

Promotio Iustitiae

Jesuit Narratives from Eastern Europe

Žak, Kušan, Lizna, Łusiak, Schweiger, Vitvitskyy

Debate: Salvation, the Poor and the Rich

Joseph Nguyễn Công Đoan SJ and Roberto Jaramillo SJ

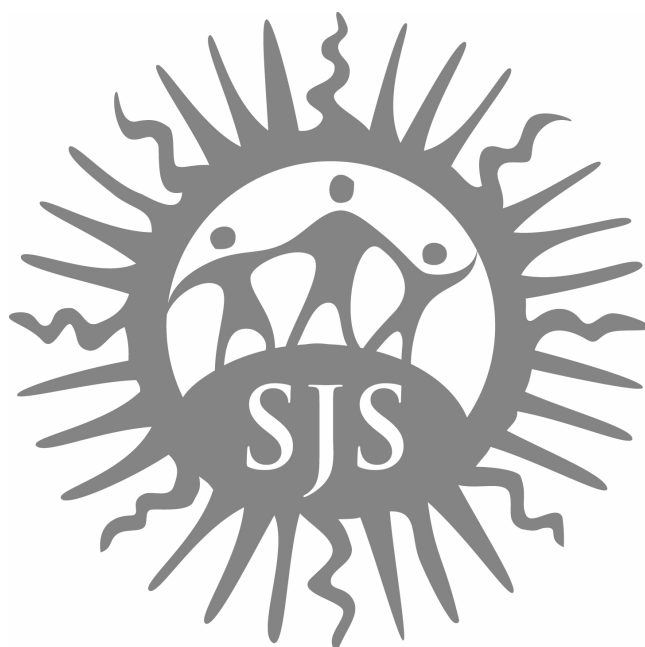
Debate: Perspectives on GC 35 from India

Ambrose Pinto SJ and Edward Mudavassery SJ

Experiences, Reviews



Social Justice Secretariat



Promotio iustitiae 95 (2007/2)

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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

As one walks towards the old thermal hotel in the picturesque city of Piešťany in Slovakia, one sees an arch over a bridge carrying the Latin inscription *Surge et ambula*, the words of Jesus to the paralytic: “Get up and walk” (John 5: 8). The words refer obviously to the healing power of the thermal waters, especially against rheumatism.

I was struck by the prophetic significance of this command to the people of Slovakia, and by extension to the other countries that comprised what used to be called 'Communist Europe,' or more guardedly, 'Eastern Europe'. They have indeed heard the call to get up and walk, but the going has been tough and not always as joyful as had been predicted.

The narratives collected in this issue of *Promotio* are an attempt to record the voices of Jesuits whose lives through this period portray the chequered history of the Assistancy in its journey to freedom after a long and brutal repression. These are the voices of a few Jesuits representing different countries and at least three generations. We are invited to listen to them as they convey their hopes and frustrations, their certitudes and their doubts. They are, above all, a symbol of courage and fortitude. We need to remember that these countries and these Jesuits are called to play a decisive role in shaping the future of a new European Union of the 27.

The 'Debate' section follows the narratives. Two different themes have been included: the first deals with the interpretation of the preferential option for the poor; and the second, from a South Asian perspective, lays bare the issue of cultural differences in the Society vis-à-vis General Congregation 35.

The first debate opens with Fr. Joseph Nguyễn Công Đoan's spirited critique of the use made by Roberto Jaramillo SJ (*Promotio Iustitiae* 93,) of the categories of 'poor' and 'rich' in ways that seem to be dangerously close to the old Marxist categories of class. He asks whether the reason given by Jaramillo to explain God's preferential option for the poor is evangelical or ideological. In his response, Jaramillo explains the crucial significance of understanding the quality or the type of existing 'relationships' between people and groups. It is the quality of these relationships between people and groups that determines the existence of justice and fairness or injustice and marginalisation. It is generally the group of those who control and have access to wealth that maintains dominant and unjust relationships. On the contrary, it is generally among those who do not have access to cultural, economic, social and political resources that the oppressed and marginalised live. The debate has underlined once more the need to reflect deeply on certain issues that kept us bogged down in the past.

The second theme deals with issues of identity and culture. Drawing from two different, carefully nuanced viewpoints, Edward Mudavassery and Ambrose Pinto look at the expectations generated by GC 35 in the South

Asian continent. The question raised by Ambrose on the difficulty of talking about 'one' omnipotent and omnipresent Jesuit identity rooted in the past – however desirable – is one that needs to be addressed and debated. These counterpoised cultures (and ways of interpreting reality) are often based on constructed social, ethnic and linguistic rankings (superior-inferior) and cut across provincial and regional boundaries. They have become serious obstacles to creating true apostolic communities and collaborative efforts.

We take this opportunity to remind our readers that the 'Debate' section in the present and past issues of *Promotio Iustitiae* intends to create a space where Jesuits have an opportunity to question and challenge, critically and respectfully, issues concerning our charism, our life and the social apostolate. The endeavour is fraught with dangers: it hurts some because we seem to have gone too far ahead, and it annoys others because we do not seem to move. On the other hand, if we attain some humble measure of success and stimulate the minds and hearts of many other Jesuits and companions, it will have been worthwhile. Given the times in which we live, this is necessary and valuable. We must acknowledge, however, that to acknowledge our differences is not enough. We have to learn how to discern and decide, whenever required, on a single course of action in a context of plural sensitivities and cultures; we need to devise very concrete mechanisms of apostolic discernment, and we need to discover the role that obedience and good governance play, both in keeping our 'union' and in carrying out our mission.

In an effort to confront the real situations of our world today, the section on 'Experiences' offers four different inspiring examples of apostolic engagements. Pierre Martinot-Lagarde writes his impressions of the World Social Forum in Nairobi. Tanya Ziegler and Frank Turner describe their visit to the Democratic Republic of Congo where hope miraculously lives in a country torn by invasions and civil strife. Roberto Greeley narrates the suffering of those migrants from Central America who cross the entire length of Mexico in goods trains while they pursue their dream of crossing to the United States. Finally, the moving account of Michael Kennedy's visit to a prison in the state of California highlights the hidden ministry of many Jesuit prison chaplains and their collaborators.

The back cover of this issue carries a photo of Fr. Ed Brady, a pioneer in the work of JRS. He wrote a contribution in the last issue of *Promotio Iustitiae*, and died some time later in Nairobi. May he rest in peace.

Fernando Franco SJ

NARRATIVES

Faith and Justice – Landscape after a Battle The Experience of Jesuits in Eastern Europe Adam Żak SJ

1. The faith-justice relationship in the Christian experience under Communism

After the great debates that took place in the Church and in the Society in the post Council decades, there is a common understanding that social commitment and the Social Apostolate cover the same area of meaning. When one talks of the social commitment of Christian believers and *-a fortiori-* of religious, it is taken for granted that this concept is a synonym for the Social Apostolate. Furthermore, it seems commonly accepted that the term Apostolate be qualified also by the adjective 'social'. It is generally understood that there is an intrinsic link between the Social Apostolate and social justice, so much so that the latter is increasingly considered to be clearly one of the aims of the Social Apostolate. At the same time however, at least from a linguistic perspective, 'social commitment' and the 'social apostolate,' because of their clear association with the term 'social justice,' although not opposed to the concept of *caritas*, do not explicitly refer back to this concept to qualify as Christian. That is, they are not seen as distinctly different from explicitly non-Christian visions of social commitment. In fact, the concept of the Social Apostolate as it has developed over recent decades has been strongly influenced by reflection on the relationship between the declaration of faith and commitment to justice. The point of departure for this reflection is not an abstract analysis, but actual experience of social injustice experienced by many peoples within Christian tradition, especially in Latin America – a phenomenon that posed a challenge to the declaration of faith in the contemporary world.

While in the historical experience of Christians in Latin America, and then in theological reflection, the link between faith and justice has been experienced and pondered upon with great naturalness, believers in Eastern Europe governed by Communists suffered, under the standards of justice, a fierce attack on their faith which had no precedent. It must be understood that behind the attack on faith there was a radically negative judgement on religion, especially Catholic Christianity, as a formidable reactionary force opposed to progress and social justice. For Christians in Communist countries the whole range of meanings linked to the problematic of social justice and expressed in language was negatively occupied by Marxist propaganda.

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Thus Christians in Eastern Europe were not able to understand the ease with which their brothers and sisters in faith used Marxist conceptual instruments to analyse reality; nor could they conceive the role of faith in the realisation of social justice projects inspired by Communist ideology. This ideology has in fact monopolised every discussion on social justice, progress and development. The introduction of dictatorship as a form of government was ideologically justified by the struggle for social justice. This traumatic experience has strongly conditioned the way in which the discussion of the relationship between faith and justice has been received. Christians even avoided the phrase “social justice,” preferring to use other terms, for example, social love, human rights, the subjectivity of individuals and peoples and so on. Furthermore, isolation over several decades and total control by the state prevented Christians in Eastern Europe from contributing directly in a significant way to the animated debate on these issues taking place in the free world.

This was the reason that Church documents refuting Marxist prejudices against the Christian faith as reactionary and opposed to progress were welcomed and studied with special attention. I should mention some in particular which inspired a clear echo. First of all, we note the documents from the time of the Second Vatican Council, including the encyclical by John XXIII *Pacem in terris* (1963), the declaration on religious freedom *Dignitatis humanae* (1965) and the conciliary constitution *Gaudium et spes* (1965). These documents, together with the encyclical *Populorum progressio* (1967) and the Apostolic letter *Octogesima adveniens* (1971) by Paul VI, offered Christians in Eastern Europe the means to understand their church experience, which in turn helped them to live their faith proudly and defend it. The very attempt to impose atheism throughout Central and Eastern European society was perceived as a great injustice inasmuch as it was a systematic violation of the rights of believers. In this way, the defence of faith and its proclamation spontaneously became a struggle for justice. What was at first a struggle for the rights of the Church became, under the influence of the Council and growing sensitivity about human rights in civil society, a struggle for human and social rights. Defence of the faith, and the mere fact of continuing to profess and proclaim it, became the most significant contribution to the re-establishment of conditions of elementary justice.

If we consider this general context, we will understand more easily the difficulties experienced by Jesuits in Eastern Europe, largely excluded as they were from the intense debates of the seventies, in finding their own position with regard to Decree 4 of GC 32. This does not mean that there was opposition to the decree. Rather, there was a widespread feeling that the decree, and with it GC 32, was not “for us”. Eastern European Jesuits who followed GC 32 to some extent found their bearings more easily in the documents of the two General Synods in 1971 and 1974 dedicated to justice and evangelisation, and, above all, in the two

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Vatican documents of 1984 and 1986 on liberation theology aimed not at them but at Latin America. Only after the political changes in 1989/90 was there a partial return and participation in the search for identity within the Social Apostolate, and this was thanks to their involvement in the debate which led to the Congress of Naples in 1997 and the drawing up of the document *Characteristics of the Social Apostolate in the Society* in 1998.

Immediately after the fall of Communism reflection began on issues centred on the relationship between faith and justice within the EOR¹ Provincials Conference. The following are some examples of the issues studied. The 1990 meeting was dedicated to the issue – *Faith and Justice: The challenges facing Jesuits in Eastern Europe* (cfr. *Promotio Iustitiae* 48, 1991). In February 1992 there was rich discussion on the issue *Our apostolic priorities in the light of Decree 4*. At the 1997 meeting, the social dimension of every Jesuit Apostolate was examined in depth in the context of the prevailing tendency in the Assistancy to reduce the Apostolate to *cura animarum*.

Since 1995 EOR provincials have actively promoted meetings within the Social Apostolate of the Assistancy and have nominated a coordinator in this sector, Father Robin Schweiger (SVN). Since 1996 there have been regular study meetings at which Jesuits interested, or engaged, in the Social Apostolate may exchange experiences. The Social Apostolate sector is the only one coordinated in a continuous way at Assistancy level. This indicates that the Society in Eastern Europe is really making an effort to face the challenges of the process of unprecedented transformation.

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2. Understanding the *kairos* of the fall of Communism

If, on the one hand, it is true that for reasons of censorship a wide philosophical-theological debate on the faith-justice relationship was lost during the decades of the Communist state, it is equally true that this relationship was experienced as a conjunction that frequently culminated in martyrdom.

In our part of Europe the words of John Paul II in his apostolic letter *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, where he says that in the twentieth century the martyrs returned, have a special significance. This testimony must not be forgotten; in

¹The Assistancy of Eastern Europe (EOR) is made up of one independent region, Russia (RUS) and 7 provinces. Though Lithuania and Hungary do not formally belong to the Assistancy of EOR, they share the same history and experience and hence should be considered when we think about the Society of Jesus in Eastern Europe. During the decades under communism, the Region of Russia was in fact non-existent, though there were Jesuits in the Soviet Union and a clandestine formation. Jesuits in the provinces of Bohemia, Slovakia and Romania (like in the provinces of Lithuania-Leetonia, and Hungary) were forced to live in clandestine circumstances and to migrate. The province of Romania has re-emerged only in 1990 with only 7 or 8 members! Only four provinces, Poland Major (PMA), Poland South (PME), Croatia (CRO), and Slovenia (SVN), even with great apostolic limitations were able to continue having some visibility.

fact their witness should not be lost to the Church but must bear fruit. Martyrs sow the seeds of belief. Here it is not a question of remembering martyrdom as a sort of exhibition of suffering undergone to elicit compassion, but to make the experience of martyrdom fruitful, discovering how the work of grace in history restores justice in a surprising way.

Theologically speaking, the martyrdom of innumerable believers in both Eastern and Western traditions is the most important contribution to the declaration of faith which produces the fruits of justice.

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cry of his people***

In almost the entire region the Christian faith progressively became an immeasurable source of strength for an ever more conscious resistance to injustice. With time this resistance, nourished by the Word of God and prayer, contributed to the collapse of Communism. Thus, many saw the fall of Communism as a liberating event, God's response to the cry of his people.

If we seek points of reference by which to interpret the fall of Communism theologically, we find them in the history of Israel, in the liberation from slavery in Egypt. The Roman Catholic liturgy of the Easter vigil with readings on the Israelites crossing the Red Sea (Exodus 14, 15-30, and the subsequent canticle 15, 1-7. 17-18) becomes – at least in the Latin Church – a point of reference whereby all recent history can be lived and interpreted as the history of salvation. This interpretative elaboration on the basis of the liturgy is extremely important insofar as life under dictatorship was marked and scarred by the experience of evil in many ways. It seemed –and here was the force of temptation against faith– that evil was going to win. The experience of the evil suffered continues to exert its force and must be countered by the experience of grace. Communism has gone, yet the temptation to imagine the victory of evil amidst the confusion of the present is still with us. Victory over evil, experienced historically and interpreted theologically in terms of the liberation coming from God, is essential to reinforce hope. A return to the experience of martyrdom is important in discovering the work of grace in history.

Faced with Communism, Christianity accomplished its role by drawing from its own source, that which animates it and constitutes its essence – the victory of Christ over evil. This means that the force of Christianity is far more than merely the negation of an imposed ideology bolstered by arguments from some cultural current of thought or some anti-Communist political movement. The original force of the Christian faith is manifested in the force of its martyrs. Through this force, Christianity inspired hope, reinforced awareness of the dignity of man and human rights, confuted the absolute character of Communist ideology with arguments and even ensured the sense of a community of values unifying the continent of Europe. Going farther, Christianity has been the voice of those who were deprived of elementary rights, the force of martyrs and confessors.

Christianity has defended freedom and justice, even the freedom to pardon enemies, repudiate revenge and give up one's own life for others. It is in this sense that freedom operated long before the prisoners were able to leave the Gulag archipelago. It did this inside that archipelago, as witnessed in that extraordinary novel by Solzhenitsyn, *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*.

In presenting this reflection, I find it necessary to underline something else I consider very important, not to be forgotten as one looks at the numerous difficulties experienced by Christians in Eastern Europe after the fall of Communism. Freedom does not automatically make anyone happy. For many, freedom can be an empty word because, instead of work, it provides a passport, making rooted people beggars and vagabonds in the world. There is no doubt that, in resisting the totalitarian pretensions of Communism, the main force was not the negation of injustice, but the profession of a faith which liberates. Now the temptation for many is to think that our most important task is to run down everything that makes life insecure, or which disappoints in a functioning democracy and market economy. Not even Jesuits are free of this temptation. Thus, even now, under new conditions, the experience gained under Communism that faith, far from being negative or reactionary, is a salvific, hope-inspiring force, retains all its validity. This experience remains a permanent challenge to thinkers and artists, theologians and pastors, for ecclesiastic and religious communities, journals and faculties. The martyrdom of our brothers and sisters in faith places us as believers before a fundamental requirement – to reveal the Christian faith as a positive force that saves instead of condemning, which is not a voice of misfortune but of hope, and which helps us read the work of grace in the course of history. This is the context of the Society's task in countries recently emerged from Communism.

How can the Society respond to this challenge under the conditions of post-Communist society – pluralist, democratic, relativist and so on? One of the responses made by Jesuits offer is the Social Apostolate.

3. Perspectives for the Social Apostolate in Eastern Europe

As already mentioned, the Social Apostolate was introduced into the agenda of the EOR Conference of Provincials immediately after the political changes. Numerous Jesuits from all EOR provinces took part in the groups for reflection and exchange promoted by the Provincials over the course of the years, contributing not only to the development of the Social Apostolate, but also to overcoming a certain diffidence arising from the long separation between developments in the East and West. I would like to develop my reflection around some questions.

What is the common experience now of Jesuits in post-Communist countries?

Towards the end of the nineties, during a meeting of EOR Provincials, it was noted quite openly that we are no longer united by the past experience of

Communism; the suffering of the past is no longer a common denominator. In the process of concentrating on the past under Communist rule, an opening towards the future has emerged. We have discovered that the problems faced by our mission in post-Communist countries grow increasingly similar to those the Society is experiencing in other parts of the world. Long before 2005 when the Conference of Provincials of ECE and EOR decided to unite in one single conference, we found in joint working meetings that we were discussing the same problems relating to secularisation, formation and such issues. The realisation came that Jesuits in the West and in the East are in the same boat and called upon to face very similar problems. Even at the time of GC 34 no delegate from either of the two Assistancies could have imagined a development of this nature. The horizons seemed so different that a possible coming together was considered only in the very long term.

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While this realisation is certainly valid for Jesuits, we cannot say that the same process was so rapid in other segments of our societies and churches as to produce a similar perception of sailing in the same boat. For this reason one of the greatest tasks of Jesuits in EOR provinces is to help churches and numerous social groups to abandon their victim mentality and discover and face challenges with hope, not fatalism. From the Christian viewpoint, history, despite its apparently inexplicable turns, is always the history of salvation. Even the period of Communism which caused so much suffering belongs to God's design. The fall of Communism itself may be seen from an unforced theological reading in Paschal terms as a liberation event, a gift to be accepted and made to bear fruit for the future. This reading puts an end to negative brooding over the past in a fatalist vision of the present and the future, and opens up the possibility of grace operating in history, the prospect of hope and the future prepared by God, the Lord of history. The Jesuit in the post-Communist world is a serene and grateful witness to a liberating God!

What is the main task of the Jesuit Social Apostolate in post-Communist countries?

Before going on to attempt a response, I would like to focus on the distinction between the social dimension of each Apostolic sector and the Social Apostolate which is devoted to works of a social nature. The social sector in the provinces of post-Communist Europe does indeed exist and assumes different forms in each country but is, understandably, still a somewhat weak sector. The social dimension of the various Apostolates is obviously capable of growth; and for this reason Jesuits working both in the social sector and other Apostolic sectors must realise that ultimately there is a task which unifies all sectors and clearly qualifies the social dimension.

Apart from those participating in a seminar or undergoing the Spiritual Exercises, what is the crucial need of people attending a Jesuit school or receiving the sacraments in post-Communist countries? What can we, or what must we, as the Society of Jesus, impart to the people?

It is my deepest conviction, strengthened by every journey made to countries where Jesuits live and work, that the most urgent need in post-Communist countries and the most genuine task of our Apostolate is reconciliation. In fact our greatest problems arise from the fact that we live in the midst of tragic and profound conflicts and divisions between individuals, social groups, religious faiths and nations. These conflicts and divisions are part of the social heritage of each region. Communism decreed the end of these and repressed them but did not resolve them. On the contrary, it created new ones. An obvious example of this state of affairs was the war following the dissolution of Yugoslavia. There are, however, other examples which manifest the same need for reconciliation and I will recount one. I was in Romania on the day the country joined NATO and was witness to a spontaneous comment from a Romanian bishop, obviously happy about the political event being celebrated in the country as a feast day. "This is a very important day," said the Bishop, "if not for any other, at least for one reason – from now on war with Hungary seems less likely."

If, on the one hand, this comment reveals the scars present in this part of Europe, it indicates, on the other hand, a deep need to go beyond the important political significance of the fact that war has become now highly improbable. Now the scars must be healed. The free market will not do this, nor will the joint efforts of the armed forces. We need to work for reconciliation. This is an inherently religious task, with a Christological foundation which we do not need to expound here. It is a task for all those who define themselves "servants of the mission of Christ," independently of whether they propose a seminar on democracy to young people in a social centre, or accompany the faithful in search of peace with God, themselves and others, or whether they are preaching, confessing or collaborating in a project to resettle war refugees.

For decades society in our countries was exposed to a dialectic according to which struggle was the engine of progress in history. As a result people have been quick to define and indicate the enemies to be fought. We must be just as quick to work on reconciliation, with social dialogue initiatives and the creation of meeting spaces and opportunities for dialogue with enemies. Reconciliation not only heals scars, but also builds foundations for a different future.

The work of reconciliation must be measured evangelically, but with care since the heritage is complex. There are not only issues of enmity, nationalism and the consequences of economic and technological backwardness, but also a

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passivity that expects too much from public and state institutions. At the same time there is a diffidence that inhibits active participation in civil society towards organising something constructive. Certainly, there are many differences between the different countries owing to their different historical experiences. Tendentially however, the number of those who have been incapable of, or unaware of how to react constructively to the changes is quite high in all post-Communist societies. Thus the gap grows between these “passive” and disappointed masses and the cultural, political and economic elites who make huge profits out of the situation in a selfish way by accumulating wealth and power. Populism also profits from this gap and instead of releasing energies creatively, actually perpetuates injustice. Unfortunately, there are forms of populism justified by pseudo-demagogic arguments drawing on religion, national myth or an idealising of the Communist past. This rather simplified image reveals however the importance of teaching, associations and other forms of social education in the construction of bridges and overcoming of divisions. The work of reconciliation needs multiple concrete initiatives to give visibility and stability to the hope for justice.

We are not alone in serving faith that does justice. Fortunately the Social Apostolate works in many forms. We are called above all to collaborate, learning from those we want to help. The Social Apostolate of the Society is small compared to the needs and the challenges faced. We need to forgo every form of presumption in order to sow the seeds of hope among the people.

Original Italian

Translation by Judy Reeves

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"They are doing good things for us"
Narrative from Croatia
Stjepan Kušan SJ

I was born in Croatia¹ into a family that was nominally, but not really, Christian. My father was a member of the Yugoslav Communist party. Whenever the priest came to bless the houses during Christmas, my father always ran away. It made me wonder why it was wrong to meet the priest. This curiosity encouraged me to look at my mother's old catechism. While reading it I decided to make my first Confession without attending any kind of instruction. I did so when I was a boy of 14 years, and here I am.

When I was in high school I joined the group attending religion classes in the local church, and that experience made me decide to enter the Society of Jesus. After ordination and postgraduate studies I was appointed religion teacher for young people in the age group 14 - 18. At the same time I was engaged in family pastoral activities where the main stress was on the communication between husband and wife. Other duties came later, such as teaching moral theology, being Province treasurer, Provincial and Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) Southeast Europe Regional Director. At present I am Director of the Pastoral Centre in Ohrid, Macedonia, and Provincial Delegate for JRS in the Balkans region.

The Communist regime was unjust, atheistic, and controlled even the way of thinking of the people, but it was a challenge for anyone to make a personal decision - to remain or be faithful to God. This regime belongs to history now, but in my Province the troubles were not over. Hardliners with a nationalistic background caused a terrible war in Yugoslavia, the consequences of which are still being felt.

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I was challenged to read the Documents of General Congregations concerning faith and the promotion of justice. While in the process of making a decision about how to proceed, I found the text below very inspirational

As fellow pilgrims with them towards the Kingdom, we have often been touched by their faith, renewed by their hope, transformed by their love. As servants of Christ's mission, we have been greatly enriched by opening our hearts and our very lives to 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 (GC 34, D 3, n. 1).

In the year 1991, when the war started in Croatia, our scholastics made an appeal to their colleagues in the world asking for support and prayers in both

¹A short historical note has been appended at the end. Readers are requested to read that note first before going on to the rest of the article [Editor's note].

defending Croatia and supporting refugees and displaced persons. Their appeal was heard in a special way in Germany, where concrete fundraising action started.

One day four scholastics came to the Provincial's office and told me that they had decided to go home and join their fathers and brothers in fighting the enemy. "We cannot just sit down and watch television while they are risking their lives," they said. I felt embarrassed and said: "Do what you think is right, but do not come back again." Not knowing what the scholastics would do, I experienced great desolation. Fortunately they did not go.

The period between 1991 and 1995, when wars were raging in Croatia and Bosnia, was a time of real challenge to do something in accordance with our mission and spirituality. The first step was to establish JRS so as to help people

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who were being forced to leave their homes. Croats, Bosnian Muslims and Serbs were in need of material and psychological support. Our supporters were happy to see us helping all these people. But I was in danger of being considered 'Yugo-nostalgic' and friendly towards the enemy, which made me angry and caused great desolation.

For a period of two months I did not know what was happening to our community in Sarajevo. The area in which our residence is located was occupied by Serbs. Telephone lines had been cut off. After persistent attempts to get in touch I succeeded in calling some of our Serbian neighbours who gave me information about the community and even invited Fr. Slokar for a cup of coffee so that I could hear him. I asked him to leave the house and get out of Sarajevo. A few days later I got a letter from him asking me to allow him to stay there because he wanted to be of comfort to a neighbour whose smiling face he could not abandon. I learned my lesson. When we finally had to leave the house Fr. Skolar wrote a long report, at the conclusion of which I saw a note saying "The goodness of some Serbian neighbours should not be forgotten."

As we were coming back to reoccupy our house in 1996, one of the Serbian neighbours asked Fr. Slokar to come to see him before the Bosnian police arrived, a request with which Fr. Slokar complied. The man had taken the statue of Child Jesus from the Christmas crib and wanted to give it back. "I protected him during this terrible time and I believe he will protect me now," he said. "The only problem is, how will I explain my act to a Muslim policeman who might accuse me of stealing the statue." The renovation of the house was done by a faithful Muslim architect. In his letter containing Christmas greetings he had enclosed a considerable sum of money. He explained this contribution saying: "The kitchen organised by JRS is serving all in need; regardless of their background, nobody leaves this house without support."

One day a newspaper article titled "Jesuits are cleaning Serbian mess" appeared in a Croatian weekly. A whole lot of angry people called over the

next two days, protesting against our action. What we had done was to organise a group of 5 Serbian and 5 Croatian young men to clean out the Serbian Orthodox monastery near Knin (Centre of the Serbian rebellion) and put the library in order. The Provincial had to defend me against angry fellow Jesuits. It looks as if the article was written by a priest of a Catholic religious order.

Satisfaction came a week later when the same newspaper published an article about Mother Teresa. Under this article was a small note suggesting that what the Jesuits were doing amounted to the same thing. The Serbian Orthodox weekly newspaper carried very positive reports about our action. Catholic boys who stayed for a week in the Orthodox monastery living together with their Serbian "enemies" began to call themselves by orthodox monastic names.

A scholastic doing his regency with JRS in Bosnia was stopped by Serbian police and asked to pay a penalty for exceeding the speed limit. When one of the policeman saw the JRS sticker he asked what the letters stood for. The scholastic answered: "It means Jesus for Republic Srpska."² Another policeman, hearing this explanation, asked his colleague to let the scholastic go with the remark "They are doing good things for us."

The war is over but the consequences are visible in the displaced people, ruined houses, landmine victims and acute poverty. So I decided to continue to work in this field, aware that I am not only offering material support but bringing Jesus to the people as well.

The Province encourages and supports living our faith and doing justice at different levels, such as education, bringing together organisations inspired by Ignatian spirituality, and performing concrete acts of mercy. In the Faculty of Philosophy, departments for bio-ethics and business ethics have been established. Seminars are being organised at national and international levels to foster mutual understanding between different groups of people. The coordination between all these sectors needs to be improved.

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HISTORICAL NOTE

The Croatian Jesuit Province covers the territory of Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro, Kosovo and Bulgaria. The history of this region has been marked by continuous changes of borders and regimes. Four centuries of Turkish domination came to an end in 1913, and, with the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire at the end of the First World War, there emerged in 1918 the new

²The Serbian Republic is one of the political entities that form the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It was constituted after the Dayton accord. Generally it is known as the *Republika Srpska*. This is a way to differentiate it from the independent Republic of Serbia (*Republika Srbija*).

state of Yugoslavia, also called the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenians. The major ethnic groups were Roman Catholics, Catholics of the Byzantine rite, Serbian Orthodox, Macedonian Orthodox, Bulgarian Orthodox, and Muslims. Each region had its own dominant group and minority groups.³

The ethnic groups comprising the kingdom pushed towards local autonomy, which Alexander, the King of Serbia, tried to contain through a highly centralised policy. He dropped the description 'Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenians' in 1929, calling the country only Yugoslavia, and sought to eliminate ethnocentric tendencies by dividing the country into local sections according to rivers and districts. By dissolving the parliament and introducing personal dictatorship he hoped to establish a strong centralised rule.

King Alexander was assassinated on 9th October 1934 in Marseille by a Macedonian revolutionary group which intended to create a greater Macedonia that would include Bulgaria, parts of Greece and Albania. The political instability of the country and centralising policy of the King had encouraged people to press for autonomy. Croatia, which gained it in 1939 within the territories recognized by King Alexander, included part of what is today Bosnia.

When World War II broke out, Croatia allied itself with Germany and Italy, while Macedonia was occupied by Bulgarian troupes. The Serbian King fled the country and went to Britain. Tito's Partisan Movement recreated Yugoslavia in 1943, took possession of it in 1945 and, with the support of the Russian army established the Communist regime.

The history of the country between 1918 and 1945, and later under Communist rule, was marked by tensions between ethnic groups and demands for independence. A real reconciliation process never took place in the country. History was falsified in order to blame one group or other, or to secure the predominance of a particular group. The Communist Party had to be alert, and in order to keep the country together, had to create the 'true' enemy." The words used to identify the true enemy were: nationalism, separatism, clericalism, legalism. The atrocities that had occurred during World War II were continuously reported and an illusion of the "Brotherhood and Unity of Yugoslav peoples" was promoted without any real effort at reconciliation.

All this, together with the fall of the Communist regime, brought about the disintegration of Yugoslavia. Unfortunately it led to cruel wars in Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia, and later on in Kosovo. The status of this region has not yet been resolved and possible fresh violence may result in yet another exodus of the people.

Throughout history all so-called ethnic cleansing has been caused by armed conflicts or by political decisions. In recent times 50% of the Bosnian population has been displaced within the country or sought refuge outside it. Serbs from Croatia, Bosnia and Kosovo have not yet returned home; mass graves are still full of unidentified dead, massacred by Serbian troops in Srebrenica. All these are the consequences of what was happening in this part of the world. Several suspected war

³The composition of these groups in different regions are as follows: **Croatia:** Roman Catholics 87.8%, Orthodox 4.4%, other Christians 0.4%, Muslims 1.3%, Catholics of Byzantine rite 0.9%, none 5.2% (2001 census); **Bosnia and Herzegovina:** Muslims 40%, Orthodox 31%, Roman Catholics 15%, others 14%; **Serbia:** Serbian Orthodox 66%, Muslims 17%, Roman Catholics 15%, Protestants 2%; **Macedonia:** Macedonian Orthodox 64.7%, Muslims 33.3%, other Christians 0.37%, others and unspecified 1.63% (2002 census); **Montenegro:** Orthodox 87%, Muslims 12%, Catholics 1%; **Kosovo:** Muslims 79%, Orthodox 20%, Catholics 1%; **Bulgaria:** Bulgarian Orthodox 82.6%, Muslims 12.2%, other Christians 1.2%, others 4% (2001 census).

criminals are still out of reach of the International Tribunal in Hague. Notable among them are those responsible for war crimes in Bosnia, men such as Karadzic and Mladic, considered heroes by the general Serbian public and actual politicians.

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To Be with the Poor Narrative from the Czech Republic František Lízna SJ

I was born in the Czech Republic in 1941 and joined the Society of Jesus in 1968 during the Prague Spring. I took my first vows in 1972 from a Jesuit, Father Kovář, at dawn in a remote parish behind closed church doors out of fear of police persecution.

In those dark days the Society of Jesus had gone underground. I did my monthly spiritual retreats practically on my own; Father Kovář only supervised me. I continued in this manner until the Fall of Communism.

From 1974 - 1989 the authorities imprisoned me four times, kept me under constant observation and occasionally interrogated me. But during all that time I signed no secret pact with the devil nor directly collaborated even during moments of weakness.

After my ordination I could only celebrate the First Mass. The members of the Secret Police attended the service and it was easy to distinguish them from the faithful. I especially approached them, put my hands on their heads and blessed them so that they would become Christ's advocates through the Virgin Mary's intercession. Then till 1990 I was a 'working priest' under political surveillance; I was at the same time at least a symbolic Jesuit though without the possibility of living in a community or enjoying the fruits of the worldwide Society of Jesus. Contacts with other Jesuits were sporadic; we would mainly meet at funerals and the Provincial's birthday celebrations. The Constitution and other formation texts were practically inaccessible.

After my ordination I worked for 16 years as a manual labourer, for 14 years as a male nurse. I spent 4 years and 3 months altogether in prison. The experience of Communist rule protected me from formalism and weakness and made me attend to the

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essentials. I experienced the strongest connection with God and found solace in a prison cell in Plzen-Bory, where I said Mass daily at a particular time, and once in a while, though not very often, I heard my fellow-prisoners' confessions. The conditions for the first week of my spiritual retreat in prison were exceptional –really ideal: semi darkness, coldness, hunger, bare plank for beds, working until exhausted, humiliation by being stripped naked, the sound of barking dogs, abusive language, cell doors slamming; and on the other side, God's tangible presence and solace, promising that the time would come when the cell doors would open and we would be like birds– free.

Life was also meaningful outside prison. Every day, almost like a ritual, I would go to work very early in the morning, walking 5 km through the woods. I worked with the poorest of the poor – the mentally and physically handicapped. That was where I experienced my first miracle. There was a boy whom everybody avoided. He had great difficulty walking on crutches, taking up all the space of the hall corridor. Because he drooled, nobody wanted to sit with him at meal times. During my afternoon shift one day I found him dying. All the spasms had gone away; he grew more beautiful as he lay there; it was a man resembling an angel lying in front of me. It is this experience, rather than academic texts that stop me from doubting the possibility of miracles.

On the whole, the Communist era pushed me directly towards serving the poor including those whom I met in prison. There were very few political prisoners after the 1960s. The nation seemed to have become lethargic and passive. A hotchpotch version of socialism worked for a great many people. Only a very small percentage of citizens signed Charter 77 – the Human Rights Movement, and they were mostly people living in Prague. I did so as well, simply by following Father Aruppe's example to become involved with justice. Being a minority, we became an easy target of harassment and persecution. In prison we were isolated from each other and I would often share the cell with gypsies (the Roma people) and prisoners who had committed felonies. I came to realise that they were not so distant or different from myself, something that would not have happened if I hadn't been imprisoned.

After the Fall of Communism I was naturally attracted to serving prisoners. The idea of justice was always in my mind because I had experienced the court's corruption and longed to bring as many prisoners as possible from the left to the right of Christ's Cross. Moreover, I had been one of them. Therefore I have sympathy and solidarity with this discarded set of people whom others find difficult to understand.

Surprisingly, freedom has made many things complicated. It is not easy to be free without once again becoming slave to a lack of freedom that results from lust for power, greed for money and other vices and temptations. In my own opinion, at the dawn of the new era, the Society of Jesus naively continued their 'old traditions' which were pious illusions, and

***Surprisingly,
freedom has made
many things
complicated***

their point of view was often clouded over by pride that we were better than others. Present-day reality shatters our naivete and at times causes shock and helplessness.

Ironically, I am glad that the totalitarian era led me to, or made me be with, the poor and become one of them. From the time I was 19 years old, when I was imprisoned for the first time for seven months for taking down the red flag, I had belonged to those who were despised and persecuted. I sympathise with people on the fringe of society because I have been in the same boat. At present I find it difficult to come to terms with the Society of Jesus that does not have enough funds and volunteers for actual work with the poor. It is unrealistic to assume that the exceptionally well-educated brothers will find, besides the academic path, also a path leading to the poor, the less able, those who are outcasts with no special blessings from God. Will we ever find our way to Jesus born in a stable or merely to the virtual Jesus on the flashing screens of the latest computers? And will we ever hear the words shouted from a high barred window of a mental hospital in a big city as I once did: "Father Daddy! Thank you so much for your visit. Thank you so much." That imprisoned woman's cry filled my eyes with tears even in my loneliness.

Personally, I don't think there is any other solution for the Society of Jesus but this one: 'to be with' the poor as often as possible even at the expense of losing our own comfortable environment and our 'well-established' security; or at least 'to be for' the poor instead of conveniently closing windows and doors in the face of the poor and despised. This act of shutting out humanity would, in my opinion, lead to the gradual extinction of the Society of Jesus – the sons of the one who came to Rome with a few coins in his pockets and died in the greatest poverty - Saint Ignatius.

By way of a conclusion I offer this suggestion as food for thought

- every Jesuit should work with the poor or attend to the sick one day a week
- or should do so for one whole month a year

Vyšehorky 1.03.2007

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Social Action in Poland: a Personal Journey

Mieczysław Łusiak SJ

I was born on 11 December 1964 in Nakło nad Notecią and entered the Society of Jesus when I was 19 years old. After two years at the novitiate in Kalisz, I spent the next three studying philosophy at the Faculty of Philosophy in Kraków, and after that at the Faculty of Theology in Warsaw where I acquired a Master's degree in Theology. I spent another two years at the Institute for Spirituality of the Gregorian University in Rome. I was ordained as a priest in 1994.

Thereafter I was appointed Socius to the Novice Master in Gdynia, and taught catechism in one of the public schools there. From 1996 to 2000 I was the promoter of vocations in Wielkopolsko-Mazowiecka Province of the Society of Jesus. My tertianship followed in 2001 in the Spanish town of Salamanca, after which I was made Superior of a Jesuit House in Bydgoszcz, parish-priest and administrator of the Retreat House in Sucha, near Bydgoszcz, and ascribed to the house located in the same town. In 2005 I was recalled from the post of parish-priest and given another two functions in which I am still presently engaged. I made my final vows on 8th December of last year.

I have to admit that till I shouldered the responsibility of being superior as well as parish-priest, "the justice" aspect of our charism was only an abstraction for me.

Shortly after my appointment I was privileged to be brought face to face with the poor, those at the very margins of society. When I started my work in Bydgoszcz, the national economy in Poland was in a dreadful state; changes had been effected very inefficiently by those who were in government after communist rule. The level of unemployment was very high. Day after day people would turn up at our house located in the centre of the city, asking for help, often for the bare necessities of life. For a few months I tried to take care of these people by myself. I had long conversations with them. I would try to find out their actual situation, knowing that many of them were cheating because begging proved to be an easy way out. It is difficult to say which was the bigger problem in their case: lack of money or the lack of ethics.

I quickly realised that by myself I could do very little and I began to look for lay collaborators. With their help I opened a Charity Centre, distributing food and clothes to the destitute, and financial help to those in critical family situations or who were completely alone in the world. The priestly ministry of the Unemployed offered help in finding jobs, spiritual and psychological support, and free legal advice; we also ran an anti-alcoholic centre. I tried to open a social co-operative society, a service company that would offer repairs, building staff, cleaning and similar services, so as to provide steady work for the unemployed. Unfortunately, it failed. I did not find the right collaborators to take the responsibility for managing it. The only man I found to collaborate with in taking charge of this enterprise turned out to be a thief and a swindler.

Another area of social activity in which I was involved at the same time took a different direction. In 1981, during the war launched in Poland by the regime of Jaruzelski against the Solidarity movement, a superior from our convent in Bydgoszcz had acted as chaplain of NSZZ "Solidarność" for the Bydgoszcz Region. With great joy I inherited this honourable role from my predecessor, continuing the tradition of celebrating monthly masses for the Motherland on the 13th day of every month to commemorate the December Events of 1981. This service satisfies me deeply to this day. I come from an anti-communist background; and my own brother was a political prisoner during the war on the Solidarity Movement. I remember vividly even now how our house was searched, the moment of my brother's arrest, the days of uncertainty about where he had been taken and what had happened to him; and at last, the visits to the prison, and a trial, which was a parody of law and justice. With active Solidarity members I quickly found a common language. They became a strong support for the social activities which I had undertaken. From my side I offered them new insights into character formation through yearly retreats in our church for the Solidarity People, and a journey through the Stations of the Cross along the streets of the city, from the seat of NSZZ "Solidarność" of Bydgoszcz Region to our church.

I come from an anti-communist background; and my own brother was a political prisoner during the war on the Solidarity Movement

Simultaneously with this, I got involved in a way hadn't planned with a project to help people addicted to alcohol. It began with my agreeing to provide a room in the convent for AA (Alcoholic Anonymous) meetings. Participants in these meetings very soon suggested that we organise a retreat in our house in Sucha (where I am the administrator) addressed specifically to the alcohol-addicted. I agreed with pleasure because I had a presentiment of how much they need spiritual comfort, of how important a deep relationship with God is to stay sober and rebuild the harmony that has been destroyed by alcohol. I was not mistaken. This retreat was a shot in the dark. The first year there were only two weekend sessions attended by approximately 10 people. Currently, the retreat takes place once a month with a group of about 20 participants, which is the number we can accommodate in our retreat house in the winter. There are more people wanting to attend than there are places, and because of many other duties I cannot personally lead this retreat as often as I would wish. The retreats are admired by many therapists working in public therapy centres for addiction. In fact, they themselves direct people to our retreat. About a dozen alcohol-addicted people and therapists have undergone the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius in our house in Sucha.

From the very beginning I felt that any programme of assistance for poor people should engage the poor themselves in helping others. Delegation may

not be the most efficient way but it is vitally necessary in the business of helping. In helping the sick, we may sometimes even have to carry them on our shoulders, but all our effort is directed at ensuring they walk unaided again. It is the same with the poor. To bring somebody to a normal life one has to make certain demands even in the teeth of protests saying "I deserve all." The "I-deserve-all-benefits" attitude is one of the worst effects of communism, which was a system based simply on such an assumption ("I deserve the same as the bourgeois"). It was, and still is obvious to me that social help in post-communist Poland should aim at eradicating this 'illness,' by which I mean an attitude of dependence. That is why from the start I tried to engage those who had been long unemployed to work for others. It is almost never gratuitous but can we really expect that from people who eat only potatoes day after day, whose electricity has been cut off because they have no money to pay the bills? Instead of simply receiving money handed out to them, the people who came to us for assistance were made to work with the priests in building a new community centre for children and modernising the retreat house. Things turned around so much that I soon stopped talking about the priestly ministry of the Unemployed and began to call the group the Community of Solidarity. By using this name I wanted to send out the message that people who need help are not separate from the ones who try to help them, that aid structures are created not merely by myself as an institution but rather as a family. I am sure it did not always happen in the way I wanted, but in some cases, yes, it did.

Any programme of assistance for poor people should engage the poor themselves in helping others

This dream of solidarity between the one who is in need and the one who wants to help was realised by making our retreat house in Sucha an open community for homeless alcoholics under treatment. I admitted people from the margins of society to our actual Jesuit community. At the same time, other secular people appeared who were "rich" and who wanted, in some way, to be with these people. Thus the community was formed. It now has seven permanent inhabitants (including two Jesuits), and many supportive members. I have to admit that living with the poor (by which I mean homeless alcoholics) has been one of the most precious experiences in my 24 years as a religious. I had never thought that such an experience could give me so much. At the same time it is a very difficult experience. It was very hard, especially at the beginning when I was learning to be with them, to understand their way of thinking, looking for the right words to open hearts and minds that had been more or less destroyed by alcohol and homelessness. It was so hard that if I had known beforehand just how tough it would be, I would not have gone in for it. Today I thank God that he trusted me in this matter, because if it had not happened, I would have missed out on a lot. When I began this initiative, the therapists advised me not to, saying that anything I could do would very

quickly become “a speak-easy haunt.” Today I know that they were probably right, that might well have happened, but it succeeded because the work was done not by me but by Lord Jesus with me as helper.

With each year of my involvement in social action I am convinced ever more strongly of the importance of promoting justice through education. So, a few months ago I started the Life of Happiness Academy. Under that name we spend a few hours in monthly meetings, where qualified persons explain how to cope with many difficult problems in life, how to avoid disastrous mistakes. The topic of the next meeting, for example, will be ‘Crisis within a Marriage’. In autumn we plan to start such lectures at the local Centre of Social Integration, an institution created by our civic authorities for people returning to normal life after a long period of unemployment, imprisonment or other forms of social exclusion.

The last field of my social activity is something I call a Public Matters Club named for Piotr Skarga, a 17th century Jesuit and preacher at the royal court. Under its auspices a group of about 30 people in public life (chairmen, municipal members, politicians, trade union members, high authorities) meet regularly once a month in our religious house in Bydgoszcz to discuss current matters, especially matters relating to local and public life. On the basis of this circle I have, together with the leader of the Board of NSZZ “Solidarność” of Bydgoszcz Region, recently created an association, Centre for Social Solidarity in Bydgoszcz. Under this umbrella are covered all the initiatives I have described above. It has been registered as a legal entity according to the civil law.

For me all these activities are instruments for the “promotion of faith and justice.” Today I no longer imagine that evangelisation, my main task, could have happened without it, and concede that it may even be secondary to helping men and women overcome their poverty and social exclusion. It is true that social exclusion is a common phenomenon everywhere and not inherently or absolutely connected with financial poverty. It is a sign of grave injustice because every human person has the same dignity, pride and self respect as

I wonder sometimes whether we do not try to find escape routes when faced with direct social activity

any other, and any form of exclusion diminishes that dignity. At the same time, looking for the sources of this exclusion (not necessarily found only in social structures) takes me on an unusual adventure, brings me nearer to God, and helps me to find Him.

Undoubtedly many Jesuits in Poland have had similar experiences. However, I wonder sometimes, as I reflect, whether we do not try to find escape routes when faced with direct social activity. Little is said about such

I am convinced ever more strongly of the importance of promoting justice through education

engagement; it seems to be somewhat embarrassing. At the same time, it is also true that such engagement is rare because we do not know how to set about doing it, or because we are afraid that it would take up the time needed for evangelisation. My experience however is that we can learn everything as we go along, and social action does not distract us from the task of evangelisation; on the contrary, it is an excellent ground for widening and deepening the evangelising process.

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Social Apostolate: Early Days in Eastern Europe Robin Schweiger SJ

1. Light out of darkness

I would like to share with you a stimulating story of the social apostolate in our Eastern European Assistancy (EOR).¹ Relating this experience, a mix of joy and sorrow, is not an easy task. There is sorrow because this apostolate could not be developed for many years under communist rule, as happened in other parts of the world, especially after GC 32. There is joy because the fall of the Berlin Wall in November, 1989, symbolized a radical change in all institutions and structures, whether social, economic or political. In this part of the world it meant a new chapter in our way of living. Thinking began to evolve. Things which had been unthinkable before started to be possible again. It was an experience of light and hope out of the darkness of the regime.

This transition from one political system to another new one was painful for all. Some expected quick changes and were disappointed when these hopes were not immediately realised. For many it was extremely hard to accept the fact that after the fall of the regime, the ex-communists once again took over the governance of the countries in a democratic way through elections. Only the name of the political party was changed. Others were attached to the 'good

¹Our Assistancy comprises the following Provinces: Bohemia, Croatia, Poland (two provinces), Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and the Russian region. While most of the Provinces are defined by the state borders of the respective countries, this is not the case for Croatia Province which includes the states of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia (with Kosovo), Macedonia and Bulgaria. The Russian region covers all the republics of the former Soviet Union.

old days' (of the regime) where everyone had a job, and the state did the 'thinking' and 'caring' for you. There was then no worry about health care and social security.

People on the whole however are grateful for what happened, even if the effects of the past regime are still present through certain people, institutions and political structures. Even the Church has had to face the consequences of the past.² It was not easy to redefine and adjust its role and mission in the new democratic reality. But the real issue and the question for us Jesuits here is this: have we taken full advantage of the fact that the context of our work, namely, the world, has changed, and that the Society of Jesus can respond to the issue of faith and justice in a new political context, in a different, more mature way than was possible before?

The effects of the past regime are still present through certain people, institutions and political structures

2. The development of social apostolate: the seed of a just society

The first organised form of the social apostolate at the Assistancy level started with a meeting in Prague, the capital of the Czech republic, in January 1996. I am grateful that Fr. Michael Czerny, at that time the head of the Social Apostolate in the Curia, took the initiative in organising this meeting. For the first time Jesuits had no difficulties travelling, no one was afraid of being observed or controlled by the (in)visible 'eye' and/or 'hand' of police. It was an important meeting, not only for its contents, but also for establishing personal relationships, for the companionship in Christ of Jesuits working in the social field or willing to work in the social apostolate in the future. For many of us it was the first time we could freely share the suffering and the pain we had experienced for so many years (even decades in the case of the older generation of Jesuits), working and living under the communist regime. The meeting in Prague was a preparatory meeting for the world meeting of the social apostolate in Naples, Italy, in 1997. This was the first time in our Assistancy that we could share the experience of the works we were doing. Again for the first time we could reflect on future planning and action for the social apostolate in our provinces and in our Assistancy. That world meeting of the social apostolate in Naples generated a lot of enthusiasm and thinking ahead for the development of the social apostolate in our part of the world.

The Naples world meeting was important for the growth of the social apostolate in our Provinces and our Assistancy. It was a unique opportunity for different delegates from our Assistancy to get in touch³ with burning issues concerning the faith-justice dyad. It was an occasion to get to know the

²In some countries the Church had to face the painful issue of collaboration of priests and bishops with the regime.

³For some delegates it was for the first time they were meeting Jesuits from other continents where the social apostolate has been flourishing for many decades.

different kinds of work Jesuits do around the world, what the Jesuit universities and social centres are doing and proposing in the area of social thought and action.

One of the strongest desires expressed during the reflection at the end of our first meeting in Prague, and confirmed at our Naples meeting, was for a continuation of our meetings at the Assistancy level. The question was not only how and where to meet, but also the organisation and the themes we should tackle in our meetings. A highly important decision was taken at this meeting. We set up a small commission for the social apostolate in our Assistancy. From 1997 onwards, this commission prepared, with the help of the Social Secretariat in the Curia, several meetings aimed at developing the social apostolate in this part of the world. Since 1997 we have had our gatherings in Croatia ('98), Poland (PMA, '99, 2000), Slovenia (2001), Croatia (2002), Slovakia (2003), Poland (PME 2004), Romania (2005). The first European meeting between the three 'pillars' of the social apostolate –JRS, Mission Ouvrière and Eurojess– was held in Slovenia (2004), and in 2007 the second European meeting will be held in Slovakia.

These meetings –which were a kind of pilgrimage through different Provinces in our Assistancy– were also an opportunity to get to know these Provinces and to stimulate the reflection-action process on social issues for a more just society. Groups in the Provinces were set up to prepare these meetings to which scholastics, fathers, brothers and Provincials were invited. At each meeting –lasting 3-4 days– we had time to share our experiences, to reflect on how to promote and 'build' a social work or sector in each Province. We invariably emphasised the importance of the role of the social coordinator and the social commission in the Province. At each meeting there were certain special themes of general interest on which lay people, sisters or Jesuits were invited to talk. The following issues were tackled at our meetings:

***These meetings
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- Social analysis to acquire tools to observe and analyse the situation in our countries.
- Father General's letter on Social Apostolate for the Jubilee year as a stimulation and encouragement for our reflection and action in our Provinces.
- The issue of sustainable development, generated by the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Africa (Johannesburg, 2002).
- How the book "Characteristics of Social Apostolate" published by the Social Secretariat in the Curia can be used to stimulate our way of doing the Social Apostolate.
- The issue of Europe as many countries were in the process of joining the EU, and did so in 2004.

- The migration issue. This huge issue grows ever more pressing for the reason that, with the EU becoming more and more the promised land for many people, our countries have become the external EU border after 2004.
- The role of the Society of Jesus in establishing links between the Church and civil society for a better world.

An important moment for our Assistancy was a reflection-planning meeting which I had with the Provincials of the EOR Assistancy in Poland (Falenica 2002). I received a lot of support from the 'top,' namely, the Provincials, while we were discussing the future of this 'young' apostolate in our Assistancy. The question is what we, the Jesuits in the social apostolate, more especially the younger generation, or the Jesuits with lay people related to social works from 'below,' if I may use this expression, should do now? Will we be more proactive and creative in facing the changes, the urgent challenges and in tackling new social issues for a better and more just society?

3. The reality today

After an initial phase of enthusiasm, I sense now some kind of resistance, a lack of creativity, a certain tiredness and passivity in the social apostolate. I would like to point out some signs which can illustrate what I mean. They can be overcome with good will and a clear vision about the future of this apostolate at different levels.

I sense now some kind of resistance, a lack of creativity, a certain tiredness and passivity in the social apostolate

- In most of our Provinces in our Assistancy there are social coordinators,⁴ but they are overburdened with other tasks or missions given by Provincials. In some Provinces social commissions exist which have regular meetings. They are of great support to the social coordinator of the Province.
- A fair number of Jesuits who were involved in the social apostolate changed their mission because they were asked to do so for various reasons by the Provincials. It is thus hard to plan this apostolate in a structured way.
- It is also true that in this part of the world, the social apostolate is not a high priority among the Jesuits and Provincials. This fact reflects the consequences of the past, namely, the understanding that the Church's priority is to serve the sacramental needs of the people. Serving the social needs of the people, as service in faith that promotes justice, has not developed into a wholly important concept.

⁴In the smaller provinces of our Assistancy it is difficult to nominate a social coordinator because there may be no younger Jesuit or, indeed, anybody interested in the social apostolate. As a result we have contact persons.

- Some Jesuits who worked in the social apostolate have left the Society of Jesus, perhaps because this field seems too 'dangerous' to work in. For the same reason there is a certain resistance to sending more young Jesuits to work in the social apostolate or to study social issues. The number of Jesuits in our Assistancy who finished a higher degree in social sciences in the last years or who were sent to study that subject may be counted on the fingers of one hand.
- Among the Jesuits I find a certain passivity, a lack of creativity in tackling new social issues. One notices also a certain fear of engaging in dialogue with the civil society. The Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) has done great work for the people afflicted by the war in the Balkan region. But it is hard to find Jesuits⁵ who would work in JRS with the people living in detention centres or asylum homes. These people were on the move towards a better life in the EU, but find themselves in a new and extremely difficult situation. Nevertheless, JRS is still the most 'visible side' of the social apostolate in this part of the world; besides OCIPE in Warsaw, the only social centre in our Assistancy.

In our part of the world the social apostolate was born with difficulties. It has grown through many initiatives at the local level, with God's blessings and the support of the Provincials. Is it time for a more courageous approach towards action regarding social issues, new social problems? I would say yes; otherwise, there is a danger that the "social sector will disappear," as Fr. General pronounced in the meeting of coordinators of our Assistancy in 2003⁶ and with it, probably, the social dimension of our work as Jesuits.

Have we the courage to face this reality? We can, we hope, discuss it among the Jesuits of our Assistancy at our second European meeting of JRS, *Mission Ouvrière* and Eurojess in Slovakia this summer to plan our new second phase of the social apostolate in our Assistancy.

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⁵I am thinking particularly of Poland which has the longest external border of all EU countries and the highest number of Jesuits in our Assistancy. JRS has not (yet) been founded!

⁶Fr. General repeated this preoccupation at the Assistancy meeting in 2004.

The Fountains of Life

Viktor Vitvitskyj SJ

This is a story of how love is generated and how it might be incorporated in our lives. Despite difficulties, goodness and its effects (God's presence and His love) are always present. I will sketch a life-story about faith and its ability to confront misunderstandings and widen our horizons through its desire for justice.

The very fact of writing this article is witness to an act of justice since its concreteness will undoubtedly touch our hearts. One thing which compels me to write this story is faith in God's unlimited love towards mankind, especially towards the weak and the needy.

I would like to stress an important point before proceeding with the story, and that is the joy expressed by the disabled ones when they knew that this article I was about to write concerned them. That made them feel needed and not left out.

My name is Viktor. I entered the society seven years ago and am now at the end of my regency in Leopoli in Ukraine. I was born during the declining years of the U.S.S.R., but my memories of that period are somewhat faint. The aftermath of communism was evident for many years thereafter in this country. The news which we frequently get from Ukraine suggests that there are many problems. Economic problems, an unstable government, high levels of unemployment and other issues plague the country. There are, however, many things of which Ukrainians could be proud. As a result of its culture and history, Ukraine has survived many attacks from neighbouring countries and managed to win its independence. This marks the first step towards democracy.

A few years ago, we heard of the 'orange revolution' in which the Ukrainians proved their readiness to fight to defend their rights and freedom. One is full of awe at the progress Ukraine has made during this period. I declare this not out of national pride but because I share the same combative spirit, which will not wilt when challenged. A possible question that can arise is this: from where did Ukrainians get the energy to overcome the hurdles and many prohibitions it faced? What are the limits of hope in the possibility of a better life? Surely, without exaggeration, I may affirm that, in the case of my country, the only available source of hope was its faith in God. This faith in God is a reality that cannot be explained or offered as an answer to all that happened. No, it is an act which has to be witnessed in broad daylight; it must not be concealed in the dark.

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Ukrainian society has always produced a large number of able teachers contributing to the country's well being, but at the same time very respectful of the values of the people. Among these teachers I would include the Jesuits and their way of proceeding in a field previously unknown to them and very different from their usual contexts. The role of the Jesuits in Ukraine seemed indeed to be very different. Some accused them of dividing the Ukrainian Church; others considered Jesuits to be dangerous and obstinate. All this notwithstanding, the Jesuits did contribute a lot in the education sector; they opened pharmacies and distributed financial aid to the poorest. In 1923, when the encyclical letter *Ecclesiam Dei* was issued and Pius X proclaimed support to the Catholics of the Eastern rites, the Jesuits answered readily, offering training to its members so that they could evangelise Jesus while bearing in mind the local context.

After the downfall of the Soviet regime, the Society started its mission with a new spirit, emphasising service to God and to His people. The Jesuits saw the tough times that the people had gone through as a challenge. Their task was to be near the people, give them a helping hand, reach out to those persons who had distanced themselves from God, and finally, to console the bereaved who had lost their loved ones in foreign lands. By welcoming and sharing their daily bread with people suffering injustices, the Jesuits lived out their motto ('love and serve') fully and concretely.

I was never particularly interested in the world of the disabled. All I had heard and felt for them was simply the effect of my compassion towards them, but I had the opportunity to open up and come closer to their reality two years ago when I was beginning my regency in Leopoli.

Statistics declare that 10 per cent of the world's population suffers some kind of disability; of these, three million live in Ukraine. Among other causes, the economic crisis that lowered the country's standard of living is chief; ecological degradation and sickness also contribute to the increase in numbers of disabled people. Generally speaking, this segment of the population is weak, a highly visible fact in Ukraine where the disabled are not sufficiently cared for by the government. The attempts to improve the educational and cultural sectors, to provide relevant information regarding human rights are inadequate; the training offered to the disabled to reintegrate themselves in society is meagre. People have to go for help elsewhere in one of the charitable institutions, or learn to strive alone, full of scepticism about the government's health care system.

It is true that some charitable centres for the disabled have been set up in Ukraine, but these are few in number and face immense difficulties. I first got to know the centre for education and rehabilitation 'Gerelo' in 2005, and all that I experienced there helped me to ponder deeply on this situation, revise my opinions and understand that we should not jump to conclusions. I had never imagined that a disabled person could live a normal life; the limitations of

disability had seemed to me to be too great. Once I was in touch with their reality, I learnt that the maximization of life has little to do with producing much and producing perfectly, but lies rather in the ability to enjoy every moment that is given to us. This attitude is for me an example of how I must give my life to people so as to help them get the most out of their lives.

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The activities proposed by the centre take into account the personal needs of the disabled and make available whatever is needed for their formation - helping them build their self-esteem and teaching them how to accept their limitations so as to live well, finding their own ways of expression. Their activities show many hidden talents - ideas, sketches, story-telling and writing poetry. The centre organises an annual exhibition of paintings to help us enter the world of the disabled and understand their expectations.

Modern technology frequently provides us with better ways of viewing our world and its beauty from above. Unfortunately, we tend not to bother about how the world is envisaged by the disabled. Their lives and their problems seem to us too difficult. This is true, but the sad thing about it is that often, more than their limitations, our way of dealing with them by isolating them makes them unhappy. They are very sensitive to external events happening around them but they seem to be very much in touch with their inner lives. Their first love, their delusions, family problems, lack of friends - all these generate reactions that are, at times, unpleasant.

Conversing with the disabled, one immediately notices their profound spiritual life. I wouldn't have imagined that phrases such as 'God loves you,' or 'He created us according to His image' would cause confusion in them. Much time and patience are required to come up with a plausible answer to their question: 'Why did you create me this way, why me?' Accepting oneself often means knowing the reason why God created us: finding the meaning of all the gifts we have received and answering His call joyfully. It goes without saying that this goal is often not easily achieved.

The following two stories, written by two different persons, offer evidence of the difficulties we encounter in being available to others, in taking note of God's intervention in His creation, in listening to our neighbour's sigh, in not refusing the helping hand which might be offered to us.

Story 1

My name is Roman and I'm 29 years old. I live at Leopoli, Ukraine, in a home for the elderly and disabled. For me it is very difficult when others ignore you simply because you're disabled. People find it difficult to understand how we are what we are, to value our life and needs. I think that if one day we disabled no longer existed, people would not be much concerned. For some, the disabled are a

shame for the country, and they try to hide us in various ways. We are not informed about our rights and every instance of government aid is like an act of charity. Believe me, I don't want to be a burden to the society and beg for mercy. Instead, I want to have every possible opportunity to produce fruit worthy of my capabilities and my life. For example, it is very difficult to find understanding and a bit of tolerance. I always dreamed of having a job and being autonomous. I joined a lyceum to obtain a specialist certificate so that in the future I could earn a living, but after a few months I had to leave for useless reasons. The most difficult thing for me to understand and accept was the scolding I got from other students and the administration because I needed help to climb the stairs. I learned a lot from this difficulty in my life. Sometimes I wished to hide and curse my situation but the good Lord always sent people who managed to help me. With the help of my friends I received a computer, which is very useful to me. I wrote my first play, "Source of life." I want to show everybody the life, the thoughts and hopes of the disabled. Maybe this little step in playwriting will help me to find something more interesting and significant to do, and in this manner I can communicate with society.

Unfortunately, the persons who try to help us are few. From their work I may say that I learned a lot, especially about the nature of love, friendship and sacrifice. It is really a miracle to have such persons close by. I couldn't explain this thing better than by quoting the words from the letter of St. Paul to the Romans: "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." (Rom 8, 28). I know that my life is worthy, and the various difficulties that I encounter notwithstanding, I believe that the Lord is teaching me how to find His Will and to trust in Him.

Story 2

My name is Bodhan. I am not able to walk and eat by myself, and it's quite difficult to understand me when I speak; but God gave me the gift of painting by using my feet. The only way to communicate to people is to express in my paintings my feelings, my sensations and my heart.

Five years ago, I hadn't even the desire to look for ways to share my cordiality and love with others because all I could see in the attitude of other people seemed to me negative and cold. Now, following my encounter with 'Gerelo,' and the people who help me, my paintings have been transformed into an expression of joy and hope. I try to open myself up to others and make new friends because almost everything in my life depends on them. At times I don't succeed in asking for help, but I think I should learn to do so, as this is the only way to reach the goal of my life – to transmit hope and joy to all. The people who look at my paintings don't see anything unreal or unnatural, but rather, common things present in our lives, but which are normally not observed in everyday life. I don't think that it is an overstatement to say that through the window one sees a

lot, but not everything; through a person's eyes one can understand the structure of his soul but not its beauty. Only a pure and simple heart enables one to find the true meaning of life in its whole perfection. I wish that the world would learn how to appreciate all it possesses, to turn its attention and help towards the weak that they may become part of the society.

Through this article on disabled persons, I wish to emphasise that any tragedy that hits a nation affects mostly the vulnerable. The situation of the disabled persons in Ukraine calls for immediate action by the government. Unfortunately, it is quite evident that, despite the promises made, little has been done; the poor people and the inadequate public facilities show the low level of human involvement. Here is an actual situation to talk about justice and its concrete manifestations. It is not enough to define justice as giving a person all he or she has the right to. Maybe justice is something more than this; maybe it is the ability to see the other person as a creature of God called for a life in collaboration with the Creator. The life of the disabled is quite difficult, but the courage and faith with which they deal with life are an excellent example for us to follow.

***Any tragedy
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Original Italian

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DEBATE

The Rich, the Poor and the Honour of God Observations on *A Mission for the body of the Society* by Roberto Jaramillo SJ (PJ93 pp. 35-40) Joseph Nguyễn Công Đoan SJ

The author, in explaining the reason for God's option for the poor, attempts to redefine the theological source of the Ignatian insight into the apostolic criteria of election.

He begins by expressing his *uneasiness with an idea that the 34th General Congregation took from a speech by Fr Kolvenbach (Detroit 26/06/91) affirming that "God has always been the God of the poor because the poor are the visible proof of a failure in creation."* This he deems to be **completely wrong** (p.35); **completely against the message of Jesus in the gospels** (p. 37). He says: "*We cannot in any way affirm that God opts for the poor because they are the visible proof of the failure of creation.*" The result would be a *simplistic anthropomorphism*.

He goes on to express his view strongly: "*I think and believe that God chooses the poor so as to save us all. God chooses the poor because only in the hearts and lives of poor people can space be found for the novelty of his liberating proposal - salvation.*" An eloquent paragraph follows, a panegyric powerful enough to lift one's heart and make one commit oneself to the service of the poor.

I agree with his observations on the role of the Vision of La Storta in understanding the apostolic vocation of both Ignatius and the Society, and also with his observations on the task of the 35th General Congregation.

Nevertheless, while reading the article I was particularly struck by two things: the categorical, unquestioned judgement of the author, and his way of approaching the Bible. I wonder if his explanation of the reason why God opts for the poor ("**because only in the hearts and lives of poor people can space be found for the novelty of his liberating proposal - salvation**") is evangelical. Is it inscribed in the Ignatian understanding of the criteria for apostolic discernment?

Having specialised in biblical studies, I am surprised by the way the author treats the Bible. The first quotation from the 'interminable list' of references is provided by abridging or short-circuiting, perhaps without even opening the Bible: "*...he was rich, but he became poor to redeem us from our sins*"¹ (2 Cor. 8:9)². The text appears in a context where St. Paul brings Christ's example in order to invite generosity in sharing with poor communities: "*Remember how generous the Lord Jesus was; he was rich but he became poor for your sake, to make you rich out of his poverty.*"³ Also to be noted is

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¹"Para redimirnos de nuestros pecados" (In Spanish).

²This happens in the Spanish (original) and the French versions; the Italian and English versions follow the Bible.

³All Biblical references in both the French original and English translation are taken from the Jerusalem Bible [Editor's note].

the cursory way in which he identifies Jesus' entourage: "*his friends and intimate acquaintances are always poor.*" Can we say for sure that Zaccheus became poor (materially) in spite of his generosity: "*the half of my goods I give to the poor*"? Was Joseph of Arimathea, member of the Council who had had a tomb carved out of a rock for himself, who was able to meet Pilate and ask for the body of Jesus, materially poor? The Gospel according to St Matthew designates him unequivocally as "*a rich man of Arimathea*" (Mt. 27:57). Was Nicodemus, who "*brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, weighing about a hundred pounds*" (Jn. 19:39) materially poor? The women who, together with the Twelve, followed Jesus and who "*provided for them out of their own resources*" (Lk 8: 2-3), were they materially poor? Mary of Bethany who "*took a pound of a very costly ointment, pure nard (of an estimated three hundred denarii value according to Judas) and with it anointed the feet of Jesus*" (Jn. 12:3), was she materially poor? At the moment of Jesus' death, at the most tragic moment, the other disciples considered by the author as "*his friends and intimate acquaintances*" abandoned him whereas the two rich men put their lives at risk by asking for the body of Jesus and burying it with dignity. The presence of the rich in Jesus' entourage is awkward in the light of the author's categorical remarks about the poor as well as the rich. Is that why he gets rid of them so summarily?

The author questions the epistemological grounds of the assertion: "*What epistemology (type of knowledge, criteria of judgement and value) lies behind the statement that the poor are a visible proof of the failure of creation? For Jesus, are not the rich precisely this proof?*" (p. 38). We could ask the author in return the very same epistemological question as answer to his rhetorical question: "For Jesus, are not the rich precisely this proof?" The same thing can be done with his thesis:

"I think and believe that God chooses the poor so as to save us all. God chooses the poor because only in the hearts and lives of poor people can space be found for the novelty of his liberating proposal – salvation." To be sure, the opposition between the rich and the poor is a fundamental theme in the Bible, but which rich and which poor? The author seems to take only the material connotation into account. The Bible makes a distinction between different kinds of rich people: greedy and oppressive rich and those who distribute their riches to the poor are not lumped together. In the Gospel, while it is true that the rich young man does not provide "space for the novelty of his (God's) liberating proposal-salvation," this is not the case with Zaccheus, Joseph of Arimathea, Nicodemus, nor the women who provided for Jesus. The author's thesis seems to deny that possibility to rich people. With such a perspective, the opposition between the rich and the poor seems closer to a Marxist, not an evangelical epistemology. The Marxist-Leninist revolution is merciless towards the rich and exploits poor people's aspirations, urging them on to realise the liberation that consists in overthrowing the rich.

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The Gospel according to St. Luke, which unfolds as the accomplishment of Isaiah's prophecy read by Jesus in Nazareth, proclaims: "*Happy are you who are poor: yours is the kingdom of God*" (6:20). However, the Gospel according to St. Matthew, which presents Jesus as the Emmanuel (God-with-us), proclaims: "*How happy are the poor in spirit*" (5:3). We must consider both versions in order to understand better the position of the rich and of the poor in the matter of salvation. Lk 12:13-21 is a sermon against greed and is addressed to all, the poor and the rich, taking the example of the rich fool. The message it offers is an invitation to become "rich in the sight of God." The parable of the rich man and Lazarus the poor man in Lk 16 is indeed an illustration of Lk 6: 20-26: Happy are you, Alas for you. But the message is also an invitation to bridge the gap between the rich and the poor. The rich man failed to bridge the distance that lay between his table and the poor man at his door, and that short distance becomes, in eternity, a chasm that no one can cross. The whole of Lk 16 is a teaching on how to make good use of earthly riches. Lk 19 shows that Zaccheus has managed to bridge the gap: "*Look sir, I am going to give half my property to the poor,*" and Jesus declares: "*Today, salvation has come to this house.*" Thus Zaccheus puts into literal practice Jesus' teaching on the good use of money (Lk 16:9): "*Use money, tainted as it is, to win you friends.*" Notice the number and situation of those texts in the structure of Luke's Gospel: the Beatitudes and their opposite (Lk 6); the teaching on the way to Jerusalem where Jesus is about to accomplish his exodus (the significance of which will be revealed to the disciples by Jesus himself in Lk 24: 45-48): chapters 12, 14, 16, 18 (the rich young man) and 19 in Jericho, the last stage of the journey before the arrival in Jerusalem. The story of Zaccheus is followed by the parable of the pounds to round off the teaching on the way before the entry into Jerusalem (Lk 19: 28). The teaching on the use of earthly riches is illustrated by characters: the (unnamed) rich fool in Lk 12; the unfaithful steward representing the wisdom of the sons of this world; then the (unnamed) rich man and Lazarus in poverty in chapter 16; the (unnamed) rich young man who rejects Jesus' offer in chapter 18 and Zaccheus who offers to put Jesus's teaching into actual practice and is confirmed by Jesus himself in chapter 19. Among those characters are the disciples who abandon their belongings in order to follow Jesus permanently; they too are confirmed by Jesus. This insistence shows the importance of teaching the good use of earthly riches within the community, without distinction between rich and poor. All need to be educated so as to have the right attitude towards earthly riches and thus inherit eternal life. This point reminds us of the Principle and Foundation of the Spiritual Exercises.

The importance of teaching the good use of earthly riches within the community, without distinction between rich and poor

The three Synoptics report the story of the rich young man who went away sad when he heard Jesus' answer to his insistent question and Jesus' comment

on how hard it is for the rich to enter into the Kingdom, that is, the danger of riches. His audience reacts thus: "In that case" said the listeners "Who can be saved?" It is worth noting that Luke reports the reaction of those who heard without distinguishing between the rich and the poor. Jesus replies, "Things that are impossible for men are possible for God."⁴ Matthew also reports the reaction of the disciples: "When the disciples heard this they were astonished, saying, 'Who can be saved then?' they asked. Jesus gazed at them. 'For men' he told them, 'this is impossible; for God everything is possible.'"⁵ Mark is more dramatic: "They were more astonished than ever. 'In that case' they said to one another, 'who can be saved?' Jesus gazed at them. 'For men', he said, 'it is impossible, but not for God because everything is possible for God'"⁶ Notice how Mark emphasizes the look in Jesus' eye: Jesus gazed at them. What does that look add to the meaning of Jesus' words As far as they are concerned they have been saved, they have received the Kingdom in Jesus' person. If they have been able to abandon their belongings, however meagre, in order to follow Jesus, it is surely God's powerful work, not their own. The three Synoptics show us that Jesus' words filled Peter with joy, "We have left everything and followed you" (Mk 10.29). Luke is more specific, "'What about us? We left all we had to follow you'" (Lk 18: 28). In one of his books, Cardinal Martini relates the story of a hermit who wonders if he is the poorest man in the world, having nothing other than a rag and a half-broken jug. God transports him to a palace and says to him: "The master of this palace is poorer than you are, for he is attached to nothing whereas you are still attached to your rag and your half-broken jug." The poor person does not necessarily have a 'poor' heart; it is through God's power that the rich and the poor can have a 'poor' heart that is ready to welcome salvation.

It is through God's power that the rich and the poor can have a 'poor' heart that is ready to welcome salvation

In reading St Paul' letters, it is quite clear that there were rich and poor people in his communities, masters and slaves who lived in a state of fraternal sharing, not only among members of the same community but also between communities. And if some person or other offered his house for community gatherings, it was because he had the material means to do so. The letter to Philemon shows how the problem of slavery can be resolved without a Marxist revolution, when rich and poor, masters and slaves become brothers and sisters in Christ, through the power of salvation in Christ.

Reading the Gospel thus, one may well wonder whether "*only in the hearts and lives of poor people can space be found for the novelty of his liberating proposal – salvation*" (providing we understand the meaning of salvation brought by Christ), or whether it is rather God who creates that room in the hearts of the

⁴Luke 18. 23-25.

⁵Mt 19. 16-30; the French version of v.26 is more faithful to the Greek; the English version adds the words *at them*.

⁶Mk 10. 17-31.

poor as well as in the hearts of the rich. Saint Paul did not hesitate to affirm, "It is God, for his own loving purpose, who puts both the will and the action into you." (Phil. 2:13). No one can doubt that the Bible shows God's preference for the poor, the oppressed. But explaining that preference in terms of the space available in the heart of the poor amounts to attributing to God what Jesus considered worldly wisdom: loving those who love you, greeting only your brothers ... Tax collectors and Gentiles do as much. Jesus asks his disciples to become "sons of your Father in Heaven; for he causes his sun to rise on bad men as well as good, and his rain to fall on honest and dishonest men alike ... You must, therefore, be perfect just as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Mt 5:45-48). God is God; he comes to the poor not because there is more space for Him with them than with the rich; he makes room for himself in the hearts of the rich as well as the poor because he is almighty God. We should seek in God himself the reason of his preference for the poor.

**We should seek
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Does the option for the poor on the part of the Society imply, in the Marxist manner, the exclusion of the rich?

The author does well to recall the source of our criteria for apostolic election: a *truly universal love* which goes where *the need is greatest* ... But one may ask, "Must the social works of the Society exclude the rich?" Is it possible to change unjust structures by speaking only to the poor? Is it possible to give an intellectual dimension to the promotion of justice without the universities? Our way of promoting justice is aimed at the reconciliation between the rich and the poor through fraternal sharing and respect for human dignity. That reconciliation must be present at the beginning of the path, or rather, it is a path to be taken together by rich and poor living a faith that does justice, having been reconciled through Christ.

Going where the need is greatest is indeed a principle of Ignatian apostolic spirituality. But is it the unique and fundamental one? In the Constitutions, n° 618, Saint Ignatius gives two criteria: *maius Dei obsequium et bonum universale*. In n° 622, he recalls that double criterion before explicating it in the paragraphs that follow with the acuity of a strategist: *where the need is greatest* (that is, where there is the greatest degree of indigence as well as a lack of workers; think of the birth of the JRS at the time of Fr Arrupe); *where we can expect a greater harvest - the more universal the good, the more divine it is*.

The application of the principle of the universal good is amazing: places and people who would bring the good to a great number of others (the great ones of the civil world, prelates in the Church, people whose doctrine and authority are eminent); huge population (Francis Xavier chose China); more 'primitive' peoples (Northern and Southern America); colleges and universities (St. Peter Canisius in Germany). Saint Ignatius takes into account people's readiness to accept our help, and defends the credibility of the Society: in a context where

the enemy of Christ sows division against the Society to prevent her from bearing fruit, we should send people who can defeat calumny by their example and the teaching they provide. Saint Ignatius goes on to apply the same principle "*divinus honor maior, maiusque bonum universale*") in n° 623 in order to choose among different works, and in n° 624 in order to send our members according to their aptitudes.

When I read these pages from the Constitutions, I get the impression that the *theological source for St Ignatius' understanding of the criteria for apostolic election* is rather to be found in the Principle and Foundation of the Spiritual Exercises and the Magis of the key meditations to prepare oneself for the election and the "*en todo amar y servir*" of the "*ad amorem*." The double principle of "the greater glory of God and the most universal good" can open up apostolic orientations and free the Society's energies so that we can respond without constraints to the circumstances of places and people everywhere in the world. It is only through sharing Christ's thirst to "*glorify the Father* and "*to gather together in unity the scattered children of God*" (Jn 11:53) that the Society can be *at the service of Christ and of the Church his Spouse under the Roman Pontiff*. The mission of the Society is to serve the mission of Jesus. The mission of Jesus is to "*save the world*" (Jn 12, 47). The ultimate theological origin of the criteria of apostolic election in the Society of Jesus is to be found in the heart of Christ pierced by the overflow of his love for the Heavenly Father and for his children scattered all over the world.

Before the text quoted by the author, paragraph n° 8 of the 2nd Decree proposes a long quotation of Saint Ignatius's letter to the Community of Padua in 1547, "*The poor are so important in God's eyes... befriending the poor makes us friends of the Eternal King*". The text leads us towards the call of the Eternal King and the contemplation of the life of the Eternal King in the Spiritual Exercises. That is where we must seek the theological origin of the option for the poor and the love of spiritual and real poverty. The words quoted above remind us of the testimony of Blessed Teresa of Calcutta. We all know that Saint Ignatius and his companions lived in the homes of the poor when they journeyed, and took care of the sick and the poor in the places where they worked. Even the theologians invited to the Council of Trent found time for that. One only needs to look at the map of the works founded by Saint Ignatius in Rome during the fifteen years spent at the head of the newly established Society to realise that he had the same love and dedication to the service of the poor as the founders of religious institutions founded specifically with that aim. Ignatius did not, however, content himself with that. In that same period, he founded colleges, he sent members of the Society to help nobles and slaves, ecclesiastical prelates or princes in their kingdoms. All that points to the scope of the Society's vocation and mission: "*serving Christ and the Church under the Roman Pontiff*." The Vision of La Storta confirms that call to be at the service of the mission of Christ under his standard, the Cross. That same love of Christ for the Father

and for men drives us: the glory of the Father and salvation for all humanity. That is why Saint Ignatius chose the greater glory of God and the most universal good as criteria for apostolic discernment. The option for the poor falls within the purview of that double criterion. The author is right to entitle his article "A mission for the body of the Society" (my emphasis).

The rich, the poor and the honour of God

I will now try to understand the affirmation claimed by R. Jaramillo to be *completely wrong* and *completely against the message of Jesus in the gospels*.

We have seen that the double criterion for apostolic discernment in the Constitutions is *divinus honor maior, maiusque bonum universale*. I will try to understand the affirmation of Father Kolvenbach and the 34th General Congregation in the light of the Principle and Foundation and the biblical theme of the honour of God, creation being precisely a manifestation of the Glory of God. In the perspective of the Spiritual Exercises appears a triangle of relationships: Man –other things– God. Man is created to praise, revere and serve God... other things are created to help man... This ordering of the poles of the relationship has already been declared by Saint Paul: *Omnia vestra sunt, vos autem Christi, Christus Dei* (1 Cor 3: 21-22)

Behind the Principle and Foundation, there is an entire theology of creation which is inspired by the first pages of the Bible and the psalms on creation. The end of creation is in God's plan. The presence of the poor who do not have access to other created things –quite apart from the causes of poverty– is certainly a breach in the divine work of creation, in his plan. God *has given the earth to the sons of man* (Ps 115:16). He is present and at work in all creatures (Sp. Ex. 234-236 *Ad amorem*). How does he view the presence of the poor? In the prelude to the contemplation of the mystery of the Incarnation, Saint Ignatius suggests that we read, so to speak, "*God's sentiments and his reaction*" at the sight of a humanity that is going towards its destruction. Likewise, in making the same contemplation, we can read the 'sentiments of God and his reaction' at the sight of the poor on earth. Seeing that all human beings would go to hell, he decided, from Eternity, that the Son should become man in order to save them. Why did the Son choose to be poor? Saint Paul gave us the answer: "*for your sake, to make you rich out of his poverty*" (2 Cor 8:9). The epistle to the Hebrews proposes another answer: "*he should become completely like his brothers*" (Heb 2, 14-17). God did not create death (Wis 1:13). It was sin that introduced death (cf. Rom. 5, 12-15). The eternal Son was made mortal in order to give eternal life. God did not create poverty. The sin of injustice produced poverty. If God did not create poverty, what does the presence of the poor represent in his creation if not a failure? Thus, it is his honour that is at stake as in the case

That is why Saint Ignatius chose the greater glory of God and the most universal good as criteria for apostolic discernment

of death. The famous words of Saint Irenaeus: *Gloria Dei homo vivens* are here made clear. Saint Paul affirms that all “*have sinned and forfeited God’s glory, and... are justified through the free gift of his grace, by being redeemed in Christ Jesus*” (Rom 3: 23-24). The Son of God brought the solution to both death and poverty. He was made poor *to make you rich out of his poverty*. We need the wisdom of the Gospel to understand the meaning of “*rich*” and “*poverty*” in this Pauline text. Who can be rich before God? All need to “*be rich in the sight of God*” (Lk 12:21) so as to escape the fate of the foolish rich man.

The book of Exodus shows us how the people of God experience God, and that experience becomes the source and foundation of their faith, their hope and their charity: God is faithful to his Alliance with Abraham, God is merciful, God is almighty. Chapter 3 tells us of the call of Moses through a dialogue that emphasizes those three aspects:

*“I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham
I have seen the miserable state of my people in Egypt.
I have heard their appeal to be free of their slave- drivers;
Yes, I am well aware of their sufferings,
I mean to deliver them out of the hands of the Egyptians ...
So come, I will send you to Pharaoh
To bring the sons of Israel, my people out of Egypt ...
But Moses said to God,
“Who am I to go to Pharaoh, and bring the sons of Israel out of Egypt?”
“But I shall be with you” was the answer,” And this is the sign by which you shall know that it is I who have sent you..
After you have led the people out of Egypt, you are to offer worship to God upon this mountain”.*

It is by his faithfulness and his mercy that God “*came down*” to deliver the people of the sons of Abraham through his might. The sign he gave to Moses so that he might be assured that it was He who sent him was the success of the liberation that would lead the people to adore God on the same mountain from which God had sent Moses. God’s intervention at the Red Sea, and later in the desert is still described as a manifestation of God’s glory. After the crossing of the Red Sea, “*the people venerated God; they put their faith in Yahweh and Moses, his servant.*” (Ex 14:31).

When God threatened to exterminate the people after the episode of the golden calf (Ex 32), or after the revolt following the exploration of the promised land (Num 14: 1-25), Moses advanced the honour of God as an argument to appease God. And God heard him.

***The sin of injustice
produced poverty. If
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***Moses advanced
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The book of Ezekiel repeatedly gives us the declaration of God's motives for saving his exiled people:

"I sentenced them as their conduct and actions deserved. And now they have profaned my holy name among the nations where they have gone, so that people say of them 'These are the people of Yahweh; they have been exiled from his land.' But I have been concerned about my holy name, which the house of Israel has profaned among the nations where they have gone...I am not doing this for your sake, House of Israel, but for the sake of my holy name... I mean to display the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations ...And the nations will learn that I am Yahweh." (36: 19-33).

Note that the liberation from Egypt led the people to believe in God; the liberation from Exile will lead the nations to acknowledge God. God is always greater.

Some may object: but then does God always acts for his glory and not for the poor? Are not the poor exploited as instruments by God? To be sure, God cannot act but for his glory. He saves us by making us share in his glory. This is the reason for creation as it is of redemption. The poor are only exploited by those who abuse their misery in order to get power, or as a means to advance

The poor are a visible proof of a failure in the work of creation just as the exile of the people of God is visible proof of a failure of the alliance with God

themselves, to acquire money or the glory of saving the poor. God manifests his glory to the poor in order to make them share in his glory, the glory that he granted them through creation. The poor are a visible proof of a failure in the work of creation just as the exile of the people of God is visible proof of a failure of the alliance with God. In the Bible, creation is also an alliance with God, renewed after the Deluge. It is always the honour of God that is at stake.

God's design in granting his people a land is to ensure that they have a life worthy of the people of God. There should be no poor people. The land was distributed in such a way that all might live in dignity (Ex 33-36). The Law is given to ensure equity. Nevertheless, chapter 15 of Deuteronomy shows us the gap between design and reality:

"You must remit whatever claim you have on your brother. Let there be no poor among you then...Is there a poor man among you, one of your brothers?...Do not harden your heart...There will never cease to be poor in the land. I command you therefore: Always be open-handed with your brother, and with anyone in your country who is in need and poor" (Deut. 15: 4.7.11)

The prophets show us the origin of poverty: greed and injustice. Disobedience to God gives rise to oppression, which means that the poor will never disappear in this land. After the exile, the prophets keep repeating the same accusation. This shows more clearly the link between the rich and the

poor, between poverty and the sin of injustice. One cannot free the poor without committing oneself to reconciliation between the rich and the poor so that they unite in the fight against social injustice; on the other hand, one cannot fight injustice without committing oneself to the struggle of Christ who accomplished his Exodus for remission of sins (Lk 24: 46-48). It is the final realisation of Isaiah's prophecy that Jesus read in Nazareth: "*to preach the good news to the poor (...) to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord*". High from the cross Jesus proclaimed the acceptable year by praying: "*Father, forgive them*" (Lk. 23:34). His disciples are sent to bear witness to his death and resurrection and proclaim repentance to all nations so that their sins may be forgiven (cf. Lk. 24, 47-48). The rich and the poor have the same need to be freed from sin. Marx's illusion, which communist societies illustrated and continue to illustrate, is to ignore the existence of sin. All human structures are fragile because of the sin that reigns in the heart of human beings, whatever the socio-political regime. Corruption is a chronic ill inherent in every socio-political regime in the world today, in first world countries as in third-world countries.

That is why the Society's mission of serving the mission of Christ must concern all dimensions. We carry out the "social apostolate," not "social action"; our promotion of justice is a dimension of the service of faith in order to proclaim the good news of salvation in Christ which embraces all dimensions of the human being. Our ministry is that of Christ and of the apostles, a ministry of reconciliation (cf. 2 Cor. 5: 18-20). We are driven by the same love which overflows from the heart of Jesus and consumes him on the cross: the glory of the Father and the salvation of the world. For all our apostolic choices, we have a single criterion with two inseparable faces: the greater glory of God and the most universal good, *divinus honor maior, maiusque bonum universale*. Our path is that of Christ carrying his cross who admitted Saint Ignatius to his service. Saint Ignatius does not hesitate to remind those who want to join the Society of this *sine qua non*; to have the desire, or at least the desire of the desire of "*putting on the same vestment and the same livery as the Lord*" (Const. 101). That must always be the sign of authenticity of the life and the action of the Society as well as of each Jesuit. If there is a renewal to be always made at all levels in the Society it is indeed the effective love of that third degree of humility.

***We carry out
the "social
apostolate," not
"social action"***

Rome, on the feast of the Annunciation 2007

Original French
Translation by Christian Uwe

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A Mission for the Body of the Society

Roberto Jaramillo Bernal SJ

"The poor should be seen 'not as a problem, but as people who can become the principal builders of a new and more human future for everyone.'"

Jean Paul II, World Day of Peace, 2000

First of all, Father Doan, I want to thank you for your long commentary on my article.

I realise that the text's opening words may have angered some companions. But I assure you that there is no intention of disrespect towards Father Kolvenbach or the 34th General Congregation. Rather, there is a desire to understand better what they are saying to us and to explore further the direction they have shown us.

When we speak about the option for the poor, we must try to see better the evangelical sense and use of the concepts of "rich" and "poor", starting with the consideration of the words and deeds of Jesus as well as of the first Christian communities. I agree with you that this cannot be done on the basis of rigid social categories such as those defined in the Marxist paradigm of "social class".

The commitment of the Society of Jesus to serve the world takes its cue from God's commitment. We must therefore look for the meaning of words such as 'rich' and 'poor' in relationships of love, generosity and real solidarity between God and his creation, as well as between human beings in creation.¹

To be poor or to be rich is the expression of a state of relations between persons and groups of persons

To be poor or to be rich, in this sense, is not a quasi-ontological quality of a subject or of a class, but the expression of a state

¹This is the approach of the "Commission on Social Justice" in which I participated in December, 2006, in preparation for the text, "Review of General Congregation 34 Decree 3." In this text there are several interesting numbers. Number 4 gives a general perspective, underlining friendship with the poor (individually, but also institutionally). Solidarity with the poor, in the Ignatian perspective, is seen as friendship (see GC 34, D 2, n. 9; but also Spir Ex #231). This friendship must be seen as emanating from the friendship between God and ourselves, as articulated in the incarnation, but also in creation; we share the same world, the same history, the same fate, and in this we are friends, in solidarity of life. Creation and salvation refer to this living-together, this sharing of the world, of the Kingdom. Such a "social" vision is crucial to understanding salvation. A world in which we speak of "poor" and "rich" is a world in which the living-together is broken, in which relations of solidarity and friendship have been perverted. In the same text this vision is detailed in numbers 8-12 (*The Vision: Theological Foundations of our Charism*). In this text there are several references to the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*. Here we find some passages concerning the preferential option for the poor: # 182-184 and 449. This last number has some quotations that support, among other things, the universal destination of goods (a manner of indicating that we all belong to each other in what concerns the goods of our world), as well as a reference to the message by Pope John Paul II for the World Day of Peace in 2000, which goes straight to the heart of my article: "The poor should be seen 'not as a problem, but as people who can become the principal builders of a new and more human future for everyone.'"

of relations between persons and groups of persons: just and creative relations, or unjust relations: perverted and death-dealing. These unjust relations are expressed as much through interior attitudes as in material realities.² They insert mechanisms of exclusion and marginalisation into our common life; they deny bonds of solidarity and fundamental compassion – of justice – characteristic of creation itself.

Inevitably, once relations between human beings are perverted, we must speak of “rich” and “poor.”³ It is not easy for any of us to free ourselves of paradigms which have dominated speech and political practice through a large part of the past century. But for the good of all, and particularly for the service of the poor who suffer from injustices that rob us all of our human dignity, and also so that we may understand each other, we need at once to get rid of these prejudices, learn to think about reality in a new way, and give ourselves the benefit of being situated in a new framework.⁴

Thus the true sense of rich and poor is derived from just or unjust mutual relationships.⁵ When, in the context of the social apostolate, we use the words poor and rich, we do so in reference to relationships perverted by injustice and marginalisation, unjust and oppressive relations.⁶ Our use of those words shows that we are concerned, not with an attribute of their persons, but with the poisoned relations that socially condition and define their personhood. These may be person-to-person relationships, in which case it is relatively easy to allocate responsibility and blame. But they may also be institutionalized in structures of injustice that perversely connect those persons, who are then classified as “rich” or “poor”. An unjust poverty⁷ that degrades a

Our use of those words shows that we are concerned, not with an attribute of their persons, but with the poisoned relations that socially condition and define their personhood

²It must be kept in mind that these two dimensions are intimately bound together. The “rich” will only be poor when these same “rich” consider their wealth as belonging to all and share their material goods with the “poor” in mutual solidarity. The “poor” with the mentality of the “rich” also perpetuate structures of injustice and exclusion in the heart of a creation which is perverted by that.

³I use quotation marks to allude to the more restricted connotation.

⁴The thought developed here is theological. It needs mediation, in the sense that in ever-new contexts we must obtain the means to discover the injustices that exist and to unmask the subterfuges we use to avoid knowing or committing ourselves. Even at the level of these mediations, Marxist analysis today is considered insufficient, despite the realisation that its attention to the very material conditions of poverty and injustice should not be overlooked at the risk of an unjust, because disincarnated, spiritualisation.

⁵Discussions concerning the link between the option for the poor and relationships of justice which constitute the creative depth of our reality are very well developed in, for example: José M. VIGIL, *The Option for the Poor is an Option for Justice and not Preferential – A new theological-systematic framework for the option for the Poor* – from 2004. This article may be found on the SEDOS website (in English) (<http://www.sedos.org/>) by looking under “mission articles” for 2004.

⁶Often sin is conceived in too individualist a manner. Nevertheless, even official Church documents refer to structures of sin, in which we are also responsible.

⁷Unjust poverty because it is caused by injustice, or because, unresolved, it is the origin or symptom of injustice.

single human being is a painful and serious manifestation of a deficiency in the relations that constitute creation; a veritable failure which shows itself in the hearts of the rich who perpetuate for egotistic and structural reasons the relationships that abandon the “poor” to their unjust sufferings.

We have already pointed out there are “poor” people with the mentality of the rich, and “rich” people with the mentality of the poor – and all possible variations. But all these possibilities (with all the nuances arising from the imperfection and finitude of each human being) must not make us forget or turn away from the disturbing reality of the one who is left by the side of the road, without money or food or shelter or care. It was not chance or nature that created this situation: he is the victim of a soiled relationship between human beings, a victim of injustice. In this situation, God came and identified himself with the victim of unjust relationships by sharing his life, to the point of dying on a cross with the aim of universal liberation/salvation. The identification of Jesus with the lives of the victims of unjust relations is an undeniable gospel truth (He himself became a victim) as important as the universal offering of liberation/salvation. This is what the Gospel gives us, to believe in, to hope for, and to follow.

If liberation/salvation is to be a categorical reality⁸, to the goodness and the infinite, sovereign will of God to save all people must be joined the human heart with the disposition to receive and put into practice the Word. What I affirm in my article, then, is not that the “rich” are excluded from this divine offer and action, nor an opposition between “rich” and “poor”, but that “only in the heart and in the life of the poor can God find a place for the novelty of his proposal of liberation/salvation⁹. The spirit of the “rich” person suffers the enchantment that the possession of things, ideas, persons can produce, and ends up being possessed, either by a thing such as a book, or an idea (some ideology), or by other possessions. Furthermore, all the characteristics mentioned in that paragraph of my article¹⁰ are attitudes proper to the poor¹¹: sharing and generosity against consumption and accumulation of goods, shared work and attention to one another instead of a self-sufficient individualism, prayer, and thanksgiving, intercession and supplication as a clear manifestation of faith.

In this order of things, the vision of liberation/salvation is not to make the “poor” materially “rich” in opposition to the “rich” (Marxist categories), but to

⁸The word “categorical” is used here in the sense given it by Karl Rahner in his theological thought.

⁹PI93 (2006/4), p. 39 (Fr. ed.). In my original text, in Spanish, I wrote: “in the heart and in the life of the poor,” not “the heart of the life of the poor.” See p. 38 of the Spanish version: “*Opta por los pobres porque sólo en el corazón y en la vida de los pobres encuentra espacio para la novedad de su propuesta de liberación – salvación ...*”.

¹⁰PI93 (2006/4), p. 39 (Fr. ed.).

¹¹To be sure, the “poor” with the heart of the poor. The “rich” with the heart of the poor, by that fact, come to share the life of the “poor”, poor with the “poor”. For the development of these ideas, see: Aloysius Pieris, *God’s Reign for God’s Poor: A Return to the Jesus Formula* (Tulana Research Centre, Sri Lanka).

reconstitute the relationships of the original justice of creation: relationships in which this distinction between “poor” and “rich” no longer makes sense because each person will have, through justice, what he or she needs to live as a child of God. This is the eschatological realisation of the Kingdom of God for all, which corresponds exactly to the original creation.

This is the reason why God opts for “the poor” - to save all of us.¹² The universality of His willed proposal of liberation/salvation finds, in the hearts and lives of the victims of unjust relations, at individual or structural levels, a privileged space in which to be incarnated. This is because it is their reality which needs to be saved, liberated, reconstituted, re-humanised by the active commitment of the “poor” in the first place, and of the “rich” who want to be saved. The poor person receives the divine initiative and puts it in motion, and in that way is subject not only of his own history, but of the history of us all.

It is the option of God for the “poor”, in other words the Love of a God not only loving all but making operative his radical option for all and every victim, this astonishing Love who was made man and made poor to save all people, the ultimate source of the principal apostolic criteria of the Society of Jesus. Furthermore, you yourself expressed it well: “the ultimate theological source of the criteria of apostolic discernment in the Society of Jesus is found in the heart of Christ pierced by the overflowing love of the Heavenly Father for his children scattered over the face of the earth”.

I thank you once again, dear Father Doan, for exploring these intuitions and ideas with us; they are very important for the service which we, as Jesuits, are called upon to give to the people of God. I also hope we may continue to deepen these thoughts.

Original French

Translation by Joseph Newman SJ

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salvation is not to make the
“poor” materially “rich” in
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¹²PI93 (2006/4), p. 39 (Fr. ed.): « Je pense et je crois que Dieu opte pour les pauvres pour nous sauver tous ».

Our Jesuit Heritage and Multiple Identities A Challenge for General Congregation 35 Ambrose Pinto¹ SJ

The weight of history

When the Congregation meets in 2008 our past heritage is likely to be the background against which choices will be made. A glance at our history shows that it consists of both lights and shadows, and when the Society of Jesus looks critically at its own Jesuit past, it acknowledges publicly that it is a body of sinners invited to be saints. To put it differently: our past is not altogether dark, but neither is it as glorious as it has been made out to be. We may reasonably hope that when the Congregation meets in 2008 to decide on priorities for the future, our men will not interpret the present with reference only to the sinful past. The strategy of recalling the past to support present choices becomes problematic if a part of our past is sinful and is acknowledged to be so. The need of the Congregation to solicit historical legitimacy is real, but if legitimacy is drawn merely from the past it may lead to some contentious concerns and problematic choices. Our tradition may not help us to get insights into the contemporary situation or inspire us to take courageous action.

While it is true that in the ultimate analysis we cannot totally relate the past to the present, and that the distant past may not really be a guide to act in the present, it is also equally true that the past is not to be denied. Our identity as persons and Jesuits is influenced by the past. St. Ignatius was a Basque and a Spaniard. He had multiple identities. Besides being a Basque, he was a soldier, a European, a Christian, a product of the feudal system and a person who looked at the world from a European perspective. All these influenced him in the writing of the Exercises and the Constitution. Like Ignatius, all Jesuits have multiple identities. Similarly, as an Indian Jesuit, I too have a regional, local, national, religious, professional, linguistic and caste identity. Though not wholly determining my way of thinking and acting, these multiple identities make up my world and influence my thinking, acting and behaving. It is through the prism of these identities that I understand my being and the world around me. Jesuits need to become aware of them and make an effort to transcend their limitations and narrowness.

These multiple identities make up my world and influence my thinking, acting and behaving

Multiple identities and contexts

I have no problems living with these multiple identities even though one has to constantly negotiate with the identities of others for harmonious living.

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Identities do not have to be conflictual. When I vote in the Indian elections, in spite of my religious identity as a believer, I may vote for a party that may even deny the presence of God. If our value systems are similar, the fact that I am a Christian and a Jesuit need not conflict with my opting for an atheist political party for the simple reason that a party without a belief system may be more in consonance with my value system and the larger concerns that have been derived from my faith than any other. As long as a group represents the substance of my options, I have no problems with its religious identity.

All said and done, religion plays only a minor role in the public realm. If India has to be defined in terms of religion, 80 per cent of the country's population are Hindus. Yet the President of the Country is a Muslim; the Prime Minister a Sikh, and the leader of the ruling party is an Italian-born Catholic; the country has no problems with their religious identities. It merely indicates that the religious domain does not have to overwhelm the total arena of life. If it did, how do we explain the breakdown of the Holy Roman Empire? Closer home, both Pakistan and Bangladesh were once one country, but they split into two countries in spite of a common religion. India has managed to live with multiple linguistic, ethnic and religious identities.

As an Indian Jesuit, I cannot live with merely one identity – the universal identity of a Jesuit. In fact, I am of the opinion that it is difficult to conceive of a uniform, universal and single identity for all Jesuits. The Jesuit identity is only one among many other identities. In fact, it is an identity that we take after assuming many other identities. I was not born a Jesuit. One may even say that, at least till the beginning of my religious life, my local, regional, religious, linguistic and cultural identities, all of them rooted in the past, shaped me more strongly than my Jesuit identity. It is true that I cannot live merely with them, but on the other hand, neither can I live wholly without them. Other identities may have impacted me more than the religious. The problem is this: how will the Congregation inspire Jesuits to live with their multiple identities at a time when there is a growing consciousness among people and communities of their distinctiveness? This, I would think, is a challenge for the Congregation.

If the Congregation merely refers to the past and the grace of the founder and works at a common document, it may not be able to look at the world as it is. St. Ignatius was relevant then to that part of the world, which was caught up with the Reformation. His Counter-Reformation was to bring people back into the faith. However, the situation was not the same in other parts of the world at that time. Today too, the contexts and world reality are different in different parts of the world. It is no longer a world determined by the Enlightenment, Renaissance or Reformation alone. There are developed and developing countries. Besides affluence, there is starvation, death, hunger and oppression in more countries and within many countries. The Congregation may not be able to prioritise

***It is difficult to
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choices for the present which are passively determined by the past. The evolving multiple identities of Jesuits spread over different parts of the world must play a decisive role in decision-making while responding to mission. There may be occasions when the single Jesuit identity defined and later developed at its origin comes into conflict with the particular identity of Jesuits living within a region or Assistancy, as well as across regions and Assistancies. More pronounced differences may exist between Northern and Southern regions or Assistancies.

It is important, therefore, for our understanding of the Society of Jesus, to position Jesuits against the social and economic backgrounds from which they hail. Jesuits from North America, and Europe are Jesuits with a Jesuit identity that shares certain traits. This is equally true for Indians or Africans. In a globalised world, the values and the ethos of capitalism have shaped the identity of Jesuits all over the world. Other Jesuits the world over may have been more influenced by 'socialistic' ways of thinking and acting. These different cultural backgrounds and identities make it difficult to speak of a single Jesuit identity determined from the past.

We may also mention the opinion of those who feel that, while Christian ethics is not premised on private property, the capitalist world has always taught, defended and protected private property as part of Christian ethics. It took many years for Catholic Social Teaching to adopt a more balanced view towards private property. A similar phenomenon seems to have occurred as regards 'individualism'. The concept of individual sin, indulgences and a host of other religious practices have kept religion at the level of the individual without any social implication. This 'individualism' played a role in the development of the capitalist ethos and in fostering certain forms of Christianity in Europe.

In other words, we belong to our countries and carry the baggage of our socio-economic locations. What does this translate into, in reality? While the capitalist value system of excessive individualism, unlimited freedom, consumerism, combined with a certain kind of ethnic or social superiority, is likely to be a part of some Jesuits, other Jesuits may share a more egalitarian and socialistic vision of society. We are all inheritors of our legacies and we cannot escape them. There is a need to respond to these diversities if we are to be relevant in mission. Given the fact of our conditioning, a total inner freedom may not be easy to possess or acquire.

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If, then, the Society of Jesus is a diverse body of people who have internalised different value systems and attitudes, it follows that it may be difficult to arrive at a single Jesuit identity or even a common mission. As long as the contexts are not the same, the Jesuit mission will vary from place to place, from country to country. To define Jesuits across the world with a single identity or mission is to negate the local, regional and national characteristics. In India, the Hindutva movement has attempted to define the country with a single identity. There are other single identity-mongers right across the world, from

Christian fanatics to Islamic extremists and communalists. The consequences of such definitions are attacks on smaller traditions and plural ways of life and a growing intolerance. Surely, the Jesuit way of life must have a universal human dimension without being uniform. To achieve universality coupled with diversity in Jesuit identity we need to proceed through discussions and debates.

Debate: our way of proceeding

Leaving aside then the colonial past with its legacy of conquest and triumphalism, and its use of the spiritual to legitimise exploitative decisions, we have to take decisions in the changed situation collectively, by reasoning. The divine right theory has created more problems than solutions in administration and governance. We are confronted with unjust social and economic orders in all countries of the world, but especially in Africa and Asia. Many of these countries, formerly colonies, have been recently freed. The mission of the Jesuits in these countries is to struggle with people to establish a just social order, to address the needs of groups and communities for whom nobody cares. To respond to realities here, one needs awareness and reflection, intense debate and decisions. Choices and priorities arrived at through such debate are bound to be more vibrant and relevant.

We must admit that awareness of powerless groups was not part of our tradition. The Society of Jesus, when it was founded, was an elitist group connected with the establishment, associated with centres of power and pomp which cared not at all for the rights of communities and groups. The poor were the target of our mission and not our companions in pilgrimage. We must acknowledge that we run the risk of making a myth of our "glorious" past which can now rob us of the desire to radicalize our mission by asking us to hold on to the past. Arrupe, through his prophetic leadership, helped us to announce and denounce unjust structures so that we may add our mite to the creation of a just world. Fr. Kolvenbach has brought the multi-cultural and multi-religious dimensions into the mission. There have been heroic lives too in this Society of ours, those who have provided inspiration and example. There is a need to further the mission offered by these heroes by being totally open to the reality outside of us.

What do I expect from the Congregation and the next leadership? I expect it to be able to look back at history without allowing the past to govern our actions in the present. The past has to be recognised. But it cannot be permitted to guide us totally. The problem with the past is that it has been predominantly Euro-centric: it has tended to look at the rest of the world as somehow inferior. The way we view reality is seldom objective; all that we see and evaluate, our past as well as the future, is mediated by our particular position. Europeans looked at Asia-African countries from their particular position. Many shared the opinion that these countries

The problem with the past is that it has been predominantly Euro-centric

needed to learn their culture in order to be civilised. A European culture was imposed then through the march of armies. Today it is done through trade. If all cultures and people are to be treated as equal, this needs to change. The particular position the Society of Jesus holds should locate us in relation to the people at large, especially in the African and Asian reality.

The Congregation needs to adopt “practical reason” as the mode of procedure if the Society of Jesus has to be renewed and vitalized. Amartya Sen, the Nobel Laureate, asserts in his recent book *The Argumentative Indian* that practical reason is important for argumentation, and he attributes India’s success in democracy, secularism, and social movements to this capacity for argument. The Society of Jesus too has such a tradition of argumentation. It is this tradition that made us different from other religious orders when we were founded. The Congregation should have recourse to this and be guided by reasoning to arrive at choices and priorities. St. Ignatius has a greater relevance today precisely because of his rationalistic and reasoning tradition. This tradition can still shed light on our present concerns and help us to define ourselves differently.

As a Society, we are more multicultural now than we were at any other time, and this is likely to be felt in the forthcoming Congregation more than ever before. Multiculturalism is all about treating people as equals. There are no high or low, superior or inferior traditions. All traditions have their strengths and weaknesses. Non-discrimination is a part of this multiculturalism. The members of the Congregation have always had freedom. That freedom is essential for preserving multiculturalism. However, there may be a need for a change of pedagogy. The Congregation may have to give up traditionalism and opt instead for the pursuit of reason by addressing contemporary social and political realities. The membership of the Society in terms of geographical location has changed. The debates and discussions in the congregation too are bound to change. I repeat: we have a long and robust tradition of disagreement, dissent and debate in the Society. There is a need to revive that tradition to make all Jesuits participants. That tradition can help and serve us in our mission as a powerful vehicle for altering the inequities of class, gender, caste and other social divisions and make our contribution to that “other world” preached by Jesus.

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GC 35: Re-igniting the Flame

A Personal Viewpoint

Edward Mudavassery SJ

Introduction

GC 35 will be meeting in a special context – it has not only to elect a new leader but also take account of a rapidly changing and complex world. The Church and the world at large are presently seeking out ways to cope with the new socio-political, ethical and cultural transitions occurring all around us. In meeting these challenges, the Society too has felt the need to sharpen its vision and renew its mission.

It has been the tradition of the Society to face changes and challenges. From its inception it has traversed difficult terrain in the form of missions in far-flung parts of the world, the Reformation, the suppression and, in recent times, papal intervention in the government of the Society. It has faced all these with deep faith and trust in God, remembering St. Ignatius who says: “It was not human means that brought the Society into being, so neither can they provide for its future: survival and progress will come from the mighty power of Christ Jesus our Lord and our God, in whom alone we must hope, trusting that he himself will foster and advance this project which he launched for his service and praise, and assistance to his people.” (*Const.* n. 812). It has always emerged from these ordeals humbled and purified but resilient enough to continue its mission of service in the spirit of creative fidelity. Today, once again, the Society is faced with new challenges from both within and without. The winds of change released by globalisation, the technological revolution and by postmodern attitudes and values are a challenge to the life and mission of the Society. An appropriate response is overdue. GC 35 has to **re-ignite** the fire of Ignatian charisma to provide vigour and vitality to our mission today.

Today, once again, the Society is faced with new challenges from both within and without

I would like to reflect on three areas that may help us to do this: the need to reaffirm our Ignatian identity; to find the right balance between our global and local commitments; and to identify issues that have global impact and respond to them as one body.

Affirming our Ignatian identity

The need to reaffirm our identity is now all the more imperative. Globalisation and communication networks have made the world in which we live and move a global village. On the one hand, rapid modernisation has created possibilities for sharing knowledge and resources among people; on the other hand, these benefits are only available to a few, especially in developing

countries like India. As the grip of the multinational companies and other international organisations tighten around nation states and their governments, they seem to lose their ability to plan and control their own destinies. Mass migration in search of better jobs or living conditions is taking place both within countries and to foreign places. This phenomenon inevitably erodes national or ethnic identities rooted in a common language, memory and culture. An uncritical acceptance of modernisation by the ruling powers leads to the destruction of valuable and ancient traditions. This has given rise to militant nationalisms and religious fundamentalisms and fragmented the people. From the time it was founded, the Society has been a global brotherhood; its vision and its outreach can come to the rescue of the modern dilemma.

We believe that “human beings are created for community with the Trinity and hence with one another. All other things on the face of the earth are created to help us to attain this community” (William Barry, S.J.). When I look back at GC 34, it becomes clear to me that its decrees were trying to address these problems in a seminal way. It was indeed a global gathering of Jesuits, 223 of them, from every part of the world including newly liberated independent states; also from Mainland China and Vietnam. It had before it the Herculean task of revising the Constitutions and articulating Our Mission for an emerging new world. The past experiences of the participants and the urgency of their feelings differed greatly. But, just like our founding fathers, the members of the Congregation prayed, discussed and discerned for nearly three months to complete the task set before them. They had to work under several constraints, for example, diverse worldviews, life experiences, different understandings of what constitutes urgency, and, above all, limitations of time. The GC had to reconcile these elements to bring out a universally acceptable document and we can see that all these influenced the outcome of the final document. It was felt to be both heavy and lacking in focus. For the discerning ones, however, the document was another step in the right direction. The task of GC 35 will be to articulate those same concerns more sharply. This process, I believe, will help us to discover once again who we are and what we stand for.

Balance between global and local commitments

Over time there have been some major shifts in our understanding of the global and local issues related to our mission. In order to understand this shift we can go back to the Church during Vatican II, which, according to Karl Rahner, effected the transformation of Western Christianity, a Church largely of Europe and North America, into a world Church. Some others speak of a globalisation of the Church in terms of the advent of a new Church of the Southern Hemisphere, the Third Church. The diversity of this global Church, with new expressions of Church appearing in Africa, Asia and Latin America, has become ever more obvious. Since these Churches are rooted in very

different cultures, their social locations have naturally given rise to contextual missiologies that are often different in concept and concern from traditional ones. A careful survey of the documents of GC 31 to 34 will reveal such a shift gradually taking place with respect to our mission and lifestyles.

Decree 4 of GC 32 is of special importance here. It brought the poor and the marginalised of this world into the heart of our mission. It urged Jesuits to look at all their missions and ministries, including their life style, in the light of this decree. Pedro Arrupe of happy memory strongly promoted this new thrust. He argued that the promotion of justice was integral to the service of faith. In affirming this he was also retrieving the 'this-worldly' aspect of Ignatian spirituality. The charismatic leadership of Arrupe was historically relevant for implementing this new thrust as he had had first hand experience of the East and the West, their cultures and religions. By thus bringing the poor and the marginalised into the heart of its mission, the Society truly became the servant of the worldwide mission of Christ. Though the world has advanced today in every area, the number of the poor and exploited has only increased. GC 35 has to identify and support the causes of the voiceless poor in every part of the world. Arrupe could hold together, in the spirit of our founding fathers, the unity of our mission and the need to preserve its diverse expressions. This spirit must be expressed all the more in our fragmented world in order to make our mission contextual and relevant.

Respond as one Body

Finally, the task of our mission today is to build a civilisation of love in an unequal, violent and fragmented world. To do this we need to work against the negative impact of uncritical globalisation. We need to globalise love and justice by networking with each other in solidarity against issues that have a negative impact on the world. In this day and age, problems, whether local or global, cannot be resolved without mutual cooperation; we can no longer work in isolation, however powerful, rich or technologically advanced we may be. How disastrous this can be may be learned from the misguided adventures of some super-powers in their attempt to tackle terror single-handed. The whole world is paying a very high price for such mistakes. Millions of innocent lives are lost, unimaginable cruelty and human rights violations are inflicted on helpless people, and extensive damage is done to the environment and property. Basic trust between human beings has been severely damaged and it will take many years of sincere effort to re-establish peace and reconciliation.

The Society of Jesus is uniquely placed by its resources and global outreach to promote a new spirit of solidarity and build a civilisation of love. We face a steep, uphill task. Incidentally we have chosen to name this year the Arrupe Year in memory of our beloved former General. In him we have a heavenly patron who was an 'incorrigible optimist'. With his spirit inspiring us, GC 35 must create a global agenda for the Society where all Jesuits and all people of

good-will can work together in an expression of global solidarity to build another world, a civilisation of love. This agenda must include a united effort to address the most urgent issues of our modern world, such as eradication of poverty (or is it wealth?); violence; discrimination of every sort; degradation of the environment; promotion of peace and reconciliation; development with a human face; human rights, especially of women and children; inter-cultural and inter-religions dialogue and mutual appreciation and respect for all religions and cultures.

Arrupe, like Matteo Ricci and Robert De Nobili, has shown us that there is truth, goodness and beauty in other religions and cultures. We must be open and humble enough to learn from them. The Loyola meeting of Jesuit provincials in 2005 manifested a new spirit of collaboration and sharing. Some postulates were made for GC 35, to decentralize our governance and encourage sharing across Assistancies and provinces. All these efforts reveal to me a genuine desire for creative engagement in the critical situations of our times and to offer greater service to Christ's mission of building a more just world. Ignatius and his companions were able to draw up a community plan for a universal mission (Ricardo Antoncich SJ *PJ88*, 2005/3). As companions on mission and friends in the Lord, can GC 35 do the same? I believe we can.

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Interviews with Central American Emigrants on the railway lines of Tabasco

Ricardo E Greeley SJ

In what follows I share observations and reflections arising from experiences shared with emigrants on train lines in the main railway stations¹ of Tabasco,² with the aim of interviewing the Central American emigrants passing through the State. I had a conversation with Pancho, the “Toluco,” a resident of one of the districts bordering the railway lines in Villa Chontalpa. He is on the verge of moving with his family to a house nearer the railway lines so as to offer more efficient assistance in the work with immigrants “in whatever way he may be useful.”

In the course of our conversations he mentioned there were townspeople who believed that all Central Americans were crooks. We spoke a lot about this, and he offered examples of bad experiences with some emigrants. I, on the contrary, got him to see that, no matter which part of the world or which the institution, the situation would be the same, for among the mass of people there are always a few “tarred with the same brush.” In institutes of education, public health, firms, churches, courts and judiciary, sports federations, etc., etc., we will always find a few who blot the good name and image of their institution through their behaviour. I pointed that out it is a characteristic of any group of human beings who engage in unlawful behaviour to create prejudice against the whole group. This is so true that I challenged him to count the negative experiences he had had with emigrants and compare them with the number of people who had passed through these lands. We reached the conclusion that not even 5% could be described as negative. On the whole, they are a peaceful lot who know how to conduct themselves and respect others. At most, the inconveniencies attributable to them are that they leave rubbish lying around, or relieve themselves in the open, thus contaminating the environment.

These facts are remarkably similar to those collected in other train stations where I went. People complained that, since there were hundreds and hundreds of emigrants who had no access to latrines or appropriate sanitary services, they used the fields of neighbours close to the railway line. This was true of a lady from Santuario who said her husband had to pile up the rubbish left by emigrants, such as nylon bags, plimsolls, dirty or torn trousers, soft drink bottles, tuna tins, and such stuff, and set it ablaze every two or three weeks to prevent infection, and this meant a lot of work on a regular basis. Worst of all is the stench that those who live there have to put up with.

¹Such as Gregorio Méndez and Arenal (both in the municipality of Emiliano Zapata), Buenavista (Apasco) and Santuario (both in the municipality of Macuspana), Villa San Manuel and Villa Chontalpa (both in the municipality of Huimanguillo).

²Tabasco is a Mexican State in the south-west of the country. The State stretches southwards from the coastal plains of the Gulf of Mexico to the hills of northern Chiapas. To the north it borders the Gulf of Mexico and the State of Campeche; to the South the State of Chiapas, to the East the State of Campeche and the Republic of Guatemala, and to the West the State of Veracruz (Editor's Note).

This conversation with “Toluco” and with the others from various communities living near the railway lines contrasted with one I had afterwards with Felipe, a man from Honduras, about 55 years old, who came on the train and helped me understand all the benefits lost by the Mexican Government and people through a policy of persecution towards the emigrants. The point he made was that, if transit facilities were to be conceded, the emigrants would contribute to the economy from the south to the north of Mexico. This would happen because the money for the journey, sent by relatives in the United States, would allow them to make use of ADO (long distance buses) or other passenger transport instead of boarding a train, to eat in restaurants and pay for lodging in guest houses or hotels while they crossed Mexico, all of which would benefit many Mexicans as well as the economy in a wider sense.

It is a pity that at present relatively few people benefit from the passage of emigrants; and these tend to be individuals from police units, a few chicken farmers, taxi or bus drivers, grocers most from very small shops, engine drivers, a few hoteliers (very rare), and that is all. Some of the money the emigrants spend while passing through goes as bribes to official agents, exorbitant prices both for transport when they take something other than the train, as well as the 100 or 200 pesos per person to each train driver to travel just by hanging on to the wagons. Money also goes on board and lodge in clandestine places so as to avoid spending a night in legal establishments. In short, they have to lay out a whole lot of expenditure, which only goes into the pockets of people who are part of this illegal network. In this way the State is deprived of considerable revenue, which could be collected through taxes if the emigrants were only given legal access to and passage across our country.

On the other hand, our authorities are guilty of shameful abuses against people – robbing them of their belongings and money, submitting them to humiliations, whether through beatings or sexual favours demanded of the women as the price of freedom. In short, it is a whole system well entrenched in our institutions, and speaks very badly of us. This is why emigrants crossing Mexico complain that the Mexican authorities greatly impede their passage to the United States in hope of finding employment and a dignified life no longer possible in their own country.

They also complain about the drivers since it is they who are in charge of what happens on their trains. They decide when the train will start and when it will stop. And they ask for a contribution of 200 pesos³ per person on board (sometimes they want it in dollars). When the emigrants cannot pay up, having already been robbed by gangs or the police, they hold a pistol to their heads and threaten them with death, saying they do not want to see them on the train, and that, as drivers, they can stop the train in the middle of the forest and leave them there; they would then disappear without anybody being able to trace them.

On the other hand, grocers who sell them water, biscuits and other things affirm that when the migrants are travelling with a little money and are able to pay the train driver the fare he requests, he takes them inside the locomotive if they are women, or even more, youths, so that, in exchange for sexual services, they are protected from action against them by Migration Officials.

³200 pesos correspond to about 18 US dollars (Editor’s note).

In addition, when the driver does not have complete control or cannot charge the emigrants the normal contribution, he threatens to call the Migration Officers, or spreads the rumour that they are waiting for them ahead in order to capture them. Another ruse is to spread the story that his train will halt for a couple of hours in a certain place, or take on extra wagons from different tracks requiring a halt of several hours and various movements; then, just as the emigrants are waiting for this operation to end, the driver reverses a considerable distance and advances at high speed, passing though the station where the emigrants are waiting so that it is impossible or extremely dangerous for them to climb on to the train. In short, the drivers use many traps to force the emigrants to pay their quota.

In the rainy season it is more difficult for the emigrants to climb on to the train, especially at night, when everything is wet, slippery, dark and dangerous. This is when most accidents occur.

Once, when I was walking along the train lines about 400 metres from Apasco, looking for emigrants to interview, I came across an individual coming out of the bushes; more precisely, out of a culvert containing water from a stream that ran under the track. He had just washed his clothes and was preparing to spread them out in the sun while waiting for the next train to jump on to and continue his journey. After chatting a little I managed to interview him.

On returning to the village, we found Efraín interviewing another youth, also from Honduras, who had similarly stayed behind because he had not been able to get on to the train the previous night. This youth told of his painful experience, of how he had suffered at the hands of the police who had beaten him, assaulted him and taken his plimsolls and the rucksack in which he carried his belongings. Efraín and I invited both of them to the parish hall to hear a talk about emigrants' human rights, which we had prepared for the Macuspana Human Rights Groups with whom we were working. Only the younger one, Willy, accepted the invitation and came to the church with us. After some 15 minutes of watching the documentary "*Dolor por Dólar*" (Spanish Television), he got up and left. At first I thought he had gone to the bathroom, but that was not how it was. When in the afternoon I met him again on the train lines, he replied he had left because the video, which illustrated so well the reality of Central American emigrants, made him sad and that he preferred not to think of the dangers and risks that lay ahead in his journey towards the United States. I said I was sorry and he accepted my apology. After that, Willy continued chatting with me and related his experience of when he travelled for the first time to Mexico and his accident. This meant three long months in hospital in San Luis Potosí where they bound his jawbone with screws... along his gums one can see the metal screws that hold his jaw from one end to the other. On being released, he was deported. So this was his second journey in search of the American dream.

On the morning of the 9th August 2006, in the Villa Chontalpa station, I was able to establish that three trains had passed through the station in less than 24 hours, each train with over 100 emigrants. What was amazing was not only the large number of people clinging to the coaches but the fact that it had rained heavily for 4 or 5 hours that night. While many went to buy something to eat, look for water or

simply to stretch their limbs, the majority were shivering with cold. All arrived soaked to the skin, sleepless and exhausted.

It was clear that, besides the several older men among the emigrants, there was a frighteningly large presence of women and a great many young children.

Continually seeing the crowds journeying on these train, in this case the majority from Honduras, one is left with the impression that the country is not only being depopulated but is losing precisely its best people, those with great energy, from whom one can hope for greater creativity and work output. These are people qualified to rebuild the havoc left by Hurricane Mitch or confront the tremendous problems of corruption and poverty that vitiate everything in this Caribbean country.

Luckily, whenever I have gone with friendly greetings and gestures to the places where they wait near the train, I have never been rejected or made to feel I was a nuisance; on the contrary, they have welcomed me and shown interest in what I am doing.

Only on a few occasions (and these have been minimal), have a few "mischievous" youths already on the train –and that too, only after they had already climbed aboard– teased me (in their typical mestizo slang): *What's up there?* I have invariably smiled and replied encouragingly: *"Nothing, everything is okay, no hassle."* It is odd that, though we have sometimes passed each other in the streets when they were buying supplies for their journey, they never teased me in that way, neither behind my back nor to my face. The change in attitude gave me much pleasure because now I was able to move among the emigrants more freely in a relaxed manner, thanking the Lord I was not the target of hostility.

I am aware that among the 100 or 200 emigrants travelling on each train, there may be perhaps six to nine youths who behave and act like gang members (with tricks I know well from personal experience). This leads me to understand that, around the railway line and among the emigrants, there is risk of being verbally or physically attacked by gang members. Many look on the emigrants with mistrust and even label them criminals. Fortunately, I have never been even slightly attacked by travellers on the train (and I have spent many hours walking in this environment... including at dawn about 6 and till 10 at night).

Only in two stations have I noted the presence of drugs, on three occasions in insignificant quantity. In the case of Chontalpa station, two different locals came offering drugs to the emigrants while I was interviewing them. And only once did one of these sellers challenge me, asking, *"What is one of your race doing here?"* and *"Why are you registering them?".* This was because I had documents and a pencil in my hand and was writing. Then he asked me why I did not record him too on my list. As my reply was somewhat ambiguous without being defensive or challenging this peddler, somewhat under the influence probably of alcohol as well, relaxed, took a piece of newspaper out of his bag, showed what was wrapped inside, put it to his face and breathed in, saying: *"Aahhh! How delicious!"* (I could see that it was marijuana from only 40 to 50 centimetres away). And he added: *"Don't you want any?"* After a couple of minutes in which nobody paid him any attention, he walked away without causing trouble.

The second time I was in the presence of a drug peddler, I saw what he handed

over to the emigrant I was talking to by the railway line. Minutes before meeting the emigrant, I had passed both the drug peddler and the man from Honduras who, after I had got some 80 metres away, must certainly exchanged words, though I didn't see that directly. When I returned and finally approached the emigrant to interview him, he was alone and didn't refuse to speak with me...But after 3 minutes the individual I had seen just before riding around on his bicycle returned, and when both shook hands, I saw how he discreetly handed something rolled up in paper to the man from Honduras, without saying anything, but certainly speaking through his looks. All this happened in front of me barely a metre and a half away.

It is true, as verified in the enquiry n. 014 dated 20th July, this emigrant had suffered a severe blow and had nearly had his leg injured by the train, had almost been run over by it. In these circumstances he had bought the drug to alleviate his suffering. Though I offered to take him to a doctor, he refused because what he wanted was to arrive quickly at Orizaba.⁴

Once in Apasco, I met a couple of individuals whom I tried to interview; they were lying down by the railway line and rolling a marijuana joint in the shade. One of them, far from replying rudely or cutting me off, offered me some if I wanted, but I gently refused. Little by little, I began to speak to them. One was from Honduras but had passed through many places in Mexico (he described the characteristics of each place, so I was able to verify his story); he had also lived in various places in the United States, and spent several years in prisons there. The other was a Mexican citizen, apparently a resident of Playa del Carmen.⁵

After talking for a while I decided not to ask them for an interview for the FLASCO (Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences) Research, but was happy to have been able to share something with these two characters who were *sui generis*, highly interesting for their knowledge of the world, and for their relaxed attitude towards life, indifferent to making money or finding success or achieving anything. Not that I support this attitude or position, nor its dependence on marijuana; it is just that it enabled me to realise there are people like this roaming around the world. When night came and it began to rain again and I had to say goodbye to several emigrants, I saw how these two marijuana addicts lit a small fire to heat water for their supper, both eating frugally: a tin of tuna fish and a packet of salt biscuits. I found in them one of the most peaceful attitudes I have ever seen in my life. There were no signs of worry, hurry or stress.

The only time a Mexican approached me raising his voice and threatening me was on the 9th of August around 7:00 am, and it was none other than the train driver. I don't remember the train number; I had glanced at it when it entered the station but without paying much attention. I let it go without imagining that I would have to make a declaration about how he tried to intimidate me. I shall now recount what happened.

⁴Orizaba is the capital of Veracruz State, which has the greatest number of churches. Veracruz is in the south-west of Mexico, and is on the coast of the Gulf of Mexico [Editor's Note].

⁵Playa del Carmen is the main town of the Solidaridad municipality, Quintana Roo, situated in the south-east of Mexico in what has been called the Maya Riviera. The city is bathed by the waters of the Caribbean and its main economic activity is tourism; it therefore attracts many emigrants [Editor's Note].

When the driver arrived, I had already been conversing with the emigrants for half an hour, noting several abuses committed against them in Palenque Station, Chiapas (object of the FLASCO research). He appeared, jumping between two wagons and dropped down near where we were. He angrily asked who I was, would I please identify myself and explain what I was doing. Since he got little attention from me, he began to inform me of the risks I was running by being in that place. He explained the responsibility and authority he had for all that happened in connection with the train; he said that if any accident took place or criminals came, he had to report it to the authorities concerned. Since I refused to identify myself and even told him that as a citizen I could go to any part of these railway lines or of the national territory without asking official permission, he began to intimidate the emigrants about the information I was getting through my interviews. He told them that it was not worth giving any reply to anyone who had no accreditation or was suspicious; no one, he said, is to be trusted.

He also asked me if I had reported the presence of these undocumented people, since that was my duty. On replying that I was certainly not going to report them or ask for Migration Officials to come, he threatened to do it himself; further down on the train route, according to him, they would be detained since there were too many of them and they had been behaving badly. My calm attitude seemed to drive him to despair; he turned round and walked off without saying goodbye.

Afterwards I continued the enquiry and spoke for a long time with the rest of the emigrants about the questions in the questionnaire, about the specific problems they experienced in Honduras, the situation in the United States, and Mexican and North American policy with regard to migration. Thus I spent a good long while until it began to rain and I had to seek shelter. Thereafter, I was able to do one more interview, ending it seconds before the train resumed its journey, saying goodbye to the emigrants with sincere feelings of solidarity and wishing them a good journey and much luck. From their side I received looks and gestures certainly of gratitude, which has been one of my greatest rewards during this experience of accompanying them, of talking to them and giving them information or tips on how to find help and protection through their journeying.

Early in the afternoon of August 8th, I found that some of the emigrants travelling on the train were victims of an operation carried out by the INM (National Institute of Migration) near Palenque in Chiapas. This operation was supported by the State police (the "blues") and affected some 150 emigrants, among them women and children who, since it was their first time, didn't know when to jump from the train and run into the hills, or jump over the wire fencing just where the train stopped. I give below a few of the many accounts from people subjected to harsh arbitrary treatment from the authorities, followed by some observations on the how the trains affect the stations through which they pass and the trade practices connected with the emigrants. I begin with the experience of the hardships suffered by the migrants at the hands of Migration Officials:

1) A youth who was detained had his hands handcuffed behind him. But when he complained about the savage treatment imposed and asked why they had handcuffed him and treated him badly, saying that he knew he had rights and could accuse them, they took off the handcuffs so that there would be no marks on

his hands; but then, through intimidation and threats, took 400 pesos to set him free. Thus he was able to continue his journey.

2) Mario Rodríguez Palma, his younger brother Santos Roberto and many others, were kicked by the INM police. Part of the operation consisted of firing shots near the emigrants but fortunately no one was hit. After being captured an officer said to Mario: "Let's see: open your case and hand over the drugs you are carrying." But Mario replied defiantly: "Open it yourself and if you find something you can get pissed with it." In response, one of the police gave him several kicks, breaking a rib and causing large swollen bruises swellings in his abdomen – which he showed me lifting his T-shirt.

Mario had to be taken to the hospital in Palenque where he was treated by a doctor who, knowing what had happened, offered to go with him to lodge a complaint against the aggressor. But Mario resisted because on the way to the hospital they were already telling him that the Migration Officials would deport him if he protested; they had the power to do so since nothing would happen to them. After being treated by the doctor, another doctor gave him a prescription to go to a chemist and buy his medicine – something he has not yet done for lack of cash.

Santos was also arrested and beaten by the INM police but because of his complaints and his threat that he would denounce them even if they forced him to return to his country, he was taken back to the train lines, worried about what they had done to his brother. When he was released, they threatened him in their turn that if he denounced them, he would disappear together with his brother whom they still had in their power.

Four hours later the two brothers met together again with several other victims of violence in this operation. They were able to continue their journey in another train, which I met in Villa Chontalpa.

Although we, as members of CODEHUTAB (Committee for Human Rights of Tabasco) offered to help Mario and the others who had been assaulted present their accusations to the Ministry of Public Affairs, they would not accept because what they wanted was to continue their journey. Mario assured me that, if it came to denouncing, he could perfectly well identify his aggressor, but he did not want to be deported, so he preferred to continue, even in the state he was in. He hoped to arrive at Coatzacoalcos and ask help from the BETA group (a group protecting emigrants), and if possible, stay in some hostel while he recovered, before continuing the journey to much colder zones near Veracruz.

He was in great pain and could not lie down as getting up without help was impossible. Though I offered to help him stay in Chontalpa and get the medical treatment he needed to recover, he did not want to delay too much or break his journey. His aim is to meet his wife who has been left behind in Houston from where was deported a month ago.

I turn now to the stations and trade practices:

3) Villa San Manuel till 15 years ago was a train station but has been cutting down on passenger service till it stopped operating for the public in 1996. It still makes a brief stop of 10 or 20 minutes for goods trains. Drivers like to buy their roast or grilled chicken here as they are famed for their good flavour.

This brief stop is also used by hundreds of emigrants who buy food or water; those who have money beg a little help from the local people living there. As in all the places where the emigrants pass, this train too is here is called the "Devil" partly because there is a great deal of noise when other wagons are connected, but mainly because the train has mutilated hundreds of emigrants who could not hold on properly when climbing on. Hundreds of others have died during this exodus of people from Honduras.

Also here in San Manuel, as in the majority of places on the train route mentioned at the beginning, there are simple people, very poor but very hospitable and charitable towards the emigrants with whom they feel solidarity and familiarity, coming as they do from a background of suffering and poverty like many of the local people themselves. When the passenger trains were in operation, it was clearly better for them as they could then sell their wares to the travellers. In places like this, which are no longer stations, the nature of local trade has changed, and now when the train stops for a few moments, only those who have stalls or little shops are able to sell something.

4) It is deplorable that there are traders who do well out of the emigrants by charging them higher prices than they should. Some, for example, prepare *pozol* (a maize drink) from an inferior maize that comes by train from the United States, a yellow maize which, instead of being suitable for *pozol*, produces flour cooked in a different manner. And when they claim they are selling *pozol*, supposedly from cocoa, it is really *pinol* (a drink from roasted maize flour, that is, burnt maize), which indigenous people are accustomed to drinking like coffee (though obviously it is not coffee either).

5) As for the composition of travellers on the train, that too has changed; earlier the trains carried Mexican nationals as well, but now Mexicans have almost ceased to use the trains. Perhaps only three out of maybe thousand of those travelling in the train are Mexicans; and usually they are involved in human trafficking. Some are linked to gangs or organisations of "traffickers" coming from the frontier with Guatemala to lead their victims as far as Coatzacoalcos, and others to Orizaba. Then they return to repeat the train journey with more clients, whom they claim they are accompanying.

It is rare to find emigrants who return. In some cases it is true they return because things went badly for them in the journey to the North. But according to the testimony of many, those who return "direct" others, or even assault the emigrants.

The experiences and situations which arise in the context of Central American emigrants passing through our State of Tabasco are varied and numerous; I have just noted a few which, in my opinion, are the most representative. Obviously, there are some I have not mentioned, dealing, for want of space, only with the best known. I have attempted here to complement that which is already known or simply underline some of these situations. I hope it will serve to deepen our understanding of this complex reality.

I trust that our interest in understanding this reality generates a genuine desire to do what is needed to transform practices that violate the human dignity of the

emigrants, and at the same time and to the same extent, call our own dignity into question. What we do to them, we do to ourselves. Enough of abuse and injustices.

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Inside Pelican Bay Michael Kennedy SJ

It is 8 a.m. –a beautiful April morning on the windswept coast of Northern California. Jane and I drive towards Pelican Bay State Prison, making the short trip from Crescent City. My eyes take in the imposing grey buildings with their claws sunk into the red soil of the earth. Pelican Bay Prison stands amidst towering redwoods in defiance of all the surrounding natural beauty. It takes 275 acres and an annual budget of 84 million dollars to handle about 3,400 prisoners – a “super maximum” prison for the “worst of the worst” of California’s massive inmate population.

The inmates have no idea they are living in the middle of America's most stunning landscape. They have never seen the wild Pacific surf or the trees and beaches at their doorstep. Most of them never will. I am caught off guard by a deep current of sadness flowing through me at the sight of this place. I thought I had conquered the shocking reality of California's maximum security prisons. But the menacing stillness of this place tears into me.

I have forgotten how it feels to be inside those walls. I need to prepare myself for an avalanche of emotions. I must strengthen myself spiritually for immersion in this place of spiritual crisis. All week long I had wondered why I was even going to Pelican Bay. I have so many responsibilities. Why am I spending all this time away from Los Angeles? The bigger questions brought us here. Pelican Bay has become a symbol. It is more than massive blocks of stone and steel. It has much to tell us about who we are as a society if we take the time to look.

How many families have driven through this same gate but are kept on the sidelines – never allowed to see into the heart of this monster? How many men entering these gates know they will never leave alive? To have an “L” – a life sentence. How does a human being live with this? How does a person deal with this fact every day of his life? How does one begin to face the guilt, the fear and anger, the endless ache for reconciliation and transformation? These are the unasked questions that fill the room when we meet the inmates. The answers don't come easy, sometimes not at all.

We park the car, say a short prayer and take a deep breath – preparing for what lies ahead. A steady rain begins to fall as we head towards the main door. Huge billowing clouds blow fast overhead when –suddenly– everything is showered in a burst of golden light. The sun always slips in. Even here, at the very door of

darkness.

Once inside we are greeted by Janet –the community liaison at the prison– and the race begins. Everything is intense inside these enormous, multimillion-dollar buildings. Our retreat is set to begin in half an hour, at 8:30 a.m. We update our schedule according to the changing realities of the day. We need to know where different inmates are living, who's been relocated and who's being held off limits.

At 9 a.m. (already running late) we are in the chapel to greet the inmates for the retreat. On our last visit we filled the room, thanks to the in-house Protestant chaplain who supported the idea. Today we're on our own, looking on as a half dozen prisoners file into the chapel. We make only a small circle but it's enough. Different from last time but good. Somehow it seems a small gathering is a place where Jesus would be found. The men talk about whatever comes into their hearts. One inmate named Robert speaks endlessly about Our Lady of Fatima. Another has been written up for feeding the birds. I read a meditation, watching and listening as the small circle of men slowly connect with Jesus – feeling their way towards His presence in the midst of this harsh and unforgiving world of steel bars. We finish our retreat with a liturgy.

"Thanks, Father Mike," a man shakes my hand. "We need more of this."

"How often do you get together to pray?" I wonder.

He shakes his head. "This is the first mass we've been able to attend in two years."

After a quick lunch it's time to make our visits to the SHU – the special housing unit. Most inmates in the SHU live in isolation twenty-three hours a day. They get few, if any, visitors and they do not mix with the other prisoners – some because of threats to their lives, others because they are a threat to everyone else.

The only way to see an inmate in the SHU is through a sheet of plexiglas. I sit with Carlos, one of the lucky ones who gets regular visits from his wife –"regular" being once a month for a single hour.

"I think we're going to separate. I think it's best," he tells me.

"Why?"

"It's just too difficult. It's not fair to her."

It turns out that visiting Pelican Bay is no small challenge for Carlos' wife. To see her husband through a window for that brief period, once a month, she has to drive seventeen hours.

It's a commonplace story around here. Like many of California's maximum-security prisons, Pelican Bay is in the middle of nowhere. Family members –many already living close to the poverty line– must leave children behind and drive for days to visit a son or brother. Many times that journey is in vain because of an emergency lockdown in the prison.

I sit in silence. Carlos is young, seems barely out of his teens. He'll be forty before he's eligible for parole. I can see the pain in his eyes. We don't really know what freedom is until all hope of it is lost. I wonder how it would be possible to survive this kind of torture.

A few minutes later I am facing Ivan, a lifer – a young man so far from his family he never sees them at all. When he was at Folsom Prison he staged a hunger strike and was sent here as punishment. There are so many like him, lost in the

small world of Pelican Bay. They get twenty- four hour care, just like in a nursing home - except they are young. There is no healing. There is only maintenance of despair. Anywhere else they could be people with goals. There is an illusion of possibility about them. But -in reality- the door has been closed. With no dreams, no future, what is it to have goals?

The grey, square SHU building represents everything but change. There is no colour, no nature allowed in. No creativity. Is it possible to envision incarceration in a different way? We don't have the answers. It is a test of everything we believe about ultimate hope in the worst situations. The state has judged and sentenced the man, but not his soul. When every card has been played, Christ still stands with forgiveness and healing - waiting to be revealed behind these bars. We can only be here, praying for transformation, one by one.

2:00 p.m. We are escorted by guards to the Administrative Segregation Unit, or Ad Seg. Inmates here are kept in almost total isolation, many of them people whose lives are in danger from other prisoners. I am facing Victor - but not through glass. This time they've put him in a cage to speak to me. He's a young man in an immaculate white jump suit. But his mood hardly matches his attire. Abandonment, anger, despair, these are the issues that have put Victor in Ad Seg. They are the pitfalls that so many must deal with every day - the darkness that threatens to overtake the spirit.

"Every year my life gets worse and worse," he tells me. Victor was convicted for assault on a police officer. He became a marked man for beatings by guards when he was in County Jail.

"I've been set up by the guards in every prison," he says. "That's why I was sent here."

But Pelican Bay represents its own problems. In Ad Seg inmates are not allowed phone calls. No one writes to Victor. He talks to no one from the outside. Everything is forced inward, held back until something inside breaks. On my last visit, he kicked a guard and new charges were added to his record. His actions are the price of despair, the outbursts of hopelessness that do nothing to "rehabilitate" but only result in cold isolation and a longer sentence. It is all one can do to see hope in this place... in this person before me. How does anyone survive in this total darkness?

These young men have been rejected by society, cast aside as garbage, considered as nothing. Monsters. Vicious criminals, treated like incurable rabid animals. Cages. Guards. Electric fences that kill. Everything about this place speaks of death - of being dead but alive at the same time.

And yet -somehow- all during this day there is a certain presence of God. I don't know how. It is something greater than any of our efforts can achieve. Jesus went to the darkest places -where there was no hope- and he brought light. And he is still doing it today - in spite of our poor efforts to understand exactly how it happens.

Oscar is a case in point. Just as we pray for transformation and healing for inmates like Victor -just when we're ready to give up from the sheer assault of darkness- there's an Oscar bringing home the mystery and presence of Christ in this ground zero of despair. I have known Oscar for five years. He was sixteen

when we first met at Central Juvenile Hall in Los Angeles. He was convicted on a murder that his crime partner put on him. Now I'm on my way to visit him in his cell in Ad Seg, where he spends 23 hours of every day in complete isolation. We pass through the sterile grey hallways, the same dullness and lack of colour possessed by all prisons. The same smell of something stale. Oscar lives on the second tier, at the end to the right.

"Padre!" He is surprised to see me. He thought I was coming tomorrow. We laugh. It's like dropping in on a neighbour around the corner. Such a contrast to my talk with Victor only one floor away.

Oscar defies everything about this place. His spirit seems unaffected by the endless hours in isolation. His cell is spotless. The walls are lined with nature photographs I have sent him over the years – breaking waves, trees and sunlight. Oscar reaches up and turns off the TV. He's been watching a Christian programme from Oregon while taking a break from paperwork on his case appeal. He shows me a Bible sitting close at hand.

"This is what keeps me going. All day, every day."

He has questions about the church. It is difficult to comprehend a community of faith when all you have is a Bible and televangelists all day long. I realize he is becoming something of a fundamentalist. Everything in black or white.

"No offence against your religion, padre."

I tell him I'm not concerned about the theology. What counts is how it is affecting his life. Is he growing closer to God? Is it helping him survive? Hopefully we are all somewhere on that long curve, moving towards the light.

I've always suspected that prison and the monastery have a lot in common. Obviously the differences are greater than the similarities. But as I stand outside Oscar's cell the idea is irresistible – the overwhelming sense that I am looking into the room of a modern day monk. With a little transformation, he could turn his cell into a type of cloister.

"Just like a monk," I joke with Oscar. "Three vows; poverty, chastity and obedience."

Like many in prison –and some in monasteries– Oscar is a prolific writer. His letters read like a spiritual journey, flowing freely from the Thomas Merton of Ad Seg. There is no explanation for what keeps him going – other than a profound and ongoing encounter with Christ. I think back to some of the words, found in the thick file of letters from Oscar on a shelf near my desk:

"I left the gangbanging in '98 and now I've finished it all off. I've left the prison politics. I'm just gonna do my time, educate myself more, keep straight ahead with my walk with God and live as pure as possible. It's not so bad after all. I'll be alright. What's that saying? 'He who is in me is greater than he who is in the world.' I believe that."

It takes a lot of belief. I wonder if I could spend twenty-three hours a day alone in this cell for months on end. I wonder if I could do it for a single day. To have everything taken away – friends, family, freedom. And to still wake up with hope every morning and give thanks every day, all day. Here –in a place where every effort is made to estrange human beings from life itself– is a soul that cannot be

conquered. It makes all the difference in the world. And it means our journeys to places like Pelican Bay are never in vain.

"I feel free even though I'm locked up all day," says Oscar. "No one can take away the freedom that comes from being connected to God."

It's a thought that stays with me for the rest of the day. An unfailing pilot light in this nether world where so many are infected with a deep darkness of spirit. There is Rene who hasn't seen his dying father in the six years he's been at Pelican Bay. He has two children but his ex-wife refuses to send him pictures, preferring that they think of him as dead. He fights back the tears as he speaks, unable to wipe his eyes because his hands are cuffed behind his back throughout the visit.

"Father Mike, we have hearts," he tells me. "We have feelings too."

We walk out of the administration building at 5:30 p.m. Rain starts to fall, then stops suddenly. It seems as if a year has passed since we walked in the front door. The intensity, the emotional impact and the uncertainty of trying to make schedules work all contribute to making the day endless. Luminous clouds tower over the ocean as the sun begins to set. The time of day, the colours of the water, are magical – as if celestial beings have descended for a moment to create this otherworldly beauty.

We walk to the lighthouse and climb to the top. The clouds are tinged with fire as the sea below crashes into massive stones and is thrown back upon itself. It is a liberating feeling, easy to become intoxicated with the glory of creation.

Yet I only have to turn around and look upon the walls of Pelican Bay to see the other end of the spectrum; human beings cut off from the beauty, walled in by massive stones standing like a bulwark against love itself, if that were possible.

But –somehow– God does the impossible in this place everyday. I think back to the pictures on Oscar's wall – snapshots of this very seacoast which he will never see as I do at this moment. But he knows it's here. One of those blessed few who has not seen but believes.

It is an unexpected joy of prison ministry – to go with the intention of bringing Christ, only to find Him waiting for us in places dedicated to locking Him out. The ocean at our feet may never conquer the rocks on the shore. But –if Oscar is any indication– the walls of Pelican Bay are already falling.

Because they cannot contain the souls of men, and never will.

"I just want to live a peaceful life," he writes. "Some day that when one dies, that's when they reach peace. I see it different though. I'm at peace every day... in any situation and any time. *Gracias a Dios*, well thanks to Him. He really has given me everything I've asked for. I ain't in need of anything, whether it be material, physical or spiritual. It's a trip *que no*?"

It's a trip alright – for everyone in prison anywhere. And we're glad we made the journey to join them on that road, if only to walk beside them for this short time.

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World Social Forum, Nairobi 2007

Some Impressions

Pierre Martinot-Lagarde SJ

24th January

Today, the Social Forum enters its fifth day. Having arrived on Monday morning, I could not attend the activities of the first two days. I was jumping, so to speak, onto a moving train to discover, once more, the atmosphere and the style of cultural exchanges that I had already come to know in Mumbai, the last forum I had attended, two years ago. There were many similarities but also many differences. As soon as I arrived, images from my past quick visits to Africa came to mind. I had the feeling of coming back to something known: a rhythm, colours... I felt great. What a pleasant surprise!

11 am, Monday morning: my first visit to the WSF venue. My first impression – a slight disappointment. There is hardly anybody around; no big crowds, not by any standard. Vivid in my memory are throngs of dalits (outcastes), the landless poor who were highly visible in the town and the forum at Mumbai. During this first day, all is calm. I plunge in by roaming around the stadium. As yet, I have no idea that we will be spending most of the days to follow roaming round the stands, often going round in circles, not finding an event announced on the programme, or trying to catch up with an event rescheduled elsewhere.

The “Secours catholique”¹ was easy to spot among the many banners flaunted by Christians or Catholics all around. The discreet Christian presence at Mumbai is certainly not the order of the day here in Nairobi. The prize for ostentation goes to the Franciscan friars, proudly donning their habits. The Jesuits stick to their habitual discretion ... nonetheless, they’re quite a crowd!

26th January

I can’t seem to manage to keep up with the writing of these notes. Each entry has been jotted down about two days after the events recounted. At present, we are preparing for our departure; we are about to leave for France in a couple of hours. By now, the forum is over and there are still three days sitting blank in my diary. That is, without doubt, quite a lot; I fear I will not manage to fill them up.

I dedicate the rest of the morning² to the NGOs, movements and groups that I do not know really well. My first attempt stalls. I was trying to make out what Italian trade unionists had to say, but they were having trouble setting up the debate. I move on to visit a group of alternative-economists, whose organisation goes by the name of ‘Ideas’. On paper, the panel looks interesting; however, as I join the audience, I realise that the previous debate still drags on. The roundtable conference features a Finn, a South African, a Mexican, a person from Ghana and a person from China. The last named has the most lasting impression on me, leaving me, at the same time, deeply perplexed. He conjured up a smoke screen through his many different nuanced, if not contradictory, positions. Many of the issues he

¹This is the French version of CAFOD or CARITAS [translator’s note].

²The author refers to Wednesday morning [Editor’s note].

raised emerged from his analysis of Chinese economic growth. The first thing he noted was the enormous rhythm of industrial growth, to the extent that the current trend cannot be expected to last, given that hardly any economy in the past has sustained a similar expansion over a long period. Secondly, it seems that the Chinese government is at a loss as to whether it should opt for a neo-liberal economic policy, which would partially reassure foreign investors, or maintain industrial practices that protect monopolies. The number of questions concerning the current regime in China is mind-boggling.

I spend the afternoon shopping around the stands. My talent for bargaining is quickly put down by the hawkers. I need a hat and am royally swindled. Even after halving the price, I am far from reaching a sum that is reasonable. As a matter of fact, the tax levied on a white skin is hefty and I end up paying three times the price asked by other hawkers. I must have had my head in the clouds; in any case, I hadn't bothered to convert the price I had fixed into euros while bargaining. Next, I spot an artisan potter from whom I buy four mugs. His prices are fixed; he shows photographs of his works. Out of respect for his art, no serious haggling takes place. I end up carrying some wooden baubles and coloured turtles, which I hope will amuse my nephews and nieces.

After dinner, I embark on a very good discussion with the Social Apostolate coordinator for South-East Asia. The topic is China and the attention we need to pay to this country. He starts by pointing out that one is tempted, at the outset, to consider China as an established fact: it is there, it is developing. He even confirms the morning's impression which had raised many puzzling questions-- my impression that the Chinese always set up a smoke screen to hide the topics that make us angry and want to push them towards dealing with sensitive issues. The topic that takes centre stage as the discussion unfolds is Chinese unity: we wish to arrive together at an understanding of what sustains it. Doesn't economic development threaten to divide the regions, and widen the gap between the poor and sluggish West and the galloping East? What about ethnic unity? What is the role of the army? What compromises must the government make to let the army maintain greater national unity? Many questions, many burning questions. While trade with China flourishes, one must ask what lies behind this trade. Chinese ambitions continue to make a show of development. Transfer of technology no longer suffices; they want scientific advancement. In Africa, the Chinese are everywhere, seeking new access to resources; the response from here has, till now, been inadequate, fascinated by (China's) grand political power. A roundtable debate held the day before proved how welcome Chinese expansionism is over here. A spokesperson for a Chinese NGO (actually a façade for the government) was determined to underline repeatedly the importance of Chinese aid to Africa, which could eventually surpass Western aid. Geo-strategic considerations add up to this - on the one hand, Washington's drive to encircle Beijing at home has already somewhat succeeded in seducing or forcing India and Pakistan to take sides with the US in invading Iraq; Washington may eventually need to complete this by winning over Teheran. On the other hand, China has made several attempts to dodge the American noose, notably by moving closer to India and Russia. Such considerations add

to the sense of urgency we noted earlier: we need to delve deeper into the Chinese issue. My discussion continues with the international Jesuit Social Apostolate coordinator. Taking China seriously also means, for us Jesuits, taking the question of Jesuit presence in China seriously. We too are somewhat mesmerised by China and we are ready to compromise a lot to get back in there. Rome too is keen to find a path to reconciliation.

My visit to a school in a shanty town³ led to a discussion with some of my companions about the appropriateness of such visits. Is this all a question of curiosity? A question of prying? Or rather of solidarity? One has to take into account the sentiments that such a visit may arouse in us: compassion, pity, desire to do good deeds or to commit oneself to good causes. There is also the joy of finding much life and good humour, the joy of making friends with a child, if only for a passing moment. On top of all this, one has to take into account one's desire to support and encourage all those participating in such a project, as well as a certain respect for the country's reality and for the life lived by each person here. Surely, in the eyes of many people here in Kenya, our lifestyle is Western, and we are seen as Westerners. But is there not something honest in undertaking to step out of the Western-style neighbourhoods downtown and in venturing so far as to be able to see this other face of Africa? What seems important to me and makes me rejoice is not only the energy, the thrust that makes people push on with their struggle (and they have their reasons) but also the joy and the peace that they transmit. In visiting such a school, we are taking sides with those who have power do something, and we feel less helpless. Through my visit to this project, I rediscover the identification game I have come to know during my previous visits to developing countries, in India or in Africa. Contrary to what is said by those who are against such visits, all this reinvigorates the desire to do what is right, for one is stirred by their capacity to act. Obviously, this does not clear away all other obstacles, especially the difficult moments that such projects undoubtedly face.

30th January

Owing to technical problems during take off, we get to stay on another day in Nairobi before flying back home. I had brought my diary to a close just before boarding the plane; I had no idea that we would be in the same place three hours later. While firing the engines, the pilot comes to realise that one of them is malfunctioning; the system is put through a series of tests; there is a serious problem. At 2:30 am, in the middle of the night, we disembark; an hour later we are booked into a hotel and find ourselves in the place where a large part of the French delegation is lodged. In a way, this seems like a stroke of luck.

The night is indeed a short one; the encounters and debates resume over breakfast. Some French participants, after a safari in a park north of Nairobi, review their experience. Others are already busy with negotiations to find a consensus concerning the venues and organisation of the coming Social Forums. From what I heard yesterday, all matters seemed settled for the next Forum; today it looks as though things are still somewhat open to discussion. It is clear that there is a ten-

³The context of the visit has been added (Editor's note).

sion between the religious movements and the other NGOs. One can interpret the strong presence of religion and of religious friars and nuns in many ways. Some conclude that "it's like that in Africa", meaning that you don't find here the deep-seated complexes about religion that you might find elsewhere. Others also see in this religious presence a sign of the frailty of what we too easily call African civil society, and the relative power of religious organisations vis a vis such a frailty. But one must look beyond all this and note that the implosion of ATTAC has broken down the all-embracing ideological continuum that served as a buffer between the heady extremists ("the left of the Left"), and two types of institutions that are strongly geared towards action: the aid for development NGOs and the trade unionists. In addition, the ubiquitous presence of religious movements is less a consequence of invasion than of abandonment. Finally, one must ask oneself what forces went into the organisation of the Kenya forum, and whether, in a country where the political culture remains relatively authoritarian, the setting up of the event was left in the hands of organisations of a certain kind so as to avoid the direct involvement of groups deemed more politically "dangerous." All this is to say that a consensus about the religious phenomenon is nowhere in sight.

The icing on the cake: the last segment of our long but uneventful return by plane provides the setting for a final interesting encounter. On the flight between London and Paris, I find myself sitting beside a debt relief activist, a member of one of the most radical NGOs campaigning for the waiver of the dues of poor, indebted countries. After the preliminary small talk, we manage to get friendly enough to engage in some serious discussion. My new friend is quite as upset with the prominence of the religious presence at the forum as with the whole organisation of the event in Kenya. He could not swallow the 'Secours Catholique' banners hoisted every day, everywhere, all over the stadium. All this arouses an anticlerical reaction in my friend: how is it that in all the countries where capitalism is such a disaster, the governments are run by Christians? Bush, Chirac, aren't they both committed Christians? At this point, I express my objections: surely, Bush's way of being Christian is very different from Chirac's, and furthermore, I know nothing about Chirac's personal religious sentiment. I am not at all sure that religion has any relevant role in his political decision-making. My friend is rather surprised that a Catholic priest should be making such distinctions. On occasions like this, out of prudence or of habit, I always introduce myself as a Jesuit. I am glad that I stuck to such a practice today: I think that the conversation would have ended quite differently had I revealed my identity later. Fifteen or twenty minutes into our discussion, this man comes to admit how surprised he is, after 30 years of militancy and anticlericalism, to finally encounter a priest ... From what I can see, the surprise is a rather pleasant one.

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Democratic Republic of Congo Time of Hope Tanya Ziegler Frank Turner SJ

The two authors travelled with three colleagues from Nairobi to Kinshasa in January and February 2007 after the rewarding experience of participation in the Ignatian Family Encounter, and thereafter in the World Social Forum. Our visit to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) was the pivot of a two-year project. The Jesuit European Office (OCIPE) in Brussels is working with partners from Africa (in particular, CEPAS, the Jesuit social centre in Kinshasa), from Europe (organisations and individuals affiliated with the Catholic University of Leuven) and from the USA (the Social Ministries Secretariat of the US Jesuit Conference) in a project – called the ‘Relational Peace Advocacy network’ or ‘RPAN.’ RPAN has two aims: first, to strengthen an inter-continental network for peace advocacy; secondly, to get to grips with advocacy on a topic we chose after shared preliminary discussion – the exploitation by international corporations of DRC’s immense natural resources.

In the context of natural resources, the word ‘exploitation’ can be value-neutral. The fundamental question is whether the country and its people are also being ‘exploited’. This is because the use or abuse of these resources will go far to promote or impede the harmonious development –and potentially the peace– of DRC following the democratic election of December 2006.

Our group of five travelled together to Kinshasa where we consulted with Ferdinand Muhigirwa SJ of CEPAS and with Rigobert Minani SJ of the human rights organisation RODHECIC. From there Tanya Ziegler went to Bujumbura and Bukavu with Professor Antonio Gonzalez of the University of Malaga and James Stormes SJ of the US Jesuit Conference. Frank Turner visited Lubumbashi, in Katanga, with John Kleiderer, also of the US Jesuit Conference.

Kinshasa

Our two days with CEPAS and RODHECIC clarified mutual plans and expectations and added a fuller human dimension to our work. We are invited in this article to recount our own experiences, not the dramatic stories we heard from others: but to hear how people committed to faith and justice have undergone the pressures of the last decade in DRC was **itself** an experience, simultaneously daunting and encouraging. Ironically perhaps, in a network such as ours, the international partners, relatively free from life-shaking pressures, themselves need support from those who have endured extreme situations. For we, who feel ourselves outsiders, can also feel that we are naïve. What ‘right’ have we to import our perspectives and such intellectual and financial resources as we may have, and imagine them to be relevant and useful? It can be **experientially** true that as we hear the stories of a people’s suffering, we realise that we can only give as we receive. So we can be inspired to play our own part: this is crucial, since one principle of the RPAN project is to do what can best, or only, be done **outside** Congo.

On our last afternoon in Kinshasa our hosts took us to see the Congo River, a journey of twenty kilometres to the outskirts of the city. The state of the roads after heavy rain transformed what is a daily commute for thousands into an arduous and unpredictable journey. It became clear how much sheer energy is required for bare economic survival in a city of 7-8 million people that so needs improved infrastructure: a small parable of DRC itself.

Bujumbura

The 'internal' journey from Kinshasa to Bukavu (in the East of DRC) nevertheless required our group to pass through three other countries! Our group of three returned by air to Nairobi, flew from there to Bujumbura in Burundi, then drove through Rwanda to Bukavu. In Bujumbura we found that the Jesuit Refugee Service's task of assisting refugees and internally displaced people offers a key perspective on the Great Lakes region. In the camps of Buterere and Kiyange, in a region where life had been severely disrupted by the war, homes and schools have since been built and training programmes have significantly promoted self-sufficiency. Yet these JRS-administered projects will either be terminated this year or be handed over to other NGOs. The Government of DRC may even reclaim the land on which the camps are built. No solution is to hand.

We noted the tell-tale differences in infrastructure between the three countries: Burundi's roads, crowded with people, children, animals; Rwanda's highways, almost clear of traffic, newly paved and painted on the strength of international investment; then Congo's roads, badly potholed, sometimes entire sections missing. In the last step of our journey, just before entering Bukavu, we crossed a small wooden bridge, which seemed unlikely to support pedestrians, much less our van. Everyone held their breath as the planks shook beneath us.

Bukavu

At the Jesuit Alfajir College we learned something of the experience of the school and the town during the recent war. Most striking was the story of the Rwandan children at the school who one day failed to appear in class, and instead turned up as part of the assault on Bukavu led by Rwandese forces. Armed groups made the school their operational base. Now, in fact, the United Nations 'MONUC' force uses the football field as a helicopter pad.

Nevertheless, those we met in Bukavu impressed us by their hopefulness for the development of their country. In the mining sector, for example, new investment and the return of international companies (previously deterred by the sheer difficulty of operating in DRC) promise sustainable economic growth. The many thousands artisanal miners, working in the informal economy virtually without rights or protection, hope that the a new decentralisation of the country (restructuring the current eleven provinces into twenty-six) will allow more effective local overseeing of the industry, for example by implementation of DRC's Mining Code drawn up with the support of the World Bank.

Similarly, there can be no sustained development without peace. But here, too, there is hope. The Jesuit Rector expected that the college might soon once again

take Rwandese students, and that the community would take steps, however small and hesitant, towards reconciliation. After a period in which society was almost torn apart, internally displaced people are beginning to worship alongside the home community of Bukavu.

Lubumbashi

After the hustle of Kinshasa, Lubumbashi makes an almost tranquil first impression: an uncrowded city of tree-lined avenues, well-tended shops and stalls. In fact, Lubumbashi is a city of striking contrasts. It is a boom town, and it was claimed that the influx of mining companies and their workers has driven property prices up to the level of Washington DC. Yet there remains widespread destitution. Immediately behind the Jesuit community where we lodged was a hostel run by the Salesian Fathers for about two hundred boys, who are given overnight refuge and who then erupt noisily into the city at dawn.

The focus of our visit was the mining industry, especially trans-national mining corporations operating in DRC, and their legal and ethical practices: procedures in respect of workers' rights, taxation and customs duty, the overwhelming preponderance of raw ore refined abroad and therefore leaving DRC without added value, and the opaque manner in which major contracts are negotiated and renegotiated. We met business executives, commercial consultants, journalists, trade unionists, and university professors, including some whose advocacy puts them at risk. We visited the mining project 'Big Hill', with its extraordinary mountain of 12,000-tonnes of lode-bearing earth looming over the city, and were courteously given an access and assistance virtually inconceivable in Europe. Such well-run enterprises offer economic hope to the region.

However, two aspects of the industry threaten human rights and well-being. Some newly present Asian – notably Chinese – companies fall far short of international standards of good practice in general (in the absence, for example, of supervision by auditors or by civil society) and are virtually untouched by the Mining Code. (This discovery presented us with a typical advocacy dilemma: the only malpractice we have any hope of challenging is **not** that of the worst offenders.) The second phenomenon was evident at Big Hill, where more than 1,000 artisanal miners, boys of ten and twelve among them, scavenge through the low-grade neglected by the big companies for minerals, which they then sell to the company – at the company's price. We were shown a hole in the slag, in which three children had died the week before, as their pitiful tunnel collapsed and buried them alive. No protection, no inquest, no proposals for reform.

On Hope

On leaving DRC, we reflected on the hope of a people which (even leaving aside the atrocities of its pre-colonial history) has since independence endured a thirty-year dictatorship buttressed by international support, and (from 1996) a decade of civil war and invasions by neighbouring countries that has cost almost four million lives. How can hope survive after being starved for so long? Yet we saw the beauty of DRC's forests and hills, the marvellous Lake Kivu, Lake Tanganyika,

the awesome Congo River. Still more important we met communities, including liturgical communities, full of warmth, vitality and energy: qualities that cannot exist without an underlying hope. How can we **not** share their hope for a future that transcends the tribulations, even the horrors, of DRC's past?

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The Social Doctrine of the Church

Department of Christian Social Thought, *Una nueva voz para nuestra época (Populorum Progressio, 47)*. Pontifical University of Comillas, Madrid, 2006, 3rd edition LIV+741 pp. + CD-ROM

This book, which has just appeared in its 3rd edition, is the result of several years of experience and work by a team of professors from the Pontifical University of Comillas. Responsible for spreading Christian social thought, it puts forward the Church's Social Doctrine, which has much to say to Christians and to men and women of good will in this rapidly changing globalised world. Poverty, it is clear, is not diminishing despite economic prosperity and stunning technological development. Its chief concern is to propose the basic values of an ethical position inspired by Christianity, and also to make known other alternatives; the reasons justifying each position are evaluated so as to create personal and rational opinions in the hope that these will lead to action in the world in which we live.

This text, in which Paul VI invites those of us living in wealthy countries to *examine our consciences which have something new to say for our age*, inspires the authors for three reasons:

- it clearly states what the response should be from Christians and men and women of good will
- it helps us to realise that in today's world we have new obligations
- it presents the Christian ideal as a proposal, a challenge to our

consciences. The presentation is not limited to a few of Jesus's followers but goes beyond the limits of reason, certainly beyond economic reasoning, to embrace a reasoning based on the Gospel.

The structure of the work reflects the methodology developed to teach the Church's Social Doctrine. It is **positive** since it puts the student in direct contact with the most significant texts of the past 115 years. The book engages in dialogue and occasionally raises controversies with other responses to social problems: capitalism, collectivism, anarchy, totalitarianism... It is **historical** because the Church's teaching and opinions of other alternatives are given in an historical context. Finally, it is a book of **formation** which does not attempt to give ready-made answers; rather, it offers suggestions so that each reader can reflect and come to a personal opinion through reasoning.

An essential complement to the book is the CD-ROM that goes with it. The first edition provided a rich source for documents, but now both the presentation and access to each document has been improved through the use of new communication technologies. It contains the Catholic sources of the Church's Social Doctrine and other alternative positions with links to a glossary of terms and biographical references. The introductions to the main documents suggest a didactic approach.

The novelties of this 3rd edition are due to the two motives often adduced for a new "revised and amplified" edition of an already published work:

- Revisions of the original text to enable improvements and additions based on new thought and studies.
- Innovations that have occurred since the last edition

The appearance of the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church requires its incorporation in this text throughout the pages dealing with different social issues. Important political and social events of the last five years challenge the development of the Church's Social Doctrine, calling for a consideration of, for example, international terrorism, wars, emigration...

As a result, the CD-ROM has expanded its documentary base, both incorporating new documents that have appeared in recent years and giving more attention to the historical coverage of the political documents. The glossary of terms and biographical references have also been considerably expanded, together with the number of articles now approaching 160.

With all this it is obvious that, while its main aim is to serve as a text-book for a course in Christian Social Thought, it is not a "traditional" text-book. It offers ample material, well documented and varied according to an active methodology in which, with the professor's guidance, each student can find personal expression both in learning and study as well as in reflection and the forming of an individual opinion.

Original Spanish
Translation by
Michael Campbell-Johnston SJ

IN MEMORIAM
† Fr. Edward J. Brady SJ (1929-2007)



Fr. Arrupe

Fr. Cheruti

Fr. Ed. Brady

Dear Friends,

Last Easter Sunday in Nairobi, at three o'clock in the afternoon, Ed Brady SJ passed away into the arms of the Lord whom he had served so faithfully. Ed was one of the earliest workers for the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) and his support of it continued to the end. He was there on the Thai border at the beginning of the 1980s. He was with Fr. Arrupe at that last meeting before Arrupe was incapacitated by a stroke. After working for the repatriation of Ugandans from Sudan in Juba, he moved to Khartoum. He worked for the diocese while also serving the many Eritrean and Ethiopian refugees and the southern Sudanese displaced. He set up a shelter fund for those being further dispossessed by forced relocations and helped to run the Vicariate for the Displaced. At the same time, he was spiritual father at the seminary. Later, in Nairobi, his work for Sudanese continued while he also took up more retreat work, all the time struggling with his increasing disability from post-polio syndrome. He was a man totally loyal to helping those more disadvantaged, those displaced and marginalised. He was a faithful support to many, including those in the JRS. He served on the JRS Regional Council for two directors. He was also a man of the Church, always looking to develop the theme of reconciliation. His devotion to the Eucharist and the poor was best illustrated by his constant remembrance of the Eucharistic Congress in Philadelphia, 1976, with the theme of 'Bread broken for the World'. A Congress attended amongst others by Fr. Arrupe, Mother Teresa and himself.

May his broken body and soul rest in peace.

Stephen Power SJ

We are happy to note that Fr. Ed Bradley, before his death, contributed a letter commenting on the document 'Globalisation and Marginalisation' (Promotio Iustitiae 94). We remain grateful to him and ask for his blessings from heaven.

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