EXCHANGES ÉCHANGES INTERCAMBIOS SCAMBI

Nº 76, 2002/1

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Promotio Iustitiae is published by the Social Justice Secretariat at the General Curia of the Society of Jesus (Rome) in English, French, Italian and Spanish, and is printed on totally chlorine-free paper (TCF).

If you would like to receive *PJ*, please send your mailing-address (indicating the language of your choice) to the Editor.

Promotio Iustitiae is also published electronically on the World Wide Web at the address:

www.sjweb.info/sjs/

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Michael Czerny, S.J.
Editor

INTRODUCTION

This issue of *Promotio Iustitiae* begins with good news and an official announcement. The Social Justice Secretary, a position I've held since early 1992, is passing to Father Fernando Franco. Father General writes:

> I am happy to announce the appointment of Father Fernando Franco (Gujarat Province) to succeed Father Michael Czerny (Upper Canada Province) as the Society's fifth Secretary for the Social Apostolate.
>
> Fr. Franco comes to this post as director of research at the Indian Social Institute (New Delhi) since 1999 and as superior of its Jesuit community. In 1981 he completed doctoral studies in economics at the University of Bombay and then taught economics at St. Xavier's College, Ahmedabad (Gujarat), where later he also served as Rector of the College. In 1982 he joined the Behavioural Science Centre, Ahmedabad, and became involved in designing and conducting programmes for rural animators. He has done research on poverty, caste and rural organisations. In 1995 he served as the Gujarat Province's elected delegate to GC 34. I am grateful to the Province and to his Provincial for making Fr. Franco available for this appointment and so supporting the more universal good of the Society.
>
> To Father Czerny I offer sincere gratitude in the name of the whole Society for the generous service he has given during more than ten years, first helping to prepare for the 34th General Congregation and then working hard on the initiative to renew the social apostolate and draft its *Characteristics*. The Naples Congress in 1997 remains a memorable event.
>
> As Social Justice Secretary, Fr. Czerny promoted a steady and crucial refounding of the social apostolate, offering support and guidance to the co-ordinators throughout the Society, and contributed to the progressive implementation of the social dimension of our mission. He assisted several social justice networks to emerge and encouraged young Jesuits interested in this ministry, beginning with the three Italians who have done regency in the Secretariat. While continuing the publication *Promotio Iustitiae*, including the popular *"We live in a broken world"* on ecology, he launched the electronic bulletins *Points* and *Headlines*.
>
> To him our thanks, and to Fr. Franco a warm welcome to Rome in late September. He becomes Social Justice Secretary in this new millennium marked everywhere by acute social tensions and deep structural problems. Born and reared in Spain, formed and practised in the Society in India, he will surely help Jesuits and colleagues in social ministry throughout the world to continue the process of renewal and development well begun. May God bless his work, which will begin officially on 3 December, the feast of St. Francis Xavier.
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> Sincerely in Christ,
>
> On the feast of the Blessed Virgin Mary,
> Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.J. — Mother of the Society of Jesus
> Superior General — Rome, 22 April 2002

To this official announcement I add my own words of thanks to the readers of *Promotio Iustitiae* who, even before the days of internet, have always formed a virtual sort of international community of faith, solidarity and hope. It has always been a privilege (and sometimes a happy burden!) to serve as your editor.

While my personal future remains unclear, I am completely sure that the Lord is already preparing the next phase of my life in the Society, and I put all my trust in Him. During the coming months of transition please keep a special place in your prayers for Fernando, for the Social Secretariat team, and for me. Arrivederci!

Michael Czerny, S.J.
Editor

Historical Origins of our Jesuit Commitment to Justice[1]

Paschal Mwijage, S.J.

Speaking to the International Congress of the Jesuit Social Apostolate at Naples on 20 June 1997, Father General Peter-Hans Kolvenbach reminded the Congress that "Ignatius and the first companions heard the cry of the poor in an entirely natural and, of course, spiritual way. They could not have imagined introducing themselves as companions of Jesus without assuming his preferential love for the poor." For instance, Father Kolvenbach pointed out that the three companions

> Jean-François Regis, José de Anchieta and Peter Canisius, while exceptional apostles, were also quite naturally inserted in the wretched situation of the poor of their day. These three did not act only out of the kindness of charity, freely distributing alms upon direct contact with misery; they also intervened at a social level by organising welfare and employment, by setting up associations to defend the poor and by getting involved in economic questions or in discussions about the right to take interest on capital.[2]

A Return to the Sources: Looking to St. Ignatius

Once the Society of Jesus was founded, Ignatius and his first companions laboured to bring material and spiritual relief to a large number of needy people, especially in Rome. When Ignatius became General, he never surrendered his concern for the works of direct apostolate. Even when his companions were leaving Rome, sent out on various missions by the Pope, for him the field of direct apostolate was in Rome. Cándido de Dalmases, S.J., remarks, "One can hardly think of any apostolic enterprise, either in the religious or in the social plane, in which Ignatius did not work zealously and with self-abnegation."[3]

However, whenever we look to Ignatius and his first companions for the historical origins of our Jesuit commitment to justice, we ought to go beyond and discover that they did not only insert themselves in the wretched situation of the poor of their day, nor did they act only out of the kindness of a charity inspired by direct contact with people's misery; Ignatius and his first companions were also directly or indirectly involved at a social level by making every effort to obtain for the marginalized, the oppressed and the exploited groups a more just treatment at the hands of social justice.

Some evidence can be traced in the works in which Ignatius participated. For instance, during his time, the Jews in Rome were subjected to injustice in such a way that, at the moment of baptism, they were required to renounce all their goods and turn them over to the official treasury as a sign of their total break with the past. "This practice was that Jews who became converts had what goods they previously possessed confiscated and their children declared

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[1] This brief study of the historical origins of our Jesuit commitment to justice, originally published in *Jesuits of Eastern Africa* (December 2000), is limited to the time of Ignatius and the first companions.

[2] See Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.J., "A paschal love for the world," *Promotio Iustitiae* 68 (September 1997), 95-103.

[3] Cándido de Dalmases, S.J., *Ignatius of Loyola: Founder of the Jesuits, His Life and Work*, St Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1985, p. 179.

disinherited."[4] Such exploitation made conversions difficult or altogether prevented them; it was also legalised robbery. "Ignatius worked, appealed, moved influential persons and succeeded on March 21, 1542 in getting Pope Paul III to issue the Brief *Cupientes Judaeos*, which allowed baptised Jews to retain their possessions."[5] This long-standing, unjust practice, already condemned by Popes Nicholas III in 1278 and John XXII in 1320, was now forbidden anew. Obviously, this new measure enabled the Jews to make their way to conversion with less difficulty.

Another move made by Ignatius to obtain justice for the poor concerned beggary, which had been banned in Rome. It was a social scourge in which authentic needs were mixed up with swindling. But this indiscriminate ban had succeeded in aggravating the plight of the truly poor, since obviously in those days there was no social welfare. As a result, the poor, the sick, the old and the crippled filled the streets of Rome. Ignatius helped those whom he could. But for Ignatius, this work of charity was not sufficient. He went beyond the works of charity and used his influence to obtain from the Pope the Brief *Dudum per Nos* (1542). This moderated the ban and established the Society of the Orphans, which became responsible for the poor who were sick or crippled.[6]

We also know how Ignatius worked hard to check the evil of prostitution. In the city of Rome, the courtesans as a class were exploited, maintained and despised. To them, Ignatius not only directed his charity, but also struggled hard to free them as a group from the unjust structure that oppressed and discriminated against them. There were already institutions that were helping them. But it was unjust that such institutions accepted only those who agreed to spend the rest of their lives as penitents in a religious order or those who intended to take religious vows. Consequently these institutions did not meet all the needs because they basically served only single women. Ignatius founded the centre of St. Martha, to which he admitted those who wished to enter religion as penitents and also others, such as married women who had been divorced and unmarried ones who wished to get married.[7]

John O'Malley, S.J., tells us that in the l6th century prisoners throughout Europe fell into two categories: debtors and persons awaiting sentence or execution. In Rome after about 1550 over half of those detained were debtors from the poorer classes, even though the upper classes were also heavily in debt.[8] In Venice, Rome and elsewhere, long delays for trial or sentence, inefficiency, and the corruption of officials received attention from governments and from religious activists. This situation explains the character of Jesuit social involvement with the prisoners. They did not act only out of kindness by preaching and teaching them catechism, by hearing their confession, and bringing them food or begging alms for them; they also got involved at a social level by trying to intervene and free them. For instance, Jesuits' efforts in Italy and Spain were directed toward freeing debtors by begging alms to pay off their creditors or by dealing directly with creditors themselves.

Sometimes they successfully intervened to have the sentences of convicted criminals mitigated; and on a few occasions they got the death penalty suspended and the prisoners

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[4] Dalmases, *Ignatius*, p. 180.
[5] See Pedro Arrupe, S.J., *Rooted and Grounded in Love*, n. 39; Cándido de Dalmases, S.J. *Ignatius*, p. 180; John W. O'Malley, S.J., *The First Jesuits*, Cambridge/London: Harvard University Press, 1994, pp. 188-92.
[6] See Arrupe, *Rooted*, n. 39.
[7] See Arrupe, *Rooted,* n. 40; Dalmases, *Ignatius,* pp. 181-2; O'Malley, *The First Jesuits,* pp. 178-85.
[8] See O'Malley, *The First Jesuits,* p. 173.

freed, as with a woman condemned to capital punishment for adultery in Valladolid in 1551.[9] However, O'Malley admits that Jesuits had no plan for reform of the system because "prison reform" was just as difficult to effect in the 16th century as it is today.

Provisional Conclusion

We may conclude then, provisionally, that for Ignatius charity on a personal basis is not enough. For him charity has a social dimension, deriving not only from the universality of charity but also from man's condition. Thus, Ignatius' faith, informed by charity, led him to struggle for justice for the oppressed Jews, the beggars and the courtesans. Ignatian spirituality in that sense could be described as "the performative approach to faith."[10] This practical conduct of Ignatius in this matter of the inseparable link between faith and charity is of a decisive value for us Jesuits because it reflects the mission and the chief purpose of the Society of Jesus today, in that the Society should strive not only for its own salvation and perfection but for that of its neighbour as well, aiming at the defence and spread of faith and the progress of souls in the Christian life (*Formula of the Institute*). Now we must ask ourselves, what Ignatius meant when he set as the main mission for the Society the defence and propagation of faith, and what is the nature of the faith that Ignatius wanted us to defend and propagate? And what did he mean by promotion of Christian life and principles?

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[9] *Ibid*., p. 174.
[10] See Avery Dulles, S.J., "Faith in Relation to Justice," in John C. Haughey, S.J., ed., *The Faith that Does Justice: Examining the Christian Sources for Social Change*, New York /Toronto: Paulist Press, 1977, pp. 32-34.

"Pray for peace in Jerusalem" (Ps 122,6)

A Message of Men and Women Religious in the Holy Land to the Political Leadership in Israel and Palestine

It is our love for this Land and its two peoples that motivates us, men and women religious of the Holy Land, Arabic and Hebrew speakers as well as expatriates, to humbly address this letter to you. We live within the local Christian community that has been in this Land since the beginnings of Christianity. With all our brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ, we seek to follow the path of non-violence that He has taught us. Together, we keep alive the hope that light will indeed triumph over darkness.

We love the Jewish people, their millennia-long history and their monotheistic faith. It is they who have given us the Bible and with it the firm conviction regarding the unique dignity of each and every human person, created in the image of God. We totally reject every form of anti-Semitism.

We love our Muslim brothers and sisters, who worship the One, Almighty and Merciful God and refer regularly to Abraham, our father in faith. Together we work to build up respectful dialogue with all the children of Abraham.

Concretely, we give expression to our love for the two peoples of this Land and our solidarity with the local Churches through our social, medical, educational and charitable institutions. We wish to constitute a bridge between the two peoples in order to promote justice, peace and reconciliation. Constant prayer for peace and the well-being of all occupies a central place in our religious vocation.

Due to the ancient and strong ties that link these two peoples to the same Land, we see no other solution than sharing and collaboration. For love of Israel and for love of Palestine, we join our voices to those of the entire world, crying out: Stop this war! This is a cry of the love that drives us. Violence will not halt violence. Only peace can give security to all.

There is no peace without justice; there is no reconciliation without mutual forgiveness. His Holiness Pope John Paul II has reminded us of that in his message for the World Peace Day, at the beginning of this year. The terrible sufferings that have afflicted this Land and all its inhabitants remind us of the urgency to build peace together. Relying on Scripture, we know that the suffering of the Servant will bring healing for the whole world (Isaiah 53,5).

We pray that the prophecy of Isaiah will be realised, that nations will no longer lift up the sword against each other and that they will no longer practise the art of war. House of Jacob, come, let us go in the light of the Lord (Isaiah 2,5).

Respectfully,

Men and Women Religious of the Holy Land Friday, April 26, 2002

Contact: Fr. David Neuhaus SJ at +972 2 6241 203 (fax) or <neuhaussj@gmx.net>

"For a Time of Justice"
Sessions of the Social Apostolate

Jean-Noël Audras, S.J.

1. A foundational experience

1.1 A new rapport: Jesuits and friends

We have just lived **a time of grace**, a time of spiritual consolation: a time of fraternal sharing, an experience of a coming together in a common feeling. We came together on the basis of a common desire called *justice*. Jesuits of the Province of France and friends (lay, religious, priests, Jesuits of other provinces) **have been brought together, these three days, in a new rapport.** We have experienced it, we have practised it, it has put us to the test and we have understood it as a call: we must choose to go further together.

About forty lay people and around 110 Jesuits took part in these three days. We Jesuits wanted first of all **to celebrate the fact that we live with you**: living close together in the so-called "difficult" neighbourhoods, working side by side in related fields, in institutions, we sustain each other in the work of bringing hope for the future to the excluded, the sharing of prayer, in the places, the tasks, the very diverse civil and social situations, in an ecclesial, Jesuit, or simply social context, in a large array of responsibilities and types of commitment.

Whether you are religious or lay, young or less young,[1] whether you are professionals or volunteers in the institutions where we are too, whether you be part of large networks with which we hope to work – networks of former students, networks of colleges, networks of lay people's movements – whether you be friends beside us in the cities or in the field of social action, whether you be educators of young people in trouble, or young people well integrated into the country's education system and culture, whether we've known each other for a long time or just briefly, in a long term or a brief collaboration, whether you hold other religious convictions than ours, whether, Jesuits, you are from this Province or another one, we want **to explore with you how to bring about a time of justice**.

The experience of these days, which we have had the joy to share, all of us, is that we live for this time of justice and we are sure that this is our path. There is no other. It is **a road of friendship that is offered us in this mission that brings us together**. The social apostolate, the commitment for a time of justice, is not a side chapel in the mission of the Church. **Living one's faith and engaging for justice**, for one who believes in Jesus Christ the Saviour, can never be separated, **they are one**.

1.2 Each one's place in the mission

We ourselves would like to take some initiatives in this mission. But we are happy that **you are movers in these fields of social action**, that **you call us to collaborate with you**, that you alert us so that we find ourselves bound in a common objective for which you too are fully responsible:

[1] The youngest are the Jesuit European Volunteers (JEV) from the two teams in Bordeaux and Saint-Etienne.

- We did not create the network of Ignatian centres for alternative formation, but we deeply rejoice for their establishment and for what they are accomplishing. We are happy to participate in them.

- We did not create the workshop that supports AFEPT[2] but we rejoice for this initiative that we have helped established, without up till now being able to take advantage of it.

This should be a characteristic of our social apostolate, being **integrated in larger groupings**, Jesuit-connected networks, or simply those of others (ecclesial, social) but to which we are linked. When we reflect on this or that demanding engagement that we wish to undertake because it is a form of engagement for justice, in comes the question as a central element of the discernment of the Province: can this work, this institution **rely upon a responsible person who can sustain it further down the road**, so that we are not the only ones to assume this charge, when we cannot any longer? This would not be realistic, too risky or too heavy for the future for the Province of France, if we want to preserve our mobility and our capacity for initiative. Finally, **close collaboration with others is fruitful for us, as it opens us to other people and other experiences, and I hope it is for you.**

We Jesuits need to be more numerous. Sometimes I say that the number of new novices needs to be in the "double digits" in order for Jesuits to be present in the essential areas, inventing, taking initiatives. However, at the end of this assembly, I can also say: we are not alone. We, that is "you and us," we are together in charge of the future of a time of justice, of the social apostolate and the mission. We religious and you lay people, **we are together the Church, the people of God. Each with a proper place in the unique mission that we are undertaking together**. At this point, I am not worried.

1.3 Deepening our mutual acquaintance and growing in the unity of spirit

I take up here some themes expressed this morning:

- In order for us Jesuits and lay people to live in partnership, we need common references. **We should go as far as sharing our spirituality**; we should share with you what it is that makes us live, what it is that inspires us – Ignatian spirituality is certainly not the preserve of religious or priests! We must find each other at this level of mutual recognition. This requires that Jesuits take the initiative.
- We also need to meet each other in **groups not too large, not too small, in which relationships are possible, relationships of friendship**, so that we can understand each other better and stimulate each other in our specific roles in the common work. These groups, if they come to enjoy sharing their experiences, their questions, the dynamics that they discover, will be able to weave more or less formal networks of exchange.
- Sometimes we work as professionals, sometimes as volunteers. It would be good for us to work together on a **charter of volunteering**, so that we reflect on the framework and the conditions necessary for the work of volunteers, and on ways of evaluating their commitment.

[2] *Association pour la Formation et l'Éducation Permanente à Tivoli.*

2. Some conditions for the commitment of our Province

In this situation of collaboration, it is up to us to **encourage throughout the Province a more clear and resolute dynamic of the social apostolate**.

2.1 Some obvious conditions well-worth recalling:

- In order that the concerns of the poor remain in the forefront of all the actions of the Province, there must be a **sufficient number of Jesuits who live and work full time with the poor**, in order to understand them, to see the world from their point of view and to share it with the rest of the Province. "Full time" means in a pastoral, social, activist role, it is not limited to living where they do. The members of the Province must have the desire to be sent full time to this mission and to this way of life and they must desire it effectively.

- There will be no social apostolate without Jesuits who ask for it and deeply desire it. No future for the social apostolate without **young available Jesuits** who desire to undertake the service of justice. May they be prepared for this! May they have a good capacity to work as a team – teams of Jesuits and Jesuit/lay teams – and in networks (Jesuit or not!). May their desire be welcomed by the body of the Province!

- We need to have a clearer sense of what the social apostolate is in our mission as Province, in the apostolic project of our communities, and for each one of us. On the one hand, **the social apostolate is a dimension of each apostolate**; on the other, **it is accomplished in specific missions on behalf of populations deprived of justice** (young people with no work or hardly any, immigrants and undocumented migrants, prisoners, people marginalized by their lifestyles, gypsies, and so on).

- The social apostolate is also:
  - **putting those whom we meet in our different apostolates in touch with each other**, for example seeing that the "privileged" youth come into contact with the "underprivileged" youth who live near them;
  - **letting others whom we meet in our activities that are not immediately social know of our appreciation for the social apostolate** and what we receive from it.

- We should prepare ourselves to be better **able to collaborate with others**.

2.2 Unity:

Our assembly has clearly shown that **the unity of our apostolates in the service of justice is founded upon the union of men and women sharing this concern, and this is first of all a union of hearts.**

There is no longer any basis for our Jesuit Province's commitment to justice other than the union of us who share this concern.

3. Dynamics at work

The Social Apostolate is **one dimension within the activity and the awareness of each Jesuit, no matter what his apostolate**. As one of us wrote: "May we be men of passion, leaven for justice. May this be and become a characteristic of Jesuits and of their friends, collaborators." We need a great deal of motivation to become engaged with the poor, or to bring this concern to a universe which is far from them and to all-engrossing tasks. The question is: **how can we cultivate and develop this motivation?** The Sessions are the small beginnings of a response, and the social initiatives of the Province[3] are the sign of our desire to respond to **the warning of Father General: do not stay at the level of words; be careful not to regress with regard to the service of justice.**

Still more than in these works, we find encouragement in **the joy received** in the field of the social apostolate:

- **The joy** of those who, engaged in the often trying arena of social action, receive for themselves or given by others, **an unexpected blessing**.

- **The joy** a Jesuit community receives for its own life when it opens itself to a JEV group. It is a sign that, as a body, we can receive by **opening our daily life to others**.

- **The joy** that **the Gospel produces** in neighbourhood groups, among the young and the not-so-young, through new ways of sharing the charism of the Ignatian spiritual experience and pedagogy.

- **The joy of this assembly and what it represents** in terms of commitments, long-term service, collaboration, shared involvement, fellow feeling and friendship.

- The attraction that the communities of Cergy and Saint-Denis have for **young Jesuits** also gives witness to this joy, potentially increasing in the coming years.

Could it be possible, without fanfare or showing off, **to make better known the consolations received** in the life of a neighbourhood, in participating in a small faith community carried on by the local residents, the consolations in a primitive camp for young people of the poor neighbourhood, in the work in an Ignatian network of centres of alternative formation....

4. Resistances

But this engagement runs up against some resistances in us, among them:

- the **fear of not knowing how**, of being in another culture, never being able to find the words;

- the feeling that one has **to be someone a bit exceptional** or have a certain special profile to engage in the social apostolate;

[3] See Jean-Noël Audras, S.J., "Commentary on the Province *Status* 2000-2001," *Promotio Iustitiae* 74 (2001/1).

- a **guilty conscience** (perhaps we say a little too quickly that this is a bad reason for making choices!);

- perhaps also the fact that **for a long time the social apostolate was at least largely if not exclusively identified with such groups** as the *Mission Ouvrière* (Worker Mission) or *Action Populaire*;

- the **difficulty of unifying in our** apostolates the social dimension (justice) and the spiritual dimension (experience of God) and of feeling interiorly this unity;

- without doubt also the **lack of method, of know-how** in this domain of action for justice, while we feel we have more of this in the spiritual domain.

5. How can a community make the choice to get involved and take an initiative in the social apostolate? Here are some **words of advice for communities** who would like to do so:

- First of all, **listen on the basis of where you are**. Try to know our town, our region; a human community with a history, an economic, cultural, associative, political way of doing things, a place where habits and ways of life are fashioned. Take the time to listen, to discover, to let oneself be affected by this life.

- **Identify needs; develop a community project; verify its feasibility**. It is the community that commits itself and delegates this or that member, accompanied and supported by the Province. In this way, the community situates itself not as the sum of individual responses but as a communitarian response to an entire situation.

- **Find partners** and, especially, negotiate with the diocese to include your project in its plans/orientations.

Conclusions

Could we Jesuits **live the social apostolate as a body**, that is, all of us, caring more for this apostolate, engaging in it specifically or through other types of apostolate? **This demands at the same time personal vocations, community decisions, and provincial decisions**. This takes place not only by creating institutions; what is essential is that the mission be lived out in the body, that each profit from what the other experiences, take an interest in it and be supportive.

In the present situation of the sharp decline of religious both in numbers and in their capacity to influence society, we should be engaged in a **diaconal Church** which does not fold in on itself. May our priesthood never be without the diaconate.

Let us seek and ask for the grace that **the dynamic of spiritual experience and the dynamic of social engagement be united in us**. Since Father Pedro Arrupe, Father Peter-Hans Kolvenbach and the recent General Congregations, we have good texts to inspire us.

Let us go further toward establishing **a more explicit partnership among religious congregations** to reflect on our presence in the city outskirts, or in our engagement in the social arena. In this sense, I would rejoice to see organised **a meeting of the communities of religious men and women living in these peripheral neighbourhoods.** May this meeting be a sharing and celebration of everything that each one lives and their joys!

Following this meeting the consultors of the Province will continue their reflection on the social apostolate; they will try to analyse the resistances, and explore how we can come to a greater clarity, so as to respond to the appeal of Father General: to have great ambitions, not retreating to "projects which are more modest and of limited approach."[4] We will do the same in the **animation team for the social apostolate** which I thank very much, as well as the community of Saint-Etienne, for the preparation of these Sessions.

Saint-Etienne, 1 May 2001

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[4] Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.J., *On the Social Apostolate*, Letter to the whole Society of January 24, 2000, *Promotio Iustitiae* 73 (May 2000), 19-24.

"Explaining our own why's"
A Jesuit Vocational Culture (continued)[1]

Miguel Cruzado, S.J.

How fine that *Promotio Iustitiae* carries articles about vocations! One of the most satisfying surprises of my vocational work has been to see that Jesuits involved in the social apostolate are very interested in vocations and support their promotion. This may be because they themselves do not work directly with youth, or because their daily work gives them few opportunities speak explicitly about our spirituality. But I have seen that, given the chance to draw near to young people and share their lives on a spiritual level, they do it very well! They become emotional themselves and enthuse others.

When people experience social service or confront a cultural contrast, this is very commonly when a vocation is born or is strengthened. The testimony of Jesuits, who are fortunate to work in a front-line social apostolate with people in difficult situations, has a great potential for such "vocational disturbance," it seems to me. Despite the boom in communications, internet and the rest, young people these days tend paradoxically to enclose themselves in secure worlds of their own. But if they experience contrast, service or social distress (such that the poor become real people, instead of just typical figures or photographs), and if they are in the company of Jesuits who tell them about themselves, these experiences are very powerful, at least in Peru.

I liked Fr. Uríbarri's "Roots of a Specifically Jesuit Vocational Culture" very much. No doubt, how we live our life and our way of proceeding can attract or discourage vocations. I also think that the original spirit of the Society can be vocationally extremely attractive if we live it, as the text says, with fervour, a sense of the Church, and great hope. No doubt. A Jesuit who lives his vocation with enthusiasm and fidelity is a great promoter of vocations. I have very little to add to that and to the very unfolding of the article. To read it delights me, as it surely does every Jesuit.

Nevertheless, regarding the concern for promoting vocations, I think we still need to take another step. The article lists features of our life and tradition. But not all these features contribute in the same way to "a vocational culture for our time." Vocations are born in concrete and particular eras and contexts. And so there are features which have more of a vocational appeal in different cultures and contexts, and others which have less. Each element or feature is shaped by the culture in which it is lived. For example, devotion to Mary is lived in many ways, with diverse symbolic and iconographic interpretations of the same language.

This does not mean at all that these features are more or less important for us and for our charisma! It only means that some mobilize, generate, or make possible an experience of God which carries one to the vocational concern or question.

What I am saying here is, I do not fundamentally believe in a "Jesuit vocational culture" which is always, universally and of itself an effective cultural medium for vocations. We can

[1] See Gabino Uríbarri, S.J., "Roots of a Specifically Jesuit Vocational Culture," *Promotio Iustitiae* 75 (2001/2), 61-70.

be very faithful to our vocation with all its features and nevertheless not awaken vocations: the problem is not necessarily in us and our fidelity. When I began working in vocations, it surprised me how many analyse and explain the vocational problem by stressing the shortcomings of our witness, as if this went a long way in explaining the lack of vocations. But what my companions are doing I think is admirable! and conversely I have seen that our life with all its shortcomings can be extremely attractive to young people.

Maybe we do not realise that this subtle self-blame is simply immobilising us. "Show me the super-Jesuit, faithful to our original spirit, who is able to attract these apathetic young people?" The problem has to do with us, but it is not in us. In any case, it has less to do with our failures than with which dimensions of our life we present to others, and how we get them across.

To live each of the six aspects or elements mentioned in Fr. Uríbarri's article with "fervour, ecclesial sense and deep hope" is the terrain upon which an awakened vocation can be embraced. But this is not enough to awaken vocations. It is a "base" or "platform" or "terrain" but not what by itself generates and cultivates. It is something like a point "zero," just the starting point.

Although Fr. Uríbarri's text doesn't say much about youth cultures today, it's probably the crux of the issue. It's no more a question of "blaming" the young for the absence of vocations than of blaming the Jesuits, but as vocations always arise within cultures and contexts, one cannot abstract and fix some universal "vocational culture for our times." It is where this or that youth culture meets with the Jesuit culture that that this fertile "cultural medium" for vocations is to be found.

The first step is to identify the features of the local youth culture which we're principally addressing. The second thing is to identify the dimensions of our Jesuit life and tradition that are most likely to connect with and mean something to that culture, motivating young people to come out of themselves and to approach the vocational question. Only after these steps come the promotion strategies and, finally and decisively, their particular aptitudes and the call of the Lord.

It's not a matter of knowing young people in order to see how we can convince them. No. Nor is it a matter of improving our life in order to make it more attractive to them. Not that either. It is a matter of knowing young people and seeing which dimensions of our life can mobilise whatever in them might hook up with our vocation and style of life.

There are dimensions of their culture, however valuable in themselves, which will not connect with our life, and there are dimensions of our tradition and way of proceeding which also won't speak to their vocational quest, however valuable they may be for us – and let's not cease living them. It's simply that these qualities will not be the cultural banner under which to sign up, as Fr Uríbarri himself said in his earlier "Where to join up."[2]

It is a matter of loosening up inertias in ourselves and in the young people. But also and decisively to identifying the synergies of what's Jesuit for this or that youth sub-culture. The question is, what dimensions or features of our life and tradition can also shake inertias loose

[2] Gabino Uríbarri, S.J., "Where to join up," *Promotio Iustitiae* 65 (September 1996), 83-87.

and favour synergies in relation to the vocational question and the possible enthusiasm of following Jesus in this Society.

Despite what I say, it's important to note that this business of "youth cultures" isn't easy to digest and relate to. Youth culture is nearly always by definition
- transitory (to be young is a stage in life, out of which we soon and inevitably emerge);
- weak (gender, social class, locale, etc., generate much stronger identities: it is common to find that a youth and an adult of the same social sector are much more similar than two youths from different social sectors); and
- dependent and heterogeneous. "Youth" is when people configure their identities and, borrowing from here and there, repeat diverse arguments, struggle with contradictory desires, and have a hard time explaining their own why's.

So it is unacceptable and impossible to live with our gaze fixed on young people and continually adapt ourselves to the transitory, weak and dependent elements of youth culture. I think that it is a matter of seeing in the young "whatever in our culture is in process of being forged, shaped, woven, prefigured." The richness of youth cultures is that, through them, we can catch glimpses of how the larger culture is changing direction and reshaping itself. It is to these signs that we should pay attention. And then, like our father Ignatius and the first companions, as we go ahead in our current epoch, may young people see in us, not a mirror image of themselves, but something to which they can aspire and which – even though they don't know it – is already pulsating within them.

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On AIDS in Africa

Joe Arimoso, S.J.

Dark wind howls across
The land pregnant with curses
What wind is this
That brings wayward dirges?

The tender fruit falls
On the ground, premature
And dark wind sweeps it into
The gaping wound of earth
Let branches wave in loneliness
Ancient boulders bear witness
The green land is gone
Scorched with sorrow
Cold mounds sprout
In fields fertile with bones
While renegade souls lie
In helpless quietude
The sorrowful drum
Moans no longer

So when will You deliver
Tormented spirits from
This stranded nightmare?

Bring back receding hope
You who will breathe
Life into the dry bones
Bathe the barren fields
With hallowed fertility
Make lonely branches sway
Heavy with tender fruit
Come at dawn and rebuke
The dark wind of plague
Make haste and reveal Yourself
To the grief-stricken hearts
Embedded in harrowing ebony
Let them be healed
At the touch of Your hidden hand.

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An Ecological and Jesuit Calling

Christoph Albrecht, S.J.

Twelve years ago, in the noviciate at Innsbruck, I learned that one's motivation for entering the Society is a pure one if it originates and develops in the desire to follow Christ.

Nineteen years ago I was an apprentice employed in an electrical appliance workshop and belonged to a youth group in my parish, where we shared our concerns about our own future and that of the world.

During those years I became aware that industrial products do not all contribute to human progress, and that the forests which are necessary for our life are in danger of being destroyed forever. This awareness became very important for the direction of my life. In the youth group, I began to discuss problems for which we are all responsible in this consumer society. In the workshop I began to be sceptical about whatever consumed energy or produced garbage. More and more I asked myself the question: what will I do after my four years of apprenticeship? One thing had become clear: I could not imagine myself working for years in a business that advanced the technological progress of the world without the possibility of doing something else to advance the progress of humanity.

When I was 18, my parents encouraged me to get a driver's license. I turned down their offer as I was convinced that my own life choices could persuade others to adopt a simpler style of life and could offer them concrete challenges in this direction.

Through sharing in the youth group and in meditation groups, the courage and strength to maintain my desire to change the world grew within me. At the same time, I began to see how social injustice fits in and how it is linked with the egoism of those who enjoy privileges.

The tension between a world in which both justice and respect for all creatures reign, on the one hand, and society as I perceived it, on the other, seemed impossible to resolve except in what I knew of Christian faith and hope. St. Francis of Assisi became the great example for me. If I lived the same attitudes as Francis, my life would surely become meaningful; this marked my search for self-fulfilment. I became convinced that I could only encourage people to live a simple, joyful, ecological and socially aware life if I myself lived this simplicity in joy, free of all fear of losing the advantages that a worldly life would bring me.

Fifteen years ago I decided to enter the Franciscans. After a week there, it became clear that it wasn't what I had been looking for. Having begun and completed my training as an electrical engineer, I knew I would never work as an engineer, but I hoped to use this experience in reflecting critically about certain technologies and businesses.

Towards the end of this formation, the great question for me was: in what association could I make the link between a spirituality founded upon Christian hope and a concrete commitment for the environment? – If I joined Greenpeace, for example, I risked remaining isolated in my spiritual concerns. – If I entered a Christian community, I risked not having my ecological concerns understood. I had perceived the incoherence between the freedom that Francis lived and the lifestyle of his order. Then I made an important discovery: the Jesuits' rules are not

fixed once and for all, but can be adapted according to their mission in the world. For them it was a matter of finding the seeds of the Kingdom of God and then collaborating in the transformation of the world.

I had found the group that I was looking for. Since its foundation the fundamental orientation of the Society of Jesus has been the greatest glory of God, to seek and find this in a commitment to the dignity of each human being. The Society of Jesus has principles of openness and freedom rather than rules with no value in themselves. With this freedom to respond to each new historical situation, Jesuits looked like they would be able to respond effectively to ecological challenges, too.

My experience with ecology in the Society of Jesus is marked by two lessons. Firstly, I have companions who make such a sharp distinction between the concern for evangelisation and the respect for nature, that any discussion of ecological problems ends in a polemic against the concern of the "Greens." Secondly, as I became aware of the constitutive relationship between the commitment to faith and the struggle for justice, I learned more about injustice. I discovered that there are social injustices and ecological injustices. And often, perhaps even generally, those who suffer social injustices are also condemned to live in ecologically shameful conditions.

The first lesson causes me sorrow. The second offers me paths to take within the Society's ongoing internal dialogue. GC 34's insistence that it is impossible to separate the four dimensions of the one and only mission:

No service of faith without
- promotion of justice
- entry into cultures
- openness to other religious experiences

No inculturation without
- communicating faith with others
- dialogue with other traditions
- commitment to justice

No promotion of justice without
- communicating faith
- transforming cultures
- collaboration with other traditions

No dialogue without
- sharing faith with others
- evaluating cultures
- concern for justice. (Decree 2, n.19)

This clear realisation encourages me to keep up the dialogue with my community and my Province, and to continue questioning myself about my motives for living as a companion of Jesus. It encourages me to exercise discernment so that my concern for social and ecological justice be purified by my desire to follow Christ, not fanatically or narrow-mindedly but, if necessary, all the way to Calvary.

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BOOK REVIEW:
Civil Society and Poverty

Fernando Franco, S.J.

***Para Combatir la Pobreza la Sociedad Civil se Articula [The Articulation of Civil Society in order to Combat Poverty]*, Santo Domingo: Centro de Estudios Sociales Padre Juan Montalvo SJ, 2000, pp. 308.**[1]

I must confess right at the start how happy I was to be invited to prepare a review of the Spanish book *Para Combatir la Pobreza* for an international audience of Jesuits and their collaborators. The book is, in more ways than one, the result not only of a Seminar held in Santo Domingo from the 18th to the 25th of July 2000 by 61 Jesuits and lay persons from Latin America and the Caribbean engaged in social action, but also a precious instrument to understand the ongoing reflection on new approaches to accompany the poor, and on novel forms of social organisation that have emerged in the continent during the last ten years. The book and the discussions of the Seminar seem to reflect fairly accurately the views of almost all countries of the region.[2] This brief note is divided in two parts: a summary of the main argument advanced in the book, and a critical response from the perspective of social action in India and Asia. References to the text and quotations are followed by a figure in brackets indicating the corresponding page of the book.

The book is structured around six chapters each dealing with a separate theme and each containing a few papers followed by the summary of the group discussion held on the issues raised by these papers. We are told that the order of themes in the book follows the order in which the topics were presented and discussed at the Seminar. The first part or chapter contains five papers dealing with the intractable task of tracing the origins of the concept of 'civil society' and defining its conceptual boundaries. The second theme, based on concrete experiences from the Dominican Republic and Honduras, analyses the manner in which civil society articulates itself vis-à-vis other social and political actors. The relationship between the State and civil society is discussed on the basis of experiences gathered by the Peace Movement in Colombia, and by the Centre for Social Studies (CES) Juan Montalvo in the Dominican Republic. Chapter 4 dealing with the way in which civil society combats poverty comprises nine relatively short papers outlining various experiences in seven countries. One lonely contribution examines the impact of mass media on the culture of the region, and the last chapter containing two papers attempts to draw the implications of the development of civil society in Latin America and the Caribbean for the Jesuit social apostolate in the region. I turn now to highlight some of the main issues discussed in the book.

The upsurge of civil society as a political concept and as an expression of a new political practice may be attributed, the book argues, to the development of modernity in the Western world (41), to the collapse of Western Marxism (31) and, more immediately, to the

[1] Based on the same seminar and book: Mario Serrano, S.J., *La Sociedad Civil: Aportes y desafíos*, Colección del Centro de Estudios Sociales Padre Juan Montalvo SJ, 2002, pp. 52.

[2] As expected persons from the host country (Dominican Republic) presented the largest number of papers, namely eight. Papers came also two each from Venezuela, Colombia, Argentine and Honduras; Mexico, Guatemala, Puerto Rico, Peru, Brazil and Chile contributed one paper each. There were also participants from Bolivia, Paraguay, Belize, Guyana, Nicaragua and Jamaica.

breakdown of governance in democratically elected states (97).[3] There are more 'functional' reasons for this new interest in civil society. The first is the need to look for viable channels to direct the energies of various social movements bereft of ideological direction and allow the voices of the excluded to be heard in the political space of civil society. The second is the need to counteract the neo-liberal orthodoxy of the market that strives relentlessly to strip the state of its primary obligations, and claims consequently a major proxy role for civil society. The third is to exile forever from our societies the viciousness and infectiousness of violence that have left a trail of death and despair among the poor. Negotiation, consensus, participation, heterogeneity and networking become buzz words under the new dispensation.

While acknowledging the near unfeasibility of finding a commonly accepted, clear-cut, and operational definition of civil society, the Working Group essays an explanatory one by listing some of its important characteristics (108-11). The concept of civil society entails first,

> a democratic conception of society in which its citizens are conceived of as subjects of decisions through which public life is constituted, the political system (the rules of the game) are established, and the instruments for the exercise of political power, especially the state's executive, legislative, judicial, electoral functions and the [guarantees] of social security and citizenship are defined (108).

Civil society presupposes also the political sphere as a space where collective and political objectives are defined. It finally demands "a necessary link between ethics and politics" (108). Flowing from these primary traits, the Working Group goes on to characterise civil society as plural, in the sense that "all legitimate interests have a space and acquire rights and obligations" (111), and as democratic since

> it uses negotiation and dialogue to reach public decisions within the framework of a legally constituted state, and excludes the use of force and violence to impose particular or private interests to the rest of society … [though] it accepts diversity and conflict as part and parcel of a complex and pluralistic society (112).

Two elements, according to J. Olvera Rivera, characterise civil society:

> an institutional component defined basically by the structure of rights in contemporary welfare states, and an active and transforming element constituted by the new social movements (32).

On the crucial issue of the relationship between civil society and political parties, opinions seem to be divided between those who conceive this relationship in minimalist terms – civil society influences, monitors, checks the practices of the state – , and those who attribute to civil society the function of promoting political organisations ('parties') capable of governing society according to an acceptable social project (111).

Consensus is also lacking in determining the types of organisations constituting civil society. Stronger words are reserved for the NGO sector, and I have some interest in highlighting this point in greater detail. A number of participants voice a guarded concern regarding the rapid colonisation of the NGO sector by the World Bank (55), or as Maella puts it, the latter's

[3] Mealla adds to these reasons the emergence of popular movements in Eastern Europe against the tyranny of Soviet oppression (67), a reason that finds echo in an Indian political theorist (Chandhoke: 1955; 27).

efforts at 'de-mobilising' the opposition [of NGOs] to its policies (71). Along the same critical line, Cela laments the individualistic (charismatic?) leadership and the clientelism of many NGOs (92). The same author mentions specifically the new Trojan Horse of the 'Third Sector' dressed up in the full regalia of managerial and marketing mantras, which has been effectively smuggled into the NGO sector by the dextrous hand of Peter Drucker and others (74-5). Cela also evaluates positively the role of the Church vis-à-vis civil society (79-80) and of institutions like Caritas (81-4). In recording the positive role played by Vatican II in granting autonomy to civil society, a misleading comparison has been made, albeit unintentionally, between the positive record of Christianity in separating civil society from the religious domain, and the negative stand taken by other religions like Islam and Judaism.[4] I find the reference somewhat insensitive. The rise of fundamentalist, theocratic, and exclusivist religious tendencies is unfortunately a shared trait of all organised religions, including Christianity and Hinduism.

Experiences of articulating various subjects and organisations of civil society in the Dominican Republic (Perez, 115-20; and Guzman, 132-5) and in Honduras (Casolo, 121-31) are schematic portraits of different attempts to integrate the dispersed forces of civil society into achieving specific objectives. A similar attempt, under a different chapter-heading, is carried out in the third chapter where the role of civil society in the peace process of Colombia (141-52), and a brief account of the experiences accumulated during years of patient work by the CES in the Dominican Republic (153-61), have been outlined. The fourth section on civil society and the fight against poverty promises much but delivers little. It comprises a motley collection of articles: from Marchetti's exposition of the linkages between the World Bank's strategies of poverty reduction and the issue of external debt, to general reflections on the nature of poverty (García), the interesting case of the Ixcan communities resisting land alienation, and other shorter contributions. The last two sections contain a thought-provoking article (Bisbal) on the mediating role of mass-communication with no apparent connection with the general theme of the book, a historical account of the social mission of the Society of Jesus in Chile (Soto), and one contribution on the relationship between civil society and the Society of Jesus (Lestienne).

I start my critical observations of the book with a humble acknowledgement that the space-limitations imposed by a 'review' and the lack of personal experience of the Latin American socio-political reality render my comments tentative and provisional. What is evident to me, and must be stated at the outset, is that the Seminar and the book must be unambiguously lauded as expressions of a serious and committed reflection by Jesuits and their collaborators on the relevance of civil society to fight poverty and injustice in democratic societies. This effort is one more proof, if one were needed, of the trait that has always characterised Jesuit social action in Latin America: a close relationship between grassroots experiences and intellectual (ideological) reflection.

Let me start with the remark that the collapse of people's faith in democratic political structures (political parties, bureaucracy, judiciary) and in 'meta-discourses' is also a widespread phenomenon in Asia and, I might venture to add, in the entire world. As regards the former issue, we can safely state that the mistrust of 'pure politics' has become a global phenomenon. To limit myself to the Asian scene, I may recall that Japan has been plagued by continuous disclosures regarding the murky links between politicians, the banking system and

[4] "Islam, to a great extent, and certain Jewish sects, appear incapable of distinguishing among the political, racial, social and religious spheres" (80).

a tightly controlled set of oligopolistic firms. Two Philippine Presidents have been accused of corruption and removed from office. Malaysia's Mahathir, Indonesia's Suharto and well-known politicians from India have been embroiled in case after case of financial irregularities and scams. The utter disregard of the Indian political class for any semblance of accountability has been accompanied by an obsession to make of politics a family affair where rules of blood-succession to the throne have been scrupulously followed. The point I want to make is that the existence of a 'political vacuum', or a crisis of popular trust in organised or professional politics, is a common phenomenon demanding a more incisive analysis of its causes. To look at the upsurge of civil society as a means for the dispossessed masses to fill the vacuum left by political parties leaves many fundamental questions unanswered.

The urgency of analysing this 'political vacuum' stems from the fact that the lack of faith in the political process is not totally unrelated to the rejection of overarching ideologies. As a matter of fact, various powerful groups espousing Hindu, Muslim or Christian forms of religious fundamentalism have recently filled the political vacuum. In the process, more 'democratic' groups have been forcefully pushed into a corner. Whether we like it or not, these groupings are vociferously claiming to be representing the true aspirations of civil society. This process of bringing back a totalitarian, exclusivist, male-dominated, religious ideology into the centre-stage of civil society has been supported, financed and meticulously planned by the State (Iran, India, Nepal, Indonesia and Sri Lanka) or has taken the form of underground groups engaged in open guerrilla warfare (Philippines, Indonesia, Pakistan). None of the contributions in the book has examined seriously the manner in which religious fundamentalism has successfully occupied the political vacuum left by the unceremonious exit of socialism and also of nationalism.[5] The issue of (religious) fundamentalism is relevant to our discussion on civil society for at least two basic reasons. First, all these groups are motivated by clear ideologies, and this brings forcefully to the fore the need of an 'ideology' or a clearly defined 'organisational principle' (Bayart: 1986; 117) for the effectiveness of social movements in particular, and of civil society in general. Second, these groups, and the Hindu fundamentalist outfits in India are an excellent example, have no qualms in pursuing political power as one of their most important goals.

In the light of the above, I would like to point out some limitations of the approach outlined in the book. The first is the unwillingness, though not shared equally by all authors, to face squarely the 'incivility' of civil society (Chandhoke: 1995), that is, the existence of numerous groups within the broad spectrum of civil society eager to highjack the entire democratic project. The Muslim proponents of *jihad*, the fanatic Hindu defenders of a past hierarchical and exploitative golden age, or the Christian evangelical defenders of unabashed Christian religious superiority, are not only claiming a rightful place in civil society, but have gleefully appropriated the radicalism espoused by left movements some years ago and ridiculed today by large sections of civil society. It seems to me naïve to stress the plurality of civil society without simultaneously exposing these 'uncivil' elements.

My second comment is related to the first. Behind the cover of plurality, heterogeneity and democracy lurks a seeming reluctance to "name the enemy," an anxious eagerness to

[5] Lack of space does not permit me to deal with this creative and powerful ideology that sustained innumerable independent movements in Asia and Africa after World War II. It is not entirely misplaced to link the fundamentalist movements of today with the unfulfilled aspirations for new forms of 'nationalism' and 'nation-building'.

disengage from a direct confrontation with it and even to act according to the rules of the game set up by it. We are told that one of the principles or characteristics of civil society is "self-regulation," that is, "the concept of civil society neither brings a new foundational utopia nor assumes the role of universal actors" (30). The anxiety to do away with the perceived homogenising demons of past military or socialist regimes has given birth to a generous permissiveness that allows new demons (fundamentalism, and corporate transnational capital) to enter the social project through the backdoor. This paradox is reflected in a certain logical fuzziness: on the one hand, the state's capacity to govern is seriously questioned, and, on the other, we start with the premise that civil society depends for its existence on the ground rules laid out by the state. Terms like 'class' and 'capitalism' have been exorcised completely from our discourse. It seems to me, however, an impossible task to describe the existing socio-economic processes in the world, and definitely in Asia and India, without referring to the emergence of a new Indian middle class that cuts across national frontiers, is perfectly at home in English and Hindi (or Tamil for that matter), is increasingly insensitive to the suffering and poverty of the excluded, and has cleverly combined a ferocious capitalist-consumerist outlook with the development and practice of new forms of religiosity. I find perhaps even more difficult to understand the omission of the term 'capitalism' to describe the ravages (ecological and human) that international capital has caused and is still perpetrating in most of the world. It is dangerous to ignore Gramsci and forget the role played by significant and powerful sections of civil society in legitimising an oppressive state; it is preposterous to turn Gramsci on his head and postulate that a newly created civil society will domesticate the state.

This is nowhere more evident than in the critical comments made by some authors on the NGO sector and referred to above. The experience of the NGO sector in India, barring some outstanding exceptions, seems to confirm this somewhat pessimistic diagnosis. The shift from immersion in popular movements to consultancy, from activism to professionalism, from reliance on people's resources to over-dependence on foreign funds, from ideological commitment to pragmatic 'projectism', are all indications that the heterogeneity of civil society may be a cover-up for elements and forces that are eroding the credibility of the NGO sector both to engage itself in a critique of the existing political system and to accompany radical popular movements.

As mentioned earlier, the core section of the book on the role of civil society in combating poverty is disappointing. Though the characterisation of poverty in its new dimensions is correct, the practical role played by civil society (and by Jesuits involved in civil society) has been barely sketched. One of the reasons for this lacuna may lie in the difficulty of bridging the gap between working within an established state-framework and challenging the given system. While the contributors have specifically mentioned the relationship of poverty in the region to larger issues (and structures) like the unjust mechanisms regulating international trade and capital flows (WTO), the problem of external debt (IMF), and the systematic attempt to co-opt the voluntary movement represented by NGOs, NGODs and the Third Sector (World Bank), they are less vocal in describing the specific role of civil society in challenging squarely these unjust and politically unrepresentative international structures. There is also a certain inevitability born perhaps from a perceived helplessness in accepting that existing market arrangements cannot be radically questioned by civil society. It is obvious that the institution of the 'market' is a necessary component of any trading group, but what are not absolute and given are the conditions constituting and regulating any market. The slogan 'to act locally and think globally' has become a false purveyor of empty hopes. It

might appear as if we have unquestioningly accepted our incapacity to act globally and think locally.

Two final remarks are in place. The development of 'communitarian' political identities has become of crucial importance to understand the post-Independence changes in India (Appadurai: 1997; Mahajan: 1998; Chatterji: 1995). Considerable attention has been devoted to examine the history of dalit, tribal and other movements (Omvedt: 1993). These subaltern (in contraposition to dominant and so called main-stream) movements have endeavoured to define their identities within the political sphere. The most significant change during the last twenty years has been the incorporation into the Indian political scene (including party politics) of vast masses of formerly untouchable, tribal, and other socially backward groups. By breaking the hierarchical model of political co-optation and developing a horizontal perspective, these movements are, albeit with many limitations, powerful examples of the underlying closeness existing between issues of human rights, the force and creativity of 'popular' movement, and an unambiguous political project. These are, to my mind, three dynamic characteristics or criteria defining the transforming potential of some sectors in civil society.

All said and done, I am not sure whether such a hopelessly polysemic, ambivalent, and all-embracing concept of civil society can be a helpful intellectual instrument to analyse the present moment and plan our strategies to combat poverty. It is valid to talk, as the book does, about popular (or subaltern) movements, associations and linkages at various levels. It is also imperative, as the book suggests, to accompany the rise and fall of many of these movements and to integrate ourselves into new ones that are rising everywhere. More than anything else in these confused times, we need the honesty to discover and denounce the 'incivility' of civil society and the true identity of the enemy of the poor. It sounds old-fashioned, but these lines are a modest attempt to raise a final query: are we not suffering the devastating effects caused by an uncritical acceptance of post-modernism, neo-liberalism, and neo-culturalism among many, otherwise socially committed intellectuals?

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An Open Letter to George W. Bush

Dear Mr. President, February 8, 2002

My name is John Dear and I am a Jesuit priest, retreat leader and writer. I have spent the last twenty years working among the poor here and abroad, and speaking out against war and nuclear weapons. Recently, I served here in the Family Assistance Center in New York City as a chaplain to over 1,500 relatives who lost loved ones at the World Trade Center disaster, and to over 500 police officers, fire-fighters and rescue workers at Ground Zero. I also worked as a supervisor for the Red Cross "Spiritual Care" program, helping to co-ordinate over 500 chaplains of all religions.

I am writing to you to ask you to stop immediately the bombing of Afghanistan, to stop your preparations for other wars, to cut the Pentagon's budget drastically, not increase it; to lift the sanctions on Iraq, end military aid to Israel, stop U.S. support of the occupation of the Palestinians, lift the entire third world debt, dismantle every one of our nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction, abandon your Star Wars Missile Shield plans, join the World Court and international law, and close our own terrorist training camps, beginning with Fort Benning's "School of the Americas."

In the tradition of Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Dorothy Day, I believe that violence in response to violence only leads to further violence; that war can never solve our problems; that there is no such thing as a just war; that God does not bless war; and that we are condemned to suffer further terrorist attacks by our continued militarism and war-making around the world.

The only solution to these international crises is to overcome evil with goodness, not further evil. That means we need to win the world over with non-violent love. We need to change the direction of our country, feed every starving child and refugee on the planet, end poverty at home and abroad, stop all injustices and military aid, create a new non-violent foreign policy that will serve humanity and support UN-based non-violent international peacemaking teams.

Violence is not only immoral and illegal, it's just downright impractical. Your global violence is doomed to fail and lead to further suffering because it will only stir up further hostility around the world.

In the name of the God of peace and compassion, please reverse your destructive course, and start us in a new direction, toward a lasting peace with justice for all people on the planet.

I have read that you are a Christian. May I add that I believe that Jesus was non-violent, and that he was serious when he commanded us not to bomb our enemies, but to love our enemies. Furthermore, I believe that means God is a God of peace and non-violence. If you wish to follow the non-violent Jesus and worship the God of peace, you must renounce this war and start the path of disarmament, justice for the poor, and healing for humanity. You cannot serve both the God of peace and the false gods of war.

I want you to know that millions of us around the country will continue to oppose your policies and wars; and that we will dedicate our lives to the practice of this loving, non-violent resistance to U.S. war-making. I travel around the country full time speaking to tens of thousands of students and churchgoers each year, and I find very little support for your war.

We will continue to pray for peace, march for peace, demonstrate for peace, speak out for peace, work for peace, propose peace, and resist your determined opposition to peace. You could save us all a lot of trouble and save further loss of life around the world by taking the high ground, adopting the vision of non-violence, exercising true moral leadership and heading us in a new direction toward a world without war, starvation, poverty, oppression or injustice. That is the only way to guarantee that there will be no more terrorist attacks. In that way, you will help us offer future generations a life of peace.

May the God of peace bless us all.

Sincerely, (Rev.) John Dear, S.J. <JohnDearSJ@msn.com> and <www.fatherjohndear.org>