

THE TASK OF MISSION IN THE WORLD

The International Mission Congress held in Manila Dec. 2-7 did not break any theological grounds as expected but it was considered highly successful because it voiced out in clear, unequivocal terms the task facing mission in the world, particularly in Asia.

The congress, the participants felt, ushered in a new age of mission where mission no longer refers to foreign missionaries and funding alone, but to the responsibility of every Catholic to be a credible witness to the faith in all aspects of his or her life.

The Congress attracted six cardinals, headed by Angelo Cardinal Rossi, prefect of the Vatican's Sacred Congregation for the Evangelization of People and 200 delegates and observers from all parts of the world.

The heart of the Congress was the Theological Conference where the participants were divided into nine workshops representing the various concerns of the Mission. At the close of the congress each workshop presented a Consensus paper embodying the result of the discussions held among the members of the group.

Two dimensions of Asian life heavily influenced the thinking of the delegates the degrading poverty and oppression that dominate the lives of the vast majority of Asia's people, and the fact that Catholics are only a microscopic one per cent of the total population. Such a minority position, unique throughout the world, inspires a deep humility.

"It would be a mockery of God's providence and of His will to save all the peoples of the earth," stated one of the workshop groups, "to suppose that one half of the world's population, the two billion faces of Asia, only await conversion to Christianity... in order to be saved."

Besides humility it prepares Asian Christians for dialogue: if conversion is not the sole goal of the Church's activity, Christians and non-Christians together must discover what truly are the plans of God.

Here is a summary of the Consensus Papers of the nine workshops.

* From Cor Manila, January 15, 1980, page 3.

THEOLOGY FOR MISSION IN THE ASIAN CONTEXT

The first workshop reaffirmed the need for local churches to engage in dialogue with the local cultures; the masses of the poor and the oppressed in the region; and the religious traditions of "our Asian neighbors." It stresses the need for an attitude which presupposes awareness and acceptance of the present orientations of Vatican II and sounds a call for "greater cognizance of the severe situation of war and conflict in the area that calls for efforts to bring about reconciliation and recognition of the challenges posed by modernization both to Asian religious traditions and to Christianity."

How should local churches be mission today? The delegates agreed that the "old manner" of missionwork where the gospel was preached to the natives in a "somewhat haughty manner" is past. Mission today must possess the politeness of dialogue "if not all its deeper theological values." "They should give a sample, not a sermon of what the Christ-life is; other people must not only hear the gospel but witness it. Essential to this witness is unselfish service to the world."

The Consensus Paper also touched on the delicate problem of baptism. Baptism, because of the situations in some countries, has carried with it not only its basic meaning of death to sin and life to God in Christ, but also sociological implications severely detrimental to the socio-economic life of the prospective Christian. The problem of baptism raises a host of questions but the delegates insisted that "we must continue to preach the whole gospel; work to prepare the ground for its explicit proclamation where it can't be preached explicitly at present; and strive to obtain an atmosphere of greater religious freedom for all."

The primary task of the Church, Workshop I said, is to represent effectively through personal witness, life style, concern for others, commitment, joyful hope, the meaning of human existence as revealed in Jesus Christ. The Church must become the sign of joy and hope to peoples.

*LOCAL ASIAN CHURCHES & THE TASKS OF MISSION
(INCULTURATION)*

Fundamental to the task of mission in the Third World particularly Asia which is poor and overwhelmingly non-Christian is the process of inculturation.

The problem of inculturation sprung up with the realization that past concepts of the mission which were directed at changing

situations to conform to what were generally regarded as modern did more damage than good and did not really achieve the chief goal of mission.

Inculturation, the workshop said, paves the way for the "discovery of the seeds of the Word which lie hidden in the given cultures and living traditions (cf. AG, n. 11). The mutual exchange of their discoveries among the local churches lead to their enrichment as well as that of the universal Church.

The Workshop realized that inculturation is a difficult and delicate task. What is vital to the work of inculturation, the consensus paper said, is the proper attitude. There are those who think that inculturation is impossible because it endangers the unity of the Church and would introduce a pluralism that might damage the very content of revelations. The obstacles to inculturation, it was pointed out, are over-eagerness to see results, irresponsible experimentation and undue imposition without sufficient preparation of the people.

Successful inculturation demands from those involved mature freedom in the Spirit which is characterized by docility and trust in God's guidance. This implies the willingness to take risks and profit from mistakes, to be open to correction and be willing to dialogue with others in sincere openness.

As concrete steps towards inculturation the consensus paper made the following recommendations:

1. The Episcopal Conference of each country should give encouragement to initiatives and programs of inculturation in consonance with the spirit and the directives of Vatican II, the Apostolic Exhortation "Evangelii Nuntiandi" and the documents of the FABC.

2. A continuing search for and effective working towards common vision of evangelization in Asian countries should be fostered. In the face of the pluralistic cultural and religious condition of the countries of Asia, this common vision is all the more necessary. Episcopal conferences, in close collaboration with the Conferences of Major Religious Superiors, should take initiatives toward this end.

3. Christian communities should develop a positive appreciation of the culture of their own countries. Such appreciation is a grateful acknowledgment of God's gift to a people. This love and acceptance of one's own culture, without being blind to its imperfections, will be shown in the creation of an indigenous spirituality, liturgy and art and a relevant theological reflection and the adoption of style of life in harmony with one's cultural heritage. Centers of research can be established to promote a deeper understanding of one's culture and provide leadership in experimentation.

4. In order to forestall confusion resulting from inculturation and innovative methods in evangelization should animate their communities towards responsible experimentation proceeding by stages and subject to evaluation. The alternation of experience and reflection will mark the process of authentic inculturation.

5. In order to ensure that deepening of faith which is part of genuine inculturation, the following should be undertaken:

a. The use of the Bible by the faithful should be encouraged and promoted;

b. Catechesis should not be merely a handing down of a set of truths but an initiation to the Christian life leading to the development of a spirituality beyond the merely cultic level;

c. Theologizing should be contextual, taking into consideration the ways of thinking and the sets of meanings and values that shape the lives of the people;

d. Efforts should be exerted to foster the contemplative dimension of the Christian faith through a study of the holy writings of Asian cultures and encouragement and guidance in indigenous forms of prayer and ascetism should be provided;

e. Seasonal festivals and other community celebrations should be given a Christian meaning by interpreting them in the light of the faith.

THE URGENCY OF DIALOGUE FOR THE LOCAL CHURCH

The members of Workshop III explored the "why" of dialogue, the consequences of its impact on the local church and its ability to offer a servant role to the local church itself.

The paper gave two types of dialogues: one that appeals to individuals of all religious traditions and one that appeals primarily to Christians.

A dialogue among men of different paves the way for the rediscovery a dynamic spiritual dimension sorely needed in the world which is changing so rapidly. Among these men too who are divided by conflicts which at times emanate from differences in religion, the process of dialogue becomes urgent for harmony and peace.

Among Christian dialogue becomes the spark which inflames them to discover that they are partness in bringing forth the love of God in the building up of the Kingdom. They dialogue because they are aware of God's commandment to love their neighbor as themselves.

The process of dialogue brings about an openness and an integration into the mainstream of various cultures among the local churches. Through dialogue, inculturation is made possible.

Since the building up of the Kingdom of God is an essential part of dialogue, dialogue itself gives a greater understanding to mission. It leads to new and more extensive pastoral commitments. The local church becomes a sign and sacrament in its own respective culture.

THE GOSPEL, THE KINGDOM OF GOD, LIBERATION AND DEVELOPMENT

A Christian viewing the poverty of Asia must commit himself to work for the development and liberation of his brothers and sisters, the delegates of Workshop IV said. Trying to correct a tendency among Catholics in Asia to see religion in a narrow, spiritualistic fashion, the members of the workshop on Gospel, Development and Liberation state that the mission or task of the Church "is not simply to convert people to an organized religion... It is rather to convert people to authentic human values and to deepen and fulfill these values in Christ..." The formation of values is seen as the specific role of the Church in social action on behalf of the poor.

The workshop also called for the need, specially now, in this time, for the Church of Asia to become the Church of the poor. "It is not that nothing has been achieved. In spite of our sinfulness and weakness much has been done, to make the Church of Asia resemble a little bit more the face of the poor Christ. We do not wish to deny rightful acknowledgments of admirable, often heroic efforts of Christian communities and missionaries, both past and present to bring the Good News to the poor."

This it seems is not enough. What exists, the delegates pointed out was a disparity between the Word and Witnessing. This is traced to several causes: lack of exposure to or actual experience of the misery, the powerlessness and insecurity of the poor; naivete of all too many Christians regarding the structural causes of poverty and injustice which often leads to the adoption of ineffective measures in their attempts to promote justice and human rights; and serious deficiencies in the training of ministers and missionaries of the Church (e.g., an inadequate theology of mission, ignorance of the social teaching of the Church, a certain spiritualism in seminary formation which neglects the laying of solid anthropological foundations).

How to transmit the word to action and thus become the Church of the Poor in Asia? The delegates proposed the following:

1. We must, first of all, rid ourselves more and more thoroughly of that ecclesiocentric attitude which puts institutional interests above the needs of our fellow human beings.

2. All who desire to be counted as missionaries and ministers in Asia must hold it as a first priority somehow to experience in their lives the actual condition of the poor: their insecurity, their powerlessness, their vulnerability — in a word, the life-style of the poor man.

3. A formation for mission and ministry which overcomes those ecclesiocentric attitudes and life-styles counter to evangelization should involve the lived experience of genuine brotherhood and mutual concern, which is ordinarily had in basic Christian communities.

4. A delicate and effective sensitivity to human needs in whatever form it may be found should characterize the Church of Asia. The Church should be ready to put her resources and her influence at the service of those who suffer from hunger, disease, homelessness, persecution, discrimination and oppression.

BASIC CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES & LOCAL MINISTRIES

Basic Christian Communities is a phenomenon sweeping through several Catholic countries in the world. It is a movement gaining wide acceptance on the pastoral level. Defying single definition and a structured mode of implementation, BCCs have sprung up, stirring the local churches into a beehive of activity.

Still the question remains: What are Basic Christian Communities and what is their role in the Mission?

The Basic Christian Community as a form of a fuller participation in the life of the Church, the Paper said, deserve the sincere support of all. "In our contemporary context of non-Christian environment and of ideological struggles, the individual Christian can obviously best grow and develop as a Christian person in the midst of a self-nourishing, self-ministering and self-propagating Christian community."

On the problem of ministries, the Paper said, that to achieve the objectives of renewal there must be an effort to come face to face with pastoral inadequacies and problems. "The priestly vocation in its present form does not appear to offer an attractive challenge to the young Asians of today. The ordained minister is often called

today by new services for the integral development of the human person to work beyond his competence. The all-round collegiality and corresponsibility, subsidiarity and collaboration that should flow from the leadership function of these ministers are not yet operative as a matter of course.

If the ordained ministries are to render their special service to the life and mission of the Church, the delegates proposed the following priorities:

1. Inculturation. Ministry as the visible institution in expression and support of Christian life has a primary need to be incarnated into our particular cultures, if it is to become relevant, meaningful and effective for the salvation of our peoples.

2. Leadership in the eradication of poverty and in the fight against social injustices. The selection, formation and maintenance of our ordained ministries should be suited to the local churches.

3. The form of our ordained ministries in Asia should be determined by the communitarian development of our ecclesial awareness. As we grow in our consciousness of the rights and duties of our churches to be local and inculturated, so also our ordained ministries must tend away from hierarchical status and become more and more ecclesial, community-based and oriented.

PRAYER, SPIRITUALITY & FORMATION FOR MISSION

More than in any other part of the world is the need for Christian communities and especially their leaders to be "more ardent in contemplation and adoration" felt and deeply heightened in Asia, the home of age-old living faiths.

Aware of this, the delegates composing Workshop VI expressed concern over "the general tendency among the clergy not to care much for spiritual things." This, they felt, could lead to the ineffectual ministering of "the thirst and hunger of our people in Asia."

The heart of missionary spirituality and the driving force in the orientation of the missionary's interior life to the non-believer is the love of God and the desire to tell others of this love.

An encounter with God, the delegates noted, is experienced through community celebration of life events as the cycle of life, seasonal celebrations and festivities. Thus the delegates stressed that popular piety and folk religiosity must be taken seriously,

examined and fostered. The paper also encouraged the gathering in prayer groups, which show the Church to be "sign and sacrament of God's presence in our midst.

What are essential to the formation of mission especially in Asia?

1. Formation of mission must aim at making the missionary totally immersed in the mystery of the Holy Trinity which he keeps in his heart in silence and contemplation.

2. Formation like prayer and spirituality must be integrated into life and be carried out within the context of Asian reality. To achieve integration the following barriers must be overcome: theological narrowmindedness, psychological roots of faith and life inconsistencies, cultural prejudices and spiritual immaturity.

3. Existential and not merely theoretical opportunities for growth must be provided, to allow for the integration of experiences and theories for questioning ways of thinking instead of simply providing ready-made answers.

4. There should be opportunities for service. Formation for mission indicates a direction of service that needs programming, because the understanding of the reality of mission is complex. Thus formation must be interdisciplinary, going beyond philosophy and theology to growth in cultural awareness, and be open to the real challenges of service in the varied needs of our Asian people.

5. Formation for mission is not to be the exclusive responsibility of those in seminaries or houses of formation for religious. Since missionary activity is to be an activity of the whole People of God, there is a need to bring out ever more emphatically the urgency of this activity in Asia. Thus, there is need to hold retreats, especially of small groups, seminars, workshops and the like to train and develop the laity in his responsibility and to help form the nucleus of basic Christian communities, which appear to be the future form of Christian witness in our secularized and non-Christian communities.

The local church is the center and source of evangelization. In order to facilitate the growth of responsibility for its evangelizing task, the local church should be structured in such a way as to encourage every member bishop, priests, religious and laity to exercise this responsibility. Only in this way can the community, centered in Christ become the authentic people of God.

Those directives issued by and since Vatican II about the setting up of structures which by their very nature are geared to the exercise of co-responsibility within the local church should be implemented

as a matter of urgency. Structures such as parish councils, diocesan pastoral councils, regular meetings of the bishop with the presbyterium, senate of priests, meetings of bishop with religious superiors should be set up, the Paper said.

Co-responsibility at the grassroots level can also be effectively promoted through the building of basic christian communities.

The paper emphasized role of lay people in bringing the Word of God into all areas of christian life. Laymen, the paper said, are called to transform within the professional economic, educational and family life through their witness and their struggle for justice.

Also, the paper said, the candidates for the priesthood and the religious life should receive a formation which is oriented towards the evangelizing task which awaits them. This is equally true of catechists and lay leaders who should be given special formation in seminars, workshops, formal and ongoing training.

To facilitate the exercise of co-responsibility between bishops and religious there should be consultation and planning between bishops and religious. There should be consultation and planning between them — in the spirit of the norms of *Mutuae Relationes*. Bishops in their meetings and conferences should be aware of the thinking of religious and the latter in their turn should be aware of the thinking of the bishop when they meet in provincial chapters.

Each local church is coresponsible with its sister churches every where Rome being the foundation and center for the building of the up of the Kingdom of God throughout the world.

Missionaries from sister churches are not only living signs of the universality of the church and the exercise of coresponsibility but because of their different cultural and christian background, they enrich and fruitfully challenge the local church. The local church should welcome, accept and help integrate them into her life.

An area of special concern is the financial assistance of the poorer churches by those which are better off. In the granting and acceptance of such assistance however it is important that the growth towards self reliance of the receiving church be safeguarded.

In order to be credible to the world of today, a christian community must witness to the poverty of Christ as a sign of its dependence on the power of God and is readiness to share the poverty of the people.

MISSION AND EDUCATION

Aware of the conditions prevailing in Asia today (vast population, poverty, minority Christian and high proportion of young people) and recognizing the church's educational mission at present, the consensus paper on Mission and Education has made the following recommendations:

1. In all her educational endeavors, the Church should make a preferential option for the poor leading to "a genuine commitment and effort to bring about social justice in societies" (FABC, EMDA, 21). This implies that, since evangelizing education touches on liberation for a more humane socio-economic conditions, the Church must break with educational orientations which cater to elitism. Consequently, provisions must be made for widening the possibilities of universal access to education, equalization of educational opportunities, and stimulating the young and adults to discover with the light of faith that they are called to live their Christian vocation in a more responsible manner within the context of solidarity with others (CS, 58).

2. With the immense majority of Asians being young, the dynamism they bring to the Church is so far-reaching that evangelization of the young is definitely a priority for the Church in Asia.

3. Acquisition of knowledge through education is not to be considered as a means for material prosperity and success, but as a call to serve and to be responsible for others. For this reason educational ministry, in whatever form, should strive to make the educand an agent not only of his own proper development but of the development but also of the development of his community, implying an education for service.

4. There is a need to promote an efficacious education for justice aimed at conversion of heart, the overcoming of individualism, cultivating a sense of solidarity and developing the capacity to be critical of unjust situations violating human rights and dignity.

5. Since every person has the inalienable right to education according to his possibilities and culture (GE, 1), it is incumbent upon the state to recognize its subsidiary role and to respect and protect the rights of parents to educate their children as well as the duty of the Church to freely establish and conduct schools of every type and level.

6. The Church's mission of evangelization through the Catholic school can only be adequately realized by means of the individual

and collective commitment of all the members of the school community. Every effort therefore must be made towards the promotion of Catholic schools. This is where the involvement of the laity must be given full support and encouragement.

The Catholic school should strive to create an educative community permeated by the Gospel spirit of freedom and charity which makes possible the communication of Christian values for living. Accordingly, the Catholic school should become a meeting place of believers where the children and the young can encounter Christ as the integral Liberator, the Savior, the man-for-others.

MEDIA AND EVANGELIZATION

Media for social communications is no longer an option but an obligation incumbent on all those responsible for the task of evangelization. This was the declaration of the Workshop on Media and Evangelization.

Other Christian churches are increasingly using their resources for the establishment and use of media for their own purposes. This indicates the importance of media for evangelization. Governments, various ideologies and even anti-religious agencies have understood and utilized the vast potential of the media long ago.

The Consensus Paper has made the following "Practical" recommendations:

1. Media training (mass, group and folk media) should be an integral part of training in seminaries and houses of formation. We strongly recommend the program of seminary training planned by the FABC/CSC for Asia.

2. Opportunities should be provided, especially for Bishops assigned to the National Commissions for Social Communications and Missions, to acquaint themselves with the immense field of media through workshops specifically designed for that purpose.

3. All priests, religious and laity, working in the field of media, should be given the opportunity for professional training. Moreover, it is urgent that full recognition and practical support be given to their apostolate in the contemporary Church.

4. Particular attention should be given to lay men and women involved in this field of media. Orientation of these professionals through seminar/workshops is an important task of evangelization.

Through them the Church can "penetrate and perfect the temporal sphere with the Spirit of the Gospel" (vat. II, Decree on Apostolate of the Laity, II, 5).

5. "The first priority in our work of evangelization must be given, from the very first stage of our missionary witness and proclamation, to the presentation of the good news seen as "total liberation of the socially and economically oppressed. This is the topmost priority that has to be proclaimed in the Third World under the given circumstances, before time runs out for the missions and other forces take over" (D'Souza). This calls for collaboration of the Church with other christian churches and other religious traditions of Asia without, however, losing their individual identity. Since the social communications media is a powerful instrument for this "total liberation", then collaboration in this expensive field is indispensable. This "inter-faith" use of media can draw strength from the words of Pope John II in Ankara. Turkey, last December 2, when he said: "I wonder whether it is not urgent, precisely today when Moslems and Christians have entered a new period of history, to recognize and develop the spiritual links which unite us to promote and defend together... moral values of peace and liberty."

5. To implement this collaboration; we seek the help of the Pontifical Commission for Social Communications and its agencies, namely: UNDA, OCIC, and UCIP, supported by the Sacred Congregation for the Evangelization of the People, for the broadening of the efforts at this "total liberation".