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# SEMINAR AND GENERAL ASSEMBLY REPORT

Sean Fagan, a Marxist, held the position of Professor of Ethics and Lecturer in Moral Theology at the Pontifical Athenaeum in Ireland. Fr. Fagan is well known in Ireland for his interviews on radio and television. He has conducted retreats and renewal courses for priests and religious in four continents. He is a frequent contributor to theological and pastoral journals in Ireland and author of the much-discussed Has Sin Changed? which has gone through four editions. He is currently Secretary General of the Marists.

In his address Fr. Sean Fagan called for a restructuring of the Church based on a new and meaningful theology of the laity. A study of the New Testament and early Church history shows that some of our understandings of ecclesial structure are oversimplified, local and relative. In the early centuries the laity were involved in the decision making process, were consulted on major issues and were present as full participants at synods, regional meetings and even ecumenical councils. The role of women is a central issue for the Church today. How many lay women have been appointed to positions of

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IN THIS ISSUE: This first issue of the 1987 SEDOS Bulletin contains contributions from the SEDOS 1987 General Assembly. The first item is the Annual Report of the SEDOS Executive Secretary approved unanimously by the General Assembly. The texts of the three addresses given at the Seminar session of the Assembly are included.

Séan Fagan, a Marist, held the position of Professor of Ethics and Lecturer in Moral Theology at the Pontifical Athenaeum in Ireland. Fr. Fagan is well known in Ireland for his interviews on radio and television. He has conducted retreats and renewal courses for priests and religious in four continents. He is a frequent contributor to theological and pastoral journals in Ireland and author of the much-discussed Has Sin Changed? which has gone through four editions. He is currently Secretary General of the Marists.

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authority in any of the Vatican congregations? The Vatican Council and Pope Paul VI in *Evangelii Nuntiandi* spoke of the need for 'inculturation', learning from the Philosophy, wisdom, customs and experience of different peoples. Is this not true also of female experience, female culture?

The role of the laity, the sleeping giant, the holy, priestly, kingly people, the plain people of God will remain confused until we get some meaningful light on the unfinished business of Vatican II, the role of the clergy, and the meaning of the ministerial priesthood.

Signora Emma Cavallaro is Director of the Italian National Council of the Apostolate of the Laity. The Council was involved in preparations for the Bishops' Synod on the Laity. Over 80 Associations are affiliated to the Council. The Council's Document submitted to the Synod Secretariat points out that the way co-responsibility is achieved in the Church in Italy is not always smooth. Lay people, and specially women, do not conform to ecclesial patterns. The Document stressed the need to educate an authentic laity, sharing responsibility, able to achieve integration between human Christian values and to give witness in a secular world.

There must be movement from theology on the laity to a theology with the laity. The laity are not "sent" to the world, they live in it. Signora Cavallaro hoped that the lay people who attend the Synod as experts may do so as such and not merely as bureaucrats from the apostolate for the laity. May they truly represent the rich and complex experiences present in the different local Churches. Her text which follows has been translated from Italian.

Margaret Hebblethwaite is an author, broadcaster, spiritual director, and works on the chaplaincy team of a young persons' prison. She contributed a series of articles to the London Tablet on the laity in June 1985 and is the author of *God and Motherhood*. She was involved in consultations preparing for the Synod on the Laity at both local and national level in England. She helped to organise a 2 months seminar of 16 lay people from Oxford, about half of them theologians and half involved in other professions. (See the Oxford Laity Seminar Report in the Catholic Gazette, October, 1986). She also helped to organise a weekend Laity Consultation to which 300 people from all over Britain came.

Two paragraphs from the Oxford Report summarise many of the Sentiments that emerged at the SEDOS Seminar and that were articulated by Margaret Hebblethwaite: "Changes in the Church, particularly structural changes, or changes that involve a reassessment of our expectation of the roles of clergy and laity, are frightening and threatening, and liable to be resisted by those in authority, afraid of

things falling apart. There is need for trust in God who regularly breaks up our expectations just when we want to settle into a secure and comfortable pattern."

"Centuries of over-emphasis of the clergy have resulted in a grave and culpable diminishment of the apostolic work of the Church. Neither one group nor the other is wholly responsible: laity are apathetic, clergy are cautious, and there is a vicious circle of assumptions and expectations. But the signs of the times now call us to action, to change, and to a new era of lay apostolate."

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NEWS:

SEDOS Annual Assembly gathered together 95 participants. In the forenoon session the Assembly considered the Laity in the Church in preparation for the September 1987 Synod of Bishops. The afternoon session dealt with the 1986 activities of SEDOS and decided on a planned programme for 1987. The Assembly was chaired by the President, Sister Helen McLaughlin, Superior General of the Sacred Heart Sisters and the Vice President, Father Francesco Pierli, Superior General of the Comboni Priests and Brothers. The Assembly approved unanimously the treasurer's financial statement for 1986 and the Budget for 1987, which included a modest increase in annual fees in keeping with the increased cost of living. The Assembly recorded its appreciation and gratitude to Fr. Leo Paul Nobert, OMI for his competent management of SEDOS finances carried out voluntarily by him over many years.

Annual Report: The Assembly also approved unanimously the Annual Report presented by the Executive Secretary, Willie Jenkinson, CSSp. They also welcomed Helen O'Sullivan, MM, Associate Executive Secretary to her first Assembly.

Elections: In the elections for membership of the Executive Committee the Assembly elected the following on a first ballot:

Fr. Michael Amaladoss, SJ (second term)  
Fr. Carlos Pape, SVD (first term)

and recorded its gratitude to Fr. Michael Fitzgerald, PA the outgoing member for his devoted work on the Committee.

1987 Objectives: The Assembly approved the objectives for 1987 proposed by the Executive Committee. These were as follows:

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ANNUAL REPORT  
to the  
SEDOS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

December 9, 1986

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PREFACE

This report covers the period from December 9th, 1985 to December 8th, 1986. It records the programme of activities and the decisions of your Executive Committee during that period and the efforts of the Secretariat to implement these. The Report has six sections dealing with:

1. Membership
2. Seminars
3. Occasional Meetings
4. SEDOS Bulletin
5. Other Secretariat Activities
6. **People at Sedos**

The objectives for the coming year 1987 approved by your Executive Committee are as follows:

1. SEDOS Seminar Programme 1987:
  - a. Villa Cavalletti, March 24-28, 1987: LAITY IN THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH NOW AND IN THE FUTURE.
  - b. Tuesday, October, 1987: TOPIC TO BE SUGGESTED
  - c. ~~Wednesday, December 9~~, 1987 SEDOS Annual General Assembly. TOPIC FOR THE MORNING SESSION TO BE SUGGESTED.
  - d. Villa Cavalletti, 1988, March or May?
2. Research into initial Formation Programmes for Mission including solidarity with the poor, inculturation, dialogue, justice and peace.
3. A study of some of the theological challenges from "Third World" Theologies which emerged at the 1986 Villa Cavalletti Seminar.
4. Facilitating the exchange of information between SEDOS members on their efforts to deepen their understanding of proclamation, inculturation, dialogue, and liberation.
5. Session to complete the study on World Poverty.
6. Occasional meetings: updates on mission situations.
7. Implementing the computer plan for the Documentation Center.

These will be submitted to the members at the Annual Assembly on Tuesday, 9th December 1986 together with other proposals received from the membership.

## 1. MEMBERSHIP

We welcome five new members who joined SEDOS during 1986 bringing membership to 60, the highest total to date. The new members are:

1. Ancelle del Sacro Cuore di Gesu (ACI).
2. Missionary Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Conception (MFIC).
3. Sisters of Our Lady of Sion (NDS).
4. Suore Serve di Maria (OSM, Servite Sisters)
5. Society of the Catholic Apostolate (SAC, Pallotines)

The Daughters of Mary and Joseph (FMG) withdrew during the year as their representation here in Rome is very small. There are now 25 Institutes of women and 35 Institutes of men in SEDOS.

## 2. SEMINARS

During the year SEDOS continued to provide a service to its members through its annual programme of seminars and meetings. The Seminars held were the following:

- 2.1 Assessing the Extraordinary Synod of December, 1985. Speakers were Mgr. A. Titianma Sanon, Bishop of Bobo Dioulasso and President of the Conference of Bishops of Upper Volta and Niger; Mgr. R. Ndingi, Mwana'a Nzeki, Bishop of Nakuru and President of the Kenya Conference of Bishops; Victor Dammertz, OSB, Abbot Primate of the Order of St. Benedict and Fr. Jacques Dupuis, SJ. All had attended the Synod of which they gave a balanced assessment. Mgr. Sanon's comments were particularly helpful to SEDOS members coming as they did from his West African experience. He was pleased with the emphasis on 'communion' at the Synod but we noted his final questions: Did we in the "west" really acknowledge the particular local Churches of Africa as authentic Churches, as fully part of the family, the 'communio'? "Are we allowed" he asked "to bring the experience of our Church in Burkina Faso to the whole Church family, to play our part in evangelizing the world, to be accepted as real heirs to Vatican Council II?" The note of quiet optimism expressed by all the invited speakers proved to be the generally accepted assessment of the Synod as time passed. We were fortunate to have had this early appraisal with its particular emphasis on the mission dimension of the Synod. This

in fact received little attention but the world wide composition of the participants offset this lack more than adequately (See SEDOS Bulletin 1986/No.1 for a full account).

- 2.2 Third World Theologies: This was the theme of the annual residential seminar at Villa Cavalletti. It was held exceptionally in May 1986 but will revert to its normal date at the end of March in 1987. Members of SEDOS wanted to make a special effort to listen to what the local Churches of the so-called "third world" are saying about mission issues, how they themselves see these and how they see their contribution to the universal mission of the Church. Speakers were from Africa (Boka di Mpati Londi), Asia (Michael Amaladoss) and Latin America (José Marins, Carolee Chanona and Teolide M. Trevisan). A feature of the Seminar, which developed its own dynamic with the capable help of an excellent facilitator, was that participants were particularly concerned about how the challenges that were emerging from the conferences and workshops impinged upon the missionary congregations and societies themselves, - their aims, objectives, membership, programmes of formation. recruitment, - all were challenged.
- 2.3 World Religions and Peace: This Symposium, held on October 21st, provided a rather unique experience to members in the context of mission. Among the speakers were an Italian Buddhist, a Swiss Hindu and an Indian Hindu, whose grandmother and mother had gone to Convent Schools. She herself and her daughter had also attended Convent Schools. An Italian Jewish Rabbi, two Catholic priests and the head of the Muslim Community in Rome completed the speakers. We were made acutely aware of the presence of the other religions in Europe and of the sincerity and goodness of the followers of these religions. And we had an all too brief exposure to what can unite us (eg. in the search for peace) and what are some of the potential causes of misunderstanding. (See SEDOS Bulletin 1986/No.11 for a full account).

### 3. OCCASIONAL MEETINGS

- 3.1 Liberation Theology: A considerable number of SEDOS members attended and appreciated the series of three talks given by John Fuellenbach, SVD., on three aspects of Liberation Theology during the early months of this year.

In successive lectures he dealt with:-

- The Appropriation and Rejection of Marxism in Liberation Theology.
- Some Basic Elements in the Emerging Spirituality of Liberation Theology.
- Some Remarks on the Document "Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation (March 1986).

- 3.2 Solidarity in Crisis Network: Two meetings were held in March to examine the feasibility of setting up the Network following on the discussion of this suggestion at the 1985 General Assembly. Two case-studies were presented at the first meeting: Fr. Louis Hechanova, CSSR., (who had been deeply involved in the disappearance of his fellow Redemptorist, Rudy Romano in the Philippines` addressed the meeting as did Sr. Helene O'Sullivan, MM., who was similarly deeply involved in the investigation of the four missionaries murdered in Salvador. At the second meeting the need for a network was further examined by Sr. Helene aided by Fr. Willie Frankenhuijsen, Executive Secretary of the Justice and Peace Commission of the Union of Religious Superiors. Both meetings were well attended and provoked lively participation. For the outcome of these meetings see Section 5.4 of this Report.
- 3.3 The Church in China To-day: This was a most informative Conference given by Fr. Jerome Heyndrickx, CICM., on the present situation of the Church in China. Attendance included many former China missionaries. An hour-long slide presentation on current developments completed this session which was deeply appreciated by all present.
- 3.4 Up-date on Nicaragua. A group of SEDOS members including a member of Superiors General who had recently returned from Nicaragua met at SEDOS to share current information on the situation there in an informal atmosphere.

#### 4. SEDOS BULLETIN

Readers of the Bulletin are consulted every second year. Although there was no official consultation in 1986 we received fairly steady comments expressing appreciation of it. Readership increases despite a reduction in complimentary copies. Following the June 1985 decision of the Executive Committee to publish the Bulletin monthly instead of every two weeks and to reduce considerably the number of complimentary copies to members the number printed fell to 550 but it has climbed again to approximately 820.

We are actively engaged in investigating the possibility of publishing a Spanish edition of selected articles with the co-operation of sources in Spain and Chile. Such a development will not involve SEDOS members in additional expenses.

We are very grateful to those who draw our attention to items or articles that may be of interest to SEDOS readers. Please continue to do so.

## 5. OTHER SECRETARIAT ACTIVITIES

- 5.1 Meetings with General Councils: Three General Councils have invited the Secretariat staff to visit them to explain the services available through membership of SEDOS. The Staff will visit another member Society soon for similar sharing. They will also help at a Seminar of another SEDOS Member on some aspects of their co-ordinating mission activities to-day. Requests are also being made for guidance on how to incorporate inculturation, dialogue, solidarity with the poor, liberation into initial formation programmes.
- 5.2 Referrals: There is an increase in queries coming to the Secretariat asking for information on situations of mission and the involvement of other SEDOS members. We have been able to refer a number of these enquiries to sources of assistance and facilitated the sharing of useful information. We see our ability to facilitate such referrals as a useful service to members.
- 5.3 Networking/Contacts: We use this title to cover a number of activities including contacts between the Secretariat and other organisations involved in mission, potentially enriching to both.
- (a) Here in Rome we co-operate with Commission 18 of the Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples and the Unions of Superiors General, and also with the Unions of Superiors General Commission "6". We continue to collaborate with the Vatican Secretariats for Christian Unity and for Non Christian Religions. Fr. Zago OMI., Secretary of the former, has been elected Superior General of the Oblates. We will miss him at the Secretariat and offer him our congratulations.
- (b) At the Ecumenical level the Secretariat maintains cordial informal relations with the Commission on World Mission and Evangelisation (CWME) of the World Council of Churches. A more

formal meeting is arranged each year between the CWME and organisations in Rome. This meeting alternates between Rome and Geneva. In March 1986 the Executive Secretary represented SEDOS at a three day meeting in Geneva enabling contact with the staff and various departments of CWME. In 1987 SEDOS will help to host the visit of CWME representatives to Rome. The meetings are important for the building up of mutual respect and understanding and the furthering of unity between the Christian Churches in mission. We may have reached the stage where it is inconceivable to do mission without regard for Christian unity and the real scandal of disunity.

SEDOS has corporate membership of the International Association of Studies (IAMS) and maintains contact with this ecumenical organisation through the Secretariat. IAMS forthcoming triennial meeting will be held in Rome in 1988. Your Executive Committee has agreed to the Secretariat taking an active part in facilitating preparations for this meeting. The IAMS Executive Committee has already met twice here in Rome to prepare for the 1988 meeting. The General Assemblies will be held in the Aula Magna of the Urbaniana. SEDOS Documentation Centre has full information on the Association and we will be happy to answer any queries. IAMS has now approximated 600 members. The present President is Sr. Joan Chatfield, MM. and the Vice President John Pobee from Ghana, and on the Staff of the WCC, Geneva.

Informal relations are also maintained with Selly Oak Colleges in Birmingham, England, the Executive Secretary being a member in a personal capacity, of the Advisory Committee to the Catholic Lectureship there.

- (c) At the International level: SEDOS has membership of the United States Catholic Mission Association (USCMA). This Association is preparing an Ecumenical Symposium: Divided Christians/Common Witness: An Unfinished Task for United States Christians in Mission, in 1977, to which the Executive Secretary has been invited. The Executive Committee has approved his attendance and wishes to have as wide a consultation as possible with SEDOS members in the preparation of this Symposium. A questionnaire is being made available to members at the General Assembly with a request for comments and suggestions which will be forwarded to the USCMA.

PRO MUNDI VITA the International Research Centre in Brussels is well known to many SEDOS members. Your Executive Secretary has been a member of the Executive Committee for many years - again

in a personal capacity. The contact has been very enriching as the topics researched by P.M.V. are invariably Mission related. P.M.V. celebrated its 25th Anniversary with a Symposium on Laity and the Dynamic of Faith in Lomé in September. There is a note on this Symposium in SEDOS Bulletin of November 15, 1986. A P.M.V. Bulletin with full details will be published well before the Synod on the Laity. The Executive Secretary will leave the Board in March 1987 but will maintain informal relations with the organisation.

Contacts are also maintained with AMA (Holland) Missio-Aachen, Misereor, Missio Munich. We rarely approach them for financial assistance but we record our gratitude to them for their help on those rare occasions and for their interest and courtesy always.

#### 5.4 Solidarity Crisis Network

A group of participants at the 1985 SEDOS Seminar on Justice and Evangelization at Villa Cavalletti requested that SEDOS members should work towards a policy of taking concerted action in situations where fellow members were in danger through imprisonment, disappearance, torture etc. Last year's Annual General Assembly approved this as a priority for 1986. We held a number of consultations during the year in collaboration with the USG/UISG Commission for Justice and Peace and presented a final proposal for comments at this year's Villa Cavalletti Seminar. Participants unanimously recommended approval of the proposal.

A team to guide the initial working of the Network has been chosen. They are as follows: Bill Halliden SSC; Louis Hechanova CSSR; Willie Van Frankenhuijsen SMA; Margaret Loftus SNDN; Mary Mc Callion SNDN; Helene O'Sullivan MM; and Giuseppina Tresoldi SMC; Willie Jenkinson, CSSp. They held their first meeting in June of this year.

Already the following resources are available at the J & P office and at SEDOS: Addresses of Embassies in Rome; International Press; Church Press and Radio; Justice and Peace Commission (Europe); International and National Federations of Religious; Justice and Peace Commission of Religious in Asia, Latin America etc. etc.

The Network has also circulated a number of requests for action by members.

You will find both the NETWORK TERMS OF REFERENCE and also the first draft of The Responsibilities of the Justice and Peace Co-ordinator in a Congregation/Society in your folders at the Annual Assembly.

#### 5.5. SEDOS Documentation Centre

We made considerable progress towards computerising the Documentation Centre during the course of 1986. Already in September, 1984 we began a feasibility study and in January 1986 Fr. Farrelly, CSSp. spent three days at the Centre to prepare a plan.

In February he presented a comprehensive Report to the Executive Committee. It contains three parts:

- I. An analysis of the existing system in the SEDOS Secretariat;
- II. Specification of the proposed computer system;
- III. A Funding Proposal, - issued separately.

We circulated the Funding Proposal to a number of agencies and to some SEDOS members. We acknowledge with deep gratitude the generous help received from the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers, the Columbans, the Franciscans, Missio, Misereor, AMA and a benefactor in Belgium. The Computer Project is funded completely from these special grants raised by the Executive Secretary and not from membership fees. We are still in need of some funds to complete the project. Please contact the Secretariat if you wish to make a grant towards the project. Meanwhile we will begin the first stage of installing the equipment early in 1987.

The considerable amount of information available at the Centre will thus become more readily available to members. The present manual card system will be maintained alongside the new one for some time. With either system we know we can help you more efficiently at the Centre if we get some prior notice - so, if possible, telephone us in advance with some indication of the kind of information you need.

#### 5.6 New SEDOS Brochure

A new SEDOS Brochure was published this year. It is in four languages including Spanish for the first time. But our telephone has been changed so please add a "4" (now 5741350) in your copy of the Brochure!

6. PEOPLE OF SEDOS

The Executive Committee chosen to represent the 60 members of SEDOS was as follows in 1986.

<u>President</u>	:	Sr. Helen McLaughlin, RSCJ	- Elected 1985
<u>Vice President</u>	:	Fr. Francesco Pierli, MCCJ	- Elected 1985
<u>Treasurer</u>	:	Fr. Leo Paul Nobert OMI	- Re-elected 1985
<u>Committee</u>			
<u>Members</u>	:	Sr. Giuseppina Tresoldi, SMC	- Re-elected 1985
		Sr. Margaret Loftus, SNDN	- Elected 1984
		Fr. Mike Fitzgerald, PA	- Re-elected 1984
		Fr. Michael Amaladoss, SJ	- Elected 1983
<u>Executive Secretary:</u>		Fr. Willie Jenkinson, CSSp.	- Re-Appointed 1986
<u>Assoc. Executive</u>			
<u>Secretary</u>	:	Sr. Helene O'Sullivan, MM	- Appointed 1986

Following the election of Sr. Helen McLaughlin at the 1985 General Assembly SEDOS has a woman President for the first time.

The Secretariat was enriched by the coming of Sr. Helene O'Sullivan, MM as Associate Executive Secretary at the beginning of the year. We wish her a hearty welcome and a happy inculturation process!

Jacintha Alegiah is responsible for secretarial work and for the typing and setting of the Bulletin; Antigone Lloyd for the printing and despatching of the Bulletin and for part time duties in the Documentation Centre.

Philippa Wooldridge and Sr. Kathleen England, OSU, each come to the Documentation Centre one day a week.

Sr. Agnes Hoorman, RSCJ and Sr. Walter Santos, OSU had to interrupt their voluntary help at the Documentation Centre in mid-year but they hope to continue later in 1987.

Willie Jenkinson, CSSp. was re-appointed in July '86 as Executive Secretary for a period of three years.

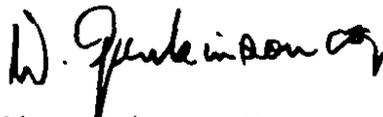
An organisation is above all "people". While initiative, vision, organisation and the rest are desirable, even necessary, it is people who are important. The spirit of collaboration which is manifest in SEDOS members encourages the Executive Committee officers and members to give generously of their time and expertise to the interests of the organisation and it supports the Staff of the Secretariat in their service of

the members. "It is the Spirit that giveth life: the letter profiteth nothing". We believe there is a Spirit of collaboration in SEDOS. All the members are at one in their belief that "there is no true evangelization if the name, the teaching, the life, the promises, the kingdom and the mystery of Jesus of Nazareth, the son of God, are not proclaimed". They are at one in acknowledging that "as an evangelizer Christ first of all proclaims a kingdom - so important that, by comparison everything else becomes "the rest". "Only the kingdom therefore is absolute, and it makes everything else relative".

(Ev. Nun. 8;22).

May we continue to collaborate in announcing Christ and his kingdom to the best of our ability sharing with one another and supporting one another in this task.

We in the Secretariat express our deep appreciation to SEDOS members and specially to your Executive Committee for your trust and your readiness to help us.



Willie Jenkinson, CSSp.  
EXECUTIVE SECRETARY  
SEDOS

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VOCATION AND MISSION OF THE LAITY  
in the Church and in the World  
Twenty Years after the Second Vatican Council

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Séan Fagan, SM

*(Le Père Sean Fagan a été professeur de théologie morale et maître assistant en morale à l'université pontificale de Miltown, à Dublin. Il est l'auteur du livre HAS SIN CHANGED (qui en est à sa quatrième édition). Il a prêché des retraites et des sessions de formation permanente dans différents pays et continents, et il est actuellement Secrétaire Général de la Société de Marie à Rome. Le P. Fagan pense que des changements de structures sont nécessaires aujourd'hui dans l'Eglise si l'en veut que la place des laïcs dans l'Eglise soit reconnue conformément à la vision de Vatican II ).*

Subjects or Objects: Fishermen tend to exaggerate when describing their successes. I recall a newspaper cartoon which showed, under the water, two rather small fish, and on the river-bank two fishermen with arms outstretched to show the size of the huge fish they almost caught. One little fish said to the other in amazement: 'You know, that's us they are talking about!' I can't help thinking that the reaction of many of the laity will be somewhat similar next October if they could listen in to some of the possibly unreal things that will be said about them at the International Synod of Bishops. No doubt there will be many beautiful things said about their unique dignity, their sacred destiny and their responsibility for futhering the kingdom of God. Indeed the Vatican Council documents and even the code of canon law have said it all already. But many lay people will say that the 'felt' reality, the lived experience, is rather different. A major problem for the synod, seemingly not even adverted to in the Lineamenta, is how to bridge this credibility gap.

The second story is an incident I experienced about five years ago. I was lecturing at a symposium on 'Moral and Psycho-sexual problems of Handicapped People'. One of those present was a friend of mine, a very talented businessman who had been in a car crash, was paralysed from the waist down, and in a wheel-chair. His wife was behind the chair at the coffee-break, and one of the other participants, who was kindly pouring coffee to give to the invalid, asked the wife, over her husband's head: 'Does he take sugar?' She simply said: 'Why don't you ask him?' The moral of the story is fairly clear, and also its relevance to the synod on the laity. We have been told that the subject of discussion will be the laity, their vocation and mission. In fact, however, the laity will not be the subject, but the object of the discussion.

There is an element of Freudian slip about the concept of a synod of bishops discussing the laity over their heads, so to speak. If we really believe in the dignity, maturity and responsibility of the laity, why are we speaking about them rather than with them?

Church Teaching at Variance with Practice: The purpose of our meeting today is to reflect on the Lineamenta or discussion-paper circulated to the bishops in preparation for the synod, and indeed we can do that. But just as God is revealed more in deeds than in words, so too the official or hierarchical part of the Church teaches through its actions as much as through its pronouncements. It can ignore in practice what it preaches in theory. To say this is not necessarily a criticism. Even the human authors of sacred scripture were not always aware of the full implications of what they wrote. St. Paul was quite absolute in his insistence that there is no difference between slaves and free persons, that all are equal in Christ (Jews and Gentiles, men and women), yet at no stage did he question, much less condemn, the institution of slavery, or object to the inferior status assigned to women by the culture of his time. It took nineteen hundred years for the Church to recognise the intrinsic evil of slavery, and judging by its attitudes and actions even now, its assent to the basic equality of women and men is still more notional than real. In terms of basic principle, the Church has some magnificent teaching on the laity, in Council documents and in the new canon law, but some of its structures, administrative decisions and attitudes seem to be at variance with that teaching. Indeed they deny it in practice.

A Change of Heart Among the Clergy: The purpose of the synod is to conscientise the laity to their vocation and mission in today's Church and world, but this cannot be done successfully unless there is a radical conversion on the part of the whole Church, and a change of mind and heart and attitude among the clergy. Unfortunately, the Lineamenta gives no hint of this. However, the document does present a useful summary of the Church's teaching on the laity and gives some suggestions on where and how they can carry out their mission. You are all familiar with the text. The introduction recalls the documents from the Council and the various post-council synods: on justice, ministerial priesthood, evangelisation, catechesis, family life, and Christian reconciliation. It refers to the rapidly changing world in the twenty years since the council, and speaks of the new groups and movements through which the laity exercise their apostolate. It warns against the 'dangers' involved in recent experiences of lay participation in the ministries of the Church and the risk of 'secularity' turning into 'secularism'. It says there is real need for the Church to reflect once again on the vocation and mission of the laity both within the Church, of which they are an essential part, and in the world, in which they live their Christian lives.

Our Common Baptism: Echoing the Council teaching, the document emphasizes the common dignity and basic equality of all members of the People of God, rooted in their common baptism. In Christ and in the Church there is no inequality arising from race or nationality, social condition or sex, for 'there is neither Jew nor Greek; there is neither slave nor freeperson; there is neither male or female (Gal 3:28, Col 3:11). Thus the laity have the right and duty to share in the Church's mission by virtue of their baptism and prior to any permission or mandate from ecclesiastical authority. It is by God that they are assigned to the apostolate. The document distinguishes between ministerial priesthood and that of all the faithful. It stresses the common responsibility of all members of the Church for its unity, its up-building and its mission, and recognises the special ministries that may be entrusted to the laity.

The third part of the document is devoted to the laity as witnesses of Christ in the world. This involves service to the Church itself, and then service to humanity, promoting the welfare of human persons, in the area of relationships, community, social and political life, work, science and technology, specialised professions. This section stresses the need for formation of laity and calls for a distinctive lay spirituality.

The Synod: Another Stage on a Journey of Self-understanding: The Lineamenta document was published as a guideline for reflection and discussion. The document itself states that it is not the agenda for the meeting, much less an outline of the statement the synod is expected to make. It would be simplistic to imagine that the 'widest possible, world-wide consultation' invited by the Lineamenta can be funnelled successfully into the synod to be incorporated in a 'teaching of the Church' that will be the last word on the subject. Indeed, Cardinal Hume has said that this meeting of bishops should not be regarded as a decisive moment in the life of the Church; it is best seen as another stage on a journey of self-understanding and renewal. It will have served its purpose if it is a meaningful step, however partial, towards that radical conversion required of the whole Church to change its attitudes and structures so that the laity can play their full part as active members of the People of God.

Different Models of Ecclesiologies: The church has been slow to follow the lead of Cardinal Newman, who in 1859 wrote an article On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine. Mgr. Talbot, agent of the English bishops in Rome at that time, was more typical of the general attitude of the Church when he said: 'What is the province of the laity? To hunt, to shoot, to entertain. These matters they understand. But to meddle with ecclesiastical affairs they have no right at all'. When the bishop of Birmingham asked 'Who are the laity?'

Newman replied: 'The Church would look foolish without them'. The official Church at the time, and indeed even today, could smile at this as a facetious remark and fail to realise its implications. Part of the reason for this is the fact that until Vatican II the dominant model in our ecclesiology was the juridical one. Any reference to the Church as sacrament of Christ, community, servant of the world, herald of the kingdom, could be treated as pious metaphor. Everybody knew that the Church was the perfect society, hierarchically constituted from its foundation. Since the Council the laity are told that they are the Church, the holy People of God, but they are more conscious of the clergy/laity distinction which has in practice become almost a division between two classes of people: one with power, status, privilege, dispenser of grace, and often identified as the teaching Church, and the other passive, obedient, receptive, the object of pastoral care, and frequently considered the learning Church. Many of the laity have been conditioned to feel that their role in the Church is to pray, obey and pay. When they are now told of their true role in the Church, some are confused, not having been prepared for it, but others are impatient, frustrated, even angry, and they say: 'Words, words, words...Show me!'

No Longer Passive: It is true that laity are no longer as passive as they used to be. Friederich von Hugel, Jacques Maritain, Frank Sheed, Maisie Ward, Frank Duff, Dorothy Day and Jean Vanier are just a few of the outstanding lay people who in recent times have enriched both Church and world by their Christian activity. Movements like the Legion of Mary, Young Christian Workers, Focolare, Cursillo, Movement for a Better World, and the Charismatic Renewal Movement encouraged laity to play an active part in the Church's mission. Since Vatican II large numbers of lay men and women have taken full courses in theology and scripture and many of them are more highly qualified in these areas than most clergy. In various parts of the world new roles were opened up for laity in parish life, education, ecumenism and Church finance. Parish councils, diocesan committees and national pastoral councils have involved them to some extent in the decision-making process in the Church.

Experience of the Laity is a Genuine Source of Theology: It all looks so beautiful on paper, and it is true that a great deal is happening in reality. But many of the laity feel that although the old authoritarian voice has gone and we now hear words of invitation and encouragement implying partnership, the authoritarian spirit lives on in the subconscious and continually shows up in Freudian slips. At the Synod of 1980 Cardinal Hume said that the experience of Christian married people is a genuine source for the Church's exploration of the theology of marriage. Does it not follow that the experience of the laity is a genuine source to be listened to for a theology of lay people in the Church? Their ex-

perience includes their fears, confusion and anger as well as their devotion, commitment and intimacy with the Holy Spirit in prayer and daily living. An Irish woman recently wrote: 'As a lay person I have the impression that the official leaders of the Church often speak for me and sometimes at me, but rarely or never with me. If the official Church doesn't listen to the feelings of the people of God it will lose the emotional allegiance of its members (Ben Kimmerling, The Furrow, Sept. 1986). Consultation is simply not enough, no matter how professionally it is carried out. Those consulting decide the topic, its scope, degree of detail, duration and timing of the consultation, and then filter and summarise the results to fit a pre-arranged procedure, and perhaps sometimes a pre-decided conclusion. Very little of the original response gets through or is really heard, certainly not the depth of feeling. In this situation, laity can hardly be blamed if they become cynical or alienated. The call to dialogue, to understanding, to respect, is a call to a recognition of the basic equality of all Christians, so clearly expressed in the Vatican II documents and in the new canon law.

#### DIFFERENT THEOLOGIES OF LAY LIFE AND MINISTRY

Since neither the Council nor the Code were able to arrive at a satisfactory theology of the lay person's life and ministry, the confusion of the past twenty years is understandable. In THE LAY-CENTERED CHURCH Leonard Doohan has traced the different theologies that emerged in the last few decades, and has shown how they operated in practice.

First there was the theology of Instrumental Ministry, with the emphasis on Catholic Action, lay activity mandated by ecclesiastical authority. Then came the theology of Ecclesial presence to the World, recognising that earthly and temporal realities have a value and goodness of their own, and the role of the laity is to be present to that world, developing and perfecting it. A development of this, namely that the lay person is not only to be in the world, but for the world, led to the theology of World Transformation, with the laity as agents in the consecration of the world.

Restructuring the Church: A fourth theology could be described as Laity and Ecclesial Restructuring. Yves Congar, whose 1957 book LAY PEOPLE IN THE CHURCH, marked the beginning of serious study of the topic, came to the conclusion twenty years later that a meaningful theology of the laity now calls for a restructuring of the Church. The reasons for this: 1) Study of the New Testament and early Church history shows that some of our understandings of ecclesial structure are over-simplified, local and relative. 2) Vatican II values experience over structure, emphasizes the functional dimension of

ministries, and calls for decentralisation and collegiality.

3) Ecumenical dialogue is forcing the Church to review the laity's role in Church decision-making and structures. 4) Many scholars are now questioning the relationship of authority to Christian community. Finally, there is a theology of Self-discovery for Laity. This means that laity are discovering their role through experience, responding to needs as they arise, and only later reflecting critically and theologically on that experience.

These last two trends would seem to be the path for the future, and unless the 1987 Synod takes them seriously it will be another non-event, open to the same devastating critique Michael Winter was able to apply to The Easter People, the response of the English bishops to the Report of the Liverpool Pastoral Congress: 'Basically what was missing was any sign of a willingness to make institutional changes... Resolutions were answered with platitudes, and the whole apparatus of Church organisations and institutions went on as before without any modification being introduced. Four years after the event, nothing of major significance has emerged from its deliberations and the exercise must be considered frankly as a failure.'

Rediscovering Basically Christian attitudes and Practices: It would be so easy to dismiss these critical warnings and seemingly radical comments as an attempt to have the Church imitate the democracies of the Western world (not necessarily a bad thing!). But in fact it is a question of the Church re-discovering some of the basically Christian attitudes and practices it had before it allowed itself to be shaped and influenced by the status, power and structures it acquired when it began to compete as a super-power with the Roman empire and the various European nations.

In the early centuries the laity were involved in the decision-making process, were consulted on major issues and were present as full participants at synods, regional meetings and even ecumenical councils. Pope Boniface VIII decreed 'Whatever affects everyone must be approved by everyone'. St. Cyprian, bishop and martyr in the 3rd century, convoked many synods to which the laity were always invited, and worked on the principle that, in his own words, 'no decree can be established which does not appear to be ratified by the consent of the plurality.'

#### WOMEN IN THE CHURCH

The Lineamenta (n.26) quotes Paul VI calling for 'a re-reading of Church history while paying particular attention to present needs' (Ev. Nunt. 73). Have we done that yet? In n.7 it quotes the Council document

on priestly life: 'Priests should be willing to listen to lay-people, give brotherly consideration to their wishes and recognise their experience and competence.' Leaving aside the patronising tone of that statement, is this listening really taking place? Perhaps the synod could begin by re-reading and listening to the resolutions formulated by the Third International Congress of the Laity (in 1967 - 20 years ago!). There were 3,000 participants and, among other things, they asked that 'a serious theological study be undertaken on the place of women in the Church and in the sacramental order.' Furthermore, they asked that 'competent women be appointed to all papal commissions', and 'that women be consulted in the revision of the law concerning them, so that women's dignity would be fully recognised and they would be given the fullest possibility for service in the Church.' This was 20 years ago!

Women and Positions of Authority in the Church: It is true that the new code of canon law recognises equal rights for women and men, except in relation to the sacrament of Orders. But what happens in practice? How many lay women have been appointed to positions of authority in any of the Vatican congregations since that request of 20 years ago? Is it still the rule that ambassadors or ministers accredited to the Holy See by secular states must be male? The Congregation for Catholic Education has been assessing United States seminaries for the past five years, and in its interim report just published it expresses particular concern about the use of lay people and nuns as teachers of 'sacred subjects' and as spiritual directors for seminarians. One wonders if Teresa of Avila were to apply for a teaching post would her status as a canonised saint and Doctor of the Church outweigh the major disability of her female sex? At a conference on Women in the Church, held in Washington last October, attended by 2,500 people, women expressed what they think, what they feel, what they experience. They cannot be blamed for wondering, asking (and I am surprised that they are not SHOUTING): 'Is anybody LISTENING?' So often I hear clerics complaining of the stridency of the feminist movement in the church. What surprises me is that the women are not MORE angry. One needs a lot of patience to hear mountains groaning for twenty years only to produce an anemic little mouse.

Learning from Female Experience, Female Culture: What of the other request of that International Congress of 20 years ago? Has there been a really serious theological study done on the role of women in the Church? Even apart from the special questions of the ordination of women, the whole Church could benefit from taking women more seriously. The Vatican Council in its decree on Missionary Activity, and Paul VI in Evangelii Nuntiandi, spoke of the need for 'inculturation', learning from the philosophy, wisdom, customs and experience of people, so that the gospel may become a living tradition enriched by, and incarnate in, their culture. Is the same

not true of female experience, female culture? The New Testament writers were all men, heavily influenced by their male-dominated culture. It would be interesting to have a gospel written by Mary of Nazareth or 'the woman who was a sinner', or a letter from one of the Roman matrons who hosted a domestic eucharist. In time, of course, the big question of the ordination of women will have to be faced. Bishop Remi de Roo of Victoria, British Columbia, told the Washington conference that 'evading this issue would endanger ecumenical relations and cause irreparable harm to the credibility of the Catholic Church.' Many theologians and scripture scholars hold that there are no convincing theological arguments against it; it is more a question of psychological and sociological factors.

Women's Role is a Central Issue for the Church: This reference to the Church's attitude to women is not a light-hearted digression from our theme of the vocation and mission of the laity. The women's question is already a central issue for the Church. It is not true that it is simply a middle-class, First-World phenomenon. I have met many Third World women who feel equally strongly about it. Cardinal Bernardin has reported that a number of bishops' conferences have asked that the issue of women in the Church be discussed at the synod.

#### The Meaning of the Word "Laity"

At this point it may be of interest to note the ambiguity of the word 'laity'. There is no definition of it either in Vatican II documents or in the code. Insofar as it comes from 'Laos', 'people', all members of the Church are laity, the people of God. But when the code speaks of 'lay members' it means 'non-clerics'. Therefore in principle it includes non-clerical religious, Sisters and Brothers. These are 'lay' religious. The others, the left-overs, the non-clerical, non-religious, plain laity are therefore defined by a double negative. In English grammar two negatives cancel each other out, but in other languages (Greek, for example) negative symbols are multiplied to reinforce one another. Is it any wonder that our laity feel second-class?

But what of the in-between group? The Lineamenta make no mention of them, almost taking for granted that they are on the side of management, with the clerics. But at a gathering like this I hope I will be forgiven for raising the question of 'sensitivity', which in some cases may also involve principle. When the Union of (male) Superiors General elect a group of their members to represent religious at the Synod, only clerics are eligible. I know this rule is not of their making. But if the synod is serious about laity, participation, responsibility, it ought to ask itself what kind of impression is created when (to take a hypothetical example) a superior general responsible for 1,000 religious is chosen to represent religious, while the general of a congregation of 25,000 is excluded a priori because he/she is a lay religious.

The Brothers have every right to feel aggrieved, and the Sisters even more so, because they are being represented not only by a cleric, but also by a man. But then one would like to ask what does 'representation' mean. Perhaps these questions are beyond the scope of our present meeting, but if they are not raised at some stage, synods may be going through the same motions for another 20 years.

On the question of 'sensitivity' I would like to make a personal comment, in parenthesis. I have been to hundreds of meetings of religious over the past 30-odd years. When all present were priests, concelebration of the Eucharist made a lot of sense. But I couldn't help feeling that when it is a mixed group, of Sisters, Brothers and priests, concelebration is less appropriate, because if we meet specifically as religious what we have in common is far more important than what divides us.

New Initiatives in Lay Ministries: To return to the synod, it ought to look at what is actually happening in the Church. The diocese of Kinshasa in Zaire has had 11 years of lay ministries, beginning in 1975 when Cardinal Malula entrusted eight parishes to lay people. The whole experiment has been evaluated by a special commission and pronounced a success. There are similar initiatives in other parts of the world. In 1982 a survey of 78 parishes in the United States showed that 33 of the 78 had not resident priests and another 14 said they would be without priests in five years. The gap is being filled by non-ordained pastoral administrators, usually religious sisters, who function on a full-time basis, reside in the rectory and do everything except celebrate Mass and hear confessions.

The shortage of priests has forced some bishops to overcome their hesitation about laity, but they have moved only to the half-way house of religious. When religious can no longer fill the gaps will they finally turn to the rest of the laity? To tease out the implications of all this could force us to take a fresh look at our ecclesiology and raise questions about clerical celibacy. Have we not got our priorities wrong when our only response to the millions of Catholics who are deprived of the Eucharist because there is no celibate male priest available, is to pray for vocations - to the celibate male priesthood?

Laity-the Sleeping Giant: To conclude: certainly the synod should look at the various ways in which lay involvement can be developed and made meaningful, from the acceptance of new ministries to structures enabling them to share in decision-making. Likewise, pre-occupation with ministries and structures should not distract from the laity's essential role of Christian living in the secular world. But too much concentration on the laity as such can

confuse the issue, because the clergy/laity division has set up so many false problems for the Church already. The role of the laity, the sleeping giant, the holy, priestly, kingly people, the plain people of God, will remain confused until we get some meaningful light on that other piece of unfinished business left over from the II Vatican Council: the role of the clergy and the meaning of the ministerial priesthood. However, we must first re-capture the vision of the whole Church as the 'people of God', from among whom some are called to the ministry of Orders, without losing their 'lay' status as members of Christ's body. Without that vision, and without a real conviction of the basic dignity and equality of all Christ's faithful women and men, we lack the proper context for any fruitful discussion of roles in the Christian community.

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A PREPARATORY CONSULTATION  
FOR THE  
SYNOD ON THE LAITY  
FROM THE  
ITALIAN NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR THE LAY APOSTOLATE

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Emma Cavallaro

*Madame Emma Cavallaro est Secrétaire exécutif du Conseil Italien pour l'Apostolat des Laïcs. Ce Conseil a collaboré avec l'Episcopat italien et avec d'autres instances ecclésiastiques, en vue de la préparation du prochain Synode des Evêques sur le Laïcat. L'insertion des laïcs et spécialement des femmes dans les structures de l'Eglise italienne est variable. Il est possible que l'insistance de certains milieux ecclésiastiques sur la séparation entre clercs et laïcs puisse nuire pendant le Synode à la prise de conscience de l'importance du laïcat. Madame Cavallaro espère que ce ne sera pas le cas mais que les laïcs qui participeront au Synode apporteront avec eux la richesse des expériences des différentes Eglises locales, et non pas uniquement les expériences administratives des différentes associations et mouvements d'Eglise dont ils sont les membres).*

(There are about 80 associations and movements in the Italian National Council for the Lay Apostolate. The Council co-operates with the Italian Episcopate in its pastoral plans and in particular with the Italian Episcopal Commission for the Laity and Family. It also co-operates with the Pontifical Commission for the Laity and with the international and national organisations for the Laity. It participates also in the European Forum of the National Committees for the Lay Apostolate.

In preparation for the Synod the Council held a Study Assembly which drew up a draft document which was sent to all participants for comment. It also held a Seminar with theologians, biblical scholars and canonists and again circulated the findings for comment and amendment. The Council then drew up a second draft based on the answers received and again circulated this widely for comment. Finally the General Assembly of the Council discussed and approved a final document taking into consideration all the comments received. This document was forwarded to the Secretariat for the Synod. Sgra. Cavallaro stressed that she was presenting to the SEDOS Seminar not just her own personal points of view but the ideas contained in this final document which was the result of a careful and wide ranging consultation. The text of her address follows).

In our study of the "Guidelines" we found that the following points in particular appeared to us to require further integration and to call for deeper study:

- theological foundation of the laity;
- the attention, the Church as a whole, gives to the topic of the laity;
- a survey of the existential condition of the laity;
- their training and their spirituality;
- the relationship between clergy and laity.

Laity at the Centre of the Christian Community:

At present the question of "secularity" as a dimension of the whole Church is acutely felt and discussed at least in Italy. Certain theologians speak of the lay aspect of the Church in such a way as to actually appear to nullify the concrete meaning and nature of the ministries, the charisma and the 'proprium' of the laity. To us there seems to be an evident and urgent need for an in-depth theological reflection which, by placing the vocation and mission of the laity at the very centre of the whole ecclesial community, would develop it in the perspective of "Lumen Gentium" and thus respond to the problem of the laity inherent in Church-communion.

It seems to us that this can only come about through the convergent reflection of all the component members of the ecclesial community: pastors, priests, theologians, religious, laymen and women, and associations, each of whom would make a "personal" contribution. It should be pointed out that the way ecclesial co-responsibility is achieved in the Church in Italy is not always smooth - either within the participatory structures or in the pastoral administrative bodies. Lay people, and specially lay women, feel that they are not completely part of ecclesial life, nor of priorities made, the carrying out of pastoral plans, or the taking up of relative responsibilities. Some presbyters, for their part, seem to fear that a re-evaluation of the laity will restrict their own activity to the sacramental ministry.

There is no doubt that latterly the laity has made much progress. Their progress has never been made against anyone, but always and only in the spirit of increasing communion. But from the uneasiness experienced it becomes apparent that a true relationship of communion must be found. This calls for a deeper theological basis and for more specific pastoral care.

It seems particularly important to us that the whole christian community should find, through internal and external dialogue, a way to progress not only by an analysis of reality, but also by an authentic knowledge of the instruments which are indispensable to Christian witness. It is not just enough to speak of a changing society.

The dynamics which cause society to change must be understood; - the problems regarding youth; the questions regarding the world of work; the problems concerning marginalization and the causes of new poverty, man/woman relationships; relationships between generations; choosing schools and types of education; the role of, and the possibilities offered by, the social communications media; the dramatic implications of certain moral choices; the challenge of science and technology; the various forms of violence; the centrality of peace as a factor for the development of peoples. In Italy, for example, these complexities have brought about different attitudes within the laity, at times so divergent, that in order to solve them, a cultural and theological reflexion is required going to the very root of the problems.

Training of the Laity: Today in Italy, and not only in Italy, we are going through a pre-dominantly secular period. The lay person's dual adherence to the Kingdom and to History presents him or her with new and ever more complex problems. A conscious formative effort is called for by the contemporary social context so that the Christian faith may attach less importance to typically temporal issues and stress instead the profundity of a free and responsible consciousness in the believer.

Precisely in this context the training of the laity assumes greater urgency and the insufficient attention devoted to this aspect of the "Guidelines" becomes apparent. Special attention should be given to this training and should be:-

- biblical, theological, spiritual: listening to the Word, aimed at intelligent faith and discernment;
- ecclesiological: awareness of sharing in the communion and the mission of the universal Church and particularly in its progress towards ecumenical reconciliation;
- anthropological: the sum of human virtues and the capacity for dialogue;
- cultural: paying attention to the cardinal problems of mankind and the relationship between faith and culture, faith and science/technology, faith and politics.
- professional: understanding work as the achievement of the human person and as a service to men and women in their daily needs;
- social: attention paid to social, civic and political commitment, and also through a ministry of charity, to Christ present in the oppressed, in the marginalized and in the least worthy.

Education: In our document we have stressed how the education of an authentic laity required thorough commitment to achieve integration between human and Christian values as well as a deep cultural and pedagogical awareness of the research being carried out by those, baptized or otherwise, who find themselves in a controversial position

regarding the Christian faith. At the Church Congress in Loreto last year a category of Church membership - "belonging with reservations" - was mentioned. In fact this category is increasing. Keeping this reality in mind it is necessary to maintain certain criteria if we are to promote a consistent education policy:-

- every form of christian education if it is to be efficacious, must be based on a pedagogy which is able to bring about unity between faith and life, preventing disintegration of the various aspects of human and Christian experience;
- every exercise of christian education should be gradual since it should respect the evolutionary rhythm of each individual person, especially that of boys and girls and youths. When this condition is neglected an artificial religiosity is transmitted which may be forced;
- every exercise of christian education of youth must prepare them to meet and make an adult choice of faith, and its consequent development should deepen the theme of the Christian choice in relation to various callings.

It is quite obvious that all this requires theological research which fosters careful reflection on the experience now present in the christian community in order to bring about the change from a theology on the laity to a theology with the Laity. From this perspective it has become essential to consider more carefully the place where the basic grounding of the laity takes place - the home, the parish and the school.

Generally, it is through the associations that one obtains an adequate training in the apostolate. This, however, is not the only way. In fact it is not so prominent to-day and it is perhaps worthwhile asking oneself the reason. At Loreto, during the Congress of the Italian Church, Pope John-Paul II stated that "the (Catholic) associations and movements in effect represent a privileged channel for the training and the promotion of an active laity conscious of its role in the Church and in the world, in accordance with the Council's authentic teaching". In fact, today, on the one hand, we are witnessing a growing temptation of some people, faced with current difficulties and complexities, to take refuge in strictly "ecclesial" experiences (parish catechesis, volunteer work, etc.), and even, on the part of some pastors, to put forward these experiences as the real and privileged way of being "Church".

It seems to us that we should at one and the same time lay "claim", humbly but firmly, to the service which our associations have always performed both as Church, and in the Church, through out direct engagement in life and in social work. This is a difficult and troubled area but it is the only place where a real, concrete service to our brothers and

sisters may be lived. We stress the risk of encouraging less problem-atical forms of service for this seems to us to lead to one of today's most serious omissions in the apostolate.

Lay Spirituality: In addition, it is necessary to promote serious research into lay spirituality. The "Guidelines" appear to propose only summary elements of this spirituality and do not take into account its originality and development. The modern world requires a spirituality which sustains and prepares one not only to speak to the men and women of today, but to converse with them and to live a life of clear and mature faith, able to express itself today in the present culture of unbelief, indifference and secularization.

The prerequisites for this spirituality are:

- a sense of vocation;
- the habit of continual contemplation;
- consciousness of the need to be builders of peace;
- fidelity to the skills and the methods of research and meditation;
- commitment and readiness to serve;
- a refusal to accept failure or default.

Knowing that the traditional way to sanctity for the laity is found in daily life we are called to commit ourselves. Everyone should understand that the commitments which are specifically lay not only do not constitute an obstacle to sanctity but, on the contrary are where one may and one must live the spirit of the beatitudes. And this is true for the ordinary areas in which lay people live, in family life, working life, social and political life, etc.

Lay persons are not "sent" into the world; they live in the world, and it is there that they must carry out their function. It is not therefore, a question of them preaching to the world but of devoting themselves to the world where they can sow the Word of God through their daily activities. This sowing is done first of all by working in and developing the ordinary situations of life. Lay persons keep within the precise functional characteristics of these situations, acknowledge their nature not attributing to them an artificial super-nature, and by their action increase the freedom of development in these situations. The first duty of lay people in dialogue with the world is to devote themselves utterly to the moment in time which is granted to them.

Missionary service: The Vatican Council presented the Church-world relationship from a missionary angle in terms of service. This service to the world is directed towards the rediscovery of the balance inherent in mankind's human, historical nature and the plan which God has always intended for creation, brought about through the Redemption. In our Council's document we have emphasized the need

for the coming Synod to offer re-orientations which will render the missionary dimension of the Church ever more active and vital.

We have pointed out also, how political endeavour may also be an expression of this missionary orientation, with two 'provisos', - that it be lived as an effort to bring to fruition the christian potential present in all reality, and that it accepts the responsibilities which this implies.

There are some initiatives which are inseperable from a new and mature laity:

- inaugurating a coherent ecclesiology;
- establishing a correct, dynamic relationship between the lay state which goes beyond the merely theoretical and accepts the practical consequences of this;
- lastly, affirming that political commitment is constitutive of the Christian character of existence.

#### CONCLUSION

Our hope is that these ideas may all be retained and shared in the working document for the Synod and may in due course form the subject of research by the Synod itself. If there is room left to express a wish it is this, that the lay people attending the Synod as experts may do so as such, and not merely as bureaucrats from the apostolate of the laity. May they truly represent the rich and complex experiences present in the different local Churches.

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SOME LAY CONSULTATIONS IN ENGLAND  
FOR THE 1987 BISHOPS'  
SYNOD ON THE VOCATION AND MISSION OF THE LAITY

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Margaret Hebblethwaite

*(On trouvera l'introduction française à cette conférence à la fin du texte).*

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Time constraints make it necessary for me to be selective in my comments and this may lead to an impression that I give too much emphasis to negative criticisms. That is not my intention. I will deal first with some five points that appeared in our preparations for the Synod. They are relevant not only to the Church in England and Wales but to the mission of the Church in the world.

1. An inward looking Church;
2. The need for the laity to take a full part in the mission of the Church;
3. Women in the Church;
4. Genuine difficulties regarding laity/clergy differences;
5. The growth of dynamism from below exemplified in the growth of various kinds of basic communities.

1. An inward looking Church: Cardinal Hume's now famous "dream" at the last ordinary Bishops' Synod when he saw the Church as an embattled castle is still valid to-day. In many ways our Church is inward looking, the very antithesis of an outgoing missionary Church. At times one has the impression that the laity need a specialised knowledge of technical terminology if they are to understand church documents addressed to them. e.g. The Guidelines (Lineamenta) circulated in preparation for the Synod refer to "the crisis of secularisation", assuming that all are conversant with the nature of the crisis.

2. Laity in the Mission of the Church: Guidelines has valuable quotations from the Documents of Vatican II but there is no evident acknowledgement of difficulties arising from these: "The lay apostolate derives from the lay person's very vocation as a Christian". (G.4) or "...All lay persons, through those gifts given to them, are at once the living instruments of the mission of the Church". (G.9) These and so many other references are excellent but their impact on attitudes towards the laity is negligible.

Again guidelines refers to the laity "sharing in the body of the Lord in the breaking of the eucharistic bread" (G.15) without any

reference, to sharing the cup thus avoiding an issue which is of growing importance to many English lay people. The language of liturgy is the expression of what it means to be Church. It is crucial. Yet there is still widespread neglect of the laity in the liturgy exemplified in seating arrangements, prayers, preaching, welcoming.

3. Women in the Church: Guidelines refers to the blossoming of new lay groups of great variety and vitality, at times spontaneous and informal (G.7), but takes no note of the failure to implement Lumen Gentium's - "no inequality deriving from sex" (G.16). There is no reference to the growth of vital women's groups at a time when more and more women see themselves as Church.

4. Laity/Clergy: There are genuine difficulties regarding the differences between laity and clergy. Guidelines quotes Lumen Gentium again: "By reason of their special vocation it belongs to the laity to seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs... They live in the world"... One may ask - where do the clergy live? There appears to be no awareness of the problem. Guidelines strongly affirms the temporal state of the laity (G.22, 23 and 24) and quotes the present Pope's concern regarding the "dangers of the clericalization of the laity and the laicization of the clergy". (G.9) There is an uneasy relationship between this emphasis on secularity coming from Lumen Gentium and the emphasis on the place of the laity in the mission of the Church coming from the Decree on the Lay Apostolate.

Guidelines refers to the ministerial priesthood differing essentially and not just in degree from the common priesthood (G.19) but this leaves many questions unanswered. To-day there is a widespread effort to break through the boundaries separating laity and clergy manifested for example in dress, celibate status, separate work. Laity seek collaboration and familiarity and ease of relationships with clergy who are willing to share the exigencies of living in the world without privileges.

Being an apostle means being present at the intersection of the Church and the world. Many of us refuse to accept being confined to a secular status. The boundaries are not at all clear. Is working in a prison lay or clerical?, writing a book on spirituality?, political activity in Nicaragua?, involvement of a priest in a job creation scheme in a poor area? visiting the sick?, feeding the hungry?, caring for refugees?

The spheres of Church and world should not be separated as though the one was the realm of the clergy and the other the realm of the laity.

The suggestion that the layperson's place is in the world can be as oppressive and discriminating as the parallel statement that, 'the woman's place is in the home'.

Confusion about ordination remains. It is seen in the controversy about the acceptance of ARCIC'S latest statement. Two views of the priest continue, one based on an existing charism of leadership, the other based on delegation as a representative of the Church. The answer to the problem is not to slam down boundaries again.

5. Basic Communities: The growth and development of basic communities scarcely appears in the Guidelines but this is not surprising in view of the "inward looking Church mentality". The question must be asked: "Is the idea that the laity belongs to the Church and participates in her mission of salvation only an "elitist" consciousness or a truly "popular" one?"

## II

The Church in England and Wales carried out a well organised consultation "Called to Serve - Finding God in Daily Life". It was very far from the approach of Guidelines. Preparatory leaflets, distributed over a number of weeks, each began with the description of an incident from parish life - designed to educate the laity. There were 1000 group responses and 800 individual responses. About 1 in 20 of all Catholics in England and Wales were thus involved personally in the preparatory process - a remarkable achievement.

Yet, many responses saw the content of the leaflets and the questionnaires based on them as manipulative and naive. Apparently open to developments, these are nevertheless foreseen within a structure that remains basically unaltered. The need to involve qualified lay people was pointed out in responses, the need to "spread the load", to involve laity at all possible levels. Many efforts on the part of the laity to become involved were rendered impotent by dominating clergy.

## III

### A Laity Consultation - Report

I summarise this report from a group which consisted of 300 self-selected and unofficial people drawn together by their desire to give "a willing, noble and enthusiastic response to the voice of Christ and to the urging of the Holy Spirit" (Dec. on the Apost. of Lay People, 797). The Report notes surprise at references to the role of the laity in the Church when in a fundamental sense the laity are the Church.

The Report continues:

Too often the laity have had to fall back on clerical or monastic models of spirituality which emphasise renunciation, silence, and detachment from the world in a sense inappropriate to the laity. Laity are immersed in and responsible for the world. That is where they should find potential for spiritual growth.

But this means that the laity must have greater confidence in their own experience as a source of holiness and the raw material of prayer. Mutual forgiveness would be an example within the family; breaking down barriers of race, class, and sex would be an example in the wider world.

It is therefore a spirituality which is meaningless unless it leads to firm commitment and action. It has so many dimensions - social, political, international, justice and peace, as well as business morality and the ethics of work, unemployment, and medicine.

These concerns should be more evident in Eucharistic expression. The offered bread and wine sum up the whole of creation and of human toil.

Some have experience of fruitful collaboration between the clergy and the laity but this happens far too infrequently. In this way the Church is prevented from fulfilling its Mission. We urgently need an active committed laity to take initiatives in the Spirit of Vatican II and a clergy willing to share responsibilities without feeling threatened.

#### Specific Proposals

1. Laity should be encouraged to enrich themselves theologically and spiritually according to their ability and vocation and to develop their own sense of Ministry.
2. There is need for a Directory of lay expertise to be made available in order that existing resources be used to the full.
3. Seminaries should be open to those training for ordained and non-ordained Ministries, for the benefit of both parties.
4. Finances should be reallocated for the training and employment of lay theologians, counsellors, catechists and pastoral workers. In addition it is part of our lay responsibility to find the money for this.
5. Since liturgy is "the work of the people" the laity of each worshipping community should take fuller responsibility for the preparation, and celebration of the liturgy.

6. The pastoral and liturgical work of the people of the parish as manifested in the parish liturgy, institutions, and councils, should have a charter of continuity which is guaranteed no matter who is parish priest.
7. Laity should regularly preach in churches. Lay people, properly trained, should be able to give the homily at Mass. By restricting this to the clergy the Church is not making use of the gifts of the Spirit and is thus impoverishing the whole body.
8. Steps should be taken towards greater accountability of ministers (whether ordained or not) to the people at Parish and Diocesan level so that mutual trust can be fostered. There should also be financial accountability.
9. The possibilities of team Ministry (including lay workers) should be explored and developed.
10. Smaller worshipping groups and base communities should be promoted according to NT tradition. Unity of mission can be maintained within this diversity.
11. Justice and peace should be recognised as being at the heart of the Gospel message for all Christians: ecumenical and other groups genuinely working for justice should be encouraged and backed by a financial commitment.
12. The Church's avowed concern for justice and peace in the world should be shown in its own structures, particularly in its attitude to women and minorities who are excluded and alienated from the mainstream of Church life.
13. In the present situation of a grave shortage of priests there should be a reappraisal of the eligibility of married men and women for ordination to the priesthood and diaconate.
14. There should be a greater commitment to ecumenism; we have much to learn from other churches that will help us better to fulfil our mission. All should be done together except those things which for the time being must be done apart.

Postscript to the proposals: Many of these proposals have been under discussion and some even officially approved for a long time, but we cannot state too strongly the frustration felt by the laity that little action has been taken and that valuable time and opportunities have been irrevocably lost. We look forward to the 1987 Synod which could herald a new era in the evangelising work of the Church in which the resources of the Church's Mission are multiplied a hundred-fold.

(Margaret Hebblethwaite est écrivaine, journaliste à la radio, conseiller spirituel et elle a l'expérience d'un ministère dans une prison de jeunes. Elle a été profondément impliquée dans la préparation du Synode des laïcs avec la Conférence des évêques d'Angleterre et du pays de Galles. Elle a également participé à deux consultations préparatoires, l'une de 18 membres de professions libérales associées avec Oxford, l'autre de 300 personnes originaires de toute l'Angleterre. Sa contribution au séminaire reflète les conclusions de ces différentes sessions préparatoires. Elle a insisté spécialement sur le danger de ne pas prendre en compte les questions jusqu'ici encore jamais résolues, concernant la distinction entre clergé et laïc. Les deux consultations auxquelles Mme. Hebblethwaite a participé ont déploré le maintien de frontières trop rigides entre les deux. Les trois intervenants ont dit leur espoir que le Synode, fasse les changements de structures nécessaires pour enlever ces frontières).

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NEWS: (continued from page 4)

1. SEDOS Seminar Programme 1987:
  - a. Villa Cavalletti, March 24-28, 1987: LAITY IN THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH NOW AND IN THE FUTURE.
  - b. Tuesday, October, 1987: A Look-back at the Synod on the Laity.
  - c. Tuesday, December 8, 1987 Annual General Assembly.
  - d. (Villa Cavalletti Seminar March 22-26, 1988).
2. Research initial Formation Programmes for Mission including solidarity with the poor, inculturation, dialogue, justice and peace.
3. Study of some of the theological challenges from "Third World" Theologies which emerged at the 1986 Villa Cavalletti Seminar.
4. Facilitate the exchange of information between SEDOS members on their efforts to deepen their understanding of proclamation, inculturation, dialogue, and liberation.
5. Complete the 1986 SEDOS study on World Poverty.
6. Organise occasional meetings and updates on mission situations.
7. Implement the computer plan for the Documentation Center and Secretariat.

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