

**BECOMING THE CHURCH OF THE POOR:  
WITH INDUSTRIAL WORKERS**

The First Asian Institute for Social Action  
Antipolo, Philippines, August 28 – September 5, 1987

*Introduction* by Archbishop Anthony Soter Fernandez

- Chapter 1* — Historical Background  
Part 1: The Emergence of an Asian Church  
Part 2: Social Action of the Asian Church  
Part 3: The AISA Program (1987-1990)
- Chapter 2* — Exposure-Immersion  
Part 1: The Human Face of the Poor  
Part 2: A Firsthand Experience
- Chapter 3* — Social Analysis  
Part 1: The Method of Social Analysis  
Prerequisite for a Sound Analysis  
Part 2: Asian Labor Situation  
Part 3: — The Philippine Labor Situation  
Panel Discussion: Viewpoints on the Analysis of Why the  
Workers are Poor and Possible Responses  
A. The View from the Management as presented by  
Mrs. Lourdes Jose, Personnel Manager  
B. The View from the Academe as presented by Prof. René  
Ofreneo of Ministry of the Philippine Institute for  
Industrial Relations  
C. The View from the Labor Sector as presented by a  
Trade Union Leader  
Part 4: — Open Forum  
Part 5: — Specific Area of Concern: Women Workers  
Part 6: — A Look at the Responses of Government and Non-Govern-  
ment Agencies in the Philippines  
— Department of Social Welfare and Development  
— Rizal's People Economic Council  
— St. Joseph Social Services
- Chapter 4* — Theological Reflection  
Part 1: A Theology for Our Times  
Part 2: The Church and the Workers

- Part 3: ASIA I Reflection
- A. Where did I sense God at work in the lives of the worker I met or worked with?
  - B. What did I hear God speak to me through the Church's social teachings?
  - C. What problem do I have in responding to God's challenge?
- Chapter 5 — Pastoral Planning
- Part 1: The Pastoral Constitution
  - Part 2: Organized Response
    - Plans of AISA I Participants
    - South Asia
    - East Asia
    - Philippines
- Chapter 6 — The Contemplative Dimension of Social Action

### AN HISTORIC STEP

by Archbishop Anthony Soter Fernandez

(These excerpts are from the opening address to ASIA I by Archbishop Anthony Soter Fernandez of Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, Executive Chairman of the Office for Human Development of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences).

This is an historic occasion for the Church in Asia. The first Asian Institute for Social Action (AISA) is the beginning of a series that I hope will have far-reaching effects on the Church of Asia and hopefully, the Church of other parts of the world.

My mind immediately goes back to another historic event which took place in the Philippines in 1970. On the occasion of Pope Paul VI's visit, bishops from all over Asia gathered to form the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC). They committed themselves to become the Church of the Poor, because the majority of the people of Asia is poor.

At their first Plenary Assembly at Taipei in 1974 they were more specific when they stated that the people of Asia are economically poor but culturally rich. Their cultural richness has been called by theologians "the evangelizing power of the poor."

Another historic event was when 42 bishops, mostly from Asia, along with other bishops from around the world, gathered for the

seventh Bishops' Institute for Social Action (BISA VII) in Thailand in 1986.

They expressed their experience with the poor in this way:

Asian poverty is not a purely economic concept, neither is its religiosity merely cultural. Poverty and religiosity are interwoven in the Asian ethos in such a way that at a central point they seem to coalesce in order to procreate the specific character of Asia. Within the fabric of this rich and varied religio-cultural heritage of Asia, but especially in the lives of the poor, the bishops sought to discern the creative impulses of God's liberating Spirit as the poor struggle to free themselves from deprivation and oppression and strive for genuine communion among people and nations.

Another significant event was the bishops' fourth Plenary Assembly in Tokyo, in October 1986. In their final reflection they specifically addressed the laity in the world of work. In a beautiful paragraph that is the inspiration for our present AISA, they stated:

A fundamental mission of the laity in the world of work is to recover the religious meaning of human work as an expression of human creativity and participation in the work of the Creator. The task of transforming the present dehumanizing situation of work begins when the worker rises above the routine and monotony of day-to-day labor and questions the whole of life experience: Why work? What is the meaning of work? What is the meaning of life?

These are basic religious questions, expressing deep human aspirations for a happy life, liberation and respect for person. Rooted in the Spirit of God these aspirations cannot be stifled by any work system. So when workers struggle to create a work system more conducive to an authentic spiritual life, their efforts are, in the light of his Gospel, really religious acts.

These beautiful and inspiring words of the Asian bishops need to be enfolded and incarnated in the lives of the workers. Out of this need, AISA was born.

No better words can sum up our hopes for AISA I as an historic beginning, a first step in journey of thousand miles, than the profound insight repeated in BISA VII:

The Lord of history is at work in the world of poverty. Seeing the Lord in the poor, making sense out of his action among them, discerning the direction of his action with them — this we felt deeply within us was the more specific challenge we have to face. It is a challenge we have to respond to in faith, with faith. For the challenge forces us to re-examine our notion of ourselves as Church, as the People of God. These challenges lead us to only one conclusion: we must strive to become truly the Church of the Poor (BISA V).

## CHAPTER 1 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

### **Part 1: The Emergence of an Asian Church**

**A New Era.** The epoch-making Second Vatican Council came to a close in 1965. No single event in the history of the Church in the 20th century could be compared with the impact of this event on the life of the Roman Catholic Church. If the document on the Church, *Light of Nations*, was historic, the closing document that gestated and grew out of the womb of the Council itself was epoch-making in terms of its far-reaching consequences. It was the document of the *Church in the Modern World*. It set off a chain reaction that was felt immediately in Asia.

**Asian Vision.** In November 1970 over a hundred bishops from all over Asia had assembled in Manila to meet Pope Paul VI. It was an historic occasion — the first time a Pope would set foot in the Philippines.

Plans were then afoot to organize the bishops' conferences as had been done in Latin America. It was not to be a slavish imitation of CELAM however. It was to be something much more humble — a federation of bishops' conferences, a forum to exchange experiences for mutual enrichment. It was to be a structure to enable bishops of Asia to know one another, for they were aware that they had better links with bishops in Europe and North America and Rome than those within their own continent.

For some of the more perceptive bishops, this was more than just getting to know one another. There was an emerging vision of an Asian Church that would be more than just a federation of national churches. There was an Asian vision of responding to a continent that had nearly

two-thirds of the world's population, most of it poor, most of it non-Christian.

These bishops were drawn together around Pope Paul VI in their earnest desire to become a genuine Asian Church. This Church, they said, must become the Church of the Poor because the vast majority of people in Asia are poor. "It is our resolve, first of all, to be more truly the Church of the Poor. If we are to place ourselves at the side of the multitudes in our continent we must in our way of life share something of their poverty. The Church cannot set up islands of affluence in a sea of want and misery."

## **Part 2: Social Action of the Asian Church**

**The Path to Human Development.** The first Priests' Institute for Social Action (PISA) was held in Hongkong in August 1965. Out of the PISA arose the need for an Asian office to co-ordinate the Asian Church's social action in the future. This office would be called the Office for Human Development. Its Magna Carta would be Pope Paul VI's astonishing encyclical *Development of Peoples* (1967). Human development, the Pope said, is a process of change "from less human conditions to more human conditions."

The office was set up under the leadership of Filipino Carmelite Bishop Julio Xavier Labayen who has been the leading light in the Asian Church's social action thrust over the years. In one of his ad limina visits to Rome, he began telling Paul VI about the office — its vision, its hopes, its inspiration from the encyclical *Development of Peoples*. The Pontiff listened intently for nearly half an hour. Then he embraced Bishop Labayen and whispered, "Pray for us. We need human development here in the Vatican."

When the Asian bishops, in a meeting at Manila in 1970, decided to form the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC), they searched for a mechanism to implement their aspirations to become the Church of the Poor. Like a child born before its parent, the Office for Human Development was adopted by the Asian bishops as their office, and Bishop Labayen was confirmed as the first chairman.

With the experience of PISA, the Office for Human Development, under the guidance of Bishop Labayen, began a process of educating the bishops on the meaning of human development. The first Bishops' Institute for Social Action (BISA) took place in March 1974.

**Interpreting the Gospel's Social Dimension.** BISAs I-III sought to interpret the social dimension of the Gospel in the context of Asia. They faced the staggering extent of Asia's material poverty, but emphasized that "our people are rich as far as cultural traditions, human values and religious insights are concerned" (BISAs I-III). As witnesses to Christ, the Church must make a wholehearted commitment to the poor and opt in their favor. This does not mean merely to work *for* the poor, but *with* the poor (BISA I – March 1974). The first step in the process of working with the poor is to live in contact with and close to the weak, to the people in need (BISA II – April 1975). However, many of our Church institutions designed to help the poor not only do not do so, but may in fact have unintended effects against their interests. They are caught, as it were, in the unjust social system and structure of our age (BISA III – November 1975).

BISAs IV-VI stressed the collegial responsibility of bishops for human development. While examining afresh the Asian situation in the light of the Gospel, the bishops sought to do this as brothers, in an effort to discover the practical meaning of collegiality of bishops (BISA IV – March 1978). They indicated that since many of the problems of human development are structural in nature, they need to co-ordinate collegially their insights and initiatives at diocesan, national and regional levels (BISA V – May 1979).

The methodology of BISAs IV-V emphasized, more than previous BISAs, exposure to the poor themselves. Thus the bishops came to see the causes of their distressing situation. BISA VI (February 1983) asked: "Are there new challenges and increasing obstacles to human development in Asia in the 1980s?" The new challenges that aggravate the old challenges to human development are the increasing militarization of the continent, the resurgence of traditional religions in Asia and Asia's increased dependence on global economies.

**BISA VII.** In January 1986, the Seventh Institute for Social Action (BISA VII) came to a close. Forty-one bishops, including some from other continents, but most of them representing the national conferences of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC), agreed to the final reflections on Asia's religio-cultural heritage and human development.

They had chosen the theme, "Asia's Religio-Cultural Heritage and Human Development." They concluded:

Culture, religion and society are interdependent, interacting and mutually transforming. In our Asian continent, which is the cradle for all the great world religions, culture and religion are integrated. Religion is the dynamic element of culture. Together they form the religio-cultural system which interacts with the socio-economic-political system of society, permeating every sphere of human life.

Asian poverty is not a purely economic aspect, neither is its religiosity merely cultural. Poverty and religiosity are interwoven in the Asian ethos, in such a way that at a certain point they seem to coalesce in order to procreate the specific character of Asia.

Within the fabric of this rich and varied religio-cultural heritage of Asia, but especially in the lives of the poor, the bishops sought to discern the creative impulses of God's liberating Spirit as the poor struggle to free themselves from deprivation and oppression and strive for genuine communion among people and nations. In this perspective, the role of the bishop as spiritual leader of the diocese becomes evident. He is not primarily in organizer or coordinator of social action programs but truly an animator, namely, the one who in the Spirit recognizes and affirms the reality of an authentic spiritual life both in groups of the poor and in the pastoral teams of workers. He continues to nourish and guide their spirituality and at times complements and corrects it. The bishop does this also in the entire ecclesial community among all its various sections — clergy, religious, laity.

**Animation and Development.** BISA VII was followed immediately by the Asian preparation for the Caritas Internationalis global seminar on Animation and Development. The main points of agreement were:

1) Human development is an ongoing process by which people move from less human to more human conditions (*Development of Peoples*, No. 20). It has to affect the whole person, all peoples and every aspect of society. Development has to touch the deepest aspirations of all people to become fully human and fully alive and thus reflect the image of God in their lives.

2) All people, particularly the poor, deprived and oppressed, through a process of animation become the subjects and agents of their own development and authors of their own history and future.

3) The dynamic elements that ensure the humanizing aspects of the development process are the positive values in the religio-cultural

heritage of the Asian people.

4) The task of bringing new life to Asia is the work of the Spirit inspiring the People of God, moving their hearts to bring to realization the Gospel values of God's Reign.

5) Asia is the cradle of all the great religions of the world. Its religiosity permeates its culture and influences the day-to-day life of the people. It is this same religiosity that distinguishes Asia from the other continents and at the same time constitutes the sign of Hope for a New Humanized Asia.

6) The Gospel values of the Reign already in the positive religio-cultural values of the poor in Asia can be the foundation for a humanizing development in Asia.

7) The bishops' primary task is that of animator. He and other animators of the people announce them, support them, accompany them but are ready to critique them and denounce their dehumanizing aspects on the people's lives in the process of working for the total human liberation of all.

8) For the animator to be able to recognize the spirituality within the positive religio-cultural values of the poor, the animator has to have a deep and total experience of God in one's own prayer and meditation and also experience this same God among the poor. The animator needs to be in touch with the poor in order both to share with and grow with them; and be ready also to be converted by them to the values of the Gospel. This is what BISA VII means by being evangelized by the poor (Final Reflections of BISA VII, No. 4 [iii]).

9) Animation and development are related with each other like body and soul. Animation is the soul of development. It does not happen in a vacuum, but takes place within the processes of human development. It provides the motivation, the meaning and deeper understanding of development as a humanizing process. Animation accompanies the process of human development in order to sustain the human spirit, particularly through the vicissitudes of human development.

From the Christian perspective, animation is the process whereby the human spirit is nurtured, strengthened and sustained by the Spirit of Jesus. It is another word for spirituality.

**The Pastoral Spiral.** The method used for BISA VII by the bishops



in their one-year preparation, called the Pastoral Cycle, was modified into the Pastoral Spiral at the Animation / Development meeting.

1) To the usual BISA exposure program, BISA VII added the new dimension of Immersion. Exposure brought us closer to the stark reality of poverty, but immersion sought to experience that reality from the perspective of the poor themselves. Exposure is like a doctor's visit for diagnosis; immersion is like the visit of a genuine friend entering into a dialogue of life. Exposure-Immersion which follows the basic principle of the Incarnation is the first stage of the Pastoral Cycle.

2) The second stage after Exposure-Immersion is called Social Analysis. Using social analysis, we try to evaluate the social, economic, political, cultural and religious systems in society. We try further to discern God's plan in the signs of the times, in the voices of our age, in the events of history as well as in our people's needs and aspirations. Nevertheless, social analysis, as a tool, is unable to provide an adequate grasp of the whole of reality. This is due to the perennial possibility of our brokenness intervening, thus resulting in deception either by ideology or self-interest.

There comes the need to integrate social analysis with the religio-cultural reality, discerning not only its negative and enslaving aspects but also its positive, prophetic aspects that can inspire genuine spirituality.

3) The third stage, called Theological Reflection, emerges from Asia's religio-cultural heritage. It is the contemplative dimension of human development. Contemplation is a heightened awareness that makes us discover God's presence and activity within social reality. Contemplation enables us to become aware of non-analyzable phenomena within the reality and to be transformed by the gradual unfolding of the mystery of that reality.

The mystery of God's preferential presence and activity among the poor is an unrecognized resource that only the contemplative dimension within us can discover. The poor provide us an opportunity to be evangelized. They supply us with a new liberating potential for spirituality. We could discover in their ethos, cultural values and religious practices that make up the elements of the spirituality. But to recognize these elements in the spirituality of the poor, the bishop or other enablers should live in a contemplative spirituality themselves. Once we resonate with the poor in their spirituality and discern its values and elements, they can be appreciated and announced as genuine Gospel values: simplicity of life, genuine openness and generous sharing, com-

munity consciousness and familial loyalty.

This stage is one of ongoing theological reflection. It is an affirmation that the Gospel of the Kingdom is being shaped in the reality of the lives of the poor and that the Spirit of Jesus the Liberator is at work among them.

4) The fourth stage, called Pastoral Planning, seeks to translate the previous three stages into actual, realizable plans. These plans must be submitted to evaluation during their implementation, by a renewal of the exposure-immersion experience and the continuous process of the pastoral spiral.

5) These four stages revolve around Prayer as a covenantal relationship in faith. It is only through a deep spirituality grounded in interior prayer that the bishops can experience God in the poor, reflect on that presence in the here and now and seek to bring about what the Lord of history is challenging the Church to do for human beings who are oppressed.

The pastoral spiral as a genuine method for a local church to become the Church of the Poor had not yet been tested at the level of the local church. It was out of this need to test the Pastoral Spiral that the idea of the Asian Institute for Social Action (AISA) was born.

### **Part 3: The AISA Program (1987-1990)**

**Major Insights.** Major insights that emerged from BISA VII and the Animation and Development Seminar were:

1) An operational, inductive methodology for animation and development of the Christian community at the local level called the Pastoral Spiral.

2) The immersion dimension added to the usual exposure program. This helped the participants to meet the poor, not just as doctors diagnosing their problems, but as empathetic friends conscious of the people's own religio-cultural heritage as their resource to respond creatively to their situation of exploitation and oppression. The participants' role was to get into solidarity with the people's own efforts to change their situation.

3) The mission of the local Church at the level of a diocese was self-animation, leading to building of local communities of justice and love.

4) The special mission of the bishops in the process of animation of the whole community, emphasized by BISA VII, was to become the leader in discovering the spirituality of the people: the spiritual leader raises the leadership of the people by emphasizing the spirituality already present among them.

#### **Areas in our Pastoral Spiral Methodology that Need More Reflection;**

1) The link between exposure-immersion and social analysis; between analysis and theological reflection.

2) The method of planning according to new priorities.

3) Contemplative prayer as the heart of the faith relationship with God among the people. This should become evident in the presentation of the liturgy.

#### **The AISA series was born out of the need:**

1) To strengthen the major insights and to deepen the areas of the pastoral methodology that need more reflection.

2) To prepare for BISA VIII in January 1990-91 on the theme "Discovering the Spirituality of the Poor."

3) To create methods, tools and skills for understanding the Spirituality of the Poor.

4) To commit the Church in Asia more deeply to becoming the Church of the Poor with special reference to the workers of different sectors as a preparation for the 100th anniversary of *Rerum Novarum*.

**The Birth of AISA I.** In BISA VII the bishops attempted to discover a liberative spirituality for social action among the poor and by the poor.

A new spirituality that will suffuse evangelization and embrace the plan of God for the whole creation is imperative. Mere individual salvation is not enough; salvation must be for the whole person, all people and even the cosmos. This spirituality must not be inward looking but must place the Church at the service of the whole human race (BISA VI).

Poverty and religiosity are interwoven in the Asian ethos, in such a way that at a certain point they seem to coalesce in order to procreate the specific character of Asia. Within the fabric of the rich and varied

religio-cultural heritage of Asia, and especially in the lives of the poor, the hope is to discern the creative impulses of God's liberating Spirit as the poor struggle to free themselves from deprivation and oppression, and strive for genuine communion among people and nations.

In this perspective, the role of the bishop as spiritual leader of the diocese becomes evident. He is not primarily an organizer or coordinator of social action programs but truly an animator, namely, the one who, in the Spirit, recognizes and affirms the reality of an authentic spiritual life both in groups of the poor and in the pastoral teams of workers.

This liberative spirituality will animate the whole diocesan program of social action with a relevant spirituality, as it emerges from the poor and is discovered and complemented by the bishops and other facilitators. Spiritual animation will, in addition, transform all social action into one of evangelization, pastoral renewal and the milieu of God-experience. The God-experience will have both a contemplative dimension and a call for a contemplative atmosphere. This hope for transformation of the diocese and the spiritual orientation of the diocesan pastoral policy of social action is a concern of AISA.

**Themes and Aims.** AISA I had as a theme, "Becoming the Church of the Poor with Special Reference to Industrial Workers." It is the first of a series on different themes, to be held in different Asian countries for the next two years.

An offshoot of BISA VII, the AISA series aimed to provide each national bishops' conference of the FABC with an opportunity and method which will be a genuine contribution to the centenary celebration of Pope Leo XIII's epoch-making encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (1891).

"By 1990-91, the 100th year of Catholic Social Teaching will be celebrated. How have we implemented the Church Social Teachings?", the bishops were to ask themselves.

The more specific aims of each AISA in the series are: to plan the concrete steps necessary at diocesan, national and Asian level; to make the Church of Asia the Church of the Poor, with special reference to a particular sector of poor; to relate the religio-cultural aspects of the workers' lives with the socio-economic-political aspects, especially through prayer and liturgy.

The whole program of AISA I was to be experienced as a continuous ongoing process of action and reflection.

**Auspicious Launching.** AISA I passed through the most auspicious circumstances before it was finally held. Twice derailed when the first two hosts backed out, both barely three months before the scheduled date, preparations had to start from scratch three times.

In the middle of the frantic search for a new diocesan host, the organizers from OHD came across an interview of Msgr. Alfredo Sta. Ana of the Antipolo diocese which appeared in *NASSA News*. The interviews concerned his opinion of the labor situation and the labor programs of his diocese. After conferring with the bishops and staff of LUSSA (Luzon Secretariat of Social Action), OHD decided to woo the Antipolo diocese into playing host for AISA I.

The Antipolo diocese seemed an ideal site for AISA I, considering that the conference was specifically focused on industrial workers. The diocese has an existing labor program and nine of its parishes have a significant number of industrial workers. Antipolo also was the scene of a number of major industrial strikes.

AISA I was finally held at Antipolo, Rizal, Philippines, from August 28 to September 5, in coordination with Bishop Protacio Gungon, Msgr. Sta. Ana, the priests, religious and church workers of the Antipolo diocese, and NASSA and LUSSA.

AISA I had 55 participants, mostly industrial workers, several priests, a few religious and two bishops. Some were from Japan, Hong Kong, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Germany and the Asia Desk of Rome-based Caritas Internationalis.

Twelve resource persons from the Church hierarchy, Philippine labor offices (government and private), the academe and industrial workers were also invited.

AISA I was destined to be memorable. Not only did it mark the beginning of a serious and radical attempt to bring the discussion and reflection of seven BISAs down to the local level of a diocese, it also formally opened while a bloody coup d'état, instigated by renegade soldiers against the embattled government of President Corazon Aquino, raged in Manila.

From their hilltop retreat house, the participants witnessed war-planes bombing the Armed Forces Headquarters in Camp Aguinaldo. By sundown, the coup was crushed. The AISA participants, meanwhile, were getting ready to troop out to their destinations in the diocese for their three-day exposure-immersion.

## CHAPTER 2 EXPOSURE-IMMERSION

### ***Part 1: The Human Face of the Poor***

**An Intimate Encounter with the Poor.** It is understood that people who choose to enter into an exposure-immersion process are not tourists who expect to be pleased with what they see. People who undergo exposure-immersion have chosen to experience for themselves the lives of the poor, deprived and oppressed.

Their interest is to see and feel the actual conditions of the poor. They want to enter into their very lives; feel their pains and joys and understand their struggles and dreams. They seek to perceive not only the variables and contexts of their life-situation but also to grasp the meanings, the nuances, the cultural subtleties and even the coarseness of the poor who struggle against all inhumanity. Exposure-immersion participants enter into the poor people's world with open minds and hearts, ready to learn new insights and to unlearn long-held beliefs.

As the exposure-immersion participants meet people in the field, they see faces distorted by hunger and violence. They hear cries of anger and despair. They hear the uneasy silence of a people both expectant and suspicious. They smell the stench of feces and garbage strewn in the alleys. They smell the effects of inhumanity and poverty. They touch the harshness and callousness of oppression.

Thus begins their intimate encounter with the face of the poor. Tales of woe and triumph are related. Feelings of deep sorrow and joy are shared. The participants take note of the non-verbal communication, the tones, the curses and the sighs. They observe the people's behavior and their interaction. Gradually, they begin to unravel the meanings behind the words and the actions.

The participants are encountering the human face of the poor.

The poor are no longer seen as a mass of people but as human

beings — as a mother, a father, a sickly grandmother, a worker, a fisherman. The participants not only get to know the poor as a suffering people but as united and organized in unions, peasants' organizations, women's movements, youth leagues.

A breakthrough in their world of meanings, values and convictions is taking place.

In the process, the participants also share their own life, their own struggles and dreams. As they ask questions from the people, they also have to answer people's questions in return. There may be differences springing from dissimilar class positions and orientations but they do not hinder, instead enhance, the process of communication and sharing. The candid exchange of life-experiences mirror reality more fully as it is drawn for different perspectives and worldviews. An enriching dialogue of life takes its course and insight into perspective and religio-cultural legacies deepens.

**Through the Eyes of the Poor.** While exposure-immersion bears enriching possibilities, it could not but be at the same time a disturbing experience. The process challenges many traditionally-kept beliefs and views about impoverishment and the impoverished. Prejudices against the poor are slowly dispelled. Misconceptions about the cause of poverty are shattered as the poor themselves share their own analysis and strategies for change. The participants discover not only the grim realities of the dispossessed and disinherited but also their courage, wisdom and sense of justice. As they begin to see the conditions of the poor from the eyes of the poor, a new discernment process slowly unfolds. This leads them to reflect on and evaluate their own attitudes, lifestyles and values. This provides them a glimpse into the liberative consciousness of the poor.

This new awareness springs not only from the experiential grasp of poverty and oppression but especially from taking as one's own the viewpoint from which the poor see their situation, their problems and struggles. The viewpoint of the victims of injustice greatly differs from that of the oppressor. The exposure-immersion participants' privileged position in society has made them imbibe the perspective of those who benefit from unjust social structures. Wittingly or unwittingly, they have identified themselves with the viewpoint of the ruling elite. Conscientization takes place from experiencing the life of the poor and understanding the causes of their problems from their liberating perspective.

Hence, conversion takes place. It is a conversion from an elitist perspective to the perspective of the people at the base. It is a radical shift of viewpoint from that of the powerful who work to preserve the status quo to that of the underprivileged who struggle for genuine change in people and in society.

This conversion enables the participants to comprehend the unjust structuring of the world system. They discover that people are impoverished not just because they are systematically “deprived of access to material goods and resources which they need to create a truly human life for themselves (but) deprived, because they live under oppression, that is, under social, economic and political structures which have injustice built into them” (*Evangelization in Modern Day Asia*, FABC, 1974).

The change of viewpoint significantly alters the participants’ way of feeling, doing, valuing and being. It moves them to work for justice and peace. It merges them into the cadence, heart and soul of the masses who are moving towards authentic change and human development.

**Spirituality of the Poor.** The dialogue of life further leads the exposure-immersion participants into the worldview of the poor. Their worldview embraces the humanizing elements of the religio-cultural heritage of the people, their thinking patterns and their particular ethos. Given the awesome combination of the people’s cultural well-springs and their dynamic struggle, the participants discover that the people themselves, especially the poor, are the subjects and agents of their own development. They are the makers of their own destiny. They are the artisans of a new humanity.

Insights into the spirituality of the poor is an intrinsic component of the conversion from an elitist perspective to one that is of the poor.

Their simplicity of life, genuine openness and generous sharing, community consciousness and familial loyalty, perseverance and constancy in struggle — all these resonate with Gospel values. This reality affirms that the Gospel of the Kingdom is being shaped and lived in the reality of their lives and the Spirit of Jesus, the Liberator, is alive and at work among them.

God works through their positive and humanizing religious and cultural values and ways. These comprise the core elements of spirituality. To those participants who are grounded in prayer and contemplation



awaits the deep discovery of the mystery of God's preferential presence and movement among the poor. Through contemplative prayer, participants recognize the cry of the poor. The immersion process provides participants the opportunity to be evangelized by the poor who are, after all, the bearers of the Good News. Imbued with the spirituality of the poor, one believes in a living God. He is able to see God in the human face of the poor. He sees God in the present struggle of the poor. He intuits that God continues to reveal himself even in unexpected places, faces and events.

**A Humanizing Solidarity.** Having qualitatively immersed themselves in the experience and perspective of the people, the participants are moved to make a response. Vital to this response is an honest self-criticism. This includes a humble acceptance of one's own weaknesses and mistakes. This may lead one to admit that one's own concepts and ideas about human development were rather myopic and biased against the poor. Programs, once initiated, were implemented without due participation of the people. One may realize that these initiatives were superficial or even counter-productive. A realization that attitudes were paternalistic and condescending may be reached. This self-criticism, while it points to past mistakes, helps avert responses which may run counter to the genuine aspirations of the people. Instead, it will make one walk humbly with the people and accompany them in their search for a better life.

There is a danger that at certain points in the process the participants may romanticize the poor. Seeing reality from a new perspective does not mean that the poor are infallible in what they say and do. The participants must understand the fact that the poor are human beings like them, capable of mistakes, wrong judgments and capitulation. They have been victimized for many years; they may at times display submissive or fatalistic traits. They have long been living in uncertainty and fear; hence theirs is a culture of silence. Their constant exposure to cultures of exploitation may have forced them to house within themselves the values and ways of their oppressors. God's instruments in bringing about the Kingdom, even if they are special, are not perfect.

It is important then that participants overcome romanticism with human realism. This is a necessary ingredient for a continuing dialogue of life and conversation which can lead to a nourishing and humanizing solidarity.

Albert Nolan has captured the meaning of solidarity in these

words:

Real solidarity begins when we discover that we all have faults and weaknesses. They may be different faults and weaknesses according to our different social backgrounds and our different social conditions and we may have different roles to play, but we all have chosen to be on the same side against oppression, well aware of our differences. We can work together and struggle together against our common enemy, the unjust systems and structures which stem from sin, without ever treating one another as inferior, but having a mutual respect for one another while recognizing the limits of our social conditioning. This experience of solidarity with God's own cause of justice can become spiritually an experience of solidarity with God in Jesus Christ. It is a way of coming to terms with ourselves in relationship with other people, without illusions, our feelings of superiority, with our guilt, our romanticism, which then opens us up to God, to others and to God's cause of freedom.

### **Part II: A First Hand Experience**

**A Shock Treatment to Traditional Attitudes.** The participants of AISA I saw for themselves the human face of the poor. They visited a parish where a single priest serves a total number of 50,000 parishioners. They saw the parish priest on a Sunday, after holding two successive Masses, simultaneously baptize about 50 babies.

This brief glimpse of the overworked parish priest totally involved in sacramental, liturgical and parish school activities exemplified the obstacles priests face in expressing their concern with the plight of the workers. It is therefore not uncommon for a priest to be unaware of strikes and lockouts occurring within his parish. The workers, on the other hand, feel that the Church and the parish priest do not care about their plight and their families. The effect is that workers distance themselves from the Church as they see it as totally detached from their daily struggles.

During this particular exposure trip, a participating bishop was horrified to know that only 10-15% of parishioners come to Mass on Sundays. "You must find a way to get everyone to go to Mass even if it means saying more Masses on Sunday," the bishop said persistently. "But I have no other priest. We have a shortage of priests in the diocese. Anyway, the churches cannot hold all the faithful if they decided to

come to Sunday Mass," explained a priest of the diocese. "But Sunday Mass, the sacraments, are essential to live the Christian life," insisted the bishop.

The bishop turned to a worker participant of the exposure group and asked his opinion. The worker replied with a smile: "Quite frankly, bishop, I don't go to Mass at all. I have to work long hours every day, even on Sunday, as I get about 60 pesos (\$2.50) per day. Out of 1,800 pesos I earn a month if I work every day without a day off, 800 pesos go to my house rent. I have only 1,000 pesos for food, clothing, travel, education of my wife and children."

"But what about the obligation to go to church, to receive the sacraments after your working hours?", persisted the bishop. The worker explained: "All my free time is spent organizing other workers in their factories. I am the president of the trade union in my factory. I have to educate the workers in my union. Then I spend my own money and my spare time organizing other workers' unions and conducting workers' education courses. I hardly see my children or have time for my family." He then asked the bishop, "Am I not a good Christian when I make all these sacrifices for other workers?"

The bishop blinked in disbelief. His perspective on what was right and necessary according to traditional Catholic Church teaching was challenged by the daily practice of a Christian worker. An exposure – immersion program served as a salutary shock treatment of an ingrained perspective and orthodox beliefs.

The same bishop was able to visit a workers' picket of a steel factory that has been in lock-out for the past three years. Eleven children of the picketing workers had since then died of illness and malnutrition. Despite the appalling conditions, the morale of the remaining picketers remained high. They even began culturing snails and operated a small school for their children.

The workers were able to persuade a participating bishop to sleep with them in their makeshift sheds in the picket line. Far different from the comfort of a bishop's house, he slept on a wooden board with two workers, under one mosquito net, in a dilapidated shed of cardboard, wood and rusty metal sheets. In the morning, the bishop celebrated Mass, struggling with the Tagalog he learned in the picket line, a sign of solidarity with the workers' struggle.

The irony of the exposure program was that the spontaneous hospitality of the poor towards visitors disrupts the best-laid plans for a genuine exposure-immersion among the people. Thus, some participants actually lived in comfort while others, like the participating bishops, experienced the hardships of the life of the poor. Some intended host-parishioners even backed out at the last minute, apologizing to the parish priest that their homes were not comfortable enough for a foreign bishop to stay in.

**Exposure-Immersion Group Reports.** The following is a synthesis of the group reports of AISA participants.

**1) Areas visited:**

Marikina	St. Francis
Taytay	Santolan
Rosario	Binangonan
Cainta	Concepcion
Antipolo	Xavier
Pasig	

**2) Host Factories/Companies:**

shoes	pottery
shoelaces	utensils
plastic bags	baby food
handicrafts	sanitary wares
steel	automobile
garments	sewing machines
marble	

Companies are either foreign-controlled, Filipino-owned or joint ventures by both Filipinos and foreigners. They are either multinational corporations (MNCs), medium or small-scale industries. MNCs offer relatively better conditions, benefits and higher pay and incentives than local counterparts. There is a need, however, to assess the role of MNCs in countries like the Philippines.

**3) Workers**

- a. Wages – Most do not receive the minimum wage set by law.
- b. Benefits – Benefits vary from one company to another. Only two groups recorded satisfactory worker benefits.
- c. Tenure – Some are contractuels, many are still probationers

despite years of service, while a few are regulars.

d. Working conditions – Generally unsatisfactory – poor ventilation and lighting, crowded work areas and lack of safety measures for the workers.

e. Living conditions – Some workers live within the company compound and pay rent. Most live in nearby areas, usually in slums or squatter communities.

f. Working Hours – Workers feel extremely overworked, with very little time for their family and for recreation, especially in cases where there is only one shift and they are forced to render overtime work.

g. Union – Few are unionized. Family-owned companies tend to ban union activities, while in workplaces where they are allowed, they are usually “yellow” or pro-management. Organized workers resort to strikes to seek better terms through the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA). Strikers experience harassment, arrest, union-busting, preventive suspension or even salvaging (summary execution).

h. Political Consciousness – Unlike those who man the picket lines, other factory workers have a low level of political consciousness. Their needs are still basically economic.

i. Some of the issues raised by the workers in their testimonies are the following:

- a) illegal dismissal of union officers (union-busting)
- b) CBA deadlock
- c) low wages
- d) violation of labor code
- e) threat of transfer to another worksite
- f) unfair and unjust treatment of workers

j. Most workers are willing to continue their strike until a satisfactory settlement is achieved. The longest strike has been going on for three years and the most recent has been launched barely a month ago. Workers suffer extreme difficulty at the picket lines, not for lack of food and sleep but because of harassment, intimidation and possible arrest, and even “salvaging.”

Unity, brotherhood and hope are shown by unions and support organizations which help each other in their common struggle.

4) **Owners/Proprietors.** Most managers boast of having good relationships with their employees and of taking positive steps in providing benefits for workers. These, however, are not borne out in the interviews with the workers. Many employers, in fact, are perceived by their own workers as capitalists who are only after profit even at the workers' expense. Workers also claim that many use different schemes to shortchange them.

5) **Role of the Church.** Most workers have no idea how the Church can be of help. Others see the Church's assistance only in terms of prayers. The help extended by priests and religious and Church-based organizations have not been seen as part of the Church's mission.

Some parishes have labor pastoral programs but these were hardly felt by workers within the parish. Workers are not involved with the Church either because of lack of time and energy or they find it lacking in relevance.

One group suggested the following possible remedies:

a. The parish priest should try to keep in touch with the workers in his parish. He can also appoint a lay person to take charge of workers' concerns.

b. Sunday liturgy can be arranged especially for workers.

c. Look into the possibility of dialogue between management and labor union under the auspices of the parish.

d. Plan workers' education/formation through seminars, workshops and discussion of the spirituality of workers.

6) **The Government.** Certain labor laws are seen to favor management. Others like BP 130, which allows the entry and exit of goods and materials in a strike-bound firm, are considered as anti-labor. Laws that protect workers' rights are also often ignored and violated by management. Workers do not consider the Department of Labor and Employment as safeguarding their interests.

7) **Host Families.** Most are quite poor but are rather enthusiastic about having guests, especially foreigners. Some hosts were chosen and assisted financially by the organizers. A common experience was the hospitality of the families and their generosity in sharing what little they have. Faith is expressed in traditional ways: devotions, novenas, Mass.

8) **Limitations of the Exposure.** There was too little time allotted to the exposure period. For some groups it was not possible to talk directly with workers since management personnel somehow prevented this. Facts and figures were at times supplied by the management themselves rather than by rank-and-file workers.

The choice of the families was possibly not well-understood by those assigned the task. Instead of staying with workers' families, some groups stayed with the management.

9) **Observations/Lessons**

a) There is great need to educate workers on their human rights and exploited situation.

b) The stronger the union, the better the chances are of negotiating with management.

c) Christian factory owners/proprietors are not necessarily just in dealing with workers.

d) The Church has much to contribute in terms of responding to the needs of workers. Through this, she can identify herself with their struggles and be truly a Church of the Poor.

e) The Church's mediation in management-labor conflicts is deemed helpful, if not necessary.

### CHAPTER 3 SOCIAL ANALYSIS

#### **Part 1: The Method of Social Analysis**

**Science and Religion.** Today the perennial conflict between science and religion is evident within the Church's pastoral. There are those who believe that the Church is a human institution, without denying it is divine, and therefore its pastoral ministry must be submitted to human scientific analysis in order to make it more effective. This approach is contested by those who see the Church as a divine institution whose human operations cannot be judged and evaluated by human scientific methodologies and analysis and certainly not according to merely human criteria of effectiveness. They suspect and shy away from social science methodologies and criteria of evaluating the Church's pastoral activities that are emphatically "spiritual" and therefore unanalyzable. That the Church keep her balance between these two positions which

often disperse her pastoral effort is crucial and indispensable.

In the past, the secular science of philosophy in its rational search for ultimate knowledge, challenged Christian faith and forced a synthesis between the two in theology, i.e., the science of faith. So today, the methodologies and discoveries of the social sciences too are challenging the faith towards a new synthesis.

**Allergy to Social Analysis.** To some, "social analysis" conjures up ominous images of ruthless criticism and violent confrontation with authority, traditional values and peaceful coexistence. They believe that this will lead inevitably to Marxist atheism, violence and revolution.

This brings to mind an event during BISA VII wherein a bishop secretary of one group, asked to interpret their exposure-immersion using the method of social analysis, reported: "We spent our whole time doing a social analysis on why we should not do social analysis." The general assembly of bishops exploded with laughter. While it was taken on the lighter side, it also underscores the need for this strong allergy to social analysis to be understood.

**Looking at Society to Change It.** The stage of Social Analysis that followed the experiencing and reflection on the actual situation of the workers attempted to put those experiences into an organized form. What are the main problems of workers? How are they interrelated with each other and to other problems? What are the root causes of these problems?

From whatever angle we weigh the reality of a country, we realize the existence of vast problems with extremely difficult solutions.

To classify those problems, to find out their roots, to plan viable solutions and to train agents for change, etc., is a task of various disciplines. However, each of these disciplines has to commence from an accurate analysis of the problem which has to be faced. Briefly, a comprehensive social analysis of the society is the base of any planning.

Analysis is "a breaking up of a whole into parts, to find out their nature."

Social analysis is "a method of looking at society in order to understand it better, and in that case, to change it."



## **Prerequisite for a Sound Social Analysis:**

### *Necessity of a "vision" and a "faith"*

In analyzing the reality and planning any action it is not possible to remain "neutral," nor is it required. The scientific method used in conducting the analysis must remain objective, but when action comes in, the agents become persons "of parts." As Christians, our "vision" and "faith" will be that of Christ and his people of God.

On the other hand, in analyzing the society, we cannot avoid the reality even if it is in opposition to our vision. It will be this confrontation of visions and praxis that will create changes.

Starting from experience, it is almost impossible to separate a social analysis from one's ideology.

### *The analysis must bring action*

Once the reality is understood, we must move on into action. Pure conscientiousness, theoretical analysis, filing of surveys, etc., are not only useless but can generate disappointment and frustration. Along with analysis solutions must be shown, and at least a "seed" of hope must be implanted.

### *Grassroots participation*

The exclusion of people with their peculiar mentality bring, inevitably, dogmatism, deviations, or at best, leads to illusory solutions. At this stage the worst enemy is impatience and presumption, to already know everything.

### *Acceptance of possible risks*

Since social analysis cannot be "neutral" and it moves necessarily into action, risks are inevitable. The component of risk comes in because often social systems are based in and nourished with injustice. We know by experience that in establishing justice and peace, suffering, struggles and defeat are always present.

Discovering the mechanism of exploitation and subjugation of persons through analysis makes analysis a tool for action on social reality. But there are two major approaches to analysis of social reality: the functionalist and the Marxist.

The basic Marxist insight has been its insistence on social structures and the historical process of their evolution in society. This goes beyond the functionalist emphasis on social system. Hence in wholistic analysis there is need to understand the relationship between social systems and social structures. Just as between the respiratory system and the respiratory organs there is a setup of priorities or organizations of organs in the respiratory system, so also between the political institutions of society, like government, law courts, police departments, people's organizations and the political system which is the whole decision-making power of society, there are political structures.

The social structure of a society is a rather permanent and stable arrangement of social positions, e.g., status or position occupied by a group or person within the social structure, social role. Expected ways of using power come from stature or position and social functions, e.g., the contribution made to the organization by social groups possessing the same social positions, playing the same social roles and performing the same social functions. These social groups, often called "classes," are interlinked in such a way that they are an overall social structure, which differs from its components.

Structural analysis is mainly concerned with the relationships that exist between more or less articulate groups of people having the same social positions, roles and functions. The term "classes" classifies groups according to income and other criteria and introduces the idea of conflict in the social structure. This conflict is conceived as dialectical; so classes evolve within the historical context of society.

While the differences between the two major approaches to analysis of social reality – functionalist and Marxist – should not be exaggerated, the differences should not be ignored. Since the trade union movement and the field of workers are strongly influenced by Marxist analysis, from the perspective of the working class, all the systems of society – the health system, the legal system, the education system, etc. – are all heavily biased in favor of the elite and well-off, and against the working class who make up the majority of the population. The accumulation of wealth by the elite who own the means of production in the economic system at the expense of the labor power of the working class is the exploitation the workers' experience.

Religion, with its eternal values of humanization, instead of being a liberating force, is often co-opted by the political system and reduced to an ideology that becomes a tool for dominating the working class. The

real problem is that there is an equal ignorance on the side of Christians as well as Marxists about each other today.

## **Part 2: Asian Labor Situation**

(To fully comprehend the immersion-exposure experience of the AISA I participants, resource persons were invited to provide inputs and spark discussions on crucial issues. The Asian context of the labor situation was delivered by Norma Bias, former Asian coordinator of the Young Christian Workers [YCW].)

The USA and its Western partners put a premium on Southeast Asia as a profitable partner in the international division of labor because of:

- 1) large, cheap and skilled labor
- 2) abundant natural resources
- 3) strategic geographical location

The World Bank-IMF have pressured client states, like the members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), to restructure their economies along the lines of export oriented-import dependent strategy. The economies of these countries are liberalized to accommodate surplus products and capital of industrialized nations at the same time that they are consigned as mere suppliers of cheap raw materials.

The establishment of Export Processing Zones (EPZ) in various countries is part of the strategy to build profit and tax havens for multinational companies in the Third World.

These, however, are to the great detriment of the workers. Hence, the labor situations in many Asian countries are amongst the worst in the world. Consider the following facts:

- 1) Most Asian workers receive extremely low wages.
- 2) Workers' compensation is deliberately depressed as an incentive for foreign business.
- 3) Most Asian governments follow the dictates of the World Bank-IMF for a "wage-freeze" policy.
- 4) Some countries do not even have a standard minimum wage.

Most Asian governments also restrict the workers' right to strike and organize. Trade union repression is rampant. A growing trend is for the state to resort to arrests, physical abuse or even murder to silence militant labor leaders. Increasing militarization and gross violations of human rights confront Asia's labor movement. It is not surprising therefore that the labor movement in most Asian countries remains stagnant and powerless.

Asian workers also have to contend with long working hours, job insecurity, occupational hazards, substandard health protection and lack of fringe benefits.

While yellow unionism dominates the Asian scene, there is, however, an emerging trend in various countries to form genuine trade unions even amidst a repressive environment.

### **Part 3: The Philippine Labor Situation**

**Understanding the Workers' Poverty.** "Why are the workers poor and what responses should be made?" This was the question presented to three invited speakers from three different sectors of society — management, trade union and academe.

The position a person occupies in the social structure of society conditions the person's perspective of the problem under discussion, as well as the perception of the actors involved in the issue. No one group in society can arrogate to itself the responsibility of being the change agent. Genuine social transformation of the structure of society towards greater justice can only emerge out of a concerted effort by different groups of actors operating in tandem.

In a Catholic-majority country like the Philippines, it may seem that the role of the priests and bishops to influence society is easier. But the discovery that class interest is often more powerful than religion is a sobering thought. Nevertheless, the interaction between the three Catholic panelists representing three crucial sectors of society needed for social change was challenging.

#### **Panel Discussion: Viewpoints on the Analysis of Why the Workers are Poor and Possible Responses**

##### **A. *The View from the Management as presented by Mrs. Lourdes Jose, Personnel Manager***

In general, poverty can be traced to the 20 years of Marcos dictatorship which plundered the economy.

Foreign debt has soared and flight of capital has continued. The government provides for a conducive business environment to encourage the entry of foreign investments. The government is not capable of providing the minimum wage for its employees. Women's rights are not protected and child labor is on the rise. On the other hand, certain social values or attitudinal factors should also be considered like *amor propio* (love of self), *hiya* (shame), *pakikisama* (co-operation) and *utang na loob* (debt of gratitude). Also skills of workers have yet to be upgraded.

The following are the suggested possible responses:

- cultivate an active employee-employer relationship;
- immersion of management in workers' day-to-day activities;
- take advantage of government programs to upgrade skills, and seminars that deal with changing negative attitudes.

***B: The View from the Academe as presented by Prof. René Ofreneo of University of the Philippines Institute for Industrial Relations***

The immediate causes of poverty are joblessness, landlessness and low wages or income. There are a number of deeper causes to these. They are as follows:

- 1) Inappropriate philosophy or policy of development, either dictated or inculcated by external forces like the International Monetary Fund – World Bank (IMF-WB), Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and similar institutions.
- 2) False industrialization, an offshoot of a false policy of development, which is oriented to meet profit requirement of MNCs and their local partners – not the requirement of the people for jobs and essential products.
- 3) False agricultural development programs.
- 4) Unjust international economic order where developed market economies plunder the Third World, through unequal trading agreements, debt trap, technology control; the Third World is now the “new” exporter of capital to the First World.

5) Undemocratic national political-economic order where the native elite are in privileged positions in terms of political and economic power, and the land and natural resources are concentrated in their hands.

6) Political-economic order reinforced by elitist social institutions like the educational system, media establishments and even the Church.

Ultimately, the domination of society by a privileged few, i.e., by the foreign and domestic elite, is the root cause of poverty.

There is a need for conscientization or consciousness-raising among workers' ranks, and a counter-consciousness, different from that of the status quo, should be developed.

### ***C. The View from the Labor Sector as presented by a Trade Union Leader***

Poverty is brought about by the government's pegging of the minimum wage to P57.00 per day as dictated by the World Bank-IMF, connivance of government and capitalists against the workers, and the so-called labor representatives in government who are not real representatives of labor.

### ***Part 4: Open Forum***

**On Skills and Relationships.** A worker representative asked if management is also concerned about their own skills since they always give premium to the skills of workers. There are employers, he said, who are more profit-oriented than people-oriented.

The management representative replied that while they seek skills from labor, foremost in their concern is improving the skills of management. They are, in fact, giving skills training to supervisors on how to handle employees, e.g., how to use Filipino traits and values in a positive way. She added that when workers go wrong, it is generally held as a failure of management. She said that they also dismiss managerial employees, even presidents and vice-presidents.

A university labor educator said that the management sector in this country is not homogeneous. There are enlightened ones and there are those who direly need education. These are those who look at unions as something evil, an attack on their management prerogative. They do

not understand that unions came about as a result of democratic process in an industrial society, he said.

The resistance of some employers, he added, is sometimes violent and much more expensive than if they simply come to terms with labor's view. This is not rare, he said, for he has seen management really behave irrationally in many companies.

The positive use of cultural values to foster harmonious management-labor relations is good, the professor opined, but this could never be enough when it comes to issues of social justice or giving workers their due. Good labor-management communication through the active use of Filipino values should not supplant giving workers what they need, what is due them, he declared.

The professor also added that workers actually spend 10 to 12 hours a day in their place of work, including the breaktime, preparation and travelling time. Thus, he said, it is fair enough that labor, who are the creators of wealth, should have a say about one-half of their life; and since they are the most numerous in society, they should also have a say about how society should run. He quoted Abraham Lincoln who said that "there is no capital when there is no labor."

**On the Labor Movement.** The same university professor said that the Philippine labor movement now is badly divided. He said that there is a need for labor to unite to really effect change. The power of a united labor was shown by the successful general strike of August 27, 1987, which was participated in by practically all labor groups of different shades and ideological leanings. He admonished that organizational and ideological differences must be forgotten for a while to discuss the problems and concrete solutions seen by labor. He cautioned that no one group should try to dominate a coalition, for the KMU, TUCP or TUPA\* alone cannot bring real change.

**On Profit Sharing.** On the concept of profit sharing, businessmen would most likely demand a share corresponding to what they have spent, return on investment or return on funds employed, the management representative said.

The representative from the academe, on the other hand, said that genuine profit sharing is dependent on genuine information about

---

\* These are coalitions of different trade unions in the Philippines.

spendings and earnings and also allowances of executives. Workers, he said, should have access to this data to reach a meaningful discussion on it.

**On Labor Cases.** The management representatives said that resolution of disputes would be more effective if it is arranged by both parties. They also feel that there should be a time limit for settlement of cases.

Rabid anti-labor management, said Prof. Ofreneo, can resort to all kinds of legal trickeries to prolong the litigation of the case. He cited one instance wherein the Supreme Court took 20 years to hand down their decision on a labor dispute. The problem, he said, is that the labor movement in the country is dominated by lawyers, hence it has the tendency to be legalistic. He added that, contrary to what some management people think, dealing with unions is actually more economical. Scandinavian investors, in fact, encourage their workers to form their own unions, he said.

**On Salary Gaps.** Mrs. Jose, the management representative, said that people should be paid reasonably so as to meet their needs. The gap, she believes, should not be too wide but concedes no knowledge on huge disparity can be corrected.

Prof. Ofreneo explained that it is just right to recognize the salary gap caused by training and responsibility. The problem, however, is that the discrepancy here is atrocious. The normal gap, he said, is 5 times bigger than the rank and file. Here, he said, it is as much as 100 times bigger.

Prof. Ofreneo added that immersion of management people with the workers is being practiced by the Japanese. Japanese employers sometimes cannot be distinguished from their employees because they wear the same uniform, thus encouraging rapport and closeness.

#### **Part 5: Specific Area of Concern: Women Workers**

**Women Workers in Asia.** More than 400 Thai Srikao knitting factory women workers have been on strike since June this year. Srikao women workers have been subjected to extremely inhuman conditions: unbearable high temperature and loud noise in the work place, working at night continuously for 8 hours without a break, working on holidays without overtime payment, being forced to renew the work contract every six months so as to be kept as temporary workers, dismissal with-



out compensation, overstress workload, etc. The Srikanth women workers' plight, and their struggle to demand for more decent lives, is one of the latest illustrations of how women workers in Asia who have been oppressed finally come to their awareness to empower themselves.

These industrialization policies of developing countries in the 70s have resulted in the massive participation of women in the industrial labor force. Today women form a substantial part of the working population, particularly in the manufacturing and service sectors. In Asia, women now represent 45% of the working population. Yet women's position as wage earners seems to be one of continual exploitation and subordination. Women enter into the labor force on unequal footing with their male counterparts.

As wage earners they experience differential pay and low wages, poor working conditions, job insecurity, poor job prospects and low skilled work. As women workers, they have specific issues, like maternity leave, menstruation leave, sexual harassment to contend with. And finally as women in a society yet unequal, they continue to bear the greater burden of family responsibilities of child care and housework. All these characterize the lives and situation of the millions of women workers in the Asian region today.

**Concern for Women Workers.** Given this exploitative and oppressive condition faced by women workers, one would expect women workers' issues to be a major concern of the labor movement. But, instead, a different picture emerges. Women workers' issues are rarely taken up by the labor movements. The labor movements in Asia have been represented generally by the more formal organized structures which have been largely dominated by male colleagues. Although women workers participate in labor unions, their problems and issues have been considered as secondary to the overall struggle of workers.

The failure of formal labor unions to take up actively women workers' concerns has led to the emergence of informal labor groups and also women's groups to incorporate women workers' issues in their activities. In recent years there have been positive developments that women workers have begun to get organized. The much publicized decade of women has brought deeper understanding of the situation and lives of women workers in Asia. Their lives are also seen to be burdened by both economic and cultural constraints which make them vulnerable to manipulation and exploitation in society.

**Women Workers Organizing.** The emerging trend of a women workers' movement continues to take shape in the Asia region. Women worker leaders/activists have begun to voice their specific concerns and the forming of women workers' labor groups are positive trends, so that their struggles have taken on a new perspective — women workers are now organizing themselves to respond to their own demands and needs. In countries like the Philippines and South Korea, the women workers' struggles have taken a momentous leap forward in line with the people's struggles. In other countries of Asia, these events serve as examples for women who are attempting to organize themselves.

Women workers' organizing is a relatively new social phenomenon. As local women workers come together to realize their needs as women and as workers, the need to consolidate all efforts to achieve this emancipation becomes a new challenging task.

The Committee for Asian Women (CAW) is an ecumenical program set up by both the Christian Conference of Asia-Urban Rural Mission and the FABC Office for Human Development. Since its inception in 1981 CAW has been playing a coordinating and facilitating role regarding the issues of women workers in the Asian Region. Being the only regionally-based organization for women workers, CAW continually strives to act for the needs and the changing situation of women workers. With the recognition that women workers have the potential to develop themselves, the regional role is to facilitate local activities, while simultaneously drawing on bringing regional linkages to the issues of women workers. This is the priority of CAW's work.

Activities of CAW includes:

- Regional linkages and networking: exchange programs, consultations and seminars
- Local programs and initiative projects: CAW supports local efforts on training, organizing work and educational resources
- Solidarity Appeal Support Network for Asian women workers
- Documentation and publication

Some CAW publications:

- Asian Women Workers Newsletter (4 issues a year)
- Plight of Asian Women Workers in Electronics, 1982
- Tales of Filipino Women Workers, 1984

- Our Rightful Share — Labor Laws on Women Workers, 1984
- Industrial Women Workers in Asia, ISIS/CAW, published 1985
- In the Shadow of Affluence — Stories of Japanese Women Workers, 1986.

**Part 6: A Look at the Responses of Government and Non-government Agencies in the Philippines.**

**1) Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD)**

***The Nature of Social Welfare***

- Social welfare is a necessity as long as the lives and well-being of the poor, deprived and oppressed depend on it.

- Social welfare needs of today are but a reflection of society's weaknesses, lags and failures. The government has for decades failed to address the problems of the poor. The government's inaction has reinforced the powerlessness of the poor, isolating them from the mainstream of development.

- There is a prevalent notion that welfare only serves to drain government resources and institutionalize dependency as a result of misinformation.

- High on the agenda of the DSWD is to reorient social welfare towards one that is responsive, relevant and accessible.

***DSWD Mission***

- Care, protect and rehabilitate socially disabled constituents and the physically and mentally handicapped for effective social functioning;

- Arrest the further deterioration of the socially disabling or dehumanizing conditions of the disadvantaged segment at the community level;

- Coordinate the service facilities required from such department/agencies, governmental and non-governmental, to provide an integrated welfare package to constituents on the basis of their needs;

- Advocate policies and measures addressing social welfare concerns.

## 2) Rizal People's Economic Council (PEC)

PEC is a community-based multisectoral group (with representatives from trade and industry, service sector, civic, religious, academe, professionals) organized to utilize the various resources in the locality towards the solution of the problems especially affecting the poor.

– PEC combines “people power” and government resources in solving problems and issues related to trade and industry.

– PEC is aimed at the optimal utilization of local resources and skills for the attainment of economic growth and national welfare.

– PEC is doing its share to complement the industrial sector by providing livelihood projects such as:

- 1) bamboo craft, basket and hairclip-making in Antipolo
- 2) doll-making in Cainta
- 3) food preservation and food processing in Tanay
- 4) banana chip and cashew nut production, manufacturing concrete hollow blocks and sanitary bowls; extracting gravel and sand from blue rocks, *kangkong* farming and goat raising.

Beneficiaries of the projects are:

- urban poor workers
- underemployed workers
- out-of-school youths
- employees affected by strikes, as well as their families

## 3) St. Joseph Social Services

St. Joseph Social Services is a non-profit, non-governmental service agency formally established in 1982. Aptly named after St. Joseph the Worker, it is a product of the ecumenical unity of the Church with the workers. The organization is committed to serve and protect the interest of the Filipino worker regardless of his religion, social status, political belief or affiliation. It strongly adheres to the principle that workers should be assisted in making themselves self-reliant, that will in turn encourage these workers to extend the same assistance to their fellow workers who are in need.

St. Joseph's solicits the assistance and support of friendly individuals, institutions and organizations who are committed to the welfare of the poor and needy workers.

## **Main Goal and Objectives**

The main goal of St. Joseph's is to enhance the integrated human development of workers for social transformation as a recognition of their important role in the development and progress of our society. This goal is anchored on the encyclical of Pope John Paul II which puts the Church solidly behind the workers.

The general objective of St. Joseph's is to provide opportunities for workers and their families to develop their capabilities to help them improve their social conditions.

The specific objectives are:

- to promote the socio-economic, political and cultural upliftment of workers through non-formal education;
- to develop participatory involvement of workers and their families by providing a meaningful social support for the attainment of self-reliant communities;
- to render meaningful social assistance to victims of calamities, industrial conflicts, human rights' violations and social deprivation;
- to document and analyze the studies being undertaken on labor relations, working/living conditions and common issues among workers;
- to disseminate documented survey and research findings in the form of publications and audio-visual presentations for workers' human development.

## **Scope and Coverage of Services**

St. Joseph's is working on comprehensive and long-term programs that aim to assist the workers and their families realize their self-initiated projects. It will concentrate on the following programs:

**Training and Development.** Training seminars are divided into:

### **a. Social Development Courses**

Health Education

Herbal Medicine

Nutrition

Acupuncture First Aid

Acupressure

Cooperatives  
Micro-entrepreneurship  
Photodocumentation  
Basic Labor Research  
Union Journalism  
Cartooning/Illustration

b. *Trade Union Courses*

Introduction to Labor-Management Relations  
Comprehensive Labor-Management Relations  
Trainer's Training  
Public Speaking  
Leadership Training  
Labor Laws  
Grievance Handling  
Comprehensive CBA  
Union Building / Administration  
Finance Administration

**Research and Information.** It provides educational materials, e.g., directories, books, brochures, manuals and comics to workers, unions, alliances, federations and communities on labor relations, working/living conditions and profiles. It also hopes to come up with documentaries in the form of audio-visuals, photo essay/exhibit, video, slides, that will be made available to the public. It will also initiate databanking and library services exclusively on labor matters.

**Social Development.** It provides health/medical services, legal assistance, child care, micro livelihood and emergency assistance. In the future, such services will be expanded in the communities where workers are concentrated.

## CHAPTER 4 THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

### **Part 1: A Theology for Our Times**

**Reading the Signs of the Times.** One characteristic of Vatican II was the fresh interest of the Church in scrutinizing the “signs of the times.” Theology clearly has a role in helping her to do this along with Scripture, Tradition and Magisterium. What is happening now around the Church and within her is to be treated by the theologian as a “locus theologicus” — something to which he or she must listen. For theology

to be able to this, the help of the social sciences is needed. There are clear precedents for this recourse to secular sources.

Theology has long acknowledged the need to explore and articulate the deposit of faith with the help of *philosophical* concepts and tools. With faith determination, moral theology is examining and selectively using the insights of contemporary *psychology*. The theological enterprise now, however, must not balk at acknowledging and critically assimilating insights of *social sciences*, beginning by using them to answer such questions as: Who does theology? From where? With what impact on the groups constitutive of society?

To put it in another way, Vatican II was not downgrading a theology which is intent upon hearing the word of God as Israel or past generations of Christians heard it, but was seeking to upgrade the experience of the present generation, as also an input for reflection. It wanted to end the monopoly that one style of doing theology has enjoyed. In parts of the Third World this monopoly is being broken by the proven effectiveness of a theology which listens closely to the experience of today's poor.

**A New Way of Doing Theology.** Theology can be understood in a broad and a narrow sense. In a broad sense the priest giving a homily, the parent explaining to a daughter why "everyone is doing it" is not a reason for her doing it, are doing theology, viz., they are searching with others for God's word to us now. In a narrow sense, theology is the activity of trained specialists. The small core of professional theologians will not by themselves change the dominant style of doing theology. Their responsibilities in the formation programs of seminarians, economic dependence on ecclesiastical patrons and an intellectual approach to life limit them. Priests in the field faced with Mass attendances of 30% and lower or parents struggling to understand the media-inculcated restlessness of their children will not by themselves produce a new way of doing theology. Some broad movement by the entire local Church of which they are each a part – professional theologian, curate, parent – is ideally needed to bring them into genuine dialogue and searching together.

The theologian who wants to help forge a new way of doing theology is someone who will have to familiarize herself or himself thoroughly with the life-experience of the country's poor (through first-hand experience and the choice of reading) and with working-class tradition and experience. In the areas of both theology and the social

sciences, what is needed are people with considerable analytic and reflective skills but who, even more than books, take the raw material for their reflection from the experience of the poor and are struggling with them to transform society. Together, these professionals-in-a-service-capacity would forge a rich theoretical framework that would prove capable of linking theology and the social sciences in a healthy way and be fed by the experience of the poor.

## **Part 2: The Church and the Workers**

**On the Side of the Workers.** The workers present at AISA listened incredulously when Msgr. Ralph Salazar said: "In 1891, Pope Leo XIII firmly placed the Church on the side of the workers in his encyclical *Rerum Novarum*. He stated that workers have the natural right to form associations with suitable organizational structure, to act freely on their own initiative." The worker-participants could only wonder how come these truths were never told to them.

Pope Paul VI has stated that the social teaching of the Church "accompanies men in their search," but does not thereby limit itself to recalling general principles. Pope John Paul II said that since the social teaching of the Church has its source in the gospel, received, assimilated and lived in the Church, therefore it has always existed. He calls it "an echo of the human conscience." Earlier, Pope John Paul II had stated the social teachings were not a prefabricated model, but a dynamic inheritance — doctrinal and practical — which developed in contact with changing situations of the world. In his oft-quoted words Pope Paul VI has directed: "It is up to the Christian community to analyze with objectivity the situation which is proper to their own country, to shed on it the light of God's unalterable words and to draw principles of reflection, norms of judgment and directives for action from the social teachings of the Church" (*Octogesima Adveniens*, n. 4.).

Insight after insight, statement after statement of the Popes over the last nearly one hundred years hammered out these social teachings:

- "Trade union or associations of workers, using legal means only, were for their protection" (Leo XIII);
- "Wages should be determined not with a view to private advantage, but on the basis of providing employment for as many as possible" (Pius XI).

In the great social encyclical of Pope John Paul II in 1981 there was



plenty to affirm the workers' efforts:

- "Workers have the right of association."
- "Labor unions are the mouthpiece for the struggle for social justice, for the rights of the working people, but it is not a struggle against others."
- "Other workers' rights are social benefits such as health care, rest and leisure, pension and insurance and healthy working environment."
- "A strike is recognized by Catholic social teaching as legitimate in the proper conditions and with proper limits. Workers should be assured the right to strike, without being subjected to personal or penal sanctions."
- "Work is a means by which persons grow in union with God and participate in the Paschal mystery."
- "Work is inextricably bound with the mystery of God's creative activity; each person shares in the wonder of creation through work."

Pope John XXIII in 1961 also dissociated the Church from the forces of society that were most opposed to structural change. Pope Paul VI, in addition, stated unambiguously in *Development of Peoples* (1967): "A revolutionary uprising – unless there is a question of flagrant and long-standing tyranny which would violate the fundamental rights of the human person and inflict grave injury on the common good of the state – produces new injustices and provokes people to further destruction and outrage." In the light of the twenty years of dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos, these words carry great significance.

The Synod of Bishops in 1971 likewise declared that promotion of justice is a constitutive dimension of preaching the Gospel. Also, a Church that presumes to speak to the world about justice must herself practice it in her life and structures.

### **Part 3: AISA I Reflections**

**Fasting for Solidarity.** AISA I began the stage of theological reflection with a day of fast in solidarity with the workers. The participants agreed to have only one meal and to give to the workers they visited during the exposure-immersion the money saved by the organizers in addition to their own contributions. To experience in some way the hunger of the workers was an act of solidarity with them.

The stage of theological reflection is not so much an intellectual exercise like analysis but a reflective time, a discernment process in the person's heart on how God is at work within the reality of workers. How have we experienced God among the workers? In what areas of the workers' lives have we sensed God's presence challenging us to respond?

## **Reflection of AISA Participants**

### **A. Where did I sense God at work in the lives of the worker I met or worked with?**

#### **1. *Philippine participants***

– In the poverty of the workers which is the very life of God himself. He is definitely present among his suffering people. As in history, God hears the cries of the nation.

– In the workers' commitment, conviction, perseverance, hope and unity that they will attain justice with God's help and guidance.

– In one worker who shares his P400.00 weekly income with families of three other striking workers. The fact that they can make do with that amount attests to God's presence among them.

– In the fact that we Church workers are still here despite the judgment passed on us by others.

– At the picket lines, where workers struggle for survival and the affirmation of their human dignity, and in organizers who persist in their task, awaiting no monetary compensation in return.

#### **2. *East Asian participants***

– In the workers' ability to care for others despite their miserable condition. We see the divine life among people who show care for one another.

– In the young people in Hongkong who are starting to search for the meaning of life in spite of material satisfaction. We sense God's presence as they move to the spiritual level.

– In a young Korean woman's perseverance to set up a union by herself, despite receiving no support.

– In the workers' struggle at the picket line. The center of our faith is the mystery of Christ's death and resurrection. We encounter God in

our suffering. As parts of the body of Christ, when we see workers suffering, we feel a part of the body suffering.

- In the workers' simplicity not only in material means but also in their lifestyle. Simple people get in touch with God more easily than complicated people.

- In oppressed peoples. Rich nations should share the wealth with poor nations.

### **3. South Asian participants**

- In seeing the poor toiling, suffering, hungry, harassed or abused. We saw in the workers the thirsty and hungry Jesus on the cross, the suffering he went through, the abuse and harassment he faced in front of Pontius Pilate. Some get from the workers' plight the inspiration to go on.

## **B. What did I hear God speak to me through the Church's social teachings?**

### **1. Philippine participants**

- To continue relating not only with workers but with management because each person is important.

- Workers should be given the right to take part in making decisions and in charting their own history. The dignity of man, his ability to make and shape his own destiny; solidarity with the poor.

- The Church's ability to deal with human rights to help people, especially the poor, alleviate their economic, political and socio-cultural conditions. The Christian's responsibility to serve, to speak for justice on behalf of the poor. The Church's openness to the plight of the poor as a dominant feature of her social teachings.

- To defend the right to organize and form unions, uphold the rights of women and reject the two extremes of capitalism and communism.

### **2. East Asian participants**

- That we have to act according to the word of God. The Church not only has the responsibility to speak out but to act as well. The social teachings give us a clearer dimension of what the Bible says about how we should act in our daily life and maintain the vision we need in our work.

- That the priest should not lose the opportunity to speak against injustice. Part of his mission also is to help other priests and Sisters better understand labor issues.

- One of our members feels that there is lack of grassroots participation in the process of writing these social teachings. A challenge to the Church is to involve the grassroots in the further development of these teachings.

### **3. South Asian participants**

- Church people should work for just salaries and be in solidarity with the poor. Priests should be taught the Church's social teachings.

- There should be attitudinal and structural change within the Church. There should be a change in the system. Most Church people consider sex and social ethics as the big problems, while they never talk about the social teachings of the Church. Perhaps, they fear that their lives will be endangered by such advocacy.

- God may be at work in other sources, therefore we must be ready to join hands with them. Another economic system could be started on a very small scale to break the prevailing capitalist system.

## **C. What problems do I have in responding to God's challenge?**

### **1. Philippine participants**

- Financial needs which cannot be met because of the continued foreign control of our economy, politics and culture.

- Personal and family needs.

- Doubts and uncertainties: How deep or strong is my faith, my commitment? Can we really tackle these tasks? How far can I go? What will other people say if I act in behalf of the poor?

- A sense of missing out on luxury and the good life.

- Shallow knowledge of the conditions of the poor and how things operate, e.g., the system of government and all things affecting the poor.

- Fear for one's security. Working for the poor runs the risk of being branded a communist and being put under surveillance by the military and armed vigilante groups.

- Harassments by goons and military during strikes and demon-

strations.

- Conflict between the progressives and conservatives within the congregation.

- The lack of time and other resources to respond to the plight of workers and their needs.

- Existing structures and systems in the factory and counter-propaganda hindering education and organizing of workers.

## **2. East Asian participants**

- We are not workers ourselves, so we might not know their real situation. Still we consider ourselves as part of the movements and have roles to play.

- The fear that we have to give up so much, even our life. The feeling that we do not have enough support of the Church, that we are misunderstood by some people, that we lack our family's understanding and their participation in the movement.

- The uncertainty of maintaining the level of commitment and involvement with the labor movement if ever contact has been broken.

- The difficulty of making people respond to issues in other countries.

## **3. South Asian participants**

- We are a tiny minority in the countries where we come from, maybe only 1% of the total population, hence it is understandably difficult to have national impact. However, the first step is to make available the Church's social teachings to the priests and people. Perhaps we can reach the poor workers but how about the management and, above all, the government?

- Talking with the dictator about social teachings is like removing the profit motive of the capitalist system. Perhaps it would be better to start with small co-operatives in small places.

# CHAPTER 5 PASTORAL PLANNING

## **Part 1: The Pastoral Constitution**

**Social Ministry.** The distinctive contribution of the Pastoral Con-

stitution of the Church in the Modern World is that it provides a theological rationale for the entire social ministry of the Church. It provides a crucial and necessary link to the rich tradition of Catholic social teaching from Pope Leo XIII (1891) to Pope John Paul II (1987).

Catholic social teaching develops a body of "principles for reflection," "criteria of judgment" and "directives for action" (*Octogesima Adveniens* 1981, n. 4) based on the Gospel. It serves as a framework of conscience for the Church as institution and for each Christian about the shape of the social system within which human persons can live with dignity, rights and responsibilities. But by neglecting to link the social teachings with the essential nature and mission of the Church, the social ministry became a peripheral ministry, sometimes called pre-evangelization. It became the work of a few "specialists."

The Pastoral Constitution of the Church in the Modern World establishes an explicit theological relationship between the ethical-moral vision of Catholic social teaching and the very nature of the Church's mission. "The Church by reason of her role and competence, is not identified with any political community nor bound by ties to any political system. It is at once the sign and the safeguard of the transcendental dimension of the human person." (*Church in the Modern World*, No. 76). So the tasks of protecting human dignity and promoting human rights are essential to the Church's nature and mission.

The Synod of Bishops (1971) on Justice in the World cast the social ministry of justice in ecclesiological terms: "Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the gospel, or in other words, of the Church's mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation." What was pre-evangelization is now a constitutive dimension of evangelization. Not just preaching justice, but doing justice is now a visible, explicit criterion for judging the fidelity of the Church to her pastoral ministry.

**Dialogue with the World.** The deeper issue that the Pastoral constitution of the Church in the Modern World addresses is: Once the Church engages in a consistent pursuit of human rights, how does she prevent herself from becoming politicized?

In paragraphs 40-42, the Pastoral Constitution examines, among other things, the mode of the Church's presence in the world. The mode of presence must preserve her identity and at the same time make an

effective contribution to a just and peaceful society. This style of presence is through dialogue with the world. The Church has something to learn and something to teach. She acknowledges her need for and desires to draw on the various disciplines and areas of expertise which contribute to the building of contemporary society. But the pastoral desire to dialogue moves beyond listening to and interpreting the deeper sense of the human and religious significance of contemporary life.

“The Council, relying on the inspiration of Christ ... proposes to speak to all men in order to unfold the mystery that is man and cooperate in tackling the main problems facing the world today.” At the heart of the dense technical complexity of the contemporary problems of human life lie the perennial problems of meaning, purpose and moral discretion of human life itself.

**Christology and Pastoral Action.** The Church is built on Christ, Ecclesiology is built on Christology. Christology is the root of pastoral practice.

Christology has always existed in the plural. The New Testament presents various Christologies; for example, Mark and John describe a quite different Jesus. Modern scholars have fathered a prolific variety of Christologies from different biblical, historical and dogmatic starting points. Most have a common feature that qualifies them as Christologies “from below.”

A **Christology** is called “**from above**” if it starts from the assumption of Christ’s divinity and then proves that he was also a man. This is the approach of the Gospel of John and of classical Christology. Objections against this way of proceeding are, among others, that it presupposes the idea of “God” and then applies it to Jesus, whereas we know God properly only in Jesus; that it produces an image of Jesus which is that of a God disguised as a man, incapable of really living a human existence; that it speaks a language of mythology, strange and repulsive to modern ears ...

**Christology “from below”** starts from the human, historical Jesus and ascends towards the confession of his divinity in the light of the Resurrection, according to the faith of the Church. As a method, it tries to follow the track of the Apostles, who adhered to the pre-Easter Jesus as a fellow Jew, catching, however, titillating glimpses of his deepest personality. This Christology presupposes, first of all, that Jesus is a man,

“consubstantial with us,” as the Council of Chalcedon defined it. Being a non-mutilated man, Jesus is a human, living according to the laws of human psychology and historicity. As a consequence, Jesus is portrayed in his limitations, like any incarnated spirit, regarding time, space, physical endurance ... His mind is described starting from zero and learning like ours in dependence upon his body and environment – physical and social. Like all historical beings, he was a product of tradition, with both a good and a bad legacy. He had to grow in all his human dimensions: personal maturity, knowledge, wisdom, virtue. This Christology expounds not only the ignorance of Jesus, who had to search for the way to fulfill his mission, but also his faith and religiosity as a Jew, steeped in Old Testament piety. (Fausto Gomes, S.J., *Christology and Pastoral Action from Below*)

**Pastoral Practice “from above” and “from below.”** In pastoral practice “from above,” priority goes to institutions, things and doctrines. The Church establishes a hierarchy, a network of schools, hospitals, publications ... If it works well, the Church is pronounced to be in good health – never mind if they do not love one another. This heavy burden of institutions paralyzes the Church; like the classical David in Saul’s armor (1 Sam 17:38-40). Furthermore, possessions enslave; the Church loses her freedom. Any government can blackmail the hierarchy which, in order to keep those things in operation, will be tempted to compromise with regimes of blatant injustice.

Pastoral practice “from below” begins with the Christian people. In fact, most of the great evangelical movements have come “from below.” Vatican II speaks nicely of lay people; so does the new Canon Law. But when it comes to decision making they are just “sheep” as before. Both natural talents and gifts of the Holy Spirit in the People of God are forced to run to seed.

People become, and give their best, in man-size communities. Mammoth institutions like dioceses and many parishes are incapable of providing a climate for brotherhood. If all Christians are to build the Church, the present system must be changed and the sooner the better. The Apostles gathered their congregations in private houses. Out of the community leaders were chosen by the Church to preside at the Eucharist, to teach the doctrine, to manage the funds, to organize whatever was needed. Such congregations were dynamic; they evangelized their neighborhood by personal contacts, created new units.

In Asia, this system makes even more sense: we are dispersed



minorities like them. In spreading the Gospel, the main convincing argument would be the life witness; ministers would be easy to find; no great sums of money would be needed for buildings and costly institution. (Fausto Gomes, *ibid.*)

## **Part 2: Organized Response**

**Planning the Church of the Poor.** Pastoral planning is for Church people to respond to the challenge of God in an organized way, so that the Church at the level of the diocese, the country, the continent can become the "Church of the Poor" with special reference to industrial workers.

During the exposure-immersion of the Korean bishops in preparation for BISA VII, Bishop Dupont of Andong was placed in a slum. During the reflection afterwards he commented: "The Church's pastoral to these slum dwellers is now considered an extraordinary ministry. The ordinary ministry is celebrating Mass, administering the sacraments, preaching in the Church. When ministering to the slum dwellers becomes the ordinary ministry, then we have become the Church of the Poor."

## **Plans of AISA participants**

**South Asia.** The eight participants of South Asia – Pakistan, Sri Lanka, India and Bangladesh, composed of two bishops, three priests, and three laity, planned to put up a South Asian level institute along the lines of AISA I, which would be called South Asian Institute for Social Action (SAISA).

At the diocesan level they hope to do the following:

- 1) set up labor desks;
- 2) involve Caritas, the Young Christian Workers and the National Justice and Peace;
- 3) organize a training course in social teachings of the Church for workers and seminarians;
- 4) support the Young Christian Workers; and,
- 5) exchange newsletters and magazines.

**East Asia** The five participants from East Asia – Hongkong and Japan – formulated the following plans:

## **Hongkong**

There are a few Church-Labor programs in Hongkong but only two are represented, hence the difficulty of making concrete plans. The participants, however, have come up with suggestions which they intend to bring up in Hongkong.

1) Hold a meeting of Church and concerned groups to discuss the following issues

- views on the labor movement
- spirituality of workers
- work experience, possibilities of co-operation

2) Formation Programs on spirituality and social action to be sponsored/supported by CIRC (Catholic Institute for Religion and Culture).

3) Lend assistance to workers, e.g., establishing a central provident fund

4) Tap existing workers' resources/documentation programs

5) Establish linkages/co-ordination of different Church/social concern groups

- to hold dialogues with the Hongkong diocese
- to plan to establish labor desks in every parish
- to initial labor leaders' training seminars (advance leadership training will be referred to YCW)
- to co-ordinate with international and regional support groups like CCP, CAW

## **Japan**

- Continue to work with workers as chaplain of YCW in Kyoto.

- Pastoral planning can be further discussed in the National Institute Congress on Evangelization (NICE) to be held on November 19-24, 1987. Of the nine themes in the agenda, one concerns the workers.

### *In YCW:*

- continue to have formation programs and consciousness-raising programs for young workers

- special issues to be taken up in Kyoto, e.g., wage problems, overtime work (in smaller factories, companies)

### *Sub-Regional Level:*

- Exchange trips among parish labor desks, workers groups – organizers and workers
- Pool resources and materials on labor
  - e.g., CPP Labor communication
  - Asian Women Workers Newsletter
  - Asian Labor Monitor
  - Asian Workers Solidarity Link
  - Newsletter (Occasional)

### *Philippines*

The Philippine participants were divided into three regional groupings: Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao.

#### *Luzon*

General Objectives: To express the Church's concern for the rights of our oppressed and deprived brethren by assisting them in regaining their human dignity in accordance with the Church's social teachings.

#### Specific Objectives:

- 1) Formation of diocesan labor desk
- 2) Inter-Religious programs among workers
- 3) Inter-Dialogue and consultation
- 4) Inter-Communication through publication
- 5) Inter-support system in times of urgent needs

Phase I – Consultation with bishops and parish priests – 5 months

Phase II – Consultations with workers and urban poor communities – 5 months

Phase III – Formation of labor desks in every diocese – 5 months

Phase IV – Secondary planning and implementation – 2 months

#### *Visayas*

General Objective: To put up labor desks to respond to the needs of the workers.

Time Frame: One Year Plan

- Phase I – Consultation of Visayas' social action directors and bishops  
re: orientation of the objectives of AISA
- Phase II – Holding of Visayas-wide consultation with bishops/social  
action directors (SADS) and workers
- Phase III – consultation on the diocesan level with bishops/SADs and  
workers
- Phase IV – Establish labor desk in every diocese, if possible.
- Facilitator: Visayas Secretariat of Social Action (VISSA)

#### *Mindanao-Sulu Dioceses*

Coverage: Mindanao-Sulu dioceses

Period: 1988-1989

Focus of Operation: Diocese of Davao, Tagum, Digos and Mati (all  
dioceses can avail all services and programs as  
needed)

#### General Objectives:

- Assistance to workers in Mindanao-Sulu
  - Provide intensive education towards the establishment  
and strengthening of agri-workers organizations
  - Assist in the strengthening of workers' organizations
  - Provide analytical and research services with respect to  
workers education and organization
  - Extend socio-economic assistance to workers
  - Bolster legal assistance

## Program Implementation

Objectives	Activities	Time Table	Persons/Agencies Involved
<p><b>1. Research, Documentation and Communications:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- produce researches and articles on labor situation</li> <li>- to monitor / document labor activities and happenings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- data gathering</li> <li>- periodic visits to factories</li> <li>- formal and informal meetings with workers</li> <li>- dialogue / consultation with management, workers and local public officials</li> <li>- documentation, compilation analysis of available materials</li> </ul>	5 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- staff</li> <li>- volunteer workers</li> <li>- union organizers</li> <li>- NGOs and GOs</li> </ul>
<p><b>2. Education – provide skills in the following areas</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- communication</li> <li>- leadership training</li> <li>- grievance handling</li> <li>- union management</li> <li>- organizing skills</li> <li>- financial management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- seminars</li> <li>- workshops</li> <li>- consultations</li> <li>- meetings</li> <li>- symposia</li> <li>- case studies</li> </ul>	5 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- staff</li> <li>- volunteers</li> <li>- Church workers</li> <li>- resource persons</li> <li>- from NGOs and GOs</li> <li>- Agri-workers</li> </ul>

### 3. Organizing:

- assistance in union formation in 10 non-unionized factories
- alliances building of 5 banana plantation workers
- strengthening of sectoral desks in every diocese

- contact building
- periodic visit to factories
- home visitation
- assemblies
- conventions
- paralegal training

5 years

- organizer
- volunteer organizer
- staff

### 4. Legal Assistance:

- Assistance in filing and handling of workers' cases
- Establishment of legal aid clinic

- representation in quasi-judicial court
- cases preparation, e.g., affidavits, pleadings and position paper

5 years

- staff
- lawyers
- volunteers
- workers

### 5. Socio-economics:

- help workers augment their daily income through income through co-operatives
- formation of 4 workers' co-operative in 4 dioceses

- organizing
- contact working
- seminars/trainings

5 years

- staff
- workers
- NGOs and GOs

## CHAPTER 6

### THE CONTEMPLATIVE DIMENSION OF SOCIAL ACTION

**Faith and Ideology.** At the heart and center of the whole pastoral spiral is faith and not ideology. Juan Segundo, the South American liberation theologian, explains that ideology is "the system of goals and means that serves as the necessary backdrop for any human option or line of action." Ideology offers a concrete blueprint for society, i.e., it indicates an economic system and a corresponding political apparatus, as well as a certain philosophy of the human person which provides the vision which gets concretized in the socio-economic-political system it advocates.

It is the parallel in the socio-economic-political sphere to faith in the religious sphere. Ideology is an option for a cause in the socio-economic-political sphere; faith is a commitment to the person of Jesus Christ: a religious option. Therefore, ideology does not necessarily supplant faith, though they have similarities. Ideology is commitment in the strictly political sphere; faith is a commitment in the strictly religious sphere. The real danger arises when ideology replaces faith or co-opts faith rather than faith being able to critique ideology in the light of Jesus' option for the values of the Kingdom of God. "The Christian faith is above and is sometimes opposed to the ideologies, in that it recognizes God, who is transcendent and the Creator, and who, through all levels of creation, calls on man as endowed with responsibility and freedom," states Pope Paul VI. But "an ideology which claims to give a complete and self-sufficient picture of man" must be assessed by Christians, "safeguarding the values, especially those of liberty, responsibility and openness to the spiritual, which guarantee the integral development of man" (*Octogesima Adveniens*, N.27, 31).

Faith in the person of Jesus Christ and commitment to God's Reign (Kingdom) on earth is the basis of the contemplative dimension of social action. Thomas Merton, the American monk who wrote *Contemplation in a World of Action*, gives us an insight into contemplation and contemplatives.

Contemplatives search "not only their own heart"; they "plunge deep into the heart of that world of which they remain a part although they seem to have 'left' it." In reality they abandon "the world only in order to listen more intently to the deepest and most neglected voices that proceed from its inner depth ... This silence, this listening, this questioning, this humble and courageous exposure to what the world

ignores about itself — both good and evil” is a unique service to the world.

The kind of prayer we have to speak of “is a prayer of silence, simplicity, contemplative and meditative unity, a deep personal integration in an attentive, watchful listening of the ‘heart’ ... The concept of the ‘heart’ refers to the deepest psychological ground of one’s personality, the inner sanctuary where self-awareness goes beyond analytical reflection and opens up into metaphysical and theological confrontation with the abyss of the unknown.”

We need an integrated prophetic-contemplative spirituality. Liberation theologians provide two crucial insights for an integrated prophetic-contemplative spirituality.

1) Praxis, for them, is action which creates the new, makes the Reign of God more of a reality in our world. Praxis is “action on behalf of justice and peace.” It demands a prior solidarity with, commitment to and preferential option for the poor and all the victims of injustice.

2) They are not interested in solving real, historical problems theoretically. Their audience is not “non-believers” but “non-persons” — the victims of injustice. It is not new understanding but transforming action that challenges the Church. To be prophetic the Church must not only *denounce* the reign of Satan but also *announce* the Reign of God. It must go beyond words and individuals to actions that challenge and transform structures and systems of *sin*.

Therefore, action on behalf of justice/Reign of God is the locus in which contemplation occurs and from which it derives. It is in historical immersion, in solidarity with the victims of injustice, in actions for the sake of the Reign, in transformative praxis, that God is encountered.

In a prophetic praxis spirituality, therefore, love of neighbor (especially the “least of these”), commitment to social justice and transformative praxis are not merely imperatives of our faith. Contemplation/encounter with God is itself at the very heart of such transformative praxis.

**God in History.** But how can and do we encounter God in liberating, transformative praxis?

Karl Rahner, the Jesuit theologian, said, “God is encountered in



history or he is not encountered at all." Magisterial statements indicate "God is encountered in a special way in the poor and victims of injustice for whom he has a preferential option and who are in a special way open to his presence and voice."

However, these answers do not take into account the radical significance of the role of praxis. They emphasize the God of the past or the present. It is precisely *praxis* which makes historically more present, though always incompletely, the Reign of God or the "end-time God," that is, the saving God himself, who always remains ahead of us. It is *precisely through this praxis that God has a history and enters into history*, that God becomes not more God in himself, but more for us, more the "end of time." In short, the future God (the Reign) is more present now, because of our transformative action, and hence can be more experienced. It can be the locus and means of a deeper experience of the end-time God. The encounter with God (contemplation) is found in the doing of love that is made concrete through deeds of justice. This position is very similar to that of John the Cross and other mystics, who claim that mystical union is more a matter of love of the heart, than of knowing and of the intellect.

**Genuine prophetic mysticism** is rooted in action for the sake of the Kingdom (Reign). This mysticism in no way reduces the goal of contemplation in Christian life: the loving awareness of the divine presence. It is also aware of divine absence, not only in the individual, necessitating personal conversion and transformation; but also in society, its systems, structures and alienating ideologies. It is the awareness of the divine absence that compels the prophet to speak.

This prophetic activity, however, does presuppose a prior awareness of the divine presence which makes the prophet a "mystic in action." Prophetic activity therefore flows from an already existing contemplative experience, but impels it to an even deeper contemplation or awareness of the divine because of the newly experienced presence of the Reign of God brought on through praxis, i.e., action on behalf of the Reign. So there is always a dialectic between the prophetic and the contemplative.

**Prophetic and Traditional Mysticism.** What is the relationship between the prophetic and traditional mysticism, which will prevent mere social activism? Gustavo Gutiérrez, the South American theologian, points out that the purity and effectiveness of transformative action (*praxis*) depends on one's prior contemplative relationship with

God: one's experience of the divine graciousness.

Nevertheless, the very possibility of experiencing God in the "other" and in the praxis, presuppose such a relationship. We can experience the divine presence and divine absence in history and in our transformative praxis only if we first experience the divine within. Given the prior contemplative experience, our praxis itself becomes the locus of a deepened contemplation, because through it (praxis) the end-time God has become more God-for-us.

So there are two movements or moments which interact and reinforce one another in such a way that they become one movement called the "prophetic mystical." Only when the contemplative and prophetic movements are found in their ongoing, dialectical synthesis do we have powerful agents of the Reign of God as were the prophets and Jesus of Nazareth.

From "Past Tradition, Today and Tomorrow"  
A talk given by Donald Bugget, O. Carm.  
to the Carmelite Council of Provinces,  
Niagara Falls, Ontario, Sept. 11, 1986.

Published April 1989

## FABC Papers:

- No. 34 Summons to Dialogue, by Archbishop Angelo Fernandes. A National Seminar on Dialogue and Evangelization, 1983.
35. Challenges to Human Development in the 1980s: Response of the Church in Asia. The Sixth Bishops' Institute for Social Action, 1983.
36. Lead Me to the Real: The Hindu-Christian Dialogue. The Third Bishops' Institute for Interreligious Affairs, 1984.
37. Our Quest for Justice. The Second Consultation on Justice and Peace, 1984.
38. Christian Presence among Muslims in Asia. A Consultation on Inter-Religious Dialogue, 1985.
39. Social Action Groups: Harbingers of Hope in Asia, by Felix Wilfred, 1985.
40. Trusting, Entrusting the Laity. The First Bishops' Institute for Lay Apostolate, 1985.
41. Building the Church of Christ in a Pluricultural Situation, by Robert Hardawiryana, 1985.
42. Towards a Theology of Local Church, by Joseph Komonchak. The First Colloquium of the FABC Theological Advisory Committee, 1986.
43. The "Abba Experience" of Jesus: the Model and Motive for Mission Today. A Project in Formation for Mission, 1986.
44. Contemporary Catholic Thought on the Vocation and Mission of the Laity in the Church and in the World. A Position Paper for the Fourth Plenary Assembly, by S.J. Emmanuel, 1986.
45. Sunset in the East? The Asian Reality Challenging the Church and Its Laity Today. A Position Paper for the Fourth Plenary Assembly, by Felix Wilfred, 1986.
46. Fourth Plenary Assembly: Workshop Discussion Guides
  - a. The Role and Relationship of the Laity in the Church
  - b. Lay Spirituality
  - c. Towards a New Understanding of Women's Role
  - d. Laity and Ministry to Youth
  - e. The Laity in the World of Education
  - f. The Asian Laity in the World of Health Services
  - g. The Laity in Mission
  - h. The Laity in Politics and Public Service
  - i. The Laity and the Family
  - j. The Laity in the World of Work
  - k. Trusting, Entrusting the Laity in Media
  - l. The Laity in the World of Business
47. The Vocation and Mission of the Laity in the Church and in the World of Asia. A Report of the Fourth Plenary Assembly of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conference, 1987.

48. Theses on Interreligious Dialogue. An Essay in Pastoral Theological Reflection, The Theological Advisory Commission of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences, 1987.
49. Living and Working Together with Sisters and Brothers of Other Faiths. An Ecumenical Consultation, 1987.
50. The Urgency of Christian Mission. The All-Asian Conference on Evangelization, 1988.
51. Science, High Technology and Faith. A Seminar on the Role of the Catholic Scientist in Asia, 1989.
52. Becoming the Church of the Poor: with Industrial Workers. The First Asian Institute for Social Action, 1989.

FABC PAPERS is a project of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC), designed to bring the thinking of Asian experts to a wider audience and to develop critical analysis of the problems facing the Church in Asia from people on the scene. The opinions expressed are those of the author(s) alone and do not necessarily represent the official policies of the FABC or its member Episcopal Conferences. Manuscripts are always welcome and may be sent to: FABC, 16 Caine Road, Hong Kong.