

Bulletin 2013

Vol. 45, No. 11/12 - November–December



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Editorial

"The Gospel, radiant with the glory of Christ's cross, constantly invites us to rejoice".
(Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*; n. 5)

On 24 November 2013 to conclude the Year of Faith, Pope Francis issued, his first Apostolic Exhortation which encapsulates his vision and dream of evangelization. There is a breath of joy that irradiates throughout the text; but at the same time Pope Francis challenges all evangelizers inviting them to a deep and total conversion: "*Jesus wants evangelizers who proclaim the good news not only with words, but above all by a life transfigured by God's presence*" (EG, no. 259).

I found the articles published in this last issue of the year 2013, very enlightening and enriching to read, in the light of *Evangelii Gaudium*. These articles echo the content of the Exhortation in a very special way. Pope Francis wrote: "I dream of a "missionary option", that is, a missionary impulse capable of transforming everything, so that the Church's customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channeled for the evangelization of today's world rather than for her self-preservation" (EG, no. 27). "*When the Kingdom of God becomes the focal point of the evangelizing mission, the Church should no longer indulge in erecting gigantic structures for the sake of her missionary enterprises, nor should statistical increase of Christians be her primary concern*"... writes **Fr. S. Devaraj**, parish priest of Crawford, Tiruchirappalli, India, in "**Witness of Life, Our Mission Today**".

The most amazing article is the short but very powerful text by **Fr. Suresh Matthew, OFM-Cap.**, which is an excerpt from his doctoral theses on The Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, which he calls: *Pope Francis' Magna Carta for Church Reform*". His research promises to be very interesting and Prof. Fr Paul Steffen, SVD, deems it a scientific article.

Pope Francis asserts that: "The parish is the presence of the Church in a given territory, an environment for hearing God's word, for growth in the Christian life, for dialogue, proclamation, charitable outreach, worship and celebration. In all its activities the parish encourages and trains its members to be evangelizers" (EG, no. 28). Pope Francis' Exhortation echoes the vision of Cardinal Joseph Albert Malula († 1989) Archbishop of Kinshasa, who had a prophetic vision of the role of parishes and of the mission of the Lay Faithful, and this back in the 1970^s. Cardinal Malula talked about "bombarding huge parishes" so that parish communities fulfil their missionary call and become active evangelizers and places of communion and fraternal relationships. Reverend l'Abbé **Ignace Ndongala** summarizes the missionary endeavours of the Small Christian Communities in Kinshasa in his research on: "**Socialisation religieuse et engagement politique des chrétiens**".

Fifty years after Vatican II published "Inter Mirifica", "no New Evangelization will be possible without taking a fresh Christian look at the role of communication in society and culture today and the formation of truly communicative people in spirit and mind", Fr. **Franz-Josef Eilers**, SVD, concludes in "**Inter Mirifica' after 50 years. Origin, Directions, Challenges**".

I take this opportunity to thank all SEDOS' Members and Readers and to wish you a peaceful close to the year.

Sr Nzenzili MBOMA, FMM
SEDOS Executive Director



S. Devaraj

Witness Of Life: Our Mission Today

Mission is born of faith and was at the base of last year's Synod of Bishops on 'The New Evangelization'. The author of this article devarajsoosai@gmail.com is at present the parish priest of Crawford, Tiruchirappalli. He holds a doctorate in systematic theology from the "Urbanianum", Rome, and has taught at St. Paul's Seminary, Tiruchirappalli, for eight years. In 2006-8 he contributed three articles to VJTR, one each year.

Since the Second Vatican Council 'mission' has been a subject of deep reflection and important debate within the Church. Responding to the emerging social, cultural and religious context of India and other countries of Asia the concept and praxis of mission have undergone radical changes. Taking into account the multi-religious context of our country and in the light of what the Indian Church has been experiencing on account of the ruthless attacks of fanatic Hindu and fundamentalist groups in several States, I shall endeavour to find a new language and a new style to speak about our mission that seems to me to be more respectful of the religious sensibilities of our fellow citizens and that also goes along with the vision of Jesus.

Mission: *the* Primary Concern of *the* Local Church

Before Vatican II, mission referred to countries where the Church was not yet deeply rooted. Missionaries, from different parts of the world with an immense thirst for the salvation of souls, travelled to far off countries, lived in the midst of the local people and worked hard to baptize and build up the structural Church. In this missionary venture the uniqueness of Christianity and the superiority of European culture were upheld in an uncompromising way while a negative and pessimistic attitude toward non-Christian religions and non-European cultures was maintained.¹ Thus the Christian mission in Asia, Africa and Latin America was criticized for being linked to the colonization of peoples by European traders and political powers to satiate their greed for wealth, and for its attempts at "spiritual" conquest.

In this regard K.M. Panikkar commented as follows:

It may indeed be said that the most serious, persistent and planned effort of European nations in the nineteenth century was their missionary work in India and China, where a large-scale attempt was made to effect a mental and spiritual conquest as supplementing the political authority already enjoyed by Europe. Though the results were disappointing in the extreme from the missionary point of view, this assault on the spiritual foundations of Asian countries has had far-reaching consequences in the religious and social organization of the peoples.²

The old era of mission, understood in terms of sending foreign Missionaries out to work in the various mission countries, is over in Asia and in the world at large. In the new situation which has emerged from the political independence of Asian countries following the oppressive colonial rule, and in the light of the resurgence of fresh nationalism and the revival of old religions and cultures, the mission is "no longer and can no longer be a one-way movement from the 'older Churches' to the 'younger Churches', from the Churches of the old Christendom to the Churches in the colonial lands".³ Being aware of the significant change in the present historical context and the profound transformation taking place in Asia, the Asian Bishops have declared: "We have reached a decisive turning point in the mission history of the Third World. There is no return to the past, neither to past mission theories, nor to past mission methods, nor to the past mission goals".⁴

In the post-colonial period a new age of mission has dawned in Asia as a result of the new impetus given by the Second Vatican Council. Thanks to the *aggiornamento* initiated by the Council at all levels one remarkable change in the field of ecclesiology is the shift from the centralistic, or monolithic conception of the Church, to the stress on the local realization of the Church. The Council, thanks to its single-minded effort to reform the Church in the light of the vision of the New Testament and the emergent signs of the times, exhibited renewed interest in the building-up of the local Churches. Accordingly, a new theological thinking and pastoral practice, that has gained momentum all over the

world and particularly in Asia, is that every local Church is missionary by its very nature and responsible for its mission. The Asian Bishops unequivocally affirmed that, "the local Church is the centre and source of evangelization",⁵ due to the fact that only the local people can "discern and work out the way the Gospel is best proclaimed; the Church set-up, the values of God's Kingdom realized in their own place and time".⁶ For them, this renewed perception of mission emanates from "the renewal of our faith that God so loved the world that He sent His Son to be the Saviour of all".⁷

As the New Testament candidly portrays, Jesus of Nazareth filled with the power of the Holy Spirit preached the Good News of the Kingdom of God, and commanded his disciples to continue doing the same by becoming his witnesses to the ends of the earth (Mk 16:15-16; Mt 28:20; Acts 1:8). The Bishops, at the *International Congress on Mission*, emphatically underlined this theological basis of Christian mission drawing inspiration from the Christological and Trinitarian foundation of mission outlined by *Ad Gentes*, n. 2. They stated that, "every local Church is 'sent' by Christ and the Father to bring the Gospel to its surrounding milieu, and to bear it also into the world".⁸ The local Church can remain a credible body of the disciples of Christ only to the extent that it is actively and faithfully involved in mission.

The Goal of Mission is the building-up of God's Kingdom

A paradigm shift has been emerging in the theology of mission since Vatican II.⁹ Accordingly, the central point of the mission is no longer the establishment of a structural Church, but "the ushering in and establishment of God's Kingdom, namely God's rule in the hearts and minds of Asian peoples".¹⁰ We must bear in mind that God's design is for humanity as a whole. To obliterate all the division, conflict and strife caused by selfishness and sin, and to gather all peoples and nations into one family as brothers and sisters through Jesus Christ is God's design.¹¹ In other words, it is the creation of "a new heaven and a new earth" (Rev 21:1), where all peoples, transcending all differences, live in harmony and communion among themselves, with God and with the entire Creation. The mission of Jesus Christ consisted primarily in sharing with everyone "the Good News of God's dream for the world".¹² He called this dream, the Kingdom of God. It is a web of relations — a communion — a *koinonia*. It is a new communion and fellowship with God as a loving, merciful and human Father, with people as brothers and sisters with the whole of nature as God's wonderful gift. The Kingdom of God as communion is already present among the people through word, deed and witness (Lk 17:2). The mission is to make the reality of the Kingdom come alive in the reality of every people, their words, deeds and witness.¹³

The All India Seminar on *The Indian Church in the Struggle for a New Humanity* made a pertinent observation in this regard:

Her (the Church's) mission requires that she herself embody in her own life and structures the Kingdom values of freedom, fellowship and justice. It also requires that she contribute to the promotion of those values in the ordering of society.¹⁴

The Asian Bishops have also clearly stated:

The Reign of God is the very reason for the being of the Church. The Church exists in and for the Kingdom. The Kingdom, God's gift and initiative, is already begun and is continually being realized and made present through the Spirit: where God is accepted, when the Gospel values are lived, where man is respected ... there is the Kingdom of God. It is far wider than the Church's boundaries. This 'already present' reality is oriented towards the final manifestation and full perfection of the Reign of God.¹⁵

When the Kingdom of God becomes the focal point of the evangelizing mission, the Church should no longer indulge in erecting gigantic structures for the sake of her missionary enterprises, nor should the statistical increase of Christians be her primary concern. Her vocation and mission consists precisely in becoming the pilgrim People of God bearing the message of God's unconditional love for every person, a visible sign, a sacrament of "communion with God and of unity among all people".¹⁶ We must know the

purpose of God's mission of sending his beloved Son Jesus Christ to this world. St John makes it clear that 'mission was none other than the manifestation of God's infinite love: "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (Jn 3:16). In other words, Jesus Christ was sent to reveal the Father (Jn 1:18) and to make God's love and mercy known to a lost world. The mission of God as manifested in love is to be understood by loving God, loving each other and loving one's neighbour. We are called to be servants and also friends walking together in God's mission.

Witness of Life: the First and Most Important Means

There are diverse methods for continuing the evangelizing mission. In accordance with the context of the people and in the light of the signs of the times, new methods could be evolved and employed for the successful implementation of mission. But the first and most important means of doing mission is the witness of an authentic Christian life. The main reason for asserting witnessing has been well articulated by Pope Paul VI in his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*: "Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses" (n. 41). Pope John Paul II made a similar observation: "People today put more trust in witnesses than in teachers, in experience than in teaching, and in life and action than in theories. The witness of a Christian life is the first and irreplaceable form of mission..." (*Redemptoris Missio*, n. 42). In his Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia*, Pope John Paul II said: "it is clear that there can be no true proclamation of the Gospel unless Christians also offer the witness of lives in harmony with the message they preach" (*Ecclesia in Asia*, n. 42).



Needless to say, witnessing is an apt and appropriate way of communicating the person and message of Jesus Christ to the people of our country. The expression of our faith in Jesus Christ consists primarily in devoutly listening to him, humbly following him and tenaciously bearing witness to him.¹⁷ However, the magisterial documents emphatically assert the indispensability and urgency of proclamation. The urgency has been underlined by the recent Popes, especially in the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* and the Encyclical *Redemptoris Missio*.¹⁸ In the same way *Ecclesia in Asia* repeatedly insists: "There can be no true evangelization without the explicit proclamation of Jesus as Lord...". "The Church evangelizes in obedience to Christ's command, in the knowledge that every person has the right to hear the Good News of the God who reveals and gives himself in Christ" (nn. 19, 20). The oft-quoted text for justifying the proclamation leading to conversion is the great commission of the Risen Lord to his disciples: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations" (Mt 28:19); "Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to the whole Creation" (Mk 16:15. RSV).

Undoubtedly the great commission or command of Jesus Christ has inspired the mission of the Church at all times. It is usually understood as a universal, absolute and all time command given by the divine Master to convert all peoples in the world for the motive of redeeming them. Matthew 28:19-20 is referred to as the key text for the missionary work of the Church in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Today biblical scholars look at this text critically and raise a number of questions regarding the way it has been interpreted to justify the Christian mission. Indian theologians and missiologists have called for an integral way of reading and understanding this biblical text which may help us to comprehend it better and come to know its fuller meaning. This mission command must be seen in the light of other mission commands of Jesus, for instance, as George Soares-Prabhu, points out in the light of another missionary text, Matthew 5:13-16, where mission is "not so much noisy proclamation as infectious witness".¹⁹ The images of light, salt and leaven employed by Mathew underscore, "the importance of the type of life the disciples live, the newness brought about by the transforming power of the Gospel which 'draws' people to Jesus and his message, as happened in the early Church, where the love of Christians attracted many to Jesus".²⁰

Another important point to be noted, in this connection, is that India is a multi-religious country with age-old religious and cultural traditions, older than Christianity itself. Any kind of aggressive mission with the sole aim of adding numbers to the Christian flock would certainly hurt the religious sentiments of the people belonging to other religious traditions and endanger the harmonious relationship in society.

Keeping this point in mind, Jacob Kavunkal observes:

The proclamation of Jesus Christ must take place primarily through the life-style of the Christian. It is not a frantic effort to save Jesus Christ from other saviours by trumpeting truths about Jesus Christ. The Church must stand for what Jesus Christ stood for and work for the realization of God's Reign on earth, which was the foundational theme of Jesus' work. The sheer proclamation of the uniqueness of Jesus Christ will turn out to be a religious competition which in the Asian context can only lead to fanaticism and religious violence, the opposite of the divine reign! The 'new life in Jesus Christ' is the quality of life of the Christian and not a claim made over the followers of other religions. Christian mission in Asia must become a love affair and not a Truth-affair.²¹

Josef Neuner notes:

The Christian message must be communicated through the service of human promotion, in the various fields of education, in the many forms of healing ministry, and in social service ... the decisive feature of Gospel-pedagogy is witness. All mission documents after the Council place Christian witness at the centre of all evangelizing work.... Jesus never taught doctrine but proclaimed a new life in union with God and through loving service to neighbour.... So, too, Christian communities in Asia are meant to be the sacrament, the tangible sign and effective agent of the new creation.²²

Jonathan Tan Yun-Ka writes:

For the FABC, the life witness in solidarity with Asia's peoples is important, especially in regions fraught with religious tension. For the FABC, people embrace Christ's vision mainly because they are touched by the Spirit of Christ as manifested in the life witness of his followers and the solidarity they share with the people around them.²³

The Asian Bishops, at their very First Plenary Assembly, acknowledged the place religions hold in the lives of the people of Asia and viewed them from a positive theological perspective: "We accept them as significant and positive elements in the economy of God's design of salvation. In them we recognize and respect their profound spiritual and ethical meanings and values. Over many centuries they have been the treasury of the religious experience of our ancestors, from which our contemporaries do not cease to draw light and strength".²⁴ Seen in this perspective, the proclamation of Jesus Christ can be meaningful and relevant only when it is carried out in a dialogical manner. For, dialogue prevents the Church from becoming a self-centred community, links it deeply with other religious people and provides an opportunity to listen to them. Furthermore, our proclamation can bear abundant fruit in Asian societies only when it emanates from our bearing witness to the values of the Kingdom of God for which Jesus of Nazareth sacrificed his precious life. In browsing through the documents of the FABC, it becomes clear that they do not speak in terms of a classical sequence of proclamation — conversion — Baptism and membership in the Church. Their orientation is: proclamation, witness, Christ-like deeds, dialogue, liberation, etc.

At the Fifth Plenary Assembly, the Bishops unambiguously stated:

The proclamation of Jesus Christ in Asia means, first of all, the witness of the Christian and of the Christian communities to the values of the Kingdom of God, *a proclamation through Christlike deeds*. For Christians in Asia, to proclaim Christ means above all to live like him, in the midst of our neighbours of other faiths and persuasions, and to do his deeds by the power of his Grace. Proclamation through dialogue and deeds — this is the first call to the churches in Asia.²⁵

Let Your Life Speak

The proclamation or sharing of the Good News about the Kingdom of God will be heard and accepted by people, whether they are literate or illiterate, rich or poor, young or old, only when confirmed by an authentic Christian life. In our contemporary society, marked by critical thinking and reflection, people cannot be mesmerized merely by eloquence and flowery language. More is needed. They will accept his message only when they are convinced that his words have emanated not just from his lips but from his life. In the Indian context "witness of life" is valued immensely more than doctrine and dogma. That is why, Mahatma Gandhi, while addressing a group of protestant missionaries, succinctly told them, "Let your life speak to us, even as the rose needs no speech, but simply spreads perfume. Even the blind who do not see the rose perceive its fragrance.... If the rose needs no agent, much less does the Gospel of Christ need any agent.... All I want them to do is to live Christian lives, not to annotate them. I have come to this view after a laborious and prayerful search".²⁶

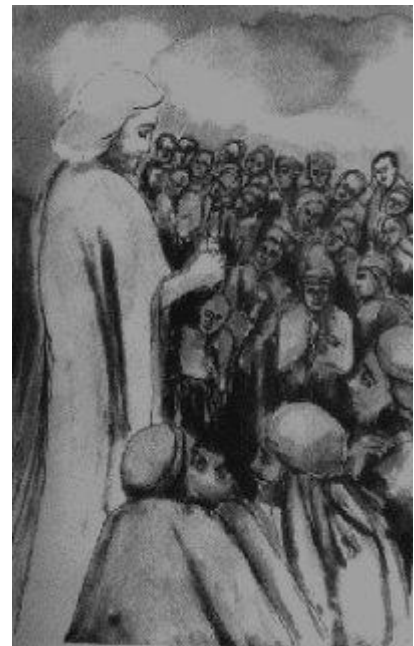
Blessed Mother Teresa of Kolkata (Calcutta) did not preach directly about Jesus Christ. But her mission of compassion for the poorest of the poor who had been neglected and marginalized for so many years exhibited the love of Christ in a very eloquent and tangible manner and made them experience it concretely. She remains a powerful sign of God — an incontrovertible sign that God still loves humanity today. As Gispert-Sauch succinctly notes, "Mother Teresa appeared in India as *dayasindhu*, an ocean of mercy. India was fortunate to be the *karmabhumi* of the Blessed, and she was fortunate to be sent to serve in this country".²⁷ "Mother Teresa was no theoretician of mission but an activist to the core. Her only goal was that she and her sisters manifest the love and compassion of Jesus to all people in need".²⁸

Fr. Albert Huart remarked:

What struck most people on meeting Mother Teresa was the joy she radiated. Who has not observed, at least in photos, her homely face all wrinkled up in smiles as she fondles a baby orphan, greets a poor girl or comforts a dying beggar? How, people wondered, can a person daily immersed in the depths of human misery keep going with such unflagging joy-giving vitality?²⁹

Witnessing: Method of Jesus Christ

It is to be noted that witnessing was the missionary method adopted by Jesus of Nazareth. He came in to this world mainly to bear Witness to the unconditional and unfathomable love of God the Father, who "makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust" alike (Mt 5:45-46). He not only preached about God's love but also revealed it to the people through his life and ministry of compassion. His prophetic proclamation of the message of the Kingdom of God revealed the merciful, forgiving and unconditionally loving Father who was always on the side of the poor and the needy. Mathew summarizes Jesus' ministry of compassion as follows: "When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd" (Mt 9:36). Compassion reflects the character of Jesus (Mt 14:14; 15:32; 18:27; 20:34). He had compassion on these people who were exploited and were like sheep without a shepherd. The expression "sheep without a shepherd" refers to the marginalized people of the Jewish community who had no genuine and authentic leader to lead them on the path of liberation. It is noteworthy that Jesus proclaimed the Good News of the Kingdom of God predominately in the region of Galilee where the majority of the people were poor and marginalized. Tax collectors were scorned and the women were kept away from the main stream of society. The lame, the blind, the deaf and the mentally challenged were ill-treated and dehumanized to the core. Lepers were totally ostracized from society. These were the people who were "sheep without a



shepherd". Jesus' ministry of compassion enhanced and brightened the life of these weak and oppressed people.

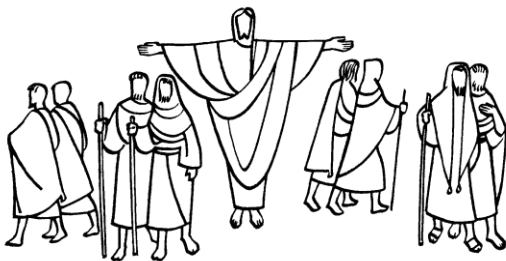
Jesus table fellowship with tax collectors and sinners, his intimate communion with the poor and the dehumanized demonstrated God's unconditional love and preferential option for the socially and religiously excluded (Mt 9:10; 11:19; Mk 2:15-16; Lk 5:27-32; 7:34; 19:1-10). According to Joachim Jeremias, "sharing at table meant sharing life". It also meant "fellowship before God".³⁰ His miracles manifested how God united himself with those suffering, participated in their pain and agony, and liberated them from sickness, infirmity and from the forms of prejudice that made them outcasts. His violent and cruel death on Calvary was indeed a supreme act of sacrifice that clearly manifested how God loved the entire humanity so lavishly and profoundly.

Highlighting Jesus' compassionate mission, Joseph Mattam writes as follows:

Jesus' mission is 'revealing' the Father. He reveals the Father precisely in the way he lives: his attitude to sinners, tax collectors, prostitutes, the sick and broken, the unwanted and rejected of society. He is the very justice and mercy of God: God responds to *our needs*. The sinner needs forgiveness, the sick needs healing, the hopeless needs to find hope and a new future, the possessed needs to be freed. This is what Jesus constantly offers.³¹

Witnessing: The Wait Towards the Spread of Christianity

The Apostles continued the mission of bearing witness to the Risen Lord by word and deed. The basis for this understanding of mission is found in Acts 1:8: "... and you shall be my



witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth". Luke had already pointed out in his Gospel that the mission of the disciples consisted in witnessing, when the Lord told his disciples: "You are witnesses of these things" (Lk 24:48). In the early period many accepted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour and embraced Christianity. We often think it was mainly due to the powerful and convincing preaching of the Apostles. But it was

also by seeing the Christians' witness of life with their own eyes that they were attracted to this new way of life. E.R. Dodd gives several reasons for the spectacular growth of Christianity in the early period. One such reason is the witnessing and edifying life of Christians. Till the third century the great majority of Christians belonged to the middle and lower classes and many of them were poor and illiterate. But they were deeply rooted in the faith, ready to sacrifice their lives for the sake of the faith and convinced of the fact that the faith should be lived and manifested through the practice of love, equality and fraternity.

He writes:

Christianity was open to all. In principle, it made no social distinctions; it accepted the manual worker, the slave, the outcaste, the ex-criminal.³² Its members were bound together not only by common rites but by a common way of life.... Love of one's neighbour is not an exclusively Christian virtue, but in our period the Christians appear to have practiced it much more effectively than any other group. The Church provided the essentials of social security: it cared for widows and orphans, the old, the unemployed, and the disabled; it provided a burial fund for the poor and a nursing service in time of plague. But even more important, I suspect, than these material benefits was the sense of belonging which the Christian community could give.... Within the community there was human warmth: someone was interested in them; both here and hereafter. It is therefore not surprising that the earliest and the most striking advances of Christianity were made in Antioch, in Rome, in Alexandria. The Christians were in more than a formal sense 'members one of another': I think that was a major cause, perhaps the strongest single cause, of the spread of Christianity.³³

Even the Roman Emperor Julian (A.D. 332-363), in spite of his critical outlook on Christianity, attributed the successes of Christianity to "their philanthropy towards the stranger, their care for the burial of the dead...".³⁴

Not by Eloquence but by the Ministry of Compassion

Looking into the history of Christianity in India, it becomes clear that the influence of the Gospel and Christianity on Hinduism was achieved not so much through verbal proclamation as through the encounter with the situation and through witnessing and service.³⁵ Many of the European missionaries who came to India from the 16th century onwards were not very fluent in the native languages in spite of their hard and strenuous efforts to learn them correctly. Nevertheless they were able to win the hearts of the people and bring many to Jesus Christ because of their genuine and undivided love for them. People accepted Christ and joined the Catholic Church not because they were attracted by eloquent words, but because they were inspired by their powerful ministry of compassion. Following the model of Jesus who emptied himself totally and identified himself with all people for the sake of the Kingdom of God, those dedicated and heroic missionaries took part in the joy and the hope, the grief and the anguish of the simple and ordinary masses (*cf. G et S*, n. 1) who were longing for a more dignified life. Moved by love and compassion they worked tirelessly for the well-being of those on the margins of society.

The letters of St Francis Xavier, the apostle of the Pearl Fishery Coast and the greatest missionary of the 16th century, bear out how genuinely and single-mindedly he loved the fishermen Christians for whom he worked for a few years in Tamil Nadu. As George Schurhammer has pointed out, "his courageous, indefatigable interventions on behalf of his Christians, persecuted and oppressed both by the Portuguese and pagans, had attracted the attention of all upon him. From Mannar in the North to Travancore in the South, he was everywhere spoken of as the *Periya Padre*, the Great Father".³⁶ Antony de Proenca, a Portuguese missionary, who worked in the region of Tiruchirappalli in the second half of the 17th century, was determined to save his Christians from the onslaught of the Mysore troops, known for their cruelty, and took them to a safe place and settled them, unmindful of danger and threats.³⁷ St John De Britto, popularly known as the Apostle of Maravas, exhibited extraordinary love and affection for his people and fully identified with them. For instance, when an epidemic broke out in and around Kolei, he worked "so efficiently distributing remedies, attending to sanitation, going from house to house, nursing and cheering the sick, that the disease soon subsided".³⁸ Fr Caussanel, a Jesuit missionary, who worked in the region of Tirunelvely, as the parish priest of Vadakankulam, defended the legitimate rights of the downtrodden people in the Church.³⁹

The missionaries exhibited the love of Jesus to those who were in dire need by offering them humanitarian assistance especially during the eruption of natural calamities like famine and epidemics. Having been attracted by the ministry of compassion carried out by them, a sizable number of people belonging to the lowest strata of Indian society characterized by the rigid caste system courageously abandoned Hinduism and embraced Christianity in the 18th and 19th centuries. For instance, during the gruesome famine that rocked the Madras Presidency from 1876 to 1879, a massive hunger relief programme was organized, orphaned children were taken care of and the sick were provided with medical assistance by the missionaries on a par with the Government relief operation.⁴⁰ It is to be noted that the continuous threats from their Hindu landlords could not deter them or make them retract from their decision to join the Catholic Church. Feeding the poor, distributing clothes to the needy, helping them with their education, and initiating various development programmes for the downtrodden were some of the noteworthy services of the missionaries.

Christian Witness Today

Witnessing is the mission of the Indian Church which should be given by all Christians. It is our foremost responsibility to share the Good News of the Kingdom of God by living the Gospel values in our family, workplace and in public life. Our witness can be personal and communitarian. Hence:

1. At a time when many families in our society are facing a number of challenges and undergoing crisis due to social and cultural changes caused by the impact of Western culture and globalization, the Christian families are called to set an example by bearing witness to God's love in the neighbourhood and becoming the agents of harmony and reconciliation. The Gospel values should be nurtured, promoted and lived in the family. As *Ecclesia in Asia* pertinently observes, "the Christian family, like the Church as a whole, should be the place where the truth of the Gospel is the rule of life and the gift which the



family members bring to the wider community" (n. 46).

2. It is matter of fact that many of our parishes are just ritualistic communities which gather every Sunday for the celebration of the Eucharist. Many people think that our Christian obligation is only faithfully fulfilling the Sunday Mass. Rather, our communities are called to become witnessing communities, following the model of the early Christians described in the Acts of the Apostles (cf. 2:42-44). The life of witness can become a reality only at the grassroots level. Therefore, basic ecclesial

communities should be formed in all the parishes and our people should be guided and motivated to pray together, participate in the joys and sufferings of one another, share with the poor and the needy and fight for the rights of the oppressed and the dehumanized in the locality.

3. It is well known that corruption is rampant in every segment and every section of Indian society. It has spread its tentacles in to every sphere of life, namely, business administration, politics, officialdom and services. In fact, there is hardly any sector which can be described as not being infected with the vice of corruption. Honesty should be the hallmark of all Christians. They should come forward to create awareness of corruption in society and educate people to combat this evil. They are called to create a new culture of honesty, trustworthiness and accountability and thus "sanctify the world from within like leaven" (*Lumen Gentium*, n. 31). In our schools, colleges and other institutions the students must be constantly motivated to take every step to fight any corrupt and dishonest practice.

4. A new awakening is spreading fast among the poor and the marginalized to fight for a better and fuller human life. Dalits, women, tribals, unorganized workers, menial labourers, etc., have resolved to struggle to get back their rights and freedom to live in dignity as human beings in society. This awakening of the ordinary masses is a sign from God who invites the Christians to join hands with them, organize them and struggle with them so that what they desire is achieved.

5. Caste is a man-made evil. It is deep-rooted even today in our Christian communities and its dehumanizing elements are operative with the same severity and asperity as in any other community in India. Now the *kairos* has arrived for Christians to engage in fighting the caste mentality and eradicating every form of discrimination in Church and society. This must really be an authentic Christian witness.

6. Taking into account the pitiable and dehumanized condition of Dalit Christians who have been neglected and kept at the periphery, all Christians are called to show solidarity with them, to make an option in their favour, and to participate in their struggle for life.

7. The most striking and appealing dimension of Christianity is the message of love. The humanitarian services, rendered to the needy and the suffering through our institutions have always appealed to our Hindu brethren. Compassion or *karuna* is a virtue highly valued in the Indian tradition. The works of charity, educational services, medical care, social work and different welfare programmes, etc., have stood out as symbols of Christian love. In all our services the preference and topmost priority must always be given to the marginalized and dehumanized people. Thus, our institutions could continue to be an expression of our commitment to truth, love, justice and service. All Christian institutions need self-examination from time to time to find out how far they are really expressions of God's unconditional love for all.

8. Today a new consciousness is slowly spreading among the people of different religions on the need to unite with a view to promote peace and harmony, collaboration and participation in the race against religious fundamentalism, which is a growing phenomenon that threatens the unity and integrity of the human community. Some inter-religious groups are already working towards the realization of this goal. To become authentic witnessing communities, Christians should identify such groups and join hands with them for the promotion of social harmony. The creation of a new human community free from division, discrimination, corruption and evil practices cannot be achieved by the Christians alone. It is a joint venture. Collaboration with people of other religious traditions and all

people of good will is absolutely necessary since our common concern is for an all-round liberation and the creation of a new humanity.

The Asian Bishops have stressed:

that Christian communities must come forward to "work with other believers and believing communities for a world where people and communities are fully alive, for a communion of all life, for the final coming of God's dream". As human values such as, "life, dignity, equality, justice and social order", are values of the Reign of God, we must "co-operate with all believers and other people of good will who work to uphold human values".⁴¹

Witnessing Emanates from the Encounter with the Divine

For an authentic Christian witness what is indispensable is the inner awakening resulting from an encounter with the Divine. The experience of God as *Abba* shaped the life of Jesus and remained a dynamic force that led him to commit himself fully to the mission of bearing witness to God. The disciples of Jesus became a community of love and fellowship called *ecclesia* and joyfully bore witness to Christ only after experiencing the power of the Holy Spirit. The Pentecostal event touched their hearts, transformed their lives and led them to a new life of communion and witness. Today we can bear witness to the Gospel only to the extent that we go nearer to Christ, experience him in the depths of our hearts and allow him to transform our lives. Compassion is the hallmark of a person who has experienced the Divine in the depths of his heart: "Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful" (Lk 6:36. RSV).

Conclusion

Vatican II made it clear that "the entire Church is missionary", and "the work of evangelization is a basic duty of the People of God" (*Ad Gentes*, nn. 2, 35. Abbott). The Church is a community of Jesus' disciples who are sent forth to continue his mission in the same manner as he accomplished it in Palestine. The disciples are those who live with Jesus intimately, follow him closely and bear witness to him courageously. Wherever they are, they must become the salt, leaven and light of that place and manifest the love of God. Witnessing is the most appropriate way of doing mission today, taking into account the multi-religious context of our country. Hence our vocation is to become authentic witnesses of Jesus Christ in our Christian communities and society at large.

End Notes

¹ Cf. Jacob DHAMARAI, *Colonialism and Christian Mission: Post-colonial Reflection.*, Delhi: ISPCK, 1993; S. MANICKAM, *Studies in Missionary History*. Madras: CLS, 1988; Immanuel DAVID, *Reformed Church in America: Missionaries in South India*, Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 1986.

² K.M. PANIKKAR, *Asia and Western Dominance: A Survey of the Vasco Da Gama Epoch of Asian History 1498-1945*. London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1953, 481.

³ Delegates of the Congress *International Congress on Mission*, as in *For All the Peoples of Asia: Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences Documents from 1970 to 1991*, Vol. I, ed., Gaudencio B. Rosales and C.G. Arevalo, Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 1987, 14. (Hereafter cited as *FAPA*, Vol. I).

⁴ Delegates of the Congress, "International Congress on Mission", in *FAPA*, Vol. I, 131.

⁵ Workshop VII, "Co-responsible Evangelization", *International Congress on Mission*, Vol. I, 155.

⁶ Fifth Plenary Assembly, "Journeying Together Toward the Third Millennium", in *FAPA*, Vol. I, 281.

⁷ Fifth Plenary Assembly, "Journeying Together Toward the Third Millennium", in *FAPA*, Vol. I, 279.

⁸ Delegates of the Congress, "International Congress on Mission", in *FAPA*, Vol. I, 130.

⁹ Michael AMALADOSS, "Mission: From Vatican II into the Coming Decade" in *Making All Things New*. Anand: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, 1990, p. 273.

¹⁰ BIMA I, "Evangelization in Asia Today", in *FAPA*, Vol. I, 292.

¹¹ BIRA IV/11, "Statement of the Assembly", in *FAPA*, Vol. I, 319.

¹² BIRAIV/12, "Statement of the Final Assembly", in *FAPA*, Vol. I, 326

¹³ *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, n. 8.

¹⁴ D.S. AMALORPAVADOSS, ed., *The Indian Church in the Struggle for a New Society*, Bangalore: NBCLC, 1981, 62.

¹⁵ BIRA IV/2, "Final Statement of the Assembly", in *FAPA*, Vol. I, 252.

¹⁶ *Lumen Gentium*, n.1.

¹⁷ Jacob KAVUNKAL, "Developing Indian Missiology", *VJTR* 61 (1999) 180.

¹⁸ *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, n. 22; *Redemptoris Missio*, nn. 1-3.

¹⁹ George SOARES-PRABHU, "Following Jesus in Mission" in *Bible and Mission in India Today*, Mumbai: St Paul's Publications, 1993, p. 86.

- ²⁰ Joseph MATTAM, "Evangelization and Justice", *Third Millennium* 9 (2006) 35.
- ²¹ Jacob KAVUNKAL, "Church and Mission in Asia in the Light of *Ecclesia in Asia: A Critical Study*", *Jeevadhara*, 30 (2000) 297.
- ²² J. NEUNER, "A New Theology of Proclamation", in *The Future of the Asian Churches*, ed. James Kroeger and Peter Phan, Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 2002, 100-1.
- ²³ Jonathan TAN YUN-KA, "Approaches to Christian Mission in Asia", *VJTR* 67 (2003) 276.
- ¹⁴ FABC FIRST PLENARY ASSEMBLY, "Evangelization in Modern Day Asia", in *FAPA*, Vol. 1, 14.
- ²⁵ FABC FIFTH PLENARY ASSEMBLY, "Journeying Together Toward the Third Millennium", in *FAPA*, Vol. I, 282.
- ²⁶ M.K. GANDHI, *Harijan*, April 17, 1937.
- ²⁷ G. GISPERT-SAUCH, "Mother Teresa's Centenary: A Tribute", *VJTR* 74 (2010) 635.
- ²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 636.
- ²⁹ Albert HUART, "Mother Teresa: Joy in Darkness", *VJTR* 64 (2000) 654.
- ³⁰ Joachim JEREMIAS, *New Testament Theology: The Proclamation of Jesus*, Vol. I. London: SCM Press, 1971, 115.
- ³¹ Joseph MATTAM, "Jesus, Source and Model of Evangelization", *VJTR* 69 (2005) 587.
- ³² E.R. DODD, *Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965, 134.
- ³³ *Ibid.*, 136-8.
- ³⁴ Quoted by E.R. DODD, *ibid.*, 138.
- ³⁵ Cf. M.M. THOMAS, *The Acknowledged Christ of Indian Renaissance*. Madras: CLS, 1976.
- ³⁶ George SCHURHAMMER, *Francis Xavier: His Life, His Times*. Vol. II. Rome: The Jesuit Historical Institute, 1977, 456.
- ³⁷ Cf. Fr S. DEVARAJ, *History of Tiruchirappalli Diocese*. Tiruchirappalli: Bishop's House, 2011.
- ³⁸ M.A. SAVARIAR, "Missionary Spirit of Britto Inherited; by Fr John Baptist Trincal", in *St John De Britto: His Spirit and Mission*. Dindigul: CIS Publication, 1995, 92.
- ³⁹ A. SIVASUBRAMANIAM, "The Crusade Against Caste Domination in the Holy Family Church at Vadakkankulam", in *Jesuit Presence in Indian History*, ed. Anand Amaladoss. Anand: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, 1988, 334-58.
- ⁴⁰ Hugald GRAFE, *The History of Christianity in India*. Vol. IV. Bangalore: Church History Association of India, 1990, p. 96.
- ⁴¹ BIRA IV/12, "Statement of the Final Assembly", in *FAPA*, Vol. I, 333.

Ref.: *Vidyajyoti Journal of Theological Reflection*, Vol.77/1 January 2013, pp. 46-63.

Suresh Matthew, OFM–Cap
Evangelii Gaudium:
Pope Francis' Magna Carta For Church Reform

Pope Francis expresses his vision and dream of evangelization in *Evangelii Gaudium*ⁱ published on 24 November 2013 to mark the conclusion of the *Year of Faith* proclaimed by Pope emeritus Benedict XVI. Pope Francis' ideas about evangelization are seen not only in *Evangelii Gaudium* but also in many of his homilies and messages one can get glimpses of his vision. In this paper only two aspects are treated: a) his life witness as the quintessence of evangelization and b) the vision of evangelization as narrated in *Evangelii Gaudium*. However a few pages of this thesis cannot comprehend the whole vision described in *EG*.

Personal Life: An Invitation to Reform and An Epitome of Evangelization

A glance at the life of Pope Francis, after his election to the Holy See, demonstrates that his own personal life is the quintessence of evangelization. Many Church documents and well known theologians describe personal life and witness as the first instance of evangelization. Upholding this view, an outline is drawn to show how the personal life of Pope Francis is the embodiment of evangelization.



The Pope, right from the day of his election on 13 March 2013,ⁱⁱ has been in the headlines of newspapers and news channels for being a Pope with a difference. At his very first appearance on the balcony of St Peter's Basilica he won the hearts of the thousands of people gathered there on that cold breezy evening, and of the millions of people watching the event live on the electronic media, by requesting their prayers before blessing them. Bowing deeply before the people he asked them to pray not only for him but also for his Predecessor, Pope emeritus Benedict XVI.ⁱⁱⁱ His decision to take the name of Francis, after St Francis of Assisi known as the Second Christ, communicated to the Church and to the world what would be the new Pope's lifestyle. He made it even clearer on 16 March 2013, when he addressed the journalists who were in Rome to cover the Papal election.^{iv} The image of St Francis of Assisi embracing a leper came to mind on seeing the Pope hug a terribly disfigured man as an expression of the healing power of God through touch. His daily mass and homilies are broadcast within minutes of happening. All these and many more instances of the Pope Francis' life can be cited as proof that he is proclaiming Christ by word and deed.

He is proving to the world that the administration of the Church is not just a matter of changing the rules and laws but it is concerned with changing attitudes and interaction. He has set a standard of living as an example for them to emulate. His decision to wear an iron pectoral cross, change the residence from the Apostolic Palace to *Domus Sanctae Marthae*, a guest house, and his decision to use a five-year-old Ford Focus have created a stir in the higher echelons of the Church. He has instructed Catholic priests around the world to choose a simple vehicle, imploring them to think about the poor rather than of their own comfort. Followed by the clarion call to priests and bishops to change their lifestyle and mode of interacting. He wants them to be Shepherds after God's heart and thereby warns priests not to act as wolves but as shepherds.^v He is very emphatic when he asks priests and bishops to be on their guard against careerism, money and power. He has expressed his benevolence to the sinner but not to sin on various occasions. He has repeatedly asked priests not to turn the confessional into a torture chamber but into a place of mercy and asked them to represent the forgiving merciful Father in the confessional. This is all the more clear when he says that he would come to baptize the children of unwed mothers if priests do

immense love in the crucified and Risen Christ".^{xxx} He has devoted very few pages to the dogmatic aspect of mission and evangelization because on many occasions he says that they have already been taught or written about by his Predecessors.^{xxxi} In fidelity to Christ's teaching, the baptized have the duty to go and proclaim Christ. "All the baptized, whatever their position in the Church or their level of instruction in the faith, are agents of evangelization".^{xxxii} The source and strength of evangelization is explained as letting God take one beyond oneself and sharing what a believer has received at baptism. It is this sharing that makes a person fully human.^{xxxiii} A dignified and fulfilled life is attained only by reaching out to others.^{xxxiv} This communication of the Gospel is not the transfer of European culture. Any attempt to imitate the modes of expression developed by the European nations is decried by the Pope.^{xxxv}

Triple Mission of Evangelization

Pope John Paul II in *Redemptoris Missio* spoke of three situations of evangelization. They are: a) bringing the Good News to people, groups and socio-cultural contexts in which Christ is not known, b) a pastoral care amidst healthy mature Christian communities and c) an intermediate situation where the baptized have lost the sense of faith and no longer live as Christians.^{xxxvi} Taking a cue from *RM*, Pope Francis narrates three settings of evangelization. They are: a) pastoral care of the baptized b) bringing back the strayed, people who have lost the spirit of baptism and c) preaching to those who do not know Christ.^{xxxvii} After affirming this triple mission of the Church he quotes the Latin American Bishops and states that we cannot remain passively in our church buildings but have to leap into the fore of evangelization.^{xxxviii}

A Communitarian Involvement

Evangelization is not to be seen as isolated individual work, but rather as a communitarian activity. The mission is accepted by every single baptized Christian, but the mission is accomplished in a community. Therefore communion and mission are interconnected. This communitarian aspect forces people to get involved in the lives of people by word and deed. Therefore an evangelizing community is willing to stoop to touch human life, especially the suffering flesh of Christ. An evangelizing community is supportive and stands by people at every step of the way, no matter how lengthy or difficult it may be. Pope Francis rightly uses the term 'evangelizers smell the sheep' to express the involvement of evangelizers in the daily lives of people.^{xxxix} It is an invitation to imitate Christ who 'knows his sheep'.^{xl}

A Dream for Transformation

Pope Francis expresses his "dream of a missionary option" where the missionary impulse would first transform the Church, and channel her customs and structures to evangelize the world.^{xli} He recommends "the unified and complete sense of human life that the Gospel proposes as the best remedy for the ills of our cities". At the same time, 'a uniform and rigid programme of evangelization is not suited to the complex reality' of our cities. Therefore one must face the challenges of the culture of the city with the leaven of the Gospel.^{xlii}



The practical, revolutionary and radical suggestions in the Document may be considered the Magna Carta of Pope Francis for the reform of the Church. Through this Apostolic Exhortation the Pope has only written down on paper what he has been preaching throughout his life.

END NOTES

ⁱ FRANCIS, *Evangelii Gaudium*, Apostolic Exhortation on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today's World, 24 November 2013, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Vatican, 2013. Hereafter *EG*.

ⁱⁱ Cf. "Electio Summi Pontificis", in *AAS* 105 (2013) 362.

ⁱⁱⁱ Cf. "Promulgatio", in *AAS* 105 (2013) 363.

^{iv} Pope Francis frankly stated that it was neither Francis de Sales nor Francis Xavier that was behind the choice of his name, but St Francis of Assisi. Immediately after the papal election, Caudio Cardinal Humes had asked the newly elected Pope not to

forget the poor. The word "poor" re-echoed in his ears and then the idea of St Francis of Assisi, who loved the poor and lived a life of poverty, struck him and he decided to take the name of St Francis of Assisi. Cf. FRANCIS, "Allocutio S.P. ad Legatos Communicationis Socialis", 16 March 2013, in AAS 105 (2013) 381.

^v FRANCIS, Homily on 15 May 2013, "Clergy Must be Shepherds, Not Wolves, Says Pope", in <<www.ncregister.com/daily-news/clergy-must-be-shepherds-not-wolves-says-pope>> (Accessed on 1 December 2013)

^{vi} Cf. EG, nn. 1, 3.

^{vii} VATICAN COUNCIL II, *Ad Gentes*, Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity, 4 December 1964, in AAS 58 (1966) 947-990.

^{viii} PAUL VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, Apostolic Exhortation on Evangelization in the Modern World, 8 December 1975, in AAS 68 (1976) 5-76.

^{ix} JOHN PAUL II, *Redemptoris Missio*, Encyclical Letter on the Permanent Validity of the Church's Missionary Mandate, 7 December 1990, in AAS 83 (1991) 249-341.

^x Cf. P. KALLUVEETIL, "Evangelization: The OT Perspective", in *Bible Bhashyam*, vol. 37, no. 4, 2011, 308.

^{xi} Is 9: 3; 12: 6; 40: 9, 49: 13; Cf. EG, n. 4.

^{xii} Zech 9: 9; Cf. EG, n. 4.

^{xiii} Zeph 3:17; Cf. EG, n. 4.

^{xiv} Lk 10:21; Cf. EG, n. 5.

^{xv} Lk 1:28, 47; Cf. EG, n. 5.

^{xvi} Jn. 20:20; Acts 8:8; 13:52.

^{xvii} Cf. EG, n. 5.

^{xviii} "The Joy of the Gospel", in *L'Osservatore Romano*, Weekly Edition in English, 29 November 2013, 1.

^{xix} Cf. BENEDICT XVI, "Homiliae" in AAS 104 (2012) 874. It was a Homily on the Occasion of the Inaugural Mass of the Thirteenth Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops.

^{xx} *Ecclesia in Asia* is quoted five times in EG. The first instance is the effects of media as explained by the Bishops of Asia are presented in EG n. 62. The second instance cites the primacy of the proclamation of Jesus as seen in *Ecclesia in Asia* and is taken to describe the essence of evangelization in EG n.110. The third time the Pope quotes *Ecclesia in Asia* is to establish the fact that in the proclamation of the faith and Jesus Christ, the transplantation of European culture cannot be done; rather the faith has to be encapsulated within the local culture. Cf. EG, n. 118. The fourth time is to quote that "the Holy Spirit is the principal agent" of evangelization in EG n.122. The fifth time the Pope quotes *Ecclesia in Asia* is to state that "a pedagogy which will introduce people step by step" to the faith is required, cf. EG, n. 171.

^{xxi} *Ecclesia in Africa* is quoted twice in EG. The first occasion is where it quotes that *Ecclesia in Africa* is against globalization which pushes poor countries and their respective cultures into the background. The Bishops of Africa had complained that they have been considered merely as "cogs in a gigantic wheel". This is also true in the context of social communications where priority has not been given to their problems (cf. EG, n. 62). The second instance of quoting *Ecclesia in Africa* is to make a very powerful statement regarding the inculturation of the Gospel: "Christianity does not have simply one cultural expression" ... "but it will also reflect the different faces of the cultures and peoples in which it is received and takes root" (*Novo Millennio Ineunte*, n. 40), instead it takes the culture of the place where it is preached (*Ecclesia in Oceania*, n. 16). The assimilation of different cultures is compared to the image of "the bride bedecked with her jewels" (Is 61:10); cf. EG, n. 116.

^{xxii} *Ecclesia in Oceania* is quoted thrice by the Pope in EG. The first quotation is in the context of a renewal needed in the Church. He dreams of a renewed and revived Church, indeed: "all renewal in the Church must have mission as its goal if it is not to fall prey to a kind of ecclesial introversion, (n. 19)", cf. EG, n. 27. The second occasion is to appreciate the role of culture which offers positive values and forms which can enrich the way the Gospel is preached, cf. EG, n. 116. The third time Pope Francis refers to *Ecclesia in Oceania* is to remind us that the Bishops of Oceania invited "all missionaries to work in harmony with indigenous Christians so as to ensure that the faith and the life of the Church be expressed in legitimate forms appropriate for each culture" for the acceptance of the Good News by local people, cf. EG, n. 118.

^{xxiii} *Ecclesia in America* is used to emphasize the view that the role of the Church cannot be neglected in public life. Christian conversion demands that it review "those areas and aspects of life related to the social order and the pursuit of the common good", cf. EG, n. 182. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops is also quoted twice and they are very interesting to note. The first occasion speaks of moral relativism prevalent in the country and Pope very directly admonishes the Church by saying that on such occasions the Church "needs to provide an education which teaches critical thinking and encourages the development of mature moral norms" in people, cf. EG, n. 64. The second instance recalls the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops teaching: that "responsible citizenship is a virtue, and participation in political life is a moral obligation", cf. EG, n. 220.

^{xxiv} *Ecclesia in Medio Oriente* is quoted in the context of religious freedom. The Pope reaffirms the freedom of individual to choose and practice any religion what one considers to be true to his conscience and also the freedom to express his faith in public, cf. EG, n. 255.

^{xxv} Here the Pope is quoting the Second Special Assembly for Europe of the Synod of Bishops to reiterate his stand, cf. EG, n. 275.

^{xxvi} Cf. EG, n. 15.

^{xxvii} Cf. EG, nn. 10, 14, 15, 25, 83, 123, 124, 181, 198.

^{xxviii} Cf. EG, nn. 115, 122.

^{xxix} This dialogue is qualified in the first place as a conversation about human existence. It is a simple dialogue open to the followers of non-Christian religions: "sharing their joys and sorrows", cf. EG, n. 250.

^{xxx} Cf. EG, n. 11.

^{xxxi} Cf. EG, 51, 163.

^{xxxii} Cf. EG, n. 120.

^{xxxiii} Cf. EG, n. 8.

^{xxxiv} Cf. EG, n. 9.

^{xxxv} Cf. EG, n. 118.

^{xxxvi} Cf. RM, n. 33.

^{xxxvii} Cf. EG, n. 14.

^{xxxviii} Cf. EG, n. 15.

^{xxxix} Cf. EG, n. 24.

⁴⁰ Cf. Homily, 15 May 2013

^{xli} Cf. EG, n. 27.

^{xlii} Cf. EG, n. 75.

Abbé Ignace Ndongala
Socialisation Religieuse
et Engagement Politique des Chrétiens
– Une mise en perspective à partir des communautés
ecclésiales vivantes de base de Kinshasa (RDC)¹ –

Introduction

L'archidiocèse de Kinshasa vient de célébrer le 40^e anniversaire de l'érection de ses communautés ecclésiales vivantes de base (CEVB). Ces référentiels visibles d'une pastorale inculturée sont l'une des réalisations pastorales les plus importantes de l'épiscopat du Cardinal J.-A. Malula. L'institution des CEVB ne répondait pas seulement à l'opportunité pastorale. Elle correspondait aussi à un projet d'éveil et d'animation du laïcat. A ce titre, elle augurait une nouvelle forme de sociabilité ouverte à l'engagement des laïcs dans l'Église. Cette socialisation religieuse en gestation à Kinshasa a-t-elle suscité l'engagement des laïcs dans la société? La question est importante. Elle touche à l'efficacité politique de l'action de l'Église. Le présent article désire la déployer en gardant comme trame de fond le projet ecclésial du Cardinal J.-A. Malula. Nous entendons mettre au jour le contexte d'émergence des CEVB dans l'archidiocèse de Kinshasa pour expliciter ensuite leur apport à l'intégration sociale et à la socialisation religieuse des Kinois.² Nous pourrions, à tout le moins, proposer des réajustements que le vecteur de la démocratisation impose sur le point précis de l'engagement politique des chrétiens. Au terme, nous dégagerons quelques suggestions concrètes avant de conclure.

1. À l'origine des CEVB de Kinshasa, le projet ecclésial du Cardinal J.-A. Malula

Le phénomène des communautés ecclésiales n'est sans doute pas absolument nouveau en République Démocratique du Congo; évoquée en termes généraux en 1961 par la VI^e Assemblée de l'Épiscopat congolais, l'insertion du christianisme dans une société en pleine mutation au lendemain de l'indépendance nécessitait des communautés chrétiennes vivantes ouvertes à des nouvelles formes de sociabilité.³ Cette nécessité n'échappa pas au nouvel évêque de Léopoldville qui, en son temps, en avait appelé à «une Église congolaise dans un État congolais».⁴

Érigé dans une ville en pleine extension et en proie à un développement rapide des modalités de la vie sociale, l'archidiocèse de Kinshasa était confronté à des impératifs pastoraux nouveaux et des défis divers. La résolution de ces derniers imposait de rejoindre les lieux des Kinois en prenant en compte leurs multiples appartenances et la multiplicité des réseaux complémentaires de la ville de Kinshasa.

Pour avoir pris acte des limites de la structure territoriale de la paroisse, le Cardinal J.-A. Malula résolut de préserver les solidarités primordiales en promouvant les relations interpersonnelles. Il s'engagea à rejoindre le maillage naturel des réseaux humains de la ville. Pour ce faire, il intégra à la réflexion pastorale le processus d'individuation, de mobilité géographique, de différenciation sociale et de spécialisation fonctionnelle⁵. Il décida d'un nouveau redécoupage des paroisses susceptible d'une sociabilité religieuse en réseaux.⁶ L'évêque congolais exprima cette importante décision à travers une frappante expression: «Il va



falloir bombarder les paroisses actuelles pour les faire éclater en petites communautés à taille humaine».⁷ L'expression n'était pas une formule idéaliste, sans prise sur la réalité. Elle visait la création de paroisses plus petites. Il ne s'agissait pas encore de vraies 'communautés de base' qui relèvent d'un modèle d'Église qu'on n'imaginait pas encore clairement à cette époque. Mais le projet de reconstruire la paroisse par le lien communautaire était dans l'air.

La décision de bombarder les paroisses sous-tendait une redéfinition des rapports de l'Église avec le monde. Par fidélité au dernier concile, l'évêque de Kinshasa entendait promouvoir un desserrement des liens paroissiaux de manière à ouvrir la pastorale à un service renouvelé de la société kinoise en mutation constante. Cela dit, venant d'en haut, son initiative n'impliquait pas la sortie du modèle paroissial ni du modèle clérical traditionnel. Cette sortie se fera progressivement et sera attenante à un autre modèle ecclésial : une Église qui naît d'en bas en des groupes de croyants préoccupés de la vie dans leur milieu avec un souci de rayonnement social.

Comme il s'en explique: «Pour répondre aux besoins de décentralisation de l'action, et par souci d'efficacité, pour calquer les structures de l'Église sur les structures sociales naturelles, il est indispensable de développer là où elles existent, de les susciter ailleurs des Communautés de base dont la responsabilité doit être confiée à des laïcs».⁸ Bien que lui étant antérieure, l'option pastorale de l'archidiocèse de Kinshasa s'inscrivait dans la ligne de la déclaration des évêques d'Afrique et de Madagascar au synode sur l'évangélisation (1974): «C'est à ces communautés incarnées et enracinées dans la vie de leurs peuples, qu'il incombe au premier chef d'approfondir l'Évangile, de fixer les objectifs prioritaires de l'action pastorale, de prendre des initiatives qui s'imposent en vue de la mission, de discerner, dans la foi, les éléments traditionnels pouvant être conservés et les ruptures rendues nécessaires pour une véritable pénétration de l'Évangile dans tous les secteurs de la vie»⁹.

À l'évidence, l'archevêque de Kinshasa entendait faire des CEVB le lieu de participation à la mission d'évangélisation et d'engagement social, bref, une structure de plausibilité de la grâce baptismale possédée également par les laïcs et les prêtres. En effet, avec la valorisation de l'engagement actif des laïcs, le Cardinal congolais remettait en cause le modèle ecclésial hiérarchique et patriarcal ainsi que la pratique institutionnelle en cours. En effet, ils étaient articulés essentiellement autour du rôle primordial du prêtre à qui était dévolue la gérance de l'Église, la gestion du monde étant du ressort des laïcs. Entendons-nous bien, il ne s'agissait pas pour lui avant tout de suppléer à la pénurie des prêtres, mais de promouvoir une collaboration fraternelle entre prêtres et laïcs, chacun selon sa vocation, pour porter d'une manière plus actuelle le message du Christ dans la vie des gens là où ils sont, spécifiquement dans leurs quartiers de résidence. L'innovation qui, sur le plan doctrinal se réclamait de l'esprit de Vatican II, ne manqua pas sur le plan de l'organisation d'entraîner des réaménagements relatifs à la répartition des rôles dans le champ ecclésial¹⁰. Comme nous allons le voir sous peu, ces réaménagements s'inscrivaient dans la ligne de la réception du concile par l'Église de Kinshasa.

L'option prise par le Cardinal J.-A. Malula tranchait avec la mission de la paroisse traditionnelle telle qu'héritée des missionnaires. Longtemps tributaire d'une pastorale centrée essentiellement sur les structures et les institutions adossées au mode groupe et basées sur la proximité humaine ainsi que la solidarité globale, la configuration ecclésiale de l'archidiocèse de Kinshasa reposait sur la paroisse. Cette dernière, groupement géographique de fidèles structurellement hiérarchisés sous la houlette des prêtres, manifestait la réalité du corps du Christ dans les rassemblements dominicaux et autres activités spirituelles. Comme telle, elle était axée exclusivement sur le service religieux en fonction de l'appartenance géographique. Avec J. Buet, il faut reconnaître que les paroisses étaient «une transposition de paroisses de type «rural» adéquates, à la réalité d'une communauté où l'essentiel des activités et des relations des gens se déroulaient à l'intérieur d'un territoire restreint».¹¹

De fait, les paroisses à Kinshasa étaient conçues sur un modèle homogène, quelle que soit la fonction du quartier dans lequel elles étaient érigées. Avec les auteurs de *Mission de l'Église à Kinshasa*, il faut reconnaître que «très étendues et à population très dense, ne correspondant pas aux communautés naturelles, elles ne permettaient que rarement une action circonstanciée et intensive d'éveil et d'animation des laïcs».¹² Au total, les paroisses kinoises correspondaient à un mode de sociabilité rurale. Entretenant un lien lâche avec la vie quotidienne des Kinois, elles étaient désarticulées par les mutations socioculturelles observables à Kinshasa. Redonner aux paroisses un dynamisme et un support naturels devint une préoccupation constante du nouvel archevêque de Kinshasa. Dans la droite ligne de la VI^e Assemblée plénière de l'épiscopat congolais, en réponse aux mesures anticléricales des années 1972, et par fidélité au Concile Vatican II, le Cardinal J.-A. Malula entreprit le renouvellement des structures pastorales afin de susciter de véritables communautés chrétiennes et d'initier une pratique institutionnelle renouvelée. Selon lui, «les paroisses devraient se diversifier selon les structures de l'espace géographique qu'elles recouvrent et desservent: paroisses de transit, paroisses de communauté, paroisses résidentielles, paroisses, permanences de culte et de sacrements, etc».¹³

Sa préoccupation pastorale était grosse d'une approche ecclésiale renouvelée. Elle était la résultante d'un nouvel imaginaire de l'Église. Comme telle, elle répondait à la vocation de l'Église de Dieu dont il était devenu le pasteur: être une communauté fraternelle. Une telle vocation était effective et vérifiable. Elle était sous-tendue par un modèle participationniste, dont l'inscription (dans la réalité sociale et culturelle kinoise, a entraîné des déconstructions importantes. Celles-ci vont dans le sens d'une réélaboration doctrinale qui privilégie les charismes plutôt que le pouvoir et reconnaît à tous les baptisés le droit de participation à la vie ecclésiale et liturgique.¹⁴ À l'analyse, ces déconstructions sont de véritables innovations porteuses d'un nouvel imaginaire de la mission et d'un important renouvellement ecclésial. On retiendra parmi ces déconstructions, outre la restructuration de la paroisse, les réaménagements qui touchent au laïcat, à la liturgie et aux ministères.¹⁵

Évoquons d'abord la liturgie, car elle revêt une valeur heuristique. On observe à Kinshasa en effet, un renouvellement des rites et de la symbolique, un enrichissement de l'homilétique ainsi «qu'une liturgie corporelle expressive. Cette dernière allie liberté inventive et fidélité à la culture locale, à l'Écriture et à la Tradition. Fort du nouvel ancrage doctrinal, le dispositif liturgique en cours à Kinshasa rend compte de la structure fraternelle de l'Église.¹⁶ Avec l'adoption du «rite zaïrois de la messe».¹⁷ la réception de la réforme liturgique conciliaire a renouvelé le ministère de présidence et requalifié religieusement les laïcs au point de leur assigner des services divers.¹⁸ Elle a généré des novations caractéristiques qui affectent les sacramentaux et enrichissent la célébration des sacrements. Il est indéniable que la vision nouvelle de l'Église en gestation à Kinshasa a donné un autre sens au rendez-vous dominical qui est devenu un accomplissement de la journée des CEVB. Le rendez-vous dominical lui-même a concouru à tisser la trame des liens sociaux pour édifier l'Église en reliant la *didascalia* (catéchèse), la *marturia* (témoignage de vie) et la *diaconia* (prise en charge des nécessiteux) à la liturgie. En effet, la communauté eucharistique, forte de l'intelligence de la Parole de Dieu, est devenue une communauté missionnaire dont la diaconie dans le monde devient un potentiel d'engagement civique. La prise en compte de ce potentiel latent a modifié le visage de la paroisse. Nous constatons que non seulement, la paroisse comme unité pastorale de base était restructurée, par voie de conséquence, une de ses activités principales à savoir la sacramentalisation fut orientée vers un service renouvelé de la société. De distributrice de vie culturelle et de piété, la paroisse devint promotrice d'œuvres sociales et caritatives, et surtout lieu d'apprentissage ecclésial.

Il s'ensuivit que le projet de façonner l'éthos collectif et les comportements sociaux des Congolais qui, de manière préférentielle, reposait sur les élites sociales chrétiennes et l'Action catholique fut abandonné au profit de la formation, l'organisation et la structuration d'un laïcat chrétien adulte et engagé.¹⁹ Le programme diocésain de formation sous la tutelle du Centre Pastoral s'y était attelé en proposant des sessions en

complément de la formation de base qui portaient sur l'approfondissement de la foi des adultes dans les petites communautés, et la pédagogie libératrice inspirée tant de Paulo Freire, de l'Institut Lumko en Afrique du Sud, que du Monde Meilleur. L'enseignement social de l'Église a fait l'objet de conférences, sessions, cours du soir et publications.²⁰

On notera de plus qu'un cycle de formation d'animateurs de communautés fut institué ainsi que des sessions pour les Bayangeli (responsables des CEVB) et les membres du noyau. L'intérêt pour la formation des responsables des communautés chrétiennes et dirigeants de paroisses confiées à un responsable laïc fut couronné en 1980 par l'ouverture de l'Institut Supérieur des Sciences Religieuses (ISSR).²¹ C'est l'opportunité de signaler aussi la formation organisée pour les animateurs du Renouveau dans l'Esprit au sein des Facultés Catholiques de Kinshasa.

Il nous reste, pour être complet, à mentionner les nouveaux ministères laïcs nés en grande partie à partir de l'Institut des Sciences Religieuses (ISSR) de Kinshasa et grâce à l'impact des sessions Église/Monde. De Pierre Lefebvre, nous tenons que c'est au cours d'une session des anciens de l'ISSR à Kikwit que, partant des engagements effectifs sur le terrain des anciens, la trilogie (responsable de communauté, animateur pastoral, assistant paroissial) fut clairement énoncée avant d'être adoptée par l'archevêque de Kinshasa. Peu après, il instituera le ministère de mokambi (responsable laïc de paroisse), celui d'assistant paroissial et le ministère de l'animateur pastoral.²² Hâtons-nous de préciser que les deux derniers ministères étaient aussi exercés par les femmes.²³

2. Les CEVB de Kinshasa et la socialisation religieuse des Kinois

Nous venons de voir que dès leur institution, conformément au projet ecclésial du Cardinal J.-A. Malula, les CEVB de Kinshasa ont fonctionné comme une instance de socialisation primaire et qu'elles étaient structurées selon le modèle organisateur des relations fraternelles. Ceci est important à noter, car ce qui semble une rémanence des dispositifs relationnels spécifiques à la sociabilité rurale l'est effectivement, mais avec des accommodements notables. Le génie de l'archevêque de Kinshasa est d'avoir promu le retissage d'une sociabilité urbaine à travers un dispositif attachant au réseau territorialisé et lié aux quartiers de résidence. De nos jours encore, les images légitimatrices qui président à l'organisation des CEVB participent de l'imaginaire de la fraternité. Ce dernier émaille le dispositif d'inculcation mis en place par l'archidiocèse de Kinshasa et sous-tend les instances et supports de socialisation religieuse. Il ressort de l'observation effective des CEVB autant que des déclarations et pratiques des chrétiens kinois que la structure des relations dans les CEVB demeure portée par des normes et valeurs adossées à ce que l'archevêque de Kinshasa appelle des relations «*ndekologiques*»,²⁴ entendez des relations basées sur la fraternité. L'élaboration sur la «*ndekologie*» rend ainsi compte de l'identité commune des membres des CEVB. L'examen du lexique religieux des catholiques kinois et de leurs pratiques communautaires révèle que, comme production narrative, la «*ndekologie*» promeut deux signes de reconnaissance mutuelle : la nomination et la salutation. Disons un mot sur chacun d'eux.

La nomination de l'autre, une déclinaison de la fraternité²⁵

Il convient de ne pas perdre de vue que la fraternité évoquée à Kinshasa l'est dans un contexte où l'intégration des membres dans la société est hiérarchique. En effet, alors



que communément, les Kinois se désignent par le titre ou le rang social, en recourant à l'effet performatif de la nomination comme construction d'objet affectif, les catholiques kinois se nomment réciproquement «*ndeko*». La nomination «*ndeko*» dénote donc un déplacement dans les rapports entre les chrétiens kinois. Le Cardinal J.-A. Malula l'explique bien: «Autrefois un

jeune prêtre nouvellement ordonné, quand il s'adressait aux chrétiens adultes qui avaient peut-être le triple de son âge les appelait *Banabangai*: mes enfants. Aujourd'hui

tous disent: *Bandeko ba ngai ba bolingo*: Mes biens chers frères ou chères sœurs dans le Christ». ²⁶ Comme on peut le remarquer à l'analyse, le déplacement d'accent dans la manière dont les prêtres se situent par rapport aux fidèles va de la paternité spirituelle à l'affirmation des liens fraternels. Ceci est important à noter, car la désignation traditionnelle «*bana ba ngai*» (mes enfants) reposait sur une hiérarchisation implicite qui articulait la supériorité du prêtre autour de la grâce de l'ordination sacerdotale. La désignation «*bandeko ba bolingo*» (mes biens chers frères ou chères sœurs dans le Christ) repose sur l'égalité foncière entre les interlocuteurs, égalité se fondant sur la grâce baptismale. Elle relativise aussi les distances et clivages sociaux. Et le Cardinal J.-A. Malula de poursuivre: « Toutes ces expressions témoignent d'un grand changement dans la manière de considérer Dieu. C'est le primat de l'amour de Dieu et du prochain qui passe au premier plan de l'enseignement de l'Église ». ²⁷ On le voit, l'encadrement prégnant de l'amour met en avant la fraternité et se cristallise autour du concept de «*ndeko*» (frère, sœur). Il structure désormais les relations dans les CEVB et à la paroisse.

La désignation «*ndeko*» fait désormais partie des rites de sociabilité et condense autant d'apprentissages sociaux qui requièrent une manière autre d'interagir avec les autres. Le terme «*ndeko*» («*bandeko*» au pluriel) connaît une extension sémantique. Tout en gardant son sens premier, il acquiert une référence nouvelle qui l'affecte d'une signification originale. En dépassant le champ de la réalité profane, l'enrichissement du concept de «*ndeko*» se fait selon deux perspectives: l'une sacramentelle (les *bandeko* sont tous les régénérés dans le Christ par le baptême), l'autre spirituelle (les *bandeko* sont tout Homme porteur de l'image et de la ressemblance de Dieu, tout Homme pour qui le Christ est mort, quels que soient son âge, son sexe, sa race, sa religion, etc. (1 Co 8,11; Rm 14,15). Cette référentiation au sein de la visée de la foi ouvre le terme de «*ndeko*» à un nouvel horizon de signification qui renvoie à la fraternité universelle. ²⁸ Ce qui enrichit les concepts apparentés (*bondeko*, *kindeko*). En se ressourçant dans l'éthique de la fraternité, l'enrichissement de ces concepts revêt un impact quant à la pratique puisqu'on observe que dans les CEVB, la socialisation religieuse ne s'effectue plus selon le registre de l'autonomisation des prêtres ni l'exaltation de leur pouvoir, mais plutôt par l'interaction entre les fidèles.

Les valeurs et normes inhérentes à l'option pastorale du Cardinal J.-A. Malula sont bien intériorisées par les chrétiens de Kinshasa au point qu'ils l'inscrivent encore de nos jours dans des dispositifs et services divers: célébrations liturgiques (slogans, chants, rites), pratiques institutionnelles (dispensaires, centres pour handicapés), gestes (salutation) et expressions usuelles (identification). Autant de «produits chrétiens», de «concentrés d'apprentissages sociaux» adoptés par les Kinois et autres adeptes chrétiens congolais. Nous allons y revenir sous peu.

La fraternité initiée par l'archevêque de Kinshasa se vit entre autres lieux dans des «rassemblements en Eglise» attenants au réseau de relations basées sur la foi chrétienne vécue dans les quartiers. Arrêtons-nous un instant sur le concept qui sert à désigner ces rassemblements à Kinshasa: le *lisanga* («*masanga*» au pluriel). En effet, la désignation des communautés à taille humaine par le vocable «*lisanga*» est en elle-même très significative. ²⁹ Elle revêt une signification qui va au-delà du sens descriptif et sociologique. Du verbe *kosangana*: se réunir, s'assembler, se rassembler, le terme *lisanga* désigne la réunion, l'assemblée. ³⁰ Le même terme reçoit dans le champ religieux un sens plein et fort qui le place dans le réseau des concepts exprimant la communion. En ce sens, il apparaît dans le credo pour désigner la communion des saints (*lisanga lya basantu*). Par extension, il désigne les chrétiens qui communient au corps et au sang du Christ et que l'Esprit Saint rassemble en un seul corps. Le *lisanga* édifié par le Saint-Esprit coïncide avec le corps du Christ. ³¹ C'est donc l'assemblée constituée sur convocation du Père, l'Église au sens de «*lisanga lya bana ba Nzambe*» (assemblée des enfants de Dieu). Le lexique religieux des catholiques et leurs pratiques communautaires établissent une connexion entre les deux entités (*lisanga*-CEVB et *lisanga*-Église). Le concept de *lisanga* fait désormais partie de l'interlangue des chrétiens kinois où il se rapporte à la fois à l'assemblée des chrétiens et à la paraliturgie qui rassemble les chrétiens en un lieu et un jour fixes de la semaine. Il exprime la mise en œuvre effective du vivre-ensemble des fidèles habitant le même quartier et rend compte de la socialité des fidèles.

Les données de l'expérience ecclésiale illustrent combien le *lisanga* est un vecteur de construction de liens sociaux tissés sur base de la fraternité. C'est un espace d'acquisition et d'apprentissage d'une nouvelle forme de sociabilité. Tel qu'il vit dans la conscience chrétienne des Kinois, le *lisanga* est une réalité spatiale, sociale et ecclésiale qui se prête à la prière, à l'approfondissement de la foi, à sa transmission et à son inscription dans la vie quotidienne. Il se décline comme un lieu d'évangélisation et un lieu d'éclosion des responsabilités ecclésiales diversifiées. Il est le lieu de gestation des expressions et symboliques liturgiques nouvelles. C'est aussi un agent d'inculturation et un vecteur de promotion humaine intégrale qui exprime l'Église comme un «signe de présence du Christ dans le monde» (AG 15). Bref, c'est une instance d'appartenance ecclésiale et un lieu d'identification et d'intégration pour les chrétiens. Les *masanga* favorisent des relations de proximité et une forme de présence qui renouvellent le visage de la paroisse et font de cette dernière une communion des *masanga*, et donc le centre de rencontre, de coordination, de synthèse, de renforcement de la vie ecclésiale, de formation et d'encadrement des animateurs. Et, pourrions-nous ajouter, les *masanga* s'instituent et se constituent comme un acteur de changement social et même un révélateur de changement social.

Le découpage des *masanga* se fait selon le critère territorial. Bien qu'ils ne réunissent souvent qu'une catégorie homogène de fidèles, ce qui, reconnaissons-le, marginalise d'autres groupes sociaux, les *masanga* permettent des relations interpersonnelles fraternelles, des relations sociales d'interconnaissance et d'inter-reconnaissance³² qui promeuvent une coresponsabilité partagée et différenciée.³³ Nonobstant le fait qu'ils relèvent d'une construction orientée par la hiérarchie, les *masanga* rejoignent l'éthos des catholiques kinois et correspondent à leur sens commun. De manière générale, chaque *lisanga* a un visage spécifique et une histoire particulière que rend souvent le nom qui lui est donné. Au-delà de la diversité caractéristique des *masanga*, diversité attenante à la réalité kinoise diversifiée, les *masanga* ont une organisation interne et une structure composée outre des répondants des différentes commissions paroissiales, des *balendisi ya balabala*.³⁴

Lieu de socialisation de voisinage et de construction communautaire, les *masanga* (CEVB) promeuvent une socialisation autour de diverses valeurs qui participent à la création d'une nouvelle modalité du vivre-ensemble: tolérance, fraternité, hospitalité, entraide, solidarité, gratuité. Cette socialisation soutient une pratique d'élection des responsables, de discussion, de participation et de partage.³⁵ Elle requiert une éthique de la «fraternité différentielle» qui innerve la différence et la rend fraternelle en dépassant au niveau du droit les liens de sang, les frontières linguistiques, les barrières ethniques, les disparités sociales, les oppositions politiques et les limites confessionnelles. Parmi les mécanismes d'inculcation et de consolidation de cette fraternité, on retiendra le rite de salutation des chrétiens kinois.

La salutation, une manière d'advenir à l'autre

Alors qu'à Kinshasa, pour se saluer, on recourt à plusieurs formules ordinaires dont les plus courantes³⁶ se rapportent à la santé et à la forme physique, les catholiques kinois ont adopté à la suite du Cardinal J.-A. Malula une formule spécifique qui porte les aspirations des chrétiens au bien-être et leurs inspirations au salut: «*Boboto, bondeko, esengo*» (paix, fraternité, joie).³⁷ L'analyse des implications concrètes, de la signification et de la densité de cette formule de salutation fait éclore le sens des rapports fraternels que les chrétiens sont conviés à vivre au quotidien.

Porteuse des valeurs évangéliques, la trilogie «*boboto, bondeko, esengo*» tient ensemble la salutation juive (*boboto*, paix) et la salutation grecque (*esengo*, joie). La conjonction des mots paix et joie ne peut manquer de faire penser à la fraternité des premiers chrétiens.³⁸ Qu'il nous suffise ici de rappeler à la suite de L. Bouyer que «dans les salutations de l'antiquité les Juifs se souhaitaient la paix et les Grecs la joie. Le christianisme a réuni les deux en faisant d'un simple souhait formel une bénédiction effective; car, de même que la paix, la joie dont il s'agit n'est plus «comme le monde la donne», c'est la joie du Christ, fruit de la charité. Cette joie se trouve dans l'amour dont on est aimé du Christ et qui engendre l'amour dans les autres».³⁹

Cet amour est source de la fraternité (*bondeko*) caractéristique de tous ceux qui sont aimés du Christ. L'ordonnance des termes de la trilogie sous forme de climax établit un rapport de réciprocité entre le(s) locuteurs et le(s) destinataire(s).⁴⁰ La présupposition sociale de ce rapport n'est pas une simple formule de politesse ni un quelconque souhait, mais une responsabilité qui s'origine dans le baptême. Il convient d'accorder une particulière attention aux termes de la trilogie «Paix, fraternité, joie», car elle repose sur une attente implicite préalable dont les implications traduisent une pertinence topique. Il y a lieu de soutenir que la présupposition sémantique de cette trilogie assigne un rôle central à la fraternité.

En conjuguant le souhait de la fraternité, à la paix et à la joie, la salutation des chrétiens de Kinshasa décline la convivialité en faisant de la construction de la paix une exigence de la vie chrétienne. À bien observer les assemblées chrétiennes à Kinshasa, on découvre que l'échange de salutation devient une forme de reconnaissance mutuelle. S'il est vrai comme le souligne E. Lévinas que «le dire est une manière de saluer autrui, mais saluer autrui, c'est déjà répondre de lui»,⁴¹ l'on doit reconnaître que cette manière de se saluer des catholiques kinois a une valeur pragmatique à la fois d'identification et d'intégration. Elle est constitutive à double titre: sur le plan individuel, elle constitue chacun comme membre du *lisanga*; et sur le plan collectif, elle constitue le *lisanga* comme tel.



Dans la perspective décrite ci-dessus, le geste banal de salutation rend compte d'une modalité particulière du vivre ensemble qui devrait avoir une incidence sur la vie sociale aujourd'hui en désintégration. Au sein de cette dernière, le champ d'action de l'Église croise les dynamiques et structurations qui relèvent de la politique, dépendent de l'économie et véhiculent des valeurs. Tenir compte de ces dynamiques et structurations, c'était pour le Cardinal J.-A. Malula, faire du combat pour la justice une des exigences de la prédication de l'Évangile et donc de la mission de l'Église. Ce n'est pas un hasard si cette approche de la mission de l'Église a émergé après le synode de 1971 sur la justice et celui de 1974 sur l'évangélisation. D'un synode à l'autre, il apparaît, en effet, que désormais la mission intègre le dialogue et la diaconie Eglise-Monde. Utile perspective qui ouvre l'évangélisation aux questions économiques, politiques et à la prise en compte de la dimension éthique. On l'a déjà dit, c'est par fidélité à cette dimension de la mission que l'archevêque de Kinshasa fit de la quête d'une action circonstanciée et intensive d'éveil et d'animation des laïcs une priorité pastorale. Entendons bien, cependant, en dépit des avancées remarquables du synode de l'archidiocèse de Kinshasa (1986-1988),⁴² l'analyse ecclésio-sociale dans les CEVB n'a pas entraîné d'engagement politique. C'est peu dire que faute d'intégrer des actes à incidence politique, l'habitus des chrétiens de Kinshasa campe encore aujourd'hui dans l'engagement socio caritatif. Enlisées dans une culture d'apolitisme, les CEVB kinois ont un impact moindre sur la vie politique du Congo.

3. Des CEVB en transit entre la prescription religieuse et l'inscription politique

Comme beaucoup de théologiens l'ont noté, l'ecclésiologie de communion du dernier concile a promu de nouvelles valeurs dont l'inscription dans l'existence globale tient compte du social, de la culture, de l'économie et du politique. Nous avons déjà eu l'occasion de le souligner, la réception de ces valeurs à Kinshasa a trouvé un ancrage dans les CEVB. Dans tous les cas, cependant, quelques timides ouvertures vers le monde exceptées, les CEVB de Kinshasa gardent un caractère ecclésiocentrique. Ceci s'explique en partie par le contexte de leur érection. C'est en pleine enflure dictatoriale que les CEVB de Kinshasa ont vu le jour, et ce, dans la mouvance de la politique du recours à l'authenticité. La dynamique qui a accompagné leur érection était cultuelle et culturelle. Les CEVB étaient à l'origine des lieux de prière du quartier (*losambo ya quartier*).

L'intégration des membres y a été pensée et s'est réalisée selon la variable de la participation aux réunions et aux pratiques culturelles. En excellant dans des pratiques solidaires, les CEVB ont socialisé leurs membres aux valeurs de solidarité et aux œuvres de soulagement de la misère matérielle. C'est tout à leur honneur. Cela reconnu, il faut dire qu'elles ne se sont pas attaquées aux causes de la marginalité sociale de la population. Elles ont brillé d'un apolitisme démobilisateur accordé à la suppléance caritative. Pouvait-il en être autrement pour des institutions qui ont échoué comme une reproduction structurelle et organisationnelle de la paroisse? La question est importante, car l'éthique de la fraternité qui soutient la socialisation religieuse telle que vécue dans les CEVB requiert la traduction de la fraternité dans l'engagement politique. D'où la nécessité impérieuse de redécouvrir la portée politique du message chrétien.

Il est aisé de constater combien, au niveau primaire, les CEVB ont été au départ d'une fraternité vécue à travers diverses pratiques solidaires spontanées, naturelles et formelles (soutien des familles en deuil, prise en charge matérielle des pauvres, des indigents et des prêtres, défense des veuves, des prisonniers et des enfants accusés de sorcellerie ...). De fait, nous allons le voir, ces pratiques ont créé du sens et permis de relever les défis environnementaux, sociaux et économiques de l'heure. Bornons-nous ici à illustrer ce qu'il en est du défi économique.

La solidarisation religieuse, forte de nouveaux liens sociaux qu'elle a générés, a permis aux CEVB de relever le défi économique, lequel défi, corrélé avec la loi du marché et la flambée des prix, déstructurait le lien social. Ce fait est digne de mention. En effet, l'opération «vérité des prix» en 1978 offrait en des actes concrets ce que pouvait être une communauté de frères confrontés à un problème économique. Est-il besoin de dire que la mise en œuvre du «vivre-ensemble» des chrétiens, axée sur la fraternité, avait permis aux CEVB de décourager les nombreux intermédiaires et de mettre un terme à la spéculation sur le prix du pain ? Le système mis en place dans les CEVB concrétisait une alternative à une société basée sur le profit. L'opération «vérité des prix» était, à notre avis, un acte de subversion qui s'est révélé un antidote efficace à la spéculation et au fonctionnement utilitariste des rapports sociaux. Commencée avec la vente des pains, elle a inspiré l'opération «banque de vivres» et a été élargie à d'autres denrées alimentaires notamment le riz, le manioc, les haricots, etc.⁴³

Au niveau secondaire, le Cardinal J.-A. Malula avait encouragé des initiatives destinées à sortir l'Église locale de Kinshasa de la dépendance extérieure. Ces initiatives qui avaient stimulé des pratiques solidaires n'avaient pas manqué d'influer sur la vie des CEVB. Signalons-en deux de type relationnel élargi qui, se déployant au cours des célébrations eucharistiques, accordèrent une place centrale à la fraternité: *Pro Familia Dei* et «le Fonds Solidarité et Partage».⁴⁴ Évoquons enfin pour être complet les nombreuses initiatives placées sous le label de la fraternité: la pastorale des pauvres dénommée «Ekolo ya bondeko», les centres de santé et de nutrition, les villages bondeko (Centre de formation et de rééducation pour handicapés).

Au-delà de l'évidence de l'implication des CEVB à la socialisation religieuse des Kinois, s'impose le constat que cette socialisation n'ouvre pas assez à l'engagement politique. Il reste vrai dans cette perspective que les mouvements, associations des laïcs et les CEVB investissent plus sur le terrain social sans prolonger leur action dans l'arène politique. Bien que les sessions dites Église/Monde nées du Service pour un Monde Meilleur aient été données à tous les niveaux de l'archidiocèse, et que des documents du SCEAM tels que *Justice et Évangélisation en Afrique* (1981) et *Église et promotion humaine en Afrique* (1984) aient été vulgarisés, les CEVB ont continué à reproduire à leur échelle propre la fonction tribunitienne et d'allégement de la misère exercée par l'Église institution. La descente dans le concret de la décision politique au Congo étant subordonnée aux initiatives de l'épiscopat, les laïcs ont été exonérés de toute responsabilité sociale à caractère politique susceptible de mettre l'État devant ses responsabilités. Corrélativement, ils sont tenus à s'abstenir de tout engagement politique de nature à engager l'Église. Rien ne le prouve mieux que la censure par l'épiscopat du prophétisme des «marcheurs chrétiens».⁴⁵ Plutôt que d'en rester à des CEVB qui vivent par procuration et qui prescrivent à leurs membres le sens et des pratiques cloisonnés dans une pratique religieuse apolitique, il convient d'en arriver à des CEVB dont les membres, suffisamment formés à la responsabilité chrétienne, deviennent des sujets

qui, au nom des valeurs de l'Évangile, optent pour un mode d'insertion dans la société ne récusant pas l'engagement politique.⁴⁶

Ainsi, comme nous avons essayé de le montrer dans les lignes qui précèdent, les CEVB demeurent des lieux d'innovation de la pastorale et de diaconie caritative. Telles qu'elles se donnent à voir à Kinshasa, elles sont en transit entre la prescription religieuse et l'inscription politique. Il est temps maintenant de voir comment, elles peuvent devenir des lieux de circulation d'un message libérateur dans la société et jeter ainsi les bases d'un nouvel ordre social et politique.

4. Éléments d'une propédeutique de l'engagement politique des CEVB

Une idée courante est que la mission première de l'Église est d'ordre essentiellement religieux. Il convient de la compléter en reconnaissant que l'Église est une instance sociale productrice de sens et d'éthique. À ce titre, bien que religieuse, sa mission comporte aussi une dimension sociopolitique. Nous n'entrerons pas ici dans le débat que charrie l'expression «l'Église ne fait pas de politique». Nous remarquerons seulement que se retrancher derrière la neutralité de l'Église n'est qu'une démission feutrée qu'affectionne le «démon de la pureté» et que conforte le zèle «des mains propres». Cette prétendue neutralité qui n'est que camouflage et camouflet à la réalité dessert la cause de Jésus au profit de ceux qui détiennent le sabre (le sceptre ou la canne) du pouvoir. Ainsi se conclut une alliance entre l'autel et le trône au grand dam de ceux qui, au bord du chemin, sont assis, courbés, blottis et écrasés par l'injustice sociale. Comme le fait observer R. Mehl, «une Église qui de fait, a partie liée avec le pouvoir, dont elle accepte au moins le système des valeurs, ne saurait en aucun cas être l'Église des pauvres, des opprimés, des laissés pour compte. Elle a beau, au travers de sa hiérarchie, affirmer sa neutralité politique; cette neutralité, elle-même, parce qu'elle tend consciemment ou non, à ne pas gêner le pouvoir, constitue déjà un acte d'allégeance politique».⁴⁷ La justesse de cette observation nous amène à conclure que la supposée neutralité de l'Église congolaise ne lui permet pas d'aller au bout de sa mission.

Il ne fait pas de doute, selon nous, qu'en structurant aujourd'hui les rapports sociaux selon le modèle de la famille et de la fraternité, l'Église qui essaie de signifier dans ses engagements des anticipations du Royaume de Dieu annoncé par Jésus ne devrait pas négliger la dimension politique. Puisqu'elle entend participer à la construction d'un monde humain et fraternel, le monde-que-Dieu-veut, et donc réaliser hic et nunc la justice, la liberté, la paix et la réconciliation, l'Église se doit d'être prophétique. Ce prophétisme auquel renvoie le premier Synode africain⁴⁸ requiert d'être actualisé. Mais comment le traduire dans le fonctionnement repérable? De quels moyens dispose l'Église de Kinshasa pour ce faire? Il nous reste à répondre à ces questions dont l'intérêt pour la diaconie de l'Église est particulièrement évident.

Segment d'une société en crise, l'Église famille qui séjourne au Congo Kinshasa se trouve aujourd'hui touchée par les soubresauts de la démocratisation du pays. S'investissant plus dans la prière et l'engagement social de suppléance, les CEVB de Kinshasa ont évolué comme une instance d'intégration sociale et de socialisation intergénérationnelle exerçant une fonction de cohésion fondamentale et d'attestation d'un vivre-ensemble marqué du sceau de la fraternité. Ce faisant, elles se sont inscrites dans la tradition du statu quo et donc dans une ligne relativement conservatrice. Elles n'ont par conséquent pas été un lieu d'analyse sociale ni de prise de conscience des problèmes, des ruptures dont parle la Déclaration des évêques.⁴⁹ On peut ainsi comprendre sans méprise que l'ancrage religieux dans les CEVB n'entraîne pas un engagement politique institutionnel de contestation ni de protestation. Il est permis de penser à la suite de L. de Saint Moulin que «le rôle confié aux communautés ecclésiales de base, qui ont été organisées essentiellement sous forme de communautés de quartier, dépasse sans doute leurs possibilités: elles sont un instrument adéquat pour la prise en charge des problèmes de quartiers, y compris la christianisation des deuils et de nombreux aspects de l'éducation, mais, laissées à elles-mêmes, elles sont sans forces adéquates pour la promotion de la justice dans le monde et la lutte contre les structures sociales qui écrasent les pauvres».⁵⁰ Il y a une observation d'une incontestable justesse dans cette remarque. Il ne faudrait cependant pas la durcir au point de dédouaner les

CEVB de toute intégration sociopolitique de ses membres. Sur cette lancée, nous pensons qu'il convient de dépasser le modèle de l'instruction scolaire des CEVB et revoir son mode de fonctionnement.

Il faut en premier lieu relever que les CEVB de Kinshasa reproduisent les limites des paroisses, notamment la difficulté d'appropriation libératrice du message évangélique et la limitation du potentiel d'engagement politique des fidèles. Gardant quelques relents du modèle paternaliste d'exercice de l'autorité, leur fonctionnement actuel reproduit le modèle d'encadrement et repose sur quelques membres à qui sont dévolues les fonctions de direction. On peut regretter cette lacune qui conforte la cléricatisation des laïcs responsables et consolide la «paroissialisation» des CEVB.

Il faut ensuite souligner la dépendance des CEVB à l'égard du feuillet Iisanga.⁵¹ Ce feuillet qui informe et forme les membres des CEVB devrait aussi les transformer pour donner forme au Royaume de Dieu. Cette observation ne nous fait aucunement, bien sûr, oublier ni minimiser le leadership gestionnaire ou intentionnel exercé actuellement par les laïcs. Nous voulons simplement insister sur la nécessité de former les laïcs au leadership transformateur.⁵² Il se trouve que le modèle de l'instruction scolaire du feuillet Iisanga empêche de nouvelles interprétations de l'Évangile et confine dans une orthodoxie au service de l'inculturation contrôlée. Pour sortir des rets de l'encadrement religieux, de l'homogénéisation des CEVB on gagnerait à soutenir l'autonomie relative des CEVB dans le choix et le traitement des thèmes. Ce qui permettrait le passage des CEVB objets aux CEVB sujets capables d'une action transformatrice de la société. Encore, ne faut-il pas négliger, dans le sillage de ce passage, la conscientisation des chrétiens et leur responsabilisation. Il est sûr, en tout cas, que cette dernière s'avère indispensable en ce temps où l'Église participe à la consolidation du processus démocratique au Congo. L'implication ces dernières années de l'Église dans l'éducation civique et électorale donne une réelle actualité et un certain caractère d'urgence à la participation des CEVB à l'édification d'un État de droit. En allant plus loin dans cette perspective, nous suggérons de faire des CEVB des matrices de politique qui réactivent la conscience missionnaire des chrétiens, ravivent le dynamisme prophétique des baptisés et remobilisent les ressources disponibles au sein de la société civile. Bref, des lieux d'apprentissage de la culture politique de citoyenneté, de changement et d'alternance. Cet apprentissage multiforme est d'importance. Il peut être propice au passage du social au politique et donc, à l'émergence d'un espace civique et au-delà, à une recomposition de l'espace politique.

Conclusion

Cette présentation naturellement trop rapide a permis cependant, nous l'espérons, de saisir de quelle façon l'action de l'Église à l'heure de la démocratie à la congolaise requiert la descente dans le concret de l'engagement politique. On peut observer que jusque-là, les CEVB sont polarisées vers des thèmes ecclésiocentriques et culturels. Il convient d'ouvrir ces thèmes aux questions politiques. Bien qu'elle n'exerce aucun pouvoir politique, l'Église est conviée à augmenter son expertise sur son fonctionnement interne et, grâce à l'action des membres des CEVB, à peser sur la politique. Puisqu'elle livre des principes directeurs du comportement pratique des chrétiens en conformité avec l'Évangile et la doctrine sociale de l'Église, elle devrait aussi travailler à l'émergence de chrétiens qui agissent en acteurs sociaux et politiques dans l'espace public. Il nous semble que, comme nous l'avons déjà remarqué, et ce, sans avoir à prôner un activisme politique, c'est aux CEVB de travailler à la conscientisation politique par la structuration des chrétiens actifs et des sujets politiques qui feront demain partie de la société civile.

Les développements précédents l'ont montré, il convient de renforcer le niveau d'éducation politique, de formation et d'information des chrétiens. Prendre au sérieux cette mission amène l'Église à se défaire de l'empirisme et de la perspective instrumentale caractéristiques du fonctionnement actuel des CEVB. Quatre décennies après leur création, les CEVB ne doivent plus fonctionner comme un rouage de plus dans le dispositif bureaucratique de quadrillage du territoire diocésain.⁵³ Pour développer leur potentiel innovant, il est parfaitement exact de renoncer à faire d'elles le réceptacle des idées et programmes élaborés par des spécialistes archoutés dans leurs certitudes. Nous

pensons que le temps est venu où l'Église dans sa hiérarchie est conviée à tenir compte du potentiel d'engagement civique et politique des CEVB. La fraternité qui s'y déploie et la nouvelle sociabilité qu'elle engendre requièrent d'en faire des laboratoires d'actions prophétiques spontanées de manière qu'elles deviennent un corps social alternatif et des lieux d'apprentissage de la culture démocratique.⁵⁴

C'est à partir de ces cellules d'Église, véritables réseaux de voisinage, de proximité et de sociabilité, que l'Église est conviée à soulever la pâte d'une humanité enfin humaine. C'est aussi au sein de ces creusets d'entraide et de convivialité qu'elle a à faire émerger une société civile engagée et déterminée à inventer les structures de rassemblements ouvertes à l'engagement concret. Une telle invention créatrice en faveur de la reconstruction du Congo requiert des chrétiens, outre la prière et le partage de la Parole de Dieu, trois formes novatrices d'apprentissages prospectifs: l'analyse sociale, la réflexion éthique et l'action. Voilà qui nécessite une information objective sur les réalités sociales et sur la crise congolaise ainsi qu'une vulgarisation de l'éducation des consciences. Ces apprentissages ne s'inscrivent-ils pas dans la ligne du devoir assigné par les évêques africains aux Églises familles? Rappelons ce noble devoir: «Travailler à transformer la cité».⁵⁵ À n'en point douter, ce devoir est aujourd'hui une des missions des CEVB de Kinshasa.

End notes

¹ La rédaction de cette contribution a été rendue possible grâce à une bourse de recherche octroyée par l'Institut de missiologie Missio-Aachen (Allemagne).... L'auteur remercie le Père Pierre Lefebvre pour les remarques et les compléments apportés à cette contribution.

² Kinois désigne les habitants de Kinshasa, capitale de la République Démocratique du Congo.

³ Lire Actes de la Vie Assemblée plénière de l'épiscopat du Congo (20 novembre-2 décembre 1961), Léopoldville, 1961.

⁴ Expression célèbre prononcée le 20 septembre 1959, par J.-A. Malulau cours de son ordination épiscopale. Revenant 20 ans après sur ces paroles, l'évêque de Kinshasa affirme: «Le Seigneur a mis dans ma bouche des paroles dont moi-même j'ignorais l'impact sur ma vie et la grande portée dans l'histoire de notre pays /.../ L'Esprit-Saint qui avait mis ces paroles dans ma bouche savait ce qu'il voulait. Par ces paroles, l'Esprit a tracé tout le programme de ma vie; il a indiqué les deux directions, les combats de toute ma vie épiscopale: la lutte pour le surgissement d'une Église authentiquement africaine et la lutte pour un Congo juste, humain et fraternel». On retiendra ici le recours au mot «fraternel» dont l'élaboration émaillera l'épiscopat de J.-A. Malula comme en témoignent ses nombreuses et fécondes initiatives pastorales. Lire «Sermon aux agents de l'évangélisation», du 20 septembre 1979, repris dans L. DE SAINT MOULIN, *Œuvres complètes du cardinal Malula*, vol. 3, Kinshasa, Facultés catholiques de Kinshasa, 1997, p. 112.

⁵ Sur les transformations de l'espace urbain kinois et les problèmes d'adaptation pastorale y afférents, lire F. HOUTART, «La pastorale urbaine dans les villes d'Afrique», dans F. HOUTART et J. RÉMY, *Milieu urbain et communauté chrétienne*, Paris, Marne, 1968, pp.122-142; L. DE SAINT MOULIN, *Visage de Kinshasa et Problèmes de pastorale*, Kinshasa, Editions du C.E.P, 1969.

⁶ Lire en ce sens les réflexions contenues dans le document *Mission de l'Eglise à Kinshasa*, Kinshasa, Archidiocèse de Kinshasa, 1970.

⁷ J.-A. MALULA, *L'Église à l'heure de l'africanité*, Kinshasa, Saint Paul Afrique, (1973), p. 11.

⁸ L. DE SAINT MOULIN, *Œuvres complètes du cardinal Malula*, Vol. 4, p. 40.

⁹ «Promouvoir l'évangélisation dans la coresponsabilité», dans Documentation catholique, 1664, 17 novembre 1974, pp. 995-996.

¹⁰ Il faut reconnaître qu'on en est resté à une pastorale d'encadrement confinant les prêtres dans la fonction culturelle. Ce qui n'en faisait pas des animateurs de la communauté paroissiale ni des agents de changement.

¹¹ J. BUET, «Kinshasa. Horizon 1975», dans Orientations Pastorales 128, janv.-févr. 1970, p. 19.

¹² *Mission de l'Église à Kinshasa Options pastorales*, Kinshasa, Archidiocèse de Kinshasa, 1970, p. 18.

¹³ J. BUET, «Kinshasa. Horizon 1975», art. cit., p.19. Les diverses modalités de regroupement ecclésial retenues par l'archevêque de Kinshasa ne virent malheureusement pas le jour.

¹⁴ SUR cette notion de participation, lire M. PELCHAT, «Participer: devenir sujet actif dans l'Église», dans G. ROUTHIER, M. VIAU (dir.), *Précis de théologie pratique*, Bruxelles, 'Montréal, Lumen Vitae, Novalis, 2004, pp. 585-596. On trouvera des élaborations intéressantes sur les charismes chez G. ROUTHIER, «Gouverner en Église: entre gestion pastorale et gouvernement spirituel», dans G. ROUTHIER, M. VIAU (dir.), *Précis de théologie pratique*, op.cit, pp. 644-646.

¹⁵ Nous laissons de côté les mouvements des jeunes (BilengeYa Mwindi, Kizito-Anwarite) dont l'impact reste à établir.

¹⁶ Nous avons développé cet aspect dans «L'Église de Dieu qui est à Kinshasa (1979-1989). Contribution à l'étude de l'image de l'Église-fraternité», dans M. CHEZA et G. VAN'T SPIJKER (dir.), *Théologiens et théologiennes dans l'Afrique d'aujourd'hui*, Paris, Karthala, Yaoundé, Clé, 2007, pp. 191-193.

¹⁷ L'appellation impropre est communément usitée pour désigner la manière zaïroise de célébrer le rite romain.

¹⁸ Sur les avancées et les limites de la manière congolaise de célébrer l'Eucharistie, lire E. KABONGO, *Le rite zaïrois. Son impact sur l'inculturation du catholicisme en Afrique*, Brussel, Peter Lang, 2008; I. NDONGALA MADUKU, «Le rite congolais de la messe: 30 ans après. Enjeux ecclésiologiques du point de vue de

l'inculturation», dans *L'Eucharistie dans l'Eglise-Famille à l'aube du 3^e millénaire*. Actes de la XXII^e semaine théologique de Kinshasa de Kinshasa. Du 28 au 31 mars 2001, Kinshasa, FCK, 2001, pp. 91-104.

¹⁹ Dans la ligne de notre réflexion antérieure, il nous paraît suggestif de renvoyer à notre contribution «L'engagement des chrétiens dans la société congolaise (RDC). Évolution de la pensée et des pratiques à Kinshasa», dans *Spiritus* 189, décembre 2007, pp. 445-453.

²⁰ L'impact de tout cela n'a pas toujours été spectaculaire, car la mentalité cléricale d'une Église institution pour la religion, était fortement ancrée. - Quand même, il y eut la fameuse marche, et aussi la pétition initiée en 1998 par le CIAM qui réunit 80.000 signatures pour l'annulation de la dette. Les signatures avaient été obtenues après une réunion de sensibilisation très politique. Une brochure sur la dette (*Rendez-vous noire argent*) publiée par le CIAM eut un grand succès.

²¹ Depuis 1985, l'ISSR dont le programme de formation en trois années est centré autour de trois axes (Bible et dogme, catéchèse et pastorale, sciences humaines et développement) développe une pédagogie qui allie enseignement magistral et travaux pratiques. Nous pensons que plus de trois décennies après 1985, au regard des mutations de la société congolaise et des acquis de la recherche en pédagogie des adultes, une nouvelle impulsion devrait être donnée à l'ISSR.

²² Sur ces ministères, lire L. SANTEDIKINKUPU (dir.), *L'avenir des ministères laïcs. Enjeux ecclésiologiques et perspectives pastorales*. Actes du Colloque célébrant le 20^e anniversaire de l'Institution des Ministères laïcs à Kinshasa (du 19 au 24/11/1995), Kinshasa, Signes des Temps, 1995.

²³ A ce sujet, on pourra se reporter à notre article, «Femmes et Hommes partenaires égaux de l'Église-famille de Dieu dans la réalité ecclésiale de Kinshasa ?», dans *Mission de l'Église*, 150, janv.-mars 2006, pp. 67-70.

²⁴ Lire J. Malula, *Foyer heureux*, Leverville-Kikwit, Bibliothèque de l'Étoile, 1951.

²⁵ Nous nous inspirons ici de notre contribution, «L'Église de Dieu qui est à Kinshasa (1979- 1989). Contribution à l'étude de l'image de l'Église- fraternité», dans M. CHEZA et G. VAN'T SPIJKER (dir.), *Théologiens et théologiennes dans l'Afrique d'aujourd'hui*, Paris, Karthala, Yaoundé, Clé, 2007, pp. 191-193.

²⁶ L. de Saint Moulin, *Œuvres complètes du Cardinal Malula*, Vol. 3, Kinshasa, Facultés catholiques de Kinshasa, 1997, p. 123.

²⁷ *Ibidem*.

²⁸ Dans la retraite prêchée aux étudiants de l'UNAZA en 1976, le Cardinal J.-A. Malula exprime cette fraternité universelle en disant : « Tout homme devient et est mon frère ». Lire L. de saint Moulin, *œuvres complètes*, Vol. 6, p. 127.

²⁹ La désignation de ces communautés à Kinshasa a été fluctuante. On est passé des Communautés ecclésiales de base (CEB) aux Communautés ecclésiales vivantes (CEV) puis enfin aux Communautés ecclésiales vivantes de base (CEVB).

³⁰ Dans le vocabulaire politique congolais, *lisanga* désigne l'assemblée, l'association, le parti, le parlement. Lire R. KASORO TTJMBWE, «Le français, langue de la politique au Zaïre? Observation du langage politique depuis le début du processus de transition vers la démocratie», dans A.-M. D'ANS (dir.), *Langage et politique. Les mots de la démocratie dans les pays du Sud de l'espace francophone*, CIREFA-Acct, (1995), p. 80.

³¹ La traduction lingala de l'invocation pour demander l'envoi de l'Esprit Saint en vue de la communion (prière eucharistique II du missel romain) s'articule autour de l'unité du *Iisanga*. Ici le *lisanga* coïncide avec le corps unique du Christ.

³² O. BOBINEAU, «Sociabilité et socialisation paroissiales: une comparaison franco-allemande», dans *Archives de sciences sociales des religions*, 133, janvier-mars 2006, pp. 93-114.

³³ Notre présentation appelle bien évidemment des nuances qu'on trouvera chez B. UGEUX, *La pastorale des petites communautés chrétiennes dans quelques diocèses du Zaïre*, Paris, 1988; P. LEFEBVRE, «Les communautés de base à Kinshasa. Éléments d'analyse critique», dans *Bulletin de Théologie Africaine* VI 11, janv.-juin 1984, 5-16.

³⁴ Ce sont des chrétiens qui animent la vie de l'Église dans les rues des différents *masanga*. Par des visites, ils confortent les chrétiens et servent de relais entre la paroisse, les *masanga* et la rue. Lire N. KALONJI NGOYI, *Balendisiyabalabala*, (Lisanga n°10), Kinshasa, Ed. Lindonge, 1998.

³⁵ Le registre interlocutif privilégié dans les CEVB est celui du «partage» plutôt que celui du dialogue. Les CEVB sont donc des lieux de partage d'expériences, de vie, de la parole de Dieu et de manière ponctuelle du Corps du Christ. L'Eucharistie y est le creuset du vivre ensemble. Sur la distinction entre dialogue et partage, lire F. JACQUES, «Trois stratégies interactionnelles. Conversation, négociation, dialogue», dans *Échanges sur la conversation*, Paris, CNRS, 1988, pp. 45-68.

³⁶ *Mbote*, (Bonjour), *boni? obimi?* (comment?), *ozalimalamu? ozali?* (comment?), *ndengenini?* (Comment ça va ?).

³⁷ L'élaboration créative des CEVB a donné une extension à la trilogie au point d'intégrer, au gré des circonstances, les concepts d'amour, de travail, de justice et d'autres concepts encore.

³⁸ On retrouve la même conjonction chez Saint Paul. En articulant les deux mots (ici la joie précède la paix), il les fait découler de l'amour (Gal 5,22 ; Rm 15,13).

³⁹ L. BOUYER, *Le quatrième évangile*, Paris, Casterman, Tournai, Maredsous, 1955, p. 206.

⁴⁰ La salutation procède climax et se déploie ainsi: Destinateur(s) Destinataire(s) Paix (boboto) Fraternité (bondeko) Fraternité (bondeko) Joie (esengo)

⁴¹ E. Levinas, *Éthique et infini*, Paris, P. Nemo, pp. 82 et 93.

⁴² Il faut le dire pour le déplore, avec le décès du Cardinal J.-A. Malula, la réception de ce synode n'est plus à l'ordre du jour.

⁴³ Sur ces initiatives, lire N. KALONJINGOYI, «Les communautés de base dans l'archidiocèse de Kinshasa», dans *Spiritus* 143, juin 1996, pp. 132-136, surtout p. 133.

⁴⁴ Ces deux œuvres sont les produits des quêtes ponctuelles destinées respectivement à couvrir certains besoins des prêtres et religieuses diocésains et à aider les pauvres et les nécessiteux.

⁴⁵ D'après l'opinion commune, la marche des chrétiens du 16 février 1992 n'était pas autorisée par les évêques. Elle ne put être préparée, au niveau des CEVB, ces dernières étant sous contrôle des évêques au nombre desquels, certains étaient partisans du statu quo. Ces derniers ne soutinrent que du bout des lèvres les

victimes des sbires du président Mobutu. Le fait est là : la marche de l'espoir donna lieu à une crise non pas entre les fidèles et l'État, mais plutôt entre les prêtres protagonistes de la marche et leurs évêques.

⁴⁶ Nous nous inspirons ici de la distinction faite par A. CHARRON, «Ville, pratiques religieuses et mission chrétienne», dans *Théologiques*, vol. 3, 1, 1995, pp. 61-88. Ici, la page 71.

⁴⁷ R. MEHL, «Les groupes informels dans l'Église. Un point de vue protestant», dans R. METZ et J. SCHLICK (éd.), *Les groupes informels dans l'Église*. 2e Colloque du Cerdic. Strasbourg ; 13-15 mai 1971, Strasbourg, Cerdic Publication, 1971, p. 237.

⁴⁸ D'après le pape Jean-Paul II, «l'Église doit continuer à jouer son rôle prophétique et être la voix des sans voix» (E1A 70).

⁴⁹ Voir supra la note 9.

⁵⁰ L. DE SAINT MOULIN, «L'évangélisation en profondeur dans les écrits du Cardinal Malula, Pertinence pour la théologie africaine». Texte à paraître aux Éditions Karthala dans les *Mélanges L. Bertsch*.

⁵¹ Le feuillet est édité par la commission CEVB de l'archidiocèse. Il propose des thèmes qu'il développe suivant la méthode voir, juger, agir. L'apport du feuillet «*lisanga*» est reconnu par toutes les paroisses. En revanche, nous pensons que ce dispositif d'inculcation fonctionne plus comme un dispositif de contrôle de l'orthodoxie. Il devient manifeste qu'une équipe interdisciplinaire et diversifiée devra s'occuper de ce feuillet. Sa tâche ne devrait pas se limiter à rédiger le feuillet, mais aussi à former tous les membres des CEVB (pas seulement les responsables) à l'analyse sociale.

⁵² Sur le leadership, lire G.-A. ARBUCKLE, *Refonder l'Eglise. Dissentiment et leadership*, Québec, Bellarmin, 2000, pp. 145-155.

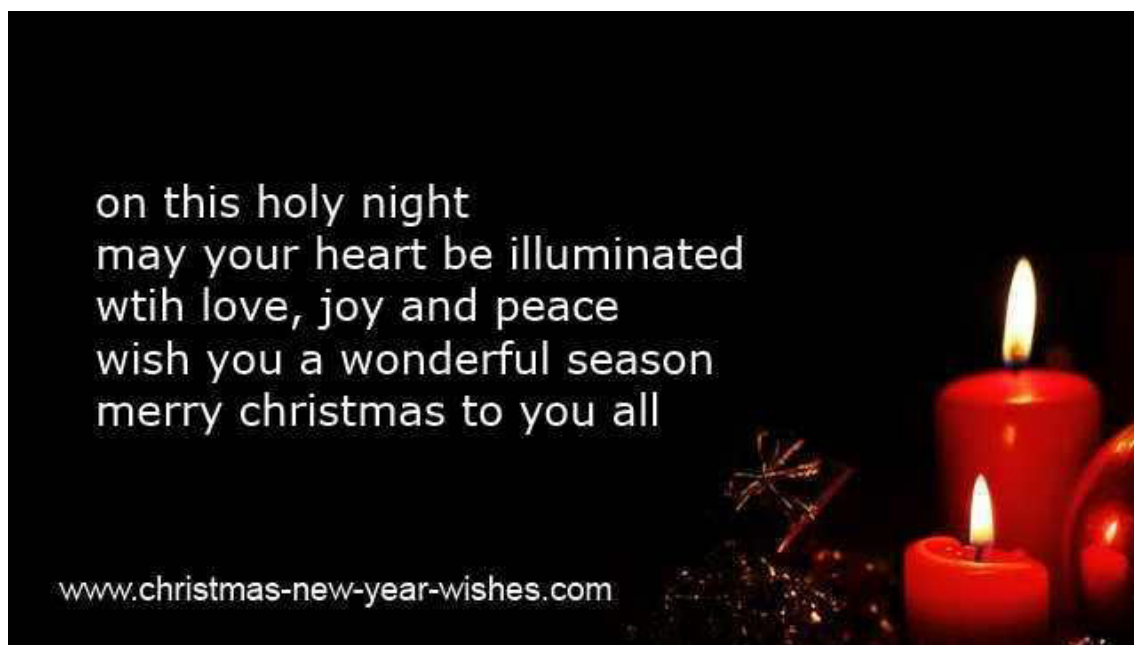
⁵³ R. OTAYEK, «L'Église catholique au Burkina Faso. Un contre-pouvoir à contre temps de l'histoire?», dans F. CONSTANTIN, C. COULON, (éd.), *Religion et transition démocratique en Afrique*, Paris, Karthala, 1997, p. 227.

⁵⁴ Lire sur ce point J.E. REGAN, *Catéchèse d'adultes le pourquoi et le comment*, (traduction de l'américain par P.-A. Giguère), Bruxelles, Montréal, Lumen Vitae, Novalis, 2008.

⁵⁵ «Message final des évêques au premier synode africain», dans M. CHEZA, *Le synode africain. Histoire et textes*, Paris, Karthala, 1996, p. 226.

Réf. : *TELEMA – Revue de réflexion et créativité chrétiennes en Afrique*, 2/12 pp.53-72.

SEDOS BEST WISHES



Franz-Josef Eilers, SVD
'Inter Mirifica' after 50 years
Origin, Directions, Challenges

Origin

Not even three months after his election as Pope (28 October 1958), John XXIII surprised everybody when, on 25 January 1959, in St Paul's Outside-the-Walls he announced a Diocesan Synod for Rome to be held in St John Lateran, the Cathedral of Rome; and an Ecumenical Council for the whole Church in St Peter's Basilica. Soon after this announcement, preparations started and right from the institution of the internal commissions in November 1959, a commission was set up on the "Modern Means of the Apostolate", especially referring to the "new audio-visual techniques" like the motion picture/cinema, Radio/TV and the Press. Maybe one reason for this inclusion of the *media* right from the beginning was the fact that on 8 September 1957 Pope Pius XII had published *Miranda Prorsus* an Encyclical Letter on the electronic Media (Radio/TV, motion picture/Film), just one year before his death. This Encyclical was still fresh in people's minds and John XXIII referred to it extensively in his own first Encyclical Letter *Ad Petri Cathedram* (29 June 1959) with some eight paragraphs (nn. 11-19) treating the duties of the Press, the modern means of Communication and their relation to Truth as well as other subjects.

Thus *Communication* entered early into the preparatory stage of the Second Vatican Council despite the fact that of the themes requested from bishops and religious superiors, including Catholic 'Institutions of Higher Learning' like universities, for discussion at the Council, only 18 out of the total 2,150 answers referred to Communication, all of which came from bishops and superiors, but none from any of the Catholic universities (Baragli 1969, 94).

The internal pre-preparatory Commission met twice (November 1959/March 1960) and produced written documentation on the matter. Soon after this on 30 May 1960, the Pope issued the document *Superno Dei Nutu* establishing 10 official commissions for the preparation of different documents to be presented to the Council. A Secretariat to handle "all questions related to the modern means of social communication, Press, Radio/TV, Film" was set up with a document dated 5 June of the same year. The members and consultants of this Secretariat were all appointed, including the Chairman in the person of Archbishop Martin John O'Connor (former Rector of the North-American College in Rome) and Msgr. Andrea Maria Deskur (later Cardinal) as Under-Secretary. It was called the "Secretariat of the Press and Film", different from the earlier title "Modern Means of the Apostolate". The members were all either bishops or clergy who came from quite different parts of the world – including one prelate from Manila.¹ This Secretariat held four sessions between November 1960 and October 1961.² All the meetings of this Secretariat up to the final promulgation of *Inter Mirifica* took place in the Palazzo San Carlo, within the Vatican, which even after the Council remained for many years the main seat of the Social Communication Office of the Vatican. Only in 2007 was it moved to one of the buildings on the Via della Conciliazione!

This Secretariat came up with a document of 114 paragraphs: after an introduction there followed sections on: 1. The doctrine of the Church (with three subsections), 2. Action and Apostolate of the Church (with two subsections). 3. Ecclesiastical Discipline



¹ For a full list of participants cf. Roegele 1964, Footnote 9. The only participant from Asia was Archbishop Giustino Ortiz of Manila who only attended some of the Sessions.

² 1. November 13-15, 1960; 2. January 24-27, 1961; 3. April 25-28, 1961; 4. October 12-21, 1961 (this one with working groups on different Media)

and structure (with two sub-divisions), 4. Single instruments of Communication with chapters on the Press, Cinema, Radio/TV and other means like Comics, Discs, Notice Boards, etc.

The First Session of the Council which opened on 11 October 1962 lasted until 8 December 1962. The very first concern of the some 2,600 bishops/participants at the beginning was the final composition of the commissions for the preparation of the documents for discussion. The original proposals of the Vatican Curia were mostly rejected and had to be reworked or even substituted by theologians, called "*Periti*", of the participating bishops. This, however, did not affect the Document on Social Communication which was not challenged and actually could already be discussed at the First Session of the Council.

Then, after a lengthy discussion on Liturgy, a subject which was prepared well in advance, followed the discussion of a Document on Revelation which was, however, postponed after some time on the instruction of Pope John XXIII, to be re-worked and taken up in later Sessions. Thus, rather unexpectedly the document on "The Instruments of Social Communication" came in. It was discussed by the Council Fathers on 23, 24 and 26 November with 2,153, 2,133 and 2,136 participants respectively being present at the Sessions. At the 28th General Assembly of the Council on 27 November 1962 the document was put to the vote and out of the 2,160 Fathers present 2,138 voted in favour of the text with the following provisions:

1. To approve the text in substance and to affirm that the Council should treat a subject of such importance for Pastoral Ministry.
2. Considering the comments of some of the Council Fathers, however, it is proposed to shorten the existing text to the essentials of doctrine and general pastoral directives without losing the essential points.
3. Everything referring to the practice and execution of the teachings should be worked out as a special mandate by groups of experts from various nations.

The proposed revision was entrusted to the Council Commission 10 (Laity). In fact, however, the former Secretariat continued to meet at Palazzo San Carlo in the name of this Commission at five different sessions 1962 and 1963 to reduce the original text and re-write the new proposal. The special section treating the different media which took up more than half of the original document was removed. The 54 interventions from the Council floor as well as an additional 42 comments which were submitted in writing also had to be considered. One of these came from the Auxiliary Bishop of Krakow, Karol Wojtyla, later Pope John Paul II, (Composta, 1967, 39 f.).

The shortened text that was finally submitted was no longer an extensive presentation of the field but rather a pastoral orientation. This re-edited text was then included in the material for the Second Plenary Session the Council held from 29 September to 4 December 1963.

The reception of this 'new' text, however, was anything but smooth. Resistance built up against it in the conviction that the proposed text was insufficient and according to



the opinion of some lacked the quality of the Council. Three American Journalists published some critical comments on 16 November 1963 who concluded: "This Decree, as it now stands, may one day be cited as a classic example of how the Second Vatican Council failed to come to grips with the world around it". These comments were also signed by Fathers John Courtney-Murray, S.J., Jean Danielou, S.J., and Jorge Mejia (Baragli 1969, 148, Table 23). A similar initiative was taken by a group of some 97 Council Fathers mainly from German-speaking countries who asked that the final voting be postponed

and the proposed text re-examined (Baragli 1969, 153). They distributed leaflets at the entrance to St. Peter's immediately before the Final Session on 25 November 1963 with the request to postpone the voting. This was hindered personally by Archbishop Pericle Felici, General Secretary of the Council. It seems, however, that this contributed to the

503 "No" votes to 1,788 "Yes" votes on that day, the highest number of "No"-votes any Document received in the history of Vatican II. In the final voting, however, immediately before the official publication of the document on 4 December 1963 there were 1,960 votes to only 164 "No" Votes.

The Council's Communication Document was called moralistic, ecclesiastic and without sufficient respect for the work of laypeople in this field (Composta 1967, 144, *cf.* also Roegele 1964, 316 *ff.*). It was agreed, however, that the subject deserved to be treated by a Council. In fact some observers stated that one should be happy that the concern "made it" in view of the fact that originally some 70 themes and papers were prepared for submission to the Assembly out of which only 13 received final approval (Composta 1967, 44).

Another criticism of the Document referred to the lack of theological input. This can be partly explained by the fact that the Secretariat for the preparation of the text was mainly composed of bishops and priests who were responsible for communication undertakings but were not really experts in theology. It seems that the theological 'push' of the central European Bishops in bringing their own theological experts for the preparation of the Council's other documents apparently never reached the Communication Secretariat. This was only somewhat rectified seven years later with the publication of the Pastoral Instruction *Communio et Progressio* which the *Inter Mirifica* Council Document had demanded in n. 23.

I. Position within Vatican II

The Decree *Inter Mirifica* on the Instruments/Means of Social Communication was one of the first two Documents of the Second Vatican Council. It was published on 4 December 1963 at the end of the Second Session of the Assembly. This means that the theological considerations and insights of the Council that followed, as reflected in later discussions and documents, could not influence the Communication text that had already been published in any way. Thus, the so-called 'lack of theology' could not be addressed. Therefore, there is still a need to study the remaining 14 Vatican II Documents which followed *Inter Mirifica* in the perspective of Communication and the possibility of introducing a broader vision of the field. For example the Document on the Church *Lumen Gentium* or the one on Revelation *Dei Verbum* which went through seven different drafts before being finally approved seem to be quite relevant. *Revelation* is a communication 'activity'. What does this mean for the Church's communicative life and work? Also along the same lines was the final document which actually evolved from the Council Fathers themselves and was not prepared by any of the preparatory commissions: *Gaudium et Spes* seems to be of special importance for the social communication work of the Church which is imbedded in modern cultures and the life and concerns of the people of today. For example it is not insignificant that this Document contains a whole chapter on Culture (nn. 53-62) which is of growing importance in an intercultural world and in Communication. Indeed other texts of the Second Vatican Council present special challenges for pastoral Communication like the ones on the Priesthood (*Presbyterorum Ordinis*), Bishops (*Christus Dominus*) and priestly Formation (*Optatam Totius*). The sending of the Church on Mission (*Ad Gentes*) is a sending out for communicating the life and Word of God (Evangelizing Communication)! Priestly and pastoral Spirituality is to be communicative spirituality: only a priest, bishop, Christian who can communicate will reach and influence others! The Declaration on Non-Christian Religions (*Nostra Aetate*) and that on religious freedom (*Dignitatis Humanae*) are essential texts for any inter-religious dialogue and proper human communication and interaction!

At the World Congress of the Catholic Press, held in Berlin in 1968, Cardinal Franziskus König of Vienna already recommended that the participants go beyond *Inter Mirifica* and read and study especially *Lumen Gentium* and *Gaudium et Spes* if they wanted to gain a proper insight and approach to Social Communication in the spirit of Vatican II. Avery Dulles, S.J. (1988) (later Cardinal, † 12.12.2008) developed five models of the communicating Church on the basis of the different Vatican II Documents. But beyond this there seems to be hardly any other extensive study along these lines which should be a matter of great interest to the Church and to everybody who is concerned

about proper and theologically grounded communication. The Pastoral Instruction *Communio et Progressio* (1971), which the Council Fathers had demanded in *Inter Mirifica*, goes a little bit in this direction and might be considered as compensating for some of the missing parts in the earlier Document. But even this is not enough for a deeper and thorough understanding and synthesis of Social Communication in the understanding of Vatican II.

II. The Role of Pope John XXIII

In the history of *Inter Mirifica* it is astonishing to see that Communication was included right from the beginning in the preparations for the Second Vatican Council. Apparently the Pope himself took a special personal interest in this field.

Already Pope John XXIII's Predecessor, Pope Pius XII, had taken an extensive interest in the different means of communication. He not only addressed many Speeches and Addresses to communication people (cf. Eilers 2011, 77-121) but also published important documents such as his *Ideal Film* (1955) and the Encyclical *Miranda Prorsus* (1957) which he devoted to the electronic media: Radio, Television, Motion picture about a year before he died. The memory of the Pope's last big Encyclical was still fresh in people's minds when he died. In fact some argued that because of this there would be no need for the Council to produce an additional document. However, his immediate Successor Pope John XXIII, who was elected on 28 October 1958, could not ignore it. Indeed, in his first Encyclical Letter *Ad Petri Cathedram* (29 June 1959), John XXIII



devoted an extensive section to "the chief moral duties respecting the proper use of the instruments of social communication" and the Press (nn. 11-18). Indeed on 22 February 1959 he created within the Vatican a "Pontifical Commission for Film, Radio, Television" which, Pope Paul VI, following up an *Inter Mirifica* proposal (n. 19), then extended to all the means of Social Communication in April 1964, as the Secretariat called the "Pontifical Commission for Social Communications Media".

Pope John XXIII also showed his personal and special interest in the proposed Council Document on Social Communication. On 19 October 1961 he went in person to Palazzo San Carlo within the Vatican, where the Secretariat was in session, and stayed 1½ hours with the members of the group, discussing beside other things the relationship between art and morals. One of the participants later remembered his words: that for him personally the language of the heart would be more important than the one of words (Baragli 1969, 114).

When the final proposal of the Communication Document was discussed and voted upon at the Central Committee for the Council on 3 April 1962 the Pope once again devoted a large part of his Speech especially to this Document and its concerns. In fact he had personally studied and read the text and wrote some remarks on the margin of the draft, e.g. praising the proposal for national communication offices and respective structures as "optime" (Baragli 1969, 116; Table XVII). On this occasion he also referred to his own announcements (cf. Eilers 2011, 123-133) and to the two Communication Encyclicals of his Predecessors Pope Pius XI (*Vigilanti Cura*) and Pope Pius XII (*Miranda Prorsus*).

From all this one can conclude that the Council's Document on Social Communication was of special personal interest to Blessed Pope John XXIII.

III. Teaching and Approach

Looking at the Council Document's teaching it might be well to be aware that there are different translations available in English. 1) Usually the translation of Fr. Austin Flannery, O.P., (1975) is used which seems, however, to reflect a less positive approach to the text. For example he translates the purpose of *Inter Mirifica* (n. 2) as: "that it is

its duty to *treat the **main problems*** posed by the means of Social Communication" while the official Vatican text reads: "to *treat the **principle questions*** linked with the media of Social Communication" which sounds more positive: and 2) The Documents of Vatican II, Walter M. Abbott, SJ, General Editor: "This most sacred Synod follows the path of vigilance shown by Supreme Pontiffs and Bishops in so weighty a matter, and regards it a duty to deal with the main problems presented by the instruments of social communication" (n. 2). Instead of Flannery's: "it is the Church's *birthright* to use and own any of these media" (n. 3) the Vatican translation talks about "an inherent right of the Church to have at its disposal and to employ any of these Media insofar as they are necessary or useful for the instruction of Christians and all its efforts for the welfare of souls". "Therefore the Church claims as a birthright the use and possession of all instruments of this kind which are necessary or useful for the formation of Christians and for every activity undertaken on behalf of man's salvation" (Walter M. Abbott, S.J.).

In fact *Inter Mirifica* seems to be only an outline on the Church and Social Communication. This is because the published document is a reduced form of the longer and more extensive text originally presented to the Council. Basically the text underlines the right of the Church to own and use the means of communication proper to her ministry (n. 3). In a similar way also the moral obligations of the members of the Church as well as those involved in media production are underlined. "Hence there exists within human society a right to information about affairs which affect men individually or collectively, and according to the circumstances of each" (Walter M. Abbott, S.J.), confirming the right to information (n. 5). Besides the role of public opinion: "With the aid of these instruments, then, each man should strive to form and to voice worthy views on public affairs" (*ibid.*, n. 8). Further it is "the responsibility of all Christians, but especially also of the pastors of souls" (nn. 13-17). "That the aforementioned needs be met, let priests, religious and laymen be opportunely trained to bring the necessary skills to the apostolic use of these instruments" (n. 15, Walter M. Abbott, S.J.), especially to strengthen the Christian texture of human society" (*ibid.*, n. 17). Actually many of these things had already been expressed in earlier Church Documents, but here they received the authority of a Council.

More important, however, for the future of communication seem to be the following facts, proposals and initiatives which reflect a special permanent concern of and for the Church:

1. With *Inter Mirifica* it was the first time in the history of the Church that an Ecumenical Council discussed and published a Document on the instruments of Social Communication and this fact underlines that it is an essential concern of the Church.
2. The Document proposes a central office for Communication in the Vatican and consequently also national *offices for Social Communication* for Bishops' Conferences, guided by a Commission of Bishops and an appointed bishop. The same proposal holds good for every diocese where the bishop is ultimately responsible for all Church activities in Social Communication, including those of Religious (nn. 21, 20).
3. A *World Day of Communication* was established, the only such initiative taken by the Vatican Council. The Day is to be celebrated annually (since 1967) with a respective theme which the Pope selects and on which he comments with a special Message. Thus, over the years quite a body of Church 'teaching' on Social Communication has been built up (n. 18).
4. The publication of a more extensive *Pastoral Instruction* is demanded (n. 23) to be elaborated by a group of experts. It led to the comprehensive "Pastoral Instruction" *Communio et Progressio* (1971) with 187 paragraphs, a Document considered to be one of the best, even outside the Catholic Church. Twenty years later it was followed by another 'Pastoral Instruction' *Aetatis Novae* to commemorate and amplify the Document of 1971 (n. 18).
5. The expression *Social Communication* was introduced for the Vatican II document from "*De instrumentis Communicationis Socialis*". At first it was more of a common expression for the different means of communication like the Press, Radio, etc. but later it was extended and broadened, going beyond the "instruments" to the "Communication of and in human Society".
6. The need for proper *formation and training* in the use and application of communication in Ministry is strongly stressed (nn. 13-15), also repeated in *Communio et Progressio* (n. 111) and other Documents, but up till now hardly developed in a systematic and integrated way especially in pastoral ministry. The same holds for serious research and academic work by Catholic Institutions of Higher Learning and Universities (*cf. CetP*, nn.

113; 184/185). Social Communication is still seen as a field for some specialists ('hobby') but not as a common concern touching all areas of human life and society — which was actually confirmed by the Council Fathers who considered this field both important and worthy of being discussed by an Ecumenical Council!

IV. Professional Consequences and Follow up

Inter Mirifica gives clear directions for a proper structure of communication within the national Bishops' Conferences and also for international cooperation between these at the continental and regional levels. This, however, has not yet been implemented in some places even after 50 years! Similarly proper *formation programmes* in communication, as proposed by the Document which should go beyond single media skills, are almost nowhere a regular part of priestly and religious formation, which is more than simple technical 'training' ("how to use ..."). Academic studies in Pastoral Communication and related fields are still very sporadic. The University of Santo Tomas in Manila (UST) with a regular MA and Licenciante programme in Communication Theology is probably still an exception.

The concept that the field of Social Communication is broader than technology and single media, and an essential part of any society and human life, still needs to be promoted and developed further. It is basic for any Church ministry to train *communicative personnel*, who are essential for the life and growth of Christianity and the Church. Qualified communicative people are the heralds of the "new" Evangelization! The awareness of this communication dimension of Pastoral Ministry is still very cryptic and has not really been grasped by many of the Church's leaders and members.

V. Challenges

From all this some more and special challenges are coming up for further consideration and development which should be considered:

1. From Instrumentality (Media) to "Social Communication"

The official title of the Decree *Inter Mirifica* is: *Decretum de Instrumentis Communicationis Socialis*/(on the Means/Instruments of Social Communication). At first sight it seems to be a text on the *instruments* (Media) and their use. Fr Enrico Baragli, S.J., one of the authors of the Document, devoted several pages in his "Alance de los terminos" (1966, 39-72) to explaining what this expression "instrumentos" means and justifies its use. In fact the expression has been part of the title of the Document right from the beginning of the preparations through the Council till its promulgation in December 1963. Unfortunately it was never really explained and clarified. Only when Pope Paul VI followed up the proposal of *Inter Mirifica* to establish with "In fructibus multis", 2 April 1964, a special Vatican Office for Communication the word "instruments" was dropped from the title and only "Social Communication" remained. According to Fr Baragli this was done "per comodo di brevità", just for the sake of brevity which can rightly be questioned. In his explanation of the different words of this expression he seems already to indicate that the new expression in general terms would open the whole field more to sociology, theology and morals rather than concentrating on a single means of communication, like the Press, Radio, TV or Film. This, in fact, was strongly criticized by the German Communication scholar Otto B. Roegele already at the end of 1964. In his extensive study of *Inter Mirifica* he stated that only the title of the document looked professional but the content not at all. "The concept of social communication", he wrote, "is understood to be in sociology, communication science and social philosophy as one of the top creative elements (*Vegetationsspitzen*) for research and teaching",³ but "unfortunately not much (of this) can be seen in the text of the Decree. Instead the 'communication process' in *Inter Mirifica* appears to follow the old understanding of working from top to bottom, or as in a monologic approach (*Hinsage*) which might be fitting for the traditionally organized authoritarian society" but "certainly not for today's society where communication takes place in the form of give and take, as

³ ("Der Begriff der sozialen Kommunikation gehoert in Soziologie, Zeitungs - bzw. Publizistikwissenschaft und Sozialphilosophie zu den Vegetationsspitzen von Forschung und Lehre").

'Dialogue in society' which is also reflected in the means of communication ...". This was written after the final publication of the Document at the end of 1964⁴ (Roegel 1964, 317 f.). Thus, already at that time communication scholars moved away from the single media to a broader understanding of communication in human society which was — despite the title of the Decree — apparently not fully understood by certain Church authorities. Thus, the "instrument mentality" continued also in many of the follow-up Documents and the real meaning of "Social Communication" as the communication *of* and *in* human society was not developed much.⁵ This changed, however, with Pope John Paul II in his Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Missio* (1990, n. 37c) when he talked about a "new culture" created by communications which needs an answer from the Church too. In today's new world of "social media" and "social networks" the expression "social communication" takes on a new and important meaning as the overall heading for a field which is finally also recognized by the Church but which still needs much more "investment" in research and practice.

2. From 'Instrumentality' to Communication Theology

Something similar can be said for the theological approach of the Decree *Inter Mirifica* which for many seems to be missing. Attempts have been made for a "Theology of Communication" to somehow 'baptize' the Media and thus place them also in the garden of the Church or reclaim them for her use. In reality, however, communication is to be seen as a theological principle: the whole of theology can be considered in this perspective. Theologians like Martini, Häring, Rahner, Greshake, Dulles, and others have pointed in this direction and developed the field: the Trinitarian God *is* communication, Father, Son and Holy Spirit communicating with each other and we are created in this image and likeness. The whole Bible, the Old and New Testaments are Books of God's communication with and of his creatures. The high point of this is the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, the master ("perfect Communicator") and "*Urbild*" of Communication. The Church is called not only to *use* the *Media* but to be herself a reflection of God's communication in everything she does in the here and now of time.

3. From Pastoral Methodology to Disposition

Over the years there is quite some literature on how to use the "Media" for pastoral ministry and quite a number of formation houses and seminaries held "training" courses on how to use these Media properly. In reality, however, very often students and seminarians see and experience this as a welcome break in the monotony of their studies but it does not really 'form' them. Social Communication, however, is a real challenge that demands a proper *formation* of the candidate, an inner *disposition*, and not merely a superficial attitude or just a 'skill'. Communication Spirituality is based on total openness to God, to self and to others, it is the decisive foundation on which a communicative person is formed and is a quality required of any pastoral minister. However, not only seminarians need such a disposition but also priests, any secretary of a parish, as well as bishops.

4. From Structure to Spirit

The Conciliar Decree *Inter Mirifica* confirms and describes earlier proposals for national and diocesan communication offices starting with the Vatican itself. Up till now, 50 years later, these structures are only partly developed and in place. Here too, one has to keep in mind that structures alone do not guarantee their proper and effective use if they don't have good programmes and especially communication staff to develop a

⁴ The German communication scholar Walter Hagemann, already in 1958 defined communication ("Publizistik") as the "public sharing of actual things from people's mind" ("Öffentliche Aussage aktueller Bewusstseinsinhalte") and his successor Henk Prakke, (1964), already talked about communication as "Dialogue of Society". There is no word about media or technology but human society remains at the core at the time of the Second Vatican Council!

⁵ Even after "Inter Mirifica" Church Documents used the new expression just as a commonplace expression for the different mass media but not in a broader perspective. Fr. Baragli himself still used the expression 'Mass Media' in a longer article 10 years after the publication without mentioning "Social Communication" but commenting in a footnote (n. 30): "In this essay I have preferred to use this term (Mass media) instead of the longer and more exact 'instruments of Social Communication', bearing in mind that to many readers this terminology of the Decree is not familiar, as it is (or should be) among Catholics" (Baragli, 1974). This remark is all the more astonishing as, according to Cardinal Andrea M. Deskur (at the Plenary of the Pontifical Council for Social Communication, 2004), it was Baragli who proposed the new expression ("Social Communication") to the Secretariat for the presentation at the Council. A footnote at the beginning the official document in the hands of the Council members actually defended the new expression 'Social Communication' because they felt that words like 'mass media' would not sufficiently reflect the concern of the Church in this field (cf. Eilers, 2011, 136 ff).

correct vision in individual situations. Ultimately, it is not the structure but the Spirit which moves the Church. In a similar way the Church and her institutions are often identified as institutions whereas in reality they should be living communities of communicative people. Maybe we are not yet sufficiently concerned to implement appropriate formation and academic study programmes to train and qualify such staff members....

5. From Isolation to Integration

In the pre-conciliar preparation for *Inter Mirifica* the secretariat was divided into working groups according to the Media: Press, Radio-TV, Film. The main part of the proposed original document reflected this with more than half of the text devoted to these Media. Already the two Encyclical Letters on Communication before Vatican II were devoted to the special Media with Pope Pius XI on Film and Pope Pius XII on the electronic Media. It was only through the Pastoral Instruction *Communio et Progressio*, which the Council decreed, that a broader perspective, beyond the single media, was taken into consideration accepting communication as a reality of human society. The tendency for the single media, however still continued after that. Thus, almost all the Exhortations of the Popes following a Synod have a section on communication but once again these refer to the single Media or to the Mass Media generally as one activity of the Church, instead of integrating the communication dimension into all the Church's pastoral and evangelizing work. The same holds for our teaching of Theology where Communication is considered a separate subject but not as a dimension of *all* Theology, like e.g. the Bible as communication of God to us, or faith as a communicative experience challenging us in the world today as in Fundamental Theology, or the Church as a community and communicative body (Ecclesiology), human and divine communication as norm for behaviour (Moral Theology)....

6. From Means and Media to Social Communication in its full sense

After the application of the expression: "Social Communication" as a common term for all the "Media", the real, full meaning of this as "communication *of and in* human Society" has to be developed. Almost all the documents of the Church on communication treat the media but not *social* communication oriented to communication as the essential lifeline of human society which includes e.g. also traditional ways and means of communication like music, dance, theater, storytelling and all forms of oral communication as well as the modern technical means (*Internet*) which makes users their own editor, writer, producer and commentator reaching all parts of the world in an instant....

The full meaning, value and power of all communication in society ("Social Communication"!), apparently still needs to be discovered by the Church and all of us! There is a first indication for this, however, in the approach of *Communio et Progressio* where after Theology the first main part, over almost 100 paragraphs, talks about the role of Communication in human society in general while the contribution of Catholics to Communication is treated extensively only in the third and last part of the document....

7. From the 'Essentials' of *Inter Mirifica* to modern times

The Conciliar Decree *Inter Mirifica* has received negative criticism many times as, e.g. in an editorial of the London *Tablet*, one of the oldest Catholic weeklies in Europe, "the embarrassingly poor Decree on the mass media" because it was one of those drawn up by the Roman Curia and it was apparently not enclosed as one of those which instead of being endorsed by the Council Fathers who "swept almost all of it aside and started again" (6 October 2012). However, this does not mean that the Council Document is useless, as some people say....

The fact remains that the majority of the Council Fathers underlined the importance of the means of Communication in the modern world and declared that the treatment of Social Communication by the Council was important. This fact has not changed after 50 years but rather challenges us to take up the essentials and place them in a proper theological, but also cultural and social, perspective where communication is the lifeline



of everything, personal and communal.... In a way we have to repeat the Conciliar process of "aggiornamento" in our life today, too. This might include, besides considering a deeper theological foundation, a review and further development of the approaches used in *Communio et Progressio*, with a fresh Christian look at the role of communication in society and culture today and the formation of truly communicative people in spirit and mind. No New Evangelization will be possible without that!

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More details will follow soon



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