



SEDOS

Bulletin 2010

Vol. 42, No. 7/8
July-August

"THE PROPHETIC CHALLENGE OF THE AFRICAN CHURCHES"



To learn to forgive is the only way
to be whole, healthy
Instruments of Reconciliation

ARICCIA 18-22 May 2010

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Editorial

Although forgiveness and reconciliation are closely connected, we still have a great deal of difficulty in differentiating between them. Forgiveness is a personal and free choice to get even with someone who hurt you; it is a journey toward genuine peace and freedom. Nelson Mandela, in his inaugural speech in 1994, when he was elected President said: "If I did not forgive I would still be in prison". And Dag Hammarskjöld, the second Secretary General of the United Nations, jotted down in his diary: forgiveness "breaks the chain of causality", forgiveness may be the only credible option to the continuing escalation of violence in our world. Forgiveness truly has the power to heal mind, body and spirit". Whereas reconciliation is more difficult, it is something over which you have no control. You may take steps toward reconciliation but if the person concerned turns down your gesture of reconciliation, you can do nothing, except pray for him/her to be open and accept the grace of reconciliation (*cf.* Human Development, Volume 29, n. 2, Summer 2008, p. 41). In fact, Pope Benedict XVI has highlighted that reconciliation is a gift of God that men and women must implore and receive. It is a stable basis on which to build peace, and an indispensable condition for the authentic progress of people and society in accordance with the project of justice wanted by God (Benedict XVI, Homily, 4 October 2009). Forgiveness is a free gift to the person who hurt you.



Pope Benedict XVI invited the Church in Africa to become reconciled with God and with one another, so that it fulfills its prophetic mission of being the leaven of reconciliation between different ethnic, linguistic and even religious groups, within single nations and throughout the continent (*cf.* Benedict XVI, Homily, 4 October 2009). The spiritual and cultural patrimony of Africa constitutes an immense spiritual "lung" for humanity that appears to be in a crisis of faith and hope, Benedict XVI emphasized; yet the "lung" can also become ill. Africa, this immense "lung" of humanity is, indeed, ill. Africa has lost its sense of the "UBUNTU" which asserts that, "My humanity is caught, is inextricably bound up, in yours". "What dehumanizes you inexorably dehumanizes me" (Desmond Tutu, *No Future Without Forgiveness*, p. 31). Africa must continue

striving to be open to the redeeming grace of the Risen Lord, to accept to be illuminated by his light and to let itself be guided by the Holy Spirit; to rediscover and cherish the values of the "UBUNTU"; so that Africa becomes a blessing for the universal Church, and brings a qualified contribution to the building up of a more just and humane world.

There were 123 participants. We express our deep gratitude to Prof. *Joseph Thierry Amougou*, a Cameroonian, whose challenging exposé on Africa has helped us "acquire a greater knowledge and a deeper understanding of Africa and the issues affecting it. We feel a stronger empathy with the people of Africa and an appreciation of the missionaries working there" (from the final evaluation). We drew, from the painstaking and thorough talks of Fr Michael McCABE, SMA; Sister Jane MUGUKU, ICM, and Fr Paul ENNIN SAA-DADE, SMA, (these three talks are included in this issue), renewed impetus to develop and nurture a spirituality of reconciliation; and mostly, to make of our respective religious communities a place of forgiveness and reconciliation. And also, it is necessary to find adequate ways and means of instilling these values in our candidates.

Sr Nzenzili Mboma, FMM
SEDOS Executive Director

Ouverture du Séminaire à Ariccia de mai 2010

Bien chers amis, membres de SEDOS, participant(e)s au Séminaire de 2010,

Soyez les bienvenus dans cette maison d'Ariccia où nous aurons la joie de vivre ensemble pendant 4 jours. En lien et en continuité avec le dernier Synode pour l'Afrique, le thème de ce Séminaire est « *LE DEFI PROPHETIQUE DES EGLISES D'AFRIQUE* ».

C'est donc l'Afrique, son présent, son avenir, ses enjeux, qui nous réunissent ici. Laissez-moi alors vous souhaiter encore la bienvenue dans plusieurs langues africaines ... seulement quelques unes car, en réalité, dans l'Afrique d'aujourd'hui l'on parle 2011 langues !

<i>Mwaiseni</i>	<i>Kaze Kulikayo</i>	<i>I ni se</i>	<i>Karibuni</i>
<i>Murakaza neza</i>	<i>M'itila kemi</i>	<i>Ney waongo</i>	<i>Takulandirani</i>
	<i>Garima</i>	<i>M'itila kemi</i>	<i>Kaije</i>

On dit de l'Afrique qu'elle est « le berceau de l'humanité » car l'on y a découvert les plus vieux ossements humains datant de millions d'années. Elle est aussi un vaste continent aux cultures, décors et influences multiples.

Ces dernières années le continent Africain a parfois été comparé à cet homme de la Parole du Bon Samaritain, roué de coups et couché au bord de la route. Des passants s'empressent, chacun pris dans ses propres préoccupations, intérêts et besoins.... Cet homme à secourir représente une situation de marginalisation, de retrait, par rapport à un ensemble qui continue son cours.... Or, la vie, la croissance, le développement ne se trouvent pas dans l'isolement mais, au contraire, dans la relation, la participation, l'interaction, l'échange et la réconciliation. C'est ce que veut dire le concept appelé *UBUNTU* : « Je suis parce que j'appartiens, parce que je participe, parce que je partage ».

Ubuntu est un concept philosophique africain qui offre une compréhension de soi en relation avec le monde. Selon *Ubuntu* il y a un lien commun entre tous les vivants. Ou, comme un dicton Zulu exprime : « une personne est personne grâce et à travers les autres ». Nous affirmons notre humanité quand nous reconnaissons celle des autres.



Le Prix Nobel, Desmond Tutu, dit que « *Ubuntu* est l'essence de l'être humain.... Mon humanité est profondément liée à la tienne. Je suis humain parce que j'appartiens. *Ubuntu* signifie intégrité, compassion. Une personne avec *Ubuntu* est accueillante, hospitalière, chaleureuse, prête au pardon.... Les gens qui ont *Ubuntu* sont des gens forts et flexibles, capables de survivre aux pires épreuves, et de sortir encore plus humains même dans les situations les plus deshumanisantes ... ».

La notion d'*Ubuntu* souligne l'importance de la réconciliation et procure un système de valeurs afin de donner et de recevoir le pardon. La réconciliation est précisément le sous-thème de ce Séminaire. Réconciliation comme paradigme de la Mission aujourd'hui.

Chers amis, que ces journées que nous allons passer ensemble fassent grandir l'*UBUNTU* en nous et nous rendent plus disponibles et aptes à être les Missionnaires dont l'Eglise et l'Afrique ont besoin en ce temps.

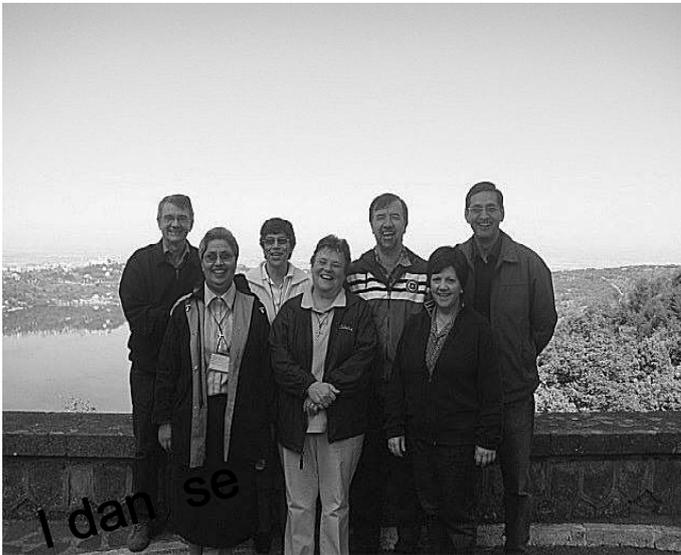
JE VOUS SOUHAITE UN BON ET PROFITABLE SEMINAIRE !

Sr Piluca Benavente, MSOLA
Présidente de SEDOS

I dan se



Bienvenidos



Takulandirani
M'itila kemi

I dan se

Ney waongo



Bienvenus

Kulikayo

Mwaiseni

Kaze

Mwaiseni

Michael McCabe, SMA

***Key Challenges
for International Missionary Institutes in Africa
Today in the Light of the Second Synod for Africa***

Introduction

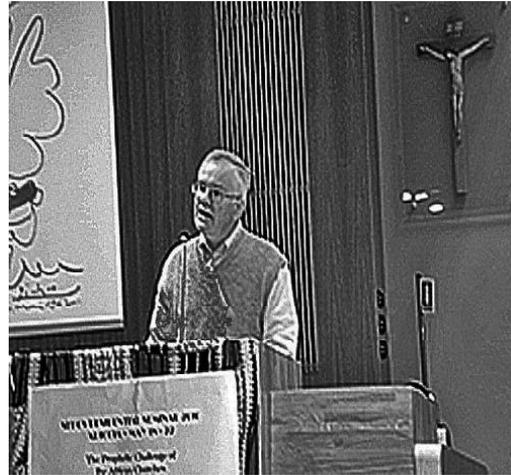
While in continuity with the first African Synod of 1994 and its theme of evangelization, the particular focus of the Second Synod was the ad extra dimension of the Church's mission, its prophetic role in society. This is clearly indicated in its full title: "The Church in Africa in the Service of Reconciliation, Justice and Peace: 'You are the salt of the Earth ... you are the light of the World' (Mt 5:13,14)". The Synod, thus, strongly endorsed the key affirmation of the 1971 Synod on Justice in the World that the promotion of reconciliation, justice and peace is no optional extra, rather an integral dimension of the Church's evangelising mission. As the recent Encyclical of Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, stated, the promotion of justice, peace and reconciliation is simply the social expression of the Church's testimony to love. At the same time, the Synod did not claim that the Church could or should provide the answer for all of Africa's political, economic and social ills. It was rather concerned with how the Church in Africa might become a more authentic and effective agent of transformation ('salt' and light) in the current situation. I am convinced that international missionary institutes have a vitally important role to play in helping the African Church become a more effective agent of social change in contemporary Africa. In this presentation, I will highlight a number of key challenges mentioned by the Synod which these institutes should embrace. First, a general word about the Synod's reading of the present situation of Africa.

Optimism tempered with Realism

The Synod noted the increasing influence of Africa on the universal Church. In little over a century, the Catholic population of Africa has grown from 2 million to 165 million. It is not a dark continent (as a book edited by Fr Fritz Stenger, Mafr., noted some years back) but a continent marked by a youthful optimistic spirit with a new generation of leaders, lay, religious and clerical, determined to make the African Church more and more a subject of history, a Church taking an increasingly prominent role in the mission of the Church (Message 12). At the same time, there was among the Synod delegates an awareness that, while the Church in Africa is growing in numbers, and in priestly, religious and missionary vocations, it is not having the kind of impact upon society it should be having. As one of the delegates, Archbishop Palmer-Buckle of Ghana, stated in an interview for the *National Catholic Reporter*: "The Church has transformed neither society nor itself.... Where there has been corruption, Catholics have been involved, and where there has been violence Catholics have been among those instigating it" (14 October 2009).

Without drowning us in pessimism, the Final Message of the Synod paints a

grim, but arguably realistic, picture of the reality of Africa today. While “rich in human and natural resources, many of our people are still left to wallow in poverty and misery, wars and conflicts, crises and chaos”. These evils, the Synod asserts, are mainly the product of “human decisions and activities by people who have no regard for the common good and this often through a tragic complicity and criminal conspiracy of local leaders and foreign interests” (Message, n. 5). The appropriate response to such evils, however, is not despair but ever greater and more concerted commitment from the Church Family-of-God to those deprived of freedom and peace, those violated in their dignity as human beings, those who “suffer poverty, diseases, injustice, wars, violence, and forced migration.”



In his homily during the closing Eucharist celebration of the Synod, Pope Benedict called on the Church to become “a community of reconciled people, operators of justice and peace; salt and light amongst the society of men and nations — and thus a potent leaven of reconciliation in each country”. In these words, then, the Pope enunciated the fundamental challenge of the Synod for the African Church, namely to both witness to, and promote, reconciliation, justice and peace throughout the continent. To meet this challenge the African Church must begin by putting its own house in order and using its considerable resources in a more concerted and collaborative manner. This I see as the first challenge of the Synod.

1. Greater Unity and Solidarity within the African Church

One of the reasons for the failure of the African Church to fulfill its potential as an agent for the transformation of African society at large is its lack of unity, its failure to be true to its calling as the ‘Family-of-God’. The Synod made it clear that the African Church itself must be transformed if it is to be an effective catalyst in the transformation of society. Can the Church effect change in society? Yes, it can, was the ringing affirmation of the Synod, but only if all its members collaborate effectively. “An army of well-organized ants can bring down an elephant” (Message n. 15). All members of the Church — clergy, religious and lay faithful — must be mobilised to work together in the unity that brings strength” (*ibid.*).

Proposition 3, emphasising the model of Church as communion, calls on bishops, priests, deacons, religious and the laity “to further strengthen their coopeation at the diocesan, national, continental and intercontinental levels.” The Synod calls on bishops to ensure that their dioceses are “models of good governance, transparency, and good financial management” (Message n. 19) and “to put issues of reconciliation, justice and peace high up on the pastoral agenda” of their dioceses. Addressing priests, the Synod calls on them to give an example of unity by “living together in peace across tribal and racial lines” and to “welcome gladly whoever the Holy See appoints as bishops over [them], irrespective of place of birth” (Message n. 20). Addressing religious, it exhorts them “to give maximum effectiveness to [their] apostolate through loyal and committed communion with the local hierarchy” (Message n. 21). I wonder if there is implied criticism of religious and missionary institutes in this statement. Certainly these institutes have played a major role in the establishment and building up of the Church in Africa. But we might raise the question of whether or not a tendency may have developed in recent years for international missionary institutes to distance themselves

from the local church and pursue their own goals and targets. While remaining faithful to their distinctive charisms, are there ways in which these institutes could contribute to, and collaborate more effectively with, the local Church?

The Synod also underlines the need to strengthen institutions of organic solidarity in Africa, such as SECAM (The Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar) and COMSAM (*Conferences of Major Superiors of Africa and Madagascar*) and to further develop organs of intercontinental collaboration and support. Proposition n. 4 calls on the African Bishops "to revive existing structures of ecclesial communion" and promote other structures such as: a continental council of the clergy; a continental council of the laity; and a continental council for Catholic women". Surely international missionary institutes must also be involved in responding to this challenge for they have an extensive experience in creating and maintaining effective organs of dialogue and collaboration at continental and intercontinental levels.

2. Globalisation

A second challenge highlighted by the Synod concerns the impact of the phenomenon of globalization on Africa today. Globalization is not something new in Africa. However, in the 15 years between the first and second African Synods, its impact on Africa has become ever more pronounced. The Synod was careful not to condemn the entire process of globalisation (Proposition n. 31). Echoing *Caritas in Veritate*, the Synod refused to see globalisation in fatalistic terms 'as if it were the product of anonymous impersonal forces or structures independent of the human will' (CV n. 42). In itself, globalisation is neither good nor bad. It is a dynamic process that is within our power to shape and direct. We are its protagonists, not its victims. For example, globalisation can be harnessed to extend the benefits of a socially responsible capitalism and a humanised science and technology to all peoples. Such a globalisation of solidarity would be eminently desirable. It is possible to 'steer the globalisation of humanity in relational terms, in terms of communion and the sharing of goods' as *Caritas in Veritate* pointed out (CV n. 42).

Unfortunately, the process of globalisation, as experienced today, is being used to promote a liberal capitalism (or what Pope John Paul II termed "savage capitalism") which benefits the rich at the expense of the poor, and a materialistic technology, which exploits and destroys nature. It is this form of globalisation which the Synod excoriated. The dominant actor on the world stage today is the free market. The globe is conceived as one great market place directed by the profit motivations of private enterprises that know neither national boundaries nor local allegiances.

Michael Amaladoss, the well-known Indian theologian, paints a grim picture of the abuses being perpetrated by this form of globalisation:

"The rich capitalists have now a global market-field to play in. The facilities of mass and rapid communications are made use of for increasing profits by looking for cheap labour in poor countries. The international markets are weighed in favour of the richer nations who control them. The commercial and service sectors are favoured while primary goods attract increasingly lower prices. People who wax eloquent about intellectual property rights ignore natural and human rights. The multi-national companies are more powerful than many nations. Politicians everywhere are at the service of business interests. The richer nations use their political and military power, even across their borders, to favour and protect their own economic interests... What we have therefore is not the globalisation of well-being and abundance, but the globalisation of poverty and injustice".

The picture painted by Amaladoss finds an echo in the Final Message and

Propositions of the Synod which draw attention to the problems and consequent challenges arising from the unchecked globalisation of liberal capitalism: the unjust world economic order which benefits the rich at the expense of the poor (Message 32); the criminal devastation of the environment by greedy multinational companies (Message 33); the "new global ethic" being propounded by the U.N., the World Bank and the IMF which under the guise of "modern culture" is undermining traditional African values (Message nn. 24-25).

Under the heading of the impact of "modern culture" on Africa, even the Aid agencies from the Western world were criticized by the Synod. While commending the good work many of these are doing in combatting poverty, promoting development, defending the rights of women and children, and combatting diseases such as AIDS, Malaria, Tuberculosis, the bishops denounced "surreptitious attempts to destroy and undermine the precious African values of family and human life" (Message n. 30). They expressed particular concern about article 14/2c the Maputo Protocol which pledges "to protect the reproductive rights of women by authorizing medical abortion in cases of sexual assault, rape, incest, and where continued pregnancy endangers the mental and physical health of the mother or the life of the mother or the foetus".

How can international missionary institutes help the African Church to counteract the negative effects of globalization on Africa? I would argue that both at local and international levels these institutes are already doing a great deal to promote African values and challenge the injustices of the world economic order. At the local level they have been at the forefront of efforts to preserve the values of African cultures and inculcate the Gospel in Africa. Of course, they cannot do this alone and I would suggest that the challenge today is to intensify their dialogue with the local Church (the main agents of inculturation) on how best they can continue this work.

On the international front, for more than a quarter of a century over forty missionary and religious institutes working in Africa have been engaged in a joint ministry of advocacy and lobbying at the international centers of economic power where policy decisions are made which affect the lives of millions of Africans. I am referring particularly to the work of the African Faith and Justice Networks and Vivat International, but there are others.

The particular concern of these networks is to address issues of structural injustice rooted in European and United States policies that affect Africa adversely, especially in the area of economics. The members of these networks empower one another to lobby their national political decision makers and the international centres of economic power, so as to positively influence decisions taken by the the European Union and by the US Congress in favour of Africa. I am convinced that these networks can only serve Africa when there is a significant contribution not only from missionaries and religious working in Africa but also from the local African churches. It is necessary to establish clearer, more radical and stable links between these networks and Africa. Closer cooperation between the member congregations of these networks and the local Churches of Africa will greatly enhance the effectiveness of their advocacy.

3. *Giving Priority to Pardon and Reconciliation in the struggle for Justice and Peace*

For several decades, Justice and Peace has been high on the agenda of practically all international religious and missionary institutes working in Africa. I think we are accustomed to view justice as a prerequisite for forgiveness, reconciliation and peace. However, the Second African Synod appears to give

priority to forgiveness, pardon and reconciliation over justice. Justice, the bishops argue, is the fruit of forgiveness and reconciliation, rather than the other way around. Proposition 14 elaborates the theological foundation for this claim as follows: "God justifies the sinner by overlooking his or her sins, or one justifies an offender by pardoning his or her faults. And because God has justified us by forgiving our sins, so as to reconcile us to himself, we too can work out just relationships and structures among ourselves and in our societies, through pardoning and overlooking peoples' faults out of love and mercy. How else can we live in community and communion?".

The Message of the Synod tells us that, in the process of reconciliation "the virtue of pardon is crucial, even before admission of guilt. Those who say that pardon does not work should try revenge and see. True pardon promotes the justice of repentance and reparation, leading to a peace that goes to the roots of conflict, making friends, brothers and sisters out of former victims and enemies" (Message n. 8).

This priority of forgiveness and reconciliation over justice only makes sense from a perspective of faith. An intra-worldly humanist approach will always tend to give priority to justice. However, the Christian standpoint is unique. Its approach to conflict resolution and peacebuilding is grounded in a spirituality of reconciliation based on the initiative of God: "God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting their trespasses against them and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.... So we are ambassadors for Christ" (II Cor 5:19,20).

Not all African theologians are convinced by this argument. The well known Tanzanian theologian, Laurenti Magesa, insists that, in the process of reconciliation, it is justice that must be given priority. "To place reconciliation at the foundation of the process of justice and peace", he argues, "seems to preempt the more fundamental aspect of justice as a prerequisite of both reconciliation and peace". For Magesa, justice should be the starting point and goal of the process of reconciliation. Otherwise, he claims, we end up with the kind of superficial process that, in his view, the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) is engaged in: "Because the foundational principle of justice was deliberately kept in the background for fear of jeopardising the process, the TRC cannot be said to have achieved the ultimate goal of a reconciled South Africa. Whatever other causes may be adduced the current simmering of resentment in that nation, it is primarily due to this failure. The ugly head of xenophobia recently witnessed there is just one extension of that reality".

However, even if the process of the South African TRC was not completely successful, did it not prevent the kind of appalling slaughter that has been an all too common feature of conflicts in Africa? We just don't know what might have happened had there been no Nelson Mandela, no bishop Tutu and no Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Nevertheless, there is some validity in Magesa's argument. The struggle for justice must always be part and parcel of the process of reconciliation and peacebuilding. If justice is overlooked, might we not end up with a culture of impunity instead of a culture of reconciliation? At the same time, it is surely questionable that we will ever establish perfect justice on this earth. Is it not likely that a struggle for justice that is not set in the context of a higher ethic including virtues such as mercy, forgiveness and compassion can easily degenerate into a fanatical concern for the righting of wrongs which is more likely to perpetuate rather than to transform conflict? Robert Mudida, a Kenyan lecturer in Conflict Resolution and Peace Building at Hekima College, Nairobi, makes the point that a justice not motivated by love, and tempered by mercy and compassion will not

bring about lasting peace. In writing about the Church's unique contribution to building peace he quotes Tarimo and Manuela as follows:

"From psychological and religious perspectives, forgiveness transforms the victim, the perpetrator, and other members of society. Personal repentance and forgiveness, combined with public truth-telling make the process of reconciliation complete. The approach is constructive because victims consumed by hatred and the desire to revenge cannot build a healthy society. This is because their energy and resources are used to plan for revenge. The process of learning to overcome pain and resentment creates goals to pursue. On the part of the victim, the process cultivates compassion and acknowledges the effort of repenting demonstrated by the perpetrator. The courage to forgive requires a personal sacrifice that cannot be imposed authoritatively".

Having acknowledged the unique resources of mercy and compassion that the Church brings to the process of reconciliation and peace building, it is, nevertheless, essential that the Church, in conjunction with other groups, should continue to promote ever greater justice in society at large. In this regard, the principles and guidelines of the Compendium of Catholic Social Teaching are particularly valuable but, as Mudida points out, they will be more effectively used in the African context "if they are seen to reinforce traditional African notions of justice" and tied into the guiding principle of "ubuntu" which is at the heart of African social philosophy.

This is certainly a challenge for which international religious and missionary congregations are ideally equipped. Ethnic, tribal and regional divisions still afflict many parts of the African continent and are a major obstacle in the development of its peoples. Furthermore, as the Synod acknowledged, these divisions are evident even within some African ecclesial communities. This context makes the testimony of international missionary and religious communities especially relevant and urgent. These communities represent people (including many Africans) from very different ethnic, cultural and linguistic backgrounds who leave their homelands to make a home among strangers. They are committed to learning new languages, eating local food and embedding themselves in the tissue of other ways of being human. Perhaps more significantly, they embrace a wide range of cultural and ethnic differences within their communities as they live and work together in the service of the Gospel. Thus, by their very existence, these communities give a clear and prophetic testimony of what Timothy Radcliffe calls "God's vast home, the wide openness of the Kingdom in which all may belong and be at ease". Their presence proclaims the Gospel truth that God does not have favourites, that we are all his children and our common destiny is to be one family in Him, and this is the only certain and lasting foundation for a reconciled humanity.

4. Empowerment of Women: from Praise to Commitment

This fourth key challenge arises from the Synod's clear acknowledgement of the vital role of women in the Church and in African society, and its commitment to giving them a greater say in Church governance. A number of Religious sisters were invited to address the Synod and they made a strong case for women to be given a greater role in the Church's decision-making process. A Zambian sister, Mary Ann Katiti, Provincial Superior of the Kasisi sisters, stated that "women have no real voice when it comes to their places and rights, and their contribution to evangelisation". An intervention by a Congolese sister highlighted the fact that women in Africa bear a disproportionate share of the burden arising from the various crises affecting Africa today from poverty and disease to violence and social disintegration.

It would seem that the Synod responded to these pleas from the Sisters. Its Final

Message acknowledges "the specific contribution of women, not only in the house as wife and mother but also in the social sphere" and recommended that the local Churches in Africa "put in place concrete structures to ensure real participation of women at appropriate levels". Proposition 47 commits the Church to "greater integration of women into Church structures and the decision making process". There are signs, then, that a new sensitivity to women's issues may be emerging within the African Church, but it still has a long way to go. I would suggest that missionary and religious institutes have a major role to play in helping to develop this embryonic sensitivity. They can show that the way forward for both men and women in the service of the Church's mission has to be the way of collaboration on an equal footing. If we believe that the Spirit is at work among both men and women, then it is not only possible but necessary for women to be actively involved in policy and decision making at local, diocesan and national levels. Many of the traditional works undertaken by women are valuable, but too limited. Women of necessity are assuming new roles in mission, but there needs to be a further recognition by the official Church of this evolution. True collaboration does not mean that one person sets the goals and the other undertakes the task. Collaboration is putting into practice the philosophy that whatever can be done together is done together.

In order to participate in the creative movement of the Spirit, women and men together must enter more deeply into the situation of the world. The great problems of Africa today are problems that deeply concern women: the movement of refugees, the greatest ever known in the history of the world; unemployment and the loss of dignity involved; the world-wide drug problem; the demands of consumerism and its effects on the environment in rich countries; famine and malnourishment; AIDS and its social consequences; the abuse of women and children; the domination of the lives of millions by multi-national corporations — the list seems endless. If the Church is to respond effectively to these problems, it must increasingly involve women in its policies and plans as well as in their implementation.

5. Good Governance and the Formation of African Leaders

While acknowledging the efforts to improve governance in Africa at the political level through the African Union (AU) and, at the economic level, through the strategic framework of the New Economic Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) and the African Peer Review Mechanism (Message n. 34), the Synod reserved one of its strongest attacks for African political leaders, describing their performance, with a few exceptions, as "woeful" (Message n. 36). The reason for their shamefully bad governance, the Synod suggests, is that these leaders pursue "greed for power and wealth at the expense of the people and nation. Whatever may be the responsibility of foreign interests, there is always the shameful and tragic collusion of local leaders" (*ibid.*).

Aside from engaging in diatribes, what should the Church be doing to promote better governance in Africa? Proposition 25 provides the answer. It states that the role of the Church is "to offer present and future leaders a fitting doctrinal, pastoral, practical formation as well as spiritual support (by setting up chaplaincies). The Synod draws attention to the value of the Compendium of Catholic Social Teaching as a tool for this purpose. In addition, it calls on Catholic Universities to "establish faculties of political science" and on all African Episcopal Conferences "to promote multi-dimensional programmes of civic education; implement programmes to foster the formation of a social conscience at all levels; and encourage competent and honest citizens to participate in party politics" (*ibid.*).

However, it is not enough for the Church to set up educational programmes for present and future African leaders. True enough, more attention needs to be given to

the formation of a social conscience in education programs in Africa. However, the Church also needs to provide models of the kind of leadership it expects of politicians and I believe that international religious and missionary congregations can do much to help the local Church in this regard. In contrast to the top-down model which placed the leader in a position above and apart from the community, these congregations have developed a model of leadership which has the following characteristics:

- First, it places the leader alongside rather than above the members of their communities.
- Second, it repudiates titles and privileges formerly attached to leadership positions and views the functions of leadership as roles of service that do not have any special status attached to them.
- Third, it envisages power as a social process, something essentially relational, a quality made visible in the interactions of the different members of a community. Thus, leaders do not need to be powerful people. What they do need is to be able to get the members of the group to acknowledge their interdependence and collaborate with one another, so as to release the transforming power latent in the group.
- Fourth, whereas in the past leaders were required to do the thinking for the people and to provide them with the answers, the task of leaders today is to facilitate people in the process of finding answers for themselves.
- Fifth, this kind of leadership, while striving to promote unity, is also prepared to accept and even promote the diversity of gifts which exist among the members of the community.

As we can see from the current crisis (re. the handling of clerical sex abuse) affecting the Church in many parts of the world, the hierarchical model of Church leadership is increasingly coming under strain. Its inability to respond adequately to the needs and challenges of people today is becoming ever more apparent. The time is ripe for a shift to a new style of leadership, somewhat along the lines I have indicated above: a style of leadership which international missionary and religious institutes have been modeling for years.

6. *Effective Planning*

A number of commentaries on the Synod have pointed out that the main reason for the failure of the first African Synod was its lack of a clear plan of action. This must not happen again. The proposals and recommendations of this second Synod must be accompanied by clear action plans, with specific targets, and a time-frame for implementation and evaluation. These plans must also specify those responsible for ensuring that the plan is implemented, and that its implementation is regularly evaluated. In this regard, the African Churches have surely something to learn from the methodology used with remarkable consistency and no small success by missionary and religious congregations and societies in their chapters and assemblies for the past 30 years.

Presenting a Positive Image of Africa to other Continents

Here is a challenge that is more hinted than explicitly mentioned by the Synod. Africa is poorly served by the mass media, which focuses almost exclusively on the bad news, thus creating a widely accepted narrative of a continent in a constant state of crisis. The 'Aid Industry', too, feeds on selling negative and outmoded stereotypes of Africans as helpless victims of endless wars and constant famines. Even some of Africa's strongest advocates — including pop stars and politicians — frequently give the impression of being engaged in a messianic mission to save Africa in spite of its people.

But this narrative of Africa as a land of hopeless, hapless victims is a far cry from the Africa most missionaries and religious have come to know and love. Through years of experience of working for and with its people, we are familiar with an Africa seldom mentioned in the media, the Africa of immense beauty, the Africa of ordinary people who humble us by their stoicism, selflessness and delight in company. This is not the Africa of helpless victims, worthy only of pity. It is rather the the Africa of song and dance, of laughter and celebration, of energy, creativity and resilience. The people of Africa must become more central to the narrative of Africa that is presented to other continents. Surely international and missionary institutes are ideally situated to do precisely this.

QUESTIONS

1. In what ways can we collaborate more effectively with the local churches of Africa so as to help them become more effective agents of social transformation? What are the implications of this collaboration for our formation programmes?
2. How do we form our students and members to be effective agents of reconciliation in their various ministries?
3. How can we help to strengthen the commitment of the local African churches to giving women a significant role in its structures and decision making processes. Do our formation programmes reflect the fundamental dignity of women and their equality with men in the service of the Church's mission?
4. What style of leadership do we want to see in the African Church and in African society? How do we form our candidates/members for this style of leadership?
5. How to we ensure that the concerns of Africa are heard in the international forums of economic power? Do our formation programmes in Africa train our students and members for an effective and committed ministry of advocacy?
6. What image of Africa do we present in our countries of origin and how can we better collaborate to utilize the resources available to us to correct the unbalanced image of Africa presented by the international media?

Notes

Cf. *Caritas in Veritate*, nn. 5 and 6.

Cf. Laurenti Magesa, "The Second African Synod: Random Thoughts on a Process", in *Hekima Review*, December 2009, n. 41, pp. 32-33.

Cf. *Africa is not a Dark Continent* (Nairobi: Pauline Publications), 2005.

"Global Homogenization: Can Local Cultures Survive", at <http://www.sedos.org/english/amaladoss2.html>. Accessed on 10 March 2010.

Art. cit., p. 31.

Ibid.

Art. cit., p. 32.

From A. Tarimo and P. Manuela, *African Peacemaking and Governance* (Nairobi: Acton), 2007, and quoted by Mudida in "Enhancing the Role of the Church in Conflict Transformation in Africa", in *Hekima Review*, December 2009, p. 125.

Mudida, *art. cit.*, p. 125.

As Kieran O'Reilly, SMA Superior General, pointed out in his intervention at the Synod.

"**Religious Life After** 11th September: What Signs do we Offer? In *Passion for Christ, Passion for Humanity*, Pauline Publications, Nairobi, 2005, p. 192.

Peter Henriot, "The Second African Synod: Challenge and Help for our Future Church", in *Hekima Review*, December, 2009, n. 41, p. 15.

Peter Henriot, *art. cit.*, p. 11. Cf. also, Laurenti Magesa, *art. cit.*, pp. 35-37.

Jane Muguku, IMC

Diakonia: Being Instruments of Reconciliation

Prayer

Let my eyes stream with tears
 day and night, without rest,
 Over the great destruction which
 overwhelms the virgin daughter
 of my people,
 over her incurable wound.
 If I walk out into the field,
 look! those slain by the sword;
 If I enter the city,
 look! those consumed by hunger.
 Even the prophet and the priest
 forage in a land they know not.
 Have you cast Judah off completely?
 Is Zion loathsome to you?

Why have you struck us a blow
 that cannot be healed?
 We wait for peace, to no avail;
 for a time of healing, but terror comes
 instead.
 We recognize, O Lord, our wickedness,
 the guilt of our fathers;
 that we have sinned against you.
 For your name's sake spurn us not,
 disgrace not the throne of your glory;
 remember your covenant with us, and
 break it not.

Jer 14: 17-21

(Canticle, morning prayer, Fri 3rd Wk)

Introduction

Reconciliation in Africa is a very complex and difficult undertaking. Nobody can presume to treat this topic in an exhaustive manner or to give answers. It can only be an attempt to explore some possibilities and to raise some questions as a contribution to the questions that others are also asking. It is a starting point in the search for some possible answers. Mine, then, is just such an attempt. There's no easy solution to the situations of suffering and brokenness in Africa, a suffering and a brokenness that permeates all aspects of life, physical, spiritual, psychological, social-cultural, economical and political. It extends to the natural resources as well.

There's a culture of violence and death that has become accepted by the society as a whole; there's a culture of hatred, jealousy, greed, vengeance that takes on very destructive expressions. Some people, both high and low, poor and rich, young and old, have taken power into their hands and are causing the violence and the injustices we experience on a daily basis. The worst in us is coming to the fore. People live through all of this with a sense of helplessness and abandonment to "fate" almost as though God had abandoned us to the powers of this world. We have been paralysed by fear.

Many times, when I see on the television the violence and the many faces of the suffering in Africa my mind and heart go back to the Holy Week narratives. I see Jesus, I see Pilate. I see the Roman soldiers standing at attention to do the bidding of their governor. I see the Temple Guards arresting Jesus, they too doing the bidding of their superiors. I see the Jewish leaders consulting each other, holding court and passing the death sentence onto Jesus, finding him guilty of the



highest crime in Israel: blasphemy! I see the various religious groupings all shouting and inciting the crowds; threatening them or bribing them or blackmailing them to shout with them: "Crucify him!". Pilate, afraid, consents willy-nilly but nonetheless, he consents. Afraid of an uprising and of what it would cost him, he agrees with them, yet knowing that Jesus is innocent. I see Herod mocking Jesus and using him to ingratiate himself with Pilate. "Herod and Pilate became friends that very day, even though they had been enemies formerly" (Lk 23:12). I see the crowds, victims of ignorance and misguided by their leaders shouting: "Crucify him!" without

knowing what harm he has done to merit crucifixion. And I also see the disciples, afraid of sharing his lot, confused, helplessly watching and waiting for the doom that would befall their master. They do not know what to do. They hide in shame that they could not do anything to help him and afraid to identify with him in case the same should befall them.

And yet this thing did not happen suddenly! The Jewish authorities had been looking for a chance to kill Jesus quite early in his ministry. The scriptures report it, which means the disciples knew about the danger the master was running into. Jesus himself knew of the hostility of the Jews towards him. Why didn't anybody take notice and do something about it before tragedy struck? Where was God in all this? Why did he not prevent it?

What we are witnessing in Africa is more or less the same. We have all seen it coming but we did not know how to stop it. We did not cry out for help before it happened and we were struck dumb with horror when it happened. We looked at each other ashamed. We got angry. We pointed accusing fingers and we are still pointing fingers. But the holocaust has already happened and if we don't do something about it, it will continue happening. But we look at each other and say: What can I do? The magnitude of what is happening and the depths to which our people have regressed in their vengeance is just horrible. Are human beings capable of doing the heinous acts we have witnessed so very recently in Liberia, in Sierra Leone, in Rwanda, in Kenya, etc? It wasn't one man's doing so we could say: he is mad! It was collective regression.

The Church in Africa has decided to do something about this situation. It has challenged itself to be at the service of reconciliation, justice and peace. It's no easy task. That Church is each one of us: Africans and missionaries in Africa who have answered the call of the Lord to walk with Africa in its response to live "The Way" in its relationship with Christ.

The African Church at the Service of Reconciliation

The 2009 Synod challenges Africa as a Church to consider Reconciliation as imperative and urgent in the Continent and to become a credible instrument of that reconciliation (IL 48).

Grounded in God's love and faith in Africa

The first challenge of the African Churches is contained in the motto that was echoed throughout the Synod: Africa, rise up and walk. This is a challenge that

Africa needs to let sip into its very bones: say it around the hearth to its children, proclaim it from the pulpit. Every member of the Church in Africa needs to become conscious of this great responsibility: to rise up and walk. For too long Africa has given excuses of one kind or another as an explanation of its paralysis. Let the Church make the wake-up call — a call to grow, to become adult. This is what Jesus did for those who were paralysed. Today, it is the responsibility of the Church to do the same: shout the wake-up call for its members and for those outside its boundaries.

This first challenge of Reconciliation calls upon the African Church to own her responsibility [to be responsible?] for whatever she wants to happen. Africa has to reconcile herself with using her own resources rather than depending on others to come to her rescue. Jesus' challenge to the paralysed man is a challenge to Africa and it is a challenge of reconciliation with our own giftedness. It's a call to acknowledge our own situation and do something about it. Believe that we can. This is the most difficult challenge. Africa has for too long looked outside its own boundaries for help. It has failed to recognize its own resources and to believe in its own capacity. A God-given capacity. It's a lack of confidence and a lack of faith. It's the cry of the man who received one talent and refused to risk losing it. Who will give Africa this faith? This is the challenge!! The challenge is for the daughters and sons of Africa to stand before God and dialogue with him. Reconcile with being African.

There is a sense of inferiority that consumes the best energies of the African Continent. Yet we have human and natural resources that we can use. We need a reconciliation with our "Africanness" — to look at ourselves long and deeply enough to discover God's unique creativity and love in calling Africa forth to life. There is a reconciliation with God in this that needs to be faced squarely and truly: "Why did God create us so?" It's a question Africans often ask. It's a question that Africans need to face. In this, they will find God as well as their true vocation among God's other children. In this, they will discover their connectedness with others and take up their place alongside them, differently but competently. Thus, empowered by God's love, Africans can take up the challenge of the Synod with courage and love.

The Church has a big role to play in all of this. Since it has access to many people because of the services it offers, it has plenty of opportunities to involve people and persons in the process of reconciliation:

- The Church has schools ranging from kindergarten to university. It offers quality education in all fields, including professional training. Those who profess other faiths come to Church schools. Here's a chance to challenge the students to take up their responsibility in rehabilitating Africa.

- The Church has a big membership and is organized in its service to its members. The Small Christian Communities, for instance, are a special space that can be highly utilised to make people reflect on issues related to conflicts in the country, to understand the challenge of Christianity in this regard and to act according to the demands of the Christian Discipleship.

- The Church needs to redefine Community in Christian terms and to be determined and consistent in addressing the tribal issue. Since Christians can be found across tribal lines, they can be instrumental in tackling this intricate subject. The bishops can, like the apostles, address the question at the national and continental level. The college of the bishops in Africa can refuse to have divisions based on tribe and come up with strategies to start a process of unity and communion among the many peoples in their dioceses and in their nation. As Christians, we do believe that we are all one, children of the same Father, God. Africans have "kinship" in their genes. Now is the time to build up this kinship at a higher level, a level higher than the

one of blood-relations. Jesus died so we may be his brothers and sisters, heirs with him in the Kingdom of God. Let each diocese ask the question of "kinship" to its church members. It needs to be addressed urgently. To whom do we owe allegiance: my tribe or my faith in Jesus who builds a different kind of kinship among Christians and among all peoples regardless of their faith?

- The Church needs to empower the women to take up their life-giving role in society. The Church has educated many women and many of these hold high offices in all aspects of life in society. Women are a majority in Church attendance and the Church needs to reflect on and give space to the good they can do for reconciliation at all levels: family, community, national and international. Women have an interest in peace. They have a father, a brother, a husband or a son among those involved in the conflicts and in the violence. They want them alive. They have families to raise. Let the Church involve women in the reconciliation debate.

- During the first years of African Nationalism the Church gave almost all its educational institutions to the States. Today, it's imperative for the Church to take up its role as a teacher for the children and the youth in Africa. In African traditions the children and the youth were considered as the richness of a clan or tribe and great care was taken to pass on to them the secrets of the tribe and to make sure that they understood their role. The young adult had the role of defending a clan or tribe from its enemies. What is the role of our youth today? What have we evangelized and educated them for? Our youth in yesterday's Africa went through difficult fits to prove to their elders that they could risk their lives for the sake of the tribe. What do our youth risk their life for today? Where are the values for which to live or die? Today our youth are easy prey to those wanting to perpetrate any kind of evil among the people. They are easily enticed as individuals and/or as a group to become instruments of hatred, vengeance and violence. In reclaiming its teaching role, the Church needs to address the different stages of life in a community: the children, the youth, the young adult, the married couples and the elders.

Reconciliation as a Spirituality

The Church has a vital role to play in making reconciliation become a spirituality with which Christians face their daily living, in their relationship with one another and with those who do not belong to their number. They can thereby become "the salt of the earth and the light of the world".

Reconciliation is central to the mission of Christ. In His mission to reconcile people with God and with each other, Jesus went out into the villages to meet the people and to talk with them.

"Jesus went around to all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and curing every disease and illness. At the sight of the crowds, his heart was moved with pity for them because they were troubled and abandoned, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is abundant but the labourers are few; so ask the master of the harvest to send out labourers for his harvest". Then he summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits to drive them out and to cure every disease and every illness" (Mt 9:35-10:1).

Jesus chose to walk among the people, to experience their sense of abandonment and discouragement; he taught them, he healed them. In other words, he nurtured them, but from a closeness that made the people feel secure, that made the people know that God had not abandoned them. He made them experience "God is with us!". It is a reconciliation with God. He was a shepherd among them. Jesus could have chosen other forms of being with the people: he chose to mingle with them.

The Church in Africa is challenged to come down and make the presence of God felt by the people — walk with the people where the people are. It's a challenge to incarnate the Church in Africa. Make the people know that God is with them. Let the words of the shepherds of the Church in Africa be words of encouragement, of consolation, of hope, of prophecy. During the violence in Kenya in 2008, the displaced peoples called upon their bishops to come and wipe the tears from the faces of the frightened children, to walk among them and reassure them that God had not left them to themselves.

There's a challenge here: approachability, simplicity, presence and closeness to the people, less structures, less power. Let the people know how close God is to them by our way of relating with them.

In the formation of the evangelizing agents, for instance, in our formation houses: are we forming shepherds and shepherdesses or are we forming managers for our various activities?

This is a call to the Church to undergo conversion in its leadership, in its ministers and in the religious people. Let the people know, through the way we live, that we are disciples of Jesus Christ. There's a call to live 'The Way' as we hear it proclaimed in the Gospels: "You have heard it said, 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth'. But I say to you ... do not the pagans do the same?" (Mt 5).

It's a Way of Life that calls for true meekness and unconditional love of the other. It's the Cost of Discipleship.

Starting from Forgiveness

We are called to live reconciliation as a spirituality first and foremost amongst ourselves before preaching it to others. In any relationship, things will go wrong and a conflict will arise either internally within the person or externally between people involved in the relationship. We are often afraid to face conflict — both the one within and the one that involves others. We wait, we become defensive and we complicate things until the conflict reaches explosive expressions. Even if we do not consequently hurt others, we can hurt ourselves. For instance, there are people who suffer ailments such as depression, paralysis; others abuse substances such as alcohol or drugs to quiet the internal turmoil, while others may even commit suicide. All this happens because they have accumulated unresolved conflicts and unresolved guilt and they may believe their deeds to be unforgivable.

Jesus talks of this when he cures the man paralysed for 38 years and the other man lowered through the roof of the house where Jesus was preaching: "Rise, take up your mat, and walk ... your sins are forgiven". Forgiveness is an uphill part of the journey in living reconciliation. And yet it's the key to reconciliation and peace. If I do not forgive and if I am not forgiven, a whole series of actions, whether verbal and/or non-verbal, will follow and complicate our living together harmoniously. We both feel threatened by the non-forgiveness that lies between us: there's resentment and a need to get even and at times we follow it through using varying degrees of violence.

The Church in Africa needs to urgently address forgiveness using all the instruments available in the Church and in African cultures. I am speaking of non-sacramental forgiveness. Many Christians do not have access to sacramental reconciliation for various reasons. Whichever be the case, in many situations of conflict it will not suffice to whisper our sins to the priest in the privacy and

anonymity both of the offender and the offended. It's wholesome to sometimes lay it on the table and call it by its proper name so that both parties can look at it and dispose themselves to forgive and reconcile. Often, the family and the community of the people involved take part in the animosity. This too needs to be unearthed. The animosity harboured in the heart is poisonous both to the one who harbours it and to the community as a whole. In African cultures, no sin is individual because the individual is a member of the community and whatever he does affects the whole community. Therefore, the expiation of sin has community connotations. It's called cleansing because it tries to purify the heart, the root of the problem. It's done through symbols and symbolic actions which touch the depths of the spirits and heal them. When an individual has a habit of wronging others he is made to "vomit" the iniquity within him. The belief is that evil deeds are generated from within. One man's impurity becomes a community uncleanliness. Hence, a community forgiveness, reconciliation and cleansing is necessary. As African Christians, we feel exonerated from all this. We are told that it is enough to whisper our iniquity to the priest who forgives us in the name of Christ. But have I been forgiven by the community, by the children whose parents I have eliminated or maimed? When these children go through difficulties they will curse whoever killed their parents!

Another proverb in one African community states: it takes two fingers to kill a body louse or a flea. Hence it is good for the two involved to clear the air between them. The air we breathe in Africa is contaminated by the sins of injustice and violence. How shall we make it wholesome? Can we learn from the African tradition even as we search for new ways that will address the present generation of Africans adequately?

I want to give forgiveness a special emphasis. Jesus underscored its importance in the one prayer attributed to his teaching: "Our Father ... forgive us our sins as we ourselves forgive those who wrong us ...". If we want to be forgiven the we must forgive. Jesus gave us the power to forgive others their sins. It's a difficult business but it is within our power. Jesus tells us to sort it out with our adversary before he takes us to court.

Forgive and be forgiven. In our communities of religious life and in the Church leadership we can many times down-play forgiveness as a way of life. We believe that we do not have any enemies because what happens among us is not war. Is this perhaps the reason why we do not put a lot of emphasis on forgiveness as a way of life for those we evangelise? In fact, the conflicts in Africa continue catching us by surprise. Even after Rwanda and Congo, the other African countries went on as though nothing had happened until it happened again in Kenya. We were not prepared to prevent it and we are still struggling to see what we can do to heal the wounds and to prevent future conflicts of this magnitude.

What do we do with our "little wars", fruit of mismanaged emotions such as anger and jealousy, inferiority/superiority complexes, spirit of competition, prejudices, our different editions of the truth, etc? Jesus talked about the heart as the root of all evils. What attention are we giving to the heart in our Catechesis?

The houses of formation of agents of evangelisation and the Church leadership need to include the heart in formation programmes. We need to teach those being formed to own the truth of the movements of their hearts and the actions that follow those movements, to have them confront their actions with the Christian values they want to embrace. We need to accompany them to take responsibility for their actions without covering them up. Truth will make them free. We need to

teach them not to look at reality as right or wrong. Those in formation are afraid to be found wrong, at fault, for fear of being sent away. We need to teach them that nothing will happen if they fail or make mistakes: mercy and forgiveness are available. We need to teach them to ask and to give pardon; to give it even when it has not been asked for. They need to learn to forgive, by giving up their right to get even or to be right and even their right to resentment or anger. We need to create an atmosphere of mercy and forgiveness — to defeat fear of punishment and encourage doing or not doing moved by love.

Accepting to have done wrong and admitting it verbally to another who accepts it without judgment and respects you after what he/she knows about you, creates an atmosphere of unconditional love, something such as what the prodigal son found when he came home after squandering his father's savings. We have, as a Church, and for too long, enthroned "perfection" as the norm. It's a lie! None of us are perfect. We do make mistakes and this alone ought to make us very humble before the mistakes of others. This rather tones down our judgment of others' wrongdoing or omission.

During the recent conflicts in Congo/Burundi/Rwanda/Kenya, the ethnic debate came home to religious communities. Many of our communities are multicultural and multi-ethnic. I remember a panel interview posing the question to the applicants to a formation programme: How did the ethnic conflicts affect you in community living? How will you help an aspirant of one tribe to integrate with others whose relatives have hurt and chased away her people? Or with those that her people has chased away? Some tended to deny the existence of any animosity between the different tribes that composed the community. And yet we know that there are problems in religious communities any time there are tribal clashes. I have known Sisters who have been afraid of remaining in their congregations for fear of reprisals by the Sisters of the opponent tribe. What are our communities doing about the ethnicity question?

Learning to forgive and to receive forgiveness in our daily relationship with each other and as community is the way forward. The African Church is being challenged, as was the first Christian Community, to learn to accept differences so that each ethnic group can truly say it is at home in the Church and so we can live together and manage our differences without fighting and destroying each other. The Church in Africa is at an advantage to mediate the differences because it works with all tribes and peoples.

Reaching out to those who are hurting

A great deal of talks, energies and money are being spent to bring to justice those who have caused so much human suffering and destruction of the social and environmental structures in Africa. That is in order. Let justice take its course.

But after we have been to court and obtained justice, after we have punished those found guilty, will our consciences be clean? Have we done all we could do? What shall we do with our collective guilt?

So let's go to court, let's find the culprits but please, let us not rejoice that justice has been done. While we go to court and after we have gone to court, there is still much we need to do.

Let's look at the faces of those who have been hurt or destroyed spiritually and psychologically. Let's look at the open wounds and bring healing. Physical wounds heal easily and quickly. But psychological and spiritual wounds do not. They keep simmering under the scars. The heart takes time to heal. The heart is not healed by justice. Those

who have been hurt, and very deeply so, need to pour out to somebody who is willing to listen to the sorrows and the horrors they have experienced. They need to pour out their fears, their anger, their loss, their guilt, their shame.

When you look at Africa and think of the child-soldiers or the child-prostitutes, how do you restore their innocence? how do you remove their shame and guilt? Someone has made them instruments of destruction and this will haunt them at night.

Think of the youth who do not see a future before them. How do we restore their confidence in life? Others have given them narcotics so that they can perform the horrors that they have: what shall we give them to bring peace to their troubled hearts and to help them deal with their guilt?

How do we bring peace and confidence to the hearts of the many widows and orphans who have lost their loved ones in the wars for political and/or economic power? How do we give confidence to the women and men who have been raped?

How do we reconcile people who have been used as instruments to kill each other and who have been led to see each other as enemies? How do we stop the folly?

African natural resources such as forests and minerals have been ravaged in a war of greed. Hence, desertification is making African climate hostile for humanity. How can we also bring forgiveness and reconciliation here?

We must not forget that those found guilty have a right to the service that the Church wants to give to Africa: they too have been hurt even as they have hurt others. They too are children of God and need to come back to Christ the Shepherd.

This and much more is what the Church has to face if it is to be at the service of reconciliation in our wounded Africa. The Church, just as its Master, needs to take charge of the situation according to the mission entrusted to it by Jesus himself (Mt 9-10). This is what Jesus did. Jesus met the people that were hurting, both as group and as individuals. He healed their ills, he expelled the evil spirits from their midst. He gave them hope. He made them feel wanted by God. He made them know that God, the prodigal Father, was waiting for them to come home to him and to each other.

The Church can use the knowledge of social, health and psychological sciences to help heal the wounds of the people. The Church can use what African cultures have used for ages to heal spiritual and psychological wounds both for the individuals and for the communities. The Church can use the power received from God in Jesus to heal those who are hurting. The Church needs to believe again that it has been given the power to heal and to expel the evil spirits. This the Church owes to Africa. Use what it has as Church of Christ Jesus, use what Africa already has and when that is not enough borrow from the neighbours as it is our custom in our African cultures.

Conclusion

Grace builds on nature and nature can rebel against our better selves when we experience difficulties such as are experienced in war and other traumatic and violent experiences. We are horrified at the depths to which we can regress in situations of violence and vengeance. This horror can paralyze us unless our relationship with God gives us a hand to rise above the resentment, the need for vengeance, hatred, anger and fear, in order to let God forgive and heal through us. Only then can we go out and teach others how to live a spirituality of forgiveness and reconciliation (IL n. 54). The Church in Africa took up the challenge to do just that: to become ministers of reconciliation (IL nn. 42-43).

The Church has a lot of agents of evangelization at her disposal. These need to be formed to carry out the process of forgiveness and reconciliation. But this should be first and foremost for themselves, so that once they have personally experienced the benefits of living reconciled they can be credible instruments of reconciliation for others. This process of formation ought to include the leaders such as Bishops, Parish priests, Directors of Seminaries, Heads and Professors of our Universities and Schools, Catechetical Centres, as well as formation houses of religious people, etc. Those working in the services offered by the Church to the people of God also ought to be included.

These human resources can then be used to work with:

- Pilot groups and then form a co-ordinating team from the various dioceses.
- Target groups such as the Christian professionals, interest groups, catholic politicians, professionals of other faiths that need to be involved if reconciliation is to happen, etc. The youth who is a priority group!
- Christians and other faith groups at grassroots, national and international levels.
- Exchange programmes between the different dioceses and between nations or between faiths.

The Church in Africa cannot make it on her own in this task she has undertaken. She already is in dialogue with others: Ecumenical dialogue, inter-religious dialogue with Islam and traditional religions of Africa. This is a great asset. The Catholic Church can invite these others to join hands with her in order to find ways of bringing about forgiveness and reconciliation in Africa.

What I propose is the mobilisation of all our resources to ensure that as many people as possible enter into this process of forgiveness and reconciliation as a way of life.

Questions for reflection

- Kinship is very important in all African cultures: when we meet we try to find out how we are related. Before Christianity, the tribal systems formed our identity and kind of dictated how we related to each other and to those outside the tribal relationship. These systems dictated our organisation and our unity. Today, what holds us together? Can Christianity give us a sense of belonging to one another, a kinship that goes beyond the boundaries of tribe or Church?
- Has the question of ethnicity surfaced in your community? How are you dealing with it? If it does today, are you equipped to deal with it?
- How have you addressed the question of ethnicity in your formation programs?
- In the ethnic conflicts that happened recently in Africa, which side did you take? Are you sure things were the way you saw them?
- Missionaries in Africa are not immune to the influence of ethnicity and tribal differences. Which side have you usually taken when conflicts have arisen?
- Do our communities deal with conflict openly? As individuals and as Community?
- Economic and political agents (especially these last) always manage to mobilise whole regions in support of their cause. What strategies do they use? Can we learn something from them to use in this endeavour?

Note

All Biblical quotations are taken from: *The African Bible - The Biblical Text of the New American Bible*, Paulines Publication Africa, Nairobi, Kenya, 1999.

Paul Ennin, SMA

"The Prophetic Challenge of the African Church" Diakonia: Missionary Institutes as Instruments of Reconciliation

Introduction

Our discussion on "Reconciliation" today is based on the recently concluded Second Synod of Bishops for Africa under the theme: The Church in Africa in the Service of Reconciliation, Justice and Peace. In recent years, events have shown that there are so many people hurt in Africa and in the world: hurt by politics, economics, exploitation, religious intolerance, unhealthy and sometimes violent competition, discrimination, lack of leadership, ethnicity, war, etc. Moreover, the cost of conflict is enormous: think of the destruction of social and economic infrastructures, loss of human lives, displaced persons and refugees, orphans; Reconciliation thus, becomes an imperative for every human society afflicted with conflict, especially when one considers the hidden and unquantifiable cost of these conflicts: traumatic experiences, pain and sorrow, psychological effects, entrenched animosity, fears, culture of violence etc.

Reconciliation is a very complex subject as are the causes of conflicts, be they strife between communities or within communities. Internal conflicts can be extremely complex as they are often dominated by identity and have deep historical roots. The complex nature of these conflicts calls for an equally complex response.

It is essential not to talk of reconciliation in abstract terms, but to put issues in context. A complex continent like Africa cannot have blanket solutions. We need to identify the various kinds [of suffering] and causes for the hurt in order to find reasonable and viable solutions to them. Also, our involvement in the issue of reconciliation, as Pope Benedict reminded the participants at the synod, stems from our faith in Christ Jesus, our peace and reconciliation. We are not to lose sight of this, since it is the foundation from which all our actions and intervention take root. This is not to discard the contribution of other faiths to reconciliation. However, that it is not the focus of this paper. Local efforts will do well to have interfaith approach to reconciliation.

Our discourse today is surely not an exhaustive treatise on the subject of reconciliation. It simply serves as an introduction, a "punto di partenza" for discussion and sharing on the theme that hopefully will lead to our institutes' increasing involvement in the areas of conflict resolution, peace building, healing of memories and other activities which bind people and communities together.

1. RECONCILIATION: WHAT IS IT?

The word "Reconciliation" has unfortunately been used at times to mean "sweeping past horrors under the carpet". Paul Oestreicher, in an essay called "Reconciliation: a search for meaning", a word which he confesses he uses less and

less, writes: "Reconciliation, to the comfortable and rich who badly need to be disturbed, gives the all too easy assurances of a quiet life. To the oppressed, uprooted, homeless and disturbed it seems to signify that nothing much will change ...". Here is an example from the testimony of a Palestinian — Israeli women's group for peace:

"The Israel women come to dialogue with Palestinian women so that they can sleep better at night. They can assuage their guilt feelings about being in the camp of the oppressors. On the other hand, Palestinian women come to the dialogue group to prevent the Israeli women from sleeping well at night ... [the Israeli women] want to drink coffee, they want to talk about their children and about good books they've read. They acknowledge the faults of the Israeli government but, at the same time, they want to get past it. But the Palestinians are not past it".

From the sociological perspective of conflict resolution, reconciliation is seen as a longer-term process of overcoming hostility and mistrust between divided peoples. It includes the recognition among the parties of the need to develop a common understanding of the causes and nature of the conflict and develop shared notions of responsibility. Speaking of reconciliation, John Paul Lederach maintains that "its primary and key contribution is to seek innovative ways to create a time and place, within various levels of the affected population, to address, integrate, and embrace a painful past and the necessary shared future as a means of dealing with the present".

From the Christian perspective, God is central to any true reconciliation, since reconciliation has its origin in God through Jesus Christ. All persons are equal before God: all have fallen short and are in need of revelation, compassion, forgiveness and conversion. Forgiveness is essential to the Christian understanding of reconciliation. The process begins with the victim because real forgiveness comes before conversion. Reconciliation is the work of God, who hears the cry of the poor and the oppressed, and turns first to the victim whose humanity and dignity have been damaged to restore him/her to wholeness — this is what we call grace: the experience of the graciousness of a life-giving God. This gracious experience empowers the victim, in turn, to lead society to a new possibility of relationship. In this way, reconciliation becomes a passage from a situation of peaceful settlement to the restoration of broken relationships between groups and between individuals where healing can take place — this is the kind of reconciliation that the Synod is calling the Church in Africa to be engaged in: "a peace that goes to the roots of conflict, making friends, brothers and sisters out of former victims and enemies".

2. MISSIONARY INSTITUTES AT THE SERVICE OF RECONCILIATION

Regarding missionary institutes, the Synod makes the following proposition: "... their witness is particularly valued in their prayer life and community life, education, health, human promotion and pastoral service. Their prophetic role must be emphasised in the process of reconciliation, justice and peace, and the fact that very often they are very near to victims of oppression, repression, discrimination, violence and sufferings of all kinds".

This statement from the Synod makes a testimony of missionary and religious communities both relevant and urgent. These communities represent people, who, from very different ethnic, cultural and linguistic backgrounds, leave their homelands to be at home among peoples of different cultures. They embrace a wide range of cultural and ethnic differences within their communities living and working together at the service of the Gospel. These communities have the potential of giving a

clear prophetic testimony. Their presence proclaims the Gospel truth that God does not have favourites, that we are all his children and that our common destiny is to be one family in Him. The role of the International Missionary Institutes, particularly those in Africa, will have to be crucial. They are a potential for good and for a testimony of unity. But they have to first address their own internal tensions.

2.1. Intra institute dynamics: a school in reconciliation

Charity, it is said, begins at home. So if we are to be agents of reconciliation in conflicts then we ourselves must believe that reconciliation is possible. The call and mission of Christians according to the Lord's command is to embrace and transform human vulnerability. This remains a challenge also within our various institutes — both at a personal and at a collective level. It is an invitation which necessarily entails facing, receiving and healing the pain, the suffering, the misfortunes and imbalances within the Institute. It is a commitment to reconcile the tensions within: histories, deep-seated fears, prejudices, and excesses of authority, jealousies, competition, nationalism, tribalism, careerism, impressionism, lies, enmity, rivalry, complexes, gossips and calumnies, overt and covert aggressive behaviours. Though they may be seen as paradoxes and a sign of contradiction, these tensions could be used as stepping stones in a learning process towards being authentic witnesses capable of strengthening their fellow brothers and sisters. This is why our reconciliation project must start from within. And the first port of call is the inner self.

2.2. Spirituality of reconciliation (charism)

Reconciliation involves a way of life, one which must first be cultivated internally, within the person. Hence, the Synod recommends the creation of a spirituality of reconciliation. Aung San Suu Kyi expresses it beautifully: "Paradise on earth is a concept which is outmoded and few people believe in it anymore. But we can certainly seek to make our planet a better, happier home for all of us by constructing the heavenly abodes of love and compassion in our hearts. Beginning with this inner development we can go on to the development of the external world with courage and wisdom." Being effective mediators of reconciliation calls for an interior spirituality: a spirituality of healing and reconciliation that underlines the role of the Divine, the dimension of mediation as a transforming force, and the healing effect of forgiveness.

Reconciliation is first and foremost the work of God who initiates and completes reconciliation within us through his liberating spirit. At the heart of reconciliation lies the manifestation of the love and mercy of God that aims at making men and women open themselves up to the fullness of life that comes with reconciliation, and letting themselves be transformed by it. It is a call to acknowledge the indispensable role of the Holy Spirit, whose breath of truth helps to illuminate shadows, give strength in times of weakness and restore communion in one love.

Mediation as part of a spirituality of reconciliation highlights the contribution of men and women in creating spaces that are healthy and reconciled for them and others, by affirming the uniqueness of each individual and the responsibility of each person in an atmosphere of trust, freedom and commitment. Mediation is closely linked to transformation because it is geared towards making it possible to illuminate spaces of recreated humanity. Sometimes these will be glimpsed spaces, searches, shadows, trials, but whoever takes on the task of mediation must have his/her gaze fixed on the resurrected one, and be filled with the hope that neither division, nor evil, nor pain, nor hatred, nor vendetta, nor death will have the last word.

Forgiveness is at the heart of Christian reconciliation and an essential part of Christian spirituality. "Because God has justified us by forgiving our sins, so as to

reconcile us to himself," affirms the Synod, "we too can work out just relationships and structures among ourselves and in our societies, through pardoning and overlooking peoples' faults out of love and mercy. How else can we live in community and communion?". God's love makes forgiveness possible. Forgiveness opens up to the liberating meeting between different peoples, the justice and fraternity that seek reconciliation above revenge and distancing! In this sense, forgiveness generates creative space for both the victim and the victimizer — becoming new creations, as the Spirit makes something beautiful out of their lives. In other words, our faith affirms its hope in the edification of a new behaviour that articulates forgiveness and justice; that forgiveness brings healing to the victim and offers the offender a graced moment to change and to be an agent of the kingdom. Such spirituality helps overcome hurts and pains.

Our spirituality of reconciliation must take into consideration how we imbibe some essential attitudes of Jesus: his ability to stop, to teach and to heal (Lk 6:17), to bridge the distance between him and the other (Mk 10:49); his acceptance of persons as a "specific other", with a specific and unique biography and history; his willingness to engage in uncomfortable topics, to abandon safe and comfort zones to go out into pathways that lead up to and challenge "accepted" social barriers.

It should also involve a discernment process that challenges us to see if we are prepared to engage in specific commitments that help to establish the bases for a humanity in God's image, that provide an added value of solidarity in relations, that accept with grateful hearts brothers and sisters from the "other shore", that create a heart willing to seek and to offer forgiveness in mutual reciprocity. It calls for the cultivation of an attitude of nonviolence and a new kind of relationship derived from the compassion and mercy of God who forgives the sinner. Such an attitude becomes an important criterion of our life-long missionary journey.

As we work for reconciliation, we become agents of God's love in helping people to acknowledge the wrongs of the past, to accept shared responsibility and to work out a mutual understanding of a common future.

Question: In what ways are healing and reconciliation an integral part of the spirituality and charism of our institutes?

2.3. Creating Internal spaces for dialogue within our communities: respect, openness, truth

It is essential that in thinking of reconciliation and healing, we promote a culture of discussion, objective listening, and consultation. It is not unusual to find in our communities people who complain, like the cripple at the pool of Shiloh, that there is nobody to listen to his/her story, views, pains, feelings, etc, and that hurts. There are also issues of perceived oppression, domination, favouritism, north-south divide, rich-poor provinces, majority-minority ethnic or national representation. Such issues can disfigure an institute's testimony of the inclusiveness of God's reign. If we are to be agents of dialogue, we must first learn how to dialogue within our institutes. It is therefore important to create the needed spaces of discussion and dialogue among the different groups. A genuine dialogue involving suppressed and perceived feelings of oppression or domination and touching on identity issues like nationality, ethnicity, race, can be problematic. It requires adequate training and preparation.

Here is a testimony of Sumaya Farhat-Naser, a Palestinian involved in the Palestinian-Israeli women's group for peace:

"When we have lived 50 years knowing each other only as enemies, with pain and bitter experience very much alive on [one] side, it is very difficult to say: 'let's sit together and hug'. We can't hug. [So] we train both groups, independently, about how to meet, how to learn to respect one another's vision, how to know that there are at least two versions, not one, to every story. Although meeting together is painful, we must learn to bear this pain, to defend ourselves from feeling this pain, and learn how to cross this painful stage. We must address our fears, speak our hopes and visions aloud ... when both sides feel that they are prepared to look into the eyes of the other with respect, to heal, to listen, to understand how to contribute to a logical discussion, to be sensitive in wording, in attitude, then the groups can meet and begin working together".

While the mere facts of meeting and expressing oneself are therapeutic in themselves, the exercise must reach some concrete action, if there is to be true reconciliation: apologies, forgiveness, and some form of practical justice. The essential ingredients here are respect, openness and truth. It is through them that we can bring people and ideas on board, thereby allowing their gifts to blossom for the good of all.

There is also the need for shared reflection on events and happenings around us, to help our members to be engaged in healthy social and political debates. For example, during the post-electoral violence in Kenya, a formation house had an open discussion with the students that included persons from the different ethnic and political groups involved in the conflict. The outcome was very positive as it created an atmosphere of mutual trust and understanding instead of the prior state of tension and ill-feeling in the community.

Such exercises within our institutes would help form our members in a culture of peace and reconciliation where one is willing to learn and listen to the story of the other, to keep channels of dialogue always open, to learn through this process how to express our own hurts, our viewpoints, to defend our rights, and to show solidarity to all. It allows us to experience firsthand the "gazes of strangers" and people different from us, to touch and question our life stories, values, reasoning patterns, and discover our vulnerabilities. It encourages us to come out of ourselves to discover those with whom we make "the path of life" and establish with them a dialogue that gradually shapes us as a community that walks in the same direction — individuals and groups of men and women called to take steps that make a more fulfilled humanity possible for everyone. The process of dialogue helps us live in a unique way the call of Isaiah "Come let us talk this over" says the Lord, "though your sins are like scarlet they will become as white as wool" (Is 1:18).

2.4. Reconciliation is about respecting the dignity of the other

One definition of "Reconciliation" which I find very beautiful is: "to look into the eyes of the other with respect"; i.e. being prepared to admit the existence and dignity of the other. Africa, as we know, is poorly served by the mass media, which focuses almost exclusively on the bad news, widely presenting Africa as a continent of hopeless and hapless victims. The 'Aid Industry' also feeds on selling negative stereotypes of Africans as helpless victims of endless wars and constant famines: An Africa without any dignity, and worthy only of pity. But there is also the Africa of beautiful spaces and people, of rich cultural, spiritual and human values. Africa of songs and smiles, of happy and healthy people....

In its final message the Synod makes the following call: "To the great powers of the world, we plead: treat Africa with respect and dignity ... Africa is not helpless. Our destiny is still in our own hands. All she is asking for is the space to breathe and thrive". This call is also for us missionary institutes. Jesus' response to the vulnerability of others, and his solidarity towards human pain, his offering of compassionate answers through his touch, his words, his proximity, his defence of the voiceless and the poor, never denigrates the

person, but rather gives back dignity, integrity, strength, happiness and a sense of worthiness! We are called to do likewise. We need to ask ourselves a few questions:

Does the way we present Africa in our mission animation and fundraising activities, the photos we publish in our magazines and websites, the stories we tell, the videos we show, etc, uphold the dignity of Africans? I will encourage each institute to reflect on the issuing of a mission statement on their use of audio-visual aids in their mission animation and fundraising work.

Do our mission projects move people from humanitarian handouts to human restoration?

Do they create a dependency syndrome and paternalism or do they help liberate the beneficiary who can rise and take up his mat and walk with dignity?

Question: How do we form our members to imbibe a spirituality and culture of dialogue, respect, forgiveness and reconciliation? Which areas can be improved?

□ *At ecclesial level: strengthening the collective witness of the family of God in Africa*

The Synod calls for greater ecclesial solidarity in Africa, advocating "further and ongoing cooperation between the 'Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM) and the 'Confederation of the Conferences of Major Superiors of Africa and Madagascar (COMSAM)", and welcomes their valid contributions to the life and mission of the Church in Africa.

It seems to me that if the Church in Africa wants to be "a community of reconciled persons ... and thus a potent leaven of reconciliation in each country" then it needs to do a few things:

- i) Re-evangelise our attitudes, especially the way we perceive leadership. I think the need for a servant-leadership is probably the greatest challenge to the Church in Africa. A female religious once mentioned that she watched with concern the reasons why a couple of bishops in her country were crumbling in poor health, while still relatively young. "They carry too much, power. They do not delegate. They attract pressure on themselves. They must include us all in running the Church".
- ii) Review our pedagogical approach: It is said that Jesus taught adults and blessed children, but oftentimes the Church teaches children and blesses adults. The Synod stressed the importance of adult education and formation.
- iii) The Church must go beyond a "proclamation" that appeals to individual conscience. Enough of talking and issuing documents. It's time to act. The Church in Africa must gear herself to deal with the cumulative sins of Africa's past that continue to weigh her people down. She must be engaged in the purification of the collective memory, in helping to repair strained relations, re-establish productive and harmonious communication among the different sectors of the community.
- iv) The way we treat children and women. I have sometimes heard comments like: "She is just a woman", or, "On top of that, she is a woman". And these are our sisters, mothers, friends, cousins, etc. It hurts. Women are the backbone of families, of faith communities. It is time for a "greater integration of women into Church Structures and the decision making process".

So what can missionary institutes do?

● *Working within ecclesial structures*

Missionary institutes need to rethink their relationship with the local church. This has to do with the view that missionary institutes, especially international

ones, are foreign and thus not part of the local Church; the idea that we have come to help and then will leave, even if most of our institutes have a good and growing number of members from the local area. There is, therefore, a need to look at how we approach the local hierarchy and the local community: to make them understand that missionary institutes, whether local or international, have a stake in the local church and are one with it; their clergy form one presbyterium with the diocesan clergy and the bishop; their religious and lay collaborators, along with all baptized brothers and sisters, form one family of God.

In order to remedy to such perceptions and bring about the necessary internal changes in Church structures, it is important for missionary institutes to work with and within these structures and to become leaven in the flour. It is not uncommon for missionary groups to be viewed in opposition to the local clergy; sometimes, for various reasons, some very quickly begin taking sides or even write off certain groups of people. Such actions, if not carefully handled, could sow seeds of division. As the African Church becomes more and more self sufficient, there is the risk for missionary groups to find themselves at the fringes of the local Church family and local Church structures. Yet, I believe their presence within these very ecclesial structures to be very healthy and essential for the local Church.

- ***Inter-institute collaboration***

We are in a new era of inter-institute collaboration. One can say that gone are the days of rivalry and competition among institutes for the influence in our Father's house. Now I dare say that we finally believe there are enough rooms in our Father's house for everyone. Vatican II, while advocating for the establishment of conferences of major superiors, wanted institutes which are engaged in missionary activity in the same territory to find ways and means of coordinating their work (AG 33). In the area of reconciliation, justice and peace, joint efforts and coordination are the best approach to avoid the risk of multiple activities with very little impact. There are already joint projects like the AEFJN and the Solidarity with Southern Sudan project. In some countries, like Ghana, missionary institutes are harmonising their JPIC programmes. Such efforts could also include joint studies and analyses to determine the real missionary needs of a particular area, after which individual institutes may commit themselves to a particular mission project alone or in partnership with others. Also, institutes can share information regarding the training of personnel to avoid having the same expertise in one area, and very few or none in another.

Question: In what ways can missionary institutes strengthen their relationship and collaboration between their members and the local church, and their partnership with other institutes? To what extent are the needs of the local Church considered in the formation and training of our members?

- ***At the social and civil level: salt of the earth***

- ***Mentoring socio-political elite of society***

The Second Synod for Africa laments the socio-political quagmire facing Africa and asserts the vital role of the political and economic elite in keeping the peace. So, while acknowledging the importance of forming the citizenry in areas of conflict management, electoral practices, checking of government actions, upholding human rights through formation programmes at all levels, aimed especially at grass root mobilisation, the Synod advocates a serious involvement of the Church at the highest decision-making levels in Africa (continental, regional and national bodies), and pastoral care for the top movers

and shakers of the society. This is new ground for the African Church; a turf that is as dicey and tricky as it is uncomfortable for many missionary groups.

Most often, missionary institutes have been involved and happily so with 'caring' for the weak and the poor — whom sometimes we end up patronising. In my view the Synod realisation that the Church has not apparently been efficient in mentoring the top echelon of society is a step in the right direction. The Church needs to pay attention and to care for the elite as well. I find it a sobering idea and I wonder if the elite (who most often are the instigators of conflict) could not be challenged to be greater instruments of peace and reconciliation. But this means that missionaries have to make an extra sacrifice to adapt their age-long maxim of "preferential option for the poor" so to also include the elite — like embracing both poor Lazarus and rich Zaccheus.

• ***Networking with local civil and faith groups***

In Africa, the vast majority of conflicts are internal — "intra-national" strife where conflicting groups live very close to one another, and the real or perceived enemy is in one's own locality, village and neighbourhood. Often, such conflicts are likely to have historical dimensions. In such situations, groups "live as neighbours and yet they are locked into long standing cycles of negatively defined interaction. The conflicts are characterised by deeply-rooted animosity, fear and severe stereotyping".

In this context, it is important to work with local groups. An essential part of this is the need to keep our work in reconciliation in a cultural perspective. Peace building from below is of decisive importance for it is the means by which a peace constituency can be built within the setting of the same conflict. Lederach calls it 'indigenous empowerment': "The principle of indigenous empowerment suggests that conflict transformation must actively envision, include, respect, and promote the human and cultural resources [and modalities] from within a given setting. This involves a new set of lenses through which we do not primarily 'see' the setting and the people in it as the 'problem' and the outsider as the answer. Rather, we understand the long-term goal of transformation as validating and building on people and resources within the setting".

In internal conflict situations, the futures of the conflicting parties are inevitably linked together. In order to achieve reconciliation we must create or provide a space where encounters can take place and relationships may be healed. By making use of what is on the ground, peace and reconciliation efforts will not be imported from outside, rather built from the peacemaking mechanisms and assets which already exist within the community. Sometimes we rely far too much on some powerful nations from the outside world so much that local resources and experiences are not used and, in some cases, altogether despised. This is where inculturation comes in: before our arrival, there is God, there is experience, and there is knowledge. Mission involves learning and sharing, as well as teaching. It is about strengthening local mechanisms — spiritual, cultural, human — and not importing from outside.

Women and faith groups present very good opportunities for collaboration. They can help at the grassroots level: working with and within families, convincing the man, the husband, father, son, uncle, etc, of the need for reconciliation and the futility of violence.

Question: What are the fears and the challenges for missionary institutes who engage in socio-political activities and with groups outside "Church circles"? How can we form our members to overcome these fears and face these challenges?

3. CONCLUSION

Being a peacemaker and an agent of reconciliation in an atmosphere as divided and wounded as ours is a long and exacting task. Yet, it is one in which God accompanies us through all the hurt and pain. God demands that we take it on as an integral part of our vocation to others: "All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation" (II Cor 5:18-19).



As instruments of reconciliation, we need a spirituality that the other takes into account, not as a receptor but as a protagonist, as someone we take into account. Being a community of reconciliation means being able to recognise and dialogue with the other, despite the different ideology, culture, ethical and religious convictions. It means introducing the dynamics of forgiveness into social life; cultivating a memory that heals and reconciles, a memory that does not forget events as if they had not happened, but one that breaks with the past. It also reminds us of the importance of humble gestures, the significance of cooperation strategies, the value of a personal encounter, the value of dialogue and relations.

It is imperative therefore, that missionaries who will launch into reconciliation work, in Africa as well as elsewhere, remember that at the end of the day, we are only stewards, we come and go, and that the project belongs to God. Cardinal Hume used to say that we are pilgrims, that we should not take ourselves seriously but only take God seriously. It is this God who helps us move beyond the superficial dynamics that separate and divide the human family, and leads us to a restructuring of our persons and communities while offering himself as a promise of a total and fulfilling life, free from the oppressive state of revenge, vendetta and resentment. And there is nothing better than experiencing it oneself.

Notes

Paul Oestreicher, "Reconciliation: A Search for Its Meaning", in *Open Hands: Reconciliation, Justice and Peace Work Around the World*, edited by Barbara Butler, Mayhew, 1998, p. 36.

Sumaya Farhat-Naser and Gila Svirsky, "Working Peace as Development Practice", in *Development, Women, and War: Feminist Perspectives*, Oxford 2004, p. 277.

Caritas Internationalis, Working for Reconciliation: A Caritas Handbook, Vatican City, 1999, xii.
John Paul Lederach, *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*, UN University, p. 35.

Second Special Synod of Bishops for Africa, *Message*, n. 8, Civitate Vaticana, 2009.

Second Special Synod of Bishops for Africa, *Elenchus Finalis Propositionum*, n. 42. Civitate Vaticana, October 2009.

Cf. Kieran O'Reilly, SMA, Superior General of the Society of African Missions, intervention at the Second Special Synod of Bishops for Africa, *Synodus Episcoporum*, Bulletin 10, The Sixth Session, 08.10.2009, p. 4.

Second Special Synod of Bishops for Africa, *Propositionum*, n. 9.

Aung San Suu Kyi, "Heavenly Abodes and Human Development", *CAFOD 1997 Pope Paul VI*

Memorial Lecture, Delivered by her Husband, Dr. Michael Aris, London, 1997.

Cf. Elisa Esteves Lopez, "Transformative Spirituality and Mission as Healing and Reconciliation", *International Review of Mission*, 98/2 (2009) p. 285.

Second Special Synod of Bishops for Africa, *Propositionum*, n. 14.

Sumaya Farhat-Naser and Gila Svirsky, "Working Peace as Development Practice", in *Development, Women, and War: Feminist Perspectives*, Oxford 2004, p. 276.

Marigold Best and Pamela Hussey, *A Culture of Peace: Women, Faith, and Reconciliation*, London, 2005, p. 6.

Cf. Kieran O'Reilly, SMA, Superior General of the Society of African Missions, intervention at the Second Special Synod of Bishops for Africa, *Synodus Episcoporum*, Bulletin 10, The Sixth Session, 08.10.2009, p. 4.

Second Special Synod of Bishops for Africa, *Message*, nn. 32, 42.

Second Special Synod of Bishops for Africa, *Propositionum*, n. 3.

Second Special Synod of Bishops for Africa, *Message*, n. 17.

Pope Benedict XVI, *Homily at the Closing Eucharistic Celebration of the Synod*, 24 October 2009.

Cf. Second Special Synod of Bishops for Africa, *Propositionum*, n. 18; *Instrumentum laboris*, nn. 128-135.

Pastoral letters, communiqué, preaching, press releases and press conferences. Through these means, the leaders of the Church hope that people's hearts would be touched and the ensuing conversion will transform society; a situation where serious social and political injustices and evils are reduced to lack of personal piety; and ecclesial remedy are focused on individual conversion, leaving behind the larger social and community ramifications of these gross social ills. Cf. Second Special Synod of Bishops for Africa, *Propositionum*, n. 5.

See the intervention of Rev. Sr. Felice Harrie, OLA, the Superior General of the Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Apostles, at the Second Special Synod of Bishops for Africa, *Synodus Episcoporum*, Bulletin 14, The Eighth Session, 09.10.2009, p. 17.

Second Special Synod of Bishops for Africa, *Propositionum*, n. 47.

"Rich in human and natural resources, many of our people are still left to wallow in poverty and misery, wars and conflicts, crisis and chaos. [Sadly] these are very rarely caused by natural disasters. They are largely due to human decisions and activities by people who have no regard for the common good and this often through a tragic complicity and criminal conspiracy of local leaders and foreign interests". Second Special Synod of Bishops for Africa, *Message*, nn. 4-5.

Cf. Second Special Synod of Bishops for Africa, *Propositionum*, nn. 18, 24, 25; *Instrumentum laboris*, nn. 128-135

John Paul Lederach, *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*, U.N. University, 1995, p. 35.

John Paul Lederach, "Conflict Transformation in Protracted Internal Conflicts: The Case for a Comprehensive Framework", in Rupesinghe, K., *Conflict Transformation*, 1995, pp. 201-202.



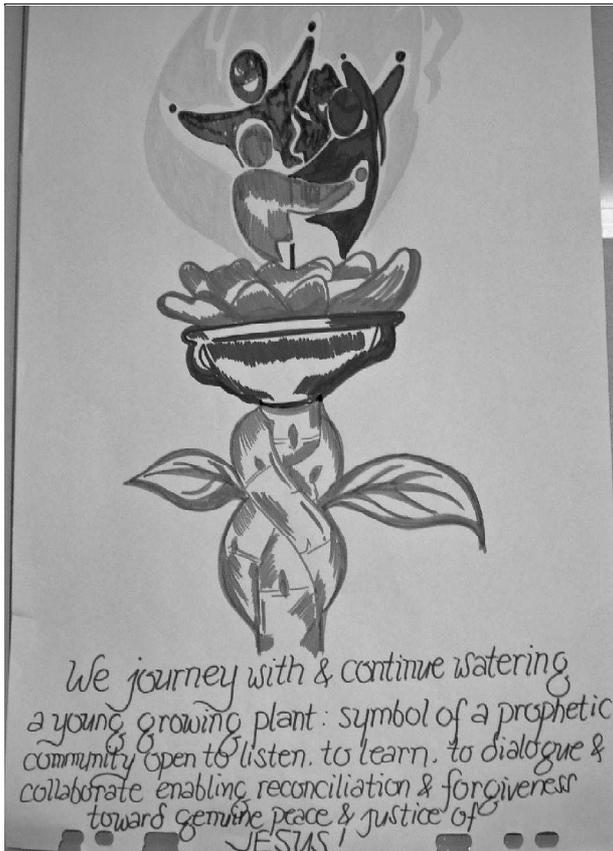


***Reports
of the Working Groups***

OF THE LISTENERS ...

1. Final reporting of what I have heard:

• I have heard: *Our speakers inviting us to understand the challenges that facing the church in Africa in the context that Africa is not an isolated continent.*



• They led us to see Africa in the context of world history, which goes back to pre-history, colonial and post colonial.

• Although this history was expected to bring about growth and development, the negatives came instead. These include under development, tyrant and dictatorial leadership, mismanagement of economics, corruption, civil wars, and heavy debts, exploitation of natural resources by foreign forces, land grabbing, emigration etc, leading to despair and disruption of true peace.

• The current situation of Africa brings about, as I have heard, a mixture of realities. Rich and poor living side by side: growth of population and high mortality rate, growth of the church in terms of the number of believers, clergy and religious, at the same time resentment of believers towards their own church leaders.

• These realities, as I have heard pose the following challenges drawn from many of what have been highlighted by the speakers and the respondents during the plenary sessions.

- i) The reality of globalization which is a force beyond our control.
- ii) Unity and solidarity in the African churches.
- iii) Promotion (desire) of good governance and formation of African leadership.
- iv) Effective planning.
- v) Presenting (how) a positive image of Africa.
- vi) Giving (how) women a key role in the spheres of the community in both the church and the society.

2. All these lead to a call to:

- a) Examine our prophetic role as individuals and missionary congregation leading

to conversion.

- b) Restoring Dignity to Africans and the African continent.
- c) Imagining in the ministry of reconciliation which prioritize forgiveness and mercy above justice.
- d) Learn (critically) from those who have succeeded / or attempted to undergo or initiate the process of reconciliation particularly women, at the same time, keeping in mind the danger of polarizing men against women.
- e) Deconstructing the understanding of the term development.
- f) Use the richness of our African cultures in the process of reconciliation.
- g) Change the attitudes.
- h) Break the culture of silence.
 - There was a very high and deep call to understand and live the richness of the concept of *UBUNTU*.
 - There was a concern to take some concrete actions on how to collaborate between the local church and missionary institutes.
 - Believing that reconciliation is possible and that it has to begin with me. However, less was said on truth as part and parcel of the process of reconciliation.
 - Evaluating the whole week, I could see the atmosphere of deep prayer and reflection which was punctuated by creativity and a zeal to put in practice issues which were highlighted, such as inviting women at the altar.
 - A sense of self interrogation as to how I personally or my congregation become the agent of true reconciliation.
 - I could note a deep appreciation that the organizers have chosen well the theme and sought well the speakers. All working to touch the hearts, not the mind.
 - Generally, the time was very well spent. We need the Holy Spirit to work in each one of us and our Institutions.

From these I recommend that as a follow up, a process of reconciliation befitting the African reality we were reflecting upon be developed as to complete what we have been reflecting upon this week.

(Reported by Fr. Gervase Taratara)

1. I have experienced the participants in the seminar as:

- Very attentive to the proceedings of the seminar.
- Conversations were based on real African experiences.
- Active participation in the small groups as well as in plenary sessions.
- Empathetic listening to the real situation.
- Openness and dialogue and mutual enrichment.

2. I have heard the following calls emerging from plenary sessions:

- Call to empowerment of women and women as agents of change in the process of reconciliation and in promoting justice and peace.
- Call to greater unity and solidarity within the African Church — among the bishops, clergy, religious and lay faithful, as a community of reconciled people, working for justice, and peace.... Being salt and light to others.
- Call to Africa to focus on its own strength, on its own capacity and present a positive image of itself to other nations and continents.

3. I have discerned the following commitments emerging from the plenary sessions.

In reference to formation:

- Religious congregations take responsibility to form candidates to follow the movement of the heart, breaking the barriers of fear and silence.
- Give formation of the heart based on Christian values of mercy and forgiveness in an atmosphere of unconditional love as in the parable of the prodigal son.
- Focus formation on spirituality of forgiveness and reconciliation.
- Focus formation programs on integrated development of formees through effective collaboration with other religious institutes.
- Commitment to quality formation — train formers as agents of evangelization not as administrators of work.
- Empowerment of women towards a greater participation in Church activities, in decision making roles, in dealing with women's issues etc. Religious and missionary institutes have to play a major role in this process.
- Missionary institutes need to collaborate and dialogue with the Local Church, and other Govt. and NGOs, to be effective mediators of reconciliation, justice and peace.
- Missionary institutes need to recommit to the African way of life, adapting themselves and their charisms through dialogue, respect and openness.

(Reported by Sr. Vijaya Udumala, JMJ)

My observations:

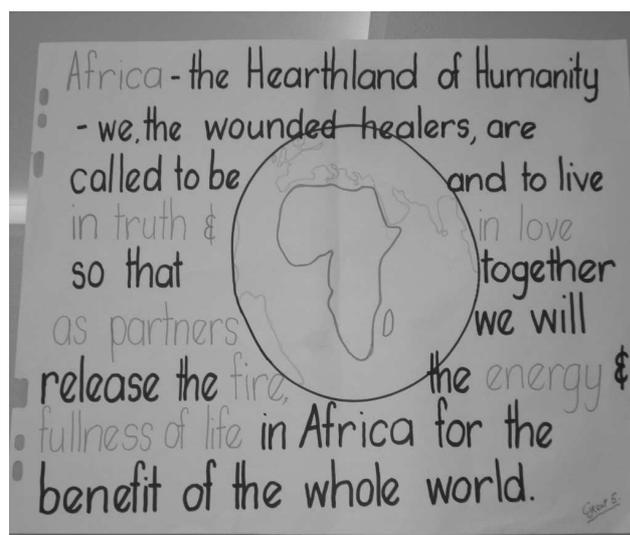
The group of participants is a good representation of the universality of the Church. All the five continents are present here at this seminar. The hall is decorated with a beautiful mosaic reflecting humanity from all over the world. Though we speak different languages we are united and able to understand each other, not only because of the translators but also our heart are at the wave length of the Holy Spirit. Indeed it is a new Pentecost as the Synod Fathers called the Second African Synod.

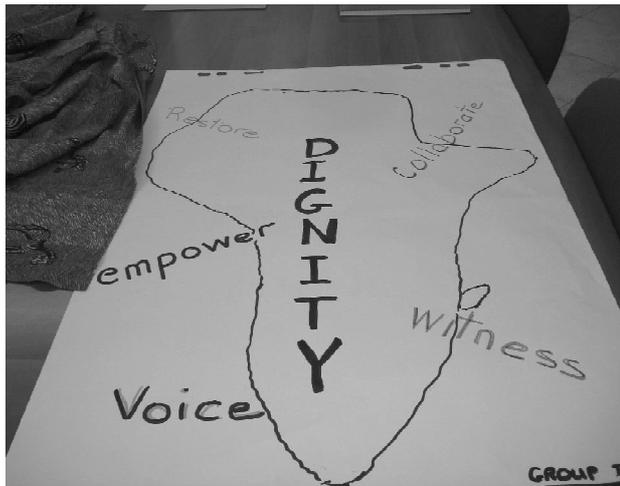
All of us personally, and as missionaries of International Congregations have Africa in the heart. This is true for those who were born and live in that continent. This is also true for those who have been, or still are, in Africa for the sake of the Gospel. Finally this is true for those who have never been there but would like to take the great opportunity to visit the land that welcomed the first humans on this Earth.

I felt that the participants have been very happy about the venue, the hospitality and the programmes which are being offered. The input and the talks given by various and very competent speakers — Sr.

Jane's particularly — have met the expectations of most of us. The many questions and interventions from the floor are a confirming sign.

We also appreciated the short video clips, movies and other entertaining initiatives





which are very touching and appropriate to the theme of Reconciliation, Justice and Peace. We are being fed body, soul and spirit in a wholesome way.

The prevailing and creative prayerful atmosphere, the animation and coordination are keeping us in the right mood. Definitely something prophetic is happening here.

As we talked, watched, listened, and interacted with one another, women were a recurrent subject from various vantage points: from justice to

empowerment passing through formation to reconciliation and forgiveness. Women deserve a better share of participation, in the shaping of Africa's destiny. A better recognition of their contribution to Africa's achievements is more than overdue. And this request is valid not only for the secular realm but also for the church. African women, including women Religious, intend to realize this dream not in competition or antagonizing men's folk, but in tandem and together with them, taking into account their culture and in a spirit of interdependence and complementarity. The collaboration between the head and the neck is given as an example. We also know that behind successful men there are women backing them up.

There is life, dynamism and hope in Africa. There is a craving to live abundantly. In spite of news of war and poverty there is optimism. We are called to participate in the balancing out of the image of Africa in the media starting with the way we ourselves present Africa to the outside world. The vitality which has characterized African resilience over the centuries, will carry them towards their God-given destination.

The overwhelming challenge of reconciliation needs to be responded to by leadership formation of individuals and, more importantly, democratic institutions to develop a tradition of human rights and common good. The top down, authoritarian, clientelist leadership must give way to bottom up, servant and collaborative models. This will mean "taking of the shoes" and start with the reality on spot.

We are invited to be the salt of the earth in the transformation process from within rather than from without. This will imply to know and respect the Africans and their culture starting, for instance, with learning their language. At the same time, questioning some aspects of the culture such as witchcraft, ethnicity and kinship absolute allegiance will be an evangelical imperative for reconciliation, justice, peace and unity for which Jesus prayed. A new call consists of providing chaplaincy and strategic care to African politicians. The first step will be to come out of the sacristy and convent, and out of there be able to encounter the people in the different aeropagi of the globalized world.

The different presentations and discussions have opened our eyes to the need of putting our houses in order and to overhaul our formation both initial and on going in terms of contents and formats. A particular attention has to be paid to the development of a spirituality of reconciliation, justice and peace which will become our new way of life, a paradigm of mission and a witness. All this has to be done in collaboration with the communities, with other congregations and Local Churches.

las opciones y las prioridades pero hay una gran cantidad de sugerencias válidas que reclaman un tratamiento posterior para identificar compromisos más específicos. Se dijo que una de las debilidades de la Iglesia en África está en su incapacidad para establecer metas y luego evaluar.

Me quedó gravado el concepto fructífero de de-construir (como requisito previo para la construcción de una nueva realidad de los datos preexistentes. V.g. Las catedrales de Roma). ¿Qué es lo que se debe de-construir? Las dependencias internas, su tradición histórica, ¿Será que la cultura tradicional es un arma para defender el statu quo? En la economía política, en la Iglesia, incluso en las comunidades religiosas... ¿Lo tradicional lleva a la cultura del fatalismo y a la resignación?

Dependencias externas de relación de África con otros continentes: Europa, América, Asia (Ayer y hoy) ¿que mentalidad ha prevalecido? De sumisión ... y no de reciprocidad. ¿Cómo tener la perspectiva de un futuro común? ¿Por qué siempre son los demás los que deciden por África?

Deconstruir la formación religiosa, en seminarios, etc., que sea más inclusiva, que la formación intelectual no ahogue la dimensión afectiva, la sabiduría del corazón, de los sentimientos, los currículos. La "*relatio studiorum*" la relación tiene que ser revisada para responder a los nuevos requisitos de asumir el ministerio como un servicio y no como un privilegio o promoción social. Trabajar en la formación la cuestión de género para superar el machismo omnipresente. La obediencia como discernimiento comunitario y no como una pura sumisión.

Que se promueva expresamente la interculturalidad e internacionalidad. Formar para el perdón, más allá de la dimensión sacramental, y se recupere el sentido de la palabra africana para establecer consensos. Que se aborde con las armas del Evangelio las trampas del etnocentrismo abierto o velado. Qué se aborde la relación de la creencia en el poder de los espíritus, las fuerzas invisibles, magia y la responsabilidad personal. Esta cuestión fue tratada en el Sínodo. Nosotros la tratamos ayer en general. Pero pide que se estudie a fondo teniendo en cuenta las vertientes psicológica, sociológica, religiosa y de la política económica.

La capacitación de la mujer es un imperativo urgente. En el caso de África y la intuición de San Enrique de Ossó es actualísima: Educar a un niño es formar a un hombre, pero educar a una niña es educar a la sociedad. La película sobre Liberia fue una señal, pero hay muchas bellas historias de mujeres que han influido en los cambios. Hay necesidad de contar y compartir sus historias. Promover y sostener la participación de las mujeres en la toma de decisiones en la iglesia.

Las escuelas en sus distintos niveles, desde las guarderías hasta las universidades y las escuelas profesionales deben i revisar su contenidos para que sean espacios y oportunidades para los jóvenes de adquirir y recuperar su identidad y tomar su responsabilidad ante el futuro de África. Fomentar la colaboración entre los institutos religiosos, la Iglesia local y otras fuerzas que promueven la vida.

Aquí incluiría el papel de las congregaciones religiosas internacionales. Con su promoción, con sus ONG, la AEJPN, otras FI, Vivat, etc.

El diálogo. La iglesia no puede estar sola en esta tarea. El diálogo con los otros, el diálogo ecuménico, el diálogo interreligioso con el Islam y el diálogo con las religiones tradicionales. La Iglesia Católica podría servir como un catalizador en la búsqueda de los medios para lograr el perdón y la reconciliación en África.

(Reported by E.M. Chindecasse, SVD)

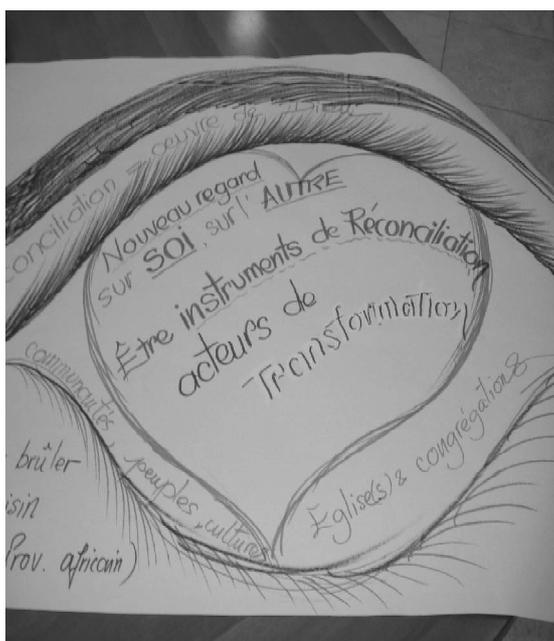
I. Mon expérience

Les participants sont mordus par le thème choisi:

parce qu'il touche les réalités concrètes que chacun vit. Il se dégage la volonté d'arriver à une vision commune, un dynamisme nouveau. Tous sentent et portent l'Afrique dans leur cœur. La question qui est là est de comment faire entendre ce message sur le terrain.

II. J'ai entendu émerger des sessions plénières les appels suivants- conscientisation + formation + témoignage + approche pastorale.

1. Une conscientisation collective par rapport aux réalités de l'Afrique sans



pessimisme ni fatalisme mais avec un sens critique quant à son processus historique et les mécanismes internes à l'extrême qui gèrent son appauvrissement et sa dépendance sociopolitique. Par rapport au danger de la relation Chino-Afrique

2. Des Eglises d'Afrique à devenir agent de transformation du continent. Appel au pardon à la Réconciliation.

3. À former des agents de transformation pétris des valeurs de l'Évangile. Le pardon, la réconciliation, la paix, la justice. Une justice qui va de pair avec la réconciliation. L'accent est mis sur la Femme. Des femmes dont l'apport constitue une chance pour la mission de l'Église (Liberia, Ghana).

III. J'ai discerné les engagements suivants:

Il n'y a pas eu d'engagement comme tel mais j'ai entendu les participants se pencher fortement sur le comment? Et la planification de:

1. la mise en pratique du thème du 2nd synode africain à s'engager comme africains à la reconstruction de l'Afrique à partir des ressources humaines, culturelles, naturelles de l'Afrique sans attendre l'aide externe ; "s'engager à nous mettre debout". La planification.
2. Aller vers les campagnes, des bidouilles, là où se vivent les réalités simplement. Suivant la démarche de Jésus qui allait vers les gens pour les écouter, les guérir — pardonner, donner la paix du cœur.
3. Concevoir un ministère d'écoute pour la guérison des blessures du cœur. La pratique *UBUNTU*. Surtout après la guerre. Les blessures restent longtemps.
4. Rendre opérationnelle et renforcer les structures de collaboration et de solidarité au sein de l'Église (SCEAM).
5. Travailler à l'approfondissement d'une foi adulte au sein des Églises par l'initiation à la lecture correcte de la Bible.
6. Donner à l'extérieur une image positive de l'Afrique et là où c'est possible s'engager comme un plaidoyer comme nouveau ministère pour influencer les décideurs politiques et économiques.
7. Collaborer entre Instituts et l'Église locale dans ses structures ; dans le

programme de formation.

8. Nous-mêmes, apprendre des gens — la réalité, les réponses justes, la sagesse africaine.

9. Préparer les futures leaders politiques pour la bonne gouvernance des Etats africains par l'éducation et l'accompagnement.

10. Préparer les membres de nos Instituts missionnaires dans les maisons de formation.

11. Travailler ou témoigner d'unité par une conversion d'abord au sens de l'Eglise institutions, nos communautés multiculturelles pour avoir une crédibilité au sein des populations victimes de tant des maux.

12. S'adonner à une nouvelle approche pastorale pour plus d'écoute de la réalité et du contexte. Portant toujours non de l'idéal mais du concret. Plus d'accompagnement des populations blessées pendant et après les violences.

13. A revoir, ensemble nos programmes de formation afin d'y insérer ce qui nous préoccupe aujourd'hui, l'ethnicité, l'histoire de la colonisation, les cultures africains.

14. Former au dialogue interreligieux avec les musulmans mais aussi avec les croyants des religions traditionnelles.

15. Avoir le courage de rompre la culture du silence. En créant des lieux de dialogue. Et apprendre à résoudre le problème avant qu'il soit trop tard.

16. Se pencher sérieusement et ensemble sur la question de la sorcellerie.

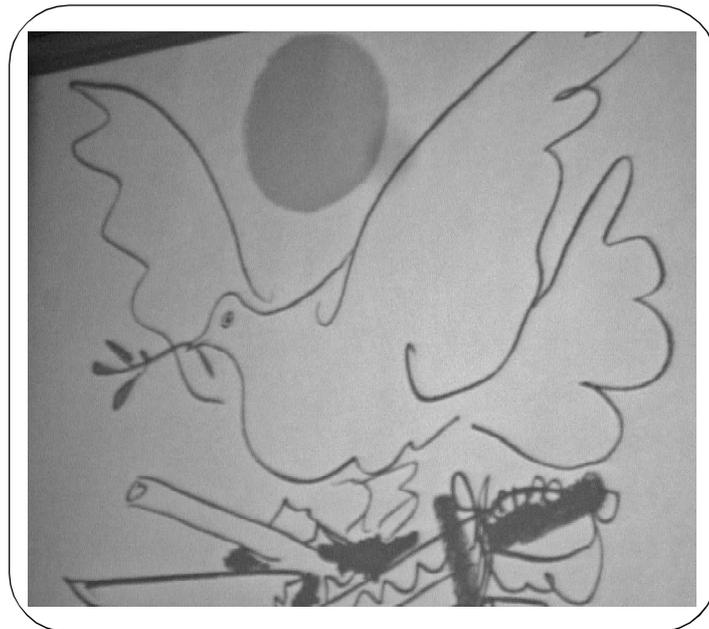
Remarque

Les problèmes de l'Afrique ont une dimension mondiale car on est connecté les uns aux autres.

- Nous restons humains et les tensions seront toujours là mais le pardon donné permet de repartir guéri.

- Justice, Réconciliation, Paix font partie intégrante du message chrétien. Ceci n'est donc pas facultatif.

(Reported by Angele Muton Kole M., SCJM)



... AND OF THE SECRETARIES

DURING THIS SEMINAR WE HAVE EXPERIENCED:

- The diversity, authenticity and authority of the African voice.
- A naming of the reality of Africa which holds a call and gift for the whole church and society — aspects which are also the reality of the universal church.
- A oneness of heart among us here and a shared concern for healing our broken world.
- An openness to speak the truth, anger about the abuse, corruption and injustices in church leaders and a realization that the collective power of women is a catalyst for change, an agent of transformation.
- The sadness at the loss of African identity and *Ubuntu*.
- The hope of a people who recognize their gifts, their resources and potential to restore that lost identity.
- The value of religious life and what it has to offer.

WE HAVE HEARD THE CALL TO:

- Respect the voice of Africa and to see with the eyes of Africa.
- Be positive and open to change attitudes, and believe reconciliation is possible.
- Take responsibility to “put our own house in order”, to be open in dealing with our ethnic differences, past pains and hurts so as to be reconciled, while respecting and honouring the other without judgment and with appreciation.
- Bring out issues with clarity and honesty (whispers in confessionals are not enough).
- Dialogue, network and collaboration to be the catalyst for change within and beyond the church.
- Embrace models of leadership which witness “servanthood” with the people
- Recognize our responsibility as religious to model “Unity in diversity”.
- Accept mistakes as opportunities for growth and affirm the value of non-sacramental occasions for forgiveness and reconciliation.

WE FELT A DESIRE TO COMMIT OURSELVES TO:

- Pray for openness to be transformed by God’s reconciling love.
 - Making reconciliation, justice and peace a way of life.
 - To listen carefully and be courageous in creating an atmosphere so as to tell the truth in love and prevent “cover-ups”.
 - To look at our own ways of dealing with conflict and our methods of conflict resolution.
 - To collaborate with other religious orders, faiths, the church — for the good of the church and society.
 - To finding ways to empower women and to support them in their initiatives.
 - Formation for leadership and equality in education that will allow the integration of the values of culture and tradition.
-

1. PENDANT LE SÉMINAIRE, NOUS AVONS ÉPROUVÉ :

- Le sentiment d'urgence vis-à-vis de la formation intégrale de nos membres et de ceux avec qui nous sommes dans nos ministères.
- Émerveillement devant les personnes qui ont l'audace, qui prennent le risque et l'initiative d'aller à la rencontre de, du dialogue de rompre le silence, du pardon.
- Nous avons découvert les potentialités positives de l'Afrique surtout les femmes comme agents de Transformation.
- Le problème de l'Afrique ne concerne pas l'Afrique seulement mais tous nos continents sont affectés.

2. NOUS AVONS ENTENDU L'APPEL À :

- Revisiter nos modèles de gouvernance internes et en l'Eglise locale.
- Partir de la réalité pour trouver une solution AVEC.
- Former des personnes qui n'ont pas de frontières et des personnes capables d'aller à la rencontre des défis.
- Collaborer et travailler entre institutes utilisant entre autre le don réciproque de médiation.

3. NOUS NOUS ENGAGEONS À :

- Continuer à nous laisser travailler par l'Esprit qui nous devance afin d'être des Communautés qui soient un témoignage de dialogue, de prière, d'unité et de Réconciliation.
 - Le séminaire vient d'allumer un feu en nous et nous voulons que le feu du Pardon et de la Réconciliation soit propagé dans tous les Instituts à travers la formation permanente, initiale ; accompagnement personnel et dans nos mission avec de peuple.
 - On ne laisse pas brûler la maison du voisin sans intervenir autrement dit. Quand un cochon mange dans le champ du voisin c'est mieux de le chasser sinon dès qu'il aura fini chez le voisin il attaquera le mien.
-

1. DURANTE QUESTO SEMINARIO ABBIAMO SPERIMENTATO:

- La capacità di lavorare insieme.
- Una chiamata alla conversione nel nostro modo di guardare e pensare l’Africa e di rapportarci ad essa.
- Un senso d’impotenza davanti alla complessa realtà dell’Africa.
- La gioia di sentire che si sta rompendo la cultura del silenzio: questo è un segno di speranza.
- Un’apertura di vedute sulla realtà dell’Africa.
- Responsabilità di conversione all’interno delle nostre comunità.

2. CI SIAMO SENTITI DI:

- Approfondire la nostra conoscenza dell’Africa: la sua storia, la sua cultura, i sistemi politici ed economici, i suoi processi di sviluppo, le sue grandi problematiche ed insieme le relative principali cause, in modo che la nostra azione missionaria diventi più oggettiva e più efficace.
- Passare dal nostro protagonismo al potenziamento del popolo/la gente perché sia esso il protagonista del proprio sviluppo: investendo nell’educazione e formazione delle nuove generazioni, come nella coscienza critica della realtà e dei diritti umani; formando una nuova mentalità di *leadership* — corresponsabilità e servizio; promuovendo l’*“empowerment”* del ruolo della donna nella chiesa e nella società.
- Rivedere i nostri stili di vita: offrendo la testimonianza delle comunità interculturali, nelle quali si vive in un autentico spirito di fraternità, di comunione e riconciliazione.
- Ribaltare la nostra attuazione: passando da *‘offrire, dare, curare’* a *‘costruire con’*.
- Rivedere i nostri programmi di formazione all’interno delle nostre congregazioni:
 - *Contestualizzandoli.*
 - *Disponendo il cuore ad acquisire una formazione umana ed una mentalità evangelica.*
 - *Dando spazio all’etnicità.*
 - *Disarmandoci dagli schemi occidentali di formazione.*
- Coinvolgere noi stessi e gli altri nei processi di pace e riconciliazione ... :
 - *Con il coraggio del rischio.*
 - *Con grande umiltà e dialogo.*
 - *Con creatività e non violenza.*
 - *Con passione.*

3. ABBIAMO IL DESIDERIO D’IMPEGNARCI A:

- Mantenere uno sguardo positivo sull’Africa: coltivando in noi, e tra la gente, la speranza evangelica e la fiducia nei valori del popolo africano.
- Collaborare con creatività con la Chiesa in Africa nella promozione della giustizia, della pace e della riconciliazione.
- Rendere più *‘inculturati’* e *‘contestualizzati’* i nostri programmi formativi.
- Trasmettere/dare un’immagine diversa dell’Africa attraverso la nostra animazione missionaria ed i mezzi di comunicazione.
- Far riconoscere alla società civile il ruolo specifico della donna quale agente di trasformazione.
- Continuare ad incrementare la collaborazione inter-congregazionale e con la chiesa locale.

DURANTE ESTE SEMINARIO HEMOS EXPERIMENTADO:

Partimos del hecho que la mayoría del grupo no es africano ni residente en África, conocemos poco la realidad africana y pedimos consideren que nuestro aporte es limitado por estas circunstancias.

Solamente en uno de los grupos estaba un africano y en el otro, ninguno.

Nos llevó a una lectura profunda de la realidad, que confronta nuestra vida y acción misionera.

Reconocer que África no es el problema, es el síntoma, ¿cómo participar en la solución? Distinguir los elementos generadores de conflicto para superarlos: Intergeneracional, campo-ciudad, norte-sur, pobres-ricos, intercultural, internacional, ideologías, etc.

NOS SENTIMOS LLAMADOS A:

- Creer en la propia capacidad de rehacerse (resiliencia).
- Partir de la realidad de cada contexto social y cultural, respetando las diferentes etnias y sus valores culturales, para caminar juntos.
- Mirar los puntos de unidad y no los que dividen, abrir brechas para que otros transiten por ellas, iniciando con pequeñas acciones, pero constantes y con un objetivo claro. Socializar nuestras experiencias que han funcionado y que pueden iluminar a otros.
- Ver a las personas concretas y entrar en relación con ellas, no con las instituciones, hacernos amigos.
- Retomar la pedagogía de Jesús para mirar al otro con el corazón, para darle confianza, curar sus heridas y caminar con él.
- Impulsar un trabajo incluyente con preferencia a los pobres, las mujeres, los jóvenes, los niños.
- Ser misioneros con actitudes de servicio al bien común y no de poder.

DESEAMOS COMPROMETERNOS A:

Aprender DE y CON...

Es la pedagogía de Jesús. Aprender de, quiere decir: situarnos con humildad y sencillez para escuchar como discípulos, aquello que me pueden enseñar. Aprender con, porque no está hecho todo, hay muchas cosas que cambiar y transformar, el buscar y compartir juntos nos hace más fuertes y creativos.

Caminando juntos se puede inculturar el evangelio y evangelizar la cultura, creando modelos alternativos en concertación y colaboración tejiendo redes eclesiales y sociales.

¡PARA el perdón y la reconciliación en África!

La realidad histórica pide una sanación coherente, es decir, espera la restitución del tejido social y la reparación de los bienes como condición para construir el futuro y alcanzar la justicia y la paz duraderas.

- Generar espacios de encuentro para el diálogo (hombres-mujeres, nacionales-extranjeros, gobiernos-pueblos, etc.) para interactuar con más sinceridad, respetando la dignidad y los valores personales.
- Formar agentes para el cambio social, eclesial, congregacional.
- Dar una formación cualificada e integral, que sea capaz de crear e impulsar procesos de conversión y transformación.
- Buscar mediadores, capaces de discernir el punto crítico y dar un paso de calidad.



Mot de clôture du Séminaire Résidentiel de 2010

Chers Frères et Sœurs,

Ce m'est un devoir agréable, à la fin de ce Séminaire Résidentiel du SEDOS de 2010, de vous exprimer ma profonde reconnaissance. Je voudrais le faire en partant de la contemplation de la beauté enchanteuse de ce lieu, don gratuit de l'amour du Créateur. Cette belle nature nous invite aussi, ce matin, à contempler les merveilles que le Seigneur vient de réaliser en chacun et chacune de nous durant ces jours passés ensemble à Ariccia. En fille de St. François d'Assise, ma reconnaissance envers vous se fait un chant d'action de grâce au Seigneur.

Je bénis le Seigneur car, tout en étant venus des quatre coins du globe, chacun et chacune de nous porte l'Afrique dans son cœur, et dans un élan d'amour inconditionnel pour ce continent, nous désirons nous engager dans un processus de déconstruction de nos mentalités et de notre imagination, une des conditions sine qua non pour porter sur l'Afrique un regard neuf.

Je bénis le Seigneur parce qu'ensemble, nous avons entendu un appel pressant à devenir des témoins crédibles de la réconciliation, et que pour cela, nous voulons faire de nos communautés des lieux de pardon et de réconciliation. Nous désirons conjuguer nos efforts pour répondre à une interpellation de taille : celle de former des agents de changement qui chérissent les valeurs « d'UBUNTU ».

Je bénis le Seigneur pour le dynamisme avec lequel le Père Carlos Rodriguez Linera, OP, a servi la cause du SEDOS. C'est à lui que revient aussi le mérite de la réussite de ce Séminaire. En effet, c'est lui qui en avait défini le thème : « Le défi prophétique des Eglises Africaines ». C'est encore Carlos qui avait trouvé ces pierres précieuses qu'ont été nos conférenciers :

- Le Père **Michael McCabe, SMA**, Professeur à Langata, Nairobi. Dans son exposé intitulé : « Défis clefs pour les Instituts missionnaires et internationaux en Afrique aujourd'hui, dans la lumière du Second Synode pour l'Afrique », il a cherché à nous conformer aux interpellations de ce Synode. Il nous a lancé une question pertinente, celle de savoir quelle formation est appropriée à qui se veut instrument de paix, justice et réconciliation ?

- Sœur **Jane MUGUKU, IMC**, originaire du Kenya et membre du Conseil général des Sœurs Missionnaires de la Consolata, formatrice de longue date, a fait appel à son intuition féminine et développé le thème de la Diaconie, entendu au sens de: Etre instruments de la Réconciliation. Elle a invité l'Afrique en ces termes : « Lève toi, Afrique et marche. Crois en ta capacité de te mettre debout par toi-même ; réconcilie-toi avec ton être africain. réveille ton sens profond de la dignité humaine qui croit qu' « Une personne est personne grâce et à travers les autres ».

- Le Père **Paul Ennin, SMA**, a aussi développé ce thème de la « Diaconie : Etre instruments de réconciliation ». Avec la simplicité et la candeur de sa jeunesse, il nous a invités à revisiter les images de l'Afrique que nous utilisons lors de nos campagnes de solidarité.

Merci, Père Carlos, d'avoir si bien balisé le chemin pour nous.

Je bénis le Seigneur pour le **Prof. Joseph Thierry Amogou**, Camerounais, professeur à l'Université catholique de Louvain la Neuve, qui a brossé un tableau saisissant de la réalité africaine, soulignant ses ombres et ses lumières. Il nous a aussi lancé un défi, celui de chercher dans la culture africaine même les éléments qui permettront aux Africains de

trouver des solutions à leurs problèmes. Nous en avons eu un exemple : Les Femmes Libériennes qui ont mis fin à une longue guerre sans une intervention extérieure.

Dans ces quatre conférences, nous avons puisé une eau rafraîchissante qui a éteint notre soif et qui nous invite à inventer des voies neuves pour une présence prophétique en Afrique.

Je bénis le Seigneur pour la collaboration active et fraternelle qui règne au sein du Comité Exécutif du SEDOS. Ensemble, nous avons minutieusement préparé ce Séminaire en deux longues séances de travail. A tous les membres du Comité Exécutif vont mes sentiments de gratitude profonde.

Je te bénis spécialement, Seigneur, pour le don de **Sœur Maria Pilar Benavente Serrano** (Piluca), Supérieure générale des Sœurs Missionnaires de Notre-Dame d'Afrique et Présidente du SEDOS. Malgré les multiples occupations inhérentes au service de leadership, elle a gracieusement accepté d'être la Facilitatrice de notre Séminaire. Elle a eu à cœur de donner à nos assises un déroulement cohérent. Elle a été le cœur de l'équipe animatrice composée de **Sœur Filo Hirota, MMB, Sœur María Gutiérrez, SUSC**, et de **moi-même**. Et je puis affirmer que la complémentarité harmonieuse de nos dons et talents a eu un impact sur l'organisation, le déroulement et l'aboutissement de ce Séminaire.

Un merci spécial au **Père Antonio Rovelli, IMC**, qui a accepté de porter deux chapeaux à la fois : ceux de modérateur et d'écouteur.

Je te bénis, Seigneur pour le don des Père **Pio Estepa** et **Arlindo Dias**, tous deux SVD, qui ont préparé la prière du matin avec tant de créativité. Le Père Pio, un mordru des techniques de media, a su combiner des images et la musique qui tout en provoquant des éclats de rires sonores, nous offraient ainsi des moments de détente gratuite, suivis de ces clips qui nous plongeaient dans une atmosphère de contemplation, nous préparant ainsi à l'étape suivante du programme. Merci à vous, Pio et Arlindo, pour avoir trouvé des documentaires très riches en enseignements et source d'inspiration pour notre réflexion.

Je te bénis, Seigneur, pour la disponibilité de Sœur Monika Lita Hasanah, OSU, et du **Père Gervase Taratara, CSSp.**, qui ont assumé la responsabilité d'organiser nos célébrations liturgiques ; grâce à leur esprit de créativité, l'Eucharistie de chaque jour a reflété la richesse de la multi-culturalité du SEDOS. Merci à tous ceux et celles qui ont activement participé à la liturgie quotidienne. Un merci spécial au groupe hispanophone et lusophone qui nous ont aidés à prier avec notre Mère la Terre au bord du lac. Merci aussi à la Sœur sacristine qui a mis à notre disposition tout le matériel nécessaire....

Je te bénis, Seigneur, pour ce don précieux qu'est **Mrs Ilaria Iadeluca**, la Secrétaire du SEDOS, et le cerveau moteur de toute l'organisation matérielle du Séminaire ; aucun détail n'échappe à son regard scrutateur ; son dévouement plein d'enthousiasme est une joie et une bénédiction pour nous.

Je te bénis, Seigneur, pour la présence sereine et combien active de **Sœur Celine Kokkat, JMJ**, responsable de la bibliothèque du SEDOS. Si vous faites des recherches en missiologie, n'hésitez pas à consulter Sœur Celine qui vous introduira à la Page Web du SEDOS ; notre bibliothèque est précieuse en tout ce qui concerne les divers aspects de la Mission hier et aujourd'hui.

Je te bénis, Seigneur pour le don inestimable de nos traductrices : **Alessandra Cama, Barbara De Luzenberger** et **Marilù Balbis**. Elles nous ont accompagnés, assises derrière leurs appareils, un service exigeant mais combien important ! Avec patience et détermination elles nous ont aidés à dépasser les barrières linguistiques, habituées qu'elles sont aux

subtilités des langues du séminaire, ainsi qu'aux différents accents des participants. Grazie di cuore, carissime Alessandra, Barbara et Marilù, c'est à vous surtout que nous devons l'heureuse conclusion de ce Séminaire.

Je te bénis, Seigneur, pour le personnel de cette **Casa Divino Maestro**, à Ariccia.

Merci au *Frère Angelo* qui détient non seulement les clefs de la maison mais aussi celles de la technologie moderne. Il est toujours prêt à nous dépanner quand la technique nous joue des mauvais tours.

Merci à toutes *les dames de la réception*, leur sourire accueillant est un antidote à la fatigue du voyage.

Merci à toutes les employées à l'entretien, qui savent garder ces lieux tellement propres et accueillants !

« Bonne cuisine, bonne discipline » dit un proverbe espagnol. Je te bénis, Seigneur, pour nos *frères et sœurs de la cuisine* qui nous ont servis avec tant d'amour et de délicatesse. Continue, Seigneur, à les accompagner de ta bénédiction !

Enfin, je bénis le Seigneur pour vous tous, **participants et participantes** à ce Séminaire Résidentiel de 2010, et particulièrement à tous les chefs et secrétaires des groupes, à ceux et celles qui joué le rôle d'écouteurs des appels et défis du Séminaire. C'est grâce à votre joyeuse et active participation, à votre enthousiasme, et surtout à votre souplesse face à d'éventuels ajustements du programme, que nous avons fait de ce Séminaire une célébration de notre appel commun à continuer la mission du Christ, l'Envoyé du Père.

Comme conclusion, je dois dire que nous venons de vivre une expérience de « *UBUNTU* », les intervenants ont souvent employé ces pronoms : « We », « Nosostros », « Noi » et « Nous », parce que tous nos Instituts religieux et missionnaires appartiennent au SEDOS ; nous avons la même mission et nous nous soutenons mutuellement. C'est là aussi, une des sources qui alimente notre élan missionnaire !

Le prochain Séminaire Résidentiel du SEDOS aura lieu à Ariccia, du 17 au 21 mai, 2011 ; son thème sera sur « **Le défi prophétique de l'Église en Asie** ». Nous avons encore à clarifier et déterminer les divers aspects que nous aurons à développer.

BONNE FETE de la PENTECOTE !

Nzenzili MBOMA, FMM
Directrice Exécutive

NEXT SEDOS RESIDENTIAL SEMINAR
"The Prophetic Challenge of the Church in Asia"

17-21 May 2011

Place: Ariccia "Casa Divin Maestro"



A Lord's Prayer for Justice

In the world's schema of things, survival of the fittest is the rule. In God's schema, survival of the weakest is the rule. God always stands on the side of the weak and it is there, among the weak, that we find God.

Given the truth of that, we might occasionally pray the Lord's Prayer in this way:

Our Father ... who always stands with the weak, the powerless, the poor, the abandoned, the sick, the aged, the very young, the unborn, and those who, by victim of circumstance, bear the heat of the day.

Who art in heaven ... where everything will be reversed, where the first will be last and the last will be first, but where all will be well and every manner of being will be well.

Hallowed be thy name ... may we always acknowledge your holiness, respecting that your ways are not our ways, your standards are not our standards. May the reverence we give your name pull us out of the selfishness that prevents us from seeing the pain of our neighbour.

Your kingdom come ... help us to create a world where, beyond our own needs and hurts, we will do justice, love tenderly, and walk humbly with you and each other.

Your will be done ... open our freedom to let you in so that the complete mutuality that characterizes your life might flow through our veins and thus the life that we help generate may radiate your equal love for all and your special love for the poor.

On earth as in heaven ... may the work of our hands, the temples and structures we build in this world, reflect the temple and the structure of your glory so that the joy, graciousness, tenderness, and justice of heaven will show forth within all of our structures on earth.

Give ... life and love to us and help us to always see everything as a gift. Help us know that nothing comes to us by right and that we must give because we have been given to. Help us realize that we must give to the poor, not because they need it, but because our own health depends upon our giving to them.

Us ... the truly plural us. Give not just to our own but to everyone, including those who are very different than the narrow us. Give your gifts to all of us equally.

This day ... not tomorrow. Do not let us push things off into some indefinite future so that we can continue living justified lives in the face of injustice because we find good excuses for our inactivity.

Our daily bread ... so that each person in the world may have enough food, enough clean water, enough clean air, adequate health care, and sufficient access to education so as to have the sustenance for a healthy life. Teach us to give from our sustenance and not just from our surplus.

And forgive us our trespasses ... forgive us our blindness toward our neighbor, our self-preoccupation, our racism, our sexism, and our incurable propensity to worry only about ourselves and our own. Forgive our capacity to watch the evening news and do nothing about it.

As we forgive those who trespass against us ... help us to forgive those who victimize us. Help us to mellow out in spirit, to not grow bitter with age, to forgive the imperfect parents and systems that wounded, cursed, and ignored us.

And do not put us to the test ... do not judge us only by whether we have fed the hungry, given clothing to the naked, visited the sick, or tried to mend the systems that victimized the poor. Spare us this test for none of us can stand before your gospel scrutiny. Give us, instead, more days to mend our ways, our selfishness, and our systems.

But deliver us from evil ... that is, from the blindness that lets us continue to participate in anonymous systems within which we need not see who gets less as we get more. *Amen.*

