Social Justice Secretariat

Nº 94, 2007/1

Promotio Iustitiae

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Darío Mollá SJ

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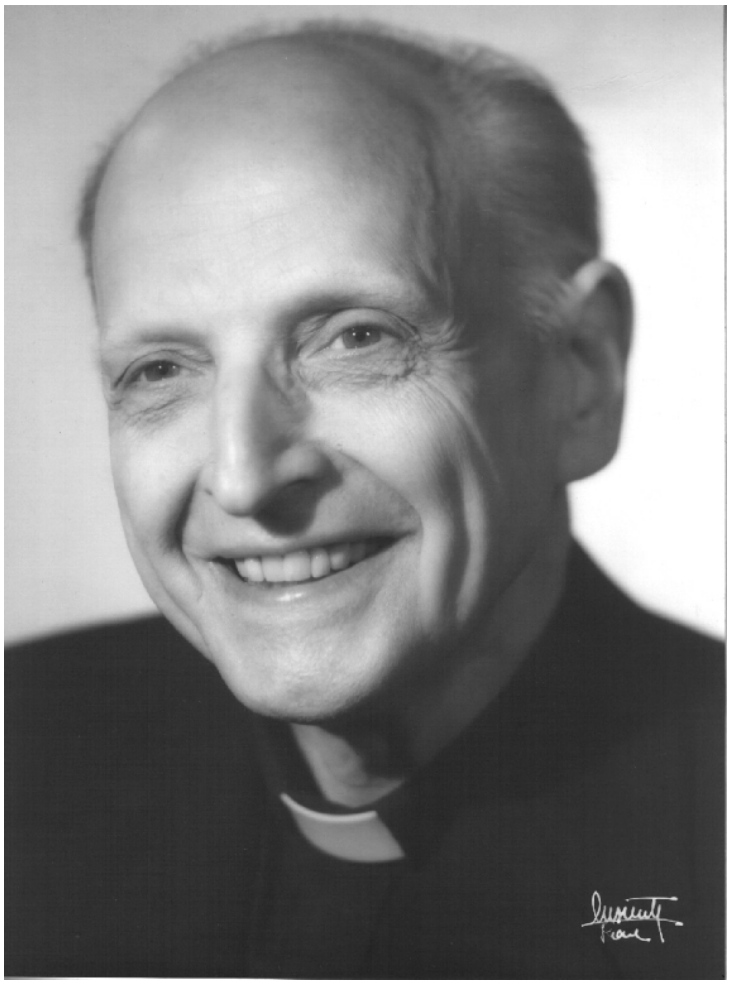
Experiences, Letters, Review

ANNIVERSARY

14th November 1907 – 5th February 1991



Father Pedro Arrupe SJ

Promotio Iustitiae 94 (2007/1)

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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). *Promotio Iustitiae* is also available electronically on the World Wide Web at the following address: **www.sjweb.info/sjs,** where you can download single articles or the complete issue.

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

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EDITORIAL

The real countdown for General Congregation 35 has started. One year from now around 240 Jesuits will gather in Rome to elect the new General of the Society of Jesus. The goal will be to set the course for the Society to respond effectively to the opportunities offered by globalisation at the same time that it struggles against the exclusion and inequality that persistently trail the globalising process.

The Commission on Justice appointed by Fr. General to review Decree 3 of General Congregation 34 completed its work on 15th December 2006 and submitted a report to Fr. General. In a respectful, free and honest atmosphere, the members readily agreed that new decrees are not the need of the hour. There was, however, a sense of urgency in calling the entire body of the Society to set up its tent among the poor and excluded (John 1, 14), build up alliances with them and work with all kinds of stakeholders engaged in the struggle for a more just world. Our commitment to a faith that does justice and to a justice that leads us to a deeper faith must be lived in a multicultural and pluri-religious context. No apostolic endeavour in any part of the world can escape the twin transversal reality of cultural and religious difference. As Jesuits and partners committed to the same mission, we are called to open spaces in our communities and institutions all over the word where women and men of good will, and from every culture, can work in true solidarity.

There are voices among some Jesuits calling for a commitment to social action based on our religious vocation (our faith) rather than on the 'ideological' principles of the past. I consider the content of that call to be true; it touches and expresses the core of our own identity. We may remember that the call to conversion always opens the most important decrees of past congregations. I must, however, confess my surprise at how little we seem to know the inner (spiritual) motivation of our Jesuit and non-Jesuit companions! There are now enough writings witnessing to the characteristics of this mystique lived in the midst of the struggle for justice.

This issue of *Promotio Iustitiae* touches on this matter with a long contribution on the spirituality of social action. Written by a man, Dario Mollá SJ, who has experienced in his own flesh the pain and ecstasies of accompanying the poor, the article offers an Ignatian and practical way to reflect on the spirituality we live in the midst of our social engagement.

We have just completed the celebration of an Ignatian jubilee commemorating the death of St. Ignatius 450 years ago, and the birth 500 years ago of St. Francis Xavier and the Blessed Pierre Favre. Among the many celebrations that have dotted the global landscape of the Society, this issue of *Promotio Iustitiae* would like to remember the Seminar

'Homecoming and Encounter' held in Javier (Navarre, Spain) highlighting the gospel of human fraternity preached by Francis Xavier. The articles of Francisco Vitoria, a priest teaching at the Jesuit Theological Faculty of Deusto University, and Michael Amaladoss SJ, former Assistant at the Curia, present two very challenging visions of mission and evangelisation today: one is addressed to Europeans, and the other, written from an Asian perspective, challenges all of us.

The piece on *Cristianisme i Justícia* (Christianity and Justice) commemorates 25 years of a social centre of the Society of Jesus in Barcelona (Spain) committed to promoting justice and to finding new and creative ways to support critical and alternative ways of thinking. Their fascicles in Spanish, Catalan and English probably constitute the single largest edition for any publication in the social sector all over the world.

I would like to highlight the contribution of Lancy Lobo SJ to the ongoing discussion on lay collaboration. On the basis of a well-researched study of mission parishes in South Gujarat, India, he advocates a paradigm change in our approach to lay collaboration. The article of Tony Weiss brings to our map the Caribbean region and its agrarian problems. By highlighting an important development project of Jamaica promoted by the Canadian NGO, Canadian Jesuits International, we wish to take note of the excellent work done by these newly transformed Jesuit NGOs. They are good examples of the increasing bonds of cooperation among various regions and provinces.

In his diary of events in the Colombian struggle for peace, Francisco de Roux SJ touches on the issue of reconciliation and forgiveness in situations of conflict that finds a common denominator in many other places all over the world. Bluntly put, the question is: under what conditions can a victim forgive the perpetrator? Why does the author call the initiative by a group of paramilitaries to ask the past victims of their attacks for immediate forgiveness an act of profound disrespect?

Let me end with a practical matter. We have received clear indications that some of the translations appearing in *Promotio Iustitiae* could do with some improvement. I want to thank those who have pointed out these shortcomings. I understand that though working under financial constraints, we still need to address this issue, and we are indeed making an effort to introduce greater editorial supervision. We have re-launched our website and are trying to develop new, more eco-friendly and less expensive ways of communication.

Let us keep in touch as we walk during this year the road that leads us to General Congregation 35.

Fernando Franco SJ

REFLEXION

Spirituality in Social Action

Darío Mollá SJ

The encounter with the world of the poor may give life or it may destroy. It transports us to a land where one suffers the harsh strokes of oppression and injustice, but at the same time one finds the most surprising life force. A person or institution's approach to the poor says a great deal about the quality of that person or that institution.[1]

These words of Benjamín González Buelta, a Jesuit who has offered broad and deep reflections on encountering the poor, help us understand at the very outset the 'why' of this reflection on the "spirituality of social action." People who devote themselves honestly to social action in a professional way, going beyond usual simple routine acts, will have had contradictory and varied experiences, which may either give life or destroy it. And it is in that alternative that spirituality finds its place.

The radical alternative between "giving life and destroying it" is to be located not so much in one's personal interior life as in one's actions with others, especially if those others are weak and fragile. Interventions here call for delicate, precise and fine instruments as well as skilled hands. The weaker the person or reality in which we wish to intervene, the more care we need to apply and the better our tools must be. For if we err, or intervene ineffectually, we can cause much damage, and the more fragile the persons we are dealing with, the more irreparable the damage. For this reason, from both the human and evangelical points of view, only very fine persons should approach the poor.... The most decisive instrument in any social intervention is the person who intervenes; consequently, those doing social action must be of the highest personal quality.

Social action is in itself an authentic spiritual experience

Spirituality in the field of social action thus aims to help those who are involved in resolving the alternative between life and death positively, both in their inner lives and in their actions in the world of the poor. It offers them a key for reading, receiving, and managing the internal experience itself; it helps them recognise it and internalise its message, elaborating it so as to aid spiritual and human growth. Spirituality continuously transforms those who commit themselves to social action so that their dealings with others lead to humanisation, dignity and life.

In speaking of spirituality and social action, we must note another challenge. Not only does an appropriate spirituality transform and humanise social action, it is in itself an authentic spiritual experience. What is it that

[1]Benjamin González Buelta SJ. "Formar según San Ignacio en la escuela del pobre" in *Tradición ignaciana y solidaridad con los pobres*, *Colección Manresa 4* (Bilbao: Mansajero 1990), p. 143.

makes social action a true spiritual experience? What markers, what accents, what characteristics should we strengthen in ourselves to make social action itself "spiritual," that is, what in us can make such social action the place where the Spirit is present and acts, a privileged space for the encounter with God and the experience of Life?

We are suggesting that social action not only helps the subject, but that the experience itself may be an authentic and true spiritual experience. This is not automatically the case: much depends on the hidden attitudes by which we access and live out the experience. But if the experience is truly spiritual, it is so in a privileged mode. If we can encounter God in all things, how can we not find God, and that too in an elevated mode, in the service of the poor with whom God has wished to identify Godself?

Analysing the personal experience of Ignatius of Loyola recounted in his autobiography, Josep Maria Rambla comments that the Ignatian experience of proximity to the poor was for him a spiritual experience:

> *The richness with which the help of the pilgrim to the poor manifests itself is born in his own heart. Beyond a human sentiment of compassion or an honourable fulfilment of Christian duty, but including both, the pilgrim lives his contact with the poor as a deep spiritual experience. This is because in his heart spring those motions that mark the actions of the Spirit of the Lord in the people who truly seek him.*[2]

Two brief observations to conclude this introduction. Our attention in this reflection is centred on the subject engaged in social action and in the relations that he or she establishes; other aspects, such as the social tasks that demand spirituality based on the Good News of Jesus, are outside its scope. Secondly, our reflection stems from what may be called an "Ignatian spiritual sensitivity," although what we suggest has wider validity. We identify below five elements or basic characteristics of spirituality that we propose as spirituality "in social action."

1. Living the calling to social action as a gift

At the 28th Meeting of Bishops and Major Superiors of the Basque Country, in a much wider context, Patxi Alvarez said:

> *I understand that the spirituality of our time consists in giving an outlet to these gifts, that is to say, to harbour them, to help them grow and to express them. Spirituality, therefore, seen as life in the dynamic that the Spirit bestows on us.*[3]

The quotation has immediate applicability for those who involve themselves in social action. Many who work in social action do so from a very personal response to an interior or external calling to this commitment. It may have led

[2]Josep Maria Rambla SJ. "El peregrino con los pobres" in *Tradición ignaciana*, op. cit., p. 23.
[3]Patxi Alvarez SJ. "Acoger el don, impulsar la mission" in *No tengo miedo al nuevo mundo que surge:* proceedings of the Euskadi Conference of Bishops and Major Superiors (Vitoria 2006), p.20.

them to choose one set of studies rather than another, to prioritise a job less paying or less valued socially compared with others; this is a commitment that can withstand the social pressure of making certain lifestyle choices.

It is therefore very important that this vocation and that response should be lived inwardly with a deep sense of gratitude, as a gift which is given to us. Gratitude is the fountain from which flows spontaneously and abundantly all that is crucial in dealing with people – generosity, joy, respect for others, gratuitous help, unconditional support, perseverance...

One of the dangers built into social action is that we may sees ourselves as heroes, as having more merit or sensibility than others, as somehow 'exemplary' in a mediocre society which is without solidarity. We may be tempted (and I am resorting to caricature) to think: "How good and wonderful are we that we dedicate ourselves to the poor!" "How happy they must be that someone as valuable as myself works for their cause!" Obviously few are so foolish as to actually utter such expressions, but far too frequently does one find this underlying tenor in discussions that are apparently about external situations.

One of the dangers built into social action is that we may sees ourselves as heroes

Seeing ourselves this way is not only a problem of pride and personal vanity, but in the long run has very negative repercussions on our own social action. That stance makes us feel that others owe us something ("I can't believe that they should do this to me, after all that I've done for them!"). We feel justified in harbouring all sorts of reproaches and blame; we enter into a dynamic of asking for affective and effective compensation; we reserve the right to abandon or give up on account of our tiredness and convenience ("We have arrived thus far, no one can ask more of me!") etc, etc, etc… In short, we put ourselves first in making our decisions rather than what is of primary importance, namely the poverty, suffering and shattered dignity of those whom we want to help…

Our inner calling to work with the poor and the victimised in society is a gift that we have received. If we know how to sustain it, care for it and make it grow, it will become one of the greatest gifts that can be given to us in life. And the one thing we feel in receiving such a gift is a sense of being privileged, overwhelmed by the mystery of continuing to receive something so worthwhile daily without our doing anything to deserve it.

The discovery and the experience of the vocation to social action as a gift is, of course, the task of a lifetime and has to do with personal and spiritual maturity. At the outset feelings of heroism (unconfessed, not specified) are normally present when we compare ourselves with others and feel superior. This is especially the case if we enter the world of social action when we are still young, or in contexts where this commitment seems exciting or exceptional. With time we mature and enter more into the logic of the gift,

rather than the logic of personal heroism…. But we must examine ourselves to see if we are indeed advancing along that path. For even when we are mature, we will be surprised from time to time by the upsurge of attitudes that we thought we had overcome.

There is a significant act in the life of Ignatius de Loyola along these lines… After his many actions over the years in favour of the poor, he continued in the maturity of his spiritual life to beg "to be placed" alongside the Crucified Son. According to Ignatius one does not identify with the crucified unless one experiences to "be counted" among them. He tries to place himself near them and some day receive the grace of "being put," of "being accepted"…. and that is the definitive grace. For that reason in the Exercises the identification with the poor and humble Christ is the greatest grace to ask for; we ask to be touched by that grace (Exercises no. 147).

According to Ignatius one does not identify with the crucified unless one experiences to "be counted" among them

Also, the sense of the gift of our social vocation grows in us as we observe all that we receive and discover when we are with the poor. This observing, if it is to be experiential and not merely an ideological catch phrase, requires time. What one learns to value goes much further than the day-to-day, beyond the immediate… Then we can realise the sincerity and heartfelt nature of such words as these:

> *In popular culture we find a solidarity that faces the emergencies of each day and allows survival. No one knows how discreetly aid walks about, respecting the wounded dignity of the one who has neither food nor medicine. Here we find many faces that have rescued their kindness and their tenderness from the blows they have received. A capacity for joy surprises us in the lives of the assaulted. Humour often penetrates the most extreme of situations. The blows of greed or nature devastate everything in minutes, but from the roots spring forth resistance and the capacity to begin anew. In the morning a cyclone devastates a crop. In the evening it is possible to begin preparing for seedtime again.*[4]

But our social vocation is given a definite reach and depth, fortified and made solidly stable, when the vocation becomes a "mystical" experience. Obviously, I do not use the word mystical in its somewhat coarse and distorted sense to mean being transported to another world; I use it in its deepest and truest sense of "union." I refer to the union and communion between people who draw near each other on the basis of mutual coexistence, sensitivities, desires, and hearts. Social action becomes a mystical experience when faces of actual people enter our lives, inerasable and imperishable; when the concrete faces of people as people, not their role or social status, occupy a place in our hearts.

The word mystical I use its deepest and truest sense of "union"

[4]Benjamin González Buelta SJ. *Tradición ignaciana*, op. cit., p.148.

This is the experience of an Ignatius in love with the "poor and humble" Christ and, therefore, with his friends, the poor. We are now no longer caught in the logic of fulfilment or of the heroic, not even in the purest and clean logic of the gift: we have gone beyond. The mystical experience in social action occurs when the entrance of the poor in our life is so inward that it strips us and releases us to ourselves and from ourselves, and we no longer see with our eyes; neither do we reason with our logic, nor love only with the affections of the heart. The gift has become flesh of our flesh and blood of our blood; to paraphrase a phrase from Saint Paul, It is not I who lives, it is He, the "poor and humble," and His friends "the poor" who live in me. The gift becomes the Eucharist.

2. To be contemplatives in action

The ultimate objective of Ignatian spirituality has been described by the formula "to be contemplative in action." But while it has been widely, frequently and appropriately used, I believe it has carried a more limited and less vigorous significance than Ignatian texts allow. The expression "to contemplate" refers to a way of praying. Also, by extension, it speaks of a "contemplative life" in the case of people who dedicate the larger part of their life to prayer. But Ignatian intuition applies the adjective "contemplative" and the dynamics of "contemplating" not only to prayer but also to action, to activity, to working; to be "contemplative" in one's behaviour. I mention this Ignatian phrase because I believe that it makes a lot of sense in the case of social action. Let us analyse, then, the basic characteristics of that "contemplative" behaviour applied to social action.

In prayer, contemplation places Jesus, the other, as the protagonist of the prayer. The matter of the supplication is not the thoughts, the needs nor the preoccupations of the one who prays, but the person of Jesus, an act of his life, just a few of his words, a gesture. To contemplate is, in the first instance, "to see," "to hear," "to watch" outside. The one who prays does not place himself in the centre of the scene, but is like a passionate spectator, interested but discreet. The centre of the contemplation is always another person and, very specially, Jesus.

To act contemplatively, to work contemplatively, is to place the other at the very centre of my sight, my interest and my action

To act contemplatively, to work contemplatively, is to place the other at the very centre of my sight, my interest and my action. To this end, one is required to observe, to look and to listen. 'To pray and to act contemplatively' means placing oneself discreetly on the fringes of another persons' life, observing her so that she does not feel that her reality has been invaded and is spontaneous and free. To act contemplatively

presupposes that I do not occupy the stage, much less centre stage, but that I stand so that the other person is the protagonist.

To contemplate is, secondly, an exercise of attention, and of attention to detail. Simone Weil said that "absolutely pure and undiffused attention is prayer." It seems that such attention excludes distance and haste; it is difficult to capture detail in haste and from afar. And the one who loves is interested in precisely the details because the details are what lead to the heart and feed love.

Attention and attention to detail are essential in social action. Precisely because of the fragility of the people for whom one works, the slightest detail can elevate or sink, break or restore. Attention is the absence of haste and the exercise of patience; one does not capture detail at first glance. Often much attention is needed to find, in the middle of a destroyed existence, that particular detail of life that allows the process to be recovered and sustained; and much patience is also needed to observe even the slightest advance that opens up hope in the middle of frustration, failure and impotence.

To contemplate is to let oneself feel the impact of that which one contemplates. It is a certain type of passivity: to let that which I have before me strike me with its innate force in my conscience and in my heart, rather than projecting on to it schemes which I might have thought of previously. If, instead of letting myself be impacted by what is outside me, I project what I carry inside (and this happens so many times in life), I end up seeing not that which really is, but what I want to see, and hear not what really is being said but what I want to hear.

I believe that allowing ourselves be impacted is necessary if we are to help other people in what they really need, not in what we have thought or predetermined that they should need. How can I really serve if I do not let myself be struck by the needs of others? When I do not let this happen I am in danger of fulfilling, perhaps quite well, the rigorous requirements that my task demands, or of supposing that service is that which I believe I must do, or want to do, however costly or valuable in itself.

We said that to let oneself be impacted is, in the most appropriate sense of the word, to let oneself be struck. We may be hurt and stunned, and the blows may fall very awkwardly when the one who strikes us is someone smaller or weaker than we ourselves. But we will not be impacted if we do not clearly know the role and the dignity of those whom we want to serve. Good companions and, if one works in an institution, a good institutional atmosphere, help ease painful, perhaps even shameful blows; they bring us back into the dynamics of true service.

To contemplate is, finally, to let different sensitivities make contact, to be affected by one another. It is simply to remain together for a long time, and remaining together over periods of time is never innocuous. Sensitivity to one

another determines the way in which we approach each other and say something that is really significant for others.

Often it turns out that the greatest distance between us and the people whom we wish to help is the distance between sensibilities. That distance moves us farther away from the people whom we wish to help, making it more difficult for us to empathise with each other and go beyond the differences of age, culture, and history. We would often like to jump over these distances and build the bridges which the heart desires but which our gestures and the words do not know how to construct. Powerlessness felt this way is an invitation "to contemplate" more, to spend more time together. It may seem to be time spent apparently uselessly, without objective or without result; it may mean overcoming many inner and outer discomforts. It may make us wish to rush things, but that desire only means that we want to escape from situations which we cannot control or in which we feel uncomfortable.

The desire to rush things is a desire to escape from that which we cannot control

3. Available to choose

Placing love of the other before self on a daily and concrete basis requires decisions based on deliberate choice. In the context of our reflection, to choose is to select, not between a good and a bad thing (obviously that is no alternative for an honest person) but rather between things good or, at the very least, neutral in themselves. In social action, as in life, living out a specific option from day to day is based on many small choices, and it is in these daily choices that the truth, coherence and effectiveness of our underlying option are at stake.

The field of choice is very wide: the what, the who, the how, the limits, the where and the when. The more we take a bird's eye view of life, the more difficult choices become – not all is worthwhile, not everything helps or is acceptable. This is why it is occasionally so difficult to choose within social action: the overall bird's eye view and limited frameworks conflict, or seem to conflict at the outset. Choice is then an ambiguous and uncertain affair. At this point, I am struck by the heap of tensions experienced by those who pursue the greatest possible personal and institutional honesty in social action: tension between the purity of intention and the ambiguity of mediations, between generous desires and limited possibilities, between the scope of proposals and restricted resources, between the means that clearly should be used and the price that has to be paid for using them, between the urgency of things and the slowness of actual rhythms… and so many others!

Spirituality in social action has to be, then, a spirituality that helps the subject to choose, enables choice, indeed makes him or her available to choose. To use the classic term, we would say that a spirituality of "discernment" is

very useful to one who is in social action. Social action needs a spirituality that makes us "available" to choose.

"Available" to choose means one who wants, can, and knows how to do it

I use the word "available" in a triple sense. In the first place, the person available for making the choice is conscious that he has to do it and that he is ready to do it, that he has an active, involved, personal take on that which he is handling; that he is not frozen by the fact of making decisions, nor hopes that the work will be done for him; that he knows that formulas and recipes are both limited and transitory. But I also give the word "available" two other meanings: available in that he has the affective and effective capacity to choose. To put it plainly, "available" to choose means one who wants, can, and knows how to do it. In Ignatian terms, there is a "subject" to choose, and that "subject" has the "means" to choose, and knows how to handle the procedures, times, and dynamics of the choice. With these two last aspects of the "availability" to choose we shall stop. To carry them out is the task of the spirituality.

"To choose" in the sense that we are giving it here is neither a banal nor an easy task and consequently what Ignatius called a "subject" must be a person with a basic capacity, the minimal personal and spiritual maturity to do it. So conscious is Saint Ignatius of this necessity that a large part of his Spiritual Exercises is devoted to enabling the subject to make a good choice.

If the subject is to choose suitably in a context with a multiplicity of offers and expositions and a strong sense of the relativity of each, she should have the basic options from which to choose rooted in her heart; she should also know the ultimate objectives to be reached, and have fully understood the basic criteria that limit the field of choice, which after all is not infinite. She can then choose effectively, uninfluenced by fashions, pressures or momentary conveniences. Nevertheless, even with the best intentions and theoretically clear objectives, one must be permanently vigilant about one's own inner freedom in the process of deciding and choosing.

We are all familiar with self-deception and the stories we tell ourselves when we are caught in the dynamics of narcissism and selfish satisfaction. We are then able to justify the unjustifiable. We see this better in others than in ourselves, but there is nothing that makes us immune to placing our own interests above everything else. It is written into our being human, and, if you will bear with my saying so, these self-seeking mechanisms multiply as the difficulty of our social action increases, or when recognition and gratitude for work done is not forthcoming.

Further, we know through personal experience that the human heart tends to settle on things and people, to find security in them and consequently to absolutise them, making them unquestionable or untouchable. What is in fact happening in such cases is that the human heart imprisons itself in realities

that are limited and secondary, and in the process loses its freedom. Freedom is required if I am to choose purely between that which will help me more or which will help others more. To choose freely presupposes choosing without preconditions, with a readiness to leave what has to be abandoned, however useful it might have been at a given point. This may sometimes demand renouncing securities, acquired goods, even certain affections… and that is not easy to do. It is easier then to "cheat" in the choices that one makes.

And to choose is often to risk, to bet, to confront, enter into conflict, question the established, to leave the habitual or the socially correct. That always produces discomfort and even fear; and fear can take away freedom and paralyse decision-making.

To be affectively and effectively available to choose demands a free subject

Really to be available, to be affectively and effectively available to choose, demands a free subject. This freedom achieves consistency and stability through a heart cemented in love, which puts itself at the periphery and centres instead on those it wants to serve, strong in the face of threats and dangers. All this is not improvised or ad hoc; it takes time for it to work within, to form a pedagogy and a therapy of freedom. This is one of the basic tasks for any spirituality, and most certainly the spirituality of those committed to social action.

Once that first and decisive element is assured, that is, forming and maintaining a subject capable of the freedom to choose, then spirituality can also aid in devising, as far as possible, instruments, tactics, methods that can ease the subject's task.

The Ignatian methodology of the Exercises offers diverse materials as aids to discernment. We find there the rules of discernment as such; then another set of rules which shows how to apply the rules for discernment to concrete situations in daily life; and, finally, a set of materials that helps the daily and/or regular practice of discernment, what Ignacio calls *examens.* This is not the place to provide a detailed commentary on all that, neither does this article claim to be the best or the only one to aid choice or discernment today. But I do want to note briefly two important intuitions that underlie this exposition.

In our daily life the feelings and inner movements that we experience are multiple, and the impact that "outer" events produce in us also very varied. To learn to read, interpret and handle all that material and its meaning is basic to our discernment, and a basic element of the process. My second observation is this: to practice daily forms of discernment, simple but constant, is indispensable to maintaining ourselves agile and trained in the face of more complicated processes of discernment. We will thereby acquire a dexterity and ability that make of our choosing not a cabbalistic process, but the natural movement of one who wants to translate into a concrete and everyday form the great ideals to which we aspire in our social commitment.

4. With a Spirit of Strength

Strength, one of the most necessary conditions in the "spirit," in the "animus" of one who is committed to social action is also one of the gifts most characteristic of the Holy Spirit in Catholic theology. I have a double reason for preferring to use the word "strength" rather than "resistance," favoured by other colleagues who reflect on spirituality in social action. The first reason is that "strength" seems to me a more global concept that allows inclusion, along with "resistance," of a whole set of other important attitudes. Secondly, I wish to avoid some of the contemporary connotations that the concepts of resistance and "resistance identities" have acquired, for example, those associated with fanaticism and fundamentalism or attitudes of intolerance. They suggest a poor capacity for listening and dialogue with other points of view, for finding one's place in life.[5]

Strength is one of the most necessary conditions in the "spirit", in the "animus" of one who is committed to social action

The difficulties that beset the person who is thoroughly committed to social action are many. Some are obviously difficulties inherent in all efforts to act with coherence and responsibility. Others, however, have a special virulence; they occur more often and more aggressively in the lives of people working in the field of social action.

The origins and nature of these difficulties are diverse. Some have to do with external factors: resistance from one's own social reality in the face of initiatives for change; or the powerful interests of those who benefit from situations of injustice and the suffering of others; or limits and deficiencies in people whose humanity and dignity have been hurt; or complex mechanisms that seem impossible to remove; or the lack of alternatives, or a social climate that opposes our efforts. Other difficulties, and these are particularly hurtful, come from the surroundings of the individual: lack of understanding; lack of support in difficult moments; competition and rivalry sometimes open, sometimes buried; abandonment of esteemed colleagues; the calling into question or clear devaluation of what we do or attempt. Finally, there are internal experiences of impotence, downheartedness, failure after a concerted effort, feelings of irrelevance and contempt. These affect us quite as much as difficulties of an external kind.

With all these difficulties, a spirit of strength is important – a spirit that makes itself present in very special ways when there is union between companions. Union, indeed, is strength; the sense of being a team or a group gives strength. Communication and cooperation between those who pursue identical aims can then balance and compensate for the personal difficulties. I now want, briefly, to underline aspects of this strength that is so necessary.

[5]Patxi Alvarez SJ. Euskadi Conference, op. cit., pp.8 and 12-14.

And the first word that I associate with strength is patience. Patience is much more than passively holding on or hoping that the heavy showers will pass; it implies patience with the people we want to help, patience with the processes and rhythms of transformation, patience also with ourselves as companions and promoters of those processes. We cannot let our anxiety to obtain results, or our frustrations at not obtaining them, or not obtaining them as quickly as we had hoped, make us downcast. Patience is not to be forgotten when we make judgments and evaluations: so often we are mistaken in our precipitous judgments! And we also err in evaluating our own action: when we are too satisfied because we have helped more, or very dissatisfied because we have helped less. Patience, in the words of Dolores Aleixandre, is

The first word that I associate with strength is patience

> *… to familiarise us with the "law of the long period" of the gospel that counts on slowness while the leaven is fermenting the dough or while the seed breaks through the soil.*[6]

Strength is also the desire (and I mean desire) and the capacity to share, or better, "co-bear" the ensemble "cortege is the Ignatian word," of the most diverse afflictions (physical, economical, social, moral…) that affect the people whom we want to help. This desire to share their suffering is explained not by masochism but by the truth of our proximity and commitment to them. Saint Ignatius formulates it in the Exercises with a very expressive phrase when he asks for: "pain with the Christ in pain, brokenness with the broken Christ" (Spiritual Exercise 203). This is not the plea of the masochist or kamikaze, but of the one who loves those who suffer, and for that reason wants to accompany them wherever possible. We cannot follow untouched those who endure violence, nor serve the dispossessed to the bitter end without suffering loss ourselves.

To remain, to persevere, to not abandon, are verbs to be conjugated in the field of 'strength.' And, once again, that permanence and authenticity come not from a wish to prove something to ourselves or boast before others, but because we prioritise those whom we serve before ourselves, because we take their pain, the injustice they suffer, and their dignity seriously. This weighs more with us than the temptation to surrender, or our fatigue, or our desire for a different atmosphere.

The words of Dolores Aleixandre seem to me very suggestive when, in a reflection on "resistance," she remembers that part of the task of resistance is to make the person resistant and strong, to take care of the self in all ways, to avoid not the fatigue (that is inevitable) but the burnout, being melted down.

[6]Dolores Aleixandre rscj. "Espiritualidad solidaridad con los pobres," in *Tradición ignaciana,* op. cit., p.141.

In that preservation of self many elements enter, including those that Dolores mentions with common sense and a certain wise humour:

> *Resistance adds the sapiential disposition to the prophetic impetus. It reminds us that "in order that the subject may not be corrupted" we need to care for it with sensible doses of humour, common sense, the support of friends, and attentive reading of the history of yesterday so as not to take too tragically that of today.*[7]

We have spoken of patience, of compassion (sharing passion or suffering), of permanence and perseverance, of taking care of the subject… And obviously one must add to strength the buttress of hope: that radical trust in the promise of God and in the victory of Christ who opens human history to a just future which our daily struggle anticipates and approaches.

I still want, before I conclude this section, to make a last reflection. The spiritual strength of which we have spoken is not obtained through fistfights, or strenuous volunteerism, or gymnastics in our daily work. No – this spiritual strength is also a gift, part of the gift that is given to us with our call and our vocation. It is a gift that we feed when we live with gratitude, when we sincerely wish to serve, when we find ourselves face to face with brother or sister, when we open our hearts to the life of the poor, when we try to be as honest as possible. And also, above all, if in the process we let ourselves be accompanied, if we are capable of letting ourselves be helped by others, and make collaboration our way of life – that too is a gift. It is a gift that is received freely, strengthened in the exercise of love and cooperation and asked for with conviction and trust in the Lord who promises and gives us his Spirit (cf Luke 11,13).

Spiritual strength is not obtained through fistfights, or strenuous volunteerism

5. Gratuity

"Your faith has saved you; go in peace." This phrase, which Jesus repeatedly uses after many of his acts and signs of healing and liberation, is a perfect synthesis of the gratuity that is a marked characteristic of social action that wants, truly, to build up humanity. The two parts comprising this phrase point to two basic aspects of this gratuity: with respect to Jesus, the utter absence of any type of condition or return for his aid; with respect to the person healed, the empowering and highlighting of her deepest possibilities, in short, the affirmation of her dignity.

It is important to examine in greater depth the dimensions of the gratuity that dignifies social action and gives it an authentic human character.

[7]Dolores Aleixandre rscj, ibid.

We primarily think gratuity means not to charge or expect anything in return from the one whom we helped. (It is quite another thing to accept fees for our work from those who hire us). Obviously when we say 'expect nothing' we do not mean charging for our help in money, but there are other less "material" forms of gratification – basically, compensations of the affective type. One tries to not charge, when things turn out well, in the form of dependencies, fidelities, adhesions, silences; and when things turn out poorly, we try not to charge through reproaches, undervaluing, disqualifications, rancour or resentment. The word gratuity applies to situations in which our action is not conditioned by the answer that we receive but by the need that we detect.

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Apart from that primary sense of not charging either affectively or effectively, gratuity contains shades of greater refinement. It consists also in not seeking benefits or personal yields from my social action in the form of prestige, image, or merit that I award to myself. Gratuity means never to treat people as "my property": "my poor," "my people," "my group," assigning myself an exclusivity that nobody has given me and that could easily lead me to prevent or boycott other actions which might well be, who knows, more beneficial than mine. It is about never exchanging dignity for help; the goal of clean social action is to help without reducing, instead, enhancing and harnessing, the dignity of those who are aided. Nothing we give can have value if, in giving it we take away the dignity of the receiver; it will, on the contrary, be perverse and harmful.

Gratuity, besides being concerned with the greatest possible dignity, is to make an effort to emphasise all the good and positive qualities of people, even if they are not very visible; and to always start off with that attitude in our action. Gratuity emphasises possibilities, opens up horizons, and favours people, no matter how indigent; it is all that harnesses their progressive autonomy; gratuity means giving effective agency to the receiver and lessening dependency as much as possible.

Jose Ignacio González Faus, starting with a small anecdote from the life of Saint Ignatius, makes a suggestive reflection:

> *"... as soon as he arrived, he decided to teach Christian doctrine every day to the children; but his brother was much against it, assuring him that nobody would attend. He responded that, for him, one was enough (Autobiography 88)." The one [i.e. St Ignatius] who is content here with "just one" is the very one who was to write and proclaim in a thousand ways about the universal good: "the more universal it is, the more divine it is." He also wished that of all the poor, not a single one should remain in that state. But the sense of efficacy in the 'material' is not*

wholly at odds with the seemingly inefficient overtone of gratuity in the 'spiritual,' even if, as happens often enough, we don't ourselves know how to put the two together nor which might be the right moment for each.[8]"

Gratuity has to do with freedom: the freedom that we have with regard to ourselves and the freedom that we are able to generate in those who approach us. We have come to the conclusion of our reflection on spirituality in social action. I refer to what I said at the beginning: we have focused on the subject and the relations established in social action; we have not considered the tasks required by the evangelical spirituality that, in the light of the world situation today, is needed as much at the immediate level as at the global level.[9]

It seems to me important to say, before closing, that everything that we have remembered, suggested and proposed in this reflection is not something "added" to our social action. It is not as if there is something that must be done "in addition" "from outside" to validate it or give it sense. Absolutely not. What we have proposed is none other than a way (perhaps the only way?) to be and to act in social action so that it leads to the fullness of humanity in all those involved.

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[8]José Ignacio González Faus SJ. "De la pobreza a los pobres" in *Tradición ignaciana*, op. cit., p.51.
[9]See, for example, Esteban Velázquez Guerra SJ, "Espiritualidad y compromiso social. Las comunidades espirituales y religiosas ante los grandes problemas que aquejan a la humanidad", paper presented at the Spiritual Forum of Estella (Spain) in June 2006.
http://www.foroespiritual.org/portal/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=109&Itemid=73

New Images of Mission[1]

Michael Amaladoss SJ

Saint Francis Xavier, the first Jesuit missionary, gave us an example of adaptation in choosing to dress like a European nobleman when he wanted to dialogue with the Buddhist monks in Japan. He considered them learned compared to the poor fishermen of the South Indian coasts. That spirit of adaptation took root in Asia through Mateo Ricci and Roberto de Nobili. Incidentally, we celebrate this very month the 400th anniversary of the arrival of De Nobili in Madurai. The spirit of adaptation has continued and the encounter between Christianity and other cultures and religions has gone through many paradigm shifts in the last century, especially after the Second Vatican Council. The various narratives of mission in Asia and in the world bear witness to this. The jubilee is an occasion not only to look at history and at the present, but also to dream of and plan for the future. We can do this only if we become aware of the various movements in the field of mission. Even our dreams have to be contextual, though dynamic. I shall, therefore, evoke, first of all, the various paradigm shifts in the practice of, and reflection on, mission, though the limitations of time will not allow me to give the full theological background in every case. Then I shall reflect on the three crucial questions raised by the organisers of this encounter. Let me then start with the paradigm shifts. There are five of these.

I shall evoke the various paradigm shifts in the practice of, and reflection on, mission

From the Church to the Kingdom of God

In the past, the goal of mission used to be the 'planting of the Church' – *plantatio ecclesiae*. The planting was often the 'transplanting' of a European church with its structures, doctrines and rituals. Even though the missionaries may have adapted themselves to the local culture and context, they did not adapt the Church. There may have been some translation, but nothing more. But today we have become aware that the goal of mission is two-fold: the building up of the Kingdom of God, and the building up of the Church as its

[1]The article was originally written as a contribution to the Seminar 'Francis Xavier: Return and Meeting' held in Javier, Navarre, from the 13th to the 16th of November 2006. The seminar, jointly organised by ALBOAN, Deusto University and the province of Loyola, was meant to celebrate the fifth centenary of the birth of St. Francis Xavier. Following the methodology adopted in the Seminar, the author's contribution is an attempt to answer as a theologian the experiences of three communities living their commitment to a faith that does justice in the Asian context: an Adivasi community from the ethnic group 'gamit' living in Mandal Parish, South Gujarat (India); the Catholic Labour Apostolate Conference in South Korea; and the movement 'Couples for Christ' which started in the Philippines [Editor's note].

symbol and servant. Mission is primarily the mission of God, who sends the Word and the Spirit to share God's life with humanity and the world and to bring all things together (Eph 1:10) so that "God will be all in all" (1 Cor 15:28). The Word and the Spirit are present and active in peoples, their cultures and religions. The Word becomes incarnate in Jesus to further this project of universal reconciliation and communion.

The Kingdom is a historical and yet a dynamic reality. Speaking about it George Soares-Prabhu says:

> *When the revelation of God's love (the Kingdom) meets its appropriate response in man's trusting acceptance of this love (repentance), there begins a mighty movement of personal and societal liberation which sweeps through human history. The movement brings freedom inasmuch it liberates each individual from the inadequacies and obsessions that shackle him. It fosters fellowship, because it empowers free individuals to exercise their concern for each other in genuine community. And it leads onto justice, because it impels every true community to adopt the just societal structures which alone make freedom and fellowship possible… (It) summons us to a ceaseless struggle against the demonic structures of unfreedom (psychological and sociological) erected by mammon; and to a ceaseless creativity that will produce in every age new blueprints for a society ever more consonant with the Gospel vision of man. Lying on the horizons of human history and yet part of it, offered to us as a gift yet confronting us as a challenge, Jesus' vision of a new society stands before us as an unfinished task, summoning us to permanent revolution.*[2]

The perspectives of the Kingdom remain the criteria to discern where the Spirit of God is active in any given context

This Kingdom is operative in the whole of humanity, its diverse cultures and religions. The Church is aware of itself as sent by Jesus to be the symbol and servant of the Kingdom. It is called to collaborate with other religions in the continuing building up of the Kingdom. The perspectives of the Kingdom remain the criteria to discern where the Spirit of God is active in any given context. If there are people who feel called by God to become disciples of Jesus, we welcome them to join the community of the Church in mission. As an Asian theological Consultation said:

> *The Kingdom of God is therefore universally present and at work. Wherever men and women open themselves to the transcendent Divine Mystery which impinges upon them, and go out of themselves in love and service of fellow humans, there the Reign of God is at work… This goes to show that the Reign of God is a universal reality, extending far beyond the boundaries of the Church. It is the reality of salvation in Jesus Christ, in which Christians and others share together; it is the*

[2]George Soares-Prabhu. "The Kingdom of God: Jesus' Vision of a New Society," D.S.Amalorpavadass (ed), *The Indian Church in the Struggle for a New Society* (Bangalore: NBCLC, 1981), pp. 600, 601, 607.

fundamental "mystery of unity" which unites us more deeply than differences in religious allegiance are able to keep us apart.[3]

From Mission to Dialogue

The Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences, at their first plenary meeting in Taipei, Taiwan, said that evangelisation in Asia is a three-fold dialogue of the Gospel with the many poor, the rich cultures and the active religions of Asia. The focus of this three-fold dialogue is the dialogue with the poor, because justice is the integrating principle of mission – as the 34th General Congregation has said. However justice, as the transformation of economic and socio-political structures, cannot be promoted without the transformation of cultures and religions. The call to such transformation can only be dialogical, since here we are dealing with the freedom of God who is present and active in the cultures and religions of all peoples and the freedom of the humans who respond to God's call. Dialogue therefore becomes the way of mission. Dialogue presupposes not only knowledge and relationship, but also a challenge to conversion and transformation. The dialogue focuses on cultural and religious transformation as a means of social transformation, and this would then lead to collaboration at the level of social transformation. The multi-religious group should be able to develop a consensus on common spiritual and social values that it wishes to promote, while each religious group finds the basis, motivation and inspiration for the common task in its own religion. In the course of such collaboration, dialogue, interaction and transformation strictly at the religious level is not excluded. It may even be encouraged. Conversion from one religion to another may also take place. Mission then becomes dialogical and starts a process of living together as one community in spite of religious differences. Today religious differences have become radicalised and lead to violence. The immediate cause of violence may be economic or political, but religions justify it. Fundamentalism can make religion itself violent. Inter-religious dialogue then has to start with conflict resolution and reconciliation before it can go on to collaboration and proper inter-religious encounter where the believers of different religions encounter each other at the deepest level in the presence of God.

Mission then becomes dialogical and starts a process of living together as one community in spite of religious differences

From Domination to Service

Authentic conversion and transformation have to come from within. The word of God is a challenge that is responded to by the hearers. Traditionally,

[3] *For All the Peoples of Asia, Vol II,* p.200.

the missionary not only proclaimed the Gospel, but also told the people how to respond to it, imposing on them his own cultural, institutional, ritual, theological and spiritual, not to speak of social structures. Some adaptation would be tolerated. Translation would be insisted on. The missionary thought of his own culture as Christian, therefore privileged and normative. But most people today would maintain that the Gospel has to become incarnate in every culture. In the incarnational paradigm of Jesus all transformation has to come from within. The agent of such transformation is obviously the listener, not the one who proclaims. This seems obvious. But it is equally obvious that such creative freedom is not available to all people even today. The Church is supposed to be the servant of the Kingdom. Its service involves a self-emptying for which it is often not ready. During the colonial period domination was taken for granted. Today there is a growing awareness of the need for autonomy and inculturation in the local Churches. At an international mission congress in Manila in 1979, the Asian Churches declared that they are responsible for mission in their territory and co-responsible for it elsewhere. The missionary therefore comes not to dominate, but to help and to serve the ongoing encounter between Gospel and culture in the life of the people. It is from this encounter that a local Church emerges. The universal Church is a communion of local Churches.

The missionary comes to help and to serve the ongoing encounter between Gospel and culture in the life of the people

From the Sacred to the Secular

I have said that in the past the goal of mission was the transplantation of the Church. This was done of course to save souls. Souls were saved by the grace of God. One had access to the grace of God by the sacraments. So the mission aimed at promoting sacramental practice in the newly formed Christian communities. The success of mission was counted in terms of the number of baptisms and confessions in a particular area. Missionaries had always been concerned about the poor, but working for the poor was considered as the expression of one's Christian life. Before the Council, aiding the poor was considered either as a consequence or as a preparation for mission. Around the time of the Council, service of the poor was considered as indirect evangelisation. It was at the Synod of Bishops on justice in 1971 that the promotion of justice was seen as an integral dimension of evangelisation. That was also the time when the theology of liberation was being developed in Latin America and soon echoed across other poor countries in Africa and Asia. The 32nd General Congregation of the Jesuits

We are now moving towards a situation in which the option for, and service of, the poor becomes the primary characteristic of mission

spoke of faith that does justice. The promotion of justice was now seen to be a concrete expression of faith.

I believe that we are now moving towards a situation in which the option for, and service of, the poor becomes the primary characteristic of mission. As a matter of fact, the poor are organising themselves and helping themselves. They are struggling for justice and equality, and religion is respected and accepted if it helps this commitment to justice. Religious ritual must become the symbolic celebration of the struggles and successes of life, inspiring them to carry on their struggle. The accent of mission, therefore, is shifting from the sacred to the secular. We said earlier, while discussing inter-religious dialogue, that its focus is no longer on the religions themselves but on what they can do together to build community. Dialogue that is strictly religious is reserved for a few specialists. For ordinary humans dialogue means collaboration in the defence of common human and spiritual values. Service to the poor implies something very similar to this. The poor have to defend their rights; they have to struggle for justice; they are not interested in institutional religion for its own sake. Rituals are welcome in so far as they help their struggle. This is what I call a shift from the sacred to the secular.

From Unity to Harmony

The goal of mission used to be to convert the whole world so that there would be one Shepherd and one sheepfold. This oneness was understood to mean that all humans would eventually become members of the Church. The Church was seen as the only way to salvation; the other religions were destined to disappear sooner or later. It is with this perspective, for instance, that John Paul II declared in New Delhi, where he proclaimed the post-synodal document *The Church in Asia*, that Asia would become Christian in the third millennium. He believed that Europe became Christian in the first and the Americas in the second. Now it is Asia's turn. I do not know on which signs John Paul II based his prediction. Sometimes the Church speaks the language of fulfilment. The other religions will find their fulfilment in Christianity. We do not know, of course, what form such a fulfilment will take. It appears at the moment to be hierarchical, since the image is one of moving from the partial to the full, from the less perfect to the perfect.

Asians living the experience of the richness and diversity of religious traditions speak about harmony as the goal

Asians, however, living the experience of the richness and diversity of religious traditions speak about harmony as the goal. Harmony supposes pluralism. This is not an unordered pluralism, but one in which there is mutual interaction and enrichment through dialogue. Collaboration among the different religions to pursue common goals can ensure that pluralism is experienced as richness and not as a problem. As the Second

Vatican Council said, God is the common origin and goal of all peoples. As they walk towards this goal the members of different religions experience themselves as co-pilgrims. Their common enemies are Satan (the personal principle of evil) and Mammon (the power of money), and in fighting against these common enemies they see themselves as allies rather than enemies. Each religion can and should affirm its specific experience of God. It can share it with others. But it cannot judge *a priori* the God-experience of the others. It can only listen to them and interact with them. God will remain the horizon of such inter-religious encounter. Examples of people like Swami Abhishiktananda (Henri le Saux) suggest that any hasty integration of differences must be avoided.

This vision of harmony is further strengthened by the perspective of *advaita* or non-duality in India. It is manifested in the integration of nature with the human, of matter with spirit and of the human with the divine. This harmony may also be seen in the Chinese tradition as the dynamic movement embracing the *yin* and the *yang*.

These new paradigms are summarised by a group of Indian theologians in the following manner:

> *Creation itself is a self-communication of God, who is reaching out to all peoples through the Word and the Spirit in various ways, at various times, and through the different religions. This ongoing divine-human encounter is salvific. However, God's plan is not merely to save individual souls, but to gather together all things in heaven and on earth. God is working out this plan in history through various sages and prophets. Jesus, the Word incarnate, has a specific role in this history of salvation. But Jesus' mission is at the service of God's mission. It does not replace it. Taking a kenotic form, it collaborates with other divine self-manifestations in other religions as God's mission is moving towards its eschatological fulfilment.*[4]

Crucial Questions

It is in this theological context that I would like to consider the three crucial questions raised by the organisers of this congress.

Faith and Life

Reading through the various narratives we see that the goal of life is no longer an other-worldly, individual and spiritual salvation, but a life of equality, justice and community in this world. We may wonder whether this vision comes to them from their Christian faith or from a certain secular humanism prevalent in the world today. This may have its roots in the revolutionary traditions of the modern period. People who talk today about justice and human rights do not necessarily seek religious justification for

[4]Thomas Malipurathu and L. Stanislaus (eds). *A Vision of Mission in the New Millennium* (Mumbai: St. Paul's 2001), p. 203.

them. There is a 'secular' consensus about their need that transcends particular religions. The groups of the oppressed who follow such goals often tend to be multi-denominational and multi-religious; religious differences seem not to matter much to them. Christians may, and often do, justify these goals in terms of the life and teachings of Jesus. Other believers may offer other justifications; faith is experienced as larger than Christian faith, but there is a consensus about the common goals that are pursued. There is certainly a link between faith and life. But there seems to be a certain ambiguity whether faith follows life or vice versa. Comparing these experiences with similar ones which owe their existence to other religions and even non-religious secular ideologies may make us aware of the limited role of faith. It is significant that in most of these narratives, the people concerned start reflecting on the relationship between faith and life only after the question is put to them, almost putting words into their mouth. It is also significant that such faith is rooted in the life and teaching of Jesus rather than in the theology and structures of the institutional Church. Life is primary. It has its own meaning. Faith offers a context in which life can discover a supplementary meaning.

Life is primary. It has its own meaning. Faith offers a context in which life can discover a supplementary meaning

Faith and Society

These narratives also bear witness to the process of secularisation that characterises the contemporary world. One effect of secularisation is the progressive autonomy of secular aspects of life –economics, politics, society and culture– from religious control. Such a breakaway makes it possible for people who belong to different religions, denominations and ideologies to live together. Groups that engage in fundamentalist religious violence refuse to allow this differentiation of the secular from the sacred. Yet, such a differentiation seems necessary and inevitable in a multi-religious and complex society seeing as how the way of life in a pluralist society is dialogue and collaboration. Dialogue is not possible if any one tradition claims to be exclusive and superior. Dialogue presupposes a status of formal equality in the public, civil space, whatever the self-perception of a particular group in the religious sphere. People who belong to the same religion may belong to different ideological groups. This underlines the distinction between faith and ideology, religion and society. In modern societies there may be an increasing proportion of people who do not believe in any particular religion. Defence of

Dialogue presupposes a status of formal equality in the public, civil space, whatever the self-perception of a particular group in the religious sphere

people's freedom to follow any religion according to their conscience assumes that dialogue has become a way of life in the secular sphere. This also involves a certain privatisation of religion, so that there is a clear separation between the Church (as institution) and the State. Religious leaders should not get involved in politics. While the distinction between political and civil society is not always clear, religious institutions should be sensitive to that distinction operative in civil society and keep clear of politics.

Faith and the Church

When we read the many narratives, we see that while people are inspired by Jesus and the Gospels, many are reticent with regard to the institutional Church and its ministers. There is an interest in the Eucharist, but more as a gathering of a community in the presence of God than in terms of its ministerial structures. This indicates that even the sacraments have a secular focus. A community that is searching for solidarity and equality can give expression to it and draw nourishment from a sacramental celebration. Where such a community does not exist, the sacrament becomes an empty ritual. There is today an insistence on the emergence and autonomy of the Laity. There is also an emergence of solidarity and community on the margins of the institutional Church, and also a certain need and desire for an autonomous local Church. The sacraments and rituals of the Church are not given a magical value in themselves, but as experiences of the community gathered together in the name of God and of Christ. On the one hand, the basic Christian community provides a welcome alternative to the institutional Church; on the other hand, the basic Christian community may merge into a basic *human* community that may be multi-religious and multi-ideological. While the communities appreciate their Christian identity and even defend it, they are free of any spirit of fundamentalism and communalism, which is the political use of religion.

Conclusion: Universal Mission

Jesus' call to conversion was not addressed only to the poor and the marginalised of his day. These he befriended, but he also challenged the leaders of the people to change, and he did it in no uncertain condemnatory tones. Today too the call for their conversion needs to be addressed, first of all to the rich and the powerful of the world who happen to be Christian, at least in name. They are the ones who have exploited the poor of the world in the colonial period and who continue to exploit them through unjust trade in the globalised world of today. It is they who over-consume the earth's resources, depriving the poor now and for the ages to come. It is a pity therefore that the mission narratives deal mostly with the work among the poor, mostly of the

Third World. A faith that does justice cannot limit its attention to the poor alone, but must aim at transforming the oppressive structures, for which it has to dialogue with the rich. Who is raising a prophetic voice against the rich and unjust exploiters today? The last question in the interviews was about what they asked for from the rich. Many asked for their prayers, their understanding, their solidarity and their aid. Only a few spoke about justice. No one spoke of restitution, though others have done so. This shows how domesticated they have become and how they have resigned themselves to their fate. The Churches in the First World seem more concerned with private moral behaviour than with public, social justice. The voice of the prophets calling for justice must reverberate in the halls of the IMF, the World Bank, the WTO, and the United Nations. Only then will mission become universal. The stalled negotiations of the Doha round of the WTO is, perhaps, a good place to start. The poor of the world need to be protected and empowered. The rich and the powerful of the world need to be conscientised and converted. Maybe it is time for a reverse mission when the poor from the Third World will come to be prophets in the First World, calling it to conversion.

A faith that does justice cannot limit its attention to the poor alone, but must aim at transforming the oppressive structures, for which it has to dialogue with the rich

The focus of the Church has to move away from institution, doctrine and ritual to life and community. It must become local in every place, autonomous and self-sufficient, collaborating with other local Churches from a position of equality. Its attitude to the others must become one of dialogue and collaboration. We must form multi-religious coalitions to promote justice and peace in the world. Such interaction between religions may rescue them from sliding into fundamentalism and violence. It will also pave the way to God's mission in the world to "make all things new" (Rev 21:5).

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Evangelising under the Gaze of the Poor[1]

F. Javier Vitoria

The witnesses of *Loiola-etxea* (Europe) and of *Romero's House* (Canada)[2] suggest to me, a Christian, a priest and a European theologian committed since the time of the Second Vatican Council to the task of evangelising the local Church of Bilbao, some reflections on the mission of the Church in rich societies, more precisely in Europe.

Faith and justice in the light of fortunate people's gospel stories

I understand my exercise of the ministry of theology to be intrinsically linked to the evangelising project of a local European Church. The challenges of this mission were the factors that motivated me to dedicate myself to theology. Almost from the outset I realised that European theology needed to retrace its path, this time under the defenceless and painful gaze of the poor. Having spent a large portion of its most recent history under the (suspicious) gaze of disbelief, it had to take a step farther towards the place where God has wished to show Himself freely. This new departure requires two things: a) learn to identify the historical faces of poverty and the human dimensions of the history of suffering; b) dare to support the poor in solidarity and compassion and make face to face contact with their pain and cries for liberation. Only then will the theologian be in a position to seek and utter anything coherent about God, based on an appropriate understanding of the reality of divine revelation. It will be coherent for it will have adopted the perspective (from above towards those below) or kenosis of God who reached us by taking the form of a slave to become one of many (cf. Philippians 2,7).

European theology needed to retrace its path, this time under the defenceless and painful gaze of the poor

All my modest theological activity has been geared to the aim of linking my reflection to the cause of justice. Recently I had the chance to reply to a worrying question: What are the possibilities of the relationship between

[1]The text of this article is part of a talk given by the author at the conference on "Francis Xavier: Return and Meeting" which took place in Javier, Navarre, from the 13th to 16th of November 2006. Organised jointly by ALBOAN, the University of Deusto and the Province of Loyola, the presentations were part of the celebrations for the 5th centenary of St Francis Xavier. Following the pattern of the celebrations, the author replies as a theologian to the experiences of two communities who live the commitment to the faith that does justice in the western world: *Loiola-etxea* (Donosti-San Sebastián, País Vasco/Basque Country) and *Romero House* (Toronto, Canada). [Editor's note]

[2]In the Conference's working document, *Community Experiences,* there are also two witnesses from the *Communità Sant'Egidio.*

[3]See "Una teología de ojos abiertos. Teología y Justicia, Perspectivas" in *Cátedra Chaminade, 25 años de Teología: Balance y perspectiva* (Madrid 2006), pp. 441-454.

theology and justice or between faith and justice?[3] My first impression was that the future of the faith-justice dyad, in both its biographical and reflective versions, was not very promising. The cultural climate in which we live seems to have put an end to the times of messianic Christianity. Nevertheless, my reply was eventually more encouraging.

The future of theological thought about the cause of justice will depend on Christian lives, individual and collective, concerned in season and out of season with an ever greater justice, committed to the lives of human beings, especially of the poor who are the glory of God. The memory of Christianity in the past encourages us to hope – perhaps against any hope that history can offer – that the Spirit will raise up a messianic Christianity even in the foreseeable adverse conditions of the future. It will be peopled by men and women trained by the Spirit for a "*total offering*" of which only God is capable (M. Horkheimer); apprentices together with the Father of the secrets of the "*economy of the gift*" (P. Ricoeur), permanent disciples of the "*supreme man*" – Jesus of Nazareth – who lowers himself as far as possible to give life.

Experiences lived in *Loiola-etxea* and in *Romero's House* have fully convinced me of this intuition. The Christian men and women who have been meeting us here in these days at Javier represent many others who, in the Europe of triumphant markets and celebrities and other rich countries, share the lot of the excluded. They are all people of flesh and bone. At the same time there are the righteous and the sinners; tireless militants for great historical causes and those who are hung up on small family attachments; travellers enriched in the endless journey towards Ithaca[4] and the shipwrecked clinging stubbornly to Utopias sunk in the immensity of the ocean; those who resist harshness and are yet vulnerable to gentleness; who carry on with the struggle, yet are weary of the task; who watch for the morning with eyes heavy with sleep from countless nights in vigil. Their living journeys bear the marks of "*the gospel stories of fortunate people*" (D. Aleixandre), that is, the unmistakable air, the infectious mood, the unique style of the Gospel of Jesus. All of them are authentic spiritual people: women and men seduced, moved and controlled by the Spirit of Jesus, who adopt his options with the same passion. They live history from within, seeking the city of the future and settled "outside the bounds of the camp" in that place where the poor endure "their disgrace" (cf.

[4] "*When you undertake the journey towards Ithaca*
you should ask that the way may be long,
full of happiness, full of knowledge.
You should ask that the way may be long, that there be many dawns
in which you enter through a door your eyes don't know
and that you go to cities to learn from those who know.
Always keep the idea of Ithaca in your heart.
You have to get to it, this is your destiny,
but never force the distance to be travelled.
It is better that it takes many years
and that you have already grown old as you anchor in the island,
enriched by all you have gained on the way
without hoping that you are offered more riches.
Ithaca has given you a beautiful journey,
without her you would have never set sail.
And if you find it poor,
don't think Ithaca has tricked you.
As a wise person that you have become
you will know well what Ithacas mean."
(Konstantinos Kavafis).

Hebrews 13,12) and their "necessary" crucifixion (cf. John 11,50). They move in "an opposite direction" to this age which has canonised the all-powerful market, decreed the impossibility of utopias, enthroned the value of possessive individualism, privatisation and the compulsive enjoyment of the present, and proscribed all ethics put into practice with passion (that is, with compassion, and for that reason not exempt from suffering). Paradoxically, this desert in which they have set up their dwelling is for them like a divine gift in which they receive *light, warmth and company*. They live in an inclusive home and sit at an open table – a spiritual experience that redeems all darkness, cold and separation left over from the old way of living the Christian faith.

Paradoxically, this desert in which they have set up their dwelling is for them like a divine gift in which they receive light, warmth and company

If all authentic discussion of the faith-justice dyad depends on the life of these spiritual protagonists of faith and justice, if there is no ready-made theology to label them with, if the only authentic theology is that which is deduced from their lives, then only living stories like those witnessed here can authorise (however clumsily and inadequately) a discourse on theology and justice, on faith and a life worthy of the poor. For my part, I am confident that such generous credit has to be given to them. It would be unforgivable if, in attempting to establish the unity of theology and justice, my presentation were to end up being a complicated muddle, strange to the ears of the protagonists of these stories, which are tales of solidarity with the excluded.

Those of us who claim to pronounce the name of God or stutter *"a heaven-knows- what"* about God – not only theologians, but also preachers, catechists, teachers – must never forget that we are attempting something very difficult, if not impossible: to speak satisfactorily about the Mystery. We must remember that our true cross does not consist in explaining the inexplicable, but in following historically, like any disciple, the way of Jesus. Only then will our theological "science" impart this wisdom of God which we absorb by following Jesus – a wisdom that is much deeper than any science and of which the saints and prophets have been experts. In short, the theologian can dare think and stammer something about the Mystery of Love, because first she has dared to believe and practise love according to the plans of Jesus, that is, she has run the risk, as G. Gutiérrez said, to "practise God".

Whosoever is going to speak about God in the face at this time of the present death camps that poverty has given rise to, must always bear in mind the impertinent remark of S. Kierkegaard: *"Who is a professor of theology? Someone who is professor because another has been crucified"*. The memory of the Crucified One shows that God is much more interested in how we behave – always inadequately! – towards the "living crucified" of history than in our thinking about the crucifixion. The theologian's 'ecclesiality', her 'feeling with'

the Church, depends more on her persistence in bringing about a Church open to the God of the poor than in her tenacity in defending it against secularism and laicisation. If the theologian does not live affected by the suffering and fate of her crucified contemporaries, she will not be following Jesus, her prayerful silence will not merit the description Christian, nor will her theology be an expression, fearful and stuttering, of the strength and wisdom of God.

The theologian's 'ecclesiality', her 'feeling with' the Church, depends on her persistence in bringing about a Church open to the God of the poor

Having said all this, I would add, so as not to dilute my thought, that not even this theology which tries to live and think under the guidance of the victims justifies the theologian. That is, even if the theologian tries to do all that has been said, she remains radically obliged to take the mediations of theology very seriously.

Option for the poor and evangelisation of Europe

For more than fifty years we have known that Europe is missionary territory. When in 1943 Godin and Daniel, two priests of the Mission of Paris, published *France, pays de mission ?*, a book with a theological proposal on evangelisation that was new and disturbing to traditional beliefs, almost nobody thought that, seventy years later, the description of Europe as missionary territory would be generally accepted in the Church. Today we all recognise the crisis and even admit the failure of evangelisation in Europe in modern times. We remember here that 14 years ago the then Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger denounced "*the catastrophic failure of modern catechesis.*"[5]

While the optimism generated by the Second Vatican Council made it seem that the Church had found a way to dialogue with the modern world, the gigantic changes that have swept through the European scene in the past forty years have placed the Church in the position of having to learn anew how to relate to the world. The assessment of evangelisation over the last four decades in Europe shows that the Church needs to move away from the injunction to evangelise towards a recognition that she does not know how to put it into practice. The current conclusion of most people is that we have not yet come up with a meaningful and evangelically effective formula expressing the relationship between the Church and European society. The present situation in Europe is an invitation to the Church to redefine her mission. She knows that finding an adequate reply cannot be put off, if she is to remain faithful to her Lord. But whether or not she finds it will inevitably affect how she shapes herself today and builds her future.

[5]"El Sacramento de la penitencia o confesión" in *30 DIAS EN LA IGLESIA Y EN EL MUNDO,* Suplemento n.52 (1992), I.

In this historical crisis the most official proposal for evangelisation, and the one that is most praised seeks a missionary strategy which generates and fosters a culture open to Transcendence, or a 'culture of faith'. A culture of this nature is the only way of saving Europe from a decadence rooted in secularism and unbelief, and can give rise to a civilisation of love.[6]

There is no doubt that building social reality and faith in God are mutually intertwined. Modern theology has often stressed this point; social theories have also emphasised it. But would a hypothetical move from unbelief to religious faith automatically solve the problem of building a European society worthy of its best Christian roots and democratic traditions?

In my opinion openness to the mystery of God does not in itself guarantee the health of European society, and as a result, its regeneration does not depend directly on the articulation of a culture of transcendence. All cultural proposals, even those open to the Absolute, have written into their nature an appearance of barbarism. It was so in the past, and ethnocentrism, colonialism and the nationalisms of European culture are there to prove it. It could be so again in the future, and the threat of religious fundamentalism is there to show it. In European history individuals have too often been condemned to extermination and death in the name of Transcendency. The inquisition and religious wars show how calling on the divine has distorted our Christian roots.

Openness to the mystery of God does not in itself guarantee the health of European society

A civilisation of love cannot be achieved by simply recognising God's existence and overcoming atheism. It needs the contribution of a social and political practice which can truly ensure and materially realise the dignity of all European citizens. A society involved in the task of ensuring that the poor have a worthwhile life, whether or not that is its express intention, will give glory to the Living God who became present in history through the weakness, tolerance, poverty and vulnerability of the Suffering Servant. And in practice it will recognise his Name, because *to give a life (worth living)* and *to give (one's own) life* is precisely the glory that God seeks and claims.

We do well to recognise that our society is infiltrated by indifference, that occasionally it accepts nihilistic beliefs which not only destroy religion but preserve unjust privileges in the European paradise. But the witnesses we have listened to here remind us that defence of the Living God's identity against the idolatrous powers of death is not achieved by the mere and simple proclamation of God's Mystery. Such a defence requires definite proposals, realistic and practical, capable of giving dignity to those actually excluded from European and American citizenship.

[6]For an extension and qualification of these ideas see my work "La nueva evangelización de Europa" in *Iglesia Viva* 159 (1992), 303-326.

To believe in the God of Jesus Christ includes the adoption in practice of a specific and effective "social theory" whose evangelical origin is in *the preferential option for the poor*, so often emphasised by Pope John Paul II. This can give rise to *a culture of solidarity* and an ethical system based on *effective solidarity and public and private honesty.* Such a system will not waste time in puritanical or permissive flourishes but will try to redress marginalisation and pockets of poverty in the rich cities, without forgetting peoples who are separated from the main European and American paradise.

On this basis it is right to hold the conviction that, as a Christian, *to practice the faith in this God of Life* helps to build a more human and caring society. Furthermore, as Christians we can, like H. de Lubac, consider that faith in *this* God is a better guarantee for building a just and fraternal society than atheism. Our God is gratuitous, but not superfluous. At the same time, all this does not prevent us from recognising the possibility of an authentic human way, spiritual and perhaps even mystical, without religion.

Nevertheless, official proposals of the Church often change her evangelical message into a theodicy, as if it were necessary to defend God against the world. And in this way they insensitively leave the face of the *Christian* God in semi-darkness as a Transcendence without a historical or imminent profile. The repair and new life of the "common house" that is Europe – we can call it "etxe-berri" in memory of Francis Xavier – cannot be reduced to eliminating indifference and agnosticism from its rooms. A dehumanising spirit will take deeper root in Europe if the *new presence of God* does not include *the hitherto unheard-of presence of the poor* (Matthew 12,43-47).[7]

A mystique of gratuity and evangelisation

The stories of solidarity with the poor which have been told here at this meeting leave us with a lesson that perhaps the older ones among us do not yet know how to assimilate because it is difficult and painful for us to do. That is, the cause of justice is not the result of any Promethean or massive messianic drive, nor of heroic voluntarism, nor of politics alone, however necessary. The building of history according to divine standards requires major changes of attitudes and practices, such as gratuity, receptivity, contemplation, respect, patience, gentleness, and so on—practices which apparently seem not very constructive.

Evangelisation, that is, the construction of salvation in history,[8] is at the same time the fruit of gratuity and a mandate. To look for ever greater justice will be for the Church *an absolute requirement* of the faith. But we Christians

[7]See J.L.Segundo. *La historia perdida y recuperada de Jesús de Nazaret. De los Sinópticos a Pablo. (*Santander: 1991), p.213.

[8]I tend to think that to evangelise is to transform into historical facts that desire of the Divine persons: "*Let's save the human race",* as St Ignatius explains in the Exercises.

will, we hope, learn in time that there is nothing more demanding in justice for others than to experience the *gratuity* of God's love. This love opens in each one of us real possibilities for the impossible: to be like children in faith and like brothers and sisters in solidarity. If we fight for justice as a law, awareness of its impossibility will sooner or later demobilise us. Whereas, if we accept it as a *grace* we will perceive its perpetual dynamism and call in the experience of "*God's love [that] has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.*" (Romans 5,5). Then we will know ourselves above all *forgiven, thanked* and *referred* constantly to that Gift in our evangelical mission, and not "chained" to a categorical imperative.

There is nothing more demanding in justice for others than to experience the gratuity of God's love

Freed from the captivity of works and the law, the practice of justice and the struggle for a life worthwhile for all will be purified from its own *"hubris"*: the false absolutisation of the project itself, which inexorably ends in a path of destruction and death. Any real project of struggle for justice will always be incapable of achieving full justice for all the victims of misery in the world. Furthermore, it will inevitably have to pay its own contribution to injustice since no human work is capable of bringing with it a chemically pure justice. Only the mercy of God and his power to raise the dead will purify the works of our hands and bring definitive justice to the victims of history.

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DOCUMENTS

Fragments of Peace in Magdalena Medio, Colombia[1]

Francisco de Roux SJ

Demobilisation and Dignity

Victims of the armed internal conflict – mothers of families, widows, brothers and sisters, sons and daughters – met in Puerto Berrío for two days at an event organised to express the grief and humiliation buried in memories. They met so that the clamour for justice would spring out of silence in a firm resolve to beat back fear and demand truth and reparation, but also to then open themselves to reconciliation.

It was the idea of the Student Society of the University of Antioquia to hold the event and to coordinate it. The "Laboratory of Peace" of the Development and Peace Programme of Magdalena Medio (PDPMM) joined the Church and the municipal government in accompanying the initiative. The five-day activity was called "Putting the Pain onto the Public Stage."

On the evening of 6 October, on the pavement of the central square, in front of the main entrance of the church, we were called together on behalf of more than 400 persons, assassinated or "missing." Their names were written on white bricks on which flowers and candles were placed by family members who stood there. With the data that arrived that afternoon the number of the dead exceeded 600, the great majority of them victims of the internal warfare raging since 1980.

Suddenly, members of the NGO that represented the demobilised paramilitary troops sat down at the main table facing the white bricks representing the dead, and distributed posters and pamphlets bearing their coat of arms next to the emblem of the PDPMM, while one member of the group addressed the people, praying and dramatically seeking forgiveness.

A feeling of damaged, buried, unvoiced, confused human dignity crept through the perplexed silence of the relatives and friends of the dead, and for a time no one dared to react because of the real power of the demobilised paramilitaries.

As for ourselves in the same public forum, we reacted immediately to this action of the paramilitaries. This seemed to us like a drama with the actors playing out the confusion of both – the demobilised members of the AUC as well as the national and international apparatus which supports the process of demobilisation.

We said that the PDPMM is a supporter of demobilisation, and believes that if the demobilised make a public commitment never again to take up illegal arms, it would be highly beneficial. But to take the initiative in an event organised by the victims; to coerce the families broken by violence into granting forgiveness (because these families feel fear as well as pain); to present themselves as

[1]In this issue of *Promotio Iustitiae*, we present the account of some events in the Magdalena Medio area of Colombia. Not an article grounded in an academic discourse, this account of seemingly unconnected events gives us a dynamic view of the situation of the Programme for Peace in the country. [Editor's Note]

conciliators allied to God, to hand out pamphlets in which they place themselves on the side of the grieving families and of the Laboratory of Peace, and to construe themselves as participating in the painful events when they have so savagely harmed these very people – this is to show disrespect and lack of dignity, their own as well as of the others.

To take the initiative in an event organised by the victims when they have so savagely harmed these very people is to show disrespect

The Colombian government has pardoned the demobilised paramilitaries. The international partners have pardoned them. Business leaders and politicians in Bogotá and Medellín have pardoned them. And such pardon and recognition by those in power may have led these confused demobilised fighters to feel they were entitled to impose granting of forgiveness on the community, to take the initiative in a forced reconciliation, and to demand the handover of subsidies, jobs and confidence. But the victim community has not yet forgiven. And here what matters is not the State, nor the international partners, nor other players with power, but the people.

There are two things which every human being knows from experience about forgiveness. First, no one can forgive on behalf of the persons who have been mutilated or widowed or orphaned or rendered paraplegic by the actions of the aggressors. The victims alone can forgive. Secondly, forgiveness is absolutely free; no one can be obliged to make that act of human magnanimity and freedom which is forgiveness. No one can exercise coercion to force forgiveness.

The victims alone can forgive

The communities of Magdalena Medio want reconciliation and forgiveness. But in order to forgive, the affected families first of all seek truth and reparation. They want, at the very least, evidence that the perpetrators have begun to speak the truth for which the people ask, signs that they are beginning to repair what the people want repaired. The victims want to see the dismantling of the "promoters of coercion."

In Puerto Berrío, before the demobilised fighters could speak, the mothers and children made their petitions: "Tell me, where is my son who disappeared?" "Where is the body of my daughter?" "Why did they kill my brother?" There was no answer to these requests.

The families – who experience keenly the effort needed to overcome the fear of speaking out, and the effort to transcend hatred and resentment – are in the right to insist on an answer. More than that, they have a duty to insist on an answer. In the future their grown children will ask their mothers for the truth and for justice concerning the assassination of their fathers – and all these facts will have remained silent because the paramilitaries and the institutions demanded forgiveness.

Beyond all that lies the question of dignity. The dignity of the victims; the dignity of the aggressors themselves – paramilitary troops who, unaware, revealed themselves as villains that difficult evening in Puerto Berrío.

A man with ties to the demobilised paramilitaries approached us when we concluded our reflections at the meeting in [Puerto] Berrío. He said we had done wrong to speak as we did. We replied that we would not be coerced into defining right and wrong and we could not keep silent about what we felt in our conscience. He protested that we had shamed the demobilised "boys"; and we replied that we wanted precisely that. If they felt no shame for their crimes they would not admit anything, nor speak the truth, nor offer reparation with their own goods and actions for the damage they had done.

From Puerto Berrío we left for Ceja, where the demobilised leaders are imprisoned, to see Rodrigo Pérez (also known as 'Julián Bolívar'), leader of the paramilitaries of Puerto Berrío. We went there to ask for respect, both for the victims and for themselves, the perpetrators of the crimes; to express that the way things are being done is unacceptable; and to demand that the demobilised paramilitaries be contained. Renouncing the offence of illegally bearing arms is the start of a path toward lucidity and reconciliation, but it requires thinking, first of all, of the victimised community, answering its demands, waiting with patience and humility for acceptance by those whose lives were shattered, and trusting in the nobility of a community which is ready to believe if it is treated with human dignity.

Julián Bolívar understood, and asked for pardon. Will the government, the OAS, the international cooperation, the police, the business leaders, understand?

The peasants and miners of San Lucas

There is an armed conflict between the army and the guerillas going on in the south of Bolívar. In addition to the many lamentable episodes of the previous weeks, the army killed Alejandro Uribe, president of the community action committee of Mina Gallo, and said he was a guerilla killed in combat. The communities protested. On 19 September, 2006, one thousand two hundred peasants and miners poured into Santa Rosa, determined to extract from the government the conditions for living in peace in the mountain regions of San Lucas. The Vice Minister of Defence came to Santa Rosa as the residents had asked; but there was no conversation. The peasants and miners, angered by the death of Alejandro, did not want the army to be present at that dialogue. The government insisted that the military presence had been agreed upon; the residents declared that the opposite had been the condition of dialogue. The government delegation left a document with the commitment that the public prosecutor would investigate what had happened and that there would be another meeting under clearly and previously defined conditions. For their part, the communities sent another document with points on which they hoped there would be agreement. On 9 October there was another meeting with civilian representatives of the State. The miners and peasants clearly stated their petitions; there was still no agreement.

The peasants and miners live in immense uncertainty. The mountains are the territory of the Humanitarian Zones[2]. There are communities which grew up during the conflict and acquired autonomy, sovereignty and a sense of being citizens of a civil society with rights; communities which asked all the armed factions for peace, beginning by demanding peace from the guerrillas; communities that refuse the government's right to hand over thousands of acres of land, including their own homes and work sites, to a multinational mining company without taking the local people into account. These people do not consider themselves as owners of the land so much as belonging to the land, with the obligation to look after it and sustain it so that the land may be the source of life for present and future generations.

Communities which asked all the armed factions for peace

What a pity that both parties lacked the flexibility to talk to each other on that day when the delegation from the Ministry of Defence came to Santa Rosa! The gesture that could have broken down the barriers never happened. Let us recall 12 October 1992. The indigenous peoples of the country had come to Popayán for a ceremony marking the 500th anniversary of the "Discovery" (which for them was fatal). The army had obstructed and upset them as they travelled on the highways and roads toward Popayán. There had been recent cases of communities victimised by the armed forces. The commander of the troops besieging the place was in the central square, which was full of native people. Jesús Piñacué, the leader of the Paez people, stepped up to the speaker's platform. He spoke at length before thousands of indigenous people about that dramatic history. At the end there was a long ovation. Then Piñacué, from the platform, looked towards the commander of the army that had provoked and assaulted them throughout their journey, and held out his hand. And kept it held out for several minutes. Then the confused commander, who had hesitated to accept the gesture, stepped onto the platform and clasped the hand which had been freely offered by the native chief. This gesture revealed a new step forward by the indigenous peoples for the building up of Colombia.

More aerial spraying

Since 21 September, at the Barrancabermeja airport, military helicopters, aircraft and pilots from private U.S. companies have been fumigating the 5,000 or 6,000 hectares of coca in Magdalena Medio. This is an operation of Plan Colombia[3] against narco-subversion or narco-terrorism. The reality is that 80% of the coca plantations in Magdalena Medio are controlled by demobilised paramilitaries.

The reality is that 80% of the coca plantations in Magdalena Medio are controlled by demobilised paramilitaries

[2]Humanitarian Zones in this context refers to areas where international human rights standards are respected both by the State and the armed forces in conflict. [Editor's note]

[3]Controversial U.S. legislation aimed at curbing drug smuggling by supporting different Drug War activities in Colombia. [Editor's note]

The operation costs 10 or 12 million dollars – some 30 billion pesos. With that kind of money we could have carried out an integrated alternative development programme for all the communities where, at the moment, peasants without coca and peasants with coca live out the drama of an absent State, illegality and conflict. Aggressive fumigation destroys the food crops of these communities, and leaves the people with an economic crisis. Among other kinds of damage, the planes have sprayed their poison on the coca nurseries of Asocalima, a project of the Laboratory of Peace, the Ministry of Agriculture and of the U.N. Anti-Drug Agency (UNODCCP). The people want to get away from war and cocaine. The communities have offered to eradicate coca manually. It is not necessary to bring in people from outside to pull up the plants. Why not believe the people of Magdalena Medio?

Chronic hunger devours the body's resources

The summit on hunger at Carmen de Chucuri

The summit meeting was held 28-29 September. Meticulously prepared by the Obusinga organisation under the direction of Néstor Mendieta, it was a constructive meeting, during which the problem of chronic rural hunger was approached from different angles. There were participants from all over Magdalena Medio, from the Colombian Family Welfare Institute, from the municipalities, the nutrition security programme of Social Action, the principal campesino organisations of the country, and from NGOs.

Chronic hunger is not ravenous hunger, which can kill, but rather the hunger which travels inside rural women and men in Magdalena Medio, destroying their energy, making a misery of their days; this is because they do not get protein, vitamins and amino acids in sufficient and balanced quantities to keep healthy. In the end, chronic hunger devours the body's resources, brings on premature old age, diminishes emotional and intellectual capacity, and lowers resistance.

From this perspective, nutrition was analysed under the following headings: a fundamental human right; sovereignty and dignity; the responsibility of the State; production and rural marketing of foods; subsidies; and systems of advertising and information about different foods.[4]

October 16, 2006

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[4]The Public Statement of the Regional Food Summit of Magdalena Medio may be found [in Spanish] at <www.cumbrealimentaria.blogspot.com> or by e-mail at <cumbrealimentaria@gmail.com>

Jesuits and Lay Collaboration: by Design or Default?

Lancy Lobo SJ

The discourse among Jesuits of South Asia of making a paradigm shift from Paternalism to a Participatory mode of functioning in their apostolate is not new. Lay collaboration, is seen as an ideal domain in which this paradigm can be realised. Conceptually we accept lay collaboration but operationally it remains elusive.

Conceptually we accept lay collaboration but operationally it remains elusive

The roots of our Paternalism lie in the hierarchical structure of authority in the church and religious life. The ultimate tribute we pay to Paternalism is calling the Pope "Papa" and having lay people call their pastors "Father." With this terminology powerlessness in the laity has been institutionalised.

One of its manifestations is the institution of "Sole Trustee" in parishes. All authority and power have thereby been delivered into the hands of the parish priest. Traditionally he has seen no option but to exercise them all by himself. Canon law now mandates a Parish Council to provide the necessary framework for lay collaboration at all levels of parish functioning. The Second Vatican council defined the church as "the people of God." The goal of our lay collaboration is to hand over increasingly greater control of the local church to the People of God.

Parish Councils and Trusts in which lay people have been inducted can be effective instruments of furthering lay collaboration. However, most of the Trusts I know of, including some of those that fight for human rights and justice as well as those engaged in legal aid programmes, do not hold mandatory annual general meetings. They consider Trust laws an unnecessary burden and treat them as legal appendages. How carefully are our Trust documents maintained, including reports on minutes and action taken? Having worked in a non-Jesuit organisation and been a Trustee for years I know how seriously the Trust deed is taken, as well as the maintaining of accountability and transparency.

Lay collaboration is not a matter of "them" working with "us" or even "us" with "them," but of laity and Jesuits sharing a common enterprise, and working in equal partnership with a mutual exchange of respect, trust, communication, accountability and transparency. This may require us to give up power consciously. The real question to my mind when lay collaboration is mentioned is: can we Jesuits work under lay people? This would be the real test. If we cannot, then no lay collaboration is possible. The Christian Brothers by contrast have already appointed a few competent lay principals in their schools with Brothers working under them.

Lay collaboration as equal partners implies that lay people are equally competent to do the tasks they are called upon to do. Hence, they must be motivated to do the task and they must be qualified to do the task. Motivation comes from a shared vision and qualification and competence from training and formation.

Lay collaboration is not merely about proposing a new structure of the Church to people, a new set of relationships within an institution. It is about engaging the hearts of our collaborators to lead them to see how what they are doing will help people fulfil their dreams and live better lives. It is getting people to share the vision of the institution/parish. If the institution itself does not have a vision, there is no scope for collaboration. If people don't have a compelling cause to live for, it is because the leadership has none or has failed to communicate the one it has. Creating a culture behind a shared mission, vision and values is the essence of leadership.[1]

If people don't have a compelling cause to live for, it is because the leadership has none or has failed to communicate the one it has

The growth of an institution or parish is directly proportional to the growth of the people in it. If members are encouraged to become competent, to assume responsibility for themselves and the situations that arise, they develop a sense of maturity and ownership in their work. Competence will come from constant leadership and skills training. By continuously investing in people, sending them to training seminars and courses, and exposing them to the latest developments in their field of work, we will sharpen their skills, develop their talents and help them to see that they can actually play a leading role in effecting a change in their institution.

In the West, lay collaboration has been implemented out of necessity. The decreasing number of Jesuits, an ageing Jesuit population and lack of competent and skilled Jesuits to run institutions have compelled them to hand over their institutions, wholly or partially, with perhaps just a symbolic or token Jesuit presence. They had no alternative but to engage lay people. But then, is this the only form of lay collaboration we can envisage?

In Asia, the situation is somewhat the reverse: here we have an increasing number of Jesuits and youthful ones at that; however, one cannot always vouch for their competence and skills. These fairly numerous Jesuits easily fill in positions and places without competing for them and not necessarily on merit. Better-qualified lay people, perhaps with better skills, are not unlikely to have negative experiences under them. The sheer number of available Jesuits leaves little room for lay collaboration, much

These fairly numerous Jesuits easily fill in positions and places without competing for them and not necessarily on merit

[1]Adapted from Robin Sharma's books on leadership.

as we may desire it. With our famed training, are not many among us ending up as clerks and doing what lay persons could do in a much more cost-effective way?

Are Jesuits trained for teamwork in their formation? If Jesuits cannot work in a team among themselves, much less will they work as a team with lay people except in a hierarchical position. Some Jesuits make no bones about it when they say, "It is easier to work with lay people than with fellow Jesuits."

There is a vast difference between the work habits, subculture and life style of lay people and those of Jesuits. Lay people, by and large, learn a great deal through the daily grind of living with their husbands or wives and bringing up children. A religious does not have this sobering experience to bring him down to reality. A Jesuit lives a sheltered life, unaware of the underlying insecurity that touches the lives of lay people. Lay collaboration may even be perceived as an intrusion into the even tenor of their lives and apostolate. Lay people, however, have much to contribute to issues and relationships that affect the institution through creative cooperation, through their unique experience of life and their different perspectives.

Lay collaboration is feared for another reason: our inability to trust lay people with real power, confidential matters and the institution's funds. Cases of mismanagement by priests and religious are common enough to challenge our credulity about ourselves. If we have nothing to hide, breach of confidentiality will not do the damage we fear when we are dishonest. Inducting lay people into our Trusts is a very concrete way of effecting lay collaboration. They just need the vision to be motivated, and capacity-building and training to make them equally competent collaborators and leaders in any enterprise with Jesuits. The benefits to be reaped from the synergistic potential of lay collaboration are huge. All Jesuits need is the courage to leave their comfort zone, and the humility to recognise that there are lay people out there with more talent and willingness than we can hope to garner from our very restricted numbers.

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Twenty-five Years in the Service of Faith and Justice
Centre d'estudis Cristianisme i Justícia[1]

Twenty-five years ago, the Centre for Christianity and Justice was born with the aim of taking up an itinerary of faith committed to the promotion of justice. A few years earlier, a fair number of communities, groups and Church institutions had established the alliance of faith and justice as key to their identity. In the wake of Vatican II, they understood the struggle for justice as both an imperative of faith and an integral part of the Church's mission. In this way a journey began, which step by step evolved into the historical path of Christianity in the 20th Century.

This commitment has been for us a marvellous gift from God. It has placed us with the best companions, certainly with the Lord Jesus, but also with the least of his brothers and sisters (cf. Matthew 25, 40), as well as with his companions committed to justice. During this quarter century, making this pilgrimage with them towards the Kingdom, we have felt encouraged by their faith, renewed by their hope and transformed by their love in solidarity. Like humble servants of the mission of Christ, we have been repeatedly affected and enormously enriched by "the joys and the hopes, the grief and the anxieties of the men and women of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted" (*Gaudium et Spes* 1). Throughout this period it has been our intention to be attentive to the historically progressive character of the promotion of justice. United, we have confronted the necessities of a complex world, subject to increasingly accelerated changes.

The conversion of our perspective

In all things, we would like 'the perspective of the other' to be our guide. Respect for reality requires us to 'convert' our own perspective. A quick glance

[1]*Cristianisme i Justícia* (Fundación "Lluís Espinal") is a study centre of the Society of Jesus in Catalonia, Spain, dedicated to the analysis of key questions of our time. Its goal is to add a Christian Word to many of the other voices that fight for a society that is more just and human. The above text is the Centre's 'Manifesto' which has been prepared to celebrate 25 years of its work. *Cristianisme i Justícia* is a:
1) **Voluntary Service of Intellectuals** At present we have an interdisciplinary team motivated by Christian life, comprising 80 university professors and specialists in the human and social sciences and theology, who desire to look at our world through 'evangelical' eyes. The team is formed of Jesuits and lay people who dedicate part of their time, studies and experience to reflecting on intersecting questions between faith-justice-culture.
2) **Teaching Centre** Professors offer several courses at the postgraduate level for university students or others who may be interested. 25 seminars are offered each year for groups of 15-20 students who work over six sessions on a theme for a monograph.
3) **Publications Centre** Among the various publications of the Centre, 'CiJ' attempts to be simultaneously rigorous and easy to read, so as to be accessible to educated people who are non-specialists. The 2006 edition has produced 65 thousand copies, edited in Catalan, Castellano and English. It is sent free on request. Seven issues are produced a year, each one a brief monograph of 32 pages written by our specialists and co-workers. They combine pedagogical force and intellectual rigour. (To receive free copies notify Cristianisme i Justícia, R. de Llúria 13, 08010 - Barcelona - 93 317 23 38 - info@fespinal.com). They are also freely available at www.fespinal.com.

can help us to assume the perspective of the other, that is, of the victims of injustice. 'To look through their eyes' has meant for many an authentic epistemological revolution very like the life-changing experiences of Francis of Assisi and Bartolomé de Las Casas in their respective encounters with the leper and the Indian.

Respect for reality requires us to 'convert' our own perspective

In this epistemological revolution the 'hallowed' interests of the rich in developed countries function like specks in our eyes, preventing us from seeing and knowing what is in front of us. (cf. Matthew 7, 3). Compulsively seeking to satisfy our innumerable desires, we are struck by that pandemic of blindness against which José Saramago warned us. The perspective of the other helps us to see the truth (about the western model) of the cultural model of western modernisation. Beyond formal declarations of universal citizenship, there is little social space for freedom, the space for equality is considered politically non-viable and that of solidarity is progressively shrinking**.** Looked at in this light, it seems we are only really free when we take on the role of being our brother's keeper, the role of the Good Samaritan. This perspective places on us a responsibility that cannot be renounced, the task of rescuing the afflicted, and this in turn pulls us out of the self-centeredness that blinds us. Today we are able to confess, humbly, that this perspective evangelises us inasmuch as we are 'forced' to see and think as God does. (cf. Mark 8, 27-35).

With modest tools

We wish, poor as we are, to contribute to structural change

Guided by this light, we wish, poor as we are, first of all, to contribute to structural change in the social, economic and political fields. Secondly, we want to work for peace and reconciliation, for the end of all types of discrimination, racial, religious, sexist, ethnic, class-related, whatever. Next, we oppose the poverty and hunger that grows apace in the world while material prosperity is increasingly concentrated in the hands of the few. We feel that the collective conscience of the human rights discourse is being challenged.

The unjust attitude of the human heart has led to a mounting increase in the number of areas of conflict: the destruction of planet earth, the threat that minority cultures and indigenous people will be blown away by the pernicious winds of globalisation, the intolerable inequality between the men and women.

All this has made us increasingly interested in a new world order, a life-giving culture, a balanced ecology and the sustainable and fair use of worldly resources. We are not resigned to contemplating with indifference the immigrants who arrive on our shores; they are only the tip of a huge iceberg comprising the 45 million displaced people or refugees in the world. The wounding and marginalisation of the African continent in this new world order and the condition of Africans is a paradigm of all the marginalised of the world.

These situations are the consequences of an injustice implanted in the human heart that prefers to grab rather than share, to dominate rather than love. Together with so many who work in these fields, we hear the psalmist, and through him, the voice of God who calls out with all the victims: "Do not harden your hearts."

Justice flowing from faith

Only the mercy of God and his power to resurrect the dead will purify the work of human hands and bring definitive justice to the victims of history

This road that we have retraced is an authentic journey of initiation. The experience of the Justice of the God of the Kingdom transforms us so much that we deeply desire it. We have been constantly urged to catch up with this justice through the evangelical source from which flow all its possibilities and challenges, even more so in these perplexing times. Today we know differently what we knew already in the past, that the advancement of justice flows from faith and deepens it. The justice that we seek is attested in the Scriptures and the best ecclesial tradition as being intimately linked to faith in the God of Jesus of Nazareth. The justice of the Kingdom of God transcends all notions of justice that come from ideologies, philosophies and particular political movements and can never be adequately expressed through them. A purely historical project that fights for justice will be incapable of achieving a complete justice for all the victims of misery in the world. Even more crucially, it will inevitably have its share in perpetuating injustices, since no human work is capable of producing a justice that is 'chemically' pure. Only the mercy of God and his power to resurrect the dead will purify the work of human hands and bring definitive justice to the victims of history.

We proclaim that the search for an ever greater justice is an absolute requirement of the faith in the God of the Kingdom. We maintain that this justice is not like a law or a new moral imperative. Rather, we seek to receive it as a grace of "God's love [that] has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us." (Romans 5,5). Nothing is more capable of demanding justice for others than an experience of the gratuity of God's love, which forms human beings as God's sons and daughters, and our brothers and sisters. We implore the Lord's help in not forgetting that we live always with reference to this gift, so that we do not separate the promotion of justice from its most authentic source: our faith.

Committed to justice, whose fruit is peace (Isaiah 32,17)

We wish to renew gratefully our commitment to the promotion of justice. We are conscious that our times are not easy, neither culturally nor ecclesiastically, for those who intend to unite the Christianity-Justice dyad. However, we cannot renounce this quest without betraying the vocation to which we have been called. Tomorrow, as much as in the past, the strength of a

Christianity concerned with the cause of justice will depend above all on the existence of Christian testimonies, individual and collective, resolutely mindful of an ever greater justice and committed to the cause of human life (most particularly of the poor), which is the glory of God. The history of Christianity allows us to hope – often against all historical hope – that the Spirit will give life to a Christianity that fights against injustice. In our difficult contemporary situation the Spirit continues to restore our human desires, adjusting them to the will of God so that they have the same goal – that the poor may live. This can happen because we believe that, through the Spirit, God himself can be present in the heart of our desires. We trust in the existence of the men and women of tomorrow who will be apprentices to God and who, as permanent disciples of Jesus of Nazareth, desire to lower themselves to the deepest places in order to give life. We have faith in the secret of 'the economy of the gift' (P. Ricoeur), which enables us spiritually to give ourselves wholly as only God can.

The promotion of justice requires, before anything else, our own continual conversion to Jesus Christ in the midst of the bankruptcy of our world, a turning to love in solidarity with the poor and marginalised in such a way as to take on their cause underneath the banner of the Cross. The more frequent and direct our contact with the least of the brothers and sisters of the Lord, the more motivated our sensitivity to this mission will be. In their company we hope to journey towards a fuller integration of the promotion of justice in the life of our faith, and, alongside other men and women of all conditions, to make the Kingdom of God present here.

Conclusion

In years gone by we often sang with profound conviction, "When the poor man has nothing and still shares with us" – the world isn't necessarily better but "…there walks God in our path." These wonderful words only reformulate the teaching of the New Testament: *...we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way which he opened for us through the curtain* which separated us from the Divinity, *that is, through his flesh* (cf. Hebrews 10, 19-20). For this we wish to repeat with St Paul who wrote "Let us approach with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience."

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Some Notes on Globalisation: A View from Japan

Peter Shimokawa SJ

In the context of the document on Globalisation and Marginalisation,[1] I would like to offer some comments on these processes from a Japanese perspective. I shall comment on the positive and negative effects of globalisation as experienced in Japan.

The market mechanism has no power to reduce inequality

Negative effects of globalisation[2]

There are many kinds of globalisation, but I believe that Neo-liberal Globalisation is usually harmful to people, especially the poor. Neo-liberal Globalisation is based on the belief that the market mechanism can realise the optimal society and that this mechanism works well through competition among actors in the market.[3] The fundamental problem of this belief, however, is that "optimal" means only "effective (use of resources)" and does not mean "reducing inequality." That is, the market mechanism has no power to reduce inequality; rather, it usually results in an increase of the gap between rich and poor. Thus, forced competitions, especially in developed countries, have become fiercer and more varied in various fields[4] and the aim is to be the winner or, at the very least, a survivor. Furthermore, people presume that the losers are losers through their own fault, that they lose out because they do not make enough of an effort.

The following are concrete instances of what is actually happening in Japanese society.

Homelessness

The homeless are the latest victims of Neo-Liberal Globalisation in the country. Unlike most other countries throughout Asia, few large urban slums or squatter houses may be seen in Japan. Possession and ownership of land are strictly regulated and monitored, to the extent that people who have no housing of their own have little choice but to trespass on government-administered public lands. The result is, throughout most urban and sub-urban cities, homeless people are a striking presence in open spaces such as parks and riverbanks, living in tents or other makeshift abodes, or roughing it

[1] *Globalisation and Marginalisation. Our Global Apostolic Response*, Social Justice Secretariat, Rome, 2006.
[2] It should be noted that my comments on the positive and negative aspects refer to what has been called "Neo-liberal Globalisation."
[3] This is a theoretical explanation. In reality, it seems that the developed countries, especially the United States, are forcing their own standards on the rest of the world on the basis of this principle.
[4] For example, in various markets, including labour markets, companies, education and academic fields where universities are ranked, and even in the evaluation of NGOs, etc.

out at night, sleeping on cardboard, near train stations and shopping areas. The homeless population is overwhelmingly single and male, primarily forced onto the streets by unemployment and lack of work. Currently, over 30,000 people are estimated to be living on the streets. According to a government survey conducted in 2003, 84% of the homeless people nationwide have a secure and stable residence of their own, such as tents, and 49% reside in parks (in some cities there is a clear majority, such as Nagoya with 80%), while 19% live on river banks.

Currently, over 30,000 people are estimated to be living on the streets

These individuals' right to occupancy is not fundamentally recognised. Since their abodes are formally considered as trespassing on, and illegitimately appropriating, public property, the danger of being forcefully evicted by government agents for "unlawful occupancy" is ever-present. Furthermore, the government is not alone in displaying a lack of understanding. Railway workers, shop owners and local residents regularly expel persons sleeping near train stations, shopping streets and other urban central spaces under the pretext that they "dirty the area."

Recent governments in Japan have started to tackle the issue of homelessness, but rather than taking initiative themselves, they emphasise the need for self-help efforts by the homeless and the private sector, including NGOs. For example, there is no intention to create jobs despite the fact that the main cause of homelessness in Japan is unemployment. The implication is that homeless people who cannot find jobs through their own efforts are "bad homeless," and governments and society treat them accordingly.

Migrant Workers

Migrant workers need support regarding their immigration status. The fact that the Immigration Bureau is asking all citizens to provide information about foreigners through the internet is a serious issue. Migrant workers also experience high levels of discrimination. The Government has announced new plans for jobs in nursing and care– giving for Filipinos; this will attract more migrant workers without ensuring at the same time that the appropriate support mechanisms are in place. It is true that since many migrant workers are Catholics (mainly Filipinos), the Church is there to help out as best it can, smoothing out the problem of separation from family and providing faith education.[5]

[5]Japanese Catholics are just about 420,000 or less than 0.5% of the population of 120 million. Considering the fact that there are another 400,000 non-Japanese Catholics, mainly among foreign workers, the Catholic Church in Japan numbers about one million members. The churches are small, but highly international. Regardless of their size the Church is heavily involved in school education.

Structural Change and Structural Reform

Japan entered a long-term depression in the 1990s, but is now on the way to recovery. However, this recovery is based on the gains of prosperous corporations and 'winners.' In this process, many 'losers' were left behind, and at present, the gap between poor and rich is increasing remarkably. Especially in the big corporations, the conventional Japanese permanent employment system has collapsed; unstable and informal employment such as part-time jobs and dispatch work has rapidly increased, and is creating a new social problem – increasing numbers of young people not in 'official' employment. This is a result of the corporations' struggle to survive in the face of global competition.

The ultimate victims of this structural change are the homeless and the migrant workers

The ultimate victims of this structural change are the homeless, and the migrant workers who are forced to work under precarious conditions due to their vulnerable and often irregular status. The condition of these workers is changing rapidly under Neo-Liberal Globalisation. Meanwhile, in the name of structural reform, the government is moving ahead with the abolition of public services and social welfare assistance programs.

Social Atmosphere

In society as a whole, the signs of the times are obvious: social insecurity, increased competition, a tendency to cut down or exclude vulnerable people, and insistence on self-help efforts and private responsibility. Whether or not on account of this social atmosphere, phenomena such as stress arising from excessive competitiveness, depression and social withdrawal are increasing among some of the winners (or apparent winners) of the competition. It is clear that the competitive principle is destroying their humanity. As a result of all this, over 30,000 persons committed suicide in 2004 in Japan; this serves as just one example of the despair of the growing 'ever-stronger' society today.

Strong turning to the right

A number of policies have marked the turn of Japanese politics to the right. I should like to mention especially the reinforcement of public security, control and social surveillance. Following in the footsteps of U.S., the 'war on terror' is fought here as well; there is a tendency to drive down the increasing number of poor people by force (rather than welfare state measures); there is also the growing social insecurity brought about by the advance of Neo-liberal Globalisation.

Relations with Asian counties

Japan is seen as an 'assailant' by other Asian countries especially due to its positive stance towards Neo-Liberal Globalisation. The aggressive inroads made by Japanese companies into new markets constitute one obvious problem.

Positive effects of globalisation

In spite of the social problems mentioned above, there is a distinct possibility of constructing a global network beyond national borders, rather than solving these problems in Japanese society alone, and this is actually being carried out gradually. For many Japanese people and organisations, however, the language barrier is a major problem.

Awareness of the Neo-liberal Globalisation issue makes it easier to discover the similar roots of many current social problems. Recognition of shared similarities then becomes the motivation for various groups like NGOs to work in solidarity and through broad networks.

Reshaping Jesuit universities

Today universities are themselves judged by market standards and have had to adapt to survive

The intellectual apostolate has long given importance to the university. This was justifiable in earlier times when universities were the custodians of value and had the power to change society by changing human ideas. Today however, universities are themselves judged by market standards and have had to adapt to survive. The intellectual apostolate may now well find its centre in social movements rather than in universities unless Jesuit Universities re-orient themselves to producing more humane societies rather than rating themselves by the standards of the market.

Cultural and spiritual dimensions of globalisation

As regards the dimension of intercultural and interreligious dialogue, one positive aspect of the global network is that it provides a chance to create a multicultural society based on peaceful co-existence. In some of the Japanese churches today, foreign Christians are more numerous than Japanese Christians, generating cultural friction. Solving this problem within the churches will set an example for Japanese society in general, showing that multicultural co-existence is possible.

At the root of Neo-Liberal Globalisation lie principles like "compulsory competition and the exclusion of the losers," and "every value (human value) is determined by the market value." By contrast, the fundamental message (Good News) of Jesus is a clear "no" to these principles. That is, Jesus

proclaimed and showed through his life and death that God loves every person without exception, especially if he or she is poor and cannot observe the Law. This means, in the context of our situation, that every person without exception is loved by God, even if he or she is a dropout, loses out in competition, or cannot make the effort to survive. Our social apostolate (in fact, all of our mission) must show Jesus's "no" to these principles in a visible way. In other words, we have to work to promote a social atmosphere that will support such persons who can say "no."

When we perform the meditation "Two Standards" in the Spiritual Exercises, we 'understand' better what our position should be vis-à-vis neo-liberal values in our reactions towards the process of Neo-Liberal Globalisation and its effects.

The light emerging from the 'social darkness' comes from creating a sense of community, creativity and awareness

Whenever Christians consider their commitment to promote justice, in other words, their dedication to the social justice ministry, they must look for the distortions or dark spots in society and the deeper roots of those distortions. **It is our belief that once a person comes in contact with 'social darkness,' s/he can discover the light that emerges from the darkness because the Spirit of God, the Father, and the Risen Christ has been always working in human society (even without us)**. Through involvement in social justice work, we not only fight evil, we also try to look for bright aspects, try to find possible alternatives to support. I believe that the light emerging from the 'social darkness' comes from creating a sense of community, creativity and awareness, and a subjective commitment to effect change in society.

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Agrarian Reform in Jamaica
The St Mary Rural Development Project

Tony Weis[1]

The following article is based almost entirely on a report written in March 2006 about the St Mary Rural Development Project (SMRDP) in Jamaica supported by the Canadian NGO Canadian Jesuits International (CJI). The project, besides helping small farmers individually, has also been engaged in the formation of farmer's cooperatives. The alterations, undertaken with the author's permission, are largely a matter of omitting figures and tables which, useful in a report, are not strictly necessary for the readers of *Promotio Iustitiae*.

Introduction

At its inception the St. Mary Rural Development Project (SMRDP) conceptualised its role somewhat broadly, as the name suggests, but with a clear emphasis on assisting land and resource-poor small farmers.[2] The intent was not only to support small farmers individually but also to help fortify a series of marketing co-operatives that were established around the same time (which were eventually centralised into one Co-operative 2001-2). As the last project evaluation in February 2002 made clear, the SMRDP has evolved through experience and also through tragedy, having been dealt a massive blow in 2001 with the murder of Fr. Martin Royackers, the Project Director at the time and the source of immeasurable energy and insight.[3]

Over time the SMRDP became increasingly focused on ensuring the economic and institutional sustainability of the co-operative marketing efforts, and came to see the issue of land distribution as being deeply interwoven in this goal (with the idea, discussed later, that its objectives and experience are model-worthy). Thus, far more than the number of irrigation tanks, length of drip-hose, or bags of fertiliser that have been distributed, or the important role the project has had with celebrated individual success stories (having had an important role on the farms of Jamaica's Champion Young Farmers in 2002,

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[2]An early mission statement envisioned the SMRDP this way: "to enhance the quality of life of rural communities through a program of integrated rural development."

[3]Lawrence Cumming. "A Few Steps Down the Hill, A Few Steps Up the Ladder: An Evaluation of the St. Mary Rural Development Project" (2002).

2003, and 2005), the measure of the SMRDP's long-term contribution is to a significant extent the health and long-term viability of the Co-operative.

After 15 years buttressed by the SMRDP, it became apparent that the Co-operative must be prepared to move forward without external support, that this step is essential to its future, and that it is ready to take it. For this reason, the SMRDP is not seeking further funding after the current phase ends. This report will therefore reflect on the achievements and limitations over the course of the SMRDP's lifetime, concentrating on its approach in the recent past that has been geared to this phase out. But first, to understand the SMRDP's efforts it is necessary to appreciate the broader context in which it has operated.

It became apparent that the Co-operative must be prepared to move forward without external support

The Big Picture Context

To put it simply, agriculture in Jamaica is either in a state of crisis or, to give a hopeful spin, at a crossroads. Jamaica's landscape was forged by plantations and slavery, and it still bears the scars of that history; land distribution is as uneven as anywhere in the world. Land distribution in St. Mary reflects almost exactly the national picture where 3-4 percent of farms occupy nearly two-thirds of the agricultural land, with inequalities magnified by land quality as most small farmers are confined to the rugged interior.[4] The St. Mary Banana Estates dominate the fertile coastal lowlands of the Annotto Bay region where the SMRDP is based, while small farmers have historically cultivated a range of crops on small, often steeply sloping plots.

Jamaica is either in a state of crisis or, to give a hopeful spin, at a crossroads

But while the plantation sector's grip on the fertile lowlands has persisted, the sector has been in evident crisis for some time. Both sugar and bananas, the dominant lowland plantation export crops in Jamaica,[5] have long depended on preferential markets through an arrangement between the European Union (EU) and the African, Caribbean, and Pacific (ACP) group of countries.[6] The fertile Annotto Bay lowlands were historically controlled by sugar, but since the 1980s have been in large-scale banana production.

[4]These figures come from the most recent *Agricultural Census*, published by the Statistical Institute of Jamaica in 1998 (work on a new census is apparently set to begin in 2006, but this is not likely to show any significant changes).

[5]Coffee is the other large agro-export crop, but is concentrated on the hills and mountains. Early on, the SMRDP had a role in helping establish some young coffee farmers in the town of Long Road, but all high value mountain coffee gets sold through a centralised agency.

[6]For sugar, the arrangement brought a guaranteed market and prices far above the world average (as it was tied to the EU's heavily subsidised sugar beet industry), and for bananas the arrangement provided a tariff and quota system, ensuring higher than world market prices and insulating ACP producers against much lower-cost production from Latin America.

In both sugar and bananas most of Jamaica's plantations are far from competitive in the absence of preferential markets (though workers in either sector are far from well compensated), and these markets have been under threat since the inception of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in 1995. The 'banana wars' at the WTO are now well known, and have led to the progressive dismantling of the EU's preferential banana regime.[7] The battle over sugar is more complex, with Brazil, Australia, and Thailand winning a WTO ruling against the EU sugar regime in 2005 and the early indication being that this will bring a 39-percent decline in the sugar prices earned by ACP producers.

Neither Jamaican bananas nor sugar can compete in this next context, and bananas have already begun a precipitous decline that is very evident in St. Mary and promises to continue. In the wake of the WTO's August 2005 ruling against the EU's restructured tariff regime (which the EU established to assist ACP producers after the original ruling against the tariff and quota system), Dr. Marshall Hall, the director of the St. Mary Banana Estates' parent company stated bluntly that "the farms of Annotto Bay and Golden Grove will be virtually devastated."[8]

Small farmers are also facing increasing pressures that have global dimensions

Small farmers are also facing increasing pressures that have global dimensions. Jamaica is a heavily indebted country and its economic policies have long been guided by international creditors, principally the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank and their set of reforms known as 'structural adjustment'. Structural adjustment and debt service have together resulted in shrinking state support for agriculture, particularly for small farming, and adjustment brought commitments for Jamaica to liberalise domestic markets.[9] Market liberalisation has brought a wave of imported food, both some directly competitive produce and an array of indirect competition that is changing dietary patterns and inevitably impacting small farmers' place in domestic markets. Food imports to Jamaica doubled in the 1990s alone. The productivity of both small farms and plantations has declined drastically.

Finally, the problems and prospects of agriculture must also be understood within the context of Jamaica's serious social strife. Extreme disparities in

[7]Giant U.S. agribusiness (in particular Chiquita) won a victory at the WTO (1998 and on appeal in 2000) that declared the EU's preferential banana regime for ACP producers to be an illegal trade practice. See Gordon Myers. *Banana Wars: The Price of Free Trade* (London: Zed Books 2004).

[8]These are the largest remaining banana estates in Jamaica. See Ross Sheil and Damion Mitchell. "Banana blues: Revised EU tariff ruled illegal, Hall predicts devastation for Ja." in *Jamaica Gleaner*, August 2, 2005, A1,A3.

[9]For instance, adjustment has decimated programmes for state-supported credit (making it virtually inaccessible to small farmers), subsidised inputs, and extension services. A professor at the University of the West Indies at Mona suggests that small farmers have less institutional support today than they have had in Jamaica's modern history, and arguably (in a relative sense) since the post-Emancipation period. For more detail, see Tony Weis. "Restructuring and Redundancy: The Impact and Illogic of Neoliberal Agricultural Reforms in Jamaica." in *Journal of Agrarian Change* (2004), 4(4): 461-491.

wealth, income, and opportunities coupled with persistently high levels of unemployment (most severe amongst young and uneducated people) are fuelling what some have called a 'social implosion' that is most acute in Kingston (which has one of the highest levels of violent crime in the world). Ultimately, the decline of the agrarian economy and the widespread rejection of farming by youth contribute to rural-urban migration and help fuel these problems. Agriculture is still the country's largest source of employment, but the percentage of the workforce on farms has fallen by half since the 1970s, from roughly 40 percent to just over 20 percent today.

In short, the SMRDP has been swimming upstream against some strong currents. When the SMRDP began some of this big picture was in view, particularly the urban implosion (which has unquestionably worsened) and the need to stem the demographic problems of small farming and the flight of rural youth. But other foundational considerations, most notably the profound agrarian decline exacerbated by the end of preferential markets and the flood of imported food, have unfolded rapidly over the project's lifetime and have obviously had a major affect on how the SMRDP has conceived its role.

The hope is that instead of leading down to a dead-end, the current crisis might instead be turned into a crossroads. To see optimism in Jamaican agriculture at the present juncture starts with a two-fold recognition; first, that plantations are very inequitable and do not provide dignified forms of labour for most of those involved; and second, that small farmers have historically been constrained by their marginal position in the landscape. In other words, the landscape is an unjust historical relic, and now that it is becoming untenable there is potentially a new opportunity to remake it in more socially equitable and economically viable ways. This is also a related environmental imperative, as the cultivation of excessively steep hillside land has led to serious problems of soil erosion and water conservation; Jamaica's National Environmental Protection Agency classifies 19 of the island's 26 watersheds as being degraded and in need of repair, which affects, among other things, the irrigation potential for agriculture.

But though land reform is seen as a paramount priority for agricultural renewal, it is not an easy process in practice going against vested interests, bureaucratic inertia, and government corruption!

The Land Issue and the 'Scaling Up' of Successes

Within St. Mary, as within Jamaica, success stories are urgently needed to help inspire an agricultural transformation at the current juncture, not only to press for policy changes on land issues, but equally or more importantly to show young people that farming is not a sentence to poverty and uncompensated hard work. As the SMRDP has learned through hard experience, there are very few young people willing to farm in the old manner

on a few acres of hillside land. To overcome negative associations and make small farming attractive to young people, a new model needs to emerge in which farming can be seen to provide a good livelihood with dignity and stability.

A new model needs to emerge in which farming can be seen to provide a good livelihood with dignity and stability

In time, it is hoped, localised successes can be 'scaled up' (to use a phrase that sometimes comes up in discussions about rural development) as attempts get made to build upon the inspiration and practical lessons learned. Thus, the SMRDP hopes that its efforts to help establish commercially successful small farmers on 'reformed' land – which goes hand-in-hand with institutionally strengthening the Co-operative – will not only have a local impact but can potentially make a broader contribution. The previous evaluator urged the SMRDP and the Co-operative to consciously reflect and act on its role as a regional and national model.[10]

In light of this context and vision, much of the SMRDP's work in recent years relates to helping farmers secure and get established on better quality, flatter, tillable, and irrigable land, including some former plantation land. Efforts here have ranged from advocacy with relevant government bodies[11] to detailed tenure negotiations, and where land acquisition has been successful, the SMRDP has provided extension support and subsidised ploughing and inputs (particularly those related to drip-irrigation systems). In general, the SMRDP's extension efforts[12] and inputs focus on improving the quantity and quality of output from the Co-operative's most productive farmers (most of whom have irrigation capacity or potential). The SMRDP also learned through experience that focusing inputs on youth was misguided for while vigour would not be wanting if supported, initiative must first be demonstrated.

As noted, support for land reform also relates to the strengthening of the Co-operative. While the marketing efforts of the individual co-operatives had initially been centred on small, hillside farmers, this posed a number of serious challenges for coordinated marketing efforts, most centrally the problem of gluts and shortages (and related large price swings) with mostly perishable goods.[13] For the co-operatives, it proved difficult to find outlets for a very inconsistent supply (leading to spoilage and market rationing in times of glut),

[10]Lawrence Cumming, *op. cit.*

[11]The advocacy has been on issues relating to transparency of titles and distribution, the inequities of absentee and rent-seeking landholders, and the general way that land distribution stifles small farm development.

[12]For the past three years, the SMRDP has employed one senior and one junior agronomist, each for one day a week. Their efforts generally focus on disease control, but also address land-use planning advice and soil conservation methods. The SMRDP is the main source of extension services in the region as government provision has been badly eroded by adjustment, as noted earlier.

[13]Because hillside agriculture is at the mercy of the rains, small farm production in Jamaica has historically been characterised by a large degree of seasonality.

and to maintain good purchasing arrangements with these large swings in quantity and quality, especially as buyers were finding it increasingly easy to source orders from Miami by the late 1990s.[14] Conversely, for those farmers dealing with small volumes, many were dissatisfied with the prices that co-operatives earned with bulk purchasers, and turned to different forms of marketing where they could often get better margins.[15]

In this situation, what sustained the co-operatives was the emergence of some more successful farmers – a number of whom had recently gained access to better land (often with the assistance of the SMRDP) – who were producing larger volumes and, because of irrigation with greater consistency and higher quality that allowed the co-operatives to hold markets. These farmers, in turn, needed the marketing capacity of the co-operatives to deal with their volume. The net result was that while small farmers in the region could still sell their goods through the co-operatives, both the marketing foundation and the board membership came to be sustained by a much smaller 'core' group (a big part of the reason the four co-operatives were consolidated into one). Starting in 1999, membership was linked to higher though still relatively modest levels of sales.[16]

The dramatic decrease in the number of farmers supplying to the Co-operative in 2004 and 2005, and the decrease in sales for 2004 were also heavily impacted by Hurricane Ivan in September 2004. After Ivan, there was virtually nothing to supply and the truck stopped going to Long Road, Fort George, and Enfield. The Co-operative marketing manager continued to pick up supplies at Enfield and Belfield with his pickup, but it was not economical to restore the larger service there, and the larger farmers from these areas now bring their supplies to Annotto Bay on Sunday or Tuesday afternoons.

In 2002, the SMRDP set itself a goal of securing 200 acres of tillable, state-owned land for farmers. While this goal was not met, some significant strides were made. In recent years, the biggest economic event in the region has been the progressive retrenchment of the St. Mary Banana Estates (SMBE) from production in response to the demise of the EU banana regime, as discussed earlier. Poised to see and seize the opportunity implicit in this crisis, the SMRDP has recently helped negotiate 10-year leases for a total of 60 acres of high-quality, SMBE land in an area east of Annotto Bay called Epsom. The

[14]The distribution point for US agro-exporting into the Caribbean region.

[15]The main alternatives are to sell to petty traders known as 'higglers', or to sell directly to a local market.

[16]This was characterised by the last evaluator as: "a few steps down the hill, a few steps up the [socio-economic] ladder". It was explained thus: "When visualised geographically and spatially, and in terms of actual participation, the SMRDP has moved somewhat down the mountainside onto more easily tillable land…there are fewer farmers in these remote mountainside communities with a serious interest in… participating in the Co-op as a marketing mechanism. There are, however, others with more land who are keenly interested…[and who] produce more on relatively larger pieces of land found on less steep inclines and at lower altitudes. The ladder metaphor includes two elements: production and socio-economic position." Lawrence Cumming, *op. cit*.

land has excellent irrigation potential (it is directly adjacent to a river) and is being leased to six of the most skilled farmers associated with the Co-operative. Not surprisingly, there is a tremendous amount of optimism associated with the possibilities here, and if successful this could be a very significant example for SMBE land and beyond.

Since 2002, the SMRDP was also involved in a protracted process to obtain access to 120 acres of gently sloping government land at Nonsuch (near Highgate) which has gravity-fed irrigation potential from an old but still operative upstream dam. There was much hope about the possibility of a number of excellent young farmers in the area gaining access – as it was part of a rare, large 'undesignated' block of government land (the only such one in St. Mary) – but efforts unfortunately here came to naught, engulfed in a frustrating process of political patronage, as is all too common in Jamaica. In another long-running effort, the SMRDP has continued its efforts to procure 27 acres in the Fort George lowlands for small farmers nearby.

In the end, if land reform is to take root in St. Mary, or elsewhere, the emerging farmers will need marketing institutions like the Co-operative that can deal with their volumes;[17] otherwise marketing is simply too inconsistent and time-consuming. This again emphasises how the SMRDP has seen the land issue and the institution-building process for marketing as being organically connected, each necessary to help re-invigorate small farming and transform the landscape in more socially just and economically viable ways.

If land reform is to take root in St. Mary, the emerging farmers will need marketing institutions like the Co-operative

Institution Building

As discussed earlier, the 'core' farmers play a critical role in making the Cooperative function – its marketing efforts depend not only on their volume but also on the consistency and quality made possible by irrigation. Given the narrowing of the supply pattern, the consolidation of the four cooperatives into a single regional one was a logical step and it has improved institutional efficiency (e.g. managing accounts, the productiveness of Board meetings).[18]

Rising sales figures are clearly one aspect of the Co-operative's growing institutional strength. In addition to the increasing foundation of 'core' farmers, a few 'core' crops have emerged with stable markets for high volume,

[17]The state-run Agricultural Marketing Corporation that helped stabilise marketing for small farmers in the 1970s was a casualty of structural adjustment in the 1980s.

[18]Related to the issue of institutional efficiency is the stability that the Co-operative has had in its two paid staff (Mr. Lloyd Edie, Marketing Manager, and Ms. Selestine Fraser, Accounts Manager), both of whom have served in their roles for roughly 10 years. In 2003, the SMRDP also paid for a Kingston accountant to improve financial management systems and consolidate accounts as the co-operatives merged into one entity.

a stability enhanced by the diversified based of purchasers the Co-operative has built up over the years, including green grocers, food processors, and caterers.

In 2005, papaya, hot pepper (scotch bonnet), plantain, and pineapple together accounted for roughly three-quarters of all sales. Regarding the growth potential of hot pepper, the SMRDP has helped mediate discussions with Walkerswood Ltd., a leading Jamaican condiment producer which is currently in the midst of a sizable expansion that is related to the growing popularity of 'Jamaican jerk' sauces. This development could contribute to the sort of synergy between small farmers and food processors that the Jamaican agricultural sector generally lacks and needs.

In 2005, for the first time, the Co-operative produced a surplus, allowing annual dividends to be distributed to members. This is especially noteworthy against the backdrop of the adverse weather conditions in 2004 and 2005, which badly damaged production. In addition to Hurricane Ivan in 2004 and the severe storms of 2005 (Hurricanes Dennis and Emily), which devastated plantain, pepper, and all vegetables and badly damaged papaya, St. Mary and Jamaica also experienced prolonged drought seasons.[19]

But while the Co-operative has shown encouraging signs, even in the face of great adversity, neither the technical administration nor even the financial stability of the Co-operative can guarantee its longevity. In addition to these factors, the success of any co-operative effort also ultimately hinges on whether participants philosophically appreciate it and are committed to it – in short, whether there is a strong sense of collective ownership. This ownership is often related to economic success, but not entirely, and is not easy to measure. In some respects, for small farmers with limited experience, working in collectively-based institutional settings, building co-operative ownership and financial success is something of a chicken-and-egg dilemma – which comes first? In practice, the SMRDP has seen financial viability as a requisite for ownership to grow, and has focused more attention here.

The success of any co-operative effort hinges on whether there is a strong sense of collective ownership

The fact that the offices for the SMRDP and the Co-operative have been housed together in St. Theresa's Catholic Church in Annotto Bay since their inception has had both positive and negative impacts. Positively, it has helped to contain administrative costs, enhancing the efficiency of the SMRDP's distribution of funds to farmers and effectively subsidising the co-operatives as they developed. The downside of this arrangement is that it has, at times, blurred the two organisations and probably affected the degree to which some

[19]Caribbean agriculture can only hope that this does not portend increasing weather extremes in the future, which many are predicting will be part of climate change.

farmers see themselves as the owners and managers of the co-operatives and not merely its beneficiaries.

The importance of this issue of ownership has been recognised and since 2001 efforts have been made to secure land that can house the Co-operative on a permanent basis separate from the Church. These efforts have centred on a government-owned property two miles east of Annotto Bay in an area called Iter Boreale, and negotiations finally came to fruition in 2005. The property includes 12 acres of flat land with agricultural potential and two existing buildings (acquired in a state of disrepair), which are being refurbished with the support of the SMRDP. These buildings are ideal for the Co-operative's needs; one will function as a large warehouse for food storage, and the other will house the office and provide space for a micro-processing plant for pimento and hot pepper. The Co-operative already has some equipment for these, and has plans for moving into more value-added initiatives in the future.

It has already been mentioned that part of the reason for not seeking further funding for the SMRDP relates to the belief that while it has been invaluable in establishing the foundation for the Co-operative – and sincere appreciation is again expressed to CIDA and to the Canadian Jesuits International for their support over the years – continued external funding assistance could detract from the Co-operative's long-term sustainability by creating an unhealthy dependence. In short, the Co-operative needs to move forward on its own, and is confident it is ready for this next step.

Significantly, in the difficult recent past, when production was battered by adverse weather, the farmers banded together to keep the co-operative afloat with its purchasers, and such resilience augurs well for the future.

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PRESENT
Symbolic and Meaningful Actions
Fabricio Alaña SJ

Two weeks ago the Catholic Church remembered her dead, her saints. We remember them because we believe that they are still living; that they are **present** among us and very close to the source of all life, to our Father/Mother God who welcomes us all. This weekend in Columbus, Georgia (USA), over 20,000 of us from the civilian-led movement 'SOA watch'[1] came together for all manner of different professions of faith, prayers, songs and speeches, but most of all for an impressive liturgy. For more than three hours we stood at the gates of Fort Benning, surrounded by a huge contingent of police and helicopters, remembering a large number of martyrs – those who had dead or disappeared; singing, in the style of the litany of saints, a litany to the martyrs of those days.

For each litany, when they recited the name of the martyr, and (if they knew it) their age and the place of their death as well, all of us who were in procession along the main road up to the Fort would lift up our crosses and would all say together in a single voice "PRESENT," in the tone of a litany as prayed in our cathedrals. Here we were employing the same tone in a sanctuary of evil, in a sanctuary of war. PRESENT, our martyrs who are asking for justice; together with us civilians, who listen to their cry, yearning for and encouraging peace, active non-violence, creativity and hope. It was for this reason that we were singing:

"¡NO MÁS!, NO MORE shout the hills of Salvador
Echo the voices of the World,
we cry out, ¡NO MÁS!, NO MORE!

We must stop the dirty wars
compañeros, compañeras, we cry out: ¡NO MÁS!, NO MORE!"

As a Jesuit, I was moved listening to the litanies for the Jesuits of El Salvador, among the first of the thousands that we prayed for day (November 20th). I loved meeting a small group of North American Jesuits and lay people from Berkeley Theology College, who were led by their President P. Joseph Daoust SJ. Together with this group, and also with the Jesuits from Boston College (four from various countries, one from the US), one Benedictine and 13 male and female lay companions, we constituted a goodly delegation for whom theology means listening to the cry for life. Moreover, also present were many Jesuits from the US

[1] 'Watching the School of the Americas' where dictators and military from Latin America and from many parts of the world have been trained in order to spread the dominance of the Empire and the suppression of others; in particular training those who have given the orders to kill thousands and thousands of people only wanting the basics of life: dignity, peace and justice.

Assistancy who had just finished their formation meeting with a large number of lay people. The presence and cheerfulness of Fr Will Brennan SJ evoked profound admiration. At 86 years of age and in a wheel chair, he managed to be present and united in solidarity with the martyrs and with the peace-seekers. His witness of faith and hope joined that of many older religious people, men and women of all races, children and young people.

"IF NOT YOU, WHO?, IF NOT NOW, WHEN?" Such is the summary of a long and profound homily by the President of the US Assistancy, Tom Smolich SJ, which he delivered to more than 3,800 university and college students, volunteers and parish representatives who were present at the Columbus Convention Centre as part of the formation plan for all of the US – the 'Ignatian Teach-in for Justice.' The voices of many young people from universities such as Boston College, Loyola Chicago, Saint Louis Missouri and Fordham, together with delegates from the remaining universities and centres, attracted attention on account of their number and fervour. Pastoral action is for everyone, but the qualitative response is that of the minorities who refuse to resign themselves to acceptance of the status quo. It is from within the system itself that we begin to see its contradictions. The alternative approach continues to shape itself. It was a prophetic choice on the part of the US provincials to coordinate their conference with this civilian event, which is symbolic of their walking with the people, of their search for a degree of hope.

MUCH remains to be done in order for us to be more effective, but between doing nothing and doing what we can the latter choice is preferable. "Military Power or Economic Terrorism may be able to flatten many flowers, but it will never impede the springtime which is about to appear."

These events take place every year.

(16th-19th November 2006)

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"The Word Becoming Flesh Among Us"
An ongoing Reality in our Life

Blaise Benedict SJ

For the past three months, I have been staying in a place called Madhubani of Patna Province,[1] doing my second year regency in the Social Action centre here. *Prabhat*, as this centre is known, has been working among the Saday community – the lowest rung in the caste-ladder that structures society in Bihar. In the context of a globalised world, the Society, with its option for the poor, has sent me to this part of the Province in order to experience and share the reality of human life marked by the most unjust circumstances and to witness the redemptive role of God played through us. It has afforded me an experience of the kind that Ignatius had in the La Storta vision – an experience of partaking in the liberative enterprise of God.

As a regent, and primarily as a Jesuit, my commitment to Christ the Poor derives from my encounters with the daily struggles of the people with whom I am involved. The Sadays are one of the many indigenous peoples who have gone through collective oppression for over 2000 years, condemned to be outcastes, a status imposed upon them by the powerful upper castes of Hindu religion. Understanding their life situation makes us aware of the extreme disrespect that can be shown towards human life. They are victims who have been denied every basic right – to freedom, education, economic freedom, health and land. In my experience, when one is denied the basic right to a human life, one ceases to foster one's conscience, in other words one just exists for the sake of it.

To me, Sadays represent the loss of human conscience, and as such, they are the victims of this loss. Any attempt to awaken the conscience of the upper castes would demand the empowerment of the poorest, particularly the Sadays, since resistance from the poorest has the capacity to penetrate the hardened hearts of the rich. When Jesus says it is as difficult for the rich to go to heaven as for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, he means that the rich will have great difficulty in experiencing God's liberative role as long as they are blind to the crisis of the poor. Only the poor, however, can open the eyes of the rich, and so Jesus asks the rich young man to go and distribute all his goods among the poor.

The empowerment of the poor directly hits the tranquillity of the rich and the powerful, destabilising the 'permanent' nature of the social ladder. Inevitably, this unjustifiably secure ladder will be tolerated no longer. Like the angry Jesus, we Jesuits too are called to be partakers in the divine enterprise of purifying the social structures by transforming them and making them more just and humane. My experience in *Prabhat* in this context centres around one concrete instance, which sums up the process and the result of this enterprise.

[1]The Indian province of Patna is situated in the upper part of the state of Bihar close to the Himalayan border with Nepal on the eastern part of India. With a population of 83 million people, Bihar is the third most populated state in India and it has the dubious distinction of possessing the highest level of rural poverty [Editor's note].

Prabhat has been working among the Sadays of Madhubani district for the past nine years. Through various kinds of projects it has tried to empower the Saday community. The importance of empowering women was a foundational realisation for *Prabhat*, and Self-Help Groups (SHG) were introduced among Saday women in four blocks of the district. Today *Prabhat* has nearly 180 SHGs for Saday women. Along with promoting the economic well being of the community, the groups also intend to conscientise the people about their right to education as the stepping stone to self-empowerment. Having realised the tragic and unjust side of imposed illiteracy, the women have taken a resolution to educate their children so as to create a better society for them.

Governments have come and gone, each leaving hollow promises unfulfilled. Education has been one of the most neglected areas in this state, especially the education of the poor, which was obviously the programme of the rich. Government schools, most dysfunctional in the rural areas of Bihar, have been a joke. The rich never educate their children in these schools but send them to elite private English Medium schools. They know the lethargy and apathy of the Government school system; its victims are the poor.

Bent upon stressing the significance of educating the Saday children, *Prabhat* has had several rounds of discussions with the SHGs. As a result, a decision was taken to start five village schools in four blocks of the district. The condition was that the basic necessities such as land, school buildings and collecting children had to be taken care of by the villagers, while *Prabbhat* would attend to appointment and salaries of teachers. As the Sadays have no right to land, they had to capture land belonging to the government in order to build the structure.

I was most touched by what happened in one of these schools. In a village called Sukalrahi, the villagers decided to construct the structure on land which was given to the Saday community for residential purposes by the government under the Land Ceiling Act[2]. However, there is a temple adjacent to the plot and the temple authorities, with the objective of occupying the land, chased the people away by injecting them with fear of the god 'dwelling' in the temple. The Sadays, who have always considered the gods of the upper-castes to be powerful and dangerous, left the plot. Taking advantage of their absence, the upper-castes decided to get the police station shifted to this site. This move was vehemently opposed by some members of the Saday community who as outcastes have suffered atrocities at the hands of the police.

Prabhat's prompt intervention and the move to start a school at that spot were seen as a threat to the police and the powerful people in the locality. So while the school construction was in progress, police came and twice picked up a few men from the site. They used different means to frighten the Sadays into dropping the idea of the school. Through all this the women remained as symbols of courage and willpower, taking the initiative in furthering the activities being undertaken

[2]The Land Ceiling Act was one of the most important instruments of land reforms in India. It sets the maximum amount of land (irrigated and non irrigated) that a family may posses. Land in excess is confiscated by the government and distributed among the poor. [Editor's note]

with them. Time and again we reminded ourselves of the importance of remaining in the background rather than getting involved directly. Our presence and support surely boost up the morale of the people, but when we take control of the entire programme, it has an adverse effect and makes them dependent on us.

Within a month, a small primary school was inaugurated with great enthusiasm. Parents and children gathered in large numbers to witness the fruits of their labour in a two-room mud hut. From the very beginning the school has been recording an attendance of 125 to 160 pupils, all from the Saday community. It was an achievement for the people, the beginning of a great future for all of them. One of the commendable things about this school is that there are a few married girls studying there. It is highly unusual for newly married teenage girls of this most oppressed caste to have access to education, one of their basic human rights.

The joy of a peaceful atmosphere conducive for learning was short-lived. The opponents were looking for an appropriate occasion to retaliate, and it happened that same night. After we, the *Prabhat* team members, had had a meeting with the teachers and parents in the school campus, some miscreants came and demolished the entire structure leaving no signs of the school. Interestingly, the local police was party to the entire project. This was a blow to the dreams the Sadays had been weaving all this while. To our great satisfaction, however, the villagers did not give up in disappointment but rather took it as a challenge they all wanted to face. Once again, without much agitation, while the school continued to function in an open space, the people rebuilt the school building, firmly resolved that no external forces would be permitted to erode the unity of the Sadays.

I have been an enthusiastic participant in the entire episode. The director of *Prabhat*, Fr. Sudeep Chacko SJ, has been a source of inspiration and guidance, bringing to the project his concrete experiences in the field with the people and his deep commitment to God and the people of God.

I believe that the struggle for a just society is an ongoing one with continuous resistance from opposing forces. The dominant society with its powerful institutions, including the institutionalised role of religion, has certainly been wrestling with all sorts of outcries for justice. Sheer selfishness, grinning at the poverty-stricken faces of the oppressed classes, lies at the basis of these institutions. Unfortunately, our prestigious educational institutions, which prepare a large number of white-collar employees and mainstream stalwarts, have failed by and large to transform society by instilling values of faith and justice in the hearts and minds of students. Violence then becomes an unavoidable, perhaps inevitable means of disturbing the hardened conscience of the powerful. This violence is not a matter of bloodshed, but rather one of uncompromising resistance. It is a violence that disturbs the peace and stability of the powerful by breaking the barriers they have built, and is a march towards one's own liberty.

A society that does not respect the rights of its individuals is a society torn apart. It is a sectarian-ridden structure in which the wide gap between the rich and the poor, the privileged and the underprivileged is perpetuated. Jesus' mission was to teach humanity the unconditional love of God who does not distinguish between humans. Jesus embraced everyone alike so as to create a world rooted in God's love. In a world torn apart by casteism, and religious and linguistic differences, it is important to spread the love of God that Jesus was trying to spread through his very life. We Jesuits, being companions of Jesus, are called to do the same, carrying out the same mission. Although this year of regency is a challenging one for me, I am happy to be part of the lives of these people, trying to imitate Jesus. It is a meaningful participation in the Eucharist that Christ the Poor has established in order to unite the world in LOVE.

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Communities in Opposition

James C. Dabhi SJ

Lobo, Lancy and **Das Biswaroop** (Eds). ***Communal Violence and Minorities: Gujarat Society in Ferment.*** Jaipur: Rawat Publications, 2006. 228 pp.

This book, a collection of ten articles written over a span of time after the ill-famed Gujarat Carnage of 2002 in India, offers a set of reflections by scholars on a variety of issues that emerged in the years following that particular horrendous event. These include not only the causes and consequences of the 2002 carnage, but also the testimonies of victims of violence and the politics of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS)[1]. The RSS has been busy communalising[2] indigenous people and Dalits (ex-untouchables) and harassing Christians in the name of conversions. This brand of politics goes some way in determining relations among various religious communities and establishing a cultural and ideological hegemony antithetical to the secular fabric of India.

The editors use the term 'riots' to cover all the incidents of 2002. **Riots** occur when crowds, or even small groups of people gather to commit acts of violence and cause damage to property, usually in reaction to a perceived grievance or out of dissent. Those of us who were in the thick of what happened in 2002 would use the words 'pogrom'[3] or 'carnage' rather than riots.

The myth of the non-violent Gujarati now stands exposed; it is clear that Hindu Nationalism, nascent in the era before Independence, has taken root in Gujarat through Hindu right-wing organisations both social and political in nature. The silent consent of many in this state during and after the carnage, including some corporate houses, civil society organisations and so-called 'saints,' 'Bapus' and 'Swamis' or religious leaders, is eloquent testimony to this fact.

Lancy Lobo and Biswaroop Das may prefer to call the incidents of 2002 riots but their analysis indicates that the incidents went far beyond that description. The article *The Changing Trajectory of Gains and Losses* highlights the spread pattern of relevant variables related to the violent events that affected Gujarat for the period 1995 to 2004, when state assembly elections were held after the carnage. Keeping in mind that the two leading national political parties operating in the state of Gujarat were the Bharatiya Janta Party (BJP) and the Congress Party, their mapping clearly suggests that the high incidence of violence in the state actually helped the BJP in terms of assembly seats.

[1]The literal translation would be "National Group of Volunteers" [Editor's Note].
[2]The terms 'communalising' and 'communalisation' refer to a process of indoctrination that aims to convert a social group (or community) into a faithful follower of the Hindu nationalist ideology.
[3]The word 'pogrom' is a Russian word meaning an attack or a riot. The historical connotations of the word include violent attacks against local Jewish populations in the Russian empire and all over the world. In modern times, political and economic resentment against Jews and the traditional religious anti-Semitism have been used as a pretext to organise pogroms. [Editor's Note, see http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/article.php?lang=sp&ModuleId=10005757]

In another paper – *Hindus and Muslims after the 2002 Gujarat Riots: 'Imaging' as Binary Opposites*, Lobo and Das capture the perceptions that Gujaratis have about Muslims in Gujarat and elsewhere. The article vividly presents the images/cognitive social constructs of one community vis-à-vis the other, and shows how these have been sustained and spread, more so among the 'educated,' or perhaps I should say literate, middle class, middle-caste Gujaratis. The images and meanings of 'Hindutva'[4] that emerge from the respondents are mirror images to the images they have of Muslims and have obviously been constructed for them by various socio-religious and political leaders and agencies.

Hindutva and Muslims in Gujarat by university Professor J.S. Bandukwala describes his own experience in Vadodara (one of the larger cities of Gujarat), which, together with neighbouring towns and villages, saw some of the worst violence of the carnage. In contrast to Lobo and Das, Bandukwala identifies the 2002 violence as carnage and as a state-sponsored pogrom. Bandukwala, a Muslim, is one of the many secular citizens in the state whose views on secularism offend both upholders of Hindu Nationalism as well as conservative Muslims. The author, himself a victim at the hands of Hindutva right wing forces during the 2002 outbreak, explains how selected Dalits and Adivasis were mobilised to be at the forefront of the violent frenzy to terrorise Muslims. The article also highlights how the Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA) was politically used against Muslims by the Police under the state's political patronage. The author sees Gujarat as a breeding ground and laboratory of Hindutva. He attributes it to the conjunction of patriarchy, gender injustice and religious intolerance, all cultivated by the Sangh Parivar[5] over the years in this region—the land of Gandhi.

In his essay *Communalisation and participation of Dalits in Gujarat 2002 riots*, Ghanshyam Shah, a sociologist from Gujarat, explains how 3,5 million Dalits in the state have been misguided by the caste leaders of Hindutva forces. He argues that Dalits, who did not participate in Hindu-Muslim violence in the past, were instigated by the BJP and Sangh Parivar and mobilised against the Muslims. This was done to a large extent by creating a common enemy – 'the Muslims' – and a false unity of all 'Hindus' to counter 'the enemy.' In the process, hierarchical caste divisions and social discrimination were cleverly underplayed. Hindu fundamentalists used religious and cultural symbols such as swords and tridents, songs, slogans, pamphlets, videocassettes of hymns and prayer meetings to create a sense of 'our culture' vis-à-vis 'their barbarism' (Muslim barbarism). By painting Muslims as "anti-nationals," as terrorists with dangerous weapons and as parts of an international network, the BJP and its associates succeeded in creating a feeling that Hindus were in danger. I would like to remind readers that a large number of Gujarati non-resident Indians in the USA and UK support both Bush's anti-Muslim policies and the 'Hindutva' agenda in India.

[4]The ideology or the movement advocating Hindu nationalism [Editor's note].

[5]The name, meaning "family of the collective," refers to the collection of organisations ideologically in sympathy with the RSS. Sangh Parivar operates as an umbrella of many organisations. [Editor's note]

The Adivasi population of Gujarat is nearly 15%, which is much higher than the national average of 8.2%. In *Adivasis, Hindutva and Post-Godhra Riots in Gujarat*, Lancy Lobo suggests that the role played by Adivasis in the 2002 violence is very different from anything in the past. He highlights the fact that the physical and social geography of Adivasis was destroyed when states were formed on a linguistic basis, and maintains that they have been 'Hinduised' by the state over a period of time through official registration of their Hindu identities. The process of Sanskritisation[6] and communalisation of Adivasis has further eroded their Adivasi identity and culture. He argues that the Hindutvavadis have distorted the aspirations, and social, economic and political concerns of the Adivasis. They have also diverted their attention to the pseudo-concern of 'purification' through re-conversion from the so-called 'alien' religion of Christianity and stressed the importance of protecting Hinduism and 'Hindu culture' from Muslims.

Ram Puniyani in *Hindutva's Foot Soldiers – Dalits, Adivasis?* describes the post-Godhra violence against Muslims as genocide. He explains the modus operandi by which Hindutva forces mobilised a section of Dalits and Adivasis to think and behave in a way that suited the political agenda of the BJP. The failure of the Congress Party to keep its promises, the subsequent anti-reservation agitation fuelled and supported by Hindutva institutions, and the lack of any robust and long-drawn-out liberating social movement in Gujarat have all led to the success of the BJP. Allurement, threat and payment for violence against Muslims were the means used by the Sangh Parivar. The victims – the Muslims – do not hold Adivasis responsible for the attacks on them. The article also highlights how right wing political forces used religion and culture to organise heinous violence and killings for political gains. He places the stance of Hindutva forces in sharp contrast with the Indian constitution, noting that Ambedkar[7] burned the *Manusmriti* (Hindu scriptural commentary which promotes discrimination against Dalits and women) and presided over the drafting of the Indian Constitution, while the RSS upheld the *Manusmriti* and appealed for a rejection of the Indian Constitution.

Asghar Ali in *The Gujarat Carnage: Causes and Consequences* gives a historical perspective with statistical evidence of communal violence in independent India, estimating that nearly 13,952 riots have been recorded, 14,686 people killed and 68,182 people injured. He distinguishes the Gujarat 2002 violence from others as unprecedented in terms of brutality and, above all, direct support from the state machinery. He also offers various causes of violence, such as spontaneous expression of animosity of one community against the other, vote bank violence with the support of political parties, the hate campaign let loose by Hindu nationalists using religious nationalism to exclude and eliminate Muslims, and the usage of violence as a strategy to divert people's minds from such real concerns as unemployment, poverty, corruption, injustice, inequality, discrimination and effects of globalisation.

[6]'Sanskritisation' is the term used by sociologists to refer to the emulation of upper-caste practices by those low down in the caste ladder. [Editor's note]

[7]Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, Dalit leader and chief architect of the Indian constitution. [Editor's note]

Religious Cover for Political Power by Lancy Lobo and Biswaroop Das describes the Gujarat carnage of 2002 as portrayed by two vernacular newspapers – *Gujarat Sam*achar and *Gujarat Today*. Lobo and Das analyse the newspaper articles and views, as expressed in these two publications, of prominent citizens from academia and civic organizations regarding the causes of the violence in Gujarat, the role of the police, the state, the media, as well as the overall implications of the eruption. The views are not only different but almost diametrically opposed. The *Gujarat Samachar* is supportive of the state, the ruling party (BJP), and in many ways justifies the violence against Muslims, while *Gujarat Today* presents an entirely different view. It is clear that the role of different newspapers in such gruesome violence often depends on the class and caste of the owners of the newspapers, their political affiliation and patronage enjoyed.

Ram Puniyani traces the emergence and growth of the RSS and its activities in an essay entitled *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh: Politics as Culture.* He explains the circumstances of the birth in colonial India of the RSS (the social backbone of the BJP) and its subtle and bloody attacks on Muslims and Christians from that time to this. The article highlights the organisational structure of the RSS and its ideological underpinning (propounded by Savarkar and Golwalkar), and identifies its inherent characteristics of regression as opposed to the progressive tenets of a modern, democratic and secular nation. The article suggests that the inspirational roots of the concept of a Hindu Rashtra or Hindu Nation (the goal of both the RSS and the BJP) lie in Hitler's fascism as opposed to the Indian Nation as embodied in the Constitution written by Ambedkar.

Surat, a leading a city in Gujarat, did not witness the fury of the Sangh Parivar-led violence as it had in 1992. Kiran Desai, in *On Determinants of Communal Relations: Some Observations from a Case Study of Surat*, examines the nature of the relationship between Hindus and Muslims in that city and shows the historical interdependence of the two communities to be embedded in economic networks and transactions. She describes the divisive role played by Hindutva forces among the rising middle class and migrant population. She also says that despite the fast changing political discourse and dynamics, this interdependent economic base has gone a long way towards shaping a pluralist social fabric, a fact that inhibited extremes of viciousness during the 2002 riots in the city of Surat.

Overall, the book reminds us of the violence against Christians, the killing of 2000 Muslims and loss of property and livelihoods of thousands of families in Gujarat. The essays, taken together, enable an analytical understanding of the horrifying events of 2002. The reader is given an opportunity to understand better history, politics, the market, and civil society; we learn how these forces operate individually and in coalition, with and without human concern for human wellbeing. I believe that power is meant for empowerment but there are those who use power to manipulate, control and annihilate others – physically and culturally. Religion, culture and politics are social constructs and human beings are capable of using them to enhance or destroy.

Four years after the carnage, the underlying causes of the carnage and hate propaganda against Muslims continue to remain embedded in various forms and

erupt at the slightest trigger. The situation of the Muslims has hardly improved despite the nation's forward march. "The nation indeed appears to be shining in parts of its metros, large cities and their select classy streets. It is shining for the owners of large commercially productive farms and farm houses, for the contractors, builders and agencies associated with executing large-scale urban, rural and national projects, for the traders who are able to hook on to larger nets of the global market and for a section of the urban middle classes able to appropriate fast changing market situations in their favour." Things have improved, in other words, for the elite and high caste Gujaratis but not for Dalits, indigenous people and Muslims. The Gujarati Muslims continue to live under terror as second-class citizens.

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Review

On the document 'Globalisation and Marginalisation'

May I offer you congratulations and my sincere thanks for your publication of the Task Force on Globalisation's final document, "Globalisation and Marginalisation: Our Global Apostolic Response"? This note comes from an elderly Jesuit who has spent some twenty-five years involved with JRS and is now still involved with the Sudan Catholic Bishops Regional Conference in a consultative function, mainly with the Justice and Peace Department and the Sudan Bishops' Healing the Healers programme which addresses trauma.

I found the 'executive summary' and diagrams very helpful in getting into the heart of the study, and appreciate also the manner in which the regional studies have been used to give further background on various points. What I particularly appreciate is having the whole study put into an apostolic context and the focus on various aspects of our Global Apostolic Response.

Regarding our response in the light of our upcoming General Congregation, may I suggest that a 'case study' be initiated showing 'best practice' in dealing with marginalised people? I would recommend JRS for such a study since it has twenty-five years' experience in accompanying marginalized refugees and IDPs and now has an active focus on advocacy on local, regional and international levels. Such a study could provide a working example of communities of insertion and also communities of solidarity (through its various levels of advocacy), and hopefully would encourage more Jesuits to make themselves available for the various needs of refugees and IDPs. It would also allow these same Jesuits to profit spiritually from the experiences.

On another point of possible follow-up to the study, I shall be particularly grateful if you can urge the CIS [Centre of Ignatian Spirituality] personnel and other experienced persons to come up with a model or models of Apostolic Discernment in Common, drawn from the experiences of groups actually working with such models. The JRS international office may offer some insights. Since our discernment process is crucial to our Ignatian way of proceeding, I feel that working models of 'discernment in common' will, if made available, be useful and helpful to all who are putting into practice the recommendations of the study, as well as many others. From a few experiences in attempting to deal with this topic, I feel that many of ours, old and young, including myself, do not have much practical experience of discernment in common.

May I add my thanks and congratulations also for cooperating with CIS in bringing out "Faith that does Justice; Justice that seeks God." I have only just begun to go through it, and have found the theological reflections of T.K. John and Jean Ilboudo especially insightful.

Again, many thanks for your work in putting these studies together and getting out the reports. I join you in praying that the outline on our Global Apostolic Response may lead us all to

be more mindful and caring of Christ marginalised in our midst.

In union of prayers,

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On Jesuit-Lay Partnership

Promotio Iustitiae 92 (September 2006)

I was serenely joyful when I read your lines for I see that the sharing of life and mission between Jesuits and Lay partners is deepening. I have been under the same roof with Jesuits and former prisoners for several years in the Community of Loiolaetxea in San Sebastian (in the Basque country), and I know that at times it is not easy. What we on the ground need is to receive light. As well as much spiritual courage!

Original Spanish
Translation by Judy Reeves

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Thank you from the Amazon Region

Peace, goodwill and greetings from a small village called Santa Clara, at some distance from Iquitos (Peru). Here I nurture my spiritual and social life with all the reflections you send me in the review *Promotio Iustitiae.* This publication reflects very fine work by all the team and the Society. I am a Franciscan sister, yet Ignatian Spirituality flows in my veins, for I was involved from a very young age with the youth groups of the Parish of Chiclayo, and thanks to that, I am what I am. How much energy it gives me to continue announcing the Kingdom of Justice in these places where nobody wants to come and accompany the most abandoned! Thank you for all your dedication and your gesture of solidarity. It is very beneficial to our ongoing formation and helps us to nourish ourselves with the Word through reflection.

Original Spanish
Translation by Judy Reeves

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Seeking Peace in a Violent World

Promotio Iustitiae 89 (December 2005)

I greatly enjoyed the review you so kindly sent me of "Seeking Peace in a Violent World," the workshop on violence and war that was held 4 –17 September 2005.

I have read it several times, especially "Seeking Peace in a Violent World: New Challenges," the concluding document of the workshop, and its chapter IV, "New Replies from the Jesuits and the Jesuit Family." I feel

from the heart that the desire to work for peace is born in each one of us, in our own lives and in our relations with others.

The world of conflict in which we live should lead all Christians to consider other alternatives to build and contribute to peace, but alternatives that are our own. We have seen that governments, especially Latin American governments, have done little or nothing to strengthen peace in our region. Economic and political interests and high levels of corruption make it really difficult to achieve, even if we still believe and trust in what our authorities can do. Civil society is beginning to realise the need of a civic power built on a base of love, solidarity, respect and active non-violence as a pedagogical tool; this is clearly the alternative that can give human beings the possibility of living in peace in a more human and just world.

In your review you have identified the way to direct your engagement and work, and your eloquent pieces on "Non-violent Struggle for Justice," "An option for those who suffer violence, war and injustice," "Option for Good Government," and other similar topics reflect in a clear manner the commitment to build peace, which, as a religious community, you seek around the world.

I want to place special emphasis on the "Institutional Recommendations of the workshop." Here the alternatives you have discerned are generously offered to humanity and to civil society. They are illustrative of not only your continuing work for peace through your own organisations around the world, but also of your work in promoting and developing "...new models of articulation in the social apostolate and other sectors of the Society as well as non-Jesuit organisations..."

We share these dreams of peace, and thus I take the liberty of writing you this letter to tell you of my sincere desire to find joint alternatives of institutional, regional and international cooperation.

Perhaps we will be able to dream together of a more human and just world in which peace reigns.

Original Spanish
Translation: M. Campbell-Johnston SJ

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The Faith-Justice Dyad

Promotio Iustitiae 82 (March 2004)

The Faith-Justice dyad contains another dyad, constituted of the two terms of the dyad – first, transcendence of values linked to their Universality, and second, rootedness in reality linked to the particularity of action. We have attempted an analysis of the different contributions to this issue of *Promotio Iustitiae* from such a perspective, in accordance with the general viewpoint of this publication, which is social action. Some of the contributions accentuate transcendence and the search for a universal absolute

acceptable to every culture or ideology. Others focus more on the practical applications.

I fully support **José Mario Castillo's** severe judgement when he says "The Society of Jesus has not been faithful to the mission it committed itself to in GC32, later ratified by GC33 and GC34." Yes, there have been "some Jesuits" who have given their lives to defend the poor and exploited, but they have been the exceptions. I myself have been working for over 40 years in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and have always taken part in one way or another in the struggle for justice and democracy, and this has brought me into some difficulties with those in power. I have, however, always felt myself alone within the Society while my companions in arms have been secular priests and lay people.

Father General was right when he wrote that "the Social Apostolate showed 'certain worrying weaknesses'" because "it seems there are ever fewer and less well prepared Jesuits dedicated to the Social Apostolate."

The economic and political system imposed on us now by Globalisation leads inexorably to the rich getting richer and the poor getting poorer. Unlike Father Castillo, however, I think there is a way of generating the resources necessary for our Apostolate from within the system while opposing it at the same time. By regrouping and animating the exploited and oppressed, we can insist on certain points in order to bring about certain changes. This will bring us into difficulties with established political and economic powers but they can never stop us from working. For this to come about we need to have some degree of social consequence, and that too at the world level. This is the goal of the Altermondialisation movement, the World Social Forum, which seeks to bring into one single network all movements, trade unions and associations set up by all those who are oppressed throughout the world.

I believe also, like Father Castillo, that not to have decided to orient our spirituality towards justice was an unfortunate omission. Yet the Spiritual Exercises are a perfect complement designed for precisely this. On reading this, I myself realised that the spiritual foundation of my concern for justice was inspired partly by my father and completed later by Protestant friends who made me read the Bible with new eyes.

I agree with **Jose Mario C. Francisco** that the Sovereignty of God is the foundation of the Bible. Finally, someone has indicated the Bible as a source of our commitment to justice. He is right also when he says that the subject of justice is not *the solitary individual* so central to Western culture. It is rather *the person in his/her relations with others,* a member of a community, who needs justice to subsist. It seems to me that this concern for justice, which the Christian finds in the Bible, can easily be shared with all who believe in God, whatever their religion, and also with those who attribute an absolute value to the great human values.

With regard to the author's desire to seek an absolute foundation for justice outside of God, I do not see the importance of this. If the values of personal dignity, equality and liberty

are enough to motivate some people to commit their lives to justice, we will joyfully collaborate with them without allotting too much importance to the absolute nature of these values, which may be accepted as such by others. Let us leave this issue to the philosophers and theologians. The oppressed cannot wait for us to find an absolute accepted by everyone. Social work is essentially carried out in a social, political and economic domain. The essential problem is to mobilise a sufficient number of groups and individuals, particularly among those who are oppressed, so as to produce enough social and political pressure to force a country, or the world (in the era of globalisation) to accept certain changes.

Juan Hernandez Pico's contribution is a reaction to which I subscribe from start to finish. GC32 stimulated Central American Jesuits to enthusiasm and inspired them with new ardour in their struggles with the oppressed for justice, studying with them and deepening their analysis of unjust structures – of "structural violence." They also understood that it was necessary to go beyond economic and political structures, and get to cultural and religious roots in order to bring about the necessary changes. They understood too the importance of the creation of global "networks" in a globalised world.

William R. O'Neill clearly indicates where the problem with the relationship between Faith and Justice lies. For liberal philosophers, Justice should exclude all reference to a religion or a culture, both of which have to go. Without a religious or cultural foundation, however, Justice is powerless. Other critics think that Justice is radically inclusive of religion and culture – the very meaning of Justice is of biblical inspiration; the Church *is* quite simply a social ethic. However, Father O'Neill agrees – the more impregnated Justice is with culture and religion, the more limited its scope.

In Fr O'Neill's opinion, Fr Ignacio Ellacuría offers a promising middle path. We could "make historic" the debate on human rights, not as "great history," but as a *grammar* of our particular cultural histories. In his opinion human rights are less the property of individuals than concrete universal claims legitimised by "the minimum indispensable conditions" for exercising the historical social contract, which is the foundation of the community to which we belong. We recognise here the thinker for whom commitment to a multiform and opaque reality takes precedence over philosophical purity of thought, and who does not accept the inalienable rights of the solitary individual, yet for whom the rights of individuals are lodged in his relation with a community, itself rooted in history.

As an example Father O'Neill cites the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, where the issue was not so much debate *on the rights* themselves, but *rights made possible*. Justice is the grammar that permits us to reread the great history written by apartheid and demolish it, and write a great new history, where the "non-people" in the times of apartheid erupted into a great new history. For those who want to exclude faith from Justice, Desmond Tutu remarked that few people opposed the

deeply spiritual and frankly Christian character of the Commission.

The position taken by **Susai Raj** is that of a man totally committed to serving the oppressed. He seems to me to be asking the question that every Christian should ask. This is not (at least for the social worker) "*how* faith does justice, nor *how* justice constitutes faith," but rather how faith has facilitated justice in the past, in other circumstances, and how this should be done today in a globalised world. By its very nature faith illuminates the life of man in all its dimensions. Justice on the other hand, by its very nature, encourages us to act, because it is inspired by the cry of the victims of oppression. Rooted in divine nature (and the object of theology), it is also immanent and existential, flesh and blood, noise and dust (and the object of social action).

India, with its different religions, cultures and ideologies, demands a humble approach which enables dialogue and work among all these men and women, whatever their culture or religion, who live and put into practice the Faith-Justice dialogue.

In fact, articulating the needs of the moment or the claims of the oppressed of our times is one way of expressing how Faith seeks to do Justice in the current world, and how Justice seeks to deepen Faith.

In many countries in the Third World, the links between local and regional exploitation and exploitation at national and international level were analysed through analytical instruments and power balance mechanisms elaborated in the form of legal safeguards, ethical parameters and cultural values. Strategies for social transformation were prepared. Now, like a river in flood which sweeps away everything in its path, *globalisation* has rendered most of these analytical instruments, power balance mechanisms and strategies for social transformation obsolete. In fact globalisation is nothing other than the new name for economic (re)colonisation.

The great problem of the Faith-Justice dyad for social workers, according to Susai Raj, is not therefore to find an absolute which sustains Justice and is independent of all culture and all religion. It is rather to find new systems of analysis, new power balance mechanisms and creative new strategies for a new society.

We will note first of all the somewhat provocative opinions of Aguiline Tarimo, reported in the contribution by **Gerard Whelan**.

On reading his insistence on "the injustice within the Society," I ask myself if perhaps in Eastern Africa they are less advanced than in our ACE Province. His cry "Justice within the Church first of all. May our voice be heard!" and "Stop thinking for us" sounds strange to me as a member of ACE.

He also asks whether it is not time that the Social Apostolate was dissolved as a "*distinct sector,*" and made rather into a simple "*dimension*" *of our Apostolate.* It is obvious that this is in the spirit of Decree 4 to make justice a dimension of all the sectors of our Apostolate – colleges and higher education, parishes, and retreats. However the elimination of the Social Apostolate as a "sector" seems to me a regrettable regression with regard to everything concerning the application

of Decree 4. If we want to introduce justice into our Apostolate, a social centre is more than ever necessary, a centre employing men who have undertaken serious studies in the field of social science and whose main work is socio-economic analysis and social action. They would then be able to enrich the other sectors with their studies and their experience. Otherwise this "social dimension" will remain a very superficial veneer. Did Father General not warn us that the Social Apostolate showed a 'certain worrying weaknesses' because "it seems there are ever fewer and less well prepared Jesuits dedicated to the Social Apostolate." (*Promotio Iustitiae* 82, p.19, col.2, al.2).

As for the idea of young East European Jesuits contributing to the emergence of future African elites by managing secondary schools for the well-to-do, I am very sceptical. These wealthy people in my view are becoming a *social class* where members will be essentially in solidarity with each other, and not an "elite" of leaders concerned primarily for the common good, including that of the poor. We must, on the contrary, welcome to our teaching establishments both the poor and the rich, from which will come the real "elite," not merely financial leaders but true leaders, who, thanks to our teaching, will be committed to improving the lot of the poor.

In conclusion, as social workers reflecting on the Faith-Justice dyad, we must not worry overmuch about finding a universal absolute acceptable to everyone, whatever their culture or religion, but orient ourselves resolutely towards practical matters and discover the deep links which unite faith and justice, while remaining fully open to other religions and cultures.

Kimwenza (Kinshasa) 11/12/06

Original French
Translation by Judy Reeves

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letters

Veni, Creator Spiritus

Pedro Arrupe SJ

Give me what you gave to the Prophets: even if my craven soul protests, force me to speak ... The word that came to them was not their own word but yours, of your Spirit sent to them not only to create a new personality for service but also to explain its sense and secrets ...

Give me that Spirit that scrutinizes all, inspires all, teaches all, that will strengthen me to support what I am not able to support. Give me that Spirit that transformed the weak Galilean fishermen into the pillars of your Church and into Apostles who gave in the holocaust of their lives the supreme testimony of their love for their brothers.

From the Final Address
Congregation of Procurators
5th October 1978

Social Justice Secretariat

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