

# Bulletin 2015

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SEDOS



**Centro 'Ad gentes' Nemi (Rm)  
4-8 May 2015**

**Open the Door, Let Him Out"**

***"Ouvre la porte, laisse-Le sortir"***

***"Abre la puerta, déjalo salir"***

***"Aprite la porta, lasciatelo uscire"***

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## "Open the Door"

In his Apostolic Letter to the Consecrated Persons, Pope Francis reminded us, consecrated men and women, of the importance of building communion between the members of our respective Institutes. He has urged us to step out more courageously from the confines of our Institutes and to work together, at the local and global levels, on projects involving formation, evangelization, and social action. And he concluded that in doing so we would make for a more effective prophetic witness (cf. Apostolic Letter of His Holiness Pope Francis to All Consecrated People on the Year of Consecrated Life, No. 3).



Without boasting SEDOS Membership can say it loudly that since 1964, we have been endeavoured to meet this concern of Pope Francis. In fact, our deep gratitude goes to the Members of the Executive Committee of SEDOS for their choice of a theme very much appreciated by the eighty-seven participants in the SEDOS Annual Seminar: 4-8 May 2015. In the evaluation of these days spent together in joy and missionary enthusiasm, the majority put emphasis on the fact that the topic of the Seminar was well-chosen, that it was a very ecumenical, up-to-date theme fitting into the current context of the world today. We found it very challenging and engaging: **"Open the Door, Let Him Out". The self-referential Church keeps Jesus Christ within herself and does not let him out**" (Pope Francis). We are called "to go forth from our own comfort zone in order to reach all the 'peripheries', new frontiers, in need of the light of the Gospel" (cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 20).

The Preparatory Team composed of young people of our intercongregational union: **Sr. Gisela Schreyer**, MSOLA; **Fr. Rosario Francis**, SMA; **Fr. Daniel Onyebushi Ihunnia**, MSP; the fourth member was not able to make it. They produced a very well-planned programme and they highly deserve our warm thanks.

The Keynote Speakers were very well prepared and their inputs were very interesting and extremely enriching. We can only mention their names here.

In his opening address, Br. **Emili Turu**, FMS, Superior General and the SEDOS' President, clarified the different subtopics of the theme stating that according to Pope Francis, the Church is in need of REFORM and this is to be done through the joy of the Gospel. The Seminar heeds the call of the Pope in *Evangelii Gaudium*: to go forth from our comfort zones to reach all the peripheries in need of the LIGHT OF THE GOSPEL.

**Fr. Felix Korner**, SJ, who teaches Islamology at the Pontifical Gregorian University, developed the following: "Understanding Islam". Fr. Felix affirmed that at present Islam poses an important question for the world today and he thinks that this is an opportunity for us: to understand each other and to enter into dialogue that includes:

To stand side by side: shape our world together,

To stand face to face: to question each other.

To stand back to back to deepen one's tradition in order to be friends in our difference and, to sum up, a chance: **"To learn to understand the pain of each other"** (Pope Francis).

**Mrs. Mary McAleese**: dealt with "Woman in the Church and Society". Mary McAleese, the former President of Ireland, is well known because of her very rich life experiences. She introduced a new approach to the topic by choosing a form of interview in order to directly interact with the participants. We set up a team of panelists who prepared insightful questions: Sr. Gisela Schreyer, MSOLA, **Sr. Maryann Dedewo**, NDA/OLA and **Sr. Patricia O'Brien**, SNDdeN. Mary McAleese's mind-blowing interventions left each one of us very satisfied. The

transcript of the interview will be published later on, since it requires more time to transcribe it.

**Fr. Noel Mpati:** speaking about the "**Jeunes de Lumière et contribution à l'Eglise universelle en République Démocratique du Congo**", described the highlights of the bold, concrete action taken by the late Msgr. Ignace Matondo Kwa Nzambi (1932-2011), to vigorously counteract the decision taken by President Joseph Désiré Mobutu in 1974, to abolish all the Christian Movements for the Youth in Zaïre. Bishop Matondo offered a programme of African Initiation leading to *metanoia*/conversion, based on the see-judge-act method; and his purpose was and still is to help young people to be committed in all areas of their lives.

**Fr. Alfredo J. Gonçalves, CS:** being a Scalabrinian, was the right person to develop the theme: "**Elementos para una Pastoral para los migrantes**".

Fr. Alfredo put emphasis on the fact that Migration is a global, 'structural' phenomenon, and one of the 'signs of the times'. The main question remains: **Who is the migrant?** For some Migration is an issue of 'National Security', for us as missionaries, it is a good opportunity for encounter and to move from multiculturalism to interculturality. **Migrants teach us** what is essential, we learn from them how look at God of the Scriptures: the God of journey, not of the Temple.

**We felt strongly that we are called to look at migrants with the heart of God and to look at God with the heart of migrants.**

**Rev. Pastor Jens-Martin Kruse:** "**Empowering the Lutheran Youth. Opportunities and Challenges**". Since we are living in a secularized society he called us to leave the shallow waters and start relating to all both within and outside the Church. We have to find new ways to connect faith with people's reality. And he concluded by stressing the fact that mission and ecumenism are inter-related dimensions of our faith.

**Prof. Alexey Maksimov:** "**Empowering the Orthodox Youth. Opportunities and Challenges**". Prof. Alexey, a young dynamic man, gave us a vivid profile of the Russian Church which is in transition after the fall of communism. He put forward the main challenge, which is to engage youth as agents of mission rather than objects. He underscored the importance of discerning the youth's desire for great ideals, for radical commitment: "It is worth living for what we can die for". Lastly, he emphasized that in our missionary endeavour

it is important to focus less on structures and more on people and this because we are witnesses to the Joy of the Gospel.



We eagerly listened to **Sr. Georgeanne Marie Donovan, SMSM**. Superior General, as she developed with feminine genius the topic on, "**Empowering the Young Generation for a Hope-Filled Future**". Sr. Georgeanne Marie shared the "experience of ongoing formation that her Congregation initiated as an element of their process of co-creating a new model of organization". She was able to involve all the members of the Congregation

so that each one will not only feel responsible but also be ready to give her accountability.

**Br. Emili Turu, FMS,** Superior General, using a Power Point presentation, creatively took us on a journey concerning: "**Nuestra visión de futuro**" (Secretariado Laicos – Hnos. Maristas). He laid stress on the equal dignity of Marist Brothers and Lay people, as they are all called to a radical following of Christ, they have a common charismatic vocation, and *they mutually illuminate each other*. It is a short text but very insightful!

**Prof. Luca Pandolfi,** of the University 'Urbaniana', has been commissioned by the SEDOS Executive Committee to conduct an Evaluation of the Structures of SEDOS, 50 years after its foundation. He just gave us a brief presentation of the process he has initiated.

If the SEDOS Seminar was life-giving, joy-filled and a very enthusiastic get together, we owe that to our two excellent Moderators: **Sr. Roxanne Schares**, SSND, and **Fr. Mariano Tibaldo**, MCCJ. They both put their skills at the service of our common mission. We are very grateful to them.

Last but not least, our translators who every time we gather, they secure the simultaneous translations. In fact, to build communion and find new ways of being missionaries today, we need to attentively listen to one other and also understand the language of the other. Communication is of the outmost importance; and our poor human language is not capable of rendering the deep expressions of our gratitude towards: **Alessandra Cama**, **Barbara de Luzenberger** and **Mariella Giorgieri**, the SEDOS excellent translators!

Towards the end of the Seminar, we wrote a letter to Pope Francis to assure Him of our prayers and closeness, and we also expressed our concerns about the place of woman within the Church, especially in the area of decision-making, since Pope Francis has recognized the importance of the woman's genius. We express our deep gratitude to Fr. Peter Dikos, SVD, General Procurator, who took care of delivering the letter to the office of the Pope. We got an answer from Pope Francis' Office. It seems that we are a lucky group. Maybe, the three letters will be inserted in this issue.

*We wish all of you a very restful summer vacation 2015.  
May the Blessed Mother Mary be our companion on this journey until we meet again in September 2015.*

Sr. NZENZILI Lucie MBOMA, FMM  
SEDOS Executive Director

**SEDOS RESIDENTIAL SEMINAR 2015**  
**4-8 May**  
**At Centro Ad Gentes, Nemi (Rome)**

**“OPEN THE DOOR. LET HIM OUT”**

***“A self-referential Church keeps Jesus Christ within herself  
and does not let him out” (Pope Francis)***

*- Let us go out to the existential Peripheries -*

**PROGRAMME**

| TIME          | MONDAY, 4/5/2015                                                                                   |
|---------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 15:00 – 15:30 | Arrival/Check in                                                                                   |
| 17:00 – 17:30 | Opening Liturgy                                                                                    |
| 17:30 – 18:00 | Br. Emili Türu, FMS, SEDOS President<br>Opening Address<br>Orientation Seminar                     |
| 18:00 – 19:00 | Fr. Felix Körner, SJ, Prof. at the Pontifical Gregorian University<br><b>“Understanding Islam”</b> |
| 19:30 – 20:30 | Supper/Free time                                                                                   |
| 20:30 -----   | Getting together                                                                                   |

| TIME          | TUESDAY, 5/5/2015                                                                                 |
|---------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 07:30 – 08:30 | Breakfast/Free time                                                                               |
| 08:30 – 08:45 | Prayer/Orientation                                                                                |
| 08:45 – 10:00 | Mary McAleese - Former President of Ireland<br><b>Woman in the Church and Society</b> — Interview |
| 10:00 – 10:30 | Coffee Break                                                                                      |
| 10:30 – 11:15 | Mary McAleese - Former President of Ireland<br><b>Women in the Church</b> — Interview             |
| 11:15 – 11:30 | Short pause                                                                                       |
| 11:30 – 12:45 | Fr. Noel Mpati (DRC)<br><b>‘The Youth of the Light’ and Contribution to the Universal Church</b>  |
| 13:00 – 15:30 | Lunch/Free time - Personal reflection                                                             |
| 15:30 – 16:30 | Small Groups                                                                                      |
| 16:30 – 17:00 | Coffee Break                                                                                      |
| 17:00 – 17:30 | Plenary                                                                                           |
| 17:30 – 18:00 | Liturgy of the Word                                                                               |
| 18:00 – 19:00 | The Eucharistic                                                                                   |
| 19:30 – 20:30 | Supper/Free time                                                                                  |
| 20:30 -----   | Film optional: <i>The Symphony of the Soil</i>                                                    |

| TIME          | WEDNESDAY, 6/5/2015                                                                                        |
|---------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 07:30 - 08:30 | Breakfast/Free time                                                                                        |
| 08:30 - 08:45 | Prayer/Orientation                                                                                         |
| 08:45 - 10:00 | Fr. Alfredo J. Gonçalves, CS<br><b><i>Elements for a Pastoral for Migrants</i></b>                         |
| 10:00 - 10:30 | Coffee Break                                                                                               |
| 10:30 - 11:30 | Rev. Pastor Jens-Martin Kruse<br><b><i>Empowering the Lutheran Youth. Opportunities and Challenges</i></b> |
| 11:30 - 12:45 | Prof. Alexey Maksimov<br><b><i>Empowering the Orthodox Youth. Opportunities and Challenges</i></b>         |
| 13:00 - 15:30 | Lunch/Free time - Personal reflection                                                                      |
| 15:30 - 16:30 | Small Groups                                                                                               |
| 16:30 - 17:00 | Coffee Break                                                                                               |
| 17:00 - 17:30 | Plenary                                                                                                    |
| 17:30 - 18:00 | Liturgy of the Word                                                                                        |
| 18:00 - 19:00 | The Eucharistic                                                                                            |
| 19:30 - 20:30 | Supper/Free time                                                                                           |
| 20:30 - ----- | Film: on Migration ...                                                                                     |

| TIME          | THURSDAY, 7/5/2015                                                                                               |
|---------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 07:30 - 08:30 | Breakfast/Free time                                                                                              |
| 08:30 - 08:45 | Prayer/Orientation                                                                                               |
| 08:45 - 10:00 | Br. Emili Türu, FMS<br><b><i>A Journey Together With the Lay People Sharing the Same Charism</i></b>             |
| 10:00 - 10:30 | Coffee Break                                                                                                     |
| 10:30 - 11:30 | Sr. Georgeanne Marie Donovan, SMSM<br><b><i>Empowering the Young Generation for a Hope-filled Future</i></b>     |
| 11:30 - 12:45 | <i>Sharing of experiences on the Restructuring in the Congregation: What do you expect from that experience?</i> |
| 13:00 - 15:30 | Lunch/Free time - Personal reflection                                                                            |
| 15:30 - 16:30 | Small Groups                                                                                                     |
| 16:30 - 17:00 | Coffee Break                                                                                                     |
| 17:00 - 17:30 | Plenary                                                                                                          |
| 17:30 - 18:00 | Liturgy of the Word                                                                                              |
| 18:00 - 19:00 | The Eucharistic                                                                                                  |
| 19:30 - 20:30 | Supper / Free time                                                                                               |
| 20:30 - ----- | .....                                                                                                            |

| TIME          | FRIDAY, 8/5/2015                                                                       |
|---------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 07:30 - 08:30 | Breakfast/Free time                                                                    |
| 08:30 - 08:45 | Prayer/Orientation                                                                     |
| 08:45 - 10:00 | <i>Time to harvest the fruits of the journey made together and plan for the Future</i> |
| 10:00 - 10:30 | Coffee Break                                                                           |
| 10:30 - 11:30 | Br. Emili Türu, FMS, SEDOS President<br><i>Plenary and Closing address</i>             |
| 11:30 - 12:45 | Eucharist/Sending                                                                      |
| 13:00 - 15:00 | Lunch/ Departure                                                                       |

# Felix Körner, SJ

## Political Islam

### Seeing the reasons — and opportunities

#### 1 Militant Islamism

- **Muslim Brothers** 1928 social activities
- **Hizbollah** shiite; suicide bombings against <Western> institutions as political instruments— model for:
- **Hamas**
- **al-Qaʿida** 1984 mugahidun vs Soviets in Afghanistan
- **Boko Haram** “books” (Western education) are *haram* (banned voice of forgotten Africa)
- **<Islamic State>** Abu Bakr al-Bagdadi “God’s vicars on earth, book, sword”—weapons in Syria, wealth, competence: officers, intelligence, media

#### 2 Unity and division: origins

- **Arab peninsula** polytheist, Jews, Christians, tribal
- **Muhammad** \* ca. 570 AD, orphan, tradesman, 610: <recite!>
- **tawhid** unity:
  - 1 **theology** *la ilaha illa Allah* nothing adorable but God
  - 2 **language** *mubln* clear, unambiguous
  - 3 **spirituality** *sirat al-mustaqim* straight, simple
  - 4 **prophetology** *Hbada* service - <homoprophecy>
  - 5 **ethics** final responsibility; no charisms/vocations
  - 6 **politics** against tribalism
  - 7 **society** no <other>
  - 8 **existence** *rahman* mercy/respect, no pro-existence
- 622 AD Muhammad’s emigration Mecca > Madina, 632 A.D. Muhammad’s death: who will be his successor, vicar (*halifa*)? Abu Bakr *sunna* (tradition) — Sunnites, or Ali *siʿa* (party) — Shiites

| literally        | phobic               | naive                   | fair                      |
|------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| islam submission | oppression           | peace; Abr. Ecumenism   | submission to God         |
| iman belief      | always: only Muslims | always: all monotheists | Mecca: God / Medina: Muh. |
| gihad striving   | holy war             | religious fervour       | violent potential         |

#### 3 Explaining radicalisation

|                       |                                                    |
|-----------------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| 1 inferiority complex | Ottoman decline; 1924                              |
| 2 identity            | ambiguity; modern anti-modernism                   |
| 3 integralism         | having the solution; safe all-answer               |
| 4 integration         | parent generation seemed to over-adapt; in-group   |
| 5 institutional       | representatives do not represent us                |
| 6 distrust            | live for nothing die for something                 |
| 7 insignificance      | a virtual world, aesthetics of violence            |
| 8 imagine             | beat history’s ultimate battle against the daggal  |
| 9 initiate eschaton   | of Islam’s rational and plural history             |
| 10 ignorance          | fascination of hard action                         |
| 11 injustice          | colonialism; we must be the voice of the forgotten |
| 12 Israel             | Arab > Muslim solidarity Koran/Muhammad can        |
| 13 Islam itself       | justify violence                                   |

#### 4 Opportunities

**denouncing double standards** we are against the persecution of believers (not only Christians), Christianity has served colonialism/nationalism, we have fundamentalism, too.

**education** most Muslims are moderate: strengthen their <ambiguity tolerance>; sense of one’s own dignity; God’s word as call to conversion (liberty; pluralism; newness); inner diversity of Islam, Islam’s reflective tradition (theological institutions), hermeneutics

**Francis** <open> (apertura); learn to understand the other’s pain

**Dimensions of dialogue** side by side (we too want to shape this world) face to face (condemn!; and argue!) back to back (friends in difference>)

# **P. Noel Mpati**

## **Les Bilenge ya Mwindi (BYM)**

### **Contexte de création**

Conflit Eglise Etat qui au départ oppose Malula et Mobutu. Alors que Mobutu prône la politique du recours à l'authenticité, Malula sans s'y opposer demeure critique quant au projet de société qui s'y attache. Il y voit une stratégie de consolidation d'un pouvoir politique qui tend vers l'autoritarisme. En réponse aux réserves de l'archevêque de Kinshasa, Mobutu prend en 1972 des mesures anticléricales notamment la suppression des mouvements de jeunesse. (A développer).



P. Noel Mpati

### **1. Les Bilenge ya Mwindi (BYM) en perspective**

***C'est quoi, créé par qui ? Où ? Premiers lieux d'expérimentation?***

#### ***C'est quoi?***

Le BYM se veut une pastorale de jeunes avec la méthode négro-africaine. Tout est orienté vers la métanoïa, c'est-à-dire le changement extérieur et intérieur de l'homme, touchant jusqu'aux profondeurs même de l'homme. Le but visé, c'est de produire une nouvelle personnalité totalement changée dans sa façon de penser, de juger et d'agir, dans ses réflexes.

#### ***Créée par qui?***

### **2. La pastorale de jeunes BYM**

Ignace Matondo Kwa Nzambi, membre de la congrégation des pères de Scheut né 1932 et mort en 2011) Sociologue de formation, il travaillait alors comme vicaire à la Paroisse Saint Pierre à côté du curé Frédéric Etsou. Ayant observé la manière de vivre de jeunes il était impressionné négativement par la dégradation des mœurs. Beaucoup se sont lancés dans ce qui sera appelé 5D négatifs: débauche, drogue, détournement, débit de boisson, défoulement. Touché dans son amour propre, il décida d'approcher ces jeunes, cohabiter avec eux, faire d'eux ses amis avec un but: ramener ces jeunes dans l'Eglise et les attacher au Christ.

En 1974, Ignace Matondo est nommé curé à la paroisse Saint Alphonse. Il s'enrichissait des idées pour accompagner les jeunes.... Il proposa la création d'une chorale Mwindi ya Bilenge. L'histoire retiendra que c'était lors d'une recollection que les jeunes se sont rendus compte qu'ils portaient à tort le nom de Mwindi ya Bilenge, car cette lumière qu'ils portaient au lieu de les brûler, comme ils pensaient, au contraire les transformait, les convertissait. Ils ont alors jugé bon de changer le nom. De Mwindi ya Bilenge à Bilenge ya Mwindi. Désormais il ne sera plus question de se réunir simplement pour la chorale mais ils ont demandé au Père Ignace de développer une série des formations à leur égard pour leur croissance spirituelle.

Fort de son expérience vécue, le père Ignace va faire profiter aux jeunes sa connaissance en matière de l'initiation. Ainsi, petit à petit, l'initiation BYM va prendre forme avec comme verset biblique phare Jean 8,12: Je suis la lumière.

Le père Ignace sera nommé évêque de Basankusu où il va continuer à transmettre aux jeunes des enseignements moyennant des écrits.

Organisation de l'initiation: qui? Jeunes et encadreurs (âge?). Quoi? Etapes.

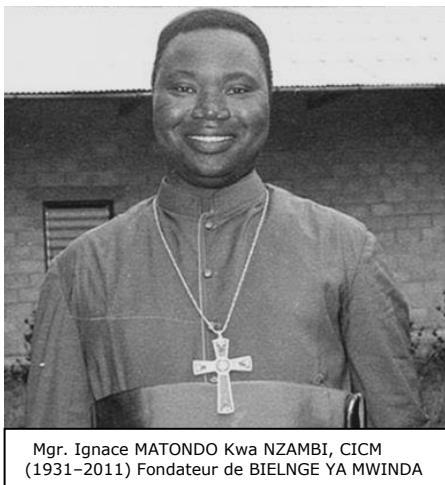
En 1974, la pastorale de BYM est adoptée et commence à donner ses fruits. Du coup l'organisation prend forme. Tous les jeunes sont concernés et l'initiation se fait progressivement et en étapes. Les trois grandes étapes choisies sont: La Lucidité, l'Option fondamentale et le Rayonnement.

Durant l'étape de la lucidité, les jeunes apprennent le code de conduite, c'est-à-dire les 16 mystiques. Un fois compris, une séance de promesse sert de passage d'une étape à une autre. L'étude de l'évangile de Saint Jean occupe les jeunes qui traversent l'étape de l'option fondamentale. L'étape de rayonnement conduit le jeune à affronter la vie en chrétien.

### 3. La Méthode

#### ***L'initiation dans le BYM suit la méthode voir, juger et agir***

Dans le voir, le jeune fait l'expérience humaine des jeunes (EHJ). Dans le juger, il fait celle du Christ (EHC) enfin dans l'agir, il affiche l'attitude de converti (AC).



Mgr. Ignace MATONDO Kwa NZAMBI, CICM  
(1931-2011) Fondateur de BIELNGE YA MWINDA

Méthodes, Promesse, synthèse réussie entre les valeurs traditionnelles et les valeurs chrétiennes, présentation d'un idéal aux jeunes. Socialisation religieuse, intégration dans une société en mutation.

Les 16 mystiques (bondeko, makemba, identification, parole créatrice, force vitale, case initiatique, bonne action, salongo, shaloom, témoignage, émulation, himalaya, mbila, combat spirituel, pêcheur à la ligne et maranatha) (à développer +3 pages avec spiritualité et méthode).

Critique: plus centré sur le spirituel et le cultuel, pas d'engagement sociopolitique. Le contexte de la dictature ne le permet pas.

#### ***Mais à l'actif des BYM, il y a:***

- a- Approche du mariage par étape: libala mwinda; (à développer + 3 pages)
- b- Nouvelle manière de se désigner à Kinshasa: «ndeko»;
- c- Nouvelle manière de se saluer chez les jeunes «shaloom» qui va inspirer la salutation des adultes «boboto»;
- d- Développement de la liturgie en tenant compte de la culture des jeunes: messe des jeunes;
- e- Enrichissement du répertoire des chants et émergence d'orchestres chrétiens.
- f- Rayonnement en dehors de Kinshasa et de la RDC.
- g- Pépinière des vocations sacerdotales et religieuses (+ mon exemple personnel) + 3 pages

### 4. Demain les Bilenge ya Mwinda

40 après sa création, l'histoire de Bilenge ya Mwinda n'est pas terminée: Chaque époque confronte l'Eglise à de nouvelles questions et de nouveaux défis. Sans cesse, le BYM doit oser relire son enseignement à la lumière de l'actualité du pays et du monde pour un apport appréciable. Ici une spiritualité conçue comme une performance personnelle est à dépasser pour une spiritualité qui ouvre sur la *martyria*: le témoignage. La notion existe déjà dans les BYM, mais il faut l'innover de nouvelles données pour avoir des jeunes témoins qui comme Malula pourront dire «il vaut mieux être crucifié pour la vérité que de crucifier la vérité». Le défi qui se pose aujourd'hui à la reconstruction de la RDC est celui du mensonge. Mensonge qui prend les formes de corruption, de vol, tricherie, d'injustice....

Les BYM ont un apport spécifique à faire prévaloir sur ce point.

Autre point, quid participation des BYM à l'édification de l'Eglise famille pour un monde meilleur? Mboka Mwinda.

### Conclusion

Une remise à jour de l'initiation s'impose. Les BYM ont été conçus dans le cadre d'une pastorale paroissiale. Comment le repenser dans le cadre d'une Eglise famille qui fonctionne à partir des CEVB? Et aussi qui s'ouvre dans le monde.

## Fr. Alfredo J. Gonçalves, CS

# Éléments pour une pastorale des migrants<sup>1</sup>

Lorsque nous abordons la condition des migrants, des réfugiés, des déplacés, des itinérants, etc., l'expression «signe des temps» émerge naturellement. En effet, c'est ainsi que la Doctrine Sociale de l'Église (DSE) désigne le phénomène de cette "multitude d'apatrides" qui, aujourd'hui plus que jamais, sillonne les routes du monde. Sans parler de ceux qui meurent ou disparaissent simplement dans les eaux de la Méditerranée, dans les sables du désert ou des frontières anonymes. Mais la thématique n'est évidemment pas le monopole des institutions qu'elles soient publiques, privées ou religieuses.



Il s'agit plutôt d'un énorme défi qui implique plusieurs instances des relations internationales, des gouvernements, de la société civile, des églises, des organisations non-gouvernementales, des entités, des mouvements sociaux, et ainsi de suite. Dans les paragraphes suivants, l'accent sera mis, cependant, sur l'action sociale, pastorale et politique qui se développe dans le vaste domaine de la mobilité humaine, d'une façon particulière dans les activités liées à l'Église Catholique. Sans entrer dans les détails, nous suivrons la méthode voir-juger-agir.

### I. Photographie de la mobilité humaine

Dans les dernières décennies du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle et du début du XXI<sup>e</sup> siècle, la plupart des chercheurs commencent à parler de changement de paradigme. Ce n'est pas une période de changement, disent certains, mais un changement d'époque, qui secoue non seulement le visage social et politique des eaux, mais surtout des courants souterrains de l'économie et des valeurs culturelles. La Constitution Pastorale *Gaudium et Spes* sur l'Eglise dans le monde d'aujourd'hui, document approuvé par le Concile Vatican II en 1965, nous avait déjà mis en garde: "La race humaine vit aujourd'hui une nouvelle étape de son histoire, dans laquelle des changements profonds et rapides sont progressivement étendre toute la terre" (GS, n° 4).

Les déplacements humains de masse constituent, en général, une sorte de thermomètre qui mesure la température d'une telle transformation. En effet, au long de l'Histoire, ces mouvements précèdent ou suivent fréquemment des changements de caractère structurel, à la fois du point de vue social et économique comme du point de vue politique et culturel. Ils forment des espèces de vagues occultes, des signes visibles de phénomènes invisibles. Il y a plus d'un siècle, lors des migrations dites historiques causées par la Révolution Industrielle, le pape Léon XIII présentait la *Rerum Novarum* (1891), un document inaugurale de la Doctrine Sociale de l'Eglise (DSE), utilisant des expressions telles que «soif d'innovations» et «agitation fébrile» (RN, 1). Les deux reflètent de façon frappante et significative le mouvement incessant des migrants dans toutes les directions.

#### 1. Chiffres e trajectoires

Les chiffres relatifs au phénomène migratoire sont généralement la cause de la controverse entre les sociologues, les démographes et les chercheurs en général. La raison est simple: la plupart des immigrants sont en situation irrégulière, dans de nombreux pays, ce qui les pousse à "se cacher pour se protéger". D'où la difficulté d'obtenir des statistiques fiables. L'instruction *Erga Migrantes Caritas Christi*, publiée en 2004 par le Conseil Pontifical pour la Pastorale des Migrants et des Itinérants, affirme dans l'introduction: "Aujourd'hui's migrations constituent le plus important déplacement de personnes de tous les âges. Au cours des dernières décennies, ce

*phénomène, qui comprend actuellement environ 200 millions d'êtres humains, s'est transformé en une réalité structurelle de la société contemporaine, et il est en train de devenir un problème de plus en plus complexe du point de vue social, politique, religieuse, économique et pastorale"* (EMCC, Présentation).

Deux observations font surface. La première est que, dix ans après la mise à jour de ce document en 2014, l'ONU estime que 232 millions de personnes vivent hors de leur pays d'origine. Si nous ajoutons à cela le nombre des migrants internes et/ou temporaires et ceux qui se déplacent chaque jour à cause de leur travail, les chiffres ont tendance à augmenter considérablement. Le Conseil Norvégien pour les Réfugiés (CNR) a constaté — d'autre part dans son dernier rapport officiel publié en 2012 — pas moins de 45,2 millions de réfugiés dans le monde. En bref, si nous ajoutons les migrants pour des raisons sociales et économiques, les réfugiés, les exilés et les expatriés, les nomades et tous ceux qui voyagent, par mer et cioux, ... nous obtiendrons un chiffre non négligeable face à la population mondiale.

La deuxième observation concerne le concept de "réalité structurelle" utilisé par le document. En effet, une analyse actuelle de l'économie mondiale et de la société moderne ou post-moderne ne peut pas ignorer le facteur «migration», s'il elle ne veut pas courir le risque de devenir anachronique. Les historiens et d'autres chercheurs de renom, tels que Eric Hobsbawm, Alain Touraine, Boaventura Santos, Manuel Castells, Antonio Negri, Jürgen Habermas — entre autres —, dédient de longues pages à ce thème de la mobilité humaine. Pour certains, les déplacements de masse humaine sont devenus, peu à peu, une sorte de fenêtre pour observer la société actuelle et le monde. En d'autres termes, ils sont une clé de lecture privilégiée à toute étude sérieuse et actuelle.

Où les plus importants flux migratoires ont-ils origine et vers où se dirigent-ils? Le plus grand nombre a tendance à laisser les pays périphériques (ou sous-développés) vers les pays centraux (ou développés). C'est donc un mouvement de l'hémisphère Sud — Asie, Afrique et Amérique Latine — à la recherche de nouvelles opportunités dans le nord. D'autre part, beaucoup de gens, beaucoup de familles quittent les pays d'Europe de l'Est, de l'ancien «rideau de fer», de l'ex-Union Soviétique, pour essayer de construire un avenir dans les pays occidentaux. Le cadre général des déplacements humains n'est cependant pas si simpliste pour s'adapter à ce schéma. A côté de ces tendances significatives, des millions de personnes se déplacent dans toutes les directions imaginables, de façon temporaire ou définitive.

Le même phénomène existe au niveau national et régional. Selon le sociologue paraguayen Tomás Palau, *«Le mouvement dynamique et pluriel de personnes dans ce qu'on appelle "les complexes de frontières", où se croisent les frontières de deux ou plusieurs pays, est l'un des symptômes les plus importants de l'économie mondiale»*. Détenus dans les aéroports par des lois sur l'immigration de plus en plus strictes et sélectrices, les travailleurs repoussent les frontières de leurs pays d'origine, essayant à tout prix de pénétrer de l'autre côté. La preuve de cela c'est ce qui se passe à la frontière entre le Mexique et les États-Unis, sur la mer qui sépare l'Afrique du Nord et l'Europe du Sud ou dans la zone des trois frontières de l'embouchure du fleuve Iguazu (Brésil, Argentine et Paraguay) — pour n'en nommer que quelques exemples. C'est une "aventure" macabre qui laisse une traînée de cadavres sans sépulture, dans les sables du désert et les eaux de la Méditerranée, et dans les sentiers sinueux de la forêt.

Il ne faut pas oublier, aussi, qui pourrait être appelé la migration limitrophe. C'est le mouvement constant de travailleurs qui se déplacent d'une région à l'autre ou d'un pays à l'autre, à la recherche de travail, souvent temporaire. Ils migrent vers des cultures agricoles, des projets gouvernementaux ou des chantiers de construction civile. La triple frontière entre le Chili, la Bolivie et le Pérou est un exemple de cela. Et il est important de souligner également le drame de "personnes déplacées" par la violence sous ses différentes formes, comme c'est le cas de milliers de Colombiens qui sont pris entre deux feux, de la guérilla et de l'armée. Dans le premier cas, nous avons une migration de résistance qui consiste à quitter temporairement pour ne pas le faire en définitif; dans le deuxième, c'est une évasion vers les centres urbains ou d'autres pays voisins.

## 2. Noms et visages

Plus important que les chiffres, les tableaux et les statistiques, c'est la réalité des gens, leurs noms, leurs visages, leurs histoires et leurs destinées. La mobilité humaine rassemble des travailleurs individuels et des familles entières, des hommes et des femmes, des jeunes et des enfants qui fuient en même temps quelque chose ou qui en recherche une autre. Ils **fuient** la pauvreté, la misère et la faim; la violence et les conflits armés; la discrimination, les préjugés et la persécution politique, idéologique ou religieuse.... Ils **recherchent** un endroit qui les accueillent comme des citoyens et qu'ils puissent considérer comme patrie.

Nous pouvons utiliser trois adjectifs pour classer la migration contemporaine. Elle est, en même temps, plus grande, plus complexe et plus variée. Elle est **plus grande** que les mouvements du passé.

Comme nous l'avons vu, le nombre de personnes qui se déplacent croît progressivement sur la surface de la planète. La révolution des transports et des communications y est pour cause. L'historien Peter Gay a choisi le train et le mouvement comme deux grandes métaphores du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle, avec d'énormes déplacements transatlantiques. Selon lui, entre 1820 et 1920, pas moins de 62 millions de personnes ont quitté le vieux continent européen vers les nouvelles terres des Amériques, de l'Australie et de la Nouvelle-Zélande. Que dire alors de ce qui se passe de nos jours!



La migration est également **plus complexe**. Dans le passé, les gens arrachaient leurs racines du pays qui les avaient vus naître et grandir et où ils avaient enterré leurs ancêtres. Mais ils le faisaient, en général, pour les transplanter ailleurs et pour y prendre racines en tant que colons. L'origine et la destination des flux migratoires étaient plus ou moins prévues, déterminées. Aujourd'hui, la tendance se traduit dans une migration qui se répète et qui se compose de plusieurs étapes, parfois sans approfondir les racines où que ce soit. Une sorte de navette sans fin, avec des horizons et des perspectives diverses. Les mouvements migratoires ont tendance à naviguer selon le flux et le reflux des vagues créées par l'économie mondiale. Une véritable "armée de réserve" qui ne vit pas, mais qui campent — comme l'avait déjà dénoncé Karl Marx. Ils se déplacent au gré des vents et des nouvelles possibilités d'emploi ou de sous-emploi. C'est un mouvement circulaire, pendulaire, selon certains.

Finalement, le phénomène migratoire est **plus diversifié**. De nouvelles personnes, des races, des peuples et des nations font partie du contingent de migrants. Le pluralisme culturel et religieux de la société contemporaine se reproduit également dans les différents visages des migrants. Dans certaines villes comme New York, Rome, São Paulo, Paris ou Londres — parmi les villes les plus cosmopolites — les habitants croisent presque quotidiennement «les mille visages de l'autre», et peuvent entrer en contact avec des langues, des drapeaux et des coutumes différents. Il est difficile aujourd'hui, voire même impossible, de trouver un pays qui ne soit pas impliqué, en quelque sorte, dans le phénomène de la migration. Certains comme des lieux d'origine, d'autres comme des lieux de destination et d'autres comme des zones de transit, sans mentionner certains pays qui peuvent représenter, en même temps, les trois fonctions, comme le Mexique et le Guatemala, le Portugal, l'Italie et la Turquie.

## II. Radiographie du phénomène migratoire

Il ne suffit pas, cependant, de faire une photographie. Tout médecin digne de ce nom, s'il souhaite vraiment guérir son patient, doit essayer de connaître les causes profondes de la maladie. Connaître le mal est la condition *sine qua non* pour pouvoir prescrire le médicament juste. Cela va de même pour le phénomène de la migration. Dans la plupart des cas, nous sommes confrontés à des déplacements forcés, qui peuvent être évités par des politiques

appropriées, dans les pays d'origine ou dans les pays de transit et de destination. En un mot, c'est un problème qui peut être corrigé avec les relations nationales et internationales.

Il en résulte la nécessité de prendre une radiographie de la mobilité humaine. Elle seule peut rompre, parfois, les apparences trompeuses. Il importe aussi d'écouter les histoires de chaque migrant, de connaître les valeurs de chaque culture, d'approfondir l'étude de la réalité de la migration. La radiographie révèle non seulement la peau, mais les os, les organes internes et le cœur. De cette façon, comme nous le verrons, nous pouvons développer une pastorale plus efficace.

### **1. Motivations immédiates**

Demandons à tout migrant pourquoi va-t-il quitté sa patrie et migré vers une autre région ou un autre pays. Ce qui l'a poussé à faire un pas aussi risqué et parfois sans retour. Les réponses peuvent être les plus diversifiées. Certains diront qu'ils avaient le désir de connaître d'autres lieux; d'autres peuvent mentionner une sécheresse prolongée ou une forte inondation; d'autres encore montreront des cicatrices d'un conflit armé ou se rappelleront avec tristesse des membres de la famille qui ont péri victimes de la violence. Beaucoup diront tout simplement qu'ils ont décidé de suivre un parent ou un ami qui les a précédés; après eux-mêmes ont appelé leur connaissance et, de cette façon, le réseau familial s'est restructuré.

Un groupe considérable quitte leur pays pour des raisons de santé, à la recherche de lieux où les soins sont meilleurs, plus rapides et qui disposent d'équipements modernes. Beaucoup de jeunes des deux sexes, après leur étude primaire et secondaire, recherchent des lieux où ils peuvent continuer l'enseignement supérieur, en vue de la professionnalisation et de l'obtention d'un emploi. Mais les termes «travail», «meilleur avenir» et «vie meilleure» apparaissent dans pratiquement toutes les réponses. Il est courant de parler, également, de «fuite de cerveaux». Dans ce type de vision émergent, tout naturellement, les soi-disant facteurs d'expulsion et d'attraction. Mais la première réponse du migrant et celle de celui qui l'écoute peuvent être trompeuses. Les motivations immédiates cachent habituellement des causes plus profondes. Ici, aussi, la photographie a besoin d'être radiographiée.

### **2. Causes éloignées**

Dans une grande partie des flux migratoires, le milieu social et économique d'origine est marqué par une double contradiction. D'une part, il y a des îlots de richesse dans un océan de pauvreté et de misère, où se côtoient la concentration des revenus et l'exclusion sociale. La ligne qui divise le premier et le troisième monde traverse, en vérité, l'intérieur de chaque pays et même de chaque région. D'autre part, depuis le début des années 1970, nous assistons à une crise prolongée et structurelle du système capitaliste de production qui augmente le mouvement circulaire d'énormes masses de gens dans le monde entier. La crise s'abat, tout d'abord, sur les personnes les plus vulnérables, et celles-ci sont obligées de partir à la recherche de meilleures conditions de vie dans des terres lointaines, dans le sillage de l'accumulation du capital.

Prenons l'exemple de ceux qui blâment la sécheresse de l'abandon de leur patrie. En principe, la réponse n'est pas fausse, mais incomplète. S'il est vrai que l'absence prolongée de pluie oblige les gens à quitter leur propre région ou leur pays, il est également certain qu'elle seule ne détermine pas un exode massif. La sécheresse marque l'heure du départ, mais derrière ce fléau il y a une structure agraire et agricole qui depuis longtemps prive les gens de toute défense. Ceci est prouvé par le fait que les grands propriétaires terriens, avec ou sans pluie, restent. Alors, ce qui expulse, ce n'est pas la sécheresse, mais «la clôture» où ils vivent. En d'autres termes, les conditions injustes et inégales de la propriété foncière.

La même chose se passe pour d'autres types de réponses ou d'analyses superficielles. Dans le contexte de la mobilité humaine en général, la vision immédiate, superficielle ou simplement cyclique cache souvent des causes plus profondes et structurelles. Dans la grande majorité des cas, la racine de la migration se trouve dans la situation sociale et économique défavorable à la permanence dans le lieu d'origine. Le manque de travail et de salaires décents, la précarité du système de santé publique et de l'éducation, les relations de travail analogues à l'esclavage, la culture patriarcale dans laquelle les femmes sont totalement soumises à la puissance masculine,

l'exploitation du travail des enfants (ne pas confondre avec la saine initiation des enfants à certains services au sein de la famille) — sont des exemples d'une telle situation.

Dans certains pays et certaines régions, ce sont comme des résidus médiévaux en plein XXI<sup>e</sup> siècle. Par-là, le capitalisme révèle un de ses visages les plus flagrants et perverses: paradoxalement et contradictoirement, avec la révolution technologique en cours, les innovations technologiques les plus avancées coexistent avec des formes de travail condamnées et bannies depuis longtemps par la lutte syndicale au long de l'histoire. Comme l'a déclaré le sociologue José de Souza Martins, des formes non capitalistes peuvent côtoyer un système de production capitaliste.

Les autres causes des déplacements de masse sont liées — comme nous l'avons vu ci-dessus — à la persécution politique, idéologique ou religieuse qui force les gens à fuir. Elles sont liées, aussi, aux préjugés, à la xénophobie, à la discrimination ethnique ou religieuse; à un conflit armé à l'intérieur du pays (par exemple, le Liban) ou entre deux états différents et belligérants (par exemple, Israël et la Palestine, la Russie et l'Ukraine); à des affrontements entre des factions rebelles et des forces armées (par exemple, en Colombie); à la violence sous maintes formes, en particulier la traite des êtres humains causés par le crime organisé; à la lutte pour le contrôle des drogues et au trafic d'armes (par exemple, le Mexique, la Colombie et le Brésil); au travail temporaire qui, au fil des ans, peut conduire à une migration permanente.

### III. Un regard biblique, théologique et pastoral

Il y a trois façons de lire le phénomène de la migration à la lumière de la Parole de Dieu. La première consiste à prendre une histoire biblique ou un livre en particulier — respectivement l'épisode des Disciples d'Emmaüs ou le Livre de Ruth — et à partir de cette approche chercher à approfondir le thème. La deuxième façon consiste à prendre des textes bibliques qui se rapportent à la question de la migration et tisser avec eux une réflexion de caractère théologique spirituel ou pastoral. La troisième, finalement, consiste à lire toute la Parole de Dieu dans la perspective de la mobilité humaine, en mettant l'accent sur une théologie ou une spiritualité du chemin. Sans sous-estimer les autres façons, nous suivrons la troisième, considérant seulement quelques textes paradigmatiques de l'Ancien Testament et un du Nouveau Testament, pour illustrer l'expérience d'un peuple en marche.

#### ***Regarder le migrant avec les yeux de Dieu***

En ce qui concerne l'ancienne alliance, nous pouvons concentrer notre regard sur ce que les experts appellent le «crédo historique» du peuple d'Israël: Deutéronome 26,5-10, dans sa version plus élaborée, et Ex 3,7-10, une version plus primitive. Il s'agit, comme nous le savons, de l'expérience qui a contribué à la fondation Israël comme Peuple de Dieu. En comparant les deux versions, nous trouverons quatre verbes à la première personne du singulier, tous attribués à Dieu, nous montrant un fil conducteur qui se présentera au long de toute la Bible. *«Et Yahvé dit: J'ai vu la souffrance de mon peuple en Égypte, j'ai entendu leur cris sous le poids de l'esclavage, je connais sa souffrance et je suis descendu pour le libérer et le conduire à une terre où coulent le lait et le miel».*

Les quatre formes verbales — **voir**, **entendre**, **connaître** et **descendre** — indiquent que, lors de son "expérience fondatrice", les Israélites ont développé la théologie et la spiritualité d'un Dieu qui non seulement est attentif à la situation concrète du peuple au pays de l'esclavage, mais qui surtout descend pour le rejoindre sur les routes de l'exode et du désert et, plus tard, sur celles de l'exil et de la diaspora. Cet acte de descendre se réalisera pleinement avec le mystère de l'incarnation. Ici, il est important de souligner la sensibilité et la solidarité d'un Dieu qui se fait proche et qui, face à l'oppression de Pharaon, prend parti en faveur de ceux qui souffrent et de ceux qui sont humiliés. En bref, c'est un Dieu qui privilégie les pauvres, non seulement parce qu'ils sont pauvres ou parce qu'ils sont nécessairement «bons», mais parce qu'ils sont victimes de circonstances historiques indésirables.

Le mouvement prophétique ne fait que mettre à jour, à son tour, cette même théologie et spiritualité aux temps troublés de la monarchie et de l'exil. La combinaison de l'alliance entre la *libération* et la *promesse* se revêt d'une nouvelle vigueur. D'où le triple accent prophétique: le **rappel** que *«vous avez été esclaves en Égypte»* et que pour cela vous ne devez pas opprimer l'étranger qui habite chez vous, ni votre propre frère; la **dénonce** face aux diverses formes

d'oppression, parce que vous, *"princes de la maison de Jacob et chefs de la maison d'Israël! N'est-ce pas à vous de connaître le droit, vous, ennemis du bien et amis du mal! Quand ils auront dévoré la chair de mon peuple et qu'ils lui auront arraché la peau et brisé les os ... "* dit le prophète Michée (Michée 3,1-2). Enfin, **l'annonce**, qui est comme le souffle d'un peuple opprimé qui attend la promesse de la Jérusalem céleste, d'*«un ciel nouveau et d'une terre nouvelle»* (Isaïe 65,17-25).

Quant au Nouveau Testament, nous pouvons nous arrêter sur deux textes fondamentaux. D'une part, au début de son ministère public, le prophète itinérant de Nazareth (John P. Meier) prend le Livre d'Isaïe pour annoncer ce que nous pouvons appeler le «programme de Jésus» (Lc 4,16-20; Is 61,1-2). Il révèle depuis le début sa prédilection pour les opprimés, les esclaves, les prisonniers et les pauvres, ce qui reprend, en d'autres termes, les expressions *«l'orphelin, la veuve et l'étranger»* de l'Ancien Testament. **L'option préférentielle pour les pauvres** est enracinée au cœur du Maître, parce qu'il a une affection particulière envers les marginalisés, les impuissants, les migrants et les exclus: *«J'étais étranger et vous m'avez accueilli»* (Mt 25,35).

D'autre part, l'évangéliste Matthieu interrompt habituellement le récit pour introduire de brefs résumés et mettre en évidence quelque chose qui ne doit pas être oubliée. *«Jésus parcourait toutes les villes et villages ...»* nous dit le texte. Et il poursuit: *«Voyant les foules fatiguées et abattues, Jésus eut compassion parce qu'elles étaient comme des brebis sans berger»* (Mt 9,35-38). Deux observations: tout d'abord, notre attention est attirée sur le verbe «parcourir» qui, à lui seul — ce qui démontre la pratique pastorale de Jésus — pourrait être utilisé pour une bonne retraite de conversion. Jésus ne se limite pas à attendre les gens au temple (ou à la porte des églises), il va à la rencontre des pèlerins. Ensuite, entre ces *«foules fatiguées et abattues»*, nous pouvons mettre un accent particulier sur le nombre des migrants qui errent sur les routes du monde entier, souvent des orphelins, seuls et perdus.

### **1. Regarder Dieu avec les yeux des migrants**

Celui qui marche beaucoup apprend très vite à alléger non seulement ses bagages, mais aussi son âme. Chaque long voyage nous apprend à mettre de côté ce qui est superflu et à s'en tenir qu'à l'essentiel. L'acte de migrer et de migrer à nouveau aide à discerner ce qui est essentiel de ce qui est négociable. La route — surtout si elle est parcourue une, deux ou plusieurs fois — nous enseigne la sagesse de nous débarrasser de ce qui est lourd et de ralentir le pas pour nous concentrer sur le but, sur l'horizon de l'existence humaine. En un mot, les pieds du pèlerin développent une mystique naturelle, celle de relativiser "les choses" en quantité et d'absolutiser "une/la seule chose", ce qui est le plus important, comme nous pouvons le constater dans l'épisode de la visite de Jésus chez Marthe et Marie (Lc 10,38-42). En outre, selon le concept du *cor inquietum* de saint Augustin, le migrant représente la condition de tout être humain, pèlerin sur la terre, à la recherche de la patrie définitive.

Selon la Doctrine Sociale de l'Église (DSE), il y a des semences du Verbe au cœur de chaque personne et de chaque culture. En se déplaçant d'un lieu à l'autre, les migrants sont porteurs de ces semences. Selon le bienheureux J.B. Scalabrini — "père et apôtre des migrants" — tout comme les oiseaux et les vents transmettent le pollen qui féconde la vie, ainsi les voyageurs des routes portent avec eux des expressions et des valeurs qui fécondent la tradition culturelle d'autres peuples. C'est pourquoi, la migration ne cesse d'être un instrument d'évangélisation qui tend à promouvoir la dépuración et la purification réciproque et permanente des cultures, comme nous le rappelle le document d'Aporecida. En outre, le migrant ne peut jamais être considéré uniquement comme étant victime de l'exploitation du marché du travail. S'il est vrai que, d'une part, il est généralement un fort candidat aux services les plus lourds, les plus dangereux et les plus mal payés, il est également vrai que, d'autre part, son entêtement indomptable et imbattable fait de lui un protagoniste et un prophète de l'avenir. Par des voies inhospitalières et hostiles ou *«sur des eaux jusqu'ici inconnues»* — selon l'expression du poète portugais Luís de Camões — le regard tourné vers Dieu devient le phare du "fragile vaisseau" de chaque migrant.

Dans cette perspective, la foi et l'espoir du peuple migrant est généralement une lumière qui montre de nouveaux horizons pour l'histoire, qu'elle soit personnelle, familiale ou collective. Dans ses bagages, même pauvres et réduits, il est rare de ne pas trouver un symbole de la religion de ses ancêtres, comme la Bible ou le Coran pour les musulmans. Ainsi, l'acte de migrer met en mouvement, par lui seul, non seulement les attentes du migrant et de sa famille, mais aussi la

propre Histoire. D'une part, le déplacement forcé dénonce à l'origine l'incapacité de nombreux pays d'accorder une vie digne à ses compatriotes. D'une autre part, il annonce, à travers le phénomène du transit et la destination choisie, la nécessité urgente de changements structurels dans les relations nationales, régionales et internationales. En bref, il n'est pas exagéré d'affirmer que l'expression de Martin Luther King: *I have a dream* (J'ai un rêve) devient une force motrice dans la vie du migrant. En paraphrasant Euclides da Cunha, "*le migrant est d'abord et avant tout quelqu'un de fort*".

#### **IV. Défis et perspectives: que faire?**

Après un bref aperçu de la réalité de la migration (parties I et II), suivi par quelques éléments bibliques, théologiques et pastorales qui illuminent et orientent (Partie III), l'objectif de cette dernière partie est celui de montrer des pistes d'action sociales, pastorales et politiques. Plus de "réinventer la roue", nous essayons de mettre l'accent sur certaines activités qui, dans la plupart des cas, sont déjà en cours dans l'Église en général et dans la Pastorale des Migrants en particulier.

##### **1. Accueil et documentation**

L'accueil est l'ADN de la Pastorale des Migrants. C'est l'ouverture du cœur, des portes et des espaces ecclésiaux et culturels pour "l'autre, l'étranger, le différent". Accueillir signifie, surtout, promouvoir une aide immédiate à ceux qui arrivent dans un nouveau lieu. Cette assistance, cas par cas, signifie se préoccuper avec les dimensions personnelles, familiales, sociales, juridiques, éducatives, sanitaires, psychologiques.... C'est pourquoi il existe un réseau de Maisons des Migrants dispersés aux frontières (entre le Mexique et les États-Unis, entre le Mexique et le Guatemala ou entre le Chili, la Bolivie et le Pérou) et dans certaines villes ayant un grand nombre de migrants (São Paulo, Santiago, Manaus). Il est inutile d'ajouter que, très souvent, il est fondamental d'enseigner la langue locale.

L'accueil s'accompagne d'un long processus de régularisation des documents. Sans ceux-ci, toutes les portes se ferment, à commencer par l'accès à un travail décent et à un contrat formel. Le travail, à son tour, ouvre une série de possibilités. Une fois de plus, les migrants peuvent compter sur un réseau de centres d'accueil et d'orientation, qui comptent avec la collaboration d'assistantes sociales, d'avocats et d'autres professionnels qui peuvent aider à l'intégration plus rapide dans la société. La façon grossière avec laquelle la plupart des autorités de la police fédérale traitent les nouveaux venus est bien connue. La présence d'un professionnel donne une plus grande confiance aux migrants.

##### **2. Droits des Migrants**

L'engagement pour la défense des droits de l'homme en général et des droits des migrants, en particulier, est l'une des caractéristiques de l'action sociale et pastorale dans le monde de la mobilité humaine. Beaucoup d'immigrants restent pendant des mois, des années, voire même des décennies (si ce n'est une vie) dans la situation précaire des sans-papiers. Dans cette condition irrégulière, ils deviennent vulnérables à toutes sortes d'exploitation du travail, sexuelle et des proies faciles pour le réseau mondial de la criminalité organisée.

Nous connaissons bien le poids du mot «clandestins» dans des sociétés comme les États-Unis, comme en Europe, en Australie, au Japon, entre autres. Il traduit concrètement l'insécurité, l'instabilité, la peur et, à la fin de la ligne, le processus de rapatriement. Malheureusement, en ce qui concerne le traitement des immigrés dépourvus de documentation régulière, la même chose se produit dans les pays en développement ou émergents. C'est pourquoi il est urgent de pouvoir compter avec une protection juridique pour la conquête et/ou la défense des droits à la vie et à la dignité humaine.

##### **3. Paroisses multiculturelles et pluriethniques**

D'un point de vue strictement pastorale, dans les paroisses d'accueil, il est nécessaire de sauver et de promouvoir les valeurs culturelles et religieuses des migrants. Il n'est pas difficile de créer des espaces pour des rencontres multiculturelles ou pluriethniques, telles que la fête du saint patron, la fête nationale, etc. Ici, cependant, se cache une ambiguïté qui présente souvent un piège capable de confondre les moins attentifs. La préservation de la langue originale, des expressions culturelles et religieuses aide à cimenter et à maintenir la cohésion du groupe

ethnique, en particulier dans les cas de discrimination, de préjugés et d'hostilité. Cependant, dans ce processus de sauvetage culturel il y a le risque de créer des ghettos qui empêchent une intégration rapide et naturelle. En termes métaphoriques, les anges de la tradition religieuse peuvent se transformer en démons, en promoteurs de la division et de l'isolement. Le défi consiste à trouver l'équilibre entre le respect des différents groupes ethniques et l'intégration progressive dans la société du pays d'accueil.

Préserver et promouvoir les valeurs inhérentes à chaque personne, à chaque peuple et à chaque culture exige primordialement un espace privilégié à l'histoire individuelle et collective. Dans cette ligne, les réunions de migrants par groupe ethnique sont souvent extrêmement révélatrices. On suppose que la migration porte un coup qui laisse des blessures, certaines qui ne cicatriseront jamais. Le déracinement et l'exposition au soleil torride du chemin présente des conséquences inévitables. Habituellement, l'individu qui part souffre ainsi que celui qui demeure dans son pays d'origine. Raconter sa propre histoire — comme nous le dit la Psychologie — est un moyen d'exorciser les ombres qui obscurcissent notre itinéraire. Verbaliser la souffrance permet de nous libérer du poids hérité du passé. La même chose vaut pour l'histoire du groupe dans son ensemble. C'est pourquoi, il est important de promouvoir un temps et un espace aux migrants qui, en croisant leurs parcours, peuvent échanger leurs expériences et ainsi s'enrichir mutuellement.

#### **4. Présence au départ et à l'arrivée**

De la même façon que les mouvements migratoires établissent un **pont de survie** entre la patrie et le pays d'arrivée, les agents et les *leaders* qui accompagnent les migrants peuvent s'engager à construire, grâce à la correspondance, un **pont social et pastoral** entre le lieu de départ et le lieu d'arrivée. Chercher à unir les deux côtés du pont par des visites régulières, des missions populaires, des échanges d'informations et de personnel.... Voici une façon de maintenir et de renforcer la foi et les efforts des migrants dans la lutte pour une vie juste et digne. Si les migrants ont des difficultés à aller à l'église, celle-ci doit se faire présente là où ils sont.

Cette présence de l'Église, à la fois dans la case de départ et dans celle d'arrivée, n'est pas une nouveauté des temps modernes. En effet, à la fin du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle, l'évêque JB Scalabrini a fondé deux Instituts religieux (pour hommes et femmes) et un institut laïque pour accompagner les émigrés italiens, à la fois dans son propre diocèse de Piacenza et dans d'autres régions de l'Italie, que de l'autre côté de l'océan, aux États-Unis, au Brésil, en Argentine, en Australie, et ailleurs. C'était, disait-il, pour leur porter "*le sourire de la patrie et le confort de la foi*." Il disait encore que "*pour les migrants, la patrie est la terre qui leur donne le pain*", en concluant que "*la migration étend le concept de patrie*".

#### **5. Centres d'études et de pastorale**

Afin de développer un travail plus efficace et de plus grande incidence sociale et politique, il est nécessaire de faire une lecture scientifique et actuelle du phénomène de la mobilité humaine. Ainsi sont nés les centres d'Etudes Migratoires, présents aujourd'hui en Europe, en Asie, en Afrique, en Amérique du Nord et du Sud. En collaboration synergique avec d'autres institutions académiques, ces centres effectuent des recherches, des études et organisent des conférences, des réunions, des cours et des séminaires afin d'impliquer le plus grand nombre de personnes, mais aussi de sensibiliser l'Eglise, la société civile et les autorités au drame de la migration. Il est évident qu'une telle lecture approfondie des flux et des tendances, des causes et des conséquences de la migration reste strictement connectée avec les éléments précédents. Elle permet non seulement d'augmenter les activités pastorales, sociales et politiques, mais aussi met l'accent sur les changements nécessaires pour de nouvelles lois d'immigration.

Il est important de souligner, à cet effet, la réalisation du Forum International de la Migration et de la Paix. Lors de sa 5<sup>ème</sup> édition (Antigua, Bogota, Mexico, New York et Berlin), le Forum a présenté un double objectif: d'une part, séparer le concept de la migration de l'idéologie de la sécurité nationale et du crime organisé, soulignant avant tout le potentiel qu'elle représente pour la construction de la paix. D'autre part, engager les autorités politiques, les penseurs universitaires et d'autres personnalités, dans une participation sociale et politique plus importante en faveur des droits des migrants.

<sup>1</sup> Ce texte, dans sa quasi-intégralité, et sous le titre de « *Sollicitude pastorale envers les migrants* », a été utilisé à l'origine pour un projet de la "Mission internationale et interculturelle" sous la responsabilité de Lazar Thanuzraj Stanislaus, SVD.

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**"Talking about God in the World**  
**- The Missionary Responsibility of the Church Today -"**

**1. Introduction – "Talking about God in the world- The Missionary Responsibility of the Church today"**

*Dear Ladies and Gentlemen, dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,*

I warmly thank you for the invitation and honorable task of presenting some reflections from the Lutheran perspective on the topic: "Mission and Ecumenism from the perspective of the youth" My reflections are titled: "Talking about God in the World — The Missionary Responsibility of the Church today".

"*I believed. Therefore I have spoken*" (II Cor 4:13), proclaims the apostle Paul, expressing that the proclamation of the Gospel is part of the nature of faith. Those who believe cannot remain silent. Those who believe have something to say about God's goodness. Those who believe want to convey to others what gives meaning and direction to their lives. The Apostle Paul uses the following words to explain his life in Rome: "*I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong — that is, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith*" (Rm 1:11-12).

Just like Paul, who is not prevented from speaking enthusiastically of God and the world, and who overcomes every obstacle to look for people and tell them about the Gospel, the Church of Jesus Christ is today called upon to carry out this same task. Therefore it is the challenge all Christian Churches must face and is based on *how* to speak about God in a rapidly changing world.

Some key points suffice to describe these changes. Looking at Europe, one must acknowledge that countries that until now had been Christian, have become lands of mission. In the heart of Europe, there are areas broadly estranged to Christianity. Many people have lost their bonds with the Church. They consider it the normality and are not aware of such deficiencies. Children and youngsters grow up in families who always less often practice faith. The transmission of Christian faith from one generation to the other is no longer taken for granted. The breach of traditions and spread of secularization is always more evident even among environments close to the Church. Concurrently non-Christian religions, especially Islam, are no longer relegated to faraway lands, but live among us.



**2. Within faith, capable of speaking in a new way**

We must self-critically acknowledge that the Churches have ill prepared their member to address this modified situation. The mission in one's own country had such a small perspective that Christians have not practiced in speaking of God to the world. The typical behavioral traits of silence and lack of words, were, first an expression of embarrassment and as time went by they became a habit.

But the world has changed and therefore talking about God in this world must adapt to the changed conditions. One important task is that Christians are enabled to find a language of their own or learn the language of faith in a new way. There is no need for many new programs for building up the community or spectacular missionary strategies. If we think of what turned people into Christians, in the two-thousand year of Church history, and what, in that period kept the Church of Jesus Christ alive, then without hesitation we can say: it was above all through people's testimony (Acts 4:13) that faith has spread.

Today, parents and grandparents are the ones who tell their children and grandchildren stories from the Bible; who pray together with them and are examples of Christian life. They

are the cooperators of youth activities that through what they say and their life ignite faith among the youth. They are the colleagues at work, friends in the sports environment and neighbors who are bold and focus the attention of others to the treasure of their faith. They help them to discover this treasure also in themselves. It is not just a matter of talking about the Gospel, but to come and open a dialogue. It is, therefore, a fundamental task of the Church's Missionary activity to strengthen people in their ability to talk about their faith.

### 3. Wanting to discover the other

This task is related in the same way to the fact that Jesus entrusted us to announce the Gospel to every human being: *"Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to all creation"* (Mk 16:15), the Risen One said to his disciples. Also with regards to this task given by Jesus, we must self-critically admit we have been content to focus on ourselves and our Church members. As a general rule, we have not been concerned with the others, who have more or less reasonable reasons not to have points of contact with the Churches. But, this is not what Jesus asked us to do. As to the changed situation, Card. Kasper described and set the task of missions in a new way: *"One cannot, therefore, reduce the mission to the 'missio ad gentes', the mission to the Gentiles, in the original sense of the term. We need a new evangelization of Christian countries so far. The whole Church is the Church of mission"*.



... Waiting to attend the daily conference

However, we cannot say that everywhere in the Churches the necessary consequences of this reasoning have been followed. Many churches are still too busy with their personal concerns and the structural changes in the making. This activity is so time and energy consuming that often there is little enthusiasm; joy and spur left to look beyond one's backyard. The need to be concerned with the situation of faith in the entire world around them and be mobilized by it. It is, therefore, positive and necessary to be continuously animated by Pope Francis: *"Let us go forth, then,*

*lets us go forth to offer everyone the life of Jesus Christ!"*<sup>1</sup>

Or, using the word of Jesus to get Peter moving: *"Duc in altum" — «Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch"* (Lk 5:4). The time has come to leave the "shallow waters" of complacency or resignation. To start seriously relating to people inside and outside the Church, and all that moves them curious about what they have to tell us.

If Jesus identified with the least ones (Mt 25:40), perhaps today he comes to us through those who are distant from the Church. Those with no religion who are often neglected and unworthy of attention. *"If something should rightly disturb us and trouble our consciences"*, said Pope Francis, in his Encyclical, *"Evangelii Gaudium"*, *"it is the fact that so many of our brothers and sisters are living without the strength, light and consolation born of friendship with Jesus Christ, without a community of faith to support them, without meaning and a goal in life. More than by fear of going astray, my hope is that we will be moved by the fear of remaining shut up within structures which give us a false sense of security, within rules which make us harsh judges, within habits which make us feel safe, while at our door people are starving and Jesus does not tire of saying to us: 'Give them something to eat' (Mk 6:37)"*.

### 4. Only together we are credible witnesses of Jesus

Jesus' task is true for all Christian Churches. Today, in carrying out this task they face the same challenges. Mission and Ecumenism are integrating parts of one another. Only together, we can be credible witnesses of God. And this is true today as well as from the very beginning. Reciprocal integration between mission and ecumenism dates back to Jesus' Last Supper in Jerusalem. When before his death Jesus prayed that all of them may be one so the world may believe (Jn 17:21). The unity of all Christians is the will of Jesus, but according to Jesus not an end in itself. It is the indispensable premise of the Christians' credible message in the world. How can the gift of God's message of love, communion and peace ever be credible

if Christians lie to one another? If they fight and are hostile to one another? We can be true witnesses of the good news to the world and spread the spirit of the Gospel only through profound communion and cooperation among us Christians.

From these reflections about talking of God to the world today, we see the need for a new missionary beginning. Putting it into practice is however not easy. According to a famous proverb, wood and sails are not enough to build a boat. Above all, we need a strong yearning for the sea and to travel to new shores.

Structural and organizational changes are not enough to move closer as a Church. Adding new roles to the organizational chart or well-devised programs will not do the job. First and foremost we need, *"a pushing force and movement from within: motivation and enthusiasm, that ultimately, only God can give"*.

## **5. Relearning the mission from the Apostle Paul**

The way we can become a Missionary Church under this banner can be clarified by the example of the apostle Paul in Athens, described by the Evangelist Luke in his Acts of the Apostles. In this episode, we can find clues and fundamental reasons that can give us directions today in our missionary task.

1) As soon as he arrives in the city, Paul delves into the city life. With a watchful eye, he considers the life and all its aspects to understand what is moving the people of Athens. He is not happy of all he sees. On the contrary in seeing the city full of idols, *"he is greatly distressed"*, (Acts 17:16) Luke writes.

2) However, his anger does not estrange Paul. Like in every other place he looks for a *dialogue* also in Athens. He looks for the encounter between the Gospel and peoples' existential realities. This is successful only by being present where people gather and exchange opinions. This is why Paul immediately goes to the 'agora', the marketplace. Here he listens to people and takes part in their discussions.

3) Finally, Paul is invited by some to speak more broadly about his faith at the Areopagus. Paul's speech is noteworthy for its content as well as its skillful missionary direction. The apostle starts his speech with the following words: *"People of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: to an unknown god. So you are ignorant of the very thing you worship — and this is what I am going to proclaim to you"*. (Acts 17:22-23). In rhetoric, we call it connection. The idea that this unknown God identifies with the God of the Christians is much more than a rhetorical chess move by the apostle. It is a truly convincing missionary strategy. By so doing Paul, concedes to the Athenians, through what is important to them, that they are not far away from the kingdom of God. Therefore, Paul does not shout against the Athenians' superstitions and quality of the images of their Gods. Nope. He connects in a careful and cautious way to the Athenian existential reality, where he can discover a link to the Christian faith

I think it is important for us to apply what we learn from Paul in our current situation. If we want to speak about our faith, we must learn to connect to what is dear and precious to others. So, we must not use meaningless sentences or dogmatic doctrinal decrees of our faith, but tell in a simple and concrete way how we have found in our live support and consolation through faith. People are not interested primarily in the Bible or the teachings of the Church but they want to know how we as Christians have personally experienced in our life God, revealed to us through the Sacred Scriptures.

4) This credible account has to do with the essential content of faith. We can also learn this from Paul: relating with does not mean to conform. Relating to the life of the people of Athens, Paul doesn't conform to what they say. He encounters them in their situation, but then he speaks in a clear and explicit way about Christian faith. By so doing at the Areopagus, Paul speaks of repentance, judgment and resurrection from the dead. His listeners in Athens are not so keen on listening to him about this as they were during his initial praise of their religious feeling.

After his introduction speech when Paul speaks of the core aspects of Christian faith, the reaction from his listeners is indifference and ridicule. Luke writes: *"When they heard about the resurrection of the dead, some of them sneered, but others said; "We want to hear you again on this subject."(Acts 17:32).*

5) It is clearly a difficult task, to speak in a credible way about arguments of basic faith

such as the resurrection of the dead. But the alternative is not that of remaining silent. Instead, to the extent of one's own ability to speak again and again of the Gospel's message. And to do so knowing that our powers are limited, and at the same time confident that God will do his work. We can also learn this from the apostle Paul. The result of his action in Athens can be considered mediocre. But instead of giving up and feeling submitted, he leaves Athens to announce the Gospel to the next city: Corinth.

6) Reflecting on this episode of Paul in Athens, we can extract five incentives to help us today to open people's eyes to the truth and beauty of the Christian message.

- a) Firstly: go to the places where people's lives unfold and consider what moves them.
- b) Secondly: join in the public life and look for a dialogue with others.
- c) Thirdly: testify one's faith and,
- d) Fourth, do it in a prudent and frank way as well as clearly and fearlessly.
- e) Lastly, fifth: we can take on this task, confident that God can and wants to achieve something big and wonderful starting from a small beginning.

## **6. Building the Church moving towards the future**

The example of the apostle Paul gives us courage and direction in building a Church moving towards the future. I would like to conclude my reflections on "talking about God today" with a brief consideration of the missionary life in a very normal Lutheran community.

The theologian Eberhard Jüngel described in a beautiful image the need, at par, of the mission and evangelization to the steady beat of the Church. He said: *"If Christianity could breath, if it could inhale and could take a deep breath, then it would realize that there are two forms of graces when breathing (...) When inhaling the Church reflects on herself, when exhaling she becomes outgoing (...)."*<sup>m</sup>

- 1) "When inhaling the Church reflects on herself" -It occurs in the religion, where the Gospel of Jesus is announced and experimented in the sacraments, the salvation of God. Here is the source of faith from which we draw strength in our lives and Christian duty. Sunday worship, therefore, is at the heart of our community life. It is the place where the community experiences itself as communion, founded by the love of Jesus.

A distinctive feature of our cults is that they are celebrated together and that the interpretation of the Word of God, during the sermon, enjoys a special appreciation. The culture of worship in our Church include other forms of worship, especially oriented to the needs of children, youth and families.

- 2) "When exhaling the Church becomes outgoing." This is done in community life. In many ways, here we have opportunities to reach out and talk to people who have had, so far, little contact with faith: on the occasion of administrative acts, the cult of children, coffee in Church, during home visits, conferences, lectures, religious education in school, the group of young people, in the context of social projects or through sacred music.

In all these occasions, two topics are important for us:

- 1) It is a communion. We try to shape our community life for people to feel welcomed and willing to contribute to the activities providing their skills.
- 2) the second paramount aspect in community work is formation. Where people gather in our community, either for religion classes for children, confirmation or the elderly, the goal is to try and learn the essential content of Christian faith. Applying them to the personal practice of faith and growing in the Christian practice of faith. By so doing, the members of the community will also be able to defend faith both in private and public dialogue. And realizing its well-rooted meaning in our lives.
- 3) Families are specifically at the core of our community. This is based on one hand on the so called missionary assignment given by Jesus: *"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you"* (Mt 28: 19-20). The bond with Jesus and the Church occurs mainly through the Holy Baptism. In our Church, it is mainly done as a pedobaptism. But a life coming from the Baptism is possible only if children can grown in Jesus Christ's faith.

Children's baptism responsibility, is addressed by providing children and their parents with a

series of opportunities of accompaniment throughout the liturgical year and enable to learn faith one step at a time. This includes for example, the children's cults, with systematic encounters as well as cults for family members in important Church festivities.

Confirmation lessons are aimed at preparing youngsters to pronounce their own acceptance to faith. The groups include from 5 to 10 youngsters that in a one-year time span are intensely taught the main elements of Christian teachings. The protected area enables youngsters to speak about their religiosity, to understand the meaning of Christian faith in their lives and experience one's form of personal spirituality.

Another important event during confirmation lessons are the recreational weekends. They specifically experience communion and help the youngsters to live the community as a comfortable place.

At the same time, however, families enjoy specific care. The children and youngsters are experiencing for the first time, within their families how to entrust one's life to God, talking about God and speaking to God in prayer. In no other place, one can decide how powerfully profound breach of traditions that is currently unfolding will be. With specific solutions, we try to support parents in Christian education and to strengthen their everyday life of faith with their children.

4) In a pluralist society, Christian Churches, in reaching out to people who are distant both internally and externally from the Christian faith, find themselves competing with other market offers. This is true also for the small Lutheran community in Rome. We try to address this challenge in three ways. On the one hand through quality community level work. On the other with offers such as conferences, cultural events, concerts ,etc. specifically designed to target people who have little points of contact with Christian traditions. And, we don't wait for people to come to us but try to attract people's attention to our community. Each member of the community plays an important role. There are few things as convincing as the personal testimony of a Christian layperson. Because few things are as convincing as the personal testimony of a Christian layperson.

5) Talking about God in the world. In many places, in the Churches, the urgency of the missionary activity has been acknowledged once again and given a top priority. Therefore we need all the proficiency and power we can find. At the same time, this is part of the most beautiful tasks pertaining to our faith. Because: *"Those who have experienced the gospel of Jesus Christ as the foundation of their life, cannot help but to testify, making propaganda for this Lord and invite others to rely as much to him".<sup>ii</sup>*

This task will continuously push us to our limits. We will be questioned. We will not reap the desired success everywhere. But, confident that our Lord will accomplish His work, we always want to stay with him, who called us to follow him.

Therefore: *"we want to concentrate ourselves on Jesus' cause and pray him to keep us in this cause, to help us to continuously refocus on it and protect us from the many losses. We therefore mustn't look anxiously backwards, to what has distorted us from our path of sequel, shattered and prevented us from freedom. We will not anxiously look back, just like a ploughman who doesn't look back to avoid going out of the furrow. Instead, let us look ahead: Let us look at Jesus of Nazareth, who is calling us with a winning voice to his sequel and glorious freedom".<sup>iii</sup>*

Thank you for your attention!

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<sup>i</sup> Kasper, Walter: Eine missionarische Kirche ist ökumenisch (2008), in: ibidem: Wege zur Einheit der Christen. Schriften zur Ökumene I (WKGs 14), Freiburg, Basel, Wien 2012, p. 625.

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<sup>ii</sup> Kirche mit Hoffnung. Leitlinien künftiger kirchlicher Arbeit in Ostdeutschland. Zitiert nach Rudolpf, Barbara: Einbringung des Kundgebungsentwurfes auf der 4. Tagung der 9. Synode der EKD (7-12 November 1999), Leipzig, p. 1.

<sup>iii</sup> Marksches, Christoph: Das Leben lieben und gute Tage sehen, Frankfurt am Main 2009, p. 109.

**Prof. Alexey Maksimov**

## **Bolstering the Youths: Challenges and Opportunities**

I shall begin my brief reflection starting with the title of this seminar: "*Open the door. Let him out*": "*A self-referential Church keeps Jesus Christ within herself and does not let him out*". The words of Pope Francis, in my modest opinion, could be applied not only to the Catholic Church, which they are directed at, but also to the Orthodox Church. I hereby don't intend to take the liberty to include all Orthodox Churches. In fact, I refer to the Orthodox Church that I belong to. To this could be added a diagnosis of our ecclesial reality in general, in the West and in the Christian Eastern realm alike. I believe that the problem regarding youths and their relationship with the Church stems precisely from this very "self-reference" and "closure" of the Church, mentioned by the Pope.

Whilst reflecting on this theme within the Russian Orthodox context the story of the Catholic missions came to my mind, especially those missions that served in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the young Churches in various nations finally recovered their "Catholicism", in terms of being able to develop their own hierarchy, priesthood, along with responsible laity. In essence, they became missionary Churches themselves: they went from being a passive object of mission to being its agents. To a certain extent the Russian Church today resembles these young Churches. She is also very young, but not in historical terms if we consider her richness and deep-rooted traditions. Rather, in 1991, after the fall of Communism, her new history was set in motion. The Church that during the many years of persecution had the strength not to disappear and cherish her own tradition, in the new liberal mundane context, which was scarcely connected with the previous historical period, was faced with challenges and problems, which she didn't know how to respond to.

From that condition of insecurity several contemporary currents took shape, characterised by a set of intentions, paths, and — it could be said — by different eyes. From this perspective, extrapolating the question of the young and of the Russian Church from ecclesial problems on the whole, and drawing a comparison, we could say that the Russian Church is presently experiencing a passage from being the object of the mission to playing an active role, precisely like the young Churches of the above-mentioned nations, which you know better than me. Acknowledging this reality could prompt a feeling of sadness, but it must be remembered that only twenty-five years have passed from the creation of the new history of the Russian Church, and this is not the right time to draw a balance. We are fully cognizant that in the twenty-five-year period that followed the Second Vatican Council there have been problems, sufferings, and uncertainties that linger on still today, over fifty years later. I am fully aware of the fact that for many of you the Orthodox Church is a mystery, meaning that little is known of her tradition or of her specific traits pertaining to the spiritual realm, her administration, etc. I have been made fully aware, by Catholic friends whom I had the pleasure to meet in the years I was studying and carrying out my theological research here in Rome, that in the Catholic environment it is largely believed that missionary activity is not present in the Orthodox Church, that the Orthodox Church is not a missionary Church. It's beyond my intentions to deliver a lesson on the history or Orthodox theology, or address missiological questions. In fact, my purpose is to propose "food for thought", an impetus for reflection that may



Alexey Maksimov

contribute to our common Christian vision of the problem of the Church's mission and the role of youths in this process. Following an in-depth reflection on the method and on the basic approach of my speech, as relates to the question of the youths' contribution to the mission of the Church I decided to share with you some views that could be considered not overly positive.

I'm not speaking of the contribution to interreligious dialogue simply because it does not exist in the Russian Church. I could be accused of making a false claim, but at a deeper reading we should underline its honesty and objective truth. It could thereby be affirmed that dialogue does exist at practical level, namely, at the level of peaceful coexistence, and also on the cultural and sociological planes. In these spheres, inter-religious relations are very good, notably with Islam and Buddhism — the traditional religions of the Russian Federation. We are united in terms of the joint defence of the values of life, of mankind, etc., but we have no intention to delve into theological issues; let's avoid this. The Christian understanding of the members of other religions is not negative but compassionate, since they are lacking true faith, and thus they are lacking eternal salvation, whence derives the missionary commitment. In other terms, conversion towards Christianity is the only possibility, more specifically to Orthodoxy. The image just presented would appear to bring us back to the Middle Ages, but it actually is a rather specific condition. It isn't a practical form of Christian fundamentalism but rather a sort of mental fundamentalism. Could we apply the above-mentioned words by Pope Francis also to this case or would it be an overly hastened decision? To speak the truth, the nature and substance of interreligious dialogue, which currently holds a central role in Western thought and action, is not completely clear to me yet. I recall the words of Cardinal Karl J. Becker, passed away at the beginning of this year, notably his *lectio magistralis* delivered during the Symposium on missiology at the PUG two years ago. At the time His Eminence said that in all Christian honesty it had to be admitted that the theology of religions does not exist, that while we could speak of interreligious dialogue, from a purely theological angle we wouldn't find ways out since we are on utterly different planes in terms of the fundamental questions of faith. Also the late Cardinal 'Tomaš Špidlik occasionally said that notwithstanding the abundant discourses on interreligious dialogue it should be admitted that the only solution is conversion to Christianity. Is it shocking? Yes, it may be. And many would certainly disagree with this view. The reason why I proposed it is to underline that also in the Catholic West not everything is acceptable or clear. In any case, this is not the appropriate venue to deepen these issues. Thus I shall hereby broach the question of youths and their contribution to Church mission.

But before doing this, it is necessary to clarify certain questions, notably how to transform our young people from being the objects of mission into agents of mission. Indeed, the former is a complex problem in the Russian Church today. I remember that in the 1990s many young people would gather in churches because after decades of atheism they thought they had found something authentic and true. I was one of them, my adolescence and my childhood years developed in those years marked by a yearning for acts of heroism, a yearning for — I'm not afraid to say — serving the *New, Excellent* we had found, to the very end. But the Church wasn't ready to welcome youths. They were faced with that very tiredness suffered by priests in his homily on Holy Thursday. The martyr-Church, confessor-Church, suffering-Church had lost the capacity to see reality with positive eyes. In this new state the Church didn't know what to do and ... she started constructing buildings, restoring monasteries, recreating bygone or disappeared structures, 'gilding' cupolas and not only. Only secondly did she attempt to recover human souls, notably those of youths. I remember churches full of young people, their enthusiasm, their "fanaticism", if I may be allowed to use this term with a positive connotation. Then, after a few years the churches started loosing their youths. They were not deeply interested in fulfilling the traditions or taking part in celebrations. They wanted to do something that would be

authentically useful for the Church, they wanted to feel useful, feel it as a thriving need. Some of them became priests, some entered monasteries, others left those places from which they had drawn their energy. Today's situation is not very different. Ten/fifteen years ago the late Patriarch Aleksij II said that today we are 'gilding' cupolas and constructing new, large churches and cathedrals, but years will go by and in our beautiful churches there will be nobody left. Fortunately this prophecy has not come true yet, but if we take it into consideration in the context of young people we could sadly yes, it has. Our churches are still full, but compared to the number of faithful the percentage of youths in churches is far too low. Indeed, in Moscow or in Petersburg the situation is very different. In these cities young people account for 30/40 per cent. But in provinces, that represent 90% of Russian territory, the situation is very different.

Let us try analysing this so-called 'drop' in interest towards mission among youths to identify our past mistakes and our present challenges. The answer of a friend, a missionary seeking new possibilities to carry out his mission among young people, with serious, honest concerns, came to my mind. I must immediately say to me his vision is far too negative, and I myself don't share it completely, although I agree on many aspects. When I asked him "What do our youths need today?", he replied:

*Today, those "ecclesial youths" that have not yet fled "to more interesting places" or who have not become robots that read prayers, attend holy sites etc., need only one thing: to find a deserving application for their energy. Mission is precisely what is needed. But here there are many "Noes." First of all, the basic understanding of what mission is all about, is lacking. Thus is also lacking what I describe as the "culture of mission", namely, a certain "missionary intuition", a certain "missionary inspiration", a certain "missionary vision" of reality, of everything that is happening today in life and in the world. The attempts on the part of the ecclesial hierarchy to change the situation with new administrative methods, however just, only led to negative consequences. Creative minds escape this "bureaucracy" and those who remain have no "tutors" capable of supporting and helping them.*

*The other problem is that a missionary should be honest. For a young person with nothing to loose, who has not accumulated wealth, nor high-ranking positions, honesty is still a "luxury" that it relinquished reluctantly. Unfortunately, the policy of "washing dirty laundry at home" poses a dilemma to the missionary: living or reacting according to individual conscience enables you to go either against "official hypocrisy" or to reach compromises with one's conscience. These, for me, are the main problems of young missionaries today.*

*As regards so-called "non-ecclesial" youths, I shall not refer to all youths but to those who are potentially open to the mission. The latter consist first of all in those who cherish a yearning to fulfil the high potential of morality, which they failed to find in the 'profane world' but unfortunately also in the ecclesial realm, perceived as an area for moral self-accomplishment. I don't refer to those social contexts where mission is traditionally active, namely towards the poor, the prisoners, etc. This is a different theme. Those are 'normal' youths, full of strength, energy, and positive ambitions. They need to know that their energies are fulfilled. Many of them yearn to better themselves in moral terms. This, in a nutshell, is the only valid reason to become Christian. It could be that my vision is far too idealized, but I am sure that among them there are many of those who want this more than it appears at first glance. They simply "closed" themselves to us. We see them as "insolent", "scarcely obedient", but in reality they are delicate and sensitive. We want them to be happy, "making them keep their heels on the ground", but they expect examples of true maternal love from us. And since they don't see it, they defend themselves. "Posing" for them is the same as being in an upright position. But when they don't see us as enemies they open up. Thus when they remove the mask of the "bad boy" or of the "prostitute", their beautiful, authentic faces emerge. Thus it is with these true faces*

*that we should work. Or rather, simply start loving these people for what they really are, to love them so that they may respond in the same way. And then, as a revered Russian missionary, Saint Nikolaus from Japan, used to say, they will start loving the One that you love, that is Christ. This is probably the only thing that the youths outside the Church need: our love.*

I feel obliged to say that part of my friend's speech contains a strong criticism that I don't share completely, as previously said.

*To your question "how can we renew the missionary spirit among young people?" I must answer with the awareness that in my opinion since there never was "missionary spirit" as there was nothing to renew. Indeed, there were missionaries, but the "missionary spirit" penetrates the entire Church, and I cannot find in our history the precise moment when interest towards the mission involved 'ecclesial masses'. For this I would like to paraphrase your question with: "What is needed to prompt the birth of missionary spirit?" There is a disease called "parkinsonism" that can affect individuals and societies alike. In particular, the Church has contracted parkinsonism, namely, the human dimension of the Church. Pompous celebrations, beautiful churches and monasteries, are but the "benevolent smile of a feeble sick person." Aspiring to this Church only belongs to those to whom this state befits, and thus this disease will continue growing worse. The conclusion is that the mission is impossible, and so everything needs to be changed!!! A radical change: if this will be done without discord or schisms and with both hands, I will fully endorse it! But I'm afraid that the evolutionary way won't be of help. An "explosion" is needed, an "atomic explosion" that will destroy everything. Like Christ and Paul.... Everything must undergo a radical change, with no regret for the "sacred belongings" that are sinking our Ecclesiastic Ship.*

I consider this a radical vision of the problems of youths in the Russian Church and of the problem of the mission as a whole.

And now I will propose another vision, that I would describe as more moderate, but equally poorly encouraging. It's that of another friend of mine who completed his studies at the missionary Seminary and after the theological Academy for many years cultivated an interest in this problem. What are, in your opinion, today's challenges and opportunities to strengthen youths' mission, and how can they be strengthened?". He answered:

*As for challenges, in my opinion they can be internal and external. External challenges include, inter alia:*

- 1. Religion, along with the Church it represents today, is not the foundation on which social life reposes. Indeed, all European culture is Christian culture, but modern societies seek to follow the principles of humanism. And while on the one side they developed under the influence of Christianity, on the other they no longer have the substance that gives these principles harmony and meaning.*

Here I should immediately add my remarks, since after due reflection, the centrality of this problem can be affirmed in the framework of the mission of the Orthodox Russian Church. Until today we have been facing a situation which to a certain extent reflects the situation in Italy today, where a Christian tradition, still strong and widespread, closes our eyes on reality, making us believe that the majority of the population living within Christian civilization is completely Christian while in reality it has become, if not completely pagan, at least syncretic, to a certain degree. It would be wrong to say that we are unable to see this at all, but the appearance of social life makes us think that it is still Christian, while it no longer is.

2. *The Church does not enter the sphere of interests of young people's lives, and as a consequence for most of them it remains something archaic and abstract, totally unrelated with real life.*
3. *The Church is not "fashionable". The Church isn't interesting. The feeling is that the Church is not a reflection, an expression of reality, but rather that contemporary reality is applied to the archaic forms of the Church.*

*Internal challenges include the following:*

1. *The problem of rite and its "untouchability". We have a very rich tradition but its archaic forms, despite their deepness and value, have developed under the influence of a given epoch, and there is nothing worse than when an epoch influences the forms of ecclesial life.*

These last three points are strictly connected. The question of rite, the archaism of ecclesial expressions, are centuries-long problems for the Russian Church, exemplified in the 17<sup>th</sup> century schism, a yet unhealed wound. For the majority of the Russian population, rite and faith are inseparable. There is a feeling of sacredness of



words and gestures on which depends the purity of faith itself. To a certain extent, tradition is the liturgical richness marked by symbolism and spiritual deepness. I hereby reaffirm its missionary value, however, it should be noted that it has become a "Museum of sacred objects", comprehensible to experts only. The "Tale of the Antichrist", by renowned Russian philosopher Vladimir Solov'ev thus came to my mind. In order to encourage the Orthodox faithful to accept him, the

Antichrist utters the following words: "Dear brothers and sisters! I know that there are among you many for whom the most precious thing in Christianity is its sacred tradition — the old symbols, the old hymns and prayers, the icons and the old rituals. What indeed, could be more precious for a religious soul? Know, then, my beloved, that today I have signed the decree and have set aside vast sums of money for the establishment of a world museum of Christian archaeology in our glorious imperial city, Constantinople. This museum shall have the aim of collecting studying, and saving all the monuments of church antiquity, more particularly Eastern church antiquity; and I ask you to select tomorrow from your midst a committee for working out with me the measures which are to be carried out, so that modern life, morals, and customs may be organized as nearly as possible in accordance with the traditions and institutions of the Holy Orthodox Church. My Orthodox brothers and sisters! Those of you who view with favour this will of mine, who can in their inner consciousness call me their true leader and lord, let those come up here." This is an awful, unpleasant image of the Orthodox Church! Could it be said that isn't true? As a responsible member of the Orthodox Church I cannot say that it isn't. With his genius Solov'ev penetrated the spirit of large numbers of Eastern Christians. Unfortunately, still today the forms of the faith are dearer to them than faith itself, even than Christ Himself.

2. *The crisis of the community. It is a fact that in today's Church the ecclesial community is absent. The faithful are outside ecclesial life, their "functions" are limited to church attendance and communion. The rebirth of the ecclesial community is a primary challenge today, which could revive the archaic form that today is presented as "the new wine into old wineskin" (Mt 9:17).*
3. *We should not forget that Christianity is the religion of joy. We have lost this meaning. If we take as an axiom the fact that every human person wants to*

*find happiness in life, it can be said that Christianity is called to bestow supreme happiness.*

On a personal note I would like to mention the thought of an author whose name I have forgotten but whose words struck me very deeply, when I still was a neophyte. He wrote: "When I see Christians' faces I find it hard to believe that Christ was really resurrected." When I visited the Holy Land two years ago, we met the Syro-Chaldean bishop of the oriental rite. I remember his words: "We behave as if Christ wasn't resurrected. Watch the football fans shouting during the match — Goal! Goal! While we proclaim — Christ is resurrected! With a sad, tired face. We should exclaim it to the whole world, without fear!"

*There are many opportunities today. But we must be able to see them and seize them.*

1. *It is necessary to seek the points of convergence and the possibility of dialogue. First of all, we should create the opportunity of an encounter with Christianity outside the walls of the Church. The Church should not highlight the "devotion to the Word" in the attempt of "introducing" the surrounding world within her own forms, but rather, show good judgement and a sound understanding of reality.*

This point directly refers to the appeal of Pope Francis that inspired the title of this Seminar: *Open the door. Let Jesus out!* We are excessively closed within our walls, preserving Jesus and His word. In reality, it's a kind of disease affecting the profane world. There are two extremes — positively overestimating the world, or conversely, underestimating it. While in the Western world the first option is frequently followed, in the East the latter prevails. According to this view the world is presented as God's enemy. Indeed, we find the same words in the Epistle of John (1 John 2:15-17) but at the same time the missionary paradigm of the Gospel states: sow the land, in the mud. Unfortunately we often remember only the first statement and we "conceal" Christ in our churches, while we should be sowing on a rough terrain, covered with stones.

2. *Today, it often happens that all that is authentically Christian, thus truly lively and interesting, is discussed, who knows why, outside the Church.*

This is true. It's very strange and sad. Today, a tradition full of symbolism, of metaphors that express the divine reality, is afraid to apply the hermeneutics of interpretation, of creating new adequate forms to respond to substantial questions, like the meaning of life and death. I remember the impact of the "Lord of the Rings" (a literary work) as the effect of an atomic bomb. And what did large numbers of "zealous Orthodox" say? All they said is that this work has nothing in common with Christianity and that the faithful shouldn't read these books. Allow me to say that there is no place for such nonsense. The same — if not worse — thing happened with "Harry Potter", branded as the "work of Satan." How many people are fascinated by these books? I took these cases as glaring examples. They prompted in young people energies, emotions, and decisions to go towards the Truth. And after so much emotion members of the Church make such a statement! Which missionary defeat is comparable to this one? To put it in allegoric terms, 'we are still counting the casualties'!

3. *Today we see the "great success" of terror organizations, which are also, and primarily, Islamic. Hundreds of young people from world countries join such organizations to become terrorists. Why? Are they so cruel? Do they need money? Or are they perhaps motivated by an interest in radical Islam as an intellectual movement? I believe none of these options is true. They want to be part of something meaningful, something they could even die for. The lack of a sense of*

*importance inside the Church, understood as the object of lifelong dedication, is the main cause of disinterest towards the Church. That's why the Church is not fully attuned with the modes that are popular among youths: the Church only wants to show her true vocation. The Church appeals to peace but it's not a liberal form of peace, rather, it's that very peace that Jesus spoke of (Mt 10:34). Christian life cannot be without struggle, it should stand up against the enemy, the Devil, publically declare its hostility challenged by means of Baptism. The life of Christians, "knights of Christ", cannot be uneventful. There is a battle against the fiercest evil in the world: it's a battle against indifference. If the Church will find the way to show this dimension to youths, she will reap abundant fruits.*

I consider this last remark not only interesting but also very important especially because the theme of interreligious dialogue is the main theme of the Seminar. I wish to add a sentence by a Russian philosopher that deeply impressed me. Ivan Ilyin wrote: "It is worth living for what we can die for." Going back to my friend's words it should be acknowledged that in today's Church we have forgotten this dimension of Christianity, even though near us, in the Christian West, is shed the blood of contemporary martyrs.

My address may seem pessimistic to some, but it's not. We often share with one another and with the rest of the world, the beautiful picture of a Virgin, Holy Church. What I wish to say is that while we are also unwell these diseases signal that we're still alive, since only a living organism, that continues struggling for life, can get sick. If there were no diseases, no problems, it would mean that we're corpses that there is no more hope. Thus also our weaknesses are opportunities, like when Paul asked God to set him free, but as we all know, the answer was: "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness" (2Cor 12:9).

Now I think it's time for your questions and remarks.



## **Apertura creciente a los laicos y el proceso de compresión del nuevo modo de ser hermano (Hermanos Maristas)**

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El H. Charles Howard SG, lo afirmó con claridad en 1993: "El carisma de un Instituto no pertenece a ese Instituto en exclusiva. Los carismas son para la Iglesia y pertenecen a la Iglesia. Nosotros somos los herederos del carisma de Marcelino y, por eso mismo, sus guardianes, pero es para nosotros una alegría y una responsabilidad el que seamos capaces de compartir este don. Los laicos nos han de revelar nuevas facetas de ese carisma, conforme ellos vayan viviéndolo más plenamente. **El compartir con ellos espiritualmente nos ha de revelar nuevas profundidades de nuestra vocación de Hermanos**".

**Colaboradores**  
... 1962

**La apertura  
creciente a los  
laicos y el proceso  
de comprensión del  
nuevo modo de ser  
hermano.**

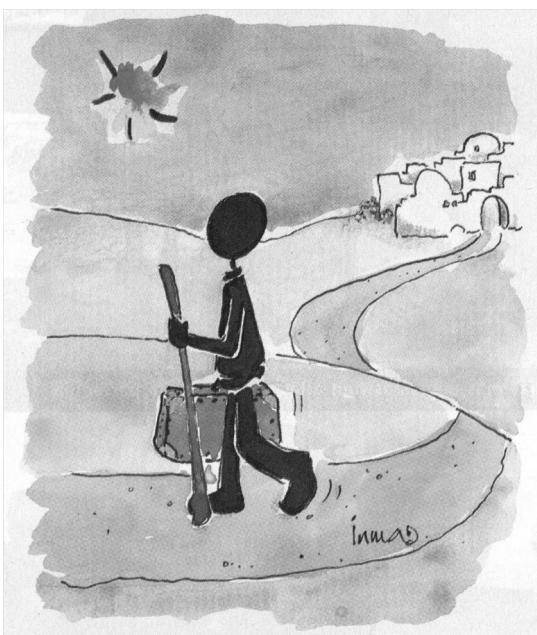
**Familia marista**  
... 1976 ...

**Misión compartida**  
... 1998 ...

**Ensanchar el espacio de la  
tienda**  
...2001...

**Familia carismática**  
... 2005 ...

**Nueva tienda**  
... 2009 ...

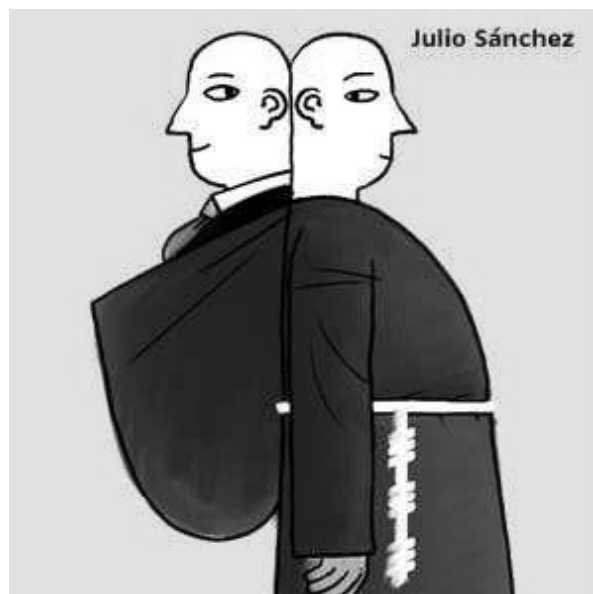


**Colaboradores**  
...1962  
*Antes del Vaticano II*

## **VIDA DE LOS HERMANOS**

- **Empleados o trabajadores.**
- **Trabajo educativo sin mucha relación con la misión evangelizadora.**
- **La responsabilidad última es de los hermanos.**

- **Dimensión pastoral en manos de los hermanos.**  
**El carisma es propiedad de los hermanos.**
- **Autosuficiencia apostólica.**
- **Aislamiento de los procesos sociales y políticos.**
- **La vida religiosa como compartimento cerrado.**
- **Hermanos sobrios, trabajadores, dedicados a la misión.**
- **Fidelidad de solidez y perseverancia.**
- **Siempre atareados. Esfuerzos ímprobos por asentar las obras.**
- **Predominio de la regularidad.**



**"Familia marista"**  
**...1976...**  
**XVII Capítulo General**

## **VIDA DE LOS HERMANOS**

- **H. Virgilio León: Comunidad de personas que comparten el espíritu marista.**
- **Exalumnos, padres, profesores, familias de hermanos...**
- **Más vinculación al nombre de Maristas que al carisma marista.**
- **Se comparte la fraternidad marista.**

- **El hermano más en medio del mundo, dialoga con la realidad.**
- **Realización personal. Mayor autonomía. Dignidad de la persona.**
- **Ideal evangélico de la encarnación. Compromiso temporal. Fuerza de la misión. Búsqueda de una sociedad más justa y más humana.**
- **Se quiebran los moldes de la uniformidad.**
- **Vida religiosa más humana y más evangélica.**
- **Opción por los pobres, inserción, defensa de los derechos humanos.**
- **Va apareciendo un nuevo perfil religioso entre los hermanos.**



**Misión compartida  
...1998...  
*Doc. Misión compartida***

**VIDA DE LOS HERMANOS**

- **La evangelización referencia de un camino conjunto.**
- **Corresponsabilidad en la animación de las obras.**
- **Proyectos apostólicos compartidos.**
- **Testimonio vocacional cristiano.**
- **Comunidad educativa marista,**
- **Desafío de ser juntos una señal del Reino de Dios.**
- **Se acentúa el nuevo espíritu de trabajar juntos.**

- **La presencia significativa de los laicos conforma una forma de ser hermano más en comunión con la Iglesia.**
- **Se potencia con los laicos el suelo común de la fe y del evangelio.**
- **Se promueve determinar mejor lo específico de la vocación de hermano.**
- **Se introducen nuevos dinamismos apostólicos.**
- **Los laicos, como compañeros de camino, ayudan a perfilar nuevas formas de vida consagrada.**



**Ensanchar el espacio de  
la tienda  
...2001...  
XX Capítulo General**

**VIDA DE LOS HERMANOS**

- **El carisma marista encarnado en las diversas vocaciones.**
- **Procesos de formación conjunta Hermanos y laicos.**
- **Participación de los laicos en estructuras de gobierno.**
- **Comunidades abiertas a los laicos.**
- **Formas de pertenencia y compromiso.**
- **Estructuras comunes para sentirse todos "en casa".**

- **La vocación de hermano se reconoce más a sí misma en el encuentro con el laico.**
- **Nuevos parámetros comunitarios con hermanos y laicos.**
- **Nos inspiramos unos a otros para crecer en fidelidad al carisma.**
- **Espíritu eclesial nuevo, sin dependencias.**
- **Hacia una colaboración con los laicos.**
- **Construcción de la "casa común" del carisma.**
- **Espacios comunes de convivencia, espiritualidad y formación.**
- **Modelo de vida religiosa más enraizado en el Evangelio.**
- **El amor al prójimo antes que cualquier compromiso institucional.**

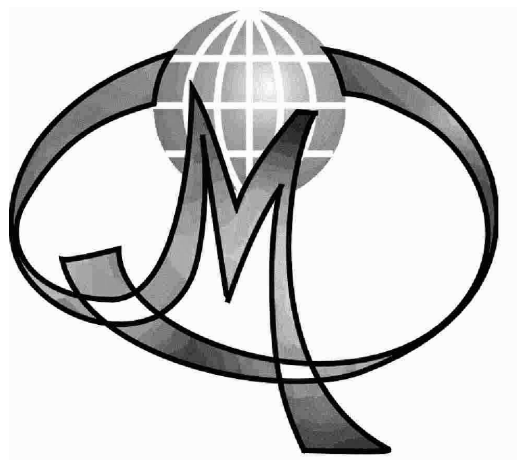


**Familia carismática  
...2005...  
H. Antonio Botana**

**VIDA DE LOS HERMANOS**

- El carisma fundacional es el lugar central de referencia.
- Comunidades con un mismo carisma, aunque con distintos proyectos vocacionales.
- El carisma enriquecido con nuevas formas.
- El compromiso supera la dimensión de trabajo y es una elección vocacional de pertenencia a una familia carismática.
- Superación del instituto religioso como centro.
- Desafío de armonizar autonomía y comunión, vocación y comunidad.

- Conciencia de que con los laicos se puede asegurar la continuidad renovada de la vida religiosa.
- Fuerza de la Iglesia-comunión.
- Conciencia de que la identidad de los religiosos se hace correlativa con la de los laicos.
- Hermanos y laicos: Camino de una auténtica relación de comunión, una renovada experiencia de fraternidad evangélica, un mutuo estímulo carismático y una identificación mejor de la propia vocación.
- Futuro marista como comunión de personas en el espíritu de Champagnat.



**Nueva tienda  
...2009...  
En torno a la misma  
mesa**

**Nueva forma de vida cristiana que incluye laicos y religiosos, hombres y mujeres, sacerdotes**

- Nueva comprensión tanto de la vocación laical como de la vida religiosa.
- Pensar, sentir y actuar como religiosos y laicos interrelacionados y unidos.
- La opción por la fe y por el carisma propio: la primera opción de vida.
- Nueva relación hermanos-laicos/as.

- El futuro como horizonte común.
- Nueva forma de vida cristiana, comunión vital que necesita una estructura nueva y no fácil.
- Una vida consagrada nueva, una nueva forma de ser hermano.
- Nuevos paradigmas de la vivencia del carisma.
- Desafío al ensayo y a la experiencia, en una transformación progresiva en las maneras de entender la vocación del hermano y la vocación del laico.
- Construcción de una nueva tienda con espacios de convivencia, espiritualidad, formación y misión.
- El sueño de Champagnat en una nueva encarnación para nuestro tiempo.



# NUESTRA VISIÓN DE FUTURO

## (Secretariado Laicos – Hnos. Maristas)

1. *Por el bautismo, hermanos y laicos, nos situamos con la MISMA DIGNIDAD FUNDAMENTAL de todos los miembros del pueblo de Dios y con la misma misión en el mundo.*

El Concilio Vaticano II pone las bases para el desarrollo de este nuevo ecosistema eclesial: La referencia al Bautismo y demás Sacramentos de la Iniciación como fuente y fundamento común de toda vida cristiana; la común llamada a la santidad; la común y única dignidad; la única misión eclesial, compartida por todos; el común derecho, que es también deber, a participar en la misión evangelizadora de la Iglesia.



Hno. Emili Turu, FMS,  
Presidente de SEDOS y Superior de los Hermanos Maristas

2. *Todas las personas cristianas estamos llamados a la RADICALIDAD DEL SEGUIMIENTO DE JESÚS, cada una desde su vocación particular. Así, las personas laicas tienen su propio lugar, un lugar que no está definido por la negación de otras vocaciones.*

Esta dimensión laical, es decir, de pertenencia al pueblo, nunca nos abandona: unos la viven de forma significativa (los cristianos laicos); otros (sacerdotes y religiosos) como referencia constante que les recuerda para quién y en función de quién ejercen su ministerio.

3. El futuro de la Iglesia depende, en buena parte, de la propuesta y de la actuación de los movimientos y comunidades laicales. *Como en la Iglesia primitiva los laicos y laicas desempeñan un papel total en la MISIÓN.*

De aquí que la nueva relación supondrá para los hermanos pasar de ser los protagonistas de la misión y evangelización a hacer que los laicos sean los protagonistas, y los hermanos sus colaboradores y servidores.

4. *El carisma marista no pertenece al Instituto en exclusiva, es DON DE DIOS a la comunidad eclesial.*

Nuestro carisma expresa su fecundidad y plenitud cuando es vivido por los diferentes miembros de la Iglesia. Es un don que va más allá de la vida de los Hermanos. Estos han de considerar a los hermanos laicos como herederos en pleno derecho, en su forma de vida laical, del carisma y, por consiguiente, como responsables de su crecimiento y readaptación.

5. *Creemos que Dios llama a hermanos y laicos a seguir y compartir el carisma de Marcelino de diferentes maneras, de acuerdo a las vocaciones personales. Tenemos una VOCACIÓN CARISMÁTICA COMUN: unos la vivimos como religiosos hermanos y otros, como personas laicas.*

El laico marista descubre la llamada de Dios a vivir el carisma de Champagnat desde su estado laical, como forma peculiar de desarrollar la identidad cristiana común a todos los fieles. La nueva relación invita a reconocer la forma específica de vivir los laicos el carisma marista y a no reducir su identidad a ser colaboradores de los hermanos.

6. *El CARISMA FUNDACIONAL se afianza como lugar central de referencia para las relaciones entre laicos y hermanos en el interior de nuestra familia marista. La fuerza de la familia carismática no proviene de una institución dominante que arrastra a las demás, sino de la comunión entre los diversos grupos, puesta al servicio de la misma misión, enriquecida ésta por los carismas particulares de cada grupo.*

Con este nuevo centro de gravedad pierde fuerza la división entre estados de vida cristiana. El carisma se hace vocación, y la persona responde a esta vocación con un proyecto existencial.



Es el elemento unificador, el puente que permite el encuentro, la raíz de las relaciones mutuas, el eslabón que une y diversifica las identidades.

7. Hoy como ayer, la motivación para esta nueva relación es la misma que impulsó a los primeros hermanos al lado de Champagnat: dar respuesta a las necesidades educativas de los niños y jóvenes abandonados. La voluntad de dar respuesta a esta llamada de Dios y de los pobres se convierte en motor de este proyecto común. *Afirmamos que la EVANGELIZACIÓN es el centro y la prioridad de nuestras acciones apostólicas, proclamando a Jesucristo y su mensaje.* Laicos, laicas y hermanos nos sentimos unidos en la misma misión.

8. Hay laicos y laicas en nuestras provincias que afirman: "Hijos de Marcelino Champagnat, comprometidos en el seguimiento de Jesús al estilo de María, nos sentimos llamados por Dios a construir un mundo mejor, una sociedad que se rija por los valores del Evangelio; nos hemos convencido que ser laicos maristas es una vocación y, por lo tanto, un regalo de Dios. *DIOS NOS HA TOCADO Y NOS HA DADO UN CORAZÓN MARISTA.* Ciertamente, más que decisión nuestra, ha sido iniciativa de Dios. No podemos vivir de otra manera, somos maristas".

9. Partícipes como son los Hermanos de ese don del Espíritu como es el carisma marista, les corresponde personalmente la alegría y la responsabilidad de ser fieles a él, hacerlo crecer, vivirlo con otros. *EL CARISMA ESTÁ VIVO EN LOS HERMANOS; ellos son memoria y testimonio fiel.* Propio de los Hermanos es exagerar la fraternidad, y de este modo hacer visible y creíble el rostro misericordioso de Dios.

10. *Tenemos la certeza de que nuestras vocaciones específicas, sin confundirse, SE ILUMINAN MUTUAMENTE; y somos los unos para los otros una constante fuente de riqueza.*

Ni superioridad, ni dependencia, ni pasividad, ni privilegios, sino una espiritualidad de comunión en la misión. En la Iglesia-comunión los estados de vida están de tal modo relacionados entre sí que están ordenados el uno al otro. Son modalidades a la vez diversas y complementarias, de modo que cada una de ellas tiene su original e inconfundible fisonomía, y al mismo tiempo cada una de ellas está en relación con las otras y a su servicio. No sólo hay lugar para unos y otros en la mesa, sino que nos necesitamos mutuamente al lado.

11. *Contemplamos nuestro FUTURO MARISTA como una comunión de personas en el carisma de Champagnat.* Esta experiencia de compartir el carisma nos lleva a repensar el modelo institucional que hasta ahora ha encarnado el carisma marista en la Iglesia. La realidad parece indicar que no sólo necesitamos ensanchar la tienda del Instituto, sino construir juntos una tienda nueva donde todos, laicos y hermanos, encontremos nuestro lugar.

Sentimos que el carisma compartido por hermanos y laicos, puede llevarnos a descubrir inesperadas y fecundas implicaciones de algunos aspectos del mismo y que los laicos pueden revelar nuevas facetas del carisma conforme lo vayan viviendo más plenamente.



12. *A hermanos y laicos nos exige el Señor disposición a asumir un ITINERARIO DE CONVERSIÓN.* La vida marista está urgida a adentrarse en una dinámica de éxodo y desplazamiento que nos lleve a hermanos y laicos a abandonar las respuestas del pasado que no nos satisfacen y rastrear los caminos de la nueva tierra, atravesando el desierto.

13. Acertar a utilizar nuestros recursos económicos en relación con los valores evangélicos y con la misión es una preocupación importante que toca nuestra identidad religiosa hoy y la credibilidad del testimonio que de ella damos. No hay duda que nuestra economía tiene que ser una economía al servicio de la misión. *¿Cómo poner los bienes EN FUNCIÓN DE LAS PERSONAS Y DE LA MISIÓN MARISTA?* La dependencia económica no favorece el camino de la autonomía laical.

14. ...

# **Sr Georgeanne M. Donovan, SMSM**

## **Empowering the Young Generation for a Future Full of Hope**



This presentation today is an attempt to share with you about an experience of ongoing formation that my Congregation initiated as an element of our process of co-creating a new model of organization. "Co-creating a new model of organization" is another way of talking about a reorganization of congregational structures.) So, before I can speak about "empowering the young generation for a future full of hope", I would like to contextualize both the situation in which we carried out this ongoing formation and the group that we identified to participate in it. I will begin with the group.

### **The Group:**

In most presentations on the topic of "youth", we are referring to young people in an age bracket of about 15-30 or 35 years of age. The phrase "young generation" in my presentation has a different context; I am referring to members of a religious congregation – my Congregation of Missionary Sisters of the Society of Mary. So, I am not referring to "youth" in the general population but to a group of women in my Congregation who are perpetually professed and whose age-span is quite wide: between 28-50 years.

### **The Situation:**

Years ago, the Holy Spirit planted some seeds in my Congregation regarding the need to reorganize our structures. Some seeds take a long time to grow. Nevertheless, the Holy Spirit finally broke through our congregational skin during our last General Chapter and convinced us that the time was right to move on this. By 2008, the seeds had been transformed into potential fruit and were ready to spring into new life. We all felt it: the time was NOW and we had a small window of opportunity to act. We could no longer pretend that the heavy structures that required so much time, energy and expertise to maintain, sometimes to the depletion of energy for mission, could continue indefinitely. As a result, our General Chapter gave us a mandate to "reorganize our structures for mission", and this we did.

In fidelity to the direction of the General Chapter, the general council developed a process of discernment that was done in collaboration and consultation with all of our sisters. Throughout the process, we consulted the members of the Congregation and then we met with provincials to discern how best to move forward, taking into consideration the "voices" of the sisters and the "voices" of those with whom we ministered in our varied contexts throughout the world. We also engaged the assistance of consultants and facilitators in the process. After each of our enlarged general council meetings in 2010, 2011 and 2012, we took the "next steps" in the process. It was during the EGC of 2012 that we actually developed a new model of organization. It was at that EGC that our language changed from doing a "reorganization of structures for mission" to "co-creating a new model of organization" so as *to release the energy for mission*. It was the whole Congregation, all the members, who had been involved in the discernment process and who would need to implement and live-into a new reality to be born: in that sense, all of us were part of this process of co-creating something new. All of us would have to be responsible and accountable members and take up our role to faithfully live our charism today and carry it into the future. Throughout our process, we believed that God truly desired to give us a "future full of hope" (Jer. 29:11) but that we, each individual and all of us together, would have to embrace our responsibility to be co-creators of that future.

Our overall goal was to “release the energy for mission” and some of the core elements of the new model of organization that we hoped would help us to fulfill this goal were:

- Suppressing our seven provinces covering 24 countries and reconfiguring into four regions;
- Strengthening the sense of belonging to “the whole” Congregation and not only to one of its “parts”;
- Preparing our sisters adequately, through education and ongoing formation, to respond to the new needs of mission today;
- Continuing to create better ways of collaboration and sharing of resources across the Congregation;
- Strengthening faith-filled membership which, in turn, would foster faith-filled leadership.

Throughout 2013, our year of preparation to initiate the new model of organization, the general council continued to discern what would be needed to fulfill the goals we had for developing this new model. We were convinced that ongoing formation for all of our members would be needed – not just when we initiated the model but especially in the first years of our transitioning into it. We knew that individuals would need ongoing formation but so would specific groups: communities, assemblies, community leaders, regionals and their councils and, perhaps it would be necessary to gather sisters in “age groups” so that they could identify and reflect on the specific gifts that they bring as they embody the charism and carry it into the world today.

We sensed within ourselves a certain urgency to start some in-depth ongoing formation for those sisters who would most likely be the ones to carry the charism into the future towards 2035. We asked ourselves: Could we bring together all the perpetually professed sisters who were 60 years of age and under to have a time of formation? We chose the outside age of 60 for such a gathering because sisters in my Congregation are often in full-time or part-time ministry well into their 80’s and are open to being sent beyond their own country and culture to respond to the needs of the world in which we as a Congregation are engaged. So we expected that a 60 year-old today will be doing likewise over the next 20 years.

We looked at all the pros and cons of having a gathering of sisters in that age group for ongoing formation. We were considering a three-week process so that participants would have sufficient time to really engage in the task. We knew that this was a very daring idea for us because we had never gathered together such a large group - about 120. We are a relatively small congregation of 435 members and our programmes for ongoing formation are normally in language groups of French and English for 10-12 participants. We imagined the diverse voices of our sisters asking:

- Who will pay for such a gathering?? (The question of “money” is always the first point raised).
- How can all these sisters be freed from their ministry responsibilities at the same time?
- What about the rest of us who are over 60 years of age?

Sure enough, those were the voices that came to us, even though not always directly.

We continued our discernment about this possibility with the new regionals during their orientation with the general council in preparation for initiating our regional model of organization on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2014. While they supported the idea, they also raised the same questions that we had asked. Their suggestion was: “Let’s do the programme in each region.” This suggestion implied four separate programmes with four different coordinating teams possibly resulting in sisters hearing four different messages. This did not sit easily with the general council but we were open to considering it. Fortunately, we did not make a final decision on it at that time.

In early 2014, the general council was still not settled on how to resolve this issue. We ourselves were influenced by the questions I already mentioned as well as the question around the organization of such a programme. We were “stuck” on the issue of whether to have four regional gatherings or one Congregational gathering. I asked each member of the council to look at all the pros and cons of each possibility, how each one could be organized, and to think “outside



the box” – that is, to consider other options that we had not considered before. In other words: What was missing? If we were clear on our goals, what elements might be changed or added to move the process forward?

After sharing the results of our personal work, we decided that we needed an objective person to assist us in the discernment process. So, we asked the help of the facilitator who had worked with us in developing the new model of organization since he was very familiar with why we were restructuring and how we hoped to engage all the sisters in the process. We had

several Skype meetings with him and he listened intently to each of us, reminding us of two core goals of our restructuring: “To build the capacity of *the SMSM body* to respond to the needs of mission today” and “To strengthen the sense of belonging to *the whole*.” With this objective voice to challenge us, we made the decision to have one three-week ongoing formation process for perpetually professed sisters who are 50 years of age and younger. Once this decision was made, we were able to harness our energy and engage with all the practical aspects of developing and carrying out an ongoing formation programme that would be “*A Formative Experience in Faith-filled Membership for SMSM*”.

We contacted the regionals about our decision, which they supported and then we informed the whole Congregation. After that, we immediately engaged in the practical task of answering the questions: Where, When, Who, What? After researching possible locations, taking into consideration the need for visas and the travel options to various locations from many different parts of the world, we decided to hold the programme in the Philippines at Tagaytay. We considered all the ministries in which our sisters were engaged and tried to identify the time of the year which would be least disruptive for the greater number, and we decided on November/December. We then wrote a letter of invitation to each potential participant.

### **A Formative Experience in Faith-filled Membership:**

Gathering of 50 participants of 21 nationalities who were living and working in 22 countries

*Processes Used:*

- Working as one body
- Working in language groups
- Working in mixed-language groups
- Working in regional groups
- Working in “issue-centered” groups
- Integration (10 minutes of silence) at the end of the last session each day
- Framing the whole day in our faith context: beginning each day with the Eucharistic Liturgy at 6h30 and closing the day with 30 minutes in silence before the Blessed Sacrament followed by 30 minutes of *Lectio Divina* — ending at 21h00

*in order to:*

- Discover each other* — Who are the members of the SMSM body in this age group?
- Discover the Congregation in greater depth* — through a living representation of the core elements of our history in stages: 1) our pioneer beginnings (1845-1881, 2) our second stage of development following officially established novitiates in France and Oceania and continued growth in membership and organizational development (1881-1931, 3) our official approbation as a Pontifical Congregation whose focus is universal mission and our continued development and growth within a regional structure of governance (1931-1963, 4) our shift into provincial structures because of our large numbers with many young sisters, which was immediately followed by years of major changes after the

Second Vatican Council (1964-2013), and 5) with the recognition of the changing context of the world and our Congregation, the shift towards co-creating a new model of organization that would energize us to live our particular charism faithfully today and tomorrow (2014).

*Discover the world* — the various contexts in which we live and those with which we are not familiar: What are the realities of the world today? What are the new needs of the world that are calling for a response from our particular charism in the Church? What are the possibilities for us to respond within the context of our own reality through greater collaboration among ourselves and with others? What has to die within us for new life to emerge?

*Discover the new model of organization* – reflecting on different elements of the new model and how we are being called to participate (co-create together) in the unfolding of this model so that we can release energy for mission. How am I/we called to be more responsible and accountable in this process? ... in living the charism faithfully where I am/where we are?

*The Team:* The team was comprised of our facilitator and the general council. Because it was a formative process, there was very little “input” as such. The work in groups and sharing in the whole body (in the assembly) continually created the “material” for the process. While we had a well-developed plan for the three weeks, we did not give the participants the details at the outset of the programme. They were very surprised by that, especially those who like to know exactly what is coming next. Instead, our team met each evening to process what had happened in the day and where we needed to go on the following day. If for some reason the group was not ready to move to the next item in the programme, we readjusted the work for the following day. We trusted in the movement of the Spirit to guide us, which is easier said than done even for members of general councils. But, we took the risk to do it and it was worth it in the end. We had one outside speaker, Father Antonio Pernia, SVD, who shared with us on the needs of mission today and the missionary attitudes that we need. His presence with us was a blessing, not only for his excellent presentation, but because he came at a moment in which we needed another voice from outside of ourselves to help ground us in a wider reality.

After the first few days of euphoria in meeting many smsm for the first time, there were emerging signs of the challenges we meet in living in international, multi-cultural communities. There were signs of a growing sense of individuals and small groups holding on to the “my”: my culture, my country, my region, my ministry, my ... There was a need to provide space for respectful listening to “the other”, to recognize the mental models that we carry within us that may be based on false assumptions and to realize that we are “one body” and that the decisions that we will need to make in the future, such as closing communities or ministries or leaving countries in order to go to the new peripheries where God is calling us to live our charism more faithfully and fully today, will need the participation of all of us.

At the end of the three weeks, all of us — participants and team — were changed in some way. Each one shared on one way in which she wanted to be more responsible and accountable when she returned to her community and ministry. Besides the forging of new or renewed relationships – deepening our bonds of communion with each other, there seemed to be a genuine desire on the part of the participants to engage more fully with their commitment as Missionary Sisters of the Society of Mary – to find life in more than ministry, to let go of past hurts, individualism and tendencies to be self-referencing in all things and to be open to transformation and to the ways in which God may surprise us as we move forward and outward as one body, united in mind and heart.

After living with our younger sisters for three weeks, listening to their experiences – their pain and their joy — as well as to their desires, I was filled with gratitude ... gratitude for each one of them who was and is “my sister” and for the gift of the shared charism that we have been called by God and Mary to live.

Do I believe that this formative experience was a means of empowering the “young generation” of my Congregation? “Yes”!

Do I believe that God is giving us a future full of hope? Absolutely “yes”!

***The letter to Pope Francis  
from the Participants to the SEDOS  
Seminar***





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8 May 2015

His Holiness Pope Francis  
Casa Santa Marta  
00120  
Vatican City

Most Holy Father,

The SEDOS Annual Seminar is taking place this week at the *Centro Ad Gentes*, Nemi, with the theme "Open the door, let him out". SEDOS began very simply during the Second Vatican Council when nine Superiors general who were Conciliar Fathers began to meet informally in Rome to exchange information and views on Mission in the Church. In 1964 they founded SEDOS with the purpose of deepening their understanding of mission. The membership has expanded over the years to 96 Congregations, and in 2014 SEDOS celebrated 50 years of service to the Mission of the Church.

We, the participants at the Seminar, have recalled several occasions when we were inspired and heartened by the words of your Holiness regarding the position of women in the Church and in society, and particularly by what you said at the General Audience on April 15, 2015:

*"There is no doubt that we must do far more to advance women, if we want to give more strength to the reciprocity between man and woman. In fact, it is necessary that woman not only be listened to more, but that her voice carries real weight, a recognized authority in society and in the Church.... We have not yet understood in depth what the feminine genius can give us, what woman can give to society and also to us.... It is a path to follow with greater creativity and courage".*

We are greatly encouraged by your words and your concern on this issue, and consider that Church action in this sphere could have a widespread and significant impact on the status of women everywhere. We would therefore like to support you in this endeavour, and request that a concrete plan may be devised which will promote participation and create a balanced partnership between women and men in decision-making bodies in our Church.

We assure Your Holiness of our prayers and our commitments to go out to the existential peripheries.

Your Sisters and Brothers in Christ.



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Novelle Meeus  
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Fr. Jackhua O'Riiscoll SMMA  
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Gerard Moorman  
Meggie Jackson  
Juana Valera, MSC  
Fr. Barthelmy Basano  
Fr. Daniel Hummer MSF  
Oscar Arturo García Padilla, misionero de África -padres blancos-  
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Sr. Natalina Stringari - M.C.

Sr. Celina Kokkat, J.M.J.

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Your Sisters and Brothers in Christ

Sr. Githuo Hughes, sfb.  
Sr. Patricia O'Brien SDDEN.  
Sr. Masheti Wangoyi SDDEN  
Sr. Adelaide Gambin  
Sr. Maria Aparecida Moreira  
Sr. Lucy Wambui RNDM  
Sr. Joyce Peter RNDM  
Sr. Sudha IBM  
Sr. Rianne Schauer  
Sr. Shyry Joseph SSPS  
Sr. Maria Emilia Peliz, RSCM  
Jusélio Belolo MCEJ  
Sr. MICHELLE KENOA. SFB.  
H. Euzé Turi FMS  
Sr. Maile Joes Fma  
Júnio Antonio Ramalho FMS  
Fr. Martin Jaggi SHB  
Sr. Birgit Goslain SGM  
Sr. Elizabeth Vadakebare  
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Valenza D'Amico S.a

Gisela Cleveger MSOLA

Sr. Jeanne d'Arc Burundi

Jolanda Delleman f.m.m.

Nzenzi Lucie Mboma, f.m.m.

**SEGRETERIA DI STATO**

**PRIMA SEZIONE - AFFARI GENERALI**

Dal Vaticano, 10 giugno 2015

Reverenda Madre,

con cortese lettera dell'8 maggio scorso, e relativi allegati, Ella, anche a nome di codesto Servizio di Studi sulla Missione, ha indirizzato al Sommo Pontefice espressioni di ossequio e di comunione con il Suo universale ministero, accompagnate da alcune personali considerazioni.

Sua Santità ringrazia per il deferente pensiero, avvalorato dalla preghiera, e per i sentimenti manifestati e, mentre chiede di pregare per il Suo servizio alla Chiesa, affida Lei e le Consorelle alla celeste intercessione della Vergine Maria e di cuore imparte la Benedizione Apostolica, estendendola volentieri alle persone care. \_\_\_\_\_

Profitto della circostanza per confermarvi con sensi di distinta stima

dev.mo nel Signore



Mons. Peter B. WELLS

*Assessore*

---

Reverenda Madre  
Suor LUCIE NZENZILIMBOMA, FMM  
Direttrice di SEDOS Via dei Verbiti, 1  
00154 ROMA



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10 luglio 2015

Sua Eccellenza Monsignor Peter B. WELLS  
Assessore

Eccellenza,

È stata una grande gioia per noi ricevere la sua lettera del 10 giugno scorso dal Vaticano, nella quale trasmetteva il ringraziamento di Sua Santità per le nostre preghiere e i nostri sentimenti indirizzati a Lui con la nostra lettera del 10 giugno 2015.

Continuiamo a pregare per il viaggio di Sua Santità in America Latina, per portare ai nostri Fratelli e Sorelle di questo continente e a tutto il mondo, l'espressione della tenerezza e della bontà de nostro Dio.

Chiediamo a Maria nostra Madre di accompagnarlo nella sua visita per confermare nella fede le pecore a Lui affidate.

dev.ma nel Signore  
Suor Lucie NZENZILI MBOMA, FMM  
Direttrice esecutiva di SEDOS

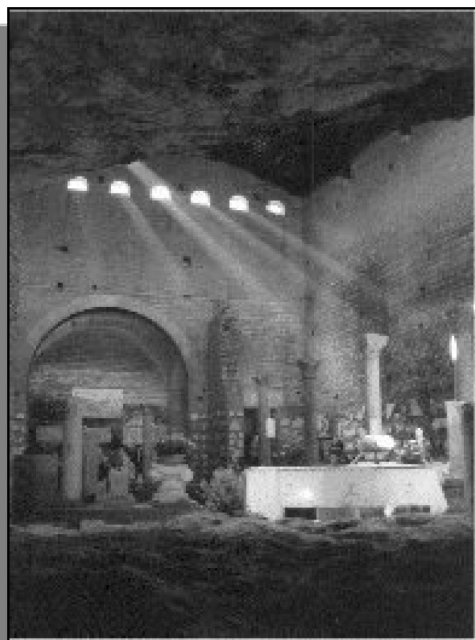
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SEGRETARIA DI STATO  
PRIMA SEZIONE - AFFARI GENERALI  
CITTÀ DEL VATICANO  
**ROMA**

## Seminar on the 50<sup>th</sup> Years of the Pact of the Catacombs

**Saturday, 14<sup>th</sup> of November 2015,**

**Aula Magna of the Urban Pontifical University (*Urbaniana*), Rome**

**from 9 a.m to 5 p.m.**



This year the Church is celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the conclusion of Vatican II which was a milestone in the recent history of the Catholic Church. Inspired by what was going on and what was said during the Council, already towards its end 40 bishops from all over the world signed a pact in the Catacombs of Domitilla, and known as the Pact of the Catacombs. With this pact, the bishops promised to journey with the poor to be a poor Church that serves the poor by living a simple life style and withdrawing symbols of power. In this same line Pope Francis through his words and examples puts this option for the marginalized as the core of the life and teaching of the Church. In the spirit of Vatican II, the Pact of the Catacombs could be very inspirational for the whole Church and in a particular way for the religious, for whom the Church dedicates a special year in 2015, to implement the option for the poor.

To mark this celebration of 50<sup>th</sup> year of this almost unknown yet very powerful document of the Pact of the Catacombs, we: Union of Superiors Generals of the female and male religious congregations (USG/UISG), the Service of Documentation and Studies on Global

Mission (SEDOS), The Divine Word Missionaries (SVD), and the Pontifical University of Urbaniana, have been organizing a lot of activities since November 2014 like pilgrimage and the way of the cross to the Catacombs of Domitilla. To close these activities we organize a seminar with the theme: "A poor Church serving the Poor - The Pact of the Catacombs and its' Impact Today".



**SEDOS**  
Service of Documentation and Study on Global Mission