L’esempio dei santi Cirillo e Metodio

All’opera di evangelizzazione, attuata con ardore apostolico dai santi Cirillo e Metodio nel territorio abitato da popoli slavi, occorre continuare a guardare ancor oggi, perché costituisce un modello di inculturazione della fede, nei suoi elementi essenziali, pure nell’epoca postmoderna. Il Vangelo, infatti, non indebolisce quanto di autentico si trova nelle diverse tradizioni culturali, ma aiuta l’uomo di tutti i tempi a riconoscere e a realizzare il bene autentico, illuminato dallo splendore della verità. Compito pertanto dei cristiani è di mantenere e rinsaldare l’intrinseco legame esistente tra il Vangelo, la missione dei discepoli di Cristo e la loro rispettiva identità culturale. Riscoprire le radici cristiane è importante per contribuire a costruire una società in cui siano presenti i valori spirituali e culturali che scaturiscono dal Vangelo. Valori e ideali che si alimentano di un’incessante unione con Dio, come dimostra l’esistenza dei santi Cirillo e Metodio, costanti tessitori di rapporti di mutua conoscenza e cordialità tra popoli diversi e tra culture e tradizioni ecclesiali differenti.


Music: privileged instrument for encounter

Music, and art in general, can serve as a privileged instrument for encounter and reciprocal knowledge and esteem between different populations and cultures; a means attainable by all for valuing the universal language of art.
There is another aspect that I wish to emphasize. I note with pleasure the interest shown by your orchestra and choir in European religious music. This shows that it is possible, in different cultural settings, to enjoy and appreciate sublime manifestations of the spirit such as Mozart’s *Requiem* which we have just heard, precisely because music expresses universal human sentiments, including the religious sentiment, which transcends the boundaries of every individual culture.

*Address at the Conclusion of the Concert Given by the China Philharmonic Orchestra and the Shanghai Opera House Chorus, 7-5-2008.*

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**I giovani e la cultura odierna**

Desidero anzitutto felicitarmi con voi per aver posto al centro dei vostri lavori la riflessione sul come favorire l’incontro dei giovani con il Vangelo e quindi, in concreto, sulle fondamentali questioni dell’evangelizzazione e dell’educazione delle nuove generazioni. In Italia, come in molti altri Paesi, è fortemente avvertita quella che possiamo definire una vera e propria “emergenza educativa”. Quando, infatti, in una società e in una cultura segnate da un relativismo pervasivo e non di rado aggressivo, sembrano venir meno le certezze basilari, i valori e le speranze che danno un senso alla vita, si diffonde facilmente, tra i genitori come tra gli insegnanti, la tentazione di rinunciare al proprio compito, e ancor prima il rischio di non comprendere più quale sia il proprio ruolo e la propria missione. Così i fanciulli, gli adolescenti e i giovani, pur circondati da molte attenzioni e tenuti forse eccessivamente al riparo dalle prove e dalle difficoltà della vita, si sentono alla fine lasciati soli davanti alle grandi domande che nascono inevitabilmente dentro di loro, come davanti alle attese e alle sfide che sentono incombere sul loro futuro. Per noi Vescovi, per i nostri sacerdoti, per i catechisti e per l’intera comunità cristiana l’emergenza educativa assume un volto ben preciso: quello della trasmissione della fede alle nuove generazioni. Anche qui, in certo senso specialmente qui, dobbiamo fare i conti con gli ostacoli frapposti dal relativismo, da una cultura che mette Dio tra parentesi e che scoraggia ogni scelta davvero impegnativa e in particolare le scelte definitive, per privilegiare invece, nei diversi ambiti della vita, l’affermazione di se stessi e le soddisfazioni immediate.

*All’Assemblea Generale della Conferenza Episcopale Italiana, 29-5-2008.*
Los instrumentos de comunicación y la verdad

Las distintas formas de comunicación —diálogo, oración, enseñanza, testimonio, proclamación— y sus diversos instrumentos —prensa, electrónica, artes visuales, música, voz, gestos y contacto— son manifestaciones de la naturaleza fundamental de la persona humana. La comunicación revela a la persona, crea relaciones auténticas y comunidad, y permite a los seres humanos madurar en conocimiento, sabiduría y amor. (…)

Es evidente que en el centro de cualquier reflexión seria sobre la naturaleza y la finalidad de las comunicaciones humanas debe estar un compromiso con las cuestiones relativas a la verdad. Un comunicador puede intentar informar, educar, entretenér, convencer, consolar, pero el valor final de cualquier comunicación reside en su veracidad. (…)

Sería una tragedia para el futuro de la humanidad si los nuevos instrumentos de comunicación, que permiten compartir el conocimiento y la información de manera más rápida y eficaz, no fueran accesibles a los que ya están marginados económica y socialmente, o sólo contribuyeran a agrandar la distancia que separa a estas personas de las nuevas redes que se están desarrollando al servicio de la socialización humana, la información y el aprendizaje. Por otro lado, sería igualmente grave que la tendencia globalizante en el mundo de las comunicaciones debilitara o eliminara las costumbres tradicionales y las culturas locales, de manera especial las que han logrado fortalecer los valores familiares y sociales, el amor, la solidaridad y el respeto a la vida e

Discurso a un Congreso organizado por el Consejo Pontificio para las Comunicaciones Sociales, 23-5-2008.

Una Chiesa di tutti i popoli

“Tu sei Pietro e su questa pietra edificherò la mia chiesa e le porte degli inferi non prevarranno contro di essa. A te darò le chiavi del regno dei cieli”. È la prima volta che Gesù parla della Chiesa, la cui missione è l’attuazione del disegno grandioso di Dio di riunire in Cristo l’umanità intera in un’unica famiglia. La missione di Pietro, e dei suoi successori, è proprio quella di servire quest’unità dell’unica Chiesa di Dio formata da giudei e pagani di tutti i popoli; il suo ministero indispensabile è far sì che essa non si identifichi mai con una sola nazione, con una sola cultura, ma che sia la
Chiesa di tutti i popoli, per rendere presente fra gli uomini, segnati da innumerevoli divisioni e contrasti, la pace di Dio e la forza rinnovatrice del suo amore.

Angelus, 24-8-2008.

CATHOLIC BISHOPS’ CONFERENCE OF INDIA
COMMISSION FOR CULTURE AND EDUCATION

A Seminar on “Cultural Challenges for Christian Mission” was held at Pune, India from the 2nd to the 4th of August, 2008. The meeting organised by the Episcopal Commission for Culture and Education of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of India was attended by Cardinal Telesphore Toppo, 18 Bishops and Archbishops and Superior Generals, Province of Missionaries totalling 140 in all. Fr. Theodore Mascarenhas SFX represented thePontifical Council for Culture. Amidst well prepared Talks, animated workshops and rich discussions, the participants sought to prepare a response to the various cultural challenges facing the Christian Mission in India. Among these prominent were rising fundamentalism, marginalisation of subaltern cultures, caste system, poverty and injustice, globalisation etc.

The Seminar came out with the following concluding Statement.

INTRODUCTION

In response to a call given by the Bishops of India, through the CBCI Commission for Education and Culture, we, lay persons, Religious, Priests and Bishops – 140 in all, drawn from different parts of our country – came together to reflect on “Cultural Challenges for Christian Mission.” We reminded ourselves of a momentous change in human history: culture has moved to the centre of human life. Culture plays a decisive role in every aspect of life. Culture occupies the centre of people’s aspirations and anxieties. This was facilitated by the contemporary insights drawn from anthropology, affirming the cultural uniqueness of different ethnic groups, which demolished the prevailing myth of any one monolithic culture as the ideal human culture. Besides, the growing awakening of subaltern cultural groups empowered by modern education has also led to the assertion of their distinct identity with self-respect.

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Culture weaves the threads of people’s deeper level identities; it is the memory disk of their historic experiences. It is the mirror reflecting their ethnic pride, their collective psyche, community ambitions, and motivations including their shared prejudices, fears and weaknesses. It catalyses them for change and action, empowering them to claim their rights, to resist subjugation and to protect their identity, beliefs and values. That is why we consider that the Church can ill afford to ignore the cultural challenges in mission. Those who run the world of globalised economy, market and business and who control people’s lives, the neocolonisers, tend to ignore culture, as did the colonial masters of old.

We brought our concerns into prayer, and we celebrated our hope in the daily breaking of the Bread. We listened to one another, as research scholars animated us. And we made a reality check with concrete life-situations of people’s lives through our group sharing. Through all this, we looked at the emerging cultural landscape at this juncture of our history.

A. The Emerging Scenario

We focussed on the following aspects of the emerging scenario as far as cultures are concerned. We looked at the positive and negative aspects of the currents and forces that affect cultures in one way or another. Our aim was to read the signs of the times and discern the direction for an authentic Christian response as individuals, groups and communities.

1. Globalisation

Globalisation, while it contains several positive aspects, is bent on homogenising culture and promotes market values of consumerism and individualism. Peoples everywhere experience its negative impact in every area of life. It subtly injects uniform norms of conduct, customs, markets, meaning and ultimately ways of life alarmingly threatening humanity with its inherent exploitative tendencies. Post-modernism and globalisation became the twin engines of progress in an unprecedented way opening up new ways of interconnectedness through internet, super-fast computation, transportation and international travel, transforming the world as a global village. It contributed to greater awareness of cultural diversity. Postmodernism, among other things, has stimulated a renewed search for religiosity and meaning. At the same time, these forces promoted unbridled individualism, consumerism, loss of community sense and breakdown of family. In addition to these forces that intrude from outside, we identified
cultural nationalism as another monstrous force that destroys our cherished values of harmony and tolerance.

2. Cultural Nationalism and Cultural Intolerance

Foreign conquests, cultural insensitivity of colonial rulers and some overzealous missionaries, and the Orientalist romanticisation of Hinduism provided the backdrop for the birth of Hindu Nationalism. This was in stark contrast to the emerging liberal national movement for freedom grounded in secular and socialist vision. As a reaction, the threatened Hindu civilisation was anxious to rediscover its roots and affirm its supremacy. Organised resistance directed against Christian mission was first initiated with the foundation of Arya Samaj.

The emerging Hindutva ideology has three constitutive elements: a) nation (rashtra), race (jati) and civilisation/culture (sanskriti). The promoters of this ideology consider Hindustan as their fatherland (pitrubhoomi) as well as their “holy land” (punyabhoomi). Consequently, they hold that non-Hindus cannot have equal rights in this land. Hindu nationalism is embedded in an ideological agenda: to organise and mobilise Hindus on the vision of dharmaraj based on varnashramadharma of the caste hierarchical structure. The organisation of Rahstriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) was also enhanced by the concept of the Aryan supremacy of Hindus. Resulting from this exclusivist ideology is a hate campaign against its imagined enemies – Muslims, Christians, Communists and anti-Brahmin movements.

Through sustained vernacular media, ratha yatras, kaths and other popular means both the upper castes and the masses are being mobilised and organised. Further, the Sangh Parivar has inducted even their religious heads into the movement. Bajrang Dal and other Sangh Parivar organisations are founded to mobilise the youth. Violent attacks on places of worship, Christians, and their institutions, murder of priests and rape of sisters have accelerated.

3. Erosion of Democratic Ethos

The erosion of democratic ethos and the virus of corruption that eat into the vitals of political system, lack of accountability from the part of the ruling class, criminalisation of politics and politicisation of religions are other forces that impinge upon multicultural living. In this context, we are painfully aware of the lack of sufficient and effective presence of Christian laity who could act as leaven in the socio-political arena. Besides, sufficient efforts have not been made to promote their political participation and
leadership. It is of utmost urgency to heed the call and warning of Vatican II: “The Christian, who shirks his temporal duties, shirks his duties towards his neighbour, neglects God himself, and endangers his eternal salvation” (GS 43).

4. Influence of the Media

We are aware of the external influences being brought to bear upon people in general and the youth in particular. New ways of thinking and behaviour are emerging as a result of over exposure to mass media and of the information-communication technology’s impact on our youth. It even creates a generational digital divide, with the older generation, on the one hand, being unable to cope with the fast developments, and, on the other, the youth always dreaming of ever new possibilities. It encourages anonymous and often ambiguous identities, leading to a sudden surge of independence, a daring to explore whatever is new. Nevertheless, the modern media can become a boon for promoting evangelical values.

As John Paul II cautioned: “… Their beneficial effects can at times be outweighed by the way in which they are controlled and used by those with questionable political, economic and ideological interests. As a result the negative aspects of the media and entertainment industries are threatening traditional values, and in particular the sacredness of marriage and stability of the family. The effect of images of violence, hedonism, unbridled individualism and materialism is striking at the heart of Asian cultures, at the religious character of the people, families and whole societies” (EA 7).

5. Cultural Conflicts within the Church

We also are aware of the painful experiences of division and conflicts mainly due to a lack of recognition of the dignity and equality of various cultural groups within the Church. This factor continues to diminish and even threaten to destroy our fellowship of equal disciples of Christ.

As Christians from dalit, tribal and OBC background constitute the larger section of the Church in India, and as they grow in self-awareness and self-assertiveness, they rightfully challenge the domination by the caste Christians in some parts of India. Their self-respect and identity is the core issue. These communities can make a contribution at this time of history with their cherished values of community, joyful celebration of life, closeness to nature and other human values.
6. Formation in Indian Context

Looking at the emerging scenario with reference to the formation of religious and clergy, we recognise a lack of spirituality, vitality, dynamism, commitment and mission thrust. This is due to inadequate cultural integration in our formation programmes. The life-style of formation houses attached to heavily institutional structures uproots and alienates them from their cultural context, and creates in them an elitist mentality and behaviour. This severely diminishes their ability to meet the challenges of mission today.

B. OUR CHRISTIAN RESPONSE

Our Christian response to all these challenges must be born out of the values of the Gospel of Jesus and from the way he himself chose to respond creatively, critically and prophetically to his times. Ultimately, transformation of a society can be effected only by those who live the Gospel values of love, justice, reconciliation and peace. With a prophetic spirit, optimism of the Kingdom of God, and with deeper commitment to walk the path of Jesus we hope to contribute to the empowerment of people and nation building.

1. To be present in a place and still more to be present to people is the great challenge for all Christians and especially for missionaries and pastoral workers. We need to be fully integrated into the culture of people, the psycho-social setting of the community. Only then can we become cultural bridge builders. Evangelisers should never be carriers or importers of an alien and alienating culture. Centres and activities that contribute to local culture should be promoted. We need to direct our institutions to be prophetic witnesses of social and cultural transformation.

2. A genuine encounter between the Gospel and Indian cultures should lead to gradual inculturation of Christian life: life-style, liturgy and every area of Church’s life. The entire people of God should participate in this process. Reviving the inculturation movement, in keeping with the post-Vatican II directives of the Church, is of paramount importance for the mission of the Church in India.

3. In the face of communalisation of politics and aggressive promotion of cultural nationalism in every sphere of life, the Church should join and network with the many secular forces and social movements in
our country in a spirit of dialogue. This is all the more necessary as people of subaltern cultures are being co-opted into Hinduism and their cultural identity is itself being threatened.

4. In order to be more authentic prophetic witnesses, we Christians need to denounce the caste mentality and discriminations as sinful, and eradicate such tendencies prevailing in some degree within the Church itself.

5. In the context of the ‘culture of individualism’— a by-product of Globalisation – Christian communities should become more and more counter-cultural communities, witnessing to the Kingdom values of compassion with those who suffer and of sharing with those in need.

6. Since politics has such a powerful influence on human life, it is incumbent on Christians to work for corruption-free governance, by advocating the establishment of an independent commission for dealing with corruption and to mobilise public opinion for the achievement of this goal.

7. We must aim at maximum participation of Christians in every electoral process, as their moral duty. This requires formation of laity, religious and clergy in greater political consciousness and responsibility.

8. There is urgent need to promote the Christian organisations that are involved in civic and political issues together with empowerment of the laity to play an active role in economy, administrative services, media and legal profession. Moreover, lay leaders should be trained to influence public opinion. All this requires well-planned investment in the laity.

9. Greater use of FM and community Radio, internet, and TV, and highly effective PRO or Public Affairs Service is needed to promote cultural values and shape public opinion. At the same time, the youth need to be guided to make an intelligent and wise use of the media.

10. Freedom to choose one’s religion, and therefore scope for religious conversion is a major imperative of democratic and constitutional culture. The anti-conversion Acts only advantage the dominant groups and disadvantage the minority communities. The church should engage in such a discourse at national and regional levels.

11. In context of globalisation and post-modern mentality, effective programmes need to be organised for preserving the integrity and sanctity of the family, which is the cornerstone of society.
12. In our multicultural context, we need to find ways and means to root the formation of clergy and religious in mission. This would give them ample opportunities to learn and respect other cultures. The formators must become living examples of such values.

13. It would be greatly desirable if the CBCI, the CRI and other Church bodies would give greater attention to issues relating to culture and mission.

CONCLUSION

Finally, the most simple message and witness of Jesus’ self-sacrificing love should characterise our intercultural life, formation and mission. In working towards a deeper encounter between the Gospel and culture the missionary should live a spirituality of ‘passing over’, a dying to one’s own culture and preferences, and of being, as it were, born into the culture of the people with whom one engages in mission. We are convinced that without rootedness in the core elements of our faith tradition, we will be carried away by passing currents; we will not be able to make our own contribution as Christians. We are committed to all that we have reflected on and planned, so that through all this we can communicate to the world that Jesus has a relevant and unique contribution to make for the creation of new humanity founded on equality, fellowship and justice.
THE OTHER AND THE BEYOND
Maynooth, 8 May 2008
Donal MURRAY
Bishop of Limerick

THE SELF AND THE OTHER

In speaking about ‘the other’ it may be useful to begin by recognising that I could not speak at all if I did not first recognise the other as other. How could a human being ever develop the ability to speak if there was nobody with whom he or she wished to communicate? Why should someone develop such a skill if there was no possible use for it? Even more fundamentally, how could individuals ever learn to speak without encountering somebody willing to communicate with them? We all learned to speak by hearing people speaking to us.

Furthermore, without some interaction with others it seems impossible that I could have any clear idea of my own identity. A little boy can only begin to identify himself as a little boy when he knows that there are people in the world who are not children and there are children who are not boys.

The idea that I am Irish only acquires meaning if I know that there are people who are not Irish and when I begin to have some idea of what is distinctive about other nations and their people in terms of their location, culture, language, history, social and political structures, climate and so on. The flaw in racial hatred is that my own sense of identity is dependent on my recognition of other identities. If that recognition is distorted, so is my recognition of myself. If on the other hand, my recognition of the other can appreciate the new perspectives and experiences and energies which the encounter offers, my own self-understanding is enriched.

To go even further, we build up our sense of ourselves precisely by seeing that we are distinct from others and by presenting ourselves in a way that stresses that distinctiveness. Gabriel Marcel, the French mid 20th century philosopher, was very interested in this topic of self-knowledge and I have always found his insights very enlightening. He begins a reflection on the
growth of self-awareness in his book, *Homo Viator*, with a picture of a small boy bringing a bunch of wild flowers to his mother. “Look”, he says, “I picked these for you”. The child is very unsubtly drawing attention to himself as admirable and is looking for the appropriate praise and approval: “Thus the child draws attention to himself, he offers himself to the other in order to receive a special tribute”\(^1\). In this, the self, the ego, of the child is in the forefront; it would be a real disaster for the little fellow if someone else got the credit for the beautiful bunch of flowers that he had gathered and that he is now presenting with such pride and satisfaction. And so the child must make it clear that it was *he* who had the idea in the first place, and it was *he* who went to trouble of picking the flowers and it is *he* who is now making this wonderful gift.

As we get older, this rather blatant seeking of praise and recognition becomes disguised by what Marcel calls “the complexities of the game of social hypocrisy”. But it by no means disappears! An amateur musician plays a piece he or she has composed and is delighted when someone asks ‘is that a piece by Fauré?’ This enables the composer to respond with the greatest apparent modesty, “No, as a matter of fact, it is my own”\(^2\). Of course he could scarcely have dared to hope that the conversation would go so well! Marcel sums up this point:

> “Very early in the development of a human being this consciousness of existing… is linked up with the urge to make ourselves recognised by some other person, some witness, helper, rival or adversary who, whatever may be said, is needed to integrate the self”.\(^3\)

There is, however, an obvious paradox here. We know that the more we are preoccupied with making a good impression on others, the less authentic we are. If the other is simply a foil, he or she is not really being recognised as other. To call another person, ‘you’, is to acknowledge another ‘I’\(^4\). In other words, it is to acknowledge a being who is not merely there to provide affirmation to me.

Furthermore, the effort to seek our value and status by comparing ourselves favourably to others is doomed for a number of reasons. In the first

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3 *Homo Viator*, p. 15.
place, what is really valuable in us is not our own achievement. All I do is
done on the basis of gifts which I may have played some part in developing
so that they may bear fruit but which I have not given them to myself.

Secondly, such an approach destroys the basis on which I am looking
for approval because it demeans the people from whom I seek it:

“… I must puncture the illusion, infinitely persistent it is true, that I
am possessed of unquestionable privileges which make me the
centre of my universe, while other people are mere obstructions to
be removed or circumvented, or else those echoing amplifiers
whose purpose is to foster my self-complacency. I propose to call
this illusion moral ego-centricity, thus marking clearly how deeply
it has become rooted in our very nature”.

The parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector confronts precisely
this illusion. The Pharisee was vain enough to seek admiration even from
God who created him out of nothing! He sought to confirm this favourable
judgement on himself by contrasting his life and qualities with the tax
collector whom he saw as his inferior, socially and morally, and whom he
looked on with contempt. That was probably an evaluation shared by the first
hearers of the parable. But it was the tax collector, not the Pharisee, who
returned home in good standing with God (Lk 18:14).

But thirdly and most fundamentally, judging others is something I can
never fully do. However well I can empathise with another individual, even
with someone I know and love, I can never have their actual experience or
understand exactly how things appear to them. While it is possible to say that
a particular action was wrong – for instance that it violated the rights of
somebody else or it did not take account of the realities of the situation – that
does not mean that I can precisely measure the degree of freedom or
understanding or guilt that was present in the person who performed the act.

It is particularly dangerous to attempt to define national or racial
identity by establishing our identity by reference to our imagined superiority,
or our hostility, to other people of other nations any more than we should
define our own family by reference to its supposed superiority to our
neighbours. When someone contacts a radio programme to play a request
‘for the best mother in the world’ the whole country does not rise up in
protest saying, ‘but my mother is the best’! In the same way we ought not to
be like the old colonel described by C.S. Lewis. He was waxing eloquent
about the glories of England when someone objected that every country

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5 *Homo Viator*, p. 19.
thought its women were the most beautiful and its men were the most courageous in the whole world. “Yes”, the colonel replied, “but in England it’s true!”6 People can be rightly proud of their own nation. But real patriots expect other people to equally proud of theirs. They are motivated by love of their own country and traditions, not by hatred of others. If they adopt the latter course they become as ridiculous as the colonel, but a good deal more dangerous.

KNOWING THE OTHER

That leads us to another thought. What exactly do we mean when we talk about knowing another person?

Even the word ‘knowledge’ is a problem, especially in our time. We are in danger of narrowing the idea of knowledge in a way that actually diminishes us. There is a kind of knowledge of the other which is valid and important, the knowledge that comes from the biological or medical sciences for instance. At perhaps the extreme end of this limited perspective there is the perfectly valid and accurate knowledge that comes from chemical analysis – the human being is made up mostly of water, with some carbon, hydrogen, nitrogen, phosphorus, calcium etc. In that perspective, the human being is a collection of items worth approximately ten euro! Star Trek fans may recall the episode in which strange crystalline creatures described human beings as “ugly bags of mostly water”.

A complete answer to the chemical question, ‘what is a human being?’ can easily be provided. It is obvious, however, that it falls far short of answering other more important dimensions of the question! There is a real danger that we can begin to look on scientific truth as the only objective, ‘real, truth’ and that all else is opinion – not far superior to the statement that little boys are made of slugs and snails and puppy dogs’ tails. That temptation to restrict our notion of truth, even if not expressed or not consciously adopted, can narrow our perspective on the world and on ourselves.

That was one of the central points of Pope Benedict’s address at Regensburg:

“It is man himself who ends up being reduced, for the specifically human questions about our origin and destiny, the questions raised by religion and ethics, then have no place within the purview of

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collective reason as defined by ‘science’ and must thus be relegated
to the realm of the subjective”7.

There are levels of knowing the other which are not measured in
knowledge of scientific measurable facts but rather in what might be called
the degree of personal presence that exists between two people. Sometimes
people are present physically, standing right beside one another, but there is
no personal interaction. Marcel points out:

“There is a presence which is still a mode of being absent. I can
behave in the presence of another person as if he were absent”8.

In this seat of learning, for instance, we may recall the classic
definition of a lecture as the process whereby the material that is in the
professor’s notes transfers itself to the students’ notes, without passing
through the mind of either!

There are, however, ways of being present to another person which are
more suitably expressed in a different sort of language, in the language of
poetry, literature, music, in the giving of gifts, or in loving words of undying
devotion. To try to express this in the language of objectively verifiable facts
would empty it of its human meaning and produce something akin to the
chemical analysis of a human being. This latter understanding is an
‘impoverishment’ of the primordial idea of what one philosopher calls ‘the
body-for-us’ which can never be fully analysed by objective thought9. If
there were a simple scientific diagnostic method of determining the presence
of love, a lot of tragedies could be avoided. “If only one could tell true love
from false love as one can tell a mushroom from a toadstool”10.

In spite of the pitfalls and possible misunderstandings and deceptions,
the way in which I come to know others in any deep sense is inextricably
bound up with how I look on them and how I treat them. One might actually
say that my ability to understand another person depends on the quality of
our relationship. Marcel puts it strongly:

7 BENEDICT XVI, Papal Address at the University of Regensburg, 12 September 2006.
il y a une présence qui est encore un mode de l’absence. Je peux me comporter en
face de quelqu’un comme si il était absent… »
9 Cf. MERLAEAU-PONTY, M., Phénoménologie de la Perception, Gallimard, Paris
1945, pp. 403f: « Il est question seulement de reconnaître que le corps, comme
édifice chimique… est formé par appauvrissement à partir d’un phénomène
primordiale du corps-pour-nous… »
“That means – and there is nothing more important to keep in view – that the knowledge of an individual being cannot be separated from the act of love or charity by which this being is accepted in all that makes of him [her] a unique creature or, if you like, an image of God”\textsuperscript{11}.

\section*{PUNCTURING THE ILLUSION}

A statement of the Second Vatican Council which occurred perhaps more frequently than any other in the talks and writings of Pope John Paul was that human beings “can fully discover their true selves only in sincere self-giving”\textsuperscript{12}.

Recognising others not just in theory but by acknowledging them to be people like myself is a fundamental opening of myself to see beyond my own limited perspective. This goes a step further even than some experiences of participation with others in a common cause. In such a case it may be that they are united only by a factor which lies outside both of them: “In this kind of union the person of the other is not so much of interest, but rather the common purpose. The individual persons may be seen as dispensable”\textsuperscript{13}.

But relating to the other as \textit{another 'I'} shows me that the things around me are not just mine; they exist in a world that is not defined simply by my perspective; I see other people who have a different but equally valid perspective. In other words I come to accept what Paul Ricœur called “the existence-value of the other” which limits our egocentrism\textsuperscript{14}. Our desire, our ambition, our pretension are no longer self-evident or self-justifying; they have to be evaluated in the light of the perspective of other people. We see ourselves not only from our own point of view, but begin to see ourselves as others see us. We begin to suspect that what others think of us may be nearer to the truth than we would like to admit. In that sometimes painful process of

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{11} \textit{Homo Viator}, pp. 23-24.
\item \textsuperscript{12} \textit{VATICAN II, Gaudium et Spes}, 24.
\item \textsuperscript{13} \textit{VENDEMIATI, A.}, “L’amore cristiano…” in \textit{La Scala della Carità}, ed Ilunga Muya, J., Urbaniana Rome 2007, p. 46: “In questo tipo di unione non interessa tanto la persona dell’altro, quanto lo scopo comune: le singole persone sono persino sostituibili.”
\end{itemize}
encounter with others, especially with different cultures, we ourselves grow in self-knowledge and in knowledge of what it means to be a member of the human family.

Here is the first way in which the other points to the beyond. The recognition of the other person requires us to transcend our own self-centredness and complacency. We can only recognise the distinctiveness of our cultural heritage and value it when we recognise the cultural heritages of others. Similarly we only recognise our own distinctiveness and value when we see ourselves in relation to others. The process of becoming aware of myself is a process of coming to see myself ‘as a being in the world with others’. The human being, finite and existing in the physical world “is bound to this world and to his fellow men by all the fibres of his being”\(^\text{15}\).

When I truly recognise another ‘I’, it means that I recognise that other people are entitled to make claims on me, just as I may make claims on them. An important aspect of this is that I develop a sense of responsibility. I recognise that I am answerable for using my freedom in a way that impacts on others.

And so I transcend myself in another way. I am not a static, given reality. I have the ability, the responsibility, to direct myself, to make something of my life, to respond to other people as gifts or sometimes as challenges or threats. And I have to answer to them and to myself for how I exercise my freedom. This responsibility is inescapable. Thus my encounter with the other is an encounter of two freedoms, two responsibilities. Each of us in our freedom ‘speaks’ to the other, expressing our attitude of respect, or contempt, or indifference, or whatever. Even doing nothing may be an eloquent expression of my attitude! This encounter with the other, with the neighbour, is at the heart of morality:

“‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself’ (Mt 19:19; cf. Mk 12:31). In this commandment we find a precise expression of the singular dignity of the human person... The different commandments of the Decalogue are really only so many reflections of the one commandment about the good of the person... in relationship with God, with his neighbour and with the material world”\(^\text{16}\).

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\(^{16}\) **John Paul II**, *Veritatis Splendor*, 13.
Each of us also makes and shapes him or herself in the exercise of our freedom and responsibility:

“… freedom is not only the choice for one or another particular action; it is also, within that choice, a decision about oneself and a setting of one’s own life for or against the Good, for or against the Truth, and ultimately for or against God”17.

The acceptance and recognition that others are ‘I’s, just like myself, is the fundamental puncturing of the illusion of moral egocentricity. I am no longer the centre of the universe. I can no longer be the source of the meaning of my own life, because that meaning cannot be constructed without reference to the world around me, to other people and indeed to my own ‘situatedness’. Wherever I would like my life to go, I deceive myself if I try to start from an imaginary place. I cannot build my life on ‘if onlys’ and ‘might have beens’, only on reality.

THE OTHER POINTS TO THE BEYOND

Knowing ‘the other as other’ points me beyond my own goals, beyond my own perspectives and beyond myself. As we mature, we see things in a less self-centred way. The ego around which everything revolved when we had not yet learned to appreciate the other, has been dethroned – at least in our better moments, though the moral egocentricity can reassert itself from time to time!

But what ultimately is the nature of the beyond that lies above or outside or deeper than my self? The first thing to be admitted is that if we could define the ultimate Beyond, that concept would not be ultimate enough! But we may approach the question from a number of angles.

Consent and Mystery
The first is about how we can reconcile the free self with the need to recognise and acknowledge a physical world which situates me in time and place, with the need to recognise my own limitations as an embodied being who cannot simply wish away the laws of physics, with the need to recognise that my freedom has to take account of the presence of other ‘I’s making claims that seem to restrict my freedom of choice.

17 *Veritatis Splendor*, 65.
Of course, from another point of view, these apparent limitations are in fact the means by which I can act at all – a physical world, my own body, the community of people in which I learn to know and to speak and to be myself. If I spend my energies resenting these apparent limitations and fail to see them as the arena in which I can be free, I will end by enslaveing myself. The first step in any exercise of freedom is to accept the reality, the truth in which I operate. Paul Ricœur puts it well:

“To consent is not to capitulate if, in spite of appearances, the world is the possible theatre of liberty. I say: this is my place, I adopt it; I do not surrender, I acquiesce; it is well thus…”

The consent to the physical world with its perspectives and its limitations is a recognition of the field in which my freedom is operating. I act in a world I did not create; I choose for motives that find their basis in the reality I perceive; I act with abilities and skills that are built on the possibilities with which I was born. But I can alter my physical surroundings, especially through science and technology; I can shape my motives by my moral growth or my refusal to grow; I can develop my skills by education and training.

To consent to the equal dignity and value of the other person is a step beyond the simple acceptance of physical reality. But this is not a surrender either. It is a recognition of the truth of who we are and of the arena in which we act – as beings in a world with others.

We all operate in this field, situated in time and place, with our own personal history and character affecting one another by the way we use our freedom.

We know how much difficulty we have in evaluating our own responsibilities, our own motivation, and so on. So this is also a recognition that, since my knowledge of myself is so limited, my knowledge of the other can certainly never be total. I cannot see into another person’s soul. I can only observe what they express physically. But even when the expression and what is expressed are apparently identical – as in an outburst of anger – it remains “always and indivisibly” an expression both of what he or she wishes to express and of who he or she is and has become. The anger may be very basic and very real, but the way in which it emerges in this person

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18 Philosophie de la volonté I, p. 439. « Consentir n’est point capituler si malgré les apparences le monde est le théâtre possible de la liberté. Je dis : voici mon lieu, je l’adopte ; je ne céde pas, j’acquiesce ; cela est bien ainsi”.

may have much to do with his or her previous experiences, state of wellbeing, and perception of the events that triggered it – none of which I can know exactly as he or she does. Indeed he or she may know them only very partially.

The other person, even if he or she is greatly loved and has been a vital part of one’s life for a long time, is never fully known. Thus I am already consenting to mystery – to the realisation that there are realities in the world which are not ultimately exhaustible and which can never be completely understood, predicted or managed in the way that objects or things, can be. When we take our relationship with the other seriously we have already broken through one of the misleading assumptions that the Pope pointed to in the Regensburg Address, namely that:

“…only the kind of certainty resulting from the interplay of mathematical and empirical elements can be considered scientific. Anything that would claim to be science must be measured against this criterion. Hence the human sciences, such as history, psychology, sociology and philosophy, attempt to conform themselves to this canon of scientificity.”  

There are ways of knowing that are not simply objectively verifiable facts. This brings us back to Marcel who made a fundamental distinction between a problem and a mystery:

“A problem is something which I meet, which I find completely before me, but which I can therefore lay siege to and reduce. But a mystery is something in which I am myself involved, and it can therefore only be thought of as a sphere where the distinction between what is in me and what is before me loses its meaning and initial validity.”

Human beings are fundamentally mystery not problem. The answer to the questions “Who am I?” or “Who are you” cannot in the last analysis be expressed as if we were merely objects, or things. The answer to such questions is not about ingredients or measurements or experimental data. The truth is that in recognising that we are mystery, we acknowledge that there is more to us than meets our eye, or any human eye. It is impossible to understand ourselves fully without seeing ourselves in the ultimately unfathomable ocean of the meaning of life. We can go on to look briefly at some other pointers of where this line of reflection may lead us.

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20 Regensburg Address.
Love and Hope

I have already said that we come to the fullest knowledge of another person when we love them. William James puts it strikingly: “Every Jack sees in his own particular Jill charms and perfections to the enchantment of which we stolid onlookers are stone-cold”.\(^{22}\) He goes on to say that Jack is right and we stolid onlookers are wrong. Jack is the one who knows Jill best; Jack understands, in a way that we fail to do, that Jill’s existence is among the wonders of the universe.

Love not only gives a new perspective on the beloved; it points beyond the person we love. In a Pastoral Letter on *Christian Marriage* almost forty years ago, the Irish Bishops said:

> “People in love cannot help speaking of their loved one as divine and adorable and of their love as undying, everlasting, eternal. They cannot help feeling that love comes from beyond themselves and carries them beyond themselves… The only possible explanation is that, whether we realise it or not, *all human love is finally a longing for God*. Only God can give that timeless happiness, that perfect satisfaction, that unchanging lovableness, that unfailing faithfulness which men and women are seeking in one another’s love, but cannot fully find there”\(^{23}\).

Death remains always a mystery. But there is ‘a deep instinct’\(^{24}\) within us which shrinks from and rejects the idea that I will merely cease to exist. There is also a deep refusal to believe that those we love have gone into nothingness. “To love a being”, says a character in one of Marcel’s plays “is to say you, you in particular, will never die”\(^{25}\).

Of course the fact that we cannot accept something does not, in itself, mean that it cannot be true. But the arguments for saying that death is the end are often based on what I referred to earlier as the impoverishment which identifies the person simply with objective, material realities. It assumes that when the brain irreversibly ceases to function the person is no longer there.

We are looking here at a very different kind of argument. We are in the presence not just of a scientifically provable fact – that this body is no longer a living person – but of a choice as to how we understand the meaning of the


\(^{24}\) VATICAN II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 18.

\(^{25}\) Homo Viator, p. 147.
world in which we live. If there is only the perspective of science then death is the end of everything. But if we reflect on our protest and our refusal of the idea that people to whom we have pledged undying love are no more, we are faced with a different question: Does this ‘you will never die’ point us towards a larger reality, a deeper participation without which human existence must remain absurd and unsatisfied?26

The question is whether our existence is one in which hope is possible, or whether life is absurd. There is nothing in between those two possibilities. That is the often hidden fear underlying our existence today. It makes us afraid of being silent for fear “of feeling the emptiness that asks about meaning”27; or it takes refuge in the hope of some technological utopia or some drug-fuelled escape.

“All these, however, show themselves profoundly illusory and incapable of satisfying that yearning for happiness which the human heart continues to harbour. The disturbing signs of growing hopelessness thus continue and intensify, occasionally manifesting themselves also in forms of aggression and violence”28.

Lesser hopes can urge us on, and even satisfy us for a while. But they cannot finally satisfy us. Pope Benedict in the encyclical Spe Salvi says that we need a hope that goes further:

“It becomes clear that only something infinite will satisfy (the human being), something that will always be more than he can ever attain”29.

Consent to our situatedness in the physical world already dethrones us as the centre of the universe, as our own god. The presence of the other raises the question in a new way. What becomes of me and of all the other ‘I’s, especially those I love? Does the mismatch between our limitless aspirations on the one hand and our limited abilities, situation and lifespan on the other mean that humanity is an absurd illusion? Only if there is something infinite which can satisfy the deepest human longings is life anything more that what Jean Paul Sartre called, “a useless passion”30, or in other words an unsatisfiable longing.

27 JOHN PAUL II, Orientale Lumen, 16.
28 JOHN PAUL II, Ecclesia in Europa, 10.
29 BENEDICT XVI, Spe Salvi, 30.
30 SARTRE, J.-P., L'être et le néant, Part 4, ch 2. « L’homme est une passion inutile ». 

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This longing is expressed in poetry and music, in commitments to undying fidelity, and even in doomed searches for fulfilment through possessions or status or power or drugs. The Christian revelation addresses the unlimited longings of our hearts. The recognition of the other is a fundamental step in opening up my awareness of the longing to which that revelation speaks.

**A Kingdom of Justice**

One longing that strongly calls for something that comes from beyond, is the longing for justice. We recognise somewhere in our hearts that “I’m all right, Jack” will not do as a meaning for life. We live with facilities and technology that we have come to take for granted but it is said that 80% of the people on earth have never had a telephone dial tone. Pope John Paul once said that we live against a background of “gigantic remorse” because in a world where many enjoy affluence and excess there are also “babies dying of hunger under their mothers’ eyes” 31.

A world in which my life is reasonably comfortable can leave me fairly contented and, at least for most of the time, experiencing little or no anguish about the meaning of life. But if I believe that this is what makes my life meaningful I am deceiving myself. Human life would then be absurd for the many, indeed the majority, of human beings who live without any of these comforts and cushions – for the children who die of starvation or of easily curable conditions before they even learn to walk or talk, for those who spend all of their lives hungry, for those who live surrounded by war and cruelty. It would be nonsensical to imagine that I inhabit a bubble of sense which is surrounded by chaos and meaninglessness.

A genuine opening to others bursts the bubble. Take an African mother with a dying child and with other children who will receive no education, if I really saw her as another ‘I’ would I feel happy assuring her that development aid will gradually increase and that things may be significantly better for her grandchildren – if she has any? If I were in her place would I be happy with that response?

And yet when I reflect on these things I experience a sense of helplessness. As individuals or groups, we know that what we can achieve will be hopelessly inadequate to the scale of the problem. The gigantic remorse remains.

There is, however, a possible escape from the absurdity – an escape which in no way lessens the imperative to respond as generously as we can, but which rather intensifies that imperative. That is the possibility that there is a Power great enough to provide vindication even for those human beings

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31 JOHN PAUL II, _Dives in Misericordia_, 11.
whose lives are no more than short experiences of illness, starvation and pain. It is the same Power that calls us to love our neighbour as ourselves:

“The vigilant and active expectation of the coming of the Kingdom is also the expectation of a finally perfect justice for the living and the dead, for people of all times and places, a justice which Jesus Christ, installed as supreme Judge, will establish. This promise, which surpasses all human possibilities, directly concerns our life in this world. For true justice must include everyone; it must bring the answer to the immense load of suffering borne by all the generations. In fact, without the resurrection of the dead and the Lord’s judgment, there is no justice in the full sense of the term. The promise of the resurrection is freely made to meet the desire for true justice dwelling in the human heart”32.

**Image and Likeness**

The Christian Gospel offers an answer large enough to satisfy even the most profound sources of anguish and ‘gigantic remorse’. The human person lives in the inescapable tension between, on the one hand, a life that is inescapably marked by pain, injustice, suffering and mortality and, on the other, a life which is already full of the glory of the risen Christ.

The human being is the only creature presented in the Bible as the image of God. But this is another way of saying that in knowing the other we come to know God. Pope John Paul pointed to the necessity of a contemplative outlook, which would see reality in its deeper meaning, would discover God’s reflection in all things and would see the Creator’s living image in every person33.

What this means in practice is that meeting other people, and especially those who differ from us culturally, is an opportunity to recognise a part of the truth about God that is not so visible from the familiar perspectives of our own background.

In our own experience we see how a person’s humanity can be expanded by immersion in another culture. Someone who is completely at home in two different cultures – fluent in two languages, feeling a sense of belonging in both, sharing in the two perspectives and approaches to life – is enriched enormously.

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33 **JOHN PAUL II**, *Evangelium Vitae*, 83.

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In less dramatic ways, we grow every time we really appreciate the wider perspective on truth that is offered to us by another person’s insights, or sufferings, or qualities, or courage, or wisdom. When that happens, our knowledge of God, our relationship with God can also grow. We see the Creator’s goodness reflected in the gifts of the other; we see the hope offered by God more clearly when we realise that it can fulfil the deepest and truest longings of someone whose experience and culture is quite different from ours.

God offers hope to all humanity and wishes all to be saved (cf. I Tim 2:4). The Good News of Jesus tells us that we already belong to this family of God. We belong not only with all the great variety of all the billions of people who are alive today, but with all the others who have lived on earth and all those who will live on earth – people who lived before the wheel was invented and people who will regard our most sophisticated technology as impossibly primitive.

My final destiny is not just the fulfilment of my hopes. It is at the same time the fulfilment of all those billions of hopes. If it were not, then human life would indeed be a useless longing. If there were no hope for some human beings, then the hope we feel would be empty. The most adequate formulation of hope as Marcel succinctly put it is: “I hope in Thee for us”34. Not only that, but we will rejoice together in the flourishing of all human gifts and in the God whose gifts they are. St Thomas Aquinas describes eternal life:

“Eternal life consists in the joyful companionship of all the blessed, a companionship which is full of delight; since each one will possess all good things together with all the blessed, for they will all love one another as themselves and, therefore, will rejoice in one another’s happiness as if it were their own, and consequently the joy and gladness of one will be as great as the joy of all”35.

This is not a fulfilment that is alien to our present lives; it is the blossoming of the gifts and qualities and achievements which we will find again “cleansed this time from the stain of sin, illumined and transfigured” when Christ presents the Kingdom to his Father36. That is the end of the journey that begins in the opening up of the self to other people: it is an opening of ourselves to the whole human family and to the Lord who is “the goal of human history… and the fulfilment of all aspirations”37.

34 Homo Viator, 60.
35 AQUINAS, Collationes super Credo in Deum, 12.
36 Gaudium et Spes, 39.
37 Gaudium et Spes, 45.
ANNONCER LE CHRIST AU CŒUR DES CULTURES AFRICAINES

22-26 juillet 2008, Bagamoyo, Tanzanie

Bagamoyo en Tanzanie, marché d’esclaves pendant de longs siècles, aujourd’hui centre culturel dirigé par des Spiritains et sanctuaire de pèlerinage, a accueilli pendant quatre jours les membres et consulteurs africains du Conseil Pontifical de la Culture, auxquels se sont joints les évêques responsables de la pastorale de la culture, délégués des Conférences épiscopales du continent.

Dans le contexte actuel, profondément marqué par la mondialisation et la sécularisation qui excluent la transcendance autant que les valeurs, les évêques rassemblés à Bagamoyo ont insisté, à un an de distance de l’Assemblée spéciale pour l’Afrique du Synode des Evêques, sur la nécessité de promouvoir une inculturation toujours plus approfondie et effective, parce que l’Afrique a besoin de témoins qui soient des prophètes et des saints.

Si la mondialisation est source de progrès et d’ouverture dans les rapports entre les peuples, il n’est pas possible d’ignorer ses effets néfastes comme, par exemple, la disparition des cultures les plus fragiles et la diffusion auprès des jeunes et des familles de contre-valeurs morales et culturelles. Les mutations culturelles actuelles favorisent le relatif face à l’absolu, une consécration du monde associée au mépris de son Auteur et de la personne humaine elle-même. La sécularisation qui prétend libérer l’homme de Dieu, crée un monde sans Dieu, et finalement un monde contre l’homme. Elle ne laisse pas pour compte l’Afrique : elle tend à réduire la place de Dieu dans la société et propose des modèles de vie imprégnés par le relativisme moral.

Les évêques ont rappelé la nécessité d’une inculturation intérieurisée de la foi, comme l’unique moyen d’arriver à la conversion et à la sainteté, afin d’offrir au monde le vrai sens de la vie et lui faire connaître la beauté de l’amitié avec le Christ. L’affirmation de Jean-Paul II : « Chaque culture a besoin d’être transformée par les valeurs de l’Évangile à la lumière du mystère de Pâques » (Ecclesia in Africa, n° 61) fait écho à la parole toujours
actuelle du Cardinal Hyacinthe Thiandoum : « *La sainteté est le signe de l'inculturation authentique* ».

Les effets conjoints de la mondialisation et de la sécularisation mettent en lumière la rupture entre l’Évangile et les cultures, que Paul VI considérait comme « *le drame de notre époque* » (*Evangelii nuntiandi*, n° 20). Aujourd’hui encore le message de l’Évangile est Bonne Nouvelle pour l’homme et lui révèle sa vocation dans le Christ, mais trop souvent l’homme considère la question de Dieu comme dépourvue de pertinence.

Au cours de la rencontre, les évêques ont identifié au moins onze priorités pastorales qu’ils se proposent de présenter aux différentes Conférences épiscopales.

**Propositions pastorales**

1. L’engagement des chrétiens dans le processus de transformation des cultures actuelles demande la présence active de laïcs bien préparés, spirituellement et culturellement.

2. La pastoral de la culture est une réalité transversale. Aussi l’Église en Afrique se doit de promouvoir l’intelligence du mystère chrétien et la connaissance des cultures, afin de manifester, comme l’ont fait les Pères de l’Église, le visage du Dieu d’amour manifesté dans le Christ au cœur des cultures purifiées du péché et de tout ce qui ne respecte pas la dignité de la personne humaine. La Bible, Parole de Dieu, revêt une importance toujours plus grande, lumière sur nos pas, pour permettre de faire naître, croître et murir l’Église famille de Dieu en Afrique.

3. En communion avec les évêques, prêtres, religieux, religieuses et catéchistes occupent une place primordiale dans la mission de l’Église. Il convient d’accorder une attention toute particulière à leur formation initiale et permanente, en se confrontant à la Tradition de l’Église et aux cultures contemporaines, de sorte que cette formation concerne la totalité de la personne et la prépare à rendre compte, dans les différents aréopages, de l’espérance qui est en nous.

4. Pour un renouvellement de l’annonce de l’Évangile, il est nécessaire d’agir dans les différents diocèses africains, afin que la réception des enseignements du Magistère soit effective, à commencer par les documents du Concile Vatican II, le *Catéchisme de l’Église catholique* ou le *Compendium de la doctrine sociale de l’Église*, qui ne sont pas suffisamment étudiés, connus et approfondis.

5. Devant la complexité du phénomène de la mondialisation et face aux effets de la sécularisation, les évêques rappellent la nécessité de préparer des experts et des théologiens, en vue d’un approfondissement du Mystère.
chrétien, lumière sur la route pour les hommes immergés dans des cultures souvent étrangères aux valeurs de l’Évangile.

6. À l’ère de la communication, les difficultés du langage nous empêchent souvent de transmettre notre foi et d’être compris. Nombreux sont-ils, notamment parmi les jeunes, à recevoir des moyens de communication sociale une multitude de propositions religieuses non chrétiennes, qui constituent de vrais défis pour les communautés locales peu préparées. Dans le domaine des communications, les évêques insistent sur la nécessité d’encourager et soutenir la formation des laïcs. La professionnalité qu’ils auront acquise, leur permettra d’apporter leur utile contribution au profit de l’Église et de toute la société. Les ressources économiques sont souvent modestes, mais il est nécessaire d’investir — en coopérant au niveau régional ou national — dans ces moyens de communication, radio, télévision, vidéo, etc.

7. Les jeunes sont les premiers destinataires de la pastorale de la culture, parce qu’ils sont aujourd’hui rendus particulièrement vulnérables par le déracinement culturel dû, principalement, aux migrations qui les privent de leur milieu culturel naturel, de la transmission de leur patrimoine culturel et religieux qui se transmettait au sein de la communauté traditionnelle de la famille, du village, du clan. Plus de la moitié de la population du continent africain vit actuellement dans la proximité de la ville où surtout les jeunes croient pouvoir trouver des conditions de vie meilleures et où ils sont exposés à de nombreux périls. L’Église doit être la communauté qui les aide à maintenir ferme leur foi.

8. Les Églises locales sont invitées à promouvoir la création culturelle d’inspiration chrétienne, parce que l’art – surtout l’art sacré – est un puissant moyen d’évangélisation quand il exprime la foi de l’Église universelle dans les cultures singulières. Souvent, aujourd’hui, les artistes manifestent un grand intérêt pour la spiritualité, mais ils manquent cruellement de formation chrétienne. Le renouveau de la pastorale des artistes demande des personnes compétentes, notamment dans les domaines de la Bible, de la théologie, de la spiritualité et de la liturgie.

9. La piété populaire demeure une des meilleurs manifestations d’une authentique inculturation, parce qu’en elle s’unissent foi et liturgie, sentiments et art. La foi s’exprime dans la culture traditionnelle évangélisée.

10. Les progrès considérables de la science, de la technique et des nouvelles technologies posent de nouvelles interrogations, spécialement dans le domaine de la morale. Il est nécessaire de pouvoir compter sur des scientifiques, des philosophes et des théologiens bien préparés, pour donner aux prêtres, aux religieux et aux catéchistes une formation initiale et permanente qui leur permettra de répondre avec compétence aux demandes
des fidèles. Dès lors, ceux-ci pourront assimiler l’enseignement de l’Église et témoigner dans un contexte culturel souvent étranger, de la foi chrétienne.


Bernard ARDURA
Secrétaire du Conseil Pontifical de la Culture

LES DÉFIS CULTURELS DU SÉCULARISME PROPAGÉ À TRAVERS LA MONDIALISATION

Conférence d’ouverture de S.E. Mgr Gianfranco RAVASI
Président du Conseil Pontifical de la Culture

« Si je suis absent physiquement, je suis cependant moralement avec vous, et je me réjouis de voir votre bonne tenue et la fermeté de votre foi au Christ. » Je fais miens ces mots que saint Paul adresse aux chrétiens de Colosse (2, 5) pour envoyer – par l’intermédiaire du Secrétaire, le Père Bernard Ardura – non seulement mon salut le plus affectueux et le plus chaleureux à tous les participants de cette rencontre, mais aussi un message que j’ai voulu concentré sur l’essentiel et qui aurait pu bénéficier de davantage de spontanéité et de chaleur, s’il vous avait été présenté de façon plus directe et personnelle. Même

I. PERSPECTIVES GENERALES

Je développerai mon intervention en deux parties distinctes. La première aura le caractère d’une introduction dans le but de présenter notre Conseil Pontifical de la Culture et de manifester notre désir de recevoir de la part de votre assemblée des propositions, des suggestions, des stimulants pour la réflexion et des indications de voies à parcourir.

A la suite de la longue et féconde présidence de Son Éminence le Cardinal Paul Poupard, à qui nous pensons sans cesse avec beaucoup de gratitude, nous avons le désir commun de faire prendre à notre Dicastère des trajectoires déjà empruntées par le passé, tout en l’ouvrant vers de nouvelles perspectives.

A vrai dire, l’une de ces nouveautés concerne les cultures émergentes du point de vue international, apparemment regroupées en surface, mais qui en réalité sont marqués par un très grand nombre de diversités et de disparités. Certainement, comme on le reconnaît habituellement, l’Asie a un poids très important non seulement à cause des géants que sont la Chine et l’Inde, mais également par d’autres identités nationales et ethniques. Mais l’Afrique, elle même, revêt une importance décisive dans le concert des nations. Pour cela, nous croyons qu’il est possible de mener une réflexion et de tracer des projets pastoraux et culturels à proposer aux différentes communautés ecclésiales, non seulement à partir de cette rencontre spécifique mais aussi d’un dialogue
constant et approfondi entre vos épiscopats et leurs structures relatives d’un coté, et notre Dicastère de l’autre.

Il y a de nombreuses autres possibilités qui s’ouvrent devant l’activité du Dicastère. J’aimerais en indiquer quelques unes de manière simplifiée. Tout d’abord, nous dirigeons le dialogue complexe et délicat entre la science et la foi qui avait eu une articulation décisive dans le projet appelé STOQ (science, théologie, recherche ontologique) et qui est maintenant prêt à s’étendre à d’autres domaines. Nous prévoyons une importante série d’événements qui se terminera par une grande convention en mars 2009, au cours de laquelle scientifiques, philosophes et théologiens pourront échanger leurs points de vue sur le thème de l’évolution, sujet à questionnement réel, qui fait encore débat aujourd’hui. Puisque l’année passée fut consacrée par l’ONU à l’astronomie, il y aura cette année une nouvelle présentation de la personne de Galilée et des dialectiques méthodologiques sur la relation entre la science et la théologie, et entre la science et la foi.

Un autre domaine réclamera notre attention : celui du langage. A l’heure de l’informatique, de la téléphonie mobile, et de l’hégémonie de la télévision, la transformation du langage est particulièrement notoire. La communication religieuse a besoin de savoir comment s’équiper en fonction des nouvelles modalités d’expression, sans pour autant perdre son identité en changeant le continu ou le style, et sans se renfermer sur des références personnelles qui deviendraient incompréhensibles pour l’extérieur. Ainsi, la prochaine Assemblée Plénière du Conseil Pontifical de la Culture, prévue en 2010, portera sur le sujet. De la même manière, la dernière Assemblée Plénière qui eut lieu il y a peu de temps traita de la sécularisation, de ses implications dans l’Église et de l’environnement social dans lequel elle évolue.

Parmi d’autres thèmes, il y en ait un que nous ne pouvons pas ne pas évoquer. Il s’agit du phénomène complexe et délicat de la non croyance, qui englobe non seulement l’athéisme mais également l’indifférence et l’agnosticisme. A vrai dire, il ne faut pas oublier qu’au début, le Conseil Pontifical de la Culture fut créé pour s’occuper de cette question. Notre devoir, intimement lié au problème pastoral, est de regarder en face un monde de plus en plus dépourvu de cohérence, et de racines et de références éthiques fondamentales.

Outre l’intérêt général pour les différentes sciences humaines, c’est à partir de ces réflexions qu’est né le désir de commencer des recherches sur l’économie, entendue non pas comme modèle de production de systèmes et de marchés ni comme une simple technique monétaire ou financière, mais plus comme une vraie et bonne science humaine qui cherche à individualiser une interprétation et une gestion correctes et harmonieuses de l’oikos, c’est à
dire de la demeure et de l’environnement dans lesquels l’humanité vit et travaille. Il pourrait y avoir d’autres pistes sur lesquelles réfléchir et à partir desquelles suivraient une série de suggestions, d’idées et de propositions qui seraient collectées par les Conférences Épiscopales, le personnel des Centres Catholiques Culturels et même par le monde laïque (dans tous les sens du terme, aussi bien ecclésiastique que profane).

Cette rencontre qui est sur le point de commencer est en effet l’un des forums auquel le Conseil Pontifical de la Culture assiste, aussi bien pour collecter des idées et du dynamisme que pour entendre des propositions. La question de l’évangélisation en Afrique sera certainement traitée d’une manière particulière.

Certains aspects, bien qu’ils aient leurs propres formes ethnique et sociale et qu’ils soient pourvus de traditions laïques locales, servent de modèle et de référence, même pour d’autres civilisations : je pense ici à la pluralité des religions, à la progression du fundamentalisme, aux enjeux de l’inculturation, aux dangers du syncrétisme, au fait que le christianisme soit de plus en plus considéré comme une religion étrangère au tissu socioculturel, pour le dialogue interculturel et interreligieux, etc.

A ce point, il est maintenant possible de passer à la deuxième partie de mon intervention, de caractère plus thématique et précisément en relation avec le sujet annoncé.

II. LES DEFIS CULTURELS DU SECULARISME

« La clochette sonne. A genoux ! On porte les derniers sacrements à un Dieu qui se meurt ». Cette suggestive image d’Heinrich Heine, célèbre poète allemand du XIXᵉ siècle, semble anticiper la longue séquence des proclamations de philosophes et même de théologiens sur la mort de Dieu. Nous nous sommes ainsi progressivement convaincus de l’inutilité de combattre Dieu, comme le faisait l’athéisme militant, car il suffit de savoir qu’il est réduit à l’impuissance, exclu de notre monde. De la sorte, s’est créée une atmosphère d’indifférence, caractéristique de l’actuelle cité sécularisée, qui ne vit plus avec ni contre Dieu, mais tout simplement sans Dieu. Comme l’exprimait avec ironie le philosophe canadien Charles Taylor dans sa récente et importante œuvre The Secular Age, si l’homme d’aujourd’hui devait croiser sur ses routes dépouillées de tout emblème religieux un Dieu, au maximum il lui demanderait ses papiers.

C’est dans cet horizon socioculturel que nous nous trouvons maintenant, et nous y découvrons la fin de la métaphysique, mais aussi la fin des grandes
narrations qui interprétaient et embrassaient l’histoire des hommes. Les visions globales qui délimitaient le périmètre dans lequel nous vivons, nous mouvons et œuvrons, et les utopies qui cherchaient à en franchir les limites, ont cédé le pas à la navigation à vue, au petit cabotage ou à une norme fluctuante au gré de situations contingentes. Les soubresauts violents comme ceux de Soixante-huit ou la chute du mur de Berlin, n’ont même pas réussi à produire une humanité nouvelle et plus forte ; ils sont seulement parvenus à projeter l’homme et la femme vers un subjectivisme anti-institutionnel, lié à l’humeur du moment et amoral, tendu vers l’immédiat, immergé dans la vanité de la parole et de l’action désormais privées de leur efficacité interprétative et opérationnelle. De pèlerins en quête permanente d’un sens capable de réunir les étapes fragmentées de l’itinéraire d’une vie, nous voici transformés en vagabonds on the road, sans but, uniquement guidés par une frénésie qui produit seulement – comme le suggérait un auteur français – un exode sur place, un exode statique, sans terre promise.

A. La mondialisation

Dans ce contexte, l’Église voit se dresser devant elle la puissante vague de la mondialisation, qui porte avec elle un certain nombre de contre-valeurs au détriment des personnes et des communautés humaines. Ce raz de marée est le fruit d’un impressionnant développement des moyens de communication sociale, des transports, des télécommunications, de toute une technologie qui tend à supprimer les contraintes de temps et de lieu et rapproche les hommes, pour faire de la terre un unique village, le village global.


Par ailleurs, la mondialisation est le véhicule par lequel l’économie de marché a conquis la presque totalité de la planète. Elle trouve un puissant allié dans la « financiarisation », dénoncée à grands cris par certains mouvements radicaux. Les économies et les systèmes sociaux sont de plus en plus interdépendants, et si la croissance de certains « moteurs » de l’économie mondiale produit des effets positifs sur les pays pauvres, la crise boursière d’un seul pays peut avoir des conséquences désastreuses sur les économies les plus faibles.

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Les conditions de vie de l’homme en ce début du troisième millénaire ont été profondément transformées et confirment l’intuition du concile Vatican II qui n’hésitait pas à parler d’« un nouvel âge de l’histoire humaine »1. La mondialisation contribue à la diffusion de nouvelles idées philosophiques et éthiques, désormais fondées sur les nouvelles conditions de travail, de vie et d’organisation des communautés, et non plus sur la dignité de la personne humaine. Pourtant, la mondialisation porte en elle des promesses que seule une action volontaire et résolue des États et des Organisations Internationales permettra de réaliser en corrigant les effets discordants des mécanismes du marché livrés à eux-mêmes. En de nombreux lieux s’élèvent des voix qui se joignent à celle de l’Église, pour le développement d’une « culture de la solidarité » et une humanisation du monde de l’économie et de la finance.

La pastorale de la culture demande alors aux pasteurs un effort d’objectivité dans leur recherche pour comprendre ces nouveaux phénomènes. Il s’agit de rappeler, à temps et à contretemps, aussi en Afrique – je pense particulièrement au message à faire passer auprès des acteurs du système bancaire, notamment à la question de la dette publique et à sa remise –, la priorité de l’éthique et le primat des personnes, pour que l’ensemble des pays et des populations du globe puissent bénéficier de ce processus d’unification du monde : « À présent que le commerce et les communications ne sont plus limités aux frontières d’un pays, c’est le bien commun universel qui exige que les mécanismes de contrôle accompagnent la logique inhérente au marché. Cela est essentiel afin d’éviter de réduire toutes les relations sociales à des facteurs économiques et de protéger ceux qui sont victimes de nouvelles formes d’exclusion ou de marginalisation. »2

1 Gaudium et Spes, n. 54. Cité dans Pour une pastorale de la culture, n. 7.

Internet permet d’accéder à des banques de données dans tous les domaines du savoir, mais aussi – sans contrôle extérieur – à des informations de caractère immoral où des comportements dégradants avilissent la dignité de la personne humaine.

L’ensemble des progrès de la technologie influe profondément sur les relations entre les hommes : il est possible, aujourd’hui, d’être relié avec l’ensemble du monde en n’importe quel point du globe, à condition d’être adéquatement équipé. Par ailleurs, les transformations technologiques sont telles qu’elles engendrent des comportements culturels encore insaisissables et mouvants. Comment y greffer la foi ?

Quelques défis
Nous pouvons énumérer quelques défis de la mondialisation : « l’oubli » du bien commun ; la « nouvelle culture » dont les valeurs de comportement relèvent de la logique du marché ; la destruction de modèles de vie – famille, éducation, recherche de vérité, effort de sainteté, sens de la beauté, générosité et désintéressement, etc. – patiemment introduits dans les cultures par de longs siècles de christianisme fécondés par la grâce ; rupture dans la transmission du patrimoine commun par les parents, l’école ou la paroisse ; perte du consensus moral dans les sociétés traditionnelles ; renforcement de l’autonomie des personnes par l’exaltation de la liberté et surtout de l’individualisme…

Certains progrès dans la connaissance des sciences de la vie et leurs applications biologiques aboutissent parfois, il faut bien le dire, à des résultats monstrueux. Ils témoignent dès lors d’une perte dramatique du sens de la loi naturelle et du respect de la personne. C’est une véritable contre-culture bien peu humaine qui revendique un droit de cité, sous couvert de prouesses techniques, qui sont, hélas, de nature à réduire l’homme à un pur objet.

Dans les pays les plus pauvres, la mondialisation étend ses effets ravageurs : destruction des valeurs véhiculées par les traditions culturelles ancestrales, déstabilisation des consciences et déracinement culturel de générations entières emportées dans une spirale qui les conduit de la pauvreté à
la misère. Le fossé ne cesse de grandir entre les générations, ce qui n’est pas sans conséquence sur l’art d’être parents et sur l’éducation dans son ensemble.


B. La sécularisation
Le phénomène de la sécularisation et sa dérive dans le sécularisme sont ressentis partout, y compris en Afrique et dans sa culture, ou plus justement ses cultures, malgré un passé profondément imprégné par les religions traditionnelles africaines, et dans une histoire plus récente, marquée par le Christianisme ou l’Islam.

graves risques liés à la sécularisation – j’y ai déjà fait allusion précédemment – nous tenterons maintenant de tenir un discours davantage attentif aux dimensions positives du phénomène.

Il me semble toutefois important de rappeler, ici, que le processus de sécularisation, avec ses aspects positifs, a été inauguré en Afrique par les premiers missionnaires de l’Évangile. Il s’agissait de transformer la mentalité « magique » des peuples en une pensée théologique et rationnelle. Ce processus n’appartient pas exclusivement à l’Afrique : dès ses débuts, la foi chrétienne, pour s’enraciner puis se répandre, a eu à connaître une certaine forme de sécularisation. Confrontée à la sacralisation exaspérée d’une certaine vision religieuse et au polythéisme de l’Antiquité, elle a dû les dénoncer afin de provoquer le rejet des dieux et des idoles censés habiter chaque réalité de l’univers, des arbres aux fleuves, en passant par les montagnes et tant d’autres « merveilles de la nature ». Ce n’est qu’en vertu d’une réelle « dédivinisation », et donc d’une authentique « sécularisation », que l’Église a pu annoncer et rendre crédible un Dieu véritablement divin et transcendant, mais aussi présent dans l’histoire des hommes. Ainsi se configure le cœur du christianisme, l’Incarnation : Dieu s’est fait homme en Jésus-Christ pour notre Salut.

La foi chrétienne est foi en un Dieu pleinement divin, seul vraiment divin, et reconnaissance d’un monde pleinement mondain, créé par Dieu, sur lequel l’homme est appelé à exercer son dominium, même si Dieu ne lui reste ni étranger ni indifférent. Ainsi, la sécularisation est un processus, non seulement mondain, qui se manifeste par l’auto-affirmation de la raison critique en tous domaines, mais elle est également un processus lié à la vision biblico-chrétienne du monde.

**Séculaire, séculier, sécularisé**

Il est, cependant, nécessaire d’apporter quelques précisions, même terminologiques. Selon les langues, deux ou trois adjectifs sont issus de la même racine sémantique que le substantif « sécularisation » : séculaire, séculier, sécularisé. Parler de quelque chose de « séculaire », c’est se référer en premier lieu à un événement qui se produit une fois par siècle. Le « siècle » est ici une mesure chronologique permettant de souligner l’importance d’un événement précis, ou de caractériser l’ampleur d’un phénomène historique d’une portée toute particulière. Progressivement, l’adjectif « séculaire » a fini par désigner toute réalité dont l’existence, la durée s’étendant, de fait, sur plusieurs siècles. Ainsi affirme-t-on, par exemple, que l’Église est une « institution séculaire », et même la plus « séculaire » de toutes nos institutions puisque, après avoir célèbre le
bimillénaire de la naissance de son fondateur, elle va vers la célébration de ses vingt siècles d’existence.

Ainsi, affirmer de l’Église qu’elle possède un caractère « séculaire » de pratique et d’enseignement, c’est non seulement dire qu’elle est digne de foi en raison de sa durée, mais c’est également mettre en valeur sa qualification d’« experte en humanité », selon le mot de Paul VI à la tribune des Nations Unies.

« Séculier » est utilisé pour désigner une réalité « du siècle », « du monde », « mondaine » c’est-à-dire présente « en plein monde », et donc a priori étrangère à l’ordre du religieux et soustraite à l’influence religieuse. Mais cet adjectif connaît pourtant aussi un emploi ecclésial, donc religieux, donc ... non séculier ! L’Église utilise ce terme d’abord pour désigner et caractériser ses prêtres diocésains, ceux qui n’ont pas fait de vœux de religion, et qui par conséquent calquent une part non négligeable de leur existence sur les modalités ordinaires de la vie des gens du « siècle » où effectivement ils vivent.

L’appartenance au « siècle » s’est trouvée non seulement reconnue mais même revendiquée dès les premiers temps de l’Église : la Lettre à Diognète constitue sans doute le plus bel éloge de la sécularité des chrétiens, thème phare des années qui suivirent le concile Vatican II. Non seulement, l’Église a donné une place en son sein même à une certaine sécularité, mais elle a également reconnu l’existence et l’importance de réalités « séculières ».

L’évolution de l’emploi de l’adjectif « séculier » s’est poursuivie de telle sorte qu’après avoir été appliqué à des réalités internes ou extérieures à l’Église, mais toujours en rapport avec elle, il s’est vu introduire jusque dans ce cœur de la réalité ecclésiale qu’est le champ de la « vie religieuse » ou, plus largement, de la « vie consacrée » : en reconnaissant l’existence d’instituts ecclésiaux qualifiés comme « séculiers », le pape Pie XII a achevé d’introduire la « sécularité » au cœur du « religieux », avec la conséquence notable de déplacer la frontière jusque-là intangible entre le monde « séculier » et le monde « religieux ».

Le fait est que Dieu nous a créés tels que nous ne pouvons pas échapper à l’insertion dans une temporalité concrète, et donc dans un « siècle » précis. Ainsi sommes-nous « par nature » pleinement « séculiers », tandis que l’Église dont nous sommes les membres, se déploie dans le cours du temps, de sorte qu’on doit y voir une réalité proprement « séculaire ». Comme j’ai déjà eu l’occasion de le dire, le phénomène de la sécularisation (il vaudrait mieux dire de la « sécularité ») ne peut donc être tenu a priori pour essentiellement négatif.
Tenant compte du concept de « séculier », que je viens de décrire, nous sommes conduits à envisager un certain nombre d’autres distinctions qui ne sont plus des indices d’exclusivité ou de séparation, notamment « monde/Église », « raison/foi » et « nature/grâce » ou « nature/surnaturel », et « temporel/spirituel ». Pour le christianisme, ces distinctions ont leur fondement archétypique dans la célèbre déclaration du Christ : « Rendez à César ce qui est à César et à Dieu ce qui est à Dieu » (Mc 12, 17). Par rapport à ces réalités distinctes mais non opposées, un risque peut se profiler, celui de la séparation totale, ou celui de l’hostilité et de la conflictualité, qui peut aboutir à la prétention de l’un à dominer l’autre, ou à celle de l’autre à éliminer l’un. Ainsi, des attitudes cléricales nient effectivement la juste autonomie des diverses formes du « temporel », des « réalités terrestres ». Ce sont là des courants extrémistes, radicaux, fondamentalistes qui lancent l’anathème contre toutes les instances de « ce siècle », et déclarent que la sécularisation est fondamentalement le fer de lance du mal absolu. Péguy les dénonce en ces termes : « Puisqu’ils ne sont pas de la nature, ils estiment qu’ils sont de la grâce ; parce qu’ils ne sont pas de leur temps, ils prétendent être de l’éternité ! ». Il va jusqu’à dire : « Le spirituel est lui-même charnel ».

Il faut cependant le reconnaître, il existe un autre visage de cette forme d’opposition, et c’est ce que nous pourrions appeler « sécularisme ». Il assume le plus souvent une dominante critique, voire négative, et prend facilement la forme d’une contestation, d’un rejet de la présence même de l’élément religieux dans la société, et du magistère de l’Église, qui est un service de la vérité. Il n’est pas rare que le militant de la sécularisation revendique pour son action un caractère absolu, au point de s’octroyer les attributs « religieux » qu’il prétend pourtant combattre dans le monde religieux : dogmes assénés, vérités incontestables, autorité infaillible, etc.

Si l’on peut tenter un résumé, disons que la sécularisation apparaît aujourd’hui dans son lien étroit à la temporalité. Elle suppose, en outre, l’introduction et le fonctionnement de distinctions qui peuvent toujours se dégrader en opposition, voire en exclusion, et prendre la forme d’un processus non seulement d’émancipation mais de radicale contestation.

**La post-sécularisation**

Le sécularisme, par conséquent, n’est rien d’autre qu’une sécularisation qui se conçoit pratiquement comme une religion, comme ce fut le cas notamment dans l’aventure marxiste. Bien des signes montrent que, dans ce cas, elle finit par faire la preuve qu’elle porte en elle-même sa propre condamnation. Il faut cependant signaler un autre aspect contemporain, que
nous pourrions définir comme « post-sécularisation » : plus les sociétés sont sécularisées, plus se développent les sectes et les mouvements religieux « à la carte », ou des formes de mysticisme vague et de spiritualisme de type « New Age ». Quel autre symbole invoquer, pour qui est allé récemment en Russie, que celui du nombre impressionnant des églises orthodoxes aux coupoles d’or, qui refleurissent malgré plusieurs générations de léninistes-marxistes-athées ? Je n’entrerai pas ici dans ce débat sur la post-sécularisation, ni même dans celui du phénomène, pourtant extrêmement intéressant, d’une plus grande avancée du sécularisme dans les pays de tradition protestante.

Au point où nous en sommes, il nous semble utile de revenir sur l’aspect positif de la sécularisation que l’on devrait mieux définir – comme je l’ai dit – par le terme « sécularité ». La doctrine de la Création, mais aussi celle de l’Incarnation rédemptrice, offrent aux chrétiens et à l’Église toutes les raisons de reconnaître, de soutenir et même de promouvoir la juste autonomie du séculier. Voilà la vraie et authentique notion de « sainteté » qui – à la différence de la sacralisation exacerbée qui sépare et exorcise tout ce qui n’est pas consacré – parvient à s’exprimer dans le « profane » et dans le « séculier » sans le sacraliser, mais en le fécondant dans sa plus profonde identité.

C. Quelques lignes d’action

– Ne pas tomber dans l’excès des déplorations généralisées sur le malheur des temps et l’inéluctable dégradation du monde moderne, ni à la dénonciation récurrente des fautes ou des torts de l’Église, notamment des premiers missionnaires, face à l’insistance quasi-obsessionnelle de certaines sectes ou médias sur la faiblesse ou les omissions des hommes d’Église.

– Renoncer à une stratégie purement défensive face aux promoteurs d’un sécularisme agressif dont nous avons bel et bien les moyens de mesurer, et de faire apparaître les prétentions excessives et les contradictions internes, les limites inévitables et donc les faiblesses avérées.

– Reconnaître résolument l’intérêt d’une plus grande proximité par rapport à ce monde effectivement séculier/sécularisé dans lequel nous sommes de toute manière immergés, et auquel nous n’avons pas à craindre de manifester que, certes avec discernement mais réellement, nous l’aimons.

– Transformer l’agressivité que risque toujours de produire en nous la sécularisation, en la vigueur et en la douceur d’une proposition sereine de la substance pure et simple du message chrétien en ses vérités « ultimes » spirituelles, en ses hautes valeurs morales et sociales, en sa grandiose tradition culturelle.
– Au milieu des cultures qui à la fois nous entourent et nous traversent, mais aussi nous provoquent et nous portent, nous devons toujours affirmer, en en témoignant en actes et en paroles, sans crainte ni complexe, le cœur de la foi chrétienne. Son vrai cœur. Et toujours à la manière dont, effectivement, il nous tient à cœur. A cet égard, est emblématique l’appel de saint Pierre à être « prêts à vous expliquer devant tous ceux qui vous demandent de rendre compte de l’espérance qui est en vous ; mais faites-le avec douceur, respect et conscience droite » (1 Pt 3, 15-16).

CONCLUSION

Il vaut aussi pour l’Église contemporaine, le sévère avertissement de saint Paul adressé aux chrétiens de Rome : « Ne prenez pas pour modèle le monde présent » (Rm 12, 2), qui voilerait votre propre identité spirituelle et culturelle derrière un modèle qui éteint le frémissement de la foi, affaiblit l’ardeur de la charité, obscurcit la recherche de la vérité. Il s’agit, en effet, d’une tentation permanente et qui peut aussi s’insinuer dans des communautés chrétiennes vivantes et, par certains cotés, encore jeunes comme c’est le cas des Églises d’Afrique. Celles-ci voient se multiplier en leur sein des chrétiens comme Démas, qui – avertit encore saint Paul – « m’a abandonné par amour de ce monde » (II Tim 4, 10), incapables d’être dans le monde sans devenir du monde.

Et pourtant, nous savons – selon le mot de Pascal – que « l’homme passe infiniment l’homme ». Même dans la cité sécularisée, l’Église a la possibilité de découvrir, et non seulement en son sein, des lieux ouverts pour faire germer l’humanisme chrétien et faire briller une foi authentique, lumineuse et pure. Là, il sera possible de proposer à nouveau les grandes valeurs morales, mais aussi les thèmes de l’eschatologie, rétablissant ainsi le dialogue avec la puissante et grandiose création intellectuelle et spirituelle de la tradition. Là, on pourra faire résonner, de façon renouvelée et incisive, la Parole de Dieu. Celle-ci est même capable de féconder les déserts de l’indifférence et de la superficialité, et d’être le feu et l’épée qui viennent à bout du refus et de l’hostilité et secouent les consciences. Voilà l’espérance que nous voulons souhaiter à toutes les Églises d’Afrique, qui, à travers leurs pasteurs, se sont ici réunies dans le dialogue, la réflexion, et dans la communion fraternelle.
AD LIMINA VISIT OF THE BISHOPS FROM MYANMAR

On 30th May, at 5 Pm, 2 Archbishops and 12 Bishops from Myanmar, in occasion of their Ad Limina Visit, called on the Pontifical Council for Culture. Archbishop Charles Bo could not participate because he remained back in Myanmar to direct the relief work in the aftermath of the devastation caused by Cyclone NARGIS.

The Prelates were received by the President of the Pontifical Council for Culture, Archbishop Gianfranco Ravasi, the Secretary Most Reverend Bernard Ardura and Fr. Theodore Mascarenhas. The meeting originally scheduled to last one hour, had to be shortened to half an hour, in order to accommodate a last-minute change of programme for the Bishops at the Secretariat of State.

Archbishop Ravasi welcomed the Bishops, thanked them for their visit and expressed the nearness of this Dicastery to the Bishops and the Catholic Church in Myanmar, already known to this Dicastery specially through Fr. Theodore Mascarenhas. He hoped that this contact would be rendered more active, alive and fruitful. In this regard, he expressed the desire of this Dicastery to have a better knowledge of Asian Cultures in regard to their spirituality, ideologies, theology, customs and way of living and thinking.

The President then outlined a few itineraries that are being thought out for the life and work of the Pontifical Council for Culture. These, he said are based on the very valuable work done by this Dicastery in the last 26 years but also included new ways of working. His Excellency reminded that while these new approaches and itineraries would outline the contribution of the Dicastery, we would also like to have your input specially regarding the pastoral, theological and ideological aspects of cultures.

The first itinerary, the President listed was the field of Science and Faith, which he pointed out was not only dear to the Holy Father Pope Benedict but was also important to the whole world.

The second important itinerary to be outlined was the Dialogue with non-believers, which he pointed out was actually at the base of the foundation of this Dicastery. But this Dialogue would not be limited only to non-believers but will be extended to the diversity expressed in other
religions, a dimension that has attained much importance in view of the phenomenon of rapid globalisation.

A third important trajectory of the Council would be that of **Human Sciences**, particularly Economy, not as an abstract science of market movements but more in the sense of economy in relationship to the actual problems faced by the people as in country like Myanmar. This would imply considering Economy in its etymological sense of “administering the house”.

A fourth course of action of this Dicastery would be the field of **Language**. The Ecclesial community often uses a language that is not inculturated and frequently does not take into account new language forms like the television, internet etc. The challenge for the Church would be to find a way of communicating, that preserves the authenticity of the message while making it comprehensible to everyone.

Another track to be followed would be the **horizon of Art, music, cinematic culture** in all their diversity of expression and in this connection, the Pontifical Commission for Cultural Heritage, whose Presidency also is held by Msgr. Ravasi would have an important role to play.

Concluding his intervention, His Excellency told the Bishops that there were two aspects to their visit: to dialogue with them, listen to them, and learn about the complex, interesting and often difficult situation for the Church in their country. At the same time it was an occasion to renew and strengthen contacts with them.

Therefore, this Dicastery, he said would be happy to have information about all the events, situations and centres of cultural activity in a difficult country like theirs. We need the information he said, that we can be informed and advised while at the same time being able to advise. He asked them for information about their universities, faculties, even of theology and philosophy, cultural centres and every sort of cultural activity that they were involved in.

The President of the Myanmar Bishops’ Conference, Archbishop Paul Grawng in a brief intervention thanked the President for activating the contact with them. He regretted that they had, had very little contact with this dicastery in the past and wished to have a much better relationship in the future.

Bishop Felix Lian Thang, Chairman of the Episcopal Commission for Culture expressed his gratitude for this meeting. He recalled how Fr. Theodore had gone to Myanmar and conducted the seminar on culture and how they had learnt so many new things and could discuss much about the evangelization of cultures and the inculturation of the faith. He said that he was the new Chairman of the Commission and had been in office for only three months.
He said that while they were faithful to the Latin rite in the country, they would like to also inculturated in their worship, the cultural ethos, music and art. He said that most of the Christians were tribals and mostly one culture of Yangon was dominating. He expressed the need to recover the cultural identities, to learn better the tribal languages. Therein lies a difficulty because the Government does not allow and encourage the learning of the tribal languages. Similarly globalisation is destroying the indigenous cultures. Television is adversely affecting both the cultural education as well as family and community life. The Church, he said was called to fill in the gap which is a daunting task. There are no Catholic Cultural Centres, but some could be started now. History teaching in schools is limited to the period after he World War. Research is not allowed for the period before World War two. In spite of this, the Church is trying to preserve and promote the various cultures.

Bishop Nicholas Mang Thang explained that there were beautiful cultures at the local level. But these are slowly being absorbed and eliminated by the bigger culture, namely the Burmese culture and even the Burmese culture is being eaten up by the globalising culture. How to preserve our cultures is a problem for us and this Dicastery will have to help us to do something.

Fr. Bernard Ardura concluding the Session, expressed his appreciation for the Asiatic cultures. All over Asia, he said and this was particularly true of Myanmar, each country is a mosaic of different cultures. One of the challenges for these countries is as to how to preserve and develops one’s own culture while at the same time remaining open to the Universal Church and Gospel Culture.

All the Asian Churches also face a common challenge: how to develop and enrich their cultures without being eaten up by the globalising culture. It is important that faith is transmitted to future generations. Though faith and culture may be diverse but they are transmitted through proclamation and education. As St. Paul asks: “And how can they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone to preach?”

We must cultivate together the high level of our cultures and bring the Gospel into our cultures. Here in lies the importance of maintaining and preserving one’s art, customs, own traditions while at the same time having it enriched by the Culture brought in by the faith. When we receive the faith we do not renounce what is good in our culture but we can always add the new that enriches them.

As Gaudium et Spes says, human beings are both child and parent of the culture in which they are immersed. That is, Man inherits his culture
while at the same, he also creates his culture. Inculturation is specially important in the field of culture. At our recent meeting in Kathmandu, it was discussed as to how it was our task to inculturate values in our life.

In conclusion, Archbishop Ravasi thanked the Bishops for their visit and wished them all the best in their ministry.

Fr. Theodore MASCARENHAS, SFX
Official of the Pontifical Council of Culture

**AD LIMINA VISIT OF THE BISHOPS FROM BANGLADESH**

On 13th June, at 12 noon, 1 Archbishop and 6 Bishops from Bangladesh, in occasion of their Ad Limina Visit, called on the Pontifical Council for Culture. The Prelates were received by the President of the Pontifical Council for Culture, Archbishop Gianfranco Ravasi, the Secretary Most Reverend Bernard Ardura and Fr. Theodore Mascarenhas.

The meeting began with Archbishop Ravasi welcoming the Bishops, and thanking them for their visit. The visit assumes special significance, he said, because of the complex situation faced by the Church in Bangladesh and cultural, spiritual, ideological and theological riches the country offers. The visit, he added, would have the perspective of not only what he Dicastery has to say but also to listen to what the Bishops themselves have to say.

The President then outlined a few itineraries that are being thought out for the life and work of the Pontifical Council for Culture. His Excellency reminded that while these approaches and itineraries would outline the Contribution of the Dicastery, we would also like to have your input specially regarding the pastoral, theological and ideological aspects of cultures.

The first itinerary, the President listed was the field of **Science and Faith**, which he pointed out was not only important to the whole world but also essential in their area considering the fast development in the Indian subcontinent. In this connection, he said, there would be two conventions organised in Rome, one on “Evolution” to mark the 150th anniversary of Darwin’s theory of evolution and another one on “The relationship between Science and Faith” to mark the 4th Centenary of Galileo.
The second important itinerary would be that of emerging cultures, which are really very ancient cultures but find themselves in a new emerging world. These cultures are now coming into the limelight. He expressed his desire to know more about these cultures from the Bishops. He thanked the Consultor of the Dicastery Bishop Theotonius for his active collaboration. He also suggested that in reference to the cultures of the Indian subcontinent, we should reflect on the theme of inculturation and discuss the special function of the Catholic Cultural Centres.

A third important trajectory of the Council would be that of Human Sciences, philosophy, theology and particularly Economy, not as an abstract science of market and financial movements but more in the sense of economy in the perspective presented by modern economic theories of Economy. A good example of this would be the suggestion of the Indian Scholar Amartya Sen, who refers to Economy as a humanistic science. In this light, the emerging economies or the so called third world become a source of questions, challenges to be answered not only in the perspective of justice and peace but in the global sense.

A fourth course of action of this Dicastery would be the field of Language. The Ecclesial community often uses a language that is not inculturated and frequently does not take into account new language forms like the television, internet etc. The challenge for the Church would be to find a way of communicating, that preserves the authenticity of the message while expressing it in new ways and making it comprehensible to everyone.

Another track to be followed would be Culture in the traditional sense of the word: the High Arts: Art, music, cinematic culture etc. in all their diversity of expression and in this connection, the Pontifical Commission for Cultural Heritage, whose Presidency also is also entrusted by the Holy Father to Msgr. Ravasi would have an important role to play.

Concluding his intervention, His Excellency wished to stress on two points: 1. On the importance of culture as the first step in inter-religious dialogue. He recalled that Islam is the primary challenge in Bangladesh and dialogue is possible in situations where there are no strong tensions or the existence of fundamentalism. 2. The need for collaboration between the Pontifical Council for Culture and the Bangladesh Episcopal Conference and their contribution to the work of this Dicastery. Therefore, this dicastery, he said would be happy to have information about all the events, situations and centres of cultural activity in a difficult country like theirs. We need the information he said, that we can be informed and advised while at the same time being able to advise. He asked them for information about their universities, faculties, even of theology and philosophy, cultural centres and
every sort of cultural activity that they were involved in. Thus we can have an interactive and living experience integrated in the itineraries of the Dicastery mentioned above.

Msgr. Ravasi informed that Fr. Theodore would be his qualified referent for the Area, besides the Secretary Fr. Bernard Ardura as the secretary who organises and coordinates the entire work of the Dicastery.

The President of the Bangladesh Bishops’ Conference, Archbishop Paulinus Costa intervening expressed the happiness of the Bangla bishops to visit the Dicastery. Thanking the President for the warm reception given to them, he said that the “Council for Culture” had looked abstract to them before visiting this Dicastery and listen to the President, he said it looked very practical. He said the Bishops felt honoured because the President had cited the name of the Bangla Scholar Amartya Sen. He further said that the bishops had come with the intention of not only listening to the Pontifical Council for Culture but also to be able to speak to it. Introducing the different Bishops by name, he assured the President that what is discussed here will influence their deliberations and decisions when they go back home. The Pontifical Council for Culture will be a great source of support and encouragement, he hoped. Like India, he added, Bangladesh also had a rich culture and like Indians, the Bangladeshi’s too do not remain fixated with anything; we remain flexible and accept, absorb and assimilate from other cultures he said. Further, the Bangladeshi Culture he felt was more human than the European cultures.

Speaking about the situation in Bangladesh, he disclosed that though the majority of the population is formed by the Muslims, there are two types of Muslims: the intellectual and elite and the fundamentalists. The first group he said was very supportive and sympathetic of the Catholic church and want to collaborate for the sake of development of the country. They appreciate and seek services of the Church in the educational and medical fields. On the other hand, the fundamentalists feed on the illiterate and make issues where none exist. For example, in the uproar following the Holy Father’s speech at Regensburg, while there were protests all over the world, the reactions in Bangladesh were largely muted because the group of intellectuals was with the Church.

Bishop Theotonius thanked the President for taking off time to meet the Bangla Bishops, specially since he had to readjust programmes to be able to participate in this meeting. He called attention to what he had said at Kathmandu, that the Bangla culture is a very simple culture, so to say even agricultural. That is why people feel very close to nature. Music too is fundamental to the life of the people and is almost a spiritual reflection and
religious culture lives along with technology. The Bangla contribution to the
developed world could be a deep reflection on the relationship between
culture and spirituality. There is no doubt poverty, injustice and oppression
in the Bangla society which needs to be corrected. Since the situation
continues to persist, we could also try to see the positive side of it, the
presence of God and the culture of poverty. We could enter into the spiritual
culture, never forgetting however, that if there are people who suffer poverty,
 marginalisation and oppression, then there are structures that are not good.

Bishop Theotonius spoke of the spiritual nature of Islam and Hinduism
and suggested that a dialogue could begin with them on the level of
spirituality, specially with the mystic and Sufi elements. Terrorism and
Fundamentalism are imported from outside, form part of the power politics
and do not basically associate with Islam in Bangladesh. Islam in Bangladesh
is much influenced by Buddhist and Hindu influences. He further eulogised
the Bangla language and said that it was a well developed language.
Christian theological expressions and liturgical expressions could enrich the
Bengali language as happened with the Latin Language and the Gregorian
Music. We could work on these lines so that through inculturation, the
Bengali language and music would also benefit.

To a question from Fr. Ardura as to what values could be taken up
from the Bangladeshi culture for inter-cultural dialogue, Bishop Theotonius
mentioned, the community spirit, the viewing of life with faith, the culture of
poverty, dependence on Divine Providence and hope as some of the cultural
values that could be fundamental to an inter-cultural dialogue.

To another question about Catholic cultural centres, Bishop Gomes
informed that though there are no organised cultural centres, we could start
with colleges, liturgical centres etc. Seminary also could be a good area for
their organisation.

The Bishops promised to send reports on cultural activities so that the
same could be published in the Dicastery’s magazine, “Cultures and Faith”.
They also offered to send to the Dicastery, the Newsletter of the Catholic
Bishops’ Conference of Bangladesh.

The Bishops expressed their interest in the question of Economy
specially as it affects the developing agricultural nations. Msgr. Ravasi
elucidated the three horizons for looking at the relationship between
Economy and Culture. The first he said was the approach suggested by
Amartya Sen, not to conceive Economy only as a science of market forces
and a model of development elaborated by World Banks and Financial
Institutions. True Economy is to be considered as a humanistic Science that
concerns the integral development of the whole human person. Economic
Development, according to this theory, is concerned not only with economic and financial advancement but also in regards to the quality of life of the Community.

A second element relates to the cultural, spiritual and civil development of the community and the person. The community must provide not only the basic needs of food, clothing and shelter but also the development of the person. Therefore the laws of economy cannot be dictated by the World Banks and financial institutions or the Stock Market.

A third horizon is the one exposed by the Harvard Scholar Joseph Stiglich and regards the administration of the planet in the terms of the globalised world. Globalisation does have a positive side in the sense of the advance in communications but also in the negative sense there is domination by the Western and specially the American cultures. To maintain this distance, glocalisation is proposed. In other terms, while communications and economic globalisation goes ahead, realisation must dawn that there are particular social, ethnic and cultural fields, goals and objectives that should remain immune from globalisation. As a humanistic science, economy deals with the *oikos* or the house. Therein enters the law of subsidiarity and basic ethics. There is the whole interconnection of religious, cultural and political institutions in which politics can never be a slave of economics.

Msgr. Paulinus appreciated the idea of glocalisation and said it reflected the journey to the fundamentals, of going to the small things or the smallness, the originals. Msgr. Ravasi asserted that glocalisation means going to the originals, to the core. That is why the Church is involved at the economic level.

Archbishop Paulinus, while concluding in very emotional terms, thanked the President and said that the Bishops were touched by the affection that their small Church had received and assured that they would translate this affection into action when they reached back to their work places.

Fr. Theodore MASCARENHAS, SFX
Official of the Pontifical Council of Culture
Nel quartiere di Muski al Cairo, attraversata la confusione di un enorme mercato rionale, immerso dalla polvere che in quest’area della città sembra superiore che in ogni altro luogo della metropoli egiziana, si trova il Centro francescano di studi orientali cristiani. Qui ci si occupa di studi, ricerche e documentazioni riguardanti le chiese orientali e c’è uno degli archivi più ricchi della plurisecolare presenza dei francescani in medio oriente.


Oggi immediata è la sensazione che questo luogo abbia avuto tempi migliori, ma i cinque frati presenti, alcuni anziani, malati e senza nessun aiuto, riescono ancora a gestire il grande patrimonio culturale che queste stanze custodiscono. Circa centomila volumi, oltre ad una collezione di almeno mille tra riviste, manoscritti arabo-cristiani e occidentali. Infine c’è una grande collezione di manoscritti islamici, che purtroppo non si è riusciti ancora a catalogare completamente. La biblioteca possiede libri di teologia, storia, geografia, arte e nella sua area più specializzata ha volumi riguardanti la storia di comunità cristiane orientali come la copta, l’armena, la siriana e altre, semmai piccolissime, in cui si riconoscono o si sono riconosciuti i cristiani di oriente. Un dipartimento è dedicato, esclusivamente, ai testi provenienti da singole comunità religiose, utili a ricostruire la storia di mondi anche del tutto scomparsi.

Al primo piano molte stanze sono adibite a conservare i volumi ordinati in lunghe scaffalature allineate, mentre antiche vetrinette custo-
discono i libri più antichi. Sullo stesso corridoio si trovano anche le stanze dove si rilegano i testi e si restaurano le copertine di pelle dei volumi malandati. Al centro si trova la sala di catalogazione, qualche computer e grandi tavoli per la consultazione dei testi.

Padre Vincenzo Mistrih di origini siriane, dopo solo un anno a Roma e tre a Gerusalemme, è da ben quarantacinque anni all’istituto di cui oggi è direttore. Riceve nel suo grande ufficio che ricorda fasti di tempi più prosperi, con la bella scrivania fine ottocento al centro e le raffinate librerie che rivestono tutte le pareti dello studio, ma che necessiterebbero di qualche restauro.

«Quando si inaugurò il centro del Muski, gli obiettivi non erano molto chiari. Si parlò di creare un’università cattolica, si pubblicarono soggetti di islamologia e di letteratura araba, ma ben presto si delinearono le due attività principali: incrementare gli studi riguardanti le comunità cristiane in medio oriente e continuare le ricerche sulla storia della Terra Santa sulla scia del grande trattato sulla storia della Custodia francescana di padre Girolamo Golubovich, pubblicato nel 1929».

La ricerca è oggi l’attività principale del centro. I lavori degli addetti e dei collaboratori esterni vengono pubblicati o nel periodico «Orientalia Christiana Collectanea» (Soc) o più brevemente nella Collectanea, infine c’è la serie delle monografie. «Le pubblicazioni di Gabriele Giambernardini costituiscono un nucleo di prim’ordine – prosegue padre Mistrih – il suo desiderio sarebbe stato quello di avere uno specialista per ogni comunità. I settori più sviluppati della biblioteca sono quelli che hanno avuto la fortuna di avere questo specialista, come la sezione copta, quella arabo-cristiana, armena e quella di Terra Santa».

Padre Giambernardini è ritenuto uno dei pionieri degli studi copto-cristiani, fu fino alla fine degli anni Sessanta il direttore dell’istituto e con la sua partenza, lo scoppio della guerra egiziana del 1967 e la mancanza di personale al centro per un periodo di circa dieci anni che le pubblicazioni del centro ebbero un forte crisi.

«Padre Gabriele si è occupato anche della storia dei francescani in Egitto: la “Cronaca della missione francescana” del 1962. Dopo di lui le pubblicazioni sono riprese con grande vigore solo negli anni Ottanta con padre Cruciali e la computerizzazione del lavoro editoriale».

Il nucleo iniziale della biblioteca fu costituito dai libri raccolti dai vari conventi della Custodia. A questi si aggiunsero altri volumi e pubblicazioni per acquisto diretto o attraverso donazioni o abbonamenti. La fiera del libro al Cairo, a fine gennaio, è il momento più importante per i nuovi acquisti. Una sezione degna di esse ricordata per la sua particolarità è quella dedicata

Oltre a questo il centro rende un grande servizio culturale al mondo musulmano. «Recentemente mi sono messo a insegnare il latino a un gruppo di ragazzi dell’Università del Cairo – racconta il direttore – con gli studenti anche i professori universitari egiziani vengono qui a cercare testi di storia dell’occidente geografico, di patrologia greca, dell’occidente medioevale, del mondo bizantino, ma non possono leggerli, perché non conoscono il latino. Io faccio per loro molte traduzioni dal latino all’arabo e ho pensato che era giusto organizzare un corso per istruirli». I giovani studenti arabi sono interessati, quasi unicamente, a conoscere la storia delle crociate e come si è addivenuti alla spartizione delle proprietà di terre e edifici in Terra Santa. Padre Mistrih ha addirittura tradotto, per aiutare tutti loro nelle ricerche, *i Registri dei lasciti al Regno latino*. «Sono interessati anche alla storia del nostro monachesimo e alla filosofia cristiana, sant’Agostino e san Bonaventura, noi continuiamo a offrirgli il nostro aiuto» dice padre Mistrih.

L’istituto francescano di studi orientali, il più antico e ancora il primo per la quantità e rarità di volumi, ha dato il via al Cairo alla creazione di centri analoghi da parte di altre congregazioni religiose cristiane, i gesuiti e i domenicani francesi. La biblioteca dei padri domenicani francesi, strettamente collegata all’Ecole Biblique di Gerusalemme, è un centro modernissimo nel distretto cairote di Abbassiah. Giovani studiosi domenicani come padre Jean-François Bour, sono arrivati in Egitto proprio per proseguire all’interno della cultura locale gli studi di Foucauld, Massignon, Anawati, de Beaurecueil, Jomier su filosofia islamica, mistica islamica e la moderna interpretazione del Corano. «L’interpretazione del Corano non è monolitica. Ci sono molte differenze tra gli scritti degli studiosi musulmani mediorientali e quelli indiani, dello Sri Lanka o turchi – spiega padre Bour – certo non è sempre facile vivere qui, ma il lavoro che facciamo è molto interessante».


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LA CENTRALE CATHOLIQUE EGYPTE DU CINÉMA


Fondée en 1949, la C.C.E.C., à l’instar des autres Centrales dans le monde, s’occupe du côté moral des films projetés en Égypte et attache une très grande importance au film égyptien.

Chaque année, un Festival du Film Égyptien est organisé par la Centrale et les meilleurs films égyptiens qui se sont distingués par leurs valeurs morales sont primés, alors que leurs réalisateurs, producteurs et acteurs sont récompensés. Cette manifestation annuelle est un des exemples les plus marquants du dialogue islamochrétien puisqu’elle réunit les responsables de l’industrie cinématographique en Égypte, en majorité de confession musulmane, aux hautes autorités ecclésiastiques catholiques en Égypte, et la cérémonie de remise des prix a lieu en présence du Nonce Apostolique en Égypte ou d’un évêque représentant la Hiérarchie catholique en Égypte.

A part le festival annuel du film égyptien, la C.C.E.C. supervise également des représentations théâtrales ainsi qu’un festival artistique et culturel de l’enfant à l’instar de “Zecchino d’Oro”.


En tant que membre de SIGNIS, la C.C.E.C. est toujours en contact avec cette association et assiste aux divers congrès.

‘OTHERNESS’ IN OUR MIDST
Culture Migration and Religious Identity

A One-day Symposium entitled ‘Otherness’ in our Midst. Culture Migration and Religious Identity: The Place of the Immigrant in the Irish Religious Landscape, was hosted by the Irish Centre for Faith and Culture at St Patrick’s College, Maynooth, on Thursday 8th May 2008. The speakers included Dr Martin Mansergh, TD, Dr Donal Murray, Bishop of Limerick, Pastor Anthony Joseph, Senior Pastor and President of Hope and Glory
Christian Ministries, and Professor Miroslav Volf from the Yale Centre for Faith and Culture. Some of the key issues raised at the Symposium challenged its participants to think again about our interaction with our immigrants. How do we understand and welcome the ‘other’ in our midst? How do we adapt to the complex but necessary attitude of allowing the other to be precisely that: ‘the other’.

An opening address was given by the Director of the Irish Centre for Faith and Culture, Professor Michael A. Conway. Entitled *Beginning with the Other*, Professor Conway’s address lead the way with a stimulating and enjoyable philosophy on the subject of ‘doorways’ and whom we welcome or refuse entry. Professor Conway spoke of the two major narratives that have emerged in the twentieth century in relation to migration. The first is that of cultural integration or assimilation and the second is multiculturalism. Built on the premise that the ‘other’ must surrender their ‘otherness’ to become part of the new order, cultural integration, insists that the ‘other’ must become the same. Multiculturalism, however, recognises the ‘other’ as just that: ‘other’ and insists upon total segregation in order to preserve both the ‘other’ and the ‘self.’ Professor Conway suggested that we should not be content with either of these models and suggests that it is time for a new narrative. To abandon the ‘other’ or leave them at the mercy of these dynamics, says Professor Conway, is to forsake our own Christian tradition.

Dr Martin Mansergh is the newly appointed Minister of State at the Department of Finance and Junior Minister for the Arts. His lecture, *The Other – Paradigm, Power and Accommodation*, gave a comprehensive and entertaining account of being the ‘other’ as a member of the Anglican community in the Republic of Ireland. Entitled *The Other – the Hurt, the Horror and Hope*, Pastor Anthony Joseph shared his experience of moving with his family from Nigeria to Ireland. This made for a very engaging exchange between some of the listeners and Pastor Anthony as they imparted some of their own encounters as the ‘other’ abroad.

Dr Donal Murray’s address *The Other and Beyond* reflected upon encountering and communicating with the ‘other,’ which becomes an arduous task if we do not firstly recognise the ‘other’ as ‘other’ and secondly, recognise that interaction with others gives us a clearer idea of our own identity. The idea that I am Irish, said Bishop Murray, only acquires meaning if I know that there are people who are not Irish and when I begin to have some idea of what is distinctive about other nations and their people in terms of their location, culture, language, history, social and political structures, then my own self-understanding is enriched. The acceptance and
recognition that others are ‘I’s, is the fundamental puncturing of the illusion of moral egocentricity, said Bishop Murray. It means that I am no longer the centre of the universe. I can no longer be the source of the meaning of my own life, because that meaning cannot be constructed without reference to the world around me.

This year the Michael Devlin Lecture, as part of this Symposium, welcomed Professor Miroslav Volf who delivered his lecture, entitled “The Other,” Violence, and Memory. Professor Volf spoke about the role of memory, identity, and otherness. Challenging those who attended his lecture to always remember and never forget, Volf noted that reconciliation and forgiveness both require memory, but remembering rightly. One of the key issues raised by Volf was the question of what it meant to be “self,” to have an identity and how the differences between the ‘self’ and the ‘other’ generate boundaries and violence. Reconciliation, or ‘the cure,’ as Volf referred to it, occurs when the ‘self’ nurtures its own complex sense of identity, and recognises that the identity of the ‘other’ is also complex, of which the ‘self’ is a part. Rejection of the ‘other,’ says Volf, is self-hatred. If the ‘self’ rejects the ‘other’ from one’s own identity (that is, we are we and they are they, whoever we and they may be) then there is no meeting ground for the two groups, and the stranger is perceived as enemy.

Finally, the Professor of Liturgy, Liam Tracey, gave the response to Professor Volf’s lecture. Professor Tracey noted that identities are a positive good and by their nature require boundaries. But identities are also shaped by interchanges between selves, and boundaries are not just present, therefore, to keep things out. They also serve to allow things in. Others enrich us, even as we remain ourselves, said Professor Tracey, boundaries are porous and identities are not self-enclosed.

The event also included an art exhibition with the work of Polish artist Natalia Czarnecka and during the evening supper ‘Grace Notes,’ a stringed quartet, entertained those who attended the symposium.

Source: Julieann MORAN, Secretariat of the Irish Centre for Faith and Culture.
NOTITIAE

SPE SALVI
Presentan traducción al ruso de encíclica de Benedicto XVI

En un evento titulado “Cristianos unidos en la esperanza”, fue presentada el 25 de marzo la última encíclica del Papa Benedicto XVI, Spe Salvi, traducida al ruso, por, el Arzobispo de la “Madre de Dios”, en Moscú, Mons. Paolo Pezzi, y el Secretario de la Comisión teológica sinodal del Patriarcado moscovita y vicerrector de la Academia Teológica de Sergiev Posad, Padre Vladimir Shmalij.

Esta publicación del documento pontificio, “que dedica un amplio espacio a la denuncia de las ideologías y sus falsas esperanzas, que constituyen la destructiva experiencia vivida en Rusia”, representa “una ocasión de encuentro y diálogo entre la Iglesia católica y la ortodoxa”, indicó la Asociación Rusia Cristiana en un comunicado.

El evento se realizó en La Biblioteca del Espíritu, donde trabajan juntos católicos y ortodoxos, impulsando ocasiones de diálogo ecuménico, por medio de encuentros, muestras y publicaciones.

Esta biblioteca fue fundada por la Asociación Rusia Cristiana, el Centro ortodoxo Santos Cirilo y Metodio de Minsk, y Caritas de Moscú en 1993.

La traducción al ruso de la encíclica del Santo Padre fue hecha por Ediciones Franciscanas y la Nunciatura Apostólica de la Santa Sede en Rusia.


LA CULTURE À L’ÈRE DE LA GOUVERNEMENTALITÉ

André Rouillé analyse le malaise de la culture, en France, et explicite le concept de « gouvernementalité ».

[…] Le malaise vient du fait que la réduction de la part de l’État dans le financement de la culture se conjugue avec un objectif plus vaste consistant à introduire dans le champ de la culture un ensemble d’institutions, de procédures, d’analyses et de réflexions, de calculs et de tactiques, permettant d’imposer des normes de comportement aux différents acteurs du champ. Il s’agirait donc, pour le gouvernement, de soumettre la culture à une nouvelle rationalité politique, ce que Michel Foucault a désigné par le terme de « gouvernementalité ». Cela afin d’exercer une forme spécifique de « pouvoir qui a pour cible principale la population, pour
forme majeure de savoir l’économie politique, pour instrument technique essentiel les dispositifs de sécurité » (Michel Foucault).

Les formes de la nouvelle « gouvernementalité » ont été très nettement stipulées à la ministre de la Culture dans la lettre mission reçue le 1er août 2007. Il lui a ainsi été explicitement notifié que sa « première mission est de mettre en œuvre l’objectif de démocratisation culturelle. Celle-ci ayant globalement échoué parce qu’elle ne s’est appuyée ni sur l’école, ni sur les médias, et que la politique culturelle s’est davantage attachée à augmenter l’offre qu’à élargir les publics ». Dans ce cadre, elle devra concevoir les « modalités d’un partenariat pérenne » avec le ministère de l’Éducation nationale, et « proposer les modifications souhaitables de structures » aux chaînes de France Télévisions. Mais la ministre a surtout été invitée à procéder à une inversion complète de la politique menée depuis plusieurs décennies par son ministère en privilégiant désormais « les publics » (la population) plutôt que les créateurs (« l’offre »). Notamment en « veillant à ce que les aides publiques à la création favorisent une offre répondant aux attentes du public ». L’État continuera certes à soutenir la création, mais avec pour critère « les attentes du public » (la population), avec pour condition que « chaque structure subventionnée rende compte de son action et de la popularité de ses interventions », et avec pour règle celle qui consiste à « fixer des obligations de résultats et à empêcher la reconduction automatique des aides et des subventions ». À la différence de la création, qui est d’ordre qualitatif, le public se mesure, se calcule, se compte (« La question des chiffres de fréquentation sera l’un des thèmes de travail », annonce la ministre aux Entretiens de Valois). De la création au public, on passe de la qualité à la quantité. On place la politique et les choix culturels sous les fourches caudines de l’économie politique, c’est-à-dire sous le pouvoir d’un savoir extérieur à la culture. C’est cela la « rupture ».

À « l’ère de la gouvernementalité », la culture est soumise aux valeurs de l’entreprise, du marché, de la marchandise, de la concurrence. Désormais, martèle la ministre, « l’État n’a pas vocation à intervenir partout et à tout niveau. L’État n’a pas vocation à participer de façon pérenne à tous les projets ». Cette situation, qui a pris forme au cours des dernières années, est devenue, avec la dernière élection présidentielle, la règle régissant en profondeur l’activité de la culture en France. Il ne s’agit pas seulement pour l’État de faire des économies, comme on l’entend souvent dire, mais d’« exercer une forme bien spécifique, quoique très complexe, de pouvoir » (Michel Foucault).

Les institutions culturelles publiques ou subventionnées sont désormais contraintes de trouver par elles-mêmes des ressources qui leur venaient auparavant de l’État. Ces ressources, elles doivent apprendre à les recueillir, soit auprès des collectivités territoriales, soit auprès des entreprises privées par le biais du mécénat, soit par la création de services, de produits ou d’activités commerciales propres. C’est pour cela que les lieux culturels s’adjoignent des équipes chargées du mécénat, qu’elles accompagnent leurs manifestations de produits dérivés, ou qu’elles abandonnent ponctuellement leurs espaces à des opérations commerciales extra-culturelles.
L’alliage entre culture et économie de marché, entre art et entreprise, qui prévaut désormais, oblige les institutions les plus prestigieuses comme Le Louvre ou le Centre Pompidou à monnayer leur nom et leur prestige – métamorphosés en « marques » – dans les opérations culturellement les plus improbables (telles que celle d’Abou Dhabi). Quant aux visiteurs (le public, la population), ils sont aujourd’hui définitivement devenus des clients…

Autre symptôme de la situation de la culture à « l’ère de la gouvernamentalité »: l’aliénabilité des œuvres. On se rappelle que Maurice Lévy avait, dans un rapport retentissant, proposé que les musées publics français puissent, comme les musées privés américains, vendre une partie des œuvres de leur fonds. Autrement dit : les œuvres du patrimoine national devenaient des marchandises, les musées se voyaient confortés dans une posture d’entreprise commerciale, et les fonds d’œuvres transformés en stock à gérer conformément aux lois du marché.

Le malaise qui agite le monde de la culture est directement lié aux restrictions budgétaires. Mais il est plus fondamentalement causé par l’avènement de cette situation où la culture est gouvernée par l’économie, où l’activité économique et les mécanismes du marché sont les principes régulateurs dominants de la culture.

Extraits d’un article d’André Rouille dans ParisArt, no 225, 21 février 2008.

COMUNICAZIONE, INTERCULTURA E MISSIONE
Convegno all'Università Urbaniana

Comunicazione, intercultura e missione, sono stati i temi centrali di un Convegno Internazionale, svoltosi il 15 maggio 2008 presso la Pontificia Università Urbaniana, al termine del quale è stato presentato il Master di I livello in Comunicazione sociale nel contesto interculturale e missionario. Il Master si propone di formare, dal punto di vista teorico e pratico, quanti lavorano in ambiti caratterizzati dalla missione, dal dialogo interreligioso e dalla multiculturalità. Di questo contesto l’Università Urbaniana, che accoglie studenti da 90 paesi del mondo, è già un emblema.

Sulle sfide della comunicazione di una Chiesa missionaria e su come è possibile coniugare la comunicazione e la missione con l’etica e i valori della Dottrina sociale della Chiesa, l’Agenzia Fides ha interpellato mons. Ambrogio Spreatico, Rettore Magnifico dell’Università Urbaniana. “Credo che innanzitutto bisogna avere una formazione – risponde mons. Spreatico –, perché non basta essere esperti di strumenti tecnici, non basta essere esperti di strumenti audiovisivi, bisogna avere una formazione filosofica, teologica, che permetta di comunicare dei contenuti, quindi non solo un’expertise particolare, tecnica, ma veramente credo ci sia bisogno sempre di più di un approfondimento di ciò che sono gli elementi fondamentali dell’etica espressa dalla nostra Chiesa. In questo senso, noi vogliamo da una parte rendere più leggera, in questo
master, la parte più tecnica ed anche quella nozionistica generale sul problema delle comunicazioni, e invece approfondire gli elementi specifici della comunicazione in un contesto multiculturale e missionario. Questo è l’intento nostro, ed anche per questo abbiamo voluto fare un master di un anno e non dare tempi troppo lunghi”.

Tra i precetti etici della comunicazione c’è quello di essere veritiera. Il rapporto tra mass media e verità non è sempre sereno, a tutte le latitudini, compresa l’Italia. “Credo che molte volte la comunicazione stravolga i fatti – prosegue il Magnifico Rettore. C’è quindi bisogno di persone che abbiano una coscienza retta, con un’attenzione alla realtà, che colgano anche gli aspetti umani della realtà, quindi non solo la notizia eclatante che deve essere buttata davanti agli altri, persone che abbiano una responsabilità e non rincorrano solo il successo, ma rincorrano veramente la verità. In questo senso, il Santo Padre ci insegna ogni giorno a capire come uno dei problemi essenziali del nostro vivere, è vivere nella verità e comunicare la verità, nella carità. Io credo che in questo i mass media dovrebbero fare una seria riflessione”.

La formazione è quindi lo strumento per una corretta comunicazione, e mons. Spreafico sottolinea che ci si attende una attenzione per il Master soprattutto “dal mondo interessato alla missione e da questo ambiente multiculturale, quindi dall’Africa, dall’Asia, ma anche all’interno dell’Italia e dell’Europa, dove ci sono queste preoccupazioni interculturali, la preoccupazione di arrivare anche a mondi che oggi sono più lontani dalla Chiesa. La preoccupazione missionaria non è solo extraeuropea, ma deve tornare ad essere una preoccupazione anche all’interno dei contesti in cui viviamo” conclude mons. Spreafico.


**ENCuentro de alto nivel sobre el Patrimonio Cultural de la Iglesia Portuguesa**

Especialistas portugueses se reunieron entre el 18 y el 19 de junio de 2008 en Lisboa en un encuentro que convocaba por primera vez al Consejo Nacional para los Bienes Culturales de la Iglesia, informó la agencia portuguesa Ecclesia.

En él participaron, entre otras personalidades, el cardenal José de la Cruz Policarpo, Patriarca de Lisboa, que actuó como anfitrión, monseñor Gianfranco Ravasi, presidente de la Comisión Pontificia para los Bienes Culturales de la Iglesia, y el ministro de Cultura de Portugal, José António Pinto Ribeiro.

Estuvieron presentes los delegados de las diócesis portuguesas, así como los representantes de varias instituciones eclesiales que tienen responsabilidades en el área del Patrimonio Cultural.

También participan los representantes de la Conferencia Episcopal Portuguesa en los órganos consultivos del Ministerio de la Cultura, y los delegados de la misma Conferencia en la Comisión Bilateral Iglesia-Estado para el Patrimonio Cultural, establecida por el Concordato entre la Santa Sede y el Estado Portugués.
En el Consejo estuvo también presente como experto el director del Secretariado de la Comisión Episcopal del Patrimonio Cultural de la Conferencia Episcopal Española, Manuel Iñiguez Ruiz de Clavijo.

El encuentro fue promovido por La Comisión Episcopal para la Cultura, Bienes Culturales y Comunicaciones Sociales, que preside el obispo de Oporto, monseñor Manuel Clemente, y fue organizado a través del Secretariado Nacional para los Bienes Culturales de la Iglesia.

El objetivo principal de la reunión era, según explicó a Ecclésia el director del Secretariado Nacional de los Bienes Culturales, João Soalheiro, “evaluar los conseguido en el área del Patrimonio Cultural a lo largo de estos últimos años”, así como “diseñar estrategias de actuación futura”.

500 kilómetros de documentos

El patrimonio que custodia la Iglesia portuguesa es inmenso, tanto material como inmaterial y tanto artístico como documental, explicó Soalheiro, así que de entre las necesidades actuales, se ha decidido priorizar la archivística, de manera que se pueda poner cuanto antes a disposición del público los acervos históricos y documentales de la Iglesia Católica.

“Según las indagaciones que hemos hecho, la Iglesia católica podría poner pronto a disposición del público una red de archivos históricos cuya longitud en papel calculamos en más de 500 kilómetros”.

“La Iglesia tiene noción que sus fondos documentales son valiosos y relevantes –explicó Soalheiro–. No sólo para la memoria del Cristianismo en Portugal, sino para la sociedad portuguesa en general. Actualmente los fondos documentales se encuentran dispersos por las más diversas instituciones eclesiales, y, por eso, no hay una visibilidad o memoria fotográfica que traduzca el impacto de esta documentación”.

El mayor problema, además de la cualificación profesional, es la falta de recursos para acometer esta tarea. “En este momento, ninguna diócesis está en condiciones financieras de intervenir en su patrimonio con la calidad y la cualificación deseadas. Pero no es una situación exclusiva de la Iglesia Católica porque, en este momento, también el Estado Portugués tiene grandes dificultades para financiar las intervenciones en el área del Patrimonio Cultural”.

Para João Soalheiro, la reunión del Consejo es a la vez un punto de llegada y un punto de partida. “Se ha sensibilizado a las personas sobre estos problemas. Ha llegado la hora del pragmatismo: es preciso hacer operativas las soluciones teorizadas”.

“El objetivo fundamental de la Iglesia Católica, en el área del patrimonio, es servir la sociedad portuguesa. Y hacerlo a la luz de su misión evangélica. La Iglesia siempre tuvo una conciencia muy nítida de la belleza del Evangelio y de la capacidad creadora que las generaciones consiguieron demostrar al largo de los tiempos”.

LE CAIRE : LE PLUS ANCIEN FESTIVAL DE CINEMA EN AFRIQUE

La jeune réalisatrice Sandra Nachaat a remporté haut la main quatre prix pour Mallaki Eskendéreya (Private Alexandria) lors de la 54ème édition du festival de la Centrale Catholique du Caire (SIGNIS Egypte). Outre le prix du meilleur film, ce film a reçu le prix de la meilleure mise en scène, celui du meilleur scénario et un prix spécial a été attribué à la jeune Ghada Adel, l'héroïne du film.

Ashraf Abdoul Baqy a remporté le prix du meilleur acteur pour son rôle dans Khali min al-Kolestérol (Sans cholestérol) de Mohamed Abou Seif. Ce film met en cause le monde corrompu de la publicité.

Bannat Wassat al-Balad (Les filles du centre ville) de Mohamed Khan, réalisateur chevronné dans les années 80, a quant à lui reçu le prix du jury. Ce film a été salué par la critique lors de sa sortie en salle. Il marque le retour de Khan sur la scène cinématographique après une longue absence.

Le réalisateur Khaled Youssef, assistant et dauphin de Youssef Chahine, a présenté son dernier long métrage : Inta Omri (Tu es ma vie). Ce film a reçu un prix d’appréciation du jury pour les prises de vue de Samir Bahzan. Il a également été sacré meilleur film par le public.

Ahlam Omrena (Les rêves de notre vie) de Osman Abou Laban a reçu un prix d’appréciation du jury.

Hommage aux vétérans

La Centrale, en marge du festival, a rendu hommage à l’actrice Nelly, qui a fait ses premiers pas au cinéma dès son plus jeune âge surtout dans les comédies musicales. L’acteur Hassan Youssef, jeune premier dans les années 60, tourne aujourd’hui des feuilletons religieux. Un hommage très spécial a été rendu pour la première fois à l’acteur Gamal Ismaïl célèbre pour ses seconds rôles. Dorriya Charafeddine, présidente des chaînes satellites égyptiennes a reçu également un hommage. Elle est surtout connue auprès du grand public pour son programme Le Club du cinéma. Un prix spécial de la Centrale a été accordé à Ali Al-Samman, secrétaire général du comité de dialogue inter-religieux. Il œuvre pour le dialogue entre les cultures et les religions tant au niveau national qu’international.

Après les chants présentés par la chorale de la Centrale, qui ont donné une note de gaité à la soirée, place au sérieux. C’est sur un ton solennel que le père Joseph Mazloum, président de la Centrale et maître de cérémonie, a dénoncé au nom de la Centrale les caricatures injurieuses publiées dans un journal danois contre le prophète Mahomet. « Je tiens à dénoncer en mon nom et celui de la Centrale l’atteinte aux autres religions et croyances », a souligné le père Mazloum.

Une atmosphère joviale

Cette année encore, les acteurs, artistes et gens du monde des arts et de la culture étaient très nombreux, tout comme les chaînes de TV et les photographes venus en grand nombre pour immortaliser la soirée. Ce festival reste le festival fétiche des grandes vedettes du monde du cinéma qui ont toutes, un jour ou l’autre,
été récompensées. La jeune génération d’acteurs et de réalisateurs reconnaissent aussi au festival sa qualité de précurseur dans le monde du cinéma. Ils sont tous très fiers d’y recevoir un prix. Des prix qui ne récompensent pas seulement leur travail artistique, mais surtout les valeurs dont les œuvres sont porteuses : respect de la dignité humaine, des droits de l’homme, des valeurs morales, humaines et sociales.

Pour cette 54ème édition, le jury était présidé par Ali Badrakhan (grand réalisateur) et formé de Rafik El Saban (scénariste et critique de cinéma) de Foussy, Hala Sedki, Al-Sayyed Raadi, Omar el Hariry (acteurs et actrices) et de Khâireya el Bechlaawi (critique de cinéma).

Le festival demeure un festival pour les familles toutes confessions confondues. Un festival où les jeunes curieux et leurs ainés nostalgiques se côtoient joyeusement.


**PONIFF PRAXIS PROMOTER OF FAITH-REASON DIALOGUE**

**Polish Priest Wins Templeton Prize**

In a message sent through Archbishop Fernando Filoni, “sostituto” for general affairs at the Vatican Secretariat of State, Pope Benedict XVI congratulated Monsignor Michael Heller, a professor of theoretical physics, cosmology and philosophy of science at the Pontifical Academy of Theology, who won the Templeton Prize for his contribution to the dialogue between religion and science.

The message said, “The Holy Father was pleased to learn that you have been awarded the Templeton Prize in recognition of your outstanding contribution to the dialogue between science and religion, and he sends you his warmest congratulations and good wishes.”

Citing the encyclical “Fides et Ratio,” the note continued, “As you know, His Holiness has repeatedly underlined the importance of a fruitful encounter between faith and reason, the two wings on which the human spirit rises to contemplation of the truth, and he wishes to encourage all those who devote their lives to exploring the profound insights to be gained from scientific research in the context of religious belief.”

Referring to Psalm 18, the papal message added: “He prays that your work in the fields of cosmology and philosophy will help to make known the message that ‘the heavens proclaim the glory of God, and the firmament shows forth the work of his hands’.”

“As this prestigious award is conferred upon you in London on May 7, 2008, the Holy Father will remember you particularly in his prayers. Invoking upon you and all those whose work serves to promote a deeper understanding of the relationship between religion and science, His Holiness cordially imparts his apostolic blessing.”

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The writings of Monsignor Heller, 72, “have evoked new and important consideration of some of humankind’s most profound concepts,” the Templeton Foundation said. “Heller’s examination of fundamental questions such as ‘does the universe need to have a cause?’ engages a wide range of sources who might otherwise find little in common.”

“By drawing together mathematicians, philosophers, cosmologists and theologians who pursue these topics, he also allows each to share insights that may edify the other without any violence to their respective methodologies.”

The Templeton Prize honors a living person considered to have made an exceptional contribution to affirming life’s spiritual dimension, whether through insight, discovery or practical works.


UCRAINA: UNA TV CATTOLICA DESTINATA AI BAMBINI

Una comunità di frati cappuccini ha dato vita in Ucraina a una serie di produzioni televisive dedicate ai bambini, trasmesse anche della televisione pubblica. Il programma, Mistetzko Nadija (Città della Speranza), combina l’intrattenimento con la formazione civile e religiosa dei bambini.

Si trattava di offrire una alternativa ai bambini dell’Ucraina che in alcuni periodi hanno attraversato molte difficoltà, come per i fatti di Chernobyl, di cui sono state le vittime più esposte, ma anche per la disgregazione delle famiglie e la povertà. L’iniziativa è nata quando alla casa editrice Clara Studio, gestita da una comunità di frati cappuccini provenienti da Cracovia e con sede a Vinnitsa, giunse la proposta di realizzare un programma dedicato ai bambini.

La Clara Studio era stata affidata ai frati dal Vescovo di Kamyanets-Podilskyi, monsignor Jan Olszanski. Erano gli anni successivi alla caduta del regime comunista, e i cappuccini cominciarono a stampare una rivista che oggi non esiste più.

“La chiesa usciva dalle catacombe – dice padre Justin Rusin – e c’era anche un po’ di timore a esporsi. Tuttavia cominciammo; i greco-cattolici erano d’accordo con noi e fu realizzato qualcosa di veramente utile”.

L’attività continuò con la stampa di un libro di preghiere, un giornalino e vari opuscoli sui sacramenti. Da poco più di un anno pubblica una versione ucraina de “La Voce di Padre Pio”, un santo quello del Gargano molto apprezzato in questo Paese sia dai cattolici che dagli ortodossi.

In particolare, la figura di padre Pio è legata a un aneddoto alle origini dello studio televisivo di Clara Studio: nella primavera del 1993, infatti, mentre il parroco del tempo, padre Stanislaw Padewski, oggi Vescovo di Kharkiv-Zaporizhia, stava preparando alcune immagini di padre Pio da lasciare nelle case dei malati che stava visitando, gli sfuggì di mano una sua stampa che cadde in uno scantinato in disuso del convento.
Il parroco disse che lì sarebbe sorto un centro di audiovisivi per far conoscere padre Pio in Ucraina. “A dir la verità – rivelò il Vescovo – non mi resi conto di quello che avevo detto; ma oggi, visto come sono andate le cose, penso che qualcuno mi abbia suggerito parole che non avrei mai immaginato di dire”.

Nell’autunno dello stesso anno arrivò all’editrice, da parte della tv locale, la proposta di preparare un filmato per bambini. Dal 2004 Clara Studio, che ha prodotto anche documentari (famoso quello sulla visita di Giovanni Paolo II al Paese) e cortometraggi sulla storia dell’Ucraina, propone settimanalmente alla tv nazionale brevi filmati destinati ai più piccoli.


EUROPE : LA COMECE REFLECHIT AU DIALOGUE INTERCULTUREL
Réponse à quels problèmes ?

La Commission des Episcopats de la Communauté Européenne (COMECE) a réfléchii au dialogue interculturel en posant la question : Réponse à quels problèmes ?, indique un communiqué de la COMECE.

Premier d’une série de quatre séminaires consacrés à l’Islam, le Christianisme et l’Europe, le séminaire du 17 avril 2008 s’est tenu au Parlement européen (Bruxelles) sous la forme d’une conférence-débat entre experts musulmans et chrétiens. Ceux-ci ont échangé sur l’urgente nécessité et les objectifs du dialogue interculturel en Europe.


Le Prof. Dr. Ural Manço, sociologue des religions aux Facultés universitaires Saint-Louis (Bruxelles) a particulièrement abordé la question des musulmans en Europe de l’Ouest, qui sont arrivés ces 50 dernières années. Il a insisté sur le fait que dans le contexte actuel (celui de l’ère postindustrielle) dans lequel l’individu est souverain, les personnes ressentent le constant besoin de réaffirmer leur personne et leur identité à tous les niveaux. A défaut, elles ont l’impression de ne pas être reconnues. Par conséquent, l’Islam est pour beaucoup d’immigrés un moyen de
s’affirmer en tant que personnes dans la société occidentale. Affirmer son identité religieuse comme musulman est un moyen de s’affirmer et d’acquérir une reconnaissance. Pour ceux qui pensent et ont l’impression que leur travail ou leur profession ne leur procure pas de reconnaissance, leur appartenance religieuse leur donne la possibilité d’affirmer leur identité et donc d’acquérir une reconnaissance.

Les religions ont leurs propres problèmes et obstacles internes, selon l’Imam Tareq Oubrou, Recteur de la Mosquée Al-Houda de Bordeaux (France). Il a par conséquent souligné la nécessité de trouver des moyens pour empêcher que le dialogue interreligieux ne se substitue au dialogue intra-religieux, qui devrait quant à lui viser les problèmes spécifiques à chaque religion. L’Imam Oubrou a affirmé qu’en tant que représentant d’un Islam orthodoxe, il considérait qu’il y avait un besoin de dialogue théologique, rappelant les nombreux passages du Coran qui font référence à la diversité et à la tolérance. Cette théologie orthodoxe de l’ouverture à la diversité est très importante et il a regretté que les Musulmans n’aient pas accompli ce travail théologique. Il a également suggéré que les Musulmans pouvaient apprendre beaucoup du Christianisme en matière de sécularisation et de modernité, et qu’ils devraient s’appuyer sur l’expérience des chrétiens en la matière.

Le Père Ignace Berten, dominicain et un des fondateurs de l’Association « Espaces » (Bruxelles), a expliqué que l’intégration était plus difficile pour les immigrés d’Afrique du Nord et de Turquie en raison d’un fossé culturel plus important, mais aussi en raison du fort taux de chômage dû au manque de qualification de ces immigrés. Selon lui, les 2e et 3e générations de Musulmans sont composées de jeunes gens qui souffrent d’une crise d’identité. Les solutions à ce problème d’intégration pourraient être trouvées dans l’éducation, l’assistance sociale et une meilleure connaissance de l’histoire réciproque. À titre de comparaison, il note également que le Christianisme a réussi à remettre ses textes religieux dans leur contexte historique, et à distinguer ainsi ce qui relève de la Foi fondamentale de ce qui relève de la culture.

En guise de conclusion, Mme Ramona Nicole Mănescu, MPE (ADLE-RO), a souligné les difficultés rencontrées pour mener à bien un véritable dialogue interculturel ; elle a estimé que les discriminations qui existent à l’égard des Musulmans pouvaient conduire à des sentiments anti-occidentaux. Bien que la Charte des droits fondamentaux garantisse le droit à la liberté de religion, ce n’est pas suffisant. La croissance de l’islamophobie est un obstacle au dialogue.

Elle suggère aux citoyens européens de découvrir la contribution culturelle de l’Islam à la culture et à la civilisation européennes. Elle a également réaffirmé la nécessité d’engager pleinement les organisations et les Eglises dans le processus de mise en place du dialogue, sans pour autant négliger une approche plus locale (rue, voisinage, individus). La députée européenne a souligné la contribution spéciale des femmes qui, par leur plus forte inclinaison à l’empathie, pouvaient contribuer au succès du dialogue interculturel. Pour terminer, elle a réaffirmé que le concept de frontières ouvertes ne devait pas seulement s’appliquer aux frontières entre États, mais aussi aux frontières entre peuples et cultures.

Les séminaires se tiennent au Parlement européen.


EPISCOPAL COMMISSION FOR THE MEDIA (CEEM):
IN DIALOGUE WITH THE WEB

“The culture of the web is a culture of networking. It’s a horizontal network of people increasingly entering into dialogue with each other”. That’s one of the reflections that emerged at the annual meeting of the executive committee of the Episcopal Commission for the Media (CEEM), a specialized commission of the Council of the Bishops’ Conferences of Europe (CCEE), which monitors the development of the media and inter-church communications, promotes the work of the Bishops’ Conferences in this field, and formulates media policy options. The meeting was held at the Domus Sanctae Marthae, in Vatican City, from 25 to 27 April.

The culture of the web. The participants examined the theme of the next plenary assembly on the theme “the culture of the Internet and the Church”, due to be held in Rome in March 2009. Presentation of the theme of the plenary assembly was entrusted to Nicoletta Vittadini, professor of sociology of education at the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart in Rome. If the web is born “within a culture of an economy of giving away”, it’s also true that “the culture of the web is a culture in which the relation with the authorities tends a priori not to be recognized. So the authorities that are present within the real world must re-acquire authority within the web”. In 2009, the European bishops with special responsibility for the media will try to analyse the effects of the culture of the web in and over our society, and in and over the Church; examine how Christians can intervene in this culture; and verify what contribution the web can make to ecumenical and inter-religious dialogue.

Constant company. “The Catholic media must be a presence, a constant company, a proposal for people searching for God”, said the President of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications, Monsignor Claudio Maria Celli, in his address to the CEEM meeting. “We must avoid succumbing to a self-referential agenda and speaking merely as Catholics to Catholics – he continued –, forgetting all
those who don’t form part of our communities and who are seeking the meaning of
life”. Msgr. Celli also reported on the activities of the Vatican Office he leads. He
sees the service of the Holy See to the world of communications expressed in a series
of projects being pursued in 2008: these include training pastoral agents for
communication; pursuing ongoing dialogue with the university departments that deal
with social communications to understand what ought to be the identity and mission
of faculties of social communications within Catholic universities; acquiring greater
knowledge of the experiences of Catholic radio stations; making a renewed
commitment to theological reflection on communication; opening up the Church to
new forms of audiovisual presence at the international level, such as the young news
service H2Onews; pursuing the work already begun with the Latin-American IT
network RIIAL; and proposing new globally broadcast transmissions of significant
moments in the life of the Church.

Positive and negative sides. “We may note a growth of the Church’s presence
in the media and a renewed interest in the religious sphere”: that’s one of the findings
that emerged at the annual meeting of the CEEM, especially through the presentation
of the activities performed over the past year by the bishops responsible for the
European regional linguistic groups. But “problematic situations” are not lacking.
They include “the revision of modes of access to the public radio and television
service”. In various countries, in fact, some recent European provisions and the
growth of new religions have led to downplaying the presence of Catholic
transmissions in public broadcasting. Moreover, “the trivialization of some liturgical
events of national and international importance” has been registered. Other threats are
posed by “the exploitation of the Church for political ends, especially in debates
touching on ethical issues”; “the reduction of the Church merely to an institution
interested in defending her own interests”; and “a view of religion as problematic for
peaceful coexistence, especially after the terrorist attacks in New York and London”.
Therefore, “we need to defend an image of the Church based on the witness of her
members and the presentation of the Christian message. Trustworthiness and
authenticity are required today”, especially because “the young are very interested in
religion and the lifestyles generated by it”.

Some figures. The Church, therefore, is increasingly interested in the world of
communications and, in particular, in what is happening on the web. And she is not
wrong in this: according to figures published by the European Commission in
Brussels in recent days, “over half Europeans regularly use the internet, 80% of users
have broadband connection and 60% of public services in the EU-27 are available on
the web”. Thanks to the rapid dissemination of broadband in Europe, “two thirds of
schools and half of all doctors use high-speed connections”. According to the
Commission, “the Internet attracted almost 40 million new regular users in 2007”;
there are now some 250 million of them, but it’s also true that “40% of Europeans
never use the Internet” (and they aren’t just the elderly).

Source: Agenzia SIR (http://www.agensir.it), 30-4-2008.
ÁNGEL HERRERA ORIA Y LA MODERNIZACIÓN DE ESPAÑA

El arzobispo de Toledo y Primado de España, cardenal Antonio Cañizares, inauguró el Curso de Verano ‘Ángel Herrera Oria y la modernización de España’ que organizan en Santander la Asociación Católica de Propagandistas y la Universidad CEU San Pablo. En el acto de inauguración también estuvieron presentes el obispo de Santander, monseñor Vicente Jiménez Zamora; el presidente de la Asociación Católica de Propagandistas y de la Fundación Universitaria San Pablo CEU, Alfredo Dagnino; y el director del curso y propagandista del Centro de Santander, José María Díaz Pérez de la Lastra.

En su conferencia, el arzobispo de Toledo denunció la existencia de “un proyecto social y cultural que pretende configurar una sociedad laica sin ninguna referencia religiosa y moral tratando de imponer un pensamiento nihilista, eliminando de forma deliberada todo lo católico en la vida pública”. Según explicó, ese proyecto “no es de ahora”, sino que viene de lejos y no afecta a España de forma exclusiva, “es un clima general en Occidente pero que en España tiene una especial intensidad” habiéndose radicalizado en los últimos años.

Señaló, además, que ese proyecto nos ha sumergido en una “gran revolución cultural en la que Dios no cuenta”, y declaró que “el silenciamiento de Dios es el acontecimiento fundamental de estos tiempos, no hay otro que se le pueda comparar en su radicalidad y en la gravedad de sus consecuencias”. Por ello, hizo hincapié en que estamos ante un proyecto cultural que conlleva la erradicación de las raíces cristianas. “Se trata de un gran proyecto cultural apoyado por fuerzas poderosas, a veces ocultas”, que van desde los medios de comunicación hasta la escuela. Con él se busca “la cercenación de la libertad religiosa y en concreto de la fe católica”.

Esta revolución cultural se asienta en el relativismo social, en la ideología de género y en la laicidad. Es un proceso, apuntó el cardenal Cañizares, que se presenta “como un proyecto de modernización de España. Se trata de una iniciativa que afecta a lo social, político y cultural, y que busca modificar la realidad social y cultural de España transformando su identidad”.

Denunció, también, que los promotores de este proyecto “han puesto a la Iglesia Católica en su punto de mira” al encontrar en ella y en la familia los principales obstáculos a sus planes. “En esa siembra de ideas se presenta a la Iglesia como enemiga de la democracia y de la modernización, buscando así el arrinconamiento de lo religioso a lo íntimo y privado”, aseguró. La actitud hostil contra la Iglesia se agrava todavía más “cuando la propaganda muestra a la Iglesia como contraria a la ciencia y al progreso, adversa a la libertad, enemiga del bienestar o como promotora de la división, la confrontación y la violencia”.

Para el cardenal Cañizares en este diseño de una nueva sociedad, el relativismo juega un papel destacado. “El relativismo, al no conocer nada como definitivo, está en el centro de una sociedad que duda constantemente de sí misma. No hay derecho, sino derechos que se reducen o amplian según la voluntad del que legisla. En todo ello hay una concepción del hombre como ser autónomo de la voluntad de Dios, que no cuenta”. De este modo, “el hombre pierde su grandeza”.

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Asimismo, aseguró que dentro de esta revolución cultural en España existe “una tendencia a la desmembración de los pueblos de España, y no es algo casual, sino que responde al proyecto de destrucción de la unidad de la identidad de España”.

Finalmente, invitó a no perder la esperanza: “debemos afrontar los problemas y contrariedades con fe y esperanza. La iglesia es la que puede dar una respuesta de esperanza al hombre y a toda la humanidad. Algunos creen que ante las tempestades Cristo se ha bajado de la Iglesia, y esto no es así, Cristo nunca se separa de la Iglesia”. Por ello, aseguró que “en el momento en el que vivimos es muy necesaria la presencia y la actuación de los herederos de don Ángel Herrera Oria”.


CANADA : LES MANUELS DU COURS D'ETHIQUE ET DE CULTURE RELIGIEUSE

Le manuel pour les élèves de 8 ans publié par Modulo avoue que le cours pourrait les perturber. C'est ainsi que les jeunes héros de ce manuel admettent que leurs « idées se bousculent » après avoir entendu différents récits contradictoires de la création. Qui croire ? La réponse du « sage » qui clôt le manuel est d'une mièvrerie et imprécision affligeantes. Il est légitime de se demander si cette confusion n’est pas le but de la précocité dénoncée ci-dessus. Rappelons les paroles du réviseur scientifique des manuels Modulo, Fernand Ouellet, pour qui « Il faut apprendre à ébranler la "suffisance identitaire" ».

Dans les manuels du premier cycle du primaire de Modulo, seuls 52,3% des pages à contenu religieux parlent du christianisme alors que 20% ont pour thème la spiritualité autochtone dont les adeptes, selon le recensement de 2001, représentent moins de 0,1% de la population ! On déplorera l'absence de l'orthodoxie dans les manuels alors que l'hindouisme, le sikhisme, le judaïsme, l'islam, le bouddhisme, chacun au mieux d’un poids égal à l’orthodoxie dans la population québécoise, sont bien décrits !

Alors que des « récits religieux » comme le rêve de la reine Maya ou la révélation à Mahomet sont toujours à l’indicatif ou à l’impératif « Dieu révèle à Muhammad le message divin », la résurrection de Jésus est relatée au conditionnel dans les manuels Modulo : « Ils l’auraient plutôt rencontré bien vivant » ! Ailleurs [ERPI] au secondaire, le rôle de la femme dans la spiritualité autochtone est traité avec lyrisme : « La femme représente la Terre-Mère et incarne la fécondité. Elle veille à la croissance et à la socialisation des enfants. Toutes les activités des femmes feront d’elles des Gardiennes de la vie. » Pas d’envolée pour les chrétiens. ERPI se concentre sur la non-ordination des femmes catholiques, sujet dont on ne dira rien quand il s’agira des femmes musulmanes, mais on affirmera que leur sort s’est amélioré avec la venue de Mahomet ! En quoi le sort des femmes chrétiennes
et juives au Proche-Orient s’est-il amélioré avec la venue de l’Islam ? Le manuel n’en dit mot.

L’apprentissage des religions au primaire est très rudimentaire. L’élève n’aura qu’une vague idée de ce que sont ces différentes religions. Notons la volonté affirmée de démontrer que les religions se ressemblent (elles ont toutes des récits de la création, des rites de mariage, encouragent le partage...) Le manuel Modulo pour la 2e primaire demande aux jeunes de ressortir les similitudes, mais pas les différences dans « les récits de l’Annonciation, de la reine Maya et de la révélation à Muhammad [Mahomet en français] ». Or, ce qui est intéressant, c’est ce qui distingue les religions et qui parfois se cache sous un même nom. Définir Napoléon en disant : « il a deux jambes et une tête, donc il est comme moi », n’avance à rien.

Relevons encore l’impression lancinante de lire des documents Nouvel Âge tant par la mise sur un pied d’égalité des différentes religions, la valorisation de la spiritualité autochtone, de l’écologie, de la Terre-Mère et enfin la quête du bonheur ici-bas comme but ultime – et non le salut comme c’est le cas pour les chrétiens.


Source : Patrick Andries, Roxton Falls (Québec), 19-08-2008, (www.cyberpresse.ca)

Ce volume présente les Actes du Colloque qui s’est tenu à Vienne du 3 au 5 mai 2006. La rencontre a été consacrée à une réflexion commune entre représentants catholiques et orthodoxes sur l’engagement des chrétiens dans la vie publique en Europe et constitue le fruit d’une coopération entre le Conseil Pontifical de la Culture et le Patriarcat de Moscou, avec le soutien de la Fondation Pro Oriente. Ce symposium permis une analyse commune des défis que l’Europe vit aujourd’hui, face aux demandes nouvelles sur le sens de la vie, sur la valeur de la liberté et sur l’avenir du continent même.

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Nel maggio 2007, questo Dicastero della Cultura ha organizzato a Sibiu (Romania) il Terzo Incontro Continentale dei Membri e Consultori europei del Pontificio Consiglio della Cultura, nonché dei Presidenti delle Commissioni per la Cultura delle Conferenze Episcopali d’Europa. I partecipanti, che erano circa quaranta e provenivano da venticinque paesi, hanno proposto mezzi, modi e iniziative pastorali per una nuova evangelizzazione dell’Europa, per rispondere, così, alle sfide di una società senza Dio, in piena secolarizzazione, oggi forse meno rumorosa di ieri ma più penetrante. Quanto detto, proposto e discusso a Sibiu è ora presentato in questo libro.

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El documento presenta los frutos de los trabajos de la Asamblea Plenaria del Consejo Pontificio de la Cultura que tuvo lugar los días 27 y 28 de marzo de 2006. Este volumen contiene el documento final y las intervenciones de algunos miembros durante la Plenaria. Mons. Melchor Sánchez de Toca, Subsecretario del Consejo, en su presentación, informa al lector de lengua española del camino hecho por este Dicasterio de la Santa Sede desde su fundación hasta hoy y de los temas de los que se ocupa: indiferencia religiosa, cine, música, estudio de las nuevas religiones alternativas, diálogo con la filosofía moderna y el mundo de la ciencia.

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This book offers the Proceedings of the conference held in Budapest on 14-16 December 2006. The occasion was the twentieth anniversary of the historic meeting of 1986 organised by the Vatican Secretariat for Non-Believers and the Hungarian Academy of Sciences on *Society and Ethical Values. A Dialogue Between Christians and Marxists*.

The 2006 meeting was organised by the Pontifical Council for Culture, the Hungarian Catholic Bishops’ Conference, and the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. Lay and Church scholars were invited to provide an overview of the social, cultural, political, and scientific achievements in the era of the post-bipolar world. Speakers examined the present situation in Europe and of European values.

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En 1979, Juan Pablo II expresó el deseo que teólogos e historiadores examinaran a fondo el célebre caso Galileo. Así se llegó a la creación de una Comisión de Estudio de este famoso caso, que constituye hasta hoy un tema de actualidad. La Comisión fue dirigida en su última etapa por el cardenal Paul POUYARD y clausurada solemnemente en el Vaticano, el 31 de octubre de 1992, por el mismo Papa.

A través de las páginas de esta obra los lectores tendrán la oportunidad de conocer el origen de la importante Comisión, sus trabajos, sus resultados y las dificultades encontradas a lo largo de su camino. Galileo queda todavía el protagonista con su figura, su persona y las circunstancias del caso que lo hicieron famoso.

Ecco il quinto volume della STOQ Project Research Series, nata grazie al contributo delle Pontificie Università Romane allo sviluppo del dialogo tra scienza e religione per un rinnovato incontro tra la “cultura scientifica” e quella “umanistica”.

“Scienza e fede”, scrive nella sua prefazione Mons. Gianfranco Ravasi, Presidente del Pontificio Consiglio della Cultura, «sono entrambe libere nei loro domini ma non estranee, anche perché spesso hanno lo stesso oggetto di analisi come l’uomo o il mondo; sono autonome ma non indipendenti, distinte ma non separate… siamo convinti che nella categoria “sapienza” una presenza preziosa sia proprio quella della cultura e della fede, della filosofia e della teologia». Con questo libro, la suddetta collana inaugura una serie di nuove pubblicazioni in lingua italiana.

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A l’occasion des 150 ans de la fondation de cette fameuse abbaye provençale, le Secrétaire du Conseil Pontifical de la Culture a voulu offrir aux lecteurs un portrait physique, spirituel et humain de cette communauté de prémontrés. Puisant dans sa propre expérience et ses souvenirs personnels, et faisant recours à l’abondance de la tradition orale comme à la richesse du matériel d’archives existant en France et à Rome, il donne de nombreux renseignements sur l’ensemble des religieux de l’abbaye, en présentant des documents essentiels qui permettent de comprendre ces « hommes… témoins du Christ à la suite de saint Norbert ».

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En esta pequeña obra cuyo título italiano original es Interpretare la Bibbia (Bologna, EDB, 2006), el autor afirma que antes de abordar el texto bíblico es preciso saber como plantear su lectura para aproximarse a las Sagradas Escrituras tanto de un punto de vista exegético, histórico-critico, como del punto de vista de la fe.

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dell’acqua viva: una riflessione cristiana sul “New Age”, dal 14 al 16 giugno 2004, in Vaticano, ha avuto luogo un incontro di cui qui si pubblicano le relazioni con una breve presentazione. I testi sono disponibili anche in inglese e spagnolo.

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AVE MARIA PRESS, NOTRE DAME (INDIANA, USA), Michael PENNOCK, This Is Our Church. A History of Catholicism, 2007. Organized by key eras – the spread of Christianity, Middle Ages, schism, reform, and renewal, the Catholic Church in modern times, the Church in America – this book includes chronological timelines and charts, art and photography, reflection and discussion questions, and suggestions for further study. – Loughlan SOFIELD, Carroll JULIANO, Bishop Gregory M. AYMOND, Facing Forgiveness. A Catholic’s Guide to Letting Go of Anger and Welcoming Reconciliation, 2007. An encouragement for Catholics to take the first steps in the process of forgiving. A resource for personal spiritual growth.

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Studia

S. Exc. Mgr Donal MURRAY, Evêque de Limerick, est intervenu au Colloque sur ‘Altérité dans notre Milieu organisé par le Irish Centre for Faith and Culture au Collège St Patrick, le 8 mai 2008, avec un conférence sur L’Autre et Au-delà (p. 171-185). Sa réflexion porte sur la rencontre et la communication avec l’« autre », qui demande avant tout de reconnaître l’« autre » comme « autre » et, dans le même temps, de reconnaître aussi que l’interaction avec l’autre nous donne une idée plus claire de notre identité. Accepter que l’autre est un « je », signifie que je ne suis pas le centre de l’univers et qu’en sortant de mon égocentrisme, je dois découvrir que ma propre vie ne peut être conçue sans référence au monde qui m’entoure.

Al Simposio su ‘Otherness’ in our Midst organizzato dall’Irish Centre for Faith and Culture nel St Patrick’s College, l’8 maggio 2008, è intervenuto S.E.R. Mons. Donal MURRAY, Vescovo di Limerick, con una relazione su The Other and Beyond (p. 171-185). Egli ha riflettuto sull’incontro e sulla comunicazione con l’“altro” che richiede anzitutto di riconoscere l’“altro” come “altro” e, nello stesso tempo, anche di riconoscere che l’interazione con l’altro ci da una idea più chiara della nostra identità. Accettare che l’altro è un “io”, significa che io non sono il centro dell’universo e, uscendo dal mio egocentrismo, devo scoprire che la mia stessa vita non può essere concepita senza il riferimento al mondo che mi circonda.

Durante el Simposio ‘Otherness’ in our midst, organizado por el Irish Centre for Faith and Culture, en el Colegio St. Patrick’s, S.E.R. Mons. Donal MURRAY intervino el pasado 8 de mayo de 2008 con una relación sobre The Other and Beyond (p. 171-185). En su intervención, el prelado reflexiona sobre el encuentro y la comunicación con el otro, que exige, ante todo, reconocer al “otro” como tal, y al mismo tiempo, reconocer que la interacción con el otro nos ofrece una idea más clara acerca de nuestra propia identidad. Aceptar que el otro es un “yo”, significa que yo no soy el centro del universo y, saliendo del propio egocentrismo, es posible descubrir que la propia vida no se puede concebir sin referencia al mundo circundante.

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Symposia

The Pontifical Council for Culture organised a continental meeting for those responsible for the pastoral approach to culture in the Episcopal Conferences of Africa. The meeting held at Bagamoyo in Tanzania from the 22nd to the 26th of July 2008 addressed the theme Pastoral Prospects for the New Evangelisation in the Context of Globalisation and its Effects on African Cultures (p. 186-189) The President of the Pontifical Council for Culture, Archbishop Gianfranco RAVASI, sent a substantial message centred on the cultural challenges of secularisation spread through globalisation (p. 189-201).
