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## INTRODUCTION

The preparations for the 34th General Congregation, now well underway, invite all Jesuits and our colleagues to reflect anew on the "the service of faith, of which the promotion of justice is an absolute requirement." Quoting from the tabloid **Challenges of Mission today to our *Minima Societas*** (April 1993):

This mission has transformed the Society, with most of us making it our own or trying to. The promotion of justice now marks, not only the social apostolate, but every sort of Jesuit ministry.

At the same time there are Jesuits, communities and works that have not begun or sustained implementation. We did not always understand, or undertake, what integral evangelization asked of us. Dialogue broke down, with everyone contributing consciously or not to polarization, including those who energetically undertook the promotion of justice and deserve much credit for its implementation.

After an initial embrace or rejection, after conflicts and polarization, the Society has undergone considerable *metanoia*. Consensus now typically obtains regarding the "basic intuition" of Decree 4: to seek justice in whatever we do no matter how a-social it might at first appear; to employ justice as the criterion for evaluating every undertaking as apostolic or anti-evangelical. But many of us remain unsure how to implement this basic intuition in the 1990s, whether in existing works or in new projects, and widespread sadness or weariness and sometimes cynicism obtain at not knowing how to do so. Applying formulae or imitating models is no answer, although examples may stimulate the imagination. A deepened commitment and practical guidance, rather than new theory, is what many ask of the next Congregation.

**The Centre for Social Studies and Action** (CEAS) in Salvador, Brazil, is just such a long-standing example which stimulates the imagination, while Father General's "**Current Perspectives on our Justice Mission**" underlines that Christian faith and love must permeate the struggle for justice, whether we share the daily sufferings of the poor or confront the larger structures of injustice.

Perhaps in response to the hope expressed in N° 49 that *PJ* become ever more a place or *topos* of questioning, exchange and reflection, some very interesting letters have arrived, including several on the posthumous article of César Jerez on the Church's social teaching and liberation theology (in *PJ* 49) which provoked quite a bit of reflection. In fact Noël Barré has written a fine re-reading of Catholic Social Teaching in critical dialogue with César.

Your own brief reflections, questions and suggestions, not only on previous articles of *Promotio Justitiae* but also responding to the tabloid **Challenges of Mission today to our *Minima Societas***, are very welcome. Please do not hesitate to mail or fax your letter to *PJ* for inclusion in a future issue (see address and fax number on the cover).

Thank you for your interest and participation – let us pray for the guidance of the Spirit in all our preparing for the next General Congregation.

## CENTRE for SOCIAL STUDIES and ACTION

Cláudio Perani, S.J.

On 4 October 1992, Father General visited the *Centro de Estudos e Ação Social* and met with the CEAS team and other pastoral agents connected with the Society's social apostolate, in Salvador, Brazil. Fr. Cláudio Perani, director, introduced the CEAS in the following words:

One characteristic of CEAS, as a social project of the Society, has been the wish to incorporate the laity more and more into its style of deciding and doing the work it does.

Our principal objective is to do what we call **work at the base** i.e., political-educational work among the popular classes, seeking to reach the most neglected people, the lowest-income groups. This is how we try to accompany the inhabitants of the lowest-income neighbourhoods here in Salvador, the workers, the day-labourers, those of the "informal sector" and popular church groups; and in the countryside, small farmers and especially the peasants who grow coffee, cocoa and sugar cane.

Our aim is to encourage the popular groups we work with to participate in undertaking their own autonomous initiatives. In this way we try to negate and overcome the social exclusion and historical authoritarianism whereby the elite have always sought to decide for the people.

This is why we spend time and resources in what we call **direct work**, which consists in accompanying the population where they live, through visits to families, through small meetings among neighbours and workers interested in discussing and reviewing their lives, through activities which enhance a collective approach to problems, through demands for social benefits in favour of the communities, etc. On a number of occasions we have also taken part in specific struggles, such as for housing, for human rights.

In doing this we are not trying to provide welfare but to strengthen a particular experience, a different relationship between the social project we represent and the public with whom we work.

These are some of the approaches which have remained valid and have illuminated the work throughout twenty-four years of activity:

a) Cultivating a process view of time: with the experience of 450 years of history, we struggle to believe that from those bitter times it is possible to reach another, a favourable time, without trampling on the

rhythm of the poor which is not the same as that of intermediary political institutions.

b) Learning, together with the poor and the humble, the best way to contribute to their growth. This means that technical information must be linked with the lived experience of the group we want to accompany.

c) We have no definitive or precise proposal or ready-made model for society. We are convinced that whatever the project, it will be valid only insofar as it always involves the critical and autonomous participation of the people. We are certain that projects which do not improve the living conditions of the people and do not incorporate their responsible participation are worthless.

d) We always try to remain open, both in the groups we work with and in similar milieux with which we are in contact, to new questions which arise, for example concerning environmental problems, women, young people, black people, etc.

e) The modesty of our human and material resources limits the range of our social involvement, but it also keeps us realistic and brings us closer to the living conditions of the people.

These years of experience also raise doubts which impel us to review our work. The most dramatic is possibly the following concern: in a country where such great poverty and destitution exist and keep on growing, what word of hope and optimism can we pronounce? At times the situation obliges us to share with a group of workers the understanding that there is no going much beyond the limits of the moment, and that the way out may not be found at present, whereas at other times utopia may appear more clearly. Thus a moment which appears impoverished should also be the occasion for gathering up new utopian elements.

However there is always the desire to keep going, to go forward.

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## CURRENT PERSPECTIVES on our JUSTICE MISSION

Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.J.

I have always been impressed by the vigour of the social commitment of the Society of Jesus in Salvador and in this Province of Bahía. I am happy to meet you personally, Jesuits and co-workers, committed body and soul to the promotion of justice in this society, which is still marked by the exclusion and exploitation of the vast majority of people.

I want to thank you very much for coming on this Sunday afternoon to listen and dialogue, giving up your well-deserved rest and the company of your families, not to mention your possible pastoral tasks among the least and the poorest. I want to thank you even more for the trust you show in the Society of Jesus, for seeing in our present mission and in the works which it carries out a valid framework for fulfilling your intention of serving people and contributing to their liberation.

In fact CEAS<sup>1</sup>, FUNDIPESCA<sup>2</sup>, OAF<sup>3</sup>, pastoral work among young people, other activities of human development and popular organization, carried out by Jesuits and laity together in Alagados<sup>4</sup> and other outlying districts, offer a wide range of excellent services in the cause of justice. In the midst of difficulties of all kinds, you continue to struggle on these different fronts with the clarity, hope and generosity of spirit which the Gospel message conveys.

Without undervaluing other important works, I would like to mention especially the accomplishments of CEAS over twenty five years, because of its more universal character. Through its projects of advice and support for people's organizations, its work of research, its publications and particularly the *Cadernos do CEAS*, the Centre has won the respect and recognition of everyone interested in the change of social structures, both in academic circles and among the people. I believe that this close relationship which my predecessor, the unforgettable

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<sup>1</sup> *Centro de Estudos e Ação Social.*

<sup>2</sup> An institution for the social development of farmers and fishermen in Bahia.

<sup>3</sup> The Organization for Fraternal Help is an institution for the education of abandoned children.

<sup>4</sup> *Alagados* is a poor neighbourhood of Salvador (Bahía) where the Society has a parish and various social projects.

Father Arrupe, recommended so highly between scientific reflection and insertion into the popular environment, between direct service to the poor and the development and popularization of analyses based on experience, is what constitutes the originality and strength of CEAS. The legitimate urge to respond to emerging problems and take a stand in the face of social conflicts, undoubtedly entails the risk of formulating debatable analyses and judgements. But far more important is the Centre's record in the vigorous defense of the rights of the oppressed and the forgotten.

For practical reasons, before asking you about the challenges posed by the social reality of this region and the responses you try to give through your action and reflection, I would like to share with you briefly some ideas on the current perspectives of the mission of the Society of Jesus in the service of faith and the promotion of justice.

We are all very aware of the changes which have occurred on the world scene, and particularly in Latin America, over the past few years. The failure of real socialism in Eastern Europe and the obvious limitations of the revolutions proposed and attempted on the Latin American continent, have discredited - in the eyes of political, academic and even public opinion - the proposal to transform present reality to meet the demands of social justice. On the other hand, the distance between the very rich and the very poor is still growing both in Brazil and on a world level, despite international development programmes and despite the efforts of Church-people and others of good will pushing for a fairer distribution of goods and opportunities.

This picture invites us to review our struggle for liberation over so many years with all its presuppositions, strategies and ways of proceeding. This is the review to which a group of Jesuits and other experts in social sciences devoted themselves during the **"César Jerez" International Seminar** in Zipaquirá, Colombia (July 1992). Such self-criticism means renouncing neither the values nor the objectives which have oriented our action: the dignity of each person, the ethical requirements of political and economic activity, the fundamental equality of rights and opportunities, solidarity with the weakest, peace as the fruit of justice. We must not cede to the pressures of neo-liberalism.

But perhaps we will express our analysis of systems in less polarized or Manichaeian oppositions. Solutions may be more gradual and more respectful of culture and of the real priorities and initiatives of the people themselves, and may better integrate the economic, political, ethical and religious dimensions. At present it seems too early however to outline global alternatives to the unacceptable reality in which we live. Everything suggests that the new models we seek are being built from below, starting from the concrete and effective experiences of community participation, of technical training and humanizing education, of competitive production and distribution in solidarity. You, especially the CEAS team, certainly have an important

contribution to make towards working out new paradigms for Brazilian society, provided that you seek a fuller truth, the truth which liberates and builds because it takes science into account, the aspirations of the immense majority of the people, and the Gospel.

Among those who collaborate in social projects of the Society may be some who do not share our faith in Jesus Christ and in the transcendent destiny of the human person. They may subscribe to our mission insofar as they affirm the fundamental values which orient it. But this does not dispense us from making explicit the inspiration which nourishes our commitment for justice and to the poor, which determines the convictions with which we take it up, which reveals the final meaning of our efforts and hopes. The source and inspiration of our effort is the love which Christ's new commandment requires. This means, above all else, that we must love as God loves. God loved us first, freely, not because we were of interest to Him but when we were sinners. Working for the poor or in a poor milieu, being in solidarity with the marginated, is never humanly gratifying<sup>5</sup> and may even be quite frustrating, not because the poor do not have much to give and teach those from other social settings, but because of the many obstacles with which the whole of society blocks such work from succeeding, humanly speaking.

We are made in such a way that, without the conversion of our hearts through God's *agape*, through His free love, even an option for the poor can be at root an egotistical thing, the instrumentalization of our neighbour's destitution for the sake of personal advancement or in the interests of political or ideological groups. Saint Paul, in the well-known hymn in his letter to the Corinthian community, declared the most generous philanthropy to be vain unless it ceaselessly seeks its origin in the Divine *agape*.

The new commandment also states that one must give one's own being, one's own person. As long as we give only our things, our ideas, our organizational capacity, our more or less effective achievements, we have given nothing. One must give one's own life, in the image of Christ. Hence the importance of respect, attention and interest for each person, since the personal encounter, although always limited, is undoubtedly the only one which truly and effectively transforms. Different opinions notwithstanding, the preferential love for the poor, as an expression of the new commandment, in no way weakens the struggle for justice. And as the proclamation of the faith has, since the beginnings of the Society, been inseparable from the promotion of

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<sup>5</sup> The meaning of this affirmation is clarified in the phrase immediately following, which explains the challenges and difficulties of political change. Obviously our encounter with the poor can be a source of human enrichment for us and strengthen our hope to find concrete pathways for change, be they only partial or limited. (Cláudio Perani).



justice, in the same way love and justice must never be dissociated. Justice impels us towards those very concrete fields wherever people lack what they need in order to be human, to the field of socio-economic and political conditions. But the mere change of such structures does not produce communion and peace unless it is inspired by love for our neighbour, unless it is accompanied by generosity, compassion and forgiveness, as these reflect the experience of God's love which frees us and enables us to love in the Spirit of Jesus.

May these considerations suffice to express my deepest convictions and the orientation of the Society for its members working in the social field. It is now up to you to make your concerns and hopes clear. I listen to you with great interest and joy, convinced that this dialogue carried on between Jesuits and lay people, shared in daily life and collaboration, will yield an ever more luminous and profound vision of human reality made in the image and likeness of the Trinitarian communion, and an ever growing commitment, as radical as it is tender, for the building up of this new society.

Salvador  
BRAZIL

4 October 1992

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## RE-READING CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

Noël Barré, S.J.

On first reading César Jerez's reflexions<sup>6</sup> I was deeply moved because some of them concern hot points in my life as a French worker-priest and trade-union militant in the *Confédération Française des Travailleurs Chrétiens* which wanted to be in line with the Church's Social Doctrine until its deconfessionalization in 1964 when it became the *Confédération Française Démocratique du Travail*, and active in an *Association d'Education Populaire (Culture et Liberté)* situated in the nebula of the movements which stemmed from the JOC (*Jeunesse Ouvrière Chrétienne*) at the time of World War II.

I suffer over the Church's historical compromise with the Powerful, over her paternalism towards the common people (the workers, the poor), over her slowness at analyzing and denouncing the structural causes of poverty, over her pride and self-importance which lead her in a moralizing and severe way to judge from on high the practices of the men and women who are fighting outside to survive with dignity and justice. I immediately sympathize when a voice rings out which I have good reason to recognize as the voice of those who have been forgotten, exploited and crushed, whether they live in my town or in a country of the South or the East.

My own reading of *Centesimus Annus* found an echo in that of César Jerez, even though it does not totally coincide. My criticisms concern mainly the interpretation of the events in the East. It seems too easy to consider atheism as entirely responsible for the failure of "real socialism"; the history of the people subjected to this "real socialism" cannot be so totally negative; the Church is not the only force acting in the revolution brought down totalitarianism; the path to follow towards full freedom in justice will be far longer and more difficult especially if the "market" invades the space vacated without social movements having begun to forge new utopias and to set up practices not dominated just by business, etc.... Though in this same encyclical Pope John Paul II repeats several times the importance of the active contribution of everyone, including the poor – individuals or nations –, when he interprets the events of 1989 the genre of a letter does not allow paying much attention to the positive things peoples were able to promote even under this system of "real socialism". Many other things could be said too, e.g., that his judgement of the systems of "real capitalism" could be far more severe

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<sup>6</sup> "Perspectives of the Church's social teaching and liberation theologies concerning the communion of goods, socialization and private property," *Promotio Justitiae* 49, March 1992.

and that the people of the East soon discovered what unemployment, dual society and exclusion mean.

I would like to add that when the Church speaks of social realities, in order to criticize them, she should demonstrate the capacity to recognize her own errors, mistakes and blindness. There are too many proofs that the Church has very often compromised herself with the exploiters because they were rich, powerful and claimed to be Christians, even after the social doctrine called for respect for the rights of the poor! I therefore applauded César Jerez's severity and rejoiced in the publication of this text in *Promotio Justitiae*.

However several questions stirred in my mind, and I re-read it making note point by point of César's criticisms of the Church's social doctrine. I also re-read for the Nth time the great documents which César himself referred me to, with some confirming his remarks and others weakening them.

I obviously would have liked to address my remarks about this subject to César to continue the dialogue we began on two occasions in 1983, at the European meeting of the Jesuits in *Mission Ouvrière* at Sant Cugat and during the 33rd General Congregation. Dialogue can and must be pursued between those who, like César Jerez, live and struggle in solidarity with the people of the South and those who, like me, are bound to the people of the North. The following remarks may contribute a bit to this dialogue.

I am convinced that the **eurocentric** model of development which has dominated for so long is harmful and must be gone beyond. It is true that we always find traces of this eurocentrism in ecclesial discourse and practices, not only in the area of social discourse.

Is this not also true of the ideologies and movements born in the heart of the industrial world? As a worker and activist, I must always be careful, when with my trade-union and other colleagues, to analyze the economic and social realities from a more universal point of view. The workers of the North and their organizations are sometimes accused of conniving with the capitalists who exploit the poor of the South; for in wanting to better their salaries, working conditions and living conditions, it is true that trade-unions have not always known how to show solidarity with workers and people of other continents. There are some explanations for this; I know from experience what obstacles to a truly universal solidarity have to be overcome.

The Church has her own handicaps in this area but I do believe that, especially since Vatican II, she has fostered an awareness, though some may feel that this comes too late and too timidly.

I have always reacted to the **unfair treatment** meted out to **capitalism** (which could be improved) and to **socialism** (from which only the worst can be expected) in the Church's social teaching. The Church's wordly

links with the powers that be (which, however, are not as uniform as some would make them out to be!) certainly weigh heavily as a handicap, and the analysis of real capitalism's failures, limits and crimes is far from adequate!

But it seems to me that some judgements or recommendations in *Centesimus Annus* are more than nuances (it is César who speaks of "nuances"), for example where the limits of a "free economy" are concerned. The comments of the most marxist trade unions as well as those of certain economists, indicate that John Paul II has been understood on this point.

The **cultural hegemony** of the Catholic Church occasionally assumes shocking forms. The year 1992, the 500th anniversary of the "encounter" of the two worlds, gave us every occasion to refresh our memory on this point. Another form of hegemony appears equally in the area of ecumenism where some of the Catholic Church's representatives often seem intransigent.

Let us however recognize the fact that, in the course of the history of the Church's Social Teaching, we find a positive evolution which leads to recognizing the importance of all the social actors whoever they may be, to admitting that the Church does not have a ready-made solution and that its readings of events are provisional.

Here are some quotations in support of this observation:

"The Church requires special help, particularly in our days, when things are changing very rapidly and the ways of thinking are exceedingly various. She must rely on those who live in the world...of both believers and unbelievers." *Gaudium et Spes*, N° 44.

"The same Christian faith can lead to different commitments... It is up to the Christian communities, in dialogue with all people of good will, to discern the options and commitments..." Paul VI (1971).

"It is not the Church's task to analyze scientifically the possible consequences of this kind of change (technological, economic and political) in the life of human society. But the Church considers it her duty always to recall the dignity and rights of workers, to condemn those conditions in which they are violated, and for her part to contribute to orienting these changes towards authentic human and social progress." John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens*, 1981, N° 1.

"This teaching essentially oriented towards action, develops according to the changing circumstances of history. This is why it consists both in permanently valid principles and in contingent judgements. Far from being a closed system, it remains constantly open to the new questions which never cease cropping up. It requires the contribution of every charism, experience and competence." Cardinal Ratzinger (1986).

"The Church has no models to present; models that are real truly effective can only arise within the framework of different historical situations, through the efforts of all those who responsibly confront concrete problems in all their social, economic, political and cultural aspects, as these interact, with one another. For such a task the church offers her social teaching as an indispensable and ideal orientation..." *Centesimus Annus*, N° 43.

This same evolution, seen from the specific angle of evangelization, leads to John Paul II's declarations on dialogue and inculturation in *Redemptoris Missio*. For some time now in the course of my apostolic activities I have really been able to refer to the Church's doctrine when calling for mutual dialogue.

The Church's social teaching occasionally claim to be a "Catholic social science", a third way between capitalism and socialism, and some are still tempted to try and replace social utopias with the Church's social teaching, instead of encouraging Christians to be the leaven in historical movements and in different cultures.

I do believe however with some theologians of the *Mission Ouvrière* that, quite clearly since John Paul II, this social teaching is a theological doctrine which supports an anthropology capable of inspiring the conduct of Christians committed in different ways to justice and peace.

**The poor**, both individuals and nations, **are treated as appendages**, as useless, by our so-called developed societies. Faithful to the Gospel, the Church has always been concerned about the poor but for a long time in an individualist, paternalistic and "charity" manner. She took a long time to admit a more collective language and praxis and to envisage a political and structural analysis of poverty.

But, according to other documents of the Church, it seems to me that *Centesimus Annus* is quite clear on this point. The poor – whether individuals or nations – must be the agents of their history and contribute activity to the prosperity of all.

"It will be necessary above all to abandon a mentality in which the poor – as individuals and as peoples – are considered a burden, as irksome intruders trying to consume what others have produced. The poor ask for the right to share in enjoying material goods and to make good use of their capacity for work, thus creating a world that is more just and prosperous for all. The advancement of the poor constitutes a great opportunity for the moral, cultural and even economic growth of all humanity." *Centesimus Annus*, N° 28.

While re-reading César's article, I was led to ask myself another question.

I am always interested in what my Church says or doesn't say and yet, possibly, I don't expect as much from encyclicals as César seems to; maybe because I am in a far more laicized, secularized universe than that of Latin America. But in fact the difference of cultural situations does not always make it easy for us to absorb teachings come from afar.

My colleagues in workers' movements are on the whole indifferent if not hostile to the Church (though less than 30 years ago!). Many men and women who struggle for peace and justice have a certain tradition of **atheism**, and it is a highly respectable one; it often represents a considerable effort to purify the image of God given by Christians; these atheists have rendered us a great service. I reproach *Centesimus Annus* for apparently not knowing these men and women of our countries of the North. The treatment given to the philosophy of the Enlightenment is a caricature.

Our bishops told us that in their *ad limina* visit to Rome, they met with some interest in our missionary practices which try to respect laicity, while until now our churches' apostolic approaches, like Young Christian Workers (JOC), Worker-priests, etc., represented attitudes of giving-up for which we rightly bore the consequences: lack of religious and priestly vocations, for example. Some churches of the East are faced with people who have gone through atheism or indifference and do not all throw themselves into the arms of the Church. They seem interested in our apostolic experience which, some people claimed not so long ago, bore signs of connivance with the Marxism which is accused of all evils.

To conclude I find that César Jerez vigorously attacks the Church's social teaching and unreservedly praises the theologies of liberation. **He hopes that the contents of these two bodies of doctrine may come to coincide.**

I wish he had recognized that some important elements of the theologies of liberation have already been integrated into the Church's social teaching. Curiously, he dissociates certain texts of *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, *Octogesima Adveniens* and *Laborem Exercens* from the body of the Church's social doctrine, as if it were not a living, constantly evolving corpus nourished by the experiences and reflections of committed Christians and people of good will, and especially of the Christian base communities of Latin America. And César says nothing about more recent texts such as *Redemptoris Missio*.

Every year at the diocesan Centre for Ongoing Formation I offer a course on the evolution of the Church's social teaching. It is constantly renewed though some phases have been more enriching (Vatican II, the two Bishops' Synods on the Promotion of Justice in 1971 and on Evangelization in 1974, just before the 32nd General Congregation which produced Decree 4) than others. I regret that César says nothing about this, but he certainly would have been ready to say more!

After reading César's article I definitely feel that there is still a long way to go, with many initiatives as well as risks to take, so that the Gospel might inspire people's conduct; and that this Gospel is an unfailing source on which we can always draw, with the help of the imperfect, unfinished, but improvable (by us, too!) tool which is the Church's social teaching.

Undoubtedly the power of money and those who possess it is considerable; the powerful do not easily loosen their grip and there is connivance even among those whom they exploit and dominate. (Recently we have seen the Philippines welcoming back Mrs. Marcos, who stole from them!). Consequently there is a great job of formation to do – raising consciousness and encouraging action – in all sectors of society and the Church. Before a twenty-year-old JOC-member looks to *Centesimus Annus* for inspiration, there are all sorts of efforts still to make, mediations to respect, pedagogies to put in place. This question should be posed at all levels of the Society: What are we doing so that young people from working and popular sectors will draw from this source which is the Christian faith?

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May 1992

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## LETTERS

I hope that your travels have served to confirm and strengthen, were it possible, your decision to work with your prodigious capacity for those who are materially in need of the rediscovered social justice in a world which appears more and more designed to exclude the vast masses from the minimum benefits of immoral capitalism. Those of us who know our people – and not only their intellectual mentors – know that their destitution is growing.

In Argentina, while the government and its allies wax eloquent over the supposed benefits of the supposed entrance into the First World – only for the jet-set and concentrated economic groups, thanks to the privatization of public enterprises. But impoverishment has struck the middle sectors and the recession is producing un-, under-, and semi-employed in search of substitutes, with its cohort of moral and spiritual decadence. The example given from above is one of squandering, mediocrity, ostentatious luxury, which are obscene in the face of increasing poverty. To conceal all this the President announces so-called social plans (there will be legislative elections during the third quarter of this year, and Menem is interested in reforming the Constitution in order to be re-elected), which in fact are simply a reshuffling of the budgetary items already appropriated and destined to projects which are made to produce the external signs of economic recovery...until the elections. However, structurally, the adjustment continues and it means less income for the people, less consumption, less production of basic goods, the disappearance of light industry, the de-industrialization of important sectors which are not connected with the central capitalist market for not being controlled by transnational firms of which local ones are subsidiaries, etc. The picture is not a pretty one, but this is how it is and not to say so is...a sin.

As happens everywhere to a greater or lesser extent, some social sectors (I call them classes and parts of classes, because I am old) enjoy extraordinary privileges. But these are ever more reduced and restricted sectors who serve as the managers of the huge transnational groups and gaily celebrate the disintegration of the monster called State...provided that **their** State guarantees their profits and sinecures and is ready to repress any serious questioning. For now no questioning of this kind exists because there is a break-up of the subordinate classes into a stampede which erodes social solidarity and, naturally, the ethical bases of living together. Even the Argentinean bishops have discovered this! However they are more worried about cinemas which show pornographic films than about structural criticism, and they praise private initiative, that new Moloch.

All this is very bad, but I believe that we have not yet reached rock bottom. For the moment one must hope that people of good will and firm



character, with different horizons, will seek an integral regeneration or, even better, a new alternative for human living together and new (or possibly very old?) ethics of service of others. Contrary to Murphy's law, but without faith in indefinite progress, I continue to be sour though optimistic; this may be a stroke of madness, but I prefer it to complacency in the face of other people's misery. When all is said I can still work independently – naturally with a constantly diminishing income – and eat twice every day, which is quite a bit.

Buenos Aires  
ARGENTINA

January 1993

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About *Promotio*: I very much appreciate the dialogue that sometimes takes place, for example the response of Agacino in issue N° 50 to Amaladoss' piece. I am wondering if more data can be offered on individuals who are writing, for example the actual address, work, etc. of Daniel María Agacino in Uruguay; plus an invitation to anyone to be in touch with one or other of the authors. Another example: Although I can figure fairly well the source of the Canadian contributions recently, wouldn't it be worthwhile to put in the individual's (or group's) name and address, even – and perhaps especially – if it is one of our lay collaborators so that people might, through *Promotio*, begin being in dialogue with one another.

So far, the focus seems to be on the ideas presented. I applaud that as a basic purpose – if it is one. But I wonder if the author and his context could be revealed more in the name of potentially fostering dialogue even outside the pages of *Promotio*?

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February 1993

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With great interest we of the small Jesuit community in Berlin-Kreuzberg read that *Promotio Justitiae* is "a place of questioning, exchange and reflection" – we welcome that! Vincent Mooker reports Shri Pradeep Prabhu's criticism of the Society of Jesus. It seems to us that he would not have been quoted in *Promotio Justitiae* if there were not more persons, Jesuits and non-Jesuits, of a similar opinion. We count ourselves among them. If we do not want to adhere to the mentioned liberalism, tolerating or even adhering to a certain criticism but 'to a safe degree', what are the consequences for us? It means we cannot be satisfied in having a certain minority status (even

an outsider-status in our Provinces), while the Society of Jesus as a whole, as an 'apostolic body', proves to play a certain role in society contrary to our visions and hopes.

At the *Mission Ouvrière* meeting in Lancio in 1986, Fr. General spoke of the necessity of integrating the different services of the Society of Jesus, and he said that the basis of this integration must be Decree 4 of G.C. 32. Seven years have passed since. We certainly cannot speak for the Society as a whole, but what concerns our German-Jesuit background, it is difficult to see where and how this integration should have taken place. Both German Provinces started a process of **province planning** - and stopped it again without results. Our community had to struggle not to be dissolved altogether. In June 1992 the heads of the seven richest countries of the world met in Munich. No less than 150 (!) Jesuits live in this rich Bavarian capital. Where were they? How do they understand their apostolic mission?

Vincent Mooker writes, "Empowering the oppressed is the main aim of all our involvements." We take this as the intention of most *PJ*-readers. But this is simply neither the tradition nor the present praxis of the Society of Jesus.

In our country the Society played its greatest role during the time of the Counter-Reformation. Invited and financed by "Catholic" rulers, they educated the youth to form an elite faithful to the rulers and to the Catholic church, and 'missionized' the poorer people to return to or remain within the Catholic fold. It was clearly a process "from above". There are roots for this *modus procedendi* even in the praxis of St. Ignatius.

It is necessary to discern from today's point of view what we consider St. Ignatius' charism inspiring us today and what not. We do not know whether this has already been done on a theoretical level. But we mention it because we notice the continuing praxis "from above" even within the field of faith and justice. Young German Jesuits are much more motivated to become highly qualified advisers of the ruling than participants in the humiliations, hopes and struggle of the poor. As long as we simply glorify our past we will fall back again and again into the same mistakes, and the criticism and scepticism expressed by Shri Pradeep Prabhu will remain valid.

What can be done? Years ago we suggested that someone from a so-called third world country visit our Provinces and make an evaluation from his (or better: their) point of view, thus counteracting a certain Eurocentrism. We still consider this an idea worth discussing.

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May 1992

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This is a rather personal reflection, trying not to be pedantic. I spent all my life in social apostolate, among bishops, religious, including Jesuits in the Assistency here, and lay people of different religions. Thank you for your first *Promotio Justitiae*. Splendid! After some hesitation I made up my mind to write you my comment as you requested.

1. I think faith and justice move as one thrust, on which should be reflected continuously. There cannot be real *promotio justitiae* without service from faith **to** faith in others. If faith is too much insisted upon, justice too becomes "spiritualised" and does not become down-to-earth justice, it is not earthed or human. If justice is too much stressed, faith easily disappears, drowns. So you could already reflect a bit whether the title of your exchange *Promotio Justitiae* still expresses faith too. Service **to** faith **in** promotion of justice is so essential that it should be clearly expressed, as faith precisely *pro-motes* justice.

2. My experience is that many "rank and file" Jesuits want to live the one vision and direction of Faith and Justice, one in our Lord who worked and served always in that way, and is still doing that through, in and with the faith of His followers and *socii*, because faith is from Him. What is then that faith which needs reflection and clarification all the time, so that we as Jesuits live and develop that dimension of our Ignatian spirituality? Seeking our Lord in all things. I sincerely hope that you can make it gradually more clear, that faith **in** justice, as far as possible, is just becoming the normal Jesuit way of life now, yet a mystery of the life and work of our Lord in all people, including us Jesuits. Not any faith does justice, because uprooted 'faith' can be unjust too by not recognizing and accepting real and true faith at work in others whatever religion they have, for example not rooted in the living God who became human.

3. Here the specific Jesuit charism comes in of spiritual discernment, having in itself its very essential social dimension. All people of faith deeply desire to be confirmed in the faith they live, hidden even under all sorts of fundamentalism. We Jesuits have to discern that living faith, and we can do that only in and with the Spirit of Jesus from whom that basic faith in common with our faith arises. That becomes clear from Jesus' discernment of faith in the Roman centurion, the Samaritan and Syrophenician women. This gives us a strong basis for discerning its same root, our Lord at work in all people.

4. I think this is what César Jerez and Ignacio Ellacuría were searching for, like many others from Asia, for example Aloysius Pieris.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> See also Peter G. Breemen, S.J., "Spirituality of Liberation,"

I am inviting you now to get reflections in depth on this service of faith to faith which is the source of doing, serving in promotion of justice. It is spirituality: How does the Spirit work, and how do we Jesuits accept Him in faith and justice? Social analysis alone is not enough, as it has to be lightened by spiritual-social discernment, which enlightens us then on ways and means of how to go about it.

5. It cannot be justice with the wrong faith, because that 'justice' can become unjust too, not recognising and discerning the real human values in people, through and in which the Spirit of our Lord is at work always. Genuine human values in which human rights are rooted become very important. We all have only one human life, in which faith and justice have to become well integrated and rooted in the spring inside human beings, welling up to eternal life. Jesus was speaking of the Spirit (John 4:13-14; 7:37-39). It is of course difficult to explain this concretely in practice. Much personal and common discernment is needed, what we do rather well in international meetings, but rarely in our communities where Jesuits live and work concretely.

6. Pope John Paul II tells us in *Laborem Exercens* that the Church wants to take direction towards becoming the Church of the Poor, where even the institution(s) of the Church take up this direction. We Jesuits have a similar problem with our institutions. It is because we all are sinners. It means, demands and urges all Jesuits to become all the more rooted in faith and rooted in justice, rooted in any human root or well which signals faith and justice. These signals arise from the seeds our Lord planted in every human being.

7. I like the reflections of our professional-specialists, although they may be too sophisticated to be understood by rank and file. It has to be certainly a part of *Promotio Justitiae*, but not the main part, without further reflection in depth on the faith-dimension. If that is not given, how will Jesuits in education, formation, pastoral services, communication be able to read and understand that? They feel that it is not for them, and so do not profit from it. Are they then not living from the one life-giving Well, faith of the life in Christ in all of us? They might be right that they miss pronouncement of faith in the reflections of our professional specialists. Jesus lived faith and justice for us, not just as example only, but at work in us too. This Spirit works also in our intellectual, scientific efforts (Teilhard).

8. Because we Jesuits are called by Jesus to live from Him, we need our discerning meditations in every work we do, also our apostolic discernment in common in our communities. It seems to become more difficult all over the world, as we all have the problem of younger Jesuits who are much influenced by television and the like, what

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*Review for Religious* 49:6 (1990), 825-36.

hampers discernment. So we have to insist all the more on personal and social spiritual discernment. We need to get more reflections in depth on these problems from Rome, not by a good letter only from our great General, but continuously by your good self in *Promotio Justitiae*.

9. Here we live and work together with many people who live from their Asian faith: Hindu, Buddhist, Islam and many too of old popular faiths.

Yes, there **is** faith of inner thrust, in-created by our God in every human being towards Him. We could stress all the differences, whereby any dialogue becomes impossible. But we search and discern together for what we really have in common in Asian human values and faith and spirituality, so different from European cultures. Also in these cultures from Europe and America we search for common roots, as the impact of foreign values is becoming very strong in Asia too. I understand here again what Jerez César was looking for and rightly so.

10. Then: the Poor, always with us. Are they with us Jesuits really?

There is always need to serve them, primarily their wonderful faith, as they have the Kingdom. To side with the oppressed poor is first of all to side with their faith. If not there always arises the overwhelming task of teaching and training them, not forgetting to communicate mutually in common and basic faith.

I myself try to live from Matthew 12:18-21, believing that the wavering flame and crushed reed means faith, always wavering and being crushed, yet still alive and at work, particularly in the poor. They have in a way integrated divine life in themselves so that they may have life and have it to the full.

Let me finally apologise for this simple *cri de coeur*.

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May 1992

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I just saw the issue N° 49 of *Promotio Justitiae*. May I suggest that you get some help on making the **layout**. The print was small, and unrelieved: no boxes, no images, not too attractive.

In this age of specialization we really need collaboration. Nobody can bring the Good News alone. Everybody needs the help of everybody. We all need the help of the social scientists. We all need the help of media people, etc., etc.

I write to encourage you – not to discourage you. Rome must lead the way. Rome must show us what they mean when they say we must all be conscious of mass media – as well as all being conscious of the faith that does justice

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May 1992

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The Editor's vision that "the writers and readers of *Promotio Justitiae* are partners in the discernment of God's call to the people, calling each one and each community to contribute to today's history of salvation, of liberation" is not only true; it is also necessary.

Telling the many what justice is, and how it has to be sought, is not the prerogative of the few. It is of all tasks confronting the world today the most communitarian and the most international. However, with special obligation the task devolves on those nations and peoples which, since the beginning of European colonialism in the 15th century, have been the victims of economic exploitation, cultural oppression, slavery and, in some places like Amerindia, genocide. *Octogesima Adveniens* had an intuition of the way that Christian Social Thought should develop when it said: "It is up to Christian communities to analyze with objectivity the situation which is proper to their own country." And analyzing the reality of one's own situation one contributes to the analysis of the reality of the entire planet whose resources have to be shared justly by all.

César Jerez' *cri de coeur* regards three realities: sharing, socialization (John XXIII didn't yet dare to discuss the positive features of 'socialism') and private property. On all three realities the voice of the Third World needs to be heard. On sharing: "It is a new society that we must create...a society rich with all the productive power of modern times, warm with all the sharing of olden days."<sup>8</sup> On socialization: *pace Centesimus Annus*, it is not "real socialism" nor the "Marxist solution" that failed in the year 1989 but the betrayal of both by cruel totalitarian regimes, so both still remain available choices for the developing countries. On private property: classical Catholic social thought is so tied to private property because the only alternative it sees to private property is property owned by the totalitarian State, whereas Third World societies point to a third reality between the Individual and the State, which is the Community. The person antedates the State but not the community. It is the idea of community that needs to be brought back to centre stage: community within nations and community between nations.

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<sup>8</sup> Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*.

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March 1992

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As I understand your prefatory remarks to *PJ* 49, you saw these pieces as challenging. From my perspective the term "obscure" better describes the piece by Désigaux. I could not determine the point he was trying to make and thus I did not see the cogency of the rather sweeping historical analyses he provided. For example, how precisely should evangelization be changed in order to reflect the change in humanity as a result of the transformation of work, and how is that related to the activities of Jesuits in *Mission ouvrière* and the local churches (one of the issues identified as a topic of the conference)?

The piece by César Jerez, on the other hand, did provide the promised challenge. I am not sure that I would agree with his analysis that the social doctrines expressed in *Centesimus Annus* "deprive large masses of humanity of any social utopia to sustain their flagging hope." Neither am I convinced that from an exegetical standpoint the community described in Acts could be described as practising socialism. Both of these comments, however, go to the substance of the article. I am grateful to you for providing this substance.

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May 1992

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I am a member of the New England Province and, along with Sr. Mary Southard, CSJ, co-founder and co-director of SPIRITEARTH, a Center for the Sacred Universe. Our purpose is to contemplate and study the Universe/Earth and to share the results of that contemplation and study with others.

I have been a faithful reader of *Promotio Justitiae* over the years and found it especially helpful during the fourteen years I worked in Jamaica and other Caribbean countries and territories. I just finished reading Issue 49 and was pleased to be introduced to you.

My hope for *PJ* is that it will begin to address what I am convinced is the most basic and important issue of our time, namely, the relationship between Earth and its humans, a relationship that is becoming increasingly destructive. In recent years I have come to the awareness that we humans are totally implicated in Earth's natural processes, and to think and act otherwise is to be living in an illusion. If the water, air and soil are toxic, we humans are toxic. This is the reality. I do not criticize those who do not have this awareness, as I was like them only a few years ago. I do think that most of our works for justice are taking place within that illusion and are therefore somewhat deficient. Any plan or program that assists the poor but diminishes or destroys the natural environment within which they live might be a blessing in the short run but for their children and grandchildren it can be a curse.

My question and challenge to *PJ* and its readers is: can we begin to see our preferential option for the poor and an option for the earth as one option? Borrowing the words of ecologist Thomas Berry, can we see that "the human community and the natural world will go into the future as a single integral community or we will both experience disaster on the way"?

I will be pleased to contribute to any dialogue concerning this foundational issue.

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**EDITOR: Michael Czerny, S.J.**