

Bulletin 2015

Vol. 47, No. 3/4 - March-April

SEDOS



Editorial	43
The Role of Charisms in the Church Some Contemporary Considerations <i>Antony D'Cruz, O. Praem</i>	44
Fondateur et origine de la congregation des Soeurs Servantes du Seigneur (bene-umukama) du Burundi <i>Sr. Jeanne d'Arc Kamikazi</i>	51
Las comunidades eclesiales de base (CEB'S) <i>Julián Andrés Salazar</i>	62
Some Hindrance to Christian Mission from the Buddhists in Myanmar <i>Fr. John Lian Cin Pau</i>	71
Women in the Old Testament - Part I - <i>Rev. Subhash Anand</i>	74
The SEDOS annual report 2014 50 years in mission SEDOS, a timely and prophetic initiative	84

Editorial

Pope Francis has dedicated the Year 2015 to Consecrated Life, which is at the very heart of the Church and a decisive element for her mission, besides being a precious and necessary gift for the present and future of the People of God. It is also an intimate part of the Church's life, her holiness and her mission (cf. John Paul II, The Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Vita Consecrata* (Consecrated Life), n. 3).

**"Cristo è risorto Alleluia!
Vinta è ormai la morte,
Alleluia"!**

In this issue of the Bulletin there are very meaningful articles related to Consecrated Life.

All the Institutes of Consecrated Life are heir to a history rich in charisms. Charisms are a gift of the Holy Spirit, and they are useful (cf. 1 Cor 12:7) for the common good of the Church. **Antony D'Cruz, J., O. Praem**, is propounding an in-depth study of: *"The Role of Charisms in the Church:*

Some Contemporary Considerations".

Pope Francis said: *"recounting our history is essential for preserving our identity, for strengthening our unity as a family and our common sense of belonging"* (21 November 2014). This is exactly the purpose of Sr. **Jeanne d'Arc Kamikazi**'s research. She is a member of the Sisters Servants of the Lord (BENE-UMUKAMA) in Burundi. She retraces the journey of her religious family from its foundation in 1970 by Msgr. Michel Ntuyahaga, the Founder, in her doctoral thesis entitled: *"Fondateur et origine de la Congrégation des Sœurs Servantes du Seigneur (Bene-UMUKAMA) du Burundi"*. She hopes that her work will serve to reinforce the identity of the members of the Congregation, strengthen their unity and nourish a deep sense of belonging. She especially addresses the young members who never knew the Founder.

The Second Vatican Council promoted a Church in which the laity would share equal responsibility with the clergy in advancing God's Reign. In order to fulfil this promise the Church in Latin America developed the Base Ecclesial Community (BEC). This structure emphasized the requirement of: participation, consent and community organized around a project. The Base Ecclesial Communities introduced a new form of ecclesial experience whereby the accent was put on the community and participatory dimension within the Church. This revolutionary initiative was taken by the Bishops of Latin America at Medellín, in 1969. **Julian Andrés Salazar**, a student at the Pontifical Urbanian University, is writing his doctoral thesis on: *"Las Comunidades Eclesiales de Base (CEB's)"* and Prof. Paul Steffen, SVD is his Adviser.

Since news about the Church in Myanmar very seldom reaches us, the SEDOS' Staff is very grateful to Fr. **John Lian Cin Pau**, from Myanmar, for his contribution. He is writing his doctoral thesis, at the Pontifical Urbanian University, on the topic: *"Some Hindrance to Christian Mission from the Buddhists in Myanmar"*. It is a very short article but rich in information. Even though the Catholic Church in Myanmar has just celebrated 500 years there, the Christian population only constitutes 5% of the total population of Myanmar (52.4 million). With God's grace the Christian population is increasing, but gradually, which is due to the fact that to be a Christian in Myanmar is like being a stranger in one's own home. In such a situation Christians are called to build peace and reconciliation by taking a real interest in the local culture.

The 2015 SEDOS Seminar will address, once again, the controversial issue of: Women in the Church (e.g. at the level of decision-making) and Society. A very specific study will focus on the dominance of the patriarchal mindset in the Old Testament. Rev. **Subhash Anand** has conducted very interesting research on: *"Women in the Old Testament, Part I"*; and *"Women in the New Testament, Part II"*. We shall be presenting: *"Women in the Old Testament, Part I"*.

Sr Nzenzili Lucie MBOMA, FMM
Executive Directress of SEDOS

Antony D'Cruz, O. Praem

The Role of Charisms in the Church

Some Contemporary Considerations

The author (antonydcruz@gmail.com), an expert in ecclesiology, teaches at Norbertine Study House, 13 Sainhikwadi, Pune, 411014, India. His last contribution to VJTR was in November last year, pp. 805-15. In this essay he presents a study of the meaning of charisms in the New Testament, especially in the context of charisms of religious life, and, their presence in the personal lives of Founders. He stresses the ecclesial function of the charisms that need to work harmoniously with the primordial charism, the foundation of the universal Church as the sacrament of Christ's presence in the history of the world.

Introduction

Charisms are the gift of the Holy Spirit, originating from Christ's promise that he would send his Spirit to his disciples when he would return to the Father (cf. I Jn 14:16; 14:26; 15:26; 16:7, 13; Lk 24:49), and that the Spirit will be his abiding presence until the end of time.¹ For this reason charisms are perennial: the Holy Spirit who is all-embracing and ever-present, always grants gifts to the faithful to fulfill their functions and duties for the good of each Church in its own milieu.² And the Church has always accepted and believed that Christ established it with a certain hierarchical structure in which some members are invested with special powers and ministries for the service and good of the whole community (cf. Lk 22:24-30).³ Nevertheless, in the same breath, the Church also affirms that the Holy Spirit is given to all the faithful, great or small, more or less important: all have their functions and duties, from the Saints to the least gifted Christian.⁴ Each member receives grace according to the mission entrusted to him or her, and the positions and duties vary from member to member, as St Paul made very clear in the metaphor of the 'Mystical Body' (cf. I Cor 12:4).⁵ In this paper we shall first analyze the linguistic background of the word 'charism' in order to understand its general meaning and the technical meaning it has in the Pauline Letters, substantiated by Thomas Aquinas, and nuanced by the Second Vatican Council.

1. Charism: A Pauline Doctrine

The Greek word *charis* means free gift or favour and its English transcription is 'charism'.⁶ This word comes from the Greek root *char*, which indicates something in the nature of well-being. The verbal root *char* is best translated as: to grant grace, to give, to lavish.⁷ The Greek word *charisma* is derived from the verb *charizesthai*, which means to 'show oneself generous', 'to present'. A general meaning suggests 'generous gift'.⁸ Nevertheless, through usage the concept has acquired an added technical sense in modern theology.

The modern technical sense surely derives from Pauline literature where the context refers to divine gifts given for building up the Church (I Cor 12:8-10).⁹ Nevertheless, Paul does not give a precise definition of 'charism' as such. The diversity that Paul lists in his Letters (e.g., in I Cor 12 and 14) bears witness to a broad semantic field to signify various gifts of the Holy Spirit given to the faithful for service and effective membership in the Church (cf. I Cor 12:4, 12, 17-26).¹⁰ In other words, Paul uses the word freely and not as a technical term. For him *charis* indicated the various God-given gifts or graces.¹¹ He also uses qualifiers or synonyms to denote general meanings, for example *pneumatika* (I Cor 12:1; 14:1),¹² *dorea* (Rom 5:15 and II Cor 9:13);¹³ and *charis* (I Cor 1:4).¹⁴ Accordingly 'charism' in St. Paul can mean: (a) the gift of faith and faith sharing (Rom 1:11); (b) being justified by faith in Christ (cf. Rom 11:29); (c) being a member of the 'Chosen People' (Rom 11:29); (d) special vocations within the chosen community (I Cor 1:7; 7:7; 12:4, 9, 28, 30, 31; II Cor 1:11; I Tim 4:14; II Tim 1:6) are also charisms.¹⁵

Nevertheless, a technical sense of charism can be inferred from the Pauline literature, particularly in the analogy of the human body to indicate the end or the purpose of charisms.¹⁶ Just as all parts of the body are organically *united* with different functions, so the members of the Mystical Body of Christ are united with different positions and operations. This distinction is effected by the Holy Spirit through the selected diffusion of his charismatic gifts; yet unity is maintained since all the gifts come from the one divine source (cf. I Cor 12:12-27; Rom 12:6-8).¹⁷ The element underlying Paul's doctrine (or the technical sense) of charism is the *principle of unity in diversity*. Thus, differences should never be made the basis for discrimination or for claims of *superiority* over others. Within the Body of Christ each of the faithful with his or her charism is important by *contributing to its growth*.¹⁸ However, no single person with his or her charisms can exhaust the Mystery of Christ. Paul, to whom was granted a superabundance of charismatic gifts, admits that he can only "... see now through a mirror in an obscure manner ..." for he is only able to "... know in part and prophesy in part".¹⁹

2. Nature and Purpose of Charisms

Charisms are useful (cf. I Cor 12:7) for the common good of the Church, argued Thomas Aquinas.²⁰ Therefore he explained charism by the expression "*gratia gratis data*" ("grace freely given" cf. I Cor 12:8-10) and distinguished it from sanctifying grace as "*gratia gratum faciens*" ("grace that makes one agreeable to God" cf. Eph 1:6). "*Gratia gratis data*" is that grace by which one person cooperates with another so that he might be brought back to God. The subject is only a provisional holder for the benefit of the whole ecclesial community. In other words the Holy Spirit uses the subject in a broad sense, for the good of others.²¹

This Thomistic concept is reflected in Vatican II's teaching on charism (*Lumen Gentium*, n. 12).²² In order to define charisms, Vatican II distinguished them from the grace that the Holy Spirit grants to the People of God not only "through the sacraments and Church ministries" which is sanctifying grace, as there are special graces (*gratiae speciales*) that the Spirit distributes "as he wills" (I Cor 12:11; *LG*, n. 9). Nevertheless, in the same breath Vatican II teaches that they are granted to "the faithful of every rank", thus maintaining its pastoral approach. "The manifestation of the Spirit is given to everyone for profit" (I Cor 12:7). Citing this Pauline teaching, Vatican II teaches that "these charismatic gifts, whether they be the most outstanding or the more simple and widely diffused" all have one aim, namely, "the renewal and building up of the Church". And, since they are freely given, they "are to be received with thanksgiving and consolation, for they are exceedingly suitable and useful for the needs of the Church" (*LG*, n. 12). Therefore, in an attempt to define the function of charisms in terms of 'renewal' (renovation), Vatican II suggested the distinction between the ordinary administration of grace and new initiatives. The Sacraments and institutional ministries bring ordinary graces, but when the Holy Spirit wants to bring about something new, he inspires people with charisms.²³ However, we should not take this distinction as 'hard and fast' because the source of both these graces is the one Holy Spirit who simply and widely distributes these gifts. And in Pauline theology this distinction does not indicate opposition or exclusivity.²⁴ There is only one Spirit who, according to his own richness and the needs of the ministries, gives different gifts for the welfare of the Church (cf. I Cor 12:1-11) (*LG*, nn. 7, 12).

2.1. Unity: Abiding Principle of Charism

Charisms vary according to their motive and purpose. They are never in contradiction, but complement each other for the growth of the whole. Their fundamental aim is to contribute to the growth of the whole, while maintaining their individuality. This is clear at the Pentecost event when the outpouring of the Holy Spirit is experienced in *koinonia* to overcome hatred and stress unity in diversity (Acts 2:5). All those gathered at Pentecost could hear about the great works of God in their own language. This is why, from the early Church Fathers to Vatican II,²⁵ the event of Pentecost is set in contrast with the event of Babel, which is the symbol of division (Gen 11:1-9).²⁶ The Spirit makes everyone speak God's word in his/her own language in such a way that no one loses his/her originality or personal identity. "The Spirit gives the Church unity which can absorb differences without obliterating them and a universality which is always concrete, since the Spirit is the principle of both identity and difference".²⁷

As a result, the Spirit calls the Church to recreate what *Babel* is constantly unmaking.²⁸ Technically this is what St Paul asserted with the help of the image of the body (cf. I Cor 12:12-13). Similarly, the Spirit, by placing all charisms within the Church, calls the faithful with their gifts constantly to build up the Church in communion. The gift of the Spirit in the Upper Room (Jn 20:22-23) and at Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4) was given to all the disciples gathered there, and not only to the Apostles. Diverse gifts were given freely to each for the common good (cf. I Cor 12:4-7), and the same Spirit who operates in each person with different gifts is also the source of unity (cf. I Cor 12:13). This idea was vigorously taken up by Vatican II, particularly in *Lumen Gentium*. The very teaching about the Church bringing the light and mystery of Christ to all men, highlights this fact (n. 1). The Church is a society structured with hierarchical organs. However, she is also imbued with the hidden presence of divine elements of diversity. All these form *one* complex reality in which divine and human elements are bound together in unity. This oneness is further illustrated in Vatican II's teaching on the People of God, particularly by placing the hierarchy within the wider vision of the People of God. 'People of God' presents the Church as a unified society with a diversity of members.²⁹

While Vatican II taught that "the manifestation of the Spirit is given to everyone for profit", cf. I Thes 5:12, 19-21 (*LG*, n. 12), the Council also assigns specific duties as gifts given to Apostles

and teachers.³⁰ Thus, Vatican II introduced the understanding that the teaching authority of the Church is also a gift of the Holy Spirit. Accordingly, Christ, who called his disciples, also strengthened them through the infusion of grace at Pentecost (LG, nn. 4 and 19). Thus the "institutional Church is also charismatic, although it does not hold a monopoly of charisms".³¹ The one Spirit continued to assist the Church by providing dedicated men whom the Apostles chose as their successors (cf. Eph 4:11-12; LG, n. 20). Though Vatican II makes a distinction between hierarchic and charismatic gifts, there cannot be an essential division or separation between them because the Holy Spirit is responsible for both actions.³² That is why St Augustine could say *Vobis sum episcopus, vobiscum Christianus* ("I am bishop for you, but a Christian-along with you): "St Augustine was conveying the interrelation between the representative function instituted by Christ and the personal life lived by the grace of the Holy Spirit".³³

In fact Vatican II struck a balance between the *magisterium* or the teaching office and the faithful by referring to the 'sense of the faithful' (*sensus fidelium*) saying that the universal body of the faithful "cannot err in matters of belief", when "from the bishops down to the last of the faithful" it expresses a consent of all in matters of faith and morals (LG, n. 12).³⁴ Whether they are special or ordinary gifts, they all have the same purpose, as Paul has formulated it "*in aedificatione*" in the building up of the Church, and "*ad utilitatem*", for the profit, benefit, utility of the common good of the Church,³⁵ Pope Francis teaches that "a sure sign of the authenticity of a charism is its ecclesial character, its ability to be integrated harmoniously into the life of God's holy and faithful people for the good of all" (*Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 130).

The underlying element behind this doctrine is God's design to save all as one family.³⁶ "Salvation, then, is a corporate endeavour".³⁷ Biblically, the individual and the general eschatology are interdependent. For in the Bible the term 'body' not only means being 'embodied' but also embraces each and every aspect of the human being. Nor does the Bible see the human being as a hermeneutically closed personality. Rather, the individual is woven into the whole fabric of humanity and the world. The human person lives not only in relation to other human beings but also in relation to their environment. Therefore, the salvation brought about by Jesus reaches out to the whole cosmos, reconciling all to the Father in himself.³⁸ A remarkable teaching of Vatican II is the rediscovery of the richness of the biblical view of salvation (LG, n. 9, 16; AG, n. 2, 3; GS, n. 39).³⁹

Following the same line of thought, one can better understand the Thomistic view of grace, i.e., the assistance of God which enables the human person to return to God (*gratia gratum faciens* or sanctifying grace). Indeed this return to God is not a purely individualistic operation, but rather a social one which is in union and cooperation with one's fellow human beings (*gratia gratis data*) (cf. I Cor 12:8ff).⁴⁰ Therefore, a charism is an aid from God "who, in the freedom of the Spirit, distributes a variety of gifts which the faithful must place at the service of one another in view of the common task of the Christian life and as a means of extending Christian influence by service to others and by bearing witness".⁴¹ Thus they assist their fellow human beings to return to God.⁴²

2.2. Prophetism: Fundamental Nature

Charisms are fundamentally prophetic in nature because they have their origin in the Holy Spirit who is the source of every prophetic action. The gift of prophecy in the context of charisms means preaching or instructing in the Christian faith rather than foretelling the future (cf. I Cor 14:1ff.),⁴³ in order to teach the truth of the Mystery of Christ in an enlightened way a person must be especially equipped with the gift of wisdom.⁴⁴ To be God's prophet in the Judeo-Christian sense does not necessarily mean to reveal the future.... Prophets are primarily charged to show how things fit into God's plan for the world, God's design or purpose. For this reason prophets are reformists, because they work towards interpreting the 'spirit' that lies beyond the 'letter' and they push God's People to realize God's design.⁴⁵

Following from the above thoughts, in the New Testament Pentecost is viewed as a prophetic event. In the Old Testament prophecy, the Spirit is the gift of the Last Day (cf. Joel 2:27f; Isa 14:3; 63:14; Ezek 36:27; Zech 4:6).⁴⁶ The Pentecost event exemplified "the decree of God to heal the division of sin and its consequent alienation by gathering men once more into one in Christ and giving them life from the one Spirit".⁴⁷ Jesus came in order to reconcile the world to the Father (II Cor 5:19). The immediate object of this promise is revealed in the community gathered in the Upper Room, which represents the destiny of all humanity and the entire world (Acts 1:13).

Accordingly, Paul's charismata too are not a law, but the crystallization of the Gospel that leads to the eschatological community. Paul based his list of charismatic gifts on his

acknowledgement of the Lordship of Christ. They evolved out of his experience of the powers of the Spirit and are developed in the perspective of the eschatological plan of God,⁴⁸ i.e., to prepare a community of men and women with a variety of gifts to bring about the Kingdom of God. Wherever the community loses this justification, this experience, this perspective, the diversity of charismata and/or their unity is lost. Then there are communities of superiors with merely passive members incapable of independent decisions and actions.⁴⁹ The prophetic community's unity lies in the one Spirit, the one calling and the one Baptism. According to J. Moltmann:

freedom, diversity and brotherliness prevail in the community. It is our 'legal' equality before God which opens up the varied riches of his pleasure. So we might formulate the principle: to each his own, all for each other; testifying together to the world the saving life of Christ.⁵⁰

This is the challenge that a religious community faces today, the realization of *come-unity*. This does not happen with enforced uniformity, but rather in a unity that transcends the dividing walls to establish a right relationship and consideration for others. Often what works against our desired unity is due to our preconceived prejudices that arise from our differences of colour, caste and rite. This attitude, which is evil and sterile, will get us nowhere.⁵¹ It is here that the importance of dialogue comes into play. Biblically, obedience is the capacity (or freedom) to dialogue with the other. It is not blind submissiveness to the control of another. Mary's reply to the Angel: "How shall this be done, because I know not man?", is the best example of the human



<http://ricardohenriqueoliveira.blogspot.it>

capacity or freedom to enter into dialogue, with the 'other'. God sought Mary's consent and Mary's consent was not blindly submissive but it sprang from her freedom, which she preserved perpetually. In other words, "the incarnation of the Word cannot be conceived apart from the *freedom* of this young woman who by her assent decisively cooperated with the entrance of the eternal into time" (*Verbum Domini*, Part I).⁵²

The early Christians said: *unus Christianus, nullus Christianus* ("one Christian alone is no Christian"). Today, we need religious communities that preserve the *taste* of genuine reality, where people cultivate the primacy of being over appearance.⁵³

Against, this background, Benedict XVI exhorted religious communities: "Fraternal life is one of the aspects greatly sought by young people when they draw near to your life: it is an important prophetic element that you offer to a fundamentally individualistic society".⁵⁴

2.3. Charism and Religious Founders

The Holy Spirit's action is not granted only at the foundation of the Church nor only to a few people: the Holy Spirit continues to act for the renewal of the Church according to the needs of the time. And the convocation of Vatican II was a recent outstanding intervention. In a prayerful context Pope John XXIII called Vatican II "a new Pentecost". The Holy Spirit that is given to the Church is not static but dynamic, i.e., while preserving the fundamental nature of the Church it brings renewal and inspires action (cf. Eph. 4:23; *LG*, n. 7). Numerous forms of consecrated life are examples that the Holy Spirit guides the Church towards transforming humanity into Christ by means of its inspiration and charisms.⁵⁵ When it is necessary for the good of the community, spectacular and miraculous gifts are granted to some members for a specific purpose.⁵⁶ All the faithful receive their gifts according to the mission entrusted to them. Their charismatic nature is evident in their ability to attract and bring together followers, and to overcome the obstacles to witnessing to Christ by transforming humanity to him.⁵⁷

Charisms are gifts of God. Gifts can be natural and supernatural in character because God is the author of both creation and salvation. In spite of its supernatural nature, the bearer of a charism need not be an extraordinary person. It is true that charisms are granted for the achievement of a special aim, or a particular duty, by an individual as a member of the body, and such gifts should be received with thanksgiving and humility (cf. *LG*, n. 12). This point is obviously *a priori* from the fact that God does not impose a duty or obligation without granting the *corresponding grace* to accomplish it, while at the same time each Christian is a part of the *one* Mystical Body, the Church (Rom 12:4-6). In other words, the particular gift of a charism does not mean, as Pope Francis puts it, "a heroic individual undertaking, for it is first and foremost the Lord's work", (*Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 12) since its bearer is in need of divine grace.⁵⁸

Against this background, we need to understand the charisms of religious Founders. The primary purpose of charismatic gifts is the edification and sanctification of others (I Cor 12). The possessor of a charism participates in the fruits of these gifts he receives, for he is a member of the Church that is sanctified and edified by the Holy Spirit (cf. Eph 4:7, 11, 12).⁵⁹ In fact, in an excellent exegetical study on the very word 'usefulness' (*symphero*) in Pauline literature (I Cor 12:8-10) and in other texts in Scripture (Mt 5:29-30, Heb 12:20), Vanhoye writes that both *glossolalia* ('speaking in tongues') and 'prophecy' are gifts, but they have different orientations, as we read in I Corinthians 14:4: "One who speaks in a tongue edifies himself; but one who prophesies edifies the Church". Following this lead, Vanhoye writes that "the grace of apostolate is obviously given for the good of those to whom the apostle is sent; however, it is also grace for the apostle himself for whom it is an opportunity for personal union with Christ in love".⁶⁰ We should not therefore rigidly separate the two aspects of grace: *gratis data* and *gratum faciens*, with regard to the vocation of consecrated life. "In the case of vocation, it is a question on the one hand of a gift that belongs to the order of grace and is given with the sanctification of the recipient in view, and on the other, of a capacity to observe a certain style of life to the Church".⁶¹ This double attitude is visible in biblical prophetism: an unusual kind of religious conscience emerging from the God experience (mystical encounter) of prophets is joined to an intense concern for the historical reality.⁶² Their singular contact with God first transformed the prophets, who were then endowed with a mission from the same God to transform the People of Israel through their words and example. The contemporary understanding of charism reflects this double dimension. For instance, Mother Teresa deeply understood that "intimate union with Jesus and work for the poor can never be separated".⁶³ Mother Teresa saw the inseparable complementarity of personal union with Jesus and her congregation's service to the poor.

Concluding Remarks

Following from the above discussion, we can state that charisms are rooted in the Spirit of Christ manifested uniquely in people but nurtured in a community of the faithful. Charisms are unique in nature but their worth fully depends on a community where they bloom.

(a) Charisms are rooted in the Spirit of Christ

Charisms are the soul of an ecclesial gathering, the spirit that animates the gathering. Following St Raul's teaching, (I Cor 12:3b-7, 12-13), the different gifts (*charismata*) of the Holy Spirit are given for a purpose: a service to be offered for the good of all (see also I Pt 4:10). They are not an end in themselves. Charisms are *norma normata secundaria*, for they depend on the Word of God that is the *norma normata primaria*. In other words they are "the assurance of Christ's enduring presence in his Church (Mt 28:20) and of the lasting support of the Holy Spirit (Jn 14:16; 1-6:13) which promises the Church indestructibility or indefectibility (Mt 16:18). The Church trusts that the Spirit will preserve it as 'the pillar and bulwark of truth' (I Tim 3:15)".⁶⁴ Writing on the Church's inseparable relation with Holy Spirit, St. Irenaeus, wrote that it is by "the Spirit of God, renewing its [the Church's] youth as if it were some precious deposit in an excellent vessel, that causes the vessel itself containing it to renew its youth also.... For where the Church is, there is the Spirit of God; and where the Spirit of God is, there is the Church and every kind of grace" (*Adversus Haereses*, 3 24 1).

(b) Uniqueness of Charism as Come-unity

A charism is primarily a personal commitment to Jesus. Nevertheless, it must unfold in personal growth, in community, and be lived as a prophetic witness to bring about renewal in society. The Church is not a ready-made or prefabricated entity but is constantly moulding itself or being moulded by God. There is room for all the faithful to make their personal contribution, to exercise their creativity but in communion with the others. In the community of the faithful, no one can say to another: "I have no need of you" (cf. I Cor 12:21 compare with 3:7).⁶⁵ A true charism does not flower without fraternal communion because the author of a charism, the Spirit, operates within the mutual love and communion of the faithful. Therefore, Paul, with the



help of the image of the body, asserts the mutual dependence of these gifts (cf. I Cor 12:12-13). He then relativizes these gifts by speaking of the greatest and abiding gift of 'love' (I Cor 13).⁶⁶

(c) Charism and Reform

The "ecclesiality" of a religious community becomes *real* through the acknowledgment of its charisms within a given context. It is not enough for a community merely to trace its historical patrimony or its glorious past. Often the rhetoric that enshrines the *patrimony* of monastic-religious life has the upper hand over the living voice for its prophetic relevance *today*.⁶⁷ The temptation is to look with nostalgia to the past, holding uncritically to it and to its kind of security rather than to look to the light of Christ, the only one who never changes (Heb 13:8), for the way to reform the present. While a religious community should never neglect its history, nor look to the future with naive optimism, it should at the same time show a willingness to adapt and make space for change.⁶⁸

The Church is neither a place of archaeology nor a supermarket of antiques. We need to have recourse to the word of God that stands forever (I Pt 1:25) and to his love that is new every morning (Lam 3:23). It is the power of God's Word that has given rise to various traditions in the Church and is still powerful to free us from the fixations and polarizations affecting our lives. Vatican II has affirmed the ongoing need for permanent reform in the Church (*UR*, n. 6) since she is identified both as holy and in need of purification (*LG*, n. 8).⁶⁹ As St John Paul II said:

Criticism is useful in the community, which must always be reformed and must try to correct its own imperfections. In many cases it helps the community to take a new step forward. But if it comes from the Holy Spirit, criticism must be animated by the desire to advance in truth and love. It cannot be given with bitterness; it cannot be expressed in insults, in acts or judgments which offend the honour of individuals or groups. It must be filled with respect and with fraternal and filial affection, and it should avoid recourse to inappropriate forms of publicity by always adhering to the directions given by the Lord about fraternal correction (cf. Mt 18:15-16).⁷⁰

There is a constant tension between charism and institution. For instance, Vatican II taught that the Church "received the mission to proclaim and to spread among all peoples the Kingdom of Christ and of God". It could not, however, identify the Church with the Kingdom but had to add the humble statement that it is on earth, "the initial budding forth of that Kingdom" (*LG*, n. 5). Thus the mission and task of Jesus' followers in all generations, in ever new situations, is to work for Jesus' Kingdom. Similarly, the legacy of all religious orders and congregations is to persistently strive for the realization of their charism.⁷¹

Notes

¹ Cf. G. Murphy, *Charisms and Church Renewal. A Study of the Nature and Function of the Charisms in the Church*. Rome 1965, p. 1.

² *Ibid.*, 4.

³ Cf. *ibid.*, pp., 2, 60.

⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, 7.

⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, 7-8.

⁶ The term and its plural *charismata* derive from *charis*, which means 'grace'. For more linguistic data see A. Vanhoye, "The Biblical Question of 'charisms' after Vatican II", in R. Latourelle (ed.) *Vatican II Assessment and Perspective Twenty Five Years After (1962-1987)*. New York: 1988, 440ff.

⁷ F. Orchard, "Charism and Context," in J. Sullivan (ed.), *Communicating Faith*. Washington: 2011, 235.

⁸ Cf. Vanhoye, "The Biblical Question of 'Charisms' after Vatican II", 447.

⁹ W. Harrington, "Charism", in J.M. Komonchak et al (eds.), *The New Dictionary of Theology*. Bangalore: 1993, 180.

¹⁰ Cf. Murphy, *Charisms and Church Renewal*, pp. 14-15.

¹¹ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 40.

¹² Paul employs the term *pneumatikos* to denote the quality of a *Spirit-filled person*, i.e., a person possessed and governed by the Spirit of God (I Cor 2:15) or the spirit-effected capacity for special knowledge (I Cor 2:13-15). In I Cor 12:1 (*periton pneumatikon* cf. 14:1) Paul employs the current term to designate "the ecstatic phenomena experienced in the Church, which were considered *effects* or *gifts of the Spirit* (cf. T. Friberg, B. Friberg, and N.F. Miller, *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*. Baker's Greek New Testament Library, Vol. 4. Grand Rapids: 2000, 318; J. KREMER, "*pneumatikos*" in *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, Vol. 3, 122-3).

¹³ The term *dorea*, means a free gift, and stresses its gratuitous character showing the generosity of the giver: *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*, Vol. 4, 122; S. Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary. New Testament* (electronic ed.), Chattanooga 2000, G1435.

¹⁴ Biblically, the term *charts* is used for God's attitude towards human beings, namely: *kindness, grace, favor and helpfulness* (In 1:16,17; Eph 2:8). Specifically the term signifies the divine grace and favour as exercised in conferring gifts, particularly bestowed in and through Christ and his Gospel (Acts 13:43; II Cor. 6:1; Eph 4:7; Phil 1:7; I Pt 1:10,13. See reference of note 13.

¹⁵ Cf. Murphy, *Charisms and Church Renewal*, p. 40.

¹⁶ A. Vanhoye, "The Biblical Question of 'Charisms' after Vatican II", 456.

¹⁷ Murphy, *Charisms and Church Renewal*, 15.

¹⁸ A. Vanhoye, "The Biblical Question of 'Charisms' after Vatican II", 456.

- ¹⁹ Murphy, *Charisms and Church Renewal*, 48.
- ²⁰ S. Th., I-II, q. 111, a.5, ad. 1.
- ²¹ S. Th., I-II, q. 111, aa 4-5. S. Th., I-II, q. 111, qq. 171-2. Cf. A. VANHOYE, "The Biblical Question of 'Charisms' after Vatican II", 441; M. Lemonie "Charism", in A. Vauchez et al. (eds.) *Encyclopedia of the Middle Ages*. Chicago: 2000, 279.
- ²² Vatican II used the same Pauline text, I Cor 12:7 (LG, n. 12) and S. Th. (I-II q. 111, a.1) to speak of 'special graces' that are charisms (cf. A. Vanhoye, "The Biblical Question of 'Charisms' after Vatican II", 443-460).
- ²³ A. Vanhoye, "The Biblical Question of 'Charisms' after Vatican II", 445.
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*, 450.
- ²⁵ "The Day (of Pentecost) foreshadowed the union of all peoples in the catholicity of the faith by means of the Church of new alliance, a Church which speaks every language, understands and embraces all tongues in love, and thus overcomes the dispersion of Babel" (AG, n. 4).
- ²⁶ See H.M. Legrand "Inverser Babel, mission de l'Église", in *Spiritus*, 63 (1970), 323-46.
- ²⁷ H.M. Legrand, "The Revaluation of Local Churches: Some Theological Implications", *Concilium*, 71 (1972) 56.
- ²⁸ Cf. *ibid.* 56.
- ²⁹ "While it transcends all limits of time and of race, the Church is destined to extend to all regions of the earth and to enter into the history of mankind" (LG, n. 9).
- ³⁰ What has a special place among these gifts is the grace of the apostles to whose Authority, "the Spirit himself subjected even those who were endowed with charisms" (LG, n. 7).
- ³¹ A. Vanhoye, "The Biblical Question of 'Charisms' after Vatican II", 463.
- ³² Cf. Murphy, *Charisms and Church Renewal*, 125.
- ³³ As argued by Y. Congar, *Called to Life*, Bombay, 1989, 71.
- ³⁴ M. Amaladoss, "God as Spirit", *VJTR* 77 (2013), 259.
- ³⁵ Cf. Murphy, *Charisms and Church Renewal*, 133.
- ³⁶ "It has pleased God, however, to make men holy and save them (men and women) ... by making them into a single people, a people which acknowledges Him in truth and serves Him in holiness" (LG, n. 9).
- ³⁷ Cf. Murphy, *Charisms and Church Renewal*, 131.
- ³⁸ See W. Kasper, "Individual Salvation and Eschatological Consummation", in R.E. Brown et al (eds.), *Faith and the Future. Studies in Christian Studies*. New York 1994, 16ff.
- ³⁹ See K.KUNNUMPURAM, "Towards a New Ecclesiology in the Light of Vatican II", in K. KUNNUMPURAM-L. FERNANDO, eds., *Quest for an Indian Church. An Exploration of the Possibilities Opened up by Vatican II*. Anand 1993, 6; J.M.R. TILLARD, *Church of Churches. The Ecclesiology of Communion*, Minnesota, 17.
- ⁴⁰ S. Th., I-II HI, q. 111, a.1.
- ⁴¹ Congar, *Called to Life*, 71.
- ⁴² Cf. Murphy, *Charisms and Church Renewal*, 69-70.
- ⁴³ Cf. *ibid.*, 50.
- ⁴⁴ Harrington, "Charism", 181.
- ⁴⁵ As argued by Y. CONGAR, *The True and False Reform in the Church*. Collegeville: 2011, 173-4.
- ⁴⁶ J. Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*. London: SCM Press, 1975, 294.
- ⁴⁷ A. Grillmeier, "Commentary of Chapter II. The People of God of *Lumen Gentium*" in H. Vorgrimler, ed., *Commentary of the Documents of Vatican II*, New York, 1969, 167.
- ⁴⁸ J. Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*, 298.
- ⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 299.
- ⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 298.
- ⁵¹ D. Oligari, "Beyond Survival. What Future for the Monastic Presence in the West?", *The American Benedictine Review* 61 (2010) 152.
- ⁵² "Our whole existence becomes a dialogue with the God who speaks and listens, who calls us and gives direction to our lives. Here the word of God reveals that our entire life is under the divine call" *Verbum Domini*, Part I).
- ⁵³ Cf. Oligari, "Beyond Survival. What Future for the Monastic Presence in the West?", 152.
- ⁵⁴ Benedict XVI, "Consecrated Life has its Origin in the Lord". Papal Address to the Union of Superiors General, www.zenit.org/article-31090?l=english (accessed 30 November 2012) Para 3.
- ⁵⁵ M.R. Jurado, "Consecrated Life and Charisms of the Founders", in R. Latourelle (ed.) *Vatican II Assessment and Perspective Twenty-Five Years After (1962-1987)*. Vol. III, New York: 1988, 19.
- ⁵⁶ Cf. Murphy. *Charisms and Church Renewal*, 15.
- ⁵⁷ M.R. Jurado, "Consecrated Life and Charisms of the Founders", 19.
- ⁵⁸ Cf. Murphy. *Charisms and Church Renewal*, 52-3.
- ⁵⁹ Cf. *Ibid.*, 55-6.
- ⁶⁰ A. Vanhoye, "The Biblical Question of 'Charisms' after Vatican II", 461.
- ⁶¹ M.R. Jurado, "Consecrated Life and Charisms of the Founders", 17.
- ⁶² Cf. G.M. Soares Prabhu, "The Dharma of the Biblical Prophet", in S. Kuthirakkattel, ed. *Biblical Spirituality of Liberative Action. Collected Works of G.M. Soares Prabhu*, III, Pune 2003, 113.
- ⁶³ As commented by J. Neuner, "Mother Teresa's Charism", *VJTR* 65 (2001) 180-1.
- ⁶⁴ H.J. Pottmeyer, "Tradition", in R. Latourelle and R. Fisichella, ed., *Dictionary of Fundamental Theology*, New York 1994, 1124.
- ⁶⁵ Y. Congar, *Called to Life*, 68.
- ⁶⁶ M. Amaladoss, "God as Spirit", *VJTR*, 77 (2013), 259.
- ⁶⁷ Oligari, "Beyond Survival. What Future for the Monastic Presence in the West?", 150.
- ⁶⁸ Oligari, "Beyond Survival. What Future for the Monastic Presence in the West?", 151.
- ⁶⁹ Y. Congar, *True and False Reform in the Church*, Minnesota: 2011, 19ff.
- ⁷⁰ John Paul II, "The Role of Charisms in the Church's Life", at the General Audience of 24 June 1992, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/audiences/alpha/data/aud19920624en.html (accessed 2 May 2013)
- ⁷¹ John Paul II, "The Role of Charisms in the Church's Life", at the 'General Audience' of 24 June 1992, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/audiences/alpha/data/aud19920624en.html (accessed May 2, 2013).
- ⁷² Neuner, "Mother Teresa's Charism," 192.

Sr. Jeanne d'Arc Kamikazi
Fondateur et origine de la congrégation des
Sœurs Servantes du Seigneur
(bene-umukama) du Burundi

Pour une herméneutique du charisme des Sœurs Servantes du
Seigneur (Bene-Umukama) du Burundi dans la prospective de
l'Ecclésiologie de communion

Notre recherche est une étude sur les origines et les développements du charisme des Sœurs Servantes du Seigneur (Bene-Umukama) du Burundi, institut né dans les années 70 grâce à Michel Ntuyahaga, premier évêque d'origine burundaise, qui s'est développé au Burundi et a pris forme dans divers autres contextes socio-culturels. La recherche porte avant tout sur le fondateur et les origines du charisme des Sœurs Bene Umukama. Elle a été suscitée par deux motivations de fond: la première part du désir de comprendre le charisme de l'Institut des Sœurs Bene Umukama, exprimé par les membres de ce même Institut à l'ouverture du Chapitre Général de septembre 2011. La deuxième réside dans le fait que le fondateur de la Congrégation est mort il y a treize ans et jusqu'à ce jour il n'y a pas eu d'étude systématique et complète sur lui en tant que premier évêque burundais et fondateur de l'Institut des Sœurs Bene Umukama. C'est pourquoi cette recherche peut aider tous les membres, et surtout les nouvelles générations arrivées après sa mort, à le connaître de façon approfondie afin de mieux comprendre son charisme et ses aspirations. Nous ne pouvons ignorer la contribution qu'elle peut apporter aux familles religieuses en général et en particulier aux familles religieuses africaines pour approfondir la connaissance de leur fondateur et de leur charisme, parce que, comme nous le savons, tant de Congrégations, spécialement celles africaines, vivent une confusion identitaire du fait qu'elles ont été fondées par des évêques ou des curés pour être au service de la communauté paroissiale ou du diocèse. La recherche, comme objet matériel, traite du charisme des Sœurs Bene — Umukama, tel qu'il émerge de l'expérience du fondateur, dans la vie de la première communauté de Sœurs et dans les documents de la Congrégation; tandis que l'objet formel traite du même charisme du point de vue herméneutique de l'Ecclésiologie de communion à la lumière des documents du Concile Vatican II sur la Vie Consacrée. En ce qui concerne la méthode, la recherche se propose d'appréhender le caractère particulier du charisme sous l'angle *inter et transdisciplinaire*¹ à travers une lecture herméneutique de la réalité historique

*Dans une tribu indigène de notre continent,
il existe parmi les artisans potiers,
une tradition qui perdure jusqu'à nos jours :
chaque artisan du village a toujours un disciple
auquel il transmet son savoir, l'art de faire des pots.
Quand un de ses maîtres voit approcher
l'heure de sa mort, il prend un des pots qu'il a
réalisés,
celui qu'il préfère, celui qu'il considère comme
son oeuvre maîtresse, celui qu'il a fait
avec le plus d'amour et d'ardeur.
Alors, il le remet à son fidèle disciple.
Dès lors, celui-ci devra continuer
le travail de son maître.
Le disciple prépare la glaise pour commencer
à réaliser un pot neuf;
il prend le pot qu'il a reçu comme héritage
de son maître, et il le brise, le réduit en miettes
et incorpore chacun de ces morceaux
dans la masse de la nouvelle glaise.
Ainsi, l'esprit de l'enseignement de son maître
imprègnera toute son oeuvre.¹*

où le charisme est né, pour faire émerger les intentions du fondateur et des instances contemporaines où l'Institut agit. Cette recherche comprend les points suivants: 1) Le contexte socioculturel du Burundi traditionnel dans lequel est né et a grandi Mgr. Michel Ntuyahaga; 2) La religion traditionnelle du Burundi et l'expérience chrétienne de Mgr. Michel Ntuyahaga; 3) La vocation sacerdotale au Burundi comme outil de l'inculturation; 4) Mgr. Michel tuyahaga, premier évêque burundais, fondateur du diocèse de Bujumbura; 5) Mgr. Michel Ntuyahaga et les origines des Sœurs Bene-Umukama; 6) Les Sœurs Bene-Umukama et les défis actuels; 7) L'héritage prophétique de Mgr. Michel Ntuyahaga.

Avant d'entrer dans le détail, nous voudrions partir d'un conte originaire du Chili pour faire mieux comprendre le voyage herméneutique que nous voulons faire:



1. Le contexte socioculturel

Le contexte socioculturel dans lequel est né et a grandi Mgr. Michel Ntuyahaga nous aide à comprendre sa société, sa famille, les valeurs et l'éducation reçues. Les *valeurs* qui caractérisaient alors le Burundi étaient divisés en trois catégories: les *valeurs morales* qui consistaient dans le respect de soi et des autres; les *valeurs sociales* basées sur le sens de la dignité, sur l'entente entre les familles, sur le sens de la communauté, sur la communion; les

¹ S. RONDINARA, *Dalla interdisciplinarietà alla transdisciplinarietà. Una prospettiva epistemologica*, in Sophia, 1 (2008/0), 61-70.

valeurs religieuses, en tenant compte du fait que les Burundais, à la différence des autres peuples africains, étaient monothéistes car ils croyaient en Imana Unique Être Suprême adoré par tous les Burundais. Pendant les années qui ont vu grandir Mgr. Michel Ntuyahaga l'éducation jouait un rôle très important. L'éducation des enfants était gérée par la mère jusqu'à la puberté. A partir de la puberté, les garçons étaient élevés par le père et les filles par la mère. Les garçons apprenaient le métier du père et surtout apprenaient du père comment devenir *umushingantahe*, c'est-à-dire une référence aussi bien à l'intérieur de la famille que dans la société. Les garçons, spécialement ceux des familles socialement importantes étaient formés en premier lieu au courage, à la discrétion, à l'hospitalité, à la prudence et à la soumission. Tandis que les filles, à l'âge de la puberté, étaient préparées par la mère à leur vie future, c'est-à-dire aux activités domestiques et surtout à la discrétion, afin de devenir des femmes capables de tenir leur maison et de s'occuper de leur mari et des enfants, c'est pourquoi elles étaient appelées *abazenzwanzu*, chargées de la maison. Bien que l'organisation socioculturelle du temps de Mgr. Michel ait été riche de l'unité vitale *ubumwe*, on remarque malheureusement une grande limitation parce que cet *ubumwe* se limitait souvent à la famille. La conséquence dangereuse de cette culture est qu'il n'y a pas de liberté de l'individu parce que l'identité est collective, elle n'est pas personnelle. A l'inverse d'un Européen, le Burundais n'avait pas la liberté de décider seul parce que vivre et agir est vivre avec et agir avec. Ainsi, agir hors de la famille signifiait se couper des autres. Mgr. Michel Ntuyahaga naît en 1912 dans cette même société, dans une famille sereine et aisée, son père était un chef respecté. C'est pourquoi, étant l'aîné, il devait devenir chef comme son père. Il devait donc recevoir une éducation basée sur les valeurs et les aptitudes sociales pour devenir un vrai *umushingantahe*.

2. L'expérience chrétienne

L'identité chrétienne, comme observe P. Coda, complète et perfectionne la religiosité naturelle et construit d'une manière particulière et surnaturelle la façon de vivre le rapport religieux.² Ce dernier contient une motivation dynamique, il doit donc respecter les dynamiques de son développement surnaturel et ses rythmes de croissance, jusqu'à sa plénitude, à l'état de l'homme parfait, à la mesure qui convient à la pleine maturité dans le Christ (*Eph. 4,13*). Mgr. Michel Ntuyahaga naît aux premiers temps de l'évangélisation, alors que sa famille est encore païenne. C'est pourquoi, avant sa conversion au christianisme, advenue le 6/12/1924 quand il avait à peine 12 ans, il pratiquait la religion traditionnelle. Cette religion consistait à adorer l'Imana qui était un Esprit Suprême invisible. Les Burundais croyaient en Un Dieu unique, qui connaît tout, qui est partout, qui peut tout diriger dans son universelle providence, source de tout, un Dieu immuable, éternel, transcendant. Pour les Burundais, l'Imana faisait partie de leur vie quotidienne, c'est pourquoi le concept Imana était utilisé dans les expressions familières, dans les légendes, dans les poésies, dans les noms attribués aux enfants, dans les récits, les proverbes etc.... Mais cet Imana est inaccessible et l'homme ignore ses secrets intimes. Tandis que pour le christianisme, à travers l'adoration, le chrétien pénètre les mystères de la divinité. Toutefois, dans la vie morale des Burundais, il y avait l'absence de Dieu, en effet, quoique bienfaiteur généreux, il n'était pas reconnu comme fin ultime et on ignorait la divine sainteté de Dieu. Mais, avec le christianisme, les Burundais reconnaissent Imana comme le roi (*umwami*), Seigneur (*Umukama*), Grand (*Rudasumbwa*). Mais par l'intermédiaire de Jésus il est aussi et surtout notre Père (*Umuvevi*). Mgr. Michel Ntuyahaga, à travers le christianisme, découvre la foi profonde en Dieu créateur, Père de tous. Cette même foi chrétienne orientera et donnera du sens aux qualités naturelles acquises dans sa famille et dans la société, elle sera ainsi le moteur de ses actes, de ses idées et de sa pensée. C'est la même foi qu'il laissera en héritage à toute la famille chrétienne du Burundi dans son testament: *Mon dernier mot sur la terre*.³ Malheureusement dans les sociétés industrielles une telle valeur religieuse est souvent reléguée au deuxième plan en ce qu'on donne la priorité absolue aux valeurs économiques. A ce sujet Mgr. Michel Ntuyahaga a dit: La vraie civilisation n'est pas de nature matérielle, mais avant tout de nature intérieure et spirituelle. *Le progrès matériel n'est et ne doit être qu'une manifestation de l'équilibre intérieur de l'âme et du cœur. Le progrès matériel doit être au service des valeurs humaines que l'Eglise se préoccupe de développer et qui doivent servir de règle à toute la civilisation ...*⁴.

² P. CODA, *Dalla Trinità. L'avvento di Dio tra storia e profezia*, Città Nuova, Roma 2011, pp. 66-68.

³ SOEURS BENE-UMUKAMA, *Fondateur des Sœurs Bene-Umukama. Témoignages*, Archives des Sœurs Bene-Umukama, Bujumbura 2002, pp. 126-131.

M. NTUYAHAGA, *Allocution prononcée lors de son installation en la Cathédrale Notre Dame, Reine du Monde*, le 23/10/1960, Cf. E. NGOYAGOYE, op. cit. p. 120.

3. Vocation sacerdotale comme contribution l'inculturation

L'identité des personnes consacrées spécifie et perfectionne l'existence du croyant appelé à se réaliser sur la voie de la foi chrétienne. La consécration est en général présentée comme un don commun: à travers le baptême se réalise dans tous les chrétiens la transformation la plus radicale, c'est-à-dire que toute la personnalité demeure consacrée. Mais cette consécration générale admet encore des consécérations spéciales, comme par exemple la consécration sacerdotale, religieuse ou laïque. Mgr. Michel Ntuyahaga, après le baptême, fréquente la mission et pendant la récréation, tandis que ses amis jouent, lui se retire pour aller prier à l'église. Le Père Blanc Zuure, constatant la foi de ce jeune garçon, lui propose d'entrer au séminaire. La mission d'évangélisation au Burundi prévoyait la préparation et la formation d'un clergé autochtone. Suivant en ceci une considération de Benoît XV qui affirmait: *Le prêtre indigène ayant en commun avec ses concitoyens l'origine, la mentalité et les aspirations, se trouve merveilleusement apte à inculquer la foi dans leur cœur*.⁵ Le premier Evêque missionnaire au Burundi Gorju favorisera cette invitation du Pape en faisant construire un séminaire pour la préparation et la formation des prêtres indigènes pour rendre plus efficace le processus d'évangélisation. Mgr. Michel Ntuyahaga est entré dans ce séminaire avec le premier groupe en 1926. Etant l'aîné et fils d'un chef, il n'a pas été facile faire ce choix de la vocation parce que sa famille aurait voulu qu'il devienne le futur chef. De plus, pour un homme, ne pas fonder une famille était considéré une anomalie et une malédiction pour toute la famille. Ainsi, avant d'entrer au Grand Séminaire, il dit à sa famille: *La prospérité que je ne vous garantis pas, je vous la montrerai avec un type d'affection. Je sauverai les âme*⁶. La vie au séminaire ne fut pas facile car les missionnaires ignoraient la richesse des traditions religieuses du pays. Vivant et connaissant la culture et les traditions religieuses de son peuple, Mgr. Michel Ntuyahaga contribuera grandement à l'évangélisation, ayant lui-même la forma mentis de ses frères à évangéliser. En 1953 il sera élu par les prêtres autochtones pour guider l'Association Union Apostolique et Culturelle des prêtres Burundais. Même pendant ses études à Rome (1955-1957) il se mettra en contact avec d'autres théologiens africains qui luttaient pour avoir une théologie adaptée à la culture africaine. Nous ne pouvons oublier le bénéfice de la formation faite à l'Institut *Lumen Vitae* après la licence en Droit Canonique à l'Université Grégorienne (1957-1958). L'expérience de *Lumen Vitae* l'aidera beaucoup dans sa pastorale épiscopale. Par conséquent, comme beaucoup de théologiens africains de son temps, il utilisera la méthode de l'inculturation dans l'évangélisation afin que le Christ soit annoncé et compris comme l'explicitera sa devise épiscopale: *Pourvu que le Christ soit annoncé (Fil 1,18)*.

4. Episcopat de Mgr. Michel Ntuyahaga: œuvres et pensée

Mgr. Michel Ntuyahaga a été caractérisé par de nombreuses qualités, humaines et spirituelles, parce qu'elles étaient fondées sur des bases solides reçues d'une famille équilibrée, sur des valeurs morales, sociales et intellectuelles acquises au long des années et sur la foi profonde dans le Dieu de Jésus-Christ Père de tous. Mais le Seigneur a voulu se servir de ces richesses pour sa gloire. C'est pourquoi ses talents se sont manifestés pendant la période de son épiscopat qui a duré 30 ans (1959-1989) et surtout pendant les dix années de la croix de la maladie (1992-2002). Pendant les trente ans de son épiscopat, sa sensibilité s'est manifestée à travers ses œuvres et sa pensée. Il a toujours été attentif aux joies et aux angoisses spirituelles et matérielles de son peuple. C'est pourquoi dès le début de son mandat épiscopal, il s'est voué à promouvoir le développement spirituel et matériel non seulement de son diocèse, mais de toute la nation et de l'Eglise Universelle, construisant églises, séminaire, école de catéchistes, promouvant les écoles pour les femmes, les écoles professionnelles, les routes, les appartements pour les jeunes filles qui travaillent loin de chez elles. On ne peut oublier sa sensibilité pour ceux qui souffrent: lépreux, malades, handicapés, il fit construire pour eux les structures adaptés nécessaires. Il avait aussi une grande sensibilité envers les personnes âgées. Cette sensibilité envers les plus petits sera, comme nous le verrons par la suite, le trait caractéristique de la Congrégation féminine qu'il fondera, les *Soeurs-Bene Umukama*. Il avait le don de la parole qu'il a manifesté dans ses discours et dans ses homélies. Il fut un prédicateur éloquent, ses discours étaient axés sur la fraternité, l'amour, la paix et la réconciliation, il suffit de rappeler son intervention au Concile Vatican II.⁷ Il fut consacré évêque de Bujumbura en 1959, pendant une période très critique de l'histoire du Burundi parce les Burundais se préparaient à l'indépendance advenue en 1962. C'est pourquoi ses discours portaient sur l'amour fraternel, la paix et la réconciliation, confirmant que l'Eglise doit être sacrement de la fraternité. Lui, il voyait l'origine de la violence dans le déséquilibre entre pensée chrétienne et pensée de la fraternité. Cet équilibre est atrophié par l'obsession de l'égoïsme. Cet

⁵ J. GORJU, *Commentaire des statuts. Vicariat Apostolique du Rwanda*, Kabwayi 1937, p. 15.

⁶ SOEURS BENE-UMUKAMA, op. cit., p. 15.

⁷ Intervention de Mgr. Michel Ntuyahaga dans la première session du Concile Vatican II lieu le 14/11/1962.

égoïsme porte à l'oubli de Dieu et du prochain et représente un obstacle sérieux à tout le développement harmonieux et pacifique. Par conséquent, pour surmonter ce danger, il propose de cultiver les sentiments de véritable progrès: la conscience du travail, la justice et la charité. Comme l'a souligné le Nonce Apostolique au Burundi dans son discours le jour des funérailles de Mgr. Michel Ntuyahaga le 12 juin 2002. Il dit que Mgr. Michel Ntuyahaga fut en mesure de concilier les qualités humaines et spirituelles, mettant tout au service de l'Eglise et du Pays. «... *Etant au Burundi depuis peu de temps, je n'ai pas eu le privilège de connaître cet apôtre de paix dans le plein exercice de son ministère, même si pendant mes brèves visites je me suis convaincu que ses comportements étaient ceux d'un homme d'Eglise et d'un homme de Dieu. Mais naturellement je connais ses œuvres! Comme Jésus l'a dit aux Juifs qui avaient du mal à le croire: «Si vous ne croyez pas à ma parole, croyez au moins à cause de ces œuvres, (les œuvres du Père) (Jn 14,11). La famille de Dieu dans le diocèse de Bujumbura est très vivace et animée, forte de l'Esprit grâce à son ministère ...»*».⁸

Son mérite ne réside pas seulement dans son rôle de pasteur qui a su organiser son diocèse ou qui a bien prêché, ou encore qui a prononcé des discours frappants au nom de l'Eglise et du peuple de Dieu. Tout ceci a certainement son importance. Mais son principal mérite réside dans le fait qu'il a su témoigner, par son exemple, ce qu'il prêchait aux autres. Ses œuvres et ses actions, sa sensibilité envers les malheureux et ceux qui souffrent étaient le moyen de concrétiser ses discours, ses prêches, ses homélies qui se basaient sur le nouveau commandement. En bref, il a su humaniser l'Evangile, parce qu'il a été un pasteur qui connaissait l'odeur (les joies et les angoisses) de ses brebis.

Nous pouvons dire que Mgr. Michel Ntuyahaga a laissé une contribution prophétique à sa Nation, le Burundi, à son église, sans oublier toute l'Eglise comme le souligne la lettre de condoléances écrite par les chrétiens du Burundi résidant en Italie quand il est mort en 2002.⁹ Pour lui il était clair que la racine de tous les maux que le monde a vécus, vit encore et continuera à vivre, a pour origine la crise d'une société où les valeurs sont de plus en plus fondées sur l'égoïsme et l'indifférence, ennemis de la paix et de la fraternité. Selon lui, la charité entre tous est la source et le fondement de la véritable paix et de la réconciliation dont a besoin le monde d'aujourd'hui et particulièrement l'Afrique qui souffre de divisions ethniques. Ainsi, cette richesse de la personnalité de Mgr. Michel Ntuyahaga en termes d'humanité et de foi, manifestée dans l'authenticité sacerdotale et épiscopale, sont à la base des motivations de la fondation de la Congrégation des Sœurs Bene-Umukama pour aimer le Christ et le servir dans les frères souffrants que le Pape François nomme *les périphéries existentielles*.

5. Mgr. Michel Ntuyahaga et le charisme des Soeurs Bene-Umukama

Le concept de charisme vient du langage profane grec et signifie *un don, un cadeau*. Saint Paul, partant de cette interprétation profane, introduit le même concept dans la théologie chrétienne. Mais comme le souligne Fernande Viens, il n'est pas facile d'élucider le sens exact du mot parce qu'il n'a pas toujours eu le même sens étant donné que celui-ci change selon l'usage.¹⁰ C'est pourquoi, Saint Paul aussi, dans le sens qu'il donne au concept de *charisme* met en évidence cinq éléments fondamentaux. Pour lui, le charisme est un *don de Dieu*, fait à des *personnes*, et ces dons sont *libres et gratuits, nombreux et variés*, et donnés pour *l'édification du Corps du Christ* qui est l'Eglise. Au temps de Saint Paul, le terme *charisme* n'était pas lié à la Vie religieuse parce que celle-ci a fleuri après sa mort. Ce fut Paul VI qui utilisa pour la première fois le terme *charisme* dans *Evangelii Testatio* en 1971, le reliant à la vie consacrée. Dans ce document, il utilise explicitement trois expressions en relation avec le concept charisme: *charisme de la vie religieuse*, *charisme des fondateurs* et *charisme des divers instituts*. Successivement, le Pape Jean-Paul II suivra la même ligne que son prédécesseur utilisant abondamment le concept dans son Exhortation Apostolique sur la *Vie Consacrée* de 1996. Ces deux Papes ont respecté le sens théologique laissé par Saint Paul. De là la définition: *Le charisme de la Vie Consacrée est un don de Dieu particulièrement lié à l'action de l'Esprit-Saint, fait à l'Eglise pour son édification. Ce charisme fait naître dans les personnes le désir de suivre le Christ dans la voie des Conseils évangéliques d'une vie consacrée qui s'incarne dans des formes diverses*. A partir de ce moment, le terme est entré dans l'usage courant parce que les fondateurs et leurs projets ont fait l'objet d'une réflexion théologique approfondie de la part de différents théologiens. Les Instituts de Vie consacrée également, se sont voués à redécouvrir le charisme de leurs fondateurs pour tirer une nouvelle vigueur de leur inspiration originelle. L'approfondissement de l'expression *charisme du*

⁸ SOEURS BENE-UMUKAMA, op. cit., p. 123

⁹ Lettre écrite à Rome, le 09/06/2002 du dernier hommage par le groupe des Burundais résidants en Italie dans la période de la mort de Mgr. Michel Ntuyahaga.

¹⁰ F. VIENS, *Charismes et vie consacrée*, Typis Pontificiae Universitatis Gregorianae, Rome, 1983, p. 3

fondeur, nait de l'exigence des théologiens de savoir s'il existe un fondement théologique à la base d'une telle quantité et d'une telle variété de communautés. Selon le Vatican, l'expression *fondeur* est en référence à ceux qui ont fondé les communautés de la vie consacrée. Ici aussi, les théologiens ont respecté les éléments de la théologie de Saint Paul: *le fondeur est celui qui a reçu le don de l'Esprit Saint pour donner naissance à une famille religieuse en vue de l'édification du Corps Mystique du Christ*. En résumé, les théologiens qui ont approfondi le *charisme du fondeur* concordent sur quatre dimensions qui doivent caractériser tout fondeur: dimension pneumatologique, évangélique et christologique, ecclésiale, de fécondité ou transmission.

Analysant le charisme des Sœurs Bene-Umukama, nous nous baserons sur ces quatre dimensions qui coïncident bien avec la naissance de l'Institut des Sœurs Bene-Umukama fondé en 1970 comme Pieuse Union et qui sera canoniquement reconnue en 1987. Ainsi l'Institut naît avec le style de Vatican II de la rénovation et l'adaptation de la Vie Religieuse. En effet, les Constitutions de l'Institut s'inspirent de deux documents principaux du Vatican II pour la rénovation et l'adaptation de la Vie Religieuse: *Lumen Gentium e Perfectae Caritatis*. Voilà deux motifs pour lesquels nous n'avons pas eu de difficultés à analyser le charisme des Sœurs Bene-Umukama: premier motif, Mgr. Michel Ntuyahaga avait participé à toutes les sessions du Concile Vatican II, il connaissait donc bien ce que l'Eglise exigeait de chaque famille religieuse. Le second motif est que Mgr. Michel Ntuyahaga était canoniste raison pour laquelle le statut du nouveau Institut devait remplir toutes les conditions exigées par l'Eglise. Dans cette analyse, nous ne voulons pas nous étendre sur les choses déjà dites ou connues à propos du charisme des Sœurs Bene-Umukama, notre recherche veut contribuer à faire connaître des réalités encore inédites. Grâce à la riche documentation sur les origines des Sœurs Bene-Umukama trouvée dans les archives de la Congrégation des Sœurs *les Servites de Marie de Jolimont* (Belgique) et à des interviews faites aux Sœurs qui ont collaboré avec le fondeur et fondé la première communauté des Sœurs Bene-Umukama. Les informations trouvées, ont éclairé de manière objective le vrai charisme en faisant jour sur les ombres qui couvraient jusqu'à présent la Spiritualité, les co-fondeurs et les auteurs des règles. Voyons à présent chaque dimension:

5.1. La dimension pneumatologique

Cette dimension est celle de l'intervention de l'Esprit Saint sur le fondeur. Cette inspiration de l'Esprit-Saint touche le fondeur directement (visions, voix) ou indirectement (à travers les circonstances, les situations historiques). Ainsi l'intervention de l'Esprit-Saint ne se manifeste pas toujours de la même façon. Mgr. Michel Ntuyahaga a eu l'inspiration indirecte, parce qu'elle advint lors de son apostolat épiscopal. Lui n'avait nulle intention de fonder un Institut de Sœurs après la fondation de la branche masculine en 1967, les *Frères Bene-Paulo* pour la prédication de la Bonne Nouvelle: *Malheur à moi si je n'annonce pas la Bonne Nouvelle*. L'histoire commence en 1960, pendant les premiers mois de son épiscopat, quand surgissent des problèmes au cœur de la Congrégation missionnaire des Sœurs Chanoinesses de Saint Augustin, actuellement Sœurs du Cœur Immaculée de Marie. La Congrégation était à Kiganda, elle avait accueilli de jeunes Burundaises qui voulaient devenir religieuses, mais on les accueille comme ordre tertiaire nommé *Sodalité de Sainte Marthe*. Elles n'avaient pas de statut distinct, elles devaient donc, chaque année prononcer les vœux et le curé allait en demander la permission à l'évêque. Cette année-là la paroisse appartenait au nouveau diocèse de Bujumbura à peine né sous la direction du premier évêque autochtone Mgr. Michel Ntuyahaga, comme d'habitude le curé lui demanda la permission de recevoir les vœux et demande également le statut de ce Tiers Ordre. Le statut n'existait pas. Cette année-là, tout fut laissé comme avant, mais il fut demandé au prêtre que l'année successive les Sœurs présentent le statut ou renoncent au Tiers Ordre. Par la suite les Sœurs décidèrent de dissoudre l'association Sainte Marthe. Certaines de ces jeunes filles, surtout les plus âgées entrèrent dans d'autres Congrégations au Rwanda ou en Tanzanie, tandis que les autres demandèrent à Mgr. Michel Ntuyahaga l'orientation vocationnelle. Tout ceci coïncide avec la requête que ce dernier fait aux Congrégations européennes en concomitance avec ses voyages pour Vatican II, de venir en mission dans son diocèse. Ces Congrégations par manque de vocations, demandaient de jeunes Burundaises qui avaient la vocation afin de les former et venir avec elles au Burundi pour ouvrir une mission. Mgr.. Michel Ntuyahaga accepta la proposition et envoya des vocations dans deux Congrégations: les unes en Italie, auprès des *Sœurs de Notre-Dame de la Providence*, aujourd'hui *Bénédictines de Gênes*, et les autres auprès de la Congrégation des *Sœurs Servites de Marie de Jolimont* (Belgique). Toutefois le projet de la Mission au Burundi ne se réalisa pas, par manque de vocations, les Sœurs Burundaises furent alors encouragées à rentrer dans leur pays pour fonder une Congrégation diocésaine. Les sœurs Burundaises, bien qu'appartenant à des Congrégations différentes et ne se connaissant pas

choisirent de rentrer au Burundi. Devant cette situation Mgr. Michel Ntuyahaga décida de faire fusionner les deux groupes pour former une éventuelle fondation. Mgr. Michel Ntuyahaga étant la référence pour les deux Congrégations et les Sœurs Burundaises, comprit que la volonté de Dieu s'était manifestée à travers l'acceptation de la fusion de la part des deux groupes. Il est juste de citer les personnes qui méritent d'être considérées Co-fondateurs parce qu'elles ont aidé le fondateur à réaliser la fondation: son Vicaire Général Mgr. Bahumwansi que Mgr. Michel avait chargé de suivre ces vocations à partir de la situation de Kiganda. D'autres personnages importants sont l'Abbé Clérens qui a contribué à l'élaboration canonique des statuts et Mère Ursula ex Mère Prieure des Sœurs Servites de Marie de Jolimont pour la préparation et la formation des Sœurs Burundaises fusionnées. Par conséquent, à partir de 1969 on peut dire que Mgr. Michel Ntuyahaga se sent investi par l'intervention de l'Esprit-Saint comme il le dit lui-même: *«Je devais choisir ou d'abandonner des religieuses déjà formées ou de fondre les deux Congrégations en une seule. J'invitai donc les deux infirmières venues d'Italie à rejoindre les trois de Joliment pour avoir le même esprit et essayer de les fondre en une Congrégation. La Mère Prieure de Jolimont m'aide beaucoup et un prêtre belge, l'Abbé Clérens, m'aide à prêcher les exercices spirituels à cette jeune Congrégation qui n'a pas encore de nom»*.¹¹

5.2. La dimension évangélique et christologique

Cette dimension met en évidence la personne de Jésus dans son intégralité c'est-à-dire dans sa parole, sa vie et sa diaconie. De nombreux théologiens nomment cette dimension *charisme du fondateur* parce que l'expérience spirituelle du fondateur est à l'origine de la *spiritualité* (évangile et mystère christologique) et de la *mission* (lecture des signes des temps). Par conséquent le charisme du fondateur naît pour répondre aux défis de l'Eglise et du monde. Ainsi, les religieux dans l'Eglise sont signe du Christ pour perpétuer sa présence dans sa Parole et dans ses œuvres de charité. La question que nous nous posons est la suivante: *Quelle est la dimension évangélique et christologique de l'Institut des Sœurs Bene-Umukama?* Comme nous l'avons déjà souligné, au cours des trente années d'épiscopat de Mgr. Michel Ntuyahaga, celui-ci a cherché à répondre de suite à deux préoccupations pressantes: l'urgence de l'évangélisation mise en évidence par sa devise *Pourvu que le Christ soit annoncé* (Ph 1,18) et pour y répondre il a fondé une Congrégation de frères, les *Frères de Saint Paul* ou *Bene-Paulo* pour la prédication de l'Evangile. La seconde urgence était de secourir les indigents, surtout les malades, les handicapés et les personnes âgées. Cette sensibilité pour ceux qui souffrent, on la remarque déjà quand, jeune prêtre il aide les lépreux, visite à pied ou à bicyclette les malades et les personnes âgées. Il transmettra donc à ses filles spirituelles, les Sœurs Bene-Umukama cette même sensibilité. En consultant les documents du projet de la fondation trouvés dans les archives des Sœurs Servites de Marie de Jolimont, les lettres qu'il échangeait avec l'Abbé Clérens et Mère Ursula, on voit que Mgr. Michel Ntuyahaga a été clair dès le début sur la spiritualité et la mission de la future Congrégation. En effet dans la lettre adressée à Mère Ursula et à l'Abbé Clérens le 20 mai 1969 intitulée: *Projet d'orientation de la Congrégation diocésaine des servantes de Jésus* Mgr. Michel Ntuyahaga écrit: *La caractéristique de leur spiritualité consistera à voir Dieu dans le prochain et surtout dans les membres souffrants du Corps Mystique du Christ*". Tandis qu'il écrit au sujet de la mission: *«L'orientation de cette Congrégation, qui représente son but et sa raison d'être, est celle de se vouer aux soins des malades et des handicapés de tout genre*. Dans une autre lettre qu'il a écrite le 28 juillet 1969, toujours adressée à Mère Ursula et à l'Abbé Clérens, pour les remercier de leur disponibilité, il met l'accent sur la spiritualité de la future Congrégation des Servantes du Seigneur¹² et il écrit: *L'exemple à suivre par les membres de la jeune Congrégation sera celui du Maître lui-même dans son évangile, surtout dans son sermon sur la montagne et dans la réalisation de ses paroles ... pauperes évangélisantur ... infirmi curatur....* Même dans le *Projet des Constitutions* qu'il a envoyé, il a souligné: *La caractéristique particulière de l'esprit de l'Institut est la vision de Dieu dans le prochain, surtout dans les membres souffrants du Corps Mystique*" et *notre mission est de soigner les malades, les handicapés de toutes sorte et les oeuvres sociales de charité*. Dans les Constitutions actuelles, la spiritualité ne s'exprime pas aussi explicitement que dans les lettres, mais elle est renfermée dans la réponse de Marie, *Je suis la Servante du Seigneur* d'où l'Institut a tiré son nom: *Les Sœurs Servantes du Seigneur* ou Bene-Umukama dans la langue locale. Le fondateur précise que les Sœurs Bene-Umukama imiteront la disponibilité de Marie contenue dans les trois vertus qui l'ont caractérisée: *ecce, fiat e magnificat*.¹³

¹¹ SOEURS BENE-UMUKAMA, op. cit., p. 78.

¹² Cette appellation était déjà donnée aux Sœurs Burundaises d'Italie, mais elle n'est pas encore officielle, c'est pourquoi Mgr. a donné la liberté de choisir une autre appellation, d'où l'appellation des «Servantes du Seigneur».

¹³ CONSTITUTIONS DES SOEURS BENE-UMUKAMA, Art. 5-8 p.

5.3. La dimension ecclésiale

Cette dimension est la reconnaissance réciproque entre le fondateur et la hiérarchie ecclésiale étant donné que le charisme est donné pour l'édification de l'Eglise. La Règle est un élément central de chaque Institut sous deux aspects: aspect spirituel ou règles subjectives (spiritualité et mission) et aspect juridique ou règles objectives qui sont les règles pratiques pour la gestion de l'Institut, les relations entre les membres et la façon de gouverner. L'auteur des règles est avant tout l'Esprit-Saint qui dans bien des cas inspirent le fondateur ou bien dans d'autres cas, la première communauté. On peut donc attribuer à l'auteur des règles le *charisme de la fondation*. Pour l'Institut des Sœurs Bene-Umukama, au début le fondateur a voulu que les Sœurs fassent l'expérience de vie ensemble afin de mieux se connaître et s'organiser selon l'orientation de la future fondation. La période d'expérience initiale, 1969-1970, se déroule à Jolimont avec une organisation interne composée de: responsable du groupe, économiste et secrétaire. Pendant cette même période on élabore le statut, selon les documents d'origine de l'Institut et les Constitutions actuelles, les règles de l'Institut des Sœurs Bene-Umukama sont le fruit de la collaboration entre le fondateur, les premières Sœurs Bene-Umukama rassemblées à Jolimont, Mgr. Lazare Bahumwansi son Vicaire Général, l'ex Mère Prieure des Sœurs Servites de Marie de Jolimont Ursula et l'Abbé Clérens. En Avril de 1970, les Sœurs rentrent au Burundi, à Kanyosha pour former une Communauté avec d'autres membres qui les attendaient. A cette même période, Mgr. Michel Ntuyahaga, en tant qu'évêque et fondateur, décide l'approbation des Constitutions provisoires de la Pieuse Union et l'inauguration du noviciat. En 1983, Mgr. Michel Ntuyahaga, après avoir évalué leur expérience de vie en communauté et mis à jour les Constitutions selon le nouveau Code canonique de 1983, approuve les Constitutions définitives *ad experimentum* de la nouvelle Congrégation. Le deux janvier 1987, Mgr. Michel Ntuyahaga obtient de la Congrégation pour l'évangélisation des peuples le *Nulla Osta* à l'élévation de la Pieuse Union des Bene-Umukama à Congrégation Religieuse de Droit Diocésain. Le trois février 1987, la Congrégation obtient l'Approbation des Constitutions des Sœurs Bene-Umukama de la part du Saint-Père Jean-Paul II. Le 15 août 1987 Mgr. Michel Ntuyahaga en tant qu'évêque local, émane le décret qui transforme la Direction Canonique de la Pieuse Union des Sœurs Bene-Umukama en Institut de Droit Diocésain.

5.4. La dimension de la fécondité ou de la transmission

Cette dimension prévoit que le charisme est donné au fondateur pour être transmis aux disciples. Mais les disciples sont disciples de Jésus sur les pas du fondateur, c'est pourquoi il faut être attentif à ce qui se transmet. Les éléments transmissibles, par exemple, sont la spiritualité et la mission, c'est-à-dire le charisme du fondateur, tandis que les éléments non transmissibles sont l'expérience même du fondateur, les qualités personnelles. L'auteur de la transmission est Dieu lui-même à travers le Saint-Esprit, le fondateur n'est que l'instrument et le serviteur de cette grâce. Cette dimension a la caractéristique de fécondité ou de transmission parce que le charisme du fondateur est source de communion entre le fondateur et ses disciples à travers la relation de filiation, et également entre les disciples à travers la relation de fraternité. Cette dimension est aussi celle de la continuité du charisme, puisque, même après la mort du fondateur, il continue à porter des fruits, parce que l'Esprit-Saint continue à assister l'Institut à travers ses disciples. C'est pourquoi certains théologiens nomment cette dimension charisme de l'Institut, du fait que l'Institut continue à être fécond même après la mort du fondateur. En ce qui concerne l'Institut des Sœurs Bene-Umukama il a toujours été fécond comme le prévoyait son fondateur dans sa lettre du projet de la fondation écrite à Mère Ursula le 20 mai 1969. Il l'a souligné aussi dans les Constitutions actuelles. Dès que l'Institut eut obtenu la reconnaissance de l'Eglise comme Congrégation en 1987, Mgr. Michel Ntuyahaga, encore en vie, en laissa la gestion aux mains de ses membres. La même année fut constitué le 1^{er} Chapitre Général, le 2^{ème} en 1991; le 3^{ème} en 1994; le 4^{ème} en 1998; le 5^{ème} en 2002; le 6^{ème} en 2006; le 7^{ème} en 2011. Lors des cinq premiers chapitres le fondateur, encore vivant, était toujours considéré comme référence et fut consulté par toutes les Supérieures Générales jusqu'à sa mort en 2002. Pendant toutes ces années l'Institut a vu augmenter les vocations et les communautés: on compte aujourd'hui 29 communautés, 155 Sœurs et 38 novices, 9 sœurs ont quitté ce monde. Parmi les lieux de mission on compte: hôpitaux, dispensaires, centres pour handicapés, maison de repos, maisons du clergé, paroisses, écoles.

6. Les sœurs Bene-Umukama et les défis d'aujourd'hui

Dans cette partie nous voulons donner une réponse à la question de départ: *Le charisme des Sœurs Bene-Umukama après 44 ans de fondation est-il encore en mesure de faire face aux défis d'aujourd'hui?* Dès le début nous avons souligné que notre recherche n'a pas la prétention de trouver de nouvelles solutions à proposer aux Sœurs Bene-Umukama pour être à la

hauteur des défis d'aujourd'hui, mais désire les redécouvrir dans le patrimoine laissé par le fondateur. Par conséquent notre réponse est que le charisme des Sœurs Bene-Umukama est en mesure d'affronter les défis d'aujourd'hui, à condition toutefois qu'elles approfondissent la richesse de leur charisme et les aspirations de leur fondateur. Quels sont donc les défis actuels à affronter? Le monde connaît une civilisation immense et complexe composée de faits économiques, sociaux, culturels qui conditionnent la mentalité humaine. Ceci provoque un grand changement social caractérisé par un extrême individualisme et un personnalisme démesuré. Ceci conduit donc la société à un manque d'unité profond dans tous les domaines y compris celui de la vie religieuse. Dans une telle situation, si la vie religieuse cesse d'être intelligible en face de semblables défis, celle-ci perd sa raison d'être, car elle veut être l'épiphanie du Mystère de l'éternelle Alliance, mystère essentiellement actuel, adapté à l'époque actuelle, dans laquelle le Burundi vit son histoire de reconstruction après une guerre ethnique désastreuse. Les Sœurs Bene-Umukama, comme tous les autres religieux, ont à affronter la crise des valeurs humaines et religieuses que l'homme actuel ignore parce qu'étouffé par l'individualisme et l'indifférence comme le souligne le Pape François *la globalisation de l'indifférence*. Les conséquences de cette crise sont néfastes parce qu'ennemies de la paix et de la réconciliation et sources de violence, guerres, conflits ethniques. On peut répondre à ces défis de deux façons: si les religieux/ses, dans notre cas les Sœurs Bene-Umukama se laissent conditionner par ce changement, leur charisme risque de disparaître, de se dénaturer et devenir inefficace. Si au contraire, elles restent lucides et conscientes, alors elles sauront se renouveler, elles seront cohérentes et trouveront dans le monde et dans l'Eglise leur fonction épiphane. Pour sortir de cette crise, il faut suivre la voie proposée par l'Eglise qui invite les hommes et les femmes de bonne volonté, croyants ou non, à promouvoir l'ecclésiologie de communion où tous vivent le nouveau commandement *aimez-vous les uns les autres*. Ceci est une invitation à la fraternité universelle où la communion est la clef herméneutique pour vivre harmonieusement en suivant l'exemple de la Sainte Trinité. C'est la même invitation, comme nous avons ¹⁴déjà pu le constater, que Mgr. Michel Ntuyahaga avait adressée à sa Nation et à l'Eglise locale au cours des trente années de son épiscopat (1959-1989). Et c'est la même invitation qu'il a adressée à l'Eglise Universelle et au monde entier dans son intervention au Concile Vatican II, le 14 novembre 1962 au nom des évêques africains, sans oublier le testament qu'il a laissé à ses fils/filles spirituels en 1992 *Aimez-vous les uns les autres*. Nous pouvons bien dire que ce que l'Eglise nous demande de faire pour surmonter la crise actuelle, Michel Ntuyahaga l'avait déjà recommandé puisqu'il pensait à un monde meilleur où règnent l'unité et l'amour. A ses filles spirituelles, les Sœurs Bene-Umukama, il recommandait non seulement l'amour fraternel mais il exigeait d'elles qu'elles aiment comme Marie, leur modèle de vie qui a dit oui au Seigneur une fois pour toutes pour le salut des hommes. En conséquence, pour en revenir aux défis actuels qui sont en face de tous, y compris les Sœurs Bene-Umukama, la direction est d'être des artisans de communion et les Sœurs Bene-Umukama ne doivent rien faire d'autre que suivre les intentions de leur fondateur et surtout le testament sur l'amour réciproque que les Sœurs Bene-Umukama doivent faire vivre entre elles, en suivant le modèle de Marie. Les Sœurs Bene-Umukama pourront devenir protagonistes et artisanes de communion, de paix et de réconciliation si, et uniquement si, elles sont fidèles aux intentions de leur fondateur qui sont les indications même de l'Eglise les invitant à faire de l'Eglise la famille *inzu et umuryango*, où tous les frères vivent dans l'unité et la communion de façon que *tous soient un*. Cette prophétie de Mgr. Michel Ntuyahaga est confirmée par le Pape François lors de la rencontre advenue avec les séminaristes et les novices le 6 juillet 2013. Il y a parlé de la bonté de la consécration, les invitant à l'authenticité et à la cohérence. Le Pape les invite à la qualité et à la passion pour leur vocation car l'acte totalisant de l'amour est un processus continu qui augmente à mesure que l'amour croît. A ce sujet, il reprend les paroles du Pape Benoît XVI disant: *l'amour n'est jamais conclu et complet, il se transforme au cours de la vie, devient grand et voilà pourquoi il reste fidèle à lui-même*¹⁵

7. Héritage en prospective de Mgr. Michel Ntuyahaga

Nous venons de faire le voyage herméneutique pour comprendre et identifier le fondateur et le charisme de l'Institut des Sœurs Bene-Umukama. Nous avons compris que l'intention de Mgr. Michel Ntuyahaga sur le charisme des Sœurs Bene-Umukama est que ce soit un charisme fondé sur le nouveau commandement du Seigneur, *l'amour réciproque*. L'amour auquel Marie est

¹⁴ Papa francesco parla della bellezza della consacrazione, nell'incontro con i seminaristi, i Novizi e le Novizie a Roma, il 6 luglio 2013, in Osservatore Romano, lunedì-martedì 8-9 luglio 2013, CLIII (155), p. 6. Cf. CIVCSVA, Anno della vita consacrato. Rallegratevi. Ai consecrati e alle consacrate dal magistero di Papa Francesco, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Città del Vaticano 2014, p. 37.

CIVCSVA, Anno della vita consacrato. Rallegratevi. Ai consecrati e alle consacrate dal magistero di Papa Francesco, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Città del Vaticano 2014, p. 38; Cf. BENEDETTO XVI, Lettera enciclica Deus caritas est (25 dicembre 2005), n. 11, in AAS 98 (2006), 217-252.

resté fidèle. Mais sa fidélité n'était pas statique, elle était créative pour affronter les défis de la vie quotidienne. Cette créativité vient de l'Esprit-Saint, c'est-à-dire de l'Amour du Père et du Fils. Marie est donc le Modèle de l'écoute attentive à l'Esprit-Saint pour rester en communion avec Dieu et avec nos frères. Pour Mgr. Michel Ntuyahaga il était clair que la communion n'est pas seulement un point d'arrivée, mais bien un point de départ et d'arrivée. Il considérait importante la vie de communion; il suffit de lire les Constitutions des Sœurs Bene-Umukama. Cet argument, bien que sous diverses formes, est exprimé avec grande force et conviction. Dans les Constitutions des Sœurs Bene-Umukama, le fondateur invite toutes les Sœurs à vivre la communion. Les expressions qu'il utilise sont les suivantes: favoriser la collaboration et la co-responsabilité dans la communauté et dans l'apostolat, faire régner où qu'elles se trouvent un climat familial, et surtout se souvenir que la source de l'unité et de la communion est la prière. Partant de ceci, nous pouvons réaffirmer que le charisme des Sœurs Bene-Umukama possède tout ce qu'il faut pour faire face avec sérénité aux défis actuels. Il suffit donc que les Sœurs Bene-Umukama vivent avec cohérence leur charisme, en mettant en pratique le testament laissé par leur fondateur: *Aimez-vous les uns les autres*.¹⁶ Par conséquent, pour la perpétuité du charisme de l'Institut des Sœurs Bene-Umukama dans fidélité créatrice, il faut faire de la spiritualité de communion une règle et une pratique propres, en ce qu'elle est une invitation à toute personne de bonne volonté, invitation qui vient avant tout de Jésus et ensuite de l'Eglise. Pour cela, avant de conclure, nous voulons proposer à l'Institut des Sœurs Bene-Umukama un approfondissement de l'analyse du charisme dans la prospective de la spiritualité de communion dans les trois domaines qui représentent les piliers de l'Institut: la formation, la vie communautaire et la mission.

Pour la formation: parce que la bonne formation de base permanente est une garantie pour vivre le charisme du fondateur avec une fidélité créative par rapport aux intentions du fondateur. Important est le rappel du Concile Vatican II à de nombreuses familles religieuses qui vise à approfondir leurs charismes pour les libérer des vieilles incrustations qui paralysent la vie religieuse dans la voie de l'évangile et de la poussée prophétique. C'est pourquoi il invite les familles religieuses à être à l'écoute des signes des temps pour être fidèles à l'humanité et à notre temps. Pour vivre harmonieusement le charisme du fondateur au milieu des défis actuels, il est sans aucun doute fondamental de le connaître à fond parce qu'il est le point de repère permanent pour la vie religieuse de l'Institut des Sœurs Bene-Umukama (*PC 2b; E 11, MR11*). Dans les programmes de la formation, on pourrait insister sur la façon dont l'Eglise nous exhorte à entrer dans le nouveau dynamisme de la communion, la seule façon pour arriver à une renaissance spirituelle, pastorale, de célébration, culturelle et socio-politique. La communion est le fruit et la manifestation de l'amour qui jaillit du cœur du Père éternel et se reverse en nous à travers l'Esprit-Saint que nous donne Jésus (*cf. Rm 5,5*), pour nous faire devenir un seul cœur et une seule âme (*Ac 4,32*) (*NMI 42*). Pour cette raison, l'Eglise et la Vie Consacrée sont appelées à être *maison et école de communion* (*NMI 43*). La communion dans l'Eglise est nécessaire et indispensable, mais afin qu'elle soit possible et réalisable il faut insister dès la formation de base sur une théologie de la communion qui la justifie, sur un ministère qui l'affirme et sur une spiritualité qui la soutienne. Les formateurs et les formés doivent comprendre que la communion est réciproque, car nous avons tous un besoin réciproque de communion qui est quelque chose de vital, qui fait de nous un seul corps, qui circule dans la même lymphe. La famille, l'Eglise, la Communauté religieuse sont des réalités qui ne peuvent être comprises sans la communion. Pour cela, formateurs et formatrices doivent être hommes et femmes de communion pour donner l'exemple à ceux/celles qui sont formés. A ce sujet le Pape François dit: *Voici quelle est la première responsabilité des adultes, des formateurs: donner un exemple de cohérence aux plus jeunes. Nous voulons des jeunes cohérents? Nous devons l'être en premier ! Dans le cas contraire, le Seigneur nous dira ce qu'il disait des pharisiens au peuple de Dieu: Faites ce qu'ils disent mais pas ce qu'ils font! Donc cohérence et authenticité ...!*¹⁷

Pour la vie communautaire: Elle représente une communion spéciale entre le religieux et Dieu et, en Lui, entre les membres d'un même Institut. Sa base est la communion établie dans le Christ sur l'unique charisme du fondateur. La référence au fondateur et au charisme vécu et communiqué par lui, ensuite conservé, approfondi et développé au cours de la vie de l'Institut, apparaît comme un des composants fondamentaux pour l'unité de la communauté. Vivre en communauté en effet, est vivre tous ensemble la volonté de Dieu conformément au don charismatique que le fondateur ou la fondatrice ont reçu de Dieu et qu'ils ont transmis à leurs disciples. Le signe par excellence laissé par le Seigneur est celui de la fraternité vécue. Le Pape

Papa Francesco parla della bellezza della consacrazione, nell'incontro con i seminaristi, i Novizi e le Novizie a Roma, il 6 luglio 2013, in Osservatore Romano, lunedì-martedì 8-9 luglio 2013, CLIII (155), p. 6. Cf. CIVCSVA, Anno della vita consacrato. Rallegratevi. Ai consecrati e alle consacrate dal magistero di Papa Francesco, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Città del Vaticano 2014, p. 62.

François, dans ses recommandations aux Clarisses à la Basilique Sainte Claire le quatre octobre 2013, a souligné l'importance de la communion qui doit régner entre elles: *Témoins de communion au-delà de nos visions et de nos limitations, nous sommes donc appelés à porter le sourire de Dieu, et la fraternité est le premier évangile crédible que nous puissions raconter. Il nous est demandé d'humaniser nos communautés: prendre soin de l'amitié entre vous, de la vie de famille, de l'amour entre vous. Et que le monastère ne soit pas un purgatoire, qu'il soit une famille. Les problèmes existent, existeront, mais comme on fait dans une famille, on cherche la solution avec amour; ne pas détruire ceci pour résoudre cela; ne pas avoir de compétitions. Prendre soin de la vie communautaire, parce que quand dans la vie de la Communauté règne la vie de famille, c'est l'Esprit-Saint qui est présent dans la Communauté*.¹⁸ La qualité de la vie fraternelle influe fortement sur la persévérance de chacun des membres. De même qu'une qualité médiocre de la vie fraternelle a souvent été considérée le motif de nombreux abandons, de même la fraternité réellement vécue représente un signe de l'éternelle fidélité à Dieu et par conséquent un soutien pour la foi. Mais le Pape François ajoute que cette fidélité doit se fonder sur l'évangile : *La fidélité dans la voie du disciple passe par l'épreuve de l'expérience de la fraternité, un lieu théologique, dans lequel nous sommes appelés à nous soutenir dans le oui joyeux à l'évangile, puisque c'est la parole de Dieu qui suscite la foi, la nourrit, la régénère. C'est la parole de Dieu qui touche les cœurs*¹⁹, *qui les convertit à Dieu et à sa logique qui est diverse de la nôtre. C'est la parole de Dieu qui renouvelle sans cesse nos communautés*». ¹⁸ Les Communautés religieuses, qui par leur vie annoncent la joie et la valeur humaine et surnaturelle de la fraternité chrétienne, affirment, par l'éloquence des faits, la force transformatrice de l'Évangile. Avant tout, revêtez-vous d'amour : c'est le lien parfait (Col 3,14). L'amour tel que l'a enseigné et vécu Jésus-Christ et tel qu'il nous est communiqué par son Esprit-Saint. Cet amour unit et incite à communiquer aux autres l'expérience de la communion avec Dieu et avec nos frères. L'amour de Dieu veut envahir le monde: la Communauté fraternelle devient missionnaire de cet amour et signe prophétique de sa force qui unifie. C'est ce que le Pape François souligne quand il dit: ... *Au moment où la fragmentation donne raison à un individualisme stérile de masse et que la faiblesse des relations désintègre et détruit la prise en charge de l'humain, nous sommes tous invités à humaniser les relations de fraternité pour favoriser la communion de vie entre tous ceux qui appartiennent au Christ. Une communion qui naît de la foi et qui rend l'Eglise, dans sa vérité profonde, communion avec Dieu, communion d'amour avec le Christ et avec le Père dans le Saint-Esprit se prolonge en une communion fraternelle...*²⁰

Enfin la mission: la tâche importante que le Concile Vatican II a confié aux personnes consacrées est celle d'être de véritables experts en communion et de pratiquer cette spiritualité comme *témoins et artisans du projet de communion*, qui représente, selon Dieu, le point culminant de l'histoire humaine. Le sens de la communion ecclésiastique, en se développant en une spiritualité de communion, privilégie une façon de penser, de parler et d'agir qui fait grandir l'Eglise en profondeur et en extension. La vie de communion, en effet, devient un signe pour le monde et une force d'attraction qui porte à croire en Jésus-Christ. De cette façon, la communion s'ouvre à la mission et se fait mission. La communion engendre la communion et se présente principalement comme communion missionnaire. La communion et la mission sont donc profondément reliées, elles se pénètrent et s'impliquent réciproquement, si bien que la communion représente la racine et en même temps le fruit de la mission. La communion est missionnaire et la mission est pour la communion. Sans être la totalité de la mission de la Communauté religieuse, la vie fraternelle en est un élément essentiel et aussi important que l'action apostolique. Il est donc impossible d'invoquer la nécessité du service apostolique pour admettre ou justifier l'absence de vie communautaire. L'activité des religieux doit être une activité de personnes qui vivent ensemble et remplissent leur action d'esprit communautaire et qui tendent à répandre l'esprit fraternel par la parole, l'action et l'exemple.

Nous voulons terminer avec les paroles laissées par Mgr. Michel Ntuyahaga à ses filles spirituelles engendrées par lui dans l'Esprit-Saint: «Mes chères filles Bene-Umukama, ces mots sont à apprendre par cœur: *celle qui se donne au Seigneur dans la Congrégation des Sœurs Bene-Umukama, se donne complètement à l'amour des frères en se détachant du monde et en se rendant disponible à la volonté du Seigneur dans l'obéissance joyeuse. Autrement ce serait un*

FRANCESCO, *Una grande famiglia fra cielo e terra, all'udienza generale. Il Papa parla della comunione dei santi* [Udienza generale, Roma, 30 ottobre 2013], in Osservatore Romano, giovedì 31 ottobre 2013, CLIII 5250), p. 8; Cf. IBIDEM, p. 48.

FRANCESCO, *Per una clausura di grande umanità, raccomandazioni alle clarisse nella basilica di santa Chiara* [Parole alle Monache di clausura, Assisi (Perugia), 4 ottobre 2013], in Osservatore Romano, domenica 6 ottobre, CLIII (229), p. 6; Cf. CIVCSVA, op; cit. pp. 46-47.

FRANCESCO, *Una grande famiglia fra cielo e terra, all'udienza generale. Il Papa parla della comunione dei santi* [Udienza generale, Roma, 30 ottobre 2013], in Osservatore Romano, giovedì 31 ottobre 2013, CLIII 5250), p. 8; Cf. IBIDEM, p. 48.

*mensonge envers le Seigneur et envers elle-même».*²¹ Les Sœurs Bene-Umukama par conséquent doivent se souvenir que pour être des Bene-Umukama authentiques, selon l'inspiration de leur fondateur, elles doivent vivre entre elles et avec les autres cette communion pour être des témoins du Dieu Amour, Père de tous et en particulier des vrais témoins de la grande valeur en crise au Burundi, celle de l'unité vitale *Ubumwe*-communion, *ubumwe*-solidarité; *ubumwe*-unité. La préoccupation du fondateur au sujet des problèmes ethniques qui menaçaient tous les Burundais y compris les Sœurs Bene-Umukama demeure prophétique. De nos jours aussi ses paroles sont actuelles: *Soyez des religieuses témoins de l'évangile. Croyez en Jésus-Christ; ayez foi en Lui; vivez en harmonie avec vos consœurs. Ne prenez partie pour aucune appartenance ethnique. Évitez tous ceux qui veulent vous égarer dans cette voie. Votre seule et unique ethnie est celle des Bene-Umukama, les Servantes du Seigneur. Si parmi vous une Sœur sent qu'elle doit promouvoir une autre ethnie que celle-là, elle se sera détachée toute seule de la Congrégation».*

Concluons sur cette réflexion sur le Saint-Esprit du métropolitain Ignatios de Lattaquié:

*Sans l'Esprit Saint, Dieu est loin,
le Christ reste dans le passé,
l'Évangile est une lettre morte,
l'Église une simple organisation,
l'autorité une domination,
la mission une propagande,
le culte une évocation,
et l'agir chrétien une morale d'esclave.*

*Mais en lui:
le cosmos est soulevé et gémit
dans l'enfantement du Royaume,
le Christ ressuscité est là,
l'Évangile est puissance de vie,
l'Église signifie la communion trinitaire,
l'autorité est un service libérateur,
la mission est une Pentecôte,
la liturgie est mémorial et anticipation,
l'agir humain est déifié.*

*Texte du métropolitain Ignatios de Lattaquié au
Conseil œcuménique des Églises, Uppsala, 1968*

²¹ J. D. KAMIKAZI, *Intervista telefonica à Suore Nibogora Edith, Italia 2013.*

Julián Andrés Salazar
Las comunidades eclesiales de base (CEB'S)
Nuevos desarrollos de las comunidades eclesiales de base
en América Latina

INTRODUCCIÓN

La constitución "Lumen Gentium" del Concilio Vaticano II había ya renovado la eclesiología y uno de sus principales aportes fue la importancia que dio al concepto de "pueblo de Dios". En América Latina la aplicación del Concilio Vaticano II fortaleció toda una experiencia de pequeñas comunidades llamadas "Comunidades Eclesiales de Base".¹

Es allí, que surgieron, en la década del sesenta las Comunidades Eclesiales de Base (CEB's), como una respuesta a las necesidades de los cristianos en su búsqueda de sentirse acogidos, valorados, más cerca de sus vecinos, formar parte de un proyecto común y construir juntos algo nuevo. A diferencia de ciertas comunidades de base que han surgido en Europa, las de América Latina surgieron con el acuerdo de las autoridades, en relación con la jerarquía de la Iglesia; con frecuencia motivadas y animadas por sacerdotes, religiosas o seminaristas.²

Sobre el término "base" hay diferentes acepciones: para algunos son los pobres de la sociedad, los excluidos, que han encontrado en la CEB su lugar dentro la Iglesia. En este sentido la base la compone el pueblo, que América Latina es la gran mayoría de los pobres de este continente. La Iglesia, como pueblo de Dios, se identifica simplemente con el pueblo. Allí donde el pueblo está formado por los pobres, "los pobres son la base".³

Es difícil de zanjar entre las diferentes acepciones dadas a la palabra "base", pero hay un elemento que esclarece: la proximidad con el pueblo, que en América Latina quiere decir: los pobres. La Iglesia debe mostrarse cercana a los pobres y excluidos.⁴

LAS COMUNIDADES ECLESIALES DE BASE (CEB's)

Ya en el inicio de la década de los 70', las CNEBB (conferencia nacional de los obispos del Brasil) había percibido que algo nuevo estaba naciendo en la iglesia del país y determinaba una investigación. Utilizando un término aún más incisivo la CNEBB osadamente llama a las CEB's "un nuevo modo de ser iglesia" es un "factor de renovación interna y un nuevo modo de iglesia de estar presente en el mundo".⁵

Características fundamentales de las CEB's

Una primera característica le viene de su origen y localización. En cuanto al origen, la CEB parte de una experiencia religiosa o política-social. Así una lucha popular, vertiente social termina en oración, celebración, en el descubrimiento de una fe católica común. La piadosa reunión en una capillita, la novena de navidad y la reflexión de la palabra de Dios, vertiente religiosa, evoluciona para una comunidad empeñada con las luchas del pueblo. Por tanto, se supone evangelio, realidad social, fe y lucha del pueblo.

El propio término "comunidad" ya indica que se trata de una unidad dinámica de personas mediante una interacción de tipo más o menos espontánea, integrada por los lazos afectivos, emocionales, históricos y culturales. Son agrupamientos restrictivos donde rigen relaciones primarias, afectivas, nominales e interpersonales. Aquí se usa el sentido sociológico de "clases popular", por ejemplo aquellas personas que están en el nivel básico de la sociedad,

¹ APOLINARIO, Abraham, *Las comunidades eclesiales de base*. En Misiones Extranjeras 2002, 187-191, p.117

² Ibídem. p.118

³ Ibídem. p.121

⁴ Ibídem. p.122

⁵ LIBÂNIO, João Batista, *Las comunidades eclesiales de base (CEB), una nueva forma de vivir y sentir la iglesia*. En Studia Missionalia, 45, 1996, p.308

económicamente pobres, políticamente sin poder, culturalmente simples, ideológicamente mas o menos concientizadas.⁶

Por tanto los miembros de las CEB's son predominantemente laicos y pobres. Caracterizan también las CEB's el tipo, la frecuencia y la naturaleza de los grupos. La perspectiva mayo se organiza desde la fe, que motiva las practicas liberadoras y considera las realizaciones anticipadoras, aunque limitadas, del Reino de Dios.⁷

Su originalidad consiste fundamentalmente en la articulaciones entre palabra de Dios y vida, entre fe y realidad. Vale la pena insistir en el carácter laico de las CEB's. animadores laicos de la comunidad presiden tales celebraciones, desarrollan diversos servicios y ministerios. Tanto los animadores como los miembros del concejo provienen de la base. Evidentemente los agentes de pastoral entre ellos presbíteros, religiosos, y laicos letrados, dinamizan las CEB's bien viviendo en ellas, bien simplemente visitándolas.⁸

Teología de Origen

Todo fenómeno nuevo en la iglesia reproduce capaz teológicas profundas. Las CEB's, prefieren el suelo de la teología tradicional y la del vaticano II y rechazan la teología tridentina que se volvió fuerte en ese intervalo.⁹



amigosdoctp.blogspot.co

Ese fue el suelo donde principalmente nacieron las CEB's, cuando llegaron los primeros vientos del Concilio Vaticano II. A su vez, las regiones del país que habían trasplantado, a través de las migraciones de los dos últimos siglos, el catolicismo tridentino alemán o italiano, no vieron surgir, en un primer momento, la novedad de las CEB's, sino que vivieron la estructura de capillas y parroquias. Y solo después de un trabajo pastoral específico consiguieron desarrollar las CEB's en su estructura. Se alimenta de una eclesiología en la que el laico desempeña un papel fundamental. Por eso desarrollan las formas litúrgicas que no requieren directamente la presencia de un ministro ordenado.¹⁰

No por eso la figura del ministro ordenado dejó de ser respetada y acatada por el catolicismo popular, ocasión de sus visitas, sobre todo "desobriga" (visita periódica hecha a regiones desprovistas de clero). Ese catolicismo dejó detrás de sí construcciones de santuarios ermitas, capillas a la orilla del camino, oratorios domésticos. El Concilio Vaticano II trajo la enorme contribución de la teología del pueblo de Dios, la preocupación por la presencia de la iglesia en el mundo, la valorización de la categoría teológica del reino de Dios, la percepción de la relevancia de la palabra de Dios en la vida de la iglesia y de la iglesia particular, la renovación litúrgica, la apertura de espacios para nuevas experiencias de vida eclesial, el acento sobre la dimensión comunitaria y participativa en el interior de la iglesia. El término pueblo resuena en el lenguaje de las CEB's con connotaciones propias.¹¹ Acentúa la exigencia de participación consiente y de organización comunitaria alrededor de un proyecto.

Con la constitución pastoral *Gaudium et Spes* las iglesias particulares se sintieron estimuladas a una mayor inserción en el mundo. Las CEB's emergieron en la realidad conflictiva de pobreza en la que la mayoría de sus miembros Vivian.

Teología generada en y por las CEB's

Para las CEB's fue decidido el salto cualitativo-teológico que trajo la conferencia general de los obispos de América Latina en Medellín (1968).¹² Rompió las fronteras de una iglesia que se

⁶ Ibídem. p.309

⁷ Ibídem. p.310

⁸ Ibídem. p.311

⁹ Ibídem. p.312

¹⁰ Ibídem. p.313

¹¹ Ibídem. p.314

¹² Ibídem. p.315

volvió sobre su propia renovación y se preocupaba con una presencia en el mundo moderno de “modernidad liberal del primer mundo”.

La inversión eclesiológica se caracteriza por el hecho de que se establecen relaciones directas entre el presbítero y los laicos, el obispo y los laicos, en vez que la relación con el laico sea solamente mediada por el sacerdote. A medida que los laicos se vuelven elementos activos del pueblo de Dios, promueven nuevas formas de culto, reviven el catolicismo anterior a la romanización tridentina, son dueños de la fiesta.¹³

En este modelo operan dos desplazamientos fundamentales en relación a la anterior, en vez de considerar a la iglesia a partir del movimiento de Dios que revela a Cristo, este a los apóstoles, y estos hasta sus sucesores hasta nuestros días la estructura básica y organizativa y de derecho divino de la iglesia, se acentúa la presencia de Cristo resucitado y de su espíritu en la humanidad y de modo más diversificado en la iglesia.

No se concibe la unidad del ministerio como un dato jurídico que determinan los diferentes ministerios de modo fijo y permanente, sino que existen los diversos que son las continuas traducciones históricas de esa unidad fundamental resultante de la presencia de Cristo espíritu en su iglesia.¹⁴

El *martirio* se vuelve una realidad frecuente en la iglesia de las bases, en las personas simples y pobres del pueblo, en los agentes religiosos o laicos, que se empeñan en el proceso de liberación. Se refleja la doble cara de la gracia y del pecado. De la gracia, porque manifiesta la presencia de personas que prefieren sacrificar la propia vida a ser infieles a sus propias convicciones. De pecado, porque muestra que hay personas o instancias que rechazan el anuncio y la denuncia evangélicos, persiguen torturan y matan. Aprisionan la verdad y la justicia.¹⁵

En pocas palabras, las CEB's ostentan, *real y verdadera eclesialidad*, al vivir la comunión, el evangelio, el don de la vida en el martirio.

En cuanto a la praxis, un trazo original de las CEB's, en distinción de las comunidades populares tradicionales, es su *nueva postura delante de la política*, con la articulación profunda y no reduccionista de fe y vida, de Palabra de Dios y compromiso social. La posición conservadora no da cuenta de esa unidad, por eso acusa injustamente a las CEB's de reduccionismo, horizontalismo, pérdida de especificidad de la fe y de la eclesialidad. Las CEB's, en sus seguidores, procuran superar los *dos extremos* perjudiciales para la vida de la CEB: una *resistencia conservadora a lo político* o una *tendencia a la politización general*.¹⁶

Muchas de las CEB's desde el nacimiento viven una profunda vinculación con los movimientos populares. Nacieron de ellos o dieron origen a muchos de ellos. Los segmentos político-sociales, con los cuales las CEB's se articulan, se sitúan en tres niveles diferentes con sus riesgos y dificultades propias. El primer nivel se refiere a la *lucha contra la pobreza*, ligada sobre todo a la esfera de la reproducción de la vida. El segundo avanza hacia el campo de la lucha sindicales. Y un tercero se implica con la lucha política partidaria, enfrentándose directamente con el poder.¹⁷

La palabra de Dios

El primer elemento constitutivo de la eclesialidad de estas comunidades es el rol jugado por la Palabra de Dios leída y reflexionada en grupo y su aplicación a la vida de cada día. El pueblo descubre la Biblia como Palabra de Dios, comunicación, mensaje, anuncio. La Biblia, que había estado reservada a un grupito de expertos, de iniciados, se convierte en el libro de todos y todas.¹⁸

Los esfuerzos de algunos teólogos y exegetas han producido la “Biblia Latinoamericana”, una edición pastoral al alcance de la gente sencilla. Con un lenguaje adaptado y con ricas y profundas introducciones y notas que han acompañado desde hace mucho tiempo nuestro caminar. Siendo los adultos quienes constituyen, de forma privilegiada, el objeto de este anuncio,

¹³ Ibídem. p.316

¹⁴ Ibídem. p.317

¹⁵ Ibídem. p.319

¹⁶ Ibídem. p.322

¹⁷ Ibídem. p.323

¹⁸ APOLINARIO, Abraham, *Las comunidades eclesiales de base*. En Misiones Extranjeras 2002, 187-191, p.119

la catequesis de adultos forma parte de las características de las Comunidades Eclesiales de Base en América Latina.¹⁹

La celebración

Las CEB's con sus prácticas participativas en la gestión de la comunidad, en la participación de la liturgia, en la creación de ministerios, están exigiendo una *nueva figura de sacerdote*. Después de su investigación sobre la figura del presbítero en las CEB's del Brasil, T. James Sheppard concluye que de hecho está por surgir una nueva figura de presbítero, con una visión plenamente comunitaria, que se coloca al servicio de las comunidades, que trabaja con el pueblo, que se compromete con los pobres de la comunidad, que apoya las luchas populares, en una perspectiva no estrictamente sacramental, sino sobre todo evangelizadora.²⁰

Opción por los pobres

La teología de las CEB's vino a colocar en evidencia el fundamento bíblico del "privilegio de los pobres" que "no se encuentra en una concepción idealizada de los pobres, sino en la disposición de Dios, en la manera como Dios concibe el ejercicio de su realeza a favor de los débiles e infelices". "Si Dios no fuese el defensor de los oprimidos, no sería justo ni misericordioso. En otras palabras: no sería el Dios de Israel" (A. Barreiro, Comunidades eclesiais de base e evangelização dos pobres, São Paulo, 2ª ed., 1981:37).

En las CEB's, no solo los pobres se van liberando de las diversas formas de alienación económica, social, política, cultural y religiosa, sino también ellos liberan a los ricos y poderosos de la esclavitud del poder y del dinero a la que llegaron por medio de tanta injusticia y explotación de los mismos pobres.²¹

La eucaristía en la vida de las CEB's

Recuperar la íntima relación que existe entre la eucaristía y la iglesia es uno de los frutos y herencias del Concilio Vaticano II. El cardenal Martini afirmaba: "la eucaristía es la forma de la vida de la iglesia" (Cf. Carlo Maria Martini, Relación publicada en *Civiltà Cattolica*, n. 3167, 1982. pp.430-442). Tal declaración subraya el carácter sacramental de la iglesia. La eucaristía recuerda siempre a la Iglesia su naturaleza de comunidad concreta, asamblea reunida, expresada en su mismo nombre, *Ekklesia*: asamblea convocada por Dios aquí y ahora, como sacramento de la comunión universal de todo el pueblo de Dios.²²

Si pensamos en las primeras iglesias, podemos decir que casi todas eran "comunidades de base": grupos en su mayoría de pobres y de una relación más horizontal. Tenemos pocas informaciones sobre cómo la eucaristía dejaba huella en estas Iglesias de los primeros siglos pero, por documentos antiguos, sabemos que la eucaristía estaba muy relacionada con el martirio. En Latinoamérica las CEB's surgieron en los años 60, poco después del Concilio Vaticano II, como expresión del programa propuesto por el papa Juan XXIII: volver a las fuentes de la fe e insertarse al mismo tiempo en la realidad actual del mundo. Es importante ver cómo tal camino implica una profunda relación entre CEB's y Eucaristía.²³

En los años 60 y 70 muchos países de América del Sur eran dominados por dictaduras militares muy represivas. Una de las cosas más peligrosas era reunirse y hacer comunidades libres y populares. Tal situación llevó a las comunidades a unir la eucaristía con una crítica social y política. Muchos cristianos y catequistas fueron perseguidos y hasta muertos por el único crimen de animar su comunidad en el



¹⁹ Ibídem. p.120

²⁰ LIBÂNIO, João Batista, *Las comunidades eclesiales de base (CEB), una nueva forma de vivir y sentir la iglesia*. En *Studia Missionalia*, 45, 1996, p.326

²¹ Ibídem. p.327

²² BARROS, Marcelo. *La cena de la vida, eucaristía en la vida de las comunidades eclesiales de base, CEBs, en Latinoamérica y en el Caribe*. En *Misiones Extranjeras*, 206-207, 2005, p.339

²³ Ibídem. p.340

culto dominical. Los mismos gobiernos dictatoriales mostraban de ese modo a los cristianos que la eucaristía, por su misma naturaleza, es subversiva y transformadora.²⁴

En una iglesia en que concretamente, los laicos pueden tener poca participación ministerial, tales grupos se constituyen, ya se decía al comienzo de los encuentros inter eclesiales en Brasil, expresiones legítimas de “una iglesia que nace del pueblo desde la fuerza del Espíritu Santo”.²⁵

Características

Las CEB's, hasta por el hecho de no contar siempre con la presencia de sacerdotes, han crecido alrededor de la celebración de la Palabra con formas más libres y diversificadas de culto. Sin embargo, eso no quiere decir que, para ellas, la eucaristía deje ser el ápice de la celebración de la Iglesia. La tradición de la Iglesia enseña que “la anáfora es siempre respuesta a una Palabra divina, proclamada y acogida anteriormente; esta oración recibe colores y acentos diferentes desde esa acogida” (Juan Antonio Ruíz de Gopegui, sj, *A Eucaristía: uma reflexão a partir da tradição litúrgica*, in *Perspectiva Teológica*, maio/agosto 2000, p.159).²⁶

Las CEB's no tienen un rito litúrgico propio pues asumen el rito latino, pero con un estilo peculiar. Estilo que da valor a todas las personas presentes, subraya las relaciones horizontales con la participación activa de todos, hombres y mujeres. En las celebraciones, el rito penitencial es valorado, pero de una forma más pascual y desde una mirada más positiva sobre la creación y la humanidad.²⁷

Fiesta comunitaria

El modo de celebrar de las CEB's da una importancia grande a los ritos de acogida, cuando las personas se presentan, se acogen, se abrazan, aplauden y danzan la vida. El que conoce las dificultades, el sufrimiento y la lucha de las personas pobres en este contexto social, acompañando la vida de las CEB's, se sorprende siempre con la fuerza que todavía encuentra para manifestar su alegría permanente en un clima de fiesta. La propia celebración del viernes santo tiene algo de fiesta comunitaria y alegría pascual.²⁸

Signos y símbolos

Como en las iglesias primitivas, la eucaristía en una comunidad de base toma más la forma de una cena que solamente la de un culto ritual. En estas misas la liturgia de la Palabra es de gran importancia. Se canta mucho, se preparan procesiones y danzas en la entrada de la celebración, en la acogida de la Biblia para las lecturas, o del Evangelio para la proclamación del Evangelio.²⁹

La relación con la vida

La eucaristía es el momento fuerte de compartir la Palabra y el pan, es también tiempo de compartir la vida, denunciar las injusticias sufridas y tomar posición firme por la justicia del Reino. Es importante el hecho de que el Evangelio sea leído en todas sus dimensiones, también social y política; y que la Iglesia acepte la profecía de la parcialidad y se ponga del lado de los más pequeños. La eucaristía debe ser semilla de un mundo y una Iglesia más igualitarios. Las CEB's no dejan que la Iglesia se olvide de esto.³⁰

Las CEB's aman a sus pastores y no tienen dificultades mayores con obispos o con la jerarquía católica, pero insisten en la plena participación de los laicos en los ministerios eclesiales.³¹

La Cena que reúne

En una época en que la sociedad dominante es tan agresiva con la creación de Dios, es bueno percibir que las



²⁴ Ibídem. p.341

²⁵ Ivi.

²⁶ Ibídem. p.342

²⁷ Ivi.

²⁸ Ibídem. p.343

²⁹ Ibídem. p.344

³⁰ Ibídem. p.345

³¹ Ivi.

celebraciones eucarísticas de las CEB's insisten en reconocer esta dimensión ecológica de la eucaristía.³²

Aunque la eucaristía en las CEB's no se celebra muchas veces en la naturaleza, tiene casi siempre gestos y ritos de veneración a la madre tierra, al agua y a todos los seres vivos.³³

"Más allá" del rito

El primero y más fundamental signo sacramental de la cena es la comunidad reunida. Por eso, la comunidad asume el modo espontáneo de las personas al llegar y saludarse efusivamente: grupo de hermanos y hermanas convocados por Dios para vivir el testimonio de Jesucristo en cada realidad concreta del mundo.³⁴

Como siempre ha enseñado la Teología de la Liberación, las CEB's asumen la comunión en la pobreza para luchar contra la injusticia estructural, fuente del empobrecimiento planificado de la mayoría de la humanidad. En esta lucha pacífica y no violenta, la eucaristía ofrece el memorial de la cruz de Jesucristo, no como un sacrificio ritual o religioso sino como una donación de sí mismo, entrega total por el otro y una propuesta de vida nueva desde el otro.³⁵

La forma de celebrar intenta unir rito y realidad para hacerse la más auténtica profecía de lo que Dios quiere que vivamos. La celebración eucarística depende, en gran parte, del presbítero que preside la celebración. Cuando éste acepta entrar en la espiritualidad de las CEB's, la eucaristía toma una dimensión ecuménica que acoge a todos y da testimonio de una mayor igualdad entre ministros ordenados y pueblo de Dios.³⁶

El presente de las CEB's

Se ha constatado que las CEB's desaparecen en algunos lugares, pero también que se resisten, renacen y sorprenden a la propia Iglesia. Las CEB's resisten: se resisten a formar una iglesia paralela. Se resisten a desligar la fe de la vida. Se resisten a dejar a los pobres.³⁷

Las CEB's sorprenden por su originalidad: originalidad del punto de partida: están los que no valen, dan lugar a los que la sociedad no da lugar. Originalidad del punto de llegada: el Reino es el punto de llegada. No la Iglesia. Las comunidades están más liberadas de lo intraeclesial.³⁸

En una investigación hecha a principios de los años 90 en Brasil, se calculaba que había cerca de 70000 CEB's, ese número se ha mantenido hasta hoy. El 75% de las celebraciones dominicales son hechas por laicos y laicas.³⁹

En América Latina hay dos nomenclaturas que difieren un poco. En algunos lugares se les denomina CEB's a la comunidad geográfica, es más amplia. Se da sobre todo en las zonas rurales y en algunas zonas urbanas. Allí se concibe la CEB como el lugar de encuentro intermedio entre la parroquia y el pequeño grupo que se denomina, según el lugar: grupos bíblicos, equipos o asambleas.⁴⁰

Cuando se habla de comunidad se entiende cuatro realidades distintas:⁴¹

- El grupo de animadores (las dos terceras partes son mujeres).
- Todos los participantes de la CEB.
- Toda la población católica del "territorio" de la CEB.
- Toda la población del "territorio" de la CEB.

La clave es el equipo de coordinación. Ésta es la posibilidad de una pastoral de conjunto. En la parroquia, todos los grupos son autónomos. Sólo dependen "del cura". En la CEB, hay interrelación entre los distintos grupos y espacios. No hay esta "autonomía". Algunos sacerdotes tienen cierta

³² Ivi.

³³ Ibídem. p.346

³⁴ Ibídem. p.347

³⁵ Ibídem. p.348

³⁶ Ivi.

³⁷ APOLINARIO, Abraham, *Las comunidades eclesiales de base*. En Misiones Extranjeras 2002, 187-191, p.122

³⁸ Ivi.

³⁹ Ibídem. p.124

⁴⁰ Ivi.

⁴¹ Ibídem. p.125

resistencia y temor a la experiencia de las CEB's, porque piensan que les será reducida su influencia en la vida de fe de su comunidad parroquial. Es tanto lo que está en manos de los laicos que parecería que es poco lo que queda bajo la responsabilidad del sacerdote.⁴²

***¿Qué se dice de las CEB's?*⁴³**

- Dejaron de ser novedad.
- Cesaron de ser sospechosas. El documento de Puebla las ubicó como concentración de la Iglesia local, inmediatamente debajo de la parroquia (no. 640ss).
- En la década del 90, las CEB's eran todavía presentadas como alternativas exitosas, en el proceso pastoral de base.
- Ahora, el nuevo milenio, las CEB's parece que dejaron de interesar a la mayoría de los obispos, clero, seminaristas, diócesis, parroquias, editoras, facultades de teología y televisiones y programas televisivos católicos, por lo general copados por los grupos carismáticos y congéneres.

***¿Desaparecen?*⁴⁴**

- El cambio de los ministros ordenados y sus sucesores las han dejado morir, sin darles apoyo o lugar en la vida pastoral. Hubo también intentos de "parroquializar" las CEB's, reduciéndolas a una tarea parroquial.
- En casos aislados hubo manipulación de partidos y movimientos políticos que buscaron valerse de las CEB's como una instancia de movilización popular. Con el surgimiento democrático de los partidos políticos, cristiano con vocación de militancia sistemática en la política ha disminuido su presencia en las CEB's en muchos casos con la buena intención de evitar, en la opinión pública, una precipitada identificación de las CEB's con un determinado partido o campaña política.
- La autoridad se centralizó en todos los niveles. Lo intra-ecclesial se volvió dominante, relativizando o suprimiendo progresivamente la presencia en el mundo como fermento, sal, luz. Lo cultural la fuerte preocupación por la ortodoxia llevaron a que los espacios de creatividad teológica, litúrgica y aun pastoral se fueran restringiendo y quedaran más vigilados y consecuentemente menos creativos y dinámicos.

¿Diluir las?

Los más recientes documentos de la jerarquía, que todavía mencionan las CEB's, por lo menos no repiten las conocidas amonestaciones de buen comportamiento eclesial (lo que nunca lo hacen a propósito de los movimientos, que de seguro lo merecerían), no explicitan que ellas sean una célula eclesial fundamental, en la cual los bautizados viven su experiencia de comunión y misión.⁴⁵

Otra manera de diluir las CEB's es la de retomar la analogía de la familia, proclamada como primera comunidad, "Iglesia doméstica". Se concluye que la familia es iglesia, ya no en sentido alegórico, sino estructural, atribuyéndole las funciones y características sacramentales de una iglesia local, omitiéndose la mención a lo eucarístico y la necesidad de un ministro ordenado que coordine la diversidad en la unidad eclesial sacramental.⁴⁶

Las CEB's resisten, renacen

Ellas nacen como reestructuración eclesial, no como movimiento social o laical. Surgen como una nueva expresión del ser y del conjunto de la misión de la Iglesia. Las CEB's, aun cuando por razones de urgencia y de exigencia históricas, acentúan ciertos aspectos de la eclesialidad y no otros, son un acontecimiento *cualitativo*. Están orientadas, por su propia originalidad, a configurar un nuevo modelo eclesial.⁴⁷

Las CEB's van resurgiendo como una exigencia misionera de llegar como Iglesia, más allá de las presentes estructuras eclesiásticas. Por eso las CEB's implican, a medio y a largo plazo, una

⁴² Ivi.

⁴³ MARINS, José. *El presente de las comunidades eclesiales de base*. En Misiones Extranjeras, 188, 2002, p.128

⁴⁴ Ibídem. p.129

⁴⁵ Ibídem. p.132

⁴⁶ Ivi.

⁴⁷ Ibídem. p.135

reestructuración eclesial. Son una nueva expresión de la misión de la Iglesia, no son un evento sino más bien un proceso.⁴⁸

APORTE CRÍTICO

Si bien las CEB's surgieron como una nueva propuesta de ser Iglesia en el contexto latinoamericano, no deja de ser un método que puede aportar grandes elementos para la Iglesia universal, especialmente allí donde "un cierto modo de ser Iglesia" comienza a ser menos "atractivo" o arcaico, en cuanto al modelo que exige la sociedad de hoy en la llamada de ser vivir como cristianos, en nuestro contexto contemporáneo, especialmente para el continente europeo.

En el nuestro hoy de la postmodernidad se presenta por parte de la sociedad un pensamiento tendencialmente "secular", que no es otra cosa que la manifestación de un cambio de mentalidad, por lo tanto, no debería ser sometido meramente a un juicio moral tratando de encontrar su positividad y negatividad y cuánto puede influir en la Iglesia.

La cristiandad de nuestro tempo está llamada a dejarse confrontar por los distintos tipos de espiritualidad que se le presentan, y desde allí saber acoger y hacer fructificar aquello que más conviene para ser coherentes a la propuesta cristiana.

Es esto lo que han hecho los pueblos latinoamericanos tratando de responder al deseo de seguir a Cristo sin necesidad de suprimir o negar las vivencias cotidianas del momento: sufrimientos y alegrías, gozos y esperanzas. Una sociedad llamada cristiana que no se deja interpelar por los cambios sociales, políticos, económicos y culturales, está destinada a decaer, porque sus futuras generaciones simplemente no lograrán aceptar aquello que es visto como correspondencia a un tiempo pasado.

Ciertamente estamos viviendo en un tiempo, en el cual, parece que el cristianismo está en crisis, seguramente lo será si solamente nos concentramos en un punto de vista cuantitativo y no calificativo, es decir, ser cristianos no es pertenecer a un grupo o comunidad como si se tratase de un "club social", ser cristianos corresponde a un modo de vivir según el evangelio y que desde nuestra fe aceptamos como la voluntad de Dios manifestada en Cristo.

Es el ejemplo de las CEB's, vivir en la unidad de intentos de ser corresponsables al Evangelio de Cristo dentro de nuestro contexto, adaptando la propuesta de la Iglesia en la cultura, del mismo modo como Dios se hizo hombre y se encarnó en nuestra historia.

CONCLUSIÓN

Las CEB's sorprenden en su punto de partida: la constante relación con la vida y con la gente tomada como sujeto colectivo y privilegiado; en su objetivo: el Reino de Dios en sus cuatro dimensiones integradas: personal, social, eclesial y escatológica; en su método teológico pastoral: desarrolla una participación corresponsable y propicia la formación de una conciencia crítica de la comunidad particularmente en relación a su vida y misión; en su ministerio colegiado que incluye siempre la presencia femenina; en su configuración porque viven con un mínimo de estructuras y máximo de vida. Autofinancian sus encuentros y es costumbre que se compartan entre todos los gastos de viaje cuando se desplazan para reuniones diocesanas, regionales o nacionales.⁴⁹

Se mueven contra corriente, porque mientras el macro proceso de la globalización es económica y culturalmente excluyente, las CEB's son incluyentes posibilitando vivir la ciudadanía tanto eclesial como social. Como las CEB's se encuentran en la frontera entre la institución eclesial y "los otros", traen en sí semillas de respuestas no teóricas, sino viales, a lo que está siendo desafío a todos los credos.⁵⁰

El futuro de las CEB's en América Latina está en construir un modelo de Iglesia-comunidad inspirado en las primeras comunidades. Es necesario articular a nivel de base las distintas temáticas. Es difícil hacer que las comunidades se articulen entre sí y con otras fuerzas sociales.

⁴⁸ Ibídem. P.136

⁴⁹ Ibídem. p.138

⁵⁰ Ivi.

Pero si esto no sucede en las bases, las grandes luchas no se articularán. Las comunidades pierden su fuerza y su eficacia, los animadores se sentirán fragilizados en su afectividad, en su formación.⁵¹

Las CEB's tienen mucho que aportar a la Iglesia, porque ellas posibilitan un modelo distinto de vivir la presencia del Reino en medio de un mundo de economía globalizada, donde los pequeños son cada vez menos tenidos en cuenta. La iglesia, visibilidad del Reino de Dios, debe presentarse como experiencia donde se vivan las relaciones distintas a las que nos propone la sociedad. Las CEB's tienen mucho futuro, porque son, como la semilla de mostaza, germen del Reino, camino del Reino.⁵²

BIBLIOGRAFÍA

APOLINARIO, Abraham, *Las comunidades eclesiales de base*. En Misiones Extranjeras, 187-191, 2002, pp.117-127.

BARROS, Marcelo. *La cena de la vida, eucaristía en la vida de las comunidades eclesiales de base, CEBs, en Latinoamérica y en el Caribe*. En Misiones Extranjeras, 206-207, 2005, pp.339-348.

LIBÂNIO, João Batista, *Las comunidades eclesiales de base (CEB), una nueva forma de vivir y sentir la iglesia*. En Studia Missionalia, 45, 1996, pp.307-330.

MARINS, José. *El presente de las comunidades eclesiales de base*. En Misiones Extranjeras, 188, 2002, pp.128-139.

Ref.: julianandres_01@hotmail.com

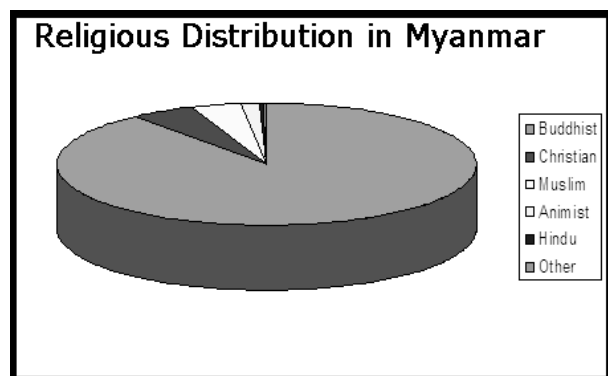
⁵¹ APOLINARIO, Abraham, *Las comunidades eclesiales de base*. En Misiones Extranjeras 2002, 187-191, p.127

⁵² Ivi.

Fr. John Lian Cin Pau
Some Hindrance to Christian Mission
from the Buddhists in Myanmar

Introduction

Although the Catholic Church in Myanmar has just celebrated 500 years of the presence of the Christian faith in Myanmar, the Christian population accounts for only 5 per cent of the total population of Myanmar (52.4 million). This shows that Christians are still a minority in Myanmar. Therefore, one can pose the question: is the Christian population increasing or decreasing in Myanmar? To this good, practical question we



can give a very short answer: 'yes', it is increasing more than before. However, the situation is not satisfactory because life for a Christian in Myanmar is like being a *stranger in one's own home*. For example, an Anglican put the prejudice against Christians even more strongly by referring to the '*mantra*' of national identity: "To be Burmese is to be Buddhist": "So who are we? We are aliens in our own country. We are seen as traitors".¹ These words express a deep wound, because Burmese Christians do not see themselves as aliens and certainly not as traitors. Simon Pau Khan En, a professor at the

Myanmar Institute of Theology, remarked that "Christianity was and still is an alien religion to the people of Myanmar due to three significant factors:

- (a) the identification of Christian mission with colonialism by Burmese people;
- (b) the negative attitude of missionaries towards the religion and culture of the people; and
- (c) the conversion *en masse* of tribal groups to Christianity".²

Actually, the above-mentioned factors derive from the wounded history of the past and weakness in interpreting the Gospel to the people of Myanmar. In order to remove or overcome these difficulties, the churches in Myanmar should look back to the past and change their way of proclaiming the Gospel to the people, especially to the Buddhist majority in Myanmar.

1. Historical wounds in the past

In Myanmar, the tension between Buddhists and the other religions (especially Christian) is the result of the wounded memory of the past. In addition, there are various religious communities of different ethnic groups who are affected by these historical wounds and prejudices as follows:

In the first place, during the reign of King Maha-dhamma-yaza, grandson of Branginoco, Philip de Brito, a Portuguese adventurer, one of the most notable figures of that time, established himself as Governor of Syriam (South Burma). He built a church at Syriam and then, in Portuguese fashion, proceeded to outrage the feelings of the people by destroying their pagodas and forcing them to become Christian.³

Second, since the time that the last Burmese monarch, King Thibaw, was dethroned on 28 November 1885, the whole of Lower Myanmar was subjected to British rule, while Upper Myanmar still survived in the hands of King Mindon (1853-1878). The British rulers in Lower Myanmar made a clean sweep of the old monarchical system, abolishing not only the Buddhist Court but the Buddhist ecclesiastical commissions as well as the Primate's authority, and many other traditional local institutions such as the Circle Headmen.⁴ At that time the Burmese, in Lower Myanmar, feared that their centuries-old way of life, monastery education, and their Buddhist faith would swiftly disappear under the alien rule. These fears intensified when the British Government refused to grant patronage to Buddhism and approval of the monastery schools, which served as the keystone of the Buddhist educational system. Then some Buddhist Monastery Schools in Lower Myanmar were replaced by the Christian Missionary and

Anglo-vernacular Schools. This action caused the Burmese Buddhists much pain.⁵ This replacement process began immediately after the British had abolished the monarchy, and disestablished the traditional patterns of the Buddhist community and monastery education. With the abolition of the Highest Buddhist Council (Sangha) and the elimination of the legitimate status of Buddhism as an official religion, the traditional monarchical pattern of the Buddhist community and its monastery education began to collapse. While this institutional collapse meant a great achievement for the British colonialists who accordingly arrogantly claimed: "We have overthrown the king and destroyed all trace of the kingly rule. Naturally they looked upon this as the destruction of their Burmese nationality. History will decide whether we acted wisely". This action endangered the very existence of the Burmese Buddhists. Indeed such dis-establishment of the Buddhist monarchical rule and monastery education system meant for Burmese Buddhists the total loss of their religio-national solidarity and the destruction of their integrated social, cultural and political systems.⁶ As a matter of fact, the replacement of the Buddhist monastery education by the British and Christian missionary education caused painful feelings among the Burmese Buddhists who then accused the Christian mission of being a part of the colonial movement. As a result, the attacks on missionary education reached a nadir in 1930. That year, the Buddhist students at Cushing High School and the Baptist Normal School in Yangon, and the Methodist Boys' High School in Mandalay went on strike, claiming that they were not allowed to go to Buddhist pagodas on special Buddhist holidays and were forced to attend Christian Bible classes.⁷ On learning of this situation the Buddhist nationalists went to investigate the Christian mission, especially its educational work, regarding it with suspicion as part of the White man's 3M-scheme (Merchant, Military and Mission) which was strongly supported by the British Government and Christian missionaries, especially during the nationalist period in the 1930s.⁸

2. The ways of proclaiming the Gospel message

At Adoniram Judson's third meeting with the Burmese monarch, King Bagyidaw asked him, "Do you, followers of Jesus, dress like other Burmese?". What the Bamar monarchs were most suspicious of was not necessarily the matter of conversion to Christianity but rather the problem of converts losing their cultural identity and associating with Western culture and imperialism.

Once, a Christian Inspector remarked that Christians are not interested in Buddhism. They think they are in possession of the one true religion. Indeed, some Catholic Bishops and leaders of other Christian denominations still believe it is their duty to convert everyone to the Christian faith, and especially to convert as many Burmese as possible. Actually, the word "Incarnation" in Buddhist culture means "preservation of cultural identity by a person of Christian faith".⁹

In spite of this statement, under colonial rule, the missions made many converts among the ethnic minorities. Consequently, a division developed along ethnic, religious, and cultural lines between the Christian ethnic minorities and the Buddhist Bamar (Burmese) majority. The division became more acute as the nationalist movement developed on the basis of Buddhist traditionalism. The nationalists looked upon Christian converts as: Western in outlook and pro-British in political sympathy. Furthermore, Christianity is regarded as foreign because of its late arrival in the country and the slowness of its adaptation to the local culture and mentality, while Buddhism was already well rooted in the hearts of the people.

Conclusion and a Way Forward

In this historical perspective Christianity is always set beside imperialism, oppression, arrogance, disdain and superior strength. This approach and kind of historical memory of Christianity must be critically reappraised before healing and reconciliation can be achieved. It is also possible to speak of a kind of Christian 'superiority complex', which stands in the way of *rapprochement*, mutual respect and good understanding.

Therefore, today one of the great social concerns of the Church in Myanmar, as in Asia, is building peace. Since Asia is an arena of intermittent violent ethnic, religious, and political conflict, the Church is often called upon to act as peace-maker in such situations or even in situations of conflict which, on many occasions, are attributed to religious differences and biases. We need to serve as a prophetic voice for peace in the midst of conflict. The road to peace is long and arduous. The Pastoral efforts of formation and dialogue must aim at building up a culture of peace among ourselves and others, based on integrity, respect, understanding and, ultimately, love.¹⁰ Hla Bu, a post-Independence Christian professor of philosophy, reminds us that

on the whole Buddhist leaders were critical of Christians as being uncooperative in national concerns. He suggested that Christians should cooperate with the Burmese Buddhist people and government as patriotic citizens.¹¹ It is a good suggestion, and therefore, in every type of social service, it should be seen by the people that the Christians are genuinely concerned for the people in Myanmar.

Finally, to overcome the above obstacles, the Christian Churches in Myanmar should continue the process of reconciliation in order to overcome the wounded memory of the past, and adapt the way of proclaiming the Gospel to the people in Myanmar as Pope John Paul II said: "To the people of our time, so sensitive to the proof of concrete living witness, the Church is called upon to give an example of reconciliation particularly within herself. And for this purpose we must all work to bring peace to people's minds, to reduce tensions, to overcome divisions and to heal wounds that may have been inflicted by brother on brother when the contrast of choices in the field of what is optional becomes acute".¹²

FOOTNOTES

¹ J.H. THRALL, "Burmese Christians struggle to cope under military rule", 2001, in <http://archive.wfn.org/2001/10/msg00255.html> [6-3-2014].

² S. PAU KHAN EN, "The Quest for Authentic Myanmar Contextual Theology", in MIT Rays Journal of Theology, v. 2 (2001), 40.

³ Cf. W.C.B. (WILLIAM C.B.) PURSER, *Christian Missions in Burma*, Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, Westminster 1911, 49.

⁴ Cf. J.F. CADY, "Religion and Politics in Modern Burma", in *The Far Eastern Quarterly*, Vol. XII (February 1953), 153.

⁵ Cf. M.H. AUNG, *A History of Burma*, Columbia University Press 1967, First edition, 240.

⁶ S.J. TAMBIAH, *The Buddhist Saints of the Forest, the Cult of Amulets*, Columbia University Press, New York 1984, 316-317.

⁷ Cf. BURMA, *Report of the Administration of Burma, 1929-30*, Government Printing Office, Rangoon, 6-9.

⁸ Cf. S. NGUN LING, "Challenges, Problems, and Prospects of Theological Education in Myanmar", 2.

⁹ S.B. BEVANS, *Models of Contextual Theology*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, N.Y. 2002, Rev Exp edition, 47.

¹⁰ Cf. FABC Documents, Symposium on "Evangelization in the Light of 'Ecclesia in Asia'": *Statement and Recommendations*; Redemptorist Centre, Pattaya, Thailand, 3-7 September 2002, no. 24.

¹¹ U HLA BU, "The Nature (Significant) of Resurgence of Buddhism in Burma", in *Called to be Community: Myanmar Is In Search of New Pedagogies of Encounter*, ed. By Samuel Ngun Ling (Yangon, 2003), 132.

¹² POPE JOHN PAUL II, *Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation: "Reconciliation and Penance" to the Bishops, Clergy and Faithful on Reconciliation and Penance in the Mission of the Church Today*, St. Paul Editions, no. 9.

Ref.: Text from the author for the *SEDOS Bulletin*, February 2015. Email: frjohnpaupi@gmail.com

Rev. Subhash Anand
Women in the Old Testament
- Part I -

Dr Anand, a former professor at the Jnana Deep Vidyapeeth, Pune, <43subhash@gmail.com> continues his pastoral ministry from the Diocese of Ajmer, India. He offers a detailed account of the Old Testament views on women in the narrative traditions.

Difficult to believe, but true: a man who does not want his eleven-year-old daughter to study throws a heavy stone at her head.¹ Patriarchal societies are not too keen on girls going to school. They see the girl as destined to be a wife and a housekeeper. Hence she does not need education. However, at a deeper level, there is fear that an educated woman will be a threat to patriarchy. Men are unwilling to let go of patriarchal culture, because it gives them a sense of superiority, a sense of power. They think that they can do what they like with women. This attitude explains why acid attacks on women are more common in patriarchal societies.² How dare a woman say "no" to a man? This mentality also explains why patriarchal societies oppose the celebration of Valentine's Day, and they justify themselves by claiming that it is "an alien concept that corrupts Indian youth";³ that it is one of the many efforts "to smuggle the Western culture" into India.⁴ The truth is that patriarchal thinkers cannot allow a young woman to choose her man. Even today one woman dies every hour due to dowry related violence.⁵ Our society is deeply patriarchal.

François-Marie Arouet, commonly known as Voltaire (1694-1778), who was not too happy with Catholicism and with religion in general wrote: "if God has made us in his image, we have returned him the favour":⁶ we have made God in our own image and likeness. Some feminist thinkers have "identified patriarchy itself as the prevailing religion of the world".⁷ Patriarchy is very pervasive. It generates its own pattern of ethical, economic, social and psychological gender relations. All may not agree with this verdict, but it remains true that most religious texts have been composed by men, and males have dominated the exegetical tradition. This is also true of the Old Testament, "Male genealogies, male oriented legal codes and cultic stipulations, masculine forms for generic speech, and the predominance of men in historical records and recollections, all reflect the male dominance of Israel's public life and formal structures".⁸ In this society "women appear for the most part as minor or subordinate figures".⁹ The reason for this is simple: the Old Testament "is the product of a patriarchal world, and more specifically, of a literate urban élite of male religious specialists.... Women in the biblical texts are presented through male eyes, for purposes determined by male authors".¹⁰ The Old Testament reflects many stages in the theological development of Israel. Hence it is not surprising that there is not a single portrait of women in ancient Israel.... Behind the disparate images and distinct life histories, however, lies a common set of expectations and values that govern the life of every Israelite woman of every period and circumstance, rooted in the need for woman's labour in the domestic sphere and more specifically for childbearing and nurture, broadly described as 'reproductive' work.¹¹

Thus, the family is the woman's primary sphere of activity and the most important source of her fulfilment: "The life and work of the Israelite woman centered on the home and duties in the family. The ideal portrait of the adult female depicts her as the mother of many children... and the wise and industrious manager of the household, providing for the welfare of husband and children".¹²

The Creation Story

The Book of Genesis presents two accounts of the creation of human beings. In the *first* account we read: "God created man ('*ādām*: humankind, people) in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them (Gen 1:27)". There is no agreement among scholars as to how woman and man are in the image and likeness of God: "The image refers to the mental and spiritual faculties man shares with his Creator".¹³ According to this view woman and man have the same mental and spiritual faculties.

Furthermore, if this terminology was "based on Egyptian and possibly Mesopotamian thinking, it should be noted that the phrase: 'image of God' described the king's function and being".¹⁴ The king was thought to rule his kingdom on behalf of God, the true ruler. He was so to speak a visible image of the true but invisible King. This was "a common oriental view of the

king".¹⁵ Here human beings were given the task to subdue the earth and to have dominion over it (1:28). This task was entrusted to woman and man. This is in sharp contrast with the second Creation account, as we shall see, where woman had a domestic function, while man had a public function. In still another view, "the image is a capacity to relate to God".¹⁶ This means that man and woman can equally relate to God. We cannot insist enough on the fact that being in "the image of God is something that distinguishes man from the animal kingdom".¹⁷ If this is true, then their sexual differences — which they have in common with the animal kingdom — are secondary and their unique personalities are primary. If being woman is being in the image of God, then there is definitely a feminine dimension to God.

Being in "the image of God" is a statement of what human beings are and what they are expected to be. There is another distinctive aspect in the first account of the creation of human beings. It begins with: "*Let us make man in our image, after our likeness...* (1:26). Here again scholars are not agreed as to why the plural is used here: "Jewish commentators have generally held that the plural is used because God is addressing his heavenly court".¹⁸ Some modern commentators think that the early polytheistic milieu could be the explanation. This, however, would have been unacceptable to the post-exilic author who composed this text,¹⁹ because by then Israel had acquired a clear sense of the One and only God.²⁰ Others maintain that the plural usage "is an example of a plural of majesty".²¹ Even more daring is the suggestion that "the plural is used because of plurality within the Godhead. God is addressing the Spirit who was present and active at the beginning of creation".²² Indeed, this was suggested by ancient Christian writers who have seen in the plural usage an anticipation of the Christian confession of the Triune God. On the basis of exegesis this cannot be accepted. But within the Christian confession, the distinctive character of woman and man reflects the mutuality of the divine persons, who are distinct and different but equal. We can be and act meaningfully as human beings only by being and acting in dialogue. We need to say to each other constantly, "Let us...". In this dialogue both are equal, and both have a distinct but equally important contribution to make — not merely as male and female, but primarily as individuals. If one of the partners in dialogue considers the other to be inferior, then no real dialogue is possible.

The first Creation account of the origin of human beings ends with a special word of approval: "And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good" (Gen 1:31).²³ This statement is special for two reasons. God worked for six days. This is the seventh time that the writer tells us that God found his work *good*.²⁴ With the creation of human beings, made in God's image and likeness, God's work reached completion. In the earlier expressions of approval the author simply says that God found his work *good*. The seventh time, he states that God found his work *very good*. This superlative was possible only after the creation of human beings. Creation is God's primordial self-revelation. If God is a communion of love between persons who are distinct and different, but equal, then the reciprocal love of woman and man, *a communion of love between persons who are distinct and different but equal*, is the nearest created image to the Triune God. The emergence of this image makes it *very good*.

Let me put it differently. If there were no people within God's Creation, then creation would be a revelation of a powerful supreme cause. There would be nobody to receive this revelation. Creation would be incomplete and even absurd. With the creation of people, Creation becomes a revelation that God is Love, a communion of persons in love. From the very start God addresses people and invites them to be "hearers of the word", and eventually of *the Word*.²⁵ In any dialogue, listening and understanding are much more important than addressing. When we listen to and understand the other person we do not *address* the other, but *respond* to the other, and ultimately to *the Other*. Woman and man are both equally human, and yet different. Theirs is a non-dual relation (*advaita*). This is a faint reflection of the non-dual relation within the Triune God. Hence only when human beings respond to each other properly will they be able to respond to the Other in the right way. Any religion that supports inequality between woman and man ceases to be authentic.

The second account of their origin is a masterpiece of patriarchal narrative (2:4-25). We need to listen attentively to the way the narrator describes the origin of the first human couple, and hear not only what is explicitly stated but also what is suggested:

	The Origin of Adam	The Origin of Eve
1	God makes Adam first and gives him a place to stay (vv.7-8).	Eve comes on the scene almost as a second thought: as Adam's companion (v.22).
2	God takes the dust of the ground (' <i>addam</i>) to make man (' <i>addam</i> , v.7).	God uses a part of man to make woman. From the start she belongs to him (v. 21).
3	God makes Adam to care for the earth (v.15). He has a public function	Eve is made to care for Adam and for his offspring (v.18). She has a domestic function.
4	God breathes his very life into the mud statue and Adam comes alive (v.7). He carries God's life within himself.	None of this is said about the woman. She carries man's image in herself: bone of his bone, flesh of his flesh (v. 23).
5	Adam has a right over the woman and he only receives what comes from him.	The bride is presented to the groom by the Father\God (v. 22). She has no say in this matter.
6	Man can forget the woman. He was not created for her.	Woman cannot forget man, because she was created for him and her very name (<i>issah</i> , wo-man) will constantly remind her of her belonging to man (<i>'is</i> , v. 23).
7	God gives the command to man (vv. 16-17). He is authorized to receive the Law.	Woman can know the command given by God only through her husband.

This narrative also has another aspect. One could say that "by putting the man into a deep sleep God assures the same autonomy to woman as to man — she depends directly on God for her being":²⁶ God is the sole active agent in the origin of woman. Also the exclamation "this at last is bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh" "set man and woman on an equal footing as regards their humanity".²⁷ Also the claim that a man leaves his father and mother and cleaves to his wife (2:24) may appear as a move away from patriarchy.

It is perhaps somewhat surprising to read that it is the man who abandons his parents and cleaves to his wife. Would it not be more appropriate, especially in a patriarchal society, for a woman to leave her parents and attach herself to her husband?... It more likely reflects the revolutionary concept that marriage between a man and a woman takes precedence over a man's duty to his parents.²⁸

While this is a healthy development, it is not enough. The fact that it is man who gives woman her name (2:23) "indicates that she is expected to be subordinate to him".²⁹ She was not meant to be an equal partner of man but "a helper fit for him": man is the norm for her fitness (2:20). We need to be aware that this patriarchal narrative continues to shape Christian thinking (I Cor 11:3, 7-9; 14:34-35; Eph 5:23; I Tim 2:11-15).



The patriarchal mindset is also clear in the way the fall of the first couple is reported (3:1-24). The command not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was given to Adam. The tempter, however, is very clever. He thinks that woman is weak and can easily be seduced. Hence he approaches Eve and succeeds. It would be more correct to say that the patriarchal writer was even cleverer: the woman is the first to fall. She ate the fruit because the tree that bore it "was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, and he ate" (v. 6). To the patriarchal author she seems to be arrogant. She wanted not only to make herself wise, but also to enlighten her husband. The patriarchal thinker might condone the former, but he just cannot pardon the latter. When she succeeded in doing that, a calamity was bound to happen.

Adam and Eve were naked from the beginning, but were not ashamed of it. After eating, nakedness became a temptation. Sin has given our body, particularly our sexuality, a negative significance. It is the woman who seduced man. This narrative anticipates the fall of David and

Solomon. The former was carried away by the charm of a married woman (2 Sam 11:2-6),³⁰ while the latter would be ruined by his many foreign wives (I Kings 11:1-8). Instead of being a help to man, woman becomes the cause of his woes. God does not question Eve first. Adam is the head of the family, and so is responsible for the observance of the Law. He is questioned first. This anticipates God's giving the Law to Moses and making him its custodian.

Adam tries to exonerate himself, and almost blames God for his fall: "The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate" (3:12). Instead of being a helper, she has turned out to be his undoing. The way God punishes them reminds us of their distinctive roles. He tells Adam: "Cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth to you" (3:17-18). Man was given a public function: to care for the earth. Now it will revolt against him. To the woman God says: "I will greatly multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children, yet your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you" (v. 16). Woman was made to be a suitable helper to man, especially by being the mother of his children. She has a domestic function. Even though God questions Adam first, he passes judgement on Eve first. Of the two, she is the greater culprit. The blessing she and her husband received (1:28) has now become the source of severe suffering for her. She has ruined her husband. She will have to pay for it: she will be under the rule of her husband. 'Her longing to be a mother will make her long for her man. Her desire for him will make it easier for him to dominate her (3:16). Here we have a divine sanction for patriarchal domination. In punishing Adam God explains "because you have listened to the voice of your wife ..." (3:17). Here we have a typical example of patriarchal prudence: "Never listen to the advice of your wife".

Depending on how we read the text, the desire of the woman could be seen as the desire to overpower her husband, using her sexual attraction.³¹ Thus, she is presented as the source of temptation. "To a large degree, men have projected onto women, starting with Eve, many of their own faults, failings, and weaknesses. At one level, the story of Eve, and the history of misogyny, is the tacit acknowledgment of the power of women. And men recognize, correctly, that this power women have resides in their sexuality",³² hence it is imperative for men to assert their hold on them. This imperative finds expression in many rules and regulations that bind women, and keep her within bounds. Once again Adam asserts his authority: he gives a name to his wife (v. 20). We are then told that God voices his fear: "Behold, the man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. Let him not stretch out his hand to take and eat of the tree of Life as well, and live forever" (v. 22). This text is also a wonderful example of how we tend to depict God to suit our needs. The verse I have quoted is really the fear of patriarchal thinkers. Deep down they are frightened: if women are allowed to be enlightened men will lose their hegemony.

The Narrative Tradition

Patriarchal societies function on "the fundamental and largely unchallenged assumption that maleness is the primary form of human experience, the measure of the human being and of the human being's activity".³³ In this framework, the father is the unchallenged head of his family. What he says is always right, and there is no appeal possible against his decision. This was also true of the Old Testament family. "The Israelite family was in all periods a male-headed household (called *bet'ab* 'house of the father'), in which descent and transmission of property... was reckoned through males.... One consequence of patrilineal organizations is that women are to some extent either aliens or transients within their family of residence".³⁴ The idea that they might choose to remain unmarried and continue to live in their father's house till death was just not known in ancient Israel.

The narrative tradition presupposed that "a man's children were *legally* regarded as his property with a calculable economic value".³⁵ Indeed this fact is very clearly brought out in the story of Jacob who married the two daughters of Laban. Jacob had to work fourteen years to pay the bride-price for Rachel and Leah (Gen 29:20,27).

Later when Jacob told them of his plan to return home after he noticed that Laban had become less well-disposed towards him, they wholeheartedly agreed with him:

Then Rachel and Leah answered him, "Is there any portion or inheritance left to us in our father's house? Are we not regarded by him as foreigners? For he has sold us and he has been using up our money. Surely all the property which God has taken from our father belongs to us and to our children. So, do then all that God has told you" (31:14-16).

Since their father had sold them, they were totally out of his family. They no longer had a place there. They were like foreigners. Nevertheless, "such a strong, public stand on the part of these women against the abuse of their father seems remarkable".³⁶

The father decided the future of his children. He chose a bride for his son (Gen 24:3; 38:6). So too, the father decided whom his daughter should marry. On her marriage he will lose her — his property — and so he collects the bride-price. The Old Testament bride-to-be had no choice in this matter. Rebecca was not asked whether she was willing to be Isaac's wife, though later on she was asked whether she would go with Abraham's servant to her in-law's house (Gen 24:51,57-58). From the context it would seem that her parents asked her in the hope that she would say 'no' and thus they could keep her for a few more days. After working seven years to marry Rachel, whom he loved, Jacob wanted her to be given to him. But he discovered that Leah had been given to him. When he remonstrated with Laban, the latter explained: "It is not so done in our country, to give the younger before the first-born" (Gen 29:26). He agreed to give Rachel to Jacob in return for another seven years of work. The two maidens were not asked what they thought about their future.

In patriarchal society a woman's importance depends partly on her fertility, especially to produce male offspring for her husband. Hence "childbearing was the most important marker of a woman's status".³⁷ This view was also true of Old Testament people. Consequently, "barrenness was viewed as the ultimate disgrace, understood as a sign of divine disfavour".³⁸ The Israelite woman had interiorized this assumption. Indeed, her fertility was what made her more important than other barren co-wives and even mistresses. Lot's daughters were keen to have a child, and the only way they could procure a child was through their father. They decided to follow this option, but realized that what they are about to do was not right. Hence they made their father drunk. For the sake of offspring, they did not consider incest with their own father wrong. The two young women did violence to themselves, to their dignity, and also to the dignity of their father, because they estimated their worth by their progeny (Gen 19:31-36).

The story of Sarah and Hagar is a tragic illustration of what can happen when a woman personally appropriates an ideal created for her by the patriarchal society, and then abuses her position as wife to harass a maidservant (Gen 16:1-16). Sarah was barren. She, therefore, urged Abraham to have sex with Hagar, her Egyptian maid. "This step was legally permissible in the ancient world's law codes".³⁹ Abraham listened to the voice of his wife,⁴⁰ "an action automatically suspect in the patriarchal society of ancient Israel".⁴¹ As he accepted her proposal, she gave Hagar to him as his wife ('iššâ, v. 3). To serve her purpose, Sarah was prepared to promote Hagar: she made Hagar her co-wife, but not for too long. She initiated the process because she was barren and brought Hagar into the picture with the hope that she would "obtain children by her" (v. 2). But after Sarah had given birth to Isaac, [(21:9)], she

said to Abraham: "Cast out this slave woman with her son; for the son of this slave woman shall not be heir with my son Isaac" (21:10). Therefore Ishmael lost his place in the house of his father, because he was not the child of Sarah. When Hagar realized that she was pregnant, it was natural for her to feel great, even greater than her barren mistress. Sarah could not stand this. "In a [patriarchal] culture that prized motherhood, Sarah could not but feel a loss of esteem".⁴² Thus, she complained to Abraham, who told her that her maid-servant — no longer his wife — was totally in her power, and that she could do with her what seemed best to her. He "took Sarah's side and let her have her way", ⁴³ thus "tipping the balance in favour of Sarah, with no apparent regard for the effect it might have on Hagar. Abram did not handle this conflict very well, to say the least. Sarah sought no reconciliation with Hagar, but treated her harshly".⁴⁴ The story may seem to depict a conflict within a family, but "because the story occurred in a patriarchal system, the males involved deserve special blame, and this was not entirely



Hilary Sylvester: *Sarah and Hagar - The Reconciliation*

unrecognized by the narrator".⁴⁵

In this episode Sarah talked a lot. Abraham spoke just once in favour of his wife. Hagar remained totally silent. She was addressed neither by Sarah nor by Abraham. She spoke only when addressed by the divine messenger. Sarah and Abraham did not seek her consent. Indeed, Sarah did not consider she needed her consent, because Hagar was her maid (vv. 2,3,5).

Sarah treated Hagar as her property, acting within the legal patriarchal framework.⁴⁶ Sexual intercourse without the consent of the woman, even within marriage, amounts to rape. Abraham raped Hagar, and Sarah was party to this crime against a fellow-woman. "Abram and Hagar simply carried out her wishes".⁴⁷ Hence whatever may have been the practice in the ancient Near East, some commentators are right in judging the action of Sarah and Abraham "as a great mistake".⁴⁸ A careful "reading of verses 2-3 suggests the narrator's disapproval, for he clearly alludes to Genesis Chapter 3":⁴⁹ Eve listened to the voice of the tempter. She had not taken God's warning seriously. Sarah was carried away by the patriarchal expectations of a woman and had recourse to human means, ignoring the promise of *progeny* God had made four times to Abraham (12:7; 13:15-16; 15:4; 17:15-18). Later when God made it very clear that she herself would bear a *child* she laughed in disbelief (18:12). From our perspective what Sarah and Abraham did was wrong. They used, or more correctly abused, Hagar, a helpless maid. Violence to helpless people is always wrong, even when those responsible for it claim God's greater glory as their goal.

The Israelite Sarah oppressed (*'ânâ*, v. 6) the Egyptian Hagar,⁵⁰ "inviting comparison with the Exodus texts, for the author used this verb to describe Israel's oppression by Egypt (15:13; Ex 1:11-12; Dt 26:6-7)".⁵¹ Hagar preferred to be on her own than to suffer humiliation at the hands of an ungrateful mistress. She set out "on her way back to Egypt".⁵² When people chosen by God indulge in injustice we have painful reversals. "Ironically, she [Hagar] thought she could find more freedom in Egypt than among God's Chosen People!".⁵³ Later on the great-grandsons of Sarah would oppress their brother and sell him to the Ishmaelites (37:27). These may be the descendants of Ishmael. "Such a view is supported by 25:17-20, which lists the sons of Ishmael, several of whom seem to belong to desert tribes",⁵⁴ ["twelve tribal princes" (25:16)]. Sarah was a very insecure woman and a jealous wife, deeply conscious of the hierarchical society she belonged to, and to the privileged position she held by being a married woman and a mother. She could not tolerate to see her son, the heir of her husband, playing with the son of a servant. She demanded the expulsion of mother and child (21:9-10). Violence against the helpless always boomerangs. The day will come when the Egyptians would oppress the Israelites.

The story of Sarah and Hagar seems unimportant for the Hebrew Bible as Hagar is mentioned nowhere outside the Book of Genesis. "The fact that women played a key role in this story has probably meant a certain neglect as well".⁵⁵ The God of Israel, however, is not a lifeless idol. He is the God who sees and hears and also responds to the plight of his children (Ex 3:9). Hagar called the well, *Beer Lahai-roi*, where the divine messenger appeared to her (16:13-14). "Like Ishmael's name [*'God hears*'], the name stands as a permanent reminder of God's merciful care: 'Well of the living who sees me'".⁵⁶ God had promised Abraham that Ishmael would have twelve sons (Gen 17:20). God fulfilled his promise (25:12-17). The Israelites might have wanted to forget Hagar, but she and her son live on in their descendants. The Holy Quran mentions Ishmael as one with whom God made a covenant (2.125). The Muslims remember Hagar with gratitude. When they make their pilgrimage to Mecca they perform the *sa' y*, which commemorates Hâjar's [Hagar] desperate search for water",⁵⁷ when she was cast out by Sarah (21:15-19).

Jacob loved Leah, his first wife, less. God sided with the marginalized, and so made her very fertile, blessing her with four sons, while Rachel continued to be childless. Like Sarah, Rachel offered her slave to Jacob. Leah also imitated her sister, because she had no child after having given birth to her fourth son. In both cases, the names given to the children were not chosen by their actual mothers, who were slaves, but by the two wives of Jacob, since those children legally belonged to them. It seems that after Leah ceased bearing more children, Jacob stopped intercourse with her. Her son brought home some mandrake plants, considered to be aphrodisiacs, from the field, and Leah was happy to have them as she could serve them to her husband and make him want her. They were also thought to be a cure for sterility. Hence Rachel was eager to get some too. The two wives struck a bargain: mandrakes for Rachel and Jacob for Leah that night (Gen 29:31-30:24).⁵⁸

The significance of child-bearing makes the procreative aspect of sexuality more important than its erotic aspect.⁵⁹ Woman is more a source of production, and less a partner in dialogue. The fact that Jacob discovered the deception only after the consummation shows that there was no real communication between him and Leah before their sexual union. In the darkness of the night he did not even see her face. He was keener to procure a sex partner than a life companion. This is what his request implied: "Give me my wife that I may go in to her" (Gen 29:21). Even Lot's daughters did not appear to be eager to get a husband for themselves, in their opinion progeny was more important than companionship. They too embodied the patriarchal view: that barrenness was "the ultimate disgrace, understood as a sign of divine disfavour".

Among the ancestors of Israel, not only Jacob, but Lamech, Abraham and Esau had more than one wife (Gen 5:19-28; 25:1-6; 28:8-9). The patriarchal setup of the Old Testament explains why. It is replete with illustrations of polygamous marriages. To be precise, it tells of instances of polygyny... but no instance of polyandry.... Wherever the emphasis of marriage is placed on procreation or the sexual satisfaction of the man, more than likely, polygyny will flourish.... In a society that is overwhelmingly semi-nomadic and agricultural, the maintenance of several wives would supply an abundant work force to tend flocks and work fields.⁶⁰

Woman was treated as a commodity. No wonder men had to pay the bride-price. To have more wives was also a sign of affluence. In the later narratives of Kings, woman will become an instrument for political negotiations (I Kings 3:1; 11:1-8).

There are some instances of violence being done to Israelite women that evoked very strong reactions from their men folk. These, however, need to be properly evaluated. The dignity of woman does not seem to be as important as the safety of guests. Lot was prepared to expose his two virgin daughters to violence in order to protect the two guests who had come to his house (Gen 19:7-8). He knew that were they to go out the men of Sodom would gang-rape them. Fortunately his guests, who were divine messengers, came to his rescue. There was a similar tragedy when to placate some rascals a man was prepared to expose two innocent women to mob violence (Judg 19:24). Eventually one of them was thrust out and as a result of being gang-raped she died (vv. 25-28). In both these cases the men preferred to expose their innocent women than to go out themselves to face the mad mob outside.

Dinah's two brothers, Simeon and Levi, were very upset because the rape of their sister was an insult to Israel as a whole (Gen 34:7). Shechem was prepared to pay any amount to marry



Bathsheba in the bath. Artemisia Gentileschi (1635 ca.)

Dinah. Her brothers negotiated with him. However, what was more important for them was not that Shechem really loved Dinah, but the fact that he was not circumcised (v. 14). Dinah remained totally silent throughout the episode. Her feelings did not seem to matter. In this episode the dignity of Israel was of greater importance than the dignity of the hapless maiden. Shechem, by being circumcised, would in some way belong to Israel. Even that ritual was only a ploy: when Shechem and the males in his company were helpless they were done to death (v. 25).

The most atrocious rape reported in the Old Testament was committed by David. He was carried away by the beauty of Bathsheba, whom he saw while she was bathing.⁶¹ He ordered that she be brought to the palace. It is unthinkable that she would have resisted. How could an ordinary woman dare to say 'no' to her king? Note here that the writer "lays the responsibility entirely on David".⁶² She became pregnant and David, wishing to hide his crime, recalled her husband Uriah from the war-front. He gave him a good meal with plenty of

wine; and bid him go home, hoping that Uriah would go and sleep with his wife. He, however, was more righteous than his king; because he was engaged in a sacred war, he had to remain pure. He spent the night outside David's palace. The king then had him killed in the war. Thus, he succeeded in hiding his rape and the murder of Bathsheba's husband (II Sam 11:1-27).

A patriarchal society is a hierarchical society, and a hierarchical society makes it possible for people in power to abuse their power. Men abusing women is one illustration of the abuse of patriarchal power. The more powerful men abuse their weaker brothers. The story of David is a tragic illustration of this. When approached by Nathan, the prophet, David pronounced judgement on himself: he deserved to be put to death. He was spared and an innocent child died (12:5,14). This is totally unacceptable to modern sensibilities. Not only women, but children too are dispensable in patriarchal societies. Some scholars have argued that "women's place in Israel began to decline with the emergence of bureaucratic monarchy".⁶³

Bathsheba was completely silent in this tragedy. The writer totally ignores her pain. She was merely an object of lust. Twice, she was called by her name: first when she was the wife of Uriah (11:3), "to identify her for the reader".⁶⁴ Second, after she had become the wife of David (12:24). Otherwise she was identified as the daughter of Eliam (11:3), the wife of Uriah (11:3, 26; 12:9,10,15), or simply as the woman (11:5).⁶⁵ Alone she was nameless, without any specific personality of her own. After being humiliated by David, "Bathsheba returned to her house and, as far as David was concerned, the relationship was apparently at an end".⁶⁶

Neither her dignity nor the life of her husband really mattered to David. He was in authority. He could do what he pleased. "One could almost say that as far as David was concerned, the deterrent value of the divine sanctions was zero, at least in this situation".⁶⁷ He could commit rape with impunity, and then cover it up by resorting to murder.

Amnon copied David, his father. He raped Tamar, his own half-sister and Absalom's sister, and pushed her out with hatred. David heard about it, but kept quiet. He had no option, as he had committed rape and murder. Amnon, however, paid a heavy price. He was assassinated by Absalom's servants (II Sam 13:1-29). In avenging the rape of their sister, the sons of Judah and Absalom seem to have been more concerned about family honour than the dignity of the person violated. In Dinah's case, the thought that she might carry the child of Shechem, an uncircumcised 'pagan', was simply not acceptable to her brothers. They eliminated all the males in the camp of Shechem, so that should Dinah have given birth to a child, none of them would be there to claim it. As for Tamar, she belonged to her family, and her rape was a violation of the rights of the family.

The narrative tradition of the Old Testament records some instances where women shaped the narrative and thus cannot be ignored. We have already noted how "Sarah took matters in to her own hands".⁶⁸ She "certainly knew that God has promised Abram offspring, but not necessarily by her".⁶⁹ Sarah urged her husband to have intercourse with her servant. Ishmael, the fruit of this union, was pushed out, but not forgotten.

When Esau felt that his father Isaac, Sarah's son, was not happy with his marrying a Canaanite woman, he added insult to injury by marrying Ishmael's daughter (Gen 28:8-9). "More recent interest in Islam, which traces its religious heritage to Abraham through Ishmael, has renewed the study on Ishmael's heritage...".⁷⁰ The Angel told Hagar: "He [Ishmael] shall be a wild ass of a man, his hand against every man and every man's hand against him; and he shall dwell over against all his kinsmen" (Gen 16:12). Some people might even say that the animosity some Jews and Muslims have for each other is anticipated in this text. The injustice done to Hagar by Sarah continues to haunt their descendants.

Rebekah, Leban's sister (Gen 24:29) who became Isaac's wife, was "the second of the four great matriarchs of the patriarchal age,"⁷¹ and perhaps the most significant woman in the story of the patriarchs. She "took the initial and decisive action of instructing Jacob",⁷² (Gen 27:5-11). As a result of her advice, Jacob obtained the primogenital blessing from his father Isaac, and thus became the father of the Twelve Tribes of Israel. Rebekah was a woman who took a great risk. Had Isaac discovered her deceitful behaviour, she and Jacob would have incurred his curse.

In the post-patriarchal narrative too there are stories of some very great women, who played a very significant role in the history of their people. They appeared in the public space as saviours of their people. Deborah, a prophetess, was also one of the judges who guided Israel in a moment of crisis. Barak, whom she summoned to lead the Israelites against their enemies, did not have the courage he needed for the task; hence he said to her: "If you will go with me, I will go; but if you will not go with me, I will not go". As a result of her intervention the army of Canaan was routed, and its general killed by another valiant woman, Jael (Judg 4:1-22). Ruth was determined to accompany her mother-in-law to an unknown land where she had no blood relatives. She did not expect any Israelite to marry her, a non-Israelite. Thus, she forwent her natural longing for a child, as her concern for her mother-in-law was of greater importance than having her own child (Ruth 1:12-17). Judith was a woman of great spiritual maturity and insight. She knew that she could not put God to the test. She knew that his ways are inscrutable, that he has been faithful; and that he will find his way to save his people. Hence, she invited her people to thank him in every circumstance (Jdt 8:11-27). In order to save her people, she exposed herself to possible sexual violence (12:10-20). Esther risked instant death by entering the king's presence without being summoned (Esther 4:16). The stories of these women are so important that there are three Books that bear their names. Yet none of these great women are remembered elsewhere in the Old Testament.

Another presupposition that shaped the Old Testament narrative is that the firstborn held a special place in the patriarchal family. He had a birthright (Gen 25:31). As a result, he "was held in special esteem in Israel; he was regarded as the first fruit of his father's strength and dedicated to God. He was in turn especially privileged during his lifetime and when the inheritance was divided ... [he received] a double share, that is, twice as much as any other brother, of his father's property".⁷³ As he succeeded his father, he had the right to a very special blessing from him. He was the lord over his brothers (Gen 27:4, 29). This special position of the firstborn formed part of the theological vision of the Old Testament: Israel was

and is God's firstborn (Ex 4:32). Every firstborn child was especially dedicated to the Lord (Ex 13:2, 15). But God's ways are not our ways: "As if to turn the tables on ordinary human expectations, the Bible focuses on examples where God works through the young and little ones". God preferred Abel to Cain (Gen 4:4-5), Jacob to Esau (Gen 25:23), Joseph to his elder brothers (Gen 38:10), Ephraim to Manasseh (Gen 48:19), David to his elder brothers (I Sam 16:11-13).

End Notes

- ¹ "11-year-old daughter keen to study, father hits her with a stone", *The Indian Express* (New Delhi ed.), 13 Jan. 2014, p. 6.
- ² "Patriarchal societies top acid attacks", *The Times of India* (Jaipur ed.), 13 Jan. 2014, p. 5.
- ³ "RSS Bans Valentine's Day" (editorial), *The Maharashtra Herald*, 14 Feb. 2000, p. 4.
- ⁴ "VHP warns against 'Valentine mania'", *The Times of India*, 15 Feb. 2000, p. 1.
- ⁵ "Dowry deaths: one woman dies every hour", http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2013-09-01/india/41662390_I_delhi-police-conviction-ncrb;a.o.30-10-2013.
- ⁶ Note books (c.1735-c.1750); <http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Voltaire;a.o.30-09-2013>.
- ⁷ Constance H. Buchanan, "Women's Studies", in Mircea Eliade (ed.-in-chief), *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, New York: Simon and Schuster Macmillan, 1995, vol. 15, pp. 432-440a, p. 438a.
- ⁸ Phyllis A. Bird, "Women: Old Testament", in David Noel Freedman (ed. in chief), *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, New York: Doubleday, 1992, vol. 6, pp. 951a — 957a, here p. 953a; emphasis added.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 951b.
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 952 a-b.
- ¹² *Ibid.*, p. 953b.
- ¹³ Gordon Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, Word Biblical Commentary, 1. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1987, p. 30.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 31.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 30
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 27
- ¹⁹ Some may be very surprised to learn that it is "generally agreed that the Pentateuch achieved its final form during the two centuries (538-334 BCE) — when Jews in the Province of Judah, and most Jews elsewhere; were subject to Iranian rule" (Joseph Blekinsopp, "Introduction to the Pentateuch", in *The New Interpreter's Bible*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002, vol. 1, pp. 305-18, here p. 314a).
- ²⁰ Today we know that "Israel believed in the existence of only one God and worshipped that one God from the latter part of the sixth century BCE... The popular religion of the Israelites was polytheistic up to the Exile" (Leslie J. Hoppe, "Monotheism", in Carroll Stuhlmueller, ed., *Collegeville Pastoral Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, Collegeville, Mn.: Liturgical Press, 1996, pp. 641b-3a, here p. 641 b).
- ²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 28.
- ²² *Ibid.*
- ²³ The second account begins with the words "These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created" (Gen 2:4).
- ²⁴ We have approval statements in 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, and 25.
- ²⁵ 'Hearers of the Word' is the title of Karl Rahner's "second foundational work" (Harvey D. EGAN, "Rahner, Karl (1904-84)", in Trevor A. Hart (Gen. ed.), *The Dictionary of Historical Theology*. Grand Rapids (Mi): William B. Eerdmans, 2000, pp. 449a-51b, here p. 449 b.
- ²⁶ Lawrence Boadt, "Genesis " in William R. Farmer, *The International Bible Commentary*, Indian ed. Bangalore: Theological Publications in India (TPI), pp. 400-46, here p. 415b.
- ²⁷ WENHAM, *Genesis 1-15*, p. 70.
- ²⁸ Victor P. HAMILTON, "Marriage (Old Testament and Ancient Near East)", in Freedman, *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 4, pp. 559b-69a, here p. 568b.
- ²⁹ WENHAM, *Genesis 7-15*, p. 70.
- ³⁰ David "saw from the roof a woman bathing; and the woman was very beautiful" (2 Sam 11:2). Obviously she was naked.
- ³¹ The text speaks of *tyšûqâ* ('desire'), a word which is used again only in Gen 4:7 and Song 7:10. In the former it definitely has a negative meaning: "Sin is couching at the door; its desire is for you, but you must master it". Scholars are divided as to whether in Gen 3:16 it also connotes the desire to dominate. See Willem A. VANGEMEREN, *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997, vol. 4, p. 341. "Christopher WITCOMBE, "St Augustine's Penis and Original Sin", [http:// witcombe.sbc.edu/davincicode/original-sin.html](http://witcombe.sbc.edu/davincicode/original-sin.html); a.o 31 -05-2013.
- ³³ BUCHANAN, "Women's Studies" (note 7), p. 434a-b.
- ³⁴ BIRD, "Women: Old Testament" (note 8), p. 952b.
- ³⁵ C.J.H. WRIGHT, "Family", in Freedman, *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 2, pp. 761a-799b, here p. 767a.
- ³⁶ Terence E. FRETHER, "The Book of Genesis" in *The New Interpreter's Bible*, Vol. 1, pp. 319-674, here p. 557a.
- ³⁷ BOADT, "Genesis", p. 426b.
- ³⁸ BIRD, "Women: Old Testament", p. 954a.
- ³⁹ BOADT, "Genesis", p. 426b.
- ⁴⁰ We find the expression "listens to the voice" only in Gen 3:17, when God accuses Adam of having listened to his wife.
- ⁴¹ Gordon WENHAM, *Genesis 16-50*, Word Biblical Commentary: 2, Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1994, p. 7.
- * Christian Community Bible: "Sarah saw the child that Hagar, the Egyptian had borne to Abraham, mocking her son..." (Gn 21:9). However the RSV and The New American Bible translate this word as: 'playing'.

- ⁴² Richard J. CLIFFORD and Roland E. MURPHY, "Genesis", in Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer and Roland E. Murphy (eds.), *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, 2005, pp. 8-43, here p. 22a.
- ⁴³ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁴ FRETHEIM, "The Book of Genesis", 452ab.
- ⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 451 ab.
- ⁴⁶ According to Ex 20:17, a man's male and female servants are his property. What belongs to the husband also belongs to the wife.
- ⁴⁷ WENHAM, *Genesis 16-50*, p. 7.
- ⁴⁸ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁹ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁰ ** Christian Community Bible: - (Gen 17:15-18) - "*Then Abraham fell face down, and he laughed and said to himself: 'Will a son be born to a man a hundred years old?'. And Abraham said to God, 'If only you would accept Ishmael as yours!'*".
- ⁵¹ In our country when we receive reports about bride-burning and dowry-deaths, the mother-in-law is often party to the crime. See for instance <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/thane/Mother-son-held-for-dowry-death/articleshow/24478112.cms>; <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/allahabad/10-years-jail-to-two-women-in-dowry-death-case/articleshow/28428435.cms>; <http://www.ndtv.com/article/cities/18-years-after-complaint-61-year-old-woman-son-jailed-in-dowry-case-426781>; <http://indianexpress.com/article/cities/chandigarh/dowry-death-mother-in-law-husband-of-32yr-old-booked>.
- ⁵² FREITHEIM, "The Book of Genesis", p. 452b.
- ⁵³ CLIFFORD & MURPHY, "Genesis", p. 22a.
- ⁵⁴ FREITHEIM, "The Book of Genesis", p. 452b. Here I am reminded of the many Catholics who are leaving the Church to join other groups for a deeper God-experience. See Paul PARATHAZHAM, "The Challenge of Neo-Pentecostalism: An Empirical Study", *VJTR* 61 (1997), pp. 307-20, here pp. 312-3. This is a revised version of a paper presented at the North Plenary Assembly of the Conference of the Catholic Bishops of India (CCBI-LR) held in Mangalore, 88-12 Jan. 1997.
- ⁵⁵ WENHAM, *Genesis 16-50*, p. 355.
- ⁵⁶ FRETHEIM, "The Book of Genesis", p. 455.
- ⁵⁷ WENHAM, *Genesis 16-50*, p.11
- ⁵⁸ Richard C. MARTIN, "Pilgrimage: Muslim Pilgrimage", in Mircea Eliade, ed.-in-chief, *The Encyclopedia of Religion*. New York: Simon & Schuster Macmillan, 1995, vol. 11, pp. 338a-46a, here p. 343b.
- ⁵⁹ We also have the story of Elkanah and his two wives. Peninnah bore him sons and daughters. Hannah was barren, and so she was ridiculed by Peninnah. Her husband loved Hannah very much. He was more to her than ten sons. Yet she would weep with sorrow (1 Sam 1:1-8).
- ⁶⁰ Perhaps the Song of Songs is the only book in the Bible where the erotic aspect of sex is given its due.
- ⁶¹ Hamilton, "Marriage", p. 565b.
- ⁶² Scholars are divided on the question as to whether Bethsheba was in any way also responsible for the tragic drama that followed. Some think that she was deliberately flirting; others maintain that it was imprudent on her part to bathe in public. Others hold that she was totally innocent. See Bruce C. BIRCH, "2 Samuel", *NIB*, pp. 1199-383, here p. 284.
- ⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 1284b.
- ⁶⁴ D.M. SCHOLER, "Women", in Joel B. Green, Scott McKnight and I. Howard Marshall, *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*. Downers Grove, IL, Intervarsity Press, 1992, pp. 880a-887a, here 88 la.
- ⁶⁵ *Ibid.*
- ⁶⁶ Even Matthew refers to her as the wife of Uriah (1:6).
- ⁶⁷ Arnold A. ANDERSON, *2 Samuel*. Word Biblical Commentary 11. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1989, p. 154.
- ⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 156.
- ⁶⁹ CLIFFORD AND MURPHY, "Genesis", p. 21b.
- ⁷⁰ WENHAM, *Genesis 1-16*, p. 452a, emphasis in the original.
- ⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 4511a.
- ⁷² Astrid Billes BECK, "Rebekah", in Freedman, ed., *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 5, pp. 6299 a-30 b, p. 154.
- ⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 630 a.
- ⁷⁴ WENHAM, *Genesis 1-16*, p. 178.

Ref.: *VJTR* 78 (2014) 253-272.

THE SEDOS ANNUAL REPORT 2014

50 YEARS IN MISSION

SEDOS, A TIMELY AND PROPHETIC INITIATIVE

*"To look to the past with gratitude.
To live the present with passion.
To embrace the future with hope".*

(Pope Francis to the Consecrated People, 21 November 2014)

Allow me, dear Friends and Members of SEDOS to start my Annual Report by taking few minutes and unite ourselves to Pope Francis and pray:

"Together let us thank the Father, who called us to follow Jesus by fully embracing the Gospel and serving the Church, and poured into our hearts the Holy Spirit, the source of our joy and our witness to God's love and mercy before the world".

The structure of my Report will follow the three objectives Pope Francis assigned to the year 2015, the Year of consecrated Life. Providentially, SEDOS has just celebrated its Golden Jubilee this year the last celebration took place on Saturday 4 October 2014. The choice of the date was not a coincidence, but it was very significant one, indeed, Francis of Assisi is a universal brother. François laid the groundwork of interfaith dialogue by visiting Sultan of Egypt and accepting his hospitality which brought fruit, a fruit that had the reciprocal positive effects.

I. To look to the past with gratitude

Saint John Paul II said: "You have not only a glorious history to remember and to recount, but also a great history still to be accomplished! Look to the future, where the Spirit is sending you in order to do even greater things" (No. 110).

We commemorated the event with the LOGO in which one can read:

Remember, Celebrate and Renew!

We looked to the past history of SEDOS with much gratitude and we did strive to find adequate ways and means to honour the nine Founders of SEDOS, hence, the Executive Director, after consulting her collaborator: Mrs. Ilaria IADELUCA, the Secretary, Sr. Celine KOKKAT, JMJ, Administrator of the Documentation Center, with the consent of the Executive Committee, proceeded to the elaboration of a commemorative publication. We sent a letter to the nine Congregations of the Founders asking them to provide for the SEDOS' Office a short biography and a picture. We got very enthusiastic replies. The booklet is in the final stage, Fr. André SCHAMINEE, M. Afr. has accepted to carry on the proof-reading started by Sister Georgeanne Marie DONOVAN, SMS, Sup. Gen, and former President of SEDOS. Fr. André would like SEDOS to publish a nice and a professional Booklet on Founders of SEDOS.

This commemorative publication has a twofold purpose. First, it aims to show how SEDOS has creatively fostered the dialogical dynamic ushered in by the Nine Superiors General, the Council Fathers and the Founding members of SEDOS. Their clarion call to an ongoing inter-congregational dialogue continues to resound in the ears of the SEDOS member Institutes and Congregations. We recognize that the structures set up by the nine Founders are still relevant and responsive to the needs of the Church's missionary action today.

SEDOS RESIDENTIAL SEMINAR: 20-24 May 2014

"Sent by the God of Surprises, New Ways of Being Missionaries"

"We look back to our origins and ask: what have we achieved at all since then?
Our first modest answer is: our questions through the years — more than our

answers — have kept us *inter-congregationally* faithful and creative to our common mission charism. We next look forward and ask ourselves: whither SEDOS henceforth? Let us renew our trusting openness to the Holy Spirit who will surely spur and lead us onwards – if only we keep on asking, searching and knocking *together as mission partners*".¹

As an inter-congregational union we modestly realized that we have been faithfully carrying out, for the past fifty years, the prophetic initiative of the Founders who let themselves be guided by the Holy Spirit. In this period of the history of the Church, we feel that we are called to become more and more "Spirit-filled evangelizers who pray and work; who develop the ability to cultivate an interior space which can give a Christian meaning to our missionary commitments and activities".²

At the end of the Seminar 2014, participants unanimously affirmed that SEDOS, born during the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, is needed now more than ever.

Secondly, we especially want to show respect and esteem to our Founders' creativity, intelligence, originality and breadth of vision that helped us transcend the attitudes of individualism and triumphalism prevalent in our missionary Congregations before the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council.

SEDOS treasures its ecumenical dimension and the Executive Committee chose the date of **4 October 2014** to conclude this happy event with a well-attended ecumenical celebration. We set out as Companions on the Journey, and we retraced the steps of the disciples on the road to Emmaus (Lk 24:13-35) in the lovely grounds of the General Curia of the Brothers of the Christian Schools.

SEDOS enhanced the meaning of the jubilee festivity by inviting some members of the Sister Churches. With deep joy we welcomed among us the Reverend Pastor Jens-Martin KRUSE, of the Lutheran Church of Rome; and the Most Reverend Archbishop David MOXON, representative of the Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury to the Holy See. Our Guest Brothers, starting from chosen passage of the Gospel of Lk 24:13-35; they offered and enriched us with their profound reflections, fruit of their life experiences.

II. We live the present with passion and so embrace the future with hope:

We recognize that the structures set up by the nine Founders are still relevant and still answer to the needs of the Church's missionary action today, but there is an urgent need to revise them for a better service in the future. (Cf. The Presentation by Prof. Luca PANDOLFI)

For the Year 2015 – the 50^o Anniversary of the Closing of Vatican II SEDOS is involved in different joint Seminars and Congress.

The Pontifical University of Urbaniana has organized in collaboration with the International Association of Catholic missiologists an International congress to celebrate: "THE JOURNEY OF MISSION INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS ON THE FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE PROMULGATION OF THE CONCILIAR DECREE **AD GENTES**."

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

Joint Workshop: 13-15 May 2015 (*Centro Ad Gentes* in Nemi): *Scriptural Reasoning "Reading the Holy Books of the Abrahamic Religions: A Way of Promoting Interreligious*

¹ Pio ESTEPA, SVD. "Review of SEDOS Seminars 1990-2014". The SEDOS Residential Seminar 2014: "Sent by the God of Surprises New Ways of Being Missionary".

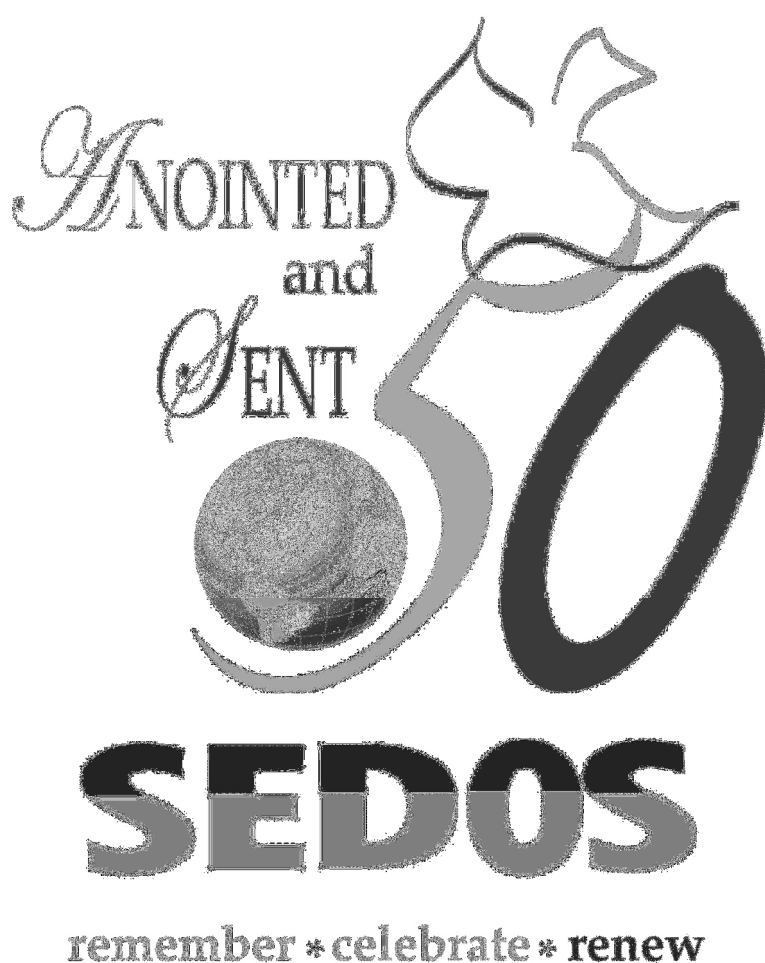
² cf. Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 262.

Dialogue?". This workshop is jointly organized by the Society of the Divine Word Missionaries and SEDOS. Facilitators: Prof. David Ford and his team from Cambridge, UK.

The Pact of the Catacombs: November, 16th 2014 (Sunday) – Opening celebration. Group in charge: JPIC – USG. A Seminar will be organized: on 14 November 2015.

The General Assembly will be held on Tuesday, 1 December 2015 at the General Curia of the Brothers of the Christian Schools.

Humbly submitted by
Sr. Nzenzili Lucie MBOMA, FMM
SEDOS Executive Directress





2015