

SEDOS BULLETIN 2017

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Editorial

Dear Readers,

At the closing of 2017 we look back at a fruitful year for the SEDOS Bulletin, with many interesting articles and themes. The changes that were made in the format of the Bulletin were well received. We now forward to the new year with confidence and hope.

For this final 2017 Bulletin we wanted to do something different. We have collected a series of stories that are useful for personal reflection as well as in group reflection through workshops. The introduction to these stories explain more clearly how to use it and the worksheets at the end of the stories are intended to help when you to share them with your religious community. This workbook *Peace through Stories* can help us all in building up “intercultural competence”, but it is also an exercise in inter-religious dialogue. The magnificent designs are done by Belgian artist Koen Van Loocke with the financial support of MISEREOR.

As *Document* we have selected the sermon that Father Heiner Wilmer, Superior General of the Dehonians, gave on the occasion of the Commemoration of 500 years Reformation at the Lutheran Church in Rome, at the request of SEDOS. Among others, the idea that God is the First Reformer is splendid and relativizes the whole history behind the Reformation and Contra-Reformation.

As *News Today* we took up an article written a few years ago by a former Director of SEDOS, Xaverian Missionary Father Gabriele Ferrari, about the idea of mission of Pope Francis. This article serves as an introduction to our next Bulletin that will deal with several articles on mission in our time.

Next year, SEDOS Bulletin will celebrate its 50th anniversary. We are preparing an extra-special edition of our SEDOS Bulletin with a list of all the articles that has been published through the years. We welcome all suggestions from our readers for celebrating this event.

***The Editorial Team of
SEDOS wishes you
a Merry Christmas, and a
Blessed New Year 2018!***



PEACE THROUGH STORIES



A SEDOS
WORKBOOK

BY
PETER
BAEKELMANS

Rome, 20 December, 2017

Dear Readers,

To start with, *Peace through Stories* is a collection of stories from all over the globe, which we hope you will enjoy, but also find instructive. They all have their way to help you *to change your way of thinking* by promoting a “holistic” approach to life, namely life in loving union with the world around it.

These stories are arranged by theme. Because they come from different religious and cultural backgrounds, they encourage the reader to understand the other religion or culture better, and in this way *they contribute to peace*. Some of the stories aim at peace of mind or of heart, but others also aim at peace in the world.

This book of stories is *also a “workbook”*. It can be used individually or in groups by looking first for the common theme, and then reading the explanatory notes and the commentary. To facilitate this we have added a proposed schedule and questions at the end of the booklet.

The designs are by *the artistic hand of Vibhutam* (Koen Van Loocke) from Gent, Belgium. These thought-provoking pictures can be used for further reflection, meditation, and even prayer. Many thanks go to him for his invaluable contribution.

“Peace through Stories” is an initiative of SEDOS, a Service of Documentation and Studies on Global Mission. SEDOS has already served for more than fifty years many Roman-Catholic religious-missionary Congregations in their reflection on the way to do Mission today. This workbook can therefore serve working groups on Inter-religious Dialogue or on Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation in their activities. It can also be used as workshop for dialogue within multicultural religious missionary communities and the stories can help in the religious education at Church or school.

Enjoy!

Fr. Peter Baekelmans, cicm
Executive Director of SEDOS

1. Heaven helps those who help themselves

The wind and the fan (Zen story)

Zen Master¹ Hotetsu was fanning himself with a fan to keep cool.

A monk passing by asked him: 'Master, the wind blows everywhere and reaches every place in the world. So, why do you still use a fan?'

Master Hotetsu answered: 'You already understand that the wind blows everywhere, and reaches every place in the world. But as yet, you have not grasped the principle of it's omnipresence'.



The wind and the fan

¹ Zen master: Is a Buddhist who teaches sitting meditation as the way to happiness.

The Farmer and Divine Providence
(Christian story, by Luc Versteyle)

There was once an English farmer who was ploughing his land.
And while he was ploughing, a pastor² came by and they talked a little.
'What a marvellous field!', the pastor exclaimed.
'Yes', said the farmer.
'And what great cooperation there is between human endeavour and the blessing of the Divine Providence'³.
'Yes', said the farmer.
'You do not seem to be very enthusiastic', said the pastor.
'No', said the farmer.
'Don't you find these thoughts inspiring then?'.
'For sure', the farmer said, 'but you should have come when Divine Providence worked here alone'....



The Farmer and the Divine Providence

Hint/Clue: What difference is there between the Zen teacher and the monk, or the farmer and the pastor?

² Priest in the Anglican Church.

³ God's intervention in the world. Things that are provided by God, without a person doing anything special.

*The change in thinking that is asked for here is:
that by becoming a believer one should not cease to be active.
One has to try to find a healthy balance between one's own endeavour,
and that of the Divinity.*

Explanation: Self-effort and Other-Power

In religious life one tries to accept what God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, the Dharma, the Dharma Power, does for us, without trying to control everything. One has to learn to see and to accept the presence of an "Other-Power". It is called a "mystical attitude" to life because one tries to follow and submit to the Other-Power.

On the other hand however, one should not rely too much on the "Other-Power" in life. There are things we can and have to do ourselves. This is called the "magical attitude" in which one tries to get the power into one's own hands. The world of technology and science are modern versions of the magical attitude in wanting to understand and control the dynamics of this world.

God, Jesus, Buddha, Dharma, Allah, the One, or any other Ultimate Reality one believes in, is supporting us continually. However, believing this does not replace self-effort on our part. It is through our words, deeds, and thoughts that this Other-Power can do its work. We do what we can, and God will do the rest. Or to say it with a famous proverb: *Heaven helps those who help themselves!*

Extra Notes: About cats and apes

Within the Christian Tradition there is continuous discussion on the essence of "grace": as to whether it comes purely from God, or whether it also needs our "good works"? Are we saved or do we save ourselves? Catholics have accepted the aspect of self-effort to a certain extent, but Protestants do not. Within the Hindu Tradition there is a similar discussion among the disciples of Sri Ramanuja, a great teacher of devotion, concerning his idea of grace. The division among the followers has become known as the "cat's way" and the "ape's way". When a kitty is in danger, the mother cat will grasp it by the neck and run away. When a little ape is in danger, it will grasp its mother, sit on her back, and both run away. The symbol of wind is also used in the Bible to describe the workings of the Holy Spirit. We do not know from where it comes nor where it blows to. It can change suddenly. However, in Matthew 11 we read that one can cooperate with grace in order to reach the Kingdom of God, the heaven on earth where everyone can be happy.

2. Love your neighbor as if he is yourself

King Brahmadata and the wife of a Merchant (Buddhist story)

King Brahmadata⁴ once saw a remarkably beautiful woman, but, alas, she was the wife of a merchant. The king burned with desire to possess this lady. He therefore secretly ordered that a valuable jewel be put in the merchant's carriage. The jewel got lost, and a large-scale search ensued to find it. The servants of the king also searched the carriage of the merchant and they discovered the jewel. The merchant was arrested, put in jail, and charges were brought against him. During the defense the king pretended to listen attentively, and with seeming sorrow he sentenced the merchant to death, while his wife was taken into the court harem. King Brahmadata decided to attend the execution in person, because he enjoyed exercising his power in this way. However, when the unjustly convicted merchant looked up at his unashamed judge, the king felt a very strange feeling. As the Executioner was raising the sword for the deadly blow, Brahmadata felt the merchant's soul entering his own. Suddenly the king seemed to see himself standing on the scaffold. 'Stop, Headsman!', Brahmadata shouted. 'It is the king you are about to kill!'

Too late! The executioner had executed the bloody sentence. The king fell unconscious, and when he awoke he was another man. No longer was he a cruel king as from then on he led a life full of justice.



King Brahmadata and the wife of the salesman

⁴ *King Brahmadata*: is the name of a king of Benares and is an example of wrongdoing.

King David and Bathsheba (Jewish story, 2 Samuel 11:12)

Once, King David⁵ arose from his siesta and walked back and forth on the flat roof of his palace. Then he looked out and saw an exceptionally beautiful lady bathing. Who was she but Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah! Uriah was one of the warriors who had gone to war with Joab and the army. David gave in to his desire and ordered that Bathsheba be brought to the palace, and slept with her. Sometime later, Bathsheba remarked that she was pregnant, and sent a message to the king. On receiving the news King David decided to call Uriah back from the battlefield on the pretext that he needed a report on the war. In the evening he sent Uriah home, to his wife Bathsheba, to relax with her. However Uriah did not go home. He slept at the entrance of the palace because he felt it was not right to enjoy food and rest while his comrades had to sleep in the open fields. The next day, King David invited Uriah to join him for a meal, and made him drunk. Again he tried to convince Uriah to go home and sleep with his wife, but once again Uriah slept at the gate. The following day, Uriah left for the battlefield. He took with him a letter to be delivered to Joab. It instructed Joab to place Uriah in the front line without support so that he might be attacked and die. A few days later Bathsheba received news that her husband had died and she mourned. When the period of mourning was over King David took her as his wife, and she soon gave birth to a child. God did not approve of David's actions, so he sent the prophet Nathan⁶ to David. The prophet went to the king and he told him the following story: *Two men once lived in the same city, one was rich, the other poor. The rich man had many sheep and cattle, while the poor man had nothing but one little ewe lamb that he had raised with his children. It ate from his plate, drank from his cup, and slept on his lap. It was as a daughter to him. One day, the rich man received a visitor, but he could not stand the idea of slaughtering a sheep or cow from his own herd for the guest. Instead, he took the lamb of the poor man and prepared that.* David was deeply shocked at the rich man's conduct and exclaimed spontaneously: 'Nathan, that rich man deserves to be killed! And he should pay four times the price of that lamb!'. Then Nathan reproached David: 'That man is you!'. David realised what he had done and said: 'I have sinned against God'. Nathan answered: 'God has forgiven your sin; you will not die, but the son born to you and Bathsheba will.'



David and Bathsheba

Hint/Clue: When does the change in the person come about?

⁵ *King David:* was the second king of the United Kingdom of Israel and Judah.

⁶ *Prophet Nathan:* he was a court prophet who lived in the time of King David.

The change in thinking that is asked for here is: that it is only through a deep experience of unity that one can change one's opinion, and this change will lead to peace and justice. In philosophy this is called an "existential experience". In Zen it is called "satori". From that moment on one turns into a new person, and the wrong deeds, thoughts, and words of the former being are forgiven. The experience will give a positive direction in one's life.

Explanation: True compassion is based on an experience of unity.

The two stories tell a similar story: namely, of unscrupulous rulers who covert the wife of another man and plan to remove the husband. However, the wicked person repents of his deed on experiencing unity, unity with the husband in the first case, unity with the poor man in prophet Nathan's account. When Jesus (Christianity) and the Dharmapada (Buddhism) say that one has to love one's neighbour as oneself, they mean that one has to love one's neighbour because he is oneself. It is from that experience of unity that real charity, real compassion, real understanding, wisdom comes forth. Without it, we only act on the basis of our faith, belief, feelings and convictions, which are always worthwhile. Although it is better to know that another level of compassion exists, one that is natural, unconditional, as we saw in the former set of texts.

Extra Notes: Unity of wisdom and compassion.

Buddhists are of the opinion that Wisdom is essential, and that it will lead to Compassion. For instance, once one has understood that all beings are related, one will be compassionate because the other person is you too. *The Awakening of Faith in Mahayana* makes this experience of unity as the basis of Buddhist faith and enlightenment. Christians, on the contrary, will start from Compassion to come to Wisdom. They believe that through prayer and doing good to others one gradually comes to know one's own real vocation, one's real task in life. The truth is in the middle, in the unity of wisdom and compassion. In Sanskrit the interrelatedness of all things is called: "Pratitya Samutpada" and in Japanese, "Engi". When a Japanese feels connected to something or someone, he will say "go-en ga arimasu". A Christian will say, it is God's Will, because he feels it is God who wants him to do something for the other person to whom he feels strongly connected.

3. Let go, let God

Heaven (Eastern story)

A Master said to a disciple who was tormented by the idea of life after death:

‘Why do you waste even one second thinking about the life hereafter?’

‘Is it possible not to think about it, then?’, the disciple asked.

‘Of course’, the Master said.

‘How?’, the disciple replied.

‘By living in the heaven of the here and now’, the Master answered.‘

And so where is that heaven?’, the disciple asked.

‘In the here and now’, the Master said.



Heaven is here and now

omitted to help some poor people because he had failed to notice their needs; or he did not show enough love or readiness to help others because he was preoccupied with some personal need. Then he slept a lot, and missed some opportunities to acquire new wisdom or to be humble. His lack of mindfulness formed part of his personality just like his good characteristics. In the end the man died. He ran towards the Gates of Paradise thinking that he had surely done enough to be permitted to enter. The gates were closed. A voice spoke to him: ‘Keep watch! The gates only open once every hundred years’. The man sat down and waited. But it took such a long time, and his power to stay awake was very limited. After what seemed an eternity to him, he started to fall asleep. His eyelids did not close for more than a split second. And just at that very moment the gates opened. But by the time the man opened his eyes it was again too late! They closed once more with a baleful sound that would even awaken the dead.

The Gates of Paradise (Islamic anecdote)

There was once a good man. He had spent his whole life doing good to others: he had given a lot of money to the poor; he had loved his neighbours and helped them whenever possible. He tried to be happy and made long journeys to acquire wisdom. His humility and exemplary behaviour were known to many. He practised all these good characteristics, at least when he thought about them. However, he had one fault: he was regularly negligent and unmindful. He actually thought that he had only one little vice compared to all his good qualities: sometimes he



The gates of Paradise

The Samurai (Zen story)

Soldier Nobushige approached Zenmaster Hakuin⁷ and asked:

‘Do paradise and hell really exist?’

‘Who are you?’, Hakuin asked.

‘I am a samurai⁸’, the soldier answered.

‘You, a samurai?’, Hakuin shouted mockingly. ‘Which lord would like to have you as his bodyguard? You look more like a beggar!’

Nobushige⁹ became so angry that he drew his sword, but Hakuin continued, saying:

‘Oh, you even have a sword!? Your weapon is probably too blunt to cut my head off’.

When Nobushige was menacingly brandishing his sword above Hakuin’s head, Hakuin said:

‘Here, the gates of hell open!’ Nobushige, on hearing this sheathed his sword and made a deep bow to Hakuin. Hakuin thereupon said: ‘And here the Gates of Paradise open’.



The Samurai

Hint/Clue: Which is the important moment in all three stories? Why?
And what does the third story add to it?

⁷ *Hakuin Ekaku* (1686-1768): One of the most influential masters in Japanese Zen Buddhism.

⁸ *Samurai*: Military nobility and officer caste of medieval and early-modern Japan.

⁹ *Takeda Nobushige* (1525-1561): Was a Samurai of Japan’s Sengoku period.

The change in thinking that is called for here is: that we need to learn that heaven does not come about on its own. We have to contribute to it by living in the here and now, and doing good works. For instance, every time we meet a beggar on the street, we should ask ourselves whether we should help him here and now, and how? Just tossing him a coin can lack true compassion and may not always be wise!

Explanation: Heaven (or Paradise) is present in the “here and now”.

Although we are used to thinking of heaven and hell as something after death, the three stories stress that they are present in ‘the here and now’. The movement of mindfulness training that John-Kabat Zinn started seeks to train people to forget the past and the future for a moment, and just to be in the present. It is taught initially through learning to concentrate on things in order to forget everything your restless mind was thinking about (*to let go*). Then the second step is to start thinking again slowly; in a relaxed attitude, in order to let new thoughts enter your mind (*to let God*). The last two stories recount the aspect of ‘here and now’, in doing good, living a virtuous life. In the term ‘mindfulness’ there is another aspect, that of being mindful to the needs of the other person. Although this aspect of compassion is not often taught in the world of meditation, it is an essential element for the growth of meditation. The Way of Mindfulness is lived by the Vietnamese Zenmaster Thich Nath Han. Through his walking meditation he teaches people to forgive and have compassion, because without forgiveness there is no future. One will always hark back to what happened.

Explanatory notes: Hic et Nunc.

Although the Latin expression: “Hic et Nunc” is famous in the Christian mystic Tradition, we also find a similar expression in the Eastern tradition. In Pure Land Buddhism, the idea of “Pure Land” [heaven] is threefold: after death, here on earth, and what has to be done (purified) here on earth. This agrees with the different Christian theological views on heaven and hell. There is an apocryphal story of Jesus walking with his disciples through the corn fields on the Sabbath. The disciples are enjoying picking ears of grain, whereupon some Pharisees passing by comment on it to Jesus, but Jesus replies: “if they know what they are doing they are blessed, if not they are damned” (cf. Lk 6:1-3). When we realize what we do on this moment and on this place, and we are convinced that it is right to do so, we are in heaven. Of course, the action should be filled with compassion. Otherwise, extremists would be in heaven too, while creating a hell for others.

4. Parental compassion

The Ignorant Son (Buddhist story; Lotus Sutra)¹⁰

A young man once ran away from home and his family. He left his father alone at home. He travelled from country to country, until at last he became very poor. Weakened by little food and an irregular lifestyle he eventually arrived in his father's city, but he did not even realize that it was his father's town.

The father immediately recognized his son, but the son was so weak and confused that he did not know his father. The father saw the terrible state in which his son was and ordered his servants to give him a simple job so that he could regain strength and become healthy again. His son was happy with the job, and grew stronger, but he still did not recognize his father. Instead, he feared his boss. The father let him grow up in the company, until the day he wanted to transfer the whole responsibility for it to him. He called all the family members together, the king, the priests, soldiers, and the people and addressed them in public: 'Dear everyone, this employee of mine is in fact my son. More than fifty years ago he ran away from home and he has known a lot of misery and solitude. By chance, I met him again in this city. I was very happy. I am indeed truly his father, and he is truly my son. All that belongs to me is his from this day'. It was only at that moment that the son realised that his boss was indeed his father! He was so happy that he had found his father again that he embraced him for a long time.



The ignorant son

¹⁰ *Lotus Sutra*: In Sanskrit, Saddharma Pundarika Sutra. In Japanese, Myoho Renge Kyo. Contains the final teachings of the Buddha.

The Parable of the Prodigal Son (Christian story, Luke 15)

There was a man who had two sons. The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate'. So, the father divided his property between them. Not long after that, the younger son put all he had together and set off for a distant country where he squandered all his wealth. After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that country, and he began to be in need. So, he became a hired servant of a citizen of that country, who sent him out to the fields to feed his pigs. He longed to fill his stomach with the pods the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

When he came to his senses, he said: 'How many of my father's hired servants have enough food and to spare, and here I am starving to death! I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired servants'. So, he got up and went to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him. The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son'. But the father said to his servants: 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found'. So, they began to celebrate.



The prodigal son

Hint/Clue: What does the father in both stories want to teach by his example?

The change in thinking that is called for here is: to understand that ignorance or self-centeredness of the other is not overcome by getting angry about it, but by showing mercy through instruction or forgiveness. A child cannot be blamed for not knowing certain things or thinking only on himself. It is the task of the parent or teacher to help it to understand; also when dealing with adults.

Explanation: World of compassion

We find here a similar story in two different traditions, namely in Buddhism and Christianity. Interesting is that although the story is similar, the way it is interpreted is very different. In the first story, the son was so weak that he could not recognize his own father anymore. His wise father did everything to bring his son back to his senses, to help him to overcome his ignorance. This is typical for Buddhist thinking where overcoming our ignorance is essential. In the second story, the son realized his fault, but as he was afraid to return home he made up an excuse to be accepted by his father once more. The forgiveness of the compassionate father is taken as an example of the compassion of God. Forgiveness is a typical Christian teaching. Both, teaching to overcome ignorance, and the act of forgiveness are acts of compassion. This world of compassion and its different expressions is what both stories (and their religions) have in common. One also could say that the first story is about Buddhist wisdom and the second about Christian compassion.

Explanatory notes: World of karma

The Buddhist idea of *karma* is that a person has done something without being aware of its effects, but nevertheless is responsible for it. In Christian terms, it is like a minor sin. The idea of *karma* asks for a non-dual thinking. Everything is related to everything. Nothing we do, think, or say stays on its own, isolated. It will have an effect on things around us, and thus eventually affect us too. In Hindu philosophy *karma* is compared to a calf that will find its mother again in the herd. For example, in Christianity the worst *karma* such as killing someone is called 'mortal sin'. Deliverance from such sins is much more difficult to obtain. Lastly, Buddhism teaches that there are people who cannot be saved. They are called "*accantikas*". There is much discussion among Buddhist Schools as to whether this is indeed possible. Likewise, in Christianity: is not the concept of eternal hell in conflict with God's unconditional love? Prayers for deceased souls exist in all religions. We must never give up the hope that even the most wicked of souls may one day be saved.

5. Life is a mystery

The Cheeks (Christian story)

A small girl sat on her grandfather's knee while he was reading a story to her. The girl looked at the book from time to time, and caressed the cheek of her grandpa. And then she caressed her own cheek.

Suddenly she said: 'Grandpa, did God made you?'

'Yes, my dear, God made me a long time ago', grandpa replied.

'Grandpa', she asked, 'did God make me too?'

'For sure, my little child, God made you not so long ago', grandpa answered.

The girl then caressed both their cheeks and said:

'God is becoming better at it, isn't He!?'



The cheeks

Mullah Nasrudin and Creation
(Islamic story)

One fine day Mullah¹¹ Nasrudin¹² was resting under a cherry tree, while looking at a field of melons. Mullah Nasrudin scratched his head and thought: 'The world is a strange place'. 'I wonder why melons grow on the ground and cherries high up on trees?'. He was still musing to himself when a cherry dropped from the tree on to his head. Mullah Nasrudin jumped up and exclaimed: 'Praise be to Allah, He knows why he does not let melons grow on trees!'.



Nasrudin under the cherry tree

¹¹ *Mullah*: A religious teacher or leader in the Muslim Tradition, especially in the Shiite practice.

¹² *Mullah Nasruddin* (13th cent.): Was a Sufi teacher in today's Turkey.

Story of Job (Biblical story)

Job was a very pious Jew, loving God above all, and following the many prescriptions of his faith. He was therefore considered to be a “righteous person”. However, Satan¹³ wanted to test him and asked God permission to do so. God agreed to it, at one condition that Job would not die. One after the other calamity came to Job. First his cattle died, then his house burned down, and later on even his relatives started to die. At last, he got a heavy skin disease. However, what also happened to him, he kept on loving God, and saying: “All this I got for free from God. He is free also to take it from me.”

His friends came over to discuss with Job the reason of all these calamities. They were convinced he had done something wrong, something that has caused God to punish him so severely. But Job negated all accusations, telling that he always has lived a pure life.

At last, God appears to Job, approving his just behaviour, restoring his health, and reproaching his friends who were thinking wrongly. God has done this to Job to show Him that we humans cannot fathom always the Will of God.



Job

Hint/Clue: What do these three persons (little girl, Nasruddin, Job) have in common?

¹³ *Satan*: The one who puts a stumble block on our way in order to test our faith, according to Jewish Tradition.

The change in thinking that is asked for here is: to accept that the world is not always explainable. The world is a mystery. Especially when it comes to suffering. Human suffering does not always have a cause within a person.

Explanation: The reason behind creation

These first two amusing stories have a common background: the belief that God created this world. The question How? and Why? is not of direct importance. When it comes to our suffering, as we can read in the last story of Job, we suddenly ask Why? and even blame others or God for our suffering. That is why this attitude of “no-knowing” becomes suddenly very important. Namely, it is not always our fault or the fault of God that I became sick, lost my wife, got broke, and so on. It can happen by accident. A *tragedy* is such an event that results in great loss and misfortune, but for which no one is directly responsible.

Explanatory notes: Suffering without a reason

According to my Jewish master Henri van Praag, tragedy is one of the *four kinds of attitudes* regarding human suffering we can find in the world. A) Hinduism and Buddhism teach *karma*: a suffering of which we are not aware, but we are responsible. Through meditation we can become aware of it, and forecome the building of new karma. B) Judaism, Christianity and Islam teach sin: a suffering caused by our own wrong deeds, and which were done consciously.

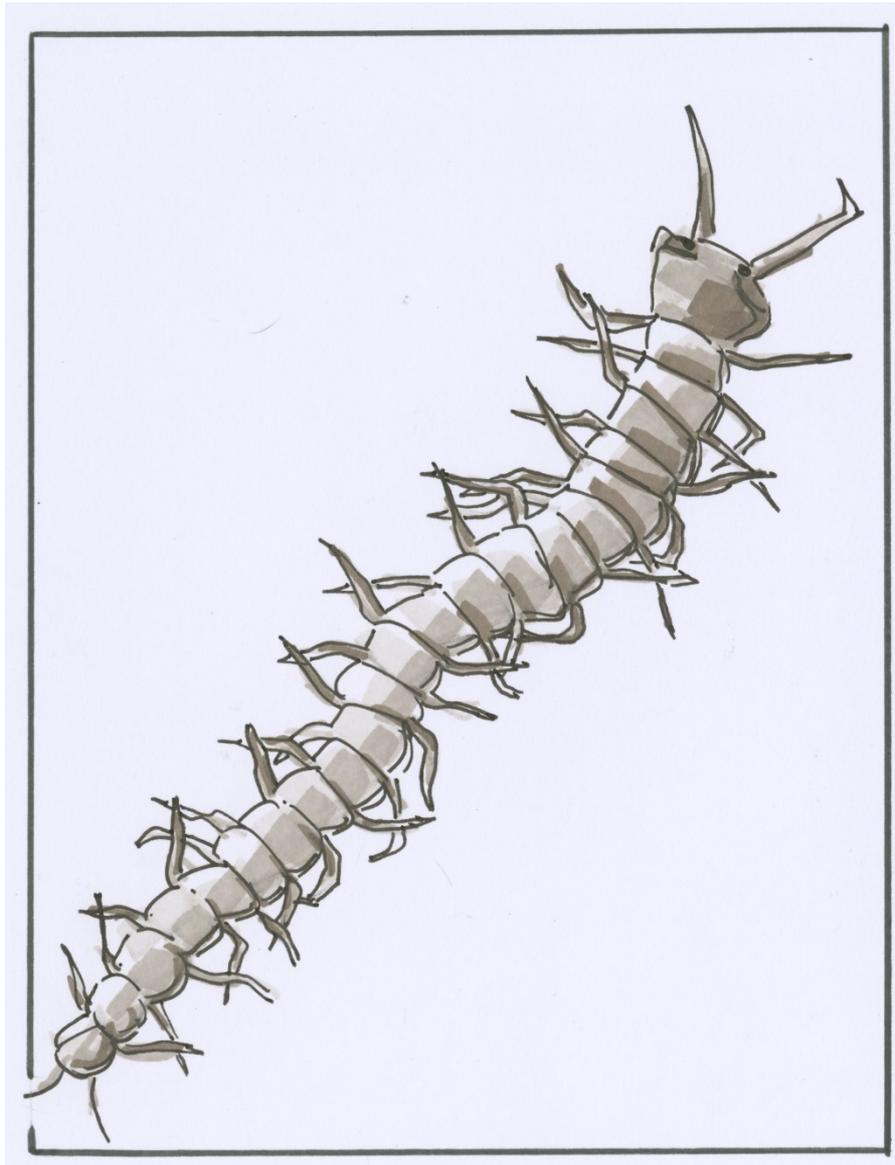
We can erase the effect of it through having remorse over it and restore what we have done wrong. C) Christianity teaches also the suffering of the cross: a suffering for which we are not responsible, and are fully aware of it. We can take up the suffering of others or suffer for others out of our own free will. This suffering is thus qualitative different. D) The last form of human suffering becomes clear in the Greek *tragedy*: the person is not aware of the suffering that is about to overcome him, but he is also not responsible for it. When a person dies in a fire, it is a tragic event. This last attitude towards human suffering contains an important teaching. Not all suffering has a cause, physical or spiritual. The story of Job was therefore a great step forward in the world of Judaism where every suffering (sickness, failure and so on) was blamed on the person himself. Even today, for instance in African society, when someone dies, the people will “look for” the one who has caused this death.

They will exclude him from the village (often young boys who end up on the streets), and might even kill the “culprit”. The opposite is happening in the Western hemisphere where the psycho-spiritual cause of sickness is underestimated, and where the suffering is softened with medicines. The Buddha sought to go to the root cause of suffering, which lies in our attachments, desires, wrong self-image. Saint John the Baptist preached healing of a loaded conscience through repentance. But also, “man cannot know God’s ways” (*Ecclesiastes* 8:14). All these answers to suffering are valuable according to the situation a person (or group of persons) is in.

6. *A Mastered Mind*

A millipede (Western story)

There was once a millipede moving around happily. Someone asked him how he could manage all those feet, and all of them stepping to the same rhythm? The millipede told the stranger that he had never thought about it, and that he would like to give it a thought. He started off, but before he had thought about it for long, all his legs got out of rhythm. It was as if his mind had got between them!

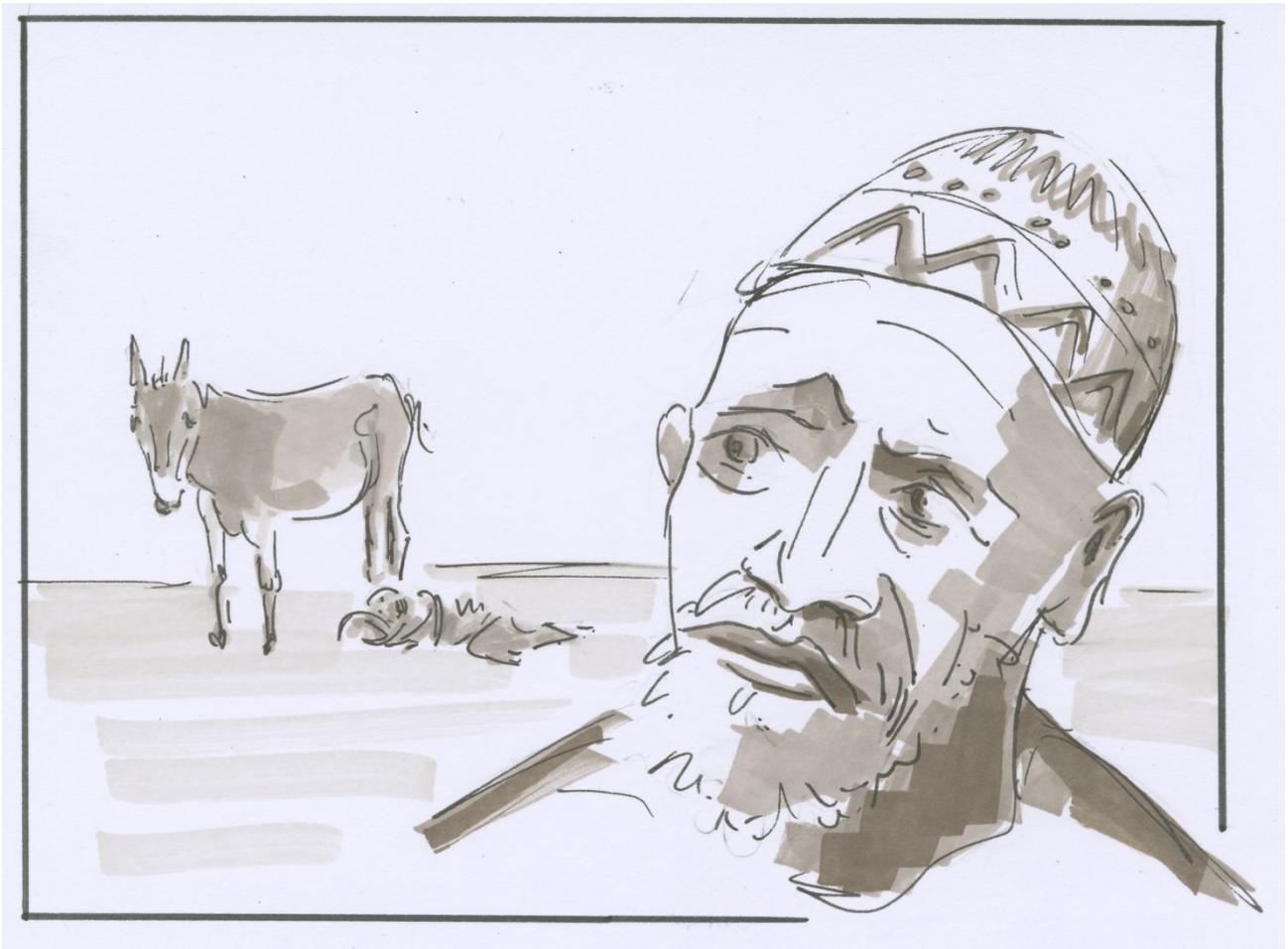


A millipede

The wise man Abarnakat on travel
(African story)

The wise man Abarnakat once went on a journey with his friends. He wore a red scarf around his neck, sat on a red blanket, and rode a beige donkey. In the evening, Abarnakat and his friends went to sleep. Each of them slept rolled in his own blanket. One of them thought he would play a trick on him. He pulled the red blanket from under Abarnakat, removed his scarf and led the donkey to another tree. He lay down there and went to sleep wrapped in the red blanket, next to the donkey.

When Abarnakat awoke the next morning, he sat and thought for a long time: ‘That man lying there next to the donkey on the red blanket, wearing a red scarf around his neck, is Abarnakat. But then who am I? And he cried as if his heart would break.



The wise man Abarnakat on travel

Story of the Jack (a funny story)

A salesman is underway with the car late in the evening. Suddenly, right in the middle of nowhere, his car has a flat tire. He looks for the jack¹⁴ in the back of the car to lift up the car and to replace the flat tire, but he cannot find it. What to do now? He sees in the distance a little light of a farmers house.

Surely, there they will have a jack, he thinks, and starts of in the direction of the light.

While walking he starts to think: Hopefully they have a jack. Most likely because farmers have a lot of vehicles. And walking further he reflects further: But of course, it is not sure that they will give the jack to a wild stranger who knocks late in the evening. How would you be yourself? I would not do it. And still walking further he starts to become anxious, thinking that they might indeed not give the jack to a stranger, and then he would have walked the whole way for nothing. He better could have stayed in his car, waiting for a possible car that passes by.

While he is so much into his mind, and getting angry by the idea that they might not give the jack, he reaches the house. He knocks at the door. It takes some time before the farmer opened very slowly the door, not knowing who knocks at his door in the middle of the night. Before the farmer can say a word, the salesman shouts at him: Keep your jack, man! I do not need it anymore! He rapidly turns his back to the farmer and off he is, being convinced that the farmer has a jack, but does not want to give it to him, a stranger in the night. The farmer is confused by what happened. He does not understand at all the intention of this nightly visitor.



The Jack

Hint/Clue: How is the mind of the persons?

¹⁴ *Jack*: Device to lift up a motor vehicle in order to change a tire.

The change in mind that is called for here is: that one should not rely on outer forms for self-perception, nor should one call into question what is obviously o.k. Learning to trust the mind and not to let it run wild. Being in touch with reality.

Explanation: The problem of a restless mind

The three stories here concern our way of thinking. They talk about the role of the mind in opposite ways. In the first one and the last one, one should not think too much or one might get confused. In the second one, one takes things for granted and never thinks about them, but when things change suddenly one gets confused. So, what is better, thinking or not thinking? It depends on the situation. An identity crisis arises when the mind becomes confused. To see clearly in one's mind is the purpose of meditation and prayer. A person consists namely of a body, a soul, and a spirit according to Western philosophy (body, speech, and mind according to Eastern philosophy). Thus, there are three elements: our body, our thinking, and that what makes us think and act. The three levels form a triple structure, but it is only when all three form a whole that a person is happy, and that we can make other people happy too.

Explanatory notes: World of wisdom

The search for the self is an eternal quest. Plato called his school: "Know Yourself". Sri Aurobindo asked every visitor: "Who am I?". This search for the true self is therefore related to knowing one's own mind. I once prayed: "Lord, I do not need a master mind, but a mastered mind." A well-known prayer written by the American theologian Reinhold Niebuhr (1892–1971), called Serenity Prayer, formulates it this way:

*God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change;
Courage to change the things I can;
and wisdom to know the difference.*

7. *It takes two to tango*

The dream of a butterfly (Taoist story, by Zhuang Zhou¹⁵)

One day I, Zhuang Zhou, dreamed that I was a butterfly,
and that I, the butterfly, fluttered about freely and at ease.
Suddenly, I awoke, and there was I, the one and only Zhuang Zhou!
Now, I wonder was it I, Zhuang Zhou, who was dreaming about being a butterfly,
or was a butterfly dreaming it was Zhuang Zhou?
There must be a difference between us, between the butterfly and me!
Is that the “transformation of things”?

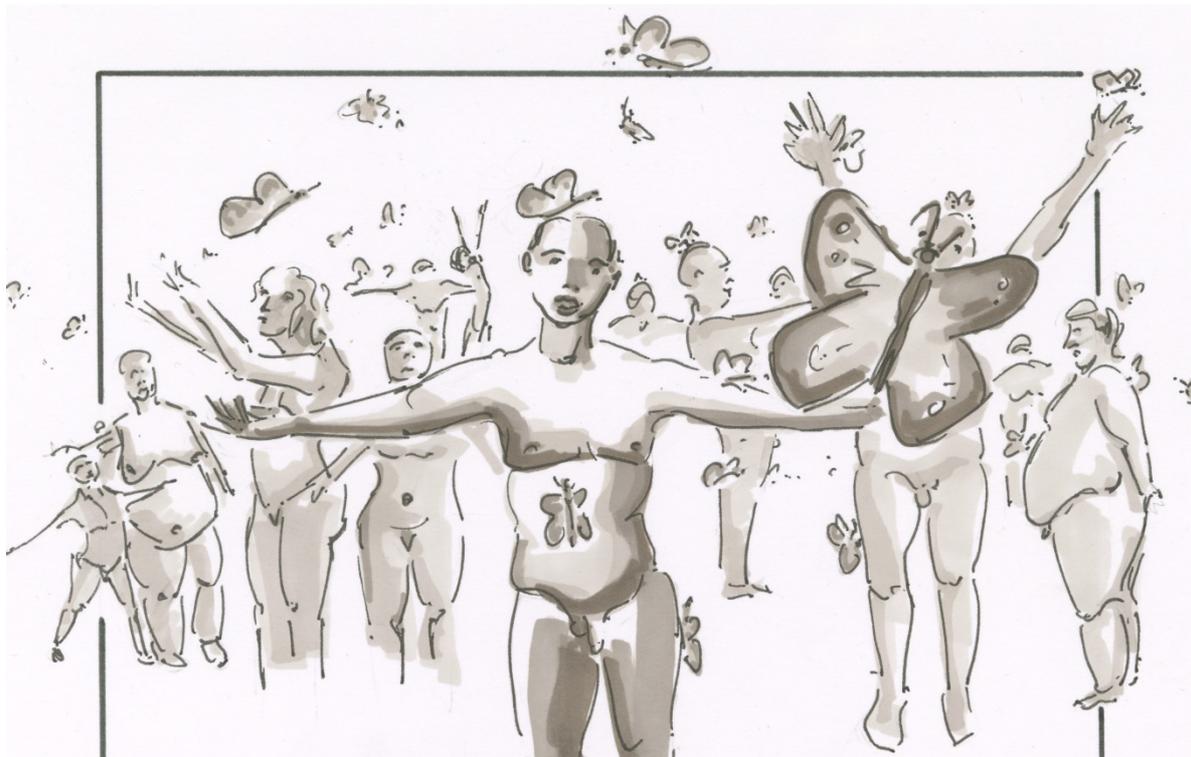


The dream of a butterfly

¹⁵ *Zhuang Zhou*: was Chinese and a great Taoist philosopher and mystic: 369 – 286 B.C.

Butterfly dreams (Zen story, by Ryokan¹⁶)

Without wishing to, a flower attracts a butterfly;
unconsciously the butterfly selects that flower.
When the flower opens, the butterfly comes.
When the butterfly comes, the flower opens.
I do not change.
Maybe I do not know other people.
And maybe they do not know me.
But even if we do not know each other
we all instinctively follow the same universal law.



Butterfly dreams

Hint/Clue: Look at the last words of every text.

¹⁶ *Ryokan*: was a great Zen mystic who lived in the late eighteenth century.

The change in thinking that is asked for here is: that everything we do, think, or say, forms part of a deeper reality that is in constant change, and that wants us to change too. Going against this deeper flow of change creates suffering. For instance, when one feels one is attracted to something or someone, one should not neglect or suppress this feeling, nor should one react to it too rapidly. One has to understand the feeling first before acting upon it.

Explanation: Universal laws.

The two stories have a Taoist background. Taoism is at one and the same time a religion and a philosophy. Its philosophy stresses the unity between the world and the human being. It is part of the mystical experience. That's why Taoist sages are usually depicted as partly human, partly of wood/stone.

Text one: We all experience Zhuang Zhuo's state when we awake suddenly from a deep sleep and do not immediately know where we are, at home or somewhere else. However, the experience he refers to is a mystical experience in which one experiences unity with something or someone else so deeply that one forgets one's self. This problem arises in the early stages of mystical life when one feels the suffering of another so strongly that one can no longer distinguish between the other and oneself. One has to learn to have compassion without identifying oneself with it too closely. The Buddha once said that if one were to feel the suffering of all human beings even for one brief moment, one would die at that instant. For others, it is hard to accept that we do not live on our own. When it is said "*It takes two to tango*", it means that both persons are involved, and not only one. Text two: It is a nice example of what love is. Love comes spontaneously, unconditionally, not made, not planned. One cannot even help falling in love.

The only thing one can do is to try to understand this love, this transformation, in order to make the transition smoothly. Often we cannot explain why we are who we are, or why we met someone. There seems to be a certain "universal law" that brings about a "transformation of things". It makes us change, change from butterfly into human being or from living as individual, to life in a communion with a person or a religious group.

Extra Notes: Chaos and order.

The fact that the butterfly appears in both stories is not without meaning. The life cycle of a butterfly exemplifies the "transformation" we all experience by contact with this world and with people. The butterfly starts life as a caterpillar and is totally different when it hatches from its cocoon. We might not like the transformation we go through because we enter an unknown world as shown in the second text, or one that we do not always understand as in the first text. However, this happens to us constantly. For those who can understand and accept what is happening in the world and life, it becomes a really wonderful experience. For those who do not, the words of Henry Miller can be true: "Chaos is a word that we have created for an order that we do not understand." Taoism teaches about the unity of the Yin and Yang, female and male, good and evil, strength and weakness, and so on. These two aspects are inseparable, are in a constant interaction, and never in perfect balance.

The book, "I Ching" develops a whole system of divination based on the interaction between the Yin and Yang. In his mystical work *Tao Te Ching*, Lao-Tse sought to show that *Virtue (Te)* comes forth from Tao, the Way. It is to this *Tao* that the words "change of things" refers. When a person becomes a sage, his words, deeds, thoughts are considered to be "natural", not contrived. Zen is a combination of Buddhist and Taoist thought. In Buddhism, Dharma (Truth) is an essen-

tial teaching. It seeks to stress that there exists a universal law. When we do not follow the Dharma, we create “karma”. Once a person has freed himself from all *karma*, he becomes a liberated soul. This does not actually mean that he ceases to exist, but that he will continue to live freed from his own personal desires. This is the great change that a Zen monk is seeking, and all spiritual aspirants too. One of the things one has to learn in Buddhism is that everything is in constant flux/change, impermanent (*aniccam*). Becoming attached to what will change creates suffering. Therefore, one’s aim is to go beyond that in order to find what is eternal: the Dharma. In Christian terms, to follow the Will of God instead of one’s own ego-filled will.

PEACE THROUGH STORIES

(An Exercise in Inter-Cultural Competence)

Questions during the workshop:

- Each text has a special message. Can you recognize the message and how the religious and cultural background colours the message?
- Can you see **similarities** in the texts? Put those texts together in the way you want.
- Explain why you have put the texts in a certain sequence. What message, way of thinking, do they have in common?
- Ask a facilitator whether you have found the right combination. If not, do the process over again. You can ask for a **hint/clue**.
- Share your own experience in relation to the message.
- One group member should jot down the insights. Some groups will be asked to share their insights with the whole group at the end of the session.

Questions for individual and collective reflection:

- When you compare the different texts, and see that they have something in common, what does this teach you in relation to your own religion or conviction?
Is truth relative or absolute, temporal or eternal, personal or inter-personal, inclusive or exclusive, scientific or mystical?
- Do you feel that doing such an exercise is changing your way of thinking and might give you peace in the long run? Does it open your mind to other ways of thinking and help you to build peace among religious (and other) traditions?
- Explain what you experienced while doing this exercise in the little groups, and how you could use this in the future to promote Interfaith and Multicultural Peace.

Important note: In planning a workshop it is suggested that the above key questions be included because they serve to prompt personal and collective reflection (in small groups). This is important for the inner awareness process, as well as for the development of new forms of initiative, and commitment.

Meaning of picture on the front cover: The different stories and cultures in this book are interconnected; within that, two faces that communicate, that want to understand each other and to put the pieces of the puzzle together (Koen Van Loocke).

| | |
|----------------|--|
| Session Name: | Peace through Stories |
| Date and Time: | Date : Time : |
| Objectives: | Religions, also Christianity, try to <i>change our way of thinking</i> through the use of stories. This new way of thinking seeks to promote a <i>holistic approach to life</i> (to think in unity or non-duality, without discrimination), to experience the miracle of life, and to contribute to peace in and among human beings. Through the use of stories from different traditions our aim is also to stimulate the <i>intercultural competence</i> of the participants, which will contribute to peace among cultures and religions in the long run. |
| Logistics: | The participants need chairs, but not tables. They should sit in a circle in small groups of four or five. Each person is given a copy of each text, and a copy of the questions. The title of each set of texts is not given as it reveals the answer. The group leader should address the group as a whole. |
| Support: | Look for volunteers to help with distributing the texts, and their follow up in the groups. |

| Time | Description of the Activity | Outcomes | Methodology |
|-------|--|---|--|
| 1u.30 | Read the set of texts together in the group. Explain difficult terms. Give time for reflection. Next, each person must try to put them in order according to his/her way of thinking, and highlight the intrinsic message. Discussion then follows and each small group will make a summary. Lastly, each group shares its opinions with the bigger group. At the end of every exercise, the correct way of looking at the texts will be explained, with respect for other opinions. | Through these sets of spiritual texts the participant learns to discover similarities as well as differences among the religious Traditions. In this way he/she will come to respect the differences, and look for what unites them. Maybe some of them will share similar stories from their own Tradition or culture. | Participants will be asked to share their knowledge of religions, especially their own, and to share their spirituality with the other participants. The content of the texts and the dialogue will help them to start “thinking differently”. |

DOCUMENTS:

Evangelical Lutheran Community of Rome XX Sunday after Trinitatis Reformation Day Commemoration 29 October 2017

Father Heiner Wilmer

Homily: Romans 3:21-28

²¹ *Yet, now, it is manifested to us what the Law and the Prophets announced: God makes us just and holy without the need of a law.*²² *God makes us holy by means of faith in Jesus Christ, and this is applied to all who believe, without distinction of persons.*²³ *Because all have sinned and all fall short of the glory of God;*²⁴ *and all are graciously forgiven and made holy through the redemption effected in Christ Jesus.*²⁵ *For God had given him to be the victim who, by his blood, obtains our forgiveness and this is a matter of faith. So God shows us how he makes us righteous. He forgives past sins*²⁶ *which God overlooked till now. For now he wants to reveal his way of making righteous: how he is just and holy and how he makes us righteous and holy through faith in Jesus.*²⁷ *But what becomes of our pride? It is excluded. How? Not through the law and its observance, but through another law which is faith*²⁸. *For we hold that people are in God's grace by faith and not by observing the law.*

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

I am very pleased to be here today, in the Evangelical Community of Rome. Dear Brothers and Sisters, beloved Pastor Kruse, it is a joy and a privilege, arousing emotion, to be invited to preach in the Church of Christ on the occasion of the Fifth Centenary of the Reformation. Your fraternal confidence gives me pleasure. Your invitation moved me especially because I have a very personal bond with the Evangelical sisters and brothers.

I was born in Schapen, in the South-West of Lower Saxony, in Emsland, which, so to speak,

is the last village before the regional border. Between Schapen and the nearby village of Schale, the ancient confessional borderline ran. If Schapen, even up to the 1970's, was almost entirely Catholic, Schale, just 6 km., away was totally Evangelical.

What did that mean in practice? Well, it meant not going to Schale. In my family, we did not inveigh against the evangelicals of the neighboring village, but we never spoke about them. One did not go to Schale for the Festival of the Schützen/Guards, nor to the fair, nor to private parties. No fiancées from Schale. Schale was taboo: because it was evangelical.

Today, almost 40 years later, I can only say that I am grateful to my evangelical brothers and sisters because, thanks to them and to Martin Luther, not only have I understood my faith more deeply, but, I may say that, the "evangelical tradition" contributed to my inner conversion. I want to explain this to you in two points, starting with Romans Chapter 3: the biblical spirit of the Reformation; and justification by faith alone.

When Martin Luther attracted attention to the dysfunction of the Church, 500 years ago in Wittenberg, he did so not only as a professor of Theology at the University of Wittenberg, but also as a preacher at the City Church of Wittenberg. In his role as preacher, his concern was the "health of the soul" of the Community. Referring to Chapter 4 of the Gospel of Matthew, he urged people to convert: "Repent!" (Mt 4:17). This is what he required in his Thesis.

Renewal: Do not focus on your merits, on your qualities, on Indulgence certificates. Repent! Build a personal, interior relationship with Jesus Christ. Focus on faith in Jesus Christ alone, and here Luther was perfectly in line with

the Letter to the Romans, because the justice of God flows from faith in Jesus Christ. All are and remain sinners. St. Paul writes: "Without distinction of persons". Nobody can boast before God. What matters are not the works and structures of the Church. Now, what matter are not the organizational plans and strategic ideas. No: what matters most is my faith in Jesus Christ, my personal bond with the Son of God, that grows ever more deeply in God through Jesus Christ, thus experiencing an inner magnitude of which nobody can boast. This is the message of Martin Luther. This was the starting point of the Reformation.

I am grateful to you, dear brothers and sisters, for always upholding the spirit of the Reformation, revealing a deep, ancient layer of faith, indeed, the origin of our faith. The spirit of reform exists not only in the mysterious depths of our faith, because it is rooted in the Bible itself. Sacred Scripture makes repeated references to renewal and refers to reforms. But the crux of everything is that the first reformer is God himself.

Moses tells us how the first reform of the Jewish-Christian Tradition came from God himself. Moses as a child was placed in a wicker basket, and entrusted to the Nile to save him from his persecutors. He lived for 40 years in Egypt. For example, according to the biblical Tradition and the first Christian account by Gregory of Nyssa, Moses spent another 40 years fleeing from Pharaoh in the land of Midian. He settled there with Jethro, (Exodus 3:1; 2:16, 21) the priest of Midian, whose daughter Zipporah he married. In Midian he led a quiet life, a normal bourgeois life, like everyone else. Then God manifested himself to him in the burning bush; uprooted him from comfort and made him into the liberator of His People Israel.

Not knowing well those with whom he had to do, and especially not the name of the One he was to communicate to his fellow Israelites, He heard God say: I no longer have a name. Formerly, they called me El Shaddai/Yahweh (Gn 17:1). But I no longer want to be called so. From now on, I no longer have a name. If your people asks you what my name is, tell them: He has no name. He is simply: "I am who am". I shall be here, I will be the One here (cf. Ex 3:14-15). Pure and simple; full stop!

This is the first reform in our long religious biblical history. It comes from God. God himself corrected his relationship with we human beings by renouncing, from that moment on, the old, clear name of "El Shaddai". Saying, in practice: "I said to the world: that's enough!".

I am grateful to the biblical and post-biblical reformers for this spirit of biblical reform; for the fact that, I myself, and each one of us needs constant reminding of his/her own relationship with God: *semper reformanda*. God does not allow himself to be captured. No image manages to depict him. You cannot grasp God with a name. God is, and remains the biggest mystery of our life.

"All are graciously forgiven and made holy through the redemption effected in Christ Jesus" (Rom 3:24), says the Apostle Paul. Where I was born and brought up in my homeland in North-West Germany, commitment played an important role. "Try to do your best; give the best of yourself; try harder! And you can, but it must be done as it should be. Nothing comes from nothing". These were the central messages of the culture in which I grew up.

It took me a long time to coordinate the words of the Apostle Paul, drawn from the Third Chapter of the Letter to the Romans, with my life. In this I was helped by an ecumenical group of Christians, made up of Lutherans, Reformed, Presbyterians, Anglicans, Baptists and Catholics.

I have before my eyes the "Ark", a communion of Christians of different confessions, which today includes members of other religions. The "Ark" was founded in the north of Paris, in 1964, by Jean Vanier. In its communities people with and without physiological disabilities co-exist.

I spent four months in a community of the "Ark" in Toronto, Canada. It was an extraordinary experience: A novel experience? The people in the House never asked me for my qualifications, recognition of any kind, school diplomas, qualifications or social positions or about travel. Instead, I was asked: Who are you? Have you some time for me? Do you like me? Do you like my new baseball cap? Would you like to come and cook with me tonight? Can I show you the photos of my family?

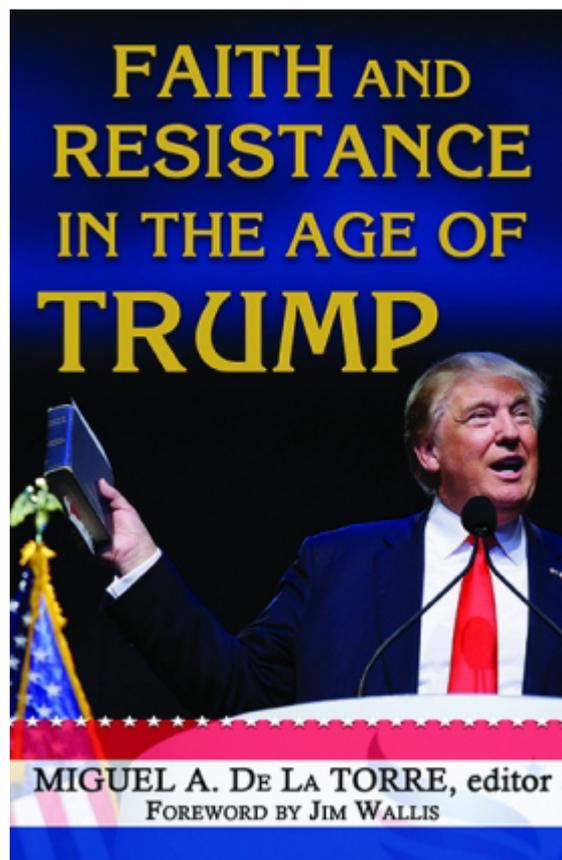
At the “Ark”, I learned that meals are important; that eating is much more than a mere nutritional intake. I learned that exchanges at table, the interest taken in others; and the question "How was your day?", contribute in an essential manner to one’s inner happiness. I learned that sitting together and talking are not negligible acts but are at the foundations of our religion. I learned that conversation at table forms part of prayer, simple prayer that intercedes and thanks. It actually opens the heart to God in the deep perception that what is best in my life is always and only a gift and never the result of my own endeavours. Or, to put it as St. Paul does: you are righteous before God through no personal merit.

Five hundred years of Reform, renewal and the journey of faith. As a Catholic, I am grateful to the Holy Spirit of God for these special centuries. I am grateful to Martin Luther and to you for many aspects of my faith, dear evangelical Brothers and Sisters. Today, I wish to highlight two of these aspects that are a fundamental part of our faith.

First: my relationship with God requires constantly reorganizing and, the first reformer is God himself.

Second: only my faith in Jesus Christ matters. Works do not make one righteous or forgive one’s sins, but only His grace.

May the Holy Spirit of God that, despite all the painful divisions in the Church, unites us in Baptism, draw each one of us to Jesus Christ. May Jesus Christ attract us throughout life. As Paul Gerhard (1607-1676) said in the fourth verse of his Hymn: "Here I am in your crib" [or "*Ich steh an deiner Krippen hier*"]: "I look at You with joy / and my gaze is never satiated looking at you; / And since I can do nothing else, / I stay here, in adoration." Amen.



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NEWS TODAY:

Gabriele Ferrari

La missione secondo papa Francesco

LE NUOVE PROSPETTIVE DELLA MISSIONE *AD GENTES* E IL DOVEROSO RIPENSAMENTO DELLA MANIERA DI FARE MISSIONE DEGLI ISTITUTI MISSIONARI

“Chiesa e missione” in questi ultimi decenni è stato un binomio classico che esprimeva la relazione obbligata che intercorre tra i due termini. Oggi tuttavia, alla luce del Concilio Vaticano II, potrebbe essere tranquillamente abbandonato, dal momento che *Lumen gentium* e, ancora più esplicitamente, *Ad Gentes* affermano che la Chiesa è il popolo che Dio si è scelto per proclamare nel mondo le meraviglie di Colui che l'ha chiamata dalle tenebre alla sua luce meravigliosa (cf. I Pt 2,9), quel popolo pellegrino nel tempo che è "per sua natura" missionario (AG 2). Ciò significa che la Chiesa è missione prima di fare missione. Lo afferma anche papa Francesco, il quale ricorda a ogni cristiano che essere discepolo di Gesù implica essere nello stesso tempo anche missionario (*Evangelii gaudium* n. 120¹), e con un tratto autobiografico si identifica con la missione: "Io sono una missione su questa terra" (273). Purtroppo questa verità, a cinquant'anni dalla conclusione del Concilio Vaticano II, non è ancora entrata nella prassi ecclesiale. Molti cristiani, sia nelle fila del clero che tra i laici, ritengono la missione *ad gentes* un'attività aggiunta, attribuita alla Chiesa, la quale potrebbe tranquilla mente esistere anche senza di essa. La storia delle missioni lo prova, la fatica per aggiornare metodi e personale missionari sta a dimostrarlo, e ogni anno in occasione della Giornata missionaria mondiale è possibile rendersi conto di quanto questo impegno sia occasionale e marginale nella vita di molte comunità cristiane e di molti fedeli. Si può sperare che la celebrazione dei cinquant'anni dalla conclusione del Concilio, insieme con la forza propositiva di papa Ber-

goglio, riesca a far recuperare la coscienza missionaria delle comunità cristiane e a far finalmente comprendere che la missione è una dimensione essenziale dell'ecclesiologia tracciata dal Concilio? Provvidenzialmente papa Francesco con la sua esortazione apostolica *Evangelii gaudium* punta a una "conversione missionaria" della Chiesa (30) e invita ogni fedele a "discernere quale sia il cammino che il Signore gli chiede" e a "uscire dalla propria comodità per raggiungere tutte le periferie che hanno bisogno della luce del Vangelo" (20). La situazione attuale del mondo non permette più alla Chiesa di restare inerte e ferma ad attendere; deve "uscire" dai suoi confini verso i lontani, gli esclusi e coloro che hanno smarrito il contatto con lei (20). Per quanto il linguaggio di papa Bergoglio sia inusuale, per essere provocatorio, va detto subito che egli non ha inventato nulla di nuovo in ecclesiologia. Si è limitato a riprendere la categoria di "Chiesa-popolo di Dio", che si trova nella Sacra Scrittura, una categoria andata in eclissi nel corso dei secoli, ma recuperata dal Concilio Vaticano II (*Lumen gentium* 9). Purtroppo nel corso degli anni Settanta, per paura di possibili derive democratiche, essa è stata abbandonata e sostituita con quella di "Chiesa-comunione" ufficialmente assunta nel corso del Sinodo straordinario del 1985. Non si può dire che ci sia stato un "colpo di mano" e meno ancora un tradimento del Concilio da parte della gerarchia, tuttavia aver lasciato andare in ombra la categoria "Chiesa-popolo di Dio" ha ulteriormente allontanato la Chiesa dalla sua vocazione missionaria, concentrando l'attenzione sulla comunità e la comunione. E se è vero che anche il binomio "comunione e missione" ha una sua legittimità e un suo significato a par-

¹ D'ora in avanti i numeri tra parentesi (...) si riferiscono ai paragrafi della *Evangelii gaudium*.

tire dalla comunione trinitaria, e ha permesso in questi anni di comprendere e vivere la comunione - un aspetto essenziale della Chiesa -, tuttavia papa Bergoglio ha chiaramente optato per ritornare alla categoria "popolo di Dio" (17), perché questa favorisce e sottolinea la responsabilità missionaria e profetica della Chiesa e di ogni discepolo in essa, senza negarne la dimensione comunioneale. Questo inserisce la Chiesa di papa Francesco nel dinamismo della storia e le imprime le dimensioni inarrivabili del regno di Dio, al cui servizio la Chiesa si trova, come egli ha detto all'*Angelus* del 12 ottobre 2014: "La bontà di Dio non ha confini e non discrimina nessuno (...) A tutti è data la possibilità di rispondere al suo invito, alla sua chiamata; nessuno ha il diritto di sentirsi privilegiato o di rivendicare un'esclusiva (...) Noi dobbiamo aprirci alle periferie, riconoscendo che anche chi sta ai margini, addirittura colui che è rigettato e disprezzato dalla società, è oggetto della generosità di Dio. Tutti siamo chiamati a non ridurre il Regno di Dio nei confini della "chiesetta" - la nostra "chiesetta piccoletta" - ma a dilatare la Chiesa alle dimensioni del regno di Dio".

Una "chiesa in uscita" secondo Papa Francesco

Non a caso o per eccesso di fantasia papa Francesco considera la Chiesa di Gesù Cristo una "Chiesa in uscita", una Chiesa dinamica che si apre verso il mondo, che non si ripiega su sé stessa e sui suoi problemi interni, ma tiene lo sguardo sulle "periferie" geografiche ed esistenziali. Infatti, una Chiesa che non si apre al mondo, ha ripetutamente detto Francesco, è una Chiesa "malata" (49), che diventa sterile e che cade in quelle "tentazioni" di cui parla il papa nel secondo capitolo della *Evangelii gaudium*.

Tali tentazioni, cioè l'accidia egoista, il pessimismo e soprattutto la mondanità spirituale, sono altrettante patologie da cui la Chiesa deve tenersi lontana e di cui, eventualmente, si deve curare, perché compromettono la gioia dell'evangelizzazione. La "Chiesa in uscita" non può che essere una Chiesa estroversa, in ascolto del mondo e delle sue speranze. "Essere Chiesa significa essere popolo di Dio",

dice Francesco, "fermento di Dio in mezzo all'umanità", "luogo della misericordia gratuita dove tutti possano sentirsi accolti, amati, perdonati e incoraggiati" (114). La Chiesa è "la casa paterna dove c'è posto per ciascuno", "non è una dogana" che seleziona chi può entrare e chi deve restarne fuori (47), ma "come madre sempre attenta si impegna perché [tutti] vivano una conversione che restituisca loro la gioia della fede e il desiderio di impegnarsi con il Vangelo" (14 e 139).

Non è pensabile tracciare in questa sede l'identikit della Chiesa secondo Francesco. Del resto non è intenzione del papa innovare in questo campo, ma solo applicare coerentemente la dottrina conciliare. Una volta però richiamato il volto tradizionale della Chiesa come popolo di Dio pellegrino nel mondo, Francesco ne trae le conseguenze per i cristiani che egli considera tutti "*discepoli-missionari*" (120), non discepoli e missionari, ma missionari proprio *perché* discepoli e *nella misura in cui* vogliono essere fedeli a sé stessi e alla loro vocazione cristiana. Come in occasione della pubblicazione della *Evangelii nuntiandi* l'esortazione apostolica di Paolo VI sull'evangelizzazione del mondo contemporaneo (1975) - anche in occasione della pubblicazione della *Evangelii gaudium*, che sintomaticamente cita a parecchie riprese il documento di Paolo VI, certi ambienti missionari conservatori, legati cioè alla missione *ad gentes* classica, hanno reagito con disappunto temendo che allargando la missione a tutta l'attività della Chiesa si indebolisse e fosse compromessa la già debole specificità della missione *ad gentes* in un momento in cui il personale missionario è in sofferenza per la riduzione numerica. Costoro forse non si rendono conto che isolare la missione *ad gentes* non fa che chiuderla in un passato che ormai non si può far rivivere e in un modello che oggi non è più attuale né attuabile. Credo invece che papa Francesco, con questo documento programmatico del suo pontificato, offra alla missione *tout court* e quindi anche alla missione *ad gentes* tre elementi di novità che possono rinnovarla e renderla rispondente alle attese del mondo d'oggi. Contestualmente egli interpella gli Istituti missionari a procedere nella revisione del modello della missione *ad gen-*

tes, che dopo la fine del colonialismo è ormai irrimediabilmente sorpassato e *outdated*.

Una missione che punta alla testimonianza

La prima novità è espressa da un'affermazione che ha scosso e scandalizzato i tradizionalisti, che temono si metta in questione quello che finora si è sempre fatto: "La Chiesa cresce non per proselitismo, ma per attrazione" (14. 131). Quest'affermazione, che papa Francesco ha mutuato da Benedetto XVI², manda in archivio il modo di fare missione che ha caratterizzato la missione *ad gentes* dei due ultimi secoli, quando i missionari provenienti dal mondo occidentale esportavano il messaggio evangelico inevitabilmente rivestito di forme culturali occidentali e si presentavano essi stessi con un inevitabile - ancorché inconscio e spesso non voluto - complesso di superiorità e di conquista nei confronti dei non cristiani. Con tale affermazione, papa Francesco suggerisce una nuova modalità di fare missione, che nuova non è perché è stata la missione della prima comunità cristiana, la "missione in atto"³ o la missione per irradiazione o attrazione (cf. At 2,47)⁴. E la missione che si fa a partire dalla testimonianza feriale e gioiosa di una comunità plasmata dalla comunione dello Spirito Santo e dall'Eucaristia, fatta di persone che irradiano nel loro comportamento il volto del Signore e la carità del lo Spirito del Risorto. Il papa non condanna certamente la generosità e le opere degli evangelizzatori del passato, molti dei quali hanno pagato con il sangue la fedeltà all'annuncio del Vangelo. E neppure

pensa che l'evangelizzazione, come annuncio del Vangelo e *plantatio ecclesiae*; sia andata fuori moda. Il papa va invece alla radice della missione e invita a far missione testimoniando il Vangelo con la vita e offrendo il Vangelo vissuto, condividendo con tutti, e soprattutto con i lontani, gli esclusi e i più poveri, la gioiosa certezza che abita il cuore dell'evangelizzatore, che cioè "Dio lo ama, che Gesù Cristo lo ha salvato, che il suo amore ha sempre l'ultima parola" (151). E la gioia che nasce dalla scoperta della salvezza che contagia l'altro e gli mostra, prima ancora di dirglielo con la parola, il mistero del Regno, la vita cioè che viene dalla morte di Cristo in croce. Lo dice il papa all'inizio della *Evangelii gaudium*: "La gioia del Vangelo riempie il cuore e la vita intera di coloro che s'incontrano con Gesù. Coloro che si lasciano salvare da Lui sono liberati dal peccato, dalla tristezza, dal vuoto interiore, dall'isolamento [...] In questa Esortazione desidero indirizzarmi ai fedeli cristiani, per invitarli a una nuova tappa evangelizzatrice marcata da questa gioia e indicare vie per il cammino della Chiesa nei prossimi anni" (1).

L'annuncio del Vangelo nasce quindi dalla gioiosa testimonianza dell'incontro con Gesù e della novità di vita che esso ha prodotto nel discepolo missionario, dell'amore suscitato in lui dall'esperienza della misericordia e dell'amore gratuito che Gesù offre a tutti e dalla volontà di condividere questa lieta notizia con chi non l'ha ancora ricevuta. Vivendo in mezzo alla gente e condividendo le "gioie e le speranze, le tristezze e le angosce degli uomini d'oggi, dei poveri soprattutto e di tutti coloro che soffrono" (*Gaudium et spes* 1), il discepolo missionario *mostra*, con il suo comportamento prima che con la parola, il volto di Gesù e il mistero del regno di Dio. Di qui l'importanza che egli non contaminare l'immagine del discepolo missionario con quella del tecnico e dell'imprenditore di opere pur sane e benefiche, ma rimanga soprattutto il cercatore di Dio, il pellegrino povero e solidale con il popolo in mezzo al quale si trova e insieme al quale va alla ricerca gioiosa e carica di adorazione dei "semi del Verbo" (*Ad gentes* 11) che lo Spirito ha seminato nei solchi della storia.

² Benedetto XVI, *Omelia nella Santa Messa di inaugurazione della V Conferenza Generale dell'Episcopato Latinoamericano e dei Caraibi* presso il Santuario "La Aparecida" (13 maggio 2007), AAS 99 (2007), 437.

³ B. Forte, *La chiesa della Trinità. Saggio sul mistero della chiesa comunione e missione*, Cinisello Balsamo 1992, p. 319, che cita S. Dianich, *Chiesa in missione. Per una ecclesiologia dinamica*, Milano 1985, pp. 80-133.

⁴ L'attrazione è opera di Dio che attira attraverso la testimonianza della *koinonìa* che lega i membri della comunità (cf. At 5,14).

La seconda novità che il papa introduce nella comprensione della missione della Chiesa oggi è l'importanza della cultura e quindi del dialogo⁵ con il mondo a tutti i livelli e con tutti gli interlocutori e del processo d'inculturazione nel momento dell'evangelizzazione. Non si tratta di una novità, ma dell'accentuazione di una dimensione permanente della missione che viene presentata come *stile* della missione della Chiesa. In passato l'accento andava sul dialogo come incontri di esperti che si confrontano. Oggi il papa presenta il dialogo come un "cammino" (238) ineludibile, una realtà quotidiana dei fedeli che prima di sottolineare le differenze culturali o religiose, cercano di condividere quello che è comune nella vita e nella fede. Il papa afferma il dovere di dialogare con tutti, di attivare ogni forma possibile di dialogo sull'esempio di Gesù nell'incontro con la Samaritana (cf. 72 e 120) e potremmo aggiungere con Nicodemo, con il cieco nato e in generale con i discepoli: una caratteristica dello stile di Gesù, soprattutto nel quarto vangelo. Il dialogo, come impegno e stile della Chiesa, è stato già autorevolmente formulato cinquant'anni fa da Paolo VI nella sua enciclica *Ecclesiam suam*. In essa papa Montini afferma che la Chiesa "deve venire a dialogo col mondo in cui si trova a vivere. La Chiesa si fa parola; la Chiesa si fa messaggio; la Chiesa si fa colloquio" (*Ecclesiam suam* 67). Dialogo dice incontro desiderato e atteso, ascolto sincero, stima e rispetto per l'interlocutore; dice anche intenzione di apprendere e non solo di insegnare. Papa Francesco riprende questa modalità della missione e insiste sulla necessità per la Chiesa di dialogare con tutti e sempre, "con gli stati, con la società - che comprende il dialogo con le culture e le scienze - e con i non credenti" (238). Il dialogo s'impone alla Chiesa perché essa non ha tutte le soluzioni e sa di poterle individuare e trovare come frutto di una ricerca promossa insieme a tutti gli uomini di buona volontà. Scrive papa Bergoglio: "Né il papa né la Chiesa posseggono il monopolio dell'interpretazione della realtà sociale o della proposta di soluzioni per

⁵ È sintomatico che in *Evangelii gaudium* la parola *dialogo* e il verbo *dialogare* appaiano 58 volte.

i problemi contemporanei" (184, cf. 241). In secondo luogo, la Chiesa dialoga, cioè ascolta anche gli altri che si mettono in ascolto di Dio, perché essa "che è discepola missionaria, ha bisogno di crescere nell'interpretazione della Parola" (40), mettendosi all'ascolto dello Spirito che parla a tutti e non solo alle Chiese, attraverso la storia e per mezzo dei cosiddetti "segni dei tempi" (51). Infine, il dialogo è necessario alla missione della Chiesa, non è un'esigenza congiunturale bensì un tratto del suo stile, perché iscritto nell'identità della Chiesa, la quale è fatta a immagine della Trinità, di un Dio che è dialogo. "Per essere fedele all'iniziativa divina, la Chiesa deve entrare in un dialogo di salvezza con tutti" (*Dialogo e annuncio* 1991, n. 38). Nella visione di Paolo VI e del Concilio il dialogo non è un mezzo per convincere l'interlocutore, ma l'atteggiamento con cui la Chiesa si mette all'ascolto degli altri nella certezza che Dio parla a tutti, cristiani e non cristiani; quindi la Chiesa ha da imparare da tutti e non solo da insegnare⁶. Purtroppo ancora molti cristiani ri-

⁶ "Il dovere missionario, d'altra parte, non ci impedisce di andare al dialogo intimamente disposti all'ascolto. Sappiamo infatti che, di fronte al mistero di grazia infinitamente ricco di dimensioni e di implicazioni per la vita e la storia dell'uomo, la Chiesa stessa non finirà mai di indagare, contando sull'aiuto del Paraclito, lo Spirito di verità (cf. Gv 14,17), al quale appunto compete di portarla alla 'pienezza della verità' (cf. Gv 16,13). Questo principio è alla base non solo dell'inesauribile approfondimento teologico della verità cristiana, ma anche del dialogo cristiano con le filosofie, le culture, le religioni. Non raramente lo Spirito di Dio, che 'soffia dove vuole' (Gv 3,8), suscita nell'esperienza umana universale, nonostante le sue molteplici contraddizioni, segni della sua presenza, che aiutano gli stessi discepoli di Cristo a comprendere più profondamente il messaggio di cui sono portatori. Non è stato forse con questa umile e fiduciosa apertura che il Concilio Vaticano II si è impegnato a leggere i 'segni dei tempi?' (...) Questo atteggiamento di apertura e insieme di attento discernimento il Concilio lo ha inaugurato anche nei confronti delle altre religioni. Tocca a noi seguirne l'insegnamento e la traccia con grande fedeltà"

tengono il dialogo un *optional* della missione oppure un ambito riservato solo a certi esperti. Il fatto che papa Francesco lo richiami nuovamente e lo dichiari importante e necessario nelle sue varie espressioni, come dialogo di vita (128) e dialogo con le varie religioni (242-258), rinforza la dottrina del magistero e toglie il sospetto - ingiusto e offensivo - che i missionari cedano alla tentazione dell'irenismo per non dover inquietare la coscienza altrui con la proclamazione del Vangelo e delle esigenze cristiane.

L'impegno per l'inculturazione

Un altro aspetto della missione che, per quanto se ne parli da decenni ormai, risulta ancora nuovo o, quanto meno, poco realizzato e che il papa chiede oggi alla missione della "Chiesa in uscita", è l'impegno per l'inculturazione della fede. La Chiesa è cosciente che il Vangelo per essere trasmesso ha bisogno della cultura (115-116). Per questa ragione il papa rinnova l'appello ai missionari affinché conoscano, rispettino e promuovano la cultura di ogni popolo secondo l'insegnamento del Concilio (*Ad gentes* 22) e del magistero ecclesiale (*Redemptoris missio* 52-54). Anche qui nessuna novità, perché a partire dall'incarnazione del Verbo, la Parola giunge all'uomo necessariamente attraverso la propria cultura, sicché l'inculturazione è una dimensione obbligata dell'evangelizzazione. Nel nostro mondo multiculturale l'urgenza d'inculturare la fede e il Vangelo (115) si è fatta più viva. Il papa ribadisce quest'esigenza, che non è di oggi⁷, che cioè il cristianesimo non può essere trasmesso secondo "un unico modello culturale" (116): l'esigenza dell'inculturazione nella missione, formulata già dal 1979, è presente in tutti i documenti del magistero pontificio di qualsiasi argomento essi trattino. Ciononostante non si sono fatti molti passi in avanti, perché la paura

di compromettere l'unità e la comunione ha frenato molti dei possibili tentativi. Con papa Francesco il discorso dell'inculturazione esce ancora una volta dalla discussione accademica per spingere gli evangelizzatori a procedere finalmente a metterla in pratica.

Un ambito in cui papa Francesco chiede alla "Chiesa in uscita" di incarnarsi o inculturarsi è il mondo dei poveri, riformulando ampiamente il tema della povertà e dei poveri e sviluppando quella "opzione per i poveri" che, pur presente nel magistero della Chiesa, in questi ultimi decenni era stata guardata con qualche sospetto a motivo delle possibili manipolazioni ideologiche. Oggi Francesco l'ha sdoganata affermando apertamente: "Desidero una Chiesa povera per i poveri" (198). Ritorna in queste parole la prospettiva dell'ecclesiologia conciliare che in *Lumen gentium* n. 8 ha parlato di una "Chiesa dei poveri", prospettiva troppo presto dimenticata. Essa ritorna oggi non più come un aspetto dell'ethos ecclesiale, ma come una "categoria teologica prima che culturale, sociologica, politica o filosofica... La Chiesa ha fatto una opzione per i poveri intesa come una 'forma speciale di primazia nell'esercizio della carità cristiana, della quale dà testimonianza tutta la tradizione della chiesa'" (198). Questa opzione - insegnava Benedetto XVI - "è implicita nella fede cristologica in quel Dio che si è fatto povero per noi, per arricchirci mediante la sua povertà" (*ibid.*). La missione della Chiesa ne è profondamente segnata perché i poveri hanno un magistero e la "misteriosa sapienza" di Dio ci raggiunge attraverso di loro (*ibid.*). Nessuno può esimersi dall'ascoltare il grido dei poveri, "nessuno può sentirsi esonerato dalla preoccupazione per i poveri e per la giustizia sociale" (201). L'opzione per i poveri è una dimensione della missione della Chiesa e una doverosa dimensione del processo d'inculturazione.

(Giovanni Paolo II, *Novo millennio ineunte*, n. 56; vedi anche i nn. 54-55 del medesimo documento).

⁷ *Catechesis tradendae* 57 è il primo testo del magistero che parla apertamente di inculturazione: "Della catechesi, come dell'evangelizzazione in generale, possiamo dire che è chiamata a portare la forza del Vangelo nel cuore della cultura e delle culture".

Una missione pluriforme

La terza novità è legata a quanto detto finora. La Chiesa cattolica negli ultimi secoli, per ragioni storiche ben comprensibili, ha irrigidito i modelli teologici e i paradigmi pastorali in un'uniformità che, per salvare l'unità, è diventata un freno più che uno stimolo all'evangelizzazione. Papa Francesco ha espressamente dichiarato di voler uscire da questa rigidità e favorire un maggiore pluralismo e ne ha indicato il fondamento nella "libertà inafferrabile della Parola, che è efficace a modo suo, e in forme molto diverse, tali da sfuggire spesso le nostre previsioni e rompere i nostri schemi" (22). Di questa intenzione sono testimoni le molte citazioni che il papa fa dei documenti degli episcopati in *Evangelii gaudium*, oltre all'insistenza sulla necessità di una maggiore inculturazione nell'annuncio del Vangelo nelle varie e diverse situazioni in cui la Chiesa si trova e sull'impegno dichiarato di lasciare più spazio alle iniziative pastorali locali: "Non credo... che si debba attendere dal magistero papale una parola definitiva o completa su tutte le questioni che riguardano la Chiesa e il mondo. Non è opportuno che il papa sostituisca gli episcopati locali nel discernimento di tutte le problematiche che si prospettano nei loro territori. In questo senso, avverto la necessità di procedere in una salutare *decentralizzazione*" (16). Francesco non si nasconde il rischio di una pluriformità della Chiesa, anzi prevede che la Chiesa sarà "un popolo dai molti volti" (115), che "esprime la sua autentica cattolicità e mostra la bellezza di questo volto pluriforme" (116), perché il messaggio rivelato "non s'identifica con nessuna cultura", e non si deve cadere in forme di "vanitosa sacralizzazione della propria cultura" (117). Questa insistenza sull'incarnazione dell'unica Chiesa e del suo magistero in forme culturali diverse cambia lo stile finora seguito dalla pratica del magistero. L'affermazione di *Redemptoris missio* 52, secondo cui l'inculturazione è stata "un'esigenza che ha segnato tutto il cammino storico" della missione, esprime un auspicio più che un fatto. Anche in questi ultimi anni, pur affermando teoricamente il dovere dell'inculturazione e quindi di un pluralismo di approcci nella missione, il

magistero ha soprattutto messo in guardia dai rischi e dai pericoli connessi a un'inculturazione non riuscita, bloccandone in tal modo la realizzazione. È ormai tempo che si passi all'inculturazione della fede e della Chiesa nella varietà e pluralità delle culture. Papa Francesco sollecita la Chiesa al coraggio e alla creatività, ad aprirsi al mondo senza lasciarsi intrappolare dalla paura di sbagliare (cf. 49). Se la Chiesa è pluriforme, pluriforme sarà anche la missione. In alcuni ambienti essa si svolgerà secondo i canoni classici della missione *ad gentes*, fatta di predicazione del Vangelo, costituzione della comunità cristiana attraverso i sacramenti e la promozione dei valori del Regno. Altrove sarà quella che oggi si chiama la missione *inter gentes*, che punterà alla promozione dei valori del Regno in dialogo con le religioni non cristiane anche senza giungere al battesimo. Del resto già papa Wojtyła in *Redemptoris missio* riconosce che ci sono persone che appartengono alle religioni non cristiane e "non hanno la possibilità di accettare la rivelazione del Vangelo e di entrare nella Chiesa" (n. 10). In tali situazioni la missione della Chiesa punterà alla promozione di quei "valori del Regno" che sono valori autenticamente umani, comuni alle altre religioni, e che fanno parte del Vangelo del Regno che Gesù ha annunciato. Così la nuova evangelizzazione di chi si è allontanato dalla Chiesa assumerà forme variabili e flessibili che vanno dal dialogo della vita agli incontri feriali sulla strada e sul lavoro e finalmente a forme di predicazione informale (127), che pur senza parole puntano a comunicare, anche senza un discorso esplicito, il nucleo del *kerigma*, quell'annuncio gioioso che scalda il cuore dei credenti: "Gesù Cristo ti ama, ha dato la sua vita per salvarti, e adesso è vivo al tuo fianco ogni giorno, per illuminarti, per rafforzarti, per liberarti" (164). Papa Francesco non offre alla Chiesa una nuova teologia della missione e neppure una nuova spiritualità missionaria (260), ma indica alla Chiesa e ai missionari alcuni cammini nuovi da percorrere con "audacia" (261) e "creatività" (156). Essi rinnoveranno la Chiesa - e in particolare gli Istituti missionari - e la ringiovaniranno più delle riforme strutturali che tutti attendono e di cui tutti sentono un grande bisogno, ma che

possono rimanere soltanto sulla carta e/o nelle buone intenzioni.

Le conseguenze per un istituto missionario

Non è necessario fare un lungo discorso per mettere in evidenza le conclusioni che un Istituto missionario deve trarre dalle proposte di papa Francesco nel campo della missione. Quello che è importante è rimanere vigili e non lasciarsi guidare dal criterio del "si è sempre fatto così" (33). Una prima tentazione, molto frequente, è quella di pensare subito a delle riforme strutturali. In questo caso nulla è cambiato della struttura Chiesa e della missione. Ciò che deve essere preso in considerazione in vista della "conversione pastorale e missionaria" richiesta dal papa sono le persone, i loro atteggiamenti e le priorità delle istituzioni nei riguardi della missione. Le tentazioni dell'autoreferenzialità, dell'accidia, del pessimismo e della mondanità spirituale colpiscono il missionario singolo e il suo Istituto e tolgono la gioia della missione e dell'evangelizzazione. L'attenzione alla continua conversione dei singoli e delle comunità e alla loro formazione permanente secondo le indicazioni di Francesco deve essere la prima preoccupazione di un Istituto missionario. Il rischio che esso corre è di fissarsi nella sua tradizione e nei modelli di missione finora perseguiti. Siccome il modello del missionario ereditato dal passato gode ancora un notevole fascino nel popolo cristiano, può essere abbastanza difficile modificarlo. E tuttavia tanto le indicazioni del papa come quelle della storia ne richiedono una profonda revisione per renderlo più semplice e libero, più povero e duttile. La missione della "Chiesa in uscita" richiede nuovi atteggiamenti che a loro volta postulano una nuova formazione alla missione e un nuovo stile di missione. Questo impone una costante e periodica verifica.

La prima e la più urgente di queste conversioni riguarda la qualità evangelica della *testimonianza* del missionario, il quale deve assumere un nuovo stile di missione più spirituale, curando più il suo *essere discepolo* e abbandonando la tendenza a *fare molte cose* che viene dall'atteggiamento imprenditoriale

caratteristico di una missione ormai passata. Uno stile *spirituale* non significa uno stile *disincarnato* o fuori della storia, anzi proprio il contrario. La presenza del discepolo missionario deve essere quella del discorso della montagna: essere "sale della terra e luce del mondo", una presenza evangelica in mezzo alla massa della gente, una presenza fraterna e solidale nel nome di Gesù. I discepoli missionari saranno *testimoni* fedeli e veraci del Signore e del suo Vangelo, germi e segni di umanizzazione: con un comportamento che riveli la verità della loro vocazione di discepoli missionari, annunceranno con la vita, prima che con la parola, la bellezza e la gioia di sapersi amati da Dio e la misericordia e tenerezza di Dio che conquista i cuori. Infatti, è per attrazione che cresce la Chiesa (14).

Va da sé che la relazione del discepolo missionario con la "Chiesa in uscita", soggetto della missione, è quella del *servitore*, non di colui che ha suoi progetti da realizzare, ma di colui che ha ricevuto la missione. Il suo carisma nella Chiesa è quello di *essere inviato* dalla Chiesa stessa; quindi la sua è una presenza subordinata, quella del servitore, che non comporta per questo la passività, ma suppone la comunione nella missione e l'obbedienza attiva e responsabile in vista dell'evangelizzazione. Il servizio alla Chiesa locale va tuttavia accompagnato da simpatia ed empatia per coloro che hanno la responsabilità della guida della comunità. Questo atteggiamento è particolarmente importante nel momento in cui i responsabili locali sono impegnati nel processo d'inculturazione della fede e della Chiesa. Essi hanno il diritto di trovare nei missionari non dei critici acerbi ma dei catalizzatori che favoriscono quest'operazione difficile e delicata.

Il missionario deve tenere viva nella Chiesa locale la *memoria dei lontani* e lo zelo per raggiungerli, atteggiamenti che rischiano di sfumare fino a spegnersi all'emergere e crescere dei problemi interni della comunità, spesso pressanti e urgenti.

Così un'importante responsabilità dei missionari nella Chiesa locale è quella di richiamare la presenza dei poveri e l'impegno della Chiesa per il superamento delle situazioni che producono e mantengono la povertà. Essi

stessi devono far propria "l'opzione preferenziale per i poveri" della comunità locale, vivere sobriamente e contribuire alla creazione di una "Chiesa dei poveri per i poveri" (198), vivendo la comunione dei beni, riducendo ogni pericolosa dipendenza economica e finanziaria dall'estero, pur accettando di essere strumenti della carità per i poveri. Una "Chiesa dei poveri per i poveri" si caratterizzerà per l'essenzialità dei suoi servizi, la sobrietà nell'uso delle ricchezze e i mezzi poveri e normalmente accessibili ai poveri, omogenei con la finalità della missione. Eserciteranno la loro testimonianza profetica denunciando tutto quello che mantiene le situazioni di "inequità" (52) che producono ingiustizia e violenza e, insieme al papa, diranno "no" all'economia dell'esclusione, all'idolatria del denaro, alla dittatura dell'economico e all'inequità che genera violenza, alla cultura dello scarto e alla globalizzazione dell'indifferenza (55-60), pericolose derive del processo di globalizzazione e del neocapitalismo oggi imperante. E assumeranno uno stile di vita rispettoso dei poveri e della creazione.

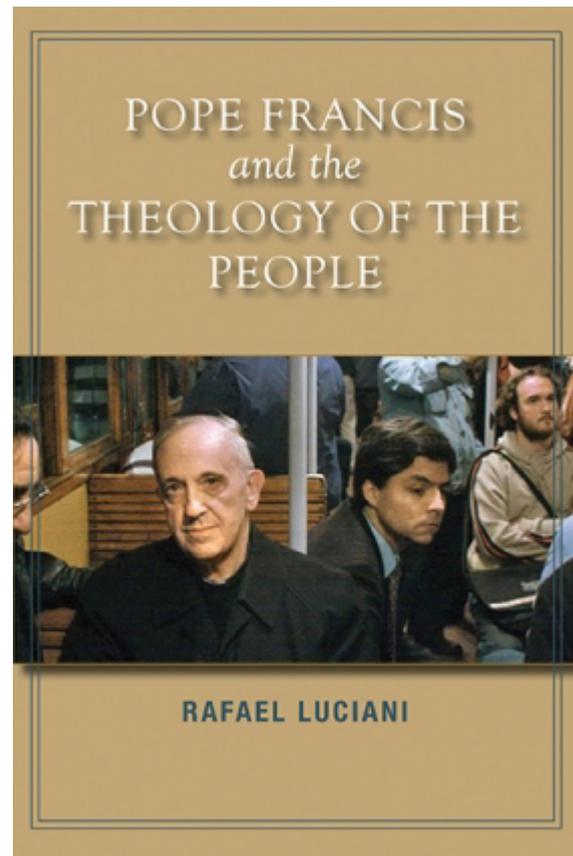
Il missionario, per la sua personale esperienza, richiama il dovere profetico della Chiesa di essere "voce dei senza voce" (*Ecclesia in Africa* 70), di non lasciarsi irretire dalle istanze locali e di mantenere quel distacco che le permette di avere uno sguardo critico sulla situazione sociale e soprattutto su quella dei poveri.

Infine, è proprio del carisma del missionario ricordare che la Chiesa di Gesù Cristo è più vasta della Chiesa locale nella quale egli si trova, e che il mondo dei lontani che attendono il Vangelo o che l'hanno smarrito è una realtà che non deve essere dimenticata, perché l'evangelizzazione viene prima della *cura animarum*, essendo lo scopo primo della Chiesa.

Ref: Ad Gentes 18 (2014), pp. 150-161.

An English version of this article will be published on the Sedos website:

www.sedosmission.org



Gift from Orbis Books to Sedos Library

ANNUAL REPORT OF SEDOS GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2017

Introduction

Once again we take this opportunity of the Annual Report to greet you all, wherever you may read it. It is a link between the SEDOS Secretariat and our Generalates here in Rome, but it is also a greeting *to all the missionaries in the field* who usually read these lines in the *SEDOS Bulletin*. It presents an opportunity for us to thank you for the contacts we have had during the year and for the many words of encouragement we received. It should give you an idea of the main activities SEDOS has organized in Rome, the publications and services of our Secretariat and of the projects we have for the future.

1. SEDOS Executive Committee:

The members of the Executive Committee for the year 2017 were:

PRESIDENT

Sr. Veronica Openibo, SHCJ, Superior General of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus.
Elected to the Executive in 2014.

VICE PRESIDENT

Fr. Tesfaye Tadesse Gebresilasie, MCCJ, Superior General of the Comboni Missionaries of the Heart of Jesus. Elected to the Executive in 2017.

TREASURER

Sr. Cristina Giustozzi, SMSM, Missionary Sisters of the Society of Mary.
Elected to the Executive in 2016.

COUNCILLORS

Arlindo Dias, SVD Society of the Divine Word, since 2012.
Sr. Rachel Oommen, ICM, Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, since 2017.
André Schaminée, MAFR, Missionaries of Africa (White Fathers), since 2012.
Kathy Schmittgens, SSND, School Sisters of Notre Dame, since 2015.
Gisela Schreyer, MSOLA, Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa, since 2012.
Lissy Sebastian, RNDM, Religious of Our Lady of the Missions, since 2017.
Emili Turú, FMS, Marist Brothers (former President of SEDOS), since 2011.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Fr. Peter Baekelmans, CICM, Congregation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary.
Elected to the Executive in 2016.

2. Restructuration of SEDOS

The restructuration we started when I came to office at the beginning of last year is now almost finished, and is producing its first fruits. For the first time in years the Financial Statement balances. This is thanks to the implementation of the structural, organizational, and communication reorganization of SEDOS we presented at the Annual General Assembly in 2016.

On the level of the structure there were still a few more minor changes. For instance, we are now employing the Easy-Clean Company for the cleaning of SEDOS, for less hours (from 4 hours per week to 2,5 hours per week), Webmaster Fabio now works freelance per hour. But as such, everything else is in place and stable now. The SEDOS Team, Leila, Sr. Celine and Fr. Peter all work on a part-time basis, 20 hours a week, and only the secretary receives a salary, while the other two an honorarium.

On the level of organization, we came up with a clear job-description for the secretary, for the librarian, and for the director as well. Every year we will renew this job-description in dialogue, so that it can be used to evaluate the work too.

On the level of communication, the SEDOS Website is being developed bit by bit, with a financial donation from MISEREOR. Leila keeps the events and news updated, as well as the Facebook page.

Matters left over from last year:

Review of the function of the Library and of the Archives. We have been working on this, and Sr. Celine presented the updating after the Annual Report. Special attention was given to our Exchange Periodicals because we receive them free, more than 30, in exchange for a copy of our Bulletin, we can use their articles for our selection of articles in the Bulletin.

The Updating of our Database and the Bulletin Subscriptions has been completed for the most part. There was some difficulty in reconnecting our database to the website domain, but Fabio succeeded at last.

What still has to be done:

Updating our mailing list to the Membership. Contact with the Congregations is getting better, but we need to update the list of addresses and contact persons in order that our e-mails reach the right person in charge.

Developing the website for Documentation on Mission. SEDOS is a Documentation Service, but that aspect is less visible at the moment. Through the website we aim to make this section more easily accessible. Sr. Clara Alvine Ayo is helping us to review the journals we have in the archives, checking to see whether they are now on-line or not, as well as the list of Missionary Research Institutes with their links, and mission libraries that are on-line.

Service for next year:

The secretary Leila Benassi will go on maternity leave from the end of December till the end of May 2018. We wish Leila a safe delivery and much strength for the first months afterwards.

3. SEDOS Residential Seminar

The last Seminar on Mission and Finances, *Economy in the Service of Mission*, held in Nemi, was a great success. We had the largest number ever, 140 participants. Their reactions were all very positive. Thanks to the cooperation of Mr. Andreas Machnik from Pax Bank we were able to engage qualified speakers with helpful information on difficult matters such as transparency and corruption. Because we had reduced the price for members, we did not make much profit from it in the end, but after all we are a non-profit organization. This year too, we were able to invite five religious bursars from Latin America to come to the Seminar, thanks to a donation from ADVENIAT and from PAX Bank. It was a great encouragement for their missionary task.

It was the first time that so many participants came from abroad. This shows that the Seminar is getting a good reputation, besides being relatively cheap compared to other more official seminars. Actually, it is looked upon more and more as a way of formation, and not only as a place to share one's experience. We hope that more congregations will send their members to attend it, and not only the Counsellors.

4. Other activities

Several activities were planned for this year. We held a workshop on Italian by Leila and another one on Soul Collage by Sr. Kathy Schmittgens, SSND. In October, there was an Ecumenical Celebration with the Lutheran Church to commemorate the Reformation 500 years ago at which Fr. Heiner Wilmer, of the Dehonian Fathers, preached a very powerful sermon. Sr. Gisela, MSOLA, worked very hard to realize this event. In November we had a workshop led by Professor Miriam Subirana from Spain on the topic of Appreciative Inquiry. The participation fee was kept low so that many could join. We had hoped for 80 participants, but in the end there were 55 participants. But that was just perfect. Our thanks go to the Marist Brothers who offered us their hall free! After the Annual Report Sr. Lissy gave a little insight on what happened and the happy results for SEDOS too. Lastly, SEDOS cooperated with the South Sudan Solidarity group of the UISG/USG for a vigil with the Pope. This was done last 23th of November. We had not thought that the Pope himself would preside, but in the end he did, and Leila and I were granted a personal encounter with the Pope. See the video of the event on: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EW2wxDsdDV0>

And last, I have been working on a booklet, entitled *Peace through Stories*. It is a workshop that I once gave to an interreligious working group, and also to the RNDM Sisters. It is based on a book of stories that I made when I was working at the University Parish in Belgium. As one looks for the common spirit behind two or three stories, one also learns to be "inter-cultural"; to gain intercultural competence. Those attending the SEDOS General Assembly received it as a gift for their participation, but it is published in the last Bulletin of this year too, and will be available on our website later. The illustrations are by a friend in Belgium, Koen Van Loocke, and it was sponsored by MISEREOR. Thanks to their donation. I hope this initiative will be the start of the publication of booklets by SEDOS that can be used in missionary formation or workshops.

5. Plans for next year:

The next Seminar will be held in Ariccia, and will be about *Mission and Youth*. The schedule is almost ready. In the middle of January we will open the registration, as usual. We hope to get a grant from the Hilton Fund Sisters for five Sisters (formators) from India. An Inter-Faith Chanting will take place at the Basilica of Saint Cecilia. Other workshops and manuals are planned.

Thanks for your on-going support!

Sedos Residential Seminar 2018

MISSION AND YOUTH

Dear all,

as every year also this year 2018 there will be the Sedos Residential Seminar. The theme is **Mission and Youth** and the Seminar will take place in House of the Divine Master, in Ariccia, outside Rome. from : Monday, 30th of April, 3 p.m. till Friday 4th of May, 2 p.m.

We take the pleasure to invite you all, don't miss this opportunity!

Please find here below a draft of the program

Program draft

Theme: Mission and Youth

Date: Monday, 30th of April, 3 p.m. till Friday 4th of May, 2 p.m.

Venue: House of the Divine Master, in Ariccia, outside Rome.

Tuesday 1 May: On Young People

Ms. Emilia Palladino (Professor at Pontifical Gregorian University)

“The way *Millenials* think and act”

Sr. Bruna Zaltron, OrselineSCM (Professor at Claretianum)

“Generati dalla Vita per corrispondere all'amor”

Wednesday 2 May: On Evangelization

Br. Paul Raj, FSG (Assistant General of Congregation of Montfort Brothers of St.Gabriel)

“The Role and Challenges of Evangelization for the Youth in the Multicultural and Pluralistic world of today”

Panel of Lay-missionaries (moderator from ICPE Mission, Michael Papenkordt)

“What moves me to do this?”

Thursday 3 May: Vocational Discernment

Br. Paul Bednarczyck, CSC (Vicar General of Congregation of Holy Cross)

“Vocation Statistics in the US”

Panel of Young Religious Missionaries (moderator Paul Bednarczyck)

“What moves me to do this?”

THE ENROLLMENT WILL START ON FEBRUARY 2018

to register write at : redacsed@sedosmission.org