

SUMMARY OF THE INTERVENTIONS*

by Archbishop Teopisto Alberto

The fact that the Church has dealt with justice in the world in the Synod demonstrates the Church's solidarity with the human family. Today, especially, it is more alive, especially towards the poor and the oppressed, both individuals and countries. In the light of the faith, it is trying to be faithful to God. It is not driven by opportunism or the desire to proselytize, but the intimate link of justice with the evangelical message. Fidelity to the Gospel urges us to new efforts to establish justice and peace in the world.

FIRST SECTION: STATEMENTS

It is the most unanimous desire of the Fathers that the Synod draw up some practical conclusions. Nevertheless some doctrinal principles and the reasons for the Church's action in the promotion of justice should be stated. Technical solutions are not the mission of the Church, but belong to states and other temporal organizations. Some values and demands of justice are contained in the evangelical message (human dignity love towards brothers and especially towards the poor, universal solidarity, universal destination of the goods of creation, etc.). The Church exercises her rightful task by:

a) proposing the evangelical message; from this mission derives the right and duty to proclaim and defend justice in the world and condemn injustice;

b) denouncing injustices by virtue of her prophetic mission. Experts will help her to discover these injustices;

c) forming consciences to action for social justice through her educational work;

d) offering an example of justice in her own life;

e) many initiatives to help the poor which will be the visible sign of the Church's charity and spur to others.*

In the method of action to establish justice, the Church must regulate herself according to the principle of subsidiarity by respecting the competence of the local Churches (*Octogesima Adveniens*, n. 2; *Lumen Gentium*, n. 36c; *Apostolicam Actuositatem* n. 13).

Regarding the concept of social justice, the notion and reality of social justice are related to the dynamic and progressive influence of history. It is up to the Church to promote a dynamic concept of justice based on the total vision of man and humanity which recalls historical changes and social development (*Populorum Progressio*, n. 15-17; *Octo-*

* This is a brief report on the summary of the interventions of the Synodal Fathers delivered by Archbishop Teopisto Alberto at the 27th Congregation of the General Assembly on Oct. 25, 1971.

sima Adveniens, n. 40). A static concept which is only based on juridical texts of the past is opposed to the dynamic concept, as the static concept presents the danger of serving only some privileged people (*Octogesima Adveniens*, n. 18, 23).

Pastoral and practical guidelines are expected from the Synod rather than speculation on basic problems which only further theological study can clarify. In this way, through full appreciation of the local Churches, the continuity of these actions throughout the Church can be stimulated.

SECOND SECTION: GENERAL ASPECTS OF THE DISCUSSION

AN ANALYSIS OF THE MODERN SITUATION

1. The report was approved in general. Some Fathers preferred to see more stress on the injustices connected with modern warfare, the armaments race, and the sale of arms. They wished to see more stress on the ecumenical aspect of the Church's work for justice.

2. The Fathers called attention to a number of aspects in the modern situation. As Pope Paul VI said in *Populorum Progressio*, the social question today involves the whole of humanity. As a new world society is being born, the imbalances can be found within the individual countries.

4. The condition of injustice should not be considered solely under its economic aspect. While it is true that privation of material goods is one of its characteristics, there is also injustice on a world scale in the exercise of power, responsibility and dignity, and the victims of this are always the poor.

5. On the other hand, while inequalities are multiplied, never has there been in the world such a strong feeling for human dignity, equality and a fair sharing as there is today. Hence the dramatic contrast in today's society.

THE CHURCH'S ACTION

6. The Synod took note of the present situation and the people's desire to see action rather than hear words. The Church's doctrinal principles are sufficiently explained in the encyclicals and in the decrees of Vatican II.

7. The Fathers asked themselves the following questions: how it is that 80 years after the proclamation of a modern social doctrine, and after 2,000 years of continual preaching of Christian charity, the Church has to acknowledge that the results have been poor when it comes to the formation of a Christian conscience among her own members.

While it is true that the works of charity practised by Catholics have always been striking, the Fathers noted that the People of God does not, as a whole, understand that structural injustice is sinful nor is it realized that there is personal responsibility involved and that each has an obligation to commitment in this field.

8. The Fathers said that a radical change is needed in education. In all Catholic schools, in religious instruction, in the seminaries, and in preaching, much stress should be put on the Church's teaching on sharing justice, the right to development and responsibility, and the radical incompatibility of the faith with radical discrimination. Students should be spurred to action.

9. The formation of consciences should also be conducted through the liturgical and sacramental life. The social aspects of sin are not sufficiently stressed in confession. Penitents are not alerted to such matters, and the penances given rarely involve works of social justice. The liturgy should be oriented towards showing better the Biblical tradition where riches that are not used to help the poor are very severely censured.

10. The whole style of life in the Church should be reformed: Stark simplicity, poverty in personal life especially for clerics, should be part of this change.

11. It is desired that women have a larger share in the consultative and executive institutions of the Church. Some Fathers have suggested that a commission be set up for the study of the woman's role in the life of the Church.

12. All this work of re-education should be conducted together with members of other religions. There should be a better sharing between the richer dioceses and the poorer ones. *Cor unum* can be used to further a permanent dialogue.

ACTION OF THE CHURCH IN THE WORLD

13. The progress of history towards the putting into effect of a world order, the growing demand for justice, dignity and fair sharing, indicate new tasks, new possibilities and responsibilities in the Church's action in secular society. Generally the Church performs these tasks through the work of those members who are morally responsible before society and who, as citizens, are engaged in the temporal order. She carries out these tasks in a general way by cooperating more widely with other men of good will.

14. Today the Church, unlike in the past, can become a voice and conscience before the world to help those peoples and groups whom the world expansion of nationalistic conquerors, economic power and cultural and ideological imperialism deprive of the most elementary rights. The use of violence and torture to limit freedom of expression and action have been denounced. The lack of religious and civil liberty in some Marxist countries and even in other countries which profess themselves Christian, has also been stressed (with special reference to Palestinian refugees and to the juridical statute of Jerusalem so as to permit equal access to the three great religions who venerate it as a holy city). The social structure of South Africa, founded on the permanent and legalized violation of the rights of negroes, has been denounced. The threat of genocide hanging over some aboriginal tribes has been spoken about. Strong emphasis was put on the insufficient respect of the rights of

emigrants whose number is continually increasing and who, although working in rich countries, do not meet full justice in the economic field nor respect or religious assistance.

WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Much was said about women who still do not enjoy full economic and social rights.

It was asked that the Church together with the other Christian Churches and communities and with the other great religions and ethnic schools, encourage the creation of a commission for human rights whose task it would be to protect and defend the rights of those who suffer grave injustices by denouncing them before the conscience of the world.

15. Within the framework of local political order, the Church should continually ask her own members to cooperate with the other citizens in recognizing the two fundamental priorities: no citizens should be excluded from full participation in the social order for reasons of age, health poverty or discrimination. This does not mean only satisfying material needs but full rights to autonomy and sharing.

The second priority concerns the life style of high consumer society. The highest individual income — the permanent stimulus — through publicity — for more and more consumer goods not only constitute a scandal in the face of the growing poverty in the world but also, by extending to ever vaster strata of the world society, could place the sources of goods in danger or create great tensions. Another evil is pollution of the very air we breathe and of the waters which endanger human life. In this connection, considering the limited area of the world, we cannot lose sight of the demographic explosion. We must recall the Church's doctrine on responsible parenthood, with methods that are acceptable to the Catholic conscience.

16. Regarding developing societies, emphasis was laid on those reforms which create conditions of self-help, basic participation and access to ownership; fiscal reforms for a special policy for full employment. However, it is necessary to recognize that the action of poor peoples in these fields is often limited because of their dependence on foreign investments and markets.

THE GLARING GAP

17. The major problem is changes of structure on an international scale. There is a glaring gap in wealth and power between the developed countries and the undeveloped. This is causing anarchy in international relations. The Synod echoes Pope Paul VI's cry at the United Nations: "never again war". The Synod supports fully the Pope's pleas for an international authority with sufficient juridical and political power to arbitrate so that the present system of having recourse to violence to regulate conflicts will be replaced by law and negotiations. Citizens should be made aware of the damage done by the arms race among the major powers, with this squandering every year of about 200 billion dol-

lars, and with the fear and uncertainty it generates. Considering individual consciences of citizens, support was given to the idea that the Church declare herself on the side of conscientious objectors to war.

The construction of peace is not merely the prevention of armed conflict. In line with *Populorum Progressio* this Synod stresses the necessity of participation on an organized world scale. Institutions should be established to insure access to the goods, the markets and the technology of the world. Two points emerge: a) the necessity of avoiding by means of suitable institutions, the transfer of capital that strengthen colonial and neo-colonial power; b) a critical study should be undertaken of the international trust companies and their influence on local resources. This is part of a more general problem: considering the general economic, technological and political power of the developed countries, whether communist or capitalist, what can be done in order that developing countries might be able to develop their own structures? Often enough, in fact, a measure of progress is achieved in these countries only at the expense of their precious cultural heritage and the loss of their national identity and true freedom.

18. It was therefore suggested that the Church undertake an ecumenical initiative to establish research centres, for dialogue, and for awakening social consciousness.

These centres should be under the aegis of "Justitia et Pax"; local universities could also be associated. They should be independent and und ecumenical. They ought to collaborate to satisfy the growing needs of the whole world, and should try to encounter the most urgent social needs and those sectors of all orders which require the greatest development.

PROSPECTS OF A NEW WORLD SOCIETY

19. The discussion stressed the inadequacy of today's idea of the liberation of man in relation to the new world society. In a certain sense we are all conditioned by the education and culture received in school, through the means of social communications and specialized propaganda. For nearly two centuries, a large part of the social sciences have depended on the conditions of material progress carried out through the applied sciences and technology. The various political-social systems: liberal capitalism, communism and social democracy, in spite of their differences, are pointed towards a higher standard of life, because they consider happiness a reality of this world.

20. The inadequacy of those models becomes evident to the Christian, especially from the fact that the opulent societies demonstrate how the access to wealth does not identify itself with access to happiness. Also because of the population growth and the difficulties which hinder rapid progress, development of the large majority of humanity in the next 30 years may attain a purely marginal improvement of their own material living conditions.

Therefore, to affirm that "liberation is identified with development means to deprive a large part of humanity of the right to hope. Finally, with the increase in the world population which is foreseen, every or almost

every possibility of benefitting from a "higher level of life", will be lacking. Therefore, the Church must stress the concept of a "high level" of "integral development".

21. Therefore the need for a deeper and wider liberation which delivers man from the slavery of material poverty and material oppression as well as from the clutches of selfishness, greed and fatalistic resignation, has also been stressed. Many insisted on the conversion of hearts as an indispensable condition for world brotherly coexistence and for an order of justice and liberty.

22. The greatest difficulties come from man's attachment to riches, privileges and power. Not a few Christians in rich countries do not realize that they are actually living in a state of sin because of their unconcern for their social obligations.

CONCENTRATION OF WEALTH

23. National and international organizations have in their power a concentration of wealth that permits a few to enjoy a high standard of living at the expense of the masses of the poor. As history shows, this leads to violence and war. New solutions must be found. On the one hand, it is impossible to tolerate the present materialistic system and on the other no recourse should be made to destructive violence.

24. It is urgent to find a non-violent method, to react against injustice with an irresistible force. Christians should be the first to lead a simple life, detached from riches. This can lead to a change of heart of which the world is greatly in need.

25. Witness of non-violence, of simplicity of life, and of detachment from worldly goods can help powerfully towards leading the underdeveloped countries to moderation. The more developed countries can learn from the developing ones in their turn: they have a sense of authentic progress and freedom. In this way through exchange of ideas, they will give proof of the possibility of advancement in love and brotherhood.

Since all this requires sacrifice, it is the task of Christians to act as a leaven in modern society through the witness they give of evangelical spirit and fraternal charity.

THIRD SECTION: QUESTIONS FOR THE LANGUAGE GROUP

A. INVITATION TO ACTION.

1. Should the Synod circulate publicly or not, an invitation to a more intense action to establish justice in the world? If the affirmative:
2. What problems concerning justice should be included?
3. Should it recall some doctrinal principles? Which?
4. Are there unjust situations which should be denounced? Which?
5. What style should be used?

N. B. — The Fathers are warmly requested to list only five problems to be dealt with (or respectively situations to be denounced or principles to be recalled) those in fact which the Group judges to be of greatest importance.

B. EDUCATION TO JUSTICE (FORMATION OF MEN, CATECHETICS, LITURGY, SACRAMENTS).

1. What should the Church do in the educational field?

- a) action of the hierarchy;
- b) action of the whole People of God.

2. What should the Church do in institutions and structures to educate to justice?

C. WITNESS OF JUSTICE.

1. How should the Church urge the testimony of her members in their own countries and in their social responsibility in promoting justice?

2. Since the Church in her communities should give a testimony of justice, are we prepared to put the concrete guidelines into practice? Some things seem to be more urgent; others are desirable.

D. SOLIDARITY AND COOPERATION TOWARDS DEVELOPMENT

Within the Universal Church:

- a) cooperation between the Churches of the rich and poor countries;
- b) cooperation with international bodies;
- c) ecumenical collaboration;
- d) wish to see women active in the Church

E. SUGGESTIONS REGARDING OTHER PROBLEMS (FOR EXAMPLE, ARMAMENTS RACE, WAR, CONDITION OF EMIGRANTS, ETC.)

— what doctrinal problems require further study? The Fathers are asked to express their views as Pastors on the best pastoral method to be adopted;

— Fathers should also express their opinion on the spirituality of the promotion of justice.

FINAL VOTING ON "JUSTICE IN THE WORLD"

	Placet	Non Placet	Abten- tions	In- valid
1st Vote:				
Introduction	174	16	9	—
2nd Vote:				
Justice and world society	164	20	14	1
3rd Vote				
Gospel message and mission for the Church	171	18	10	—
4th Vote:				
Putting justice into practice	161	24	14	—
5th Vote:				
A word of hope	176	12	11	—