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IN THIS ISSUE

The method of *Lectio Divina*, the sacred reading of the Bible, is not just a method of prayer it is also a method of theological reflection and a way of inculturating the gospel message. Holy Spirit missionary, MICHEL DE VERTEUIL, CSSp, developed this theme in the recent SEDOS seminar. Every culture transmits its values through stories; reading the Bible is story-reading. Reading it in a group you tell the story, retell it and understand it in a new way. But this must be done in an organised and disciplined way. The discipline is to stay with the Bible story and go more deeply into it.

The method is deep but simple. It is not expensive. In poor groups where electricity fails, people manage with a candle or an oil-lamp and their Bible. Nothing more is needed for a wonderful evening of prayer - no videos, or other audio-visual aids.

It is not just for simple people! There are no "simple people!" We recommend you to read the text of this one-day seminar. There are many insights in the full account and also in the question and answer session.

The primal vision of the Indonesian people in central Flores with its particular local structure of belief and action formed the base of their Catholicism according to Divine Word Missionary JOHN PRIOR. It was far removed from the story of God's revelation to the chosen Jewish people. Behind the discovery of this basic truth lies a fundamental theological issue: God's creative presence and saving activity outside the Judeo-Christian tradition.

This raises the question: are the primal religio-cultural traditions of Flores, which date back perhaps some 70,000 years, vehicles of God's revelation? Grappling with this question was a fascinating personal journey which led Fr. Prior to the conclusion "We can theologise only in relation to other cul-

tures, other philosophies and their impact on the poor. There is no viable alternative."

IAMS conferences take place every three years. The previous one took place in Europe (Rome); the three before that were held in Africa (Zimbabwe) Asia (Bangalore) U.S.A. (New York). This year the Association held its Conference in the Pacific (Hawaii). In this issue there is a description and an assessment of the conference.

There are news items, Mission Moments and information on coming events.

NEWS

SEDOS NEW MEMBERS

SEDOS Executive Committee approved the following applications for membership:

SISTERS OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD, at the meeting on February 19, 1992. The Superior General is Liliane Touvette, RGS. Their address is: via Raffaello Sardiello 20, 00165 Rome. Tel. 66418545. FAX 66418864;

The MARIANISTS, at the meeting on July 1, 1992. The Superior General is Quentin Hackenewerth, SM. Their address is via Latina, 22, 00179 Rome. Tel. 70475892;

The MEDICAL MISSIONARIES OF MARY, at the meeting on October 1, 1992. The Superior General is Philomena Sheerin, MMM. Their address is Rosemount, Booterstown, Blackrock, Co. Dublin, Ireland. Tel. 01-2882722. FAX 01-2834626;

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THE THEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND TO INCULTURATION – *LECTIO DIVINA*

Michel de Verteuil, CSSp

(Michel de Verteuil is from Trinidad. He is a graduate of University College, Dublin and Fribourg University, Switzerland. After serving as a missionary in Nigeria he was Provincial of the Trinidad Province of the Holy Spirit Congregation and Rector of the Archdiocesan Major Seminary in Trinidad; he is at present on the staff of the Archdiocesan Pastoral Centre, Editor of the Catholic Newspaper of the Caribbean, and lectures at the Seminary.)

1. METHOD IN THEOLOGY

I would like to begin with a few remarks on the importance of theology. So many people feel that it is simply abstract thinking by special individuals, with little relation to ordinary life. But it is interesting that the Reagan administration in the United States decided on a policy to 'denigrate liberation theology,' because they realised what a powerful force theology really is. In South Africa, Albert Nolan was asked why he wasted time on theology instead of getting into the dangerous area of the fight against apartheid, but in fact he saw theology as quite dangerous, indeed radically subversive.

Theology and Culture

There can be no inculturation of the Church if it is not done in theology. The classical definition of theology, *fides quaerens intellectum*, faith seeking understanding, still stands. It is an attempt to express faith in our own language and culture (both personal and collective) in a systematic way.

It is only an attempt, so it is always provisional, never fully complete, always

needing further development. It needs to be done in a systematic way, so that it will be consistent, coherent, capable of being explained and handed on to others, capable of making sense of the whole of life, capable of providing vision and meaning.

Faith is preached, but theology is needed to express it in language and culture, and as theology develops it produces doctrine, so that doctrine is the fruit of theology. Once doctrine is produced, the process of theology begins again to keep the faith alive and meaningful.

When theology loses touch with the surrounding language and culture, it is no longer alive and faith suffers. This is a constant danger, so there is continual need to keep in touch with the reality of life and culture.

A New Theology

It can be said that we need a new theology in the Church today for a new age of mission. Recall Karl Rahner's description of the three eras of the

Church: First, the Jewish Church as the followers of Jesus recognised themselves as a special group. Then the Greek Church, when non-Jewish converts joined and brought their own language, culture and philosophy. This was a painful period of transition, with a great deal of dissension and bitterness and grew into the Greco-Roman era that lasted for centuries. Now we have the third era, a World Church, which includes all the cultures of the world. This is the Church of the future.

It is no longer possible to have one language, culture, philosophy or theology dominant in the Church. We have a pluralist Church and pluralism in theology, with black theology, feminist theology, liberation theology, etc. It is obvious that we need a new method in theology, or a convergence of theological methods, so that we can have a coherent theology that will be pluralist, appropriate to a pluralist Church.

I think that in rediscovering the *Lectio Divina* as a method for doing theology, we can help renewal in the Church. The *Lectio Divina* is not really new, as we see from the history of the Church. Many years ago I was greatly influenced by a book of Jean Leclercq, OSB about love of learning and love of God, and more recently by a book published in the United States by a Cistercian entitled *From the Cloister to the School*. It seems that what the Church is doing now is rediscovering the *Lectio Divina* of the early tradition.

Monastic and Scholastic Theology

Traditionally, there were two kinds of theology in the Church: monastic and scholastic. Not monastic in the modern sense (this would be an anachronism), but rather in the classical sense, perhaps better called community theology. These two differ with regard to setting and context. Monastic theology was done in the community; it was in touch with everyday life, and had the monastery at its centre. This went on for 800 years. Scholastic theology developed in special schools during the 11th and 12th centuries, it was done by specialists in the universities.

Different Contexts

The context for monastic theology was the liturgy (feasts, seasons, sacraments, Eucharist), whereas the setting for scholastic theology was the classroom. Monastic theology involved the whole community, whereas scholastic theology was for specialists, an elite.

Monastic theology was integrated into the culture, in song, dance, poetry, painting, and recognised pre-Christian writers like Virgil, Catullus, Plato, Aristotle. Its matter was daily life. Scholastic theology created its own matter, its own culture and language, a kind of sub-culture apart from the surrounding culture.

Monastic theology stressed imagination, feeling, creativity, whereas scholastic theology emphasized reason and analysis.

A Dominant Theology

From the 11th century onwards monastic theology disappeared and scholastic theology took over the whole Church; this is still largely the case in the Church today. Nowadays theology requires money, time, special qualifications, so that 90% of the people are excluded from it. Systematised scholastic theology is controllable and controlling, and facilitates control of the Church.

We see the effects of all this in the history of the Church. It led to a compartmentalisation of life, separating spiritual and secular life, prayer and action, and all the different spiritual exercises. Is it not strange that theologians are seldom canonised nowadays, whereas in monastic theology many were?

The message that seems to come across from scholastic theology is that it is not for life or for the soul; it is intellectual and abstract. In fact, some spiritual directors in seminaries warned students that it might make them proud, so they needed to pay special attention to their spiritual reading and other spiritual exercises to maintain a balance. A kind of cultural

domination developed that was not to be found in the early Church.

The question of theological method, is crucial for the health of the Church.

2. THE METHOD OF *LECTIO DIVINA*

I would like to explain the method of *Lectio Divina*, but also refer back to the history behind it. The first thing to remember is that *Lectio Divina* is both a method of prayer and of theology. This is important for several reasons:

Prayer and Theology

1) In the Church today *Lectio Divina* is often used purely as a method of prayer. In fact there is a very popular book called *Too Deep for Words*, which deals with *Lectio Divina* not only as a prayer method, but as a method of contemplative prayer. That is one tradition, understandable in the light of what I have been saying. The two things are seen as separate, so that the word 'monastic' conjures up ideas of cloister, separation from the world, and *Lectio Divina* is related to that. But in fact *Lectio Divina* is at the same time a method of prayer and of theological reflection. In other words, it is of the very nature of *Lectio Divina* to break down compartmentalisation. It is a very old method, but if it is limited to prayer alone it is not much help to us for the whole theological life of the Church.

2) It is a method of bible reading. The word *lectio* is very significant. It is reading. *Divina*, in ecclesiastical Latin does not mean 'divine.' For example, St. Thomas was called 'Divus Thomas.' It can be translated as 'sacred,' but not 'divine.' A good translation, then, would be 'sacred reading.' But the point is that it is reading. A reading of what? It is simultaneously a reading of the bible and a reading of experience; a way of reading which puts meaning into life. It means reading the bible and reading life at the same time. It is

The *Lectio Divina* approach I am recommending is not totally new, it is a rediscovery of an old tradition in the Church, one that has borne much fruit through the centuries.

reading as a sacred exercise.

3) It was organised in one way or other in the 4th and 5th centuries. In that period in the history of the Church, it was the dominant way of reading the bible. The long tradition of interpreting texts in the Divine Office, belongs to the tradition of *Lectio Divina*. It is a biblical method found in the bible itself. It was the main form of doing theology in the Church and a science which was prevalent about the time of St. Benedict. His whole rule was based on this.

The Method

The method must be based on solid foundations, because what we need in the Church is a popular systematic approach to theology. We must not oppose systematic and popular. In the Western world we take for granted that what is systematic is limited to people who have many years of formal education, and without this you cannot have systematised knowledge. That is false.

Some people say 'I like to work with simple people because they have such beautiful insights into the bible.' There is no such thing as a simple person. We are all prejudiced and narrow and inclined to look after our own interests. Some people have formal education, and others have none, but nobody is simple. Everybody needs to have discipline in reading the bible and in doing theology.

One of the reasons why popular theology must be systematised is to make sure that it is deep, good and creative - not haphazard, certainly not sentimental and above all not condescending.

Two Kinds Of Reading

We must distinguish between two kinds of reading: text book reading and story reading. We read text books for information, for facts which are objective and static. We read stories to identify with the characters, and this involves feelings, heart, imagination; it is subjective and involves movement. It is generally believed that the purpose for reading stories, listening to them on radio or watching them on TV, is entertainment whereas we read text books in order to learn. But this is not the reality. In the Caribbean, people watch TV excitedly while sitting on the edge of their seats. It is a community activity accompanied by lots of talking and back-slapping. A family I visited told me they were excited because they would have two weddings on a weekend. When I told them how happy I was, it transpired that one of the weddings was in the TV programme *Little House on the Prairie* and the other in *Dallas!*

Stories transmit memories, values and culture. A popular TV programme in the Caribbean is called *The Young and the Restless*. It is screened around midday and the whole country comes to a standstill to watch it. People identify with the stories, with the characters, and they unconsciously accept the values that are portrayed.

In text book reading the mind is active, the material is objective. In story reading feelings are involved, and the story has movement. Our culture teaches us that stories are for entertainment, for children, whereas text books are for grownups. This is totally untrue, because in every culture, including modern culture, stories are the vehicle through which the culture transmits its values.

Stories Transmit Culture

Parents tell us about life when they were young, how hard it was, how poor or how well-off they were. There was no electricity or running water, and yet they had a very full life. This is not just to entertain us, but to show us

that you can have a very full life without all these things. They tell us about how poor they had been not to entertain us, but to let us know they did not become wealthy by accident; they worked hard to get what they now have. Parents who are now poor might tell their children it was not always so, that once they were better off and fell on hard times, so they still have their self-respect. This is how a family hands on its values to children, helps them to have a sense of dignity and worth, helps them to keep true values. Similarly, when we join a religious congregation, we are told the story of the congregation in an interesting way, because we are entering a community with its own values and traditions. The way to understand these values is not through abstract teaching or text-books but through stories, memories, statues, paintings. All are reminders!

Every culture transmits its values through stories. But in our modern Western culture, with its high premium on reason and intellect, we take for granted that stories are not serious. The terrible effect of this is that values are being transmitted without people being aware of it. People, thinking that they are merely being entertained, do not realise that values are being communicated to them. The general impression is that text-books are more serious, they are for adults. Stories are considered less serious, more for children, for primitive people (e.g. Genesis is only a story because the Jews were a primitive people). In fact all cultures depend on stories.

It needs to be made clear that a story teaches in a different way. Text books teach directly through facts (e.g. Washington is the capital of the United States), but a story teaches indirectly. TV viewers identify with the attractive characters in a story and somehow adultery and other immoral acts seem less wrong when attractive people commit them. Values are thus being transmitted very subtly, unconsciously. Without thinking, - racism, violence, and adultery do not seem so bad. The story does not teach directly that these things are acceptable; it comes across

indirectly. Very deep things can be communicated to us through stories.

The Bible is Story-Reading?

What is the bible? Many people would say a text-book, others, a mixture of story and text-book, but very few would answer spontaneously that it is a story book. The reason is first because of our long tradition of emphasizing reason, and also because we think stories are primitive, for children, and the bible is not something childish. But in fact the bible is a collection of stories, making up the one story of God's people. The individual books are stories. Jesus told stories. He himself is a story. The Bible contains proverbs and legislation, but these also have the quality of stories.

The Bible was written to communicate values; in it God wrote a story to communicate values. It is difficult to get this point across in the modern world. It is true even in the Third World, where people have been made to feel that they are inferior and that their cultures are inferior. When I taught in Africa I found that people spontaneously believed this even though their whole culture was bound up with stories. The world has been brain-washed by the belief that the rational is the highest way to wisdom and knowledge. But God understood human nature very well, and when he wanted to teach us values and the deep lessons of life, he told stories. The bible is a story book made up of the Old Testament, the story of Jesus and the story of the early Church in the New Testament.

A Living Story

God sent us a living story: Jesus. We have to re-educate ourselves to the seriousness of stories. We have lost the art and skill of story-telling because we think of ourselves as serious and story-telling is considered inferior, mere entertainment. It is sad that people who enter a seminary as accomplished story-tellers are brain-washed until they lose the art. We have to rediscover this art. *Lectio Divina* is

based on this. It is story reading, the deepest way we can communicate with God or communicate the word of God to others, because this is how the bible was written in the first place. This is the first principle of *Lectio Divina*.

TWO KINDS OF STORY READING

The second principle is that there are two kinds of story reading: alienating or homecoming stories or reading.

Alienating

The fact is that 90% of today's stories are alienating. Alien means foreign, so an alienating reading makes you feel like a foreigner. You identify with the characters, but you cannot really identify; you feel alien, an outsider. It is not your world, but somebody else's, and you are not a part of it. The soap operas on TV are a clear example. People identify with the characters, but when the programme is over they see the contrast with their own drab homes, their own families, friends or cars. The world of the screen is much more exciting and attractive, but it is not their world. This is part of the attraction - escapism from a drab world without dignity, beauty or romance.

Even people's personal dramas and infidelities are not as dramatic as those on the screen. The same is true of novels. People in the Caribbean walk the streets cut off from their surroundings as they listen on their walkmans to Michael Jackson. Even in dances, they are not dancing with an actual partner, but with a dream person, the singer or someone else. It is an escape from reality, a world they cannot really enter and one which does not bring meaning to life. This is an ongoing reality. Satellite TV enables populations of great poverty in the Caribbean to watch TV 24 hours a day; it keeps the children occupied and off the street. Apart from the story, advertisements portray foods and attractions that people have no experience of. These are really alienating stories; it is an alienating reading.

Homecoming Stories

A homecoming story is totally different. It is the story parents tell their children when they want to say: we are respectable people, what we have we had to work for; our house may not be as good as others, but listen to how we built it. Children thus acquire a sense of their own dignity. They understand why they have to work hard, and they realise what is worthwhile in life. Likewise the stories of the saints help us to understand ourselves, show us where we have come from, where we are going, what life is all about.

The Bible is A Homecoming Story.

Take the primordial story of the passage through the Red Sea. It is very simply but dramatically told. The Israelites flee, terrified of the Egyptians, but also afraid of the sea ahead of them which is a place of monsters and danger. Moses put forth his wand, the water parted and they walked through in safety, in fact more free than they were before.

Have we ever had such an experience? Yes, all of us at times in our lives have experienced dangers behind and ahead of us, and somehow God brought us through, more free than we were before. But when you tell someone the story with all the drama of the bible and ask if he or she has had similar experiences, they spontaneously say, "No, nothing so dramatic ever happened to me." But of course such things have happened to them; it is sad that they have to be shown this.

The trouble is that Hollywood shows the dramatic bible stories as mere stories happening in times past, out there, but not touching us today, personally. People think that the Exodus happened only to Moses, and to extraordinary people. So the bible can be read as an alienating story, as something to which we are not connected. But it was not meant to be so. It is really a homecoming story. From bible reading, I learn my own story.

Lectio Divina reveals dramatic stories,

but they are not to be read as something of the past. They are to be read as stories that help us to understand where we are today and where we are going tomorrow. The difficulty is that we take it for granted that stories are not serious, that they are only entertainment, and also that nothing exciting can happen to us. We cannot imagine these stories happening in our own lives; they happen only in the past, to others. Much of our bible teaching gives the impression that the bible is a book to be looked at, to be imitated because it has a message, but it is not something we live at the moment. *Lectio Divina* is based on the principle that the bible is a story to explain to us not what should happen, nor merely what will happen, but what is actually happening, now - to each one of us. We need to discover this in every bible story and to celebrate it.

An Example: Isaiah 43.16-21

All of this is brought out very well in the following passage. It makes clear that the method I am trying to explain is already implied in the bible itself. It is the famous passage from Isaiah, ch. 43, vv. 16-21:

Thus says the Lord, who makes a way in the sea, a path in the mighty waters, who brings out chariot and horse, army and warrior; they lie down, they cannot rise, they are extinguished, quenched like a wick; Do not remember the former things, or consider the things of old. I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert. The wild animals will honour me, the jackals and the ostriches; for I give water in the wilderness, rivers in the desert, give drink to my chosen people, the people whom I formed for myself so that they might declare my praise.

This was written when the Jews were in exile in Babylon. They had been a great people, but they became divided and were eventually overcome and led into slavery. It is not clear whether

Isaiah was part of the community in exile or went there as a missionary, but this does not matter. He gave them a bible teaching. As exiles they were forced to do menial work; they were exploited and taken advantage of. Although a proud people, they were treated in a way which offended their dignity.

Telling an Old Story

Isaiah teaches the Israelites in three progressive movements:

First he tells them: 'Thus says the Lord, who makes a way in the sea, a path in the mighty waters, who brings out chariot and horse, army and warrior; they lie down, they cannot rise, they are extinguished, quenched like a wick.' It is the story of the Exodus, told very dramatically, without worrying about factual details, as a good storyteller does, to stir up their feelings. God himself put those Egyptians in the field and he snuffed them out. How did people respond to this story? Would they be encouraged, helped? Some would be cynical and ask: What does this story do for us today? Others would be escapist. What a beautiful story! Tell us more to help us forget our difficulties. But Isaiah anticipates both responses and says: 'No need to recall the past.' No logic here! He has just recalled the past and then says there is no need to recall it. Why tell us the story if there is no need? The answer is: 'See I am doing a new thing.'

Re-telling The Story

He has told the old story, not to make them cynical or encourage escapism, but so that they can recognise the same thing happening today; not what should happen, or what will happen if they start behaving themselves, but what is actually happening there and then. 'I am doing a new thing, now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?' This is the art of the *Lectio Divina*, to tell the old story, and then show that this old story is really a present modern story.

And then Isaiah goes on to tell the old story again:

'Yes, I will make a way in the wilderness... I give water in the wilderness, rivers in the desert, to give drink to my chosen people, the people whom I formed for myself so that they might declare my praise.'

In this paradox we see the glory of good bible reading. You do not merely use the bible as a starting point. You read the text. The tendency is to say, Moses at the Red Sea has nothing to do with me, or to use it as an escapist a reading in order to stay in the past. But it is to be seen not as a moralising text, nor as a statement of fact, but as a story to throw light on the present, to help us understand what is happening to us now.

Understanding in a New Way

That is only the second movement. The third is to tell the old story again, to understand the present and the future so that the old text itself is seen in a whole new way. That is an example of the art of *Lectio Divina* in the time of Isaiah. It is the same today. The bible read correctly is not a book about the past, but about the present. We use biblical language to understand the present. We do not use the bible text and then go on to speak of the present in new theological language.

We speak of the present in biblical language, but conscious that we are speaking of the present and the future. This is the art of the theologian. The theologian is a bible story-teller, who reads the present in the light of the old bible story and then tells a new bible story. This requires knowledge of the bible, but knowledge also of what is happening today. It is not primarily a question of moral exhortation. This needs to be stressed, because 90% of bible teaching has been reduced to moral exhortation and it is not that primarily, although there are moral conclusions to be drawn. *Lectio Divina* is a reading of the present in bible language. There are not two separate readings; it is all bible reading, both the past and the present are present.

3. THE THREE STAGES

The method of *Lectio Divina* is a very simple process, done according to a discipline of three stages: reading, meditation, prayer. These three stages are the same for everybody. It is important to stress this. The method of *Lectio Divina* is itself a message of how we understand God and ourselves. The setting of *Lectio Divina* is part of the method. It is not meant to be done in a separate compartment of life, but in a life-setting of place and time. It is the same for all, whether university educated or illiterate. In the monastic tradition only a few monks could read, but *Lectio Divina* was done by the whole community. Today it is done by many people who cannot read. I have found that everybody needs the same discipline. Anything less is to become condescending. The discipline is: reading, meditation, prayer.

Reading

Reading means familiarising yourself with the text. Read it aloud, let the words sink in. The words themselves are important, though there is a tendency in our Church to think that they are not. Some criticise the fundamentalists, saying they stress the words whereas we stress the meaning. That is bad theology, bad spirituality, bad history. We love the words. *Lectio Divina* is based on a love of the actual text. Love the words, the sounds, the metaphors. Look up a commentary to get the meaning and to understand the context. Words are important.

Meditation

In *Lectio Divina* meditation means something different from what it means in other prayer contexts. In meditation the imagination is active when we enter into the story, when we recognise ourselves in it. For example, when we read the gospel about the useless servant, the first impression is of the seemingly inconsiderate, unjust master. But then an individual may see his or her mother in the figure of the servant. She works hard, then comes home and instead of

serving herself she looks after the family, and only then feeds herself. That is meditation - to recognise the people of today in the story.

Prayer

Then comes prayer. Meditation leads us to thank God. What is essential to the method is that first we pray spontaneously in our own words, but with time prayer is 'made in the very words of the bible and these become our prayer. So instead of saying 'O Lord, I thank you for my mother, that she looked after our family in a very thankless way,' we use the words of Jesus. We thank God that our mother, when she came home, first served us and only afterwards looked after herself. At this point we start reading again, and then meditating again, then praying again - it's an ongoing activity. Prayer becomes a whole way of life, and the bible text a part of life. We understand ourselves and our life much better.

Time and Discipline

We began with the presupposition that the bible is not a book for information, but a story communicating values. As a story it speaks to the imagination, and the purpose of the reading is to enter into that story, recognise it as our own and as the story of the whole of humanity. It is not an alienating experience, so we don't ask the question: will I be able to find myself in this story? We believe that God wrote this book for us so that we can meet him in it; that is our act of faith.

The bible can always touch us very deeply, but we need to give it sufficient time. Too much of our reading is superficial. As bible and theology teachers we must help people to go deeply into a passage. A deep meditation cannot be done in just one session. I discovered this from experience. Now I take several sessions for the same text, with intervals of a week. The

second week there is sharing in community, and in between people can share informally.

We should not look on the bible as a book of messages to be transmitted. The passage has to stir memories, deep memories of people and things, memories forgotten, things for which we have not thanked God. With this experience we grow in self-confidence. So often people feel the Sunday gospel was written just for them; God wanted them to hear just that word. God is not teaching us with abstract, objective messages; he tells us stories and wants to hear ours; we discover each other in the combined stories.

Discipline is needed. Thousands of people receive real words from God, but the *Lectio Divina* gives us a method and discipline to enable this to happen. Read the text over and over again; something will always happen if we persevere. Listen to it, and do not read into it what is not there, or omit what you do not like. Do not try to guess what Jesus might have said or done; stay with the actual text.

There is also the discipline of meditation; be true to the text, true to experience. 'See I am doing a new thing.' We need to be able to see that God is doing something new. The sign that we do this is that we pray, and that we pray in the words of the passage itself.

Discovering a Pattern

Meditation is ongoing. The three stages: reading, meditation and prayer are a cycle. Reading leads to meditation and prayer leads us back to a new reading of the text. Our prayer is done in bible language and leads to a deeper meditation.

Life teaches us that when we look at our lives we discover certain patterns. An example would be that it is not enough to be healed. We must return and admit that we were healed, recognise what we were healed from, and admit that we were touched by Jesus or by some person. The pattern is that we

do not want to go back over humiliating experiences, and yet it is important that we do. So from one memory in our meditation we begin to make links with other events in our lives. Gradually we discover a pattern. The meditation goes deeper and deeper; this takes time. The text will bring up deeper memories, some may even make us cry. The passage will reveal something about my history, the kind of person I am. And then it will take another turn when I see the pattern repeated in another person's life, perhaps that of a parent or friend. Gradually I discover that this passage is telling me something about life, about service; it is a universal story.

Wisdom

Here we are into the area of Wisdom. In *Lectio Divina* we do not start with general principles, but with simple text, leading to meditation, to memories and prayer and to insight. This is life. This is wisdom. It comes through imagination, not reason. It is what bible reading is meant to lead to. So often we do not allow this to happen in our bible groups. We do not take enough time, and perhaps also we do not fully believe that God's people are capable of deep theology and wisdom. We cannot teach wisdom, but we can teach the method that enables it to happen. We can help people to wait for the moment of wisdom or insight to occur - the fruit of *Lectio Divina*.

There are certain qualities peculiar to this wisdom. It is not regimented, we cannot plan it or produce it; it just happens.

1 - It is a universal statement, not a particular statement applicable to Catholics only, for example, we must go to Mass, but a universal statement; for example, true service does not look for reward, this is what true service is like. Such a statement applies to any minister of state or church. Or to be truly healed means that we acknowledge the fact and give thanks. Jesus told the man to stand up and go on his way. He did not want the man to remain there giving thanks. A true relationship

is where we can do something for somebody and let them go on their way. Or - Dives and Lazarus. A life like Dives leads to burial, not to true life. This is wisdom.

2 - The wisdom of *Lectio Divina* is an insight of the heart. It is not abstract, but concrete, leading to celebration.

3 - It is an insight that is new, not radically new every week. It is a conversion experience.

4 - It leads to action. It is a pity we have lost the stress on wisdom in our

Church. St. Paul prayed continually for wisdom. Theology has become such an abstract science because it has lost its biblical roots. Wisdom leads to action, but is not identified with it. In our homilies it is not necessary to go on repeating - we must do this or that. Jesus simply told us what the kingdom is like. Let the stories work and speak for themselves.

Lectio Divina is very simple, very deep; it does not require great education; but it needs a method and discipline.

4. *LECTIO DIVINA* AND CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER

Lectio Divina is a whole way of life, a way of understanding God, Church, ourselves and our own spiritual growth. As we go on we realise the wisdom of this movement and why the Church grew to be the kind of Church it is, Catholic in the sense of wholeness, integration. Theology had been one, a complete whole. Only later did it become divided up into compartments of dogma, moral, ascetical and spiritual theology, etc. It was one, meditating on the word of God. It was also integrated in the sense of being merged into the culture. Pre-Christian artists and philosophers were naturally integrated into the thinking and culture of the Church. This is seen, for example, in the celebration of Christmas, 2nd of February and folk festivals in different parts of Europe. Intégration took place because the Church lived by the *Lectio Divina*.

Along with the three stages of reading, meditation, and prayer... some writers on *Lectio Divina* introduce a fourth stage, contemplation. But my reading on the matter leads me to think that this is not a distinct concept. All prayer is contemplative, and it is not right to distinguish two kinds of prayer, non-contemplative and contemplative. This is to misrepresent our tradition of prayer in the Catholic Church.

'Differentiated' Prayer

The prayer stage of *Lectio Divina* contains two steps: the first could be called differentiated prayer. As we find in meditation, as soon as the scripture text brings a memory (for example, of our mother, or ourselves in a certain situation or experience) we begin to meditate on it and find that the meditation leads to three different kinds of prayer: thanksgiving, humility and petition.

1 - In thanksgiving, praise or celebration. We read our story; 'Lord, I thank you for Jesus, the way he healed those lepers... I thank you for the healing experiences in my life....'

2 - Secondly, we feel humble: 'Lord, I realise how I have never gone back on my healing to acknowledge it, so I have not really had a deep healing.'

3 - Finally there is petition. 'Lord I think of all the lepers in our society, send them Jesus or someone who will walk out on the waters to help them..' These are three different kinds of prayer.

Of these three, the two most neglected are the first two - praise and humility. We are too used to prayer as petition. The real sign that we are doing *Lectio Divina* is that we come to praise and celebrate that Jesus is alive,

in our own life and in the lives of others. Until we do, we have not finished our meditation! It takes time, honesty and depth to discover God at work in our lives. Likewise we need humility, to be able to discover the sinfulness in life. This is the first stage in the prayer moment.

Somebody once asked: "How can *Lectio Divina* serve as a healing of wounds in a religious or parish community?" Of course it can, but we have to be careful to see that the prayer of humility is really my humility, not an expression that points the finger at others. We thank God for the work of grace in others, and so there is a communion in prayer from the meditation.

Simplified Prayer

If we stay with the passage in our meditation long enough, for a week or more, we will find that something is happening in prayer. It becomes simple. We can if we wish, call this simple prayer contemplative. All real prayer is contemplative.

The simplifying process works in two directions. First we find that we are concentrating on fewer and fewer words in the passage. 'Lord, I am a useless servant, I will tidy myself and serve you, and then I will eat afterwards.' or

'Stand up and go on your way.'
'When I went to show myself, I found I was cured.'

We find that we are happy to use the simple phrase.

The second step towards simplicity is that we no longer differentiate between praise, humility and petition. So we are merely saying a phrase, of praise, humility and petition all together at the same time. In the tradition of the *Lectio Divina* there is no different method for contemplative prayer and the rest of prayer, or for the rest of our theological life. The result of wisdom and meditation is that we merely rest in the passage and are content just to say the words.

PRAYER OF THE HEART

Then we come to a third stage, when we say the words not with our lips but with our heart. So we are saying them, and yet not saying them; our lips are no longer moving. That is an advanced stage of contemplative prayer. In the tradition of *Lectio Divina* this is inbuilt. It is not something meant only for chosen souls or for a spiritual élite. It is for everybody. Everybody is called to find union with God in the bible. It is just there and is ongoing. An ordinary housewife goes about her work singing one line of a psalm without analysing the words, the bible text holds her full attention, and holds her in peace, in oneness with others, in oneness with the whole of creation and with her work. Such a person might wonder if you asked her whether what she was doing was sacred? Of course! The method of *Lectio Divina* is so normal, so ordinary!

Holiness for All

Those of us who study should help people to come to this experience of prayer, of resting in God as a normal part of life. There is no need for a cloister or a special setting for this. I had a sad experience in Trinidad of a famous spiritual writer telling a group that in order to live a contemplative life they needed to set apart a special room for quiet in the house, - with a carpet! But few of his listeners had any spare room or any experience of carpets. To speak like that is to write off 90% of our population as incapable of contemplative prayer. What about the mother with 6 or 7 children in two rooms? Or the wife who meditates while lying beside a drunken husband seven nights a week? These people experience contemplative prayer, but we have allowed our theology to give the impression that it is not possible for them. We separate prayer from the experience of people, from everyday life. This is not our Catholic tradition.

All are called to holiness, to make progress, to grow in it. This is an aspect of *Lectio Divina* that must be continually stressed. It gives unity to

theological reflection and to our prayer life. Our experience of oneness with God is rooted once more in practical everyday experience. We do not have to withdraw from it in order to have contemplative moments and contemplative prayer.

I recall the testimony of a woman surrounded by her children who told how she saw Jesus present in them, thanked God for them and just rested in the experience. Or the experience of sin, suddenly we understand what a sinner we are and how we have been healed. We just remain humble in the presence of God. This leads to silence, to resting in God. *Lectio Divina* gives unity to everything in life, and it is based on a very simple but basic truth - that God is in fact at work in our lives.

It is very different if bible reading is done in a moralising way. Then we discover that we are not like Jesus; we are told that we should be doing this or that; we pray to become more like Jesus; our prayer is active. But if in meditation we recognise the tiny thread of Jesus in our life, we rest in that, realising that the life of Jesus in us is the deepest thing about us. The important thing is not to pray for something to happen, but just to relax in the fact that it is happening. 'Behold, I am doing a new thing; can you not see it?' (Isaiah 43).

Integration of Prayer and Life

One of the great blessings of *Lectio Divina* is that it enables us to bring back to our Church that integrated

prayer life, where liturgy, personal prayer, bible reading and study, contemplative prayer all end up as one exercise. This is to be celebrated, not in a sentimental way seeing everything as beautiful, and the world as a wonderful place. The world is quite cruel and unjust, and sin is very powerful. But grace is never quenched and we celebrate that. *Lectio Divina* helps people to pray with a system built into the rhythm of daily life and the life of our Church. There can be a kind of consumerism in prayer nowadays, where people shop around to find what pleases them in the various methods, flitting from one to another. This may be a sign of yearning, but it can also be a sign of escapism, of wanting to avoid the challenge of prayer itself.

The discipline of *Lectio Divina* is to stay with the bible story and go more deeply into it. The method is deep but simple, not expensive. In poor groups where electricity fails, people manage with their candles and their bible; nothing more is needed for a wonderful evening of prayer, no videos or other audio-visual aids. The poor are not made to feel second-class. The setting can be very simple, with husbands waiting outside, children playing around the place. God is there in all of it! That is what *Lectio Divina* is all about. There is nothing higher than that in the prayer life of the Church; contemplative prayer is not another step above it. *Lectio Divina* breaks down the compartmentalisation of life and prayer and it makes abundantly clear that contemplation is within the reach of all and not reserved for a special elite.

QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS

Is Lectio Divina individual or communal?

In fact it is both. *Lectio Divina* is a very deep experience of God, of the sacredness of our lives, a deep method of discerning our sinfulness, of taking

stock of our life of grace. Now, that cannot be done in community alone. There must be an interplay between the community and our personal life of prayer. I work with a group which meets once a week. I familiarise them with the text, and they take it for the

week to their prayer and the following week we share our experience of the text. At first I used to do it all in one session, but then I discovered that it was necessary to leave time for personal prayer on the text. There must be complementarity between personal prayer and sharing. But the sharing is necessary; it is not private revelation. In community sharing, everyone is a deep person, a precious person; it is not a regimented community. Unfortunately in some parts of the Church bible sharing is very regimented which is harmful to community. People's concerns are different, and so they read the story differently. Allow the community to discover what the word of God is for them.

In Asia small groups share about the reality they see. They try to analyse and understand it, then they pray about it. They are led to what has to be done through a power beyond themselves. Prayer must be brought to action. Where do you see the place of action?

Of course there are many valid approaches. I would insist that the *Lectio Divina* stands as a valid method of doing theology. For all situations a theological conclusion comes from meditation and prayer. The direction in favour of action will suit a community project, but if my problem is prayer and I am looking for help to see where God is leading me in prayer, I find *Lectio Divina* best. It is a method of entering into union with God through bible reading. Meditation is the place where life experience and the bible text come together; this can lead to action. It also leads to contemplative prayer.

Lectio Divina is not the whole following of Jesus. It is a reflection method, not primarily geared to action, a discipline which enables us to judge our present situation in the light of the bible. It gives our judgment discipline, in the context of theology, and it can lead to action.

Lectio Divina requires a response: of

insight or understanding and prayer. But the action must be based on faith, on full consciousness, and this is often neglected in the Church. This consciousness should not be left to the theologians; all should be involved in developing it. Too often we are given a doctrine, and then told what to do. But moral action should flow from our experience of God, and *Lectio Divina* helps us, enables us to judge what needs to be done. Too much spiritual writing speaks of action, but not so much of wisdom.

What is the place of the values of non-Christian religions in the process of Lectio Divina?

Recall the method: read the bible, read your own experience, your own story as a fulfilment of the bible passage, e.g. Jesus heals the ten lepers, one comes back to thank him. This has many aspects, but in *Lectio Divina* take one aspect. Remember a time when you were healed, but you go on your way and forget it. You want to forget you were an addict, or full of jealousy and so you are not fully healed. Go back and relive the story, acknowledge the healing and you can get up, go on your way, more free. Then I realise that this happens to other people as well. So I can understand what is happening to them, why they are denying their past. In prayer I understand the story of grace; it is not enough to be healed, it is necessary to be conscious of it.

This can be the story too of cultures, converted from colonialism, but not fully healed, of religious orders, converted but not fully healed. I can think of people of other religions who have a similar experience; I see the bible story being fulfilled in other cultures and peoples; the bible story is a human story, about life itself. *Lectio Divina* is never dominating, centrifugal; it can become incarnate in all cultures and faiths. A story by definition is not possessive or dominating, but applies in many cultures; it is powerful but not dominating, powerful like God or Jesus on the Cross. The bible is a humble book, at the service of humanity.

Are not the saints the best examples of the Lectio Divina, since they reflect the bible, and the Pope is right to provide us with so many?

The saints are different stories of Jesus. On the feast of St. Francis we read the life of Jesus, not the life of St. Francis, because the life of Francis was the life of Jesus. We can recognise the stories of the bible in everyday life; we see Jesus, we meet Jesus, and the saints are examples. Each one of us has a story of Jesus in our own lives, in the lives of our parents, in our congregations, in our ancestors even before Christianity. This was the attitude of many early missionaries. The bible can help us to trace our ancestry back to God. The *Lectio Divina* can help us do this, with a method and discipline. This worked in early Europe. It worked too for the Irish missionaries. A recent book *Preaching in the Patristic Age*, has a good article showing the experience of the Irish Church in this area.

Why do we repeat the text in Lectio Divina?

As opposed to the fundamentalist reading of the bible, we should love the actual words. Suppose the celebrant at Christmas midnight Mass said: we are so familiar with the Nativity gospel that I won't bother reading it; let's go straight to the homily! We need to hear the text over and over again, because we love it. I actually heard a celebrant tell people he would not delay them with a full reading of Mt 25, so he just referred to the phrase: "As long as you did it to one of these you did it to me," and proceeded with his homily, but the homily was not short! This is all wrong. The bible is not only a message, but a message in a story, and we should not take short cuts. For the fundamentalists the passage has one meaning only, but for us the passage has many meanings and we read it over and over again and constantly discover new meanings.

How do you choose what passages to start from?

A good place to start is with the Sunday gospel, which ought to be the core of the *Lectio Divina*. This enables us to integrate biblical and theological reflection with prayer life. There is too much fragmentation in our life. We may not like the text at first, but we must not manipulate it, picking and choosing: I work with a group of priests. We have been meeting once a week for 14 years. When we started we thought of the 3-year cycle, but we kept starting again. It has so many spin-off effects, but the main one is to keep the prayer setting for theological reflection.

What do you do when there are special events in the life of the parish, - death, marriage, etc. which call for a special word?

Lectio Divina is not regimented. Reading, meditating, prayer are all essential, but we can start with the event and meditate on it and then go on to prayer and the bible text. But it is not good to manipulate the text. Do not take the phrase: Jesus said "Do not be afraid," and apply this universally. The context is of Jesus walking on the waters and the disciples thought he was a ghost; we have to fit into that story, not just use the phrase cut off from its context. The advantage of the lectionary is that the Church has chosen the text. It is interesting that the same text can speak to all sorts of events and situations. It is not good to have a series of separate texts for sickness, depression, various moods and occasions.

Can you identify someone who has used Lectio Divina extensively?

The *Lectio Divina* is a place where people can express their theology or where somebody can express it on their behalf, so that there is a sense of theology, of the Church reflecting on what it means to be a follower of Jesus

today. It is not enough to *do* theology, we must *articulate* it in some kind of systematic way, and that is why skill is required. It is not a question of teaching people theology; it is the theology of the people themselves that you interpret and write down. That is a delicate balance, because one is inclined to take over and put in one's own views. To work out the *Lectio Divina* requires discipline, patience, humility. It is a great need of the Church today. One of the great proponents of the *Lectio Divina* is Carlos Mesters, a Dutch Carmelite who has been working in poor and often illiterate communities in Brazil for many years. He stresses the need to systematise the theology of the people, and most professional theologians are not skilled in this. A recent number of the *Dei Verbum* bulletin has a good article of Mesters entitled *Faithful Reading of the Bible*. He is an excellent example of a theologian articulating the theology of the people.

Can Lectio Divina be done in illiterate communities?

With regard to illiterate communities, I do not have direct experience of these, because we have no illiteracy problem in the Caribbean. But I know it is not an obstacle. Recall the three stages: reading, meditation, prayer. Someone reads the passage for those who cannot read; there is no problem. Some get to know it by heart. I have people with sight problems, but I suggest that they get their children to help them, and it works. But I am strict with them, and point out that their difficulty does not mean they can be careless about what is in the passage. In this way they feel they are not being treated as second-class; they are full members of the community and must share in the discipline.

The setting is that of real life. One woman said she did her meditation lying beside her husband who was drunk every night of the week; but this did not take from her meditation. Some novice-masters would be shocked at such an idea, but it was no problem for

her. What counts is the humility and imagination, to discover the presence of God.

Discuss the connection between your presentation and the title of the seminar, The Theological Background to Inculturation?

In fact I thought I was developing it but perhaps I did not make the point clear enough. Inculturation is not something planned, something that can be organised. People ask: what are you doing about inculturation, how are you getting on? Just as they ask about catechetics and other things. I feel that inculturation is merely telling your story in bible language, whether in ritual or words or songs or gestures, and of course living it. But basically it is that, interpreting the Jesus story alive today, discerning it, celebrating it. All forms of inculturation are merely expressions of that discernment that Jesus is alive. You don't have to go elsewhere, or have apparitions to discover that Jesus is alive and at work today, and that you read him back into your personal and cultural history. That is inculturation, celebrating and living our faith.

But to do this we need a method, we cannot leave it to chance. That is what a theological method gives you, a secure foundation on which to build inculturation. That is what *Lectio Divina* did for the Church in Europe and all those wonderful years of creativity in the 4th and 5th centuries when the Church became European and people could feel at home as descendants of their ancestors and as descendants of Abraham. That is how inculturation takes place; it is basically a theological enterprise.

Inculturation is discerning, celebrating, living the presence of Jesus in the world today. There are different ways of doing it, but *Lectio Divina* is a special way with a long history of tradition behind it. It should be an essential part of priestly formation; I teach a course on it in the seminary once a

week, but I have the feeling that students, when they get caught up in scholastic theology are not excited about it and forget it easily.

Lectio Divina is not merely a method of prayer, but a way of doing theology. It is not merely a method, but a whole way of life. It is a way of reading life. The biblical word of God is expressed in experience and comes alive. Each member of a community brings his or her own gifts to the sharing; it is never clear who will unlock the door of meaning with regard to the text. At the beginning I felt very sure and confident with my theological formation and background, but gradually I came to realise that I could not dominate, that all can share, that others have their

own way of looking at things. This touched me deeply.

The bible makes the community, like the host. When the priest gives out the host, it is not his. The bible is not mine. In *Lectio Divina* the total understanding of authority in the community changes.

I agree with the comment that until Christians in an Asian country can sit humbly at the feet of non-Christian teachers and listen to them, we cannot be faithful to our Christian calling. The ideal will be when we can be at home with a pluralism of theologies in different cultures and not be threatened by them. The real problem is putting this into practice.

NEW WORLD: NEW CREATION "MISSION IN POWER AND FAITH"

VIII IAMS CONFERENCE (HAWAII 1992)

1. THE CONFERENCE

From Poland to Papua New Guinea, from South Africa to Sweden, they came. Not to Waikiki Beach, but to a college campus in the hills windward of Honolulu. One hundred seventy-nine mission experts attended the 8th Conference of the International Association for Mission Studies in Hawaii, August 3-12, 1992. The Association brings together missionaries, research workers, and academic teachers in the field of Christian world mission.

This was a significant ecumenical and world-encircling gathering. Members came from six continents, from over forty nations, and from all the major Christian traditions. There were Orthodox, Roman Catholic, conciliar and evangelical Protestant, as well as independent church participants.

NEW WORD - NEW CREATION: MISSION IN POWER AND FAITH was the Conference theme. Professor Kosuke Koyama of Japan, now teaching in New York, focused on a theology of the cross in his keynote address. "Jesus' agonizing experience of being forsaken by God is at the basis of the Gospel, and therefore of the church's self-identity." Koyama developed this to show that the mission of the church should be outsider-centered not insider-centered quoting Jesus' words: 'When you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind.'

The Conference opened with exposure experiences introducing participants to aspects of traditional Hawaiian culture and to the Hawaiian Sovereignty Movement. In downtown Honolulu a woman

pastor told of her work with Waikiki's prostitutes. North of Pearl Harbor participants visited a 'peace farm' cultivating alternatives to violence.

Against the backdrop of the glorious greens of the campus gardens and the Pali cliffs rising above the Hawaii Loa College where the Conference was held, participants came together to worship the Creator of this spectacular scenery. The relationship of the church to the welfare of all creation was stressed.

The Conference theme evolved from the commemoration of 500 years of Roman Catholic mission in the Americas begun with Columbus. As the 'New World' is engulfed in tidal wave after tidal wave of social injustice and environmental pollution, the Conference concluded that Christian mission in the post-colonial era must involve the 'little ones of the earth' - the poor, children, women - all those at the periphery. Engagement in mission requires that we find a place where they can be welcomed and share with us, and together learn from Jesus.

2. REFLECTORS' REPORT OF THE CONFERENCE

Introduction

Throughout this meeting we asked ourselves the question: *what important missiological questions are emerging during this gathering of IAMS?* We chose to carry out our task as reflectors by trying to identify some issues for the future work of IAMS. Aware that we couldn't uncover all the issues emerging, we did point to some distinc-

tive tasks for the INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF MISSION STUDIES. Members of IAMS carry a special responsibility for research, teaching and communication in the field of missiology. Because mission is central to the life of the Christian community, this responsibility implies accountability to the Body of Christ. Some of the questions identified below have arisen in earlier international mission conferences. These same questions raised in the context of our present meeting, and shaped by recent events, acquire a new urgency for further development and study.

Context

We met five hundred years after the encounter between Europe and the Americas, an encounter which profoundly changed relationships among peoples of the earth. The anniversary of this event directly challenges us to assume a share in the responsibility for greater mutuality and respect in peoples. The particular context of Hawaii brought to our attention the struggles of a particular people to reclaim their identity. This particular situation reflects similar struggles throughout the world. People in many places are striving to be respected for who they are. We are called to recognize their yearning for identity and affirmation. No group of people is isolated from the rest. There is a "webbedness" that binds all together ever more deeply, growing toward the reality of ONE world. (cf. Koyama, IAMS keynote address, 1992)

Missiological Issues

1. New World: mission and God's will that all be reconciled "...to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head...Christ" (EPH 1:10)

From the very opening of the Conference we were reminded once again, this time by the Hawaiian people, that each human group has a basic right to claim its identity. Land, air and sea constitute elements in the self-understanding of peoples and are the means of human survival. At the same

time we were aware that liberation processes lead to new fragmentations. How can mission facilitate a creative process (Koyama's "creative fragmentation") which moves toward "building the community of communities under the vision of God's sovereign rule?"

2. New Creation: mission linking creation and redemption in a new way "We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time." Rom 8:22.

Human greed has raped many aspects of life on earth: on land and sea, in peoples and cultures. Increasing disintegration in all expressions of life and that which sustains life, as well as in the inter-relationships of human groups, are signs that a deep tendency to destruction is at work in the world. However, at the same time, there are increasing signs of healing processes counteracting this destruction. Through healing, people find ways to integrate themselves into communities seeking harmony with the earth and all creation.

Salvation is thoroughly interwoven with life, and therefore, all those elements which give and sustain life are constitutive of salvation. Participation in God's mission to bring about "the community of communities" requires greater attentiveness to healing. We need to ask whether the church has been a healing community. The healing of creation calls us to new insights into the sacramental life of the church. The sacraments of God's relationship to us and our response to God are expressed through the elements of creation: water, bread, wine and oil. Mission leads us through Baptism to the Eucharist, "bread for the missionary journey." How does mission call us to celebrate Eucharist in a way that links creation and redemption in a new way?

3. Mission in Power and Faith: God's love call us into mission. "For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore, all died. And he died for all that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for him who died for

them and was raised again." 2 Cor 5:14-15.

God's grace alone invites us to participate in mission. Therefore, being in mission is not so much a duty as a gift. This gift of grace as lived out in the human context is situated in hospitality, i.e. being received by the other, coming with empty hands, being welcomed. From this space, one shares faith with another; "scare tactics" are totally inappropriate in telling the Good News. The image of mission changes when considered from this perspective. The little ones of the earth - the poor, children, women - all those at the periphery, become participants in mission. Engagement in mission requires that we find a place where they can welcome us; together we can learn from Jesus.

In the context of the new missionary paradigm which is emerging, are we not challenged to re-interpret the Great Commission as a call to discipling people

along the way of pilgrimage toward the Reign of God? Would such an understanding lead to a further shaping of the paradigm?

Conclusion

From all of the above we recognize the need to explore the implications of the following for Missionary Formation:

- . healing as an integral part of mission and the need for local communities to become healing communities;
- . a foundation missionary spirituality which leads to a "mysticism of faith, contemplating God's presence in all creation"
- . joyfulness and hope as signs of the disciples of Jesus, even in the midst of suffering and persecution.

As we go forth, we encourage one another to hold onto our faith in the Gospel, sign of God's power among us.

IAMS EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE 1992-1995

Members elected at the 1992 Hawaii Conference:

MICHAEL AMALADOSS, SJ, President (India-Rome)

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REVELATION A MISSIONARY'S JOURNEY

John Mansford Prior, SVD

*We shall not cease from explanation
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.*

(T.S. Eliot, Little Gidding, FOUR QUARTETS)

(John Mansford Prior is a member of the Society of the Divine Word. He is a staff member of the Candraditya Research Centre, Indonesia).

REVELATION, PRIMAL AND BIBLICAL:

During my years in eastern Indonesia (1973 to the present) I have been faced with the following simple fact: much of primal religious, personal and social ethics as expressed in the individual and societal behaviour of the Florenese people is at least as good as, if not higher, deeper, more "Christian" and human than that contained in the Hebrew Torah. And when a comparison between the deepest values of Ata Lio society are compared with those of "Christian Europe," the contrast is even more stark.

For instance, Ata Lio law has no concept of revenge or reprisal. If a fault is committed then the community comes together to reunite the opposing factions. Law re-unites, brings peace, restores harmony. No punishment, no imprisonment, no faulting the one side or the other. Consensus village courts seek out understanding for the various points of view which are then united in a common vision. This vision of peace and harmony is then actualized in renewed relationships. Ata Lio society is based not on the understanding of human nature as aggressive and violent, but as innately societal and cooperative.

But perhaps any comparison between Hebrew society striving to live out its

Mosaic revelation and Ata Lio society subsisting in a primal vision is hard to maintain. The Hebrew situation over at least a thousand year period and concluding two millennia ago, is that of an egalitarian minority struggling against the dominant ideology of a caste-ridden Canaanism. The Ata Lio, after living in comparative isolation over many thousands of years, are only now being buffeted by an outside dominant society based on different values.

Though any such comparison needs many qualifying statements, nevertheless I do claim that the theological and ethical values expressed in Ata Lio religious-cultural life style stand up to those as expressed in the Hebrew Scriptures. To the Church the one is "revelation" while the other has been classified as pagan, or at the most as "natural religion." In my experience so called "natural religion" stands up well in comparison to religion as revealed in the Judeo-Christian Scriptures.

The question arises: if Hebrew history reveals God's saving presence, does not Ata Lio history and society also reveal God's saving will? Why do I accept the one as revelation and the other as "natural," when the "natural" is of an equal or higher theological and ethical value than scriptural revelation? Do I in fact claim the Hebrew experience as revelation simply because it is

continuous with my Christian experience?

It needs to be stated quite clearly that there are many deep and fundamental differences in the beliefs of the Ata Lio and those contained in the Hebrew and Apostolic Scriptures. In Judeo-Christian tradition, God reveals Self as redeemer while the Ata Lio face God as creative presence. Human history is central to the semitic tradition, while the cosmos is central to the primal vision. Christians put sin and forgiveness at the centre, while the Ata Lio place discord and harmony as the pivotal values of society. Thus I do not romanticize the primal vision. I simply ask, based on observed fact over many years: if the one is revelation, why do I deny that the other has been, and continues to be, God's revelation?

That was my starting point in the questioning of my inherited theology. I have answered the question in many ways over the past dozen years. Certain social anthropologists and Christian mystics have assisted my coming to terms with God's revealing Self in each religion in a unique and complementary way.

BACKGROUND AND EARLY INFLUENCES

To explain how I have come to terms with the above empirical data, I will give a brief resume of relevant influences on my thinking. I was born and brought up in a close, pious family, which was very much part of a defensive, minority Catholic sub-culture in the Britain of the nineteen forties and fifties. Revelation was ours as argument, as weapon, as conqueror. The sixties brought about a cultural revolution both in the British religious scene and in myself. I obtained a first glimpse of this sea change with the publication of John Robinson's HONEST TO GOD and the opening of John XXIII's Council.

Meanwhile two seeds were being planted. From secondary school onwards I followed the development of Thomas Merton, beginning with his early autobiography (from rake to monk) reaching his later writings on peace

and intra-faith dialogue, especially his exposition of Zen Buddhism and his final "revelation."

During Spanish lessons at school, I was first introduced to the poetry of John of the Cross. Later through the writings of Thomas Merton, John's ascent of Mount Carmel became a framework for life, a symbolic pilgrimage to interpret and evaluate where I was in relation to Self and Other via the purgative way of courage, confession, learning, fear, surrender and unity.

The sixties was a time of unholy chaos and unbounded optimism. I entered the Divine Word Missioners in 1965 and took final vows in 1971. Set patterns in community life, philosophy and theology disappeared. The past was over, and the future was ours for the making. If my outside activities pointed to justice and peace concerns, then my studies were more and more centred on sociological interpretations of the Bible and structuralist developments in social anthropology.

GOD'S SAVING PRESENCE OUTSIDE THE JUDEO-CHRISTIAN TRADITION

Folk Religion in Eastern Indonesia

I was commissioned to Indonesia in 1973. I came from the heterogeneity and secularity of the Britain of the early seventies to the homogeneity and religiosity of a comparatively isolated central Flores. The contrast could not have been greater. I came from a culture, ideologically individualistic and autonomous and entered a culture which moved on the basis of a consensus of shared, inherited cultural convictions. At first there was no meeting point except in myself, and I, myself, was no calm, integrated person.

During my first seven years in Indonesia I was brought face to face with an active, participatory Catholicism among a people who possessed an honest, personal faith. The townspeople of Maumere were newcomers from all parts of multi-ethnic Flores and beyond, cut off from their village and land, away from the locus of their

traditional Catholicism. This deep personal faith contrasted sharply with what I frequently heard in clerical circles about the people's "folk-Catholicism," where religion was a matter of cultural inheritance rather than personal conviction.

My move from coastal town to the mountainous interior in 1981 brought me into direct daily contact with village life, with living traditions, beliefs and customs of small scale farmers and share croppers. Though somewhat isolated and characterized by others as a backwater, there too was socio-economic development - mostly for the worse - as the village ethos was buffeted by rapid change from without and within. Yet there in the village, although the people were by no means as active in formal Catholicism as were the Christians in town, their faith was transparently open, utterly honest and deeply personal.

Nevertheless I was aware of one, simple startling fact. The Church as taught by the incoming Catholic institution including myself, and the faith as believed in by the populace, were different realities. We were walking on our own individual paths. Village religion and institutional religion were interconnected, yet relatively autonomous.

Cross-Cultural Experience Raises Theological Questions

What then is the nature and character of Florenese village Catholicism? How appropriate is the view that it is simply "cultural," a part of tradition, a customary backdrop to daily life? Could such a "folk Catholicism" include a deep, personal commitment on the part of the believer while disregarding (rejecting?) many official beliefs of Catholicism considered important by the hierarchy? Or are there two divergent realities, that of an official, institutional, clerical Catholicism on the one hand, and a village-based, peoples' Church on the other? Is the Florenese Church an example of an inculturated faith, or a case of a theologically indefensible syncretism?

My reflections and studies to date have brought me to the conclusion that this primal vision, with its particular local structure of belief and action, formed the village base of popular Catholicism in central Flores. Thus the question of primal revelation is not simply a matter of tidying up history; it is very much a contemporary issue.

Behind this lies one fundamental theological issue: God's creative presence and saving activity outside the Judeo-Christian tradition. In my experience this raises the question: are the primal religio-cultural traditions of Flores, which date back perhaps some 70,000 years, vehicles of God's revelation? I observe the primal tradition, alive within the contemporary Florenese Church, as a vehicle of God's truth and goodness. How does this positive experience square with the official theological positions of the Church?

ANTHROPOLOGICAL CATEGORIES

Victor Turner speaks of culture operating on three levels: root paradigms, dominant symbols and everyday behaviour. It is in the root paradigms of a primal culture that we discover the primordial experience, the core experience of primal religion. (This is the "liberative core" of Aloysius Pieris, S.J.). Each religion reveals, offers an insight, brings about an encounter with the Divine. On this level we meet with Truth, the truth of God present within and beyond us. It is unique, universal and decisive within each religio-cultural tradition, yet surely each is compatible with the other. There is a complementary uniqueness to each religion. We enter into this core experience of the other through their symbolic world, their dominant symbols, their root paradigm. There is no other entry point.

Applying Turner's categories to the primal religio-cultural experience of central Flores, I come up with three conclusions. First, God reveals Self in the local culture and in local cultural categories. This primal revelation is alive and well, is a force in life, and forms the basic experience of the

Divine. Revelation as proclaimed by the incoming Church has been grafted onto this basic revelation.

Second, this primal revelation is expressed in the root paradigms of the culture. These root paradigms are resilient, have survived rapid social change, and apparently will not change radically in the near future. Through the root categories of primal culture God is still speaking to the Florenese people.

Third, this primal revelation is not in any way inconsistent with revelation from the Judeo-Christian tradition. The primal revelation forms the popular base upon which the ecclesial tradition is grafted. The one is local, culture-embracing, embedded in the life and value system of a fragile society. The other is world-wide, starting from the specifically historical experience of the Hebrew and Christian peoples with an explicit cult, creed and church. What is the relationship between these two modes of revelation?

THEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

1) Different Revelations

My experience, as interpreted by the anthropological categories of Victor Turner, leads me to understand that God reveals Self via more than one tradition. It is commonly stated that if we know only one language we do not understand any language! More broadly, if we only appreciate one culture or socio-economic group or religion, we cannot understand our own culture or socio-economic group or religion. Only by immersing ourselves in another's world will we come across God's revelation in another mode.

Our vocation as missionary can be understood in terms of an apostolate of listening and understanding through which cultural barriers are broken down, and faith refuses to allow itself to become encapsulated within any particular personal, cultural, denominational or religious form.

Revelation is a seed scattered abroad, a Word heard in every human movement

that supports life and growth, peace and justice, understanding and respect, dignity and harmony. The world is an epiphany of the revelation of God's Self. Revelation is thus not the monopoly of any one people or religion; it is God's initiative, God's healing Spirit at work in a shattered world, healing and uniting.

2) Prejudice and Inhumanity

As I entered the primal world where God's voice was actively at work, I could not ignore nor deny the history of prejudice and inhumanity. In the 1910 edition of Encyclopedia Britannica, edited in London, there is a whole page on the island of Flores, with detailed descriptions of the geography, climate, animal and plant life. One brief sentence describes the people: "The inhabitants are pure savages." My first embrace had to be an embrace of forgiveness and love, an acknowledging of past wrongs and present bias. Our missionary histories need redeeming. I discovered that clearly defined barriers turned out to be sign posts indicating a similar goal, boundaries become points of intersection, and dogmatic statements are expressions of specific religious-cultural approaches.

Mission history leads me to confession and humility. We have often been so tragically wrong. I do not think that we have the historical strength to right these wrongs on our own. Our individual histories either lead us into exclusive claims and renewed ghettos, or into a radical interdependence with the other. We are being asked to make an historic choice. How does one write an ecumenical history of God's revelation where each revelation is complementary in its uniqueness?

3) Language

Fumbling with an oral language, I became more and more aware that I was still speaking a foreign language. My religious words, lived syntax, cultural semantics were different from those of the villagers. I conclude that each individual language is inadequate on its own. We speak in complementary dialects. I was required to enter into

the world of the other, seeking understanding, reciprocity and empathy. In this way, obstacles become opportunities, and differences mutually enrich.

4) Primordial Fear: Surrender and Risk

I had to face up to the prejudice and anger within myself, the resentments, the bias, the plain racism and religionism embedded in my exclusive pattern of thinking and living. This was the crucial stage in my life colloquy, when the honeymoon was over and the choice was open to go a step further. My primordial fears and resentments had to be faced in courage and slowly overcome. To fear the other is to fear God. The emotional barriers I placed between myself and the villagers with their primal world-view was no different to the barrier I had already erected between God and my inner self.

This primitive fear could not be easily dismissed. All that I believed in was at risk. Without putting it at risk no heart-to-heart encounter could take place at all. The encounter had to burn away at the beliefs I held so dear, searing through my God experience in Jesus crucified and risen.

My life and loves, my very Christian core experience itself had to undergo a *kenosis* in order that a new spring well up within me and between us. I could not come to this colloquy of life with preset formulas, water-tight dogmas, a party piece. At this stage I even had to be willing to offer up the non-negotiable core, put it at risk, allow God to come to me in non-predetermined ways. It was a moment of surrender, of nothingness, complete emptiness, of absence, as total and undemanding as possible. It was crucifixion, God absconding.

5) Conversion: Towards Mutuality

Beyond the fear and the resentment lay the beauty of truth, in my Judeo-Christian heritage and the heritage of the primal world. I was not free to acknowledge, appropriate and accept it in joy and thanksgiving. This radical acceptance led to conversion: a turning

towards God. This occurred within a renewed appreciation of my own Catholic tradition.

Finally, the encounter must reach the point of mutuality. No longer them and us, we and you, but a true interdependence in autonomy, where challenge is no longer threat, each a complementary, vital, true, revelatory part of God's whole.

This pilgrimage gives structure to my on-going encounter: courage, confession, fear, surrender, mutuality. As religio-cultural traditions cross-fertilize in the human heart and in the common task, there is a constant flow from the personal to the general, from a particular religious symbol to universal natural symbols, from form to content.

LIVING WITH QUESTIONS

On the level of interpretation each religion appropriates its primordial revelatory experience and makes it actual for the present. If the western churches have turned theology into a science, then the east is asking us to return to the patristic notion of theology as wisdom.

As Aloysius Pieris maintains, in Asia the emphasis is surely on the cultural and ideological interpretation of religion. Not so much what we believe as the effect this belief has upon us; not primarily what is in the Hebrew Bible and Apostolic Writings as to the use we make of them; not so much on a detailed socio-anthropological analysis of society, as to the role and place and influence of the culture upon living primal communities and individuals.

I conclude that no single method has a normative value or overriding authority. I cannot judge one faith-tradition with the criteria of another. Plurality in hermeneutics and theological method is inevitable and a blessing. We are no longer dealing with missiology as a branch of theology; we are placing the whole of theology into an inter-faith and inter-cultural context. We can theologise only in relation to other cultures, other philosophies and their impact on the poor. There is no viable alternative.

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BOOK SALE! BOOK SALE!

DATE: December 3

PLACE: SEDOS

TIME: 9:00 - 1:00 p.m.
3:00 - 5:00 p.m.

DESCENDANTS OF THE FIRST HAWAIIANS

A RESOLUTION
ADOPTED BY THE IAMS GENERAL
ASSEMBLY, KANEOHE, HAWAII;
10th August, 1992

The Eighth Conference of the International Association for Mission Studies, meeting in Hawaii in August, 1992, has heard from representatives and descendants of the original Hawaiians.

The Conference has learned of the claims of descendants of the first Hawaiians for a special status similar to that already achieved by other original indigenous groups in the United States.

As a result, the Conference:

- 1) draws attention to the pain and concern of Hawaiians about loss of control over their traditional lands and current threats to their distinctive identity and culture;
- 2) commends further study of the issues to its own members and to churches and governments generally;
- 3) notes the endorsement given by major churches in Hawaii, and by the Hawaii Council of Churches, to the fundamental objectives of the non-violent Sovereignty Movement among Hawaiians since these are compatible with similar aims satisfied by the decisions of a previous American Administration concerning North American indigenous peoples.
- 4) especially requests the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States, in close consultation with the Hawaii council of churches, to pursue further study and meeting, with a view to urgent appropriate action and renewed approach to the United States government.



mission moments

WORDS OF ARCHBISHOP ROMERO

(EL SALVADOR)

"I have frequently been threatened with death. I must tell you that as a Christian, I do not believe in death without resurrection. If I am killed, I will rise again in the Salvadorean people. I say that to you without arrogance, with the greatest humility."

"As a pastor I am obliged, by divine command, to give my life for those I love - and that is all Salvadoreans.... even for those who may assassinate me. If the threats should come to pass, I offer God, from this very moment, my blood for the redemption and for the resurrection of El Salvador."

"Martyrdom is a grace from God which I do not believe myself worthy of. But if God accepts the sacrifice of my life, may my blood be the seed of freedom and the sign that hope will soon be a reality."

"May my death, if it is accepted by God, be for the liberation of my people, and a testimony of hope in the future. You may say, if they should succeed in killing me, that I forgive and bless those who will do it. I so wish. Yes, that they might be convinced that they are wasting their

time: a bishop will die, but the Church of God, which is the people, will never perish... May God have mercy on the assassins."

"Christ invites us not to fear persecution because, believe me, brothers and sisters, one who is committed to the poor must run the same fate as the poor, and in El Salvador we know what the fate of the poor means:
to disappear;
to be tortured;
to be taken captive;
and to be found dead."

THE LONG ROAD TO SANTO DOMINGO

(DOMINICAN REPUBLIC)

In commemoration of the 500 years since the discovery and the evangelization of the Americas, the Latin American bishops met in Santo Domingo for their 4th General Assembly on October 12, 1992. Pope John Paul II was present at the conference. From this event the Latin American Church is expecting new and essential input for its life in South and Central America, similar to the impulses given by the previous CELAM assemblies in Medellin (1968) and Puebla (1979).

Organizational and spiritual

preparations for the event took almost two years. Central importance was given to the elaboration of a working paper, to be approved by the Vatican, which could serve as point of departure for the discussions during the assembly.

In the last stage, eight experts were invited to do this work. On the one hand, they were guided by the theme of the conference, chosen by the Pope: "New Evangelization, Human Advancement, Christian Culture: Jesus Christ, Yesterday, Today and Forever." On the other hand, the experts were to make a summary of the suggestions submitted by the various national bishops conferences and collected in the "Secunda Relatio." Though many had doubted the outcome, the final working paper did indeed, maintain the options taken in Medellin and Puebla, i.e. the three options of the Church for the poor, for the family and for youth.

The following résumé of the various preparatory phases will show how difficult it was to reach a consensus on the working paper. It also demonstrates the interior conflict existing today in the Church of Latin America.

Paper of Consultation

The first preparatory stage of the working paper started in 1989. At that time, the secretariate of CELAM

elaborated a "paper of consultation," based on various records. The paper was discussed during four regional meetings of Latin American bishops. The contents of the paper was not made known to outsiders. A majority of the consulted bishops however, rejected this first version, as it concentrated almost solely on problems of economic, social, political and ethical decadence and the loss of authority within the Church. The theological basis of the paper rested "on the paternity of God and the hierarchy of the bishops."

Instrumento Preparatorio

The next document, published in 1990, was known as the "Instrumento Preparatorio". Distributed to the various national bishops conferences in Latin America, it was originally supposed to become the working paper of the 4th CELAM assembly in Santo Domingo, the theme being: "A New Evangelization for a New Culture." Its main concern was the evangelization of "modern culture" and the confrontation with "the dangers of secularism." Again criticism arose against this paper because the options of Medellin and Puebla had been totally ignored and omitted in the main text. They were only marginally mentioned in an appendix under the heading "New Evangelization with prophetic power," according to an assessment of the document.

The various national bishops' conferences named commissions to study and evaluate the "Instrumento Preparatorio." Some of these conferences, e.g. from Ecuador and Bolivia, asked lay/people on the grassroots level for their opinion and encouraged them to submit some supplementary input. This, in fact, produced various new sug-

gestions and corrections. At the end of 1990 and the beginning of 1991, CELAM received such proposals from various bishops' conferences.

The crucial and critical stage of the preparations for the CELAM conference were reached in April 1991. At that time, the 23rd ordinary assembly of CELAM took place in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Two momentous events coincided at that time: the elections to the new directory of CELAM and the publication of the presumptive working paper ("documento de consulta") for Santo Domingo. Bishop Nicolas de Jesus Lopez Rodriguez, Archbishop of Santo Domingo, was elected president of CELAM, and Bishop Raymundo Damasceno Assis, Auxiliary Bishop of Brasilia, was named General Secretary. On the last day of the meeting, the prepared working paper was handed to the bishops with the recommendation to publish and discuss it. The result of these discussions would be taken into account in the definitive version of the working paper.

On July 26, 1991 a crisis erupted. A seminar, formed by two representatives of each national bishops' conference respectively, noted that the various suggestions submitted by the bishops at the meeting in Buenos Aires had not been taken into account. The majority of the participants declared that they "no longer had the courage to submit their opinion." Some spoke of "a climate of division," of suspicion and prejudice that was developing within the Latin American Church.

The recently named General Secretary, Bishop Damasceno Assis, however, succeeded in saving the outcome of the seminar. He promised that all contributions submitted by the national bishops' conferences

would be taken into consideration in the final working paper.

Prima Relatio

This promise resulted in a further paper called "Prima Relatio," which really took up all the bishops' suggestions hitherto ignored. Till November 1991 the bishops' conferences complemented the text with further suggestions.

Secunda Relatio

The definite transition to an acceptable and undisputed working paper for Santo Domingo was reached between December 1991 and January 1992. Bishop Damasceno Assis, once again ordered a collection of all contributions made by the bishops' conferences, adding eight critical supplements and elucidations, as well as new suggestions. This document became known as "Secunda Relatio." Its most important aspect was that it corroborated anew the options originally taken in Medellin and Puebla. Furthermore, it was suggested to add two additional options of the Church in favour of the indigenous people and Afro-Americans, as well as for Christian Base Communities (CBCs) and lay-people in the Church.

Under the presidency of Bishop Damasceno Assis a group of eight experts prepared the last version of the working paper for Santo Domingo, based on this "Secunda Relatio."

Finally, on April 15, 1992 the document was ready. The president of CELAM flew personally to Rome and brought it to the Vatican for approbation. This final version was judged "positively" even by critical circles in Rome. It effectively reproduced the convictions and ideas of the various bishops' conferences. Its analysis of

Latin American realities was judged "appropriate" and the pastoral options of Medellin and Puebla were said to be "confirmed, deepened and broadened."

Ref. Information

Missionszentrale der
Franziskaner E.V. No. 9;
Bonn/Bad Godersberg,
September 1992.

PRISON MINISTRY IN
METRO MANILA

(PHILIPPINES)

Metro Manila has 5,200 inmates confined in 17 jails. Bilibid Prison of Manila was originally built to house 600 inmates; now it has 1,700. One poorly-ventilated brigada which was designed for 150 has 340 inmates crowded in it. Much worse are the bartolinas, the dark cells with small windows which keep wayward prisoners for some time.

The Manila archdiocese "Statement on Prisons and Prisoners" for the 1991 Prison Awareness Week lists these problems: "Because of these pathetic conditions in jails and prisons which are supposedly correctional and rehabilitation institutions, a litany of problems are spawned. The effects are detrimental to the health, sanity and very lives of the prisoners. These problems include illness among prisoners; idleness; undesirable interaction between sentenced and unsentenced prisoners, between the young and old and between the malleable and hardened inmates; gambling, drugs; sexual perversion and illegal activities.

Compounding the problems

faced by prisoners are few visits of family and friends, or none at all, because of distance and poverty; the absence of regular and professional custodial personnel who will undertake the rehabilitation programme, the delay in the judicial disposition of cases that contribute to the congestion of jails and the low morale among jail personnel because of the outmoded policy of assigning personnel to the jail as a form of punishment.

The Prison Ministry of Sacred Heart Parish in Kamuning was organized in 1983 to respond to the spiritual and material needs of the inmates at the jail.

"We have six regular lay volunteers, three SVD seminarians, three Carmelite Missionary Sisters," says Fr. Anthony Ranada, SVD., the present priest coordinator at the Jail. "We want to do more for them and with them but we are clearly limited in terms of personnel and material resources."

Two Holy Spirit Sisters are also part of the group of volunteers. They are Sister Marie Frances, a nurse who joined the Medical-Dental Mission Group, and Sister Arnold Maria, who opted to join the Education-Formation Group.

Ref. Ugnay-Diwa, No. 7; 1991
Tayman; P.O. Box 2036;
Manila 1099; Philippines.

Brother and a physician aged 38, was killed in an ambush not far from Nacala (Mozambique), while bringing the assistance of his word and medical skills to some of his patients.

"The hospital of Namapa, to which I have been assigned, has been in ruins for the last two years, following a RENAMO attack. Before beginning any health programme I will have to be a builder for a few months. The present reality is rather frustrating. But I trust that Namapa will be able to begin from the foundations, with the help of the people in their daily problems. I would like to start some small projects such as fishing, shoemaking, carpentry. I am in favour of promoting these activities: good health is not only the absence of disease, but the affirmation of all that is human, with a positive attitude towards all of life's and society's realities.

In these dreams of the Kingdom of God I almost think that the future of humanity will pass through Africa: perhaps from here will spring up new ways of being together and of solidarity that will be an inspiration to all. This is why in spite of the anxieties caused by the war and the worries for the future, I keep going with confidence in God."

Bro. Alfredo Fiorini, MCCJ,
Namapa, Mozambique.

Ref. New People, Nairobi,
No.21 Nov. Dec. 1992

A LAST LETTER

(MOZAMBIQUE)

On 24 August 1992, the writer of this letter, a Comboni

NEWS continued from page 292

LES SOEURS DU CHRIST, at the meeting on October 1, 1992. Their Superior General is Geneviève Delval, SC. Their address is 44, Rue des Volontaires, 75015 Paris, Francia. Tel. 47341924;

The SISTERS OF BON SECOURS, at the meeting on October 30, 1992. Their Superior General is Justine Cyr, SBS. Their address is Piazza Simone 3, 00141 Rome. Tel. 86800325.

We welcome all these new members to SEDOS.

IAMS 1992 CONFERENCE

CONGRATULATIONS to Fr. Michael Amaladoss, SJ, who was elected President of IAMS at the recent Conference, and to Sr. Margaret Loftus, SND, elected to the Executive. Both are past members of SEDOS Executive Committee. Congratulations also to Sr. Teresa Okure, SHCJ, who was elected to the IAMS Committee for the coming three years; SEDOS has invited her to speak at our Mission Research Seminar at Villa Cavalletti in May 1993.

William Jenkinson, CSSp, Executive Director represented SEDOS at the Eight International Conference of IAMS in Hawaii in August. This Bulletin contains information on the Conference.

THE THEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND TO INCULTURATION

An overflow audience attended this SEDOS Seminar at the Divine Word College on October 5, 1992. Michel de Verteuil, CSSp, made four presentations interspersed with discussions. Participants acknowledged it as one of the best one-day sessions organised by SEDOS. This issue of the Bulletin contains an edited version of Fr. de Verteuil's talks.

NEW RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS IN AFRICA AND MADAGASCAR.

MAC,¹ Rome, 1992. Pp.30, (16 cms x 11 cms). Ital. Lire 3.000. English and French editions available at SEDOS.

This is a very well written document and condenses into a readable space accurate information and guidelines about the complex topic of new religious movements in Africa. There is a useful introductory historical note and clarification of terms. The document makes a three-fold classification of the Fundamentalist, Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity spreading so widely in Africa today:

- 1) dispensationalism
- 2) the faith gospel
- 3) dualism.

These three emphases militate against Africa's long term development, the document claims.

The new movements, however, are voluntary associations with an organizational style which offers shelter, psychological security and solidarity. They challenge the Church to take Africa seriously; they challenge Africans to construct a church of their own; and they challenge formalized stylized Catholic worship and the widespread ignorance of the Bible among Catholics.

The document proposes ways of meeting these challenges and maintains it would be simplistic and inaccurate to attribute their widespread success to misplaced enthusiasm by overseas evangelists or to alleged conspiracies and foreign money.

All SEDOS members with personnel in Africa should have copies of this booklet. Mr. Paul Gifford who is at present working on this theme with the All African council of Churches collaborated in producing it.

¹Note: MAC is made up of the Permanent Bureau of SECAM (Symposium of the Episcopal Commission of Africa and Madagascar) and representatives of the Superiors General of religious and missionary institutes of men and women working in Africa.

COMING EVENTS 1992

November 16

HAITI UPDATE:

SVD College, via dei Verbiti, 1; 16.00 - 18.15 p.m.

December 14

ANNUAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY:

- 1) Morning session: A LOOK BACK TO SANTO DOMINGO
- 2) Afternoon session: GENERAL MEETING:
REVIEW OF 1992
FUTURE PLANNING
- 3) EUCHARISTIC CELEBRATION

SVD College; 9.30 - 18.00 hrs.

(Translations: English, italiano, francais, español)

December 18

SEDOS CHRISTMAS PARTY

SVD College; 18.00 - 21.30 hrs.

1993

CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM DIALOGUE

A SERIES OF THREE CONFERENCES

- | | |
|--------------------|---|
| February 25 | THE SUDAN CONFLICT |
| March 11 | WOMEN IN ISLAM |
| March 25 | PHILIPPINES: MUSLIM CHRISTIAN RELATIONS |

SVD College

May 18-22,

AFRICA: QUESTIONS AND PROPOSALS TO THE CHURCH

VILLA CAVALLETTI

(English, italiano, francais, español)