

84/No.17

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In this issue:

A FIRST REPORT FROM THE SEDOS SEMINAR  
MISSION AND REFUGEES

The human tragedy that is today's refugee was dramatically illustrated in the film SANCTUARY which opened the SEDOS Seminar.

In this issue Dieter Schotz introduces the film and then draws attention to some of the main issues which were the subject of discussion in general assembly and in groups at the Seminar.

Joe Jansen reduces the global dimensions of the problem to the situation on the door-step of those living in Rome and suggests some steps that can be taken to help the refugees.

Patricia Frost examines briefly what international missionary societies and congregations can do to alleviate the lot of refugees. We give also two comments from participants at the Seminar.

In the second part of this issue there are three contributions dealing with different aspects of mission:

- there are concluding extracts from Mgr. de Souza's address to the Lisieux Conference in April on Mission To-day.
- Omer Degrijse takes a clear stand on his understanding of "exclusively mission sending" societies contrasting with Michel de Verteuil's approach in the last issue of the Bulletin.
- and we draw your attention specially to the letter of Sr. Godelieve Prové written to the Sisters of her Congregation in connection with events in Kerala, India, portraying the type of situation which occurs with ever greater frequency in mission today. Her sisters took to heart the consequences of standing with the poor, in this case the poor fisher-folk on the coast of Kerala, in their repeated demands for justice. In India, where the tradition of fasting is part of the cultural history of the people, the consequences were in fact a decision on the part of some of the Sisters to fast, one even to death.

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News:

SEDOS Seminar: Mission and Refugees, Oct. 31, 1984: Ninety participants attended the Seminar including ten Ethiopian refugees - a small representation of more than fifteen hundred at present in Rome. The film SANCTUARY served to highlight many of the dominant issues involved in the refugee situation in the world to-day and was the basis for the day's study and meditation.

SANCTUARY, written produced and directed by James Beckett, is the copyrighted property of the W.C.C. It is a dramatic and thoughtful film suitable for worship or religious services as well as for many kinds of educational and ecumenical gatherings. Its screening time, just under one hour, facilitates a wide possible use.

We thank the W.C.C. sincerely for making this film available to SEDOS for the Seminar and for private screening to groups in Rome during these weeks.

Maryknoll - Congratulations to Fr. Bill Boteler who has just been elected Superior General of the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers. He has been working in Bolivia.

Coming Events:

SEDOS ANNUAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY and SEMINAR  
on MISSION and URBANISATION

Tuesday, December 11, 9.30 - 18.00 hrs.  
Generalate of the Brothers of the Christian  
Schools, 476, Via Aurelia.

Those wishing to borrow SANCTUARY please contact Fr. Dieter Scholtz, SJ, at Borgo Santo Spirito, 3 (Tel. 65.69.841) or SEDOS Secretariate (Tel. 57.13.50). 16 mm. Running time, 58 minutes.

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'SANCTUARY'  
AN INTRODUCTION

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Dieter Scholtz, SJ.

*(The Seminar opened with the screening of the film "Sanctuary". Dieter Scholtz presented this short introduction to the film).*

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During the past two weeks or so the Gospel readings of the liturgy were taken from those chapters of Luke where he challenges us to be alert and responsive to the signs of the time and to learn, through a deepening of our faith, how to interpret them.

In one of the readings last week we heard Jesus tell the people of his own day: "When you see a cloud looming up in the west you say at once that rain is coming, and so it does. And when the wind is from the south you say it will be hot, and it is. Hypocrites! You know how to interpret the face of the earth and the sky. How is it you do not know how to interpret these times. Why not judge for yourselves what is right"? (LK 12:54-57).

I think few people would disagree that among the signs of our time are the evergrowing arsenals of nuclear weapons, the refugees and famine on a scale not known previously at any time during our century.

Jesus calls us to read these signs and judge what is right. The call is addressed to us, not to somebody else. We are called to learn to interpret these signs, to judge and to act. Perhaps we are sometimes too quick to blame others for the events related with the signs of our time, just as Jesus' contemporaries thought the Galileans who were murdered by Pilate in the precincts of the temple while offering their sacrifices, or the 18 persons who were killed when the tower of Siloam collapsed, must have committed a serious wrong to offend God and incur his wrath. "No, says Jesus to his listeners, look at yourselves: unless you repent you will all perish as they did" (LK 13:3).

It is in this context of accepting the Lord's call to conversion that we propose to look at the world refugee problem of our day. The complex human problems and the legal and political issues involved will be presented to us in the film entitled 'SANCTUARY'. But the purpose of our meeting is not to analyse the world refugee problem in a detached and technical way, in the manner, for example, in which a large international refugee agency with salaried employees might look at it to devise strategies of fund raising, transporting foods, negotiating resettlement programmes, and so on. In that approach the individual refugee is always in danger of becoming the commodity of a big multinational company. Rather, we shall try to see this human tragedy as an appeal and a challenge to us:

*What does the refugee problem, its existence and continuing growth, say about us as members of the Church and as religious?*

A priest working with refugees in a western country recently said: "The Church has been absent from this work and so noticeably absent for so long that most refugees I meet aren't even aware that there is a Church" (Fr. David Myers, S.J.).

The focal point of the film 'SANCTUARY' is a family which has been compelled to flee home and country. The story shows what happens to each of the family members as refugees. The individual destinies of this family reveal what being a refugee is actually like. Throughout the story the refugee problem is addressed as a question to the Church.

The film was named 'SANCTUARY' for several reasons. First, the name reminds us of a church, a holy place where God's name is invoked and his authority proclaimed in worship. But the same word also means a place of refuge and protection, a concept which has relevance for certain refugees today. In response to the vulnerability of such refugees, many churches have decided to unify the dual meaning of sanctuary so that their buildings serve as places of worship and protection, thus demonstrating that love of God and love of neighbour are inseparable. In a much wider sense, the name of the film also indicates what all uprooted, homeless people are in search of: a safe haven, a place where, out of danger, they can begin the difficult process of reordering their lives.

'SANCTUARY' shows five families from various parts of the world whose stories unfold in different geographical settings. Yet despite these differences, the story is really about just one family. Seeing the 'same' family in different parts of the world emphasizes the global nature of the refugee crisis and the difficulties that refugees everywhere have in common.

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The film was followed by a period of silent meditation.

#### SUMMARY OF THE MAIN ISSUES

Dieter Scholtz then summarised the main issues raised in the film and suggested some questions for reflection and discussion relating to these issues. The focus of these questions throughout was:

*What does the existence of the refugee tragedy mean for me?  
What options do I have to make in judgement and action?*

"Sanctuary" begins in Central America. It portrays a typical situation showing why people become refugees, why they take the hard decision to leave home and undergo the dangerous escape to safety. When at the very beginning the father talks about only wanting to live their own lives, he speaks not only for many Latin Americans but also for multitudes of people in nearly all parts of the world who have been compelled to abandon their home and seek safety elsewhere.

The scene now shifts to Africa and portrays the problems that countless refugees face upon arrival in a safe haven: how to meet their immediate survival needs for health, sustenance and shelter. Then, once these needs have been met, new problems come to the fore. Recently-arrived refugees typically feel an acute sense of loss, of isolation, of resentment and confusion at their new and unfamiliar surroundings. Everything is suddenly different: the local people, the food, the landscape, the language, the place where they live.

Set in the Middle East the next sequence shows the effect on people who live for prolonged periods in camps. It is a deplorable fact that millions of refugees, after their daily needs are cared for, have little more to do with their time than wait and hope. To return home is the most stubborn hope, but with time this may give way to the chance of taking up life anew in the country of asylum or, as shown in this sequence, in some third country. And then, paradoxically, if the opportunity to leave does occur, the departure itself may pose painful dilemmas even dividing families.

The film moves to a Western country: Many refugees have difficulties when they attempt to move across borders, even legally. That people leave home with various, mixed motives is evident here: the problem faced by border and immigration officials as well as refugee-determination-boards, is to take decisions on which of the applicants are true refugees. The ambiguities, the differences in meanings, the arbitrariness that may characterize the determination of refugee status are brought out here, thus illustrating the extreme difficulty of having a fair, objective way of deciding who is and who is not a refugee.

Culture Shock: Suddenly having to cope with life in a new and completely different place is what this sequence is about. We experience this 'culture shock' through the eyes of the Indochinese mother as she makes a first few encounters with Western culture. All the things of daily life are strange and confusing for her and for countless other refugees in similar situations. It is likely that we find more humour in these situations than new refugees do- until we remember that putting to the test our own ability to cope in totally alien circumstances might well be more amusing to others than ourselves.

Sponsorship and Sanctuary: Two ways in which Churches today are assisting refugees. The final sequence of the film examines the question of sanctuary, an urgent issue now facing many churches. The heart of the matter for these churches lies in the reasons for granting or not granting refuge and protection to undocumented persons seeking asylum in their church buildings. What should be the churches' response when faced with such persons on their doorstep? Both Jews and Christians have a long tradition of sanctuary, one that has evolved at different times and places and under varying circumstances. In the sequence showing the church council discussion, the basic question is raised whether circumstances in that time and place justify giving sanctuary to the refugee seeking it. Serious legal, ethical, political, humanitarian - and ultimately theological- questions are involved in this debate, and forceful arguments can be

made in support of differing points of view.

This is not a subject on which Christians speak with one voice, but it is one which commands attention and decision by Christians and their churches because the lives of many people at risk are immediately at stake. Towards the end of the film the father, now re-united with his wife, spends night in the same church quarters occupied by the refugee who was allowed to stay by decision of the church council. Exemplified here are two ways in which churches today are assisting refugees: by SPONSORSHIP and by offering SANCTUARY. The closing scene of solidarity with the refugee who was being abducted by two unidentified men reminds us again that even in a supposedly safe haven, a refugee's existence can be a precarious one. Life is of course hazardous for many other people, but what this film emphasizes are the special risks to which refugees may be exposed - men women and children from all over the world who have been forced to leave their homes.

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A COMMENT FROM A PARTICIPANT

A group such as SEDOS has a privileged knowledge of the needs of refugees. In addition to sustenance what they ask for above all is people or persons with whom they can speak at the level of their deep human and spiritual concerns. Missionaries have this possibility more than most others yet the number who actually move with refugee people is not great.

He worked for some years in Zambia with, among others, Angolan refugees and recounted the following incident. He celebrated Mass one Sunday in a camp and talked with the refugees discussing their immediate needs and their plans and hopes for the future. Clean drinking water, seeds for planting, health care and help for modest housing. These and many other problems were discussed. Finally he asked them what was their deepest need in the camp? There was silence for a few moments and then one of the refugees answered simply "John 10.15!"

Back at his comfortable headquarters he read and pondered the reference to John which had taken him completely by surprise. "I am the good shepherd; I know my own and my own know me,.. The good shepherd is one who lays down his life for his sheep. The hired man, since he is not the shepherd abandons the sheep and runs away as soon as he sees a wolf coming"....

How many have moved with their people? How many have let them be scattered? How many are prepared to share the lives of the refugees in the camps? To stay with their people?

Kevin Doheny, CSSp.

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YOUR COMMUNITY AND THE REFUGEES

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Joseph Jansen, S.M.

*This text of a submission made to the members of his own community summarises the points made by Brother Joe at the Seminar. He was able to illustrate some of his points by reference to his Ethiopian friends who were present as guests.*

*On the floor of his office a mattress is placed every night. There, one of his refugee friends sleeps. Two of the young refugee guests present at the Seminar would sleep that night in a park as the Central Railway Station has become too dangerous because of continuous police checks. Two refugees who were detained there recently by the police were found to be without documents and were given notice to leave Italy within seven days. Where will they go? Since the onset of the cold weather Joe has supplied twenty sleeping bags already this year to refugees who sleep out. But these were only examples of the needs mentioned in his talk and detailed in his paper.*

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What can a religious do about the refugee problem? That depends. It depends on what you are trying to accomplish. Are you trying to feel better or to help the refugees?

To the exasperation of the refugees (and the poor, in general), the focus often remains on our guilt, not on their needs. Frequently we ask "How can we stop feeling guilty?" not "How can we help this person or these individuals?" Two very different questions with very different responses.

The first question wants to know how we can "buy off" the refugees so they will leave us alone. The second question seeks to "buy into" the refugee problem. It looks for an entrance, not an exit. It looks to the other, not to ourselves.

What can a community do? It depends on whether it wants to buy off or buy into the need at its door. The intention makes all the difference.

In the early stages of a community's response, it may be difficult to tell what the goal is. Prayer services, donations, hand-outs of money/food/clothing, intentions at Mass, conferences..... These could be first steps or last steps. In some communities, the mere mention of "refugees" marks the dawning of a new awareness of God's demand for justice... and charity. Other communities frequently talk about the refugee problem, but it only masks the fact that concretely they do nothing.

There's no blueprint for what a religious community could or should do about the refugee challenge in Rome. We are not asked for a new answer, nor for a complete answer. We are asked to adopt a new orientation, a new attitude toward the problem and, more especially, toward the persons involved.



When God gets us properly oriented to the refugee situation (and to the refugee person!), we will find ourselves alongside the poor, not above them. We will listen more....to the refugee, to the poor, to those responding to the needy, and above all to **God's** daily word, and to Mary's maternal urgings. Sensitive listening will help us to enter their situation, to walk in their shoes, to feel what they feel, in short to be a refugee (at least vicariously). Thus, the refugees evangelize us. They help us in the on-going process of conversion.

The refugees (the needy?) will help us see opportunities where we saw only responsibilities. They will help us create relationships where we felt only obligations. We will discover strength where we saw only powerlessness. We will find friends where we experienced only isolation. In short, we will have built a bridge, not a wall. We will have become brothers and sisters in this great human family with God as our Father.

#### WHAT SOME COMMUNITIES (OR PERSONS) ARE DOING IN ROME

- teaching English, French, guitar, art, Bible...usually small groups or even one-to-one;
- providing housing (and sometimes meals) for 1, 2 or more..;
- helping serve food at the Jesuit Refugee Center (Via Astalli 14A) between 7 and 8 p.m. Monday through Saturday)
  - being present in the Astalli Center one night a week simply to talk to the refugees, or play cards or checkers...establish relationships;
- saving left-over food for Astalli Center, or groups of refugees... and getting these left-overs to them; or them to the left-overs;
- making a once-a-week communitarian sacrifice (no dessert, no "appetitivo") and using the money thus saved to buy food for the refugees;
- Contributing used clothing (especially urgent in winter);
- donating English paperbacks and magazines to the little "lending library" the refugees have started (Astalli);
- offering Sunday "supper" (or even late afternoon tea) to some refugees (daily breakfast and Sunday supper usually do not exist for the refugees);
- organizing soccer games and other sports (usually between students/seminarians and the refugees);
- fasting (voluntarily) in solidarity with the refugees who fast (involuntarily);
- organizing a little trip to the Ostia Lido for a swim (during the summer);
- praying with the refugees in small prayer groups;
- providing a P.O. Box for refugee mail...and providing stamps for their letters to family and friends;
- permitting refugees to take warm showers (some present "dwellings")



(This page 381, was missing from the last issue of the SEDOS Bulletin 1984/No.17. We regret the error).

have little or no bathing facilities);

- being guide for a small group visit to St. Peter's Catacombs, museums...;
- arranging for the refugees to attend different forms of entertainment, for example the Circus;
- providing refugees with "tickets" for the Pope's weekly audiences;
- providing a refugee (or several with a monthly bus "tessera" (very important to them);
- permitting the refugees to use different facilities from time to time: a soccer field, a swimming pool, a basketball court....
- donating money for the running of the Jesuit Refugee Center or for the needs of Caritas;
- providing a sponsor for a refugee who is moving on to the USA or Canada;
- helping a refugee to process his papers with a Refugee Agency or to deal with an Embassy.

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#### A ROLE FOR INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS CONGREGATIONS IN THE WORLD REFUGEE SITUATION

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Patricia Frost, SSND

*This is a summary of the presentation made by Sister Patricia.*

As international religious congregations, it is important for us to respond to the situations of refugees on many levels. We have already spoken of the responses of religious men and women here in Rome who have found that giving of our personal and financial resources to the refugees has been, in fact, a great gift to us. It has affected our own spirituality, caused us to change priorities...one cannot work at the Centro Astalli and speak to young men who will sleep outside or in the train station that night without thinking serious thoughts as one crawls into one's own warm, safe bed.

We must, however, attack the problem on other levels, too.

Let me quote a few pertinent statements from "*Refugees: The Structures of a Global Justice Issue*," by Michael Schultheis, SJ (Center of Concern, 3700 13th St. NE, Washington, D.C. 20017). He asks, "How do these poor relate to the larger global crises of the 1980's? Are they incidental to or a product of the present world system? Are they not "a sign," an indication of a more fundamental and pervasive disorder in the world political-economy? And to what action on behalf of justice do they call us?"

Father Schultheis's thesis of the analysis offered in his paper is "that the main refugee flows in the world today are the direct or indirect result of forces which lie outside the countries where

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the refugee originates."

He proposes that "Effective response will require not only immediate and ongoing assistance to the victims but also longterm restructuring of the global political and economic order."

We in the international religious congregations know what it means to try to communicate across cultures. We have people prepared, who can help refugees adjust or who could be missioned to follow their people "on the move." We have the capability of being "advocates" for those who have no voice. We are able to learn ourselves through the varied activities of our own membership. We can network and strategize across cultures and ministries to help others develop more open and responsive attitudes.

My hope is that through the nurturing of our own international character, we might more fully engage in a more human, a more Christian re-structuring of our world.

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#### CARITAS ROMA - A COMMENT

The situation presented by Bro. Joe Jansen is only a fraction of what Caritas records show. In fact, there are 1,650 Ethiopian refugees in Rome; and about 2,000 non-Ethiopians coming from 89 different countries. Most of them are young people wandering around with not the least hope of any kind of settlement. If A calls B a refugee, B is more fortunate than C, who even cannot call himself or herself a refugee. Most of the people we are dealing with are Cs.

Rome Caritas is over-burdened with the general situation which in fact is growing constantly. For many years, this has been shared with Centres such as: ACSE (led by Padre Bresciani, MCCJ - a pioneering centre for foreigners in Rome); the Don Bosco Salesian Centre; the Jesuit Centro Astalli which cares for Ethiopians alone; and about 130 religious institutes and parishes which provide shelter for about 500 Ethiopians. This help is invaluable. We need still more and we would also appreciate your prayers for our continued efforts.

Alexius Perera

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Further information from the Seminar on Refugees will appear in the next SEDOS Bulletin 1st December, 1984.

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PROBLEMS OF THE FISHERFOLK IN KERALA  
A LIVED EXPERIENCE IN MISSION

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*(During his recent visit to Canada Pope John Paul II spoke forcefully to the Communities in Newfoundland in defence of an economic order which would safeguard the livelihood and human dignity of the small fisherfolk. On that occasion SEDOS Bulletin (84/No.14) quoted an extract from his address given earlier in the year in Rome to the FAO Conference on Fisheries. That Bulletin also contained a selection of items illustrating the problems of small fisherfolk in to-day's world.)*

*The following letter written to the members of the Medical Missionary Sisters shows how women in mission, who take to heart the practical consequences of counsels about defending human rights and basic justice, are faced with personal and community decisions which can lead to great suffering and anguish. It is not only in Latin America that implacable opposition to efforts at improving the lot of the poor are met with. This letter concerns the efforts of Sisters to come to the defense of the small fisherfolk of Kerala - acknowledged to be among India's poorest people with whom the Sisters live.)*

July, 1984.

"In Kerala, our Sisters have lived and worked among the Traditional Fisherpeople in the villages of Poothura and Mampally for about seven years. During this time they have entered deeply into community with these people and have worked with them to try to transform the unjust situation which affects them.

Hindus, Muslims, Christians: These traditional fisherpeople, composed mainly of Hindus and Muslims, with a few pockets of Christians, are often acknowledged to be among the poorest communities in India. In 1981, as a result of the struggle of the fisherpeople, the government passed the Marine Fisheries Regulations Act. One of the stipulations of this law is the zoning of the sea for fishing. According to this, the mechanized trawlers are not allowed to fish in waters less than 10 fathoms deep. This area is the exclusive fishing zone of the traditional fisherfolk, who use country boats and nets. The law has not been seriously enforced by the government, due to the fact that the owners of the mechanized boats have a powerful lobby and make large contributions to the ruling Party.

In 1983, Unions were formed among the fisherpeople and once formed, they began to demand justice. They started by holding rallies and meetings to try to force the Department of Fisheries to recognize the violation of their fishing waters. When all avenues of legal recourse seemed closed to them, they began to capture the mechanized boats which entered their areas.

In June of this year, a massive agitation was organized by the Union. One aspect of this was the choosing of people who were

willing to go on a public hunger strike to protest. While we don't know all of the details of how many were chosen to fast, or how long they fasted, we do know that members of several Religious communities were among those who volunteered and were accepted to demonstrate in this way.

Public fast: Some of our Sisters were involved in the agitation and joined with other religious and social groups to show solidarity through one day public fast. Others picketed railways, road traffic, government offices, etc. As a result of these demonstrations, three of our Sisters: Patricia Kuruvinakunnel, Philomine Marie Thakadiyel from Mampally, and Theramma Pravikalam from Poothura, along with other people were jailed. They refused bail in favour of a public hearing, but after six days, the entire group was released. As a result of this failure to get a public hearing, they, with the entire group, went on hunger strike. You will recall that such public fasting has a long tradition in India.

Srs. Mercy Koottiyani from Mampally, and Luke Veliathumalil from Poothura were arrested in a separate incident and were jailed for one day. Sr. Valsa Paravarakath was also put in jail, although it is reported that she was not actively part of the demonstration when they were arrested.

A delegation of bishops of the area met with the government chief minister to ask him to grant the demands of the fisherpeople. This meeting had no results. A meeting of the leaders of the fisherpeople with the chief minister also failed. It was in this context that Philomine Marie and the Union leaders decided that she would declare a fast unto death. On about the 18th day of this fast, she was arrested and put into intensive care, in a hospital, under police custody. There were attempts to force feed her.

The leaders worked to have her released from the hospital and police custody, and on June 21, she left the hospital to again take up her public fast.

"Communal discernment of the lived experiences": During all of this time, our Society leaders in South India had dialogue with the leaders of the Union. They explained our position to them and asked them to call off the fast. We were among others who felt that this fast, if allowed to continue, would result in harm to the entire movement of the fisherpeople. After a general meeting of the Central Committee of the Union, the fast was called off and, on June 22 Philomine Marie ended her fast. After one day in the hospital, she was released and her condition is reported to be good.

These happenings have sharpened many questions for us, and clearly underlined some of the implications of our mission. It is important that we all stand humbly before this and search out its deeper meaning, not only for those immediately involved, but for the total Society. To help with this, we (Godelieve and Denise) have been requested to visit South India in August/September. We will spend time with all our Sisters there, and follow this with further reflection at the coming Central Assembly."

Ref: Intercontinent No.160. 15th July, 1984; A letter from Sr. Godelieve Prové, Superior General and Sr. Denise Elliot, Asst., to the Medical Mission Sisters.

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THE NEW ERA OF MISSION  
AND THE  
AIMS OF MISSIONARY SOCIETIES

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Omer Degrijse, CICM

*(Le Societa' Missionarie continuano a cercare una esposizione ispirata dei loro fini nella nuova era missionaria. Non e' facile trovare una dichiarazione che sia accettabile per tutti i membri di un gruppo. Nello scorso numero del Bollettino sono stati presentati alcuni punti di vista sull'argomento. In questo numero Omer Degrijse della Scheut Congregation esprime la sua opinione diversa sulla formulazione della nuova costituzione della loro Societa' circa questo problema).*

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The aim of the Congregation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, popularly known as Scheut (CICM), according to the draft of their new Constitutions is to send their members to proclaim Jesus Christ in priority to the multitudes "who do not know the good News, who have not yet accepted it or who have ceased to live it" Fr. Omer Degrijse asks for a different formulation of this part of the draft text which he sees as basic. He writes:

"This (formulation) is very ambiguous. If I understand well, these words are intended to leave a door open to the re-evangelization of the de-Christianized people of Europe and North America. This is a very serious option.

In my opinion CICM (Congregation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary) should remain faithful to its first option: evangelization "ad gentes" (with preference for the poor) and "ad extra" (the universal dimension). We were born as an exclusively missionary institute and we should remain so. We have the example of other missionary institutes who, during their recent general chapters, have opted for the "ad gentes" and "ad extra".

It is true that it is everywhere said that the mission is everywhere, that the de-Christianization of the West is on the increase, that atheism has become fashionable, that we thus have masses of people around us who do not know Christ. Re-Evangelization is undoubtedly an urgent task, but it is one for the pastors of the local church who are much better equipped for this than the foreign priests.

CICM should not draw the conclusion that it must participate in the efforts to re-evangelize the West from the fact of the de-Christianization of the West or the fact that mission is everywhere (an arguable affirmation). CICM should not do everything. CICM should limit itself to the following option: "ad gentes" and "ad extra". This is its proper and specific vocation. This option

presupposes a particular spirituality, special methods and adapted preparation. There is no lack of "gentes". Their number is growing. During their meeting in Puebla, the Latin American bishops declared that one third of their population is still in the situation of initial evangelization. CICM is in its place in the regions where evangelization has not yet been achieved, as in Latin America. It should limit itself to its proper task in order to do it better and not become involved in activities for which its members are not prepared. I can point out an example: evangelization takes place in a religious world and re-evangelization in an irreligious or anti-religious world. The approaches are very different.

During the last General Chapter (of CICM) Europe was declared a missionary region. This declaration could be called ambiguous and arguable. It is true that de-Christianization has become general in Europe and that it is necessary to think of re-Evangelization. But you cannot draw the conclusion from this that there is a task for CICM here. I believe that our bishops would be astonished to see the specifically missionary institutes become involved in this task.

In my opinion the missionary tasks for CICM in Europe are the following:

- the services of the Congregation;
- missionary animation;
- the apostolate among foreigners, non-Christian Africans and Asians, especially the dialogue with Muslims; this is an apostolate "ad gentes" and "ad extra" (transcultural and trans-religious).

The presence (in Europe) of elderly or sick confreres and those who have returned for whatever cause is no reason to conclude that it is the vocation of CICM to participate in the pastoral work of the local Church. This participation is accidental. The confreres who, animated by their missionary spirit, place themselves at the service of their home Church are doing a valuable and praiseworthy apostolate. They remain at the service of the Church but they accept that it was not for this apostolate that they entered CICM and they tell the candidates who present themselves to the Congregation that this apostolate is not, strictly speaking, in the line of its vocation.

In my opinion, this is a very serious decision which concerns the nature and the future of the Congregation.

If the aim of the Congregation is not clearly defined, what reply can be given to candidates who present themselves, but who want to stay in their own country and work among the de-Christianized? The specific preparation of missionaries is compromised: preparation for inculturation, for dialogue with the religions, for acquaintance with the socio-economic situation of the Third World countries, etc... The promotion of a specifically missionary spirituality becomes impossible.

Whenever CICM recruits members presently, it should be able to state clearly to the candidates what its aim is... I hope teams of CICM confreres will not be committed to go to work in the de-Christianized milieus of Europe, North America or elsewhere.

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## LA MISSION AUJOURD'HUI, QU'EST-CE QUE C'EST?

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Mgr. Isidore de Souza

*(The Gospel is confined neither to any particular culture nor to any special form of society. In this second abridged part of Mgr. de Souza's Conference he spells out some of the concrete results for Africa of moving from the Church of missions to a missionary Church).*

### LA MISSION DES INDEPENDANCES A NOS JOURS (Suite)

#### -AU NIVEAU DES EGLISES MERES

Crise sur le plan religieux: Au niveau des Eglises mères, le premier fait important réside dans la poursuite de la déchristianisation ou, plus exactement, de la mutation de l'expression du phénomène religieux, liée à l'avènement de la révolution industrielle. Si la société occidentale continue de connaître un christianisme sociologique, la chrétienté en tant que telle a volé en éclats. Les Eglises occidentales vivent en leur propre sein une relativité, donc une crise d'autant plus aiguë qu'elle porte sur les valeurs morales. C'est surtout l'esprit scientifique et technique qui a érodé les bases culturelles des valeurs.

La culture occidentale relativisée: Ce premier fait est en partie la conséquence d'un autre: celui que constitue la révolution anthropologique. Celle-ci a relativisé très sensiblement la prétention universaliste de la culture occidentale. On a trop souvent et trop longtemps considéré cette culture sous l'aspect civilisationnel et on l'a vue davantage comme une accumulation d'outils dont l'efficacité au plan de la réussite technique en imposait au reste du monde.

Mais l'angle de vision a changé à partir du moment où l'on a été attentif à la culture, non plus comme un ensemble de moyens, mais comme l'ensemble des fins poursuivies par chaque groupe humain. Des peuples à la technique rudimentaire apparurent alors comme dominant le peuple occidental surtout au moment où celui-ci se sabordait lui-même en renonçant très largement à sa référence chrétienne. Les complexes sont alors tombés et l'on se retrouve en relativité culturelle. N'est-ce pas ce qui expliquerait en partie la fascination des cultures et religions orientales et même africaines et de l'Islam aussi sur certains Occidentaux?

Nous sommes à un âge d'humilité pour toute culture, même si l'empressement à dire que tout est relatif dans ce domaine cache parfois des orgueils inavoués. La situation, si elle est relativement facile à vivre pour les humiliés de l'histoire antérieure, ne l'est pas nécessairement pour l'Occident dépossédé, d'une certaine manière

de ses antiques privilèges de décideur et d'organisateur de l'espace humain pour tous.

Ce deuxième fait de la relativisation des cultures, conséquence d de la révolution anthropologique, se trouve accentué par le brassage des peuples. Le monde est devenu un petit village, grâce au développement fantastique des mass-média et des moyens de transport favorisant l'industrie touristique, les immigrations auxquelles s'ajoute le problème des réfugiés.

#### Crise des vocations

dans les instituts missionnaires: Les deux précédentes séries de faits en engendrent une troisième: la crise des vocations qui est le lot actuel de presque tous les instituts missionnaires.

On assiste, en effet, depuis un certain temps, à une déperdition d'énergie jeune. Dans la fin imminente, semble-t-il, des instituts, c'est à leur propre mort qu'ils semblent assister. Voir mourir entre ses mains ce pourquoi on a donné sa vie ou, plus exactement, ce par quoi on a traduit, de manière historiquement sensible, l'idéal du don de soi, c'est la crise la plus redoutable qu'un homme puisse vivre.

Mais, en tout moment de crise, l'instinct de conservation fait se raidir l'homme et saisir tout moyen de survivre. La crise n'est pas d'abord une crise insolite et spécifique aux instituts. Elle est la conséquence de la crise beaucoup plus générale des anciennes Eglises elles-mêmes qui se traduit par un affaissement de leur vitalité, une réduction de l'effectif des ouvriers apostoliques ad intra et par la mort ou au moins la sénilité de bien des congrégations diocésaines. Il serait étonnant que les instituts missionnaires, qui sont la traduction de l'effort missionnaire ad extra de ces Eglises anciennes, ne connaissent pas la même mort.

Or, nous assistons aujourd'hui à deux phénomènes de survivance qui donnent à penser et suscitent des controverses: d'une part le recrutement de missionnaires parmi les jeunes éléments des nouvelles Eglises et d'autre part, l'envoi de missionnaires laïcs. Que peuvent signifier ces deux moyens de survie, face à la nécessité de mourir qui qualifie chrétiennement toute entreprise missionnaire? "Il faut qu'il croisse et que je diminue..."

- 1) Nous pouvons reprendre la question par un autre biais: l'activité missionnaire est parfaitement similaire à l'action éducative.

Or, au moment où le jeune homme entre dans l'âge adulte, il cesse d'être un éduqué; ses éducateurs, parents ou autres, deviennent pour lui des compagnons sur le chemin de l'homme.

Sur le plan de l'histoire de la mission, qui prolonge l'histoire sainte, si un institut missionnaire recrutait "inconsidérément", pour survivre, les meilleurs éléments qu'il a pu découvrir parmi les membres d'une jeune Eglise, il rendrait un mauvais service. D'une part, il survivrait peut-être, mais artificiellement, D'autre part, il appauvrirait indûment l'Eglise qu'il avait mission de servir.

- 2) Quand à organiser le laïcat pour ce nouvel âge de la mission ad extra, ce moyen, sous sa forme actuelle, semble en deçà des exigences de l'oeuvre à accomplir. Car, un, deux, trois ou quatre

an de vie en mission, bien qu'utiles et nécessaires, restent trop courts pour le soutien de frères dans la difficile et délicate tâche d'inculturation qui constitue, selon nous, le programme missionnaire de notre temps. L'Eglise missionnaire du reste a, dans son trésor, un modèle de laïcité engagé pour la vie dans l'oeuvre évangélisatrice: nous voulons parler de nos grandes figures de catéchistes auxquels les Eglises d'Afrique et d'ailleurs doivent en partie leur existence.

### L'Occident interpellé

par la situation du Tiers Monde: Ce rapide panorama du contexte de la mission, aussi bien dans les jeunes que dans les anciennes Eglises, serait particulièrement incomplet si nous laissions de côté le grave problème du développement et le malaise qui s'en suit.

Le mal développement de l'hémisphère sud interpelle violemment l'hémisphère nord, en majorité chrétien, qui vit dans l'opulence. Le problème du développement ne peut plus aujourd'hui être résolu de manière sectorielle, nationale ou régionale. Il ne peut plus admettre la partition du monde en premier, deuxième, tiers ou quart monde. Il est impossible de séparer la croissance du développement de l'homme, de tout homme et de tout l'homme, y compris sa dimension spirituelle et religieuse. Ceci postule qu'on ne sépare pas l'économique de la question sociale qui, selon Paul VI, a atteint une dimension mondiale. La crise qui s'ouvre ici est celle qu'engendre l'exigence d'un nouvel ordre économique international pour ne pas dire mondial.

### UNE SITUATION NOUVELLE AU REGARD DE LA MISSION

Il y aurait, sans aucun doute, beaucoup d'autres traits caractéristiques des deux périodes survolées. La situation actuelle se différencie notablement de celle de l'âge d'or de la mission. C'est à partir de ces différences que nous allons maintenant jeter un nouveau regard sur la mission pour en déceler les points essentiels sur lesquels notre action missionnaire devrait mettre l'accent. Pour cela nous prendrons comme points de repère l'activité missionnaire de Paul d'une part, et le dessein de Dieu d'autre part.

1) L'une des différences qui saute aux yeux réside en ceci. La distinction bipolaire du monde qui caractérisait la première période s'estompe dans la seconde. Il n'y a plus un monde chrétien en face d'un monde païen, conduisant à privilégier la mission *ad extra*. Dans tous les pays, les situations présentent des analogies saisissantes.

2) Dans le même sens, la révolution anthropologique en Occident, doublée de la volonté de reconquête d'une personnalité spécifique dans le Tiers Monde, introduit la notion et le fait de la relativité des cultures et des civilisations. Même si on privilégie encore telle culture et telle civilisation par rapport à d'autres, même si l'Occident n'a pas renoncé au maintien de son hégémonie culturelle et civilisationnelle, force nous est de constater que chaque culture ou civilisation reconnaît, défend et cherche à promouvoir son droit à l'existence.

3) Mais comme nous l'avons noté pour l'Occident, les bases religieuses et éthiques de nos sociétés tendent à s'effriter pour

laisser place à la contestation de l'ordre établi et de l'autorité, à la permissivité dans tous les domaines, à la revendication d'une liberté sans limite.

L'ordre politique et économique ancien lui-même se trouve contesté. La crise, dans ce domaine, touche non plus un pays ou une région, elle s'étend aux dimensions du monde. Les encycliques de la fin du siècle dernier et du début de notre siècle pouvaient traiter de la question sociale en se limitant aux rapports entre patrons et ouvriers, qu'engendrent le travail et ses conditions. Celles allant de Jean XXIII à Jean-Paul II élargissent le problème à toute la terre. De sa solution dépend la paix dans le monde.

Bref, la crise sous ses différents aspects est mondiale et fait du monde, un monde tout entier en état de mission.

### DE L'EGLISE DES MISSIONS A UNE EGLISE

#### TOUT ENTIERE MISSIONNAIRE

#### DIMENSION PLANETAIRE DE LA TACHE ACTUELLE

Le monde dont nous venons de parler n'infirmes en rien l'actualité de la mission. Il la rend encore plus impérieuse. Il nous fait prendre conscience de la tâche gigantesque à laquelle le Christ nous convie. Nous sentons plus que jamais retentir à nos oreilles l'injonction du Christ: "Allez, enseignez toutes les nations et faites de tous les hommes mes disciples." Plus que jamais, nous en saisissons, ou nous devons en saisir mieux, le caractère planétaire.

#### LA TENTATION DE REPLI SUR SOI

Dans ce contexte, la tentation est grande pour les anciennes Eglises de se replier sur elles-mêmes, en disant: "La crise civilisationnelle que nous connaissons chez nous nécessite, pour se résoudre, la concentration de toutes nos énergies sur l'activité missionnaire en notre propre sein.

L'autre tentation résiderait dans la volonté de se réfugier dans la prière, ou bien de réduire l'annonce de l'Evangile à la transformation des conditions de vie, sans référence explicite au Christ et sans le souci de l'annoncer.

Les jeunes Eglises, quant à elles, n'échappent pas non plus à la tentation de repli sur soi. Ayant fait l'expérience de la fragilité d'un accueil, sans racines culturelles, de la Bonne Nouvelle, elles donnent la priorité à l'inculturation. Elles peuvent penser alors que celle-ci ne se fera qu'en se préservant contre toute influence étrangère. Succomber, de part et d'autre, à cette tentation c'est, à mon humble avis, opposer une fin de non-recevoir à la grâce que Dieu nous offre ici et maintenant.

LA BONNE NOUVELLE DU SALUT  
N'EST LIÉE, DE FAÇON ABSOLUE, A AUCUNE CULTURE  
NI A AUCUNE FORME DE SOCIÉTÉ

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Les circonstances présentes nous offrent l'opportunité de revenir à la pratique des apôtres, à celle de Paul en particulier, au moins en ce qui concerne la mission en dehors des frontières d'une Eglise. Nous n'ignorons pas, en effet, la redécouverte, faite par le Concile, de la notion de l'Eglise locale, entérinant ainsi un certain déplacement d'accent sur la mission et la catholicité.

Nous connaissons bien l'insistance de Paul, apôtre des Gentils. Nous connaissons son refus de faire transiter les Gentils par le judaïsme. Car la Bonne Nouvelle du Salut n'est liée, de façon absolue, à aucune forme de société, ni à aucune culture, car aucune forme de société, aucune culture n'est éternelle.

Dans les faits cela se traduit par la constitution, partout où le conduisaient ses voyages souvent mouvementés, d'Eglises locales autonomes, capables de vivre pleinement de la vie du Christ et de son Esprit, à la gloire de Dieu le Père. La catholicité qui se dégage d'une telle pratique est loin d'une quelconque uniformisation appauvrissante et dépersonnalisante.

C'est pratiquement à cela que nous invitent les conséquences de la révolution anthropologique. Les communautés chrétiennes ne doivent plus être des copies conformes d'un prototype idéal, lié à une culture ou à une civilisation à prétention universelle. Toute mission aujourd'hui, qu'elle soit ad intra ou ad extra, est appelée à se situer dans la mouvance et le prolongement du but que s'est fixé le Christ lui-même.

Ceci suppose de notre part, et de la part du missionnaire une attitude d'humilité, d'ouverture, d'intérêt, de confiance, de sympathie. Cette attitude poussera à un effort de connaissance approfondie des différentes formes de culture et de religion que rencontrera notre action missionnaire et d'évangélisation. Y consentir sera doublement payant:

- d'une part, la communauté chrétienne, à la naissance de laquelle nous aurons ainsi participé, sera une communauté vraiment enracinée, avec ses particularités et son cachet spécifique;
- d'autre part, l'Eglise et nous-mêmes en sortirons enrichis. Nous percevrons mieux tel ou tel aspect du message même de l'Evangile qu'occultait notre propre civilisation et sur lesquels telle culture différente projette une lumière nouvelle.

Ce que nous avons dit des autres cultures et religions n'est pas vrai seulement au niveau des jeunes Eglises. Il l'est également au niveau des anciennes. Car il n'y a pas de culture ni de civilisation qui soient statiques. La crise civilisationnelle actuelle en est une preuve. S'il y a crise, c'est précisément parce qu'un hiatus s'est

produit entre les modes de vie ainsi que les formes d'expression de la foi au sein des anciennes communautés ecclesiales et la transformation en cours de la culture et de la civilisation occidentales.

N'est-ce pas d'ailleurs la conscience de cet écart qui engendre toutes les initiatives dans tous les domaines que connaît l'Eglise de France, par exemple? Qu'il s'agisse de la catéchèse, de la liturgie, de la théologie, de la spiritualité des communautés de vie, ou de la mission ad intra.

C'est véritablement le temps favorable, un temps de grâce qui laisse augurer un lendemain meilleur. A condition que chacun s'ouvre, que chacun accepte vraiment de s'engager dans cette nouvelle ère pour témoigner pleinement de l'Evangile, en le vivant de façon nouvelle jusque dans les recoins les plus intimes de son être individuel et social, avec une fidélité sans faille à ce qui, dans sa foi, est au-dessus de l'écoulement des temps. Retrouvant ainsi et ravivant sa propre vitalité, l'Eglise de France connaîtra, j'en suis sûr, un nouvel âge d'or de la mission au delà de ses frontières, sans que pour autant ses instituts privent les jeunes Eglises de leurs membres les plus valables.

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5 Monsieur, 75007, Paris.

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