# Sedos

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# *Editorial*

Today, at all times, we experience a certain feeling of uneasiness and loss because a constant flow of talk and the signs of globalization surround us, whether on the street, at the work place, in the parishes, in our own houses or simply while reading or listening to the news. Secularization is gaining ground in the countries of the Western World and poses a challenge to the traditional values of the Church. Yet, as bearers of the Light of the world we have to struggle to bring some sense into our own lives so as to give the people we serve some 'guiding' hope.

In *"Christian Mission in an Era of Globalization"* **Fr Indunil Janaka Kodithuwakku** shares with us the analysis of globalization and presents some proposals to try to 'humanize' all the aspects of globalization, encouraging the building of a civilization of love against the culture of death.

**Francis-Vincent Anthony, SDB,** in *"Cultural Globalization and Assertion of Identity – The Challenges of Nurturing Christian Identity in a Multidimensional Perspective"* deepens the analysis of the Christian cultural identity by exploring the true meaning of 'light', 'salt' and 'yeast' and presenting it as the Christian contribution to our global world.

**John Mansford Prior, SVD,** in *"The Church and the Challenges of Secularization"* shares with us an experience of how it is possible to be a living witness of faith and charity in the misdst of a Muslim society.

From Africa **Domenico Arena, OMI,** presents *"L'Évangile de la communion: dynamisme pour une inteculturalité africaine promotrice de fraternité universelle"*. The Gospel is presented as a message of communion that facilitates the encounter among people and cultures; a Gospel that promotes brotherhood.

In his article, *"From Missionary Charity to the Mission of Charity"*, **Kwanya Charles Odira** explores the deep change in the concept of 'mission' that is happening within the Church. The era of going to far off places to 'share' the riches of the Gospel is giving birth to a deeper commitment to live the Gospel values wherever we are.

**Eleazar López Heranandez** shares with us *"The Guadalupan Paradigm: a Contribution to Universal Missiology"*. Juan Diego, the humble Indian, understood the message the Virgin of Guadalupe entrusted to him: it is possible to "receive the missionary action of the Church and be an active subject of evangelization at the same time". It is an alternative and valid way of evangelizing that might be very helpful in our era of globalization.

Lastly, we close our selection with an insight into the richness of Buddhism. **Son In Sook** shares with us her deep experience of *"Zen Buddhism and Christianity – Affinities and Experiences, A Spiritual Journey"*.

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SEDOS Executive Director

# *Christian Mission in an Era of Globalization*

## - Fr. Induni Janaka Kodithuwakku* -

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Accordingly, since 1989 the world belongs to the history of globalization. Thus, local problems whether socio-economic, political or religious in the last analysis often have global or international roots. The World Economic Forum at Davos ended proposing the first commandment of the 21st century as adaptation to climatic changes. The climatic change used to be purely an environmental issue. It is now becoming as much an economic, trade and political concern. According to Goldman Sachs' (Investment Bank) new forecast the Chinese economy will pass that of United States around 2035, while India will do the same about a decade later 2045. The report also warns that inequality in the face of rising aspirations could foment social tensions. At the same time, at Davos economists and others raised the alarm that stagnant middle class wages and highly visible middle class job losses in developed countries to emerging economies, particularly China and India, could spur renewed protectionist sentiments in the developed world. In many countries of Latin America, the "liberalized economic remedy" became a malady. As a result, Bolivia, Venezuela, Nicaragua, Brazil, and Ecuador turned to socialist economic policies. With the globalization process, global terrorism, global fundamentalism, global warming, global poverty, global migration, global health concerns (bird flue), global Human Rights, global ethics, etc., have come into being. Thus, with the emerging global Church, its mission ought to cater to the global needs.

## What is Globalization?

Globalisation is a modern term used to describe the changes in societies and the world economy that result from dramatically increased international trade and cultural exchanges. Let us examine some of the definitions of globalization. "A process (or a set of processes) which embodies a transformation in the spatial organization of the social relations and transactions – assessed in terms of their extent, velocity and impact– generation of transcontinental or interregional flows and networks of activity, interaction, and the exercise of power".[2] According to Waters, globalization is "a social process in which the constraints of geography on social and cultural arrangements recede and in which people become increasingly aware that they are receding".[3] Coatsworth sees globalization as "... what happens when the movement of people, goods, or ideas between countries and regions accelerates".[4] The IMF defines globalization as "the growing economic interdependence of countries worldwide through the increasing volume and variety of cross-border transactions in goods and services, freer international capital flows, and more rapid and widespread diffusion of technology".[5]

Robert J. Schreiter in "*The New Catholicity; Theology Between the Global and the Local*" divides the evolution of the Church's modern missionary activity into three periods namely;
*1. The Period of Expansion (1492-1945)*
*2. The Period of Solidarity (1945-1989)*
*3. The Period of Globalization (1989- )*[1]

## Globalization and its components

Globalization theory takes as its primary unit of social analysis the entire globe as "a single social system" a "single place" or "a single arena". Peter Beyer[6] mentions four sociologists who have done pioneering analyses of globalization: E. Wallerstein, J. Meyer, R. Robertson and L. Luhmann. The different views of scholars on the components of globalization can be categorized into three groups; political, economic and technological.

The political globalization came into being with the collapse of the bipolar political arrangement in 1989 and consequently the demise of the "cold war fever" which divided most of the countries in the world into a "socialist or capitalist bloc".

Economic globalization is linked to political globalization. Most of the ex-socialist countries embraced neo-liberal capitalism and abandond socialism. For the pandits of globalization this is the final victory of capitalism.[7] Yet, the scholars are divided over the future prospects of neo-liberal capitalism for humanity as a whole, because the global capitalism's greed for short term profit ruins the traditional and small scale economies. According to the United Nations Development Programme Report 2002 the gap between the "haves" and the "have nots" is growing all over the world. As a result, there is a new bipolarization of the world today; it is neither between capitalism and socialism nor between North and South. Rather it is between those who profit from global capitalism and those who are excluded and marginalized. Thus, globalization has given birth to a new international class namely a transnational bourgeoisie *vs* the exploited "mass".[8] The winner of the Noble Prize in economics, member of the Council of Economic Advisers under President Bill Clinton and chief economist and senior vice-president of the World Bank (1997-2000), Joseph E. Stiglitz argues that globalization "... often seems to replace the old dictatorships of national *élites* with new dictatorships of international finance".[9] Behind the architecture of a new world order, malignant globalization creates a three-tier structure across the national boundaries. The globalists represent the core of the circle. In the second circle are the people who "labour in insecure forms of employment and are thrown into a cut-throat competition in the global market, and the outer ring represents the excluded ones.[10] Thus, the process of globalization leads to the marginalization or peripheralisation of the vulnerable ones in society. According to Samir Dasgupta, due to the unevenness of globalization, the strong seem to be growing stronger and the weak even weaker. Thus there are winners and losers.[11] For the Transnational Corporations investment in the poor countries has in fact been motivated by (*a*) the utilization of lucrative domestic markets; (*b*) the availability of cheap raw material and cheap labour; (*c*) avoidance of stringent State regulation.[12] Felix Wilfred speaks of five grand deceptions of globalization; the illusion of unity, the appearance of growth, programmes of cover-up, corporation of disruption and forced consensus and fraudulent trade.[13] The political agenda dictated by the World Bank, IMF, and the WTO is essentially globalization from above. In response, a movement to resist this agenda has emerged as anti-globalization protest movements. Globalization of anti-globalization is a social phenomenon today. Joseph E. Stiglitz's book *Globalization and its Discontents* reveals an insider's insights into the mismanaged globalization by IMF, WB and WTO. He exposes the vested interests of the above financial institutes. "If financial interests have dominated thinking at the International Monetary Fund, commercial interests have had an equally dominant role at the World Trade Organization".[14] Archbishop Diarmuid Martin affirms the above view, "All too often, those who espouse a wider and more liberal globalization, do so only to the extent that their interests are fostered".[15] As a matter of fact, the economic power is linked to the political power of the multilateral institutions. "45% of the decision-making of the World Bank is assigned to the seven richest countries. Five central ecomonies hold 40% of the votes of the IMF, while 23 African nations, prostrated by hunger, have only 1%".[16] Joseph E. Stiglitz further says that "I also believe that … the way globalization has been managed, including the international trade agreements that have played such a large role in removing those barriers and policies that have been imposed on developing countries in the process of globalization, need to be radically rethought".[17] He recalls that this process has often produced not only poor but also anti-democratic results. Joseph E. Stiglitz also points out that "IMF Structural Adjustment Policies – the policies designed to help a country adjust to crises as well as to more persistent imbalances – led to hunger and riots …".[18] He calls this 'IMF inspired riots'.[19] The IMF policies were aimed at poverty alleviation yet in reality they were trying to fish in troubled waters. "Today, few … defend the hypocrisy of pretending to help developing countries by forcing them to open up their markets to the goods of the advanced industrial countries while keeping their own markets protected, policies that make the rich richer and the poor more impoverished...".[20]

The third phenomenon of globalization is the new communications technologies. Thanks to the new communications technologies the world has become a global village. Thus, globalization is first of all about extension. It extends the effects of modernity throught the entire world via mass media. Yet, it has the following negative aspects; "... to be seen in materialism, personhood defined by one's capacity to produce and consume material goods, the erosion or relativization of values, and an anomic individualism".[21] Moreover, globalization extends the elements of Western culture which creates homogenizing of cultures. G. Ritzer names this develpoment as "McDonaldization of Society"[22] and others as "Coca-Colonization" of the world. Robert J. Schreiter negates the view that the extension of modernity in globalization is simply the imperial reach of the West in a new guise. Immanuel Wallerstein argues that there are multiple temporalities (times), multiple universalisms and multiple particularisms. We live in many of the social temporalities simultaneously (U.S. free enterprise capitalism/Chinese market socialism). There also exist 'multiple Universalisms'. Universalism means, "there exist laws or truths that apply to all persons, all groups, all historical social systems at all points of time and space".[23] He identifies three major varieties of universalism: world religions, the secular Enlightenment ideals (humanistic-scientific) and the powerful. When universalisms destroy or oppress, people take refuge in particularisms. Hence, universalisms account for the birth of particularisms. "They (particularisms) say in effect, we are different and difference is a virtue. Your rules do not apply to us, or have negative effects on us, or are designed specifically to do us harm".[24] There are multiple particularisms. **1)** The losers of the universal race **2)** The particularisms of the declining middles (class, race, ethnicity, language and religion) whose status in the prestige hierarchy and whose standard of living is declining due to capitalistic world-economy. Their frustration is often diverted towards even weaker groups who are perceived incorrectly to be improving their status and income levels.[25] The victim group responds by forging its own particularisms producing a cycle of senseless violence. The intervention of a third party to resolve the problem, "... defines the conflict as the result of eternal enmities"[26] thus hiding the true economic causes.

## The Positive and Negative Impacts of Globalization

We cannot go back on globalization. Abandoning globalization is neither feasible nor desirable. Besides, globalization as a process has produced huge benefits. East Asia's success was due to globalization. China and India are on the way to be economic giants. It also creates new opportunities for trade and increased access to markets and technology. Globalization also has brought better health facilities, democracy and greater social justice to the world. It also creates a platform for mutual cultural, educational, intellectual, scientific, technological and skills exchanges. The rapid progress of social communication and means of transportation have really made the world a 'global village' and a 'global family'. Thus, the suffering of one country (one member) concerns the whole human family (for example Tsunami) and enhances solidarity. Besides, both Human Rights violations and discriminations perpetrated by one government or by other groups (ethnic/religious) are no longer internal or national issues. Many international civil society organizations give voice to the voiceless and stand for the rights of the oppressed. Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), UNO Charter of the Earth, and an International Panel Tribunal of UNO globalize the idea of democracy and of civil society. Overall, globalization has helped millions of peoples attain higher standards of living.

Unfortunately, for millions of people globalization has not worked. It has failed to deliver the goods. "Many have actually been made worse off, as they have seen their jobs destroyed and their lives become more insecure. They have felt increasingly powerless against forces beyond their control. They have felt their democracies undermined, their cultures eroded".[27] It was once believed that the primary mission of globalization was to integrate the parts into a whole. But, in fact, the parts have lost their sociocultural, economic, and political identity. Instead of integration globalization has brought about disintegration. "The global village, once a symbol of integration, unification, and harmony, now denotes difference,

differentiation, demarcation, discrimination, and dissonance".[28] Marshall McLuhan's dream of a 'global village' has turned out to be a nightmare or a mirage. "In terms of disparity, we remain parts rather than wholes. In terms of a single humanity, we are divided. In terms of possessions, we are either rich or we are destitute.… But in the inner space of the earth, we see the tragic division of humanity into hostile groups. Terrorism, sectarianism, bigotry, fundamentalism, and its horrible descendents, fanaticism, have possessed this beautiful planet".[29] Therefore, for many in the developing world, globalization has not brought the promised economic benefits. The growing division between the "haves" and the "have nots" has left increasing numbers in the Third World in dire poverty. If globalization has not succeeded in reducing poverty, neither has it succeeded in ensuring stability. Crises in Asia, Africa, the Middle East and Latin America have threatened the economies and the stability of all developing countries and even the developed countries as well. David A. Crocker following Held, speaks of three interpretations or theories of globalization; Hyperglobalism, Skepticism and transformationalism.[30] "The critics of globalization accuse Western countries of hypocrisy and the critics are right. The Western countries have pushed poor countries to eliminate trade barriers, but kept up their own barriers, preventing developing countries from exporting their agricultural products and so depriving them of desparately needed export income".[31] Throughout Asia the voices against inhuman globalization is loud. The two great nations of Asia — China and India — are today drawn in a massive way into the process of globalization. Commenting on the links between poverty, inequality and globalization Zephirin Diabre says, "While it has generously rewarded those with the necessary financial and human-capital resources, it has harmed many others in at least three different ways: **1.** Globalization has been an uneven process. **2.** It has increased human insecurity in several spheres (job and income insecurity, financial volatility and crisis, personal insecurity, health insecurity, environmental insecurity, political and community insecurity). **3.** Globalization has imposed a fiscal squeeze on the State and as a result has limited its fiscal autonomy".[32] The Association of Christian Institutes for Social Concern in Asia organized a seminar in 1998 on *"Golbalization: a Challenge to the Church"*. The different speaches reflect the fears and the concerns of Asians towards globalization. Mithra G. Augustine highlights why the promise of the West (various technological breakthroughs) becomes a threat to some and a fear to others. According to him, "History — with its centuries of colonialism and the accompanying exploitation — and globalization as it operates today with its mandarins having scant concern for the social well-being and progress of those who labour in their service, explain it".[33] Felix Wilfred says, "Impoverishment and misery is what liberalization and globalization leave to the poor in our society. One more qualification is added to them: Besides being the *oppressed,* they become also the *excluded.* Globalization for them in effect means *peripheralisation*".[34]

### Globalization with a more human face

If globalization continues in the present form it will worsen the global poverty and instability. "Without reform, the backlash that has already started will mount and discontent with globalization will continue".[35] "... globalization, as we experience it today, needs redemption, since it continues to produce a host of evils".[36] If we want to have a globalization with a more human face it is indispensable to reform the IMF, the World Bank and the WTO which govern it. As we already saw 'globalization from above' must replaced with 'globalization from below'. The above three institutions must collaborate with their sister organizations (UN Development Programme, UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), International Labour Organization (created in 1919), Asian Development Bank) who have a better view of the grass roots' situations. With regard to development strategies these institutions need to stop imposing the American market model as the universal remedy for all economic maladies in the developing world. There is no one market model: (Japanese/ Swedish/German models and a variety of Asian models: Malaysian/Korean/ Taiwanese/Chinese). International Organizations acting in a dictatorial manner undermining independence, autonomy, and sovereignty of the States has to be regulated.[37] Globalization from below ought to pay heed

to local, national and global levels. Local issues must be tackled locally whereas national issues should be undertaken at national level. On the other hand, global issues require collective global action. The United Nations can focus on issues of global political security. International financial institutions are supposed to focus on global economic stability, global environmental issues, global heath issues (AIDS, Bird flue) by WHO. These international public institutes with collective global action have the potentiality of producing enormous benefits for the global community and especially for the developing countries. The Church's social doctrine views positively the role of the intergovernmental organizations especially those committed to specific sectors.[38] The Magisterium also insists on the need to establish some universal public authority accepted by all and endowed with the power to safeguard, on behalf of all, security, regard for justice, and respect for rights.[39]

## The emerging global culture and religions

It is irrational and illusionary to think that an egalitarian or utopian type of global system will dawn overnight. All people of good will must work for a relatively just world-order. In the world system, religions are an integral part. Besides, like culture, religious traditions face serious challenges by globalization. Three such challenges are: the fragmentation of globalized society, religious relativism and the increasing individualization of religion. By fragmentation, it means that within the global culture the ecomony, business, politics, education, science, and so on tend to function autonomously, independent of an overarching schema. Religion can make three general responses to the fragmentation of globalized culture: a traditional, a prophetic and revisionist. The first tries to give meaning to the whole which is in pieces and the second seeks to civilize the globalization by exerting the prophetic critical role. The last, rejects global culture completely and strives to safeguard the preglobalized ideal state of existence. Besides, globalization also brings about localization. "... the very cultural-homogenization process inherent in globalization has led to the revival and assertion of cultural, ethnic and religious identities. The net result is the world with

escalating conflicts and fragmentation".[40] John Paul II points out that "Globalization, *a priori*, is neither good nor bad. It will be what people make of it. No system is an end in itself, and it is necessary to insist that globalization like any other system, must be at the service of the human person; it must serve solidarity and the common good".[41] In *Centesimus Annus* the Pope deals with the possible good and evil that globalization can produce. The Pope also expresses concern over some negative aspects of globalization specially in the field of culture and ethics. He further highlights that "in all the variety of cultural forms, universal human values exist and they must be brought out and emphasized as the guiding force of all development and progress".[42] Pope John Paul II moreover says that the ultimate winner of the process of globalization must be "humanity as a whole, and not just a wealthy *élite* the controls science, tecnology, comunication and the planet's resouces to the detriment of the vast majority of its people".[43] Johannes Schasching sums up the contemporary view of the Church on globalization as follows: **1.** Globalization as an instrument to further the well being of mankind. **2.** Globalized market, equally, requires a legal framework and legal direction. **3.** The Global market also requires international agreements and institutions. **4.** Intermediary forces between the individual and the State to order the free market towards the common good. **5.** Special attention must be paid to the developing countries. **6.** Globalization requires a substantial number of economic and political measures. Thus the formation of ecumenical, interreligious and all men of good will movements to face the challenges of globalization.[44]

## Global Ethics and Global Responsibility

As a matter of fact, today, there is a universal search for a common humanity, a global quest for a just, conflict-free world. For the promotion of a relatively 'just world order' in place of the existing 'world disorder' requires universal values.[45] This value system can be called 'global ethics'. Global ethics are needed because, "There is a very close relationship between globalization and attempts by the most economically developed countries to arrogantly impose prevailing

pseudo-values".[46] The emerging global culture must be moulded by the global ethics because "there is a kind of globalization without ethics".[47] According to John XXIII, "The coexistence among nations is based on the same values that should guide relations among human beings: truth, justice, active solidarity and freedom".[48] The international community with the "international law becomes the guarantor of the international order" yet not at the expense of the national soverignity.[49] Hans Küng's *Global Responsibility* (1990) presents a global ethic project. The Declaration of the Parliament of World's Religions in Chicago (1993) proposed an irrevocable fourfold global ethic. **1)** You shall not kill! Or in positive terms: Have respect for life! **2)** You shall not steal! Or in positive terms: Deal honestly and fairly! **3)** You shall not lie! Or in positive terms: Speak and act truthfully! **4)** You shall not commit sexual immorality! Or in positive terms: Respect and love one another.[50] Pope John Paul II in his Address to the Papal Academy of Social Sciences on 27 April 2001 supported the universal search for a commom ethical code for humankind. The World Council of Churches at its Eighth General Assembly in Harare in 1998 called for a fundamental shared ethics. Some other thinkers argue that a new knowledge system, informed by an altruistic sense of humanity, can help to produce a global ethic that provide a new and a revised sense of belonging. "Reciprocity and altruistic love underlie the Golden Rule. Positively stated, it directs one to 'do unto others what you would want others to do unto you'. In its negative form, it warns, 'do not do unto others what you would not want others to do unto you'".[51] Samir Dasgupta using Indian Philosophy deals with altruism and globalization present in *Bhagavadgita*. In Vedic thought in India man is thought of as a bundle of *Karma* (desire). Possession of desires gives him second birth but their absence make him one with *Brahma*. *Brahma* is one, and represents our globe. Globalism is very much related to sublimation and the blend represent the true nature of *Karma* (deed) which ultimately leads to *moksha* (salvation).[52] Furthermore, Samir compares the 'ideal type' model of a global village to the 'universal self'. Attaining to the 'universal self' results in awareness, recognition, inclusion, and love leading to the prime virtues of an authentic global ethic like liberty, justice, and love for a human world without gender discrimination, stark income discrepancies, illiteracy, ethnic conflict, and religious bigotry. Jay Weinstein and Elvira del Pozo name creative human altruism as 'species consciouness'.[53]

Reaching the Ultimate or the desire of transcendence is as old as the first human being. Moreover, reaching the unreached or unvisited lands in search of better pastures (migration), for trading, for colonialism (economic, political and cultural) for propagation of religions (mission) were visible throughout human history. In this global age, how can the world religions contribute to form a universal family or a global village? This is not purely a burden of world religions. Indian sociologists present a theory of humanism "… to mould and shape *one community, one culture* and *one world*"[54] on the basis of the Indian concept of the Metaphysical Triad i.e., Man-Selftranscendence-Universe. Colley named it 'growth of the larger mind'. We have already discussed this under alruism, namely: 'we are all human beings, all parts of one world'. Thus, today, the global disorder badly needs a global ethic to promote: **1)** Stability without stagnation, **2)** Freedom without anarchy, **3)** Development without ecological catastrophe, **4)** Creating one world without loosing our individual identities, **5)** Conflict resolution in a non-violent way without war and agression, **6)** Human dignity for all people through Human Rights for all people.[55] M. K. Gandhi's remark on 'social sins' too helps shape the global ethic project: **1)** Wealth without work **2)** Enjoyment without conscience **3)** Knowledge without character **4)** Business without morality **5)** Science without sacrifice, and **6)** politics without principles.[56] Felix Wilfred opposes the 'global ethic' project saying that such standardization of religion and ethics in the last analysis will have "an immense appeal to the palliatives of the pontiffs of capitalism".[57] He proposes to tap the resources and utopias contained in every religious tradition for the larger unity of the whole family. He further argues that globalization has been particularizing the religions. Therefore, a universal vision of unity in religions with the victims of globalization and their social movements can realize a more united and just world.[58] Michael Amalados amplifies the

"utopia of the human family" vision in the light of world religions: Cofucianism (harmonious nature); Hinduism (*Atman-Brahman* relationship); Buddhism (inter-being); Islam (universal community). He points out that "... any search for cosmic or universal communion should be based on inter-religious understanding. At that level every religion can contribute certain universal perspectives".[59]

It is clear from the above analysis that the unjsut globalization is a contributory factor to the rise of various destructive "isms", climatic changes, poverty, etc. Now let us now try to formulate a missiological approach for the humanization of globalization.

## Globalization and Theology of Mission

The Church is missionary by its very nature (*cf. Ad Gentes*, no. 2). It becomes missionary by attending to its every context in which it finds itself. In other words, if Christianity is to be meaningful and relevant, it must address the issues affecting its life (church) and the lives of the people (whole of humanity). Accordingly, theology must address its context. The changes in the world change the world or the context. The socio-economic, political, cultural, and technological incorporation into the "global village" has produced mixed results; positive and negative impacts on different groups in the world.

### The Urgency of Mission

The Church is at the service of the Kingdom of God. It has no mission of its own. Mission is not ours, but it belongs to God or *missio Dei/trinitarian*. The mission of the local Church is to incarnate Christ in the world. In other words, what would Jesus teach and how would he behave if he were born today ? "Jesus Christ is the same today as he was yesterday and as he will be for ever" (Heb 13:13). The Gospels (the text) reveal what Jesus Christ was yesterday and assure us that he will be the same today. The constants (doctrinal themes) will remain the same yet their interpretation will change according to the context. "Jesus always remains the Christ, although his Christness — the way he is understood is of ultimate significance — is

expressed differently and understood more deeply in the Church's various historical and cultural embodiments".[60] If a true Christian is another "Christ", then the Church (New People of God/Body of Christ/Temple of the Holy Spirit) becomes "Christian living". In other words, the Church strives to live as Christ would live here and now, as he would behave, as he would teach here and now. What values and emotions, attitudes and drives would he have were he alive today (Christ of culture)?

No culture is sacred hence in need of purification. Quoting G. Lohfink, John Fuellenbach argues that "... the Church does not see herself as 'counter to' or 'against' society as such but a 'counter' or a 'protest' against a society that does not live up to what it is supposed to be in the eyes of God".[61] Today's world is ethnically, ecologically, economically and religiously torn apart and badly in need of reconciliation. Robert J. Schreiter presents reconciliation as a new paradigm of Mission. In a humanity broken and disheartened ethnically and religiously, economically, politically and ecologically the need of reconciliation is indispensable. The ministry of reconciliation is "... about participating in God's healing societies that have been wounded deeply and broken by oppression, injustice, discrimination, war, and wanton destruction".[62] FABC cherishes harmony as one of the Asian cultural values and its vitality to bring about peace and reconciliation. "Asians live in an atmosphere charged with communal tensions. What is needed is a vision of unity and harmony, and a language of reconciled diversity that will enable people of different communities to work together for peace and the building of a more just society".[63]

The failures of globalization also have marginalized and excluded many especially the poor and the downtrodden. Furthermore, in most developing countries, the debt crisis, ecological degradation, urbanization, unemployment, corruption, and crime are on the rise. Consumerism and materialism are threatening to supplant the traditional values. It seems that *the local is sacrificed at the altar of the global*.

### Mission and Context

We saw above that the mission is urgent. In this context what is the mission of

the Church? What should be the "Good News" to a fractured, wounded, and bleeding world? The Church exists to continue the mission of the Trinity or *Missio Dei*. "It is not the Church that has a mission of salvation to fulfill in the world; it is the mission of the Son and the Spirit through the Father that includes the Church".[64] How can the Catholic Church proclaim Luke 4:18 in the world? "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, for he has anointed me to bring the good news to the afflicted. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives, sight to the blind, to the oppressed to go free, to proclaim a year of favour from the Lord". How can the Church help minimize the marginalization caused by the process of globalization? How can the Church proclaim; 'Peace be with you' or *shalom* (Jn 20:20) to the world? How can the Church restore sight to the people who are being blinded by the false promises of globalization and expose its hidden agendas and work for justice? How can the Church contribute to the global civilizing effort of globalization? Briefly, *where is God at work in a globalized culture?*

The Church lives in a multi-religious and multi-cultural world. Thus, its mission if it were to be effective ought to be intra-Christian and inter-religious especially against the destructive and dehumanizing forces of globalization. In other words, as the saying goes, "United we stand divided we fall" the mission must not be *counter*-mission or mission *against* rather mission *with* and mission *for*.

### Mission as Proclamation of Reign of God through Threefold Dialogue

We are trying to formulate a mission theology relevant to the current context in the world especially in Asia. The theological reflection pays attention to building the reign/Kingdom of God through the *triple dialogue*: the poor, religions, and cultures. The mystery of God is universal/global. God wants the salvation of all people (I Tm 2:4-5; Ti 2:11). God's vision and mission of salvation is thus universal. It can be called the globalization of salvation since it embraces the entire human race and the whole of creation. "Mission means, therefore, first and foremost God's turning towards the world in creative love, redemptive healing and transforming power".[65] The Holy Spirit is also present and active in every time and place hence universal[66] and thus operates globally. The salvation won by Jesus through the Paschal Mystery is unique and universal thus global. "The inchoate reality of the Kingdom can also be found beyond the confines of the Church"[67] and since the Holy Spirit is universally active in all times and in all cultures, the reign of God is global. Besides, salvation in Jesus Christ is available to all outside the Church in a mysterious manner.[68] However, "the Church is necessary for the world at large as a sacrament, an efficacious sign, and instrument of God's redemptive activity in Jesus Christ, leading towards the final Kingdom of God".[69] Pope John Paul II strongly argues in *Redemptoris Missio* (*RM*) God's reign cannot be separated "from Christ or from the Church".[70] Thus, to be a Christian through baptism is a divine call/choice/election for a purpose: "to 'be sent out' (Mk 3:13-15), to engage actively in God's mission, to become a co-worker with God for the salvation-transformation of the world into God's final design".[71] If the Church exists to continue the mission of Jesus Christ and if the central message (mission) of Jesus was the Kingdom of God[72] then the mission of the Church is the proclamation of the Kingdom of God. "Mission, in other words, is what it means to be Church, because to be Church means to share in the mission of Jesus, which was to preach, to serve and to witness with his whole heart to the Kingdom of God".[73] Besides, the Kingdom of God and the *Abba* though distinct are complementary. "The Kingdom explains God's being *Abba* and the fatherhood of God provides a basis for an explanation for the Kingdom".[74] According to the vision of Jesus, God is the Father of the entire human family and all human persons are brothers and sisters. Thus, it is logical to conclude that the mission of the Church by its very nature is global. Moreover, the Kingdom of God is neither totally otherworldly nor a this-worldly reality rather it is both. The dream of God is a vision of *Shalom*.

"It means well-being in a comprehensive sense. It includes freedom from negatives such as oppression, anxiety, and fear, as well as the presence of positives such as health, prosperity, and security. *Shalom* thus includes a social vision: the dream of a world in which such well-being belongs to everybody. As the story of the interaction between the dream of God and the rejection of the dream

through what happens in history, the Bible is a tale of two kingdoms: the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of this world".[75]

For this vision Jesus lived, laboured, suffered and died. This is the vision he entrusted to his disciples: As the Father has sent me, so I sent you' (Jn 20:20). According to Leonardo Boff, for Jesus, the Kingdom contained the global transformation of the old world. It would become the new world without sin, sickness, hatred, and all alienating forces that affect both human life and the entire cosmos.[76] "The Kingdom aims at transforming human relationships; it grows gradually as peoples slowly learn to love, forgive and serve one another.... The Kingdom's nature, therefore, is one of communion among all human beings – with one another and with God".[77] The Church is the presence of the Kingdom in history insofar as the Risen Christ is present in this community of believers. However, she is not the Kingdom insofar as the Kingdom is still to be realized eschatologically in its universal dimension. She is the sacrament of the Kingdom in the sense that she is a sign and instrument of the Kingdom's appearance and realization in history. "One of the most important things that Christians need to know about the Church is that *the church* is not of ultimate importance.... What *is* of ultimate importance is the Reign of God, and it is from the Church's commitment to preach, serve and witness to that reign that the church receives and maintains its identity".[78] "That the Reign of God is the very reason for the Church. The Church exists in and for the Kingdom".[79]

FABC advocates a Kingdom-oriented theology of mission or "regnocentric" perspective of mission. Since the Reign of God is universal, the Asian Church chooses the *path of threefold dialogue*: dialogue with cultures, dialogue with religions, and dialogue with the poor to build it.[80] The

Asian Bishops further affirm that the "regnocentric" approach does not threaten the 'Christo-centric' perspective of faith. "… on the contrary 'regno-centrism' calls for 'Christo-centrism', and *vice versa*, for it is in Jesus and through the Christ-event that God established his Kingdom upon the earth and human history".[81] Peter Phan notes that Vatican II changed the order of the Catholic mission theology from church, proclamation, mission, and Reign of God to Reign of God, mission, proclamation, and church.[82]

Thus, triple dialogue — with the Asian people, especially the poor, their cultures, and their religions — of the FABC as a way of being church is a sort of Copernican revolution in ecclesiology. Therefore, the urgent task of the Asian Churches is to become churches not only *in* Asia but also *of* Asia, and *for* Asia, to become truly local Churches. Accordingly, dialogue becomes the modality of the preferred mode of proclamation. Nonetheless, dialogue is neither a substitute for proclamation nor an underestimate of proclamation; rather "dialogue becomes the context in which the proclamation has to takes place".[83] Hence, the new mission of evangelization of the Asian Churches becomes liberation, inculturation, and interreligious dialogue.

Stephen B. Bevans and Roger P. Schroeder's *Constants in Context, A Theology of Mission For Today* makes a synthesis of the mission in the late twentieth century as *prophetic dialogue*. "Mission is dialogue. It takes people where they are; it recognizes the validity of their own religious existence and the integrity of their own religious ends".[84] "… It is *prophetic* in two senses. On the one hand, the Church in mission must speak clearly for the world's excluded, against human and ecological violence, and on behalf of God's Reign of justice and peace. On the other, even in the face of the 'rays of divine truth' within the world's religions, it must proclaim unhesitantly, faithfully – and yet

respectfully – the name, the vision and the Lordship of Jesus Christ".[85]

## Conclusion

We saw above that globalization is neither an angel nor a monster. We all emphasized the potentialities of globalization for the human race. Yet, we found that the kind of globalization in operation at present creates misery for the majority of the members of the universal family economically or/both ecologically. Therefore, we also affirmed the need of a "global ethic" to tame the distorted kind of globalization without any ethical consistency. In fact, we saw that an emerging global community can appeal to universal ideas like human dignity, liberty from poverty, Human Rights, respect for nature, etc. We then concluded that the present form of globalization (economic, political, and cultural) with other factors contributes to global ills. Human misery is a clear sign of man's natural condition of frailty and of his need for salvation. The Church as a sacrament of Christ has a preferential option for the poor, marginalized, voiceless, excluded because Christ the Saviour showed compassion to them and also identified himself with them (Mt 25:40-45). The Church is also bound to propose with the other religions and secular modern culture the alternatives to the logic of domination, egoism, economic rivalry, self-seeking interests, and violence. The cry of the poor, the excluded, and the groaning of the earth have reached God. As the Father sent the Son, today the *Trinitarian God* sends the Church to liberate the whole of humanity. Therefore, the Church as the body of Christ or the new people of God has a divinely entrusted mission to build the *civilization of love* against *the culture of death*. Another word for *catholic* (*kat'holon*) is global. Yet, 'catholic' does not mean 'uniform' or 'homogenized' of which some accuse globalization. 'Catholic' means united in plurality. Since, the victims of globalization are also a global phenomenon; the local Church has to collaborate with the universal Church and the international community to humanize the process of globalization. Thus, there is no 'crude contextualism'.[86] What exists is a constant global-local interaction. As Henri Bouillard said, *a theology that is not up-to-date is a false theology*.

## Footnotes

[1] ROBERT J. SCHREITER, *The New Catholicity; Theology between the Global and the Local*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, NY 1997, 122-126.

[2] D. HELD *et al.*, *Global Transformations*, Stanford University Press, Stanford 1999, 16.

[3] MALCOLM WATERS, *Globalization,* Routledge, London 1995, 3.

[4] JOHN H. COATSWORTH, "Globalization, Growth, and Welfare in History", in (eds.), MARCELO M. SUÁREZ-OROZCO-DESIRÉE BAOLIAN QIN-HILLIARD, in *Globalization, Culture and Education in the New Millennium,* University of California Press, Berkeley-Los Angeles-London 2004, 38. He identifies four major cycles of globalization: **1.** The conquests and colonization in 1492-1600s. **2.** The second wave of European colonization characterized by the slave colonies in the late 17th century to early 19th century. **3.** The salient features of this period are the scramble for the conquest of colonies, increase in international Great Depression of 1930s. **4.** The present period began with the liberalization of international trade after the World War II. *Ibidem,* 38-39.

[5] IMF, *World Economic Outlook*, May, 1997.

[6] Peter Beyer identifies four different theoretical approaches to globalization. **1.** The world-system theory of Emmanuel Wallerstein; globalization is explained from the economic perspective. **2.** The "value-creation system" of John Meyer; globalization in terms of polity. **3.** Ronald Robertson's theory: globalization as continuity of the modernization process, yet with novel realities. **4.** Niklas Luhmann's theory analyzes globalization *vis-à-vis* social communication. PETER BEYER, *Religion and Globalization*, Sage Publications, London-Thousand Oaks, New Delhi 1994, 14-44. Encyclopaedia of Sociology gives four theories: Marxism and Modernization theory, Dependency theory, World-System Theory and Current Global System Analysis. See, EDGARF-BORGATTA-RHONDA J. V. MONTGOMERY, (eds.) *Encyclopaedia of Sociology,* Vol. 2, Macmillan Reference USA, Gale Group, NY 2000[2].

[7] FRANCIS FUKUYAMA, *The End of History and the Last Man,* London 1992.

[8] *Cf.* RAY KIELY, "Neo-Liberal Globalization Meets Global Resistance: The Significance of Anti-Globalization Protest", in SAMIR DASGUPTA (ed.), *The Changing Face of Globalization*, SAGE Publications, New Delhi-Thousand Oaks-London, 2004, 298-317.

[9] JOSEPH E. STIGLITZ, *Globalization and its Discontents,* W.W. Norton and Company, NY- London 2003[2], 247.

[10] *Cf.* SAMIR DASGUPTA (ed.), *The Changing Face of Globalization*, SAGE Publications, New Delhi-Thousand Oaks-London, 2004, 19.

[11] *Cf. Ibidem,* 15.

[12] *Cf.* Verghese Chirayath – Ernest De Zolt, "Globalization, Multinational Corporations, and White-Collar Crime: Cases and Consequences for Traditional Economies", in Samir Dasgupta (ed.), *The Changing Face of Globalization*, SAGE Publications, New Delhi-Thousand Oaks-London, 2004, 151-166.

[13] Felix Wilfred, *Asian Dreams and Christian Hope at the Dawn of the Millennium,* ISPCK, Delhi 2003, 6-10.

[14] Joseph E. Stiglitz, *Globalization and its Discontents,* W.W. Norton & Company, NY- London 2003², 216.

[15] Archbishop Diarmuid Martin, "Globalization and the Social Teaching of the Church", in Pontifical Council for the Family, Proceedings of the International Conference of Globalization, Ecomonics, and the Family, Vatican City, November 27-29, 2000, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Città del Vaticano 2001, 47.

[16] Lucas Thumma, "Global Ethic and Global Responsibility", *Indian Theological Studies,* 42 (2005), 271.

[17] Joseph E. Stiglitz, *Globalization and its Discontents* ix-x.

[18] *Ibidem,* xiv.

[19] *Ibidem,* 77.

[20] *Ibidem,* xv.

[21] Robert J. Schreiter, *The New Catholicity; Theology between the Global and the Local*, 1997, 9.

[22] G. Ritzer, *The McDonaldization of Society*, Pine Forge, Thousand Oaks, CA 1993.

[23] Immanuel Wallerstein, "Culture in Conflict: Who Are We? Who Are the Others?", in Samir Dasgupta (ed.), *The Changing Face of Globalization*, 83.

[24] *Ibidem*, 87.

[25] *Cf.*, *Ibidem*, 88.

[26] *Ibidem*, 89.

[27] Joseph E. Stiglitz, *Globalization and Its Discontents,* 248.

[28] Samir Dasgupta (ed.), *The Changing Face of Globalization*, 21.

[29] *Ibidem*, 22.

[30] David A. Crocker, "Globalization and Human Development: Ethical Approaches", in Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, *Acta 7*, Globalization, Ethical and Industrial Concerns, the Proceedings of the Seventh Plenary Session of the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, 25-28 April 2001, Vatican City, 54-55. **1.** Hyperglobalism: Globalization as a new global age of economic (capitalist) intergration – open trade, global financial flows, and multinational corporations. **2.** Skepticism: rejects hyperglobalism's view that the global economic intergration is taking place and that the States are getting weaker. Instead, they argue that the regional trade blocks are getting stronger and resurgent fundamentalism either insulate themselves from or clash with the alien cultures. Furthermore, globalization is not extinguishing the North/South divide but widens it. **3.** Transformationalism: Contrary to the hyperglobalists, the tramsformationlists advocate that globalization is not merely economic but political, cultural, criminal and technological and not only inexorable and unidirectional rather it is contingent, open and multidirectional. They also emphasize that globalization can and should be civilized.

[31] Joseph E. Stiglitz, *Globalization and Its Discontents,* 06.

[32] Zephirin Diabre, "Globalization and Poverty: Potentials and Challenges", *Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, Acta 7*. 150-157. Also, Virginia Fabella- R. S. Sugirtharajah, *Dictionary of Third World Theologies*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, NY 2000, 91-94.

[33] Jegadish Gandhi – George Cheriyan, *Globalization: A Challenge to the Church, Papers and Documents from the South Asian Consultation on 'Recolonization, Globalization and the Role of the Church'*, 16-19 March 1998, Bangalore, India. The Association of Christian Institutes for Social Concern in Asia, Chennai, India 1998, vii.

[34] See, Felix Wilfred, *Asian Dreams and Christian Hope, At the Dawn of the Millennium,* ISPCK, Delhi 2003, 2-25.

[35] Joseph E. Stiglitz, *Globalization and Its Discontents,* 248-249.

[36] Jon Sobrino–Felix Wilfred, "Globalization and its Victims", in *Concilium* (2001/5) 12-13.

[37] *Cf.* pontifical Council for the Family, Proceedings of the International Conference of Globalization, Ecomonics, and the Family, 192.

[38] Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Città del Vaticano 2004, no. 440.

[39] *Cf. Ibidem*, no. 441.

[40] Jon Sobrino–Felix Wilfred, "Globalization and its Victims", in *Concilium* 5 (2001) 12-13.

[41] Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, *Acta 7,* Globalization Ethical and Industrial Concerns, the Proceedings of the Seventh Plenary Session of the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, 25-28 April 2001, Vatican City, 37-39.

[42] *Ibidem* 29.

[43] *Ibidem*, 29.

[44] *Cf.* Johannes Schasching, "The Church's View on Globalization", in Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, *Acta 7*, 38-39.

[45] See Karl-Josef Kuschel–Dietmar Mieth (eds.), In Search of Universal Values, in *Concilium* 4 (2001).

[46] Cardinal Alfonso López Trujillo, "The Family and Globalization", in Pontifical Council for the Family, Proceedings of the International Conference on Globalization, Ecomonics, and the Family, 9.

[47] *Ibidem*, 9.

[48] John XXIII, Encyclical Letter *Pacem in Terris, cf.* nn. 48, 98: *AAS* 55 (1963), 279-280; *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, n. 433.

[49] Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace,

*Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Cittá del Vaticano 2004, nos. 433-435.

⁵⁰ Declaration Towards a Global Ethic (September 1993) as quoted by Konrad Raiser, "Global Order and Global Ethic", in *Concilium* 5 (2001) 22.

⁵¹ Samir Dasgupta (ed.), *The Changing Face of Globalization*, 28.

⁵² Samir Dasgupta, "Globalization, Altruism, and Sociology of Humanity", in Samir Dasgupta (ed.), *The Changing Face of Globalization*, 136

⁵³ Jay Weinstein–Elvira del Pozo "Altruism and the Prospects for a Common humanity", in Samir Dasgupta (ed.), *The Changing Face of Globalization*, 98-124.

⁵⁴ Samir Dasgupta, "Globalization, Altruism, and Sociology of Humanity", in Samir Dasgupta (ed.), *The Changing Face of Globalization*, 146.

⁵⁵ Lucas Thumma, "Seminar on Globalization", *Petri News*, Bangalore; St Peter's Seminary, December 2004, 23.

⁵⁶ As quoted by Hans Küng "Global Business and Global Ethic", in *Concilium* 4 (2001) 105.

⁵⁷ Felix Wilfred, "Religions Face to Face With Globalization ", in *Concilium* 5 (2001) 36.

⁵⁸ Cf. *Ibidem,* 39-40.

⁵⁹ Michael Amaladoss, "The Utopia of the Human Family: Among the Religions of Harmony", in *Concilium* 5 (2001) 88.

⁶⁰ Stephen B. Bevens - Roger P. Schroeder, *Constants in Context, A Theology of Mission for Today,* Orbis Books, Maryknoll, NY 2004, 33.

⁶¹ John Fuellenbach, *Church, Community for the Kingdom,* Logos Publications, Manila, 2001, 285.

⁶² Robert J. Schreiter, Reconciliation as a New Paradigm of Mission, Conference on World Mission and Evangelism, Athens (Greece), 9-16 May 2005, 3.

⁶³ Franz-Josef Eilers, (ed.), *For All the Peoples of Asia, Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences Documents from 1997 to 2001,* Vol. 3, 330.

⁶⁴ As cited in David Bosch, Jürgen Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit: A Contribution to Messianic Ecclesiology*, London, SCM Press 1977, 64.

⁶⁵ John Fuellenbach, *Church, Community for the Kingdom,* 16.

⁶⁶ Second Vatican Ecumenical council, Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church *Ad Gentes,* (7 December 1965) nn. 3, 11, 15; in *AAS* 58 (1966) 947-990; Second Vatican Ecumenical council, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium,* n. 5: *AAS* 57 (1965).

Second Vatican Ecumenical council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the World of Today, *Gaudium et Spes,* (07 December 1965), 10-11, 22, 26, 38, 41, 92-93: *AAS* 58 (1966).

⁶⁷ John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Missio*, 20: *AAS* 83 (1991).

⁶⁸ Second Vatican Ecumenical council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes,* n. 22 (7 December 1965); *Lumen Gentium*, n. 16; *AAS* 58 (1966).

⁶⁹ John Fuellenbach, *Church, Community for the Kingdom,* 18.

⁷⁰ John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Missio*, n. 18: *AAS* 83 (1991).

⁷¹ John Fuellenbach, *Church, Community for the Kingdom*, 20.

⁷² Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi,* n. 80: *AAS* 68 (1976); Second Vatican Ecumenical council, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium,* n. 5: *AAS* 57 (1965).

⁷³ Stephen B. Bevans – Roger P. Schroeder, *Constants in Context, A Theology of Mission For Today*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, NY 2004, 306.

⁷⁴ John Fuellenbach, *Church, Community for the Kingdom,* 22.

⁷⁵ *Ibidem,* n. 25.

⁷⁶ Cf. Leonardo Boff, *Church Chrisma and Power*, Liberational Theology and the Institutional Church, SCM Press, London 1985.

⁷⁷ John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Missio*, n. 15: *AAS* 83 (1991).

⁷⁸ Stephen B. Bevans - Roger P. Schroeder, *Constants in Context, A Theology of Mission for Today*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, NY 2004, 396.

⁷⁹ Gaudencio B. Rosales – C. G. Arévalo, (eds.), *For All the Peoples of Asia, Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences Documents from 1970 to 1991*, Claretian Publications, Quezon City, the Philippines, 1992, 252.

⁸⁰ Cf. *Ibidem*, nn. 251-252.

⁸¹ Franze-Josef Eilers, (ed.), *For All the Peoples of Asia, Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences Documents from 1992-1996,* Vol. 2, Claretian Publications, Quezon City, the Philippines 1997, 200.

⁸² Cf, Peter Phan, *In Our Own Tongues*, 32-44.

⁸³ Michael Amaladoss, *Making All Things New : Dialogue, Pluralism, and Evangelization in Asia,* Orbis Books, Maryknoll, NY 1990, 59.

⁸⁴ *Ibidem*, 285.

⁸⁵ *Ibidem*, 4.

⁸⁶ See Robert J. Schreiter , *The New Catholicity; Theology between the Global and the Local*, 3-4.

# Cultural Globalization and Assertion of Identity
# - The Challenge of Nurturing Christian Identity in a
# Multidimensional Perspective -

## - Francis-Vincent Anthony, SDB* -

The contemporary world brings a wide variety of cultures, religions and nations to interact as never before on a global scale. The ideologically determined homogenization that such a process of globalization entails paradoxically awakens the often dormant specificity of cultural, religious and national identities and brings them into sharp contrast. The danger concealed in the rightful assertion and defence of one's cultural, religious and national identity in the face of globalization is that local contrasts and conflicts can have unintended and unforeseeable global consequences. This poses a particularly intricate problem for evangelization today, namely, for living and proclaiming the Christian identity in a global world.

Although *globalization* and *identity* are in vogue, they are not easily definable concepts. The shades of meaning that these take in the contemporary debate, however, point to multidimensionality as the key to their comprehension. We shall therefore clarify the multidimensionality of globalization and that of identity and examine the questions of cultural globalization and assertion of identity with reference to these. On the basis of this enquiry we shall briefly highlight the challenge of nurturing Christian identity in a multidimensional perspective.

## 1. Multidimensionality of globalization and the focus on cultural globalization

The term *globalization* came into use in the 1960s and 1970s. During this period, the growing interdependence in politics and economics, particularly in the Western countries, brought to light the inadequacy of the traditional manner of dealing with the economic, political and cultural problems, i.e.,

making a clear-cut separation between internal and external affairs, between the national and international arena, between the happenings at the local level and those at the global level. In a growingly interdependent world, what happens outside the national borders influences the situation inside and the developments inside tend to influence the outside. Globalization thus stands for this interconnection and interdependence on an ever-growing scale, speed and depth, which de-territorializes (i.e., de-links from the local geographical area, ethnic circle or nation-state) the economic, political, cultural and religious realities.[1]

In its specific sense, globalization stands for the current capitalistic processes seen in the United States, Japan and the European Union, oriented toward integrating and controlling the market and available financial resources, and making them interdependent in order to standardize profits on a worldwide scale.[2] However, in many theoretical analyses globalization concerns not only the economic sector of material exchanges, but also the other areas of social life, namely, the polity and culture, which respectively focuses on political exchanges and symbolic exchanges. According to M. Waters, each of these types of exchange exhibits a particular relationship to territory or space:

*material exchanges localize; political exchanges internationalize; and symbolic exchanges globalize.* It follows that the globalization of human society is contingent on the extent to which cultural arrangements are effective relative to economic and political arrangements. We can expect the economy and the polity to be globalized to the extent that they are culturalized, that is, to the extent that the exchanges that take place within them are accomplished symbolically.[3]

In this way, Waters takes a radically different approach to globalization from those

who hold the driving force of global integration to be the restless capitalist expansionism. In his view, "the ability of purely material exchanges to move beyond a local nexus hit its limit towards the end of the nineteenth century at which point they were transformed into political exchanges (e.g. State colonial expansionism, alliance systems, global war, superpower arrangements). A similar transformation of political into symbolic exchanges is occurring at the present historical moment".[4]

With the view to defining the process of globalization from a cultural perspective, Waters tries to imagine what a fully globalized world would look like and describes it as follows:

In a globalized world there will be a single society and culture occupying the planet. This society and culture will probably not be harmoniously integrated although it might conceivably be. Rather it will probably tend towards high levels of differentiation, multicentricity and chaos. There will be no central organizing government and no tight set of cultural preferences and prescriptions. Insofar as culture is unified it will be extremely abstract, expressing tolerance for diversity and individual choice. Importantly territoriality will disappear as an organizing principle for social and cultural life, it will be a society without borders and spatial boundaries. In a globalized world we will be unable to predict social practices and preferences on the basis of geographical location. […] We can therefore define globalization as: *A social process in which the constraints of geography on social and cultural arrangements recede and in which people become increasingly aware that they are receding.*[5]

Such a process of globalization is said to be closely bound to modernity.[6] On the one hand, modernity gives rise to globalization and on the other, what is globalized is the modern/postmodern culture. In other words, as J. Tomlinson affirms, "Globalization lies at the heart of modern culture; cultural practices lie at the heart of globalization".[7] In this vein, he holds "complex connectivity" as the essential trait of globalization, namely, of global modernity. More than a question of 'time-space compression' or 'stretching' of social relations across the globe, globalization stands for the *transformations* brought about in the local order. In this sense, it may be

described as "staying in one place but experiencing the 'dis-placement' that global modernity *brings to them*. […] In particular it is to grasp the 'proximity' that comes from the networking of social relations across large tracts of time-space, causing distant events and powers to penetrate our local experience".[8]

In this sense, the concept of complex connectivity points to two characteristic features of globalization. On the one hand, connectivity being globally encompassing it implies a certain *unicity*, namely, of the world becoming a single social setting. "Connectivity thus supposes unicity as a cultural-political principle. Local experience has to be raised to the horizon of a 'single world' if we are to understand it, and local practices and lifestyles increasingly need to be examined and evaluated in terms of their global consequences".[9] On the other hand, complex connectivity points to the *multidimensionality* of globalization comprising the economic, the political, the social, the cultural, etc. The difficulty of accounting simultaneously for all these aspects of the process, frequently leads to a simplified approach of viewing globalization in 'one-dimensional' terms: for example, in terms of capitalism or of the nation-state. Understood as a complex multidimensional process, globalization "involves all sorts of contradictions, resistances and countervailing forces". It involves the 'dialectic' of opposed principles and tendencies such as the local and the global, the universal and the particular.[10]

Consequently, viewing globalization from a cultural perspective does not mean reducing the former to a one-dimensional reality, but rather grasping the impact of globalization on the identity, life-experience, life-history, and life-world of people.

When we slice into complex connectivity from this perspective what we are concerned with is how globalization alters the context of meaning construction: how it affects people's sense of identity, the experience of place and of the self in relation to place, how it impacts on the shared understandings, values, desires, myths, hopes and fears that have developed around locally situated life.[11]

The notion of 'cultural globalization' then acquires its meaning in this interconnection between culture and globalization. Culture matters for globalization insofar as the former is an intrinsic dimension of the latter, and also

because culture is constitutive of complex connectivity. Global consequentiality of day-to-day cultural actions shows how culture matters for globalization. The cultural dimension also brings to light the essentially dialectical nature of globalization.[12] Globalization, instead, tends to defy the understanding of culture as inseparably bound to a specific locality. "The connectivity of globalization is clearly threatening to such conceptualizations, not only because the multiform penetration of localities breaks into this binding of meanings to place, but because it undermines the thinking through which culture and fixity of location are originally paired".[13] In other words, it challenges the traditional ethnographic and static view of culture, making the global progressively the cultural horizon within which we construct our identity and the meaning of our existence.[14]

### 2. Multidimensionality of identity and the assertion of identity

If globalization with its complex connectivity is the horizon in which we construct our identity, the latter itself is not a simple reality. That is, identity also comprises multiple dimensions. As we shall explain below, the multidimensionality of identity may be viewed from the psycho-individual, the socio-cultural and the religio-Christian perspectives.

***Psycho-individual perspective:*** In psychology, *identity* denotes personal identity, namely, one's being *continuous* through time and *distinct* as an entity from all others.[15] On the one hand, identity points to the possibility of remaining numerically the same notwithstanding changes, and on the other, it indicates the singularity of persons (or of things) even when they share some characteristics with other persons (or things).[16]

In this vein, P. Ricoeur distinguishes between *idem-identity* and *ipse-identity*. The former stands for someone or something

being identical in time, and the latter for the understanding one has of oneself as a person in time. In Ricoeur's view, personal identity comprises both these aspects. Moreover, the concept of identity implies a physical immediacy to oneself, which allows one to think of oneself as an external object. In this sense, identity entails a reflective disposition.[17]

In more concrete terms, identity is the concept or the image one has of oneself. This image does not necessarily coincide with that which others have of that person. It rather represents what one thinks of being or desires to be or become. In this sense, identity also denotes the ideal self.[18] In this perspective, E. Erikson describes identity as the integration of all former identifications and images of oneself in the light of an anticipated future.[19]

Personal identity is then a dynamic reality which evolves towards ever mature configurations. In Erikson's theory of identity development through eight stages, "identity crisis" plays a crucial role in the passage from one stage to another. According to Levinson, identity crisis can surface at various moments in adult life: between 17 and 22 years, when the reality does not coincide with the "dream" of what one wants to be in life, of the type of profession or of the partner one desires; between 28 and 33 years, when the initial choices undergo a revision; between 40 and 45 years, when a further revision takes place with more radical changes.[20]

***Socio-cultural perspective:*** According to Erikson, individual identity, that is, the sense of being oneself and of one's continuity in time and space, depends on collective identity. In other words, the collective identities (linked to religion, culture, language, nation, caste, class, etc.) which characterize the groups significant to the individual, determine his/her personal identity. There is, so to say, an intrinsic bond between individual identity and social identity.[21]

Already from the moment of birth the individual learns about what matters in the space-time of his/her culture, in the project of life possible in society.[22]

Generally, we shape our identity in agreement or in conflict with what others attribute to us. G.H. Mead utilizes the concepts of "I" and "me" to designate these two aspects. The "I" stands for the self-perception of the individual related to his/her physical immediacy and to his/her reflective disposition. The perspective of "me" is the one that comes from outside, the way in which I make an experience of myself from the stand point of others. What one is and who one is, seem to depend more on the impact of external attributions than on the individual's own search for identity.[23]

Consequently, we cannot speak of personal identity without making reference to others and to the social environment. Personal identity emerges from the interrelation between the environment and the individual in terms of integration and differentiation. Identification with the socio-historical context and the differentiation from it are constitutive aspects of the concept of identity. It can exist only when a person can be perceived as distinct from others, as unique and non-substitutable. At the same time, identity as a dynamic concept necessitates a certain dialogical and inter-subjective perspective. It is determined by the individual's capacity to articulate his/her own life-history, review it and change it under the impact of new experiences.[24]

***Religio-Christian perspective:*** In the various religious traditions, identity designates the profound self of the human being: his/her self as a creature in relation to the Creator, his/her self in the face of the totally Other, his/her self in rapport with the Transcendent Self. The self-realization of human being is thus viewed in reference to the Transcendent Self. For this reason, religious traditions play a crucial role in the definition of personal and social identity.

Generally, at the heart of the socio-cultural identity there is the religious one. For example, the Indian identity is closely linked to the Hindu religious core, just as the Thai identity is intimately bound to Buddhism. In contexts such as these, where religious identity is inseparable from the socio-cultural identity, Christianity has caused rapture between the religious and the socio-cultural identity of the indigenous believers, giving rise to a sort of schizophrenia in their personal identity.

The vast majority of Indian Christians, for example, tend to ignore the identity linked to their indigenous religio-cultural tradition, limiting their concern to upholding the Christian identity that distinguishes them from others. As a minority community, in order to safeguard their identity, Indian Christians tend to deliberately accentuate the distinctive aspects of their Christian identity, exhibiting in this way an alienated and alienating identity.

By its nature, Christian identity implies a certain continuity and discontinuity with the indigenous religio-cultural identity. The lack of continuity with the indigenous religio-cultural identity would undermine the personal identity of the believer, but at the same time, without the discontinuity the originality of the Christian identity would be lost. The difficulty obviously is in ensuring the continuity of indigenous religio-cultural identity without obfuscating the Christian originality. This means that in the Indian/Asian context a prudent and courageous discernment is necessary to distinguish between the legitimate and illegitimate forms of integrating the Hindu-Christian identity, the Buddhist-Christian Identity, etc. In other words, the question of continuity and discontinuity with the indigenous religio-cultural identity of Christians is a vital one.

The psycho-individual, the socio-cultural and the religio-Christian perspectives bring to light the multidimensionality and dynamic nature of identity. Against this backdrop one can easily grasp the problem of asserting one's identity in a global world. Amartya Sen, in his thought-provoking book *Identity and Violence* forcefully underscores the risks of asserting a one-dimensional and static identity.

We do belong to many different groups, in one way or another, and each of these collectivities can give a person a potentially important identity. We may have to decide whether a particular group to which we belong is – or is not – important for us. Two different, though interrelated, exercises are involved here: (1) deciding on what our relevant identities are, and (2)

weighing the relative importance of these different identities. Both tasks demand reasoning and choice.[25]

According to Sen, in the choice of identity and in the priority given to one or the other, reasoning and scrutiny should play a major role. In other words, identity should never be a question of imposition or constraint. Communitarian identity should always make place for choice so that the individual can evolve his/her identity as an open project. In this context asserting religious identity in an exclusive manner could be damaging.

Our religious or civilizational identity may well be very important, but it is one membership among many. The question we have to ask is not whether Islam (or Hinduism or Christianity) is a peace-loving religion or a combative one ("tell us which it is really?"), but how a religious Muslim (or Hindu or Christian) may combine his or her religious beliefs or practices with other features of personal identity and other commitments and values (such as attitudes to peace and war). To see one's religious – or "civilizational" – affiliation as an all-engulfing identity would be a deeply problematic diagnosis.[26]

The recognition of multiple identities or of the multidimensionality of identity, even in the religious sector seems imperative. In other words, according to Sen, religion cannot be a person's all-encompassing identity, downplaying his/her political and social identities.[27] On the contrary, acknowledging the multidimensionality of identity has become an urgent necessity in the complex connectivity of a global world.

## 3. Nurturing Christian identity in a multidimensional perspective

As discussed above, on the one hand, globalization with its complex connectivity has its impact on the identity, life-history, and life-world of the individual. On the other hand, the multidimensionality of identity has its significance in a globalizing world. In the face of the multidimensionality of globalization and that of identity, nurturing and asserting the Christian identity becomes a rather problematic issue. The challenge is to evangelize or nurture Christian identity in a multidimensional perspective,[28] and consequently engage in a complex process of evangelization.[29]

The complex connectivity of the global world provides some hitherto unforeseen channels of evangelization in a secularized context. At the same time, it warns against viewing the global world from a religious/ Christian one-dimensional perspective. Focusing excessively and exclusively on the globalization of religion could make us lose sight of the other dimensions that determine the way we situate and interpret our life in an interdependent and interconnected world. Besides, the modality of evangelization in a specific context cannot be viewed without taking into account their global consequentiality. Similarly, globalization challenges the static way of understanding and proclaiming our faith and that too in isolation from other religious traditions. The complex connectivity among contemporary cultures and religions calls for a more intercultural and interreligious approach to evangelization.[30]

With regard to the question of nurturing and asserting Christian identity in a global world, the metaphors of 'light', 'salt' and 'yeast' found in the Gospel can provide some solution. The role of light is not to attract attention to itself, but to shed light on all surrounding objects so that an individual can perceive all things. Although salt is an indispensable ingredient, food cannot be reduced to salt. Salt is meant to bring to the fore the various shades of tastes of different food items. Light, salt and yeast, in a way lose themselves in order to bring to life what surround them. They have their value not in themselves, but in relation to other entities. Christian identity – founded on the incarnation of the Son of God – cannot then be thought of in isolation apart from all the other aspects of life. The role of Christian identity is not to shine in isolation but to ennoble and bring to fullness the other dimensions of an individual's identity. With reference to the multidimensionality of a person's identity, the process of evangelization must then present the Christian faith as one that adds value to other dimensions and never as a one-dimensional identity that is sufficient unto itself.

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### Footnotes

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[1] *Cf.* Held, D. – McGrew A., *Globalismo e antiglobalismo,* Il Mulino, Bologna 2003², 9-10; WATERS M., *Globalization,* Routledge, London/New York 1995, 1-4.

[2] *Cf.* Midali, M., *Teologia pratica. 2. Attuali modelli e percorsi contestuali di evangelizzazione,* LAS, Roma 2000³, 56.

[3] Waters, M., *Globalization,* 9.

[4] *Ibid.,* 10.

[5] *Ibid.,* 3.

[6] In a wider sense, globalization can be viewed as a process accompanying humanity from it origin: see, Chanda N., *Bound Together. How Traders, Preachers, Adventurers, and Warriors Shaped Globalization,* Penguin/Viking, New Delhi 2007.

[7] Tomlinson, J., *Globalization and Culture,* Polity Press, Cambride 1999, 1.

[8] *Ibid.,* 9.

[9] *Ibid.,* 12.

[10] *Ibid.*, 16.

[11] *Ibid.,* 20.

[12] *Ibid.,* 26.

[13] *Ibid.,* 28.

[14] *Ibid.,* 28-30.

[15] *Cf.* Galimberti, U., *Dizionario di psicologia,* UTET, Torino 1994², 459.

[16] *Cf.* Musschenga, A.W., *Personalized Identity in an Individualized Society,* in *Concilium* 2 (2000) 23-24; McKinney, J.P., *Identity Formation,* in Corsini, R.J. (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Psychology,* Vol. 2, John, Wiley and Sons, New York 1994², 204.

[17] *Cf.* As cited by Haker, H., *Narrative and Moral Identity in Paul Ricoeur,* in *Concilium* 2 (2000) 59-60.

[18] *Cf.* Musschenga, A.W., *Personalized Identity in an Individualized Society,* 24.

[19] As summed up by Motet, D., *Identity Crisis,* in Corsini, R.J. (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Psychology,* Vol. 2, John Wiley and Sons, New York 1994², 203.

[20] *Cf. Ibid.,* 203.

[21] *Cf.* Kakar, S. (ed.), *Identity and Adulthood,* Oxford University Press, Delhi 1979, ix-xi.

[22] *Cf.* Ramanujam, B.K., *Toward Maturity. Problems of Identity seen in the Indian Clinical Setting,* in Kakar, S. (ed.), *Identity and Adulthood,* Oxford University Press, Delhi 1979, 37-38.

[23] *Cf.* As indicated by Haker, H., *Narrative and Moral Identity in Paul Ricoeur,* 61.

[24] *Cf. Ibid.,* 61-62.

[25] Sen, A., *Identity and Violence. The Illusion of Destiny,* Allen Lane, London 2006, 24.

[26] *Ibid.,* 66-67.

[27] *Ibid.,* 66-6779-83.

[28] See Anthony, F.-V., *Identity, Culture and Faith: Challenges and Tasks,* in *Kristu Jyoti* 22 (2006) 1, 1-29.

[29] See Anthony, F.-V., *Evangelization: Growing Understanding of a Complex Process,* in ID. (a cura), *Seguire i percorsi dello Spirito. Studi in onore del prof. Mario Midali,* LAS, Roma 1999, pp. 197-214; also published in *Salesianum* 61 (1999) 17-35, and in *Kristu Jyoti* 17/3 (2001) 206-235.

[30] See Anthony, F.-V., *Globalization and Inculturation,* in *Third Millennium* 8/2 (2005) 30-53.

Ref.: Text sent by the author in 2008.

# *"The Church and the Challenge of Secularisation"*
## *- A Church Witnessing Faith and Charity in a Muslim Society -*

### - John Mansford Prior, SVD -

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## ISLAM IN INDONESIA

Indonesia, with a population of over 240 million, has the largest Muslim community (*'umma*) in the world. With a significant Christian minority of almost 9 per cent and with over 350 distinct cultural domains, Indonesia is among the more pluralistic of societies, both religiously and culturally.

Islam came to Southeast Asia peacefully in the 12th century via traders and pilgrim saints who came from Persia and South Asia rather than directly from the Arabian peninsular. Both the peaceful origin of Islam and the absorbent nature of Southeast Asian cultures have led to open, wide-ranging Muslim cultures, in particular on the island of Java. Some of the smaller Muslim societies on other islands are more rigid; however periodic attempts at Arabisation have met with little success.

## ISLAM AND CHRISTIANITY

The ongoing dialogue over the centuries between the Islamic faith and Indonesian cultures parallels the similar dialogue that has been taking place since the 19th century between the Catholic faith and Indonesian cultures. Similarity of experience encourages dialogue in life, action and faith.

While mainstream Christianity, both Protestant and Catholic, studiously ignored Islam until the latter half of the 20th century, relations were usually marked by neighbourly tolerance. The impact of rapid social change with the globalisation of the economy and of communications has weakened this traditional stance.

When the global market economy was welcomed by the local *élite,* which for 30 years was controlled by the Suharto military regime (1966-1998), social disruption, mass displacement and rapid urbanisation led to communal violence. The most common initial cause of social clashes was economic and political, yet ethnic and religious issues easily took over.

During the 1990's as the 30-year corrupt regime began to fall apart, a few hundred places of worship in Java were burnt down. The incidents were usually instigated by elements in the army. Evangelicals and Pentecostals suffered the most. Unlike the mainstream Churches, these denominations proselytise aggressively. For Catholics and ecumenical Protestants, mission is not a question of proselytism but of witness.

## TWO DIVERGENT TENDENCIES

Two cultural trends are mutating our traditionally tolerant religious culture. The first is a *creeping secularist tendency* driven by modernity and post-modernity, particularly among those who weald power. The second trend is the more *exclusivist ethno-religious sub-culture* arising among those threatened by rapid change. These tendencies are present among both Muslims and Christians.

### *Creeping Secularism*

While Islam and Christianity maintain a public role in each sphere of Indonesian life, it is also true that religion is decreasingly present in an increasing number of sectors. Secular values such as competition, social standing and consumerism are making inroads.

As the urban *élite* find that they can function fully in a modern environment without reference to God, religion is relegated to cultural expression.

### Brittle Boundaries

Meanwhile, those battered, and thus threatened, by rapid social change, the vulnerable poor and the marginalised who feel unable to build up solidarity across religious and cultural boundaries, tend to pull up the drawbridge and batten down the hatches. This leads to a ghetto mentality, where religion is reduced to internal ritual and community identity, and when provoked can tend towards violence.

As a minority, Indonesian Christians have little political possibility of pressuring either the Government or the wider society. Those Christians who feel threatened by the majority tend to retreat into our churches, into warm charismatic, insular communities, reduced to a socially irrelevant ghetto.

## WITNESSING FAITH AND CHARITY

Our pastoral response to both the practical agnostic sub-culture among the *élite* and the exclusivist ethno-religious sub-cultures of the vulnerable is similar, namely to nurture within family networks (base communities) and inter-faith networks (Human Rights, NGOs, etc.) and also in our parishes and dioceses, a culture of dialogue, a witnessing to Christ in the daily dialogue of life, action and faith. Our witness to charity and faith flow into each other forming but a single whole. Our faith motivates, directs and informs our life commitment: compassionate justice inspires prayer, liturgy is imbued with life. We witness always and everywhere in dialogue.

### Witnessing Charity

The dialogue of life and action is witnessed first and foremost in the family. With some success our families form a contrast culture of transparent honesty in the face of systemic corruption, a culture of forgiveness where retaliation is the norm, and a culture of quiet courage where fear and

suspicion have been sown. This witness can be costly, depriving the honest of advancement in their careers, on occasion severely limiting the family income which effects the education of children. In this constant, persevering witness to charity in the face of enormous social pressure we encounter the Face of Christ. Only a living faith can sustain such long term fidelity. Base communities and evangelical movements form a vital support.

Consequently, actively witnessing to charity while working for social justice is our answer to both the secularising cultural trend of the urban *élite* and the encapsulating cultural trend of the poor.

### Witnessing Faith

The quiet courage and transparent honesty of Christians in a society invaded by the consumerist values of the never-satisfied, inevitably leads others to ask:



how is this constancy possible and why do our Christians not simply "go with the flow"? Such questions open up an opportunity to speak of Christ and be heard. Perhaps this is the most important occasion for articulating our faith, that is, when we know each other, work together and trust each other sufficiently to probe the faith of the other.

Inter-faith networks are integral to this witnessing, for the dialogue of faith and charity belong together. When we work with Muslims, as both communities open-up to

issues of social justice, forgiveness, goodness, honesty and compassion, we witness to the Jesus of the Gospels.

### Two Mass Islamic Movements

In the past the Muslim majority came face to face with Christ through cultural osmosis, through simply living as good neighbours. Many Javanese Catholics from the villages and among the urban lower middle-class feel culturally closer to Muslims of the traditionalist and village-based *Nadlatul Ulama* (NU) movement (over 40 million strong) than to Catholics from among the *élite* or, indeed, with many Protestant Christians. A common cultural heritage and a common struggle for compassionate justice bring us together. Since religion has become politicised, this no longer works automatically. Today we have consciously and systematically to intensify communication with Muslims at all levels of society to create together a culture of compassionate justice, inspired by each of our living faith traditions. Bringing out what is most noble in the Islamic and Christian traditions is often called "mutual conversion".

Aside from *Nadlatul Ulama*, the other large mainstream movement in Indonesian Islam is the modernist, more scripturalistic *Muhammadiah* with around 20 million members. *Muhammadiah* has a nationwide network of educational institutions from kindergarten to university. While *Muhammadiah* has a reputation among some of being more hard-line than *Nadlatul Ulama*, in fact an ongoing dialogue between its leaders and Catholic intellectuals has long been taking place. The two largest Muslim State Universities (UIN) in Jakarta and Yogyakarta are ecumenical in character. More hard-line Muslims are found in the secular universities rather than in the more open-minded Muslim State universities.

### BY WAY OF EXAMPLE

We have a small, but strong Catholic intellectual community which has been and remains very influential in all spheres of the media, in academic circles, in literature and the arts. To my mind this is the heart of

inculturation, where Gospel values cross-fertilise with contemporary mainstream culture way beyond the narrow confines of our minority ecclesial community.

Also, I might refer to the Jesuit Driyarkara Institute of Philosophy in Jakarta, which like its theological counterpart in Yogyakarta, has Muslim students on its courses and has many more researching in their open libraries. If Indonesia has been able to manage its communal crises over the past 10 years, it is in no small measure due, not just to the underlying tolerant yet fragile traditional culture, but also to these sustained channels of dialogue at an academic level among a whole range of Christian and Muslim traditions.

### Further Afield

Beyond Indonesia, allow me to refer to the annual *Building Bridges Seminars* convened by the Archbishop of Canterbury since 2002. Each year, alternating between Islamic and Christian environments, around 30 Muslim and Christian scholars from a wide spectrum of Islam and Christianity (including a few Catholics from Georgetown the Gregoriana universities) have been meeting to grapple with Qur'anic and Biblical texts. Rowan Williams, Archbishop and scholar, took a full part in all the discussions. Articulating faith at a high academic and spiritual level between religious leaders and scholars is not just possible, it is happening.

A final example. While we consult, immediately above us in the offices of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, a meeting has been taking place with five signatories of the open letter "A Common Word". In October 2007, at the end of the month of Ramadan, 138 Muslim scholars, reflecting a broad spectrum across the Islamic world, authored this historic document. The Pontifical Council and the Muslim scholars have just established a new Catholic-Muslim Forum to further relations between our two faiths. They have planned their first seminar for this coming November in Rome on the theme of love for God and neighbour. Some 24 religious leaders and scholars from each side will attend the

meeting, and Benedict XVI will receive the participants in audience.

This is a watershed moment. For while the dialogue of charity, life and action, remains vital for the future wellbeing of the world, the dialogue of faith is just as important. The upcoming November seminar will move the Muslim-Christian conversation from geo-political concerns, vital as they are, onto questions of faith. While we must continue witnessing in charity to human dignity and identity, to inalienable rights and obligations, this seminar will be an encounter between believers where the issue will be God, the God of love an d compassion.

## BY WAY OF CONCLUSION

In witnessing faith and charity in a Muslim society, Indonesians do not use terms like "reciprocity". "Reciprocity" derives from the language of diplomatic and trade negotiations. "Reciprocity" is not a Gospel value, for human dignity and identity are not negotiable. We witness transparently and unashamedly to human dignity in the light of our biblical faith. The greater the social pressure and harassment, the more we are able to witness to the power of the Cross. The greater the pressure we have to bear, the greater the need for Muslims to see that we do not count the cost, that the Gospel demands all that we have, all that we are. In words borrowed from Wilfred Owen, *"with truths that lie too deep for taint … (we) pour our spirit without stint"*.

And so our answer to both practical agnosticism and fanatical ethno-religious movements is not proselytism which only exacerbates social tension, but authentic witness in faith and charity in order that Muslims see Christ's love and justice, goodness and beauty in our persons and within our communities.

*Terima kasih*!
**Thank-you!**

Ref.: Text from the Author. Sent in 2008.

# L'Évangile de la communion : dynamisme pour une interculturalité africaine promotrice de fraternité universelle

- P. Domenico Arena, OMI*  -

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### Introduction

En prenant la parole, je désire tout d'abord saluer cordialement vous, les collègues ici présents, et remercier les organisateurs de l'Association Internationale des Missiologues Catholiques qui m'offrent l'opportunité de collaborer par cette intervention à la promotion de la mission du Christ et de l'Église.

Mon propos reprend le grand slogan de la présente Conférence (annoncer l'Évangile dans l'interaction des cultures) *parce qu'elle traite de l'Évangile comme message de communion apte à faciliter la rencontre interpersonnelle et interculturelle. En même temps, elle tient compte des exigences de l'évangélisation en Afrique qui ne devrait plus être vue dans un contexte d'isolement, mais plutôt se situer dans l'horizon de la mondialisation. Et, enfin, elle se réfère au projet du troisième millénaire :* 'faire de l'Église la maison et l'école de la communion' *comme cela est dit en Novo millennio ineunte* (NMI, n. 43).

Cette contribution donc se déploie et se résume dans ces points d'interrogation : Et si l'Évangile que l'Église annonce était Évangile de communion ? Et si l'inculturation en Afrique et ailleurs devenait-elle défi d'interculturalité ? Et si tout cela donnerai-il à l'Afrique et à son Église sa vraie identité lui procurant l'espoir de résoudre avec succès les problèmes, qui pour le moment semblent être sans issue, et aussi la possibilité de concourir comme chef de file à la fraternité universelle ?

### De l'Évangile de la communion

Il semble légitime de définir ainsi l'Évangile, grâce au Concile Vatican II qui

encore aujourd'hui reste un événement crucial de l'histoire de l'Église propre à illuminer encore sa marche dans le monde par ses enseignements innovateurs. En effet, grâce à Vatican II nous sommes à mesure de réaliser que l'Église est communion à l'image de la Trinité selon *Lumen gentium* (*LG*, nn. 1 et 4) et que la mission est relié à la communion trinitaire comme à sa source selon *Ad gentes* (*AG*, n. 2). Or, sur ces bases ecclésiologiques et missiologiques redécouvertes, l'Évangile justement y est perçu de manière innovatrice tel qu'un message de communion. Cela est signifié avec clarté lorsqu'on écrit que l'Évangile en plus d'être *« dans l'histoire temporelle, un ferment de liberté et de progrès... il se présente toujours comme* **ferment de fraternité, d'unité et de paix***»* (*AG*, n. 8).

### Dans le Nouveau Testament

Cette vision des choses ressort aussi à partir d'un approfondissement même pas trop savant du NT, si toutefois on prend en considération les définitions que celui-ci donne de l'Évangile.

Par exemple, le fait même de dire que l'Évangile est 'l'*Évangile de Dieu*' (Mc 1,14 ; Rm 1,1 ; 15,16 ; II Co 11,7 ; I Th 2,2.8.9 ; I P 4,17), cela revient à dire qu'il est la Bonne Nouvelle de communion car elle est celle d'un Dieu qui, en soi, est source et prototype d'amour de communion. Dire également qu'il est '*la Bonne Nouvelle du Christ Jésus*' (Ac 5,42 ; cf. I Co 9,12 ; II Co 10,14, Rm 15,19 ; Gal 1,7 ; Ph 1,27), cela revient à indiquer qu'il est Bonne Nouvelle de communion car elle est celle de Celui qui est l'Un de Dieu (Jn 1, 18), la manifestation de la communion divine,

Jésus-Christ ressuscité, notre unité. Dire, enfin, qu'il est l'Évangile *'de la grâce de Dieu'* (Ac 20,24), c'est dire encore qu'il est la Bonne Nouvelle de l'amour de communion, car la grâce est facilement identifiable à l'Esprit Saint qui, en tant qu'Esprit d'amour, est le lien de la communion entre le Père et le Fils.

Par là, on constate que la Trinité est tout à fait impliquée dans l'Évangile jusqu'à pouvoir dire que celui-ci est de la Trinité, appartient à la Trinité, à sa communion de personnes. Cela étant, il est comme une émanation révélatrice de Dieu et, ainsi, il peut être compri comme sacrement de la communion trinitaire, comparable, suivant la tradition de l'Église et *Dei Verbum* (*DV*, n. 21), à l'Eucharistie.[1]

Par ailleurs, dans le NT on rencontre certains passages qui à tout prendre résultent presque explicites et davantage pertinents pour notre propos. En particulier, cela est le cas des deux premiers chapitres de la lettre aux Philippiens là où Paul dans le vif de sa mission évangélisatrice exhorte les chrétiens de la communauté de Philippe à pratiquer une vie de communion dans l'amour, motivée et finalisé au progrès de l'Évangile :

« [1,3a] *Je rend grâce à mon Dieu…*[5]*car je me rappelle la part que vous avez prise à l'Évangile (Ýðß ôç êïéíùíßá õìùí åéò ôï åõáããåëïé) depuis le premier jour jusqu'à maintenant…*[27]*. Menez seulement une vie digne de l'Évangile du Christ, afin que je constate … que vous tenez ferme dans un même esprit, luttant de concert d'un cœur unanime pour la foi de l'Évangile (ïôé óôçêåôå åí åíé ðíåõìáôé, ìéá øõ÷ç óõíáèëïíôåò ôç ðéóôåé ôïõ åõáããåëéïõ) …* [2,1]*. Ainsi je vous en conjure par tout ce qu'il peut avoir d'appel pressant dans le Christ, de persuasion dans l'Amour, de communion dans l'Ésprit (áãáðçò, åé ôéò êïéíùíßá ðíåõìáôïò), de tendresse compatissant,* [2]*mettez le comble à ma joie par l'accord de vos sentiments : ayez le même amour, une seule âme, un seul sentiment (ôçí áõôçí áãáðçí å÷ïíôåò) …».*

Paul, ici, se souvient d'une communion dans et pour l'Évangile vécue par les chrétiens de Philippe. Ce qui peut signifier que leur communion, fruit de l'Évangile

annoncé chez eux, est aussi la forme de participation indispensable à sa diffusion. De toute façon, par ces textes, l'Évangile et la communion sont lié même littéralement *(Ýðß ôç êïéíùíßá õìùí åéò ôï åõáããåëéïé),* dénotant un rapport de féconde complémentarité entrée en quelque sorte dans les mœurs des premières communautés chrétiennes.

### *Comme auto conscience de la communauté du Ressuscité*

Si ce texte, si évocateur d'une unanimité de cœur et d'esprit par rapport à l'Évangile (et donc illustrant une **'communion missionnaire'** en acte[2]) — ne suffisait pas pour lui accorder la prérogative de la communion d'amour, on pourrait considérer aussi d'autres passages toujours du NT qui révèlent en plus une discrète auto conscience de la communauté du Ressuscité à cet égard. Nous songeons ici : aux péricopes qui, à l'unisson avec les enseignements et les prières de Jésus sur l'amour et l'unité (*cf.* Jn 13,34-35 ; 15,12-13 ; 17,21-26), font de l'*Agapè* de Dieu et du prochain le sommet de la révélation contenue dans les Saintes Écritures *cf.* Mt 22,34-40 ; 7,21 ; Rm 13,8-10 ; I Co 13,1-13 ; Gal 5,14 ; Col 3,14-15) ; aux fréquentes exhortations parachevant et résumant toutes les commandements divins compris dans la Loi et les Prophètes (adressées aux premières communautés chrétiennes sur la charité et l'unité (Rm 12,10-16 ; 15,5 ; I Co 1,10 ; 10,14-17 ; 12,12 ss ; Ga 5,13 ; Ep 4,1-6 ; 5,2 ; Ph 1,27 ; 2,2 ; Col 3,15 ; l'épistolaire johannique,[3] surtout I Jn 1,1-7) ; aux passages qui décrivent la vie des chrétiens dans son essence, à savoir une unité dans l'amour, par les allégories du corps, du temple et du peuple de Dieu uni dans la charité (*cf.* Rm 12,4-21 ; I Co 6,15ss ; 10,17. 12,12-31. 13,1-13 ; Ep 1,10. 22-23. 2,16- 22. 4,4-16.25 ; 5,23. 29-32 ; Col 1,18. 24-25 ; 2,17-19 ; 3,11-15 ; I Pt 2,4-10) ; et, enfin, aux salutations du commencement et de la conclusion de presque toutes les Lettres de Saint Paul et d'autres écrivains néotestamentaires, évoquant d'une manière emblématique l'*Agapè* de Dieu et sa communion.[4]

Toutefois, en plus de ces passages, on en trouve d'autres pour soutenir que le NT,

traduisant aussi la foi des premières communautés, avait une auto conscience de bon niveau à l'égard d'un Évangile de communion à croire et y adhérer. Pratiquement, les premiers disciples du Christ, dans un contexte on dirait de première évangélisation, apprenaient de Dieu lui-même, moyennant évidemment la Parole révélée, à considérer l'Évangile comme un nouveau message venant et portant à la communion de l'amour. C'est toujours Paul qui est le plus expressif: « *Il est fidèle, le Dieu par qui vous avez été appelés à la communion de son fils, Jésus Christ notre Seigneur* » (I Co 1,9). En effet, «*Sur l'amour fraternel, vous n'avez pas besoin qu'on vous écrive, car vous avez personnellement appris de Dieu à vous aimer les uns les autres et vous le faites bien envers tous les frères de la Macédoine entière* » (I Th 4,9-10).

Il est à croire que, en même temps et suite à cette prise de conscience, — par laquelle l'Évangile est entendu comme message divin manifestant et communicant l'amour trinitaire (*cf.* Jn 14,23) et entraînant également à un vécu de communion fraternelle — les Églises apostoliques s'impliquaient spontanément dans le processus d'inculturation et d'agrégation interculturelle. Au milieu d'une société qui réunissait personnes de religions, cultures et nationalités diverses, les Églises des Actes des Apôtres, parvenaient à harmoniser de manière exemplaire, mais non sans peines et conflits, l'effort d'inculturation et l'interculturalité. En cela, elles montraient de réagir positivement aux convictions de Paul. Celui-ci, se disant tout d'abord annonciateur d'un Évangile qui n'est '*pas à mesure humaine*' (*cf.* Ga 1,11), en suite — évoquant le baptême comme sacrement qui fait de tous les disciples les fils d'un même Père, formant une famille de frères en Jésus Christ — avait à déclarer : « *Car vous êtes tous fils de Dieu, par la foi, dans le Christ Jésus. Vous tous en effet, baptisés dans le Christ, vous avez revêtu le Christ : il n'y a ni Juif ni Grec, il n'y a ni esclave ni homme libre, il n'y a ni homme ni femme ; car tous vous ne faites qu'un dans le Christ Jésus* (Ga 3,26-28 ; *cf.* Rm 10,12 ; I Co 12,12-13 ; Col 3,11).

Pratiquement, l'Église, comme une famille formée par plusieurs membres, possède en Christ, au-delà et au-dessus de tout lien humain, le centre de sa communion. Celui-ci présent, annoncé et connu dans et par l'Évangile qui engendre communion, agit pour intégrer dans l'unité de la famille de Dieu toutes différences '*afin qu'il soit l'aîné d'une multitude de frères*' (Rm 8,29). C'est le début de la récapitulation enrichissante de tous les êtres en Jésus Christ (*cf.* Ep 1,10), ainsi que le prélude de la fraternité universelle '*par Lui, avec Lui et en Lui*', la plénitude de la réconciliation et de la paix (*cf.* Col 1,18-20).

### A l'exemple du Christ et de l'Église naissante

Tout cela trouve illustration parfaite et pleine confirmation dans l'exemple historique de Jésus Christ missionnaire du Père et dans celui de l'Église naissante.

**Jésus**, en tant que Parole de Dieu, est aussi la communion de Dieu incarnée. Il montre lui-même d'avoir l'auto conscience et vit sa mission d'évangélisation des pauvres (*cf.* Lc 4, 16-21) en communion avec son Père (*cf.* Jn 3,16- 17 ; Mt 10,40 ; Mc 9,37 ; Lc 9,48 ; 10,16). Il accomplit son ministère terrestre en communion avec ses Apôtres et disciples (Jn 20,21) et il veut qu'il en soit ainsi pour eux-mêmes en les envoyant '*en mission deux à deux*' (*cf.* Mc 6,7-12 ; Mt 10,1-9 ; Lc 9,1-6 ; 10,1 — vit sa mission d'évangélisation des pauvres (*cf.* Lc 4,16-21) en communion avec son Père (*cf* 20). Pendant toute sa vie publique, et particulièrement au Cénacle, Il forme les collaborateurs de sa mission à la communion missionnaire : donnant des consignes appropriées à ce but au cours d'une conversation sur les choses de son Père (*cf.* Jn de 13,31 à 16,39) ; et en priant avec eux pour l'unité dans une atmosphère surnaturelle de communion divine (*cf.* Jn 17,1-26). Il s'investit lui-même, par sa mort et résurrection, dans le projet de communion

missionnaire en se donnant en nourriture (*cf.* Mt 26,25 ; Mc 14,22-25 ; Lc,22, 7- 20 ; I Co 11,23-27), et préfigurant ainsi le sacrifice de soi par amour, comme voie royale et incontournable pour établir la communion. Ainsi, en assurant sa présence sans limite ni de temps ni d'espace, dans la force de l'Esprit, Il donne à ses disciples un mandat missionnaire à exécuter en communion avec Lui, pour brancher les humains et l'univers a la communion trinitaire en vue de la fraternité universelle (*cf.* Mt 28,18-20 ; Mc 16,15-20 ; Lc 24,45-53 ; Jn 20,21 ; Ac 1,6-8).

**L'Église naissante** se présente aussi, au-delà de toute idéalisation, comme un autre paradigme historique de communion missionnaire, c'est-à-dire d'une communauté qui vit et annonce l'Évangile dans, par et pour la communion. Il s'agit de la *koinonia,* qui s'exprime en communion hiérarchique, spirituelle, eucharistique, économique. En en mot, elle est la communion des Saints qui consiste en une vie d'amour fraternel illuminée par la présence du Christ Seigneur ressuscité, vivant par son Esprit au milieu de ses disciples (*cf.* Mt 18,20 ; Ac 2,47 ; 5,14 ; Col 1,27). Et de ce fait, elle devient aussi *koinonia* missionnaire c'est-à-dire une communauté qui témoigne efficacement du Seigneur ressuscité, là où lui-même présent au milieu de ses membres en est la force divine d'attraction. Effectivement, à Jérusalem, chaque jour, Jésus de lui-même, '*adjoignait à la communauté ceux qui seraient sauvés*' (Ac 2,47 ; *cf.* 5,14).

A bien regarder c'est en cela qui réside la principale vocation et mission de l'Église de tout temps comme le montre son histoire. En effet, il est aisé de constater que l'idéal de l'Église primitive de Jérusalem a été presque toujours une inspiration majeure animant personnes et institutions. Ce phénomène réapparaît tout au long de l'histoire de l'Église,[5] à commencer notamment du monachisme de l'Afrique du Nord-Est, en passant par les Ordres Mendiants, les Congrégations religieuses,[6] jusqu'aux Mouvements Ecclésiaux d'aujourd'hui.[7]

L'Écriture donc, la Tradition, la vitalité charismatique de l'Église de toujours mais surtout les documents de Vatican II, avec leur ouverture impressionnante et surprenante au paradigme de la communion,[8] ainsi que la magistère qui l'a suivi par rapport à la communion missionnaire,[9] nous portent à accueillir et à explorer davantage l'hypothèse selon laquelle l'Évangile est dans son intime nature un message de communion. Suivant le texte cité de *AG*, n. 8, on a pu apurer que l'Évangile éternel depuis toujours, au sein de la Trinité et dans l'histoire, constitue un ferment pour l'Église et pour le monde, de communion planétaire et donc de fraternité universelle qui en Jésus-Christ devient synonyme de salut.[10] Ce qui n'est pas anodine pour la mission de l'Église dans le monde et en particulier en Afrique où les conflits interethniques et régionaux ne finissent pas de se reproduire.

## L'Évangile de communion et l'Afrique

En fait, cette approche qui voit l'Évangile comme venant de la communion trinitaire et étant signe et message de communion qui amène les humains à vivre en frères et sœurs au sein d'une famille rassemblée au nom du Christ, pourrait être bien en phase et propulser l'évangélisation en Afrique.

### Au niveau culturel
Tout d'emblais, telle approche peut être rattaché à l'humus culturel africain caractérisé par l'esprit de famille et de solidarité qu'on appelle '*communion vitale*'[11] ou '*pensée de l'unité*'.[12] Cette valeur culturelle, reconnue, enviée et nécessaire à la symphonie planétaire de l'humanité, représente aux yeux de certains experts de l'Afrique le plus beau don qu'elle pourrait offrir au monde entier.[13]

### Au niveau ecclésial
A ce niveau, l'Évangile de communion se rattache aussi bien à l'idée de l'Église Famille de Dieu développée par *Ecclesia in Africa* (*EA*, n. 63), en tant qu'option fondamentale du premier Synode africain.[14] Cette visée ecclésiologique est pour beaucoup d'experts son '*concept-clé*'. En effet,

elle tient, comme écrivait le regretté père Boka Di Mpasi, le rôle d'une *'idée motrice'*, une sorte de notion qui mobilise et inspire la mission évangélisatrice de l'Église en Afrique,[15] même de nos jours.[16]

Par ailleurs, c'est dans ce cadre que l'Église en Afrique s'ouvre positivement à l'universel,[17] et fait face à ses engagements missionnaires. Elle se dispose à assumer fermement *'la vocation sublime de réaliser d'abord en elle même, l'unité du genre humain'* et elle se sent appelée *'à promouvoir une coexistence fraternelle entre les peuples'*. Dans ce sens, selon *GS*, n. 22, elle perçoit l'appel *'à donner un témoignage authentique de l'universalisme chrétien qui prend sa source dans la paternité de Dieu'*, en sachant que tous les êtres humains sont **destinés** *à former une seule famille, selon le dessein de Dieu établi 'au commencement'*. Pourtant, on s'attend d'elle *'une contribution propre'* pour l'oecuménisme et elle est appelée à jouer *'un rôle important dans le dialogue'* avec l'Islam et la Religion Traditionnelle Africaine, suivant la route de la solidarité (*cf. EA*, nn. 137-138).

En plus, pour la poursuite de ces idéaux de fraternité universelle, l'Église Famille de Dieu d'Afrique est consciente d'en avoir les moyens naturels et culturels. En effet : elle est *'dotée d'une vaste gamme de valeurs culturelles et de qualités inestimables qu'elle peut offrir aux Églises et à toute l'humanité'* dont *'un profond sens religieux'* (*EA,* n. 42) ; un sens *'de la famille, de l'amour et du respect de la vie'*, *'un sens aigu de la solidarité et de la vie communautaire'*. Un ensemble de valeurs donc qui la met en condition d'établir sa communion interne ainsi qu'à promouvoir celle universelle, au point de se poser la question si cela : « *Ne serait-ce pas, en quelques sorte,* **une préparation à la foi dans la communion des saints** ? » (*ibid.,* n. 43).

Or, le mariage de la valeur culturelle et de l'option ecclésiale pour la communion en Afrique, parachevé par l'Évangile de communion, pourrait faciliter plus qu'ailleurs la réalisation d'une fraternité locale promotrice de celle universelle.

Effectivement, l'Évangile de la communion est par sa nature axée sur l'amour divin et fait de cet amour, comme il est dit

par *Redemptoris missio* '*le moteur unique*' de la mission (n. 60). Ainsi il devient capable : d'unifier les principales voies de la mission en Afrique ; de produire sur son territoire des fruits de communion qui soient un remède évangélique de réconciliation des conflits de tout genre ; de lui permettre de contribuer éminemment à la fraternité universelle, la préservant ainsi de l'isolement et du repliement sur elle-même.[18]

Et cela, avec l'avantage pour l'Afrique: de relancer la recherche d'une unité continentale qui tarde paradoxalement à se réaliser et censée être indispensable au dépassement des problèmes quasiment insolubles à un niveau strictement national ; de répondre plus adéquatement aux défis de l'évangélisation de son territoire, tels que l'annonce, le témoignage, l'inculturation, le dialogue, la promotion humaine (ou lutte contre la pauvreté) et autres.

De ce fait, il serait souhaitable que d'ici le prochain synode pour l'Afrique, l'Évangile de communion se propage en extension et en profondeur, façonnant une Église qui soit expression de communion missionnaire. Ainsi, l'Église d'Afrique serait davantage ce qu'elle se propose être, à savoir la véritable Famille de Dieu en possession d'un programme de vie et d'une stratégie, aptes à relever ses propres défis d'évangélisation, à soutenir la renaissance du Continent et à promouvoir la *'mondialisation de la solidarité'*.[19]

Pourtant, ce qu'il lui est demandé c'est d'actualiser, au jour le jour, à l'instar de la première communauté chrétienne, un témoignage de communion des saints qui serait comme le fruit de l'Évangile de communion. Ce qui est déjà prévu : « *Un vrai témoignage de la part des croyants est essentiel aujourd'hui en Afrique pour proclamer la foi de manière authentique. En particulier, il faut que les croyants donnent le témoignage d'un amour mutuel sincère…. Le but dernier de la mission est de faire participer à la communion qui existe entre le Père et le Fils : les disciples doivent vivre entre eux l'unité, demeurant dans le Père et le Fils, afin que le monde reconnaisse et croie (Jn 17, 21-23)* » (*EA,* n. 77).

En somme, l'Évangile de communion de plus en plus vécu et diffusé en Afrique, se mariant avec la communion vitale, purifiée

éventuellement, de ses revers négatifs et rehaussée au contacte avec les sources de la communion divine, par le biais de son Église Famille de Dieu, pourrait interagir pour faire de l'interculturalité du Continent un sacrement de fraternité universelle.

## Conclusion

Ce travail nous aide à comprendre que, parler d'Évangile de communion est bien en accord avec la révélation chrétienne. En le conjuguant avec l'Afrique, celui-ci manifeste un dynamisme particulier en vue de l'accomplissement de l'évangélisation du Continent et de la réalisation de la fraternité universelle.

Pour conclure, il convient de recourir encore à la Lettre aux Philippiens, aux versets qui suivent l'enseignement de Paul sur l'Évangile de communion :

« *Ayez entre vous les mêmes sentiments qui sont en le Christ Jésus : Lui, de condition divine ne retint pas jalousement le rang qui l'égalait à Dieu. Mais il s'anéantit lui-même prenant la condition d'esclave et devenant semblable aux hommes. S'étant comporté comme un homme, il s'humilia plus encore, obéissant jusqu'à la mort et à la mort sur une croix! Aussi Dieu l'a-t-il exalté ...* » (Ph 2, 5-11).

Ces versets permettent de donner un nom à Celui qui est à la source de l'Évangile de communion, Jésus crucifié et abandonné, modèle suprême de *Kénose* qui seule peut procurer la résurrection en une véritable inculturation ouverte à l'interculturalité et à la fraternité universelle.

C'est par le mystère pascal de Jésus, procurant à l'Église et à ses membres l'Esprit d'amour et de communion, qu'elle sera, jusqu'à la fin des temps, comme elle l'a été depuis le commencement de son histoire, l'Église, famille de Dieu interculturelle, réunissant dans une unité harmonieuse et enrichissante tous les peuples de la terre.

*Kinshasa, octobre 2007*

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## Notes

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[1] « *L'Église a toujours témoigné son respect à l'égard des Écritures, tout comme à l'égard du Corps du Seigneur lui-même, puisque, surtout dans la Sainte Liturgie, elle ne cesse, de la table de la parole de Dieu comme de celle du Corps du Christ, de prendre le pain de vie et de le présenter aux fidèles* ». Si on admet, comme cela est possible grâce au témoignage des Écritures, que l'Évangile (mais aussi toute la parole de Dieu révélée) est un sacrement et en même temps un don de l'amour-communion de Dieu, on pourrait lui appliquer, *mutatis mutandis*, ce que *Sacramentum caritatis* (*SC*, n. 8) dit à l'égard de l'Eucharistie : « *Dans l'Eucharistie se révèle le dessein qui guide toute l'histoire du salut.…En elle, le **Deus Trinitas**, qui en lui-même est amour … s'engage pleinement avec notre condition humaine. Dans le pain et le vin … c'est la vie divine tout entière qui nous rejoint.... L'Église accueille, célèbre, adore ce don dans une fidèle obéissance. Nous devons par conséquent nous aussi nous exclamer avec saint Augustin : 'Si tu vois l'amour, tu vois la Trinité'* ».

[2] C'est justement cette locution '*communion missionnaire*', exprimant une visée missionnaire axée sur le témoignage d'unité, qui m'a conduit à réfléchir sur l'Évangile de la communion, ces deux expressions présentant des affinités certaines. La notion de communion missionnaire apparaît dans le magistère pour la première foi en *Christifideles laici* (*CL*, n. 32) : « *La communion avec Jésus, d'où découle la communion des chrétiens entre eux, est absolument nécessaire pour porter du fruit : 'en dehors de moi, vous ne pouvez rien faire'* (Jn 15,5). *Et la communion avec les autres est le fruit le plus beau que les serments peuvent porter : c'est, en effet, un don du Christ et de son Esprit. Or, la **communion engendre la communion** et se présente essentiellement comme **communion missionnaire**.… La communion et la mission sont profondément unies entre elles, elles se compénètrent et s'impliquent mutuellement, au point **que la communion représente la sources et tout à la fois le fruit de la mission : la communion est missionnaire et la mission est pour la communion**. C'est toujours le même et identique Esprit qui appelle et uni l'Église et qui l'envoie prêcher l'Évangile 'jusqu'aux extrémités de la terre'* (Ac 1, 8) ». J'ai pu approfondir la signification de la communion missionnaire en intervenant au colloque organisé par l'Institut Africain de Science de la Mission (IASMI) de Kinshasa, en mars 2007, sur le thème : *Sainteté et mission en Afrique*.

[3] « *Et maintenant, Dame, bien que ce ne soit pas un commandement nouveau que je t'écris, mais celui que nous possédons depuis le début, je te le demande, aimons nous les uns les autres. L'amour consiste à vivre selon ses commandements. Et le premier commandement, ainsi que vous l'avez appris dès le début, c'est que vous viviez dans l'amour* » (II Jn 1, 5-6).

[4] Ici les textes à citer seraient très nombreux. J'en

cite seulement un : «*La grâce du Seigneur Jésus Christ, l'amour de Dieu et la communion du Saint Esprit soient avec vous tous* » (II Co 13,13).

[5] *« Tout doit nécessairement être caractérisé par l'origine. Voilà pourquoi tant de si grandes Églises ne sont que l'Église primitive dont toutes procèdent. Elles sont toutes primitives, toutes apostoliques, puisque toutes sont une. Pour attester cette unité, elles se communiquent la paix, elles échangent le nom de frères, et se rendent les devoirs de l'hospitalité. Ces lois n'existent pas par nulle autre raison que la tradition unique d'un même mystère* » : ce texte de Tertullien est cité in *La liturgie des heures. Carême – Temps Pascal,* t. II, Paris, 1980, p. 1330.

[6] Même Saint Eugène de Mazenod, en fondant son Institut des Missionnaires Oblats de Marie Immaculée, s'est montré très attaché à ce modèle de communion missionnaire de l'Église primitive: cf. Arena, M., *Unità e missione in Eugenio de Mazenod*, Frascati 1995 ; « Eugene De Mazenod, teacher of missionary communion », in *Charisms in Unity*, 4 (2006), pp. 21-28.

[7] Parmi d'autres initiateurs de Mouvements Ecclésiaux, un exemple dans ce sens est celui de Chiara Lubich fondatrice du Mouvement des Focolari, autrement dit Œuvre de Marie qui, inspirée par un charisme d'unité comme idéal de vie, a produit en la matière une remarquable réflexion par ses livres traduits en plusieurs langues : Lubich, C., *Parola di vita*, Roma 1975 ; *Dove due o tre*, Roma, 1976; *La carità come ideale*, Roma, 1977. *Tutti siano uno : punti di spiritualità*, Roma, 1978. Chez elle, l'unité est comme la clé de lecture du dessein de Dieu sur le monde et sur l'humanité ainsi que du Christ et de sa parole : « *Jésus est venu de l'UN. Et où veut-il nous amener ? A l'UN : C'est sa pensée que tous soient UN, c'est-à-dire que tous ceux qui adhèrent à sa parole retournent à l'UN, dans la Trinité qui est UNE. Nous devons aller vers l'UN et l'UN est parmi nous* » : Cité par Back, J.B., *Il contributo del Movimento dei Focolari alla Koinonia ecumenica. Una spirituallità del nostro tempo al servizio dell'unità*, Roma 1988, p. 121 (La tradution de l'italien au français me revient).

[8] J'ai eu à m'occuper du thème de la communion en Vatican II dans mon récent travail : Mission et sainteté en Afrique dans la perspective de la communion missionnaire. J'ai pu relever par exemple que le terme *communio* dans les documents de Vatican II revient 108 fois et *unio* et *unitas,* plus leurs formes verbales, reviennent à peu près 300 fois dans une signification affine à *communio.* Ce dernier terme est lisible dans 11 de ses 16 documents tandis que *unio* et *unitas* sont plus fréquents dans chacun d'eux.

[9] Voir en particulier les documents que j'ai eu à analyser dans le même travail : *Evangelii nuntiandi* (1975) *Christifideles laici* (1988), *Redemptoris missio,* (1990) *La vie fraternelle en communaté : « Congregavit nos in unum Christi amor »* (1994), *Vita consecrata (1996)* ,

*Novo millennio ineunte* (2001), *Repartir du Christ. Un engagement renouvelé de la vie consacrée au troisième millénaire* (2002) et aussi *Le Message du Synode spécial pour l'Afrique* (1994) et *Ecclesia in Africa* (1995).

[10] « *Le salut de l'homme, son avenir et sa destinée, c'est la communion avec Dieu* » : Routhier, G., *Le défi de la communion. Une relecture de Vatican II*, Montréal, 1994. p. 25.

[11] *Cf.* Hampate, Baa A., *Aspetti della civiltà africana*, Bologna, 1975, p. 83 ; Mulago, V., « Religions traditionnelles et christianisme », in *Actes Semaine Théologique*, Kinshasa, 1975, p. 78 ; Senghor, L.S., *La poésie de l'action*, Paris, 1982, p. 80. Mention spéciale, à ce propos, mérite le père Placide Tempels. Celui-ci, à partir de la notion de force vitale de la philosophie bantoue, conjuguée avec la communion vitale, avait donné vie à un expérience de vie communautaire qui avait attiré pas mal l'attention des chrétiens du Zaïre de son temps : Tempels, P., *La philosophie bantoue*, Paris, 1949. Des nos jours, cette communion vitale propre à l'Afrique est assimilée au paradigme de la vie tout court : *cf.* Nkafu, N.M., *Il pensare africano come 'vitalogia'*, Roma, 1995. Sur tout ce thème de la valeur communautaire en Afrique, voir : Beller, R., *Life, Person and Communauty in Africa – A Way Towards Inculturation With the Spirituality of the Focolare*, Nairobi, 2001.

[12] « *L'unité est la caractéristique essentielle de la pensée négro-africaine. L'Africain connaît, atteint la vérité à travers l'unité de la conscience avec l'objet de la connaissance. La pensée de l'unité a de très fortes racines en Afrique ; elle peut être considérée, avec le concept de force et de vie, comme l'un des concepts essentiels de la culture et de la civilisation africaine* » : Ndaw, A., *La pensée africaine. Recherches sur les fondements de la pensée négro-africaine*, Dakar, 1997, p. 248.

[13] *Cf.* Robert, A.-C., *L'Afrique au secours de l'occident*, Paris, 2004.

[14] *Cf.* Gantin, B., «Synode africain un grand bond en avant», in *Telema*, 3-4 (1996), p. 15.

[15] *Cf.* Nothomb, D., «L'Église-famille: concept-clé du Synode des évêques pour l'Afrique. Une réflexion théologique et pastorale», in *Nouvelle Revue Théologique*, 117 (1995), p. 44-63; Boka Di Mpasi, L., «Le Synode africain, un nouveau départ sans retour», in *Telema*, 1 (1995), pp. 13-20. Effectivement, l'image de l'Église Famille de Dieu, est censée exprimer le mieux la doctrine de l'Église et de sa communion selon la culture d'Afrique, et dont voici la description donnée par *Ecclesia in Africa* : «*Non seulement le Synode a parlé de l'inculturation, mais il l'a appliquée en prenant, pour l'évangélisation de l'Afrique, l'idée-force de l'Église Famille de Dieu. Les Pères y ont vu une expression particulièrement appropriée de la nature de l'Église pour l'Afrique. L'image, en effet, met l'accent sur l'attention à l'autre, la solidarité, la chaleur des relations, l'accueil, le dialogue et la confiance. La nouvelle évangélisation visera donc à édifier l'Église Famille, en excluant tout ethnocentrisme*

*et tout particularisme excessif, en prônant la réconciliation et une vraie communion entre les différentes ethnies, en favorisant la solidarité et le partage en ce qui concerne le personnel et les ressources entre Églises particulières sans considérations indues d'ordre ethnique*» (63).

[16] Par exemple, dans le rapport générale du Congrès International de Missiologie de Kinshasa, de 2005, on lit : «*Le Congrès a souligné l'importance et la pertinence du concept de L'Église-Famille de Dieu comme un concept ecclésiologique opératoire bien fondé. L'image de l'Église fraternité dit en même temps ce qui fonde l'Église dans sa vie concrète d'aujourd'hui, l'exigence d'une fraternité vécue dans diverses formes, expérimentées dans la vie consacrée, vécue entre chrétiens, entre prêtres. Mais cette exigence s'enracine dans ce qui constitue l'Église, constituée comme fraternité par le Christ en ce qu'il est lui-même, Premier Né d'une multitude de frères. L'image de l'Église, famille de Dieu, met plus directement en valeur la dimension eschatologique et sacramentelle de l'Église, ce qu'elle est appelée à être, 'rassemblement des enfants de Dieu dispersés' et ce qui déjà elle anticipe et réalise, en particulier dans la réalité de la réconciliation.… La dynamique de la mission* **Ad Gentes** *rejaillit sur sa dynamique de communion. Elle peut permettre en particulier de s'arracher à un 'exclusivisme ethnique, racial, politique ou même national'* » : *Rapport General du Déroulement du Congrès*, in Tshibangu, T., (éd.), *L'avenir de l'activité missionnaire 'Ad Gentes'. Perspectives pour le XXIème siècle. Actes du congrès*. Kinshasa, 2005, pp. 494-498.

[17] « *En écho avec le Concile Vatican II et avec son enseignement de 'l'Église peuple de Dieu', l'Église d'Afrique a approfondi dans les dernières décennies l'ecclésiologie de 'l'Église famille de Dieu', et considère cette approche comme sa contribution à l'Église universelle* » : Ndi-Okala, J.- Ntalu, A., (dir.), *D'un Synode africain à l'autre. Réception synodale et perspectives d'avenir : Églises et société en Afrique*, Paris, 2007, p. 26. *« L'Afrique au sud du Sahara peut apporter au reste du monde son souci de communion avec l'environnement et sa tolérance religieuse, peu expansionniste et peu prosélyte. En montrant aux autres peuples son style de vie sans prétention, et en leur apprenant la manière d'être soi-même sans s'imposer aux autres, l'Africain est l'homme de la communion, d'accueil et d'hospitalité qui apportera à l'humanité la paix de ceux qui chérissent le lien humain* » : Quenum, J.-M.H., *Le Dieu de la solidarité qui vient à l'Africain*, Abidjan, 2005, p. 155.

[18] « *Les conflits fratricides nourris par le rivalités ethniques et les confrontations politiques cesseraient en Afrique de l'Ouest si tous les peuples africains s'éduquent à vivre ensemble comme membres d'une unique famille de Dieu* » : Quenum, J.-M.H., « Conflit et réconciliation : enseignement des Evêques de la CERAO », in *Revue de l'Université Catholique de l'Afrique de l'Ouest*, 27 (2006), p. 149.

[19] « *L'Église d'Afrique est donc sur le chemin de la mission. Le Congrès qui s'achève a manifesté combien elle a conscience de son identité, grâce à une maîtrise de mieux en mieux partagée du défis de l'inculturation, de son autoaffirmation interecclésiale, et enfin de l'urgence de la* **Missio ad Gentes** *dans l'horizon d'une mondialisation qui, loin de n'être qu'un risque, renferme un potentiel de grâce déjà nommé par Jean-Paul II 'mondialisation de la solidarité'* ». Mgr Monsengwo, L.P., « Discours de clôture » in Tshibangu, *L'avenir* …, p. 474.

Réf. : Texte de l'auteur. 2008.

# *From Missionary Charity to the Mission of Charity*

## - Kwanya Charles Odira -

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Mission in its wider perspective has become a key concept of discussion in our time. More often, in Europe we hear people saying they are going on mission to Africa or Latin America or any other so-called Third World country. It is, surely not in the conventional sense of the word; i.e., proclaiming the Gospel to those who have not yet heard it, but a kind of adventure; to have an experience in a land other than one's own with a missionary purpose. With time the mission focus has shifted from conversion of the pagans to the feeding of the poor, curing the sick and hospitality to the stranger. This reality is creating the emergence of new forms of mission in Europe. But what kind of consequences does this transformation have on the general life of the mission of the Church? Is the mission still the same in essence or not?

### Conversion as Missionary charity

The initial understanding and focus of the mission of the Church was the salvation of souls through proclamation and conversion. In his Encyclical on the Catholic Mission, *Rerum Ecclesiae*, Pope Pius XI considered it a great act of charity on the part of missionaries to bring 'pagans' out of the 'darkness of superstition' in order to instruct them 'in the true faith of Christ'.[1] Writing about Africans in *Catholicae Ecclesiae*, he instructed the missionaries to, "Bathe those inhabitants living in darkness and blind superstition with the light of divine truth, by which they can become co-heirs with us of the Kingdom of God".[2] The mission was thus shaped with this kind of mentality and could not do more than equip people with doctrines necessary for the salvation of their souls.

By missionary charity I mean the generosity of the Western Church who,

having received the Gospel and lived it, now shared it with the other nations. The West which was seen as the model of faith and human technology was always instrumental in the spread of the Gospel to the rest of the world, as St Augustine said, '*nemo dat quod non habet*'; so they gave what they themselves had from their spiritual treasure; but the question is: was their generosity so great that nothing was left in store for them? The Code of Canon Law of 1983 says that, "Missionary activity, properly so-called, by which the Church is implanted among people or groups in which it has not yet taken root, is accomplished by the Church especially by sending heralds of the Gospel …" (can. 786). This Code practically refers to the prepared group of heralds, priests religious and laity. It refers to the implantation of the Church as an institution; and this was always from the West.

John Pritchard, a renowned anthologist, distinguishes between three types of missionary; the ordained or lay who serves at the invitation of the host Church as what he calls a "seconded worker", the "lay professional" working for a particular institution and thirdly the so-called "special assignment" in those places where the given institution has no roots yet.[3] This 'professionalistic' approach to mission is what the Church has adopted so far either directly or indirectly. On the other hand there is another initiative, more unprofessional though functional; it is a kind of reflexive response in the sense that one feels an urge to respond to a situation as in the case of the Good Samaritan without prior training. One does not need a law to judge whether it is right to save a dying man from a burning house but a human conscience to respond instantly to the need. This I would lightly call a "freelance" Missionary spirit.

Things seem to have fallen apart, in the

language of the Nigerian writer, Chinua Achebe, in the 'professional' missionary worlds. The former Christian countries from where the Gospel was spread to the rest of the world are now sending another contrary message to the world. Whatever was a Gospel value, unquestionable by anybody, is now under question and scrutiny. Is it true that the West does not believe anymore? If so, what could be said of the younger Churches; did they make a mistake in believing the Good News from the West? If one believes one has a perfect model and then the model falls apart, what happens to the recipient?

Central to this contrary message now sent to the world from the strong Christian-fold nations are the problems facing the Church in the contemporary world, especially as manifested in: the crisis of faith, the lack of vocations to the priesthood and religious life, the family crisis and the immigration reality have tended to create some degree of indifferentism, criticism and confrontation. The youth may not wish to be priests, religious or deacons but they would rather remain faithful to their Church and if possible contribute towards her growth and sustenance. The adults would wish to work as voluntaries in the parishes, as receptionists, as sacristans, catechists and ministers of the communion but not under any commitment of vows or ordination for that matter.

The lack of vocations to the priesthood may be attributed above all to the culture of suspicion surrounding priests that has especially hit Western countries. There is what I may call a model crisis in society; a society that has placed its priests under constant criticism, suspicion, arrest and scrutiny does not leave space for vocations. The priest, who once upon a time stood in society both as a social and religious model, has almost become a laughing stock and the object of ridicule in our time; but who is to blame? Surely it has nothing to do with the wealth of the West because the greatest saints of the West like Saint Francis of Assisi, among others, were from very rich families and yet they renounced everything. It also has nothing to do with celibacy because even in the past when the vocation was high the tradition of celibacy was always cherished.

## Charity as a prophetic response

Interestingly, there is a missionary shift from the conversion of pagans to solidarity with the poor, from a clerically oriented mission to a lay man's promoted mission. There is a great emergence of non-clerical missionary initiatives since the last few years, manifesting many faces of Christ; among the best known is the community of Sant'Egidio. These initiatives are prophetic because they either directly or indirectly provide new forms of proclaiming the same Christ in a more concrete way. In many parts of Europe new forms of mission seem to be taking root, manifesting themselves in the activities of charity groups, voluntary work, charismatic movements and solidarity with immigrants. Benedict XVI states that, "In the Catholic Church, and also in the other Churches and Ecclesial Communities, new forms of charitable activity have arisen, while other, older ones have taken on new life and energy. In these new forms, it is often possible to establish a fruitful link between evangelization and works of charity". [4]



These new forms of mission are more inclusive in character and orientation. They are explosive because they come like a bomb-shell as the laity has long wished to realize an unlimited involvement in mission activities.

In the reflections of the Latin American Bishops' Conference in Aparecida, Brazil, (13-31 May 2007) the dimension of the mission and the poor is well maintained. The Gospel must be incarnated in the culture of the people starting with the poor. [5] It is in putting the needs of the poor first that the Gospel of Christ becomes truly Gospel and his mission becomes complete; thus the Church of Latin America proposes mission as a 'preferential option' for the poor.

Many people begin to show the image of

Christ who was not only a preacher but also a miracle worker, a friend of sinners, compassionate to the poor and the stranger, and a promoter of human values. In Italy, especially in the North where I have some experience, there is great enthusiasm among the lay people who are filled with a missionary urge to evangelize by way of action and spirit. Such a phenomenon is not strange in a place like Turin where great missionary congregations are known to have roots: i.e. Consolata, Cottolengo, Salesians, among others. The people who have been long involved in accompanying their sons and daughters to mission lands have not let this spirit die even at a time when there seems to be a lack of vocations; they have taken it to heart, continuing to support the work their missionary sons and daughters started, especially through long-distance child adoption, projects sustenance and voluntary activities.

### One mission, different visions

On a World Missions Day a parish priest disagreed with the missionary group on how to mark the day. This particular parish had an old tradition of collecting money on such occasions to support missionary projects in the poor countries. The priest felt the Day should be marked by inviting different experts to talk to the people on mission, make a tour as a missionary group to some interesting missionary site in the country and call it a day. Besides he argued that they no longer have their own missionaries 'out there' so are not obliged to support any particular project. Instead, the missionary group wanted to live their faith and conviction in Jesus Christ as the compassionate Lord concretely.

Freelance missionary initiatives may be a threat to the professionally-tuned mind because it becomes less conditioned by the institution; it may also be a challenge in the sense that attention now has to shift from the individual missionary to Christ as the source of all missionary action while the rest of us are merely instruments. If taken positively it can be a source of satisfaction to all missionaries who having worked so hard can now begin to see the fruit of their evangelizing work. It is a sign that the word of God first preached by the missionaries can now be lived out by the recipients. It is a visible manifestation of the Gospel being fully received. The spoon-fed style of evangelization no longer has a place in Europe nor elsewhere in the world.

Pope Benedict in his Encyclical explains the individual and communal dimension of Charity as a way of solidarity with the poor in an inclusive way, "Love of neighbour, grounded in the love of God, is first and foremost a responsibility for each individual member of the faithful, but it is also a responsibility for the entire ecclesial community at every level: from the local community to the particular Church and to the Church universal in its entirety".[6] However it is an individual initiative with a community dimension. In any case, charity becomes a unique option for many, especially the laity, as a way of feeling part and parcel of the Church in solidarity with the poor and the stranger.

Thus, many faithful find it more fulfilling and satisfying to do mission in the form of charity than any other way; after all this is what everyone can do without fear of committing heresy. In the process many of them have less time for prayer, attending liturgical services, going to confession or doing any spiritual activity because they say that they already do a lot of good work. Charity has become more of a substitution than an integral part of human nature and our faith. Pope Benedict warns that, "The increase in diversified organizations engaged in meeting various human needs is ultimately due to the fact that the command of love of neighbour is inscribed by the Creator in man's very nature".[7] In fact the same people find it easier to listen to Radio Maria while relaxing on their beds after some charitable exercise and call it a day.

Giacomo Galeazzi observed that, with the centrality of *charity* in Italy, the figure of Mother Teresa has almost replaced the Gospel. Consequently, he says many Italians read about the testimonies of Mother Teresa while they remain ignorant of the Gospels. According to his assessment the faith has become a form of solidarity and the Church a *Caritas*. The author's research shows that many have adopted the spirituality of helping their neighbour and doing voluntary work, while at the same time seeing prayer, Mass and parish activities as a kind of movement of an optional nature.[8] Many people feel

that making various material contributions to help the needy or doing some voluntary work in the parish to be an assurance of paradise.

In conclusion, doing mission in our time means living the Gospel of Jesus Christ fully in a more practical way. If the slogan, "actions speak louder than words" was ever true, then it is truer today than ever. The goal of Mission is not only to make known to the recipients the will of God but to let the will of God reign and take root in our lives. The Kingdom of God means promotion of peace and justice at all costs, lending a hand to the unfortunate brothers and sisters, respect for all human beings no matter where they come from, promotion of universal values without dominating the weaker cultures, equal sharing of the world's resources and recognizing the face and image of God in everyone. Thus it does not matter who does it but the fact that someone does it.

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### Notes

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[1] *Cf.* Pius XI, Encyclical Letter, *Rerum Ecclesiae*, (28 February 1926): *AAS* 18(1926), 65 – 83, n. 8.

[2] Leo XIII, Encyclical Letter, *Catholicae Ecclesiae* (20 November 1890): *AAS* 23(1890), 257 – 260, n. 3.

[3] Pritchard, John, "Missionary Concepts and Procedures: Time for a Review", in *International Review of Mission*, Vol. 87 344 (1998), pp. 88-89.

[4] Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter, *Deus Caritas Est*, n. 30.

[5] Zanda Tomaso, "La Chiesa in America latina è ancora capace di stare vicino ai poveri?" in *Missioni Franciscane,* 84 5 (2007), p. 13.

[6] Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter, *Deus Caritas Est*, n. 20.

[7] Benedict XVI , Encyclical Letter, *Deus Caritas Est, n* 31.

[8] Giacomo Galeazzi, "Religione è aiutare gli altri", in *La Stampa* (30 Ottobre 2007), p. 19.

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# The Guadalupan Paradigm:
# A Contribution to Universal Missiology*

## -Fr Eleazar López Hernández -

### Introduction

In Latin America, on 13 May 2007, we attended the Fifth General Conference of the Latin American and Caribbean Bishops' Conferences in Aparecida, Brazil, that had as its central theme to be "disciples and missionaries of Jesus Christ so that our peoples may have life in Him". This episcopal and ecclesial event launched us on a very ambitious project: "Nothing less than the radical inversion of the ecclesiastical system. For centuries the pastoral ministry of the Church has concentrated on the preservation of the inheritance of the past. All institutions were adapted to this end. The system was established in the twelfth century and since then it has not noticeably changed. According to the Aparecida project, everything is going to be oriented towards the mission. The practical realization of this project is going to take the entire twenty-first century. The present generation is ill-equipped for this inversion of its tasks. It is going to be necessary to radically change priestly formation and prepare new generations of priests in a very different way from the present one.[1]

In this new crossroads of deep changes in mentality and behaviour to make mission the priority of our Latin American and Caribbean Church, missiology is being asked to offer formation tools for the current formation programmes and, above all, for the future generations of missionaries and pastors. Without new missionary schemes and paradigms it will be practically impossible to implement Aparecida's directions in order to make viable the best aspirations of those who are sensible to the signs of the times and want to lay new roads of hope for those who are struggling on this continent for the fullness of life that ultimately comes from the Kingdom of God.

Against this background, the Associations of Latin American and Caribbean Missiologists, but especially the budding Mexican Catholic Association of Missiologists (AMMC), have considered it is important to draw insights from our missionary experience to allow us to confront with success the task recently assigned to us by Aparecida. Mexico, with the Virgin of Guadalupe, has a missiological and missionary paradigm that can contribute much to the Church because it takes into account the characteristics now demanded by the mission, which must begin from the poor themselves, from the periphery, in intercultural and interreligious dialogue, with an integral proposal of liberation and fullness of life. For that reason, I dare to be a herald of this paradigm to the international assembly of missiologists being held in Poland.

### Different ways to see the *Guadalupano* perspective

In order to understand the "guadalupano" perspective that began in Mexico almost 500 years ago, it is necessary to recognize that there are many lenses and points of view through which to interpret this event. There are some who place it in the orthodox watchtower of the ecclesiastical institution and confront the guadalupano from the rigid contents of Christian dogma; there are some who try to measure it with the ideological parameters of the social establishment, which sees it, more or less, as an innocuous folkloric curiosity. We do not lack those

who dissect it with the academic or *scientific* microscope cataloguing it as part of the negligible intellectual development of the masses. But, it is also possible to contemplate it with the religious eyes of the indigenous people themselves that physically lives and believes in the Virgin of Guadalupe.

I wanted, as the priest that I am and as a member of one of the largest ethnic groups of Mexico, the Zapotec, to approach the *guadalupano* world from the perspective of the indigenous communities of yesterday and today, that is to say, by trying to arrive at the *countenance and heart* of our Mexican and indigenous being in order to affirm that **Guadalupe is the theological expression of a people conquered by the force of arms, but that is not resigned to die and that valiantly resists, maintaining, against wind and tide, its hopes and ancestral utopias.** The Virgin of Guadalupe is a manifestation of *Deep Mexico*, which is present in all Mexicans and that, somehow in general, all the poor of the world also share in. It is not without reason that often, as it is commonly said, *the Indian and the Juan Diego rise to our head* and we are able to face any difficulty in defense of what we consider to be our legitimate rights.

In that sense *Guadalupanismo* is an ancient voice that comes from centuries past, and at the same time, is a contemporary word for the poor, which, before the implacable advances of projects of death, constantly renews their endurance taking them to their last frontier that is the scope of faith and religion.

For that reason, in this interchange of missiological contributions — rather than presenting a  cold academic analysis of the *guadalupano* theme — I want to manifest my being as a witness and herald or echo of the buried voice of the Mexican people. This voice has been diluted by time, but now it reappears stronger than ever with greater possibilities of resonating in the ears of all. When speaking of the Virgin of Guadalupe I will not myself enter in the old and useless discussion between *pro and counter apparitionists* of the last centuries. It is sufficiently convincing to see the popular experience of

the *guadalupano* faith and to pay attention to the oldest text that gives testimony to the origins of that faith, the *Nican Mopohua.*

### Guadalupano event and history

Of the several ways to approach the *guadalupano* event one of the main ones is the popular experience of Guadalupan Religiosity that is so imbedded and so exuberant in its external manifestations. Because one is dealing here with popular faith made into ritual, where the total language of the body, the spirit, and life are interwoven with multicoloured threads, the text offers symbols of the collective imagination that are loaded with deep content. The other route is the image of the *Guadalupana* that is a type of codex, which shows, in a graphical or hieroglyphic way, the religious thought of the conquered in an effort to dialogue with colonial society. Finally, there is the text of the story of the apparitions, the *Nican Mopohua*, where in the Nahuatl language, and in a narrative and discursive way, the indigenous vision of the world, society and the Church is revealed.

In the *Nican Mopohua*, as in the biblical texts, testimony is given, not of history as it occurred, but of the transcendental meaning that history has for the people. For that reason, the *Nican Mopohua* is not properly an historical text but a theological text of incalculable value for its time and ours, because it is a word that gives body to the worldview that our people has of life. A worldview that was valid when it originally took shape and that continues to be valid even with the passing of time. The believer's reading of the *Nican Mopohua*, its semiological interpretation and the later verification of its content in the faith experience of the people, are the means we posses to understand the soul that empowers the indigenous proposal of yesterday and today.

### Interpretive Key

In order to be in tune with and deeply understand a text of Popular Religiosity, like the *Nican Mopohua*, it is necessary to take off one's sandals as Moses did on

Mount Horeb in order to stand with bare feet on the holy land of the poor, of the nomadic peoples of the desert. A theological text cannot be understood with the coldness of the rationalist. One must plunge into the river of faith of the people that produced the text. Through the reading of the *Nican Mopohua* let us allow *Deep Mexico* to speak to us and let us listen to the voice of the guadalupano people, also alive in many other religious peoples of the world.

But we can also rely on the interpreters characterized by the faith of the Mexican people. One of them was Msgr Bartolomé Carrasco Briseño, may he rest in peace, who was Archbishop of Oaxaca in the 1980s and 90s. He dedicated much of his pastoral work to scrutinizing *guadalupano* thought and showing its transforming force for the realities of today. Another is Fr Clodomiro Siller Acuña, of the National Center to Support Indigenous Missions of Mexico who, with new anthropological tools, provided important keys for the understanding of the message of Guadalupe. Their contributions are material we can make use of in our approach to the guadalupano event to discover its force and importance for universal missiology.

### Matrix of the Guadalupano Event

It is necessary to take into consideration that in the territories of the Anahuac (center of Mexico) there has been a long road (of about 30 thousand years) walked by the Olmec, Toltec, Teotihuacán, Mayan, Zapotec, Mixtec, and Aztec indigenous peoples, where they arose, grew, and consolidated themselves with their own identity, history, culture and faith. This ascending process had in the remote past many ups and downs, but almost 500 years ago it was violently attacked with the arrival of the Europeans. And it is this historical context of the last 500 years that serves as the background to the *guadalupano* event. Outside of this context, the event would not be fully understood with all its implications.

By the force of the sword an alien social structure totally aggressive to the people was imposed that ended indigenous self-determination. That disastrous situation created a feeling of hopelessness of enormous proportions in the poor who saw the collapse, stone by stone, of their glorious past, and the impossibility to foresee any good for the future. That loss of hope was one of the determining factors for the depopulation of most indigenous communities. Fifty years after the conquest, war, forced labour, disease and repression killed 90 per cent of the native population. Juan Diego told the Guadalupana, *Why live if we have only been born to await the moment of death*?

The Church, in good measure, united its evangelizing task to the implantation of colonial society considering it *Christendom*, that is to say, a project warranted by the Christian faith. For that reason sword and Cross were allies in the conquest, although there were also famous prophets who, on the contrary, defended the life and rights of the Amerindian peoples: Antonio de Montesinos, Pedro of Cordova, Bartolomé de las Casas, Julian Garcés, Toribio de Benavente, Vasco of Quiroga and several others who established the legal foundations for indigenous rights, although they did not manage to put an end to colonial society nor to the ambiguity of the role of the Church in the process.

The painful situation of the people is symbolically expressed in the text of the *Nican Mopohua* with phrases like the *fall of shields and arrows,* the *walking by night* from north to south, the *ice of winter that burns everything,* the *illness of the cocolixtli* that fell upon Juan Diego's uncle and that came from the Spaniards, and the *mistreatment of Juan Diego himself on the part of the servants* of the bishop.

### Contemporary analysis of the guadalupano event

#### a) The actors of the drama

All the characters in the *guadalupano* event play a symbolic role in the story. This does not mean that they were not historical persons. Independently of their historicity, they represent the different actors of the reality of that time.

**Juan Diego,** a Mexican middle-aged Indian, was descended from those who

governed the Mexica People before the conquest. He was a native of *Cuauhtitlan,* that is to say, "the place of eagles", because surely he was an eagle warrior; he was *Cuauhtlatoa* or *Cuautliyztactzin,* that is to say, someone who speaks like an eagle. Due to the conquest, Juan Diego was desolate because he was an eye witness the collapse of his past and no longer had hope for the future. He was the impoverished one, the one who had been conquered and who did not know where to go; he walked by night, persecuted by misfortune. He yearned to find an exit to his situation. For that reason, he was on the road, searching. Juan Diego is the main protagonist of the *guadalupano* story.

**Juan de Zumárraga,** he the Bishop just arrived from the Metropolis, head of the colonial Church, therefore, he directly participates in the power of the conquerors. For that reason in the *Nican Mopohua* he is called *Lord of priests,* the one who lives in the palace *where I do not go or stand,* affirms Juan Diego when the Virgin sends him to bring the guadalupano message to him. The mission of Juan Diego is first directed at him: to convert him and lead him to an encounter with the Amerindian people; and to build with the Indian the Temple of *Tonantzin* in Tepeyac.

**Juan Bernardino,** the *"uncle",* represents the oppressed people, he was the only one left to connect Juan Diego to the glorious past terribly affected by the demands of colonial society. Juan Bernardino suffers from the *plague* or colonial disease of the Spaniards and he is certain that he is going to die from it soon. Juan Bernardino is the object of Juan Diego's greatest worry, and his healing is the greatest value that Juan Diego upholds over the fulfillment of the Lady of the Sky's will.

**The Servants of the Bishop** personify the wickedness of the colonial power. They are the instruments of ecclesiastical and civil control. They possess the total confidence of the Bishop. But they are also the harshest expression of the system; since they prevent the action of the poor people, they fight with them, they bother them, they spy on them, and they invent all kinds of lies against them to place them in a bad light before authority. And they are willing to take the flowers from them and to even strike them physically.

## b) Symbolic toponymy

In the *Nican Mopohua* toponymy also plays a symbolic role. It is part of the theological plot of the text:

**Cuauhtitlan**, to the north, is the land of origin of Juan Diego, and it means "place of eagles". It represents the glorious past of the Aztecs, of the eagle warrior, of the *Pilli*, now pulverized by the conquering action of the Spaniards. Cuauhtitlan, has again become, Aztlan, from where we come, land of herons, white place, that is to say, place of death. From there Juan Diego walks towards the south, the yellow place, in search of flowers, of Spring, of life.

**Tepeyacac or Tepeyac**, hill nose, is the pre-Hispanic sanctuary of *Tonantzin*, Our Mother, where the ancients went in search of shelter and consolation. There Juan Diego once again encounters the symbols of his old religion, *what the Elders, our grandparents, left said*. For Juan Diego it becomes also a place of synthesis of the two religious proposals that from then on will be the components of the Mexican soul: native and foreign.

**Mexico-Tenochtitlan** is the old Aztec capital which in 1521 was converted into the capital of the colonial power of New Spain. It is the place *of the palaces*, where the poor do not *"go or stand"* and, for that reason according to the *Nican Mopohua*, it always goes badly for Juan Diego there.

**Tlatelolco**, was an old Aztec settlement on the border of the lake, which allowed them to go beyond the water ring, and which, after the conquest, was transformed into the Franciscan headquarters for the religious indoctrination of the Indians north of the city. Juan Diego had to go there for his *Teoyotl* or Christian indoctrination, taught by a rigorous list of participants. It is where he had to go to seek aid for a good death for his Uncle Juan Bernardino.

Two of these places represent the people and their destiny; two represent the power and their colonial schemes. In the text these symbolic sites come into direct conflict. In the end the indigenous side wins because Juan Diego is able to have the temple built in Tepeyac and make the

Bishop, with his servants, go to *Cuauhtitlan* to meet his Uncle Juan Bernardino.

### Guadalupan proposal

Like all tales of this sort, the *Nican Mopohua* presents the *guadalupano* proposal as an extremely simple proposition: *build a teocalli (temple) in Tepeyac*. It seemed an absolutely non-transcendental request because the ecclesiastical institution that precisely did in order to show its religious power. Nevertheless, Juan Diego's temple acquires a totally different meaning from that of the institution due to where it was constructed as well as the purpose of its use.

To construct the temple in Tepeyac was to give reason to the Indian, who in the frustrated *Dialogue of the Twelve* had obstinately maintained that the Christian God was the same as the indigenous God, as opposed to the no less obstinate decision of the missionaries who affirmed that everything indigenous was the work of the devil. The *Nican Mopohua* text tries to prove that in *Tonantzin*-Guadalupe the two religious slopes are twined which will from then on shape the Indian soul. It is the Mother of *Teotl Ipalnemohuani, Teyocoyani, Totecuyo, Tloque Nahuaque, Ilhuicahua, Tlalticpaque* (*NM*, 22), that is to say, of all the pre-Hispanic indigenous pantheon; and, at the same time, the Mother of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (*NM*, 53).

The purpose of the temple is: *to hear, to remedy and to cure* (*NM*, 25). The text uses four expressions to speak of the situation of the people. In Mesoamerican simbology, the number four (*nahui*) represents totality. Therefore it refers to the integral liberation of the people of everything that oppresses them. The test of the effectiveness of this proposition, for Juan Diego, is the cure of his Uncle Juan Bernardino of the illness that he caught because of colonial society.

The temple also has a positive role: it is a place to *show and to give all of my love, compassion, aid and defense* (*NM*, 23). The temple involves the reconstruction of the people's utopia because it transforms the crags, mesquites, cacti, thorns and thistles of the Tepeyac hill into *turquoises, gold, precious stones and refulgent flowers*. Consequently, it means the turning of night into day and Winter into Spring, that is to say, to turn colonial history into salvation history.

The beneficiaries of the guadalupano project are Juan Diego, the Uncle and *the inhabitants of this land*, that is to say, the poor people of the Anahuac. But it is not an exclusively ethnic proposition. It is opened to all the nations who *love me, speak to me, look up to me and trust me*. In that sense it is a universal proposition, because in Juan Diego, those who are far and near, the natives and the non-indigenous are embraced. For that reason, the *guadalupano* project very quickly went beyond the borders of Mexico and became part of the popular religiosity of all the Americas; and now also of the peoples of Europe, Africa and Asia.

### Implications of the guadalupano proposal

As we have already indicated, we are apparently dealing with a purely religious proposal: to make the members of the Church build a temple. But it is more than that. It is the voice of **protest** and of the conquered people's **proposal** before the injustices of colonial society. Certainly this voice is codified in religious language and has implications for religious institutions like the Church but it is not reduced to that.

In the guadalupano proposition an indigenous appropriation of the Church and of the ideological instruments of colonial society occurs. The Virgin of Guadalupe, as Mother of all the names of God known in the pre-Hispanic indigenous tradition, also appears as the Mother of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Juan Diego seeks to lead the Bishop to Tepeyac so that he may build with him the *Teocalli*, where *all the woes, miseries, pains and sorrows* of all the inhabitants of this earth may be heard and remedied.

The purpose of the *Nican Mopohua* is to show that it is possible to incorporate in the Church the indigenous perspective of God and life; and that is also reasonable for the indigenous to accept the Gospel values brought by the Church. It is what we now

called the "inculturation of the Gospel", defined by John Paul II as "the incarnation of the Gospel in the diverse cultures and, at the same time, the introduction of peoples with their own cultures into the Church" (*Redemptoris Missio*, n. 52).

The *guadalupano* event transforms the Indian into the evangelizer of the Bishop and the Church because it leads the Pastor to the place of the poor so that he may opt for them, so that he may accompany them in their process of liberation from colonial diseases, so that he may build with them a future, not of fear or distress, but of flowers and boundless life.

The last intention of Guadalupe is to transform the first scene in the *Nican Mopohua* of the Indian kneeling before the Bishop into the final scene: the Bishop kneeling before the Indian to receive the sign from the sky that he brings. The heart of the matter is, therefore, the radical change of the history of oppression into the history of *love, compassion, relief and defense* for the *xocoyotzin*, that is to say, for the *smallest of children*, just as Don Bartolomé Carrasco points out:

"A distinguishing note of the guadalupano evangelization, which completely coincides with the *Kerigma* of the Apostles, is the proposal before the evangelized of a salvific project that goes to the root of the people's problems and that is against the sinful project of contemporary society. Certainly, on the lips of the Virgin of Guadalupe, such a project does not include concrete historical details or guidelines for action at the economic or political level, that was not the role of the Virgin but of the people themselves, who should discover the most adequate concrete historical mediation by which to channel the ideological-religious content that the Virgin of Guadalupe gives".

"Nevertheless, the project is historically real and viable because it restores the lost dignity of the subject who is to carry it out: **'You are my ambassador, in you I put all my trust'** (*NA*, 87). In addition, the

way to accomplish this project is indicated in the story itself: evangelize the Bishop, so that he, from his service as pastoral guide, may actively participate in the construction of the new Mexican people".

"Objectively the project is also clear: the Temple is the symbol of a new and global reality in which 'all the woes, miseries, pain and sorrows of the people will be completely remedied. It is the symbol of a life project that has to be built, in which the majority of the poor of Mexico will be, in reality, the agents and the beneficiaries of national development; in which the social, cultural and religious rights of the people will be completely respected and in which they will be able to transform today's arid land that only produces crags, mesquites, cacti, thorns and thistles into the paradise that our ancestors only dreamed about".[2]

### Builders of the Indian project

The main protagonist of the story is Juan Diego, the Indian, the poor man. He is *the ambassador worthy of all trust* (*NM*, 87) of the Virgin of Guadalupe. He is the absolutely indispensable actor for the accomplishment of the guadalupano project (*NM*, 42). For that reason he is truly the one who, in the last instance, appears before colonial society, as Juan Diego said to Bishop Zumárraga at the end of the story when he gives him the flowers he cut at Tepeyac, *so that the truth of my words and message may be made manifest* (*NM*, 106).

The servants of the Church (bishops and missionaries), that are for the people "images of Our Lord" (*NM*, 21), are also called to collaborate with the poor in the construction of the temple. For that they need to go to Tepeyac and have a change of heart, that is to say, to stop identifying themselves with the seat of power and instead commit themselves to the poor.

### The Virgin of Guadalupe in Mexican history

In the Virgin of Guadalupe the

millenarian *Tonantzin* or *Xonazi*, the Mother of the all Mesoamerican peoples, identified with the womb of agricultural life which is the Earth, *Mother Earth, the Lady of Maize,* continues to be valid today. In her is also the old *Cipactli* or primordial energy, which was sacrificed so that the universe could exist as a habitat for humanity. And the Lady *Coatlicue*, that virginally conceived *Huitzilopochtli* and gave birth to him before the threatening glance of *Coyolxauhqui* and of the *four hundred Surians*.

As a vital synthesis of the past and present, the Virgin of Guadalupe makes possible the continuity of the indigenous utopia at the moment of colonial society when all hope was lost. In that sense, She places the people in active expectation of better times to make life bloom in the future. In the Virgin of Guadalupe the Mexicans, although phisically struck by the conquest and colonization, were able to preserve their own soul, that was not completely conquered, and that continues to be our last place for struggle. For that reason, it is possible to affirm that in 1531 we were born as a guadalupano people, that is to say, we became *Juan Diegos* in order to resist the lethal projects that others successively imposed on us.

Innumerable indigenous rebellions during the colonial period weere placed under the banner of the Virgin of Guadalupe. Even the children of Spaniards born in Mexico — the so-called Creoles — became guadalupanos at the end of the 18th century to join in the struggle for independence. In the Virgin of Guadalupe all the social sectors of Mexico found the most profound reason to dream of a more dignified motherland different from the one the Iberians left us. Fr Miguel Hidalgo, being a Creole, hoisted the *guadalupano* standard to initiate the fight for independence. Later on, Emiliano Zapata, an Indian, led the so-called "Mexican Revolution", the indigenous uprising of the South also with the *guadalupano* standard.

The Virgin of Guadalupe has been until now, refuge, shelter and breath for many invective popular movements of farmers, workers and neighbourhoods. She is the Mother of the poor, *the very One* ("*la-mera-mera*" according to a popular saying), that not only helps endure the pain of oppression; but also lifts up the spirit to continue the fight for a full life; and, when the historical conditions are right, it also makes the people capable of social revolutions.

Today the Indian Movement makes use of this religious reserve to break through and to keep its ancestral faith alive in the churches. And it seems that it is gaining ground. Our Catholic Church has given to the Indigenous pastoral and Amerindian Theology, at the document level, a space never before recognized:

In Mexico, the Episcopal Commission for Natives of the CEM published in 1988 the **Theological Foundations of the Indigenous Pastoral in Mexico**, where it establishes the doctrinal and pastoral principles that are to guide the birth of native churches; the Fourth Conference of the Latin American Bishops, gathered in Santo Domingo in 1992, incorporated in its conclusions all the advances gained in the pastoral and theological accompaniment of the indigenous communities of the continent. That was made possible thanks to the doors that were opened in the Church, with his gatherings and speeches to the Natives, by Pope John Paul II since 1979. Also the Fifth General Conference of the Latin American and Caribbean Bishops', gathered in Aparecida, ratified the advances gained in the pastoral and theological accompaniment of the Indigenous communities were.

But the indigenous struggle also knows how to open its way in civil society through politics and even with the use of arms; as the armed uprising of the Zapatistas in Chiapas demonstrated. They have made an irreversible impact on all of Mexican society, which is no longer the same after what happened in Chiapas in recent years. And this will continue to be true in spite of the many obstacles placed in the way by those who continue to be against the resurrection of the Amerindian peoples.

**Conclusion**

With the forcefulness of analyzed facts, there is no doubt that *Deep Mexico* has awoken, and that it is more active than ever in questioning unjust models, demanding denied rights, summoning the people to build a better future for all, and construct the temple that we need for life. It is what, in the past, Juan Diego did in the *Nican Mopohua* and now proudly relives in a great number of Mexicans. The popular saying is being fulfilled: to all "Juan Diego has appeared". And in that, the Virgin of Guadalupe has evidently played an indispensable role.

In the scope of missiology, the guadalupano event shows that it is possible to design and to put into practice a model of evangelization separate from the sword and colonial power. Thus, it assumes the evangelized native, not only as a receiver of the missionary action of the Church, but as an active subject of it; making him capable of manifesting the Gospel planted in the historical, cultural and religious reality of his people, and thus, able to contribute to the serious and deep inculturation of the Church in its theology, liturgy and ministries. We can learn much from this paradigm which, since its reactivation in the last 50 years, has accomplished the Indigenous resurrection at the social and religious levels in Mexico as in other parts of the continent.

The *guadalupano* paradigm continues being today an alternative model for mission that can help us in the universal Church to bodly confront the task of the evangelization of the peoples and persons of cultures very different from the Western one, placing us in an attitude of deep dialogue without reduction of the fundamental contents of the Christian faith and without destroying but bringing into fullness in Christ, the cultural and religious identities that these peoples and persons have cultivated for centuries and millennia.

*Pieniezno, Poland*
*31 August 2007*

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**Footnotes**

\* National Center to Support Indigenous Missions, Mexico 2007.
[1] José Comblin, "O proyeto de Aparecida", online July 2007.
[2] Msgr  Bartolomé Carrasco Briseño, Archbishop of Oaxaca, homily at the Basilica of
 Guadalupe in Mexico, 12 May 1987.

Ref.: Texty from the author. Given in 2008.

# Zen Buddhism and Christianity

## - Affinities and Experiences, A Spiritual Journey -

### -Son In Sook-

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I was brought up in a Buddhist environment until I was 17. It was just a matter going to the temple when there were things to pray for. I had a difficult and unhappy adolescence because the Korean War broke out changing my life completely. I began to complain about everything to my mother but at the same time I felt very guilty about doing this. When I had a chance to talk about this to my friend who was a Christian I developed a desire to be forgiven for these guilt feelings. I went to the Catholic Church and after six months of instruction I was baptized. During my ceremony of Baptism I received a strong experience of forgiveness. It was a real experience of God's love which gave me the conviction of salvation through Jesus Christ.

As I began to practice my Catholic faith and tried to live faithful to the teachings of the Church, I was filled with scruples. At that time Korean Catholicism was very much influenced by the Society of Foreign Missionary of Paris. These missionaries had been influenced by Jansenism. So I fell into a vicious cycle of being conscious of my guilt and desiring to be forgiven. In order to be a good Christian I felt that I should feel guilty about even small things I had done wrong; little weaknesses. I used to go confession every week. I was suffering a great deal but I thought that I should suffer this way in order to be a saint. I wanted to sacrifice myself which for me meant offering my whole being to God. Therefore, I entered religious life happy to make any sacrifice for God. When I entered I was always a very serious person and a strict observer of the Rule.

After the Second Vatican Council, I began to have questions about my theology. The idea of salvation from sin is at the foundation or roots of Christianity. It influences the image of oneself. At this time in my life I experienced inner conflict regarding the teaching of Jesus … "love your neighbor as yourself". I could not love or respect myself. I was too busy finding my faults in order to be humble in front of God. Therefore, in my prayer, I would only see my weakness, limitations and selfish desires. I used to say to God, "I will be better. I will try to be humble, selfless, devoted to others". I would try to let go of my desires and empty myself before God. I would acknowledge everything as my fault, asking God for His forgiveness. I would make a resolution that I would be better but I was not changed and continued to do the same thing again and again. The formation I received in the Society was different from my earlier instruction and it helped me to respect my own being. However, it would take time before I could change my old habits.

When I had a chance to learn Buddhist Philosophy and began to practice the Zen way of contemplation I had a feeling of liberation. The aim of Buddhist practice is the concept of Liberation from Ignorance. To start with illusion comes from ignorance of the True Self. We are attached to our ego-self which is not our True Self. Our ego-self is non-existent but we still hold on to it as if it were our True Self. Therefore we suffer from ignorance. The essence of salvation is thought of as an "awakening" that our True Self is Buddha Self. At that moment one has arrived at truth. Therefore the ultimate purpose of Zen contemplation is connected with enlightenment: "seeing" into the truth of reality. This was a real awakening experience.

I have been practicing the Zen way of

prayer for 30 years. I have discovered how much I suffer from the prison of my own thinking. I was suffering from attachment to my own ideas, condition, situation which brought greed, and anger. Thought is always changing but I was attached to my way of thinking as if it were truth. It was my "ideal person" who was relating to God. It was not the person I was or am who was in relationship with God. Now I stop thinking in my prayer. Instead I am just aware of myself and what is happening in the presence of God.

Spiritual transformation is a profound process that does not happen by accident. I need repeated discipline, a genuine training, in order to let go of my old habits of mind and to find and sustain a new way of seeing.

Almost everyone who undertakes a true spiritual path will discover that a profound personal healing is a necessary part of their spiritual process. When this need is acknowledged, spiritual practice can be directed to bring such healing to body, heart, and mind. The Buddha and Jesus were both known as healers of the body, as well as healers of wounded hearts. It is natural to face our wounded hearts by practicing a Zen way of prayer

My Zen meditation has helped me face my own woundedness and weakness, to accept it and embrace it without blaming myself or others who cause me suffering. It also helped me to face my fear, my desires, my anger and temptations. I have been learning to transform the rubbish in me into the fertilizer for new life.

Now in daily life I just practice consciousness … of my breathing. Breathing in, I know that I am breathing in. Breathing out, I know that I am breathing out. This technique helps me to keep my mind on my breath. As I practice this consciousness my breath becomes peaceful and gentle. My breathing is the link between my body and my mind. By concentrating on my breathing, in and out, I bring body and mind back together and I become whole again. Consciousness of our breath is

presence to the Holy Spirit. "Yahweh God shaped man from the soil of the ground and blew the breath of life into his nostrils, and man became a living being" (Gn 2:7). I believe that in my breath is the Spirit of God. When I breathe consciously I recover myself completely, encounter life in the present moment and appreciate the "life" God gave to me. I can practice conscious breathing not only while sitting in a meditation room, but also while working at the office, walking here and there or sitting on a bus. Wherever I go at any time throughout the day I can practice this consciousness. For me this is a way of praying every moment of the day. It helps to keep my heart at peace and whenever I need to pray for somebody who is in need, I think of them and send my peaceful breath to them without saying anything. Zen practice helps me to find release from self and suffering and gives rise to wisdom and compassion so that I share self and compassion with others.

I will share my experience during my long retreat in the way of Zen contemplation with you. What I wrote after this retreat shows how to come to understanding and enlightenment. This retreat was to discern the will of God at the moment that I had to make a decision. It would be easier to explain it if I could tell you the story about "Searching for the Ox" but I do not have time to explain everything here. It was a real spiritual journey.

§ "My journey began with trying to find the will of God.

§ I began to talk to the Lord. I asked if He would show me His will so that I might obey him.

§ I cried out to the Lord to show His will to me but there was no response. I faced His silence.

§ I began to be angry with Him.

§ I began to grumble to Him, "Where are you?".

§ All my unhappy emotions surfaced.

§ Suddenly, I was aware that I was a slave to my emotions.

§ I saw that I was screaming at God; asking Him to enter into my emotions.

§ This was fabulous! (It is one step towards enlightenment).

As I was freed from my emotions, my

journey to find the will of God continued. Thinking that my heart would be polished like a mirror and that I would be able to see God, I continued my journey with a firm heart.

As I continued to polish my heart I realized I was commanding God to show Himself in my heart! How suffocating! How stifling!   I lost heart.

With an ultimate effort, I continued my journey. I began to offer my heart to His will. I screamed "Your will be done". My heart and body was exhausted. I felt I had nothing to offer. There was endless silence: I was filled with a feeling of failure, frustration and hopeless. I felt that I had been forgotten by God.

I had to go through this crisis of faith; an endless darkness, feeling the way was blocked. I realized (another level of enlightenment), that this was an evil temptation and I shouted "Go away"!   (It is always very difficult to experience temptation and doubt, to feel useless and to want to go home. Therefore it is very important to be accompanied on your journey. Traditionally the dark night arises only after we have had some initial spiritual opening).

I continued the journey but my energy was exhausted... "I commend my spirit unto you!".

Silence, silence. What is happening! I have no heart to offer and there is no one who can receive my heart!  This experience of nothingness was liberating.  I had nothing to say. I experienced the whole Universe as one; a unity. You and I and Nature are one.

"The entire universe disappears and later reappears by itself.  This release from all sense of self and form brings enormous peace and shows us a freedom beyond all form and all limited existence".  This is the experience of spiritual leaders.

When we face ourselves with this reality and are aware of it we will know what to do with it.

When you know your self objectively and recognize this self, accepting it and taking care of it, you can let it go.  If you know what you are holding on to and realize it is only dross, then you do not hold on to it so strongly. You can let it go more easily.  It is awakening from ignorance therefore Buddhism is telling us that our suffering comes from ignorance. If we awaken from this ignorance, we will be free and liberated from all kinds of disillusion.
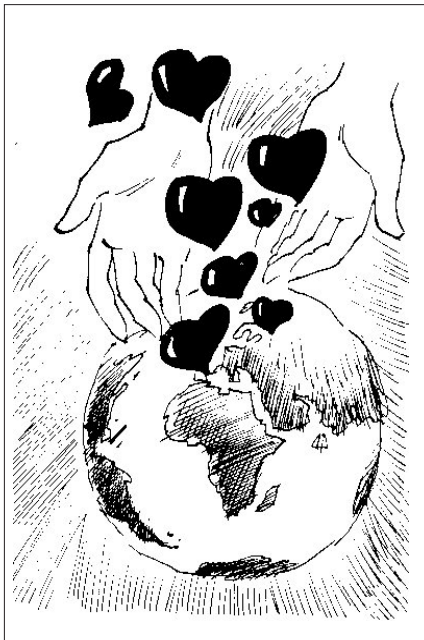
In order to arrive at this point we need asceticism in our daily life.  It is a spiritual exercise and we need to practice it so that we will not give in to the desires of our ego/self. When we become aware we are less likely to fall into this trap.

We can find this process of spiritual awakening in the Bible. Jesus went through temptation. Later we see His awareness of the unity of all things. His prayer was: "May they all be one, just as Father, you are in me and I am in you, so that they may also may be in us.  I have made your name known to them and will continue to make it known, so that the love with which you love me may be in them, and so that I may be in them" (Jn 17:21-26).  It is the desire of Jesus, therefore it is possible to experience it.

Ref.: Text from the Author, 17 January 2008.

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