

85/No.16

15 December, 1985



This Bulletin contains the Report of the SEDOS Seminar "Bible and Mission", held in Rome on 29th, October, 1985.

Welcome

*Call "Hodi" as you approach
the Tanzanian home;
then echo-prompt
and Jesus-like
the faithful welcome swells,
"Karibu!"*

*Denied a place
from stable birth
to death-by-law,
the world's Savior
bids us listen for
the "Hodi" of another
seeking room
in heart or home;
bids us speak our "Karibu!"
and let Him in.*

Patricia Jacobsen, M.M.

(Courtesy of Maryknoll Magazine)

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*We wish all our readers
the peace of Christ at
Christmas and in the
New Year.*

NEWS

Jerusalem Hope Center for Interfaith Understanding and Reconciliation- announces a colloquium which will be held in Rome. The theme is ONE GOD IN THREE RELIGIONS: ANY HOPE FOR RECONCILIATION? The date is Tuesday, 25th February, 1986 and the venue is the Brothers of the Christian Schools, Via Aurelia 496. There will be three main speakers: Rabbi David Roseu, director of the Jewish Heritage Center, Jerusalem; Rev. Thomas Barrosse, CSC., Superior General of the Holy Cross Congregation and Executive Chairman of the Jerusalem Hope Center; Kadi Wajdi Tabari, Judge of the Islamic Court, Haifa. The Conference will commence at 9.00 hrs. and end at 19.00 hrs. Among other Speakers will be Mgr. Mejiá of the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity and Rev. Thomas Michel, SJ. of the Secretariat for Non-Christian Religions.

Vatican II - Twenty years On. This Bulletin (102, 1985/3) of Pro Mundi Vita is a timely publication on the occasion of the Extraordinary Synod. It contains a very good review of world events and developments in the Church since the Council and an assessment of where we stand at present by Jan Kerkhofs, SJ.; Pro Mundi Vita, Rue de la Science 7, B-1040, Brussels. Pp.51.

IAMS Mission Studies, the Journal of the International Association for Mission Studies Vol.2-1/1985 contains the Report of the Sixth IAMS Conference, Harare, 8-14 January 1985 on Christian Mission and Human Transformation. The issue is a joint venture by Mambo Press, P.O.Box 779, Gweru, Zimbabwe and IAMS, Rapenburg 61, Leiden, Netherlands.

SEDOS Bulletin Renewal Sugscriptions. We ask our readers to use the enclosed form, if convenient, to renew their subscriptions. It will help us avoid unnecessary mailing and administration expenses.

BIBLE AND MISSION

Conference given at the SEDOS Seminar,
Rome, October 29, 1985

Ludger Feldkamper, SVD

(Texte condensé d'une conférence donnée au Séminaire de SEDOS sur Bible et Mission (Rome, 29 Octobre 1985). Le Père FELDKAMPER est le Secrétaire de la Fédération Mondiale de l'apostolat Catholique de la Bible. Le texte complet de sa conférence peut être demandé au Secrétariat de SEDOS).

I. THE BIRLE IN VATICAN II

I should begin by noting that Vatican II was a fundamental turning point in the Church's attitude towards the Bible. The effects of this spread gradually throughout the local Churches and reached into the most remote mission situations. I draw your attention very briefly to the most important elements of the Council's teaching on Sacred Scripture in the life of the Church.

1. Revelation in Word and Deed. Against a one-sided propositional notion of revelation the Council states in the 'Constitution on Divine Revelation':

"This plan of revelation is realized by deeds and words having an inner unity."

Related to this revelation in word and deed we must understand what is said in the 'Constitution on the Church Today':

"The Church has always had the duty of scrutinizing the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel".

Likewise, we read in the 'Decree on the Laity':

"Only by the light of faith and by meditation on the Word of God can one always and everywhere recognize God in whom "we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts 17:28).

2. The power of the Word of God. The Word of God as enshrined in sacred Scripture not only conveys information but - according to the teaching of the Council based on the Bible itself - is powerful and active:

"The force of power in the Word of God is so great that it remains the support and energy of the Church, the strength of faith of her sons, the food of the soul, the pure and perennial source of spiritual life". (DV21)

In this connection, the 'Apostolic Exhortation on Evangelization in the Modern World' states:

"The Church evangelizes when she seeks to convert (cf. Rom.1:16; 1.Cor. 1:18; 2:4), solely through the divine power of the message she proclaims, both the personal and collective consciences of people". (EN 18)

In the same vein the Exhortation speaks of:

"affecting, and as it were upsetting, through the power of the Gospel, mankind's criteria of judgement, determining values, points of interest, lines of thought, sources of inspiration and models of life, which are in contrast with the Word of God and the plan of salvation". (EN19)

3. Sacred Scripture - the Book of the entire People of God. The Bible is not only the book of the magisterium, the teaching office of the Church, or of scholars, but it is a book that should be in the hands of all of God's People.

"Easy access to sacred Scripture should be provided for all the Christian faithful" (DV 21). "This Sacred Synod earnestly and specifically urges all the Christian faithful especially religious, to learn by frequent reading of the Divine Scriptures the excelling knowledge of Jesus Christ... Therefore they should gladly put themselves in touch with the Sacred Text itself..." (DV 25).

This is so because all the faithful can and should contribute towards a deeper understanding of Divine Revelation:

"There is a growth in the understanding of the realities and words that have been handed down. This happens through the contemplation and study made by believers, who treasure these things in their hearts". (cf. Luke 2:19. 2:51)

Likewise, the Bible is the book of the people because all share in the prophetic office of Christ the Great Prophet who continually fulfills this office:

"not only through the Hierarchy who teach in his name and with his authority, but also through the laity". "This evangelization, i.e. this announcing of Christ by living testimony as well as by the spoken word, takes on a specific quality and a special force in that it is carried out in the ordinary surroundings of the world". (LG35).

POST-CONCILIAR STATEMENTS

It would be interesting to study how the directive "easy access to sacred Scripture for all" unfolded, on the level of reflection, theology and teaching, in post-conciliar documents. I would like to mention only two texts:

The Apostolic Exhortation on Evangelization (1975) No.4, in which Pope Paul VI reminds us to be faithful "both to the message whose servants we are and to the people to whom we must transmit it living and intact" and the Puebla document of the Latin American bishops of 1979, No. 1001, which says that "Sacred Scripture is the soul of evangelization."

II. THREE AREAS OF BIBLICAL APOSTOLATE

1. The perimeter of biblical apostolate (or the area of pre-biblical apostolate). This consists in making the Scriptures accessible as a book through translation, production and distribution. This work is done, according to the directives of the Council, to a great extent in collaboration with the Bible Societies (DV 22).

Since 1968, interconfessional bible translation projects have been undertaken by the Philippine Bible Society in eight of the major languages and a ninth one was added in 1982. Financial contribution on the part of the Catholic Church was a problem.

Cooperation has been growing. Five out of fifteen board members of the Philippine Bible Society are Catholics. In 1983 the bishops' conference and the Philippine Bible Society started the distribution project "A Bible for every family".

Thanks to the breakthrough in interconfessional translation and in the types of translation (functional equivalent versus formal correspondent), the Bible is now available to many Filipinos in a language they understand and at a price a good number can afford. Many people have a Bible of their own for the first time - a novel experience.

2. Biblical apostolate in the wider sense. This can be understood as returning sacred Scripture to its central and rightful place in the Church, so that the Church becomes ever more what she is by her very nature: the Bride of the Word (DV 23). With my own experience and involvement in the Biblical apostolate I started with what I have called "biblical apostolate in the wider sense", and only then moved on to "biblical apostolate in the narrower and more specific sense which I will describe below.
- a) In my first phase of involvement (1967-72), biblical apostolate was mainly the ongoing formation of "ministers of the Word" (priests, religious, seminarians, pastoral leaders, catechists, teachers, cursillistas, etc.)
- b) The concern was more "exegetical", i.e. handing on the results of modern exegesis. My contact with lay people, however, opened my eyes to a new dimension of the Bible/Word of God: "life dimension". My lectures in the seminary became, I believe, less bookish in this way.
3. Biblical apostolate in a narrower and more specific sense. This embodies the effort to give the Bible to "all the Christian faithful", and to provide the Scriptures, with suitable comments, "also for the use of Non-Christians" (DV 25).

MY EXPERIENCE AT VIGAN

- a) Facts. During the years 1978-1983 my involvement in the biblical apostolate changed due to the following facts:
 - The Bible as a book was now available to the people in a new and appealing translation-the New Testament since 1973 and the complete Bible since 1982.
 - Renewal movements (Basic Christian Communities, Charismatic Renewal Movement) became a great challenge to the biblical apostolate.
 - With the foundation of the John Paul I Biblical Centre I began to use the team approach in the biblical apostolate.
- b) Discoveries. In the process, we made a number of discoveries (which may have been known to others, but we learned them through our own experiences).
 - The biblical message is addressed to the whole person, not only to the intellect. Hence the importance of the arts and creativity in the biblical apostolate (posters, songs, drama, dance etc.).
 - The introduction to the Bible is the group (not some written material about the Bible!) and the seminar where people make discoveries together and enrich one another.

- Bible study has to be complemented by bible sharing: they have to go hand in hand. Further, one has to start with bible sharing; if this is done well there will automatically be a call for bible study which, in turn, will lead to deepened bible sharing.
- The biblical message is not so much to ~~be understood as~~ to be put into practice.
- There is no proper reading of the Bible which abstracts from life (K. Barth: 'The Bible in one hand and the newspaper in the other'; Cardinal Konig: 'Not so much concerned with interpreting a book than with interpreting life - in the light of the Word contained in the book').
- We have to start from where the people are. The majority of Filipinos are young, Catholic, music-loving, poor, etc. All this has to be taken into consideration in the biblical apostolate.

c) Activities. Some types of activities have grown out of these situations and experiences:

- The Basic Bible Seminar and the Bible Facilitators' Seminar: introductory courses of five evenings or two-and-a-half days leading to proper use of the Bible, particularly in bible-sharing groups;
- The Emmaus Gospel Gatherings: monthly days on the Bible with sharing, studying, celebrating, living the Word of God;
- The Youth Gospel Festivals and the Gospel Song Seminars: annual festivals appealing to the youth; gospel song seminars for creating gospel songs based on the liturgy of the three-year cycle;
- Regional workshops on the biblical apostolate: the representatives of ten dioceses meet every year to report on, reflect on and plan the biblical apostolate of their dioceses.

All of this has been possible through the dynamism of some people and approval and support on the part of most of the bishops.

III. THE SITUATION OF THE WORLDWIDE APOSTOLATE:

FACTS AND TRENDS

What follows is an attempt to summarize situations and trends which have emerged from the reports of the WCFBA III Plenary Assembly, held in Bangalore, India, in August 1984 (the complete documentation of which will be published soon), and during the WCFBA Executive Committee meeting in May, 1985.

Among the facts and trends emerging in these reports, the following are the most noteworthy:

1. "Hunger for the Word of God". The word of Amos about "a famine for hearing the Word of God" (8:11) seems to apply in a special way to our time.
 - a) This hunger for the Word of God is especially tangible in renewal movements like the Charismatic Renewal Movement, the Neo-Catechumenate, the Basic Christian Communities, the Movement for a Better World, the Marriage Encounter Movement, etc.

- b) This hunger is particularly felt in the Young Churches of the so-called Third World. Here are some examples.
- The Bible Life Movement in Korea has helped thousands of students in bible sharing and study groups to a deeper Christian life and commitment. The movement is growing constantly among mothers and taxi-drivers - to mention just a few.
 - In the Philippines, to respond to the great interest in Scripture, the Decade of the Family (1980-1990) has resulted in joint efforts between the Bishops' Conference and the Philippine Bible Society to provide "a Bible for every family" which, it is hoped, will develop a family catechesis based on the lectionary.
 - Similar examples are available from other parts of the world.

2. Translation activities.

- a) Since the Council, efforts in translating the Bible have been made as never before in the history of the Church. These translation activities and their results are characterized by three elements:
- Liturgical: The decision of the II Vatican Council to have the Liturgy in the vernacular has prompted a degree of translation activity never experienced before.
 - Interconfessional: The Council's suggestion to have interconfessional translations (DV 22) has led to the "Guiding Principles" for interconfessional translations (1968), the second edition of which is soon to be published by the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity.
 - Missionary. The new type of translation, the so-called "functional equivalent", has special appeal and is widely read by people who never had, or have lost, familiarity with the terminology of the Church.
- b) The flourishing of translation activities is evident from the fact that 170 interconfessional bible translations are in process at this moment.
- c) The WCFB is working on a complete listing of all Catholic and Interconfessional bible translations - a work never undertaken before.

3. Interpretation of the Bible in the context of life.

- a) In the biblical apostolate there is a stronger emphasis on the "hermeneutical" than on the "exegetical" approach to the Bible: People are more interested in the meaning "here and now" than on the meaning "then and there".
- b) "Fidelity to the message" is now seen more clearly in relation to the other pole, namely "fidelity to the people" to whom the message must be transmitted living and intact (EN 4).
- c) "Theology in context" and "inculturation" are important aspects of reading sacred Scripture in the post-conciliar era - as they always have been.

IV. THE BIBLE IN THE CONTEXT OF THE YOUNG CHURCHES the way to authentic Christianity

1. Fidelity to the Gospel, fidelity to the people: authentic Christianity

- a) In addition to the quotations from EVANGELII NUNTIANDI and AD GENTES (Cf. above) I would like to quote the statement of the Constitutive

Assembly of EATWOT in Daressalaam, 1976: "In order to be faithful to the Gospel and to our peoples, we have to reflect on the realities of our own situations and to interpret the Word in relation to these realities".

- b) Gospel in the context of the wider Church is emphasized by Fr. Ludwig Wiedenmann, sj, in THEOLOGIE DER DRITTEN WELT: Eine Einführung, p. 17: "European theology is on the way to becoming a regional theology along with the others in the Universal Church. One of the most important tasks for the future in all theological regions is to seek dialogue with each other, to give impulses and to correct each other in order to develop a pluriform world-theology".
- c) Fr. Karl Rahner's article: "Towards a fundamental theological interpretation of Vatican II" in THEOLOGICAL STUDIES 40 (1979), pp. 716-727, is of particular interest and relevance. He considers "Vatican II as the first major official event in which the Church actualized itself precisely as a World Church" (p. 717) .. Christianity must inculturate itself into the contemporary cultures of all Asia and Africa if it is now to be, as it has begun to be, genuinely a World Church" (p.723)...."Modern missionary history shows that Christianity as a western export actually succeeded neither with the high cultures of the East, nor in the world of Islam, precisely because it was western Christianity and sought in that way to establish itself in the rest of the world" (p. 724).

2. The Bible in different contexts: three illustrations:

AFRICA: Bishop Patrick Kalilombe, in an article entitled "The Role of the African Biblist in the Church in Africa Today" makes some pertinent observations on the role of sacred Scripture in the "localization" of the church. As in Africa so also in Asia and Latin America all of the local churches are "attempting to make up for lost time". Now "the Bible... is the basic ground for authenticating Church life and practice ... It is the sacred Scriptures that constitute the basis for the Church's experience and practice". Thus, for the localization of the church in Africa it is necessary that the members of the Christian communities "have the Scriptures realistically available... in such a way that the Bible is seen as God's challenge to their faith and obedience" (p. 29).

In this task of localization, in which the Bible has a basic function, both the biblical specialist and the people have to work together: the biblical specialist because his specialization concerns the Bible, and the people - "the common people, the unsophisticated, the less educated - those whomake up the majority of the population (p. 30).

The biblist in the pastoral context of the people cannot afford to become "a specialist in the usual academic sense, but must aspire towards a more meaningful specialization to understand the real needs of the people, learning from the people, sharing in their vision of life, discovering their priorities, their questions and aspirations, their hopes and fears, their modest projects in life, their joys and sorrows, their failures and successes, the positive aspects of their mentality and way of life, but also the darker sides of them" (p.30).

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INDIA: A few years ago, Fr. George M. Soares-Prabhu, sj, in a "proposal for discussion" (COMMITMENT AND CONVERSION: A biblical hermeneutic for India today), dealt with several basic questions concerning the way in which the Bible is to be read in India. He places "the starting point of the hermeneutical process in the present experience of the interpreter or, more precisely, in the 'profound and enriching questions and suspicions about our real situation' which lead inevitably to 'a new interpretation of the Bible which is equally profound and enriching'" (pp.8,9).

"The Bible has become the 'private property' of the biblical scholar - often with no 'social mortgage' whatever!... A very large proportion of the many thousands of books and articles on the Bible that appear each year have nothing to say to the towering real-live issues afflicting a suffering, exploited and directly threatened humanity, but move in remote academic by-ways where even the pursuit of truth (characteristic of historical-critical exegesis at its best) quickly degenerates into an irresponsible craving for originality" (pp. 10,11).

"The result is an exegesis which has lost its social moorings and its social concern. No longer is the message of the Bible significant. The Bible has become a book to be discussed, dissected, analysed, annotated - all but listened to. It has been buried under a mountain of painstakingly detailed studies which spell out everything except the significance of its challenging and transforming word...

An Indian reading of the Bible is a reading from an Indian point of view, a reading guided by sensibility, shaped by Indian culture and provoked by questions emerging from the Indian situation" (p.12). "For the Bible, in spite of all the efforts of western exegesis to domesticate it, remains a revolutionary text proclaiming good news to the poor" (p. 13). "We need, then, a commitment to the poor without which we will not be able to understand a text which has been handed down to us explicitly as 'good news to the poor', nor be able to proclaim it as a liberative message to a people 85% of whom live on or below the poverty line." (p.19).

LATIN AMERICA (Brazil): In order to be read authentically and to fulfil its function in helping to construct authentic Christian communities, the Bible has to be read by the people themselves. It can no longer remain the domain of church authorities and biblical specialists. In the movement of the Basic Christian Communities in Latin America, especially (Brazil it has 200,000 basic Christian communities and 100,000 Bible circles), the Bible has become once again the book of the people. Here are some elements of interpretation of the Bible by the people as outlined by Fr. Gilberto Gorgulho, op, in his report to the WCFBA Bangalore Plenary Assembly in 1984.

Vision for Interpretation: Within the context of celebrations, encounters and training a very simple but extremely important vision of the Bible has been created which influences the life of the Church and the interpretation of the Bible. Four aspects can be discerned.

As a book of faith, not a text to be studied; as "our book, written for us"; and as an element of contemporary life using to-day's events as a criterion for understanding the Bible; conversely, the happenings of the Bible offer guidelines for life.

Significance of Popular Interpretation

- 1) Objective: The interpretation of life and spirituality focuses on problems other than those of exegesis and even interpretes the latter.
- 2) The Agents: Who has the "sense of the church" the individual, the expert, the community? has assumed new responsibilities.
- 3) Criteria: Pope Pius XII insisted on two types of criteria: those of faith and those of science. The former are of the people, related immediately to life but serving also as commentary on the latter.
- 4) Place of Interpretation: Social reality is the place, which fact sharply influences the process. the poor read the Bible from the angle of their own suffering and liberation. What was the point of departure of Jesus and the prophets? How does this compare with scientific and hierarchical interpretation?
- 5) Method: New methods are helping to penetrate the meaning of Scripture methods which reveal the whole context of the peoples of the Bible. Which of the methods are proving most beneficial for applying the message of today's life and helping the communities to respond to the message?
- 6) Process: Different factors influence the determining of the sense of Scripture. How can these be utilised to be open to the impulses of the spirit: science, reality, authority, community?
- 7) Option for the Poor: This affects the process, focus and methods as well as the results.

V. THE WCFBA AT THE SERVICE OF BIBLE AND MISSION

1. The Purpose of the Federation is the promotion of the biblical apostolate in the threefold sense I have described. Tested activities carried out by the Federation's members in the various areas of biblical apostolate are:

a) Liturgical Celebrations; b) Scriptural Formation of priests;
 c) Lay Ministry Training so that lay leaders can lead their groups
 and communities in prayer, biblical catechesis and action; d) Inter-
 confessional Cooperation with all who recognize their common heritage
 in sacred Scripture.; e) Dialogue with other Religions whose sacred
 writings contain many "seeds of the Word"; f) Outreach to the Unchurched
 and Unbelievers; g) Support of Justice and Human Rights which pertains to
 the heart of the biblical message; h) Mass Media Communication which
 is becoming a new universal language of sounds and images.

2. Structure

- a) The Federation consists of Full and Associate Members. Full
 Members are national organizations or institutions. Associate
 Members are other organizations such as publishing houses, religious
 orders, individual dioceses etc.
- b) The delegates of Full and Associate Members assemble every six
 years for the Plenary Assembly (1972 Vienna, 1978 Malta, 1984
 Bangalore).
- c) Five regional groupings have so far come into existence or are in
 the making:
- Latin America: FEBICAM with its office in Bogota, Columbia.
 - Africa: BICAM with office in Nairobi; SECAM (Symposium of bishops'
 conferences of Africa and Madagascar).
 - Asia: S.E. Asia: Bangalore, India; S.E. and N.E. Asia; Vigan.
 - Arabophone countries of the Middle East: initiative of Bishop
 Antonius Naquib, Minia, Egypt.
 - Francophone countries (Belgium, Canada, France, Switzerland, Zaire),

3. History - Growth and Dynamism

During the 16 years of its existence the Federation's growth and
 dynamism can be ascertained from the increasing number of participants
 in the Plenary Assemblies of the Federation:

1972 Vienna: about 20 participants; 1978 Malta: 77 from 44 countries;
 and 1984 Bangalore: 119 from 53 countries.

Also from the increasing number of members.

	1972	1978	1984
Full Members	25	49	61
Associate Members	6	44	132

During the second half of 1985 a number of regional workshops on
 the biblical apostolate are taking place:

Bogota, Columbia for Latin America (July); for Central and Eastern
 Europe (September); Hong Kong for Asia (October); Cyprus for the
 Arabophone countries of the Middle East (November).

Our General Secretariate situated in Stuttgart is always ready to
 answer your queries and to help in any way possible.

LA BIBLE ET LA MISSION
Quelques Expériences

Piet Rijks, CSSp.

(This is an abridged version of the Conference given at the SEDOS Seminar, Bible and Mission (Rome, 29th October, 1985). Piet Rijks is treasurer of the World Federation of the Catholic Biblical Apostolate.

He describes some examples of the biblical apostolate which the Federation has helped to finance. The full text is available at SEDOS Secretariate.)

Dans un article "La Bible et le Continent Africain", publié dans la Documentation Catholique du 4 juin 1978, le cardinal Zoungana constatait:

"Nos Jeunes Eglises ont été profondément marquées aux temps de leur fondation, par les conceptions et pratiques de l'époque: Le catéchisme. L'inconvénient était de présenter la vie chrétienne comme une doctrine à croire et une morale à pratiquer, en oubliant quelque peu qu'elle est aussi appel permanent de l'Esprit entendu dans la Parole de Dieu et lu dans les signes de la vie quotidienne."

LES LANGUES

L'évangélisation en ces temps-la s'adressait souvent à des populations qui n'avaient pas l'usage de l'écriture. L'Eglise se heurtait au problème de la multiplicité des langues: elles sont près de 5.000 selon les derniers recensements du SIL (Summer Institute of Linguistics). Comment faire quand dans un pays de dimensions modestes comme le Tchad par exemple, un centaine de langues sont parlées? ou, quand dans un même diocèse comme par exemple Mopti au Mali, chaque paroisse a sa langue?

Le facteur politique: Il faut ajouter aussi le facteur politique qui peut influencer effectivement le travail de traduction. Il est curieux de constater par exemple que dans un pays où règne l'insécurité, le personnel missionnaire étant obligé de rester dans une même mission ou paroisse, se met plus facilement à cette tâche de traduction puisque le travail ne peut plus se poursuivre. Je pense par exemple au Tchad, où les missionnaires ont traduit dans diverses langues surtout les livres liturgiques. L'exemple le plus frappant vient du Mozambique: si pendant la période de domination portugaise, l'Eglise s'était généralement contentée de la langue portugaise, durant la guerre d'indépendance et après on a assisté à une activité fébrile de traduction.

Les langues primaires: Ces langues ont normalement une longue tradition littéraire, elles sont employées dans l'enseignement supérieure et universitaire et souvent aussi dans l'information technologique. Ces langues ont évidemment une grande influence sur d'autres langues, et c'est la raison pour laquelle on les appelle langues primaires. Dans cette catégorie il faut classer l'Anglais, le Français, l'Espagnol, le Russe, l'Arabe, le Hindi, l'Urdu, le Japonais et le Chinois. Il y a environ

75 langues primaires dans le monde et elles représentent à peu près 80% de la populations mondiale. Toutes ces langues possèdent la traduction de la Bible, certaines depuis des siècles déjà.

Les langues secondaires: Ces langues ont une tradition littéraire plus restreinte. On les utilise parfois dans l'éducation secondaire. Beaucoup d'elle se sont des "lingua franca". Dans ce groupe on retrouve le Haussa, le Swahili, le Zulu, le Lingala, le Pilipino ou Tagalog, le Pidgin et le Créole et beaucoup d'autres. Ce groupe contient à peu près 450 langues et elles regroupent environ 13% de la population mondiale. Le Nouveau Testament a été traduit dans la plupart de ces langues, la Bible entière dans quelques unes, le travail de traduction se poursuit pour les autres.

Les langues tertiaires: ce sont des langues où l'écriture est de date récente et on les emploie seulement dans l'enseignement primaire. Ces langues sont extrêmement importantes pour l'identification ethnique puisqu'elles forment un rempart contre l'agression culturelle souvent imposée de l'extérieur. Je crois que l'exemple des Indiens Navajos aux Etats-Unis est typique. Il y a un siècle, on pensait que cette langue tribale allait mourir de sa belle mort. Quand, vers 1860, les Navajos furent parqués dans leurs réserves il n'y en avait plus que 8.000. Tout le monde était persuadé que ces gens parleraient bientôt tous anglais puisqu'ils devaient l'apprendre à l'école. Les missionnaires n'avaient donc pas à étudier le Navajo, ce qui explique aussi le peu d'histoires saintes en Navajo. Mais actuellement, il y a plus de 100.000 Navajos et plus de 70% d'entre eux n'emploient jamais l'anglais malgré un système culturel qui voulait éliminer et la langue et la culture de ce peuple. Ce groupe de langues appelé aussi "Langues tribales" contient environ 900 langues qui représentent seulement 5% de la population mondiale. Il y a un grand effort de traduction dans ce groupe.

Enfin, le dernier groupe rassemble entre 2.000 et 4.000 langues et dialectes. En papouasie seule, les linguistes et ethnologues ont dénombré près de 700 (696) langues et dialectes parlées par 3 millions de gens. Ce groupe ne représente que 2% de la population mondiale soit encore 80 millions de personnes.

Qualité de traduction. Evidemment, la qualité de traduction dans n'importe de ces groupes dépend de la qualité des traducteurs. Malheureusement cela dépend aussi des exégètes, beaucoup d'entre eux ayant un style plutôt pauvre. Il suffit de lire quelques livres théologiques pour s'en convaincre.

Certains pensent qu'il suffit de donner la traduction faite par des exégètes à un styliste pour obtenir une traduction stylistiquement valable. Mais aucun styliste ne peut faire un bon texte d'un produit de base inférieur.

Dans les départements de traduction des Nations-Unies, du Marché Commun ou bien même dans une firme technique comme Siemens en Allemagne, les premiers textes sont écrits par des stylistes puis ils sont retravaillés par des spécialistes pour y introduire le vocabulaire technique nécessaire. Quand on inverse la procédure, on a constaté que les stylistes n'arrivent pas à produire un bon texte. Parfois on a essayé de joindre un styliste à l'équipe de traducteurs, mais bien vite on a constaté que les théologiens et les stylistes ne travaillent pas sur la même "longueur d'ondes". Pourtant, ces derniers temps l'Eglise catholique a fait des essais aux Indes en engageant des stylistes pour

la traduction de la Bible en Bengali ou en Nepali par exemple. Dans le domaine des aides nécessaires au travail des traducteurs nous sommes encore et toujours dépendants des Sociétés Bibliques et d'autres organisations protestantes pour que nos traducteurs puissent vraiment rendre le texte biblique accessible à leur peuple.

Les traductions sont-elles si importantes? J'aimerais terminer ce petit résumé sur les traductions bibliques avec deux citations. La première est de la part du Père Paul De Meester, Père Blanc, dans un article intitulé "Où va l'Eglise d'Afrique?". Il dit ceci:

"Il serait superflu d'insister d'avantage sur l'importance de la Bible en langue vernaculaire. L'Afrique garde un souvenir cuisant de ces florissantes Eglises du nord du continent, balayées par l'Islam à partir du neuvième siècle. Le christianisme n'avait pu s'y ancrer profondément parce que les populations n'avaient pas eu connaissance directe des Ecritures en leur langue, il fut autrement solide là où la Bible avait été traduite en langue vulgaire, c'est-à-dire en Ethiopie et dans l'Egypte copte monophysite. Si la Parole de Dieu avait été accessible en punique ou en berbère, les populations locales auraient pu s'en nourrir".

La deuxième citation vient d'un de mes confrères spiritains allemands, le Père Theodor Rath, qui écrivait en 1966 dans "Die Heilige Schrift in den Katholischen Missionen" ceci:

"Les langues et dialectes africains disparaîtront tous. Le Swahili que l'on parle des frontières de L'Ethiopie jusqu'en Rhodésie se maintiendra peut-être. Mais les populations chrétiennes de l'Uganda, du Kenya et du Tanganyika parleront anglais. Il se peut aussi que les 18 millions de Musulmans du Nigeria du Nord garderont leur Hausa mais dans les écoles du Sud du pays tenues par les missions, l'enseignement est donné en anglais. Quand ces dernières années, de nombreux nouveaux Etats ont surgi de l'ancien empire colonial français, le patriotisme ardent n'a pas séduit les politiciens africains à choisir une des langues locales comme langue nationale. Ainsi la jeune chrétienté de l'Afrique lira la Bible en français ou en anglais, car des Bibles en langue africaine n'ont aucun avenir."

Pour ma part, j'ai l'impression, que vingt ans plus tard, les langues africaines sont plus vivantes que jamais et nos missionnaires s'efforcent d'ouvrir l'Ecriture à toute population avec laquelle ils vivent.

LE RENOUVEAU DES JEUNES EGLISES ET LA BIBLE

Si la Bible est traduite, cela ne veut pas encore dire qu'elle anime la vie des communautés. J'aimerais vous montrer comment le renouveau vécu par certaines jeunes Eglises trouve son origine dans l'emploi de la Bible. Encore une fois, je ne lis ce développement que dans les projets qui passent sur mon bureau.

1. LES PHILIPPINES

J'ai choisi mon premier exemple dans le contexte des Philippines. Le long de la côte de l'Océan Pacifique se trouve sur l'île de Luzon, la Prélatrice d'Infanta, d'une superficie de 7.189 km². Ici travaillent un évêque, une quinzaine de prêtres, une trentaine de soeurs et quelques

membres d'instituts séculiers. Il n'y a pas de routes et les barrios ne sont accessible que par bateau ou à cheval. La population est fort disséminée. Chaque prêtre a environ 10.000 fidèles mais la plupart des gens vivent dans des communautés bien dispersées.

Quand Mgr. Julio Labayen prenait en main cette Prélatrice en 1963, il se rendait compte de la situation précaire de son diocèse: les quelques missionnaires étrangers allaient bientôt se retirer à cause de leur âge avancé. Il fallait donc trouver une nouvelle orientation pastorale qui ne soit pas basée uniquement sur les quelques prêtres et religieux présents dans le diocèse. C'est alors que fut lancé le "YAPAK NG PANGINOON" ce qui peut se traduire par "LES PAS DE DIEU". L'idée était de former le plus grand nombre de responsables laïcs pour le développement des communautés de base dans les paroisses sans prêtres. La station radiophonique d'Infanta joue un très grand rôle dans ce programme. Cette station est d'ailleurs complètement confiée aux mains des laïcs.

Une fois par semaine, le vendredi soir, une discussion biblique entre un prêtre et deux ou trois laïcs est diffusée. On lit les textes et on les explique durant la discussion. A la fin on résume le contenu de la discussion en quelques phrases avec une série de questions. A la même heure, les communautés de base sont réunies autour d'une radio, soit dans une école, soit dans une maison privée, soit en plein air, pour suivre l'émission. Celle-ci terminée, la discussion peut continuer alors autour de l'émission entendue et des questions posées et la soirée biblique se termine par une longue prière. Ceux qui ont assisté à de telles soirées bibliques s'étonnent de la manière dont les simples villageois transposent l'Evangile dans leur vie quotidienne. Des personnes qui n'ont jamais apprises à s'exprimer en public exposent librement leurs idées.

Le dimanche, on agit de la même façon. Sous la direction d'un laïc, la communauté se réunit autour de l'autel au moment même où est célébrée l'Eucharistie à la cathédrale. Cette Eucharistie est transmise par la radio diocésaine. La communauté prie et change comme si elle était présente à la cathédrale. Dans la mesure du possible, la communion est distribuée. L'expérience d'Infanta dure déjà depuis 10 ans.

Les communautés de base aux Philippines sont généralement religieuses, liturgiques et axées sur la paroisse. La plupart de ces communautés sont apolitiques. Les exceptions se trouvent au sud du pays et dans certaines régions aux problèmes sociaux spécifiques, par exemple dans ces régions où les familles doivent abandonner leurs terres pour faire place aux projets gouvernementaux d'industrialisation ou de développement.

De l'autre côté, de par leur existence ces communautés de base sont une réalité politique. Depuis un certain temps, les services gouvernementaux, les militaires et les groupes d'extrême droite les accusent de subversion et d'être des cellules communistes. Cette accusation ne vise pas seulement certaines activités sociales ou politiques des communautés de base mais aussi leur existence même.

Dans ces communautés en effet, les Philippinos font une expérience nouvelle. Ils apprennent que l'on peut changer certaines choses ou situations sans devoir tout de suite employer les grands moyens.

L'expérience apprise par l'emploi quotidien de la Bible est un capital énorme pour l'avenir des Philippines. Ce qui se passe ici dans le domaine ecclésial, influence inévitablement aussi le domaine social et politique. Celui qui veut changer quelque chose et qui est mécontent de la situation établie, devient suspect. On le déclare subversif et le pouvoir militaire ou politique se croit autorisé à démontrer sa force. Déportations, mépris des droits de l'homme, torture et meurtre, tout se justifie sous le couvert de la sécurité nationale et du combat contre l'infiltration marxiste. Le fait que certains prêtres et religieux ont rejoint le NPA (NEW PEOPLE'S ARMY) n'a certainement pas amélioré la situation.

Confrontée avec cette situation dangereuse, on comprend le souci de la Conférence Episcopale d'oeuvrer pour que les communautés de base ne soient pas mêlées à la confrontation politique. La Conférence insiste pour affirmer que l'Eglise n'a pas d'ambition politiques et qu'elle n'est pas une force révolutionnaire. Mais l'Eglise se garde le droit de s'engager pour la justice et pour la transformation du monde puisque c'est une dimension constitutive de l'Evangile.

On peut donc conclure que ce début est plein de promesses: en quelques années des centaines de communautés de base ont été fondées et, mieux encore, un grand nombre de laïcs responsables a été formé. La transition d'une communauté déservie par un prêtre à une communauté consciente de sa responsabilité propre s'est opérée sans trop de difficultés. Les communautés ont vite compris ce que signifie la responsabilité de tout le peuple de Dieu face à la mission de l'Eglise. Elles ont compris comment former des communautés vivantes en vue d'édifier une vie chrétienne basée sur la Bible dans la Liturgie et la Diakonia. Par le développement rapide de ces communautés, l'Eglise s'est rapprochée du peuple; la catéchèse et la liturgie sont devenues plus populaires et un nouveau processus d'inculturation s'est ouvert: l'Evangile s'incarne à nouveau dans le peuple des Philippines.

L'AMERIQUE LATINE

Lors de la première rencontre de Pastorale biblique tenue à Bogota au mois de juillet de cette année, Mgr. Ponte, membre du DECAT Brésil nous demandait de trouver les subsides pour imprimer deux millions de Bibles nécessaires aux 200.000 communautés de base et de cercles bibliques du Brésil.

Déjà en 1979, le cardinal Alisio Lorscheider disait à Munich: "On ne peut pas encore juger à sa juste valeur, la signification des communautés de base. Mais il est un fait certain que, par elles, l'Eglise du Brésil est devenue une Eglise des pauvres, une Eglise qui reçoit des gens simples dans sa communauté, une Eglise où les pauvres se sentent à l'aise. Les communautés de base sont en même temps le lieu visible où les pauvres se réunissent comme Peuple de Dieu et comme Eglise".

Au milieu d'une situation d'injustice où une minorité de la population profite de toutes les facilités au détriment d'une majorité qui devient de plus en plus pauvre, au milieu d'une telle situation que l'on doit appeler "un scandale et en opposition à la vie chrétienne" (Puebla 28), l'Eglise d'Amérique Latine a réussi grâce "à la force qui lui vient de l'Evangile" (Puebla 11) à devenir la voix de ceux qui ne peuvent pas parler ou qui sont réduits au silence. Il n'est donc pas faux ou exagéré de dire que le renouveau de l'Eglise d'Amérique Latine vient d'une redécouverte des Ecritures.

Les cercles bibliques se sont propagés depuis Medellin pratiquement dans tous les pays du continent. Le but et la force de ces cercles bibliques se trouve dans le fait qu'ils donnent un message aux gens dans lequel ils puisent force et lumière pour transformer les réalités. Lumière pour juger le comportement journalier, courage pour changer tout ce qui n'est pas conforme à la volonté divine. La rencontre avec l'Ecriture leur donne le courage de ne pas se résigner devant les difficultés et leur indique de nouveaux modèles de pensées et d'action.

Il est important que les participants se rendent compte des problèmes qu'ils rencontrent dans leur vie personnelle. Avant de lire le texte de la Bible, ils liront "dans le texte de la vie". On cherche surtout à mettre en lumière comment naissent les abus, comment très souvent ils s'enchaînent les uns aux autres, comment il est possible de les extirper et d'amener un changement.

La recherche d'une solution vient de la méditation d'un texte proposé de l'Ancien ou du Nouveau Testament où l'on voit comment le peuple croyant d'Israel ou bien les premières communautés chrétiennes ont réagi sur une situation donnée.

Ce travail des communautés de base et des cercles bibliques influence la vie de toute l'Eglise latino-américaine. Et il aide aussi à une meilleure connaissance de la Parole de Dieu. Rien qu'à Bogota, les responsables des communautés de base nous ont laissé le soin de trouver l'argent nécessaire pour 2 millions de Bibles au Brésil, 150.000 Bibles au Pérou, 100.000 Bibles en Bolivie, 30.000 Bibles au diocèse d'Esteli en Nicaragua, 20.000 Bibles pour le diocèse de Quilmes en Argentine, 10.000 Bibles pour le diocèse de Guatemala City, et 5.000 Bibles pour le diocèse de Panama.

L'AFRIQUE

Je ne parlerai pas ici de la méthode élaborée par l'Institut de Missiologie de Lumko en Afrique du Sud. Cette méthode d'animation des cercles bibliques est employée non seulement dans divers pays d'Afrique mais trouve aussi son chemin en Asie, en Océanie et même en Europe. A titre d'information: en 1983, notre bureau a fait une édition allemande pour nos bienfaiteurs: beaucoup de paroisses et de congrégations religieuses ont commandé tant d'exemplaires que nous sommes déjà à la quatrième édition. Je laisse ici, pour ceux qui lisent l'allemand, quelques exemplaires de cette brochure.

A la fin des années soixante en Tanzanie et au début des années soixante-dix en Zambie, les premières petites communautés chrétiennes (small christian communities) voient le jour. Bien vite, elles deviennent l'objet de l'attention de l'AMECEA puisqu'en 1973 déjà, les évêques déclarent:

"We have to insist on building Church life and work on basic christian communities in both rural and urban areas. Church life must be based on the communities in which everyday life and work take place: those basic and manageable social groupings whose members can experience real inter-personal relationships and feel a sense of communal belonging, both in living and in work".

Et trois ans après, l'AMECEA disait encore:

"Systematic formation of small christian communities should be the key pastoral priority in the years to come within Eastern Africa".

La où ces communautés fonctionnent déjà, elles regroupent généralement une quinzaine de familles (à peu près 150 personnes), qui s'engagent à vivre une vraie vie chrétienne et qui essaient de créer et de maintenir de bonnes relations entre elles. Les petites communautés chrétiennes mettent en relation l'Evangile et les faits de la vie journalière. Tout cela se passe dans les maisons de membres et généralement pas dans les bâtiments "officiels" de l'Eglise.

Le but de ces petites communautés chrétiennes est de réunir des chrétiens pour prier ensemble, pour écouter et étudier la Bible, pour méditer, en un mot pour approfondir et renouveler la foi et l'engagement. Le peuple choisit, lui-même, ses responsables sans qu'une autorité extérieure le lui impose. Les communautés découvrent assez vite leurs propres chefs qu'elles respectent et dans lesquels elles ont confiance. si alors des besoins se déclarent dans le groupe, la personne la plus apte à y répondre de par sa créativité, son efficacité, sera choisie alors pour s'en occuper.

Tout le monde est éligible et chacun reçoit une certaine formation selon le service donné comme par exemple: le lecteur, le responsable pour les services dominicales sans prêtre, le directeur de la chorale, le responsable de la jeunesse, le trésorier, etc.

J'aimerais terminer cet exposé bien général avec deux citations: La première est de Mgr. Patrick Kalilombe, ancien évêque de Lilongwe au Malawi:

"Until now the avowed common system was to base the life of the Church on the parish level, rather than on the sub-parish level ...in these circumstances of Eastern Africa, what we call missions or parishes cannot be taken as the basic units of the local Church. If so, the Church is doomed to failure. We need to adopt a new system, whereby the basic units of the Church are those smaller communities where the ordinary life of the people takes place".

La seconde est d'un théologien africain, Laurenti Magesa, qui écrit ceci:

"Ecclesiologically the small christian communities are the best thing that has happened since the New Testament".

- fin -

REPORT FROM THE GROUP AND ASSEMBLY DISCUSSION

Three groups studied the points made by the speakers and the Seminar then reconvened for a final general session at which some proposals were made.

1. Bible & Inculturation: This group dealt mainly with situations in Africa and made the following proposal: "We encourage and urge the World Federation of the Catholic Biblical Apostolate to develop training programmes at the regional level for missionaries and animators of basic Christian communities in how to use the bible in small communities."

B) We also urge the Federation to organise international seminars to study the use of the Bible in evangelization with a special focus on cross-cultural situations and exchanges."

The group noted that the emphases behind their proposal were practical - use of the Bible at grass roots level (eg. community reading of the Bible), and adult oriented. Most catechetical and pastoral institutes are child or school oriented they pointed out.

2. Bible & Liberation. Group II was oriented to Latin American situations. Their sharing revealed widespread situations of how the bible was used in basic communities and groups where no priests were available and how the Bible awakened people to their human dignity specially in situations of great poverty. Some of the popular publications on the Bible produced by members in this group had been very widely used (one publication has reached 400.000 copies). Summer courses on the Bible organised by Fr. Gutierrez in Lima were being attended by approximately 2000 people, many of them involved in small Christian communities. The group made four suggestions to the Federation:

- i. Build-in a biblical approach for catechesis in all Sacraments.
- ii. In the difficult task of writing commentaries use 'the language of the people'. Commentaries having sophisticated and technical language - as do most existing ones - are largely useless at the basic community level where so much of the biblical apostolate is actually taking place.
- iii. Encourage a biblical apostolate in mass-media, particularly video-cassettes and radio; encourage also the use of drama which is a powerful means of promoting interest in the Bible.
- iv. Encourage and facilitate a biblical input in the liturgical celebrations and activities which take place at so many 'sanctuaries' in Latin America.

3. The Group "Dialogue and the Bible" reported a difficult discussion about how, in practice, to introduce the scriptures to people of other religions. These contain in themselves the seeds of truth or are themselves inspired, yet their "salvific value is associated with the mediatorship of Jesus Christ. The group recommended as an immediate project the production of illustrated books on the Bible specially for children and young people of all religions, but also for adults.

In conclusion Fr. Feldkämper said the Federation is particularly interested in developing Centres at the Regional and National levels preferably networking with other Centres, for example

with the EAPI, Manila; GABA, East Africa; NEMI, Rome etc.
(cf. Group I proposal).

The last International Seminar on the bible was held at Rocca di Papa in 1971 - it may well be time to hold another as suggested by the first group.

Many graduates in Biblical studies had little or no contact with or knowledge of the Federation which aimed at a wide audience. There was no contradiction however with the work of the biblical scholars. The Federation aimed to have a close collaboration with them and would increase their efforts to help them experience the use of the scriptures at the grass-roots level.

Some members of SEDOS are already associate members of the Federation. Fr. Feldkämper invited others to consider membership as a realistic way of supporting the Vatican Council's call to a new use of the scriptures in the apostolate.

- end -

CHRISTIAN UNITY
THE OXFORD CONGRESS OF JESUIT ECUMENISTS, JULY 1985

Peter H. Kolvenbach, S.J.

(As a preparation for the Octave of Prayer for Church Unity which will take place as usual in January 1986 we print this extract from the speech given by Fr. Kolvenbach, the Jesuit General to participants at the tenth Congress of Ecumenists held at Oxford, July, 1985).

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En vue de l'Octave de prières pour l'Unité des chrétiens (du 18 au 25 Janvier prochains), nous publions cet extrait du discours prononcé par le Père Kolvenbach, Général des Jésuites, au 10ème Congrès des responsables de l'œcuménisme de la Société de Jésus qui s'est tenu à Oxford en juillet, 1985).

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Fr. Kolvenbach began by recalling that we are celebrating these days the 25th Anniversary of Pope John XXIII's establishment of the Secretariate for Promoting Christian Unity. It is also the 20th anniversary of the close of Vatican II and the decision by Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Atenagoras (December 8, 1985) to consign to oblivion the mutual excommunications between Constantinople and Rome from the year 1054. Cardinal Augustine Bea played a significant role in these events he said, and inspired generations of Christians with his dream of unity among Christians.

A special feature of the notable fourth Congress, in this series of ten, was Fr. Pedro Arrupe's speech when he said - "ecumenism should be a spirit in all of us, priests and brothers, permeating all our prayer and all our ministries and work".

Remarking on Oxford, the site of this present Congress, Fr. Kolvenbach asked if it would be anti-ecumenical to evoke the memory of Edmund Campion, who here in Oxford studied, taught and preached? Sharing with heart and mind the tradition of the English Church and believing profoundly in the divine gift of unity, Edmund Campion had produced "Decem **rationes**" - ten profound reasons for not being one with the Anglican Church. As a result he met his death by hanging at Tyburn on December 1, 1581. Only if we dare to face the whole truth, all the aspects of a long ecclesiastical tradition and Church history can we prepare together, as brother Christians, the coming unity of the Church of the one Lord, said Fr. Kolvenbach.

In a retrospective look at some of the changes that have taken place in the last twenty five years he noted specially the 31st General Congregation of the Jesuits (1965-66) which in Decree 26 humbly acknowledged the sins against unity committed by members of the Society. The 32nd General Congregation (1974-75) repeated the Society's commitment to ecumenism "which will become not just a particular ministry but an attribute of mind and life" for all Jesuits. The final document of the 33rd Congregation (1985) cited ecumenism

as one of the particular present-day ministries entrusted to them by the Holy Father with a clear reference to implementing in this way also Vatican II.

Among the "sins against unity" that Jesuits have committed he referred to some specific examples: "Apart from personal sins of arrogance and intolerance, of hunger for power and religious racism, the Society committed its share of historical sin by introducing Latinizing practices into sister Churches, by neglecting or downgrading the authentic Christian traditions of the Churches of the East and by sharp polemic presentation of the faith to the Churches of the Reformation". Fr. Kolvenbach then outlined the positive steps that have been taken by the Society in recent years, founding various Centres for Ecumenical Studies, collaborating in ecumenical translations of the Bible and helping to translate it into languages where there was still no Bible, collaborating ecumenically in works of education and of justice and peace. The concluding portion of Father Kolvenbach's address follows.

THE PRESENT STATE OF ECUMENISM

It would not be right to speak of the death of ecumenism, but we must honestly admit that there has been some decline in ecumenical sensitivity. Ecumenism has suffered from the widespread indifference towards all that concerns the faith of the Churches. It has suffered also from the consequent multiplication of sects, fanatical groups and fundamentalist movements. It has to be recognized, too, that, on the part of the Churches, there has been lacking an official reception of many of the documents prepared in common, in long and patient dialogue, so that to some extent ecumenical research has failed to give results.

Necessary progress will be made only if each Church in dialogue willingly receives from the others, at the same time, that which it is called to give them, in fidelity to the faith of the apostles.

We now realize that we ourselves may not see with our own eyes the harvest for which we have laboured. We now realize that we as Church, and specifically as the Society of Jesus, need a much more radical conversion of our hearts and minds. As we reflect on baptism, eucharist and ministry we must ask how we are responding to the exigencies of our baptism, to the many celebrations of the eucharist, and to the implications of ministry in the Church, especially ordained ministry. Do our practices, our ways of speaking, reflect a conversion that is profound and believable? "Oecumenismus veri nominis sine interiore conversione non datur. Ideo a Spiritu divino imploranda nobis est gratia...fraternae in alios animi liberalitatis" (Un.Red.,7).

SOME SUGGESTIONS

1. RETURN TO ESSENTIALS

We must first of all have the courage to return to the essentials of the ecumenical apostolate, recognizing that it is a strait and narrow path. The ecumenical salt loses its savour when ecumenism is understood in the sense of including dialogue with non-believers and non-Christians, so that it becomes the practical multinational solidarity of men of all ideologies and faiths, united for the liberation of their brothers from all forms of servitude. Ecumenism of this kind undoubtedly opens up wide perspectives of indispensable tasks to be undertaken in common, but its

transconfessional character runs the risk of undermining ecumenism's principal mission, which is the full communion of the Churches of the Lord. In this respect it is good to observe how the recent congresses of Jesuit ecumenists have addressed themselves to questions which are genuinely ecumenical.

2. "SECOND NATURE" FOR JESUITS?

At this point we may rightly ask to what extent ecumenism has become second nature for the Society. That was the desire expressed by Father Pedro Arrupe at Dublin in 1971. It is true that the diversity of situations and historic circumstances makes it unrealistic to expect the same ecumenical fervour in every place. But the fact remains that, with the exception of those from the centres, institutions and individual Jesuits who are explicitly concerned with ecumenism, very few letters that come to the Curia give any sign of ecumenical activity or creativity.

Three tensions: (a) The congress at San Cugat (1979) laid bare one of the causes of the falling off in ecumenism when it stressed the inevitable tension that exists between the demands of the service of the faith and those of the promotion of justice. Common action in defence of fundamental rights, and for charity and justice in the world, in the name of the Gospel, has certainly woven a close network of ecumenical solidarity, quite independent of dogmatic considerations. In practice, this activity in common has a much greater unitive force than has common theological research. Vitally necessary though this is as a service of the faith, it does not so immediately make its impact on most of the Christians involved.

b) A further tension which can be observed is that between ecumenism and evangelization. It can almost be expressed as a law: as dynamic missionary activity increases so in proportion does commitment to ecumenism diminish. Even the ecumenical document on common witness and proselytism (D.C. 1970, 1077-1081) did not succeed in finding a solution to this opposition between mission and dialogue which so often paralyzes the proclamation of the Kingdom. It could be that there are solutions to these problems, but they have not yet penetrated into our communities where such questions as inculturation, liberation theology, mass media and secularization, attract much more attention than do the complicated and sometimes thankless doctrinal problems which genuine ecumenism cannot neglect.

c) If the Society in the future is to continue to serve the cause of ecumenism as an expression of the spirit of Vatican II, as the Holy Father wishes, it needs to prepare today the Jesuit ecumenists of tomorrow. Have we done enough to ensure that the modest force of skilled Jesuit theologians and church historians who have studied the Christian experience in depth, who have learned to read the languages of the East and the West, will be maintained in the coming generation? Is it possible that we may no longer be able to perform those scholarly services which Jesuits in the past have undertaken for the ecclesial community? How are we to hand on the tradition especially to a generation which sometimes judges that ecumenism is not a concern as crucial as wrestling with the problems of social justice, peace, racism, finding homes for refugees? How will we convey to younger Jesuits a zest for the ecumenical agenda?

Is the observation of some critics true that, despite relocating our theologates to be near other Christians, many have not entered into dialogue with them about theology and spirituality? How overcome isolation in the midst of the ecumenical city? How do we provide a solid, doctrinal and pastorally sensitive education for scholastics in a particularized setting attuned to their local concerns and yet at the same time keep alive an international perspective? All these problems have to be solved if we take ecumenism in the Society seriously.

3. AN IRREVERSIBLE COMMITMENT

It is never easy to strive for an unknown end. In a recent ecumenical meeting in the Netherlands Pope John Paul II reasserted the irreversible character of the ecumenical commitment of the Roman Catholic Church, adding that it aims at that unity which the Lord himself wills. The Spirit who is Life prevents this unity from taking the form of a retreat or a return to the past. The Spirit who renews the face of the earth is not content with a reconciliation which dispenses each of the divided Churches from undertaking a profound metanoia. The Spirit who fills the universe impels all to that city on high to which all the nations are bearing their gifts. No other solidarity, no other truth, no other justice and no other faith than those inspired by the Spirit can build up unity. It is the Spirit of him who, exalted from the earth, will draw all to himself for the glory of the Father.

It is in these perspectives that the responsibility of a Jesuit called by the Church to dedicate himself to ecumenism is to be seen. His task has no sense outside the Church or in conflict with the Church. It is from the Church and for the Church that he receives his mission, and he realises that such setbacks and opposition, obstacles and restraints as he may well meet in the pursuit of a true sentire cum ecclesia will serve only to purify the irresistible quest for the unity of the Churches which the Spirit is already accomplishing, even though we do not know by what path he is leading us. It is in this same Spirit that I thank you now for the important contribution that you are making to this work of the Church.

Ref. SJ., Documentation: November 1985, Borgo S. Spirito 5,
00193 ROMA.

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(We present this lengthy extract from Fr. Kolvenbach's address in the belief that it may be helpful to all SEDOS members in their commitment to ecumenism in Mission to-day. - Ed.)

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