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CALLED TO BE EVANGELISERS

From the challenges of the African Synod, from John Paul II's repeated messages, from the documents of General Congregation 34, comes a clear and constant summons: we Jesuits are called to be evangelisers, sharers of the Good News with the people around us. What does "evangelisation" mean in the current context of our Zambia-Malawi Province? How do we go about it? What are our major sources of strength, the major obstacles we face, the good examples of success we have achieved, the new means we should be attempting to use? These are just some of the important questions we should be asking ourselves.

At the Province Assembly in January 1997, a voice was raised asking the JCTR Bulletin to address this issue. Responding to this request, we publicised our intentions to publish articles on the theme of evangelisation and extended explicit invitations to many members of the Province. Below are some responses received so far, coming from a scripture scholar, teachers, and pastoral workers. The next issue of the Bulletin will continue this discussion, so we look forward to further input, especially from those engaged in parishes and schools. Let us hear from you!

EVANGELIZATION AND JUSTICE

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free. (Luke 4:18)

These are the first words that Jesus speaks in public in Luke's gospel. They contain a programmatic statement concerning his mission to reverse

This justice is God's justice communicated through human works of justice.

the destiny of the poor. Throughout Christian history and especially today, these words of Jesus have been taken as a foundational statement not only for a theology of mission and a theology of justice for the poor but also for a theology of evangelization. (cf. *The Church in Africa*, no. 68).

They form the opening paragraph of *Evangelization in the*

Modern World (Pope Paul VI, 1975). One reason why it is a suitable opening statement is that the word "evangelize" is used by Jesus (Lk 4:18 and 43). Translations of this word (*euaggelizein*) such as "to bring the good news" or "proclaim the good news" could convey that it means simply to convey a teaching or message. In fact, it includes teaching and action.

Jesus' evangelizing includes his teaching in the synagogue and all that follows in the chapter -- his actions, miracles on behalf of the afflicted and deprived. Twice Jesus states that he is "sent" to "evangelize," that is, to teach and perform works of mercy and love for the afflicted (Luke 4:18 and 43).

WORDS AND ACTIONS

The *Church in Africa* bases the work of evangelization on the mission of Jesus (no.68), insisting that evangelization means word and action, that it is not just a proclamation that God is on the side of the materially and socially poor of our society.

Integral human development -- the development of every person and of the whole person, especially of the poorest and most neglected in the community -- is at the very heart of evangelization. Between evangelization and human advancement -- development -- there are in fact profound links... They include links of the eminently evangelical order, which is that of charity: how can one proclaim the new commandment of love without promoting in justice and peace the true, authentic advancement of man? [Quoting from *Evangelisation in the Modern World*, No. 30]

Therefore, action on behalf of justice for the poor is an essential ingredient of evangelization today. Such action may be called works of mercy, works of love, or works of justice. *This justice is God's justice communicated through human works of justice.* It is the embodiment of God's love and saving mercy, the justice willed by God. As Father Rodrigo Mejia,

to establish justice, solidarity, brotherhood and sisterhood. The poor are blessed not because they are better than others or because they are better prepared to receive the Kingdom which comes with Jesus. But they are blessed because God seeks to make his Kingdom a tangible manifestation of his justice and love for the poor, the suffering and those who live in misery.

INTEGRAL AND MUTUAL

Therefore, we need to interconnect evangelization, justice and the Kingdom of God. If our evangelization is to be a balanced and integral evangelization, it has to include justice as one of its central elements. Donal Dorr, in his *Spirituality and Justice*, points out that Christian spirituality contains three essential dimensions:

(1) Our personal relationship with God (Jesus) which includes faith in God's providence, personal conversion and prayer, our experience of God's mercy, our understanding of God as a loving God, recognizing Jesus as Lord of my life and human history;

(2) our interpersonal and community relations, family life, friendships, being open to all; and

(3) our relations with society (in the public sphere), working for justice, the preferential, non-exclusive option for the poor according to the social teaching of the Church.

We also find these three dimensions reflected in the ministry and spirituality of Jesus himself.

In order to foster a balanced or integral evangelization in the basic Christian communities in San Salvador, we frequently reflected together on these three areas. We asked ourselves the questions: Do I practise in my life these three dimensions? Which one do I practise most? Which one do I practise less?

BEING EVANGELISED

Finally, as regards the relationship between the "evangelizer" and "evangelized", Jesus himself shows that he is touched, affected by the faith of those he evangelizes. He gives thanks to the Father for those who

Often the most effective way of learning about justice is to accompany those who are the direct victims of injustices, the poor themselves.

have been open to him in faith (Matthew 11:25). He even commends the faith of those children who welcome him on his entry to Jerusalem on Palm Sunday (Matthew 21: 15 - 16).

Albert Nolan (in *The Service of the Poor and Spiritual Growth*) describes how in evangelizing, serving the poor, the evangelizer is herself or himself evangelized. Through this service we can grow in compassion ourselves. Often the most effective way of learning

about justice is to accompany those who are the direct victims of injustices, the poor themselves. They can tell us best about unjust structures of society because they carry in their own hungry bodies and in their helplessness the wounds inflicted by those structures. We may form our own plans and projects for the poor without realizing that the poor know better than we do what needs to be done.

Often the strong faith of the poor moves us to a deeper faith:

God wants to use the poor, in Christ, to save all of us from the madness of a world in which so many people starve in the midst of unimaginable wealth. This discovery can become an experience of God present and acting in the struggles of the poor. Thus we not only see the face of the suffering Christ in the sufferings of the poor but also hear the voice of God and see the hands of God and his power in the political struggles of the poor. (Nolan, p.7)

In this way the poor evangelize us.

In conclusion, let me emphasise that we can seek and find in Scripture not only links between justice and faith but also between justice, evangelization and the Kingdom of God.

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CONTRIBUTIONS TO THIS "SYMPOSIUM" ON EVANGELISATION ARE EAGERLY SOUGHT!

Please consider sending in some reflections by way of an article or a letter to the editor, offering observations on your own experiences or reactions to the thoughts of others presented in this issue. Deadline for July issue of the Bulletin will be 20 June. Thank you!

members themselves and with their head.

BONDS OF UNION

Factors, such as diversity of learning, apostolate, of background, make union more difficult. For example, often it is difficult to mix parish and school communities; the areas are so different and so absorbing of interest and energies, that each finds it difficult to make space for the other. This diversity needs to be transcended by common values.

According to Ignatius, the values of obedience and the love of God are primary. He points

Not only is the Good News preached, it is lived in concrete evangelical situations.

out that "Union is produced in great part by the bond of obedience" (#659), and "The chief bond to cement the union... is the love of God our Lord" (#671). Otherwise with such diversity of ministry, fragmentation is inevitable without transcending affective bonding values.

In 1974 the Jesuit General Congregation 32, attempted to restate some of this wisdom for our day. Fr. Michael Buckley S.J., one of the drafters, talks of the document *Union of Minds and Hearts* in terms of "a synthesis of three strands." In the words of the document, the first strand is *Union with God*:

It is crucial for us, somehow, to regain that continual Familiarity with God in both prayer and action which St. Ignatius considered absolutely essential to the very essence

of our companionship" (32:11:17).

The second strand is *Brotherly Communion*:

Even our interpersonal relationship within the community, then, has an apostolic dimension, in that *it must set the tone of our relationship with those outside the community ...* (32:11:15, my italics).

Thirdly, the *Bond of Obedience*:

Precisely because (the bond of obedience) is our bond of union, it is the guarantee of our apostolic efficacy" (32:11:15).

Notice that in talking of the apostolic dimension of community life the emphasis is on our quality ("the tone") of our interpersonal relationship. This quality of our relationships in community affects our relationship with those we associate with in our apostolates. Our community life is important for *who* we are in relationship, not just *what* we can do in the apostolate. It has to do with the quality of our evangelizing actions, and not just what we do.

The more the quality of our actions reflects the qualities of Christ's relating, the more the life of God is made manifest in our world. Not only is the Good News preached, it is lived in concrete evangelical situations.

DIALOGUE AND INCULTURATION

The latest Jesuit Congregation (GC-34) has no document on community life. A participant observed later that today there is so much confusion about community life it would have been impossible to do so -- at least in

terms of laying down norms and regulations. On the other hand, GC-34 places a great emphasis on Dialogue and Inculturation and relates the two:

Evangelization is not possible without inculturation. Inculturation is existential dialogue between a living people and a living Gospel (GC-34:3:4).

Now here is my main argument: If evangelization is not possible without inculturation as existential dialogue, and if our way of relating within our communities reflects and influences the quality of our relating outside our communities, then we are being invited (by the Spirit?) to give dialogue and inculturation a central place in our living together. And because we are of such diverse cultural backgrounds, the ideal place to begin the dialogic and inculturating aspect of evangelization is precisely in our communities.

Both dialogue and inculturation are central today for the labour talked of in the *Constitutions* for the Union of Minds of Hearts. If we see that union today under strain, it is precisely in

Because we are of such diverse cultural backgrounds, the ideal place to begin the dialogic and inculturating aspect of evangelization is precisely in our communities.

these two areas. That dialogue and inculturation is difficult only invites St. Ignatius' advice: *the harder it is, the more we seek means to do it.*

Good conversations do not simply happen; they require people who are willing, interested, and able -- persons of virtue. Then in the proper setting, with the right partners, that rare species, that all too infrequent happening occurs, a true conversation that refreshes and rejuvenates, that is both enjoyable and profitable, comforting and challenging.¹

If for such dialogue is to happen, we need to pray for virtues. And while all is grace, these virtues are to be cultivated, dug around, fertilized, laboured for. We don't expect them to produce fruit at once, but wait for such fruit with hope. We do not give up when the first attempt fails by

Without dialogue we may continue to walk round, seeing people superficially, like trees, in the blur, one looking much like the other.

adopting a "but we tried that before" attitude. We rejoice in small successes.

We do not demand that our dialogue partner have all the right virtues as our condition for beginning or continuing our conversation. We can be patient with those who do not even seem to desire them. Jesus did not heal the blind man at Bethsaida in one go. Before seeing clearly, he only saw "people but they look like trees as they walk around" (Mark 8:24). Jesus tried again, and succeeded.

Without dialogue we may continue to walk round, seeing people superficially, like trees, in the blur, one looking much like the other. We may pass each other in the corridors, never going beyond the polite greeting, and the type of conversation that does not refresh, rejuvenate, bring joy, profit, comfort and challenge. We may continue to meet in the doorway, passing in and out from and to our evangelizing activity, but never really meeting one another at the core of our being. We may not be strong (virtuous) enough yet to communicate, or hear our neighbour communicate, the core of being.

SHARING AND PRAYING

Keith Clark, O.F.M., in *Being Sexual...and Celibate*² sees sharing at the level of faith as the most difficult to communicate directly. This is so because usually we tend to express it theologically, rather than practically, e.g., by sharing with you what I pray about. We may be like the couple in Ric Masten's poem, "Passing in the Doorway":

I have noticed that somewhere around forty
The man comes in from the field
Wearily, he throws his hat on the hook and says,
"You were right, Grace. It ain't out there!"
And she, with children grown at last
Pulling her coat down from the hook, says
"The hell it ain't!"
Coming and going they pass in the doorway.³

Or through a mutual sharing of the core of our being, we may help one another to turn towards God, enjoying the fact that we pray in the Body of Christ. Alice Taylor in her poem "Togetherness" writes of its prayer-like quality:

Forced apart
By busy days
We now belong
Together
As the interlaced
Fingers
Of praying
Hands
Join again
In quiet times
At peace
In our
Togetherness.

And in peace, we may go forth from our communities to preach the Good News to all nations, even in the unexplored areas of our own hearts, at the core our being.

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¹ Schineller, J. Peter, "Conversation in Christian Life and Ministry", in Lorano, John M. et al, *Ministerial Spirituality and Religious Life* (Chicago: Claret Centre, 1986, pp. 98-99.

² Keith Clark, *Being Sexual ... and Celibate*, (Notre Dame, Indiana: Ave Maria Press, 1986, pp. 32-33).

³ Ric Masten, *Speaking Poems*; (Boston: Beacon Press, 1977):

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excellence and the model of all Christian witness.

The evangelical witness which the world finds most appealing is that of concern for people, and of charity towards the poor, the weak and those who suffer... A commitment to peace, justice, human rights and human promotion is also a witness to the Gospel when it is a sign of concern for persons and is directed towards integral human development. (# 42)

Paul VI, in his encyclical on evangelisation, referred to in the opening paragraph, put it in another striking way:

Above all, the Gospel must be proclaimed by witness. Take a Christian or a handful of Christians who, in the midst of their own community, show their capacity or understanding and acceptance, their sharing of life and destiny with other people, their solidarity with the efforts of all for whatever is noble and good. Let us suppose that, in addition, they radiate in an altogether simple and unaffected way their faith in values that go beyond current values, and their hope in something that is not seen and that one would not dare to imagine. Through this wordless witness these Christians stir up irresistible questions in

the hearts of those who see how they live: Why are they like this? Why do they live in this way? What or who is it that inspires them? Why are they in our midst? Such a witness is already a silent proclamation of the Good News and a very powerful and effective one. (# 21)

RAISING QUESTIONS

The Pope goes on to express the need of a more explicit proclamation of the good news of Jesus' life among us. But this cannot be done until we have first raised the questions in the minds of the hearers that can only be answered by faith in Jesus. We often see the slogan on vehicles: "Jesus is the answer!" My reply to that is: "What is the question?"

It is the witness of those who hunger and thirst for justice, seeking no reward other than the

We often see the slogan on vehicles: "Jesus is the answer!" My reply to that is: "What is the question?"

knowledge that they carry on the mission of the Lord who died for them. This raises the questions Paul VI mentions in the passage quoted. It is only then that we can get the attention of the hearers to listen to the story of salvation in Christ Jesus which raises the

essential questions of His true mission, to bring about the coming of the kingdom where love brings justice to all. It is this mission which is our purpose in life as his disciples.

BRINGING CHRIST TO OTHERS

The YCS, with which I have been involved for almost 30 years in Africa, has as its goal: to bring students to Christ and Christ to students. I often tell the members of this movement that the most effective way they can carry out this goal is to simply be Christ in their own lives. Then, each time they encounter a fellow student, they bring him to Christ and Christ to him.

I have tried to share with you my deep conviction that the work for justice is not just some "social activism" divorced from the work of evangelisation. It is the very basis of evangelisation. And even as the witness of those who hunger and thirst for justice attracts others to Christ, so the deepening awareness of the newly converted will bring them to a deeper commitment to the work of building a kingdom of justice and peace in fulfilment of the mission of Jesus.

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BISHOPS AND THEOLOGIANs

(John 20: 3-10)

After two thousand years
Of long-distance running,
Eagle-winged John still
Outpaces rock-footed Peter.
In truth, they did not go back home.

*Jim McGloin, S.J.
Charles Lwanga T.T.C.
Chikuni*

is, how can we as Pastors through our respective ministries facilitate the achievement of this total man and woman?

The question is, how can we as Pastors through our respective ministries facilitate the achievement of this total man and woman?

Honestly, we cannot answer this question unless we humbly admit that as Pastors of a traditional colonial Church, we have on many occasions failed to deliver the goods. We have failed to liberate man and woman because we have refused or failed to recognise and balance and merge the spiritual needs with the physical needs which make man and woman whole in God's image. We have failed or deliberately refused to identify with the two basic universal human struggles — struggle to cooperate with people and with nature.

No doubt, the Church has very often been praised for its role in charitable works or social welfare programmes like drought relief, building of schools and hospitals, etc. These are very important contributions, but I regard them merely as ways of treating the symptoms of very serious diseases in our society.

In essence, such a response to oppressed people's problems is like a good Samaritan, who sympathises with the wounded man but does not care to find out and analyse the root causes of robbery. Such an approach also risks playing the role of disarming people intellectually by fooling them through preaching docility, humility and acceptance of

oppression while waiting for the heavenly kingdom to come.

CHRIST AS MODEL

What we have often seen is the failure of the Christian concept of development in that it has divided the original unity of being and over-emphasised the spiritual. In Christianity we have the model of Jesus Christ as a fully developed person. But do we emulate him? How did Jesus live on earth and what did he fight for? He identified himself with the poor and oppressed and fought for a peaceful and just society. Why do we find it difficult to emulate Christ in words and deeds?

If we balance the spiritual and the social and material aspects of development, we will realise that Christ's life teaches us that social (material) development is a vital part of integral human development. Such a model has to be developed through active participation in social analysis and class struggle as Jesus himself laboured to do in his time. In this way we shall be assured both spiritual and physical liberation.

When we preach, we often fail to interpret the scriptures to suit our social reality. If we identify with the struggles of the people who constitute our congregations in our respective churches, we will realise that, while man and woman cannot live on bread alone, neither can the word of the bible alone sustain a man and woman in keeping his or her body alive. This awareness may help us to come down to earth. We will regain our total being and that of the people we preach to. By being open to both physical (material) and spiritual needs of our people and not over-emphasising the spiritual, we will develop strategies, methods and

means for attaining the liberation of the whole human person with all his and her needs.

Former Tanzanian President, Julius Nyerere, defines Development as "the creation of adequate supplies of food, clothing, medical supplies and shelter in a manner consonant with material, cultural and psychological needs of the people concerned as they define them." As Pastors and church leaders, how can we facilitate this sort of development? Nyerere again has this to say, "People can not be developed, they can only develop themselves."

Are we ready to give people back their power, to organise people for power?

Therefore our role as Pastors should be to help people to become their own developers, through the church structures, through the church network which is well established. The key is that people must be involved in what we are doing at all levels.

But the question is, are we willing to come down to earth in order to give room for integral human development through a total congregational participation? Are we ready to give people back their power, to organise people for power? What are the rigid rules and regulations which need to be changed so as to provide a platform on which participatory dialogue for development can be initiated? This is our challenge as Pastors today.

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that these groups have failed to directly adapt to the African societal context. In many instances, this has resulted in many of these organisations turning into groups restricted only to certain social classes. Examples could be Marriage Encounter and the Christian Life Community (CLC).

Marriage Encounter until now may seem to many to have been restricted only to a certain elite of our society. But just as it is important to see couples meet each other and share their experiences, so it is equally important to have an African Marriage Encounter. In authentic African marriages, there was always an elderly woman directly in charge of the couple. She kept an eagle's eye and was closely involved in the life of the couple. And never did the couple call each other by first name in public, especially if they had a child. The children hardly knew their parent's first names, let alone pronounce them out loud. But as long as a Western attitude of simplifying marriage affairs continues, very few traditional African couples will come up.

Another group, CLC, has sometimes been looked upon as divided into two sections. On the one hand, one section might appear to be made up mainly of more educated people, more well-to-do, even so-called "snobs" who seem to matter in society. On the other hand, there would be a section of less educated and poorer "nobodies."

LIFE STYLE

It is very strange and disappointing that the church in Africa often seems to seriously lack *creativity*. This has resulted in a large exodus of young inventive

people joining groups or sects. But in an effort to keep these young people, there is no point in trying to adapt what cannot be adapted, e.g., the imported television religious show "Lumen 2000." This effort really is in vain, since it tries to share a Catholic message in a style that cannot compete with the Born Agains' style of "Zambia shall be saved" which really hits the message home. We cannot compete because the imported style is completely out of context with the Zambian situation -- resulting in little or no following -- while the Born Again style remains a hot cake in most Zambian families.

Apart from the question of adaptation, I think the failure of the church in Africa, in Zambia in particular, has been due to the

The only way to inculturate inculturation is through a revolution and revolution demands sacrifice.

frequent contradiction between the life style of us clergy and religious and the life style of ordinary people. The church might often seem to have a fine voice but lack serious deeds. For example, for the past four to five years the Zambian Catholic Bishops have been busy issuing Pastoral Letters, while some Religious personnel have been busy updating the nation on the impact that the galloping economy has had on the population. But these efforts of both the Bishops and the Religious seem not to bear any fruit for life. In all sectors of our society the situation is actually getting worse.

Some of the clergy and the Religious may actually be

extending the already overstretched gap between the rich and the poor -- a gap which is being condemned in nearly all the Pastoral Letters. We only need to look at the balloon-tyred cars that we are driving around and the type of shops and clubs we Religious frequently go to. Compare this situation with what we pay to our workers!

NEED FOR REVOLUTION?

Perhaps we are fulfilling the "prophecy" that, "If one cannot serve the rich who are so few, there is no way that they can serve the poor who are so many." In short, our lives have failed to be witnesses proclaiming the correct gospel. That is why nowadays it is common to see some advertisements in the form of pamphlets or notices in magazines or newspapers trying to convince and encourage the young to join the diocese or a particular religious order.

If our current way of life is taken to be normal, then Christ must have come again twice or even more times, each time carrying a different message. In any case, there is still time and he may come again! But this time he may come to repeat what he did to the traders in the Temple.

The only way to inculturate inculturation is through a revolution and revolution demands sacrifice, as history mercilessly shows. And if there is no sacrifice, then we will have to cut down more trees (against ecology) for more stencils and more paper to continue with ineffective Pastoral Letters and more "poverty datum line" updates.

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methods of teaching us English, some of them exaggerated the importance of this subject. They even taught English *at the expense* of local languages. In their approach to the teaching of English, these teachers completely or partially alienated some of us from our mother tongue. Consequently, they alienated us from our cultural heritage which was embodied in our mother tongues.

I feel that today there are many Zambian families that have more than necessary emphasised the fact that their children should learn English beginning right at home, and going from nursery school up to university level. In some African countries today, it is not uncommon to find a good number of our brothers and sisters who know more English and French than they do their own local languages. Such people are like a full grown baobab tree without any tap-roots, hanging only on hair roots. Such people have lost part of their cultural identity and the cultural values which are embedded in the language.

LANGUAGE AND MISSION

How important to us Jesuits is language for our mission of faith and justice today? What are local languages in relation to our apostolate of defence and propagation of faith? Is there something Jesuits can do about this matter? Think, for example, of a scholastic teaching one of the local languages for his regency. What would be the responses from his fellow Jesuits, and from the pupils, pupils' parents, and friends?

Most of us Jesuits are committed to inculturation programmes. Most of our preaching ministry demands our competent knowledge of our local languages. And yet, to be honest, some of us have little or

no objective knowledge of the local languages. In our Jesuit schools and in mission schools in general, are there any departments of local languages? If so, how vibrant and viable are they?

It is true that a common language can both unite and disunite people. English and French have indeed united nations and regions. People do have very many different languages, e.g., Zambia has about 73 languages and Cameroun has at least 200. But

I was surprised to find that French is spoken by almost every person in almost all places.

all these language groups have been united into one nation or region through one language.

However, it can also be said that English and French have divided Africa. Today Africa is divided into two major camps, Francophone and Anglophone. It appears that there is little or no practical economic, social and political co-operation between French-speaking countries and English-speaking countries.

From June to August 1996, I had a chance to visit West Africa, Cameroun, for my French-language immersion. While in Yaounde I was greeted with some of Africa's greatest virtues of generosity and hospitality by the Camerounians. But I also experienced the vitality of the Society of Jesus when I attended the Assistancy formation meeting in Yaounde. The presence of different delegates from different provinces and regions of the Assistancy greatly spiced my French immersion experience. It was both amazing and inspiring to see how some of members of our Assistancy -- superiors, teachers, students -- have

transcended not only their mother tongues but also their national official languages. With my little bit of French, I was able to experience the Society's unity in diversity.

CULTURAL SHOCK

Despite the language problem I did feel during my first few weeks in Yaounde, I still felt at home among Camerounians. However, I suffered from a cultural shock. As I have already mentioned, Cameroun has approximately 200 languages. Yet none of these languages are taught in schools. Many people in Yaounde and Duala speak only French and "pidgin English." Local languages are spoken by only a few, mostly by old people. My Zimbabwean Jesuit companion, Tichaona Jabangwa, and I were very surprised to find that most of the people we spoke to knew their mother tongue by name only, but they were competent in both written and spoken French.

Furthermore, I was shocked when my teacher of French openly told us that she can not write her mother tongue because Camerounian languages are not taught in schools. I was surprised to find that French is spoken by almost every person in almost all places: markets, shops, streets, homes, offices, working sites and entertainment spots. Though I have never been to France, I sometimes felt that there was, at least language-wise, no difference between Paris and Yaounde!

I was even told that at one time the Jesuits in Duala tried to introduce local language in the Jesuit secondary school. But they were hit with very strong resistance from both parents and pupils.

This fact of not teaching local languages in schools in some

NEED FOR AN IGNATIAN ECOLOGY ?

Recent issues of the JCTR Bulletin have contained several articles on environmental issues and Jesuit responses to ecological concerns. Paul Desmarais, Roland Lesseps and Bernard Mumba have written on this topic. Now John Moore, an award winning botanist-turned theologian, raises important questions about our ecological spirituality. Any responses?

We already have three prophetic voices in the Zambia-Malawi Province crying out for "ecological justice" in recent pages of the JCTR *Bulletin*. I think it is about time that I joined my voice to theirs. After all, for the whole of my professional life until I retired in 1991, my field of research was ecology. Although my specialised field was vegetation ecology, it can never be divorced from more general environmental issues.

The immediate stimulus to attempt this article was Rodrigo Mejia's reply to Ronald Lesseps' query at the Province Assembly (January 1996) about the place of *environmental concern* in our struggle for justice in the world. Mejia stressed a point that I have

There are two extreme views among environmental activists that I still find it hard to reconcile with my Christian and Ignatian world view.

been pondering for a number of years, without doing any serious analysis of the question.

Mejia said that the ecology of a person steeped in Ignatian spirituality would be different in many points from some of the current ecological thinking. It would perhaps be different even from the ecology under the patronage of St. Francis of Assisi that is sometimes proposed.

This tallied very much with my own experience. There are two extreme views among environmental activists that I still find it hard to reconcile with my Christian and Ignatian world view. This is true so much so that I would completely reject them, while still being very much in tune with the sentiments that gave rise to them.

"DEEP" ECOLOGY

The first of these views is the conclusion of the "deep ecologists" that every living and non-living thing in the universe should be given exactly the same reverence and enjoy the same rights as humans.

Presumably what the "deep ecologists" are hoping for is this: if they can instil into us a *fellow feeling* for each being in the universe, then we may treat them with respect rather than exploiting them in the callous and destructive ways we have been accustomed to. However, as McFague in her thoughtful book *The Body of God* points out, environmental concern is not primarily a flora and fauna issue, it is a justice issue. It is a question of justice and fairness towards our fellow human beings, both our contemporaries and those of future generations.

The old medieval idea of "the human person at the centre of the universe" may seem very quaint to us in its raw form, yet there is a truth embedded there that we cannot get away from: we do have something that even our closest relatives the apes do not possess.

There is something special about human beings: "what are human beings that You are mindful of them, mortals that You care for them? You have made them a little lower than God" (Psalm 8:4-5/NRSV).

Although our physiological processes, our brain structure and our hormonal systems are basically the same as those of the other mammals, our powers of *self-reflection* and foreseeing the consequences of our actions bring a completely new dimension into our activities: we can be held responsible for them.

Even more important, we owe a certain respect and sensitivity to our fellow humans that is on a higher plane than our respect for other creatures. Admittedly we do share the earth's resources with other living beings. We do owe them a certain respect as part of the same living network of ecological relationships that sustain us all. But should we refrain, for example, from applying a lethal spray to a large colony of migratory locusts that are rapidly approaching the swarming stage and threatening the gardens of the subsistence farmers in a whole valley?

"ELITIST" CONSERVATION

The other tendency, perhaps not so strong now as it was formerly, is an elitist approach one sometimes finds in those who campaign for the conservation movement. These are people who wish to set aside wilderness areas,

I believe that Ignatian Spirituality definitely possesses something that can spark off an ecological awareness and sense of responsibility for the environment. Indeed, it has influenced two famous prophetic voices in the recent past: Gerard Manley Hopkins with his "let them be left / wildness and wet" poems (which I have heard quoted at environmental conferences), and Pierre Teilhard de Chardin whose thoughts are often invoked by environmentalists. Coming closer to home, I myself have found a harmony within myself between the Ignatian parts of my psychological make-up and my own ecological interests.

IS INTEGRATION POSSIBLE?

One thing that I have tried to do during my professional career was to ensure that there was an integration between the different intellectual compartments in my outlook: spirituality, science, theology. I have often been asked by non-Catholic scientific colleagues: "How can you, a Catholic priest, give lectures on the theory of evolution in which you make it quite clear that you find that theory useful and acceptable?"

That sort of question may sound rather dated nowadays. But perhaps a parallel question might be posed today: "How can you, a

Jesuit, whose spirituality is based on the *Spiritual Exercises*, claim that you are enthusiastically on the side of those who are deeply affected by the ecological crisis?" Surely Ignatius' *Principle and Foundation* is a typical example of the hubris of the Judaic-Christian world view: "all other things on the face of the earth were created to help human beings attain their end."

I will try to answer that question in the next issue of the *JCTR Bulletin*.

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MURDER OF THE ARCHBISHOP

Former Provincial of Central Africa, Archbishop Munzehirwa Mwene Ngablo of Bukavu, Zaire, was assassinated in November 1996. Reflecting on his death, a Zimbabwean Jesuit who has been intimately involved in faith and justice work for a long time sees particular challenges to indigenous Jesuits.

I first met the Archbishop in 1990 in Bukavu itself when I was studying French. He struck me as an unassuming person, simple, respectful of others people's views but firm in his conviction and fearless. Even at that time, that part of the country was economically and developmentally a forgotten part of Zaire, at least from an outsider's point of view. It needed someone like Archbishop Munzehirwa to remind the national government and the world that something was wrong in that corner of Zaire. But it did not require that type of sacrifice of silencing him.

Across the border in Rwanda where I had been for two weeks for the second time before I crossed into Zaire, sporadic incursions by the RPF in the country had already caused systematic killings of the Tutsi by

the Rwandan soldiers. The tension was very high. This raises the question of the state of the African Continent's moral fabric when it comes to socio-political matters. This equally raises the role of the Jesuits in Africa, to be revised as we are assisted to read the signs of the times.

APOSTOLATE EMPHASIS

My understanding and interpretation of the spirit of St. Ignatius means that the Society must always interpret its apostolate emphasis according to the times and needs of each region. In Africa, particularly in the south of the Sahara, we are faced with economic slump, stagnation and drainage. We are going through a political sterility, strangulation and civic suffocation. Social Justice implies that the Society of Jesus

has a mission to educate the African Nation with the means and the knowledge to fight the mentioned diseases which are paralysing the whole continent and its peoples. While we cannot solve all the problems, we can make a *significant difference* by taking the steps necessary in addressing these issues.

Practical cases in point which are in the international spotlight are the sub-regional conflicts in Central Africa involving Rwanda, Zaire and Burundi. I would like to take this sub-region of the Great Lakes as a classical example to demonstrate my point. The 1994 genocide in Rwanda, the 1988 genocide in Burundi, and the other previous tribal and ethnic carnage and bloodletting conflicts in both countries with a very high

REBIRTH OF AN ANCIENT S.J. CONCEPT

How does one enter the novitiate, with plans for what future status? The following reflections, by an older Jesuit who experienced a change of status after many years, may help us consider the deeper meanings of a Jesuit vocation.

During last year (1996), two important anniversaries took place for me: the Golden Jubilee of my entrance into the Jesuit Novitiate, and the tenth anniversary of my reception of the sacrament of Holy Orders. During the forty years between the events remembered, contrary to what the people may be inclined to think, I did not experience any frustration, alienation or lack of fulfillment. After all, I was a religious of the Society of Jesus, putting all other considerations or comparisons aside, a noble, worthy, complete and self-satisfying vocation.

My "alacrity and dedication" in the exercise of the assignments I

Father General's remark was strictly speaking, not accurate. I entered the Novitiate in response to a vocation to the Society of Jesus.

was given during that time has been commented on by many people, including the present General of the Society. I may, therefore, claim some little practical experience of the topic with which I am going to deal.

As is customary, I received a letter of congratulations from Father General on the occasion of the Golden Jubilee already mentioned. In the course of that letter His Paternity remarked, "It is in response to a vocation to the Brothers that you entered the Novitiate in 1946."

In my reply, I, in my turn, observed that his remark was "strictly speaking, not accurate. I entered the Novitiate in response to a vocation to the Society of Jesus." For me, this distinction has always been of great importance. It is closely linked up with an ancient concept known in the Society as "Indifferent" and was used in relation to the disposition of those who entered the Society.

"INDIFFERENT"

A keen student of our Jesuit *Constitutions* can hardly fail to notice the section in which a list is given of the categories of persons whom our Holy Founder was ready to accept into the Society. This list is followed by a very important observation.

Four categories are mentioned, but the observation indicates that he would prefer if all those who entered were of the *fourth* category. These are the "indifferent", that is, those who are prepared to enter the Society as such, with no pre-conditions. It would be left to the Society, after appropriate discernment, to decide what their future would be, in relation to Grades in the Society.¹

This idea of accepting candidates into the Society as "indifferent" seems to have been forgotten for a very long time, at least in practice. Some individuals may have entered in that frame of mind, but a long tradition has been that your category -- Scholastic (leading to Priesthood) or Brotherhood -- was already

decided, understood as irrevocably decided, before you crossed the threshold of the Novitiate. I use

It is interesting to note that the "moving ahead," in this case, means taking a long backward step forward.

the word "category," not "Grade," for, in the case of the former there was a further assigning of Grades at the time of "Final Vows," the Grades of Professed and Spiritual Coadjutor.

The concept of "indifferent" in the sense indicated has been reborn with the 34th General Congregation. It has appeared, a little strange to say, in the decree on "The Jesuit Brothers": "The General Congregation believes it helpful that Provinces move ahead in the admission of candidates to the grade of 'Indifferent'." (GC-34: 7:15)

It is interesting to note that the "moving ahead," in this case, means taking a *long backward step forward*. This is very appropriate, no doubt, in so far as it is in conformity with the directive in document on religious life, *Perfectae Caritatis*, of the Second Vatican Council: "Therefore loyal recognition and safe-keeping should be accorded to the spirit of the founders."²

This sublime concept, indicating a more selfless dedication to the Religious nature and spirit of the Society, goes back to St. Ignatius himself.

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