

Report on: JUSTICE IN THE WORLD

by Archbishop Teopisto Alberto

1. The initial survey of the topic, Justice in the World, was given by Archbishop Alberto of Caceres, the Philippines, President of the Philippine Episcopal Conference.

2. His paper highlighted the original Synodal statement on Justice in the World, distributed in March by the Secretariat of the Synod to the Episcopal Conferences.

3. Archbishop Alberto stressed that the previous document had never been intended as a draft for debate and approval during the Synod. Its purpose was solely to serve as elements for discussion both by Episcopal Conferences and during the Synod. This, he added, explains why no attempt was made either to catalogue all the injustices in the world or to provide thorough-going analysis of them, tasks in fact, that belongs to the local Churches and not to Rome.

It also explains why there appears no elaborate statement on the Church's teaching on social justice, judged unnecessary in a document destined for the Bishops.

4. What then is the Synod supposed to take up? In answering this his own question, the speaker gave the following suggestions.

5. Though other injustices are certainly important, main emphasis should fall on international justice, the reason being that justice at the world level is more pertinent to this collegial gathering of Bishops from every part of the world.

6. International justice was tied directly to the right of all men everywhere and of all nations to their integral human development, in line with the Encyclical, *The Progress of Peoples*.

7. The main infringements of this right were identified as just the unjust domination of the poor and weak nations by those that are rich and powerful — a domination that can be economic, political, cultural, or all these together. Condemned here were neo-colonialism that takes various forms; e.g., forcing weak countries into the sphere of influence of the strong; tying aid to support of the donor's political exigencies; imposition of one's culture and one's way of life.

8. Turning more specifically to questions of international economic justice, the speaker asserted that, while economic growth is not mainly explained by exploitation, colonialism has in fact provided the North Atlantic States with low-cost resources, available markets for their manufactures and profitable investment opportunities.

9. Citing Pope Paul VI's Encyclical, *The Progress of Peoples*, he identified the main source of present domination as world trade in unregulated free markets that generally favour the strong over the weak.

10. The speaker dwelt at length on two points of recent Church teaching. The first emphasizes that the main motive for supporting the right of the developing nations to liberation and development is not charity (in the sense of alms-giving) but justice and solidarity among all men.

The second states a corollary to the right to development: the right to defend self and nation against domination by appropriate means.

11. Turning to what the world expects from the Synod, Archbishop Alberto was plain-spoken: not general principles but specific action — and to say what the Church itself intends to do about injustice, including its own. Here he insisted on the need “before preaching to others to be sure to appear just in the eyes of others”. He then enumerated points on which Church leaders must examine their conduct. These include:

— Whether Church property is always administered as “the patrimony of the poor”. Does it not rather at times result in an accumulation of wealth that causes identification of the Church with rich and powerful, while reducing her credibility when she does seek to speak out against injustice and to promote justice.

— Whether rights of those who work for the Church are always respected. Here mention was made of fair compensation, working conditions, participation and an active voice on affairs that concern the employee.

— Whether the right of Church members to freedom of speech and thought (including the right to raise a prophetic voice) are not sadly infringed on at times. Question, too, was raised about due process within the Church for those charged by authorities with misconduct.

12. Three points were made on education for justice. This education must form people to evaluate critically their societies and to be sensitive to its injustices. It should not attack injustice platitudinously, but find its roots in the system and structures that breed injustice, and attack these at their roots. Finally, education should be a continuous formation from early youth through adult life, one that changes hearts, opening them to repentance and then to true commitment to humanity's common task of achieving justice, development and peace for all the human family.