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1. The first part of the paper is devoted to the study of the properties of the function $f(x)$ defined by the equation

$$f(x) = \int_0^x \frac{1}{1+t^2} dt$$

2.

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WHERE in the WORLD are WE?

To prepare for the Congregation, *the apostolic body of the Society is being asked in a rather innovative way "to see" up close and with eyes of faith, all that is happening "on the face of the earth."*¹ This effort to see up close is both analytic and meditative; it requires concepts adapted from social science, techniques of social analysis. The **Composition of Place** (first Tabloid) is one such approach which helps us to perceive the shadows and lights in which our fellow men and women live. The present article explains another, complementary technique.

An innovative approach to analyzing, describing and evaluating the world is becoming known since 1990 with the annual publication of the *Human Development Report*.² "Human development" is defined as a process of widening the range of people's choices. "Human development" evaluates people's ability in each country to live a long and healthy life, to communicate and to participate in the life of the community and to have sufficient resources to obtain a decent living.

The *Human Development Report* reports annually on each country's progress toward human development by combining and comparing nearly fifty indicators such as real purchasing power, education and health.³ This composite statistical yardstick of human progress is called the "human development index" (HDI).

By combining a variety of statistics, the HDI provides a measure of development much more **comprehensive** or **holistic** than gross national product (GNP) alone. The HDI leaves room for the cultural and the spiritual dimensions of life. It neither claims to encompass all of human reality, nor reduces it to mere numbers or materialistic factors like GNP or even standard-of-living purely in economic terms. The HDI thus introduces helpful points of reference for interpreting conditions of life in each country, and for comparing the world's 173 countries, which each year are ranked from the highest human development to the lowest.

Let us make use of the HDI to ask about the situation of the Society of Jesus. **Where in the world are we Jesuits?**

¹ Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.J., Letter of April 22, 1993, introducing the Tabloids and quoting Spiritual Exercises n° 106.

² United Nations Development Program, *Human Development Report*, New York: Oxford University Press. 1990: Concept and Measurement of Human Development. 1991: Financing Human Development. 1992: Global Dimensions of Human Development. 1993: People's Participation. 1994: Social Development.

³ HDI does not include explicit categories of human rights and social justice because these have so far proven too difficult to translate into accurate statistics that can be compared.

The geographic distribution of Jesuits may be found in one of the tables of the *Supplement*.⁴ Under the five continents, this chart lists alphabetically the 122 countries (*nationes*) where Jesuits are, and next to each, the number of houses (*domus*) and the total number (*summa*) of priests, brothers and scholastics in each country. The countries are numbered from 1 to 122.

If one looks up each country in the 1993 *Human Development Report* index and replaces the figures 1-122 with that country's ranking in the HDI, then one sees the world's Jesuits distributed from n° 1 (Japan) with the highest overall human development, to n° 170 (Burkina Faso), the country with the lowest rating in which Jesuits live and work.

Please see the accompanying chart. Jesuits can be found all over the world.⁵ Their distribution according to the HDI illustrates **where** the Society is located vis-à-vis those humanly better and worse-off and so contributes to our **Composition of Place**.

We used to talk of the world as divided geopolitically into East-West and socio-economically into First-, Second-, Third- and even Fourth-Worlds. Now the world is supposed to be divided "North-South", but this may be as inaccurate and even ideologically loaded as earlier labels. Despite the conceptual difficulties, it is important for the worldwide Society to find a common vocabulary for talking about

the major **fact** of our times, the growing impoverishment of our brothers and sisters the poor, which is already tending to become their historical, structural exclusion. I mean the plunder of their lives, the obvious failure of their historic projects, and consequently the fatal assaults upon their hope, their solidarity and, at the same time, their faith. This is the greatest "desolation" which confronts us.⁶

Reference to the HDI may shift Jesuit discussion of international poverty from out-dated (and sometimes even "loaded") notions of empire and colony, developed and under-developed, to a more nuanced basis.

Our reflections about "the poor" sometimes have to do with international differences, but more often with where, in terms of our mission, Jesuits are located — both geographically and socially — within a particular country. The HDI gives terms like "rich" and "poor" a more complex and

⁴ The table "*DISTRIBUTIO GEOGRAPHICA SOC. IESU, 1.1.93*" is found in the annual *SUPPLEMENTUM CATALOGORUM SOCIETATIS IESU 1994*, Rome: Curia, 1993. This *Supplement* is distributed throughout the Society and may often be found at the end of the Province catalogue.

⁵ Where *Distributio Geographica* puts Jesuits in what the U.N. does not consider a country (e.g, Puerto Rico, East Timor), the author put the disputed territory on the HDI where it seemed best. Such places do not have a number next to their name.

⁶ Juan Hernández Pico, S.J., "The More and More Poor," *PJ* 52 (August 1993). 30.

DISTRIBUTIO GEOGRAPHICA SOC. IESU, 1.1.93

Nationes		Domus	SUMMA			Domus	SUMMA
High human development				Medium human development			
1	Japan	14	297	82	Belize	5	25
2	Canada	42	574	83	Kyrgyzstan	-	1
4	Switzerland	9	80	85	South Africa	4	25
5	Sweden	2	18	86	Sri Lanka	6	97
6	United States	259	3.956	88	Tajikistan	-	1
7	Australia	27	214	89	Ecuador	17	156
8	France	66	853	90	Paraguay	14	78
	Monaco	1	3	92	Philippines	22	384
9	Netherlands	12	150	95	Peru	27	238
10	United Kingdom	27	344	97	Dominican Rep.	17	126
11	Iceland	-	1		Puerto Rico	3	31
12	Germany	44	613	99	Jordan	1	3
13	Denmark	3	19	101	China	-	43
15	Austria	12	183	102	Lebanon	7	63
16	Belgium	42	620	105	Guyana	7	28
17	New Zealand	1	2	107	Algeria	3	17
18	Luxembourg	1	8	108	Indonesia	50	344
19	Israel	1	7		Timor (East)	-	3
20	Barbados	1	2	110	El Salvador	8	72
21	Ireland	23	263	111	Nicaragua	6	66
22	Italy	81	1.123	Low human development			
23	Spain	148	2.298			332	3.244
24	Hong Kong	5	46	113	Guatemala	7	49
	Taiwan	17	177	115	Viet Nam	-	36
25	Macau	2	11	116	Honduras	3	42
26	Greece	3	22	118	Solomon Islands	-	-
	Czech Rep.	14	126		Guam	1	7
	Slovakia	7	125		Marshall Islands	1	4
28	Hungary	7	94		Micronesia	5	38
29	Lithuania	5	48		Palau	1	4
30	Uruguay	6	76	119	Marocco	1	8
32	Bahamas	2	6	121	Zimbabwe	17	123
33	Korea, Rep. of	6	70	122	Bolivia	15	124
35	Latvia	-	2	124	Egypt	5	38
36	Chile	21	205	126	Congo	2	10
37	Russian Federat.	2	21	127	Kenya	4	81
	Yugoslavia	1	12	128	Madagascar	14	251
	Croatia	11	177		Reunion	1	13
	Slovenia	15	47	129	Papua/New Guin.	-	1
	Bosnia/Herzo.	1	4	130	Zambia	16	118
38	Belarus	-	2	131	Ghana	1	4
39	Malta	9	90	132	Pakistan	1	3
41	Portugal	16	204	133	Cameroon	6	52
42	Costa Rica	1	12	134	India	237	3.493
43	Singapore	1	9	136	Côte d'Ivoire	2	12
45	Ukraine	-	3	137	Haiti	1	25
46	Argentina	12	269	138	Tanzania, U.Rep.	4	45
48	Poland	46	694	140	Zaire	30	309
50	Venezuela	29	224	142	Nigeria	5	41
53	Mexico	43	468	146	Uganda	1	12
54	Kazakhstan	-	3	149	Rwanda	4	21
Medium human development				150	Senegal	1	2
56	Mauritius	1	9	151	Ethiopia	2	11
57	Malaysia	4	16	152	Nepal	4	43
61	Colombia	25	395	153	Malawi	2	6
68	Panama	4	45	154	Burundi	2	14
69	Jamaica	15	36	157	Mozambique	3	23
70	Brazil	68	846	158	Sudan	1	5
74	Thailand	4	25	159	Bhutan	1	1
75	Cuba	6	32	160	Angola	1	6
77	Romania	3	17	162	Benin	1	4
78	Albania	2	6	165	Chad	13	60
81	Syrian Arab Rep.	3	16	170	Burkina Faso	1	5
						417	5.144
						1.847	23.263

more precise meaning. It is worth noting that the unjust structures and glaring discrepancies on a world scale, which the *Human Development Report* documents, are reproduced within regions and individual countries. The "human development" approach may help our discernment, not only internationally but nationally as well.⁷

But it is the world at large that we are concerned with here. In this regard, the Society is well placed to help God's people understand more deeply what is happening "on the face of the earth" and who the poor actually are. It can therefore better suggest how preaching the Good News might address both human suffering and sinful structures. But in order to do such catechesis, we must become more aware ourselves.

Our distribution, the chart shows, is widespread and tends to reflect our long history. Could we be distributed differently, in order to respond better to the needs of today and the future?

As a prelude in that personal and communal *examen*, we need to *see up close and with eyes of faith*. Then we can fruitfully ask, "What are we doing for Christ?" and courageously consider

... the perhaps painful decisions
which our faith demands
as we gaze at this immense world of ours,
and discover that we are not present there,
where "so many different peoples" live,
to proclaim the Gospel "and witness to justice."⁸

Michael Czerny, S.J.⁹

⁷ For example, how is the manpower distributed within each Jesuit Province? One could note, for example, the number of Jesuits living in the capital or major cities, compared with the rest.

⁸ Adapted from Father General's letter of April 22, 1993.

⁹ Thanks to Peter Collins, S.J. (ASL) and Bambang Triatmoko, S.J. (IDO) for very helpful criticisms of an earlier draft.

The MEAGRE EXPRESSION of our MYSTICISM and VOCATIONS

Gabino Uríbarri, S.J.

1. "There are more vocations to the diocesan clergy than among religious," declared a young Spanish priest some time ago with full conviction and convincing facts, "because we have recovered the identity of the priesthood." That raised the question of the scarcity of vocations to the Society in Western Europe, particularly in comparison with the greater number of vocations to some dioceses and other religious institutes. And the topic came up of our mysticism.
2. I am proposing a few modest ideas which need more leisurely development, ideas which may also have some validity outside the Western European area which I know fairly well. I hope they lead to reflection, as well as discussion in the pages of *Promotio Justitiae*.
3. **Vocations arise and develop out of a vital mysticism of the call to be "companions of Jesus."**¹ Or to put it in more homely terms, "Only the pious enter." Thus, youth ministry in general or vocation work in particular, which insists unilaterally on the importance of service and of commitment (including to the poor), will not yield vocations. It will not yield vocations even where Jesuits preach by example. Persons commit themselves to their studies, their life-style, their profession, their leisure-time, their money, etc. Not from this, however, arises the spontaneous desire to imitate Jesus "more closely"² as the celibate Shepherd devoted exclusively to the Kingdom of the Father. Celibacy for the kingdom of heaven is not a realistic life-choice for the sake of a task, but only if it is aroused and won through a loving seduction and sustained thereby.³
4. What I have stated in the third point is seen, for example, in the ministry to the mentally retarded in the "Faith and Light" (*Foi et Lumière*) movement in which some Jesuits from my Province help out. Young people who are keen on this apostolate commit themselves to the handicapped, participate in summer camps, faithfully devote a big part of their weekend, take courses relevant to the world of the retarded (psychology, education, etc.), are ready to live at least for a while in the houses of "L'Arche"; but from this apostolate does not necessarily result any spontaneous desire to become their "shepherd" (to help with the salvation of their souls), but only to be a social worker imbued with the Gospel.

¹ G.C. 32, D.2, n° 1.

² "Imitar y parecer más **actualmente** a Cristo nuestro Señor" Sp.Ex. 167; cf. 147.

³ Cf. Matthew 19:12; Jeremiah 20:7-9.

5. **The Society does not have a nuptial spirituality but a spirituality of mission.** The goal of nuptial spirituality is mystical union with God.⁴ The scope of a spirituality of mission is to "help souls."⁵ A spirituality of mission does not end with service, although it naturally includes it, but it goes beyond it. It goes beyond it because its source and end is God. Concrete service results from a broader dynamic which includes and surpasses such service.

6. The source of the spirituality of mission is God's desire that all people be saved (cf. Sp.Ex. 107). From this originates the sending of the Son, and the sending of the Jesuit as companion of Jesus (cf. Mark 3:13-15). Strictly understood the origin of the mission is not to meet a need, however evangelical it may be, such as "to reconcile the estranged" or "to serve those in prison," nor even more radically to take care of some pastoral necessity such as giving the Spiritual Exercises or teaching Christian doctrine to the unlettered.⁶ These are activities which derive from the mission and to which the mission directly leads, but they do not constitute the origin of the mission. The concrete way for a Jesuit to join in the redemptive mission of the Son and to carry on the mission received is "to be placed with the Son", "to be accepted under his banner," "to be a soldier of Christ."⁷

7. The mission is not limited to performing the service undertaken, even when the service is itself successful. The mission gives meaning to the work, even when it fails, and more radically it transcends it. The goal of the mission is to share in the salvific mission of the Son and so to work for the greater glory of God. Naturally, one cannot strive for the greater glory of God without at the same time labouring for people's integral salvation, positively including works of love and justice.⁸ Nevertheless the ultimate purpose is to "praise, reverence and serve God our Lord" (Sp.Ex. 23), and hence the mission cannot be restricted to service which, without the dimensions of praise and of glory of God, flattens its horizon. Thus, the mission transcends the concrete service (Luke 17:10) and can continue when a Jesuit because of illness or old age no longer has strength for the work; or when for political reasons he has to spend long years in prison and cannot engage in apostolic tasks. Even when making the maximum effort, a Jesuit does not finally live from the glory which redounds on him from his work, but rather grace is enough for him (Sp.Ex. 234). And so both the source and the end of the mission are ultimately

⁴ The first to speak of individual Christian spirituality in "nuptial" terms was Origen who developed this theme in his *Commentary on the Song of Songs*. For a brief introduction to the topic, cf. J. Daniélou, *Origène*, Paris: La Table Ronde, 1948, pp. 285-301, esp. p. 297.

⁵ "ayudar animas", Sp.Ex. n° 3; Const. n° 307.

⁶ *Form.Inst.* n° 1.

⁷ *Aut.* n° 96; Sp.Ex. n° 147; *Form.Inst.* n° 1; G.C. 32, D.2, n° 2.

⁸ Cf. G.C. 33, D.1, n° 50.

rooted in **mysticism**. By "mysticism" I mean rootedness in the divine life: relationships with the divine persons, Father, Son, and Spirit, and communion of life with them.⁹

8. In particular, to me our spirituality of mission resembles the spirituality of Jesus more closely than what is understood as nuptial spirituality with its ascent to union with God. (It may be that my concept of Jesus is irremediably stamped by the Spiritual Exercises in which a Jesuit's spirituality of mission takes shape.) The source of the mission of Jesus is his intimate relationship with the Father, living as much for Him as for all people. Impelled by the Spirit, Jesus carries out this mission. The parallel with a Jesuit's spirituality of mission is obvious: called by the Father to labour with Jesus, as companion of Jesus, according to the mind of Jesus (interior knowledge) to act according to the Spirit of Jesus (following),¹⁰ a Jesuit carries out his mission under the guidance of the Spirit who orients him in his individual and community discernment.

9. Today as an institution, with the exception perhaps of a few more creative communities, we lack ways to express this mysticism in community and to make it visible in our apostolate for others who might be able to perceive it and feel attracted by it. A Jesuit's lived experience of this mysticism frequently remains hidden without revealing itself apostolically as light for the world.¹¹ The tradition of the Society not to have prayer in common may apparently work to our disadvantage. To this may be added a general reticence to express publicly our intimacy. Nevertheless, finding communal channels to express this mysticism seems to me necessary not only from an urgent vocational point of view — this by itself is quite serious — but because what is not expressed to others runs a serious risk of disappearing.

10. In formation communities in my Province there has been some progress in this direction thanks to the practice of community discernment on personal as well as community topics. Unfortunately, this style of sharing does not continue after formation in most Province communities. Perhaps it could be incorporated into apostolic teams where we work with other people, religious and lay. Why could the evaluation of a high school's work, a parish, a house of writers, a social centre, etc., not take the form and style of an apostolic discernment? Why not accompany our apostolic evaluations with a liturgy of the sacrament of reconciliation, when at root we are analyzing our sin and asking God to help and enlighten us with His grace?

11. On the community level we could make progress by paying more and better attention to liturgical celebrations in our communities, especially in the communal celebration and context of

⁹ What I have sought to express more simply in numbers 5-7 may be found richly expressed and solidly established by Pedro Arrupe in "The Trinitarian Inspiration of the Ignatian Charism," a conference given at the closing of the Ignatian Course in Rome, on 8 August 1980. Published in *The Trinity in the Ignatian Charism*, CIS offprint, Rome: Centrum Ignatianum Spiritualitatis, 1982, pp. 11-69.

¹⁰ John 20:20-21, Sp.Ex. n° 95, 104.

¹¹ Cf. Matthew 6:2-6, 16-18; 5:13-16.

the Eucharist. Likewise we could share with one another our life in the Spirit and speak more about our "feelings" in our apostolic work and not just about our "doings."

12. In the apostolic area it strikes me as important not to hide what is the source and end of our dedication, but to invite others to share in it by providing channels for them, to initiate and accompany them as spiritual guides, or even to learn from them how to live mystically on mission. What sort of atmosphere do our residences, churches, pastoral centres exude? Whence spring the criteria of our discernments? How meaningful are they to persons involved in our works? Here we might invest more time and greater creativity, for while we generally give the impression of being busy people, serious and industrious about our work, we are rarely perceived as having that joyous serenity which makes it clear that "it is the Lord who builds the house" or that joy of knowing that "the Lord is my chosen portion and my cup."¹²

13. To return to the subject of vocations. Clearly they are a gift from the Lord of the harvest to the Society.¹³ Just as clearly, there are certain "breeding grounds" which favour them. The more effective traditional means have been regents working with youth between 13 and 17 years of age, and the Spiritual Exercises, means which have not lost their validity. My hope is that a group of Jesuits inspired by our mysticism — which would be perceptible in their surroundings and into which they would be able to initiate others younger than themselves, and where they would be working with updated forms of defending and spreading the Catholic faith¹⁴ such as "the service of faith, of which the promotion of justice is an absolute requirement" — would be a productive breeding ground.

14. The new reading of the Ignatian charism achieved by the last two General Congregation has not simultaneously been accompanied, at least with as much intensity as could be desired, by new apostolic and community expressions of our mysticism of mission, while forms which flourished until Vatican II have for all practical purposes disappeared or in many cases become obsolete. G.C. 32 and 33 have had more success in opening up new apostolic fields and inspiring some changes in traditional forms of apostolate. We have much at stake in distilling and solidifying a communal style which clearly expresses and communicates our mysticism of mission, if we neither are nor want to appear as social activists in some international NGO.

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¹² Ps 127:1; 16:5.

¹³ Luke 10:2; Const. n° 812.

¹⁴ Cf. *Form.Inst.* n° 1.

This was my concern: we should attack from within the progressive decline of the Church, especially in our Western societies, via the revitalization of our inner faith and conscience. This is how our Fathers in the faith proceeded in the reforms which they crowned with success.

CHALLENGES for the SOCIETY of JESUS TODAY

Vladimir Šatura, S.J.

I recently received the first "Preparatory Text" for the 34th General Congregation of the Society of Jesus as it was published in the Austrian Province newsletter. It says that we are starting from the concerns and needs of the present and wish to provide an impetus for conversion and change. The topics listed and discussed in this preparatory text are: culture, justice, and dialogue. The second issue, which appeared in August, added our apostolic religious life, collaboration with the laity and among Provinces, and also the updating of our law.

I must confess that I was not just disappointed but downright depressed when I read the tabloid. Are there currently no more important problems and topics for the upcoming General Congregation to handle? The deep crisis, in which the Church and human society today are mired, appears wholly ignored. Are the unique opportunities offered by each General Congregation in its own time to be squandered in advance? Are the Society and the Church to fail once again today, just as has happened several times in the past?

In the tabloid it says, however, that all members of the Society are called to bring their "own experiences" to the preparation process. Presumably their own reflections also. This is what has moved me to put my thoughts on paper in summary form.

Before I list the needs which seem to me far more pressing than those named above, let me give briefly my general impression of the tabloid.

The text is obviously the result of sociological reflection, as is seen not only in the choice of topics (justice, dialogue, collaboration, and to an extent also culture), but also in the considerations as a whole which are for the most part of a sociological kind.

That in itself would of course not be wrong if they were not so onesidedly sociological. For instance the section "Our Spiritual Tradition" treats only of social abuses, with not a word about the "spiritual tradition."

The drafters seem to have cast their gaze "over the surface of the earth" from too great a distance and using outdated glasses. They do not give the impression of being in the midst of life and aware of the problems people have to struggle with today.

And the suggested solutions? Likewise. Dialogue and criticism have the chief place. "How can we become independent, critical users of the media?" Do we hope to encourage a radical "conversion and change" in the mass media in this way?

Let me select, from the many "concerns, needs, and endeavours" of people today, those which I believe are really pressing and for which there also seems some prospect for more radical change. They touch at the same time, I think, some central concerns of the Christian message and give us the chance, starting there, to set in motion a general renewal.

1. I should put in first place, because the public is concerned about it above all, the **disturbed balance of our earth** and its atmosphere. The problem does not in itself figure among our primary tasks. And for that reason I shall not enter into the labyrinthine factual contexts or the no less complex ways in which official organs and "simple folk" react to them. I shall assume that this is well known.

The matter begins to be of interest to us on the level of a General Congregation with its particular purposes because of two facts: 1. People in civilized countries live under the fear of the destruction of the earth and its atmosphere, especially because a) everyone can observe the first signs of the process of destruction, b) it involves developments not altogether controllable, and c) the looming catastrophe could send not only nature but humankind itself to its doom. 2. The real reason for this situation lies in our boundless appetite and concern for affluence. Because people strive always to have more, to consume at an ever fancier level and to afford more and more, the businesses of production (and retail) attempt to satisfy this expectation — with resultant damage that our environment can no longer bear.

Upon this rest the following reflections. The affluence credo destroys not only our environment but also morals and other higher values. It is in addition the evil against which one might say Christ fought the most: the striving for wealth and possession. Conversely, this evil opposes itself to one of the primary ideals which he represented, namely, poverty. I do not think this requires proof.

Now it seems hopeless to try to move modern people to conversion in thought and endeavour in what regards affluence; possessiveness lies too deep in them. The desire for affluence seems so obviously justified because it not only brings about something beneficial in itself; it also creates the framework for the fulfilment of many other desires. (While conversely the teaching of Christ and, consequently, of our spiritual master is that the striving for wealth is the beginning of all evil.)

But it is precisely the general anxiety about the destruction of the environment and of ourselves that gives us a unique opportunity. It makes the public readier to give a hearing to whatever counteracts this threat. It opens its ears to this area of discussion. We would not need to start by awakening interest before we proclaimed Jesus' stance toward wealth and poverty, possessions, and the meaning of life in general.

The conversion involved would consist in leaving off wondering, "How can I get more than I have? How can I get what is even more comfortable, fancy, and technological? How can I

manage to afford even more in life?" And instead learn to wonder, "How much is enough for me? What do I not need? What can I get by without? What can I forego?" And to make this comprehensible against the background of the Spirit of Christ.

We would doubtless find a positive echo and support from those initiatives which, however modest they may be, have already for some time been moving in this direction, those for instance which involve a deliberate practice of material simplicity.

If we are supposed to be able to read the "signs of the times", then this is what they are today. One of the focuses for the re-Christianizing of our age or for the new evangelization is located right here.

One practical possibility I could imagine would be a real "campaign" by the whole Society in its preaching, in the Exercises, and in all the other apostolic works at our disposal. Everywhere in the whole world at the same time. Possibly to get other Orders to do the same.

I should like to mention something which you often hear from experts in ecology: that it is not possible to halt the decline merely by politically-imposed economic measures. These must rather, they say, be supported by a changed outlook of people and in turn influence that outlook. Question: who is in a better position to assume the task of working to improve people's attitudes than the Church, and with it the Society of Jesus?

I believe that if we succeeded in achieving a breakthrough on this point, then the General Congregation would have achieved something unique. And that means now or never. "Now is the time of grace."

Should we still have energy left for other tasks, then I should consider the following:

2. The second area of acute crisis today is **marriage** — and with it the entire **family**. Just a couple of comments as reminders. The number of divorces has risen quite sharply in recent decades and continues to rise. The concern is not so much the raw figures but rather the human tragedy involved which for years, even before the couple separates, is a source of disturbance. The spouses begin to hate each other, each harbours a cold fury toward the other, they level mutual accusations, take revenge, make it their aim to pay the other back and strike at the other physically and — even worse — psychologically. Previous ideals and behaviour break down. With unconcealed malice they set out to destroy each other. All hell breaks loose. It is not just the couple that suffers thereby, but also, if not far more, their children. And the wounds remain painful for years after the separation, if they ever completely heal at all.

It would certainly be a mistake to do no more than take regretful note of the statistics or simply pass this modern tragedy by with averted gaze. And it would likewise be too little, simply to preach the Christian ideal of marriage, appeal to the indissolubility of marriage, and issue threats of ecclesiastical sanctions with the idea that one was thereby strengthening the good will of those affected, as if everything depended simply on their will. Most of them — my experience in marriage counselling shows — have good will. It is just that they do not understand themselves how things could have turned out as they did, much less all the underlying factors. They stand

speechless before the ruins of their marriage. Even less do they know the way out of this catastrophe.

It is well known that the Church sees in marriage the symbol of her own relationship with Christ. In addition, we often emphasize that the family is the basic cell of human society. When it breaks down humanity itself breaks down. But that is precisely what should move us all the more to hasten to its aid.

I see three ways we can involve ourselves: a) by exposing those destructive models which the mass media have been propagating for some years now, and declaring war on them; b) by allying ourselves with those initiatives of assistance which already exist and cooperating with them more extensively. I have in mind for instance Prof. Fthenakis' project in Germany with its seminars, in which those intending to divorce are told among other things what usually happens after divorce.¹ There are certainly several promising initiatives in this area which it would be worth supporting and extending. c) We could mobilise our own resources to uncover couples' inappropriate attitudes (exaggerated self-attention, uncontrolled hedonism, unrestrained sexual activity, etc.) and inculcate more desirable attitudes. Models of such training methods would have to be worked out. But even making information available about the more usual causes of crises in marriage would be a considerable contribution to "converting" the present situation.

One of the causes of the current tragedy in marriage is doubtless rooted in the following critical situation today:

3. **Conscience** seems to have disappeared almost completely from public awareness. One doesn't even hear the word in the mouths of those whose voice is heard in public. Does anyone appeal to conscience any more? Politicians? Not even church officials and pastors mention it.

And yet here we have to do with people's inner guidance system. With what in Christ's view is of first importance. From what is within people comes good and evil (Mt 15:18ff).

May I suggest where in my view the lack of conscience shows up especially today? It can of course be seen repeatedly in the abuse of political power by the state, but I think it occasions even more damage in the abuse of freedom of the press and the media. That one should maintain an ethical standard seems foreign to both journalists and owners of the media. And thus they cause enormous damage to individuals and communities. Will we really come to grips with this evil by "helping the young become creatively critical" and by ourselves "becoming free and

¹ Dr. W.E. Fthenakis is director of the National Institute for Child Psychology and Family Planning in Munich, president of the German Research Institute for the Family, Family Law and Policy, and professor in the universities of Augsburg and Munich. With his team of about 50 co-workers he does research into various questions related to the family. He became well-known for the results of his research into the indispensable role of the father in education, published in *The Father: I. On the Psychology of the Father-child Relationship. II. On the Father-child Relationship in Different Family Structures*, Munich, 1985.

discerning consumers of the media"?² For the Christian, would the logical way not be to approach the problem from within and work for the rebirth of conscience in general, and in particular in those responsible for the mass media? Is this not among the priority tasks of our mission?

The sexual and drug revolutions obviously have several causes. But would they have reached their current proportions if the ethical restraints were not so totally lacking? The organisers and middlemen of the drug market come to mind among others.

But the most tragic evidence of this lack is in my view the legalizing by several countries of the killing of the unborn and its support by the state. It is evident that this comes about due to the weight of public opinion, in which the majority approves this killing, so thoroughly has conscience been lost.

Is this defect less worthy of notice than interreligious dialogue, ecumenism, poverty ("the poor you will always have with you")? Is social injustice more of a catastrophe today than previously? Conscience certainly is. Should these facts not shake us awake? And move us to dedicate ourselves to the formation this realm of the inner self? That is where all real reform has begun as well as all effective conversion in the history of the Church.

4. Another even more crucial area of our inner self is **faith**, Christian faith. This too has been in decline for some decades, as observation and polls show. This is true both of the content of faith and its strength. Immortality, the divinity of Christ, and the teachings about Mary are simply denied by not a few Christians. Departures from the Church are commoner than ever — and I think are a symptom of a general deeper disquiet in the Church that surely has several roots and calls out for help. Participation in Church services is sinking. Vocations in Western countries are ever fewer. Which families still pray?

Does the General Congregation mean to pass by all this with averted gaze? Or have we been seized by a fatalism which says that in any case there is nothing here to be done, one can only wait to see how all this continues unfolding?

We have at present a once-for-all opportunity in this area. Current fashion has heightened interest in precisely those realms which mean a great deal to us: the transpersonal and transcendent in general, and spirituality and mysticism in particular. It is not a matter simply of "new religious movements" ... "with which we should enter into dialogue,"³ but of symptoms of some inarticulate seeking to forward those concerns which the new fashion has brought with it, however inarticulate they remain. Some of these concerns coincide with ours. And therein lies a historically unique opportunity for us to take advantage of this favourable wind and to help stamp the actual form of this fashion with our articulation and our contents. It is a matter of

² First tabloid, Essay n° 2.

³ First tabloid, Essay n° 2.

much more than mere dialogue with new religions. It is a matter of reading the "signs of the time" and adjusting our programmes of action to them.

In passing it may be remarked that we ourselves would be helped on several levels if we would also let ourselves be orientated by the currently fashionable concern to give top priority to **experience**: religious experience, faith experience in all domains, in liturgy, in pastoral work, above all in the spiritual life. Words have meaning only when they refer to experience.

In closing, my question is: are not these focal points such as to deserve priority treatment by the General Congregation, including programmes to deal with them? And thereby initiate something which could contribute to a general breakthrough in the Church? From the bottom up and from within. I hope so. And I place my trust in the working of the Holy Spirit in the Church and in the Society of Jesus.

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I read *PJ* n° 52 with enthusiasm. Such testimonies go beyond ideas and make the spiritual life of Jesuits tangible. It is very stimulating. They pushed me to ask myself how I was living our Jesuit challenge. I am grateful to you for the way that *Promotio Justitiae* provokes us to examine our own lives on this matter.

An INTEGRATING and CONTRADICTIONARY OPTION

Robert Roelandt, S.J.

Reading *PJ* n° 52 brought me deep joy; in the clear and firm commitment of younger companions, I felt a great hope for the future of the Society.

Moreover, given my 35 years of living and traveling in Central Africa (Zaire, Burundi, Rwanda, Congo) and in Haiti, I found myself in complete agreement with Father Hernández-Pico and his message: we must hold fast in a world which is constantly generating ever greater misery.

I asked myself how I was living the integrating aim of the Society's apostolate: "under the standard of the Cross ... the struggle for faith and that struggle for justice which it includes." In reality I live it with great interior unease, amid two principal contradictions.

1) It's matter of getting the poor on their feet, yet they, under the blows of history and of human egoism, are sinking in ever greater numbers into ever greater misery.

It was a joy to see the condition of workers in Western Europe improving between 1935 and 1965. But in these countries 20 per cent of the population is still poor, half of them in very precarious situations. And contact with Africa has shown me immense hosts of people forced to live sub-human lives. Barely aware of what is happening to them, these people steadily decline from hopes for a better life into a more miserable condition. They are the playthings of the powerful, who easily deceive and enslave them, often cruelly. As we strive to help them to become aware of their dignity and capacity for resistance, and to form real leaders among them, we are constantly frustrated by the cunning and egoism of the powerful, by the divisions and illusions of the poor, above all by a pitiless system of exploitation that is stronger than all of us.

In the face of this "fatality" we come to realize the vanity of all messianism other than that of Jesus, the Jesus who did not come down from the cross. We come to say, like Jesus, "The poor you will always have with you" — not in the sense of those who use the saying to justify their indifference or resignation, but accepting the fact, with interior anguish, that only the cross of Jesus gives meaning to human misery and urges us to respond in the same way: by giving one's life for the poor of the world.

2) But how can we give our life for the poor when all our lives we are responsible for directing and managing apostolic institutions which are not poor? This is the second contradiction that I live.

These large institutions are necessary. They can give the essential witness of a community at the service of the Church, and they offer the guarantee of stable, long-term action. In various ways they are able to welcome some of the poor and share resources and cooperate in reflecting upon social issues and in forming leaders for the poor, etc. But they are not visibly bound up with the mass of those who are in misery.

The only way out of this contradiction, I can see in our hearts: that we be scorched by an interior vision of the poor of this world, the ragged crowds looking for food on the long avenues of Kinshasa, the peasants bent over the hills of Burundi, and the knolls ("*mornes*") of Haiti. These images will never leave me. I am afraid that this may be for me an easy evasion, but still they constantly call me to a deep sense of my Jesuit life, and they push me to spread around me, as much as I can, the spiritual concern of which Father Arrupe spoke — that the gospel of Jesus be better transcribed upon the life of society.

Finally, for me the unbearable lament of all the poor of this world is truly the fire which burned the Heart of Jesus — "the" poor man, the icon of God. By his grace may this fire keep on burning brightly in our hearts!

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Amigo e Companheiro Michael,

I just received *PJ* n° 52 and wish to congratulate you on the topic chosen for the issue and its contents. It is wonderful to read the views of other companions and to see the same concerns and perspectives in the universal Society on a subject so vital for our apostolate.

I was particularly impressed by the ideas of Father Stefan Taeubner from Germany. I would like to tell you how delighted I was to see that his thoughts correspond to our own concerns and way of acting.

In our work at the CEAS,¹ the encounter with the poor proved to be fundamental for the reinterpretation of our spirituality and the orientation of our entire evangelization in the social area. This encounter caused us to feel a certain isolation within the larger Society at that time. When Decree 4 appeared it was a great joy for us; we now feel ourselves entirely reintegrated.

¹ *Centro de Estudos e Ação Social*, Salvador, Bahia (see *PJ* n° 51).

For the moment, I am very happy that in Europe a need is felt for personal contact with the poor, a need to let oneself be challenged by them and to question the criteria and priorities of the Society's apostolate. When Taeubner speaks of how weakly Decree 4 has been understood and implemented so far, I think the criticism applies to us as well, both to the CEAS and to our Province, which works in the Northeast of Brazil.

If the Jesuits of the Third World have played an important role in the Society's renewal by setting forth the apostolic challenge of the poor, it is consoling today to note that this challenge is alive and being taken seriously by our companions in the First World. This gives us a greater sense of brotherhood, and a sense that our contribution will be of some value to them in our common enterprise.

Michael, thanks for your collaboration; I would be grateful if you could pass my opinion on to Father Taeubner. Com um grande abraço,

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You mention Wikwemikong (Ontario), the mountain people in Taiwan, the Philippines: the global pattern of native poverty. And yet my experience here in Yellowknife resonates with Jean Vanier, Juan-Luis Segundo, and the gospel insight of the liberation theologians, that God has a special favour for the poor, and the poor are a privileged access to God.

My little daily contacts with aboriginal peoples is changing me. From where my desire and appetite comes, I don't know. But as my horizon of ignorance about native people and culture recedes by tiny steps, the more I am drawn a wee bit more clearly into new regions of the heart. Like the rejected cornerstone, I sense, with growing conviction, that these people are not marginal to the hope of the Kingdom, but are at the centre of where hope trickles forth. I sense being invited into something that takes me both backward and forward into Canadian and global history.

I am stirred by *PJ's* voices from around the world. Having been drawn by the Spirit into the wilderness, I have been reminded, more deeply, of the need for solidarity. There is much deception in individualism. Amen? Lesson from the desert.

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Life continues to be very full and challenging. I still feel enthusiastic and privileged to be able to serve in this exciting, though painful, time of transition in our Church. One of the things that is very difficult in our contemporary culture is that the symbols, which the Church has used in the past to elicit strong feelings so as to be able break through arcane mindsets and to overcome psychic and spiritual paralysis, are becoming meaningless. Our liturgical celebrations do not seem to be meeting the deep needs for nourishment experienced by practising Catholics, nor those of baptized persons from whom the Church has drifted away. Catholics here have a lot of difficulty feeling passionate about the Bread of Life, at least in the way His presence is celebrated in parish liturgies. The experience rarely stays with us so as to revive us and permeate our relationships, activities, commitments and concerns during the week.

What seems to be more powerful is the fellowship and solidarity experienced by persons who return week after week and, in simple conversation, share their struggles to make sense of life's hardships and suffering as well as their conviction that God does really care for humankind. I feel so privileged at times to hear many different kinds of people express how God's Spirit made a difference in their lives, and enabled them to say "yes" once again, often in spite of terrible personal memories or ideological obstacles. It seems to be in the simple, ordinary things of human existence that the liberating power and transforming beauty of the passion, death and resurrection are revealed. And yet, I so often feel that we miss the point.

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I have just received and read your most inspiring issue of *PJ* n° 52. What a marvellous idea to let the young Jesuits air their views which I certainly find most uplifting and consoling as we approach G.C 34 and the close of the century. I was particularly struck by the article of Peter McIsaac, who undoubtedly has captured the spirit of G.C. 32 and 33. I particularly like his reference to "poverty of imagination", which has certainly played a pivotal role in the low esteem our people have of themselves and their capacity to overcome their difficulties. This is part of the legacy of slavery and colonialism, and perpetuated today through the "bigger is better" syndrome. I enjoyed reading all the articles; keep up the good work.

I was recently asked to present to my Region a brief paper on the document *Apostolic Collaboration: Inter-Provincial and International*, and I take this opportunity to share with you my observations and thoughts. In viewing the world today, as in the Composition of Place, the authors chose examples of collaborative efforts drawn exclusively from the realm of the powerful — it is as if they viewed the world through the eyes of the powerful — such examples are the U.N., the Organisation of African Unity, etc. and in the church the Synod of Bishops, the Conference of Major Superiors. All of these represent power structures and, therefore, efforts

at dealing with the question of power and its implications. What has clearly been missed is that over the last fifteen years there has been a real effort from the bottom, the poor and the powerless, to organise in their own interest, at times alongside the above-mentioned power structures. A case in mind was the UNCED conference in Rio in 1991,¹ and the Global Forum made up of NGOs which was staged at the same time and drew large crowds.

There has been a tremendous growth in popular and non-government organisations throughout the world, and especially in the Third World. Such NGOs are peasant organisations, women organisations, indigenous groups, groups formed with a particular project in mind, such as here in Guyana during the lead-up to the national elections, we formed an NGO called Electoral Assistance Bureau, whose function was to help ensure that the whole electoral process would be transparent and manageable by the ordinary people. These groups are playing a vital role both positively in their organisational capability and also as pressure groups, on other structures such as the ones mentioned in the document.

I therefore considered it important to bring this glaring omission to the brethren and to suggest that we send a postulatam to our congregation to be sent on the General Congregation drawing their attention to the lacuna and suggesting that we put out a call for Jesuits to encourage, support and foster such popular and non-government organisations as vehicles that would be truly participatory and as alternatives to the dehumanising structures which at present propose to represent their interest.

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¹ United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, also known as the Earth Summit.

I read with deep interest the whole *PJ* n° 50. I am still wondering if the Social Justice Secretariat could not set in motion some serious study in line with the seminar conducted in Zipaquirá, Colombia in honour of the late Fr. César Jerez, S.J.¹

I think the need of the hour is to go beyond some occasional workshops to serious and sustained research and study on the structural dimensions of poverty in the world, and of the economic injustice that generates the poverty. My own suggestion is the following. Our universities and centres of higher learning in developed countries could, in collaboration with similar sister institutions in the developing countries, do in-depth research into the new world order that is emerging. Such study could go into the structures that are being evolved by the powerful of the world, with the willing collaboration of the elite of the developing countries, for the exploitation of mineral and human resources for the benefit of the advanced countries.

Some examples here are the iniquitous law of intellectual property rights, the pressure brought on the developing countries to give up any scientific research that may endanger the supremacy of the advanced countries in space, atomic energy, etc. Much of the GATT discussion shows similar trends to bring in tariffs that favour the rich nations. There is also the forced opening of the domestic markets of developing countries for the sale of consumer goods from advanced countries in the name of universalisation of trade. At the same time there are stiff laws against export from developing nations to the markets of advanced countries. Basically the laws that are made are made by advanced countries for their benefit. The pricing of raw materials as compared to finished products will bear this out.

What the developing countries need is justice and not the doling out of charities. What is needed today is structural changes that will provide a world order which will really respect human rights and human dignity, and not decision-makers who use human rights platform for browbeating nations which question the present unjust world order.

I do hope that the Social Justice Secretary could initiate some serious multidisciplinary research and study to inform and influence the world decision makers and general public, especially in the developed nations. This may also help all of us in various countries to become apostles of the faith that does justice. I feel such an approach will, in some way, be a timely response to religious fundamentalism as well as fascism that are rearing their heads in various countries on both sides on the North-South divide.

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¹ A synthesis of the proceedings along with the papers presented at the seminar have been published as *Neoliberales y Pobres: El debate continental por la justicia*, Santafé de Bogotá: CINEP, 1993, pp. 600. For more information write to CINEP, Carrera 5ª n° 33A-08, Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia.

Just received *PJ* n° 51 ... again congratulations. No one claims that it is *LIFE* magazine but it is on the way!!! Keep up the work — even if it is only a few pages — the contact and information are very helpful, especially leading up to G.C. 34.

I know things are very expensive — printing, mailing, etc., but try to keep the magazine going and perhaps expand. I find the contact with other activities vital.

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It is my view that the South Asian Assistancy, because of the situation in Asia, has an important role to play to keep our Society faithful to the vision of Decree 4. I fear — without too much objective foundation, I hope — that there is a certain backsliding in the Church and even in our Society in all that regards the promotion of justice. While I am strongly of the view that the promotion of justice must be intensely and internally linked to the service of faith, I feel that the promotion of justice has to inform and influence our own deep faith and the faith experience of our people, if faith is to be relevant and genuine.

I hope that the JESA meeting¹ reaffirms the commitment of the Society to the promotion of justice as an integral part of evangelization and faith and that it strengthens Jesuits, especially the younger ones who have opted for Decree 4, to ground themselves more firmly in prayer and what used to be called the interior life but only in order that they may be the more effective instruments of God's justice in our terribly unjust and unfair world. We Christians in the Third World have a duty of service to the peoples of our continents, and we have to be their voice to the peoples of the First.

I hope that with God's grace and with all humility and the spirit of service we shall go forward relentlessly recalling the Church and the Society to the vision which Jesus himself had when he spoke in the synagogue at Nazareth at the beginning of his public life. For me the text of Luke is conclusive evidence that, in Jesus' mind and heart, faith and justice are, as I said, inextricably linked with each other.

For us Jesuits it should be impossible to work for faith without working for justice, just as we should realize that it is dangerous to work for justice without a deep faith, founded on and nourished daily by prayer and contemplation. We need a spirituality for liberative action. The

¹ Jesuits in Social Action in the South Asian Assistancy met for their thirteenth convention at Patna, 24-26 August, 1993.

Spiritual Exercises can be made to serve this end in ways which Ignatius himself, in his day and time, was not able to see but which I am sure he would have supported if he lived in our own times and cultures.

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KENOSIS and COMPASSION

J. Robert Hilbert, S.J.

I enjoyed reading *PJ* n° 52 on the preferential option for the poor. It led me to offer the following ideas I wrote in connection with a meeting of pastoral personnel in Denver. I state the matter perhaps too drastically; as in all such things we have degrees of awareness. I still think, though, that what I say is basically true, and this is confirmed in conversations with my fellow Jesuits often enough.

I too consider that a preferential option for the poor is what the Church and the Society are called to in light of the present state of our world and the leading of Vatican II, Bishops' Synod of 1971, our 32nd and 33rd Congregations, the U.S. Bishops' letter on the Economy, etc. For some years, however, I have felt that the U.S. Jesuits and the U.S. Church (granting notable exceptions of individuals and groups) are unlikely to provide leadership in this direction.

The difficulty, I think, is that it does really require conversion — not from a personally bad life to a good one, but from our cultural world-view to a different consciousness.

The Society of Jesus in our country is a body of truly good, zealous men, deeply devoted to our Lord. Our work, however, and the thought behind it, the goals we strive for, the means we adopt are all cast generally within the cultural mode of our environment. And that environment does not contain the fundamental beatitude, "Blessed are the poor."

Thus it is that when we are giving our attention to those who are poor we do so with an attitude that accepts our frame of thought, our goals and methods and our consequent life-style as the norm for all. The poor are thought of as not having the benefits we have. For instance, we are good educators of middle-class members of the Euro-American cultural group. To help the poor, we want to extend that same education to them, for the same purposes and with the same cultural framework. So we offer scholarships, tutoring programs, Head Start, Upward Bound — all with

the intent and design to help them become like us. It seems to me to arise from a fundamental, perhaps unconscious, assumption that really it is we of the educated middle class who are blessed, not the poor.

The poor are defined in terms of what they lack. They are not seen as gifted and able to offer us something that perhaps we in our affluence lack, something that has to do with knowing God.

The heart of the matter, I think, is given in the Bishops' pastoral, *Economic Justice for All*: the emptying of self that allows the Church to experience the power of God in the midst of poverty and powerlessness; and the compassionate vision that enables the Church to see things from the side of the poor and powerless (nº 52).

The urging to pay attention and devote time to the poor is heard by busy Jesuits, I think, as calling for an addition to good apostolic work they are already about, or possibly even as a recommended shift of clientele; it is not heard as a distinct challenge to the cultural assumptions and the understanding of Christ upon which our present good apostolic work is built.

What is important about the preferential option for the poor is that it would provide a change of perspective essential even for our engagement with the non-poor.

I carry an image from my travel through Mexico years ago: evening twilight, a massive 16th-century church facing across a plaza, an equally ancient, ornate governor's palace; a little huddle of children, ones I had seen earlier in the day begging in the streets and shops, now sleeping on the cobblestones under an overhang of the palace. There, in their ragged off-sized clothing, without pad or blanket, they would evidently pass the night.

The sleeping children had a soft, vulnerable poignancy that contrasted sharply with the pompous dignity of palace and church.

This image is not suggesting that Christ is not present in Church or even in government. What it does suggest to me, however, is that knowledge of Christ in the Church and in our social institutions must begin from awareness of Him in those little street beggars. Only when we encounter Him there, when we know the Good News to the poor as it is heard by the poor, will we understand the Good News in our mission to those not poor.

The usual clientele of Jesuit institutions in the States are an oddity in today's world. They — and we — enjoy an affluence as a society (whatever may be our personal frugality) that places us among the world's wealthiest. The tuition alone for a single student in a Jesuit school in this country is considerably more than total family income for the great majority of the human race. That is where we are; it is historically understandable, for the present it is perhaps inevitable. In so far as we allow it to be the norm and frame of reference for our interpretation of Christ and His message, it will keep us from ever discovering the Good News to the poor.

All I am trying to say is that we do not generally have that perspective which comes from seeing things from the side of the poor, from what Gustavo Gutiérrez terms "the underside of history."

To what extent we can develop that I don't know. At the present it seems to me the Church must rely on her Third World members to bring it that perspective, which they seem to be doing.

"Just as Christ carried out the work of redemption in poverty and under oppression, so the Church is called to follow the same path in communicating to men the fruits of salvation."¹

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ESSAY 3 and the SYMPOSIUM

Daniel María Agacino, S.J.

1. Reading *Good News and the Promotion of Justice* in the light of the *Symposium* on the preferential option for the Poor (*PJ* n° 52) made me reflect on the theme of faith-justice so boldly proposed by G.C. 32 and 33 as a synthesis of our Institute — which, however, still poses at the internal and external levels of the Society a serious problem without satisfactory resolution.

In referring concretely to poverty, Father Arrupe spoke of a "grave wound" in our Society. Others, apparently making a harsh self-criticism in applying the judgment of Vatican II on the "divorce" between the life and the faith of many Christians, also speak of a "breach" between the reality and the rhetoric of the Society.

Owing to its urgency it is important to find a solution to a problem so weighty in itself and in its consequences.

2. Before attempting to offer possible practical formulae, it might be well to analyze the causes of this "breach" or "divorce".

No one can deny, in a subject linked so closely to the following of Christ that dispensing — on the part of our personnel — with a basic supernatural perspective, is at the root of the problem. As G.C. 32 and 33 indicate with total clarity, a Jesuit cannot face the faith-justice theme with a simply sociological attitude.

¹ Vatican II, *Constitution on the Church*, n° 8.

Having accepted this fundamental criterion, however, we must also admit that the great complexity and enormous reach of this challenge leaves us hanging, unless we manage decisively to set out on paths whose goals are not easy to clarify.

As always happens, too broad a scope has led to a lesser concentration of efforts. As proof this it would suffice simply to enumerate some (only some) of the "practical problems" which the third preparatory essay proposes.¹ The wide range of concerns which — based on very serious commitments — each of these problems opens for our consideration cannot fail to produce perplexity and disorientation. To this we might possibly add the attempt to consider a variety of different aspects closely linked to so many other socio-cultural realities to which, in accord with the universality of its apostolate and with a nearly unlimited vision of work for justice, the Society is invited today.

All this convinces one of the need to discover some valid point of reference which, without distracting or diluting our attention, could effectively help to concentrate all our interest and effort. What might this point of reference be?

I am convinced that, owing to its intrinsic connection to the service of faith which does justice and because it assuredly offers a clear basis for committed action, the **preferential option for the poor** could serve in this way. And in this way I believe can arrive at a solution to the problem proposed, which up to now we have not succeeded in solving.

Progressive ways of fulfilling the preferential option

3. Before all else we must make it clear that in the struggle for faith and justice everyone does not have the same divine call — in level and manner of response — or the same commitment required. The difference is such that, where some may feel called upon to draw near to the poor in a way that is compatible with their concern for the non-poor, others will be moved to a very personal and concrete choice, not only preferential but demanding, exclusive and excluding all other options for the non-poor.

There are moreover theologians who allow such a double conception of religious life insofar as poverty is concerned. That is to say, as Juan Luis Segundo makes clear, even when the two view-points are or should be complementary, they often come across as contrary. One claims that the essence of religious life and its spirituality are defined on the basis of work to eradicate poverty **with** the poor (with them and from their viewpoint). The other defines the essence and spirituality as a commitment to eradicate poverty **for** the poor (in their benefit).

Obviously, if we accept this double interpretation, the levels of commitment in religious life and consequently in the preferential option will prove to be very diverse. Nor should it be at all strange that some among us are more inclined to one or other way of conceiving the problem.

¹ *Good News and the Promotion of Justice*, pp. 9-13.

On the other hand what has been said so far makes clear that, as in any dynamic reality, the diverse movements of the Spirit and/or theological viewpoints result in a gradual process of various forms. In the final analysis, and this is what's important in all of this, we must be ready to accept a series of steps, without anyone passing judgement on others who do not see things in the same light or who are still at the beginning of the road.

4. The progressive forms of the preferential option, which Albert Nolan, the Dominican author who originally proposed them, calls **steps in the service of the poor**, are these four:²

⌘ The first phase is characterized by compassion and relief work.

⌘ The second stage is the discovery of the structural problem and the importance of anger in the face of injustice.

⌘ The third phase: discovering the strength the poor; the poor should save themselves.

⌘ The fourth stage: from romanticism to real solidarity with the poor and oppressed.

Since the phases should not be considered rigidly as leading inexorably from one to the next, they may appear intermingled, each with its crises or dark nights, its discoveries or dawning awareness. Such stages I consider illuminating: they open an unclouded horizon for sincere discernment of spirits. Each one will then have to discover the phase or form which he understands best reflects the Lord's design, in his personal response of preferential option for the poor.

I end this commentary with Paul Crowley, S.J., one of the authors whose works *PJ* n° 52 presents so well; I quote his wise words which I had very much in mind while writing this article. "The gap between our rhetoric and our reality on the matter of the preferential option for the poor can finally be bridged not by further pious or theoretical essays, even by this one, but only by the bold and prudent charting of new modes of proceeding."

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² Albert Nolan, O.P., *The Service of the Poor and Spiritual Growth*, London: Catholic Institute for International Relations; Toronto: Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace; Dublin: Trocaire, 1985, pp. 10.

If you are struck by the ideas presented in one of these articles, or have questions or comments on the preparatory tabloids **Challenges of Mission today to our *Minima Societas*** and **The Society Facing Challenges of Mission today**, your own brief response is very welcome. To send a letter to *PJ* for inclusion in a future issue, please use the address or fax number on the cover or by electronic mail* to "czerny@geo2.geonet.de"

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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.

Editor: Michael Czerny, S.J.

* For a brief introduction to the nascent Jesuit e-mail network, see *SJ News and Features* 21:6 (November-December 1993).

