

Bulletin 2014

Vol. 46, No. 11/12 - November-December

SEDOS



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Sedos - Via dei Verbiti, 1 - 00154 Roma
TEL.: (+39)065741350 / FAX: (+39)065755787
E-mail address: execdir@sedosmission.org
Homepage: <http://www.sedosmission.org>

SEDOS - Servizio di Documentazione e Studi sulla Missione Globale
SEDOS - Service of Documentation and Studies on Global Mission
SEDOS - Centre de Documentation et de Recherche sur la Mission Globale
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In 2015 we shall be celebrating the 50th anniversary of the closing of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council. This provides us with a wonderful opportunity to reassess the overwhelming impact the inspirational documents have had and to appreciate the prophetic voices of Vatican II.

SEDOS member Congregations have affirmed that the initial intuition of the nine Founders of SEDOS was a really prophetic one. Indeed we have come to realize that SEDOS is Blazing genuine Prophetic and Contextualized Missionary Paths. The nine Founders were the real architects of the "aggiornamento" that Pope John XXIII sought for the whole Church.

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"For God has so loved the world that He gave his only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life" (Jn. 3:16)

Doing Christian mission in Asia is especially challenging. Asia is the continent with the smallest Christian population, even though it is home to some two-thirds of the world's population.

The two following articles are both about the concrete and creative initiatives taken by the Federation of the Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) from the reception of Vatican II up to now. The first one is by **Jonathan Y. Tan**: "From 'ad gentes' to 'active integral evangelization': The reception of Vatican II's Mission theology in Asia"; and the second one is by **Paul Steffen** and **Klaus Vellguth**, SVD: "A Pastoral Network Emerges: Lively exchanges between Pastoral Institutes in Asia". The FABC accepted the fact that the Asian Church will always be a "little flock", in the sea of the diverse religions and cultures of Asia. Therefore, in this perspective the FABC fosters friendship and trust, relationality and relationship-building, dialogue and solidarity as constitutive elements of the task of Christian mission in Asia.

Francis Perry Azah recognizes that in the decades since Vatican II, the Catholic Church has established an all-embracing dialogue with institutions of the Jewish faith. In his article he examines this relationship and focusses especially on how the dialogue between these two major world religions has affected educational reform and practice.

Dr. Lois Semenyé, teaches at the Nairobi International School of Theology, Kenya. Her primary concern is about the "Spiritual Formation of Christian Leaders". Hence she has developed and is now proposing what she calls "appropriate and relevant spiritual disciplines" to offer leaders support in their ministry and "to connect with God" when stressed by constant demands. Christian Leaders are called to be men and women of God because people are longing for meaning in life and they hope to find an answer from them.

Today's Church needs "Spirit-filled Evangelizers". Evangelizers who are not afraid and who continually draw strength from the Holy Spirit and so communicate the truth of the Gospel with boldness. "The leadership is at the service of the unpredictable grace of God". In her reflection on "Un liderazgo con espíritu" **Sr Asunción Codes Jiménez**, STJ, the Congregational Coordinator, shares her convictions as she asserts that there is a felt need for spirit-filled leadership which, rekindles the spirit of cooperation among the Sisters/Brothers because all are invited to the table of the Kingdom. Sisters/Brothers are called to cooperate among themselves and with everyone in order to create a chain of solidarity among them and with others.

Pope Francis has dedicated the year 2015 to Consecrated Life and he "invites us to remain for a long time, on an interior pilgrimage, before the dawn, when, in a warm environment of friendly relationships, the intellect is led to open itself to mystery, the decision is made that it is good to set out to follow this Master who alone has *the words of eternal life* (cf. Jn 6:68). He invites us to make our whole "life a pilgrimage of loving transformation" (Cardinal João Braz de Aviz, *Prefect of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life*, and Archbishop José Rodríguez Carballo, O.F.M., *Secretary*. "Rejoice", n. 4)

Wishing all the consecrated Religious and Lay men/women a fruitful inner pilgrimage.

Nzenzili Lucie MBOMA, FMM
SEDOS Executive Directress

Jonathan Y. Tan

From "Ad Gentes" to "Active Integral Evangelization": The Reception of Vatican II's Mission Theology in Asia

The task of doing Christian mission is especially challenging in Asia. While Asia may be home to some two-thirds of the world's population, it remains nevertheless the continent with the smallest Christian population despite two millennia of Christian missionary activity, beginning with the Assyrian Christian missionaries who ventured to India and China in the first Christian millennium. At the beginning of the Third Christian Millennium, Christians account for anywhere between four to six per cent of the total population of Asia. More significantly, Christians continue to represent only a small proportion of the residents of China and India, who collectively comprise about one third of the world's population.

While David Aikman made the provocative claim that 20 to 30 per cent of the Chinese population would be Christian by the 2030s,¹ the research director of the Beijing Center for Chinese Studies, Jean-Paul Wiest, cautioned us against making such overoptimistic predictions. Specifically, Wiest pointed out that China is also in the midst of an impressive Buddhist, Daoist, and Chinese folk religions revival.² Yoshiko Ashiwa and David L. Wank share Wiest's opinion, noting that China has the world's largest Buddhist population, a thriving Daoist community, and an expanding Muslim community that is larger than the total Christian population in China.³ On the issue of Chinese Muslims, Wiest reminded us that the growing Chinese Muslim population in Gansu and Xinjiang is unlikely to relinquish its Islamic faith to become Christian. This is because its Islamic faith is tightly linked to its non-Han culture and ethnic pride.⁴

This essay analyzes the reception of Vatican II's theology of mission in Asia by the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC).⁵ **First**, it will examine how the Second Vatican Council was a watershed that would open the floodgates to a rethinking of mission. **Second**, it will analyze the principal aspects of the FABC's approach to the Christian mission in Asia. **Third**, it will explore how the FABC has gone beyond Vatican II's *plantatio ecclesiae* approach in the missionary Decree, *Ad Gentes*, to articulate its own mission theology of "active integral evangelization", which is:

- (i) rooted in the immense diversity and plurality of Asia,
- (ii) undergirded by a commitment and service to life,
- (iii) oriented towards a threefold dialogue with Asia's cultures, religions, and the poor, and
- (iv) seeking to bring about the Reign of God in Asia.⁶

Finally, it will also discuss the significance and implications of the FABC's theology of "active integral evangelization" for the task of doing Christian mission in Asia.

Vatican II and the Paradigm Shift in Catholic Mission Theology

On 25 January 1962, Pope John XXIII announced his intention to call an Ecumenical Council of more than 2,000 bishops from the six continents, stating its objectives to be a new Pentecost, a means of spiritual and apostolic renewal, and an *aggiornamento* of the Catholic Church. After four Sessions which produced sixteen documents, Vatican II can be said to have covered every facet of renewal, including the renewal of the Church's mission theology. This renewal was first introduced in the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium* (21 November 1964), and further developed in the Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions, *Nostra Aetate* (28 October 1965), the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes* (7 December 1965), and the Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity, *Ad Gentes* (7 December 1965).



JONATHAN Y. TAN

Lumen Gentium

The theological foundation of Vatican II's theology of mission was first enunciated in the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, which linked missiology and ecclesiology in its opening statement:

"Christ is the light of all nations. Hence, this most sacred Synod, which has been gathered in the Holy Spirit, eagerly desires to shed on all men that radiance of His which brightens the countenance of the Church. This it will do by proclaiming the Gospel to every creature" (n. 1).⁷

On the one hand, *Lumen Gentium* insists on an ecclesiocentric grounding of *missio ad gentes*, i.e., "the Church ... is necessary for salvation" (*Ecclesiam necessariam esse ad salutem*, n. 14), explaining that the Church is "the universal sacrament of salvation" (*universale salutis sacramentum*) because the Risen Christ is leading all peoples to the Church (*ut homines ad Ecclesiam perducatur*) and "through her joining them more closely to Himself" (n. 48).⁸ It also applies the classical Thomistic axiom *gratia non tollit naturam, sed perficit* (grace does not destroy nature, but perfects it) to the Church's missionary enterprise when it insists that:

"... the Church or People of God takes nothing away from the temporal welfare of any people.... Rather does she foster and take to herself, insofar as they are good, the ability, resources, and customs of each people. Taking them to herself she purifies, strengthens, and ennobles them" (n. 13).⁹

This is reiterated in *Lumen Gentium*, n. 17, which states:

"Whatever good is in the minds and hearts of men, whatever good lies latent in the religious practices and cultures of diverse peoples, is not only saved from destruction but is also healed, ennobled, and perfected unto the glory of God, the confusion of the Devil, and the happiness of man".¹⁰

On the other hand, *Lumen Gentium* also presents the possibility of an extra-ecclesial way of salvation through God, i.e., salvation through a mysterious channel other than the Church and its sacraments:

"Nor is God Himself far distant from those who in shadows and images seek the unknown God, for it is He who gives to all men life and breath and every other gift (cf. Acts 17:25-28), and who as Saviour wills that all men be saved (cf. I Tim 2:4). Those also can attain to everlasting salvation who, through no fault of their own do not know the Gospel of Christ or His Church, yet sincerely seek God and, moved by grace, strive by their deeds to do His will as it is known to them through the dictates of conscience. Nor does divine Providence deny the help necessary for salvation to those who, without blame on their part, have not yet arrived at an explicit knowledge of God, but who strive to live a good life, thanks to His grace. Whatsoever goodness or truth is found among them is looked upon by the Church as a preparation for the Gospel. She regards such qualities as given by Him who enlightens all men so that they may finally have life" (n. 16).¹¹

From the foregoing, it is clear that while *LG*, n. 16 recognizes the possibility of an extra-ecclesial means of salvation, it however lays down three strict conditions: (i) non-Christians must be people who, through no fault of their own (*sine culpa*), do not know the Gospel of Christ or the Church; (ii) they must, with a sincere and open heart, seek God, the Creator whose existence they may know by reason, but whom they do not yet know as the God revealed in Christ; and (iii) they must try to do God's will as they know it through conscience, i.e., on the basis of natural law, striving to lead a good life and moved by grace (*sub gratiae influxu*). Therefore, "divine Providence" will not deny them the assistance necessary for salvation, although the mode by which this grace operates (*modus gratia*) is left open.

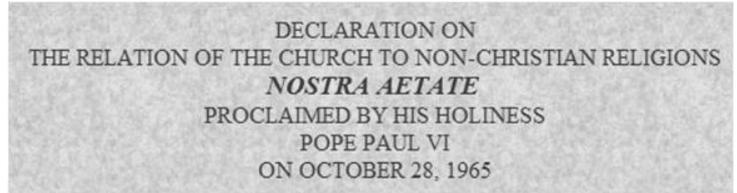
By being cautious and refusing to speculate on the mysterious workings of God's grace outside the Church, the Council Fathers left room for future dogmatic development of this principle. While accepting the possibility that salvation can be mediated extra-ecclesially, nevertheless *Lumen Gentium* does take pains to argue against any lessening of the urgency of



mission. Thus, the Council Fathers held that by "promot[ing] the glory of God and procur[ing] the salvation of all such men, and mindful of the command of the Lord, 'Preach the Gospel to every creature' (Mk 16:16), the Church painstakingly fosters her missionary work" (cf. *LG*, n. 16).¹²

Nostra Aetate

The Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions, *Nostra Aetate*, marks a paradigm shift in the Church's understanding of other religions. It is the first official Church statement which recognizes other religions as: entities that the Church should respect and enter into dialogue with, rather than merely tolerating them or working for their suppression. Eschewing such traditional terminology as: "pagan" (*paganus*), "idolatry" (*idolatria*) and "false religion" (*religio falsa*) the Council Fathers introduced a new atmosphere of recognition, respect, and dialogue, recognizing the plurality and diversity of religions. The most revolutionary aspect of this Declaration is its apparent presumption that other religions contain at least some elements of truth, although this presumption does not lessen the dominical mandate to preach the Gospel to the ends of the earth:



"The Catholic Church rejects nothing which is true and holy in these religions. She looks with sincere respect upon those ways of conduct and of life, those rules and teaching which, though differing in many particulars from what she holds and sets forth, nevertheless often reflect a ray of that Truth which enlightens all men. Indeed, she proclaims and must ever proclaim Christ, "the way, the truth, and the life" (Jn 14:6), in whom men find the fullness of religious life, and in whom God has reconciled all things to Himself" (n. 2).¹³

As is the case with *LG*, n. 16, here the Council Fathers were also somewhat ambivalent as to the amount of truth found in other religions. While *NA*, n. 2, unequivocally accepts that the manner of life and conduct, and precepts and doctrines, often contain gems of truth, it nevertheless insists that the "fullness of religious life" (*plenitudinem vitae religiosae*) is to be found solely in Christ. More important still, the Declaration goes on to lay the foundations for dialogue:

"The Church therefore has this exhortation for her sons: prudently and lovingly, through dialogue and collaboration with the followers of other religions, and in witness of Christian faith and life, acknowledge, preserve, and promote the spiritual and moral goods found among these men, as well as the values in their society and culture" (n. 2).¹⁴

By this statement, the Council Fathers opened the way for subsequent efforts at interreligious dialogue, inspiring the initiatives that would later be taken by the FABC.

Gaudium et Spes

Gaudium et Spes



In the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*, the Second Vatican Council officially acknowledged the diversity of cultures and the fact that the Christian Gospel is not a communication of timeless truths, but rather God's intervention in human history:

"There are many links between the message of salvation and human culture. For God, revealing Himself to His people to the extent of a full manifestation of Himself in His Incarnate Son, has spoken according to the culture proper to different ages.

"Living in various circumstances during the course of time, the Church, too, has used in her preaching the discoveries of different cultures to spread and explain the message of Christ to all nations, to probe it and more deeply understand it, and to give it better expression in liturgical celebrations and in the life of the diversified community of the faithful" (n. 58).¹⁵

This new understanding of culture has profound implications for Christianity because the Church has accepted that much of what was perceived as essential expressions of the Christian faith are simply Eurocentric cultural expressions of the Christian faith. What is more important is the categorical statement of the Council that there is no one culturally normative way to be Christian. Instead, the relationship between the Christian Gospel and culture is a mutually enriching dialogue:

"... the Church, sent to all peoples of every time and place, is not bound exclusively and indissolubly to any race or nation, nor to any particular way of life, nor to any customary pattern of living, ancient or recent. Faithful to her own tradition and at the same time conscious of her universal mission, she can enter into communion with various cultural modes, to her own enrichment and theirs too.

"The Good News of Christ continually renews the life and culture of fallen man. It combats and removes the errors and evils resulting from sinful allurements... By riches coming from above, it makes fruitful, as it were from within, the spiritual qualities and gifts of every people and of every age. It strengthens, perfects, and restores them to Christ. Thus by the very fulfillment of her own mission the Church stimulates and advances human and civic culture. By her action, even in its liturgical form, she leads men toward interior liberty" (*ibid.*, n. 58).¹⁶



More significantly, the Pastoral Constitution insists that the Holy Spirit offers to all, in a mysterious way known only to God, the possibility of being associated with the Paschal Mystery:

"For, since Christ died for all men, and since the ultimate vocation of man is in fact one, and divine, we ought to believe that the Holy Spirit in a manner known only to God offers to every man the possibility of being associated with this Paschal Mystery" (n. 22).¹⁷

Ad Gentes

Vatican II also initiated a profound change in its fundamental understanding of the Church's task of mission, emphasizing the necessity of mission, grounded within the Trinitarian *missiones* of the Son and the Spirit, and stating that the whole Church is missionary by its very nature:

"The pilgrim Church is missionary by her very nature. For it is from the mission of the Son and the mission of the Holy Spirit that she takes her origin, in accordance with the decree of God the Father" (n. 2).¹⁸

More important still, the task of *missio ad gentes* is not merely the province of professional missionaries sent to foreign lands, but rather, of the whole Church — "the whole Church is missionary". Michael Amaladoss has outlined the implications of this profound shift as follows:

The Church's mission of evangelization has its roots in the mission of God. It starts with God's plan to communicate God's self to all human beings as an outpouring of love. This movement starts from Creation. The whole of history thus becomes a history of God's saving act — a history of salvation. The mission of the Son is linked to the mission of God in creation. It is in the Word that the whole world is created. The Word became incarnate to bring this mission to its fulfillment. The mission of Jesus has to be understood in the context of the mission of God. Similarly, the mission of the Spirit, too, started at Creation as it hovered over the waters. The Spirit is immanent and creative in the world and in humanity. The Church continues the mission of the Incarnate Word — Jesus. *But it does not monopolize or exhaust the continuing action of the Word and the Spirit in the world.* The mission of the Church is at the service of the mission of God (emphasis added).¹⁹

The Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church asserts that: "the specific purpose of this missionary activity is evangelization and the planting of the Church among those peoples and groups [*plantatio ecclesiae*] where she has not yet taken root" (n. 6).²⁰ In explaining the purpose of the Church's *missio ad gentes*, AG opted for a fulfillment approach to the Christian mission:

"This universal design of God for the salvation of the human race is not carried out exclusively in the soul of a man, with a kind of secrecy. Nor is it achieved merely through those multiple endeavours, including religious ones, by which men search for God, groping for Him that they may by chance find Him.... For these attempts need to be enlightened and purified, even though, through the kindly workings of Divine Providence, they may

sometimes serve as a guidance course toward the true God, or as a preparation for the Gospel" (n. 3).²¹

The Decree explains that the source of this fulfillment is Christ:

"Missionary activity is closely bound up too with human nature itself and its aspirations. By manifesting Christ, the Church reveals to men the real truth about their condition and their total vocation. For Christ is the source and model of that renewed humanity, penetrated with brotherly love, sincerity, and a peaceful spirit, to which all aspire" (n. 8).²²

The Decree also insists on the necessity of preaching the Gospel, notwithstanding the possibility that salvation may be available by other channels:

"Therefore, though God in ways known to Himself can lead those inculpably ignorant of the Gospel to that faith without which it is impossible to please Him (Heb 11:6), yet a necessity lies upon the Church (cf. 1 Cor 9:16), and at the same time a sacred duty, to preach the Gospel. Hence missionary activity today as always retains its power and necessity" (n. 7).²³

In a reversal of centuries of Eurocentrism, the Council held that the Church was not a huge and uniformly Eurocentric monolithic entity, but is a communion of local Churches, each of which seeks to give life to the universal Church in accordance with the native genius and traditions of its members:

"Thus, in imitation of the plan of the Incarnation, the young Churches, rooted in Christ and built up on the foundation of the apostles, take to themselves in a wonderful exchange all the riches of the nations which were given to Christ, as an inheritance (cf. Ps. 2:8). From the customs and traditions of their people, from their wisdom and their learning, from their arts and sciences, these Churches borrow all those things which can contribute to the glory of their Creator, the revelation of the Saviour's grace, or the proper arrangement of Christian life.... "Thus, it will be more clearly seen in what ways faith can seek for understanding in the philosophy and wisdom of these peoples. A better view will be gained of how their customs, outlook on life, and social order can be reconciled with the manner of living taught by divine revelation. As a result, avenues will be opened for a more profound adaptation in the whole area of Christian life. Thanks to such a procedure, every appearance of syncretism and of false particularism can be excluded, and the Christian life can be accommodated to the genius and the dispositions of each culture. Particular traditions, together with the individual patrimony of each family of nations, can be illumined by the light of the Gospel, and then be taken up into catholic unity. Finally, the individual young Churches, adorned with their own traditions, will have their own place in the ecclesiastical communion, without prejudice to the primacy of Peter's See, which presides over the entire assembly in charity" (AG, n. 22).²⁴

The foregoing extract from *Ad Gentes* is also groundbreaking for its missiological paradigm of adaptation (*adaptatio*) which is based on the principle of *oeconomia incarnationis* (the economy of the Incarnation). Indeed, AG, n. 22 speaks of a more profound adaptation (*adaptatio profundior*) in "imitation of the plan of the Incarnation" (*ad instar oeconomiae Incarnationis*). Commenting on this phrase, Anscar Chupungco explains:

The phrase *ad instar oeconomiae incarnationis* indicates that the Conciliar Decree sets Christ's Incarnation as an exemplar to be copied faithfully. In imitation of Christ, who by virtue of the Incarnation made himself one with the Jewish nation, the local Church should strive to identify itself with the people among whom it dwells. As Christ became a Jew in all things save sin, so the Church should become not merely a Church *in*, but the Church *of*, a particular locality.... "Incarnation", both as a Christian mystery and a technical term, enriches our understanding of adaptation. As a mystery, it explains why the Church and its liturgy should adapt themselves to the culture and the traditions of the people. What took place when God became human and dwelt among us now takes place when the Church and its liturgy embody "the riches of the nations". As a technical term, "incarnation" gives depth to adaptation, which is often simply understood as a work of external adjustment to, or conformity with, a situation.²⁵

In addition, the Council also gave an expanded role to the Holy Spirit: "Doubtless, the Holy Spirit was already at work in the world before Christ was glorified" (AG, n. 4).²⁶ In an application of Justin Martyr's notion of *logoi spermatikoi*, the Decree suggests that the Holy Spirit "calls all men to Christ by the seeds of the Word and by the preaching of the Gospel" (*ibid.*, n. 15).²⁷ It explains that these "seeds of the Word" (*semina Verbi*) lie hidden in the national and religious traditions of peoples (cf. n. 11).²⁸

Aftermath of Vatican II

In the aftermath of Vatican II, the Catholic Church's mission underwent radical changes as it grappled with a rapidly changing world. While it is true that the result of *Ad Gentes* was a renewed interest in and enthusiasm for mission, the reality of new socio-political developments in former "mission lands" soon crept in.

First, the Council Fathers had adopted an overly optimistic view of missionary success, expecting that Church growth would continue unabated. Jesuit theologian Felipe Gómez explained it well when he stated:

On 6 November 1964, in the 116th General Congregation of Vatican II, after Paul VI had presented the "Schema" *On the Missions*, Card. Agagianian, Prefect of *Propaganda Fide*, drew a bright view of the situation: in the time of Vatican I, he said, "the Church had 275 mission territories; today, we have 770. In 1870, there was not one autonomous bishop, today we see here 41 archbishops, 126 bishops and 4 cardinals ...". The Popes had assumed the effective protagonism which they intended with the erection of the *Propaganda Fide* in 1622 by Gregory XV. The 20th century had seen the great Encyclicals *Maximum Illud* (1919), *Rerum Ecclesiae* (1926), *Evangelii Praecones* (1951), *Fidei Donum* (1957), which channeled the missionary zeal of the secular clergy into Africa; and on the eve of the Council, *Princeps Pastorum* (1959).²⁹

Nobody paid much attention to the underlying tensions arising from nationalistic fervour that were spreading throughout Asia, and that would eventually influence many Asians to identify and equate the Church's territorial expansion with Europe's colonial territorial expansion. Rightly or wrongly, in the eyes of many Asians, the missionaries and the Christian Gospel were tainted by their association and cooperation with, and support of, the European colonial powers.

Second, and more significantly, the Council Fathers failed to grasp the full implications of decolonization that was gathering momentum in the Two/Thirds World in the aftermath of World War II, leading to the emergence of postcolonial Asia. Gómez put it in blunt terms:

Vatican II has been accused of blindness to history, for having missed the import of decolonization, not having offered a critique on colonialism, etc. In fact, by 1965 the ancient colonies were practically all Independent, the Portuguese Empire alone ended in 1975.³⁰

In other words, while the alliance of Christian Churches with European colonialism helped these churches in their growth in Asia during the heyday of colonial expansionism, this alliance became a problematic liability for Christian Churches as they struggled to adapt to the rapidly changing socio-political situation throughout Asia.

Third, the two World Wars and the Jewish Holocaust or *Shoah* undermined the positive confidence of Christian leaders, theologians, and missionaries, who had expected that the missionary endeavour, Church growth, scientific progress, and the dominance of European colonial powers would go on unchallenged. Indian theologian M. Thomas Thangaraj summed it up well when he stated that these two wars not only "demonstrated that human beings, while making progress in science, technology, and other fields, are nonetheless very capable of engaging in extreme forms of violence and cruelty", but they also deflated the optimistic naïveté that "human progress, though seen as a great ally to the missionary movement at the beginning of the century, was no longer a trusted ally in the task of evangelizing the whole world".³¹ In the eyes of millions of Asians, the two World Wars and the *Shoah* punctured the image of superior might and invincibility that was carefully crafted by the European colonial authorities. No longer would the Asian masses acquiesce passively to Europe's hegemony and colonization of their lands. Indian Jesuit theologian Amaladoss explained the dilemma clearly:

In the former colonies, Church expansion is associated in the popular mind with colonialism. They certainly coincided historically and at that time the new Churches were not really built up as authentic local Churches. A certain assertion of autonomy on the part of the local Churches is not without connection to this past. Hence anything foreign is suspect and resented not only by non-Christians, but even by some Christians.³²

Fourth, many Mission Societies and individual missionaries underwent much traumatic soul searching. There was much confusion and hesitancy about the future of the *missio ad gentes* in the Catholic Church. Some questioned the validity of the Church's missionary mandate, perceiving that the *missio ad gentes* was in its death throes. The termination of the *ius commissionis* in 1966 and the resulting "loss" of territorial exclusivity called into question

the *raison d'être* of many foreign mission societies, which had previously operated on a territorial or geographical concept of *missio ad gentes*. As a result, many missiologists and theologians began to question the *raison d'être* of *missio ad gentes*, leading to a prolonged period of questioning and self-doubt as to the efficacy of the traditional approaches to mission. The inability of the 1974 Synod of Bishops to arrive at a consensus on the Church's *missio ad gentes* is symptomatic of this development.

Fifth, and most significantly, for many of the nations of Asia that gained Independence from their colonial masters in the aftermath of the Second World War, Independence and post-colonial consciousness led to a discovery of national pride, and with it, a massive revival of traditional Asian religions. Notwithstanding Vatican II's hopeful aspirations, the world's great religions have continued to grow and thrive not only in Asia but also in North America and Europe, challenging the preeminent position of Christianity in many countries in Europe. Indeed, since the 1960s world religions such as Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism have been rejuvenated and are now asserting themselves to the point of sending missionaries to Europe and North America and gaining new followers worldwide. Indeed, Islam has been on the upsurge, especially in Asia and Africa, making it one of the fastest growing religions in the world.

On the Indian subcontinent, Hinduism has become emboldened, rejecting its secular tolerance to wield the sword of religious nationalism against, what its fundamentalist adherents believe to be, other religious contenders for its preeminent position in contemporary Indian society. The observations of Indian theologian T.K. John in 1987 were especially prescient and still hold true today:

The [Hindu] critics see Christianity as an alien and complex power structure that threatens to eventually undermine India's culture, national integrity and its religions. They feel that a religion that is disappearing from its former stronghold is being dumped, like so many unwanted drugs, on the Third World where it has to be nourished, supported and propagated by foreign money, control and power, instead of drawing its strength from the soil. They conclude that even current efforts at inculturation (which meet with so much inside opposition) are subterfuge measures to win over hesitant or unwilling recruits to the Christian fold. They accuse the Christian missionaries of taking undue advantage of the poverty, the illiteracy and ignorance of the vast majority of the people, and for the proof of this they point to the fact that they have altogether withdrawn their "forces" from the more difficult areas like the caste Hindus, the educated and the economically well-off.³³

Today, India is witnessing the rise of the militant Hindutva religious movement and its political wing, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), both of which reject secular tolerance in favour of wielding the sword of religious zealotry against, what its fundamentalist adherents argue are, religious traditions that are foreign and alien to Indian culture.

In East Asia, Buddhism has gained new vitality as new Buddhist movements, (that first emerged in the early twentieth century), blossomed in the decades following the Second World War. For example, the charismatic Daisaku Ikeda (b. 1928) has transformed the Soka Gakkai Buddhist movement from a small Japanese lay sect of Nichiren Buddhism into a rapidly growing global Buddhist organization with more than 12 million members in over 190 countries in Asia, Africa, Europe, and the Americas.³⁴ Established in 1967 by the Taiwanese Buddhist Dharma Master, the Venerable Hsing Yun (b. 1927), the Fo Guang Shan Monastic Order is the largest Chinese Mahavana Buddhist organization in the world with temples, monasteries schools, and universities in 173 countries across five continents. The Venerable Hsing Yun is one of the main proponents of Humanistic Buddhism, which seeks to integrate Buddhist spirituality with daily ethical living, as well as work for positive social change in this present world.³⁵ Mention must be made of the well-known International Buddhist Relief Organization, Tzu Chi Foundation, that was established in 1966 by the Buddhist nun and Dharma master, the Venerable Cheng Yen (b. 1937), who is often regarded as the Buddhist counterpart to Mother Teresa.³⁶

Looking at this picture of revitalized world religions flourishing in Asia in the decades following Vatican II, one recalls the insights of missiologist David Bosch in his magnum opus, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*. Specifically, Bosch noted that Christianity, with the collapse of Western colonialism, "lost its hegemony" everywhere and "today has to compete for allegiance on the open market of religions and ideologies", such that "oceans no longer separate Christians from other religionists". On this basis, he contended that "we have reached the point where there can be little doubt that the two largest unsolved problems for the

Christian Church are its relationship: (1) to *world views which offer this-worldly salvation*, and (2) to *other faiths*".³⁷ Bosch's careful observations and comments are especially relevant to the difficult task of doing Christian mission in the diverse and pluralistic Asian world. As Vietnamese American theologian Peter C. Phan explained, "it is in Asia that the question of religious pluralism is literally a matter of life and death", and furthermore that, "the future of Asian Christianity hangs in the balance depending on how religious pluralism is understood and lived out".³⁸

The Mission Theology of the FABC

The Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) is a transnational body comprising fifteen Asian Catholic Bishops' Conferences as full members, viz., Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Japan, Kazakhstan, Korea, Laos-Cambodia, Malaysia-Singapore-Brunei, Myanmar, Pakistan, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Thailand, and Vietnam, as well as ten associate members, viz., Hong Kong, Kyrgyzstan, Macau, Mongolia, Nepal, Siberia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and East Timor.³⁹ The foundation for the FABC was laid at an historic meeting of 180 Asian Catholic Bishops in Manila

Paul VI to the Philippines in convenes in Plenary body, with the participation Delegates of Member four years. To-date ten been held.⁴⁰ In addition to the FABC has also sought

The foundation for the FABC was laid at an historic meeting of 180 Asian Catholic Bishops in Manila during the visit of Pope Paul VI to the Philippines in November 1970.

during the visit of Pope November 1970. The FABC Assembly, the highest of all Presidents and Conferences once in every Plenary Assemblies have these Plenary Assemblies, to make a significant

contribution to the development and growth of the spiritual and theological life of the Asian local Churches through the many congresses, consultations, colloquia, conferences, and symposia that are organized by its various offices, i.e., the FABC Central Secretariat, Office of Theological Concerns,⁴¹ Office of Human Development, Office of Social Communication, Office of Laity and Family, Office of Education and Faith Formation, Office of Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, Office of Evangelization, Office of Clergy, and Office of Consecrated Life.

The Challenges of Pluralism in the Asian Milieu

In its official documents, the FABC has proceeded on the basis that the Asian milieu, with its rich diversity and plurality of religions, cultures, and philosophical worldviews requires a *distinctively Asian approach* to the proclamation of the Gospel that is *sensitive to such diversity and pluralism*. Thus, at its founding at the Asian Bishops' Meeting with Pope Paul VI in Manila (1970), the Bishops of Asia acknowledged that Asia is "a continent of ancient and diverse cultures, religions, histories and traditions, a region like Joseph's coat of many colours" (ABM, art. 7).⁴² The First FABC Plenary Assembly recognized that the great religious traditions of Asia are:

significant and positive elements in the economy of God's design and salvation. In them we recognize and respect 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. They have been (and continue to be) the authentic expression of the noblest longings of their hearts, and the home of their contemplation and prayer. They have helped to give shape to the histories and cultures of our nations (FABC I, art. 14).⁴³

One year after the conclusion of FABC I, the Bishops' Institute for Social Action (BISA) II came out, among other things, with the following statement on pluralism which would undergird all subsequent discussions on pluralism in the various FABC Plenary Assemblies and Bishops' Institutes:

Pluralism is a necessity once we work through the mediation of secular analysis and worldviews. This pluralism should not be a threat to our Christian unity, but on the contrary, a positive and creative sign that our unity is deeper than whatever the concrete technical analysis or viewpoints might show: a genuine value that emphasizes unity in diversity (BISA II, art. 10).⁴⁴

For the FABC, pluralism is not something negative, but a source of wealth and strength: Peace and harmony in Asian societies, composed as they are of many cultural, ethnic and linguistic groups, would require recognition of legitimate pluralism and respect for all the groups. Unity, peace and harmony are to be realized in diversity. Diversity is not something to be regretted and abolished, but to be rejoiced over and promoted, since it

represents richness and strength. Harmony is not simply the absence of strife, described as "live and let live". The test of true harmony lies in the acceptance of diversity as richness (Bishops' Institute for Interreligious Affairs [BIRA] IV/11, art. 15).⁴⁵

Elsewhere, the FABC has extended Vatican II's cautious statements in *GS*, n. 22,⁴⁶ and *AG*, n. 4,⁴⁷ when it states that "it is an inescapable truth that God's Spirit is at work in all religious traditions" (BIRA IV/12, art. 7)⁴⁸ because:

It has been recognized since the time of the Apostolic Church, and stated clearly again by the Second Vatican Council, that the Spirit of Christ is active outside the bounds of the visible Church. God's saving grace is not limited to members of the Church, but is offered to every person. His grace may lead some to accept Baptism and enter the Church, but it cannot be presumed that this must always be the case. His ways are mysterious and unfathomable, and no one can dictate the direction of His grace (BIRA II, art. 12).⁴⁹

In other words, the FABC has taken the proposition that is made both in *GS*, n. 22 and *AG*, n. 4 to its logical conclusion when it perceives the religious traditions of Asia as "expressions of the presence of God's Word and of the universal action of his Spirit in them" (*Theological Consultation*, art. 43).⁵⁰ In particular, the "great religions of Asia with their respective creeds, cults and codes reveal to us diverse ways of responding to God whose Spirit is active in all peoples and cultures" (BIRA IV/7, art. 12).⁵¹ For the FABC, it is "the same spirit, who has been active in the Incarnation, life, death and Resurrection of Jesus and in the Church, who was active among all peoples before the Incarnation and is active among the nations, religions and peoples of Asia today" (BIRA IV/3, art. 6).⁵²

More significantly, the Final Statement of the 1995 FABC Hindu-Christian Dialogue made it clear that the FABC viewed religious pluralism as constitutive of the Asian reality:

Beyond the extremes of inclusivism and exclusivism, pluralism is accepted in resonance with the constitutive plurality of reality. Religions, as they are manifested in history, are complementary perceptions of the ineffable Divine Mystery, the God-beyond-God. All religions are visions of the Divine Mystery. No particular religion can claim to be the norm for all the others. We religious believers are co-pilgrims, who share intimate spiritual experiences and reflections with one another with concern and compassion, with genuine openness to truth and the freedom of spiritual seekers (*sadha-kas*). In this process we become increasingly sensitive to human suffering and collaborate in promoting justice, peace and ecological wholeness (BIRA V/3, art. 6).⁵³

"When various religious groups lay absolute claim to truth, aggressive militancy and divisive proselytism follow and, in their wake, bitter religious divisions" (BIRA IV/4, art. 4).

This rejection of any religious exclusivism echoes an earlier statement: "When various religious groups lay absolute claim to truth, aggressive militancy and divisive proselytism follow and, in their wake, bitter religious divisions" (BIRA IV/4, art. 4).⁵⁴ As a result, an Indian commentator was able to conclude that the Asian Bishops "consider religious pluralism as a grace and as a God-given call to be co-pilgrims along with the believers

of other religions in search of Truth in love".⁵⁵

At the same time, the FABC has acknowledged that critics of religious pluralism often raise the specter of unbridled relativism or subjectivism. In response to these critics, the FABC Office of Theological Concerns explained in a document entitled: *Methodology: Asian Christian Theology, Doing Theology in Asia Today*, that, among other things, recognition of religious pluralism does not necessarily lead to an acceptance of subjectivism or relativism:

Pluralism need not always entail radical subjectivism or relativism, in the sense of claiming that all points of view are equally valid. However, it is also true that the dawn of pluralistic, democratic, modern societies has paved the way to excessive individualism and subjectivism, and a consequent relativizing of all reality. Thus, today there are people and groups who hold all reality to be relative. For such people or groups, pluralism means relativism, in the sense that they claim all points of view are equally valid. *Such philosophical or theological positions are to be rejected; and, in fact, all the major Asian religions condemn such relativizing of reality, especially the relativizing of basic human values.* However, just because certain people and groups are misled in their search for truth, and just because they tend to perceive pluralism as relativism, or just because they tend to relativize all reality, we cannot conclude that all pluralism leads to relativism.⁵⁶

From the foregoing discussion, it is clear that the Bishops of Asia are very much at home with the diversity and plurality of the Asian *Sitzen-im-Leben*, eschewing all forms of religious exclusivism, they perceive religious pluralism as an innate and unique aspect of the Asian socio-religious landscape,⁵⁷ and seek to work consistently within the diverse forms of pluralism in the Asian milieu with its manifold peoples, cultures, and religions. Whereas some see the diversity and plurality of postmodern Europe and North America as challenges the Church has to confront and overcome, for the Bishops of Asia the question is: 'how can the Asian Churches be at home with such diversity and plurality?'

Dialogue with the Threefold Reality of Asia: Religions, Cultures, Poverty

From the very beginning, the FABC has always maintained that at the *heart* of the task of mission of Asia's local Churches lies the dialogical encounter between the local Churches and the Asian milieu with its triple reality of religions, cultures, and poverty:

A Church, in continuous, humble and loving dialogue with the living traditions, the cultures, the great religions — in brief, with all the life-realities of the people in whose midst it has sunk its roots deeply and whose history and life it gladly makes its own — seeks to share in whatever truly belongs to that people: its meanings and its values, its aspirations, its thoughts and its language, its songs and its artistry. Even its frailties and failings it assumes, so that they too may be healed. For so did God's Son assume the totality of our fallen human condition (save only for sin) so that He might make it truly His own, and redeem it in His Paschal Mystery (FABC I, art. 12)⁵⁸

Looking back at the First FABC Plenary Assembly, Michael Amaladoss commented that the Asian Bishops saw mission as a dialogue with "the threefold realities of Asia", viz., "its rich cultures, its ancient and great religions, and the poor" and accepted Asian religions as "significant and positive elements in the economy of God's design of salvation" because they have "a living experience of other religions" (emphasis added).⁵⁹

For the FABC, dialogue is "an integral part of evangelization" (Bishops' Institute for Missionary Apostolate [BIMA] II, art. 14),⁶⁰ "intrinsic to the very life of the Church", (BIRA I, art. 9),⁶¹ an "essential mode of all evangelization" (Message of the 1979 International Congress on Mission, art. 19),⁶² and "a true expression of the Church's evangelizing action" (BIMA II, art. 14). At the same time, the FABC has also explained that dialogue *does not preclude* the need for the proclamation of the Christian Gospel: in fact there could be a moment when "we shall not be timid when God opens the door for us to *proclaim* explicitly the Lord Jesus Christ as the Saviour and the answer to the fundamental questions of human existence" (FABC V, art. 4.3, emphasis in the original).⁶⁴ However, a distinctively Asian approach to proclamation which is sensitive to the Asian *Sitz-im-Leben* is needed:

Mission may find its greatest urgency in Asia; it also finds on our continent a distinctive mode. We affirm, together with others, that "the proclamation of Jesus Christ is the center and primary element of evangelization" (Statement of the FABC All-Asia Conference on Evangelization, Suwon, South Korea, 24-31 August 1988). But the proclamation of Jesus Christ in Asia means, first of all, the witness of Christians and of Christian communities to the values of the Kingdom of God, *a proclamation through Christ-like 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" (FABC V, art 4.1, emphasis in the original).⁶⁵

On the basis of the foregoing, the Fifth FABC Plenary Assembly equated the triple dialogue with the Christian mission imperative and concluded:

Mission includes: being with the people, responding to their needs with sensitiveness to the presence of God in cultures and other religious traditions, and witnessing to the values of God's Kingdom through presence, solidarity, sharing and word. *Mission will mean to dialogue with Asia's poor, with its local cultures, and with other religious traditions* (FABC V, art. 3.1.2, emphasis added).⁶⁶

This identification of proclamation with the "witness of life" builds upon the earlier statement made by the Third Bishops' Institute for Missionary Apostolate which met in Changhua in 1982:

It is true that in many places [in Asia] Christ cannot yet be proclaimed openly by words. But He can, and should be, proclaimed through other ways, namely: through the witness of life of the

Christian community and family, and their striving to know and live more fully the faith they possess; through their desire to live in peace and harmony with those who do not share our faith; through the appreciation by Christians of the human and religious values possessed by their non-Christian neighbours, and through these same Christians' willingness to cooperate in those activities which promote the human community (BIMA III, art. 10).⁶⁷

Elsewhere, the FABC has reiterated that "dialogue aimed at 'converting' the other to one's own religious faith and tradition is dishonest and unethical; it is not the way of harmony" (BIRA V/3, art. 7).⁶⁸ The FABC, with regard to the relationship between dialogue, proclamation, and conversion, has pointed out, rightly, that "dialogue and proclamation are complementary. Sincere and authentic dialogue does not have as its objective the conversion of the other. For conversion depends solely on God's internal call and the person's free decision" (BIRA III, art. 4).⁶⁹ Moreover, as Indian theologian Felix Wilfred pointed out, "truth does not impose itself, but rather *attracts* everyone and everything to itself by its beauty, splendour and fascination".⁷⁰

Building up the Kingdom of God

The FABC has taken a positive approach to such diversity and pluralism, acknowledging that the grace and presence of God permeate all of Creation in a mysterious manner. The Bishops of Asia have accorded reverence and honour to the diverse Asian religious traditions and acknowledged that God has drawn the peoples of Asia to God himself through these religious traditions (FABC I, art. 15),⁷¹ a position that has been reiterated by BIRA III, art. 2.⁷² The FABC has also pointed out that Christians believe that God's saving will is at work, in many different ways, in all religions: *the Spirit of Christ is active outside the bounds of the visible Church. God's saving grace is not limited to members of the Church, but is offered to every person.* By the grace of the Spirit, some may come to desire to belong to the Church, and thus receive Baptism; others may not. The Spirit works in entirely "mysterious and unfathomable" ways (BIRA II, art. 12, emphasis added).⁷³

Such an understanding and appreciation of diversity and plurality has led the FABC to link the task of Christian mission with the Kingdom of God. The FABC All-Asia Conference on Evangelization in 1988 explained that the "ultimate goal of all evangelization is the ushering in and establishment of God's Kingdom, namely, God's rule in the hearts and minds of our people" (BIMA IV, art. 5).⁷⁴ At the same time, "the core of Christ's proclamation is the Kingdom of God" (BIRA IV/10, art. 6)⁷⁵ and the local Church "is an instrument for the actualization of the Kingdom" (BIRA IV/2, art. 8.2).⁷⁶ The FABC has explained the relationship between the Church and the Kingdom of God as follows:

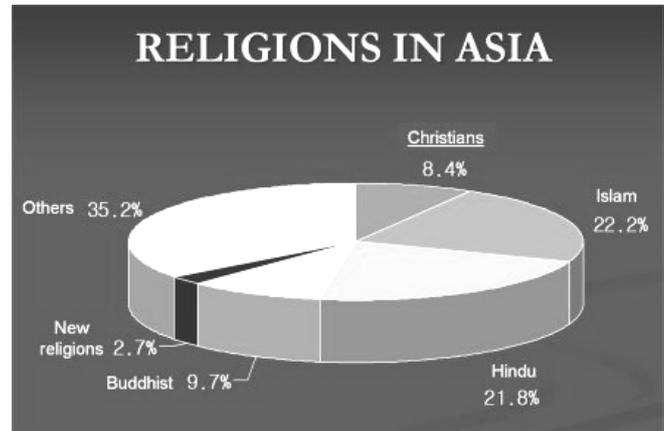
The Reign of God is the very reason for the being of the Church. The Church exists in and for the Kingdom. The Kingdom, God's gift and initiative, is already begun and is continually being realized and made present through the Spirit. Where God is accepted, when the Gospel values are lived, where man is respected ... there is the Kingdom. *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 (BIRA IV/2, art. 8.1, emphasis added).⁷⁷

Similarly, article 30 of the 1991 Theological Consultation insists:

The Reign of God is a universal reality, extending far beyond the boundaries of the Church. It is the reality of salvation in Jesus Christ, in which Christians and others share together. It is the fundamental "mystery of unity" which unites us more deeply than differences in religious allegiance are able to keep us apart. Seen in this manner, a "regnocentric" approach to mission theology does not in any way threaten the Christocentric perspective of our faith. On the contrary, "regno-centrism" calls for "Christo-centrism," and vice-versa, for it is in Jesus Christ and through the Christ-event that God has established his Kingdom upon the earth and in human history.⁷⁸

The local Church is perceived as "constantly [moving] forward in mission, as it accompanies all humankind on its pilgrimage to the Kingdom of the Father" (FABC III, art. 15).⁷⁹ In this respect, the FABC has also pointed out that:

Christian communities in Asia must listen to the Spirit at work in the many communities of believers who live and experience their own faith, who share and celebrate it in their own social, cultural and religious history, and that they (as Communities of the Gospel) must accompany these others "on a common pilgrimage toward the ultimate goal, in the relentless quest of the Absolute", and that thus they are to be "sensitively attuned to the work of the Spirit in the resounding symphony of Asian communion" (FABC III, art. 8.2).⁸⁰



In addition, the FABC Theological Consultation in 1991 concluded that "if the Church is the Sacrament of the Kingdom, the reason is that she is the Sacrament of Jesus Christ Himself, who is the mystery of salvation, to whom she is called to bear witness and whom she is called to proclaim. To be at the service of the Kingdom means for the Church to proclaim Jesus Christ" (Theological Consultation, art. 33).⁸¹

Moreover, far from being an excuse for putting aside the task of evangelization, the paradigm of the Kingdom of God in Asia challenges the local Churches of Asia to work "with the Christians of other churches, together with our sisters and brothers of other faiths and with all people of goodwill, to make the Kingdom of God more visibly present in Asia" (FABC V, art. 2.3.9).⁸² Elsewhere in the same document, the FABC pointed out that the ultimate goal of mission in Asia is "to proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom of God: to promote the values of the Kingdom such as justice, peace, love, compassion, equality and brotherhood in the Asian reality. In short, it is to make the Kingdom of God a reality" (FABC V, art. 1.7).⁸³ The inclusivity of the Kingdom of God holds great appeal for the FABC, which "acknowledge[s] that the Kingdom is at work in the sociopolitical situations and cultural and religious traditions of Asia" (Theological Consultation, art. 39).⁸⁴ For the Asian Catholic Bishops, the inclusive nature of the Kingdom of God also encompasses those people who are followers of Jesus Christ, his life and his teaching and those who continue to be Hindu, Buddhist, Taoist or Muslim, and who are otherwise excluded from the dialectical set-up of present ecclesial structures.⁸⁵ In a similar vein, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India's Response to the *Lineamenta* for the 1998 Synod for Asia stated that "in union with the Father and the Spirit, Christ is indeed the source and cause of salvation for all peoples, but this fact does not exclude the possibility of God mysteriously employing other cooperating channels" (art. 5.1).⁸⁶

Toward "Active Integral Evangelization"

The relationship between interreligious harmony, mission, and dialogue was elaborated by the Fifth FABC Plenary Assembly as follows:

Mission in Asia will also seek through *dialogue* to serve the cause of unity of the peoples of Asia marked by such a diversity of beliefs, cultures and socio-political structures. In an Asia marked by diversity and torn by conflicts, the Church must in a special way be a sacrament — a visible sign and instrument of unity and harmony (FABC V, art. 4.2, emphasis in the original).⁸⁷

This call is especially prophetic and poignant today, in view of the occurrence of religious strife in many parts of Asia, e.g., the Hindu-Christian conflict in India and the Muslim-Christian conflict in Indonesia. The Fifth FABC Plenary Assembly also held that the local Churches have "to discern, in dialogue with Asia's peoples and Asian realities, what deeds the Lord wills to be done so that all humankind may be gathered together in harmony as his family" (FABC V, art. 6. 3).⁸⁸ This is because "the local Churches and communities can discern and work together (in dialogue with each other and with other people of goodwill) to find the best way to proclaim the Gospel, set up the Church, and promote the values of God's Kingdom in their own place and time. In fact, it is by responding to, and serving, the needs of the peoples of Asia that the different Christian communities become truly local Churches" (FABC V, art. 3.3.1).⁸⁹

Building on the foregoing, the Seventh Plenary Assembly of the FABC coined a new term, "active integral evangelization",⁹⁰ to describe a distinctively Asian approach to Christian mission that integrates commitment and service to life, witness, and dialogue:

*For thirty years, as we have tried to reformulate our Christian identity in Asia, we have addressed different issues, one after another: evangelization, inculturation, dialogue, the Asian-ness of the Church, justice, the option for the poor, etc. Today, after three decades, we no longer speak of such distinct issues. We are addressing present needs that are massive and increasingly complex. These issues are not separate topics to be discussed, but aspects of an integrated approach to our Mission of Love and Service. We need to feel and act "integrally". As we face the needs of the 21st century, we do so with Asian hearts, in solidarity with the poor and the marginalized, in union with all our Christian brothers and sisters, and by joining hands with all men and women of Asia of many different faiths. Inculturation, dialogue, justice and the option for the poor are aspects of whatever we do (emphasis added).*⁹¹

In this important document, the FABC reiterated what it stated five years earlier in its 1995 Manila Plenary Statement — it is committed to the "emergence of the Asianness of the Church in Asia", with the assertion that "the Church has to be an embodiment of the Asian vision and values of life, especially interiority, harmony, a holistic and inclusive approach to every area of life".⁹² More significantly, the FABC is convinced that this 'Asianness' of the Church is "a special gift the world is awaiting", and explains that "the whole world is in need of a holistic paradigm for meeting the challenges of life", and "together with all Asians, the Church, a tiny minority on this vast continent, has a singular contribution to make, and this contribution is the task of the whole Church in Asia".⁹³ In addition, the FABC repeats that the "most effective means of evangelization and service in the name of Christ has always been and continues to be the *witness of life*,⁹⁴ and it is only through such witnessing that "Asian people will recognize the Gospel that we proclaim when they see in our life the transparent message of Jesus and the inspiring and healing figure of men and women immersed in God".⁹⁵

I would like to suggest that this witness of life that flows from active integral evangelization is needed more than ever in response to the challenges posed by religious fundamentalists and exclusivists in many parts of Asia. For example, the communal violence against Christians by Hindutva fundamentalists in Orissa, India, raises the question as to whether Christians should turn the other cheek when faced with agitation and violence? Beginning with the coldblooded murder of the Australian Evangelical missionary Graham Staines and his two young sons Philip and Timothy, who were burnt alive in their station wagon in 1999, and culminating in the violence and mayhem against Dalit Christians in Orissa by Hindutva agitators in the aftermath of the assassination of the Hindu fundamentalist Swami Laxmananada Saraswati by Maoist insurgents on 24 August 2008, it is legitimate to ask whether the Asian Bishops' approach to mission smacks of naïveté" in the face of vitriol, hate, and exclusivism that are being spawned by right wing Hindutva militant groups, e.g., the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), Sangh Parivar, and Bajrang Dal?

The Statement of the Executive Body of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI) in response to the Orissa violence against Indian Christians is unequivocal that a tit-for-tat response will only worsen things. One cannot fight religious exclusivism with religious exclusivism. One disarms religious exclusivism with Christian love. No matter how great the threat that may confront us, we cannot renounce the heritage of love and justice that Jesus left us", because "when Jesus went about healing the sick, associating with outcasts and assisting the poor, those works were not allurements but the concrete realization of God's plan for humankind: to build a society founded on love, justice and social harmony".⁹⁶

In a similar vein, the then-Catholic Archbishop Vincent Michael Concessao of Delhi stated that inflammatory missionary tracts that disparage and denigrate Hinduism are counter-productive because "they give fanatics a battering ram to crush Indian Christianity at large".⁹⁷ Commenting on the increasing tension between Hindus and Christians in his paper entitled: "The Quest for Identity and the Call for Dialogue: Prophetic Imperatives of the Mission of the Church in India", Indian theologian Sebastian Madathummuriyil puts forward the case for the Indian Church to "re-examine the Church's imperialistic objectives of mission that reflects exclusivist and totalitarian tendencies", as well as to rediscover its identity, "paying heed to the challenges posed by religious, cultural, ideological, and linguistic pluralism".⁹⁸ In particular, Madathummuriyil thinks that as a minority

community in India, the Indian Church is well positioned to be a prophetic voice for peace and harmony among Hindus, Muslims, and Christians in India against the backdrop of the Hindutva ideology of the homogeneity of religion, culture, and language. As he explains:

To be a prophetic Church in the Indian context, then, would imply, on the one hand, forfeiting traditional strategies of mission and, on the other, enhancing measures to regain the trust and confidence of both Hindus and Muslims through dialogue in an age of widespread anti-Christian sentiment.

Conclusion

One thing the FABC and Vatican II have in common is that they both unequivocally agree upon the *necessity of mission* in the Asian milieu. Without any doubt, the FABC agrees with the Council Fathers at the Second Vatican Council that the Church is missionary in nature. The FABC also wholeheartedly concurs with Vatican II on the possibility of an extra-ecclesial means of salvation (*LG*, n. 16), the respect of elements that are true and holy in other religions (*NA*, n. 2), as well as the mysterious workings of the Holy Spirit in the plan of salvation (*GS*, n. 22 and *AG*, n. 4). In the missionary Decree, *Ad Gentes*, the Council Fathers focused on the *why*, *what*, and *for whom* of mission, trying to justify the need for mission, the contents of mission, and the outcome of mission. This is not surprising, as *Ad Gentes* seeks to articulate a mission theology from the perspective of the missionaries from Europe who were seeking to bring Christ to the unbaptized (*AG*, n. 8) and the "planting of the Church among those people and groups where she has not yet taken root" (*AG*, n. 6).¹⁰⁰ By contrast, the FABC takes for granted the question of *why*, *what*, and *for whom*, focusing rather on the *how* of mission, i.e., *how* to do Christian mission in the context of the immense diversity and plurality of religions and cultures, as well as in solidarity with the poor and marginalized in Asia.

The tension between *dialogue* (*Nostra Aetate*) and proclamation (*Ad Gentes*) was evident at Vatican II and the Council Fathers did not resolve the situation one way or the other, emphasizing both the necessity of the Church and proclamation in *Ad Gentes* while discussing the possibility of truth and holiness in other religions (*Nostra Aetate*), the role of the Holy Spirit outside the Church (*Gaudium et Spes* and *Ad Gentes*), and the possibility of salvation outside the Church (*Lumen Gentium*). Faced with this unresolved tension, the FABC Bishops have chosen to contextualize their mission theology with the specificities of the Asian context, including the challenges and opportunities afforded by the diversity and plurality of religions and cultures, as well as the call to respond to the pervasive poverty and marginalization that many Asians experience in their daily lives.

In practical terms, while the Asian Catholic Bishops accept the necessity of the task of mission in the Asian milieu, they also realize that this does not mean that they are called to conquer the postcolonial Asian world in the name of a triumphant Christ or to build a triumphalistic Christendom on Asian soil. Recognizing the challenges of religious pluralism and religious exclusivism in Asia in a manner that was not discussed nor even understood by the Council Fathers at Vatican II, except for brief indirect allusions in *Gaudium et Spes*, *Nostra Aetate* and *Ad Gentes*, the Catholic Bishops of Asia have pointed out that Asian Christians are called to mission by giving of themselves and bringing the life and hope of the Good News of Jesus Christ to a world beset with challenges and problems. On a continent that is being torn apart by violence and conflict in the name of exclusivist religious fanaticism, Asian Christians are challenged to go beyond the superficiality of quantitative Church growth in favour of a qualitative *prophetic* approach that seeks to critique, transform, and heal the brokenness in Asian cultures and the Asian reality. What is clear is that the FABC accepts that the Asian Church will always be a "little flock", in the sea of the diverse religions and cultures of Asia, in a pluralistic Asia and, hence, has chosen to focus on prophetically critiquing, transforming, and healing the brokenness in Asian reality in the name of bringing about the Kingdom of God in the Asian milieu.

Moreover, it is also important to note that the FABC has consistently emphasized its preferential option for the *dialogical* path of *Nostra Aetate* (see *NA*, n. 2) in its own mission theology. In his keynote address at BIRA IV/12 in February 1991,¹⁰¹ the late Archbishop Emeritus Angelo Fernandes of Delhi, asserted that Asians of other faiths were not to be regarded as "objects of Christian mission", but as "partners in the Asian community, where there must be mutual witness".¹⁰² Archbishop Fernandes' insistence on Asians of other faiths

as partners and collaborators in a mutual witness succinctly captures the FABC's theology and practice of mission in Asia.

From its inception, the FABC has consistently sought to make the Christian Gospel and local Churches truly part of the Asian *Sitzen-im-Leben*. Unlike foreign missionaries who came bearing the Gospel and planting churches in Asia, the Asian Catholic Bishops are very much at home in the pluralistic Asian milieu, having been born into, and lived amidst, such rich diversity and plurality. They recognize that many Christians (laity, clergy, and even bishops) come from a "mixed" religious background. They have relatives, friends, and neighbours with a variety of religious backgrounds. Growing up immersed and steeped in such diversity and plurality, they also have a firsthand experience of communalists, nationalists, fanatics, and fundamentalists who not only reject pluralism and diversity, but also seek to eradicate pluralism and impose their vision as normative through coercion and violence. The forced conversion of Christians in many parts of Asia, the simmering Christian-Muslim conflict in many parts of Indonesia, and the heavy restrictions placed on Christians and their freedom of association are imprinted in the consciousness of these Asian bishops.

Ironically, without pluralism and diversity, there would be no room for the Christian Gospel in Asia, a continent dominated by the world's principal religions. Hence, the FABC Bishops recognize cultural diversity and religious pluralism as lying at the heart of what it means to be Asian. To be truly Asian and at home in the Asian milieu, the Asian local Churches are called to embrace this cultural diversity and religious pluralism. Indeed, as far as the FABC is concerned, diversity and plurality is not to be got rid of, but "rejoiced over and promoted" (BIRA IV/11, art. 15).¹⁰³

Clearly, the Asian Bishops have been interested, not just in a Christian presence in Asia that is over and against Asian religions and cultures, but rather, a presence that is relational and dialogical. Moreover, the FABC points out that Christian communities in Asia must not only "listen to the Spirit at work in the many communities of believers who live and experience their own faith, who share and celebrate it in their own social, cultural and religious history", but also "(as communities of the gospel) must accompany these others 'on a common pilgrimage toward the ultimate goal, in the relentless quest for the Absolute'", in doing so, they become "sensitively attuned to the work of the Spirit in the resounding symphony of Asian communion" (FABC III, art. 8.2).¹⁰⁴ The FABC's call to Asia's local Churches to walk on "a common pilgrimage" with, as well as discern the Spirit at work in, Asia's peoples with their ancient, diverse cultures and religions, exemplifies its vision of active integral evangelization as the way forward, building upon the tentative Conciliar vision of *GS*, n. 22 and *AG*, n. 4.

Therefore, it is possible to conclude that the Asian Catholic Bishops perceive the Church as being called to work for the redemption of humanity in Asia not by pouring oil on the fire of religious conflict and violence and engaging in competitive proselytism and one-upmanship against the practitioners of other religions. Rather, they witness to the redemptive power of the Gospel by the example of their daily life in companionship and solidarity with their neighbours, working, struggling, and suffering as fellow humans on a common quest for the meaning of life. Hence, life witness and dialogue are the two sides of the coin that define the relationship between the Christian Gospel and other religious traditions in the Asian landscape of religious diversity and pluralism, enabling Asian Christians to share the Good News with their fellow Asians. Moreover, Asian Christians acknowledge and rejoice in the diversity and plurality of religions that lie at the heart of what it means to be Asian and Christian. In the final analysis, to be truly Asian and at home in the Asian milieu, Asian Christians are challenged to embrace the religious diversity and plurality of postcolonial Asia, while at the same time prophetically challenging and purifying its oppressive and life-denying elements in the name of the Christian Gospel. It must also be pointed out that while the sapiential "Asian" vision of the FABC does not neglect the importance of proclamation, it also values friendship and trust, relationality and relationship-building, dialogue and solidarity as constitutive elements of the task of Christian mission in Asia.

Even more important, implicit in such a missiology, is the acknowledgment and acceptance of a fundamental ontological, soteriological, and existential relationship between the Christian Gospel and Asia's peoples with their rich religious and cultural traditions, as well as their daily socio-economic challenges. Such a deep and profound missiology enables the local Church to move away from the *plantatio ecclesiae* mentality, i.e., away from "an institution planted in Asia" towards "an evangelizing community of Asia" (Theological Consultation, art. 15).¹⁰⁵ Clearly, the

FABC has great hopes that the local Church can be deeply inculturated in Asia's soil to the extent that it becomes not simply a church in Asia, but truly an Asian Church (BIRAIV/12, art. 50).¹⁰⁶

* This essay is an expanded version of the paper that was originally presented at the 2012 Annual Conference of the Australian Catholic Theological Association on the theme, "Vatican II: The Promise and the Legacy". I am grateful to all who responded with questions and critical comments at the Conference. All the shortcomings are my own.

NOTES

1. See David Aikman, *Jesus in Beijing: How Christianity Is Transforming China and Changing the Global Balance of Power* (Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing, 2003), 235.
2. See Jean-Paul Wiest, "Chinese Youth and Religion Today", in *Origins* 36, no. 33 (2007): 527-531, at 531.
3. See Yoshiko Ashiwa and David L. Wank, *Making Religion, Making the State: The Politics of Religion in Modern China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 1.
4. See Wiest, "Chinese Youth and Religion Today", 531.
5. All of the important documents of the FABC have been collected and published in a convenient four-volume collection: *For All the Peoples of Asia Volume 1: Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences Documents from 1970-1991*, eds. Gaudencio B. Rosales and C.G. Arevalo (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1992, hereinafter referred to as *FAPA Vol. I*); *For All the Peoples of Asia Volume II: Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences Documents from 1992 to 1996*, ed. Franz-Josef Eilers (Quezon City: Claretian, 1997, hereinafter referred to as *FAPA Vol. II*); *For All the Peoples of Asia Volume III: Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences Documents from 1997-2001*, ed. Franz-Josef Eilers (Quezon City: Claretian, 2002, hereinafter referred to as *FAPA Vol. III*); and *For All the Peoples of Asia Volume IV: Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences Documents from 2002-2006*, ed. Franz-Josef Eilers (Quezon City: Claretian, 2007, hereinafter referred to as *FAPA Vol. IV*). Unless otherwise indicated, all references to the documents of the FABC are taken from this four-volume collection.
6. For a more in-depth and critical discussion of these topics, see my previously published essays on this topic: "A New Way of Being Church in Asia: The Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) at the Service of Life in Pluralistic Asia", *Missiology* 33, no. 1 (2005): 71-94; "Missio Inter Gentes: Towards a New Paradigm in the Mission Theology of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC)", *Mission Studies* 21, no. 1 (2004): 65-95; and "Theologizing at the Service of Life: The Contextual Theological Methodology of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC)", *Gregorianum* 81, no. 3 (2000): 541-575.
7. Walter M. Abbott, SJ, ed., *The Documents of Vatican II* (New York: America Press, 1966), 14 -15.
8. *Ibid.*, 79.
9. *Ibid.*, 31.
10. *Ibid.*, 36. *LG*, n. 17 is also reaffirmed in *AG*, n. 2.
11. *Ibid.*, 35.
12. *Ibid.*, 35.
13. *Ibid.*, 662.
14. *Ibid.*, 662-3.
15. *Ibid.*, 264.
16. *Ibid.*, 264-265.
17. *Ibid.*, 221-222.
18. *Ibid.*, 585.
19. Michael Amaladoss, "The Challenges of Mission Today", in *Trends in Mission: Toward the Third Millennium*, ed. William Jenkinson and Helene O'Sullivan (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 359-397, at 364.
20. Abbott, Walter M., S.J., *Documents of Vatican II*, p. 591
21. *Ibid.*, 586.
22. *Ibid.*, 594.
23. *Ibid.*, 593.
24. *Ibid.*, 612-3.
25. Anscar J. Chupungco, *Liturgical Inculturation: Sacramentals, Religiosity, and Catechesis* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1992), 17-18.
26. Abbott, *Documents of Vatican II*, 587.
27. *Ibid.*, 601,
28. *Ibid.*, 597-8.
29. Felipe Gomez, "The Missionary Activity Twenty Years after Vatican II", *East Asian Pastoral Review* 23, no. 1 (1986): 26-57, at 29.
30. *Ibid.*, 53.
31. M. Thomas Thangaraj, *The Common Task: A Theology of Christian Mission* (Nashville: Abingdon Press 1999), 17. Michael Amaladoss, "Foreign Missions Today", *East Asian Pastoral Review*, 25, no. 2 (1988): 104-118, at 113.
32. T.K. John, "The Pope's 'Pastoral Visit' to India: A Further Reflection", *Vidyajyoti Journal of Theological Reflection* 51 (1987): 59.
33. See Richard Hughes Seager, *Encountering the Dharma: Daisaku Ikeda, Soka Gakkai, and the Globalization of Buddhist Humanism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).

34. See Stuart Chandler, *Establishing a Pure Land on Earth: The Foguang Buddhist Perspective on Modernization and Globalization* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004)
35. See Yu-ing Ching, *Master of Love and Mercy: Cheng Yen* (Nevada City, CA: Blue Dolphin Publishing, 1995).
36. David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 475-477.
37. Peter C. Phan, Review of Paul Knitter's *Introducing Theologies of Religion*, in *Horizons* 30 (2003): 117
38. For an excellent overview of the FABC, its history and theological perspectives, see Edmund Chia, *Thirty Years of FABC: History, Foundation, Context and Theology, FABC Papers No. 106* (Hong Kong: FABC, 2003). For a more popular presentation of the FABC's early beginnings and significant accomplishments, see Thomas C. Fox, *Pentecost in Asia: A New Way of Being Church* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002). See also Peter C. Phan, "Christian Mission in Asia: A New way of Being Church", in *In Our Own Tongues: Perspectives from Asia on Mission and Inculturation*, ed. Peter C. Phan (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2003), 13-31; Felix Wilfred, et al. "Document: What the Spirit Says to the Churches. A Vademecum on the Pastoral and Theological Orientations of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC)", in *Vidyajyoti Journal of Theological Reflection* 62 (1998): 124-133; Jacob Kavunkal, "Local Church in the FABC Statements", *Jeevadhara* 27 (1997): 260-271; L. Stanislaus, "The Responses of the Church to Human Development: An Overview from FABC Documents", *East Asian Pastoral Review* 31 (1994): 95-118; Petrus Maria Handoko, *Lay Ministries in the Mission and Ministry of the Church in Asia: A Critical Study of the FABC 1970-1991* (Rome: Gregorian University Press, 1993); Jacques Dupuis, "FABC Focus on the Church's Evangelising Mission in Asia Today", in *Vidyajyoti Journal of Theological Reflection* 56 (1992): 449-468; FABC Theological Advisory Commission, *Theses on the Local Church: A Theological Reflection in the Asian Context, FABC Papers No. 60* (Hong Kong: FABC, 1991); and Felix Wilfred, "Fifth Plenary Assembly of FABC: An Interpretation of Its Theological Orientation", *Vidyajyoti Journal of Theological Reflection* 54 (1990): 583-592.
40. These are: FABC I: Evangelization in Modern Asia (Taipei, Taiwan, 1974); FABC II: Prayer — the Life of the Church in Asia (Calcutta, India, 1978); FABC III: The Church — A Community of Faith in Asia (Bangkok, Thailand, 1982); FABC IV: The Vocation and Mission of the Laity in the Church and in the World of Asia (Tokyo, Japan, 1986); FABC V: Journeying Together Toward the Third Millennium (Bandung, Indonesia, 1990); FABC VI: Christian Discipleship in Asia Today: Service to Life (Manila, the Philippines, 1995); FABC VII: A Renewed Church in Asia on a Mission of Love and Service (Samphran, Thailand, 2000); FABC VIII: The Asian Family towards a Culture of Integral Life (Daejeon, South Korea, 2004); FABC IX: Living the Eucharist in Asia (Manila, the Philippines, 2009); and FABC X: FABC at Forty: Responding to the Challenges of Asia (Xuan Loc, Vietnam, 2012).
41. The FABC Office of Theological Concerns comprises bishop theologians who hold leadership positions, and lay theologians specifically appointed by Bishops' Conferences to collaborate with the bishop theologians to produce important studies, position statements, etc., for use by the wider FABC constituencies.
42. *FAPA* Vol. 1, 4, cf. *FABC II*, art. 7, in *PAPA* Vol. 1, 30.
43. *FAPA* Vol. 1, 14.
44. *FAPA* Vol. I, 204.
45. *FAPA* Vol. 1, 321.
46. *GS*, n. 22 §7 states: "For, since Christ died for all men, and since the ultimate vocation of man is in fact one, and divine, we ought to believe that the Holy Spirit in a manner known only to God offers to every man the possibility of being associated with this paschal mystery". Abbott, *Documents of Vatican II*, 221-222.
47. *AG*, n. 4 states: "Doubtless, the Holy Spirit was already at work in the world before Christ was glorified". Abbott, *Documents of Vatican II*, 587.
48. *FAPA* Vol. 1, 326.
49. *FAPA* Vol. 1, 115, cf. *BIRAIV/1*, art. 10, in *FAPA* Vol. 1, 249.
50. *FAPA* Vol. 1, 344.
51. *FAPA* Vol. 1, 310.
52. *FAPA* Vol. 1, 259.
53. *FAPA* Vol. II, 157-8.
54. *FAPA* Vol. I, 300.
55. Lorenzo Fernando, "CBCI and FABC on Religious Pluralism", in *Vidyajyoti Journal of Theological Reflection* 64 (2000): 857-869, at 865.
57. *FAPA*; Vol. III, 334, emphasis added.
58. See Fernando, "CBCI and FABC on Religious Pluralism", 864-869.
59. *FAPA* Vol. 1, 14.
60. Amaladoss, "The Challenges of Mission Today", 362.
61. *FAPA* Vol. I, 100.
62. *Ibid.*, 111.
63. *Ibid.*, 131.
64. *Ibid.*, 101.
65. *Ibid.*, 282.
66. *Ibid.*, 281-282.
67. *Ibid.*, 280.
68. *Ibid.*, 105.
69. *FAPA* Vol. II, 158.
70. *FAPA* Vol. 1, 120.
71. Felix Wilfred, "Inculturation as a Hermeneutical Question", in *Vidyajyoti Journal of Theological Reflection* 52 (1988): 422-436, at 427.
72. See *FAPA* Vol. 1, 14.
74. See *FAPA*. Vol. 1, 119.
75. *FAPA* Vol. I, 115.
74. *FAPA* Vol. I, 292.
75. *FAPA* Vol. I, 314.

76. FAPA Vol. I, 252.
77. FAPA Vol. I, 252.
78. FAPA Vol. I, 342.
79. FAPA Vol. I, 60.
80. FAPA Vol. I, 57.
81. FAPA Vol. I, 342.
82. FAPA Vol. I, 279.
83. FAPA Vol. I, 275.
84. FAPA Vol. I, 344.
85. See Wilfred, "Inculturation as a Hermeneutical Question", 429.
86. Catholic Bishops' Conference of India, "Responses to the *Lineamenta*". *East Asian Pastoral Review* 35, n. 2 (1998): 112-129, at 121.
87. FAPA Vol. I, 282.
88. FAPA Vol. I, 283.
89. FAPA Vol. III, 281
90. FAPA Vol. 1, 3.
91. FAPA Vol. III, 8.
92. FAPA Vol. III, 8.
93. FAPA Vol. III, 9.
94. FAPA Vol. III, 12.
95. FAPA Vol. III, 12-13.
96. Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI), "Violence against Christians: Statement of the Executive Body of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India", in *Vidyajyoti Journal of Theological Reflection* 72 (2008): 814-817, at 816.
97. Cited in Francis Gonsalves, "Carrying in Our Bodies the Marks of His Passion", *Vidyajyoti Journal of Theological Reflection* 72 (2008): 801-807, at 806.
98. Gerald M. Boodoo, "Catholicity and Mission" in *Proceedings of the Catholic Theological Society of America* 65 (2010): 117-118, at 118.
99. *Ibid.*
100. Abbott, *Documents of Vatican II*, p. 591.
101. See Angelo Fernandes, "Dialogue in the Context of Asian Realities", in *Vidyajyoti Journal of Theological Reflection* 55 (1991): 545-560.
102. See *ibid.*, 548.
103. FAPA Vol. I, 321.
104. FAPA Vol. I, 57.
105. FAPA Vol. I, 338.
106. FAPA Vol. I, 333.

Ref.: *East Asian Pastoral Review*, Vol. 50 (2013), n. 3, pp. 217-250.

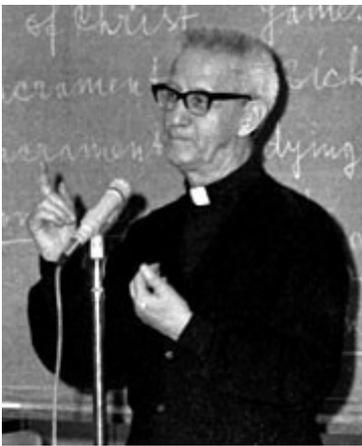
Fr. Paul Steffen, SVD

A Pastoral Network Emerges: Lively Exchanges Between Pastoral Institutes in Asia

In the 1950's and 60's numerous Pastoral Institutes were founded in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Oceania¹ to fill the gap between an academic university education and the training provided at major seminaries.²

Likewise, the need for an alternative institution to the traditional seminary for training ordained and non-ordained ministers arose. However this was in no way to compete with the seminary model, which focusses on training future ordained ministers.

The so-called mission churches of the Pre-Vatican Council era felt, as they developed into local Churches, the need for centres in which to study the local cultures and societies in depth, so as to prepare new ways for mission and ministry in order to evangelize their people and cultures. They sought methods of communication that could be understood by the People of God in their own countries, because only contextualized and inculturated approaches can reach out to the communities and individual members of a people that have embraced the Christian faith in the last centuries.³



In 1955 Fr. Johannes Hofinger (1905-1984),⁴ an Austrian missionary to China, founded the *Institute of Missionary Apologetics* in Manila, the Philippines, the first Institute of its kind. In 1965, under Fr. Alphonse Nebreda, SJ, (1926-2004), his successor, it was renamed the *East Asian Pastoral Institute*. Its task was to train religious, priests and lay people according to the Second Vatican Council's *communio* model of Church. Hofinger had inherited the vision of his teacher Joseph Andreas Jungmann (1889-1975), which was to bring the biblical, liturgical and catechetical renewal movement to the churches in the non-Western world. He spread this vision via International Catechetical and Liturgical Congresses which he began to organize in 1958, up to 1968. Many of the congresses anticipated the vision of renewal the Second Vatican Council was to propose. It was often the first time that bishops from the margins could actually exchange their experiences and views with bishops and specialists from the West. Thus, Hofinger and his teacher Jungmann influenced not only catechetical, liturgical and biblical renewal, through their initiatives they contributed to publications, workshops and international congresses as well as to the new Pastoral and Cultural Centres emerging in Africa, Asia, Oceania and Latin America.⁵

¹ Cf. Paul B. Steffen, *Centres of Formation and Evangelizing Ministry. Pastoral Institutes in Oceania and Africa*. Studia Missiologici SVD, 102, Franz Schmitt Verlag: Siegburg 2014; Horst Rzepkowski, Die Bedeutung der Kultur- u. Pastoralinstitute für die missionarische Verkündigung, in: *Verbum SVD*, vol. 13 (1972) 131-139; Hans Czarkowski, Zur Bedeutung und Situation der Pastoralinstitute in der Dritten Welt, in: *Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft und Religionswissenschaft* 59 (1975) 2, 112-126, 120. Hermann Janssen, Theologische Durchblicke. Entwicklungen und Ebenen der Theologie in der Dritten Welt, in: *Theologie der Gegenwart* 24 (1981) 1, 118-124; P. Steffen, L'inizio dell'idea degli istituti culturali e pastorali, in: *Verbum SVD*, vol. 52:4 (2011) 427-451; *ibid.*, Gli Istituti pastorali dell'Asia e dell'America Latina, in: *Nurt SVD*, vol. 1:131 (2012) 55-77; *ibid.*, Lieu de formation pour une pastorale de communion. GABA, l'institut pastoral pour l'Afrique orientale, in: *SEDOS Bulletin*, vol. 44: no. 3-4 (2012), pp. 70-88.

² Cf. Klaus Vellguth, Pastorales Netzwerk wächst in Asien. Pastoralinstitute suchen gemeinsam nach neuen Perspektiven, in: *Verbum SVD*, vol. 54:1 (2014) 26-44; cf. P. Steffen,

³ Cf. P. Steffen, Places and Models of Formation for Mission and Ministry. Pastoral Institutes in Africa and Asia, in *Verbum SVD*, vol. 51:4 (2010) pp. 423-438, see especially p. 423; P. Steffen, The Asian Pastoral Integral Approach – A New Way of Being Church in Asia. A contextualized and concrete Model for the Evangelizing Mission of the Church, in: *SEDOS Bulletin*, vol. 36:3/4 March-April 2014, pp. 61-70.

⁴ Cf. P. Steffen, Hofinger, Johannes, S.J. (1905-1984), Missionar, Katechetiker u. Religionspädagoge, in: *Biographisch-Bibliographisches Kirchenlexikon* vol. 34, Nordhausen 2013, 584-596.

⁵ Cf. P. Steffen, Places of Formation and Evangelizing Ministry; *ibid.*, Gli Istituti pastorali dell'Asia e dell'America Latina, in *Nurt SVD*, vol. 46, Tom 131:1 (2012) pp. 55-77.

The visionary Fr. D.S. Amalorpavadass (1932-1990) founded the Pastoral Institute of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI) in 1967. When he founded the Institute in Bangalore, South India, he combined in its official title all three dimensions of the renewal Hofinger had promoted worldwide: *National Catechetical, Liturgical and Biblical Centre*. Such a long name favoured the use of its initials: *NBCLC*. Now, this is the commonly used abbreviation of this National Indian Pastoral Institute which spread the catechetical, liturgical and biblical renewal and holistic formation model all over India.⁶



Network Pastoral Asia group with Cardinal, Saigon, Vietnam.

Many of these Institutes, propelled by the momentum of the Second Vatican Council, developed into Formation Centres providing initial and on-going training not only to priests but also increasingly to lay people and religious. Hitherto the Pastoral Institutes in Asia had hardly been networked at all. They knew little about the programmes that had been devised by other In order to foster communication among the pastoral institutes, MISSIO and the East Asian Pastoral Institute invited a number of directors of Asian Pastoral Institutes to the first meeting of the Asian Pastoral Network held in Manila.⁷ The Conference, which took place from 29 October to 1 November 2012 at the East Asian Pastoral Institute in the capital of the Philippines, was attended by representatives of: the Saigon Pastoral Institute (Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam), the National Biblical Catechetical and Liturgical Centre (Bangalore, India), the Pallottine Animation Centre (Nagpur, India), the Pusat Kateketik (Yogyakarta, Indonesia), the Singapore Pastoral Institute (Singapore) and the East Asian Pastoral Institute (Manila, the Philippines).⁸

The Conference's objective was to facilitate an exchange of views on the work of the Pastoral Institutes, establish a common understanding of what Pastoral Ministry meant in the context of Asia and to develop the Asian Pastoral Network. This initial meeting, of the Network in Manila, was the scene of lively discussions between the participants. They were conducted with a view to formulating a common understanding of pastoral work encompassing the different contexts in which the Church works in Asia and the challenges facing the respective Pastoral Institutes. It transpired that an understanding of pastoral work in the context of Asia needs a specific formulation. At the end of the Conference the participants stated that they understood Pastoral Care to be as follows:

"Like Jesus and the disciples of Emmaus, our pastoral centres are journeying with the people of Asia. Our way is determined by the Gospel and by attitudes that embody the compassionate love of Jesus, the Good Shepherd. The main challenge to our Asian pastoral approach is to find ways of encountering and being enriched by the different religious traditions and cultures of Asia. In humility, we are aware of our own weakness and as servant leaders we journey in our common search for God, which determines the way we are engaged in our ministries of service for a holistic and integral transformation of people and society. We, as authentic disciples of Christ, seek to dialogue with the different religions, cultures and the countless populace living in poverty. We understand 'pastoral' to mean our compassionate care to enable faith to connect with life. The pastoral task of the Church is to witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Our witnessing must always be practised in a gentle way so that we live in harmony with the various religions and cultures of Asia that enrich our journey".

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Cf. Vellguth, Klaus, *Missio*. The Network Pastoral, and the Pastoral Institutes of Asia, in: *East Asian Pastoral Review*, 50 (2013) 4, 313-323.

⁸ The fact that the representative from the Multan Pastoral Institute was obliged to cancel his participation at the last minute, because he was not allowed to leave Pakistan, is indicative of the difficulties confronting the Pastoral Institutes in Pakistan. Cf. Vellguth, Klaus, *Pastorale Initiativen in bedrängter Lage*. Der Einsatz des Multan Pastoral Institute für Dialog und Verständigung, in: *Cibedo-Beiträge zum Gespräch zwischen Christen und Muslimen* 3/2012, 92-97

Looking back at the discussions on the varying approaches to pastoral work, Arthur Goh wrote later: "I began to see that, although we start by addressing the same question, i.e. how we can help people to be good and faithful Catholics. The work performed by those I talked to was different from my own, the simple reason being that nowadays making the Catholic faith more fertile in Vietnam is not the same as making it more fruitful in India, Indonesia or the Philippines".⁹

From Manila (2012) to Bangalore (2013)

All the participants found the three-day exchange in Manila useful. It launched a process of mutual understanding which brought the Pastoral Institutes in Asia closer together. To make further progress down this road it was agreed that there should be a follow-up meeting of the Asian Pastoral Network to which the Pastoral Institutes, which had attended the meeting in Manila, should be invited together with the Verbiest Institute (Taiwan), the National Catechetical Educational and Biblical Centre (Sri Lanka), the Multan Pastoral Institute (Pakistan), the National Catechetical Centre (Bangladesh) and Ishvani Kendra (India).



Felix Wilfred, Jacob Theckenath, Paul Steffen and Klaus Vellguth

The second meeting of the Asian Pastoral Network took place in Bangalore (India) from 28 November to 1 December 2013. Representatives from the Pastoral Institutes of Asia and two prominent Indian theologians, Felix Wilfred and Jacob Theckenath, attended the second Conference at the Asian Pastoral Network which examined the possible nature of inculturated pastoral training in Asia at the outset of the third millennium. In his presentation on "Contextualized Formation in Pastoral Institutes" Felix Wilfred dealt with the social, economic and multi-religious context of Asia, while Jacob Theckenath concentrated more on the cultural context that must be taken into account in inculturated pastoral training, in his lecture.

According to Felix Wilfred *Gaudium et Spes* did not want to define "pastoral" in the sense of taking care of the faithful. Pastoral ministry is first and foremost *going out into the world*. The centrifugal outreach is clearly stronger than the centripetal force any human community can maintain easily. Therefore mission and pastoral ministry can no longer be separated, both terms express one and the same mission of the Church to evangelize (see *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, n. 14). The Church is the sacrament of God's presence in the world. As Christians we feel challenged to form harmonious and just human communities in the world. After the Second Vatican Council the churches in Asia experienced a very creative pastoral period because pastoral ministry became more exciting.

The discussions during the second Conference of the Asian Pastoral Network were full of joy as well as those on the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*. All the participants had already read it with great interest, even though it had only been published four days earlier in Rome. Besides members of the Pastoral Institutes which had attended the previous year's Conference in Manila, representatives were present from the Verbiest Institute (Taipei, Taiwan), the National Catechetical Educational and Biblical Centres (Colombo, Sri Lanka) and Ishvani Kendra (Pune, India). Once again, absent from the proceedings were the Multan Pastoral Institute (Pakistan) and the National Catechetical Centre (Bangladesh), whose representatives had been refused an entry visa for India — which serves to illustrate the situation in Asia.

⁹ Arthur Goh, Herausgefordert durch Situationen extremer Armut. Das asiatische „Netzwerk Pastoral“ formuliert sich, in: KM Forum Weltkirche, 2/2013, pp. 23-28.

The Asian Pastoral Network's second Conference was devoted in particular to the requirement of inculturated pastoral training. The visit to the Indian Social Institute¹⁰ proved helpful in the reflection on the demands relating to contextualised pastoral training. *Jyoti Sahi's Art Ashram* and the *Vistar Institute*¹¹ focus on the *Dalits* and other traditional sections of the population. In their Final Declaration the participants at the second Conference of the Asian Pastoral Network stated that Pastoral Ministry in Asia is of a multi-religious and multi-cultural nature and that different economic, political and social relations present different challenges for inculturated training in pastoral work. It is important to overcome self-referential, Church-related thinking on pastoral care. Instead, one should work for a prophetic Church which is active in the world and aims to change it. To achieve this it is more important to evaluate bold answers that are in keeping with the signs of the times, than to concentrate on Church routine. The training of lay people at the Pastoral Institutes should not be restricted to encouraging their involvement with a view to reinforcing the existing pastoral set-up. Instead, lay people should be given greater encouragement since it is they who bear prophetic witness in the world.

The Reports were frank regarding the situation of individual Pastoral Institutes. It emerged that many of the Pastoral Institutes in Asia, founded in the wake of the Second Vatican Council, were now undergoing a crisis in the face of the challenge to redefine their self-image and the place they occupy in their specific ecclesial context. There was agreement that the period of crisis should not be interpreted as a threat but as an opportunity and as a sign of growth. Cleophas Fernandez said: "The pastoral network is a source of sustenance which helps us to find a new identity and adapt to the changes in our specific contexts". In his view he felt that the NBCLC needed to add a research department to bring it more into contact with a field of outreach it is lacking at present.

The NBCLC should be based on a threefold mission: training ministers according to a holistic and inclusive formation model; research to deepen knowledge; publishing the results of the teaching, research experiences and knowledge acquired. Thus following the model other Pastoral and Cultural Centres are implementing worldwide.

Fr. Cleophas Fernandes felt that undergoing an identity crisis may in fact mean growth and be an opportunity to overcome stagnation. Fr. Jacob Teckanath explained that the NBCLC was shaped by the outstanding vision of its Founder, Fr. D.S. Amalorpavadass, a pioneer in inculturating the Christian faith through Catechesis and the Liturgy. Indeed, ever since its establishment the NBCLC has helped a large number of priests, religious and lay people thanks to its specific approach of relating the Christian faith to the realities of India.

As regards the type of pastoral training needed to meet the challenge of inculturation in Asia the participants stated: "We see contextualized formation as a way of directly connecting reality with the light of theology. God's revelation is being realized in the complex socio-cultural context of our time. Our approach does not permit a compartmentalized approach to faith and life. In this exchange between faith and life both are mutually enriched. We are engaged in a Christological praxis which:

- Demands that we: go out in search of the lost and the least
- Engage in a prophetic action for transformation,
- Always uphold human rights and the dignity of every person,
- Adopt a methodology of insertion acquired from our concrete involvement in the actual context of a pastoral presence, which connects faith and life

Having taken part in an inculturated Eucharistic celebration, we realized how necessary it is for the liturgy and our life context to be linked. Our pastoral methodology will always have

¹⁰ Cf. Indian Social Institute, Bangalore. Accompanying the marginalized since 1963. Annual Report 2012 - 2013, Bangalore 2013. www.isiblr.org.in

¹¹ Cf. Vishtar Academy of Justice and Peace Studies, Bangalore 2012. www.vishtar.org

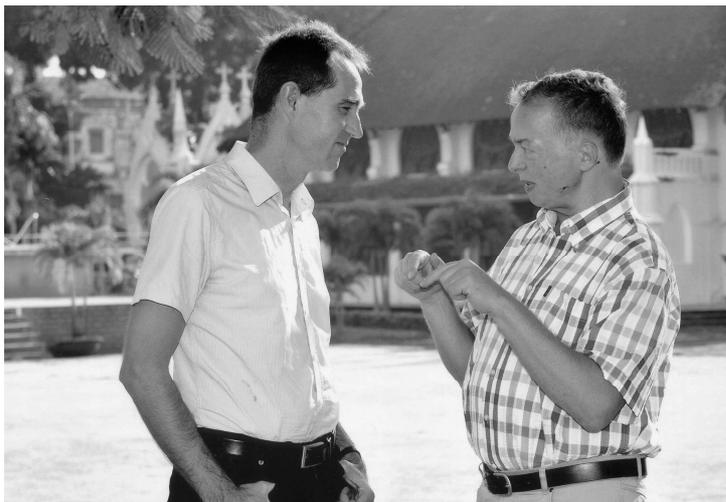
a unique character learnt through practical involvement in the context of our formation. Our methodology will emerge from our experience of insertion.

Our Pastoral Centres are called to: exercise a teaching role, offer training within concrete pastoral contexts, further research to enable us to constantly evaluate and see within and beyond, engage in some form of extension service, permit us to develop a unique methodology of insertion, engage in forms of networking and cooperation with all like-minded agents of change”.

The network is spreading

Following the first two conferences in Manila (2012) and Bangalore (2013) plans for the further growth of the Asian Pastoral Network were proposed:

- In October 2014 the third conference of the Asian Pastoral Network will be held in Ho Chi Minh City (formerly Saigon, Vietnam). By that time a number of new connections will have been established in the Asian Pastoral Network.



- The first half of 2014 will see the first national network meeting of India’s Pastoral Institutes in Bangalore. Twenty-four Pastoral Institutes will be represented and, taking the Final Declaration of the Asia Network Meeting as their point of departure, they will develop perspectives for the work of the Pastoral Institutes in India.

- In Africa, too, there is growing interest in a pastoral network. In

December 2013 the first conference of the African Pastoral Network was held at the Lumko Institute in South Africa.

Ref.: Text given from Fr. Steffen for the SEDOS Publication. November 2014. Firstly published in *Ishvani Documentation and Mission Digest*, Vol. XXXII, No. 2-3, May-Dec. 2014, pp. 168-173.

Francis Perry Azah

Jewish-Christian Dialogue and Educational Practice

Introduction

Dialogue between Traditions, such as Buddhist and Christian, or Jewish and Christian, presupposes dialogue within a Tradition. In that sense the serious interreligious dialogue that began only in the twentieth century is an extension of a dialogic attitude, which runs throughout the Tradition. Such an attitude is more evident in Jewish than in Christian history. One reason why Christians study Judaism is to gain an appreciation of the fact that disagreement need not destroy the Tradition. In Christianity's continuing relationship to the Jewish Tradition, the Christians, until recently, did all the talking because they only talked to the (dead) Hebrew People in the Old Testament. It has been a great step forward in the last half-century for Christians and living Jews to talk about their agreements and disagreements. Such cooperation has, among other things, thrown light on the origins of Christianity (Moran, 2007: 111). The Christian [Catholic] and Jewish faiths contain different belief systems (even though they all have belief in one God as their basis). By looking at each of these from a tolerant viewpoint, we can understand how this diversity of thought has been passed down through time. As we study these systems, our own view may be broadened, sharpened, or transformed.

*"I can vividly remember the Jews who gathered every Saturday at the synagogue behind our school. Both religious groups, Catholics and Jews were united, I suppose, by the awareness that they prayed to the same God. Despite their different languages, prayers in the church and in the synagogue were based, to a considerable degree, on the same texts" (John Paul II, "Crossing the Threshold of Hope").**

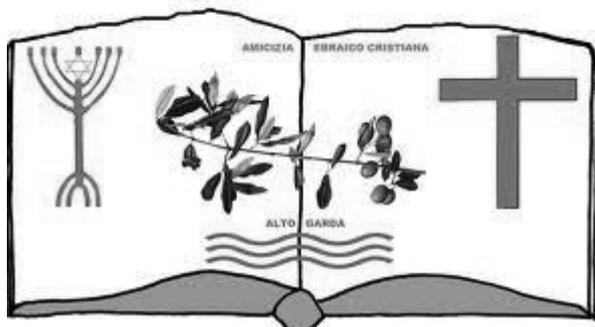
The authentic relationship between Jews and Christians in the dialogue is a relationship between people whose faith is already nurtured from within their respective religious communities. No matter how visible the life of that singular religious community may be to others, it can never be to an outsider what it is to an insider. For that life can be directly understood only by someone who has made a total commitment to be one with that historical community. That is its only true context. It can only be an act of *insight*. Thus, no Christian, no matter how well versed in Judaism, can ever directly understand the covenantal intimacy of the Sabbath without first literally becoming a Jew. Similarly, no Jew, no matter how well versed in Christianity, can ever directly understand the covenantal intimacy of the Eucharist without first literally becoming a Christian. These areas of covenantal intimacy lie far too deep for them to be entirely perceived by Jews and Christians although they share a border. The respective laws of Judaism and Christianity have recognized this elementary fact and have ruled accordingly. For this reason, Jews relate to other Jews more intimately than to non-Jews. The former relationship is more singular; the latter, more general (Novak, 1992).

On 25 October 2006, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops issued a Joint Statement with the Rabbinical Council of America and the Orthodox Union, indicating that interreligious dialogue between these bodies that share the same goals, is to promote educational reform. This statement indicates that the aim of this interreligious dialogue is to create "educational environments that strive to imbue in our children the highest values, a depth of knowledge and proficiency of skills", which will enable students "to benefit society at large" (Catholic, Orthodox Jews, 2007:17).

This interreligious dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Jewish faith has its roots in the Teaching of Vatican II and especially in the "Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions *Nostra Aetate*", which states that: "the Church ... cannot forget that she draws sustenance from the root of that good olive tree onto which have been grafted the wild olive branches of the Gentiles", n. 4, (cited by Doetzel, 2005:11). In the decades since Vatican II, the Catholic Church has established an extensive dialogue with

institutions of the Jewish faith. This examination of this relationship focuses on how the dialogue between these two major world religions has affected educational reform and practice.

Need for a Diversity of Education Reform



This is an extremely broad topic as educational literature states that reform is needed with regard to a number of issues. For example, the topic: "Equality of Education". Despite four decades of de-segregation, many schools throughout the country continue to be segregated by race and income (Gooden, 2004:230).

On the other hand, literature on the dialogue between Catholic and Jewish leaders specifically addresses the need for the re-introduction of

moral education within the nation's schools. Feminists are concerned about continuing gender discrimination in schools. Others are concerned about the issue of how mandatory high-stakes testing has affected the special education of students and minorities. There are a plethora of issues that involve reform and also address issues of diversity and justice.

Commenting on the diversity of educational reform, Dr. Nahum Goldmann (1994) made reference to a document sent to the Vatican for redress. The document, he said, was intended to urge the Vatican to make a very clear statement against racism, condemning anti-Semitism and promising to purge the textbooks and the literature of the Catholic Church of all anti-Jewish passages. This would be of extreme importance, especially in the countries of Latin America where the Catholic Church dominates the field of education and where millions of Catholic children grow up being taught that the Jews were the murderers of Jesus, that they are an accursed people. In this regard, Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI eliminated two passages in traditional prayers that contained derogatory references to Jews. But this is only a drop in the ocean because Catholic literature, and especially Catholic textbooks, is full of these references. So we, Jews, submitted the memorandum, and the Pope appointed a special Commission to study it (Berkowitz, 1994:185).

In the meantime, Goldmann (1994) continued, they have discussed the document with the cardinals in order to gain their support and that of the bishops the world over, who will finally vote on the matter. Despite all the difficulties, which they did not underestimate, they were hopeful, because the Pope, John Paul II, was in favour of it. A Pope does not have to submit this to the Commission but can make Decrees himself. However, the action would carry more weight were the Vatican Commission to adopt the resolution; one that would be of tremendous importance in fighting anti-Semitism and also serve to improve Catholic-Jewish relations all over the world (Berkowitz, 1994:186). That action would certainly open the door to a new age of understanding, peace, and enlightenment.

Religious Diversity and Tolerance

Before becoming Pope, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger was Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, and he co-authored *Dominus Iesus*, which concerns the unicity and salvific universality of Jesus Christ. Citing the Second Vatican Council Declaration, *Nostra Aetate*, (n. 2); *Dominus Iesus* re-states that salvation through Jesus Christ is available to adherents of other faiths through grace, even when they are not formally members of the Church (CDF, 2000).

This is due to the fact that the Church recognizes that a person's beliefs are highly influenced by upbringing and native culture and, therefore, the Church acknowledges that each faith enlightens believers "in a way which is accommodated to their spiritual and material situation" (CDF, 2000). The Second Vatican Council Declaration states: "the Catholic Church rejects nothing which is true and holy in these religions" (NA, n. 2). This forms the basis for the tolerance of the Catholic Church and it is also the foundation on which the dialogue between the Church and the Jewish faith is built, as tolerance is axiomatic to this process.

Since the time of the Second Vatican Council, the Catholic Church has readily acknowledged the legitimacy of both Judaism and Islam, as faiths that honour God. In his

address on the end of Ramadan (2003), Archbishop Michael L. Fitzgerald commented on how people of faith, Christian or Muslim, are united in their recognition that "human beings are not their own masters, but are called to fulfil the will of God, the Creator of all, who is the Absolute Truth" (Fitzgerald, 2003). In this address he also emphasized the fact that all individuals are part of one "human family" and that Christians stand united with Muslims in prayer before God (Fitzgerald, 2003).

It should also be understood that the acceptance that the Church does not diminish in any way the obligation of the Church's mission to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Encyclical, *Redemptoris* the Church acknowledges holy in the religious traditions of Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam as a enlightens all people" (n. 55), this position does not lessen the duty of Christians "to proclaim without fail that Jesus Christ" is the "way, the truth and the life" (*ibid.*, n. 55). The fact that believers of other religions can receive God's grace and that they can be saved by Christ "apart from the ordinary means which he has established does not thereby cancel the call to faith and baptism which God wills for all people" (*ibid.*).



understood that the Church shows toward other religions does not diminish in any way the mission to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Encyclical, *Redemptoris* the Church acknowledges holy in the religious traditions of Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam as a enlightens all people" (n. 55), this position does not lessen the duty of Christians "to proclaim without fail that Jesus Christ" is the "way, the truth and the life" (*ibid.*, n. 55). The fact that believers of other religions can receive God's grace and that they can be saved by Christ "apart from the ordinary means which he has established does not thereby cancel the call to faith and baptism which God wills for all people" (*ibid.*).

This background illuminates the continuing adaptation of Catholic education to meet the goals established by the Church with regard to instituting principles of tolerance. Miller (2005) suggests that it is a beneficial exercise for Catholic institutions of higher learning to evaluate their educational practice based on the Teaching of *Nostra Aetate*. This exercise can be seen as a test of an institution successfully implementing the principles of religious diversity within a framework of tolerance as dictated by the Teaching of Vatican II, and the **four forms of dialogue** that are frequently mentioned in magisterial documents: "the dialogue of life, of action, of theological exchange and of religious experience" (Miller, 2005:17).

The "dialogue of life" is "an attitude and a way of acting", and entails what *Nostra Aetate* refers to as a precondition for all dialogue (Miller, 2005:17). According to Miller, while witnessing to their respective religious faith and way of life, this dialogue requires concern, "respect, and hospitality for people of other faiths" (Miller, 2005). The "dialogue of action" is also known as the "dialogue of works", and refers to the requirement that believers should "preserve and promote peace, freedom, social justice and moral values" (Miller, 2005: 17). This attitude expressed as the "dialogue of life" implements it, while fostering an atmosphere of collaboration with people of other faiths in order to achieve goals that facilitate the common good (Miller, 2005).

The **third form of dialogue** is the "dialogue of experts" and refers to scholars gaining a deeper understanding of history and the heritage of each religion and its spiritual values. To promote this demands that university faculties be open to all human experience and ready to exchange views with other religions and to learn from them (Miller, 2005). The **fourth form** of dialogue, the "dialogue of religious experience", requires that universities foster worship and religious faith within the context of the daily syllabus, by setting aside periods for reflection and prayer (Miller, 2005). By taking up "the great challenge of interreligious dialogue", which Pope John Paul II launched in *Novo Millennio Ineunte* (2001), Catholic institutions of higher learning can deepen the context of their faith while nurturing tolerance as a fundamental value (Miller, 2005:17).

Religious Diversity and Tradition

The Catholic Church draws upon Tradition in defining its stance on religious diversity. In so doing, the Church recognizes that this society of ours is a religiously pluralistic society and recognizes the inherent dangers of "triumphalist, absolutist claims" that seek to give one religious faith precedence over another (Doetzel, 2005:11). It is this attitude that the Jewish and Catholic dialogue has sought to overcome as leaders and scholars endeavour to obtain greater understanding and reconciliation between these two faiths (Doetzel, 2005). Their efforts have managed to survive the imposition of numerous barriers that have periodically threatened to circumvent the goal of "open and trusting reciprocity", and this has resulted in

the broadening of their dialogue to encompass issues of joint concern, such as the appropriate goals of education within the framework of education (Doetzel, 2005).

Catholic and Jewish leaders point out that there is consensus that a State/Public School education should focus on forming good people as one of their educational goals. Everyone agrees that "a moral person should be marked by honesty, self-control, friendliness, decency, selflessness, fairness, respect, responsibility, compassion, loyalty, empathy and a cooperative spirit" (Davis, 2006:5). Tradition dictates that this can best be taught in a religion-based framework, as this was the stance of society in early American history. However, practically from the nation's outset, there has been debate concerning the content of this instruction.

Catholics and Jews became concerned in the nineteenth century that the State/Public Schools were becoming increasingly Protestant-oriented (Davis, 2006). In 1844, the debate on how to manage the State/Public Schools became violent, and school board meetings in Philadelphia over these issues ended in rioting that claimed the lives of thirteen people (Davis, 2006). As this suggests, the volatile emotions associated with religion represent a danger, and that the movement towards moral educational instruction should take place within an atmosphere that values and respects all religious perspectives.

Transformation of Tradition through Educational Settings

Historically, it has been the "family, the Church or the Synagogue, the School and the Government" that have endeavoured to educate children as regards the assimilation of fundamental values (Delegates, 1990). In recent years, however, there has been an increasing reluctance to teach these values within the framework of the State/Public School system due to the apprehension that this would entail indoctrinating children to a specific religious belief (Delegates, 1990). Nevertheless, it remains true that all the major religions of the world advocate these values.

Furthermore, the core values that moral education emphasizes are found in the world's greatest literature, as well as ethical business practices (Delegates, 1990). Recognizing these facts, the Delegates of the Interreligious Affairs Committee of the Synagogue Council of the United States of America and the Bishop's Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops of America issued a Joint Statement postulating that State Schools can teach moral values without crossing the barrier between Church and State, as this can be done outside the framework of any specific religious orientation (Delegates, 1990).

In order to bring about educational reform on this topic, the delegates presented six recommendations.

First of all, they urged those responsible for education at the local, State/Public, and national levels to bring this issue to the attention of all stakeholders, so that these parties can address the need for moral education. This recommendation also includes the action of State governors and legislators whom they feel should set up committees to promote the moral values within each nation's State/Public Schools educational programme.

The **second** recommendation proposed that principles of moral education should be introduced into the curricula, which includes the use of "textbooks, resources and teaching methodologies" that focus on teaching "basic, civil and personal values".

The **third** recommendation called for all faiths to work together to bring about systemic change, and, to facilitate this purpose, the Delegates recommended that a Joint Commission be established to evaluate the matters that are pending in the Courts and currently before Congress, which could affect the promotion of moral education in the State/Public Schools.

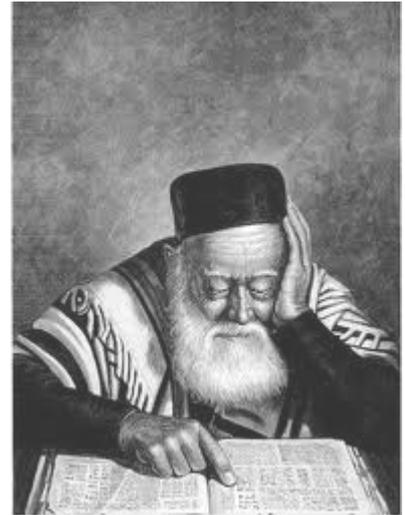
The **fourth** recommendation urged that Foundations should underwrite this initiative.

The **fifth** recommendation concerned the involvement of the media, which should also support this initiative.

The **sixth** and final recommendation regarded the action to be taken by the Delegates of both religious bodies at this Conference. This recommendation lists five distinct actions, which request that: "Catholic and Jews begin a widespread dialogue about moral education in State/Public Schools", which should take place in "State Jewish Councils, Catholic Conferences, and ministerial associations".

The Needs of Students

As humanity enters the third millennium after the death of Christ, young people face what is, in many ways, an uncertain future. In many instances, the values of society appear to be in chaos, which can be traced to the fact that values are no longer grounded in faith in God (SCCE, 1988). The problems of society are manifold, that is, "the threat of nuclear annihilation, vast unemployment, the high number of marriages that end in separation and divorce, widespread poverty", etc. (SCCE, 1988). When faced with these pressures, combined with the problem of poverty and racial ethnic discrimination, young people are tempted to turn to the abuse of alcohol, drugs, or sex. It is the challenge and the responsibility of educators to teach young people that something greater than themselves exists and a definitive path which they can follow that will lead them to become beneficial members of society, as well as active shapers of the society in which they live (SCCE, 1988).



Essentially, this is the basic purpose of the dialogue between Catholic and Jewish spiritual leaders as regards the educational goals and the institution of beneficial reforms. Both groups recognized the need for direction and that the educational system in an effort to be completely egalitarian between religions, and not to support one religious view over another, has not addressed its duty to provide moral education for the nation's young people. The spiritual leadership also recognized that this education should be offered within the framework of a system that values and respects religious diversity.

Conclusion

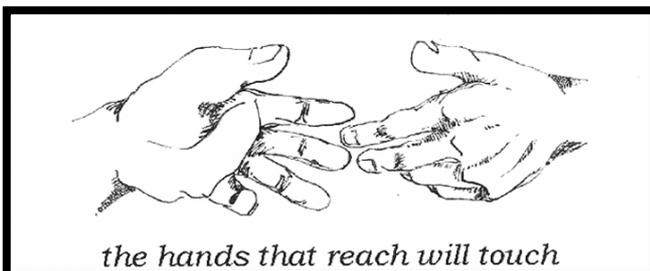
The Roman Catholic reflections describe the growing respect for the Jewish Tradition that has unfolded since the Second Vatican Council. A deepening Catholic appreciation of the Eternal Covenant between God and the Jewish People, together with recognition of a divinely-given mission to the Jews to witness to God's steadfast love, led to the conclusion that campaigns that target Jews for conversion to Christianity are no longer theologically acceptable in the Catholic Church.

The Jewish reflections describe the mission of the Jews and the perfection of the world. This mission is seen to have three aspects:

First, there are the obligations that arise as a result of the loving election of the Jewish People and their Covenant with God.

Second, there is a mission of witness to God's redeeming power in the world.

Third, the Jewish people have a mission that is addressed to all human beings. The Jewish community is beginning to consider how Judaism's mission might be related to Catholicism's understanding of its mission for the world.



Christianity has an utterly unique relationship with Judaism because our two religious communities are connected and closely related at the very level of their respective religious identities.

The History of Salvation makes clear our special relationship with the Jewish People. Jesus belongs to the Jewish people, and he inaugurated his Church within the Jewish nation. A great part of the Holy Scriptures, which we Christians read as the Word of God, constitutes a spiritual patrimony which we share with Jews. Consequently, any negative attitude in their regard must be avoided, since in order to be a blessing for the World, Jews and Christians need first to be a blessing for each other (John Paul II, 1999).

In the wake of *Nostra Aetate*, there has been a deepening Catholic appreciation of many aspects of our unique spiritual links with the Jews. Specifically, the Catholic Church has

come to recognize that its mission of preparing for the coming of the Kingdom of God is one that is shared with the Jewish People, even if Jews do not conceive of this task christologically as the Church does.

The Synod of the Evangelical Church in the Rhineland [Germany] was correct in its statement of 1 November 1980, "On the Renewal of Relationships between Christians and Jews":

In the Jewish and in the Christian Tradition, God's love embraces the entire Creation. As God's image and partner, the human being should work according to this divine model. The Jew and the Christian, therefore, may not withdraw love from their fellow humans, even if they should be their enemies — for even the enemy remains God's beloved creature. It is thus not astonishing that in Judaism, before, during, and after the time of Jesus, love of one's enemy was in force.... It is therefore incorrect to say that Jesus was the first to free the Commandment of Love from all restrictions by mandating love of one's enemy (Lapide, 1986:27).

There has been growing respect for the Jewish Tradition and the Everlasting Covenant which God made with them. Judaism is "already a response to God's revelation in the Old Covenant" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 839), a response to God's grace that requires religious freedom and respect for the faith relationship between God and the human person. At the same time, that very respect for the freedom of faith requires us to be open to the action of God's grace to bring any person to accept what Catholic belief understands as the fullness of the means of salvation which are found in the Church.

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Lois Semenyé

Spiritual Formation of Christian Leaders

Introduction

The Spiritual Formation of Christian leaders is paramount. It would be a contradiction were a Christian leader fail to grow spiritually and yet lead people. A Christian leader must be a person of God before doing the work of God. However, the demands of leadership often draw leaders away from intimacy with God. A leader encounters many challenges in life, such as: family, ministry or organization, all these factors are time-consuming, limiting time with the Lord. In order to avoid falling, the leader must purposefully and constantly seek intimacy with God, and consequently become an effective spiritual leader.

It is amazing that Christian leaders should be in such great demand. People are looking for meaning in life and they expect Christian leaders to have the answers. This translates into time and fatigue for the leaders, yet they must also set time aside for themselves. Leaders are surrounded by crowds of people who look to them for direction, making it difficult to be alone. Leaders must learn how to get away from the crowds. Leaders however, perhaps due to ego, like to act as supermen and seek to address all the issues brought before them. Consequently, they work long hours, justifying this as working for the Lord and yet losing intimacy with the Lord. Such leaders are in danger of falling into sin, thus becoming ineffective Christian leaders. In order to avoid this, a Christian leader must intentionally practice spiritual disciplines.

In this paper I shall attempt to analyze the reasons why leaders may fall short of their commitment and suggest appropriate and relevant spiritual disciplines to help them avoid becoming unspiritual. My list is not comprehensive but the reasons have been chosen according to the spiritual disciplines discussed.

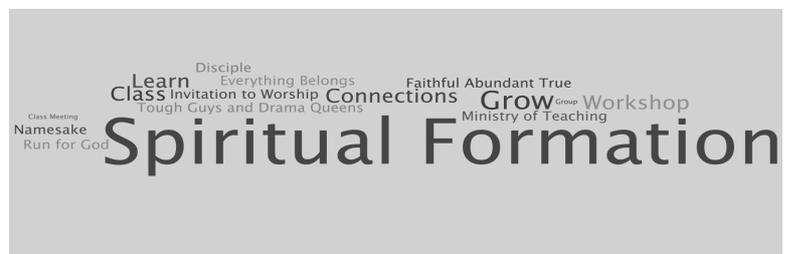
Christian leaders tend to follow a pattern.

They often start by learning the culture of the organization with great humility. In the second stage, they serve and even lead others spiritually. In the third stage, as the leaders settle into their position, they begin to distance themselves from their followers. This is a dangerous sign indicative of growing pride. As a result, their fellowship with other believers is reduced. They become isolated, which leads them towards failure as their accountability diminishes. As the demands on them increase they focus more and more on 'working for the Lord', forgetting that 'being' is more important than the unending activities of ministry.

Practicing the spiritual disciplines can help a leader stay on course. Spiritual disciplines are not a cure for spiritual apathy but can serve to check the reality. They help us to connect with God if done correctly. Even Paul felt the need to be in a right relationship with God and with man. "So I strive always to keep my conscience clear before God and man" (Acts 24:16). Practicing spiritual disciplines helps us obey the Scriptures. Matthew advises, "But seek first his Kingdom and his righteousness and all these things will be given to you as well" (6:33). One commentary on this verse states, "Jesus' disciples are assured that all the necessary things will be given them by their Heavenly Father".¹ When leaders put God first, their leadership matures according to God's ways.

Definitions

By definition, Spiritual Formation is the transformation process that occurs as one grows closer to the Lord and becomes and acts like Jesus. This is the shaping and nurturing of the Christian's inner being after the pattern of Jesus Christ. The indwelling Holy Spirit convinces the believer and reshapes the person's life. Spiritual formation does not come about by human work but is accomplished by God's grace. Our spiritual formation is not simply for ourselves but is also for others. Hence, a Christian leader should cultivate the virtue of living for others. Mulholland stated that spiritual formation is "a process of being conformed to the image of Christ for the sake of others".²



A Christian leader then leads others for their sake. This process of becoming like Christ is enhanced when we practice the spiritual disciplines, as we simply "apply the acts of will at our

disposal in such a way that the proper course of action, which cannot always be realized by direct and untrained effort, will nevertheless be carried out when needed".³ It is a means of grace. Jesus practiced many of the disciplines when he was here on earth.

Let us try to give an appropriate definition of a Christian leader. This is no easy task as there are many definitions. Stuebing stated that the Christian leader should be noted for a godly character that includes:

Personal character: self-control, discipline, modesty, common sense,
Relationship with others, especially one's opponents: peaceable, gentle, considerate
Reputation with others, especially non-believers: blameless, having integrity, above reproach, respect.⁴

The leadership gives an organization its vision and mission and its ability to translate that vision into reality. There are two realms a Christian leader has to consider and integrate: *the spiritual realm* that is developed through increasing intimacy with God; and *the physical realm* that training in leadership skills and principles sharpens. The Christian leader must balance these two realms, because emphasizing the physical aspect above the spiritual leads to disaster. Chuck Miller stated, "The effectiveness of our leadership hinges on the degree to which we abide in Christ".⁵

The Importance of the Spiritual Disciplines

It is essential that Christian leaders practice these spiritual disciplines because leaders are not exempt from spiritual attack. Indeed they are even in greater danger as they are tampering with the devil's kingdom when they lead people into righteousness. The weapons to fight these battles are not weapons of the world. "For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds" (2 Cor 10:3-4).

Christian leaders may experience conflict in numerous areas of life. These include immoral sexual behaviour when the temptation is great and yet it comes subtly and erodes the conscience. Another area might be bondage and oppression. This may take the form of sexual perversion, violent temper, lying, alcoholism, hatred and the like. Christian leaders may be driven by pride as they see the number of followers they have at their command, or even what they have accomplished. They may pursue power and prestige and thus shift the focus from God to themselves. This danger is expressed in 1 Timothy 4:1, "The spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons".

At the height of his career, the leader may ignore fellowship with others if he forgets that our Maker is a relational God who created us for fellowship. As the work of the ministry increases, it may also take precedence over the needs of his family, which results in conflict and tension at home. When the family does not relate well, the work also suffers and the leader may become more inhuman. Thus, the Christian leader becomes irritable and consequently his colleagues do not relate well with him. Productivity deteriorates, resulting in more tension. On top of that, many Christian organizations have limited financial resources so that financial challenges create more tension. The leader tries very hard to increase the cash flow, but should this lead to questionable Christian behaviour, then such attempts complicate the issue.

A leader's enthusiasm and energy may cause him to close his mind to reason and result in a dogmatic pursuance of righteousness in certain areas of life while ignoring others. Christians thrive when there is balanced growth in all areas of life. A Christian leader's only option is to adhere seriously to the spiritual disciplines that define leadership. This training for godliness will lead to spiritual growth and a closer walk with God. However, no one can earn closeness to God. It is imperative that Christian leaders be committed to God's way, otherwise too many problems may arise that can divert the Christian leader's mission and vision. "Take heed to yourself and to your teaching; hold to that, for by doing so you will save both yourself and your brothers" (1 Tim 4:16 [RSV]). We can take "brothers" to include "followers". This command teaches leaders to be on constant guard against falling into a sin that can easily destroy their ministry. They must adhere to the true faith and mature consistently. "Christian spiritual formation aims at mature harmony with Christ".⁶ Hence every leader should regard spiritual formation as a key area of life.

The Disciplines Necessary for the Maturing Christian Leader

The spiritual disciplines discussed below are not a complete list, but if performed properly they will enhance a leader's intimacy with God. Miller stated, "Godly leadership is an extension of the leader's relationship with God".⁷ Adeyemo said, "They will be known for their character competence, courage, commitment and compassion".⁸ Christian leaders must strive for these character traits through the Biblical spiritual disciplines. However, Foster warned that, "The

spiritual disciplines are an inward and spiritual reality and the inner attitude of the heart is more crucial than the mechanics for coming into the reality of the spiritual life".⁹

Foster's list includes 12 disciplines: meditation, prayer, fasting, study (the inward disciplines); simplicity, solitude, submission, service (the outward disciplines), confession, worship, guidance and celebration (the corporate disciplines).¹⁰ However this discussion will focus on Meditation, Confession, Rest, Prayer and Fasting, Solitude, Self-Examination.

The Discipline of Meditation

Christian leaders are busy people, and meditation may seem like a waste of precious time. Foster stated, "In contemporary society our Adversary majors in three things: noise, hurry, and crowds".¹¹ A Christian leader is always with people or doing things, but a leader needs to set time aside for meditation, if not other things will claim a person's time. The Bible states



that meditation is important for a person's success in life: "Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful" (Josh 1:8). Every leader likes to be successful. The dose necessary for success is given in this verse. Leaders need to meditate on the Word on a daily basis despite the great demands made on them: by work, people and even family.

There are several examples of meditation in the Bible including: Isaac, who "went out to the field one evening to meditate..." (Gen 24:63), and Psalm 1:2 which says of the blessed person, "his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night". Leaders need to be blessed people and so they must take time to meditate on the word. The psalmist chose to meditate — "May the arrogant be put to shame for wronging me without cause; but I will meditate on your precepts" (Ps 119[118]:78). Meditation on the Word should help leaders forego retaliation against those who wrong them. However, such things happen and in such an event the leader's response is critical.

Meditation is a way of life. It helps us become organized, more focused in life, in meditation, we gaze on, and long for, Christ. In the presence of God, we are changed. This happens as we interiorize the Bible's message and consequently, our spiritual life thrives. Christian leaders become effective because they have learnt to wait on the Lord and to do what He wants them to do. The Bible records a disastrous example of leaders/prophets who prophesied without first listening to God. Jeremiah: "I did not send these prophets, yet they have run with their message; I did not speak to them, yet they have prophesied. But if they had stood in my council, they would have proclaimed my words to my people and would have turned them [the people] from their evil ways and from their evil deeds" (23:21-22). The Lord is against Christian leaders who "do their own thing" instead of listening to God.

The Discipline of Confession

Confession is a discipline as we can choose to confess or not.

For Foster, confession and forgiveness are realities that transform us. Without the Cross the discipline of confession would only be psychologically therapeutic. But it is so much more. It involves an objective change in our relationship with God and a subjective change in us ... a means of healing and transforming the inner spirit.¹²

This discipline builds up fellowship and results in effective teams. Christian leaders thrive when their followers are a team. But, due to the arrogance of Christian leaders, this discipline is not exercised as often as it should be. Proverb 28:13 reads, "He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy". What Christian leader does not want more mercy?



Many Christian organizations suffer due to the lack of practicing this discipline. James

urges us — "Therefore, confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective" (5:16). Christian leaders should create an atmosphere where both followers and leaders can confess their sins freely and wisely and are not victimized. By confessing sins, the burdens and obstructions of life are lifted and this results in restored fellowship. Confession can be a means of healing and transforming the inner spirit. Psalm 66:18 reads, "If I had cherished sins in my heart, the Lord would not have listened". Therefore, Christian leaders who want God to hear them need to create that confessional atmosphere in the organization.

The Christian leader should realize that all Christians are vulnerable to sin as 1 John 1:8-9 notes — "If we claim to have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness". But Christian leaders must be wise in sharing their sins. Genuine confession includes acknowledgment of sin, sorrow for committing sin and the intention to avoid committing the same sin. Christian leaders need to be honest and transparent in dealing with this discipline, and they must practice it wisely.

The Discipline of Rest

Contemporary life challenges the need to rest. Many people neither recognize it nor practice it, or seldom do.¹³ As mentioned before, leaders are in great demand and many feel they cannot afford time to rest. But rest is paramount for Christian leaders. When fatigued, leaders are likely to make wrong decisions or to postpone decisions and that may result in disaster. Lack of rest often creates an angry person. A rest-deprived person becomes edgy and unpleasant to those around. Christian leaders sin if they continue to plan and do many things to meet deadlines, but forget that God is in control. "Now listen, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money'. Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while then vanishes" (Jas 4:13-14).



Emmert stated that, "It is difficult, and ironic, to imagine rest as the most transformative element in Christian life. For evangelicals ... transformation and sanctification are closely linked to activity". Christian leaders are surrounded with issues they feel they must deal with so rest is rare. Yet Genesis states, "By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been

doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done" (2:2-3). Should not a Christian leader learn from God to rest? Why did the God of the universe decide to rest? There must be something more we need to explore about rest.

We tend to love activity more than rest. Activities may not be wrong in themselves, but we must know why the Sabbath was given.

In Exodus it says; then the Lord said to Moses, "Say to the Israelites, 'You must observe my Sabbaths. This will be a sign between me and you for the generations to come, so you may know that I am the Lord, who makes you holy. Observe the Sabbath, because it is holy to you. Anyone who desecrates it must be put to death; whoever does any work on that day must be cut off from his people. For six days, work is to be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of rest, holy to the Lord. Whoever does any work on the Sabbath day must be put to death. The Israelites are to observe the Sabbath, celebrating it for the generations to come as a lasting covenant. It will be a sign between me and the Israelites forever, for in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day he abstained from work and rested'" (31:12-17).

In this passage God commands us to keep the Sabbath. Emmert writes, "this passage says that the Sabbath is an 'above all' command. It is as if God said: 'This is the most important one!'"¹⁴ The point is clear — rest was and is an important thing to God. God did not hesitate to give rest. The Lord replied, 'My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest'" (Ex. 33:14). Emmert commented on these verses:

This "above all" command encourages us to trust God in a way that no 'other activity can'. So much more could be accomplished by adding another day of labour, but the Sabbath requires us to

trust that God will provide for all our needs and that he will continue to manage the world without our help. The Sabbath is a practical reminder that we are completely dependent on God.¹⁵

It is God who sanctifies and rest is closely connected to sanctification. Emmert added, in "both sanctification and justification, Christians are declared righteous and are continually being made righteous solely by the free grace of God. Though we are called to be active, the 'activity' seems mostly to mean the call to rest, to trust, to freely receive sanctification from God". Every Christian leader must practice this discipline of rest. This will help us realize the need to depend on God for our physical, emotional, and spiritual needs.¹⁶

The Discipline of Prayer

This discipline is among the ones that every Christian leader practices. Prayer brings human beings into the deepest and highest work of the human spirit. Prayer is both speaking and listening to God. For Foster, "To pray is to change. Prayer is the central avenue God uses to transform us. If we are unwilling to change, we will abandon prayer as a noticeable characteristic of our lives. The closer we come to the heartbeat of God the more we see our need and the more we desire to be conformed to Christ".¹⁷

A Christian leader cannot do without prayer and expect spiritual formation! Martin Luther is widely quoted as saying, "I have so much business I cannot get on without spending three hours daily in prayer". Christian leaders can learn from Luther. Although stressed by the pressure of demands, appointments, meetings, visitations, presenting, writing, addressing people, etc., a Christian leader must take time for prayer.



Mark tells us that Jesus went to a solitary place early in the morning to pray (1:35). If the Son of God thought it important to commune with God how much more should we seek such times! The Apostles gave themselves to prayer and the ministry of the word (Acts 6:4). David woke up early to seek the face of the Lord (Ps 63[62]:1). The more we pray the more we think about praying as we see the Lord answering our prayers. Consequently, God's response to our prayers creates confidence and spills over into other areas of our lives.

Prayer can also be accompanied by fasting. God expects us to fast but did not give a command. For example, He said, "When you fast ..." in Mt 6:16. This indicates that God expects us to fast. Fasting is a private matter, but can be corporate. Christian leaders need to discern when to fast as an individual and when to organize a corporate fast. Christian leaders should prepare their followers appropriately to fast but not by cohesion. Foster stated, "The group fast can be a wonderful thing provided the people are prepared and of one mind in these matters". However, fasting should not be a way of manipulating God to act. Fasting should be centred on God and not on its benefits. In other words, fasting should focus on spiritual purposes. "Fasting can bring breakthroughs in the spiritual realm that could never be had in any other way".¹⁸ Fasting is a spiritual discipline that has been ordained by the Creator for the good of believers. Hence we can conclude that fasting is good for Christian leaders and can be a means of grace for their Christian formation.

The Discipline of Solitude



Leaders are often isolated and can experience loneliness. However, a Christian leader can cultivate an inner solitude and silence that sets him/her free from loneliness. For Foster, "Inward solitude will have outward manifestations. There will be a freedom to be alone, not in order to be away from people but in order to hear the divine Whisper better. Jesus lived in inward 'heart solitude'. He also frequently experienced outward solitude".¹⁹ Christian leaders can borrow a leaf from Jesus: "Jesus went out to a mountain to pray, and spent the night praying to God. When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles" (Lk 6:12-13). This, and other examples of Jesus going to solitary places, indicates the

importance of solitude. Christian leaders should practice this discipline as they make crucial decisions in their ministries.

When Christian leaders practice solitude, they can begin to see themselves clearly, and become true to themselves. When this happens spiritual growth can result. It is also a fact that God longs for us to be alone with him. In the process of being alone, one can distinguish between the voice of God and the voice of the world. This is because there is silence and we can focus clearly as there is no competition from social contacts. When the leader learns to be silent in solitude he can then "speak the word that is needed *when* it is needed".²⁰

The Discipline of Self-examination

This discipline of self-examination is what Barton calls *examen*. It is a discipline that every Christian leader needs to practice regularly. This discipline helps us examine daily, weekly or monthly events and how God was involved. The *examen* involves, "taking a few moments ... to go back over the events of the day/week and ask God to show us evidence of his presence (*examen* of consciousness) and ourselves in the light of his presence (*examen* of conscience)".²¹ The Christian leader who is bombarded with all sorts of challenges, success, joy and sorrow reviews how God was present in the different responses and actions that were taken. This self-examination leads us to celebrate success, repent of sin, and become aware of what to avoid in the future. Besides, one would purposefully realize the difference that the presence of God makes. Miller articulated the self-examination question as, "What is happening on the daily and continuing basis between the Father and I... the Son and I ... and the Holy Spirit and I?".²²



Burton stated that the process of 'examen' encourages us to draw close to the Lord. This discipline helps us cry to the Lord, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Ps 139[138]:23-24). This discipline does not necessarily take much time and is easy to do and yet it can yield tremendous spiritual growth.

Conclusion

The Spiritual formation of a Christian Leader cannot be overemphasized. The Bible is clear that anyone who wants to be successful must have an intimate relationship with God. "I am the vine, you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing" (Jn 15:5). This calls for an authentic relationship with God, a relationship that must be firmly guarded. God's grace accomplishes this. "Come follow me, and I will make you fishers of men" (Mt 4:19). It is the Christian leaders' responsibility to 'come' to Christ and it is His responsibility to make them effective leaders. The assumption is that leaders must follow Jesus to succeed. They must follow and abide in Jesus and they will bear much fruit. For Christian leaders the problem arises when we fail to abide in Him and fail to follow Jesus and thus forfeit true success. When leaders 'abide' and 'follow' they become Christ-like in character and personality. The challenge is 'being in Christ' first, because the 'doing' comes second.

To achieve 'being' in Christ, Christian leaders need to cultivate a close walk with the Lord. Practicing the spiritual disciplines will help them focus on their spiritual formation. This paper has dealt with a few of the disciplines the writer thought were the most crucial ones but this does not exclude other disciplines. Christian leaders will have to discover which of the others are aligned to their personality and season of life.

May God give Christian leaders the grace to be leaders after God's own heart and who therefore serve His people. Christian leaders can do all things through Christ who gives them strength.

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End Notes

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- ² M. Robert Mulholland, *Invitation to a Journey*, (Downers Grove: IVP, 1993), 12.
- ³ Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, (New York: HarperCollins, 1988), 151-2.
- ⁴ Richard W. Stuebing, *Training for Godliness in African Theological Education*, (Ndola, Zambia: ACTEA, 1995), 19.
- ⁵ Chuck Miller, *The Spiritual Formation of Leaders: Integrating Spirituality and Leadership Development*, (Camarillo, CA: Xulonpress, 2007), 82.
- ⁶ Evan B. Howard, *The Brazos Introduction to Christian Spirituality*, (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press,) 2008, 270.
- ⁷ Miller, *The Spiritual Formation of Leaders*, 64.
- ⁸ Tokunboh Adeyemo, "Leadership" in *Africa Bible Commentary*, (Nairobi: WordAlive Publishers, 2006), 546.
- ⁹ Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1998), 16.
- ¹⁰ See the table of contents in his *Celebration of Discipline*.
- ¹¹ Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 33.
- ¹² Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 198.
- ¹³ Kevin Emmert, "Resting in the Work of God: The Forgotten Spiritual Discipline", *Christianity Today*, Vol. 56, Issue 3, March 2012, 37.
- ¹⁴ Emmert, "Resting in the Work of God", 37, from the ESV. NIV says, "you must".
- ¹⁵ Emmert, "Resting in the Work of God", 37.
- ¹⁶ Emmert, "Resting in the Work of God", 37.
- ¹⁷ Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 57.
- ¹⁸ Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 77 and 87.
- ¹⁹ Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 138 and 143.
- ²⁰ Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 143.
- ²¹ R. Ruth Barton, *Sacred Rhythms: Spiritual Practices that Nourish Your Soul and Transform Your Life*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan), 2011, 59.
- ²² Chuck Miller, *The Spiritual Formation of Leaders*, 59.

Ref.: *Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology*. Vol. 32, 1, 2013; pp. 37–46.

Asunción Codes, STJ

Un liderazgo con Espiritu

Introducción

El Papa Francisco nos presenta como el mayor obstáculo para poner en marcha una nueva etapa evangelizadora de estas características en la Iglesia, la mediocridad espiritual. Está impulsando con fuerza una etapa "más ardiente, alegre, generosa, audaz, llena de amor hasta el fin, y de vida contagiosa". Pero todo será insuficiente, nos dice, "si no arde en los corazones el fuego del Espíritu". Sin ese Espíritu de Jesús, la Iglesia se apaga y se extingue. Solo su Espíritu puede poner más verdad en el cristianismo actual, y puede conducirnos a recuperar nuestra verdadera identidad. "No es lo mismo haber conocido a Jesús que no conocerlo, no es lo mismo caminar con Él que caminar a tientas, no es lo mismo poder escucharlo que ignorar su Palabra ... no es lo mismo tratar de construir con su Evangelio que hacerlo solo con la propia vida."

Por eso busca para la Iglesia hoy "EVANGELIZADORES CON ESPIRITU", que se abran sin miedo a su acción y encuentren ahí "su fuerza para comunicar la verdad del Evangelio con audacia".

Apoyada en esta invitación, y convencida de que nuestro liderazgo debe atender, por encima de cualquier otro servicio, a lo que nos descentra del verdadero centro, comparto algunas de mis convicciones.

1. Ante todo, mujeres de obediencia y de experiencia de Jesús

La experiencia que marca toda la trayectoria de un verdadero liderazgo religioso es la de un Dios que ha liberado nuestro corazón para amar, para SER Y SENTIRSE AMIGA DE DIOS Y HERMANA DE TODOS. Ha ensanchado el espacio de nuestra tienda y no podemos hacer otra cosa que rendir nuestra Voluntad, abandonar miedos y resistencias y entregarnos a que Otro gobierne y guíe nuestra historia



La fuerza de un liderazgo con Espiritu...	Cuando la pasión falta, todo se domestica
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Surge de un reconocimiento, lúcido y agradecido, de la obra de Dios en nosotras, de su comunicación constante, con palabras y acciones salvadoras, que "ensanchan el espacio interior" de nuestra libertad, de nuestro amor y compromiso.• Un solo Amor y una única pasión, la de Jesús, apasionado por Dios y los hermanos• Libres del miedo a sufrir y descontentar• Gusto de perder confort y seguridad por ofrecer verdades que centren el corazón de los hermanos	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Preparamos los discursos para no descontentar... demasiados miedos y cuidados, razones y consideraciones...• Calienta poco la llama• Preocupadas de la fama, del querer contentar a todas, de las persecuciones, de ser discretas...• Demasiado presente la pérdida o la ganancia personal

MUJERES DE OBEEDIENCIA Y DE EXPERIENCIA DE JESÚS

"no hay ya quien sufra recibir tanto y no pagar nada. Cueste lo que costare, Señor, no queráis que vaya delante de Vos tan vacías las manos.... Aquí está mi vida, aquí está mi honra y mi voluntad; todo os lo he dado, vuestra soy, disponed de mí conforme a la vuestra. (V 21,5)

Podemos decir que el LIDERAZGO CON ESPIRITU es aquel que nace de una fuerte experiencia de fe y de obediencia agradecida al proyecto de Dios, a su sueño revolucionario para los hombres y mujeres de nuestro tiempo: TODOS están convidados en la Mesa del Reino. TODOS tienen derecho a gozar de los bienes de este mundo. Lo nuestro es COOPERAR, no rivalizar, ni estorbar.

COOPERAR ENTRE NOSOTROS Y CON TODOS Y TODAS.

Jesús nos apasiona haciéndonos experimentar el fuego de su Palabra y de sus gestos en las entrañas, en la mente, en el corazón y sintiendo el impulso de encarnar su apasionamiento por la humanidad, que **despierta en cada uno/a deseos** de sanar, reconstruir, edificar mundos nuevos, generar comunión y encuentro, hacer justicia o interceder continuamente por la reconciliación, como lo han vivido cada uno de nuestros fundadores, en sintonía con lo que vemos y nos llega de toda la realidad.

El atrae y orienta nuestra respuesta en la dirección del Reino. Sencillamente vamos consintiendo al amor desde la mujer que somos. Extraña mezcla de **pasividad y libertad**. No podemos hacer otra cosa sino anunciar y amar con el mismo amor con que somos amadas, y realizar "algunas obras" en su servicio.

Cuando esta especie de pasión o "locura" falta, toda la acción evangelizadora, y también el servicio de nuestro liderazgo, se domestica y dejamos de contagiar buenas noticias transformadoras de los diferentes contextos donde estamos. Así lo denuncia Teresa de Jesús de algunos predicadores, los líderes de la Iglesia de su tiempo, que *"van ordenando sus sermones para no descontentar. Buena intención tendrán y la obra lo será; mas íasí se enmiendan pocos! Mas **¿cómo no son muchos los que por los sermones dejan los vicios públicos? ¿Sabe qué me parece? Porque **tienen mucho seso los que los predicán. No están sin él, con el gran fuego de amor de Dios, como lo estaban los Apóstoles, y así **calienta poco esta llama. No digo yo sea tanta como ellos tenían, mas querría que fuese más de lo que veo. ¿Sabe vuestra merced en qué debe ir mucho? En tener ya **aborrecida la vida y en poca estima la honra; que no se les daba más a cambio de decir una verdad y sustentarla para gloria de Dios perderlo todo, que ganarlo todo**"******* (V 16, 7)

Este sería el CONTRAPUNTO, o criterio de discernimiento para saber si la experiencia fundante de Dios como el Señor de nuestras vidas, marca nuestro modo de vivir este servicio, o son "otros señores" los que nos tienen sometidas y aprisionan el amor, la verdad y la libertad, en definitiva, el verdadero servicio:

...van ordenando sus sermones para no descontentar... Las palabras, los escritos, los gestos y decisiones de un equipo de gobierno pueden dejar indiferentes a nuestras hermanas, o hacer que los corazones ardan. No es lo mismo que nazcan del fuego de un amor que nos quema por dentro, o que lleven la pretensión de contentar, sacar ganancias personales, evitar conflictos o imponer "fardos pesados".

Un exceso de sensatez, discreción, diplomacia o miedo, se puede apoderar de nosotras algunas temporadas, y dejamos de apuntar a respuestas arriesgadas o de recordar algunas verdades necesarias para vivir una VR sin tanta mediocridad, o con menos ambigüedad.

En cambio, todas tenemos experiencia de que cuando su Palabra nos seduce, y sintonizamos con el modo de hablar, de pensar, de servir y amar de Jesús, nuestra "llama" no calienta poco, sino todo lo contrario... Pero no basta con tener un deseo muy fuerte. Para ser fieles a lo que el Espíritu sugiere es preciso consentir a esa extraña lógica evangélica de perder para ganar, liberarse del miedo a sufrir y del temor a ser malinterpretadas, juzgadas, o simplemente a equivocarnos. Hay que reconocer que lo que en el fondo más admiramos de todos nuestros fundadores es que les daba igual perderlo todo que ganarlo todo con tal de amar a este Dios que les amó primero y buscar solo su mayor gloria y servicio.

Diría, por tanto, que esta experiencia de Dios, fuerte y sostenida, es la que nos va convirtiendo en líderes que utilizan el lenguaje de decir verdades, para recordar el sueño de Dios con cada una de nosotras. Palabras y gestos que se apoyan en la humildad, y al mismo tiempo contagian la osadía evangélica, la novedad y el riesgo. Por eso dan paso a la creatividad, y hasta alguna locura.

El LÍDER con Espíritu es el que está atravesado por esa necesidad de realizar obras en el servicio de Dios, de agradecer con su vida lo mucho que ha recibido. Siente el compromiso por distinguir lo verdadero de lo falso, el espíritu de Dios, del mal espíritu. Es una mujer o un hombre serio con las cosas de Dios, y con sus intereses que son cada uno de sus hijos e hijas.

Así que el liderazgo se mostrará en ayudar a las comunidades a correr riesgos, y a no buscar la solución más fácil, a confiar en los jóvenes, aceptar la precariedad y la vulnerabilidad. Esto se conseguirá teniendo las ventanas abiertas a la gracia impredecible de Dios. La vida religiosa debe ser un nicho ecológico de libertad y confianza. No de la libertad de aquellos que imponen su voluntad, sino la que da el abandono permanente y confiado a la novedad de Dios...No necesariamente tenemos que ser temerarios, pero tampoco debemos dejarnos dominar por el miedo. Si nuestros votos son la promesa de dejar a Dios que siga sorprendiéndonos, entonces, el liderazgo nos ayuda a ser fieles a este gran abrazo a la inseguridad y desdramatiza nuestros pequeños medos ... (T. Radcliffe).

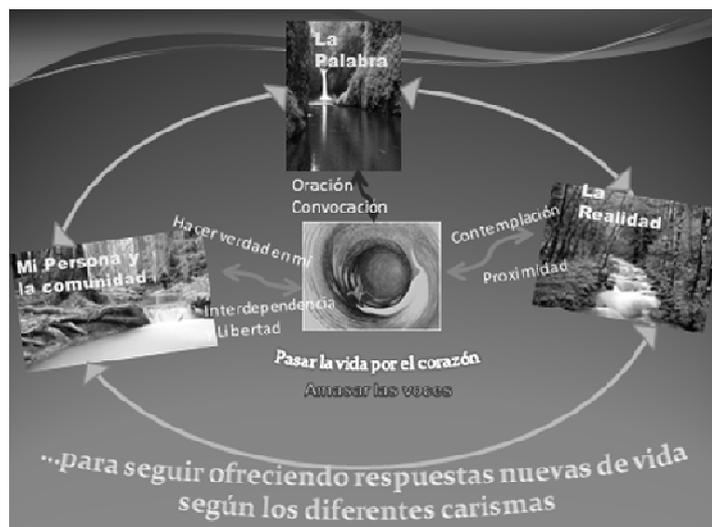
Vivir en obediencia de fe, va gestando la verdadera misión a la que hemos sido llamadas.

2. Nuestro liderazgo NO ES AUTO-REFERENCIAL

En nuestro modo de concebir el liderazgo debería haber siempre un **espacio claramente vacío** reservado para Él, la **"SILLA VACÍA"** de la que hablan algunos autores hoy, EL UNICO REFERENTE DE VIDA.

Tenemos una misión irrenunciable de CONVOCAR en torno a Jesús, a su Palabra, y las palabras de nuestros maestros de vida que leen el Evangelio a la luz de unas demandas urgentes de la realidad donde vivieron. "ÉL NOS JUNTÓ AQUÍ", "ÉL MORA", "ÉL SUSTENTA".

Esta convocatoria a vivir como discípulas de su palabra nos hace HERMANAS e HIJAS, AMIGAS EN EL SEÑOR Y BUENAS VECINAS. Y nos compromete en una ...



- Dinámica de vida personal que nos hace "escuchar" nuestro interior y SOÑAR-DESEAR el sueño de Dios
- Dinámica de vida compartida que nos hace "escuchar" el sueño de otras y compartir esos sueños.
- Dinámica de "escucha" de la realidad, en "comunidad" que nos lleva a realizar el "sueño" en lo posible.

Porque su Espíritu humanizante y liberador lo atraviesa todo. La palabra, las voces que escuchamos de parte de él nos vienen de toda la realidad — social, política, eclesial, económica, de cada contexto y cultura ... — también nos llegan de nosotras mismas y de la sensibilidad y libertad con que cada una de nosotras captamos esos gritos. Y estamos invitadas a "amasarlo" en la hondura del corazón para que esa Palabra Suya, eterna y estable, se concrete hoy y geste en nosotras respuestas nuevas de vida, según los diferentes carismas. Vivir este dinamismo significa que apoyamos e impulsamos a nuestras hermanas y comunidades a vivir próximas a la realidad, y con una mirada contemplativa; entrenadas en compartir la verdad del corazón de forma auténtica y transparente; orantes y preparadas para vivir una experiencia de fe compartida.

Esta percepción de la realidad nos mantiene siempre en estado de atención, de vigía permanente de lo que ocurre, de lo que se necesita, de los daños del Pueblo de Dios, de las guerras y de los males morales o temporales de las personas que conocemos y queremos. Dicho con otras palabras, nos ayuda a vivir la honradez, aunque nos complique la vida.

Esta fidelidad a lo real y a la manifestación de Dios en la vida, nos convierte en vigías de los nuevos valores emergentes, que son para nosotros nuevas encarnaciones de Evangelio en el tiempo actual: el despertar de los "indignados" ante tanta desigualdad e injusticia, la defensa de los recursos naturales, la difusión de la verdadera información a través de las redes sociales, el empeño por combatir el tráfico de personas, el maltrato, la desigualdad de géneros, etc.

El CONTRAPUNTO, o criterio de discernimiento lo describiríamos así: Hay personas que convocan muchas reuniones, se entrevistan con mucha gente, introducen la Palabra de Dios en todo, también la de las Constituciones, pero en el fondo esperan poco que suceda algo distinto a lo que ellas calculan. Se consulta, pero, lo tienen todo tan planificado que no cabe una sorpresa ni por una rendija.... Hasta rezamos pensando que Dios se tendría que plegar a nuestras visiones y decisiones....Vamos a la realidad habiendo decidido de antemano lo que hay que ofrecer y transformar....

En cambio, la certeza de que el referente de nuestro liderazgo es Otro que anda manifestándose de tantos modos y maneras diferentes, nos debería convertir en líderes vigilantes de toda la realidad que nos rodea, iluminada y habitada por una Presencia suave, discreta, pero verdadera. Es el principio necesario para vivir con la convicción de que la misión que llevamos entre manos no es nuestra, ni la realizamos solas. Es obra del Espíritu que nos adelanta en toda persona y circunstancia.

3. Compañera, amiga y hermana, SE GANA LA CONFIANZA, EL RESPETO DE SUS HERMANAS por el modo de ejercer el poder

Nuestro modo de ejercer el poder nos va autorizando ante nuestras hermanas para ser auténticos líderes religiosos. Es verdad que tenemos poder para prohibir, exigir, negar,... pero también lo tenemos para confirmar, incluir, restituir, dignificar,... Podemos hacer sentir a nuestras hermanas "fuera" o "dentro", identificadas con el Cuerpo congregacional, o perdidas, desidentificadas, "a su aire"... Estamos invitadas a ejercer el poder del estímulo, de la hospitalidad y de la resiliencia, y reconocer la autoridad de los que sufren, escuchábamos en la Asamblea Plenaria de

Para poder servir y tener la confianza y respeto de nuestras compañeras de camino será necesario:

Reconocer el poder que cada hermana tiene y orientarlo al servicio del Reino

Lograr que se viva con un sentido compartido de la vida y de la misión

Dar poder a las palabras y a la PALABRA, crear condiciones para ver, escuchar, acoger, asentir y consentir



Darle poder a la REALIDAD e integrar la dimensión política de la caridad en todos nuestros planteamientos
 Creer en el poder de los gestos: perdón, inclusión, escucha, trabajo en equipo, pedir ayuda y consejo....
 En nuestras congregaciones femeninas, aún debemos ahondar seriamente en el tema del poder de la mujer en mundos dominados aún por los varones.



mayo de 2013. Yo añado también la invitación a ejercer el poder o la autoridad que nos da vivir en coherencia con lo que creemos y amamos, es decir, intentar vivir lo que, desde nuestro servicio y como Equipo, proponemos a las demás hermanas y comunidades. Es preciso hacer la experiencia de vivir en "mesa compartida" dentro y fuera, entre nosotras y con muchos otros/as. Transitar y tocar el límite de lo que "predicamos": diálogo, intercambio, liderazgo compartido...

Tampoco nos ganamos la confianza por hacer con perfección

las cosas, sino por el modo como reflejamos que hemos sido alcanzadas y tratadas por Otro que es Amor, suavidad, respeto, libertad, inclusión, perdón y reconciliación.... Hoy no aceptamos que nadie sea modelo de nadie, pero sigue siendo válido que una persona logra el respeto y la confianza de los suyos cuando hay cierto grado de coherencia y sintonía entre sus palabras, sus sentimientos y sus gestos cotidianos.

Desde hace mucho tiempo ha acogido como muy verdadera la intuición de que el verdadero líder permite que el poder circule, garantiza que nadie se adueñe de la gracia de Dios, no jóvenes, ni mayores, ni... sencillamente se pone al servicio de la gracia y de la Voluntad impredecible de Dios. Nuestro mejor servicio consistirá en ayudar a permanecer abiertas a las hermanas y comunidades, provincias, a la impredecible acción de Dios que siempre realiza cosas nuevas.

Nuestras Congregaciones tienen diferentes maneras de entender la naturaleza del gobierno. Puede ser paternal, maternal, democrático o militar. No tenemos tampoco una sola forma de entender la naturaleza de la obediencia. Pero el liderazgo, está al servicio de la gracia impredecible de Dios. Ninguno es dueño de la gracia ni puede inducir su irrupción para que pase lo que él o ella quieren que pase, menos aún si le toca gobernar. El rol del superior líder es garantizar que nadie se adueñe de la gracia de Dios, ni los jóvenes ni los mayores, ni los de la derecha ni los de la izquierda, ni Occidente ni ningún otro grupo. Dios está en medio de nosotros como el que siempre realiza cosas nuevas y, a veces, los que gobiernan son los últimos en enterarse qué cosas son esas. Su papel consiste en ayudarnos a estar abiertos a las impredecibles direcciones a las que Dios puede llevarnos, porque como dice en Isaías: "Mirad, que hago todas las cosas nuevas". (T. Radcliffe)

El CONTRAPUNTO podría describirse como ... una persona que privilegia la palabra de unas, frente a la de otras; que obstaculiza los diálogos abiertos, las discusiones donde se busca hacer más verdad, esclarecer, escuchar opiniones diversas...; que tiene planes paralelos; que manipula en la toma de decisiones; que preferencia ideologías o posturas de derechas o de izquierdas, de Occidente o del Oriente ... de jóvenes o de personas mayores ... y de la que se dice que hay que escuchar lo que habla, pero no imitar lo que hace...

Para poder servir y tener la confianza y respeto de nuestras compañeras de camino será necesario:

- ✓ Reconocer el poder que cada hermana tiene y orientarlo al servicio del Reino.
- ✓ Ejercer el poder que nos otorga lograr que se viva con un sentido compartido y de la vida y de la misión que llevamos entre manos.
- ✓ Dar poder a las palabras y a la PALABRA, crear condiciones para ver, escuchar, acoger, asentir y consentir



- ✓ Es urgente darle poder a la REALIDAD que habla, sugiere, nutre, despierta, es MEDIACIÓN, e integrar la dimensión política de la caridad en todos nuestros planteamientos.
- ✓ Creer en el poder de los gestos: perdón, inclusión, escucha, trabajo en equipo, pedir ayuda y consejo....
- ✓ En nuestras congregaciones femeninas, aún debemos ahondar seriamente en el tema del poder de la mujer en mundos dominados aún por los varones.

4. LA INSPIRACIÓN ES LA CLAVE

Os recuerdo dos escenas de la película *INVICTUS*:

La primera que cito aquí ahora es la que podríamos titular: la INSPIRACIÓN es la CLAVE - "Para él nadie es invisible"

M: *El suyo es un trabajo muy complicado*
 F: *¿Eso cree? Tengo una pequeña empresa*

M: Capitán de los Springs Bokkes... ¡un trabajo muy complicado!

F: No si lo comparamos con el suyo, señor presidente.

M: bueno, a mí nadie intenta arrancarme la cabeza mientras hago el mío.

F: Sí, señor

M: Dígame F., ¿cuál es su filosofía a la hora de liderar?, ¿cómo hace que su equipo se inspire para rendir al máximo?

F: Dando ejemplo, siempre he pensado que hay que dar ejemplo.

M: Es verdad, es una verdad como un templo... pero, ¿cómo lograr que sean mejores de lo que ellos creen que pueden ser? Eso es muy complicado, creo yo. LA INSPIRACIÓN ES LA CLAVE. ¿cómo hallamos la inspiración para superarnos cuando no nos queda otra opción? ¿cómo hacemos que los demás también se inspiren? A veces yo creo que a través del trabajo de otros.

Ciertamente hay muchos riesgos a la hora de ejercer un liderazgo: el mal uso del poder; la necesidad de tener éxito; utilizar o culpabilizar a nuestras colaboradoras de aquello que nos sale mal; resolver lo inmediato, de hacer y hacer cosas, intentar dar ejemplo, o volvernos perfeccionistas, etc. y así olvidar lo principal, y perder la perspectiva, la comprensión y la VISIÓN, la INSPIRACIÓN que nos reorienta, el **SENTIDO** que nos unifica, que nos impulsa, que nos hace mejores a todos de lo que creemos ser.

Quizás uno de los mayores servicios que podríamos prestar a nuestras Instituciones es el de recordar apasionadamente *PARA QUÉ NOS JUNTÓ AQUÍ EL SEÑOR*; hacer memoria agradecida de los orígenes para ponerlos en conexión con la realidad actual y buscar responder con la misma audacia y creatividad que nuestras hermanas primeras y nuestros fundadores, pero en el hoy, sin mimetismos estériles.

No deberíamos consentir que nuestras hermanas — o incluso nosotras mismas — nos perdamos en una hacer apostólico compulsivo que intenta suplir a las que éramos y ya no somos, o hacer las mismas cosas que hacíamos y ya no podemos.

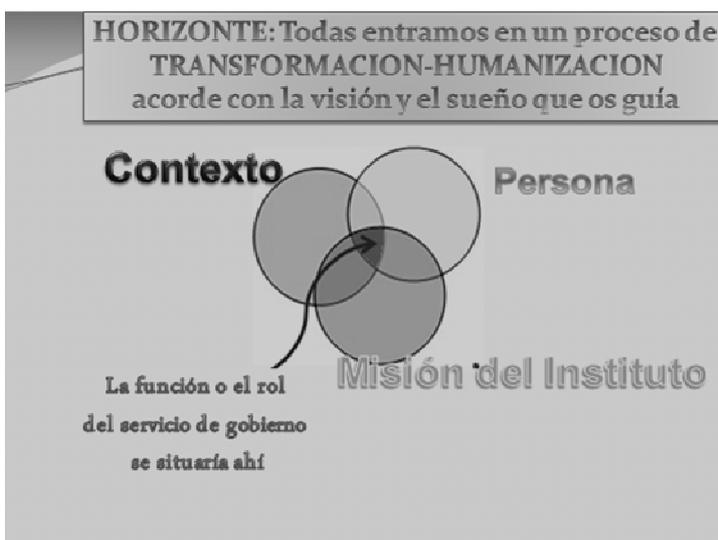
Os decía al comienzo que estoy convencida de que nuestro liderazgo debe atender, por encima de cualquier otro servicio, a lo que nos descentra del verdadero centro a todas. Esto tiene que ver mucho con recuperar el sentido, contagiar visión, devolver a nuestras hermanas la razón de ser de su desgaste y entrega. Si no vamos pudiendo construir una HISTORIA DE AMISTAD, con sus idas y vueltas, con quien bien sabemos que nos ama desde siempre, no estamos orientadas. Escuchamos demasiadas veces decir: Y todo esto, ¿para qué?... "Podría hacer lo mismo que hago fuera, con una familia"....

Según afirma J. Chisttister: "La vida religiosa no es simplemente otra forma de vida, sino un modo de vida **organizado deliberadamente para consagrarse al fin que persigue, la búsqueda humana de Dios**". Yo añadiría, que la VR realiza esa búsqueda eligiendo estar y permanecer al lado de la gente, del pueblo al que servimos, fieles a ellos y al Cuerpo

congregacional, a la misión confiada en la Iglesia. No deberíamos ser, por tanto, esclavas de ninguna organización si ya no sirve para el fin que perseguimos. La vida, el tiempo presente, puede reclamar tanto la novedad, como la calidad de nuestras prácticas. Por eso hablamos de regenerar y de revitalizar, también de recrear.

El desafío de la VC no está sólo en los números, ni en su envejecimiento, sino que está más bien en los PLANTEAMIENTOS DE FONDO, en la VISIÓN FUNDANTE QUE ANIMA Y SUSTENTA — o no — todo lo que hace nuestra Familia religiosa.

Porque queremos vivir en fidelidad creativa al Proyecto inicial de nuestros fundadores, y no continuarlo



sin más, en medio de tantas rutinas, necesitamos situarnos con autenticidad y libertad para discernir la calidad evangélica de nuestra vida, de nuestras prácticas y costumbres, de nuestros valores priorizados una y otra vez.

Es preciso renovar afectiva y efectivamente los modos y maneras de crecer en la vida y misión cotidiana. Necesitamos lucidez para saber qué estamos promoviendo — o a qué “señores” servimos — con el estilo de vida que nos vamos procurando, con los servicios carismáticos que ofrecemos, y aprender a buscar seriamente y juntas, los nuevos estilos que aporten a nuestras vida, personales y comunitarias, novedad y calidad a un tiempo.

Las normas por las que nos regimos, las formas de estar organizadas, los edificios que ocupamos o que tenemos medios vacíos, las actividades apostólicas, el estilo de obediencia y de liderazgo, el modo de gestionar y administrar los bienes, los planteamientos formativos, el entramado de la vida comunitaria, los diversos modos de relacionarnos en la Iglesia, en la sociedad y en las culturas,... o cualquier otra estructura está llamada a ser revisada en el sentido de discernir si está o no al servicio del fin que perseguimos, o lo dificulta.

En pocas palabras diría que en el “HORIZONTE” de este servicio está el deseo profundo de que TODAS ENTREMOS EN UN PROCESO DE TRANSFORMACIÓN-HUMANIZACIÓN¹ acorde con el sueño y la visión que nos guía, que tenga una doble incidencia:

- a) En el CONTEXTO GLOBAL y en los diferentes contextos donde vivimos
- b) En la propia Congregación

Transformar y humanizar siempre desde una TRIPLE MIRADA Y FIDELIDAD:

- A las personas que integran la congregación, ver a cada una como sujeto único, precioso e importante. Contribuir positivamente a que todo cuanto viva, ayude a hacer una historia de amor.
- A la misión que nos convoca, aquello para lo que Jesús nos ha reunido, sus Palabras escuchadas desde la óptica particular de nuestros fundadores
- A este mundo habitado por su misericordia y su Presencia salvadora, que nos demanda nuevas respuestas; a esta Iglesia, santa y pecadora de la que formamos parte, que pide continuamente ser reconstruida ... y a los frutos de transformación y felicidad que se van dando a través de nuestra acción.

El contrapunto...

<p style="text-align: center;">La “directiva”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Se orienta a la estabilidad y responde a las necesidades a corto plazo, a los desafíos operativos cotidianos • Planifica, organiza, dirige y controla, Mantiene el equilibrio de las operaciones, asegura el orden y evita el caos. Toma decisiones rutinarias • Analítico, calculador, estructural y ordenado • Usa el poder de posición • Tiene subordinados: aceptación y obediencia. Compromisos según acuerdos contractuales 	<p style="text-align: center;">La líder con visión</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tiene <u>una visión de futuro</u>, se concentra en los problemas a largo plazo y se orienta a la innovación, se preocupa por la intención al realizar las acciones y por la identidad • Desarrolla una <u>visión orientada al cambio</u>. La comunica y la explica. Motiva e inspira, alinea en una dirección al grupo. Toma decisiones críticas • <u>Visionario</u>, apasionado creativo y sensible • Usa recursos de poder personal • Tiene <u>cómplices</u>, seguidores por identificación e internalización. Los compromisos nacen de la implicación personal
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En este sentido que vamos compartiendo, acogemos nuestro “rol” o función no como algo estático sino dinámico, siempre en relación con el contexto, la(s) persona(s) y la Congregación con la misión que tiene encomendada.

El CONTRAPUNTO estaría expresado en el contraste entre la figura “directiva” y la “líder con visión” que aparece en la dispositiva 10 del pps que se adjunta.

¹ En 1985, Bass introdujo el concepto de liderazgo transformacional. Es una forma de ejercer el liderazgo de los grupos centrado en tres objetivos: desarrollo de las personas, logro de los objetivos de la organización y satisfacción del cliente. Estos objetivos son los que han guiado a todos los buenos líderes de todos los tiempos.

5. TODOS SOMOS NECESARIOS

2ª escena: TODOS SOMOS NECESARIOS. Mandela entra en el edificio de gobierno y encuentra a la gente recogiendo, haciendo cajas, hablando entre ellos y expectantes sobre lo que va a ser de ellos si ahora gobiernan "los otros"... Le pide a la secretaria que los convoque a todos.

M: Buenos días... ¿qué tal la mañana? ... Me alegro de verles.... Gracias por venir habiéndoles avisado con tan poca antelación.

Es posible que algunos no sepan quién soy. No he podido evitar ver los despachos vacíos cuando he llegado esta mañana, y todas esas cajas vacías... Claro está que si desean marcharse, están en su derecho. Y si creen de corazón que no pueden trabajar con el nuevo gobierno es preferible que nos dejen inmediatamente. Pero si están recogiendo sus cosas porque temen que la lengua, el color de la piel, o el haber trabajado para otro gobierno les desacredita para trabajar aquí, quiero decirles que NO HAY NADA QUE TEMER, EL PASADO ES EL PASADO. Hay que mirar al futuro, necesitamos su ayuda, queremos su ayuda. Y si deciden quedarse estarán haciendo un gran servicio a su país. Lo único que les pido es que hagan su trabajo lo mejor que puedan y con buena voluntad. Les prometo hacer lo mismo. Si logramos hacer eso nuestro país servirá de inspiración al mundo entero.

TODOS SOMOS NECESARIOS: Los verdaderos líderes no trabajan solos ni de forma aislada. Tejen redes sociales con otros liderazgos, con otras organizaciones, que buscan generar nuevos modos de vivir dignamente, humanamente. Viven otras versiones creativas, innovadoras de lo que entendemos como "liderazgos compartidos".

El líder potencia las capacidades de todas y todos para que sean ellos mismos los que encuentren la solución a los problemas, para que hagan posible una re-creación de la Congregación. Tiene una MIRADA VALORATIVA, que admira, se deja enseñar por las personas, agradece el don que significan para el Proyecto de Dios en la vida de la Congregación, etc.

Reconoce con agradecimiento y humildad que TODOS SOMOS NECESARIOS para reflejar el ROSTRO PLURICULTURAL Y MULTIRACIAL de nuestro Dios. Que no sobra nadie, ninguna cualidad, ninguna visión, ningún corazón dispuesto para amar y servir a quien más lo necesita.

Deberíamos insistir más en la responsabilidad histórica de nuestras decisiones, "encargarnos, hacernos cargo y cargar" con la vida propia y de nuestros hermanos y hermanas.... **FORMAMOS UNA CADENA SOLIDARIA**.... Cada una de nosotras y juntas somos siempre "cimientos" de las que vendrán después. Esta verdad nos compromete, nos estimula, nos responsabiliza para hacer que este "edificio" se construya con todas las piezas debidamente acopladas y potenciadas. Trabajar la comunión significa crear en el Cuerpo la urgencia de que todas se sientan piezas clave e insustituible para que esta Familia cumpla la misión histórica que tiene en el presente.



Un acompañamiento en red y al hilo de la vida

Sería interesante ahondar en un modo de definir la obediencia religiosa como "vivir un sueño corporativo como un sueño personal". Esta definición tan simple encierra un dinamismo que desata las fuerzas escondidas dentro de cada una en favor del sueño común que perseguimos.

El CONTRAPUNTO sería precisamente el comentario entre todos de la diapositiva 11 (hombre tirando del carro de ruedas cuadradas, con todas sus posibilidades de ruedas buenas en la parte superior).

6. UN ACOMPAÑAMIENTO EN RED Y AL HILO DE LA VIDA

Un liderazgo con espíritu tiene una mirada atenta y cualificada a las personas, y, en especial, a lo que descentra del verdadero centro. Busca posibilitar espacios donde tengan cabida *los ruiseñores y las mariposas*, gente que canta y que puede volar y vivir en libertad. Personas que se responsabilizan no sólo de las tareas encomendadas sino del amor y del cuidado mutuo.

El acompañamiento debe ser al hilo de la vida y acompaña los momentos conflictivos, de crisis y de sufrimiento.

EL LIDER vive un amor que acompaña al hilo de la vida y de las circunstancias, y una relación que se hace presente: cuida, sustenta, empatiza con alegrías y penas, nutre, comparte, es solidario en las crisis y no huye de los momentos conflictivos o de dolor de una comunidad. No se empeña en llevar a todas por el mismo camino. Está invitado a vivir su liderazgo desde el REALISMO Y LIBERTAD PARA DECIRNOS VERDADES.

Intenta con creatividad y a modo de estrategia ese modo tan femenino del acompañamiento "en red":

- La información circula de unas a otras.
- Se van generando vínculos entre comunidades y provincias y se afianza el sentido de Familia.
- Implica a personas y grupos en los procesos que acompaña.
- Busca una complicidad y gestión compartida en todo

Todo cuanto hagamos por tejer y recrear relaciones sanas, cálidas, transparentes y comprometidas, será una apuesta segura a favor de las personas.

Quisiera terminar con un texto muy sugerente de Buckminster Fuller que nos puede hacer pensar:

"No puedes, no intentes cambiar el sistema antiguo; construye uno nuevo que haga que el antiguo se vuelva obsoleto"... Los líderes actuales tienen que mantener las luces encendidas, tienen que suministrarnos alimentos, tienen que mantener en funcionamiento a nuestra sociedad y a nuestras organizaciones, y no tienen de hecho, el espacio para pensar radicalmente sobre cómo hacer las cosas de un modo distinto, pues tienen que mantener las cosas funcionando. En última instancia es responsabilidad de alguien como yo la creación de nuevos sistemas lo más pronto posible, que puedan madurar lo suficiente y sustituir al antiguo sistema.... Podemos sugerirles (a los líderes) que creen el espacio para la experimentación y para la investigación.



Ref.: *Coordinadora General de la Compañía de Santa Teresa de Jesús.
www.stjteresianas.org. Texto enviado por correo electrónico para la publicación de SEDOS

NEMI (RM)
4-8 May 2015

Centro 'ad gentes' - Society of the Divine Word

Via del Laghi bis, 52 / 00040 Nemi , RM. Italia
Tel: 069365001 / Fax: 06936500465
E-Mail: centroadgentes@gmail.com



Please take note and register your names!

SEDOS Residential Seminar: 4-8 May 2015
Centro Ad Gentes, NEMI (Rome)
Topic: "Open the Door, Let Him Out"
"A self-referential Church keeps Jesus Christ within herself and does not let him out". (Pope Francis)

Séminaire Résidentiel de SEDOS: du 4 au 8 mai 2015
Au Centre Ad Gentes NEMI (Rome)
Thème: «Ouvre la porte, laisse-Le sortir»
«Une église centrée sur elle-même garde Jésus Christ enfermé en elle et ne Le laisse pas sortir». (Pape François)

El Seminario Residencial de SEDOS: 4-8 mayo 2015
Centro Ad Gentes, NEMI (Roma)
Tema: "Abre la puerta, déjalo salir"
"Una iglesia autorreferencial mantiene a Jesús Cristo encerrado en ella y no lo deja salir". (Papa Francesco)

Seminario Residenziale di SEDOS: 4-8 maggio 2015
Centro Ad Gentes NEMI (Roma)
Tema: "Aprite la porta, lasciatelo uscire"
"Una Chiesa autoreferenziale mantiene Gesù Cristo racchiuso in essa e non lo lascia uscire". (Papa Francesco)