

**THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY AS THE BEARER
OF THE GOOD NEWS**

THE SECOND BISHOPS' INSTITUTE FOR MISSIONARY APOSTOLATE
OF THE FEDERATION OF ASIAN BISHOPS' CONFERENCES

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I. INTRODUCTION

In more senses than one, the Second Bishops' Institute for Missionary Apostolate (BIMA II) may be considered as a legitimate continuation and deepening of the experience that was the First Institute (BIMA I). The purpose of BIMA I was expressed in these words:

Inspired by the last two Synods of Bishops and by Pope Paul's *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, remembering the mission of the Church to make disciples of all nations, and challenged by the stark reality of millions of our country who have not yet been evangelized, we welcomed this opportunity to face with a sense of urgency the task of making Christ known, loved and followed by the vast multitude of our brothers and sisters.¹

BIMA II clearly shared the same inspiration and the same sense of urgency; it also represented a response to the two practical recommendations of BIMA I:

... there is need for the creation and promotion of authentic Christian communities where the Good News can be assimilated, lived and communicated to others as meaningfully as the human condition allows. We recommend that regional BIMA meetings take up these questions.²

BIMA II was a continuation of BIMA I inasmuch as: 1) the theme of BIMA II was, "The Christian Community as the Bearer of the Good News"; and 2) its participants came from the countries of South Asia: Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and India. These participants included 12 bishops and a cardinal, 20 priests and religious, and 2 lay people.

The Second Institute was held November 20th through the 30th, 1980. Trivandrum was selected as the venue of BIMA II as an expression of the South Asian Church's joyful recognition and thanksgiving to God for the reunion of the Syro-Malankara Church with Rome which took place 50 years ago under the leadership of Geevarghese Mar Ivanios. The actual location of the meeting, however, was some 67 kilometers away from the city of Trivandrum (the capital of the State of Kerala), and at a height of 1,100 meters above sea level, at Ponnudi, which nestles on the panoramic slopes of the Western Ghats, where the cottages of the government resort provided a quiet and healthy atmosphere for the prayerful reflection and sharing of the participants. Lifted high above the earth, they seemed to receive from this natural setting the encouragement and firmness of purpose to lift Jesus Christ high before the eyes of their countrymen, so "that all who believe may have eternal life" (Jn 3:15).

This tone was set from the very beginning of the meeting when Benedict Mar Gregorios welcomed the participants in the name of the Syro-Malankara Church and concluded by saying, "I think we are standing on the eve of a great spring for the Church, not only for the Malankara Church, but for the Church in Asia." Bishop Patrick D'Souza, the Chairman of the FABC Office for Mission, in an informal address, related BIMA II to BIMA I. Accepting the suggestion of BIMA I that the topic of Christian communities as bearers of the Good News be studied at a regional level, the Office had invited participants from the countries of Pakistan, Bangladesh, Burma, Sri Lanka and India, since the problems of these countries of South Asia appear to be homogeneous. Representatives of the Church in Burma, however, were unable to attend, and their absence was indeed felt.

The meeting developed through two principal phases:

- 1) Reflection on the existing and emerging Christian communities as bearers of the Good News.
- 2) Evolving a vision of Christian communities as authentic bearers of the Good News.

Phase I. Reflection on Existing and Emerging Christian Communities

In its preparation for this meeting the Office for Mission visualized that the first step in approaching the theme of the meeting would essentially consist in a spontaneous sharing on the real condition of Christian communities in South Asia as agents of evangelization. In the light of the Word of God and the very exigency of their Faith, how do the existing communities measure up to their fundamental vocation to be announcers of the Good News? What is the present picture, with its lights and shadows, that obtains in the four countries represented at the meeting?

Biblical Foundation and Theological Implications

To trigger off this first step, Fr. Matthew Vellanickal presented a paper, "The Christian community as Bearer of the Good News." In exposing the subject in the light of Scripture and the teaching of Vatican II, the paper provided the overall framework within which subsequent reflection could take place:

- 1) Evangelization is the act of the Church and flows from the very nature of the Church.
- 2) The Church is not to be understood in the abstract but as realized in the concrete local Church, which is the bearer of the Good News.
- 3) The Christian community is composed of those who have been evangelized, namely, those who have been converted to the Gospel of the Kingdom of God, which implies a change of the heart with revolutionary implications in politics, society and in the cosmos.
- 4) It is the very process of evangelization that results in the formation and growth of the Christian community. Therefore, evangelization becomes its primary goal and deepest identity.
- 5) The characteristic features of an authentic Christian community are: apostolicity or harmony of its Faith with the apostolic witness, service of the Word, docility to the Spirit of God, life of fellowship and love.
- 6) The Good News is proclaimed in words, deeds and lifestyle of the Christian community, following the model of Christ, but as adapted to the times and situations.
- 7) In the continent of Asia which is the abode of the great ancient religious traditions, the Christian community should exercise its role as bearer of the Good News in dialogue with other religions.

As an immediate reaction to the paper clarifications on two issues were sought: a) the relationship between the Church and the Kingdom of God; and b) the relationship between dialogue and evangelization.

a) There is neither a complete identity nor a separation between the Church and Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God is a broader reality than the Church; the Kingdom is the eschatological reality of which the Church is the sign and sacrament. In this the participants did not proceed beyond Vatican II but rather appreciated anew what the Council said when it taught that:

Henceforward the Church . . . receives the mission of preaching and establishing among all peoples the kingdom of Christ and of God, and she is, on earth, the seed and the beginning of that kingdom. While she slowly grows to maturity, the Church longs for the completed kingdom and, with all her strength, hopes and desires to be united in glory with her king.³

The discussion led the participants to recognize that in the matter of evangelization, Jesus Christ and the Christ-event should clearly occupy the central position. It is this Christ-event which the New Testament identifies with the bringing about of the Kingdom of God in relation to which the Church, the community of believers in Jesus Christ, is the visible sign and sacrament.

b) The relationship between dialogue and evangelization is a question that continues to vex Christians and it surfaced once again in the meeting at this point and also later on. The question assumes a more urgent character when one considers the situation of Christian communities in environments which are largely non-Christian — environments that range from tolerance to hostility towards the Christian message. In such a context, two opinions were expressed by the participants:

i) According to the first opinion, evangelization, which refers to the Christ-event, is theologically distinct from dialogue. This was the position of Vellanickal's paper and which was shared by some of the participants. To quote from the paper itself, this position may be expressed as follows:

Evangelization and dialogue, though connected in the practice of many Christians, remain theologically distinct. In evangelization, the Christian is seeking to share his unique experience of Christ as

member of the eschatological community established by Christ. In dialogue, the Christian together with his partner share their religious experience, mutually enriching themselves through God's gifts among the nations and seeking as pilgrims on earth the fulfilment. So the relationship between evangelization and dialogue is to be understood in terms of polarity and tension between these two activities which are part of the polarity and tension of the very existence of the Church in the world as "eschatological" and "pilgrim."

The Christian, however, does not eschew dialogue, for it is through dialogue that he learns from others, deepens his understanding of Christ and his message, and is in the process evangelized.

Genuine dialogue should be conducted in a spirit of humility and openness and willingness to learn and receive from one another, from one other's religious traditions, and values, insights and experience in a process of sharing. This can be done, therefore, without prejudice to the uniqueness of Christianity . . . Therefore, religious dialogue is to be understood in terms of the attitude of the partners rather than in terms of the subject matter of the dialogue.

ii) The second opinion understood evangelization in a broader sense that includes also the activity of dialogue. According to this view, dialogue may be the only form of evangelization available to the Church in certain circumstances. In a sense, in dialogue, both partners are evangelized by Jesus Christ. The difference is that while there is an explicit awareness on the part of the Christian that the richness of the dialogue comes from Jesus Christ, no such explicit awareness is had on the part of the non-Christian partner. Therefore, dialogue is a part of evangelization because both partners are evangelized by Jesus Christ.

In this connection the relevant portion of the Letter of BIMA I was referred to, which reads:

Religious dialogue is not just a substitute for or a mere preliminary to the proclamation of Christ, but should be the ideal form of evangelization, where in humility and mutual support we seek together with our brothers and sisters that fullness of Christ which is God's plan for the whole of creation, in its entirety and its great and wonderful diversity. ⁴

The participants were aware that the fullness of the mystery of Christ and the Church may not be able to be proclaimed immediately in some historical conditions which obtain in the countries of South Asia. This does not mean that there can, therefore, be no evangelical activity on the part of the Church in those conditions. It was agreed that dialogue truly belongs to the process of evangelization, even though this process comes to its fullness in the proclamation by the Church of the mystery of salvation in Jesus Christ.

First Round of Workshops

In the light of the position paper and clarifications received, the participants broke up into groups to prepare some sort of a general report on the present condition of Christian communities as effective bearers of the Good News in their respective environments: in Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and India. The purpose of this exercise was to identify issues regarding the theme of the meeting, which could then be taken up for further and deeper reflection in the following days. Thus, at the end of the report from each country on the existing and emerging communities, the participants were commonly able to identify a total of twenty-five issues which were seen to be related in one way or another to the theme. No attempt at discussing these issues or at prioritizing them was conducted at this stage; the issues were simply identified and written on a blackboard for the benefit of the participants.

Learning from the experience gained at BIMA I, the steering committee of BIMA II did not function as a closed group; rather, any one was free to sit in and participate as the committee reviewed the proceedings of each day and planned for the next. At the end of the third working day, then, the committee felt that some definite progress had been made; issues and concerns regarding the evangelizing potential and effectiveness of existing and emerging Christian communities had been identified. What was needed at this point was that the twenty-five issues be grouped onto feasible discussion units, which could then serve as the basis for a second round of workshops. A group of four participants (Bishop Cyril, Frs. Dupuis, Vellanickal and Ratus), approved by the House, presented a tentative grouping of the issues. This grouping was discussed by the participants in common assembly, slightly modified, and accepted for further discussion and reflection.

The general topics accepted for discussion and their respective issues were the following:

1) Churches and communities as bearers of the Good News: authentic local/individual Churches; the Oriental Churches; the parish; and the family.

2) Emerging Christian communities as bearers of the Good News: religious communities; priests' teams; secular institutes; Christian ashram; contemplative life; charismatic groups and prayer meetings; basic Christian communities.

3) Structures, organizations and institutions for evangelization national/diocesan/parish councils; structures for involvement of religious sisters in pastoral work; laity (especially women and youth); ministries for village communities (catechists, deacons, priests); distribution of personnel; traditional Church organizations; Catholic educational institutions.

4) Forms of evangelization: witnessing to justice; Church of the poor. Interreligious dialogue; "mixed" (ecumenical) communities and common (ecumenical) syllabus in schools; outreach programs by teams; special problems regarding conversion and baptism.

There was a fifth general topic concerning "Formation for evangelization" which subsumed issues such as training in seminaries and houses of formation, combined formation programs for sisters, and inservice formation for bishops and priests. This topic, however, was set aside at this juncture of the meeting for the following reasons:

a) to have five topics and five groups would mean that there would be a very small number of participants in each group and this would reduce the fruitfulness of the workshop.

b) to take up the question of formation before arriving at clearer vision of Christian communities as bearers of the Good News seemed to be premature.

As a matter of fact, this topic of "Formation for evangelization" was taken up in general assembly on the last day of the meeting.

Second Round of Workshops

As they broke up into our groups, the participants understood that:

a) they were free to prioritize among the issues and treat those issues which they considered to be the more important and urgent in the light of the theme of the meeting; b) there was nothing watertight and rigid about

the distribution of issues under the four topic headings. Therefore, if they found it necessary, they could relate the issues they were considering to issues being considered by other groups. Given the interrelatedness of the issue such crisscrossing was to be expected in the general reporting at the end of the workshop exercise.

The participants were given the choice of enlisting for the workshop that responded to their interest and experience.

Before this second round of workshops actually commenced, however, the steering committee thought it opportune that the participants spend some hours in private study. For this they were referred to material which had been made available to them. This material included: The BIMA I Document, The Conclusions of the Bangalore Meeting on Ministries in the Church (1976), The Conclusions of the Hong Kong Colloquium on Ministries in the Church (1977), The Conclusions of the Study Conference of AMECEA Plenary (1979), The New Catholic Encyclopedia note on "Basic Christian Communities," papers written by Fr. E. Zeitler, "Mission Yesterday and Today," and Fr. A.J.V. Chandrakanthan, "Basic Christian Communities as a viable alternative to the parish-model of the Church."

A Break

After more than a day of reflection and deliberation within the workshops, the routine of the meeting was broken by a welcome day of "rest from work" for the participants. Six days of work were behind them; and on the seventh, while refraining from work, they descended from the mountaintop to the coastal plain and were taken on a tour that combined the pleasure of sight-seeing with an exposure to some Christian communities in Trivandrum and in the neighboring diocese of Kottar, which extends up to Kanya Kumari, the southernmost tip of India.

Two of the communities visited were composed of recent converts to the Faith and they represent the fruit of the evangelizing activity of the Syro-Malankara and the Latin Church in this part of the country. Further south, at Kanya Kumari, they were greeted by a warm and joyful throng of believers, members of the Christian community of the parish of Our Lady of Ransom, who trace their faith to the evangelizing work of St. Francis Xavier. The participants, who had left Ponnudi at 6:30 in the morning, returned to their mountain resort at midnight — a tired group, yet reinvigorated to pursue the theme of their meeting as a result of their fleeting contact with these Indian Christian communities.

Phase II. Evolving a Vision of Christian Communities as Bearers of the Good News

The second phase of the meeting essentially consisted in evolving some kind of a vision of the role that Christian communities should play as agents of evangelization in the total mission of the Church of Christ. This was seen as the more important stage of the meeting, the point to which everything else that went before was meant to contribute and for which it would be a preparation. It was expected that the components of this vision would emerge from the reports of the four workshops.

Sandwiched in between the reporting were the contributions of two individuals: one, a guest speaker, Mr. Vishnunarayan Namboodiri, a Hindu, who shared his views on the restructuring of the self as the basis for the restructuring of society. His sharing was warm and personal, his attitude to the evangelizing work of the Church sympathetic and appreciative. The other speaker was one of the participants, Mrs. Elizabeth Woeckel, who had worked with Dom Helder Camara in Recife, Brazil, when basic Christian communities were first being formed in that part of South America. While Mrs. Woeckel shared the historical origins and early development of this grassroots movement for evangelization in South America, she counselled the participants to be responsive to the concrete conditions obtaining in the countries of South Asia and to fashion creatively programs that would be relevant to these conditions. The two contributions were timely; the participants received encouragement both from the concerned Hindu and the committed Catholic.

As was anticipated, the reports of the workshops indicated that the issues allocated to each workshop were not treated in a uniform manner; some issues were given more importance than others, and some issues received more adequate treatment than others. This was simply the inevitable outcome of the limited time for the workshop discussion and the limited resources that members brought to each workshop. Yet good work was done at this level, and its conclusions were more expansively and adequately treated in general assembly under the leadership of the moderators, Fr. James Dupuis, S.J., Fr. Mathew Vellanickal, and Fr. Leslie J. Ratus.

The Church as Communion

The Church is a communion in Christ of life, love, fellowship and truth. "Communion" was chosen as the integrating principle to

highlight the evangelizing thrust of the Church which must serve as a challenge for faith to those outside the community. Every Christian community, from the highest to the lowest level, from the level of the individual Churches as Churches, to the level of small, grassroots communities, is called to "communion."

Taking the model of the Christian community as described in the Acts of the Apostles, chapter 2 (a believing, worshipping and sharing community), the individual Churches in South Asia (Latin, Syro-Malabar and Syro-Malankara) were seen to be:

- in the matter of faith: more concerned about the orthodoxy of doctrine than about commitment at the personal and ecclesial levels.
- in the matter of worship: more concerned with ritual and ceremony than with God-experience, prayer and interiority.
- in the matter of sharing: though noted for their educational and charitable institutions, they are not seen as communities of fellowship and love.

At all three levels, it is not a question of "either-or" but "both-and": orthodoxy must be coupled with commitment, ritual with God-experience, outward service with inward fellowship. Because of the existence of a dichotomy at the three levels, it appears that the Churches in terms of communion do not clearly come through as authentic Christian communities, and themselves stand in need of a deeper and fuller evangelization.

Christian Communities in the South Asian Context

The vision of the Church as a communion of faith and worship, of fellowship and witness to the values of the Kingdom of God, made the participants keenly aware of a number of factors that need to be taken into account in striving to realize this vision within existing parish communities: ever-increasing numbers of Christians and non-Christians, geographically vast areas, lack of clerical personnel, the need for a sense of belonging and mutual support especially in non-Christian environments, the legitimate role of the laity in developing their charisms and exercising ministries, styles of leadership, and the growing urgency for participation in action for social justice.

Of the emerging models of community-building, it was felt that much inspiration can be drawn from the movement of Basic Christian Communities, even though these communities originated in altogether

different political and sociological situations than those that exist in South Asia. The experiences of Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, shared in this regard, showed that, far from blindly imitating the Latin American model, efforts are being made, with varying success, to build small Christian communities that strive to live the Gospel values and thereby become agents of evangelization. Other efforts at renewing parish communities that were especially mentioned by participants from India, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh were the Christmatic Renewal and the Neo-Catechumenate. The Charismatic Renewal within the Church has so far largely confined itself to the revitalization of the Christian community through a Jesus-experience, through prayer and the Word of God, through a renewed appreciation of the sacraments of healing and reconciliation. But already now there are signs that charismatic groups (especially in Sri Lanka) are moving out to active evangelization in non-Christian environments. With proper guidance such groups hold out great hope.

Discussion of the above-mentioned emerging communities revealed, however, that the participants again and again returned to giving expression to a fundamental concern. While appreciative of forms of community that have originated elsewhere (such as the Basic Christian Communities, the Charismatic Renewal and the Neo-Catechumenate), they were acutely aware of the need to explore creatively forms and expressions of community indigenous to Asia and to promote efforts at evangelization that responded to the specific situations of the Churches in South Asia. It was within the framework of this fundamental concern, whose parameters are determined by elements of the South Asian context, that they recognized and appreciated:

- a) the efforts at creating Christian ashrams and forms of contemplative life in the four countries represented at the meeting;
- b) the efforts at making the Church in South Asia clearly a Church of the poor and for the poor;
- c) the efforts of those within the Church who publicly stand up for human rights and issues that promote social justice;
- d) the efforts at interreligious dialogue, both at the higher and more technical level, as well as, and especially, at the grassroots level of everyday intercourse with members of the other living religious traditions.

Each of these four areas of evangelization, which are specific to the South Asian scene, was seen to have consequences for the spirit and

form of Christian communities, whether at the highest level of the individual Churches or at the level of religious communities, parish communities and small Christian communities. For example, how does a Church (or community) that wishes to be of the poor and for the poor handle the question of reliance on aid from abroad, whether from sister-Churches or through funding agencies? Again, how much freedom does the Church (or community) experience to come out strongly and uncompromisingly on behalf of the oppressed and those who are victims of social injustice? Such questions were seen to be vitally related to the present and future credibility of Christian communities as authentic bearers of the Good News.

Other Items of Concern Affecting Christian Communities

Christian communities at different levels experience elements that may be considered as items of evangelical concern to the Churches in South Asia in their desire to be authentic bearers of the Good News.

1) The Catholic Church and Other Christian Churches

Besides the general fact that disunity within the one Church of Christ constitutes a scandal and a serious impediment to evangelization, and that this should act as a spur to effective interchurch dialogue and collaboration, a practical pastoral problem was aired which affects ecumenical relationships: individual conversions versus corporate union. The goal of the ecumenical movement is corporate union between the Catholic Church and the other Christian Churches; but there is the fact of individual Christians or small groups of Christians who wish to enter into the Catholic Church right now. How does the Catholic Church in a given place heed the desires of the latter without hurting the general movement for corporate union?

2) The Church and Certain non-Christians

Among the non-Christians to whom the Gospel is announced, there are some:

— who love Jesus but who do not wish to belong explicitly to the Church through baptism, and this for a number of reasons: e.g., the social consequences of baptism, the foreign character of the local Church, the authoritarian structure of the Church, etc.

— who love Jesus but who positively exclude the Church.

The presence of these very real subgroups of non-Christians leads one to recognize and speak of a "progressive belonging to the Church." How must Christian communities respond to such categories of non-Christians who do not fully belong to the Church, and yet are in some way related to the Church because of their positive attitude and relationship to Jesus?

3) Involvement of the Laity

No Christian community can adequately and responsibly witness unless and until the lay person is enabled to come into his or her own within the community. Notwithstanding Vatican II and its documents on the laity in the Church and the role of the laity in the missionary activity of the Church, the scattered instances of mature lay participation and leadership in the Churches in South Asia indicate that there is still a long road to travel before it can be truly said that the laity have come of age in South Asia. In this area, two problems continue to be experienced:

a) the lack of adequate recognition on the part of the hierarchy that lay people have their own rightful role to play in the mission of the Church. Barring a few exceptions, the Churches in South Asia are still a clergy-dominated reality. That lay people are not assistants of the clergy, that they are not the "long-arm" of the clergy reaching out to areas which the clergy find difficult to enter, that they are not "delegates" of the clergy — these are ideas that still stubbornly persist within the local Church.

b) the poverty of formation programs for the laity, which, on the one hand, would recognize the charisms of the laity, and, on the other hand, provide lay people with avenues that would enable them to develop their charisms into fruitful forms of ministry.

Among the laity, women and youth were singled out for particular consideration since both groups represent significant sections within the Christian community; the first because of their present, generally "inferior" position in the Church, the second because of their crucial future potential in the Church. A plea for a mature recognition of women in the Church was forcefully made by Ms. Pearl Drego, who addressed the participants and shared with them, somewhere in the middle of the ten-day meeting. Arguing that the relationship between women and men in the Church is a reproduction of the relationship between men and women in a society in which men are the receivers and women the givers, Ms. Drego spoke of the cultural network, within which Christian communities exist, as including three levels: that of (a)

beliefs (idealizations) about women, (b) technology (division of labor) which assigns roles to women, and (c) emotional patterns of attraction-repulsion, love-rejection surrounding women. Christian communities will need to examine and rethink the position of women on all these three levels, for there will never be a new emerging laity without a new emerging women.

4) Religious Communities

As bearers of the Good News, religious communities of men and women were seen to present two issues of concern: the first refers to their internal life, the second refers to their relation to the local Church.

a) Religious communities become witnessing communities inasmuch as they present themselves as united in Christ and rejoicing in his presence in their midst as the bond of their community life. As such they seek to manifest in themselves the values of love, sharing, freedom, justice and reconciliation, which are the very values they seek to promote within the larger community in society. This witness is severely compromised when religious communities present themselves as visibly affected by divisions on the basis of language, caste and other cultural factors.

b) In relation to the local Church in whose midst they exist, the witnessing value of religious communities at times becomes problematic. On the one hand, it is necessary that they be faithful to their particular charisms and therefore enjoy the freedom to develop them. On the other hand, it is also necessary that they be integrated into the overall evangelical thrust of the local Church, and therefore, far from developing parallel structures and activities, it is vital that they enter, and be encouraged to enter, into greater collaboration and co-ordination in the evangelical witness of the diocese.

5) Issues particularly concerning the Church in India

Discussion in general assembly brought into the open two issues which the participants of the four countries saw as vitally related to the question of evangelization, issues, however, which particularly affect the Church in India. The first issue refers to the role of the three individual Churches in the common task of evangelization. The second issue refers to the continuing presence of the caste-mentality and caste features in the life of the Church in India. The first issue was raised by the representatives of the Oriental Churches, the second issue was raised by representatives of the other Churches in South Asia. But whatever may have been the source that raised these issues, they quickly became points of concern shared by all the participants of the meeting.

Responding in a way to this expression of common concern and keenly aware of their duty to address themselves to these two issues the participants from India had a special meeting among themselves (to which members from the other three countries were invited) on the penultimate day of the meeting. The timing of this meeting seemed to be opportune; it was held in the context of prayer, for the second half of that day had been set aside by the steering committee for prayer and quiet reflection on the issues that had emanated from the workshop reports.

With regard to the first issue, it was commonly admitted that the present relationships among the three individual Churches in India were of a nature that presented not only a serious obstacle to the image of the Church as communion, but also to the common evangelizing mission of the Church in India. On the one hand, without mutual acceptance of the individuality of each of the three Churches there cannot be genuine communion. On the other hand, the Oriental Churches felt that they would lose their dynamism and ecclesial character if they could not exercise pastoral care for their members in other parts of India and if they were not given adequate scope to evangelize in proportion to their missionary potential.⁵

Regarding the second issue, the Indian participants recognized that while caste discrimination in general had been denounced by Church authorities, such a forthright and unambiguous denunciation of the decisive features of caste-mentality and caste-based practices still present in the Church in India was wanting. It was felt that such a clear and unambiguous statement would lead to practical steps towards eradicating this evil within the ranks of the Church in India.

As a result of this meeting the Indian bishops present decided to write a memorandum on these two issues and present it to the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India for its consideration.

BIMA II Ends

On the last day of the meeting, besides finalizing the contents of the Letter that the participants wished to send to all the bishops of Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and India (in this they followed the example of the participants of BIMA I), they took up the question of "Formation for Evangelization," evaluated BIMA II, and considered some steps that could be taken as a follow-up of the meeting.

Formation for Evangelization

Cardinal Joseph Cordeiro, who chaired the sessions on "Formation," initiated the discussion by speaking of the model of formation for evangelization that is exemplified in the case of the twelve Apostles and of the Blessed Virgin Mary. In this model the following elements are distinguishable: they first received the Good News with joy, they lived in the constant presence of Jesus, they communicated the Good News to others, they experienced the death-resurrection of Jesus and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. The participants then exchanged their views on the formation for evangelization of seminarians religious sisters, bishops, and especially the laity.

Evaluation and Follow-Up

In the matter of evaluation and follow-up of BIMA II the following points were made:

a) What is the relationship between BIMA and the Episcopal Conferences of the four countries? There is no organizational link between the two, yet there is an inspirational link — a "connection of ideas," shared and sown in the course of BIMA meeting, which reach individual bishops through the report of the meeting and the Letter of the participants.

b) Though inspirational in nature, could there be some kind of organizational development in this region of South Asia, some kind of an office that would serve as a clearinghouse of ideas and provide ongoing information with regard to the missionary apostolate in this region?

c) The participants, in their individual capacities and in the specific areas of their Church involvement, offered to communicate to others the experience gained at the meeting.

d) Two themes were suggested for the next BIMA meeting: basic Christian communities and mission in the Islamic world. The first theme, it was pointed out, is already going to be treated in India and Sri Lanka next year under the auspices of other Church bodies. Mission in the Islamic world seemed a more likely theme for BIMA III, as it was particularly relevant to Pakistan, Bangladesh and India. (Possibly representatives from Indonesia could also be invited to the meeting, if this theme is chosen).

Conclusion

BIMA II concluded with Mass. Cardinal Cordeiro was the main celebrant, and the theme of the celebration was aptly that of "Hope": the hope that is sustained and nourished by the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit in the Church. It was a fitting conclusion to ten days of prayer and sharing, of reflection and searching; days of communion that was deepened by the celebration of the Eucharist in the three rites; days of prayer that was intensified by common meditation in the mornings and holy hour in the evenings; days of fellowship that was enjoyed around the dining table and in each other's company between and after session. BIMA II was in its own way an experience of Christian community united in the Lord.

FOOTNOTES:

1. FABC Papers, No. 19, 13-14.

2. *Ibid.*, 16.

3. *Lumen Gentium*, 5.

4. FABC Papers, No. 19, 15.

5. "An observation needs, however, to be made here. In the paragraph where it refers to the "peculiar condition in which the individual Churches find themselves in India," the letter to the bishops mentions that in this situation "the Oriental Churches feel unable to exercise their evangelizing activity as Churches, in proportion to their missionary potential" (See Documentation Section, p. 93). There is here no intention of taking sides, but only of giving expression to a wide-spread feeling among the Orientals, which was explicitly mentioned in the meeting. Opposite feelings on the Latin side were much less strongly expressed in the meeting and are not recorded in the letter which leaves the entire question open, only requesting that the common task of evangelization be the sole concern guiding the search for adequate solutions."

"In fact, this paragraph of the letter came up for discussion in the meeting of South Asian bishops that immediately followed BIMA II, and the same interpretation was given of the text of the letter. The minutes of the bishops' meeting record the following: "A comment was made that the letter of BIMA II ... expressed the feeling of the Oriental Churches, regarding their inability to evangelize according to their potential; but it did not make sufficient reference to the feelings of the Latin Church, regarding the many problems which might emerge and which instead of prospering our evangelizing efforts might make them counter-productive. In the light of the discussion some participants proposed to substitute the whole second sentence of the paragraph with the following text: "We are painfully aware that the Church in India is unable to use its full evangelising potential." This however was not considered possible at this stage. The participants of BIMA II present at this meeting then explained that their letter had no intent to pass any judgment on the merits of the case. However, in the interest of evangelization the problem had been noted and was referred to the CBCI for a full and frank discussion." (J. Dupuis, "Evangelising Communities for South Asia," *Vidyajyoti*, February, 1981, 76, footnote.)

II. MISSION YESTERDAY AND TODAY: LESSONS FROM INDIAN CHURCH HISTORY (THE CATHOLIC VERSION)*

by Engelbert Zeitler, S.V.D.

A. Missions at the Crossroads

1. The Old Mission Methods: In Search of Converts

With the underlying old mission theology, then rather prevalent, that it was only the (Catholic) Church that could save those it was carrying towards the promised shores of eternity, it was inevitable that the missionary efforts were concentrated on the numerical expansion of the Churches. "Mission" meant the highest possible number of conversions.

It is, however, wrong to believe that from the very beginning Christian missionaries followed the path of the least resistance and turned indiscriminately to the outcastes. On the contrary, the most farsighted missionaries of the modern period aimed high, in fact that the very conversion of the emperor, as demonstrated by the case of Rudolph Aquaviva and Emperor Akbar. (Parallel efforts were made in other countries like China and Indo-China.) First the higher castes were singled out as the ones that afterwards would almost inevitably draw the lower ones after them to Christ. It was only when it became clear that these higher groups, firmly entrenched in Indian culture and in Indian traditions and in no way in need of "the riches of Christianity," were inaccessible to missionary preaching, that the missionaries turned to the lower castes, just as the Apostles turned to the "pagans" when they realized that the Jews were inaccessible to the Gospel.

Consequently, from the 19th century on, mission in India took a definite turn as far as conversions were concerned and shifted from a direct mission approach, which no longer seemed to be possible, to an "indirect" approach. The direct preaching of the Word of God was now replaced to a great extent (by sheer force of circumstances in most of the cases) by "indirect" means, such as education (which at the beginning appeared as the panacea of all future mission methods), then by medical and charitable help to the poorest and to the most downtrodden. In the last few decades another method was discovered and is widely being used

*This paper is presented in part only. The first two chapters gave an overview of the history of the Catholic Church in India and statistics on the present mission situation.

with the vast money resources that are available from Western aid-giving agencies, namely, the so-called "development sector," whatever this means in particular. In general, direct conversions, formerly the very aim of mission work, have slowed down to an extent that quite a few of the Church leaders and missionaries are alarmed, whilst others have tried and are trying to reinterpret the modern mission movement in categories that would justify even social work and development as "an integral part of mission," if not as mission in the full sense.

2. A Shift from "the Age of Missions" (in the narrow sense) to "the Age of Church Building"

It was not developments within the Indian Church but in the World Church that brought about a dramatic change; it was mainly the Second Vatican Council. But there were also events in India that ultimately led to the change from the "Mission Age" to the "Age of Church Building."

The first contact with the new ideas of Vatican II came through the Theological Seminar in Bombay in December, 1964, on the occasion of the World Eucharistic Congress. With its stress on the rich possibility of salvation outside the Church this seminar acted like an atom bomb in the Indian mission field. Missionaries felt that their very vocation was threatened, and this time from inside the Church!

Two years later, in October, 1966, on the occasion of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India, meeting in Delhi, the topic "Mission in India" was again taken up systematically, and against all expectations this movement grew like an avalanche until it found finally its climax in the All-India Seminar of the Catholic Church in May, 1969, in Bangalore. It was prepared for by 14 regional seminars, 49 diocesan seminars and many more seminars of various groups, like 18 seminars in seminaries, seminars of religious, of educationalists and so on. 600 delegates of the Indian Church, together with almost the entire hierarchy, participated in this decisive event, the first unofficial (and also the last) National Synod after Vatican II. It was designed to concentrate on the basic topic: The mission of the Indian Church in the world of today, and defined this "mission" for the first time in a wider sense, as mission of the Church to all the reality of the Indian world. Among the 16 workshops dedicated to this "Mission of the Church Today" only one was exclusively dedicated to "mission" in the sense as understood traditionally by missionaries. Later on this workshop was clubbed together with "Dialogue and Ecumenism" and lost much of its dynamism.

After three regional seminars in Hazaribagh, Bombay and Ooty — this time exclusively concerned with “mission” in the traditional sense — more than a hundred participants from all over India, joined by experts from all over the world, met finally in 1971, in Nagpur, for the first International Missiological Congress ever held outside the Western ambient. Here, for the first time, the concept of mission was widened so as to include development and liberation as an integral part of the Church’s mission.

The newly-born theoretical insights of the new mission concept of the Catholic Church reached in Nagpur, 1971, and representing the new mission orientation given by Vatican II, were finally popularized in the First All-India Mission Consultation in Patna in October, 1973. The Patna Congress, with 360 delegates from all parts of the country, was the climax of the attempts to secure the proper place for the mission in India and to make the Indian Church a missionary Church. It was also the last of the National Congresses, which in the past had taken place every second year (1969, 1971, 1973). The 98 paragraphs of the final declaration are a mini-encyclopaedia of mission work in India as it was understood seven years ago. Henceforth, the concept of “mission” has gradually taken on a wider sense and integrates today a number of elements that are part of the Church’s mission in the world of today. In course of time the emphasis is shifting to the liberation and humanization of the depressed masses as the most vital elements that have been taken care of by the mission. This version, however, is still severely questioned by many field missionaries.

3. Fast Organizational Growth of the Catholic Church in India

During this period the Church, understood mainly in its structural aspect, increased very quickly. The number of ecclesiastical units has increased from 20 in 1886 when the hierarchy was established, to 48, in 1946 and 106 in 1979. An entirely new phenomenon is the entry of the Oriental St. Thomas Christians, with independent Oriental exarchates, seven of them in the North, now upgraded as dioceses.

The more the emphasis on direct mission work decreased, the more the stress was laid on building up Church structures: The dioceses were joined into the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of India (CBCI) in 1945, the religious congregations in the Conference of the Religious of India (CRI) in 1960. A number of other national organizations were added and are being added all along the way. Even ecumenical organizations have started growing; for example, the church-related institutions concerned with education were formed into the All-India Association of Christian Higher Education (AIACHE).

4. Institutionalization of the Catholic Church

In the context of the new mission methods which shifted more and more towards an institutional approach, it is not astonishing that the number of institutions, usually started and run with a substantial foreign contribution, has multiplied enormously during the past decades. During the past three decades, e.g., the number of university colleges has grown from 30 to 125 and their student body has increased by over 1,000%. High schools have increased over the same period by 100% and their student body by 300%, whilst primary schools have grown only by 15% and their students by 23%. This is interesting to note because it shows a definite new trend with regard to further development. The missionary Church in India should be where the masses of the poor and the needy are, in the countryside, but figures show that it is still the upper classes which are the beneficiaries of the Church's mission work. Whilst hospitals have increased ten times and dispensaries five times, the growth of other institutions such as orphanages, leprosaria and homes for the aged has been much less, even negligible. Finally, the growth of institutions, and this is very significant, has shifted from the mission areas, where they were originally intended for the spreading of the Faith, down to the South where they serve to consolidate the Christian communities and to give them a maximum of security. At the same time we note that urban-related institutions like colleges, high schools, etc., grow faster than the lower categories. All this raises the question: Is the commitment of the Church to the poor, so often solemnly proclaimed, more lip service than reality?

5. The Crux of the Problem

The past hundred years of mission work in India have on the one hand established the Church in many new parts of the country but on the other hand have left us a legacy of confusion, from which we are slowly trying to find a way out.

The first decisive correction in the course of our mission policy that has been made is the insight that "indirect mission methods," like education, medical and social work, are not means to a goal, the goal of conversion, but are essential goals in themselves, an integral part of the mission entrusted by Jesus Christ to his Church for the world of today. We must be immensely grateful for this new liberating insight, which the Vatican Council especially has emphasized so strongly.

Still, there remains a great deal of confusion. There are still people speaking about “indirect methods,” which do not exist any longer. What were formerly called “indirect” mission methods are today seen to be an integral part of our missionary proclamation in the context in which this proclamation is sensibly possible, perhaps even only as a silent witness of our Christian presence that has to prepare people for something further, that still lies beyond their understanding.

The most serious problem that has been created is the question: How to connect the ever increasing material input of the “missions” with their missionary calling to bring Christ to the world of India today? There are a number of proposals made that are often directly opposed to each other.

An inevitable side-effect of demythologising the former indirect mission methods as efficient means for conversion was that these conversions dropped drastically and are today down in many areas next to zero. The problem takes on dangerous dimensions when it is cast in an explosive language, like the following propositions: “Are these ‘indirect mission methods’ (esp., education, health care, social work):

- still means to genuine mission work, i.e., to conversion?
- or are they mission work itself, as it ought to be today as long as you have first to make these starving masses human beings before you can make them sons of God?
- or are they an integral part of mission work?
- or are these indirect mission methods the greatest obstacle to mission work, which explains a good deal of its failure wherever they have been used?”

Radical questions indeed!

Missions, due to the past mission policies, have been almost totally identified with “conversion,” though this is an unjustified narrowing down of essential elements that cannot be omitted. This identification in turn has caused great social and political repercussions which make conversion appear as a disturbing factor in our Indian social life. “Anti-conversion” bills are the most radical answer of a majority that feels threatened by a “militant” Christian minority supported by seemingly unlimited money resources from outside. “Conversion,” in an Indian context — which would apply also to a few other Asian countries — has dimensions that are unknown in the Bible, in the Christian tradition, and even in vast parts of a Western theology today which overlooks the realities of India and argues from theoretical principles which miss the drastic consequences that affect vitally those who are baptized in India.

The converts change not only their loyalty to God but change also their social and financial systems in which their family life moves, the law of inheritance and a hundred things that reach down to the very roots of their earthly existence. Can we really impose on those who are converted that they be molded into a structured Church that is for many not the incarnation of values for which the entire past of their culture has stood so far?

The problem is a very complex and thorny one and still very far from any solution. But on principle we have clear directives from the Pope and the Council as far as the Catholic Church is concerned that could serve as the Magna Charta for mission and conversion in future. This principle is enshrined in *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, No. 18:

For the Church, evangelizing means bringing the Good News into all the strata of humanity, and through its influence transforming humanity from within and making it new: Now I am making the whole of creation new. But there is no new humanity if there are not first of all new persons renewed by Baptism, and by lives lived according to the Gospel. The purpose of evangelization is therefore precisely this interior change, and if it had to be expressed in one sentence the best way of stating it would be to say that the Church evangelizes when she seeks to convert, solely through the divine power of the message she proclaims, both the personal and collective consciences of people, the activities in which they engage, and the lives and concrete milieux which are theirs.

All this is very clear and all that is needed, urgently needed, is that all the Christian denominations that are working for mission and conversion study the problem in all its ramifications and try to mark out a path through the present jungle of opinions which we can travel safely to the next decade of mission history.

The magnitude of the problem can be gauged from the number of socioeconomic projects handled annually by aid-giving agencies in India — about 5,000 projects per year — and the amounts of money involved. An intelligent guess puts them from available documentation in the vicinity of over a hundred million Rupees per annum. While we appreciate the intentions of the donors and welcome any help for the poor and downtrodden, if this is real help for them, what is sadly missing is a systematic critical evaluation of these projects, especially on a larger scale, in a wider context and over a longer period of time. This should be done on an ecumenical level. Very radical and far-reaching consequences

are bound to follow from such an evaluation, not only on a social, political (part of the animosity of the anti-conversion bill move is based on the "unlimited financial resources of foreign powers supplied to mission agencies in India") but also on the theological level. Can we really build a local Church on such a shaky ground as is such a continual foreign financial support, and thus make it dependent in all its essential functions, structures, buildings, programs, on foreign money? These are serious questions, and questions that do not allow answers to be postponed much longer.

B. The Future Forecast: Whither Church and Mission?

1. Building the Future on the Church in India on Sand or on Rock?

We have analysed the present situation of the Catholic Church in India. We have seen how unequally, lopsidedly and often without any planning, our limited resources are distributed all over the country and allocated to the different sectors of our apostolate. The growth of the Church in itself has been very lopsided in many respects. This was partly due to historical factors beyond our control, but no less to a lack of foresight in planning, and consequently to a lack of resources at all levels of the Church.

Our missionary efforts are very unequally distributed all over the country, leaving out strategic areas of vital importance and concentrating on others that give no hope of adequate returns. Not less unequally and unstrategically distributed all over the country are our institutions, our personnel, our vocations and our finances. As far as the apostolate is concerned, the Catholic Church in India has concentrated heavily on education, and of late, on medical relief, social welfare and development, while its presence in the political, economic, scientific and cultural life of the nation is insignificant, and the absence of an instructed laity in all these fields, especially in the women's sector, is striking. But what should cause us much more concern than mere results which are often not in our own but in God's hands is, however, the kind of mentality which makes it largely impossible to combine our scarce resources of personnel and money for joint action according to a scheme of priorities.

The Catholic Church in India has been divided down the centuries on the basis of communities and rites, each trying to establish its own superiority over the others. Administratively, too, we have been divided

down the line. The dioceses function independently of each other. The religious congregations watch over their freedom of action. Two top Roman Congregations, one for the Latins and one for the Orientals, maintain independent and separate supervisory responsibilities over their respective sections of the Catholic Church in India.

The latter divisions — caused by the three different rites in the Indian Catholic Church, based on different and valid ecclesiologies — that are hardly ever honestly discussed with each other, threaten to make the situation worse. They may ultimately lead to splits within the Catholic Church which so far appeared to many outsiders as a monolithic block. This conjures up before our eyes the sad picture of Christians fighting with Christians over non-essentials, a picture with which we are familiar in ecclesiastical fights occasioned by different rites. These disputes are a counter-witness in the eyes of non-Christians, to say nothing about the colossal waste of manpower and financial resources also involved. True, the time of uniformity is over also for the Catholic Church. So let us accept that pluriformity in unity is the law of life for the Christian Churches!

However, if after nearly 2,000 years of Christian history in this country and after one of the greatest missionary efforts of the entire Christendom, we still continue to be divided in our efforts, over whether we are “Catholics or Orthodox or Protestants,” in the presence or a rising tide of Hindu revivalism, anti-conversion bills and downright persecution in certain areas, with the growing impact of secular materialism and the ultimate threat of a Marxist take over hanging as a Damocles’ sword over our collective neck, we need not prognose much about our future, because there may then be none!

A missionary reorientation, a real conversion of the missionaries themselves is the first need of the hour. *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, a document that sums up ten years of an intense search for a new approach to our missionary task in the world of today, makes the shocking statement that mission work will start henceforth no longer with the conversion of the “pagans” but with the conversion of the Christians: “The Church is the people of God immersed in the world and often tempted by idols. It therefore, needs to hear the proclamation of the ‘mighty works of God.’ In brief, this means she has a constant need of being evangelized, by constant *conversion and renewal, if she wishes to evangelize the world with credibility*” (EN, No. 15).

2. Criteria to Test the Foundation of Future Mission Work

These criteria apply not only to India but extend as far as mission extends over the globe.

i) Mission, the Overflow of the Christ-Experience

The first criterion with which to test the very bases of our future mission work is to check on the way we conceive "mission work" itself.

"Missions" have become huge organizations in India, involving annual budgets of millions and employing an army of full-time workers. And yet, mission is essentially something that is very different. It is the overflow of the Christ-experience in a community in which the Spirit of Jesus lives and which, therefore, urges those who have ever had this experience to share it as the "Glad News" with those who have not experienced it as of yet. Mission can, therefore, never exist without a deep concomitant life of contemplation and prayer, which in India naturally will take Indian forms and draw on the immense riches of an intense religious experience of a country that has for 4000 years concentrated on a relentless search for God. Much of often bitter antagonism of non-Christian groups would disappear, if they would experience the Church as a spiritual community and not as a power-structure that can dispose of an enormous amount of foreign money. The appreciation of Jesus Christ in most strata of the Indian society is matched only by the opposition, often amounting to open hatred, shown to the Church that claims to represent him. A systematic study of this strange phenomenon could shed light on the path our future mission policy should travel, lest we get more and more lost in the wilderness. In a country like India, where genuine holiness of the evangelizer will always touch the followers of any religion, we Christians should earnestly heed the advice of the Father of the Indian Nation: "If you want to convert India, do not send us a thousand missionaries, send us one saint!"

ii) The Servant Church That Follows the Servant Messiah

If the evangelizing Church is really to follow the Lord though the decades that lie ahead of us, one more point will certainly deserve serious consideration, namely, that only a Servant Church which follows in the footsteps of the Servant Messiah will be able to carry on the Lord's mission to the India of today, with its growing opposition to the power structures of the Christian Churches. The great temptation of the Church

throughout her history, especially in the Third World countries, has always been the temptation of the Lord himself, described in Matthew, Chapter 4, to achieve his mission in his own strength and power and not as given to him as the gift of the Father. Any analysis of our present situation and past mission history will provide us with the necessary examples that could stop us from making time and again the same mistakes with ever more disastrous results.

iii) The Church of the Poor

Another criterion that will help us determine our future is no less evident: If the Church is ever to fulfill her role as the Servant Church, it must be "the Church of the Poor." This topic has come up again and again in big congresses in various parts of India and in the Third World but the situation has not changed substantially even now. The Churches in the Third World continue to give the appearance of power, money and prestige, in spite of all the "detachment" from earthly things, real and imaginary, which they claim to practice. If the missionary Churches want to have any future, a new orientation will have to be given to them: a firm commitment to poverty as an essential ingredient of a credible proclamation of the Gospel. As long as they side, as we do at present, with the 15% that form the top of the social pyramid in India (as well as in Asia), the group that has everything, whilst 40% and more live below the absolute minimum of subsistence, such Churches have no future.

iv) Mission the Task of the Christian Community

One more feature will characterize the missionary Churches of the future, namely, that mission work is not any longer — in fact it never was — the task of an individual, however dedicated and committed he or she might be, but the bounden duty and the privilege of the whole Christian community, as it was at the very beginning of Christianity. The future will lie with such basic Christian communities that are filled with the Spirit of the Lord whom they proclaim to the world around them, shaping them according to the image of the Lord who has risen in them. These missionary communities to which the future will belong will be very different from most of those which we see today.

3. Our Mission to the World of Tomorrow

One thing should be clear to all: we can never understand our mission to India, without including also Asia and the world today more than we ever have before.

Missionaries were sent from the very beginning by their Lord and Master to the ends of the world, but they were always tempted and some times succumbed to the temptation to stop somewhere on the road for whatsoever reasons, justified or not. The result was that the message of the Lord did not reach the ends of the earth. Mission remained something local and partial, though by its very nature it is universal and radical. Even today, after studying the sincere mission efforts of the Catholic Church as well as of so many other Christian denominations, one cannot avoid the feeling that many of these missions, often identified with "mission stations," are beautifully built, like nests in a huge tree. All are busy building more nests and more beautiful and better nests, whilst below, at the same time, people have just started cutting down the very tree on which these nests are still being built. It is sad to see how much energy is wasted in useless questions or rites, in liturgical controversies, theological niceties, unplanned social work, regional and local quarrels and squabbles which are natural in a human society but detract a good deal from the impact we could make on a world that is going through one of the most critical phases of its history.

i) Mission to the Whole Man and to All Men

Mission, as it is understood today by the Catholic Church, is something very different. Summing up ten years of search for the new mission ideals for our times, and synthesizing the Synod on Evangelization in 1974, the Pope in *Evangelii Nuntiandi* states:

For the Church it is a question of not only preaching the Gospel to ever greater numbers of people, but also of affecting and as it were upsetting mankind's criteria of judgement, determining values, points of interest, lines of thought, sources of inspiration and models of life which are in contrast with the Word of God and the plan of salvation (EN, No. 19).

That is, indeed, a program for a total revolution, if taken seriously; but it is a revolution in Christ which could change a good deal of our present approaches to "mission."

Christianity as a whole has already lost one of its most decisive battles in the past one-and-a-half centuries, which coincide for the Catholic Church with the "golden mission era" (1840-1950). While the Christian missionaries, at that time still quarrelling with each other, established Christianity all over the world and were proud of the figures of their baptismal returns, they overlooked that it was this same period

that has created the basic problems of the world of today which, if not solved in time, may one day blast away a good deal of mankind's present cultures, structures and life. It was this period that placed three-quarters of the entire resources of this world in the hands of a small minority of one-fourth, which now has claimed them as their legitimate possessions. These have been joined recently by newcomers like Japan and the oil rich countries. The non-Christian world will not forget that the original group of these exploiters were all Christian nations, (whatever value their "Christianity" had.) Helder Camara puts it this way: "Today 80% of mankind are slogging in slavery that 20% may live in luxury. Tomorrow it will be 90% that will slog in slavery that 10% may live in luxury." The latest report of the United Nations submitted by the Brandt Commission in cool realistic figures comes to an assessment that could shake those who care to study it. Many of our Christians, even our missionaries, still live under the illusion that the main division of the world is the division between the East and the West, while this division has long since been superseded by the division between North and South which separates mankind into two gigantic camps. They are actually not two halves — it is only one-fourth that in the North, while three-fourths of mankind live in a South that is miserably underdeveloped. It is this North that possesses 90% of the manufacturing capacity of the world and consumes 85% of its oil. It is this world that produces the fighter bombers, one of which alone costs the equivalent for which one could build 40,000 dispensaries in India. It is this North that spends annually 400,000 million US dollars (a figure with 11 zeros) for the mad arms race.

Mission certainly will not identify itself with a political movement but still less can it put itself at a safe distance in such a situation. Mission cannot point to heaven while people are dying of starvation on earth. Mission is concerned with the whole man and with all men. The Pope states categorically:

For the Church, evangelizing means bringing the Good News into all the strata of humanity, and through its influence transforming humanity from within and making it new. But there is no new humanity, if there are not first of all new persons renewed by Baptism and by lives according to the Gospel (EN, No. 18).

Mission preaches not only the Kingdom that is to come but also emphasizes the Kingdom that has already come, and Christians have to prove this fact in their own lives, by the contribution they make to better the horrible lot of their brethren, 800 million of whom are living below the very minimum of human subsistence.

ii) The Decisive Question: What does Religion and consequently "Mission" mean to the World of Today and Tomorrow?

The decisive question which we have to answer at the very end of our reflections in this: What does "mission" mean to the world of today and tomorrow? In concrete: What does mission mean to the 40% of our brothers and sisters in India and Asia as a whole who live below the absolute minimum of human subsistence? For the 82 million children that have to labor hard lest they die of starvation? For the 30 million children who die of malnutrition before they reach the age of six? For the two-and-a-half million children in India who will be blind before they are five-years old for the sole reason that they have not enough vitamins?

Seen against this tragic context is religion, any religion, not only Christianity, a remedy or a drug? Is it "opium for the people"? Is mission, therefore, sooner or later, better sooner than later, to be replaced by revolution? Asia's revolutions were basically the result of a tragic failure of Asia's religions, which at one time had created Asia's glorious past with its cultural and social structures. But they failed miserably to provide workable solutions for the Asia of today and tomorrow with its enormous problems, totally different from those which they tried to solve when these religions were founded some one-and-a-half to four thousand years ago. Thus religion was gradually replaced by revolution in vast parts of Asia (at present 45% of Asia's is "red"). All the chances are that this area of revolution will increase rapidly and may engulf tomorrow countries that feel quite safe today.

iii) Alternatives That Will Decide Mankind's Fate

It was Marxism that was the first alternative to the failure of Christianity to provide workable solutions for the people of today in the West and to create a world in which justice dwells. It may sound surprising but it is true: Marxism, seen from an existential point of view, is, in spite of its appalling failures to measure up to the ideal, primarily not a system of sociology or economics and politics but a (misconceived) system of human liberation. This in part explains the appeal Marxism has and always had in spite of its doctrinal inconsistencies, its proved historical failures and appalling crimes against humanity. "The gospel according to Marx" was offered as the alternative to "the Gospel of Christ" which had seemingly failed to save modern mankind. Just as Christianity in Europe was not able to stand up against the rising power of Marxism, so also in Asia the old religions in general have proved unequal to the task of building a dam against the surging floods of mankind's latest "religion," which has now swept over Asia and part of

the adjoining continents. On the contrary, the inability and unwillingness of the classic religions of Asia, including Christianity, to find new, radical, solutions to the urgent needs of the Asian people has been Marxism's strongest ally in Asia. True, in the meantime a counter-revolution of the Asian religions and cultures has set in, and we hope it will partly restore the balance lost earlier. Still, the tremendous challenge which the Asian revolutions and counter-revolutions pose to all mankind today is: If the world is to survive, we have to create something that is positive; a mere negative approach to Marxism is insufficient. What we need is a viable alternative to the warring ideologies which cut the modern world into two. We have to rediscover a new complete way of life that caters to all fields of human existence: spiritual and material, a human totality, this worldly and other-worldly.

No single, religion, not even Christianity, will ever be able to achieve this, though Christianity will have the key role to play in this new counter-revolution against Marxism as well as against totalitarian ideologies and revivalist religions, especially Islam. All religions all over the world will have to join together to give a credible witness to the brotherhood of all men after all have made their profession of the universal Fatherhood of God. They will have to bring modern man in his agony the Glad News contained in Christ's message and re-echoed in all other religions:

Love is stronger than hatred.

Peace stronger than war;

Compassion stronger than violence.

Equality and unity stronger than discrimination and division.

Justice stronger than oppression.

And Life on this earth the beginning of Life Eternal that is already incarnate in him.

The basic question will be: Can Christianity furnish a motivation for an Asian revolution, strong enough to rebuild in Asia and elsewhere a world in which justice dwells?

What is urgently required for the next decades is an ever closer collaboration of all the religions of mankind to foster and complete the humanization of mankind. If this goal cannot be achieved, man may have to start again after an atomic holocaust from the same point where he started becoming human a million years ago. This is the role that religions, and first and foremost Christianity, will have to play in the years to come. There is a need for a radical commitment by all religions, on the basis of God's being Father to all men on earth, to be brothers in order to save the endangered species of man.

The salvation offered to man today is not a new ideology. God Himself has incarnated His salvific will in a living person called Jesus Christ and destined to be the Savior of our world for time and eternity.

Mission has no other meaning than to spread this liberating Glad News for the eighties and to start the movement for mankind's total liberation here and now. Through him-with him-and in him.

Conclusion

We have travelled a long way to discover the meaning of Church and mission for the world of today.

We have reached a decisive turning point of mission history. There is no return to the past, neither to the past mission theories, nor to the past mission methods, nor to the past mission goals.

A new era has started that grows out of the past into a new future. The "missions" in the Third World, formerly only the recipients of material help, "mission personnel" and structures from the West, have now been called by the Lord of the Church's history to go out and to proclaim the Kingdom of God themselves with great faith, and a still greater hope, animated by the power that alone can save the world: Love!

Our new approach is an integrated mission approach: to build up Christian communities, fully united in him and among themselves which are witnesses of the Risen Lord who commissioned them to go out into a world that is approaching the third millenium. They are witnessing communities fully integrated also into their culture and existential situation, fully "contextualized."

They seek in humility and mutual support, together with their non-Christian brothers and sisters, that fullness of Christ which is God's plan for the whole of creation, in its entirety and wonderful diversity.

They have taken up in faith and determination the tremendous task entrusted by Divine Providence to our generation as to no one before us: to liberate the evergrowing masses of mankind from all that keeps them captives of sin on the individual and social level, to make them fully human in order to make them divine in Christ.

Our attitude should not be one of fear and despair but of hope and immense expectation, waiting to see how the Lord of History will

manifest himself and his mighty deeds to this world of ours in a situation that bears a striking resemblance to the crossing of the Red Sea, the Exodus from the land of slavery into the promised land of freedom. The color of the sea is red. This is an ominous color but the power of the Lord is undiminished and the arm of the Lord not shortened in a time in which we may see one of the greatest manifestations of his power after the crossing of the Red Sea under Moses. Mankind's history can in truth only begin after we will be led out of the land of slavery where man oppresses man and one people the other. We can hardly in our wildest dreams imagine what mankind will be able to achieve once we will be out of the period of tribal warfare in which we are engaged until now, bent on putting up ever more new international boundaries and inventing ever more horrible weapons to kill those who try to trespass them.

Mission today is the prophetic proclamation of the exodus from this land of slavery into the Promised Land of the Children of God. So far many Marxists had a clearer vision of this land and firmer determination to reach it than have had many Christians.

It Christ's cause is to survive this has to change soon. That is our mission: Proclaim the Exodus.

III. WOMEN IN THE CHURCH

by Ms. Pearl Drego

The task I have been given is to find unifying threads between the topics of laity, basic Christian communities and women. Gone are the days when Church meetings treated the topic of women's role as some kind of humorous joke, or an extra burden on the agenda. In fact I was indeed surprised to find that the first Asian Bishops' Institute for Missionary Activities had a woman as conference facilitator, which gave a special tone to the meeting. And yet this is a very minor adjustment and we could be fooling ourselves if we believed that by merely including a few women in conferences and council meetings we were bringing a radical change in the treatment and task of women in the Church. There is a famous sentence that "bugs" all or almost all Church conferences today. It is this: "Let's invite a few women." And the organizers are not sure whom to invite. The real revolution will come when Church conference committee members nod their heads and say, "Maybe we should invite a few men," because then the policy makers and decision makers, the conference planners and invitation givers will be women. However, I don't think that you will see this happen in your time, and I don't think it will happen in my time either.

An Awakening Consciousness

Yet something new is happening and there is an awakening consciousness among women in the Church that has not yet crystallized into shape in India or in Asia. The women's movement is slowly sweeping the earth and is not a temporary fad. Christian women are being influenced by it and for their good. Even though I have heard a few Indian clergymen denounce it as a "Western" product, as out of tune with Indian culture and therefore against indigenization, the women's movement has come to stay and they have good reason to be afraid that the male edifices in the Church are beginning to crumble. Instead of rebuilding their fortresses of defence against women, banishing anything (or any person) feminine from the corridors of Church buildings, tightening their custody of the eyes and raising their fears of rivalry, it is high time that they faced the reality of the contemporary situation and the birth of a new generation of women in the Church.

In recent months I have been surprised to find that there are still places where a women's hand is regarded as too inferior to distribute communion even when the situation is so desperate that people have to be denied the sacraments for weeks because no priest is available. And I know many good and humble Asian religious women who will say "yes Father," "yes my Lord," to your face but will open the tabernacle when they need to and do what they think is just and fitting.

In the meantime I do not encourage you to be benevolent or generous towards women. This will only make them grateful to you and even more dependent on you in their gratitude. Such generosity will postpone the revolution that is to come. And come it will, whether you like it or not. My message to you is not to do anything for the women in the Church because the movement has to come from and be carried forward by women themselves and not by men. What I do ask from you is to understand what is already taking place, so that you are not afraid that the ground is being shaken from beneath your feet, that you recognize the action of God in women's history, rather her story, that you cheer from the sidelines and put your authority on the side of justice, feminine justice.

Women as Laity

I find it significant that the topic of women in the Church has been integrated with the concept of the laity. In fact, women as laity are the untouchables of the Church hierarchy. This becomes clear especially

from the job allocations in the Church. I would be interested to know how many of you have a relationship with women whom you consider your colleagues and peers, and I would also be interested to know how many women (religious or lay) you have employed or harnessed as housekeepers, as secretaries and typists, as receptionists, nurses and cooks. The division of labor in the Church is analogous to class oppression in society. The Eucharistic table is laid by men while the dining table is laid by women. Women in the Church are assistants to men and very rarely their colleagues. Ecclesiastical images of woman range from that of defenceless virgin and dangerous temptress to sacrificing mother and stubborn tyrant. In reality, women are the most exploited labor force in the Church. Unfortunately, many of them survive on the crumbs of gratitude bestowed on them by the masters whom they serve. Therefore, they do not have a support system outside their dependent relation to men and cannot break out of their slavery.

In this way, the relationship between women and men in the Church is a reproduction of the relationship between men and women in a society in which men are the receivers and women are the givers. If the basic Christian communities do not present a challenge to the surrounding cultures through a new relationship between men and women and through new responsibilities carried out by women, then they will be failing in their task of inculturating the Good News of Jesus in a prophetic way. The basic Christian community is created and sustained within a particular space—time context, within a given cultural network. This cultural network includes the three levels of: (1) beliefs, (2) technology, and (3) emotional patterns.

The Basic Christian Community and Women

A basic Christian community will need to examine the position of women on all these three levels, viz., what are the:

1. Idealizations or condemnations of femininity;
2. Tasks allotted to women on the level of technology and economic production, and what are the tasks prohibited to them;
3. Feelings of attraction—repulsion, love—rejection, surrounding women that the community has inherited from its ancestors and which are current in that society.

1. The culture of a basic Christian community may, for example, idealize woman as a kind of goddess of celestial virtues or gentle maiden who does not say a harsh word but is a humble and obedient servant; as a beautiful flower with intoxicating scents, or a spring of water that brings

freshness and life; as a doll in a glass case or a mother who sacrifices everything for her children. On the other hand, she may be condemned for being unreliable in carrying responsibility, for being fragile, emotional, unpredictable, for needing purification after childbirth and for polluting the world with gross desire and trances. She may be also condemned for having a physical structure that is imperfect and automatically disqualifies her for ministerial tasks.

2. On the level of technology the basic Christian community may reproduce the surrounding culture that confines woman to the tasks of childbearing, childrearing, housekeeping, teaching, typing, sewing, etc. Even where the secular culture has gone ahead in recognizing women as lawyers, doctors, community leaders, policy-makers, technicians and administrators, the basic Christian community still treats women as second-class citizens. How many women are trained for or even participate in the technological aspects of ecclesial life? How many are involved in active pastoral administration and ministry in a way in which they are responsible for their own work and decisions? How many Asian women are trained in theology, scripture, liturgy and doctrine? We have taken for granted in the Church that the way things have been done in the past is the best way things can be done in the present. This keeps us safe and secure, and whenever necessary, we can quote the culture of basic communities to suit predetermined policies. Again, I heard a sister in North India complain that the priests wanted mothers who had just given birth to be allowed to lie on the mudfloor because that was the practice of the local culture. It did not matter if she got an infection and died. Following the primitive technological culture was more important to the masculine mind of the missionary than preserving her body. Indeed, unless we have women missionaries, prayer leaders, preachers, retreat givers, spiritual directors, confessors, contemplatives, liturgists, scripture scholars, moralists, theologians, catechists, deaconesses, women will continue to be the oppressed labor class in the Church.

3. On the third level of culture there is a real cloud of confusion. The forces of eros in the Church have not yet been understood and appreciated. The energies of love and of creation of intuition, and attraction connected with the feminine psyche lie dormant in shadows of mistrust and fear. These are the emotional elements of basic Christian communities and of Church hierarchies that are still locked in myth and superstition. Yet there are archaeopsychic powers dwelling within the community at this level that can lead to unfathomed depths of spiritual experience and of mystical revelations of the Divine at the heart of creation. By cutting off these realms we are cutting off the outermost and

innermost reaches of the redemptive work of Christ. We have not yet taken the step of Abraham to leave familiar territory and travel into the unknown, this time the unknown subterranean regions of the human psyche. We are familiar with evangelizing on the level of beliefs and values, and also on the level of technology and socioeconomic structures. We have not yet recognised the task of evangelizing the depths of the human psyche, the underworld of the mythmaking imagination, the world of inner fantasy where soma and spirit weave mysterious patterns with life-giving or life-destroying forces. It is this level of body—earth—nature—life that woman symbolizes, and the redemption of the earth must involve the redemptive action within woman and womankind. The rejection of woman and her rights is related to the rejection of the body and of the earth. To reject woman is to turn one's back on the denudation of the earth's resources, on the exploitation of the manual labor of the poor as they till the land, and on the oppression of women's bodies by marriage, family and social systems that unconsciously or consciously disrespect the horizons of her total human capacities. A new theology of matter is also needed to break through the injustice done to women's potentialities.

Woman and Person

I find that too many Church authorities are ignorant of the psychic structures of social events concerning women. For example, I find the Adivasi festival of the virgins is being Christianized under the banner of inculturation, without a proper anthropological and psychosocial study of the meaning this festival has for the young girls, nor of the concept of womanhood that is contained in the rituals. While the ceremony makes beautiful associations of womanhood to nature, to new life and to motherhood, there is also a subtle defining of the task and goal of woman. She is being taught that it is her body that is of value to society and that she will find her service and fulfilment in society's expectations on her body as procreative and life-giving. She is being confined to a maternal role with mother nature and is denied her personhood and individuality. By Christianizing the festival, without transforming the psychic depths of meaning in it, without transforming its socioeconomic and societal consequences, we are only giving religion's sanctions to those social forces within the Christian community that oppress women and limit her total evolution as a person. And I have met a sufficient number of women in India, both city and tribal, who have dreams of such an evolution beyond the cultural circumference of their local Christian community. I believe together with them that we need to learn to live as human persons in multicultural and intercultural communities. The sisterhood of women goes beyond the local Christian community and cuts across barriers of class, culture and history.

Emerging Laity — Emerging Woman

I believe that there will never be a new emerging laity without a new emerging woman. Only a strong movement of women, a radical change in their task in the Church communities, will carry the laity out of their present doldrums. Somehow the age of lay responsibility is over. Topics like "The Role of the Laity in the Church" which were aflame in the 1960's are like dead wood in the 1980's. Like the liturgical movement, the zip has faded from lay movements as lay movements. This does not mean that the laity are inactive. Lay men and women are active but their identity is no longer that of "laity" in the Church. They are professionals, or parishioners, or leaders, or councillors, or writers. They are non-clergy; they are the people of God but somehow the term laity does not have a potent meaning any more. It is a fallen symbol. So I am reluctant to speak of a new emerging laity or even of lay women in the Church. The bonding between women in the Church, whether lay or religious, will soon be stronger than the division between laity and clergy. Yet for lack of another term I shall continue to use the word laity.

The man—woman dynamic in the Church is a symbol of the hierarchy—laity syndrome in the Church. The relationship of domination between women and men in Christian communities has functional connections with the patterns of domination between laity and clergy. Both sets have conceptual links with the polarities of:

nature	— grace
body	— head
ruled	— rulers
powerless	— powerful
unredeemed	— redeemed.

Women and laity fall within the left-hand column of polarities, in line with the powerless, while men and clergy fall within the right-hand column. Therefore a women's revolution will certainly affect all parts of life in Christian communities and in ecclesial power structures. The domination of nature as earth, the domination of rich over poor, the domination of men over women, the domination of West over East, is carried over into the relationship between non-laity and laity in the Church. We need Church communities that can understand this relationship without becoming violent and oppressive; that can take up responsibilities rather than rake up grievances; reciprocity — co-operation — relational freedom — non-sexual relations between men and women — androgyny. Here again, the powerful task of women is to chalk out a new theory and a new pathway to freedom that springs from their own lived reality.

Interpersonal and Dialogical

On this road to freedom women and men will discover a new relationship to each other, one that is based on co-operation rather than on competition. They will be partners together sharing in each other's tasks and responsibilities. Within the basic Christian communities women will discover new active dimensions of motherhood, and men will take up more loving dimensions of fatherhood. And within Church structures women will take more masculine roles, while men will take up more feminine roles. Psychology and sociology have shown how great a part cultural conditioning has to play in the ascription of roles to women and men. We are also discovering the androgynous person, i.e., the woman who develops her inner anima, or feminine dimension. Women therefore discover that their personhood is not confined to their traditionally defined womanhood. And while they bring their own special qualities of gentleness, compassion, clarity, decisiveness, warmth and energy to the ministries they exercise, they are primarily persons, persons in relation to other persons, whether men or women. I prefer to describe this relation as interpersonal and dialogical rather than complementary because the latter term is too often used to specify tasks that men will not do, and therefore need women to "complement" them. Without liberation, "complementarity" only gives new respect to the old slavery which defined woman's fixed uniqueness by her biological functions and declared her the weaker sex, by nature subject to man. When women discover their real selves they will gift a new freedom to men as well.

On the road to this freedom we will discover the true motherhood of God, the fecundity of the Word and the gentleness of the Spirit. We will discover the womb of creation, the nourishment of grace and the energies for mission, the femininity of love and the sisterhood of basic Christian communities. Then the female aspect of the Trinity will be known as already revealed. We will discover in a new way the power of the woman through whom Christ was born and the role of the women who announced that "He was Risen." We will discover anew the female wisdom of God for "she is the breath of the power of God, and a pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty . . . she is a reflection of eternal light, a spotless mirror of the working of God, and an image of his goodness" (Wis 6, 22).

And we will find new meaning in the words of Jeremiah: "For the Lord has created a new thing on earth: The female overcomes the warrior" (Jer 31, 22).

Some Practical Conclusions

1. Make a survey of the position and oppression of women in your areas.
2. Get acquainted with the secular movements for women's liberation current in Asia.
3. Form committees of women to study and make recommendations about women's tasks and rights in the Church.
4. Appoint women as heads of Catholic institutions, Church committees and Church projects.
5. Develop programs of awareness-raising for women laborers and women technicians.
6. Besides starting nutrition classes, sewing classes and home science classes for women, begin programs teaching them how to be aware of current political events, to run their own local newspapers, to hold meetings to discuss problems in the village, town or city, to learn trades like carpentry, plumbing, technical design, etc.
7. Start feeling happy when you see women disagreeing with you and stating their own thoughts, ideas and suggestions.
8. Start training programs for women in theology, scripture, canon law, liturgy, etc. And these should not be watered down programs but include the most up-to-date knowledge and international trends.
9. Make a study of sexist language in liturgical texts, sacred songs and theological literature (brotherhood, manhood, mankind, etc.).
10. Formulate a new catechesis for young girls so that they develop a new understanding of Christian womanhood and Christian personhood.
11. Make women's problems the focus for the formation of basic Christian communities.
12. Let women expound the Word of God in both city and rural communities.
13. Publish articles on feminist theology in Catholic newspapers, journals and magazines.
14. Encourage theologians and scripture scholars to study the history of women in the Church and in the Bible from a new feminist perspective.
15. Start encouraging men and women teams in the Church, teams that respect the equal participation of women.
16. Study critically the myths, legends, stories of saints, etc., current in the Church, to evaluate the image of women they project.

IV. A LETTER TO THE BISHOPS OF PAKISTAN, BANGLADESH, SRI LANKA AND INDIA

At the end of our meeting in Ponmudi, Trivandrum, November 20-30, 1980, we wish to share with you, in a spirit of fraternal solidarity, the main insights and concerns that have emerged from our prayerful reflection and sharing. At the very outset we wish to express our sorrow at the absence among us of representatives of the Church in Burma and our solidarity with them. The theme of our meeting was: "The Christian Community as the Bearer of the Good News." For ten days we have tried to keep before our eyes the commission given by the Lord to our Churches to proclaim his Gospel in the context of the complex human reality of our peoples. We began our reflections by sharing among us the situation of our local Churches as we see it in our various countries: Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and India. From this sharing we were happy to derive the impression that our Churches are very much alive to their mission; at the same time we became aware of the complexity of the task entrusted to them at the present time and in the given situation. In this context we came to the realization of the fact that the Church herself needs first and foremost to be evangelized if she is to fulfil the task entrusted to her of conveying the Good News.

We tried to articulate in our Asian context the renewed vision which after Vatican II the Church has of herself as the People of God and the Sacrament of salvation. Jesus, the Savior of the world, is at the center of our faith and in him the Church finds her *raison d'être*. The Church is essentially communion; she is called to be the visible sign and instrument of communion between God and men and of men among themselves. This is the grace and the task for which, and by which, she exists; to communicate the Good News of Jesus Christ constitutes her deepest identity. A sincere effort to spell out the implications of this vision led us to the realization that our Churches need to be continuously converted to the Gospel and constantly to rethink the various ways and forms in which they are to fulfil their mission.

In order to evangelize, the Churches need to be authentic in their very existence. This puts before us the reality of the local and individual Churches of South Asia as the concrete realization of the mystery of the Church of Christ in our region. To be truly authentic, the Churches need to have the following characteristics: they must project the image of communion within themselves and among themselves; they must have the legitimate autonomy that will enable them to express their life of faith and worship within their specific human context; they must have

the opportunity to share their faith-experience with their fellowmen. Also essential to the authenticity of Churches is that their mission become the corporate responsibility of the People of God in all its various sections, laity, religious and clergy. In our South Asian context this corporate exercise of the mission will naturally take on various forms which, even though they remain incomplete expressions of the Church's evangelizing activity, nevertheless already belong to it as its integral parts. We refer especially to integral human development and witnessing to justice, as well as to interreligious dialogue.

With this vision of the Church and her evangelizing mission in our minds we highlighted the following specific points.

The existence in India of three individual Churches, the Latin, the Syro-Malabar and the Syro-Malankara, is a manifestation of the richness of the mystery of the Church. Fostering communion among them through mutual acceptance and acknowledgement is felt by us as an essential requirement for fulfilling our common evangelizing mission.

Communion between the Churches reminds us of the painful reality of division between the Catholic Church to which we belong and the other Christian Churches. This reality is a scandal to the world and constitutes a serious obstacle for the evangelization of our region also. We pray to God that it may be removed. We are convinced that rather than competing with each other, all Christian Churches should make a joint effort at evangelizing in the measure which the imperfect union already existing among them allows. While keeping before our eyes the goal of corporate union between the Churches, we are aware that situations arise where our pastoral concern for individual Christians still requires that we open our door to them. Even then, however, we would recommend that a spirit of mutual openness and dialogue prevail between the Churches involved, so that an ecclesial communion may be fostered which, we hope, will eventually bring about corporate union.

Among us Catholics, communion must prevail in each local individual Church at the various levels, such as diocese, parish and other forms of community at which the mystery of the Church is present. Given the nature of the Church as communion, various new forms of community, such as those usually referred to as "basic Christian communities," within which interpersonal relationships are fostered, the life of faith and the missionary commitment are shared, need to be encouraged and nurtured. Their ecclesial character requires, however, that they remain open to the larger community of the parish which in turn they will greatly contribute to rejuvenate and revitalize.

The same ecclesial character of these basic communities will also demand that forms of leadership emerge within them through a spontaneous process, to which recognition will have to be given. This in turn will lead to the development among them of various forms of ministries, lay and ordained. Also to be fostered are emerging groups, such as the charismatic renewal groups, neo-catechumenate groups and others, which can also be powerful means to renew the life of faith and the missionary commitment of parish communities.

The need to seek indigenous expressions of our faith, worship and religious life leads us to stress the special role of the Christian ashrams and forms of contemplative life which in recent times have been developing in our countries. This movement answers an important need as it meets the age-old search for contemplation, characteristic of our religious traditions, and reminds our nations in their efforts towards economic development of the primacy of spiritual values.

The essential missionary character of the Church leads us to reflect on the peculiar condition in which the individual Churches find themselves in India. We are painfully aware of a situation in which the Oriental Churches feel unable to exercise their evangelizing activity as Churches, in proportion to their missionary potential. We would hope that the authorities of the three individual Churches of India will face the problem in full sincerity and mutual openness, and devise adequate solutions, having for their paramount concern the common evangelizing task of the three Churches.

The corporate responsibility of the People of God in evangelization calls for stressing the need for a much wider and more intense involvement of the laity in the life and activity of the Church. Recognizing the fact that they share in their own right in the Church's overall mission, we would wish the clergy to enlist fully their co-operation, to foster among them a deeper awareness of their specific task, and to create conditions by which their charisms will flourish into various forms of ministries. In particular, we would recommend that the role of women in the Church's life and mission be fully acknowledged and promoted. We also feel the need for structures which will enable religious sisters to become more actively involved in the pastoral and mission apostolate of the Church. Such an involvement will require that they enjoy the necessary freedom in the exercise of their charisms, and that the clergy welcome their co-operation in a spirit of solidarity and partnership. In order that the apostolate exercised by religious

congregations be fully integrated in the overall pastoral and missionary action of the diocese, we would also recommend that all religious, men and women alike, cultivate more and more a deep sense of belonging to the particular Church of which they are part; on the other hand, their contribution to the particular Church needs to be fully recognized and valued. From this mutual belonging there will result greater collaboration and coordination in our evangelizing endeavors.

Among the forms of evangelization called for in our South Asian context our attention was first drawn to the need to promote integral human development and to witness to justice in our societies. We opened our ears to the cry of the voiceless millions in our countries, who are denied life-conditions worthy of men and women created in God's image. We stressed the need for our Churches to stand in protest wherever human rights are denied, irrespective of creed and caste, and to denounce structures of society which perpetuate an unjust social order. We rejoiced at the sincere efforts made by our Churches to bring about the uplift of the suffering classes, and wished that these efforts be more and more integrated in the overall development programs of our governments and other agencies. In this connection the need dawned on us for the Church to become more and more not only the Church for the poor but of the poor. A preferential option in favor of the poor is called for, to which we believe the Lord is calling our Churches. Such an option will require that we make their fate our genuine concern and stand by them to help them rise to truly human conditions. To accomplish this aim we rely a great deal on the solidarity shown to us by Sister-Churches at home and abroad. The aid they give us and for which we express our gratitude is directed towards the fulfilment of the mission of our Churches and to initiate projects for human development, so that eventually our Churches can make plans to grow into self-reliance in accord with the social, cultural and religious context of our countries.

In our discussion on justice and human rights the group expressed a special concern regarding the problem of caste, especially in India. While caste discrimination has been officially condemned both by our Governments and Church authorities, we are pained by the realization that a caste mentality is still prevailing at large in our Churches, in the ways of feeling, of thinking and of acting of their members. This counter-sign deeply affects the credibility of our message. We are aware that such deep-rooted prejudices cannot be overcome easily, but we would strongly appeal to all the members of our Churches to recognize the need of being converted to attitudes consonant with our Christian

profession in the universal equality and brotherhood of all men in Jesus Christ. We would also appreciate on the part of the hierarchies of our Churches a clear disavowal of caste mentality in the Church and clear guidelines for uprooting this evil from among us.

Interreligious dialogue is another integral part of evangelization which in the situation of our Churches needs to become a primary concern. We live in the midst of millions of people belonging to the great religious traditions born in our sub-continent, to whom the name of Jesus their Savior has not been proclaimed. Among them large numbers are also found who, while being attracted by the Person of Jesus and his message, are unable to recognize him in his Church, and for various reasons prevented from explicit belonging to the faith-community of the Church. In this context we believe that interreligious dialogue is a true expression of the Church's evangelizing action in which the mystery of Jesus Christ is operative, calling us all to conversion to him who is the fulness of truth and salvation. We would wish to see interreligious dialogue become a reality at the grassroots level of our Churches, through greater openness and reaching out of all their members towards their brothers and sisters of other religious traditions. Interreligious dialogue should not be limited to mutual sharing of religious experiences; we must also learn to address ourselves together and out of our respective religious convictions to the furtherance of human values and concerns. While the Church is the visible sign of the presence of Jesus Christ and his Spirit in the world, we believe that the same mystery is also present beyond the boundaries of the Church community and that our non-Christian brethren in ways unknown to us also relate to the mystery of the Church.

The enormity of the task put before us and the poor response which we have given to it should not lead us to discouragement. We are comforted by the thought that in her evangelizing mission the Church is not left to her own resources, but is enlivened and strengthened by the Spirit of Jesus the Evangelizer who in his goodness has chosen us as his instruments. The persuasion of his abiding presence fills us with joy and spurs us on to the fulfilment of our mission. We put our trust in the Lord who sent forth his disciples into the world with the words: Do not be afraid, little flock . . . I am with you always to the close of the age.

V. List of Participants

BANGLADESH

Most Rev. Michael D'Rosario
Rev. Philip D'Rosario
Rev. Francis A. Gomes

HONG KONG

Rev. Edward Malone

INDIA

Most Rev. Jacob Acharuparambil
Most Rev. Cyril Mar Baselios
Rev. Lucio Coutinho
Most Rev. Patrick D'Souza
Ms. Pearl Drego
Rev. Jean Dupuis
Most. Rev. Abraham Elanjimattathil
Mr. N.N. Scaria Enathumplackal
Most Rev. Mathias Fernandez
Rev. Peter Fernando
Rev. Francis Acharya
Most Rev. Benedict Mar Gregorios
Rev. John Berchmans
Rev. Jacob Kavumkal

Sister Leena
Most Rev. Abraham Mattam
Rev. Albert Nambiarambil
Rev. Leslie Ratus
Rev. Thomas Acharya
Rev. Mathew Vellanickal
Sister Sigrid Vogel
Rev. Engelbert Zeitler

PAKISTAN

Cardinal Joseph Cordeiro
Most Rev. Bonaventure P. Paul

PHILIPPINES

Sister Filo

SRI LANKA

Most Rev. L.R. Anthony
Rev. A. J.V. Chandrakanthan
Most Rev. Edmund Fernando
Sister Cynthia Mendis
Brother Clifford Perera
Mrs. Elizabeth Woeckel

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 - a. Evangelization, Prayer, and Human Development
 - b. Christian Prayer and Interreligious Dialogue: Enrichment of Christian Prayer
 - c. Education for Prayer in the Catholic Schools of Asia
 - d. Seminaries and Religious Houses as Centers of Formation for Prayer in the Asian Context
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 - f. Prayer, Community Worship, and Inculturation
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15. Gospel and Culture, by D.S. Amalorpavadass, 1979
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