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promotio justitiae

exchanges * échanges * intercambios

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THIS ISSUE

Once again the last issue of PJ for the year will be reaching you a couple of months into the following year. The same happened with PJ 10 for December 1978 which only saw the light of day in February 1979. It seems that we are incapable of catching up with ourselves. A possible ploy would be to post-date our issues, after the manner of some international magazines. However we feel our readers would not be taken in by such a ruse and will be sufficiently tolerant to read in February 1980 something that is incorrectly labelled December 1979. If however this is not the case, please let us know !

This issue is also an unusual one in that it consists entirely of documents, though we have attempted to give them different labels for variety. They are centered round the main theme which is to announce and explain the seminar on The Social Apostolate in the Society Today which will be taking place in the Curia next June. We feel this is an important event and are anxious to invite as many of our readers as possible to participate, albeit in an indirect manner (see p.157).

To help in the process of reflection that should precede this meeting, we have published part of the letter from Father General on the role and function of a Social Institute in the light of GC XXXII. We would be very happy to get some reactions from Jesuits working in our social institutes on the contents of this letter which, as explained, was destined primarily for Latin America. In a similar manner, Fr. Calvez's notes on Decree Four will be helpful background for the June Seminar.

The document from the Spanish Provincials on Violence and Society is unusual both for its style and directness. Since the problem they discuss should be of concern to Jesuits in many countries, we will be glad to receive comments on the analysis they offer and the solutions they propose.

The regular items of EXCHANGE and NEWS have been held over, partly because of space and partly because of their abundant - in the opinion of one reader, 'super-abundant' - coverage in PJ 14. PUBLICATIONS have also been omitted and have not appeared since PJ 13 (July, 1979). The Editor has never received any comments on this section and has doubts about its utility. Should it be continued, discontinued or changed ? What do YOU think ?

With this issue PJ completes three years of existence. The next number (March, 1980) will attempt to make some assessment of the bulletin as a whole. It would be a great help to have YOUR VIEWS AND OPINIONS, together with CONCRETE SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT. DON'T HESITATE TO SEND THEM IN !

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THE SOCIAL APOSTOLATE IN THE SOCIETY TODAY

The above is the title of a four-day Seminar due to be held in the Curia from June 2nd. to 5th., 1980. Why has Father General decided to hold such a Seminar? What will it discuss and what does it hope to achieve? The following notes attempt to answer these and other questions, as well as explain how YOU can become involved.

.....

1 : WHY

Three years ago, in the very first issue of PJ, we announced the suppression of the "Commission for Social and Economic Development Activities" (cf. PJ 1, p.4). This body had been set up in 1968 at the same time as the Social Secretariat itself, to advise the Father General on problems arising from our involvement in the social apostolate. Consisting of 9 experienced Jesuits in that field, it held a total of three meetings at two yearly intervals and produced a number of significant reports and documents. However Father General gave the following reason for disbanding it: "I have come to the conclusion that what the Commission was trying to achieve so far could perhaps be better achieved in the future through meetings or seminars of an interdisciplinary and international nature, which could be convened to deal with a particular question or problem, whenever the need arises".

Our 1980 Seminar will be the first attempt to respond to such a need. It is now five years since GC XXXII committed the Society to an option for the promotion of justice in solidarity with the poor. In his Final Address to the 1978 Congregation of Procurators, Father General emphasised in the strongest terms that the decrees of GC XXXII have increased, rather than diminished, in relevance. It is worth recalling his words as we enter a new decade: "The more radical the challenge, the more radical must be our application of what the Congregation said. The Society has passed the 'point of no return', the process is irreversible. In faithfulness to our vocation, we cannot turn back. Nor will the needs of the Church and world allow us. Carrying out these decrees has become for us a matter of life or death, our only way ahead, our path to God. Let us get down to work". (§ 4)

The main task of our 1980 Seminar will be to try and assess what effect GC XXXII has had in the field of the social apostolate itself. How have our social institutes responded or failed to respond to new demands and situations? What new initiatives have been taken in the field of promoting justice? Where should we be trying to move in the future? Other questions may arise, but the above will be the main concerns of the Seminar.

2 : WHO

An international meeting is a costly business! Because of this we have to severely limit the number of participants. In addition to Father General and some of his Assistants, we have so far invited twentythree Jesuits from outside Rome to attend. They fall into two groups:

- Assistancy or regional co-ordinators of the social apostolate, where such exist;
- A representative selection of Directors or members of SJ Social Institutes, old and new, throughout the Society.

Since it is not yet possible to give the names of all who will be coming, we indicate below the regions or countries we hope will be represented.

- (a) Co-ordinators : USA, (Jesuit Office of Social Ministries), Latin America North, Latin America South, India (JESEDES), East Asia (SELA), Europe (European Group in Social Sciences).
- (b) Institutes : USA, Canada, Central America, Colombia, Brazil, Chile, Zimbabwe, West Africa, India, Philippines, Japan, Italy, France, Spain, UK/Eire, Poland, Germany.

3 : WHAT

What will we be discussing? Reference has already been made above to the general purpose of the Seminar. We reproduce here a brief text from Father General that explains the background or context from which it will start. It is taken from his Report on the State of the Society, submitted to the Congregation of Procurators on September 27th., 1978:

"§ 22 : Social Apostolate

The social apostolate has undergone change in the past few years and gradually become a dimension permeating all our apostolic activities. We must admit, however, that its impact in our more traditional apostolic commitments is still limited and that, at Province or Assistancy level, it has not produced the basic changes we were hoping for.

In the social sector properly so-called we see new commitments both personal and institutional. The Social Institutes or Centers which played such an important role in the past are passing through a crisis in some places. They are trying to adapt to new needs by linking themselves more closely with those working at grass-root level and by co-operating with other sectors of the apostolate (education, pastoral, theological and interdisciplinary reflection, etc) and thus extending their field of action.

Directly social work is often conditioned by the social, political and

cultural situation in each country. To the difficulties inherent in this type of apostolate and the strong hostile reactions it sometimes provokes, must also be added in some places a lack of preparation and of right criteria on the part of those engaged in it."

In the light of these comments, the Seminar will therefore be mainly concerned with looking at new trends or orientations in our social apostolate and asking whether these fulfill the demands made by GC XXXII. Special attention will be given to:

- social institutes, old and new models;
- grass-root work among the marginalised poor and support of popular movements and organisations;
- integration of the social apostolate in the overall mission of the Society;
- international co-operation among Jesuits in the social field.

4 : HOW

It is too early yet to determine how we will organise the four short days of the Seminar itself. But careful preparation for it is crucial and the process has already started. A questionnaire has been sent to each of the participants asking them to discuss it with others and then send in brief (maximum two pages per question) replies. These will be synthesised and form the basis of preliminary reports to the Seminar itself.

Because we are anxious to have as wide a consultation as possible, we reproduce the seven questions here. AND WE INVITE ALL READERS OF PJ WHO SO WISH TO ANSWER THEM AND SEND IN THEIR REPLIES AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. IN THIS WAY YOU COULD GIVE US VERY VALUABLE HELP WHEN WE COME TO THE MEETING. THANK YOU IN ADVANCE!

- (1) What changes have taken place in the social apostolate in your Assistan-
cy / region since GC XXXII and its option for the promotion of justice
in solidarity with the poor?
 - (2) What have been the main obstacles and problems encountered in the same
field since GC XXXII?
 - (3) What still needs to be done to meet the wishes of GC XXXII?
 - (4) How is the social apostolate sector organised in your Assistan-
cy/region? How well does it integrate with other Jesuit apostolates and the overall
mission of the Society? What degree of co-ordination exists with pasto-
ral plans at diocesan and/or national level?
 - (5) What is your experience and your hope with regard to international co-
operation and action among Jesuits in the social field?
 - (6) Are there any problems or initiatives in the social field that you feel
should be taken up at the level of the whole Society?
 - (7) Have you any specific suggestions or desires to offer for our June
Seminar in the Curia?
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 A CIAS IN THE LIGHT OF GC XXXII

Three years ago FATHER GENERAL had occasion to write a lengthy letter "ad quendam praepositum provinciae" on the role of a social institute in Latin America (CIAS) after GC XXXII. Though not intended for universal application, we reproduce it here as a further contribution to our June Seminar. The original in Spanish can be found in ACTA ROMANA XVII (1977) pp. 156-160.

.....

The promotion of justice is not just the responsibility of a few Jesuits but a dimension of our whole life and apostolate. (c.f. D.2, n.9). Far from diminishing, this increases the importance of works like a CIAS whose specific task is to help build a more human and just society. Thus I consider the CIAS one of the most necessary and important works of our Province at the present time. So that it can better carry out the mission the Society has given it, I think it will be helpful to state a few principles and give some guidelines for its work.

1 : BASIC PRINCIPLES

(a) A CIAS is an apostolic work

As a concrete expression of our social commitment, a CIAS should reflect in its life and work the apostolic character that distinguishes the whole body of the Society. Thus it should promote justice not only because of faith and the christian love it implies (D.4, nn.2,18,28), but also in a more or less explicit context of faith, recognising that, beyond justice, faith has other dimensions and expressions that cannot be reduced to social justice alone. Faith not only gives us the initial motivation, but also clarifies and defines our vision of reality, determines the means and strategies we adopt and puts into proper perspective the specific goals we pursue as we promote justice here and now.

(b) A CIAS is a work of the Society

A CIAS belongs to the apostolic, religious and priestly community, linked by special bonds of love and service to the Church and its visible head, the Vicar of Christ. As such its contribution to promoting justice has a specific character that sets it apart from what others do in this field. Its contribution is in the area of prophetic proclamation and denunciation, of inspiration, support and guidance for those working to build a more just society, of gospel witness to solidarity and service in favour of the poor and oppressed, and above all in the forming of an individual and collective consciousness in the

light of social analysis and theological reflection. For more specific commitments extraneous to a priestly ministry in the strict sense or of an exceptional social or communal character, the directives of the Church and Society should be followed. (D.4, nn.78-80)

It follows therefore that the role of a CIAS is not determined solely by the needs of a specific social situation, or of a particular socio-political praxis and its immediate efficacy. Its mission, in so far as it is characteristic, is given in and mediated by obedience and carried out "in companionship" (D.2, nn.14-15), that is, in close contact not only with the local, but also the provincial and universal community of the whole Society. (D.4, nn.62-69)

2 : GUIDELINES

(a) Research and study

Serious and objective study of the social situation together with critical reflection on it in the light of faith are primary tasks of a CIAS. Without such study and reflection our attempts to conscientise and train others to change unjust social structures would lack solid foundation. Such an intellectual enquiry, pursued within a christian vision of man and society will not only help us to understand the deep roots of injustice, but also better to interpret even its social causes and judge whether tactics and strategies advanced to combat it conform with the christian praxis of the Gospel.

Clearly this work should be carried out in accordance with Church directives. The same applies to the publications we put out to spread the results of our research. Furthermore the very nature of our work calls for a humble, sincere and open search for the truth. It precludes adopting predetermined positions or closed ideological and political systems. In this way the freedom of the Gospel together with the critical and above all ethical function that is ours will be preserved.

(b) Conscientization and training

Within the christian vision of man and society and of the personal and social dimensions of sin and redemption, the 32nd General Congregation underlined the importance of acting to change structures, insisting at the same time on the need for individual conversion and changing attitudes or procedures which generate injustice and feed oppressive structures (D.4 n.32). The work of training and "conscientization according to the Gospel" (D.4, n.60), and not merely social and political, is therefore another of the priority tasks of a CIAS. And it cannot be confined, on ideological or political grounds, to just a few groups or social classes, but should reach out to all who are capable of being agents for social change and influencing or having responsibility for social structures. (D.4, n.60)

(c) Contact with action groups at the grass-roots

Through its work of conscientization, training and advice, a CIAS will often have close contacts with action groups working at grass-root level. As was recognised in Lima during the meeting of Directors of CIAS (May 1976), such contacts

can help foster, mature and make more concrete our reflection and commitment to justice. However it must also be pursued within the context of our specific apostolic mission without seeking to supplant others (D.4, n.43) or allowing ourselves to become instrumentalized or politicized along party lines. Though the Gospel we preach has very radical implications in the social field, it is not our job to incite people to specific forms of revolutionary action and still less to organize them.

(d) Collaboration with systems or movements of marxist inspiration

Members of CIAS often stress the importance of the "ideological" aspect of their work. However they should be careful not to reduce a christian input in the social field merely to inner motivation since this would lead them, almost subconsciously, to accept from other social or political systems not only scientific elements of analysis, but also the very ideology which underpins and conditions them and which is often irreconcilable both with a christian view of reality and the demands of a social and political praxis based on the Gospel.

I am referring particularly to systems clearly inspired by marxism and to options described as "socialist" or "marxist" which some claim to have made, though without always clearly defining their meaning and content. The deep and justified concern of the Church and Society for these often unclear and ambiguous options in favour of systems or ideologies which both in theory and concrete praxis present problems to the christian conscience cannot be attributed merely to conservatism or traditionalism. Contemporary history shows that such concern is well founded. The fact that others let themselves be influenced or instrumentalized by systems or ideologies as unacceptable as marxism is no justification for making the same mistake, especially now when we are trying to correct defects of the past and give a new orientation to the Society's mission.

The increasing influence of marxism in today's world calls for well prepared groups, such as the members of a CIAS, to study and reflect seriously on this system and help in setting up a platform for critical and constructive dialogue with it. However in doing this, care must be taken to avoid reductionisms and dilutions that lead to a progressive weakening of the faith and deprive our social commitment of the deep motivation that inspires and justifies it, and gives it its specific value and weight. Such a delicate and difficult task should not be undertaken with a superficial knowledge of marxism nor without a deep experience of faith rooted in solid theological training.

(e) Interdisciplinary co-operation

As stated in the Lima meeting, a CIAS should co-operate "with the different spheres of church and jesuit activity that request it." This is an especially important aspect of its work, since modern social problems are particularly complex and require an interdisciplinary approach to tackle them adequately. This observation applies especially to the Colegio Maximum and our University. If the professors in these centres and the CIAS research team work in close collaboration, they could give a first rate service to the country.

(f) *Collaboration with lay people*

Collaboration with lay people in the work of a CIAS is not only helpful but at times necessary, even though it cannot cover all aspects of the mission confided to the CIAS by the Society. This limitation should neither impede nor threaten such a collaboration, but it will be up to the Jesuits to see that those aspects proper to their mission are fulfilled.

To sum up, I think the CIAS is a work of great importance. To measure up to its commitment, it needs to push ahead with the work of research and training, accentuating its apostolic nature, with great respect for the directives of the Church and Society, and in union with other works in the Province and all those of good will who seek a remedy for injustice and the coming of the Kingdom.

 VIOLENCE AND SOCIETY

We reproduce below the full text of an important document published on Christmas Day by the eight Provincials of Spain and addressed to all Spanish Jesuits. The result of much collective reflection, it not merely condemns contemporary violence, but invites positive action for peace. This calls for a stronger commitment to our mission of serving faith and promoting justice. And, as the Provincials rightly point out, the problem is by no means confined to Spain.

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Introduction

During our 1979 meetings, one problem kept recurring: violence in all its forms, an ever present factor in modern society. Clearly this problem does not concern only Spain, but seems characteristic of our world today. In the West two significant statements were made on this subject in 1978 by the Episcopal Conferences of North America and Germany (Federal Republic) (1). All the Jesuit Provincials in Spain, including those whose regions are less threatened by open violence or terrorist action, detect elements of the same process and share the same concern. Nor does it seem that such manifestations of violence are diminishing. On the contrary, signs are that, unless attacked at the root, they will go on getting worse.

Faced by such a situation, we hope this letter will serve as a guide for Spanish Jesuits and be our collective reaction to the "gentle disposition" with which God's Spirit moves the times in which we live.

1 : ANALYSIS

 (1) *Causes for concern in our society*

The manifestations of violence taking place at the moment, whether open or concealed (2), are evident to all. Among the more important, we mention the following: *basic indifference* to, if not actual approval of, the phenomenon; an *aggressive radicalization* in opinions, often dictated more by haste and emotion than any desire to understand; a *growing disposition* to reply violently to what is seen as undue coercion; a *proliferation of phenomena* such as juvenile delinquency and drug addiction, armed robbery, rape, kidnapping and terrorist activity

of all kinds with alarming rates of increase. Finally *discouragement and despair* before the task of patiently shaping the world, which itself is an open invitation to the emergence of authoritarian regimes and socio-political regression.

What is serious about this situation is not only the fate of innocent victims and the insecurity of the majority. It is a fairly general deterioration in human qualities and interpersonal relations. All this challenges us and poses even more radical questions: Has violence become a necessary phase in those countries considered more advanced and developed? Will certain authoritarian solutions become inevitable as humanity proves incapable of recovering or learning from past experiences?

Some sociologists hold there is no more violence today that at any other time, though its forms are more violent because of new methods and greater powers of destruction. Others seem to admit the fact that the age in which we live is especially marked by this scourge. But whether one describes it as an *epidemic* or a *metastasis* implanted in a frail social organism, it is hard to deny the reality of the following paradoxical situation: the more sensibility grows concerning the violation of rights or oppressive injustice, the more the feeling increases that recourse to unrestrained brute violence is necessary to bring about the profound changes desired. This conviction can lead to an irreversible escalation that will leave our society disfigured by hatred, violence and lack of respect for life.

We are neither alarmists nor pessimists. If we were, our only recourse would be a resigned fatalism. But there are moments in history when events can be foreseen, even though obscurely, and it is possible to take remedial action. At a later stage prognostics are clearer, but then possibilities for action and struggle diminish. The fear of appearing alarmist should not make us fall into the real danger of arriving on the scene too late, as has happened so many times in our history.

In this calm and positive frame of mind, we wish to propose a few points for community reflection, so that we can better know, face up to and prevent the danger ahead.

(2) *Towards a prophetic and gospel outlook*

Turning to the inspiration of St. Ignatius of Loyola, formed by the book of the Exercises, we believe that, before reflection, we need to purify our hearts (3). We must open ourselves to METANOIA, a gospel inversion of attitudes, and ask ourselves whether this phenomenon of violence is not a product of our own faults. It is precisely when referring to violent action that Jesus disconcertingly reminds us: "*do not think you are free from fault; unless you repent, you will perish*" (4). We want to allow ourselves to be seriously challenged by these words before we embark on our evaluation. We cannot speak unless we have previously examined our consciences and searched for the faults we may have committed, as nation, Church and Society of Jesus in Spain, as well as individuals.

It is obvious our advanced society is in poor health. Perhaps the incidents of lawlessness we want to halt are no more than the final stage of other unbloody and velvet-gloved types of lawlessness. The Bishops mentioned above speak of

other criminal acts in addition to the crime of violence. Among these, they mention economic crimes, abuse of power by civil servants, fraudulent consumer goods, social and economic inequality, the acceptance of injustice and discrimination. Is not this list valid for Spain as well? When we start examining in detail a particular case of violence, we are reminded of the Gospel words: "*Let he among you who is without sin throw the first stone*" (5). If this is true, then as Church and Society of Jesus in Spain, we have sinned by complicity and by failing clearly to denounce similar social situations.

Sometimes, typical of those who are well off, we have let ourselves be lulled by the prospect of peace at any price; at others we have been put off by the inconvenience that goes with stirring up consciences; or again we have shied away from losing friendships and privileges, undeniably helpful to our work. For all this, we ourselves are in need of being pardoned.

An unhealthy society like ours gradually becomes incapable of distinguishing between a legitimate *institutional violence* (6), necessary for any type of social existence, and a wholly illegitimate *institutionalized violence* which tries to hide under the cloak of the former. The resulting confusion leads to a dangerous marriage.

In Vatican II, the Church did not presume to speak of atheism without publicly acknowledging its own share of guilt for its existence. Nor can we speak of violence without recognising many instances of institutionalized violence which are illegitimate but often justified precisely because they are part of an established order. As examples we must mention the existence of a legal minimum wage below what is needed to live; and unemployment; a veritable school of crime, together with gross abuses in the use of unemployment benefits. Also part of institutionalized violence are a scandalously unequal distribution of wealth, administrative corruption, the flight of capital abroad, a negative policy of capital investment, systematic use of the strike before any effort to dialogue on labour problems, forced emigration, political or cultural subjection of minority groups, lack of recognition of their just rights, etc.

This and much more must we recognise if, as Christians, we wish to proclaim the God of the Bible whose striking attribute is a transcendent justice calling for realisation on a human level; or if we wish to be Jesuits who have accepted the Society's mission to reconcile the estranged (7); to defend faith and promote justice (8). We cannot talk about or cast judgement on violence unless we have first disassociated ourselves from the institutionalized violence in our society.

2 : EVALUATION

(3) *Ethical roots of the evil*

Since it is not enough to denounce, we propose taking a step further. At the root of much violence, we feel there is lurking a fairly common attitude that can be described as *utopian materialism*. It is immoral since it implies a subtle subversion of human values, all the more dangerous for being hidden and disguised.

This attitude of *utopian materialism* can be described as follows. On the one hand, the fever to have and consume and the constant stimulation of possessive instincts by the social communications media gradually drive people towards a hedonism which expresses itself in an indiscriminate acceptance of everything instinctive, spontaneous, facile, convenient and gratifying to the senses. On the other hand, a host of false promises leads to hopes that from such an impoverishment will emerge the nobler attributes of mankind - liberty, peace, love, fulness, justice - and thus bring about a genuine utopia of happiness (9).

When these expectations are not realised, they naturally give place to constant tension which is at the root of frustration, aggression and violence. Strange as it may seem, there is in such an attitude a subtle distortion of christian elements which consequently makes it a source of temptation to some believers. In the christian proclamation of God's Kingdom, matter and utopia are central both as ideas and realities; in the Incarnation they become joined. However rather than reducing utopia to matter, the christian transforms and elevates matter towards utopia. Thus we see the outlook we have described as *utopian materialism* as a sort of neopaganism with christian cravings. Its characteristic contrast between a hedonistic materialism and the elevated terminology used causes a deterioration in community relations and an accentuation of egoism. This in turn leads to a sort of self appropriation of social rights and ideals. Liberty, democracy, fatherland, justice, become identified with MY ideas of liberty, democracy, fatherland, justice, and develop into one PARTICULAR concept of utopia. The result is frustration due to expectations incapable of being realised.

Yet this frustration is constantly fed in our society. It is fed by political groups which make better promises than others in order to get more votes; by consumerist propaganda trying to get people to spend; by the industries of sex and eroticism; by the doctrinaire criticism of religion as a seedbed for resignation; by the restless rush of modern life that drives away peace and serenity and builds up aggressivity. All these are the results of the *utopian materialism* we have been attacking.

(4) *The sacralization of violence as a temptation to idolatry*

It is often said that violence necessarily breeds violence. This has a double meaning. First, because a violent act sets off a reaction mechanism, also violent, in the person who suffers it. And secondly because it stimulates in the violent themselves a subtle psychological process by which violence ends in becoming a moral and psychological need for those who practise it.

This *need* includes elements of intoxication, delirium and, sometimes, even ritual and quasi-*religious* symbols. These last are especially evident in extreme forms of violence threatening human life. Is not the person who coldly carries out this type of action in some way overstepping the status of creature and even human being? It is precisely here one finds the idolatrous and *sacralizing* aspect of violence.

This aspect is often overlooked even by those who carry out violent acts. Hence it is important to expose it. Frequently in history one finds violence associated with attitudes of a religious nature, of anxiety shed in *expiatory*

sacrifice or, in more modern times, in the sphere of political struggle. In some cases it is a question of rechanneling already existing religious convictions. In others, of substituting for a religion that has been lost. In both hypotheses we encounter the same phenomenon of transposition.

In the history of religions, especially the Jewish, the tradition of the sacrificial goat is well known: loaded with the sins and angers of the community, it was sent out to Azazel, the demon of the desert (10). In this way the community freed itself of its aggression and sin. The same is true of the analogous belief that peace comes from shed blood (11). However for us Christ represents the annulment of both liturgies. According to the Letter to the Hebrews, the blood of Christ has sealed the alliance *once for all* in definitive form (12). Blood no longer has the strength to pacify.

It is non-Christian secular society that has forgotten these truths and their significance. Peace is no longer seen as a result of the conquest of aggression and violence by love. Rather attempts are made to direct these forces towards some artificial victim without which becomes psychologically necessary to preserve inner stability. Examples of this would be the presentation of fascism or communism, as the case may be, as *scapegoats* in some liberating holocaust.

The same is also true of terrorism and violence, new scapegoats of contemporary society for unloading aggressiveness and justifying injustices, and hoping thereby to discover its own identity. Yet to act thus is merely to close a vicious circle. Violence and terrorism assume a pseudo-religious halo; they become *martyrs* and present themselves as models of heroism, that is, of those very qualities so often lacking in our social groups.

A similar example of *sacralization* is the subconscious conviction of many that violence is justified by the mere fact of being *anti-something* (ANTIcommunist, ANTIfascist, ANTIimperialist, ANTIseparatist, or ANTIterrorist). This emphasises how violence arises from a conviction that the *something* is an absolute evil with no right to exist. Any form of aggressiveness against it is justified, irrespective of the fact that people are involved and behaviour becomes dehumanised.

Here again we must turn to our faith to remind ourselves that, according to Christian theology, absolute evil neither exists nor can exist as historical reality. Hence human acts cannot be defined or fully justified merely by being ANTI-something, but rather in terms of their creativity and service of others.

Before ending these reflections, we wish to call attention to some concrete factors that strengthen the urge to sacralize violence and make it almost an act of idolatry.

The first is the experience and atmosphere of frustration which thrives in the fertile soil of great industrial complexes, so many of them products of an uncontrolled drive for profit. In these huge conurbations, a person becomes anonymous and literally ceases to be *member* of a community. Such a loss often means the loss as well of a sense of restraint and responsibility, thus increasing alienation and marginalization. Our great cities are hotels for millions of rootless people. To this must be added the appalling problem of the forced immigration of labour, a further school for frustration.

Secondly there is the possible connection that exists between violence, terrorism and obscure international interests. Although reliable information on this is usually lacking, it is obvious that these multinational interests push to an extreme the false ideals of the *utopian materialism* we have been describing. They also dispose of ample resources to engage in terrorism as a means for destabilizing weaker societies in accordance with their own aims.

(5) *Traditional teaching and borderline cases*

The conclusion of all the above is a radical condemnation of violence in both its theoretical and personal aspects. There is need to proclaim that few things are more opposed to a christian view of the world than violence against the human person. The formula *thou shalt not kill* is much more than a convenient regulation or an accidental command. It consists in an act of respect, paid ultimately to God himself, whether explicitly or by implication. A society structured on violence is wholly opposed to the concept of communion which inspires the christian vision of God and man.

This attitude of non-violence which steams from the christian message and therefore obliges us all, does not exclude certain borderline cases of an extreme nature where, though regretted, it is not possible to condemn a limited form of violence. In view of this, christian teaching has carefully defined the circumstances in which the use of physical violence might be considered not illegitimate. This is not the place to repeat teaching that is well known. We would merely like to make a few observations.

1. Although the Church teaches that exceptionally violence may be considered not illegitimate, we must remember that human experience often tends to turn an exception into a rule. When this happens, violence ceases to be considered the lesser evil and becomes a desirable solution. To avoid this we have to apply the principle as to whether the violence suffered is more or less equal between perpetrator and victim. If we had applied this standard in our own society, numerous acts of violence would have been avoided in recent years.

2. With regard to acts against human life, we sincerely hold that none of the deaths that have taken place in Spain in recent times can be justified OBJECTIVELY from a moral point of view. All should be condemned and some cry out to heaven, more strongly than any possible extenuating circumstances of one type or another.

3. Rather than determining whether in any particular circumstance violence may be legitimate, the Gospel calls on us to *labour that it may never become so*. This is the real job for the pacific, the authentic builders of peace. For this reason they are blessed and deserve to be called the sons of God. (13)

3 : CONCRETE ACTION

We would like to end these reflections with some suggestions as to what we Jesuits in Spain might be able to do. We think this is a service we are called to give by that *gentle disposition* of the spirit we mentioned at the start of this document.

(6) *Suggestions for our action as individuals and communities*

Obviously in the first place we need to be convinced, personally and as a body, both of the seriousness of the topic and of our responsibility with regard to it. We would like this document to become the object of reflection for all Jesuits so that it can pass into our very lives. However, it seems advisable to indicate a few specific points so that the effort of all may be strengthened and coordinated.

1. Before anything else, our Society in Spain must take up seriously the option of the 32nd. General Congregation with regard to faith and justice. So as to fool nobody, people should be able to recognise us as clearly marked by this option, since it is meant to give meaning and coherence to the wide range of tasks to which it gives rise. Without a serious effort to combat injustice, our struggle against violence will lack force and credibility. This effort forms part of our Gospel ministry. We must ask ourselves how far we have been obedient in our reply to the 32nd. General Congregation. As Father General has reminded us, we should remember beforehand that such an option will bring us difficulties, lack of understanding, inconvenience and loss of friends and support. But this is the lot promised by Jesus to those who decide to follow him. It is the same lot that we accept in accordance with the spirit of the Exercises and of our Society.

2. Our task must always be a struggle against injustice and marginalization, fertile fields for violence, but never against people as such, not even against those who attack us. To hate sin yet love the sinner is more necessary than ever, so that all may understand that absolute evil cannot exist within time. If our NO to sin becomes a NO to the individual, group or institution, there is a danger of overlooking the very limitations of human nature and thus sacralizing violence and absolutizing it. Our witness to society and the world will at times necessarily be inconvenient and critical; but it should always be one of service and never hostile. God sent His Son into the world not to condemn but to save (14). This holds also for our presence among the poor and oppressed. We Jesuits in Spain must always give examples of respect and brotherhood in our option and even unconditional passion for justice.

3. This attitude should begin with ourselves and the life of our own Society. Often in our own living together we do not provide models of tolerance, dialogue and a pluralism based not on indifference but fraternal respect. Although there can be times when pluralism in fact becomes debilitating and excessive, we should not forget that a sickness of this nature is cured not by authoritarian methods but rather through the slow processes and innate powers of a living organism. This approach will not only make our work easier and strengthen its apostolic nature, but will help give public witness to genuinely democratic processes capable of overcoming the age-old intolerance of Spain.

4. Our Society in Spain is responsible for extensive work in education whose impact, both medium and longterm, is unquestionable. If we see to it that our commitment to faith and justice play a much greater part in this work than until now, then our educational apostolate really will become an education for peace and truth (15).

Even though an explicit education in the faith becomes more difficult in a society increasingly secularised and pluralistic, we should maintain at all costs a christian education against any form of idolatry. False gods and false images of God end by demanding human sacrifices, according to the lessons of history. In opposition to the many forms of idolatry that surround us, we must hold firm in our education to the conviction that nothing, absolutely nothing apart from the living God, deserves to be *loved above all things*. Neither one's own country, one's own race, one's own philosophy, one's own party, nor even oneself. Only the living God unites all values and *reconciles all opposites*. Every other idol absolutises one value over others and ends by calling for their death. It is also wrong to absolutise the option for justice along the lines of the famous saying: *do justice and let the world perish*. Our motto should be: *do justice that the world may live*.

In this context we need to emphasize the biblical concept of peace, increasingly neglected in our society. The peace that God wants does not come from imposing either myself or my particular group. Nor can it result from an injustice imposed by force which will end in collapse like the house built on sand.

True peace is the result of JUSTICE ASSUMED. This means thinking and acting on the principle of what I owe others rather than what they owe me. Peace really comes from respect of other's rights. This is the type of peace we must teach. Our education needs to follow the so called *principle of realism*. Our society needs to shake off once and for all the innumerable dreams of childish grandeur that have so often characterised Spain. From all we have said about *utopian materialism* and the idolatrous sacralization of violence, there should emerge a conviction that values have to be payed for. We cannot hope to achieve certain goals without taking the measures that lead to them. Otherwise we are inviting contradictions. For example, it is not enough to greet the abolition of the death penalty in our judicial system as a victory of humanity, if we neglect the most difficult part: that is, the construction of a society that makes the death penalty unnecessary and impossible. Its abolition calls for a higher level of education, justice and social integration of the marginalised. If we don't do this, voices will be raised again for its reintroduction, even though coming from those who worked neither for its abolition nor for the elimination of its causes. The same holds for disillusion with regard to democracy. It is one thing to be aware of its limits, but quite another to hanker after an antidemocratic past. Criticise democracy to improve it, yes; but not to advocate authoritarian solutions which will slow down the difficult period of apprenticeship. Every beginning is hard, much more so that of mutual understanding.

Finally our educational work should try to wipe out the seedbeds of violence in our society. It is better to prevent than to cure. However our society pays little attention to prevention and at many levels fosters these nurseries of violence. It does this, for example, through the constant bombardment of the indiscriminate viewer by aggressive films on television (16); the buying of warlike toys; the support of a sensationalist press and other forms of communication or distraction whose exaltation of violent heroes or prototypes helps in forming individual and social outlooks and habits of unmistakable aggression.

5. Jesuits working in the pastoral sector should see that the content of their retreats, preaching, catechetics, etc., has a more decided orientation towards the defense and promotion of human rights, as two recent documents requested (17). The same applies to those who use social communications media.
6. We should give due appreciation to the positive elements in many methods of non-violent struggle. There are certainly occasions when a society or group should not tolerate unjust pressures or forces, even though non-violent. However, such a limitation should not justify their total exclusion. Many non-violent methods effectively inconvenience those against whom they are directed, though they should not lead to destructive and aggressive reaction without previous dialogue. Otherwise they could end in all out violence.
7. Because of its urgency, we think the Society in Spain should make a serious joint effort to prevent anti-Basque feelings from escalating as has happened in the past in other situations and with other groups in Spain. Such a reaction, as irrational as that against which it is directed, would make the mistake of giving minority groups the pretension, which they falsely claim, of representing the rights of the people. This would have the effect of canonizing Basque extremists as victims and martyrs since they would become identified with the general protest. Here we need to recall the christian command to forgive and insist that an injustice does not justify an unjust response.
8. We cannot end this document without saying a word on the spread of abortion and discussions on its possible legalization. Though we are aware that in this matter tragic situations can arise capable of challenging any principle, we still must hold and preach that the present campaign for abortion is calling in fact for a license to kill. Apart from biological discussions about life in the fetus, there is no doubt that provoked abortion suppresses a life which, though not yet fully formed, deserves to be called human because of its destiny and potentialities. It is undeniable that mankind has only questioned whether certain beings, such as women or slaves, have a human soul when it had a bad conscience regarding them. The elimination of an undesired fetus is an attack against wholly defenseless beings. Seen in this light, the present request by some groups is a crime against humanity. This consideration should be extended to cover all fields where life is in jeopardy. It would be terrible if it were said of us that we are only against abortion because it does not touch us in our own flesh.
9. Finally we believe that all Jesuits in Spain should make an effort to foster exchanges, debates and discussions in order to achieve the objectives stated above. In our two Universities and centres of higher studies, in our reviews and interdisciplinary teams of researches, through our instruments of social communication, not only should the causes of violence in our society be analysed, but also practical methods for overcoming them suggested. In this way we will give the world a living witness to the reconciliation, peace and universal brotherhood which are the Gospel attributes of the Kingdom of God.

Madrid, December 25, 1979

NOTES

- (1) Episcopal Conference of North America: "The collectivity and the struggle against crime" (9 March 1978). - Permanent Commission of the Episcopal Conference of the German Federal Republic: "Roots of terrorism and means for combatting it" (10 April 1978).
- (2) It will be seen that throughout this document we are referring to all kinds of violence, moral or physical, armed or unarmed.
- (3) GC 32 reminds us in D.2, n.1 that to be a Jesuit means "to know that one is a sinner, yet called to be companion of Jesus".
- (4) Luke 13, 1-6.
- (5) John, 8, 7.
- (6) Mankind seems to have acquired the conviction that it is wholly positive and convenient for the modicum of violence, without which humans cannot live together; not to be left to the arbitrary decision of each or to mere circumstance, but rather to be regulated by common accord and restricted in its exercise by stringent safeguards to a few in the name of all. In this way the laws and forces of order come into being which are indispensable in the day to day existence of any human society and which can be called, without intending any negative sense, *institutional violence*. (See Declaración teológica sobre el momento histórico español, Theology Faculty of Barcelona - Section S. Francisco de Borja - 1975, n.9).
- (7) Formula of the Institute of the Society of Jesus, approved by Julian III, n.1.
- (8) GC 32, D. 4.
- (9) What we call *utopian materialism* is materialism because it reduces man to his most instinctive and spontaneous aspirations, apart from any ethical experience. It is utopian because it hopes from these a degree of consciousness and human fulfillment that can only come from man's ethical development.
- (10) Leviticus 16, 7-10.
- (11) Exodus 24, 6-8.
- (12) Hebrews 7, 26-28.
- (13) Matthew 5, 9.
- (14) John 3, 6.
- (15) "There is no peace without justice or without freedom: without a courageous commitment to promote both" (John Paul II, World Day of Peace, 1979). "To promote truth as a safeguard for peace is to undertake a constant effort not to use, even though for a good end, the weapon of lies". (ibid., in the 13th. World Day of Peace, 1980).
- (16) According to the latest report of the Club of Rome, "any young American aged 17 has witnessed on the TV screen some 20,000 assassinations". See, Aprender, horizonte sin límites, Santillana, Madrid, 1979, p. 88.
- (17) "Misión del jesuita y compromisos temporales" (1976) and "Líneas prioritarias de acción apostólica" (1978):

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 NOTES ON DECREE FOUR

The following notes were prepared by Fr. Jean-Yves CALVEZ, General Assistant and also Regional Assistant for France and Italy. They were intended as an aid for a group of new Provincials meeting in Rome, with Father General, and have also been published in IGNIS (July - August, 1979), the information bulletin of the Jesuit Conference of India.

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1 : POINTS VERY CLEAR

A few things that were very clear for the delegates at GC XXXII and which I think are clear in the document too

There is a first persuasion that the Society has shown itself in the recent past *too indifferent* towards injustice, a massive feature of today's mankind. The Congregation invited all Jesuits to a very definite turn. Hence the idea, repeatedly stated, of an "option", a "decision", a "commitment", really new with regard to our recent past (e.g. n.28).

Then there is a *general theological foundation*, also repeated, e.g. nn.18, 28: "The Gospel demands a life freed from egoism and selfseeking, from all attempts to seek one's advantage and from every form of exploitation of one's neighbour. It demands a life in which the justice of the Gospel shines out in a willingness not only to recognize and respect the rights of all, especially the poor and powerless, but also to work actively to secure those rights" (n.18). "There is no genuine conversion to the love of God without conversion to the love of neighbour and, therefore, to the demands of justice" (n.28).

From this you have of course to conclude that any preaching of the Gospel involves *preaching* justice. Still more obviously it involves that we ourselves *practice* justice in any situation that concerns us. But there is a further, a third, point firmly affirmed too: the special service of the faith and of the Gospel, which is our own as apostles, involves a certain *special* participation in the promotion of justice. Something that is beyond our being just in the situations that directly concern us and beyond our preaching the way of justice as inherent to the Gospel. I have said that it is clearly affirmed, but I used the words: "a certain" special participation, in order to mean that it has to be specified, and that it is perhaps not so easy to see which is proper to us. I shall come back to this later.

A fourth point is very clear: we lack "*insertion*". Even before thinking of special actions to promote justice, we have to have a more experimental knowledge of unjust situations. To often we are insulated from any real contact with hard everyday's consequences of injustice and oppression (n.35). We are even insulated from simple life in general and its day-to-day concerns (n.49). There is clearly the request of a greater involvement with the world, not only with situations where injustice reigns, but significantly, with these.

Similarly -a fifth point-: there is clearly a request for solidarity of *all Jesuits* with the poor. It is readily admitted at the same time that we may not all be able to share fully the lives of the poor (n.49). But all in whatever ways are accessible to them should show solidarity with the poor (n.48); this implying among other things changes in our manner of life.

A sixth very clear point is that there was never a question of proposing action for the promotion of justice as a kind of *substitute*, or of an adequate contemporary version of the service of faith. The Congregation always thought of the service of faith as the overall goal of the Society. Promotion of justice is a necessary part of it, an "integral" one, an "indispensable" one. But it clearly is a part, not the whole. (By the way, if it is remarked that we are insulated from real contact with injustice, it is similarly remarked that we are often insulated from any real contact with unbelief; unbelief and injustice being not considered as coextensive).

A seventh point related to the sixth is that our participation in the promotion of justice must of necessity be of a specifically *christian* nature. "There can be no promotion of justice in the full and christian sense unless we also preach Jesus Christ and the mystery of reconciliation He brings" (n.27). "If the promotion of justice is to attain its ultimate end, it should be carried out in such a way as to bring men and women to desire and to welcome the eschatological freedom and salvation offered to us by God in Christ". "The methods we undertake should express the spirit of the Beatitudes and bring people to a real reconciliation" (n.39).

Again -an eight point- it is clear that our service of faith and our contribution to the promotion of justice should take place in the framework of an *apostolic system* which consists primarily if not exclusively of:

- theological reflection... "throwing light on the main problems which the Church and humanity ought to be coming to grips with today";

- conscientization according to the Gospel of those who have the power to bring about social change (with a special place for the poor and oppressed);

- education, tending to turn out people capable of building a more just world;

- communication not just individual-personal but reaching also many men we could not meet individually, hence a presence in the mass media (n.60).

Not only we do not have to get away from these areas (or dimensions of endeavour) but we have definitely to intensify our action *in them*. (Let us note too that

the Congregation adds elsewhere a fifth type of action typical of Jesuits: the Spiritual Exercises, leading to freedom from reductive ideologies and nevertheless to intense social commitment (n.58). The stress on theological reflection for its part can be related to the insistence on serious study, submitting all problems, also social, to serious study: this is our task rather than activism.

2 : POINTS LESS CLEAR

Points which were not so easily solved, or about which there was a certain diversity of views and about which the Congregation attempted a conciliation without perhaps resolving the question entirely, leaving therefore much to discernment

What *type* of involvement in the promotion of justice (beyond preaching justice and beyond being just ourselves) is proper to us? The Congregation says: once we really enter into solidarity with the voiceless and the powerless, *experience* itself will show us the commitments required for us (n.42). Or: "From analysis and discernment will come committed action" (n.44).

Still it also says: "We do not have to duplicate or compete with the strengths (of others) in the struggle to promote justice" (n.43).

One has to admit that this is not very explicit. Behind it there is the question of the difference between what suits *priests* and what suits laypeople according to the ordinary practice of the Church. Hence the word "priestly" introduced in n.18 -as a matter of fact it was introduced as an amendment somewhat against the will of the commission-. Number 18 says: "The mission of the Society today is the *priestly* service of the faith". The following sentences do not however explicitate very much what in the general thrust of the Gospel towards justice would be priestly, what would be more proper for lay Christians. This may explain why the question was taken up again by Cardinal Villot in his May 2, 1975 letter, trying to be more specific: "We must not forget that the priest should inspire lay Catholics, since in the promotion of justice theirs is the more demanding role. The tasks proper to each should not be confused".

The Congregation itself had something of this in mind, although in a somewhat obscure vocabulary, when it spoke of the "involvement in civic (political) activity" which will frequently be brought about by the engagement to promote justice. There are *ordinary* forms of this involvement in civic activity to which we can be readily open. But there are also "*exceptional*" forms which should precisely remain exceptional. Reference is made to the current position of the Church which considers as quite exceptional for priests the involvement in active politics and political militancy (cfr. Synod of Bishops, 1971).

Another related area is that of the action on *structures*. The Congregation takes good note of the importance of the structures of society (n.40). According to the principle of the more universal good (n.39), action on the structures of society or the struggle to transform them is "intimately connected to the work

of evangelization" (n.40). But again one can say there are many ways to act upon the structures of society. Too often one thinks that direct political action is the only way.

One should however admit that education is a powerful means too, as well as the "conscientization according to the Gospel of those who have the power to bring about social change", of which we already spoke (n.60).

The Congregation does not discuss this in detail. It has however said that inequalities and injustices are the "result of what *man* himself, man in his selfishness has done" (n.27). It has also said that the problems of the world, hunger, poverty, unjust distribution of wealth, racial, social and political discrimination "are not just social and technological but *personal and spiritual...*" (n.21).

I think one must say that the problem of our specific action upon structures remains a somewhat opened one and certainly a difficult one. Note by the way that when speaking of transformation of structures the Congregation explicitly mentioned the importance of not neglecting in our apostolate "those who bear some responsibility or influence over the structures".

Beyond these difficult general problems the Congregation was persuaded too that it could itself give only some kind of overall orientations that had to be applied to *particular* situations, and to particular apostolates. It required a "process of reflection and evaluation", that has begun indeed in many parts of the Society but has certainly not been carried through everywhere, at least is by no means ended...

3 : GENESIS OF THE DECREE

Now a few words about the way in which the Congregation produced this decree. They may help in explaining what the Congregation wanted, even if it did perhaps not entirely succeed in conveying everything it wanted to convey.

At the beginning of the General Congregation there were three different commissions entrusted with the matter that has become Decree 4.

One dealt with the question of basic apostolic orientations and with more particular questions like: how should we understand today the typical ministries of the Society as listed in the Formula Instituti (and Constitutions)? also: how to go about a more efficient implementation of the service of faith required from the Society by the Pope in the context of modern atheism?

A second commission dealt with the postulates tending to the restoration of "mission" as something essential to Jesuit vocation, in order to counteract certain tendencies to individualistic deployment that had made themselves felt at the end of the 60's and beginning of the 70's. Two principal ideas: our activities as missions received in obedience; the corporate dimension of our commitments.

A third commission dealt with the postulates which required a stronger commitment of the Society to the promotion of justice.

At a certain moment during the Congregation it was decided to merge into one document the fruit of the work of these three commissions. Hence in the final document alongside with the decision to give more weight to the promotion of justice you find a renewed insistence on the service of the faith as such, particularly with regard to unbelief; you also find a very typical stress on the idea that service of faith must be rather explicit, in a certain opposition to a tendency to purely secular activities; apostolic only in the intention; in other words, importance of an explicit witness to the Gospel; we should always try to *communicate* that which gives meaning to everything we do. ("To promote justice, to proclaim the faith and to lead others to a personal encounter with Christ are the three inseparable elements that make up the whole of our apostolate" -n.51).

As for the conclusions of the commission on Mission in Obedience and Corporate Mission, they were incorporated in nn. 62-69 of the Decree under the title "A Missionary Body".

Why this merger? For a rather pragmatic reason, but which included a certain reason of principle (at least in the view of some). The third commission (*Promotio justitiae*) had gone very fast in its work, the other two were somewhat bogged down. As a way out one decided that there would be only one document; the commissions too were merged in order to set up a more efficient small drafting group. The reason of principle which was behind the move (for some) was that they were afraid that too much weight would be given to the trend towards participation in the promotion of justice if only the third commission succeeded in its drafting effort. The danger would be of disregarding the service of the faith, this being the very core of Jesuit vocation. There could also have been a danger of secularism in the apostolate.

Anyway this is how it came to the integration of the two aspects. It can be added that the stress on the service of the faith was more and more felt as the work went on through amendments that were proposed from the floor and accepted even against a somewhat reluctant committee. This indicates how difficult it was to strike a balance that would satisfy the Congregation. The decree proposes, I think, a rather sound balance. It is nevertheless not surprising that some discussion has gone on ever after the Congregation concerning the precise way in which to integrate service of faith and promotion of justice.

I have to add a further detail that shows how fronts can change in such an effort. When we finally had the integrated document, some began to say that they would have preferred a separate document on promotion of justice. There would have been less of a danger of overemphasizing that dimension in the whole of our service of the faith. The Congregation's document would not pretend to be a complete definition of Jesuit apostolate; rather it would touch only one aspect, to be understood within the traditional framework of our goal.

But it is a fact that the integrated document remained, the Congregation desiring precisely a *high degree of integration* of the service of faith and the promotion of justice. It so happened that the integration which had occurred first in order to answer a redactional and procedural -or drafting efficiency-

problem became a central idea to which most of the Congregation adhered (even if the last expression they gave to it did not fully come up to the level of their expectations).

I think this leaves us with questions about the precise way in which to integrate service of faith and promotion of justice in different situations and different apostolates. But the overall thrust towards that integration is perfectly clear, and it is clear enough, I think, even at the level of the text.

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THE WORLD OF THE WORKER

"I realised that, as Jesuits, we are not only far from this world but feel a certain resistance to it". So wrote one of our correspondants in PJ 14 (p. 108) in spite of four years experience among workers in a very poor urban district in BRASIL. We offer below two brief "views" of this world in the hopes that others will share their experiences so that PJ can respond to the invitation of producing a more substantial issue on this important theme.

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1 : YOUNG WORKERS IN SICILY

In and around Priolo on the west coast of Sicily there live some 14,000 workers employed, for the most part, by a cluster of multinational industrial complexes. Among them is a small community of Jesuit priest-workers. One of their number carried out a mini-survey among some of the youths to discover what they felt about religion and the Church. Here are five of them replying to two of the questions asked.

QUESTION: What is the position of religion and faith among you young workers ?

ANGELO: The problem of religion is important only for those youths who have had an experience of life in community and sharing their faith together. In general young workers don't think about God or Christ, even though they are continuously blaspheming, because they give more importance to things of everyday life, the things that make them feel alive and for which they are ready to fight. They don't pay any attention to things that have no life in them.

But if one of them discovers it is possible to have experiences that fulfill and give satisfaction, that make you feel free to take certain decisions, to make definite choices, to judge just or unjust one's own and other people's behaviour, then one can accept the possibility of guiding one's life with reference to Christ and getting involved in struggling for the good of others.

GINO: Where I work and among my friends christianity and religion are not mentioned or considered. If there is still some form of religious practice, it is only because of tradition, because the family insists on certain behaviour. Even if you don't believe what you are doing, you accept to do it to please your mother and father.

On the other hand, everything that is tradition is rejected by the young.

PATRIZIA: Problems of religion and faith occupy a pretty small place among the young. If they had been given more space, many things would have turned out better.

In fact, youth protest is limited to a debate with itself and is not capable of taking new paths, new solutions that haven't already been tried before, even though often the same or even worse mistakes are made.

For me a real religious faith can be accepted as a starting-point to give direction and meaning to one's life and to help in taking important decisions.

But the majority of youths have rejected this line. I think they are wrong, because the Gospel is a revolutionary message in so far as it proposes new ways of living and making choices.

And if anyone objects that this is utopia, one can reply with Marcuse that "Utopia is what society denies you and prevents you from being". It is society that conditions you and makes you feel that your plan for life cannot be realized.

GIANNA: Concerning your question about the youth here, there are two main positions: that of those who belong to left-wing parties and movements, including the radicals, and who, as a matter of course, cut out any reference to faith or religion. For them, the aim is to be atheists.

There is almost a convention that whoever admits to being a believer is cast on one side and excluded. But for me personally and for a few other youths, boys and girls, we accept as valid the position of those who hold that being a christian does not prevent one from belonging to the left.

QUESTION: How do the youth see the Church and what do they expect from it today ?

PIPPPO: Young workers in general have a negative picture of the Church because as an institution and structure it contradicts what it preaches as the message of the Gospel.

Priests have security while the young, especially if they are unemployed, have exactly the opposite. Priests preach humility and love of neighbour as oneself and yet they have a privileged position and lack nothing.

In addition, priests have a power which, because of traditions that still hold in many families in our villages and towns, they exercise with the aim

of maintaining things as they are, that is, along a clearly conservative line. This irritates many young people because it doesn't help their interests and blocks the way for those who want to build a new society.

Young people are waiting for the Church to get rid of its pomp, triumphalism, numerous privileges, and to hand over the many possessions it has to society so that, with its prestige and influence, it can promote works and structures to meet the needs of youth.

So many youths and people are tired of always hearing repeated the same sermons, the same arguments, the same positions, not only in what concerns the Church, but also in politics.

This is why young people are so critical of the Church in general and also of those church movements which follow a certain conservative line. Often they join independent groups because there is no other choice, no other possibility of being together with others. It often happens they don't know where to go for meetings or get-togethers; they have no means or places at their disposal to come together to defend their own interests and propagate their own ideas.

Really neither I nor many others hope for anything from the Church because, with things as they are, Church and priests no longer mean anything to us. There are much bigger and more important problems such as work, society, pollution, nuclear centres, etc.

It is no longer like it used to be when the only refuge for christian families, the only place they could find comfort and security was in Religion. So they went to church to pray and ask for grace and protection from Christ and the Saints.

But now, since peoples' problems are not getting solved, since Church and priests don't show themselves ready to do all they can to meet the needs of the people and youth, no one really believes seriously in religion any more, and most of those who practise it do so without real conviction.

Also relations between priests, especially parish priests, and youth are mostly conventional because the former insist on maintaining their distance and show a mentality that is too far removed from the problems of people and youth, too different from their way of thinking and behaving. They show they are still closed and with little or no understanding of the attitudes and ideas of the young.

ANGELO: Certain attitudes of authority in the Church are badly viewed by youth because they don't leave people free to make up their own minds on personal and private matters like divorce, abortion, political party, etc. There is also evidence to show how the Church is tied up with the powerful. Christ becomes replaced by a whole series of mystifications. So I and other young people would hope from the Church, though we don't think it will ever come, a change in line with the Gospel. We want to see the Church, as was Christ himself, part of the marginalized, taking sides with the oppressed, fighting against exploitation and totalitarianism of left or right, not only with elegant

speeches and documents which fill the mouth, but with positive and concrete action.

PATRIZIA: Young people want to see a Church ready to help them realise their utopia of a society built on love, a Church that gives more space to prophecy and less to institutional structures. Every time we have recourse to the Church as institution, we find ourselves faced by a structure we cannot accept because of its links and subterfuges.

The Church should rather be giving a lead and be in the front line for changing the structures of today's society.

It should also be a means for giving voice to the silent majorities which are overwhelmed by powerful and arrogant minorities sustained by violence and political corruption.

GIANNA: I also agree that I see the Church as an oppressive structure, allied with the dominant class and its accomplices because it doesn't put an end to their policy of exploiting and oppressing the lower strata of society.

Even though we see examples of priests coming closer to the working world as priest-workers, they are too few to counterbalance the example of parish priests who proclaim "Blessed are the poor and those who suffer", but themselves have no problems and lead a privileged life. Furthermore many of these are blind to reality and don't understand they are helping favouritism and exploitation when they make recommendations or obtain jobs for work that is blackleg and underpaid.

So the young workers in my environment don't expect anything new from the Church.

2 : AN IRISH SCHOLASTIC IN FRANCE

The following very brief account comes from a young Irish scholastic who spent a month in France during the summer with the Jesuits of the mission ouvrière at Toulouse.

For some time now Decree Four of GC XXXII has been challenging me and I have felt the need to respond. This was behind the idea of going to live with the Jesuit community of the French mission ouvrière and getting some experience of working, after looking for a job.

I was lucky enough to find a job as a cleaner after looking for two days. But those two days were a rough experience. "Go and sell yourself on the market", one of the community had said to me. And it was exactly what I had to do. And with no technical qualifications, I wasn't able to ask for a very high price. It was a

a real experience of poverty, of begging.

The desire to be poor with Christ wasn't (or shouldn't have been) too foreign to my spiritual outlook. But to be actually begging, to be up for sale in order to get manual work, this was quite new. I felt it as a challenge and an invitation in my following of Christ.

The few weeks I spent on the job helped me fill out a bit the meaning of the work "work" - physical weariness, boredom, loss of all power, etc. The worker is at the total disposition of the foreman, a sort of stop-gap shifted around each day to meet the needs of the moment. As a worker he has little say in what he does. Nor is one often proud for having done a job well, even though I sometimes got some satisfaction after thoroughly sweeping out a room. However I knew it would be dirty again in a few days. And though the atmosphere at work was fairly pleasant, a worker remains a worker. Little is expected of him and little attention paid to him.

This trip to Toulouse, away from my own country and in the world of manual labour, helped me discover how my self-image depended on outside supports - a network of relationships, diplomas, social position, etc. Removed from this, I experienced a moment of self-recognition and of gratitude for all I have received from others and God, and have so often overlooked. The Gospel tells us that the preaching of the Good News to the poor is one of the signs of the kingdom. In the light of this experience, these words make me think again about my manner of living and loving.

This experience would have been impossible without the welcome of the mission ouvrière community at Toulouse. For their friendship, help and sense of humour (their fellow Irish worker often gave them cause for laughter), I am deeply grateful.

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