Daccache SJ is academic Rector of Notre-Dame de Jamhour High School and of Saint-Grégoire High School. He is an elected member of GC 35 [Editor's note].

The great events or dates of the last ten years have been as follows: the departure of Israeli troops from Lebanon in 2002; the Maronite prelates' call in 2000 for the departure from Lebanon of Syrian troops, which controlled the whole of political life; the Maronite Synod held in 2003-2005; the assassination of Prime Minister Hariri; the Hezbollah war in July 2006.

We can say that today's situation in Lebanon is characterised by three tendencies:

- a. The fact that Christians are becoming a more and more confined minority. That situation should make Christians think, not in terms of people who used to dominate, but on their role and mission in the Arab world. His Holiness John Paul II had referred to "Lebanon, not only as a country, but also as a message of freedom and humanity."
- b. One of the treasures of Lebanon is education: its schools, its academic institutions and university. It is through education that we can accompany the youth, help them in their formation and discernment to find their path to truth.
- c. Lebanon has been founded on Muslim-Christian conviviality, if not on a common will to live together. More than ever, given the challenges of fundamentalism, intolerance and exclusion of others, Christian Churches of the country must cultivate the evangelical concern of openness, of dialogue and acknowledgement of other people's worth, while expressing their faith and their opinion on what they understand to be the spirit of conviviality. The Society remains at the front of the battle in favour of that conviviality.

(Q. 2) The Society of Jesus has been present in the Middle East and in Lebanon since 1629; it has succeeded in showing solidarity with the existence and destinies of our countries' Christians and Muslims through different cultural, religious, spiritual and, above all, educational services. Today, it remains embodied in the history of the peoples of the region. In Lebanon we run five high school institutions (6,000 pupils) and Saint Joseph's University (10,000 students), two pilgrimage and retreat houses, a publishing company and social activities. In Syria, the apostolic work focuses on catechism, the Spiritual Exercises and social commitment. In Egypt, the Society runs two high schools, a retreat house as well as social and educational activities for the poor.

The Society's strength is its weakness. Through its educational institutions, it is visible and recognised, but it could live in its ivory tower and consider culture as an objective and not as a means for emancipation and social change. Further, the Society has to rely more and more on native Jesuits and, for that reason, on the polyvalent religious, cultural and linguistic formation of young Jesuits. The latter come from all oriental Christian communities, and that could lead the Society to being a unique body. It is called to be humbly at the service of the Church in such realms as the formation of priests, the dialogue between Muslims and Christians, religious and spiritual publications, and the education of a mainly indifferent and pragmatic youth.

(Q. 3) In the context of the Middle East and Lebanon, the Society of Jesus is called to remain a witness of the dialogue with Muslims and, likewise, to be a leader in bringing together the different Christian communities. Through the Spiritual Exercises, it can form people to prayer and contemplation in action and in daily realities. Further, it must listen to the Lord telling Saint Peter: “Feed my sheep”, in the sense that it must take spiritual and social care of the Christians, so as to strengthen them in their faith and rootedness in the Middle East.

One of the major cares of the Society, for which it can look at its own experience, concerns helping Churches, Christian communities and religious congregations count on committed lay people so that they may be actors capable of assuming responsibilities and taking initiatives. Lay people in our Churches have a long tradition of commitment within church life. Today, more than ever, they are called to playing a role as catalysts and witnesses in front of their brothers and sisters by accepting positions of responsibility.

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## EAST ASIA

**Jojo M. Fung SJ**

### Awaiting GC 35: Yearnings from East Asia

#### A living hope

As a Jesuit born and bred in East Asia, inserted through research and ministry among the most excluded indigenous peoples in West Malaysia, I await GC 35 with an eagerness of heart that is best described as a glow inflamed with hope. Deep down, I yearn for God’s Spirit to give the Society, global and local, a certain impetus so that the sons of Ignatius will manifest God’s saving justice<sup>1</sup> in a world that has yet to realise God’s dream. This living hope springs from a context that is laden with paradoxes.

<sup>1</sup>God’s saving justice is fundamentally a biblical-theological notion based on God’s everlasting fidelity to God’s covenantal relationship with humankind and creation. Aware of the debate that the preferential option for the poor is an evangelical rather than ideological concept (cf. *Promotio Iustitiae* 95/2 (2007): 36-49), God’s saving justice is a biblical vision integral to Catholic Social teaching that has to be translated into an ideology (i.e. a set of foundational ideas of a politico-economic system, for instance, a Christian Social Democracy) that organises societies based on the centrality of biblical justice that is *rooted in* and *inspired by* divine love.

## Land of paradoxes

As explained by the Asian Bishops<sup>2</sup> in 2004, Asia is by no means a homogenous entity but a continent that is highly pluralistic, multilayered and fragmentary, with its shades of *light* and/amidst *shadow*. Asia is the homeland of peoples of diverse memories, cultures, ideologies, religions and ancient civilisations, sharing common values of hospitality, relatively high family stability, a sense of resilience, deep religiosity, imbued with a divine and natural closeness to nature and creation (6-8)<sup>3</sup>. Yet it is a land ridden with graft, corruption, nepotism, political and economic cronyism, with an overbearing sense of exclusive clannishness.

Within the boundaries of exclusivity, there are both prevalent and emerging influences and trends, ever pervasive yet confined and diffused. Some of these are: patriarchy (6); same-sex unions (10); exploitation of child labour (34); rise of pre-marital sex among the young (37); moral relativism (87); expressed support for women's liberation movements (31); youths becoming vanguards of social and religious transformation (33); heightened sensitivity towards environmental issues (10); pressure mounted by civil society groups on public authorities to be accountable and transparent (90), and support of the constitutional freedom of fundamental human rights. The landscape of Asia is dotted with groups of people who demonstrate admirable compassion and solidarity for single parents, families with separated parents and cases of remarriage for one or both partners (9), even strong advocacy of holistic health care for addicts living with HIV/AIDS.

## Globalisation: borderless and violent

Keeping in mind the concerns of South Asia,<sup>4</sup> I hope that GC 35 will formulate our mission of a faith that does justice by a further examination of the nexus between neo-liberalism—one of the most death-dealing forces behind the complex and multifaceted (geo-political, economic, cultural even religious) process of globalisation—and the escalating spiral of global conflict and violence. This is necessary given the hegemonic violence directed at destabilising societies and decimating cultures outside of Euro-American centres of dominance. I refer to the already impoverished livelihood of excluded Asians in many cultures and religions, not forgetting the adverse impact globalisation has on the lives of women, teen-girls and girl-children in the dispossessed urban and rural communities.

Deeper analysis has to be done in terms of economic globalisation of the cheap female Asian labour (the 'feminisation' of labour) unmistakably linked to human trafficking, especially women and children for commercial sex. A clear connection needs to be established between the victimisation of migrants and the commodification of their labour in the free, but black, market system. Further

<sup>2</sup>See *The Asian Family towards a culture of Life*, FABC document of the 8th Plenary Assembly, 17-23, 2004, Seoul, South Korea.

<sup>3</sup>The numbers in brackets refer to numbered paragraphs in the above-mentioned FABC document which can be downloaded at: [www.fabc.org/asian\\_mission\\_congress/docs/AsianFamily.doc](http://www.fabc.org/asian_mission_congress/docs/AsianFamily.doc) [Editor's note].

<sup>4</sup>See George Pattery SJ, "Doing things differently: South Asia and GC35": *Review of Ignatian Spirituality* 113 (2006) 73-84.

analysis has to be undertaken in relation to cultural globalisation that has infused Asia with a secularist, hedonistic, materialistic, bio-genetic and techno-driven mindset, eroding Asian values of the sacredness of life and its harmony with creation. Questions have to be raised regarding the ways by which this form of globalisation is unwittingly perpetuating the oppressive system of patriarchy in Asia. In other words, globalised neo-liberal capitalism, global violence, the commodification of labour and patriarchy are inseparably linked to other related issues of poverty and environmental degradation. It is for this reason that the overt yet diffused impacts of globalisation need to be critically unpacked.

### Geopolitical power-game

Our mission of faith that does justice needs to take cognisance of the changing geopolitical landscape. With the collapse of the Soviet system in 1989, the emerging unipolar world of America with its militaristic power is admired, envied yet resisted by different regional geopolitical centres around the globe. In Asia, the geopolitical position of China as the world's largest economy has commanded considerable power, buffeted by other regional powers such as the Asian economic "tigers and cubs." As reported last year in *TIME* magazine, "China's economy will be easily the world's biggest by 2040, far ahead of the US, with India in third place at about half the size of its Asian rivals"<sup>5</sup> (*TIME*, February 6, 2006: 30). According to that report, at the end of 2005, China officially adjusted "the size of its economy in an attempt to better reflect the plethora of activity taking place that wasn't counted in previous Soviet-central-planning-inspired statistics. The upshot was a 16.8% increase in gross domestic product that pushed China's economy past France's into fifth place worldwide—just behind the U.S., Japan, Germany and Britain." And "while China is exporting goods worth about \$300 billion to the US and Europe, it is at the same time importing about 100 billion dollar's worth of raw materials and good from elsewhere."<sup>6</sup> It is noted that "China accounts for only about 5 % of the world economy," but "it is responsible for as much as 30% of the world's economic growth."<sup>7</sup>

The growing geopolitical regional and global influence of China has captured the imagination of the Society of Jesus, especially among companions in the East Asian Assistancy. Yet, we need more in-depth analysis of this emerging power and economy, and the impending impact on the lives of Asians of many cultures and religions who live on the 'margins.' Appropriate strategies have to be formulated to guide the Society of Jesus in its global and regional relations with China (without rubbing salt into the wounds of the past) and the rest of Asia. These should be in terms of the strategic roles that the Society of Jesus is called upon to play in the near and distant future within the evangelising mission of the Church of Asia.

<sup>5</sup>As reported by Jim O'Neil, head of global economic research for Goldman Sachs. See Peter Gumble, "The Goldilocks Economy: Not Too Hot And Not Too Cold, The World's Finance Are Running Smoothly. So Where Are The Bears?" *TIME* (February 6, 2006) 29-32.

<sup>6</sup>Reported by Jacob A. Frenkel, former governor of the Bank of Israel, now vice chairman of insurer American International Group.

<sup>7</sup>Statement by Min Zhu, executive assistant president of the Bank of China.

## Millennium Development Goals

Of immense significance to the millions of those excluded in Asia is the proactive endeavour known as MDG or the Millennium Development Goals that came out of the 2000 meeting of the world's leading development institutions. This historic Millennium Declaration, with its time frame for action, underlines a concerted commitment to 8 Millennium Development Goals (MDG): (1) poverty (2) hunger (3) education (4) maternal and child health (5) the prevalence of diseases including HIV/AIDS (6) gender justice (7) the environment, (8) debt, equitable trade and aid. At the same time, these leaders committed themselves to work towards peace, security, disarmament, human rights, democracy and good governance. What is laudable is the commitment to halving poverty by 2015.

The incarnational dynamism of our mission calls the Society's attention to the possibility of future collaboration with such an enterprise. With respect to the goal of reducing poverty by 2015, the exhortation of Pope Benedict XVI at the recent meeting of the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences warrants our attention.<sup>8</sup> The Pope's address emphasised "the principle of the universal destination of all the goods of creation" so that "everything that the earth produces and all that human beings transform and manufacture, all their knowledge and technology, is meant to serve the material and spiritual development and fulfilment of the human family and all its members."<sup>9</sup> GC 35 can offer a venue for exploring ways by which an international body, with its many institutions, centres and research task forces for local-regional-global action, can help fulfil the Millennium Declaration in the name of a faith that does God's saving justice on behalf of the world's population living on the 'margins'.

## Conclusion

The Society is a global institution that is locally placed. At the same time, the Society is a living and acting agent. The corporate actions of its regional agents often have far-reaching ripple effects on the global landscape. GC 35 is a discerning *kairos*-moment for the Society to be mystical-prophetically placed with the Son so as to act more strategically in the world where God's re-creational efforts are moving our human-world history forward. Indeed, the world is God's stage of salvific actions in which the Society of Jesus is one among many institutions called upon to mediate God's saving justice for humankind, especially for the excluded in the many cultures and religions in East and South Asia.

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<sup>8</sup>Address of Pope Benedict XVI at the 13<sup>th</sup> Plenary Assembly of the Academy, April 17-May 1, 2007, Vatican City.

<sup>9</sup>See Editorial, "The Millennium Development Goals": *Vidyajyoti: Journal of Theological Reflection* 71/6 (June 2007) 401-404.

## THE CHINESE PROVINCE

Louis Gendron SJ<sup>1</sup>

(Q. 1) I live in Macau, a small bit of territory (28 square kilometres), with a population of half a million people. The Macau enclave was given to Portugal by the Chinese emperor some 10 years after Francis Xavier died on Shangchuan Island, a hundred kilometres away. Chinese and Portuguese merchants had been conducting illegal trade during the summer months on the island of Shangchuan, and the Chinese gave Macau to the Portuguese in a gesture of gratitude for ridding the China Sea of dangerous pirates. The Portuguese now lawfully had a place to do business with the Chinese and to refurbish their boats. A couple of years later we Jesuits also landed in Macau, hoping to enter China, which was still totally closed to foreigners. We know the rest of the story, with Alessandro Valignano and Matteo Ricci devising a policy of deep inculturation that succeeded in convincing Chinese authorities to let them live in China.

In 1999, the Portuguese finally left Macau, which reverted to the Chinese Mainland. Fr. General was quick to ask the provincial of the Chinese province to move from Taiwan to Macau. Macau now flies the Chinese national flag, but was given the promise that its way of life would be allowed to carry on unchanged for the next 50 years. We do indeed enjoy total religious freedom; we have Catholic schools, and much of the social service is still done by the Church. At the same time, Macau is about to surpass Las Vegas as the gambling city of the world par excellence. Many college students and even schoolteachers drop out of school in order to apply for well-paid jobs in some thirty casinos. The local government takes a heavy tax on casino profits, which accounts for 80% of its total revenue. With such an income, the government provides free education in all primary and secondary schools. It restores the many historical buildings, including churches, as part of the UNESCO recognized World Heritage. A government-supported foundation is going to pay for more than half the cost of building the whole campus of a new Catholic university for a projected number of 2000 students.

(Q. 2) Besides Macau with its 20 Jesuits, the Chinese Province includes Hong Kong (7 million people and 25 Jesuits), Taiwan (24 million people and 110 Jesuits) and the whole of China (1,300 million people and perhaps less than 50 Jesuits, their exact number is unclear). The whole situation is very complex and the Society has had to change its structure of government at least four times in the last 40 years. The present structure dates from September 2005, with one provincial for the whole area, assisted by a delegate for Continental China. The main responsibility of the provincial is “to promote the spirit of unity within the province, fostering concern for the common mission of Continental China,” and to implement the necessary “strategic planning in order to better coordinate efforts for the common mission of Continental China.” After two years of implementation, the new structure seems to be working pretty well and there are no calls for further structural change. The strategic planning is progressing.

<sup>1</sup>Fr. Louis Gendron SJ is presently the Provincial of China [Editor’s Note].



Our one Chinese province embraces two political entities that have lived in constant tension for many years: an immense China that has become very self-assertive, and a much smaller Taiwan run by a political party whose self-appointed mission is to create an independent new country. In fact, more and more people in Taiwan feel they are Taiwanese rather than Chinese; they have got used to functioning as an autonomous country with a democratic government. Then there are Hong Kong and Macau, the two former colonies, whose people were accustomed to being governed by a foreign Western power, with no direct experience of democracy. They had practically no 'Chinese political identity' but enjoyed a good life with a high degree of individual freedom. After reverting to Chinese rule, they have now acquired a limited degree of political freedom (more than what the Chinese have in China), and have kept their former way of life almost intact (market economy, religious freedom, private schooling system, freedom of speech, etc.) There is a growing awareness of being Chinese, and a sense of belonging to the great Chinese nation, while at the same time keeping some distance from the many limitations on personal freedoms common in Mainland China.

As far as we Jesuits are concerned, Hong Kong used to be a mission of the Irish Jesuits (beginning in 1926) and they were doing very well. 107 Irish Jesuits were sent to Hong Kong. They had a strong impact on the social development of Hong Kong over the years, especially by promoting social structures of empowerment for several disadvantaged groups. Through their schools they made good use of the Jesuit tradition, educating many of the present social and political leaders, most of them persons of integrity. But over the years the number of Irish Jesuits has declined as they could not continue to send men to Hong Kong; and there have been only a limited number of local vocations to the Society. Among the Jesuits in Hong Kong, there is now a progressive openness to the reality of the whole of China as being our mission field and a welcoming attitude towards Jesuits from other parts of the province and from other countries who come to reinforce the community. Our alumni have been faster than we ourselves to engage Mainland China and are very supportive of our schools, which they want to keep alive and healthy even without the presence of so many active Jesuits.

In Macau, especially following the big political changes of China in 1949, which sent many refugees (including 'Jesuit' refugees) to the colony, there was the strange situation in which several residences belonging to different provinces were all located in one small geographical territory. After many years of effort all Jesuits now live harmoniously in the same residence. The Macau community has become a very 'missionary-minded' community: most of the time, half the members of the community are involved in China, promoting our social ministries, giving the Spiritual Exercises to priests and religious, or teaching in universities. The Macau Ricci Institute is also at present busy with research on China.

Taiwan used to have a great number of Jesuits, most of them former missionaries from the many missions of China or younger missionaries who were originally destined to Mainland China. They first established themselves in Taiwan in the early 1950s, and there were about 300 of them! The numbers are now down to 110, many are elderly Jesuits and we have very few local vocations. All kinds of

apostolic institutions were founded, including top rate production centres in the field of mass communications, and excellent centres for the promotion of social justice. We were involved in running schools from kindergarten to university. We had dozens of parishes in cities, in the countryside and in mountain areas. We had student residences, centres for handicapped children, cultural centres, a school to train catechists, a major retreat house and centre of Ignatian spirituality, and a language school for missionaries. We are still running the only faculty of theology in Taiwan. A group of Jesuits (drawn from at least two different generations) worked 50 years to produce the most complete Chinese-Western language dictionary ever published ("*le Grand Ricci*"). Christian Life Communities and two new types of lay communities issued from CLC have successfully developed in Taiwan. We have initiated and promoted interreligious dialogue among the many religious traditions of Taiwan.

Because Mainland China was effectively closed to any type of direct or indirect evangelisation until well into the 1980s, it was gradually and slowly 'forgotten' by our Jesuits in Taiwan. With a rapidly diminishing and ageing Jesuit population and the burden of so many institutions, it is easy to understand why the Taiwan-based Jesuits were slow to re-involve themselves with the China Mainland mission, which is one of the recent apostolic preferences of the whole Society. A number of apostolic institutions that had achieved their original missions were discontinued, and many parishes were given back to the bishops. In more recent times several creative institutions and many individual Jesuits have been able to re-discern their mission in the light of the China preference and are now willing and happy to embrace China.

Most Jesuits of the province now feel at ease in any of our four territories and are available to go where called. For instance, in Taiwan we have continued to care for some parishes located in the mountain areas serving aboriginal people, who are often marginalised and discriminated against. The main Jesuit pastor of that area, together with a senior aboriginal catechist, is now directly involved in designing and teaching in a newly opened catechetical training centre in a remote area of the Yunnan Province of China, serving several aboriginal tribes.

Many observers have noticed a great thirst for spiritual values in China, notwithstanding the large sectors of society completely absorbed in the quest for money and material possessions. China has more than a hundred fifty million migrant workers living in and around the big cities along the coast, with practically no access to decent salaries, work security, health care, or education for their children. Until now, the Catholic Church in China has been rather timid in its efforts at evangelisation, its presence being mostly in rural areas. The well-known internal divisions in the Church have also hindered evangelisation efforts. The Church has done little to promote issues of social justice, for instance, the issue of the migrant workers. In recent years, there have been the beginnings of Church-related local institutions doing social service with encouragement from the government.

Jesuits from outside (especially Macau) have initiated and supported a wide array of social services for lepers in China. We are in contact with one hundred leper villages in several Chinese provinces. Jesuits and other men and women

religious from Taiwan and Hong Kong have teamed together to work for the lepers. We have also recruited religious Sisters from several congregations of China proper, Taiwan, India, and now Argentina, to live in 20 different leper villages, in collaboration with the local government officers who are legally in charge of the leprosaria. Generally speaking, lepers have regained their human dignity, live in better material conditions, get better medical care, and, most importantly, feel really loved by those who come to live with them, and supported by all those who contribute to the betterment of their lives. Their children receive scholarships, some of which continue to university level. This whole apostolate with the lepers is a clear case where we have found and cared for the poorest of the poor, people who had been abandoned by all. In this case, Jesuits (and other religious) not actually based in Mainland China have been able to do significant work inside China, and have been successful in progressively involving Chinese Sisters from different parts of China to become missionaries to distant villages in their own country. Lately, we have been more active in developing projects to help other marginalised people, like persons with HIV, often from isolated tribes of South China near the border with Vietnam, Laos and Myanmar. This type of social work however is politically more sensitive and requires much tact when approaching the relevant governmental authorities.

Some Jesuit provincials from Europe and Latin America who recently met in Beijing for a one-week workshop reflected that they have come to realise how complex China is and how complex the position of the Church in China is. For instance, religious congregations for men are illegal. Only the diocesan clergy is permitted to recruit and do pastoral work. The Society of Jesus has no legal existence in China and Chinese young men are not legally permitted to enter the Society. 'Foreign' Jesuits (including Chinese Jesuits from Taiwan, Macau and Hong Kong) are permitted to enter China, but are prohibited from doing pastoral work. They can only do academic work (like teaching in universities and doing research) and some types of social work, but must refrain from proselytisation. The Society cannot own property in China. The provincials from Europe and America who visited China were amazed to see that we are still able to do a lot; they were envious of the fact that we do not have to shoulder the heavy weight of institutions! Some of them perceived a striking similarity with the situation of the First Jesuits who were highly mobile in the service of the mission.

(Q. 3) In the last few months one topic has often been on my mind, and it is the Africa-China relationship. Last February, Fr. Fernando Franco, the Secretary for Social Justice, wrote to me saying that he had been to a meeting in Africa with several other Jesuits, and one major topic had been the rapidly growing presence of China in Africa. The tone was somewhat negative, as if China was doing not-so-nice things in Africa. He said that this might come to the floor of the General Congregation and we should be prepared. I must say that I had not been much aware of this issue, Africa being so far away. Both China and Africa are important for us; they are our two 'geographical apostolic preferences.' The question of Fr. Franco stimulated my mind and I began looking for more information. I quickly found a great deal. I have read at least 30 articles from different sources describing

and analysing the impressive growth of the Chinese presence in Africa. I have read a recent book written by scholars and activists called *African Perspectives on China in Africa*. I have taken a subscription to an online newsletter ([www.pambazuka.org](http://www.pambazuka.org)) based in Africa and run by Africans, collecting all kinds of studies about Africa. One topic that often recurs has to do the Chinese presence in Africa.

There is a great diversity of opinions about the positive and negative aspects of China's activity in Africa. It is said that there are around 750,000 Chinese who have recently gone to Africa and who are now living there on a long-term basis. The model of cooperation between China and African countries is quite different from the type of relationships established by European and North American countries. Many non-democratic governments of Africa are impressed by the great economic progress achieved by China, also a developing country with a non-democratic government. They ask why Western donor countries insist on asking Africa to develop democratic structures as a condition for providing developmental help. The Chinese, contrary to organisations like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, do not pose such conditions, saying that they do not want to interfere with the internal affairs of other countries, apart from requesting them to sever relationships with Taiwan. The Chinese also provide thousands of scholarships to young Africans to study in China, often in their best universities. There are very many African students and business people in Canton. Africans seem to be very good at learning the Chinese language.

The Society has shown apostolic preferences for both China and Africa for different reasons. The Society is really global and should be able to exert some kind of positive impact on the development of Africa-China relationships. Possible changes in the structures of Jesuit government at the level of Assistancies could possibly facilitate both the collaboration between Jesuits in Africa and Jesuits in China and also integrate more Jesuits from other Assistancies in a concerted effort for the greater good of both Africa and China.

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## BENIN - WEST AFRICA

**Eugène Goussikindey SJ<sup>1</sup>**

(Q. 1) I have to recognise, honestly, that after a long absence of more than two decades, it is difficult to describe 'objectively' the current situation of Benin or of the West African region to which it belongs. Perhaps belonging to the country compensates for this distance, which gives a certain freedom to my viewpoint. So, to the question: How would you describe the current situation of your country? My

<sup>1</sup>Fr. Eugène Goussikindey SJ is an elected member of GC 35, representing the West African Province [Editor's note].

reply is brief: Benin is experiencing a deep restructuring of its social space with a declared political will of re-defining itself in the position of an 'emerging' country.

This assertion calls for certain explanations to help in an understanding of how that affects the apostolic strategy of the Society of Jesus. "Emerging Benin" is the new slogan of Thomas Yayi Boni, the banker (President of the West African Development Bank), university lecturer (Doctorate in Economics) and elected president of the Republic in 2006 under the banner of 'change'. This slogan indicates a determination to integrate Benin in the market economy. It is a question of creating the favourable conditions to facilitate foreign capital in restoring the authority of the state over administrative and legal structures. To this end, the government does not hesitate to co-opt to its cause those who might be critical of the proposed model: the media, civil society and religious organisations. This is a strategy of taming them by a well-orchestrated media campaign to renew the value of legality, of work, of good governance and of the struggle against corruption. In spite of the legitimate criticisms that one could raise against this way of proceeding which comes very close to manipulation and demagoguery, one must recognise in this development a new desire to understand ourselves in a different light from that of the past and a clear determination to live in the world according to perceptions about Africa which are not negative.

In this effervescence of an 'emerging Benin', we observe the aggravation of an old phenomenon: the flow of migration towards the urban centres. For centuries, internal migration has fashioned African societies much more intensely than the media noise showing the contemporary marine embarkations towards Europe. Today, it is still this phenomenon of migration which is the origin of an unprecedented upheaval in the social space, particularly in the towns. Following the demographic projections of the census of 2002, half the population of Benin will be urban in 2017, that is, in a decade. It follows that the social fabric, previously fashioned by the transmission of values through belonging to 'linguistic', 'ethnic' and 'cultural' groups will be remodelled from now on according to the dynamics and constraints of urban geography and the demands of city life. Here, other stakes will determine human relations and the priorities of allegiance. Education plays a role as decisive as the networks woven around political and financial power. The paths around mystical, esoteric or evangelical religious groups are the new bridges toward these reconfigurations of the social space of Benin. These belongings are not necessarily synonymous with a return of faith because religion plays a more complex role in these configurations of social membership than simply giving a sense to existence.

The Society of Jesus, like the local Church of which it is a part, must learn to reconceptualise its manner of perceiving the present reality and of glimpsing the future of its apostolic engagement. In fact, the model proposed by the rulers through the media choreography hides the growing vulnerability of persons as much as of the state itself. In the logic of the "global economy", which must not be confused with the "international economy", the tendency is in effect deregulation even of monetary control and the management of public finances. The norms of production and consumption themselves tend to be globalised to favour a general competition. The World Trade Organisation now weighs very heavily on

commercial agreements in the same way as on the International Court of Arbitration. I have difficulty in seeing how Benin, with 90% of its population active in the informal sector, will be able to stand up to the liberalisation of its market without putting in place a well structured national political strategy, a recasting of its legal system and an increased investment in the formation of capable and competent people of integrity. Even a brief analysis suggests that the direction we are taking will lead to an increased weakening of the social fabric. The excessive dependence on foreign capital marginalises local initiatives while the conditions attached to aid (loans at low interest or over a long period) subordinate national priorities to the priorities of “donors”. The most disastrous consequences can be observed in agricultural production: to meet food needs, Benin must now count on imports of rice and wheat for bread. In this context, it is no longer a question of the Society being a bit more zealous on the social front or of denouncing the error of economic liberalism. It will be necessary, in my opinion, to take new initiatives, more positive and more constructive, on the fronts which are in discreet competition to remodel the men and women of Benin (or more widely, of Africa) and of their universe; I will name here three approaches which are not exclusive: knowledge, values and creativity.

(Q. 2) The great strength of the Society in the West African region, of which Benin is a part, is the possibility of the change in vocations to the Society of which we have the first signs. We can dream dreams of the future. In this region, the institutional glory of the past is not so great that it could become a dead weight for the future; on the contrary, our heritage demands that the generations to come carry further the engagement of the preceding generations. The great strength of the Society is that it can dare to risk the adventure on new paths with the enthusiasm and the generosity of its youth. On this level one may be afraid that certain hesitations observed in the younger generation might signify a lack of confidence or of boldness before the challenges before us. The ‘African’ Society in its totality will have to avoid a practice common to religious Institutions, which is to push back indefinitely the age of maturity and the aptitude to take responsibilities. By doing this, one pushes back in practice the capacity for initiative and the exercise of creative imagination by young Jesuits. Personally, I think it is regrettable to see that at the end of a long formation in the Society of Jesus, one finds competent young adults who are not very enthusiastic and apparently incapable of initiatives in proportion to their formation. The transition from the elders to the younger generation of Jesuits requires a good dose of enthusiasm and of generosity doubled by a heightened sense of contemporary challenges. We have to believe that God works in our region to respond to His call to participate in His work with courage and determination.

A major danger which lies in wait for the Society in Africa in general and for our context of West Africa in particular, is the new tendency to enclose oneself progressively in the ghetto of linguistic divisions which want to make some people Francophone and others Anglophone. At the very moment that politicians are trying very hard to construct a Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), bringing together fifteen entities as diverse as Benin, Burkino Faso,

Cape Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo, it is difficult to understand why the Society of Jesus encloses itself in trivial discussions and does not courageously broaden its horizon by learning to work together on certain common questions which force themselves on the peoples of the region. To tell the truth, it is a weakness that the Society shares with the Church in this region which is firmly enclosed within its diocesan and national divisions. All our 'houses of formation' should get rid of any narrowness of spirit that nourishes old ideologies in order to confront a question which our politicians ask us: are we going to meet the challenge of cooperation and integration based on putting our heads together, by going beyond national, political, economic, geographic, cultural, religious, and linguistic differences?

The 'more' which is found at the heart of the Spiritual Exercises and of the Society's apostolic engagement is our greatest strength if it becomes effectively the *leitmotif* to accompany positively the profound changes with which our peoples and their societies are becoming acquainted. We must have the courage to 'put out into the deep' even if it is at the cost of losing our security, provided that we do not look for our own will but the will of the one who called us to participate in his mission to reconcile all things so that the Father's Kingdom may come.

(Q. 3) The Society today is asked to be a catalyst, which arouses enthusiasm and frees the energy necessary for a courageous and joyful engagement in the service of our humanity. With the Incarnation, on which we meditate so well following the format proposed by the Spiritual Exercises, humanity has become the new and radical language which God has chosen to speak his love which cannot be expressed in words. The General Congregation will keep at heart the very first remark of St Ignatius in the contemplation for attaining love: "Love ought to manifest itself in deeds rather than in words" (Spiritual Exercises 230).

From this point of view, the 35<sup>th</sup> General Congregation will not be an assembly which spends its time re-editing or updating the Jesuit lexicon with rich affirmations which do little to motivate us. What I mean is that when the Congregation spends time on our mission or on our identity, it will not be content with theoretically coherent definitions which have no real impact on our engagement to bring about 'new hearts' and a 'new earth'. On the subject of apostolic partnership with others, it seems to me that we must avoid as much as possible polarising and radicalising the hierarchical divisions which the current structure of the Church already validates along the categories of lay people, religious and bishops/priests (clergy). I imagine that the Society could become in this way a living sign in the Church and the world in bringing down "the wall of division" (Eph 2: 14) in its own body and in its relations with others. It will extend its apostolic partnership to all people of good will, following the example of its Master and Lord, Jesus Christ, who made no distinction between persons.

To sum up, I would say that what the Lord asks of the Society and of the 35<sup>th</sup> General Congregation is what he suggested to the first companions in the deliberation which resulted in the institution of the Society as a body: "After the most clement and most merciful Lord had deigned to gather us and to unite us as

one, we who are so weak and who come from different regions and cultures, we should not break what God had brought together and united, but instead we should increasingly affirm and consolidate it, in grouping ourselves in a single body, concerning ourselves with each other and in communion between us to bear a greater spiritual fruit" (Ignatius of Loyola, Deliberation of the First Fathers). The consolidation of the body is not for a narcissistic existence but for apostolic purposes, "for a greater spiritual fruit."

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## TOGO - WEST AFRICA

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### **General Congregation 35: a West African perspective**

I have been asked to share my thoughts on the situation that prevails in the region I live in and any expectations I might have in the light of General Congregation 35. My outlook is essentially that of a companion who entered the Society of Jesus in 1990, was ordained a priest on 6 August 2006, and has recently been appointed director of a new centre to fight against AIDS in Lomé (Togo).

I will therefore discuss the situation over the last decade in sub-Saharan Africa, mainly in the sixteen countries that make up my province - the Province of West Africa. Thereafter I will consider the state of my province and the means available to us for meeting the apostolic challenges arising from current realities before sharing my humble perspective on GC 35.

#### **The African context: some background**

Talking about Africa is a delicate task since Africa constitutes a complex and highly diversified reality. Furthermore, Africa has been painted in such a sombre light to the point of eclipsing every chance of seeing the positive aspects of this continent, that promoting a more optimistic and beautiful image is only doing justice. So, without over-subscribing to Afro-pessimism, I would like to point to some of the problems at the root of the main apostolic challenges facing the Society in Africa and accentuate perspectives common to many African countries.

#### *Aspects of the tensions in Africa*

General Congregation 34 identified the situation in Africa as one of the most urgent and critical, deserving immediate and special attention from the Society as



an international apostolic body<sup>1</sup>. More than ten years after GC 34 the situation is practically unchanged. Africa is still undermined by dramatic situations affecting the lives of millions of people, forcing them to live in subhuman conditions. Alongside conflict, human rights violations, poor governance, halting democracy and widespread destitution, we must not overlook the HIV/AIDS pandemic. In fact, more than two thirds of those living with HIV worldwide are in Africa; and over three quarters of the dead and the orphaned are due to AIDS.

Given its multiform impact on persons, families and countries, this pandemic appears today as a symbol of suffering in Africa. In perfect synergy with poverty, AIDS has mortgaged the slight socio-economic progress achieved since independence and is a major threat to African development. In fact, in the last decade, the pandemic has struck a major blow to human resources in Africa and the fact that the average age has dropped dramatically to a mere 45 years in many African countries bodes ill for the near future in key sectors such as education, health, industry, agriculture among others.

### *Signs of hope*

Nonetheless, despite the many ills affecting its people, Africa has achieved a certain amount of success over the last decade in both the economic and health sectors. Besides the success of some African countries such as South Africa and Botswana, exceptions to some extent, we can point to technical progress which has led to improved crop variety in agriculture, infrastructure improvement and the elimination of pandemics such as onchocerciasis and poliomyelitis. Further, in the struggle against AIDS, Senegal and Uganda have been praised for their success in stemming the extent of the pandemic. Kenya also is increasingly emerging as a model in the struggle against AIDS, with promising results.

We can likewise indicate the work done by certain countries and African heads of state in the resolution of armed conflicts in different parts of the continent. The role played by committed African political actors has helped bring about a return to peace in countries such as Liberia, the Democratic Republic of Congo and southern Sudan. The end of armed conflict in Côte d'Ivoire and the agreement signed by political protagonists in Togo allow us to hope that sub-Saharan Africa will cease to be a theatre of violence where the first victims are innocent people.

The recently created African Union has played an important and positive role in peace-building. Through the initiatives of the Peace and Security Council, this organisation has strongly contributed to the reduction of conflicts undermining the continent. Moreover, the establishment of the NEPAD (New Partnership for Africa's Development)<sup>2</sup> programme has witnessed the will and desire of African

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<sup>1</sup>The Fathers at GC 34 declared in fact that the marginalisation of Africa in the "new world order" renders an entire continent paradigmatic of all the marginalised of the world. Thirty of the world's poorest countries are African. Two thirds of the world's refugees are African. Slavery, colonial and neo-colonial subjugation, internal problems of ethnic rivalry and corruption have all created an "ocean of misfortunes" there. (GC 34, D 3, n. 12).

<sup>2</sup>This new initiative proposed by African heads of state aims at enabling Africa to make good historical disadvantages and ending the marginalisation of the continent. Unfortunately results are slow in coming.

peoples to take their own destiny in hand and commit themselves to investing in growth and sustainable development. NEPAD is building awareness among African leaders and peoples of the need to become the principal actors in their own development and history.

### **The Society of Jesus in West Africa**

The Society of Jesus in Africa, as elsewhere in the world, has always kept the affirmations of the Second Vatican Council close to its heart.<sup>3</sup> The Society in all parts of Africa has concentrated on responding to the various apostolic challenges according to its possibilities. The African Jesuit AIDS Network (AJAN) is a well-known example of the African Assistency's response to the tragedy of AIDS. Unfortunately apostolic necessities often exceed capacity in some African provinces. What then have been the strengths and weaknesses of the Society in West Africa over the last ten years?

#### *Strengths and assets of the Province of West Africa*

Inspired by the report on the West African Province presented by the provincial, Fr. Jean-Roger Ndombi SJ, I would like to indicate two major strengths of this last decade. First of all, there has been a growth in numbers throughout the province and an increase in the youthfulness of members.<sup>4</sup> Secondly, we have enhanced apostolic visibility due to the creation of new works in response to major challenges.

The Centre of Research and Action for Peace (CERAP)<sup>5</sup> was established in order to promote human dignity and peace. This is a social work making a genuine commitment to research, formation and direct social action, and also part of a university perspective "to form men and women for others in leadership and service, who will struggle for justice, peace, education and health."

In the health care sector there is the University Training and Medical Care Complex "Le Bon Samaritain" in Ndjamen. This Complex will soon be integrated into the *Centre Hospitalier Universitaire*, a medical faculty and university campus.

Another significant work is the Loyola Centre in Lomé (Togo) which comprises the Loyola Cultural Centre, established to contribute to human, intellectual and spiritual formation for young people within an ideal work framework that includes

<sup>3</sup>"The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ. Indeed, nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts. [...] That is why this community [of Christians] realises that it is truly linked with mankind and its history by the deepest of bonds" (*Gaudium et Spes* 1).

<sup>4</sup>Over the past ten years, it has been estimated there are, on average, 14 entrants to the Novitiate. This is almost triple the amount compared to when I entered the Society (September 1990). Besides, more and more of the young men entering already have a university qualification or formation. This is an asset to the quality and diversity of the provincial response to multiform apostolic challenges, while the growth and youthfulness of members of the province is a source of hope for the province. In the last five years, five priests have been ordained in the province every year.

<sup>5</sup>CERAP is based in Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire). This centre has offered, among other things, continuous training modules and also formed students in human rights, conflict management and peace-building.

academic and extra-curricular activities, and the Loyola Hope Centre (CEL) set up as part of the struggle against AIDS<sup>6</sup>. As a work responding to a major challenge in the West African Province, CEL has been the object of remarkable generosity from the Society<sup>7</sup> – Community of solidarity – for the construction and the first year's work.

### *Limits of the West African Province*

The main weakness in the West African Province is the diminishing of available human and financial resources. Statistics presented by the Provincial have shown that the number of companions directly engaged in our works has declined from 96 in 2002 to 77 in 2006. Furthermore, a third of apostolic workers in the province are over 70 years old. This drop has two major consequences, notably a very limited Jesuit presence in certain works and the pushing of important apostolic emergencies to the back burner. Nonetheless, the province is trying to improve the situation by means of a new strategy: having young ordinands attend a pastoral course before advancing to special studies.

### **The Society in Africa and General Congregation 35**

The prospect of the General Congregation urges all of us to reflect on our apostolic realities in order to discern the summons from God for the Society of Jesus today and the direction to be taken so as to remain faithful to our mission. True as it is that the process of discernment on the scale of the Society requires a synergy between the local and the global, I base myself on the apostolic challenges of the reality surrounding me when I say that profound consideration of the social dimension of our mission of faith and justice should be a priority in GC 35. Certainly the work of the four General Congregations since Vatican II has enabled us to be more specific regarding the nature of our mission seen as fundamentally a service of faith and the promotion of greater evangelic justice in the world. We would like therefore to see GC 35 emphasise more discernment on ways to put into practice our mission of faith and justice in today's world.

It is useful however to recall that as the servant of the mission of Christ, the Society is called today essentially to preach the good news in the steps of our Lord

<sup>6</sup>Promoting an holistic approach, the CEL centre offers four distinct services - 1) prevention of HIV infection by building awareness on the dangers of AIDS and education towards responsible behaviour (youth and young couples); 2) spiritual, psychosocial and nutritional guidance for Persons Living With HIV (PLWHIV) and their families, as well as medical support and accompaniment for patients on anti-retroviral treatment; 3) capacity building for people working with PLWHIV and their families as well as pastoral agents through formation of all kinds; 4) advocacy and rights protection for PLWHIV, and the promotion of sociocultural and nutritional research and reflection on ethical problems linked to the pandemic.

<sup>7</sup>Citing Jesuit institutions alone, CEL was set up thanks to financial support from FACSI, and from the Jesuit Mission Procurae (treasuries) in Germany, Australia, Switzerland, and the African Jesuits AIDS Network (AJAN). For the first year of its activities (2007) CEL also benefited from financial support from the Mission Procurae of Germany and Southern Belgium (BME), a Jesuit parish in the Slovakian Province, a school in the French Province and the Office of Social and International Ministries of the United States Jesuit Conference.

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and his anointing and mission. Fr. General reminds us in his Letter on the Social Apostolate (January 2000) “to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.” The announcement of the good news incumbent on us must be accompanied by concrete action which transforms reality *hic et nunc*, and changes the living conditions of the poor to rehabilitate and restore them to human dignity.

The prospect of the General Congregation brings us face to face with a summons from our Master and Lord, to go forward in deep water and commit ourselves to advancing social justice and restoring dignity to the poor. Our concern for justice and the preferential option for the poor cannot be authentic or authenticated unless they lead to concrete commitment to change the face of de-humanising realities that entrap the poor. This is the true stake of the social apostolate. Insofar as GC 35 emphasises the fulfilment of our mission of faith and justice, it should seek to inspire new energy within the social apostolate and bring back all its vigour and importance, orientation and impact. For this we must move in certain directions, some of which I present as concluding remarks.

*Proximity in view of the empowerment of the poor*

For the social apostolate to rediscover the place that is its due within the life of the entire Society, we must find a new position vis-à-vis the requirements of the preferential option for the poor; this must not be a hallowed expression with no real content, but an inclination which leads us to real proximity with the poor. We need to enter into the experience of God who declares “I have witnessed the affliction of my people... I have heard their cry of complaint against their slave drivers, so I know well what they are suffering” (Exodus 3: 7). Such an experience leads to the compassion without which our commitment runs the risk of being superficial and inefficient. This is what I believe should lead to a true *kenosis* of ourselves for empowerment – the reinforcement of the power of action – of the poor.

*With others, fellow servants of Christ’s mission*

The social action the Society is called on to undertake undoubtedly requires that the collaboration with lay people and other religious families evoked by past General Congregations becomes one of our ways of proceeding. This is the price we have to pay to be more efficient and capable of facing the apostolic challenges of our times. I am with those who think that the Society needs others, notably lay people, to carry out its mission fully. We may thus expect GC 35 to overcome all reservations, be open to the signs of the times, and recognise the importance of collaboration with non-Jesuits in the exercise of the Society’s mission, particularly in the social dimension.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>The example of new communities like the Emmanuel Community or the Beatitudes bringing together different members (unmarried people, couples, priests, brothers and sisters consecrated in celibacy) in the same excitement of apostolic life seems to me a very strong sign of the times.

The experience of the Social Forum in Nairobi in January 2007 revealed how much the Ignatian family is capable of forming this Ignatian apostolic network to bring about the social transformation necessary for the advent of a more just globalised world. Should we not consider the members of this Ignatian family as fellow workers in Christ's mission?

### *Africa as an apostolic priority*

As recommended in GC 34, the understanding and implication of apostolic priorities merit consolidation. While hoping that Africa will continue as one of the priorities of the universal Society, I would like to suggest that this option be accompanied by a concrete commitment from the Society to implement one or more apostolic priorities in the African Assistency leading to a transformation of African society. Will Africa finally have its first Jesuit university?

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## **SOUTH ASIA**

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### **Jesuits and the Mission Ahead**

#### **Introduction**

While the reflections in these pages are applicable primarily to India and also to South Asia, there are also some issues that are global in nature. These reflections are based on my personal research, evaluation studies, and lived experiences in India as a religious for the past 42 years. While some of the data presented may sound negative and pessimistic, the future growth of the Church, both at the global level and in South Asia, is highly dependent on the type of responses that will be given to these stark realities. The Society of Jesus, with its tremendous human and material resources, particularly in the South Asian Assistency, has a vital mission to fulfil in these and other related areas.

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Interview GC 35

## **Socio-economic aspect**

Economically, educationally and technologically, India is forging ahead and the world is awakening to the reality of the mighty nation that is beginning to come of age. On the verge of crossing over from its present status as a developing country to that of a developed one, it is already throwing a challenge to the developed world. These perceptions are no doubt accurate, but this is not the full truth. What is described above is true of one portion of the people of India, the middle and the upper middle class sections. The huge population of these two sections (over 300 million), in comparison with the population of practically all the other countries of the world, means that the growth of these sections technologically, economically and professionally makes all the difference for India amidst the comity of nations.

However, one should remember the other face of India, rural India and the urban slums, where the majority of the people live. There, the people are more or less mired in the developing stage, in some cases in the under-developed stage. This is the poorer India, the impoverished India, the unskilled India, the illiterate India. The existence of such an India is a threat to the very survival of the developed India. India's real growth cannot be imagined without the growth of this teeming majority of the poverty-stricken, illiterate masses of the nation. Thus, India's real growth depends on the poor of the nation and not on the rich. We have to wipe the tears from the eyes of these millions and the sweat from the beautiful faces of these people before India can really challenge the rest of the world economically, politically and technologically.

In this context, the justice ministry of the Jesuits is highly relevant today and will continue to be so. The Jesuits will have to become more articulate and more aggressive in ensuring that India does not forget the vast majority of the people, particularly those in the rural areas and in the slums of the cities, while the nation moves forward economically and technologically.

## **Religious aspect**

### *The strength of the Church*

From the religious point of view, there are encouraging signs as well as areas of serious concern. When we look at the status of the Church in India today, we see a lot of positive features—India has a large number of dioceses, and still more are being created; it gets a large number of vocations to priesthood and the religious life; hundreds of Catholic institutions are rendering useful services to the people in the fields of education, health and social service; and Catholic institutions are known for their discipline and achievements. The Church has a tremendous amount of man-power, material resources and funds; it has good contacts with international funding agencies and is able to bring in a big amount of money every year for the service of the poor. The all-round services of the Church to the country are acknowledged by one and all; it is able to carry on its routine work of running its established schools, colleges and hospitals efficiently and with great dedication. The Church is considered to be a powerful body and there are very many former

students who are generally very helpful to the Church. It has made a considerable contribution to the growth of culture, language, education, health, discipline, and other related areas. In all these, the Jesuits have played a pivotal role and they have reasons to feel grateful to God and be happy about their contributions.

### **The weaknesses**

During the past 12 years, I had the privilege of evaluating more than 30 different Church-related organisations or institutions, among them the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India, Vidyajyoti Jesuit Theologate, Jesuit Social Apostolate in South Asia, the major seminaries and formation houses all over India, several women and men's religious congregations, a few dioceses, a few institutions, and a few social or developmental projects.

From these evaluations, it is clear that the human, material and technical resources within the Church are impressive to the point of being stupendous. But the utilisation of these resources and the impact these resources have made on the country and its people leave much to be desired. The Catholic Church may be one of the most resourceful bodies in the whole country, but its impact on the country is negligible considering the resources that are under its care and command. No doubt, Catholics have made a name for themselves in the fields of education and health care as well as social and welfare programmes, but, the real question is whether what it has achieved is proportionate to the resources at its disposal. The same can be said about the Society of Jesus in India. With so many Jesuits, a fair number of whom are highly qualified, the potential contribution it could make towards the growth of the Church and the nation is far higher than what it has actually made till now.

Here are some of the specific shortcomings of the Church and religious congregations: lack of effective leadership: groupism, politics and power struggles among priests and religious, particularly during elections or while making appointments to important posts; lack of commitment to the mission and the values of the Kingdom; an excessive need of security; inadequate vision, planning and execution; unwillingness or reluctance to allow laypeople to play their role in the life of the Church at different levels; a lack of professionalism in the missions and apostolates; unwillingness to give up irrelevant apostolates or mission centres; being satisfied with established and institutionalised apostolates and reluctance to take up new and unorganised type of apostolates, which are more risky and where success is less measurable; lack of proper formation relevant for today and so much stress on uniformity in the formation process that it would appear sufficient to produce academically qualified students rather than forming individuals in spirituality and values; poor financial management; unwillingness to share resources, and abuse of funds and resources; too strong a focus on property and ownership rather than the mission and the needs of the beneficiaries.

Organisations like the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India, the Conference of Religious in India (CRI) as well as individual Bishops and heads of individual religious congregations should be concerned about these issues and problems. But whether, and how much, importance is being given to all or at least some of these

problems and concerns is a big question mark. The Church seems to be just floating along in a routine manner. The concern for such issues and problems is hardly visible to the point that one would think that these issues do not exist. The Society of Jesus too is a victim of some of the major weaknesses listed above, in the life of its members and in their ministries. Furthermore, it has not effectively taken the initiative in inspiring the Church and its leadership to find suitable solutions to these major concerns and problems. Being the most powerful and resourceful religious group in India, one of its primary responsibilities is to take steps to find suitable solutions to such issues and concerns.

#### *Attitude towards religious practices*

Religion in the third millennium is faced with a serious crisis of credibility. What is the place of religion today? Does it have any relevance to modern men and women, particularly the younger generation? In the Christian west, the number of practicing Christians is dwindling very fast. A similar situation is slowly growing in India, too. This assessment is applicable to other religions as well. Such a trend throws up serious questions about the future of religion. What will be the status of religion and religious practices in about 20 or 30 years from now?

However, does this dwindling religious practice mean that the people do not feel the need for God? That is a big question to be tackled. The lack of interest in external religious practices need not be equivalent to the absence of faith in the Supernatural Being. People's lack of interest in going to places of worship, like a church or a mosque or a temple, does not necessarily mean that they have lost their religiosity, i.e., the sense of God and faith in his providence. There is a real need to find out what exactly the status is of the people as regards their religiosity. As far as one can judge, it seems correct to conclude that while the external religious practices of the people have come down tremendously, the religiosity of the people has not declined, at least not to the same extent. In other words, there is a religious longing in the hearts of the people and there is an experience of emptiness within. However, apparently, the present religious practices are not in a position to quench their religious thirst adequately and satisfactorily.

This is a very important area of concern and interest for the Jesuits. If there is a new mission awaiting a response from the Jesuits, it is this one. Jesuits here should take up this challenge and initiate a scientific study of this issue—the level of religiosity among the people, their attitude towards God and the supernatural, their disposition towards established religions, their longings and inner experiences, and the reasons for their lack of interest in traditional religious practices. With the help of this study, we should work out concrete steps that will help in quenching people's thirst for God and the supernatural. If this area is given due importance and if the longings of the people are appeased through creative and appropriate methods and techniques, the result is likely to be enormous, particularly as regards human values, morality, justice and equality. It will also have a tremendous impact on the life of the Jesuits themselves, as the religiosity of the members of the Society will also get stimulated and renewed. Thus, the Jesuit mission for the immediate future is the renewal and/or revival of the religiosity of



the people. Our apostolic initiatives and options should keep this as the pivotal point and the Jesuits have to move into this mission in the spirit of the *magis*.

### *Quality and quantity of priests*

In India, at any given time, about 10,000 young men are preparing for priesthood in about 100 seminaries or formation houses, some small and some big. Every year about 1,000 priests are ordained. In all likelihood, no other country gets quite as many new priests every year. Quantitatively it is an impressive achievement, no doubt. But what about the quality of the stuff that is being churned out every year? As far as the Jesuits are concerned, the South Asian Assistancy gets about 100 new priests every year, the highest number in the entire Society for any particular Assistancy. But can we say that from a qualitative point of view this Assistancy has the best men? This issue of formation, together with ongoing formation throughout the religious life, should be one of the main concerns of the Jesuits of this Assistancy.

### *The laity in the Church*

When compared with the past few decades, there is a tremendous change for the better in that there is a considerable degree of involvement of the laity in the life of the Church, at least in a large number of parishes and dioceses. Still, the Church continues to be dominated by clergy, and lay people as well as women religious, are at the receiving end. Their participation in the life of the Church is a far cry from what Vatican II declared more than 45 years ago. This is equally true of lay participation in the different institutions run by the dioceses and religious congregations. While a number of Christians are employed in these institutions, their role in the decision-making processes or their presence in important and responsible positions is far from satisfactory.

The same situation prevails in Jesuit institutions as well. The Society of Jesus has realised the importance of the laity in the life of the Church and in apostolic activities; this realisation however is yet to be translated satisfactorily into action and practice. As of now, Jesuit institutions are under the control of Jesuits and lay people have very few responsible roles to play. It is high time the Jesuits take the lead in this matter; this is clearly a crucial need for the future growth of the Church.

### *Response to changes*

We are living in an era of tremendous changes and we have to respond to these changes constructively and positively. Only by responding in this manner to these changes, can we really guide our own life and the life of those under our care. We need to develop the habit of change, not change for the sake of change, but changes that are required to respond effectively to the changed situations. The Catholic Church needs to change drastically in various ways. While it is true that Pope John XXIII opened the windows and brought in some fresh air into the life of the Church through the Second Vatican Council, many changes have taken place in the world

since then and the Church needs to respond to these changes continuously. The Church needs to effect change in the areas of liturgy, administration, the pattern of formation, the role of the laity, religious practices, social concerns, financial management, and methods of living out the apostolates.

The Jesuits, as well as the other religious of India, need to become true agents of change and show the way to the rest of the Church. This calls for a new awakening both among the Jesuits and other religious. It also calls for a new approach and style in different aspects of the Church's life and in the manner of carrying out the various apostolates.

### **Conclusion**

The primary mission of the Jesuits in today's context is the renewal and revival of the religiosity of the people, which will in turn help promote greater justice, equality and respect for one another, leading to a harmonious and peace-filled life for the entire human society. This calls for serious research, discovery of new ways of expressing one's faith experience and Christian life. This mission is a challenging one and perhaps only the Jesuits can respond to it effectively and successfully. But the Jesuits can carry out this mission successfully only with the full participation and collaboration of the laity. Hence, lay collaboration is to be given primary importance in all our mission endeavours and our apostolic involvements. This also implies an effective and relevant system of formation of the future members of the Society. GC 35 should give top priority to these three areas—working for the revival of the religiosity of the people, promoting lay collaboration and transforming Jesuit formation at different levels.

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## **Prayer for the Success of the 35th General Congregation**

Lord Jesus Christ, you desire that the Society that bears your name may gather together in your Spirit and may fulfill your will in all its decisions (cf. Acts 15, 28).

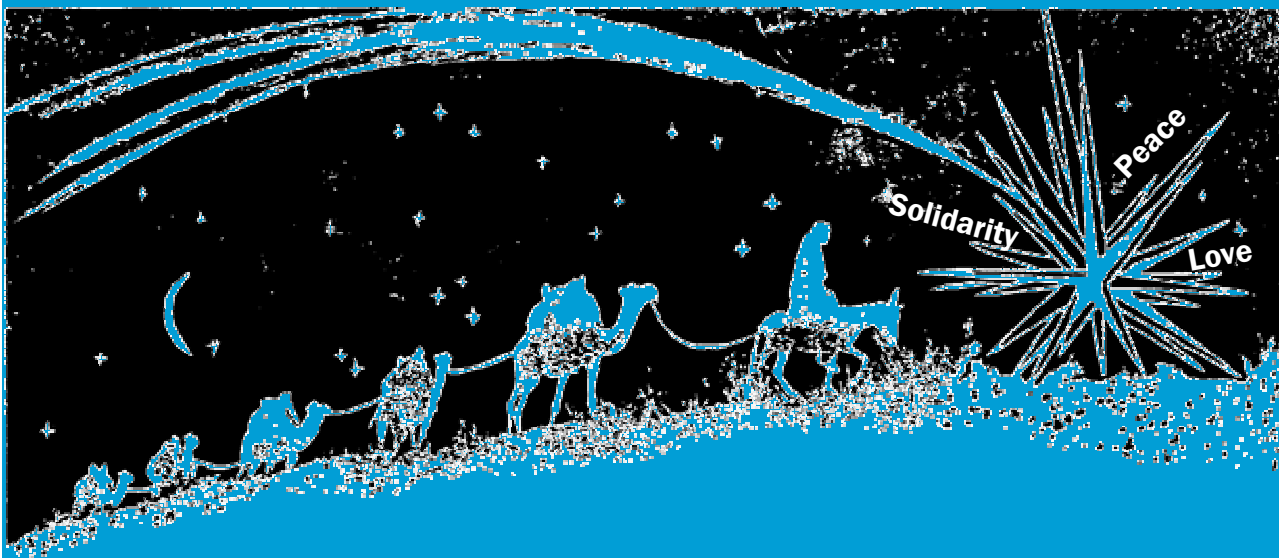
Through the intercession of the Virgin Mary Mother of God, St. Ignatius and all the Saints and Blessed of the Society of Jesus, we bring you our prayers:

1. That the upcoming General Congregation may be a time of listening to your Spirit, we pray: Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.
2. That the Electors may receive the gift of discernment, so that they may serve the well-being of the whole Society of Jesus, we pray: Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.
3. That all Jesuits may grow in the desire to serve the needs of the Church with increasing self-donation, we pray: Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.
4. That we Jesuits may be renewed in our fidelity to the Holy Father, your Vicar on earth, we pray: Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.
5. That you renew in us the strength to make you known among those who have not yet heard of you, we pray: Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.
6. That we may be guided by a true love for the poor and the little ones and the desire to work for justice and peace among peoples, we pray: Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.
7. That we might have the heart of the good Shepherd who seeks and finds the lost, we pray: Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.
8. That we may be guided by your wisdom to promote dialogue between our faith and the cultures of today and between peoples of different religions, we pray: Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.
9. That we may give witness in words and in action to the Gospel of the Lord and learn how to help the persons around us in their search for God, we pray: Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.
10. That the Church and the Society of Jesus may be gifted by new vocations, we pray: Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.
11. That you will bless all our friends and benefactors, we pray: Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.

Let us pray:

Lord, in your providence you guided Saint Ignatius to found the Society of Jesus. Enrich it, we pray, with gifts of heart, mind and spirit. Make us all one with you in holiness and love, that we may discern your will and carry it out with constancy and faith. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Praised be Jesus Christ – forever. Amen.



**Merry Christmas**

**Happy New Year 2008**

**Social Justice Secretariat**

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