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BEHOLD OUR WORLD

Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.J.

This staff retreat or *tempo forte* of discernment in common would have us direct our attention to the state of the Society in view of the 34th General Congregation, with the hope of benefitting the Society in future. We should examine the life and activity of the Society very closely and see in what measure it is an instrument — serving God and used by God, and "placed at the side of His Son" — to tackle the challenges of mission today. The tabloids have clearly adopted such a contemplative stance, elaborating a "composition of place" which turns its attention to our recent history. Master Ignatius considered this viewpoint indispensable for any election. "In every good election insofar as it depends on us, the eye of our intention ought to be single. I ought to focus only on the purpose for which I am created, to praise God our Lord..." (Sp.Ex. 169).

In their comments on the tabloids, some have noted that the tabloids take the viewpoint of the Society attentively analyzing the structures of our time and interpreting their causes and their conditions, rather than the outlook of the Holy Trinity gazing on "the whole surface or circuit of the world" in the contemplation on the Incarnation with Spiritual Exercises (102). Still the tabloids introduce this "composition of place" with a prayer which asks that "the Holy Spirit grant us the mind and heart of Christ, so that we might regard the world with the eyes of Jesus, the eyes of the poor and the powerless."¹

In Decree 4 of GC 32, this viewpoint of the Society is clearly taken from the gaze of the Holy Trinity who sees "all the peoples in such great blindness" (Sp.Ex. 106). Decree 4 describes the steps in this consideration:

St. Ignatius and his first companions, in the spiritual experience of the Exercises, were moved to a searching consideration of the world of their own time in order to discover its needs. (First) they contemplated 'how the Three Divine Persons....' Then they turned their eyes to where God's gaze was fixed, and saw for themselves the men and women of their time.... (Finally) that was how they learned to respond to the call of Christ and to work for the establishment of His Kingdom (n° 14).

GC 32 points out that the postulates directed their attention to the globe (D.2, n° 4), an earth where two-thirds of mankind do not see what they should see (n° 5); still, it is in the light of the Gospel that people can see more clearly that injustice springs from sin (n° 6). In this way and in the spirit of the Contemplation on the Incarnation, we recognize how we share in the great universal blindness of humanity if we do not make the effort to follow the movement of the Trinitarian gaze upon the world with God as our Father, His Son as our Saviour and their Spirit as the love which fills the whole universe, even now.

¹ *The Jesuits: Towards GC 34*, CIS 75 (1994), 10.

Looking at our lights and our shadows in this trinitarian light, we are "united in a single vision of faith, strong in a common hope and rooted in the same love of Christ" who has chosen us as His companions.² Our vision should not depend exclusively on flesh and blood; even in our administrative and sociological analyses, our point of view should see nothing which is not from above, according to Ignatius' expression, nothing which does not come down from the Father of lights, in the words of Polanco.³ Only in this way can a real discernment come about, in which the Spirit makes us capable of seeing things as the Lord sees them, and of making the choices which Christ has made, to make them here and now.

Considering now "how God our Lord is looking at me..." (Sp.Ex. 75), let us ask to focus upon the state of the Society, with a regard which sees the paschal light at work in the life and activities of the Society despite our shadows, so that placed at the side of his Son we can discover the light which is born of his Light.

30 May, 1994

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² GC 32, D.4, n° 15.

³ *Directory*, 71, 310.

At the beginning of Easter week the Faith-Justice Forum '94 took place at Alcalá de Henares and brought together all the Provincials and Delegates elected to go to the General Congregation from the Provinces of Spain and Portugal, along with a few representatives of the social, intellectual, and youth sectors from each Province.

A total of seventy Jesuits sought to "become aware of how our faith-justice option opens up from the actual situation towards the future, our gaze set on the coming General Congregation as well as on the process proper to each of our Provinces," as Fr. Elías Royón, Provincial of Spain, said in opening the forum.

The National Coordination for Social Action (CONAS), responsible for organizing the forum, worked out a methodology which would favour personal and group appropriation and help the participants "make themselves capable and ready" in a spirit of Ignatian discernment.

IGNATIAN METHOD: The GENERAL EXAMEN (*SpEx* 43)

Adolfo Chércoles, S.J.

1. Ignatian Examen, framework for the Forum

The goal of this forum on "Faith and Justice 1994" has been defined: "to become aware of how our option for faith and justice opens up from now on and in the future, keeping in view both the coming General Congregation and the process in each of our Provinces." To make certain that we do not present only dry facts, Jesús Renau had the happy thought of using the typically Ignatian method of the Examen. We all agreed that this would be both most appropriate and a truly Ignatian way of proceeding.

We all know that Ignatius valued the Examen above prayer. In fact, he imposed the Examen as an established rule in the Constitutions, whereas regarding prayer each one should see what he needed. For this reason, we have defined the approach for the forum as follows: "We will offer a series of meetings, reflections and prayers in common. And so personal and group appropriation will be favoured, as well as '*hacerse capaces*', making oneself capable and ready." Ignatius emphasized, not merely intellectual knowledge, but feeling and savouring (*Annotation* 2). Being such a realist he never took it for granted that we humans were prepared for anything simply through good will; he always stressed the need to "make ourselves capable and ready."

The two verbs that inaugurate the experience of the Exercises are "to prepare and to order the soul". No solution is offered, except this opening ourselves up to "make ourselves capable and ready" — which is what we'll attempt during these days. We all have to ready ourselves for a challenge that is beyond us and that has been given us, rather than occurring to us on our own.

"In a spirit of Ignatian discernment, resisting the temptation simply to take in analysis" which is the pit we always fall into, if we are not careful, at meetings like this.

The General Examen

To characterize this process according to the Ignatian conception of the Examen, we begin with two preliminary remarks. You know the Examen consists of five points. "The First Point is to give thanks to God our Lord for the benefits I have received. The Second is to ask grace to know my sins and rid myself of them." The third is what we ordinarily and, in a certain sense, exclusively mean by 'examen'. Why does Ignatius put it in third place? Because this examination of self is meant in the end (fourth point, "to ask pardon") to acknowledge and take responsibility for one's own situation — not to eliminate it or pass over it. And finally the amendment; the fifth point is "to resolve, with his grace, to amend them." Of course, the whole Ignatian process takes place in the context of grace.

It is suggested that we dedicate the last day of this seminar to planning concrete ways of making this 'amendment' operative. In any case the Ignatian Examen is not any self-examination whatsoever; strictly speaking, it begins with the third point, yet it is preceded by the other two points. In these two points, what is wholly original in the Ignatian Examen is at stake. Each point is meant to establish a perspective, an attitude.

First, it will question us about our attitude towards God, and secondly about our attitude regarding ourselves. But, going deeper, it will uncover the two great inter-related pitfalls. Facing God, the greatest trap is the **trap of projection**: we want God to coincide with us. (Ignatius sums it up brilliantly in the *Second Class of Persons*). Regarding ourselves, the great trap is the trap of **self-justification**, of defense mechanisms, such that I cannot come out of any situation badly. When we begin an evaluation, an examen, we set out with the secret hope of ending up with high marks. Yet it is surely not to justify ourselves that we need to examine ourselves, but rather so that we might open our eyes and find a way out of our ignorance.

2. First point of the Examen

Thanksgiving in the Gospel

We come to the first point, "to give thanks to God our Lord". The first surprise when reading the Gospel, is to find that not every act of thanksgiving is pleasing to God. Recall the scene of the pharisee and the publican. The prayer of the pharisee is: "I thank you, Lord..." Look where he begins and how: precisely with this first point. But his pharisaic act of thanksgiving becomes a proclamation of personal achievement in which he feels great self-satisfaction. In Scripture, however, self-satisfaction is never a motive for giving thanks, but on the contrary another display of our narcissism.

For Jesus, giving thanks is always a surprise. When the disciples return, wild with joy at what they saw and what happened to them (Luke 10), Jesus was filled with the Holy Spirit and with joy: He was surprised. Thanksgiving according to God is a surprise. It is not as if to say, "Here I am to pass the hat, for look how I have fulfilled to the very letter everything that was laid out beforehand." It is not justification or individual satisfaction. It is above all else: "Thanks for the surprises you have given me." In the Gospel it is surprising (probably we've never noticed it) how Jesus himself was evangelized. He was surprised at the widow who gave her mite; he

was surprised at the faith of the Canaanite woman; he was surprised at the centurion, the pagan. Such are Jesus' acts of thanksgiving, his surprises. Unlike a report on achievements of ours.

Thanksgiving in the Exercises

Ignatius structures the act of thanksgiving in this way. To underline this first point I am going to cite some well-known references, so that our stance may really wake us up and not anesthetize us.

This is the focus of the *Contemplation to Attain Love*. In the petition, the *Contemplation* brilliantly frames how we should open ourselves to this thanksgiving: "interior knowledge of all the great good I have received" (233). I have to give thanks, not for the taken-for-granted, but in order to open my eyes and, surprised, discover the source of the benefits I have received. When in the last century the Pope lost his papal states, did contemporary Christians live that moment with thanksgiving? Nevertheless, do we not give thanks for it today? Here is the problem with thanksgiving: we have to begin by seeking internal understanding, the gift of having our eyes opened. For if we do not, we will repeat our narcissism, rejoicing in our supposed achievements.

"Interior knowledge of all the great good received so that recognizing entirely,..." I might surprise myself, be shaken loose, open myself to something new. Charmed by inertia we are frightened by novelty, but novelty also surprises and frees and renews us. This is how we have to give thanks to God. This is being contemplative. The Gospel does not speak of an aesthetic contemplation, but rather a contemplation which, surprised, turns into grateful response. And this is what Ignatius asks: "in order that, entirely grateful, I may become able to love and serve the Divine Majesty in all things." "In all things" — Ignatius posits no exception. Therefore, we are to open ourselves to God who is constant in his gifts, in those gifts that surprise and shake us loose, make us new and open our eyes; in those gifts which make possible a thankful response in everything. God is not the expectation of omnipotence but the confirmation of grace. The two are not the same.

The *kairos*, the "without preceding cause," the opportunity, says Ignatius, comes only from God. Not from what I have projected but from what has surprised me. The pleasure of self-satisfaction does not lift me up to give thanks to God; it encloses me in the security of acquired rights, of self-satisfaction and vanity which sends God a bill. The contemplative attitude by contrast leads to acts of thanksgiving based on surprise and on perceiving reality as an opportunity — once it has occurred, I realize I should give thanks even for what I previously didn't know how to thank for.

The gift of Decree 4

The first point, therefore, is a stance before God that wakes me up and energizes me for service: "entirely grateful, I may become able to love and serve in all things." Joyfully, as an opportunity, not as an obligation. For the faith-justice challenge is not an obligation; it is a gift, an illumination, a grace. And so we have to be grateful for it. Were it not so, we would not have to be grateful for it, but only expound upon it and then pass the hat.

How to do it? I suggest we consider Decree 4 together with the postulates you have in hand — this is in fact the Society's concern today. Let us be surprised at this Society, in which we elders

have perhaps lived from other perspectives and which, amongst great shocks and surprises and failures and pains (for which we should give thanks), is opening us up to something new, to new concerns. Let us all join together in this action of the Spirit, this surprise of the Spirit.

I make only one observation on Decree 4: for me, given my experience and the world in which I move, its great brilliance was not to fall in the trap of suggesting that we turn ourselves into the "voice of the voiceless". That is an expression which has always bothered me. As if the people involved were mute, the very ones whose voice is loud, whose cry is great. The only possible, the only valid, the only coherent thing for us to do is to join in with that cry — we cannot supplant it. You find this in Decree 4, n° 48-50.

There it says that our personal origins, studies, the circles in which we move, all insulate us. And the next paragraph confesses that

- "If we have the patience and the humility
- the **least Society** as it has repeatedly been called —
- "with the poor we will learn
- they will surprise us, as the Canaanite woman and the widow did Jesus —
- "in what we can help them
- not by our dominance, wisdom or genius, nor their good luck in having us with them —
- "after having first accepted to receive from them" (n° 50).

For me this is the most inspired point of Decree 4, the most renewing, what will never be exhausted and what we will never totally achieve. Those who go to the General Congregation, please defend this like a hissing cat — don't let them delete it, please!

This then is the first part, to open ourselves to this *kairos* the Society is living, thanks to surprise and not to arrogance or self-satisfaction.

3. Second point of the Examen

"The Second is to ask grace to know my sins and rid myself of them." It's our stance before ourselves. Faced with defence mechanisms and self-justification which normally characterise our attitude, Ignatius proposes the attitude of divesting ourselves and not taking anything for granted. Thus the first great grace will be that my eyes open and I see in what I have sinned. This is not in hand, it is a surprise. My instinct leads me to camouflage sin, to justify everything. Ignatius is the great master of suspicion, from God's side.

Sin in the New Testament

If the earlier point helps to derail our mechanisms of projection, this one will dismantle our defenses. Sin, in the New Testament, is not a place of rupture with God, but of encounter with Him. Peter, in his sin, encounters three things: himself, his truth, and his brothers. Where did Peter go after his denials? Certainly to his companions. There he is on Sunday and there he tells everything from A to Z. This sin, shared and recognized together, is a point of contact with one's brothers, with all the brothers and sisters, with everyone, with all those to whom we are sent, with sinners as well. To the degree in which we feel ourselves to be such, will we be able to draw near to them. Sin is always a point of **encounter**.

With the brothers, but above all with God. Peter, in his fall, met Jesus at last. Before, Jesus was a pretext for his narcissism: "Although all abandon you, here am I." Afterwards, when Jesus asked him, "Do you love me more than these?" (which is what he had been saying), Peter

replies, "You know it, you know that I love you." Now, yes! now he is not centred on himself; it is not his narcissism that is in the forefront. He has encountered Jesus in the discovery of his weakness. Sin is a **grace**.

The joy of opening ourselves to our truth! "Humility is to walk in truth" (St. Theresa of Avila). Humility is to accede to one's own truth, without prior defenses, but suspecting that I am not as I see myself and that I am not as I strive to be. This is the second great attitude, not to take anything for granted.

Sin in the Exercises

According to Ignatius, one must gain access to sin starting from **suspicion** and from **ignorance**. I remind you of two passages in the Exercises. In the first method of prayer I ask God for grace "that I may be able to know how I have failed" against the commandments (240). It is not within my grasp to know it. My eyes have to be opened for me. However, what is most surprising is God's vision of the reality of sin in the *Contemplation on the Incarnation*. This is not a God who reproaches, but a God who contemplates reality, "how they are going down to hell in such great blindness" (106). So for Ignatius sin is ignorance par excellence. The great enlightenment, the first grace, is that our eyes are opened to our lack of consistency. Without this, all other thanks are false, even cynical, because our stance is that of the pharisee, not that of the publican.

On the other hand for Ignatius sin is not something subjective, something that develops and dies only in our consciousness. It is **something real**, to which consciousness must open up. Therefore, after setting down what I do with the process of my own sins (first point), he says in the second, "to ponder the foulness and evil which every mortal sin **committed** would contain in itself, even if it were not forbidden" (57). He does not seek an elaborate theory about sin, does not refer to an ethic or to a law; his intention is to confront this reality and weigh it, weigh its content of ugliness and evil. This is something real, it is here. It is not something which, from within my conscience and closing my eyes, I must confess without anyone else able to know it. Instead it is a consequence which everyone else knows and which is being thrown back in my face from without. It is not just something which I must acknowledge out of sincerity, it is something which I verify out of surprise. It is God's grace that verifies it.

Lies, truth and joy

Now let me tell you a delightful anecdote and, please, understand it well. None of us here is poor or marginalized; this is the mistake we always make at all of our meetings. Anyway, I am going to introduce someone marginalized to you, not a gypsy but a Guaraní. One day when I was in Paraguay, Bartomeu Melià told us the following story. It was a conference on the indigenous question attended by anthropologists, sociologists, missionaries, government representatives ... and a missionary brought along two Guaraní. There the poor fellows were, with that lost and absent look of theirs. The others were thinking: these two aren't even catching on and have nothing to say here. During the final talk someone was making a balance of the achievements regarding the indigenous problematic in Paraguay and the challenges still remaining. He lost a sheet with a quote on it, began looking for it, and stopped talking. Now the Guaraní do not to speak except after a silent pause; in our style of conversation, they don't open their mouths. But in that moment of awkward silence, one of the Guaraní declared, "How easy it is to tell lies, when everyone wants to hear them." This made my hair stand on end.

What we are trying to do here is not brainwash ourselves or tell lies which we all want to believe, but open up to a reality which is out there. What must address us and convert us, is not what we ourselves fashion but rather the challenge that is out there. All the rest will be lies to brainwash ourselves with.

I end with a quote from Ribadeneira concerning Ignatius' way of proceeding. Why do I read it? Because here you are, you who will go to the General Congregation, the sovereign authority of the Society. May you live it **joyfully**, as Ignatius says here, not as a stupid burden, but with joy and responsibility and openness to the Spirit as required by something which is beyond us.

(Ignatius) grew in devotion in his office, and otherwise he would not have it, because he would think that God did not want it. His way of proceeding is: first, to strip himself; second, to ask help; third, to think; fourth, to go and present it to God.*

So let this be our way of proceeding today, and may it be your procedure at the General Congregation to which you are going and where we will feel joyfully present in you, at this important moment for the Society.

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EVANGELIZATION and CULTURES

Michael Amaladoss, S.J.

I want to share some reflections on evangelization, based on the essay or tabloid, "Evangelization and Culture," written in preparation for GC 34.¹

I have heard some criticism of the tabloid as having too little emphasis on proclaiming Christ, spreading the Gospel and the Church, etc. The General Congregation is the occasion, not for doing theology, but rather to make pastoral apostolic options. Also, it takes Decree 4 as a starting point and aims to spell out its implications for today. The kind of themes chosen for preparation were those identified in the Province Congregations preceding the Congregations of Procurators and Provincials in 1987 and 1990. The themes sum up the Society's efforts to come to terms with what it thinks are the challenges today.

* *Monumenta Historica S.I., Fontes Narrativi*, vol. II, p. 474.

¹ *The Jesuits: Towards GC 34*, CIS 25:1 (1994), 20-36.

What is the theology of evangelization that underlies the first tabloid and is implied therein?

First, evangelization is seen as God's mission of self-communication of His life to people, through the Spirit and the Word which becomes man in the furtherance of this mission. This mission embraces the world and all history. It points to the reign of God toward which the whole universe is moving, reconciling all things, cultures, and peoples.²

Therefore the mystery of Redemption itself is seen in the context of creation and its ultimate consummation. It presupposes a certain theology of creation itself as covenantal. The Church is in mission as the symbol and servant of this mystery. Its focus is on the future and not the past. When we speak of Catholicity or of communion, we must see them as still being realized. The context is that of the kingdom that is already and not-yet.

Evangelization is seen as the ongoing dialogue of God and His Word with God's people. The primary agents who respond are people listening to the Word of God. The Word of God calls them to conversion and transformation. Inculturation is the building up of the local church as a response to God's Word. So the role of the missionary in this dialogue is that of a messenger, a facilitator, or a servant of the process. He lets the Word of God encounter people and the people themselves respond. But he is also the mediator of an intercultural encounter between his own culture and that of the people. Because of this process he is also contributing to the ongoing unification of cultures through mutual sharing and enrichment so that the Church becomes a communion of local churches.

After Vatican II we have had a widening and a sharpening of the idea of mission. Earlier it meant going out and forming and expanding the Church by making converts. But, looking for a theological foundation, *Ad Gentes* started with the mission of God, with mission as trinitarian, with the Church continuing that mission. Over the last twenty-five years the Church has been discovering the full breadth of mission as including promotion of justice, the encounter with culture, dialogue with other religions, etc., as dimensions of integral evangelization.

The Synod of Bishops on Justice in 1971 said that the promotion of justice is an integral element of evangelization. *Evangelii nuntiandi* (1974) of Pope Paul VI speaks of evangelizing culture as integral to evangelization. John Paul II speaks of dialogue with other religions as integral to evangelization. The concrete option of a task then depends upon place and time, one's talents, etc. When GC 33 spoke of integral evangelization it embraced all of these as spelling out our commitment to faith and justice. John Paul II takes up this broad vision in his encyclical, *Redemptoris Missio*. He speaks of pastoral work among Christians, re-evangelization of de-christianized areas as well as proclaiming Christ where Christ is not yet known. He has a long list of tasks, including promotion of justice, working in urban centres, with drug addicts, with youth, etc.

We have also had a deepening of what evangelization means today. The Word of God comes to people as a call for conversion and challenges them to transform social structures. We understand mission as primarily prophecy, with Christ himself as the prophet. The problem is that, when we think of prophecy this way, we tend to think of ourselves as prophets. But both the missionary and the people are under the judgment of the Word of God. Prophecy has two aspects. It is critical of existing structures, and it proposes a creative vision of a new humanity.

² Cf. Colossians 1, 1 Corinthians 15, Ephesians 1, Romans 8, and so forth.

It is always in view of the reign of God. It is not merely negative, but also positive. The post-exilic prophets (Ezekiel, Isaiah, Jeremiah) both condemn the injustice of the present and envision a future that will be God's gift. Therefore wherever the Word of God brings its prophetic challenge, then that work is mission.

The Pope's use of the word "evangelization" in the latest encyclical is based on *Evangelii nuntiandi*. When the foreign missionary has established the local church he can leave, but the challenge of the gospel continues. At a certain stage, the proclamation stops, but evangelization continues. Because evangelization seems to include everything, there is an attempt to rethink mission in terms of prophecy. Dialogue with other religions, for example, becomes mission when there is an element of challenge in the name of the Gospel.

This is a broad idea of evangelization, which provides the context for the three themes of the first tabloid. We need to deepen the commitment to faith and justice. And we need to talk more about dialogue with other religions. We speak often about the world religions but we don't show much respect for Native religions. When we talk about syncretism we often seem to be talking down to Native religions. Before we talk with them, we have to listen and ask what can we learn from them.

The third focus is on culture. It is a deliberate choice, dealing with attitudes, value systems and world views. Any real change of society has to include and promote a cultural change.

We place culture in the context of other elements of society such as politics, economics, person, society, and religion. Inculturation of the Gospel and evangelization of culture are seen as two poles of one process. As the document develops we focus more on the second; the process of evangelizing culture will have to differ with different cultures.

But searching for a common element we speak of modernity as a challenge to all cultures, i.e., secularization, pluralism, media.

The conclusion: the experience of pluralism of religions and cultures is a sign of the times. Some call this a post-modern phenomenon. Personally I don't think it has to do with post-modernity, unless you think of modernity as representing the Enlightenment and the colonial, western-European paradigm. I prefer to think of modernity as the impact of science, technology, industrialisation, urbanisation, and the mass media. We are still in the modern period in that the impacts of these things have not worked themselves out.

I think GC 34 should focus on the challenges of justice, religion, and culture as concrete applications of Decree 4 of GC 32.

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It was in July of 1968 that Gustavo Gutiérrez, from Peru, began speaking of "theology of liberation" rather than the "theology of development" which was usual at the time. How fertile this thinking has been for the pastoral practice of the Catholic Church in Latin America, is well known. A quarter century later, during the twenty-fifth anniversary celebration of the Faculty of Theology's establishment on the campus of the University of Montreal, Gutiérrez gave the following retrospective conference.

Fr. Gutiérrez recalls that the pastoral concern of the Church in Latin America fits in the perspective of the "Church of the poor" opened up by Pope John XXIII. Moreover, he shows that the current theme of the "new evangelization" — an idea already present as "re-evangelization" in the concluding document of the Medellín Conference in 1968 — is based in Latin America upon the reality of the poor and the solidarity required of all Christians.

OPTION for the POOR REVIEW and CHALLENGES¹

Gustavo Gutiérrez

I want to begin by thanking the University of Montreal's Faculty of Theology for the honour it grants me by conferring this doctorate *honoris causa*. How can I thank you for this generous gesture which, by definition, has not been earned!

I am particularly happy to be in Montreal again. Twenty-six years ago, in the summer of 1967 during the World Expo (and the visit of Charles de Gaulle), I gave a two-week course in your Faculty. My topic then was "the Church and the problems of poverty," similar to what you asked me to speak about this evening. I used that course — barely two years after the Council — to focus on the biblical and theological meaning of poverty. It would be a year before the expression, **theology of liberation**, emerged. I can tell you that the substance of this theological approach took shape during that course I gave in Montreal. Hence my joy at being back among you again.

1. A memory

Let me share a memory with you. I had the fortune of attending the fourth session of Vatican II and had been working with the then president of the Latin American Bishops' Conference (CELAM), Bishop Manuel Larraín from Chile. I was invited to attend the closing ceremony, but did not feel like going. Instead, during those two days of December 7-8, 1965, I chose to make a retreat alone, and so that was the context in which I was lucky to hear on the radio one of Paul VI's finest addresses on the meaning of the Council. I found myself caught between

¹ Prepared in French and delivered on September 16, 1993, the lecture was transcribed and published in the journal *Théologiques* (1/2, October 1993, pp. 121-134). Father Gutiérrez has now revised the text, without changing its oral character, and kindly permitted its publication in *Promotio Iustitiae* as translated into English by Martin Palmer, S.J.

mixed feelings. On the one hand, I was delighted with the results of the Council, for it reflected significantly the theology which I had studied and with which I identified. But on the other hand, I began to note a definite concern: the great challenges of the Latin American people had not found enough place in the Council.

The theme of poverty and the conflict-ridden situations gripping Latin America had scarcely been alluded to. Because of my studies in Europe my European side could be satisfied, but my Latin American side, more Indian or mestizo, remained at odds as if expecting something else. I clearly remember that those two days of spiritual experience, if you want to put a date on it, were when I began to take a certain distance from the theology which I had so fervently read and worked on until then. Having just done my first years of pastoral work, I had discovered in Latin America, particularly in my own country of Peru, a reality which had not been explicitly treated at the Council.

Now leaving aside my personal experience, which merely serves to frame these reflections, I would like to enter into today's topic. My talk has three parts. The first is a brief historical survey of what today is called the **preferential option for the poor**. The second is our shared attempt to specify what that expression means. The third, quite short, concerns what recently has begun to be called the **new evangelization**.

2. An historical survey

John XXIII's discourse on the Council can be summed in a basic challenge and three great intuitions. The challenge was how to say "Thy kingdom come" today. This was the Pope's deep concern and, on this basis, he spoke of three major issues regarding the Church's presence in three worlds.

The first was the Church's opening to the modern world. I will not spend much time on this topic since you are so familiar with it. The Council's preparatory documents did not go exactly in this direction and so, as everyone remembers, they were rejected (except the one on the liturgy), because they did not reflect John XXIII's purpose. At the Council this was jokingly called the "red menace" referring to seven cardinals, among them Cardinal Liénart of Lille, who helped to ensure the rejection of the preparatory *schemata*. These interventions eventually allowed the drafting of the constitution, *The Church in the Modern World*, where the theme of opening up to the modern world is very present.

The second intuition concerned the Church's presence within the Christian world, that is, the ecumenical dialogue. Of course this dialogue had begun many years before the Council, but the Council Fathers took up the Pope's intuition and extended it to the religious world in general. Thus the documents about the great world religions emerged. Ecumenical dialogue was fostered by the presence of Orthodox and Protestant experts at the Council, among them Karl Barth.

Just a month before the Council's opening, on September 11, 1962, John XXIII gave an address in which he spoke of "another luminous point." If you are at all familiar with Pope John's texts, you know that often, whenever he wanted to say something important, he spoke of *un punto luminoso*, "a luminous point." In this talk John XXIII stated that, in the face of the underdeveloped countries, **"the Church is and wishes to be the Church of all, but particularly the Church of the poor."** A short sentence, you see, in which every word counts.

As you know well, the expression "underdeveloped country" is fairly new. It emerged around 1955, that is, a few years before this talk of the Pope's. John XXIII did not speak of "countries in the process of development," a popular euphemism at that time. In other words, in the face of the world's poverty, the Church is (this is the reality) and wants to be (this is the intention) the Church of all and, especially, the Church of the poor. Thus, "the Church of the poor" cannot be separated from "the Church of all."

2.1 The topic of poverty at the Council

John XXIII proposed to the Council this vision of the Church in relation to poverty. Now the most influential Council Fathers came predominantly from northern countries, Europe and North America. They were preoccupied above all with the problem of openness to the modern world. In fact the Catholic Church had not yet fully accepted such modern characteristics as liberty, the democratic spirit, science, technology, etc. Most of the Fathers were also concerned with ecumenical dialogue since in their home countries of Germany, England, Canada, the United States, the Protestant churches were very strong. These two concerns were in the forefront for them more than the third, the concern for a Church of the poor in the context just mentioned above.

During the final two days of the first session of the Council, a very close friend of John XXIII's, Cardinal Lercaro, archbishop of Bologna and one of the Council's secretaries (coordinators), made an intervention stating that **"The theme of the Council ought to be the evangelization of the poor, poverty in the world."** He specified that this was not a theme but **THE** theme of the Council. **"And on this basis,"** he went on, **"we will then be able to treat the ecumenical question and openness to the world."** Think of what might have happened if the Council had accepted Lercaro's proposal and taken as its central theme poverty in the world and the evangelization of the poor. The Council Fathers were moved at Cardinal Lercaro's words but, as it says so well in French, *«c'était trop beau pour être vrai»*, it was too beautiful to be true! Other concerns held the forefront. Two very influential cardinals, Cardinal Suenens of Malines in Belgium and Cardinal Montini, the future Paul VI, then intervened to underline the first two intuitions, particularly the one of openness to the modern world.

In the Council documents, we nevertheless find a few passages on poverty. In *Lumen Gentium*, there is a reference to the evangelization of the poor: "Just as Christ carried out the work of redemption in poverty and oppression, so the Church is called to follow the same path" (§ 8). And in one of the Council's best documents, *Ad Gentes*, even more: "Since this mission continues and, in the course of history, unfolds the mission of Christ, who was sent to evangelize the poor, then the Church, urged on by the Spirit of Christ, must walk the road Christ himself walked, a way of poverty and obedience" (§ 5). So you see, the theme of poverty does occasionally occur in the Council documents. But let's not be anachronistic. It's too easy today to reproach the Council for nearly completely neglecting this key topic. We have to keep in mind that, in those years, people had other concerns. The issue of poverty, or "the Church of the poor," had not yet acquired, at least in the Church's consciousness, the importance it would later have.

Three years after the Council, in 1968, a Conference of Latin American Bishops took place at Medellín in Colombia. At this meeting John XXIII's third intuition was very much present. This is not surprising if you realize that practically the only countries whose people are in the majority both Christian and poor, are those of Latin America. I say "in the majority" because there are

also many Christians in Africa, but for well-known historical reasons, they usually don't reach the proportions of Latin America. Nor is it the case in Asia, where Christians are a minority, except in the Philippines. The only continent, then, whose majority is both Christian and poor, is Latin America, and here is where John XXIII's third intuition was picked up. In my view the greatest significance of the Conference of Bishops at Medellín remains the fact that the Church of Latin America came of age there.

2.2 Medellín and the meaning of poverty

The Medellín documents, following the method of the Young Christian Workers, are made up of three parts: description of the reality, reflection, and pastoral guidelines. In Medellín not only is the Latin American poverty described, but its causes are also pointed out. That is why Medellín speaks of liberation: poverty and liberation were its two great themes.

Three meanings of the term 'poverty' are distinguished. First of all **real** poverty, which we sometimes call 'material poverty'. This, the lack of what is needed to live as human beings, is a scandal, an evil, as Medellín says without palliatives.

In second place let us consider **spiritual** poverty, understood not so much as detachment from material goods but as a child-like spirit, that is, readiness to place our lives in the hands of God. This is the meaning of spiritual poverty, the most significant meaning in Christian revelation. This poverty allows us to recognize God as love, as Father, Mother, and to recognize all others as brothers and sisters, thus accepting the free gift of God's love.

Poverty as **commitment** was the third clarification made at Medellín: solidarity with the poor in their struggle against poverty, and commitment in favour of the poor and against poverty.

Medellín was a highly prophetic voice, as you know, in the life of the Church in Latin America. I do not claim that the entire Latin American Church has been walking in the footsteps of Medellín. We wish it had, but you are all aware that resistance was never lacking to such a commitment. In any case, Medellín has been an important voice which made numerous engagements and experiments possible. This vision was eventually confirmed and ratified at Puebla, which spoke of a **preferential option for the poor**. These are Medellín's terms turned into an expression. The 'poverty' meant here is material poverty; the 'preference' is spiritual poverty; and the 'option' is the commitment against poverty.

At Santo Domingo in 1992, among numerous other matters, this vision was ratified again. Santo Domingo repeated that the Latin American Church has **one** option and various pastoral approaches. I stress this because the preparatory documents spoke of at least eight or ten different preferential options.

3. **The preferential option for the poor**

Perhaps the best way to grasp the challenges contained in this expression is to take it word by word: poverty, preference, and option.

3.1. Poverty

The poverty to which we refer encompasses economic, social, and political dimensions, but it is certainly more than all that. In the final analysis poverty means death: unjust death, the

premature death of the poor, physical death. It is unfortunately not only in Latin America that people die of sicknesses which medical science has long since overcome in other places. There is no reason why people should die of cholera, yet it kills many victims in my own country Peru, just as it kills people in other parts of the world, in Asia and wherever there are poor people.

Poverty therefore leads to physical death, to say nothing of situations in which people are repressed. But we must also speak of cultural death. When a people is not taken into account, when a people is despised in one way or another, then in a certain sense the persons who belong to that people are also being killed. In Latin America we have a great variety of races, cultures, and languages. If these social groups are despised, then the people who belong to them are being killed. Anthropologists often say that culture is life; well, if a culture is despised, then that life is despised. This also happens when women are not accorded their full human rights.

Poverty therefore means death. In saying this I am not trying to discount the social, economic, or political dimensions; I only want to insist on this other meaning of poverty in order to tell you that what is ultimately at stake is life itself. This is why Christian communities in Latin America often speak of the God of Life and reject unjust physical and cultural death, as well as other manifestations of egoism and of sin.

So what then do we mean by 'poor'? I don't think there is any good definition. But we approach it by saying that the poor are non-persons, the **in-significant**, those who do not count in society and all too often in Christian churches as well. A poor person, for example, is someone who may have to wait a week at the door of a hospital to see a doctor. A poor person is someone without social or economic weight, who is robbed by unjust laws; someone who lacks the possibility of speaking up in order to change the situation. Someone who belongs to a despised race and feels culturally marginalized, is **in-significant**. In sum, the poor are found in the statistics but they do not appear there with their proper name. We do not know the names of the poor. They are anonymous and remain so. The poor are insignificant in society, but not before God.

People often say to me, "You are a Latin American and so you are poor." In fact I am not poor because I am not **in-significant**, since I am a priest. It is best to say this straight out. I try to live with the poor but, as a priest and a theologian, I would be lying if I said that I was someone insignificant in my country. It would be false modesty (and to tell the truth all forms of modesty are false). It is best to acknowledge things as they are and then try, with a certain humility, to live close to the poor.

A final remark on the topic of poverty: if you talk about the poor, people will probably regard you as sensitive and generous. But if you talk about the causes of poverty, they'll say to themselves, "Is this a Christian speaking? Isn't such language really political?"

Still and all, the life of the poor is not simply deprivations. The poor also have a great richness to contribute. In speaking about the option for the poor we are not only describing people who have simply nothing because they are insignificant. They are people of a great human richness as well.

3.2. The preference

I have often met people who find it strange to use the term 'preferential'. Would it not be preferable to say simply 'option for the poor,' since 'preferential' sounds too nice? I don't agree. Preference implies the universality of God's love, which excludes no one. It is only within the framework of this universality that we can understand the preference, that is, "what comes first." The Bible speaks of God's preference for the poor. In Genesis, why does God prefer Abel to Cain? Nowhere does it say that Abel is better or that Cain has something evil about him. But Abel was the younger brother, the last. God preferred the sacrifice of Abel to that of Cain. Cain's sin was his refusal to accept God's preference for Abel, and so he killed him. The rejection of the preference means failing to grasp that we must combine the universality of God's love with His preference for the poorest. And this was the expression typical of Pope John XXIII, **"The Church of all, and particularly the Church of the poor."** As Christians we cannot say, "Only the poor count." Such an attitude is no more Christian than the other extreme of claiming to love everyone while in fact not loving anyone. Holding the two aspects together, universality and preference, is not easy. It is a great challenge.

But why this preference? Analysis is not what lets me understand poverty, what bring us to prefer the poorest. Analysis is surely useful, but it is not sufficient. Or one might think that one should prefer the poor out of human compassion. Such compassion is very important, but it is not the ultimate reason. Or again, you might say, "You talk so much and so insistently about the poor, because you are Latin American." I always answer these people, "Please try not to understand me too quickly. If I talk about poverty, it is first of all because I am Christian, and secondarily because I am Latin American." The geographical factor, however important, comes in second place.

All the poor are good, some say, in order to justify the preference for them. Someone who says that gives me the impression of never having seen a poor person up close. For the poor are human beings; they include very good people, but there are also some among them who aren't. We should prefer them not because they are good (if they are, so much the better!) but because first of all God is good and prefers the forgotten, the oppressed, the poor, the forsaken. The final and deepest reason for the 'preference' lies in the God of our faith. This affirmation commits us all, because you and I believe in the same God. What I have just said applies to everyone. No one can evade this preference for the poor. How to do it? — that is another question. But if we believe in the same God, then we should walk side by side in history. The preference stems from God's goodness and it stems from His gratuitous love. Here is the central idea of the gospel message. God first loved us. Our lives should respond to this gratuitous initiative of God. This is the meaning of spiritual poverty.

The great mystics, St. John of the Cross for example, teach us how God who gratuitously loves us constitutes the heart of the spiritual life. This does not oppose social and political commitment. Without contemplation, without prayer, we cannot conceive of Christian life. But lacking solidarity with the poor, there is no Christian life either. So here are two dimensions which we must strive to hold together.

3.3. Option

The curious remark is sometime made, "The option for the poor is something which the non-poor have to make." That is not true, for the poor also have to opt in favour of their brothers and sisters of race, social class, and culture. And so the option for the poor is a decision incumbent upon every Christian.

4. The new evangelization

If one day someone posed the question, "What is the most important perspective in the theology of liberation?" I would reply that it is the preferential option for the poor. The theology of liberation could disappear, so long as this option remains. Until I was forty years old I never mentioned theology of liberation and yet I was a Christian then or tried to be one, and I hope to continue being one after liberation theology has gone. Theology has an important role, it is a means for understanding my faith, but it is not an article of either faith or creed.

All theology's starting point is revelation. Theologians differ in the ways they approach the great topics. There have been theological differences throughout two thousand years of the Church's existence. I do not imagine that the theology of liberation is something permanent. No theology has that privilege, and I even dare say that it is counterproductive for a theology to last too long. Of that we have had experience in the Church. If the preference for the poor does remain, we will have gained something important, because this theme is deeply bound up with Biblical revelation. It will be the merit of Latin American theology to have recalled this option.

The preferential option for the poor is the axis of what is called the **new evangelization**. The expression, often repeated nowadays, is familiar. What is perhaps less well known is that the expression may be found in the preparatory documents of Medellín and in the first text of the Conference.² The document speaks of the need for a new evangelization in Latin America. It recognizes that living a different historical moment in a new social and cultural context, requires new ways of proclaiming the Gospel. A new evangelization supposes a vision of history, otherwise the expression risks being emptied of its newness. In Latin America we have been talking about new evangelization for twenty-five years. The expression has been taken up vigorously by John Paul II.

I do not know if there are any Latin Americans in the audience, or people working there now or in the past. As for myself, I am sure that the Latin American Church is living a very rich historical moment, but 'rich' does not mean easy, for ours is a painful richness, that of the numerous martyrs who have given their lives for the preferential option for the poor: Archbishop Romero in El Salvador, Angelelli in Argentina, Ellacurfa in El Salvador, and so many others who are less well known. When among her members a Church can count on persons capable of giving their lives in this way, she is living something of significance.

The theologians of liberation are known in a certain world, but I think that this Church also has other representatives of what we are really living there. Let me tell you a personal experience of mine. Three or four years ago, I went to meet a pastoral team which had formed around some priests, one of whom was Canadian. The people there were familiar with every kind of violence: intolerable terrorism, drug violence, violence from the army. We stayed up all night talking. The pastoral team explained its problems to me, and I tried to offer them suggestions, but their reply was always the same: "No, no, we've already tried that and it doesn't work." "Ok, but try this or that." "That won't work either." It was already around four in the morning when I said to them: "Listen, I am deeply moved and yet, despite everything, I can't help thinking of a joke and so I want to tell it to you: An airplane has just taken off from the airport, when the pilot contacts the control tower to report a problem the plane was having. The air controller keeps

² See the "Message to the People of Latin America."

suggesting solutions, each of which the pilot rejects because it's too late. Finally the controller says to him: "Say with me, 'Our Father who art in heaven,...'"

That night the one in the control tower was me, and I finally suggested to them that we say an *Our Father*. These people are unknown, they will never be mentioned in the newspapers, in the Church nobody asks them what their problems are. That's why, compared with the sufferings of my people, I am ashamed to speak of my own difficulties. The neighbours suffer because they cannot feed their children. This pastoral team suffers because, humanly speaking, their pastoral efforts are ineffective, given that they are facing excruciating limit situations.

When I meet such people, they nourish my faith and my hope. In a Church with pastoral teams like that, a great generosity can be found. I don't claim that the whole Latin American Church has assimilated the way of Medellín, or is totally in solidarity with the poor. I simply want to say that, in any case, the most wonderful things are being done, not necessarily because of liberation theology, although that too must be acknowledged as an important factor in the lives of many. People ask what impact liberation theology has had in Latin America. I always give the same answer: "What interests me is the impact of the Gospel and the presence of Christians in the liberation process of the Latin American people. Within that, a small part belongs to liberation theology." In saying this I am not trying elegantly to distance myself from this theology. I go on working at it, and I am convinced that it is a useful instrument for fostering concrete involvements in a Church which should be in ever greater solidarity with the poor. I think this theology definitely arises out of the contrast between a reality marked by poverty, which means death, and the need to proclaim the resurrection of Jesus Christ, which is the decisive victory over death, which is the death of death itself.

You recall the Old Testament text quoted by St. Paul, "O death, where is your victory?"³ Every Christian celebration is a mockery of death, a claim that death does not have the final word in history. The final word of human existence is life, the gift of God. I believe that here is where you find the key to what is taking place in the Latin American Church. For this reason our theological reflection is of interest because, it is sustained by the life of a Church, of many Christian communities. Otherwise it would be of little significance, except perhaps in the intellectual world.

I conclude, rather unacademically, by asking you to pray for my continent and my Church. I am sure moreover that, if you keep in mind the poor of the world, you are ready to find your place and your path in this preferential option for the poor.

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³ 1 Corinthians 15:55 freely quoting Isaiah 25:7 and Hosea 13:14.

The DEATH of ALING YONING

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Aling Yoning has died. Johanna Stadelmann, the coordinator of ATD Fourth World¹ in Manila, informed me on the phone one evening. "How did she die?" I asked. "She died peacefully. I think she knew that she was going back to God," she answered.

I was overcome for a moment. I did not know what I was feeling. For the first time in my life the death of a person left a deep impact on me. It was strange. I had assisted several people dying when I was working in a hospital. I had watched people being carried into the I.C.U in the morning, and in the afternoon the corpse was carried out on a pushcart. All of these experiences had left me with a sense of the mystery of death and human suffering. But the death of Aling Yoning gave me another meaning. It did not primarily point to life after death, to whether eternity is merely an illusion or a fulfilled promise. The death of Aling Yoning revealed to me what the meaning of a life is.

When I put down the phone, I realized that there were tears in my eyes. I was sad because I would miss her warm smile, but at the same time there was also joy in my heart, believing that she was in the bosom of Abraham. Her whole life was a fight for survival, and she had ended the fight with dignity.

Aling Yoning was one of the people who made their home in the North Cemetery in Manila. There are about a thousand families living within that cemetery, some of whom have lived there since just after World War II. About half of them work as caretakers of the tombs of the rich. Others work as grave diggers, flower vendors, makers of tombstones, painters, and construction workers at the cemetery. Like Aling Yoning, some live inside the tombs of rich families, or build shelters beside their high walls. Every year they have to move out of the cemetery before All Souls' Day, when it becomes crowded with people visiting the graves. Their shelters are also under constant threat of demolition from the local government. Despite All Souls' Day or the demolitions, they move back in and rebuild their shanties in the same places. They have no other place to go. It has been like that year after year.

When Johanna introduced me to her, Aling Yoning was already bed-ridden. She was about fifty years old. I saw her lying helplessly on a long bench between two big marble tombs inside a mausoleum. This was her only shelter. She had no house, not even a shanty. She had no family of her own.

I could not imagine poverty more striking than what she had to undergo. Not only deprived of basic material needs, she had nobody to share the burden of life with as well. She suffered from many kinds of diseases. The one that caused her death was, I guess, filariasis which is a

¹ The ATD Fourth World Movement is an international non-governmental organization founded by Fr. Joseph Wresinski in 1956 in a camp for the homeless in Noisy-le-Grand, outside Paris. Today the ATD Movement involves more than 300 permanent volunteers and is active in 116 countries on four continents.

parasitic disease carried by mosquitoes. The deposit of the parasites had blocked her lymph glands and caused her leg to swell. She looked very much older than her age. Her hair was all grey.

Even though she was terribly ill, she did not forget to give us her sweet smile. "How are my children? Did they behave well?" Those were the questions she asked Johanna after she greeted her. Later on Johanna told me that Aling Yoning was the one who had helped her when she gathered the children for the street library for the first time. Johanna introduced me, a Jesuit scholastic, who helped her in the street library. I told her that I came from Indonesia and that I was still learning Tagalog to be able to communicate with the children. To my surprise, she spoke English fluently. She was delighted to know that I was going to be a priest. She asked me to come and sit beside her. She held my hand tightly. She welcomed me with warmth. We did not stay long in her place on that day. After telling her that we would visit her again some time, we left for another street library.

On a cloudy day, I went alone to the North Cemetery for my street library. I was walking around to gather the children to come to the Circle, when it started to rain. I realized that I had left my umbrella in the jeepney. I tried to cover myself with the plastic mat which we usually used for the children to sit on. I began to worry, because rain was seeping through my bag where I had the books for the children. I was looking around for a shelter, when I heard somebody calling me. It was Aling Yoning. She invited me to enter her place. Inside there were three women, including herself, and five children. They were her relatives who took care of her.

I was already half wet when I rushed into the place. I did not know what to do, when she offered me a torn blanket to dry myself. I took the blanket from her and, instead of using it for myself, I used it for the books which were already wet. When I realized what I was doing, I felt ashamed of myself. How, despite her generosity, could I do that? I used the same blanket, then, to wipe my wet face, hoping that she did not notice my hesitation. I saw her smiling at me and saying, "Don't be afraid, Brother. It is clean."

Not knowing what to say because of my embarrassment, I immediately changed the subject of conversation by asking her about her health. She said that it was getting worse every day. She was counting her days. I was impressed by the way she described her condition. I did not notice any sadness in her voice. At the beginning, I thought that she was trying to cover up her feelings. But after a while, I found that her words flowed from a deep inner peace. She had accepted her suffering long before she knew that she was going to die.

The rain continued to pour down for more than an hour. Thunderstorms rumbled from a distance and the wind started to blow wildly. I heard people from the neighbourhood passing the news from the radio that a storm was going to hit Manila. Signal number one had already been announced. I was a little bit desperate, because it was impossible to go on with the street library, but I could not get home either. I was thinking of leaving the books with them and going home, using the plastic mat to protect myself from the rain, when I saw a lightning bolt hit the statue of an angel on top of the tomb outside. Everybody was screaming when the statue fell down to the ground with broken wings.

Suddenly, a strong wind came in our direction, carrying a downpour. The water gushed in under high pressure as if from a huge burst water main. Everybody jumped to avoid the blow, except Aling Yoning who could not move from her bed. Spontaneously, I leapt up to protect her with

my body. I felt the water hit my back and wet me all over. The children burst into laughter, looking at my condition, and I could not help but laugh also. For a moment, we felt relieved.

We moved to the corner of the tomb, the only place that was still dry. The wind and the rain were still entering through the open entrance to the tomb. I tried to block it shut with whatever I could find around, including the plastic mat. Then I joined them, sitting silently in the corner. We were crammed in there like dried fish. I took one of the children onto my lap. She was shivering with cold. I hugged her tightly. Feeling comfortable, she fell asleep immediately. I looked at her small face and wondered what her future would be. I could not understand why life was so cruel to this innocent child.

Aling Yoning seemed to have read my mind. She told me that she was about this little girl's age when she came here to Manila with her father and two sisters. After the death of her mother, her father had sold the land they owned in the province because there was only poverty there, and moved to Manila to look for a better future. Her father worked hard as a janitor in a Chinese restaurant to earn their daily living, while using the money he got from selling the land for his children's education. Aling Yoning being the eldest was able to finish high school. She wanted to continue to study in college, but she could not, because her father fell into illness. He got tuberculosis. They spent all the money left to cure him. They had to sell their properties one by one, until everything was gone. Finally her father died, and he left them with nothing. Aling Yoning now had to work to support herself and her two sisters. She did as many things as she could: washing clothes for other families, arranging flowers for burials, cleaning the tombs, etc. She was able to save money to pay the debts and support the education of her two sisters. One of them married a caretaker from the same cemetery, the other married a police officer. She lived quite a decent life.

Another thunderstorm came and interrupted her story. Rolls of thunder lasted over a full minute each. A moment of silence followed. I looked at her face. She seemed to be absorbed with her thoughts. I wondered what was on her mind. I broke the silence by asking whether her sister knew her situation and was willing to help her out of this place. She said that her sister died in an accident a few years ago. Aling Yoning had gone to stay with some of her nephews who were quite well-to-do. At first they accepted her willingly but, after a while, they treated her as if she were their house-maid. That was why she decided to come back to this cemetery, to live on her own in poverty, but the people around respected her.

She took some photos out of the bag which she used as a pillow and showed them to me. "These are the pictures of my nephews and their families. Before, I hung them on the wall under that cross," she said, pointing to a big cement cross on the wall. "But I took them down because I could not forget the humiliating way they treated me."

I looked at the photos, taken at Christmas some years back. In one of them I saw her playing with Christmas decorations with some small children. I asked who they were. She did not answer my question, but looked silently at the picture. I saw a flash in her eyes and could guess that the scene brought back some sweet memories. Suddenly she said to me, "I miss them very much. They are the children of one of my nephews. If only I could forgive their parents...." I heard her sigh. She continued, "They came here once and asked me to go back to their home, but I refused." After saying that, she closed her eyes. It seemed to me that she did not want to converse any more.

The storm had been going on for more than two hours. There was no more thunder, but the wind and the rain were still quite strong. It was lunch time. I saw the two women begin to prepare food. They had rice and bagoong² for their lunch. I could see that the food was just enough for them. So, before they invited me to join them, which they would certainly do, I told them that I was fine as I had brought a lunch-bag with me. I took out some sandwiches. But having lost my appetite, I gave them to the children, who were very delighted to accept. I took only one piece and mixed it with the bagoong which they eventually offered me.

We talked about different ways of cooking, some I knew from my culture, and they told me about some Philippine dishes. It was interesting to know that there were similarities in our traditional ways of preparing food. Another hour passed and it was calm now. Sometimes the wind blew abruptly, but it rained no more. I decided to take the chance of going home before another downpour came. I left their place after saying a little prayer for Aling Yoning.

On the way back, I saw some children playing with water. They filled water into plastic bags and threw them at their playmates. It was fun but it got a bit rough. I heard them calling my name. I just smiled at them and waved from a distance. Some people were repairing their huts that had been damaged by the first blow of the storm. I said 'hello' to the ones I knew. I laughed at their joke that a demolition would be worse than this storm.

When sitting in the jeepney I could not stop thinking about Aling Yoning. Her last words kept echoing in my ears, "If only I could forgive their parents...." I begged God to give her a last chance, to heal her wounded heart, before she closed her eyes eternally. Suddenly, I felt exhausted and fell asleep.

About a month later, Johanna and I visited Aling Yoning again. It was my last visit to her. Unfortunately, we could not speak with her because she was sleeping when we came. I saw her bed was in the same place as a month before. She was lying there, her face bathed in sweat because of the summer heat. When I looked around, I noticed something different. Below the cement cross, I saw the pictures of her nephews hanging nicely on the wall.

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² Bagoong is a local Filipino food, made of dried shrimps. It is spicy and tastes very salty.

The ZAIRE WE WANT: A PROPOSAL for SOCIETY

Muhigirwa Ferdinand, S.J.

A year ago the Research Centre for Social Action (CEPAS) in Kinshasa published a booklet, *Le Zaïre que nous voulons: Un projet de société*.¹ Jesuits working in the social apostolate in the Province of Central Africa (PAC) met in May 1992 and expressed the need for such a brochure which would make a proposal for society. They wanted a text in popular form to serve as an educational tool for democracy in various sectors of our society. Drawn up by a reflection group of three Jesuits and eight lay colleagues, the booklet is thus fruit of the close collaboration between Jesuits and lay people to which the preparatory documents for GC 34 invite us.

In our day, both the Church and the Society are now summoning us with a new urgency to creative companionship with lay people. The ever more complex challenges of evangelization in the changing world situation call the Society to respond as effectively as we can.²

The brochure contains three main parts: basic values, social actors, and strategies. But first, what is this **proposal for society**?

We want Zaire to inaugurate the rule of law whereby fundamental rights and liberties are respected and protected. We want a State wherein those entrusted with power, authority or arms use them only to protect freedom, to promote peace, and to guarantee security and justice for all. A society whose economic life is channelled toward the well-being of all. A society where each one can participate more and more actively and freely in the national life. A society in which everything good and authentic in our cultural traditions may be preserved and developed while opening ourselves to universal values. In this new society, people's religious sense would serve to ground a greater morality and solidarity among all the children of God.

This proposal for society is organized around **fundamental values** such as respect for the rights and liberties of individuals and of peoples, democracy, care for the common good, awareness of individual and collective responsibility, the well-being of the population, honesty, creativity, solidarity, procreation, etc. These fundamental values are only realized within society under two conditions: first, the establishment of institutions which assure as much as possible everyone's responsible participation and control over leaders with a view to the common good; secondly, the effective change of attitudes formed by decades of colonial or autocratic rule.

Attention then turns to the various **social actors** and institutions which will play a decisive role in building this new society. We are chiefly concerned with the individual person, civil society,

¹ *Le Zaïre que nous voulons: Un projet de société*, Éditions du CEPAS, Kinshasa, October 1993, 52 pages. To request it, write to Richard Erpicum, S.J., Director of CEPAS-Kinshasa, c/o Chaussée de Hacht 8, 1030 Brussels (Belgium).

² *The Jesuits: Towards GC 34*, CIS 75 (1994), 92. See especially pages 92-107.

the State in its multiple components, various organizations like political parties, non-governmental organizations (NGO), religious groups of different denominations, and trade unions.

Finally there's the question of the **strategies** to be implemented by the social actors and institutions. In the political and juridical realms, we must plan for interdependent legislative, executive and judiciary branches within a democratic state; rethink housing policy; reorganize the public registers of property; and inform people of their rights and obligations in the ownership of land. In the economic realm, we must establish a dynamic local economy adapted to our needs; restore the system of banking, savings, credit, and commerce; promote self-sufficiency in food; and assure a just distribution of the national revenue.

In the social field, we must review educational programmes in terms of the country's development; repair the infrastructure of roads, schools and hospitals; and develop vital associations (NGOs and unions). In the cultural realm, we must preserve our culture, African values of solidarity, procreation, and love of the sacred, while opening ourselves to the universal, for only development which begins with a people's own culture makes for their real progress. In the religious area, we must rethink religion as the deep and inspiring source of our commitment to integral human development.

As a result of this reflection, certain questions are posed at the end of the booklet, inviting individuals and groups to reflect together and consider how they can contribute to the building of such a new society. Thus the brochure is an example of the "close collaboration with the laity" which we consider a necessary prerequisite for the credibility of our apostolic mission.³

It is in this perspective that the apostolic plan of the PAC invites Jesuits to

direct all their activities (in houses of formation, high schools, parishes, retreat houses and social projects) in such a way that they contribute at once to proclaiming the Good News and to human development; the latter in turn requires the promotion of justice in social relations and a promotion of values proper to each culture.

This statement of the PAC also seems valid for the other Provinces and Regions of the African Assistancy. In the various Provinces and Regions, it is a matter in our opinion of helping the social actors themselves to take charge of their progress, to create institutions and elaborate action-strategies so that social structures better meet the demands of human dignity and development.

For the apostolic body of the Society of Jesus, this booklet reminds us of the modern expression of our mission, "the struggle for faith and that struggle for justice which it includes."⁴ The social justice we are seeking is surely "part of that justice of the Gospel" which is somehow "the embodiment of God's love and saving mercy."⁵

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³ GC 34, D.1, n° 47.

⁴ GC 32, D.2, n° 2.

⁵ GC 33, D.1, n° 32 (see GC 32, D.4, n° 18).

LETTERS and COMMENTARIES

In reading your recent *Promotio Justitiae*, first of all I was impressed with the content, and second I realized what a revolution the Society is working. It is, maybe, the main thing going on in the Church in this century. And we still have such a deficient theoretical base for it. (When I read Bob Doran, S.J., I see that he has his hands on it, but I suspect it will take fifty years before what he has can be expressed in intelligible ways.) And of course the Jesuits, with Jesuit educations, move easily in theory, but only with difficulty treat on other bases.

Father Kolvenbach's observation — that you have to give **yourself** to the issue, not just your ideas or gifts¹ — revived in my mind the question of religious life. This is what it is about: giving oneself, i.e. one's body, to one's beliefs about the power and love of God. What is needed is a redefinition of the vow of poverty. Pretending to be poor is no way to give **oneself** to social justice. This touches on the financial structure of religious orders, the structure of religious formation, the educational principles, etc. Immediately a debate starts in my head which would take pages to lay out, and which doubtless would badly express what you have been wrestling with for years. I will only suggest that the end result of practising poverty should not be either suffering or powerlessness (as I confess I have thought for most of my life), but rather it would be significant wealth and power, all of which really and demonstrably comes from Godwardness and is used in dependence on God. That is an ideal which one could respect.

In North America it sometimes looks as if the Church here is going down the tubes. But then, when you look at other competing institutions,... In any case, I am much heartened to find you functioning as you are.

Lots of good stuff in *PJ* n° 54 (February 1994), which I made more of an effort to read than others and really enjoyed. Overall, I assume that the volume and quality of responses would reassure you that you are helping a worthwhile reflection take place within the Society.

Gabino Urzbarri: **very** interesting. Would others agree with his emphasis on mysticism of mission, beyond mission itself? (The reference to young people in l'Arche communities drove the point home.)

Vladimir Šatura: I liked the beginning but got annoyed by the end. I found myself agreeing that some of the preparatory material for GC 34 did contain everything under the sun, with no hint of priorities. But I thought that it was intended as an inclusive checklist, on which basis members would debate priorities. Anyway, Fr. Šatura's first two points bit the bullet; he really argued for the environment and marriage/family themes as priorities. Then he started wandering, like a politician wanting something for everyone in his platform. It's not that I disagree with "conscience and faith are important", but the analysis was so much weaker towards the end.

¹ "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." (*PJ* n° 51, May 1993).

I had trouble with how Frs. Šatura and Agacino used 'sociological'. I suppose it means a social-science analysis devoid of particular religious or spiritual perspective.

Something occurred to me about poverty in connection with several of the pieces, particularly that of Daniel María Agacino, S.J. I think of poverty in terms of powerlessness. This can be voluntary: a vow of poverty (such vows, however, tend to be about material possessions, not about the exercise of power). It can of course be involuntary. The main point is to make **material** considerations secondary in defining poverty, secondary to **personal control over the things that matter** to oneself, and also secondary to the degree to which one's environment **guarantees** a supply of the things that matter (thus, subjective and objective sides of the coin).

For example, I found our pastor a few years ago to be actively and oppressively 'rich' because he insisted that his aesthetic preferences, and his alone, be followed in decorating the church for feast days. He exercised full control over what mattered to him; he did not even share power, let alone wash feet, i.e. serve others who decided. The other side of the coin: his roof, his larder, his medical needs and his pension were all guaranteed.

And I've found, in materially rich families, full-fledged members who are utterly poor people.

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I have worked in Madagascar for over 32 years as an agricultural development technician. The preparatory tabloids for GC 34 moved me to send my opinion, but I didn't have time. Stuck in Tananarive until Easter because of a gasoline shortage (result of cyclone Geraldo), I take advantage to send my opinion about several points which seem important, though one is always a poor judge in one's own case. Please note that we have neither fax nor electronic mail. We belong to the poor Third World which is becoming poorer still.

Thank you for producing the chart, "Where in the World are We?" (*PJ* n° 54). It obviously involved a lot of work, but it is very instructive. In the list of countries with high human development, I see only Costa Rica, Singapore, Venezuela and Mexico (along with Australia, of course, but how much of it is really inhabited?) which are entirely or largely located within the tropics. In the second group, only Mauritius and Algeria (with South Africa, but what does its ranking mean?) which belong to Africa. In the third group is the vast majority of African countries.

For a long time I've thought that the Third World, which is one reality, should be divided into four groups which have little in common with each other: Latin America, where the colonizers have been decolonialized, but never the truly colonized; Central and South Asia with millennial civilizations and great densities of population; the countries of Islam, with a subgroup of petroleum-producing countries; and black Africa which is sinking in inextricable problems. A delegate to a previous General Congregation shared with me his surprise that Jesuits from these three Third Worlds (omitting Islam, of course) had practically no problems in common other than those of the Society as a whole.

But it's above all the Society which is of interest here. I am looking at Province catalogues from the African Assistancy. In the Province of West Africa (AOC), out of 171 Jesuits, I find about thirty who work in or for the rural world. In the Province of Madagascar (MDG), out of 251, I find more than fifty. In the latter country, the rural area represents 80% of the population, but the Society dedicates only 20% or less of its personnel to it.

Personally, my work here brings me to distinguish, within the countries of the African Third World (I know too little about the others to talk about them), the part of the population which still belongs to "traditional rural civilization" from the part which already belongs to "industrial civilization."¹ If one takes the 4 or 5 billion people who populate the earth, how many belong to the first category and how many to the second? Fr. Šatura (*PJ* n° 54) complains that the preparatory essay is exclusively sociological. What proportion of that text applies to the Third World, even if not exclusively? Maybe 5 per cent. At a Provincial Congregation I once presented a postulate asking the General Congregation, when legislating, to keep in mind that its legislation should be equally applicable to the Third World.

The following reflection applies, not only to the Society, but to the whole Church. As a test of the Church's interest in the rural development of the Third World — what is necessary so that the growing populations can "live," have something to eat with sufficiently balanced nutrition and can develop intellectually and morally —, I propose to compare that sector with the health sector. Does the Church dedicate as much personnel and money, in a country as a whole, to "teach the people to live" (this can take years) as to "prevent them from dying" (where often enough, a few injections or pills are enough)?

In April 1993, a meeting took place in Cameroon of those responsible for social action from the various Provinces of the African Assistancy. Certainly many excellent things were said, but I searched the final report in vain for something showing concern for the problem of the clash of civilizations and the considerable upheavals caused to the average budget of rural peoples while year by year the population growth reduces the possibilities of income.

The average Jesuit, is he not the image of the intelligentsia of good will of his country? So if he doesn't think about this, even less will the government and polite society bother themselves about it. One will make huge efforts for the slums and the malnourished and unemployed urban masses. This will serve as a cover for letting the human situation of rural people deteriorate, those who constitute the inexhaustible reservoir which feeds the same slums.

If one reviews the collection of *Promotio Justitiae* since the beginning, it is the social Centres of the North which have supplied the great majority of articles. The social problems of the South, perhaps with the exception of the Philippines, have not taken a place proportional to the human masses involved, far from it. Fr Šatura talks about problems of the environment, marriage, conscience and faith. He is right, but is there a solution if one does not take up the problems at their root? What chance does a marriage have of succeeding if there has been no formation at the beginning? Is it easier to form conscience at thirty years of age or to form it before adolescence? Can one hope that the environment will be respected if one has never

¹ See my "Lo sviluppo agricolo del Terzo Mondo visto attraverso 25 anni di attività nel Madagascar," *Civiltà Cattolica* 3331 (1 April 1989), 17-30, and "Note sul sistema di risicoltura intensiva in Madagascar," *Civiltà Cattolica* 3413 (5 September 1992), 403-16.

spoken about it to school-age children? And should one not raise, then, the question of the formation provided in many seminaries and scholasticates?

I end these reflections, already too long, with a problem which I cannot recall having seen mentioned in *Promotio Justitiae*. It is that of **paternalism**. The more one has to do with the popular masses, the greater the danger for us. Are we not at the same time the teachers and the formers, the providers of alms, of food, of work, the counsellors who know, who can provide solutions, etc.? And even without realizing it, one resolves, one decides, one gives orders when facing people who too often ask only this, because of their inferiority complex, out of fear of responsibilities, in order not to risk being criticized by others. Instead of educating, one does counter-education, instead of forming adults, one infantilizes the people, instead of teaching them to reflect, one alienates.

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There are a couple of ideas stimulated by the particularly thought-provoking issue n° 56 of *Promotio Justitiae*. I found Prof. Ricoeur's description of the Society as "one of the rare places where a global vision can prevail and therefore where intense — because invalid — contradictions to the vision can be clarified" striking a most meaningful chord in my own experience.

There seem to be far too few places in ordinary society where one can find an atmosphere of objectivity such as we usually can in the Society. Sad to say, however, even in the communities of the Society, emotional reaction to various issues often rules. Still, the Society is one those "rare places," as Ricoeur put it, "where a global vision can prevail." This is true.

We have a strength in the Society that is tremendous — at least potentially tremendous — if we only consider the international nature of the Society, which we too often do not sufficiently appreciate. Maybe it is more accurate to say that what we have is often more potential than actual.

This may seem to be stretching it, but our situation is somewhat parallel to Catholic universities — consider their number world-wide, there is no other network quite like it. Yet cooperation is often more potential than actual. We Jesuits in many ways also make up what is too often a potential, but undeveloped, network.

Ricoeur's brief description is a reminder to me of what we in the Society already have and the direction in which we need to still make progress. Thanks for a most stimulating issue of *PJ*.

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REPORT on the PROMOTION of JUSTICE

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Prepared by the Secretary for Social Justice, this report was presented at the Curia staff retreat or *tempo forte* in May 1994, as a contribution to the report on the state of the Society, *De statu Societatis*, to be drawn up at the General Congregation.

1) The mission of the Society and the promotion of justice

There is a complex relationship between the mission of the Society, as defined by Decree 4 in 1975, and the social apostolate which predated GC 32, which is variously called social action, social ministries, or the work of social justice, and which includes a full range of ministries: direct accompaniment and pastoral involvement, relief work and development projects, worker priests and social work, training programmes, social research, and intellectual work.

After GC 32 both the overall mission and the social ministries suffered conflicts and polarization that lasted, in some cases, for years. The difficulties had many bases, including ideology and theory, and reviewing them may still yield important insights for the future.

The Society has undergone considerable *metanoia*, and the conflicts have largely passed away. We have gained a better and deeper understanding of our mission, the full proclamation of faith in Christ with all its consequences for human life in the world today. Broad consensus 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, and to employ justice as a criterion for evaluating every undertaking as apostolic or anti-evangelical.

The basic intuition is leading Jesuits generally to welcome the assistance of colleagues from the social sector, something which happened rarely only a few years ago. But an air of weariness also obtains, cynicism occasionally and apathy, and mainly a practical uncertainty: many do not see how to incorporate an essential dimension, the promotion of justice, within the existing ministries of the Society. While ascertaining why this is so, we surely need to develop useful paradigms, concrete ways and means, and make these widely available. Given the much changed and rapidly changing context in both the world and the Church, a thorough re-assessment, self-critique, re-thinking is in any case very necessary regarding both the social dimension of the Society's mission and the social sector as such.

Perhaps the single most important contribution which the social sector can make, during the coming decade, is to help the Society learn to read the signs of the times. This begins with asking how the new circumstances of the 1990s and the second phase of Vatican II affect the mission and life of the Society. It includes the development of suitable tools of **social and cultural analysis**, apostolic evaluation and planning — for the various apostolates of the Society, and for other ministries in the Church.

Our own shortcomings in implementing our mission, along with many obstacles now frustrating the work which were unimaginable in 1975, may tempt some to give up trying to express the Gospel in greater social justice and transformed social structures. Similar and/or complementary expressions like 'integral evangelization', 'preferential option' or 'preferential love', and complementary dimensions like **inculturation** and **dialogue**, are ways of deepening and

strengthening our mission (not of leaving behind the challenges of social injustice); but here we need more systematic as well as practical understanding.

2) Renewal of the Social Apostolate

It is very helpful for each Province to have an active social-action or social-justice **Coordinator**, who looks out for the social dimension of the whole mission as well as cares for the works and workers within the social sector. Similarly, a functioning pluralistic **social justice committee** at the Province level is of great value. Thirdly, a **Jesuit centre** for social research, training and action can provide enormous service, not only to God's people generally, but also to the Province and Assistancy and even beyond (some 65 centres have been identified around the world).

Within the social sector, those who directly accompany or serve the poor, and those who do research, develop alternative policies, or promote structural changes, need to learn to cooperate better. This "**vertical**" **cooperation** between the various types or levels of social apostolate serves to critique and mutually reinforce each kind of undertaking.

At the explicitly socio-economic level, everyone notes the terrible dearth of practical solutions today. Jesuits have much to offer in developing viable **alternatives** to the current economic and social impasse. We also need to pool experience and expertise in order to help face the full range of threats to life, widespread corruption, human rights violations, the arrival of migrants and refugees, challenges of cultural and ethnic diversity.

The Society's many social justice projects need to work in a more interdisciplinary fashion. They should increasingly manifest all the apostolic dimensions typical of the Society, such as formal and informal education, communications media, theological reflection and Spiritual Exercises. This "**horizontal**" **cooperation** with other Jesuit ministries would help the works of social justice to become better integrated within the Province, develop better relations within the Church, and contribute more to both early and ongoing formation.

3) Activities of the Social Justice Secretariat (SJS)

The dominant theme, over the past two-and-a-half years, has been the preparation for the General Congregation. Planning and producing the Essays/Tabloids involved broad review, inquiry, consultation and reflection. This effort surpasses the **re-thinking** which SJS seemed obliged to undertake in any case at the beginning of the 1990s.

There have been eight issues of the bulletin *Promotio Justitiae: Exchanges* since the beginning of 1992, with a run of some 3,000 copies in three languages. *PJ* has sought to explore ideas and concerns both within the social sector ("vertically") and across apostolic lines ("horizontally"). It has also tried to contribute explicitly to apostolic reflection in preparation for GC 34.

The SJS has encouraged, facilitated or organized several **international** Jesuit initiatives. The most ambitious was the Workshop on the Native Apostolate, held at Anishinabe (Canada) in October 1993.¹ Another was the consultation amongst Jesuits involved in demography, at

¹ *Wassean-Danda* "new light for our eyes," was the name of the workshop and is the title of the conference proceedings published in English only, available by writing to Anishinabe Spiritual Centre, P.O.Box 665, Espanola, Ontario, Canada, P0P 1C0. Remittance of US\$ 5 per copy to cover costs would be appreciated, but is not necessary if onerous.

Ludwigshafen (Germany) in February 1994. Three Jesuits were found to help in South Africa during the weeks/months leading up to the April 1994 elections. JRS and SJS have been cooperating, recently, in sending out information on Rwanda and Burundi.

The SJS has helped to organize the presence of Jesuits at several **United Nations** conferences: at Rio de Janeiro on the environment (1992), at Vienna on human rights (1993), at Cairo on population (1994), and at Copenhagen on social development (1995). Jesuits attend as journalists representing a Jesuit review, or with the credentials of the SJS or another non-governmental organization. They try to meet regularly for reflection, sharing and prayer. Such international conferences, together with their preparatory meetings, are a valuable opportunity for us both to learn and contribute, make important contacts, and help inform our various publics, for example, by writing about each conference in a Jesuit review.

Having as director of the Human Rights Institute (IDHUCA) become involved in the U.N. peace process in El Salvador (1990-91), I served on a U.N. mission to Haiti in February 1993 and have attended several U.N.-related meetings on practical aspects of **human rights**.

The **future work** of the SJS depends, in part, on how the Society wishes to develop its international net-working and communication, and to provide over-sight and stimulus in different social areas in which we are involved around the world: e.g., Jesuits serving amongst aboriginal/indigenous/native/tribal peoples, or those with expertise in demography and population studies, or scientists concerned for ecology.

Since 1992 the name "**Social Justice Secretary**" has been used, first, to express the concern for an essential dimension of the Society's entire mission, as well as for a specific apostolic sector; also, to show availability to all ministries and all Jesuits, not only those in social action; and thirdly, to identify the commitment of the Society in a way that others, even those outside the Church, can readily understand.

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If you are struck by the ideas in an article or commentary, or if you have something to contribute to the themes in *The Jesuits: Towards GC 34*, your brief response is very welcome. To send a letter to *PJ* for inclusion in a future issue, please use the address, fax number or e-mail address on the cover.

The Social Justice Secretariat at the General Curia of the Society of Jesus (Rome) publishes *Promotio Justitiae* in English, French and Spanish. If you are interested in receiving *PJ*, you need only make your request to Father Socius of your Province, while non-Jesuits please send your mailing-address (indicating the language of your choice) to the Editor.

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