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**Cultures and Justice:
way forward for
mission of consecrated
life**

Brothers of the Christian Schools
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Presentation

I would like to begin this new MEL Bulletin with a brief introduction of Brother Anthony Rogers which will help us to better understand his reflection.

Born in Penang, Malaysia, Brother Anthony entered the De La Salle Brothers in 1968. He obtained his Bachelor's Degree and Diploma in Education at the University of Malaysia in 1974. After five years of teaching in two of our Brothers' schools, he obtained his Master's Degree in Pastoral Sociology at the Asian Social Institute and at De La Salle University in Manila, Philippines.

Brother Anthony is currently the Director of the De La Salle Brothers in Malaysia and Chairman of the Malaysian Lasallian Education Council (MLEC).

He was Executive Secretary of the Federation of Asian Bishops Conference (FABC) Office for Human Development from 1990 - 2009 and has also been working in various FABC Offices, including the Office of Student Chaplaincy and Education and the FABC Committee for Non-Formal Education for several years.

A keen, analytical observer of Asian affairs, he has written extensively on the ongoing theology and ecclesiology of the Asian Church. He has been both "doer" and "writer" of Christian life and his latest contribution to the Asian Church is the book entitled "The Faces of Joy and Hope in Asia," a compilation of a number of papers that were presented at various seminars, conferences and contributions to various publications over the past 20 years. A great advocate of justice and peace, he was one of those imprisoned without trial for over a year by the government under the Internal Security Act in 1979.

As the National Director of the National Office for Human Development/Catholic Welfare Services (NOHD - CWS), Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, he has been involved in the work of formation, especially the Social Doctrine of the Church. These include the development of ministries to migrants and refugees, indigenous peoples, people with HIV/AIDS and families and children with special needs since 1981.

He has served as a member of Caritas Internationalis – Executive Committee and he has been on the International Advocacy Committee for a number of years.

He is also a member of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace and is currently a consultor for the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant Peoples in Rome.

Brother Anthony wrote this document, MEL Bulletin 42, for the Assembly of the Union of Superiors General that was held in October 2009 and its content seemed appropriate to us for sharing this reflection on the life of the Asian continent which can serve as a journey of light for the rest of world. The document was written from the perspective of consecrated life but it has the same value for all those lay persons who are committed to the Lasallian educational mission.

The realities that we are experiencing at this time and which translate into the denial of vital elements for mankind – health, nutrition, education and a clean environment – seem somewhat contradictory when facing the ongoing and rapid development of science and technology, which without so much effort can facilitate all that is needed to live well and harmoniously.

These realities are causing people to change their cultural dynamic as they seek better life conditions. A great mobility has also been observed which makes for a day by day conversion to multi-cultural spaces in our regions where we can exchange what is best in each of our cultures. It is easy to observe this multicultural reality in Asia in great measure. Brother Anthony allows us to see this pilgrimage experience in Asia, which journeys along the path of the search for justice that should reign in a culture where each person can enjoy the essential elements of life.

Brothers and all of us who are committed to Lasallian education should always be on the journey together to continue contributing, in schools, all those necessary elements for the promotion of justice and cultural respect no matter where we are.

Finally, we are grateful to the Union of Superiors General for their permission to publish this document and to have it translated into French and Spanish.

Br. Jorge Enrique Fonseca Sánchez
Secretary MEL

Introduction

No one who is conscious of the realities around us can deny that the world has changed in both its inner cultural dynamics and its external social structures and expressions. Some of us are beginning to believe that these changes are so drastic that it is verging on a civilisational crisis. It is *with these premises that we need to pose these radical questions: Has Consecrated Life sufficiently renewed itself in its inner dimensions and revitalised in its mode of mission in the changed world? Do we still have a unique contribution to make in the Universal Church that is being called to be the “sign and instrument of God’s salvation in the world”? Has it gone past its shelf-life and no longer relevant both to the Church and the post-modern world? Is there the need for a new creativity in our Way Forward in Mission in the 21st century?*

Someone once claimed that change is another name for God and that the only constant thing in life is change. It is from this fundamental perspective that changes according to God’s eternal plans are the revelation of God’s wisdom in each era, when humanity still wishes to listen to the voice of God in the hearts of tearful humanity. It is both our sensitivity to the human drama and tragedy and stirrings of the voice of the divine within that allows the People of God and all God’s People to share a common responsibility. Humanity is thus longing to come to a better understanding of both its inner workings and outer manifestation by reading the signs of the times and listening to the voices of the age. Amidst cacophony and discord, we are struggling to awaken within ourselves a greater sensitivity to the human drama, so that we can find new creative ways of engagement amidst growing homogenisation of the psyche and conscience and thus becoming victims of inner fragmentation and outer divisions. The artificial dichotomy between faith and life has become more evident with either the setting aside of religion as irrelevant or the co-opting of religion for various forms of fundamentalism that breed greed and violence.

1. Conversion to Truth and Justice

1.1. The Moral Tsunami Today

Some also choose to remain in a state of denial, since hope has been extinguished and come to gradually believe that the powerful forces unleashed on people and nature are here to stay. Sitting in the sinking *Titanic* can be a trauma: we thus busy ourselves arranging the deck chairs. We come to accept this state of affairs, when we are unaware of the pending danger or have just lost any hope of being saved. Many in the Church and in Consecrated Life are happily preoccupied with sterile hyper activism or total indifference and apathy, because the mega fractures around us we have come to believe are beyond repair and the healing impossible. It may be frightening to come to the realisation when we have lost the inner vision to make hope a dream, we tend towards self-pity or take on aggression as the path to self-survival. People today, have gradually become convinced that we are not the apex of creation and the subjects of re-creation. The turbulent inner crisis and devastating outer manifestation make us lose both our inner security and undermine the very foundations of our being and becoming. Through this process of loss of the light within we only experience darkness outside and thus fear the world outside.

As a result of new God-Experiences today amidst pain and suffering may have also come to believe that God is alive and we are thus ready to acquire a new consciousness and thus regain the essence of a life-giving transformative ethos. We see the relevance of returning to the inherent spiritual roots of our cultural heritage and rediscover hope amidst anguish and sorrow in the world. Mystery only reveals itself in the depths of our hidden sanctuary in and through the process of contemplative interiority. Consecrated persons are called to be the poets and prophets of Inner Harmony so that we begin to Be One with the Creator and thus ready to whisper to the people of today that God is alive.

1.2. World of Grief and Anguish

For many of us in Asia, the Second Vatican Council through *Gaudium et Spes* laid the foundations for the development of the Social Doctrine of the Church that bridges the gap between our faith in God and our lives lived in the world. Our immersion in

the world is our baptism that allows us to hear the inner voice of God, "You are my beloved Son, You are my beloved daughter". We are being challenged today to be baptised in the gasping for the breath of God, amidst corrosive affluence of modernity and effluents of materialism that is submerging our personal cultures and our social structures. It is in this emerging epoch that we need a more nuanced understanding of the manner and form of the Gospel taking root in the cultures of the human community so that we can allow the structures of society to be imbued with the leaven of the Gospel. We can be the new seeds that genetically modified by the divine take root in the world and in the human heart.

Our attempts to redefine our way forward as Consecrated Persons for our renewed mission have its source in the world in crisis today. Many of us would admit that crisis that produces both a deep sense of fear, driving us to seeking security through isolation can also be the path to Joy and Hope. The essence of the first document of the Second Vatican Council, *The Church in the Modern World, Gaudium et Spes* is the starting point for the new world both for the Church and the Church in the world. We cannot renew the Church and the World unless the Church becomes the Leaven and the Spirit of God alive in the World have a meeting point in the Human Heart.

It is therefore this new sensitivity in the world that has given the Church in Asia a new added energy for our evangelizing mission. The World Today, our renewal of Consecrated Life and our Way Forward in our Evangelizing Mission in the 21st century cannot be separated.

1.3. Lessons from the World of Disparity and Diversity

The world today in crisis is also the world of disparity and diversity. Asia, where two-thirds of the world's people live and 60% of whom are young, is made up of diverse ethnic, religious, cultural and tribal communities. They have over the years relied on the inner strength of their cultures and religious traditions to be the foundations of unity struggling against both poverty and adversity.

It is in this context that the life and mission of Jesus of Nazareth, who was born in Asia, offers us strength to recognise in our diver-

sity the universality of the Human Family and amidst diversity in the unicity of God present in a hidden way in our cultures and religions. It is this hidden mystery of God that has been the source of our movement towards a new consciousness of the oneness of humanity and the oneness of God. We draw from the heights of heaven our insights embedded in our universal scriptures and aspire to learn from one another the wisdom to address the ills confronting us each day of our lives.

It is this dialogue with the people of today that the Second Vatican Council invited us to cherish that allows us to reach the depths of our being and the deepest parts of our faith roots. It has been our immersion in the sorrows and anguish of the people of today that has made the mystery of the Death and Resurrection of Jesus truly salvific. We know that the crisis in the world is also a crisis of our inner identity and our final destiny. Our years of interculturalism in the mixing of our faith based on the cultures of our society and the struggles of our people have allowed us to reach deeply through the roots of our faith into our common springs of living waters. This is the biggest blessings, the Second Vatican Council and the Social Doctrine of the Church as constitutive to our understanding of our evangelizing mission in the world today.

2. A New Way of Being Consecrated Persons in the 21st Century

The way ahead in a “Man-Designed World” calls for “A New Way of Being Consecrated Persons in the 21st Century”. A New Way is the Way towards the Incarnated Spirituality of Jesus today. Being Consecrated Persons is Being Communion as our Way of Life as the only path to being in Solidarity with all God’s People and Resources. This is our vision and dream but unfortunately people of this generation are busy with their nightmares and have not time to dream and see visions. To read the signs of the times in the light of the Gospel requires a new language and we as the new medium of communication. It is about conversion to God’s ways and reconciliation with our neighbours. Mission for Consecrated Life is not just in a new context but with a new wisdom and energy called “Creativity in Charity”. It is a way of life founded on Truth that shines forth in Charity. Charity where Truth becomes a firm and persevering commitment to the Common

Good. The post-modern world missionary does walk with only the “Bible” in the hand but with the universal scriptures as the Gospel of Life in the heart. Mission is more than communication of words and deeds but about Communion and Transmission of a moral and ethical vision that will open the eyes of persons and communities to divine and sacred in human life. It begins as mission *ad gentes* (to the peoples) but in reality becomes mission *inter-gentes* (among the peoples). This is the culmination of the God in Us, God With Us and God Among Us. This has to be our Trinitarian Missiology and Communitarian Spirituality. This new engagement with people of all faith traditions and the birth of a culture of life is the path to Social Harmony. This has to be our understanding of holiness and wholeness.

What characterises us today is our Reflective Mode of Life. Our mode of Mission is our Inner Reflection that allows us to look at the reality and review our lives especially as Consecrated Persons; in the light of the Gospel. We thus become aware of the gap between our Word (Our Beliefs), Worship (Our Acts of Celebration) and Witness (Being Signs and Instruments). We come to realise that when there is a break in these aspects of our lives we will not be able to grow into fullness. We will continue to focus on functionalism and institutionalism rather than allow the love of God and neighbour to mature organically in our lives. With an artificial separation between faith and life, a vacuum exists and conditions necessary for the nurturing of life are absent. When there are cracks in the foundations it is impossible to construct a new edifice on it. Consecrated Life has always been the new nursery and new foundation for the on-going progress of the Kingdom of God.

3. Evangelizing Mission in the 21st Century

3.1. Our Path to Social Evangelization

Many in the Church today are beginning to articulate the need for a new social orientation and direction for the Church. It is about the relevance of the Church for the world in crisis. It is about Social Evangelization, as the visible manifestation of the Kingdom within, with us and among us. Life in fullness cannot be about the artificial separation between our privatised faith and our public life but the personal faith made public by the fruits we bear in our

lives, and shared as the instrument of communion in the world. Life is about the integration of the strata of humanity, so that we can dare to reach deep down into the very centres of our beings and cultures.

3.2. Nurturing New Nurseries for the Future Evangelizers

The nurturing and cultivation of the essential elements of a liberating culture is the new womb and nursery for the replanting of the Garden of Paradise. The reaffirmation of the goodness of the gift of God implanted in the human soul is the newness of our genetic inner modification. It is this Confirmation of the Spirit alive again, that allows us to overcome the tomb of desolation, desecration and destruction in our world. The world torn apart by wars and violence, dehumanising poverty and soul-sapping consumerism can also paradoxically be the womb for the re-creation of the heart of human persons and the soul of humanity and the restoration of both insanity and sacrilege against nature and environment. The evident climate change in the world, many will agree has much to do with gradual disorientations in our human ecology. The culture of death and its masters of death-dealing antics can only be countered by a new power that consecrates the human person, the human community and the whole human family to the One Creator of Humanity.

I. The inner turmoil in culture: outer manifestations of injustices

Culture and Justice are both the Environment and the Engagement. We cannot separate culture of life from the culture of death nor the value of justice from the reality of injustices in the world. It is a dialogue between the inner ecology that nurtures us and the outer reality that moulds us. The meeting point of these two essential dimensions of life has to have as its common goal and the destiny of humanity and creation. Culture that has been developed through our historical and generational evolutions is about the inner process of transformation. It is this inner process of cultural revelation that serves as the impetus for the outer process of the transmission of the everlasting manifestations and eternal mandate of the Creator, as the mission of humanity in the world.

Homogenising Globalisation also fragments the world. Here it seems to me that our evangelizing mission has to address the consequences of an inner fragmentation, where people reshape and construct new identities to resist the encroachments of globalization, where the “New Poor” together with us have to rebuild lives and heal our memories. Our evangelizing mission is thus a process of reconciling, restoring human dignity and healing a broken society. It is about telling the truth, seeking justice, and creating a new moral vision. Indeed, reconciliation has to be the way in the 21st century. This is the only way to “break down the wall of hostility which divides us”.¹

No one can deny that growing economic inequalities is the threat to global security for those entrusted with the task of keeping peoples’ faith in international institutions both political and economic. Today the ills of the world and the task of fighting poverty and injustices is made more difficult because of the intricate connection between the process of liberalisation and privatisation as part and parcel of the process of globalisation and the inner transformation of human persons. This penchant for “Neo-Liberal”,

¹ *Ephesians 2:14*

“Political Democratisation” and “Economic Liberalisation” offers a limited perspective of life since persons are no longer able to make a distinction about life based on Truths and what is purely reason driven and logical deductions. We have grown to accept and have total faith in the 500 years of experiences of the modern state. We have gone through the process of gradual evolution as Nations and States from Feudalism, Mercantile Capitalism, Colonialism, various forms of Socialism and the current Neo-Liberalisation. Many still insist that a New World Order without God is possible as the model for the 21st century.

Without going into details, it seems obvious that various forms of economic and cultural globalisation are premised on a perspective that flows from what I would call the “Mechanical–Dualistic Paradigm”. The Age of Reason and Scientific Enlightenment has reassured people of the modern era that economic rationalism and scientific and technological advancement are best solutions for the world’s problems. Power and might, now in the hands of political pundits at the international and national levels have through their policies and programmes of greater centralisation built the structures for progress and development. Some would call these the “myth of growth” and the “maintenance of super-development”. With their new ordered mechanisms of the individual states and the network of alliances of the global powers, with their sophisticated arsenals of weaponry and financial strength, they offer a “safe and democratic environment” for the eradication of poverty and inequalities at all levels of society.

1.1. Our Fears Regarding the Future of Humanity

The Rational–Scientific perspective based on the Mechanical–Dualistic paradigm has become the sole and dominant ideology for the economic well being of the human person and the management of societies today. It accepts the unalterable premise and assumption that wealth creation and distribution, when given total freedom, will find a balance among the “Haves” and the “Have-Nots”. It is a matter of time before the levelling of societies and advent of progress with the inevitable pockets of poverty that we will have to take care of through our welfare, charity and assistance. We put away in the margins of our consciousness and social considerations the other equally important dimensions of life. These include the need to protect the dignity of human

labour, prevent dehumanising forms of work, preserve our natural resources for future generations and restore the dignity and rights of persons and communities, the gradual assimilation of values that betray our cultural traditions and heritage, especially those that attempt to link the material aspects of life with our innate attachments to the sacred and the transcendental.

What is becoming more and more evident is that the merger of the Political Powers, the Economic Planners and the Media Moguls is a highly organised system of misinformation and image management. People are no longer able to distinguish what is right and what is wrong. There is the inability to separate lies and more lies from Truth. There is a gradual eclipse of the truth, of the notion of justice and freedom. We receive lots and lots of news and a multiplicity of views in the print and electronic media. But unfortunately not many are able to really understand what is happening and thus the emergence of an ethical relativism. People begin to believe that majority opinion is right opinion, that democracy is the freedom without resorting to divinely inspired human truths. The norm gradually becomes might is right and the majority is always right. It is based on the false notion that a democratic participation ensures right even if universal and ethical norms are totally disregarded. Corruption in society in all its various forms becomes accepted as a way of life.

1.2. The Deepening of Civilisation Crisis

We are fully aware that in a fragmented and divided world, leaders in the Church and Consecrated Persons and all God's People have the responsibility to create a greater awareness of the very essence of the meaning of life itself. The culture of death, domestication and destruction can only find its alternative in a culture of life. Life in the God that we believe is founded on Love and that this God that can seek needs to be expressed in and through our lives. God cannot only be enshrined in our places of worship and enthroned in our Holy Scriptures. We are yet to fully realise that the desecrations and the violations of the dignity and rights of persons and even whole communities has something to do with the negation of God in modern day society. We thus are confronted with various forms of ideological and religious conflicts, terrorism, pathological forms of migration policies, racial and ethnic violence and cleansing, trafficking of human beings, famine,

domestic violence, workplace abuse, football hooliganism, cyberspace violence and organised wars of aggression. Violence is being manifested in both actions and pent up anger, prejudices, biases and intolerance that are lurking in the human heart. Because of our inner brokenness we gradually become insensitive to human suffering and the oppressive cultures around us. The growing insensitivity to human suffering and the blatant violation of human rights are manifestations of the growing misconception that violence is normal and acceptable. We need to identify these in each of our cultures and religions. The acceptance of the death penalty in many of our countries shows clearly that life can be sacrificed for the common good. But few would want to look closely at the cultural and socio-economic conditions that have produced in a systematic manner in which the young are driven to excessive competitions and insatiable consumerism. In a globalised world that is borderless we seem at the same time to be moving towards a new era of "tribalism and excessive ethno-centralisms" that prevent us from perceiving universal truths. We are today being challenged to look into our inner weaknesses as individuals, as communities and nations. When we know more about the monsters within us, we learn to cage them and tame them. The greater our individual and collective self-consciousness about our inner makeup, the easier it becomes for us to handle ourselves.

1.3. The Alternative Vision of Life for the 21st Century

Our future lies in the articulation of a new vision for humanity that is both holistic and ecological. It touches the whole person, all peoples and the whole of creation. Our task of building a new world order cannot be deprived of morality and spirituality. We need a moral vision and an ethical perspective.

Our Faith Encounters based on Reason, the logos (the Law) has to be kept in mind and the Ethos (the Spirit) in the heart to discern new ways forward in the terrain of our current realities and in the context of the changing times. The world today urgently requires a new moral vision and ethics and faith inspired global authority. We have in the recent past heard such voices in the wilderness ready to exert a courageous moral position on the global and local tragedies and transgressions. The burning issues today have to address both personal and social morality. We do not have

today such a global moral authority firmly rooted in our faith and religious foundations that can take a clear stand on issues such as the occupation of Palestine, Iraq or Tibet, Genetically Modified Organisms and Global Warming. In short, there is no Global Moral Authority to guide humanity today. Religions are divided among themselves or so preoccupied with their internal interests and concerns that they offer little hope for humanity. The world has sufficient technocrats and management wizards driving our globalising processes but we seem to lack both poets and prophets, persons and communities, who can communicate to humanity an alternative model for justice and peace. Our role as catalysts in civil society to bring together faith-based communities seems urgent and vital.

Here indeed is the call to return to the “Ethos” that refocuses on certain values and attitudes that flow from the spiritual characteristics of our cultural heritage and practices of the past to find expression in new and creative ventures. These include the need for a high moral character that is noble and dignified and that one is all-inclusive. We cannot deny the fact that modern day culture has also produced new daring prophets in the urban deserts and market places. The Spirit that speaks in these new *areopagai* of new forms of alienation and communities of the new poor even in the affluent nations need a listening ear by all people of goodwill.

1.4. Transformative and All Inclusive Ethos

Religions and religious leaders are challenged to return to the fundamentals and the essentials of our religions that need to move from just their preservative and maintenance roles to being agents of holistic transformation. The only path ahead has to begin with our common return to our founding inspirations of all our religious and faith traditions. We should not be afraid to stop and think anew. The bushfires are burning in our backyards and we cannot be naively looking for solutions either in the sanctuary or cyberspace: it has to be in active dialogue with the inner world of persons, who suffer from the mindless and endless aggression and violence of slow death dealing forces of poverty and malnutrition and deprivation of basic health care amenities that are affecting the lives of millions of people all over the world. To dialogue with the people of this generation who are so used to being directed

from the outside calls for a new process that will stir their interior life and spiritual core. In order to do that we need to move from our sophisticated verbalism entrenched in institutionalised teaching and preaching and our unreflective hyper-activism in various forms of social ministries. How do we therefore become transformative persons and communities?

1.5. Beginning With Introspection for the Renewal of Religions

The Catholic theologian Hans Kung was once quoted thus: “Peace in the world is possible when there is a dialogue among nations. Dialogue among nations is possible when there is dialogue among religions. Dialogue is possible among religions when religions begin to enter into dialogue with the fundamentals of their religions”.²

Organised religious institutions have in our various stages of history, imbibed the norms and values and workings of a Mechanical-Dualistic Paradigm. Mechanical because it is assumed that you follow reason and logic and even by blind faith you will obtain the desired results. It is Dualistic because it separates faith from life and God from humanity. Religion is seen only in its black and white, the focus is on the external and the apparent, not the internal and the mystery. Everything is given a logical explanation and encapsulated in dogmas and doctrines. We saw the need to teach people about life rather than help people to learn by reflecting upon their lives and their experiences. Dialogue with the fundamentals of our religion seems thus to involve a conscious inculcation of a participatory process that allows us to recognise the silent working God in our lives and communities, thus leading us to bring radical transformation to the very life of humanity. We need to learn the art of intense listening to our own stories that tell us where we come from, so that we will know where to go. One of the prophets of truth and justice from Asia, Cardinal Stephen Kim of Korea, in the early days of the formation of the Federation of Asian Bishops Conferences, posed this very difficult question: We need to ask ourselves, whether we as Church in Asia have been influenced more by the ways of the world or if the Gospel of Jesus has truly transformed

² HANS KUNG, *Christianity: Essence, History and Future*, Continuum International Publishing Group, 1996.

our lives? Yes, our insights into the world have some relevance for examining the inside of our lives as Consecrated Persons and to trace our way forward in new and creative ways.

1.6. New Interfaith and Intercultural Nurseries

Transformation of cultures and the promotion of justice cannot be the result of our total and undivided faith in the ways of the post-modern world. The seeds of a spiritual path of interiority and wholeness that is truly ecological and eco-spiritual have to be planted in new nurseries. We need a new ecology of integration into new environments of truth, justice, freedom and love. It begins with renewal of the inside and this affects the outside. It is a process of self-induced growth nourished by new life-giving waters and divine-inspired light. It is this alone that becomes the gradual process of influencing patterns of thinking based on principles of reflection, criteria for judgement, modes of behaviour and the engagement in society. This calls for imbibing this universal transformative ethos that is deeply rooted in our cultures and religious traditions. To transform every strata of humanity we need to move to the periphery to begin the process for starting a new human ecology.

We as Church and Consecrated Persons have been struggling to perform the miracle of “bi-location” moving all the time between the Church and the World and Consecrated Life and Pastoral Ministry in the World. How do we therefore begin the process of “re-location”? We have heard the axiom: “The Monk is not one who lives in the Monastery but the Monastery lives in him”. How do we become therefore Church in God’s Kingdom and Consecrated Persons in the New Humanity of God? Our lives it seems is not just being present in the World but bringing the face of Jesus as the presence of God into the new fields that are being cultivated by centuries of God’s People all over the world. We need to bring the seeds of the Gospel and replant with others in new nurseries that will nurture hope for humanity in the 21st century.

1.7. Faith Encounters that Affirm Mutuality

Our process of transforming humanity from within is about the growth in our relational lives with others. Our lives as followers of Jesus move us from being disciples to forming new associations with all God’s People who are also fellow pilgrims in the common

and unceasing search for the hidden face of God in every place and time in history. We want to consciously associate with all peoples because they are also associated with us for the coming of the Kingdom of a new Heaven and new Earth. It is not only about working together but fostering new friendships with others, beyond our current borders and circles because God's Kingdom is broader than the Church and Consecrated Life. Only when we get close enough to people of other cultures and faiths as fellow pilgrims, will we be able to hear the same the common voice of the divine and the transcendental that we can walk hand in hand to the Reign of God. We need new meeting points for cultural encounters and religious experiences so that we can discover both the new faces of God and the new voices of the divine in our midst. With the growth of trust and confidence in the innate gifts we have to share we will be ever more ready to critically examine our past lives and ensure that we can guard the present against the intrusion of a new forms of culture of death-dealing forces that subtly hide unseen in our institutions and agenda. It is this sensitive listening that will lead us to being conscious of the need for "inculturation": when we give the best we have and also receive from the good of peoples of other cultures. But we also need to consciously promote "exculturation": by identifying those elements within our personal, family, religious, institutional, society and global culture that are obstacles to the common good that need to be extricated from our lives. Some of us are beginning to believe that this will lead us to the process of holistic "inter-culturation": our cultures purified we become engaged in meeting at the deepest levels of our being in God to walk together for the coming of the Reign of God.

Thus our reflections on Culture and Justice in the context of the world today points clearly for the need to discern the roots of the culture of death and foster the elements of a culture of life present among our peoples. This inner process has to be linked with the new ways in which we work towards the removal of injustices and the fostering of Truth and Justice as the basic pillars for the growth of a Culture of Life. It is obvious that we cannot keep apart liberating cultures from death-dealing forces and thus the return to bringing a new consciousness and renewed conscience to each human person.

II. Refocusing consecrated life in the 21st century

Introduction

To refocus our Consecrated Life, we need to recall and remind ourselves of No. 2 of *Perfectae Caritatis* that attempted to bring adaptation and renewal of the Consecrated Life. It was our inclusion of both the constant return to the sources of all Christian life and to the original spirit of the institutes and their adaptation to the changed conditions of our time. For this renewal, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and the guidance of the Church, to be effective we identified the following principles:

- a) Since the ultimate norm of the Consecrated Life is the following of Christ set forth in the Gospels, it is the highest rule.
- b) Our contribution to the good of the Church is about our particularity as well as our patrimony that has to be faithfully held in honor.
- c) It is clear that we share in the life of the Church, our particular characteristics but in keeping with the Church's undertakings and aims in matters biblical, liturgical, dogmatic, pastoral, ecumenical, missionary and social.
- d) We are invited to promote among our members an adequate knowledge of the social conditions of the times we live in and of the needs of the Church. In such a way, judging current events wisely in the light of faith and burning with apostolic zeal, so that we will assist humanity more effectively.
- e) The purpose of Consecrated Life is to help the members follow Christ and be united to God through the profession of the evangelical counsels. It should be constantly kept in mind, that adjustments to meet the needs of our age must be animated by a renewal of spirit. This must take precedence over even the active ministry.³

³ PAUL VI, No. 2, *Perfectae Caritatis*.

1. Conversion to Founding Vision, Communion and Mission through a Reflective Mode of Life

Reflection on Life has to begin with linking the Word and the World. It is this intrinsic unity that flows into Worship as Celebration and Witnessing as Friendship with God and Humanity. Unless we understand the roots and essence of Creation in the Old Testament, we will not be able to move forward to the mission of re-creation of a New Heaven and New Earth. We are reminded in Genesis that God saw that the human person, created as the apex of the Creation adventure as very good. But strangely, within a very short time there is doubt about this inherent goodness and thus the longing of Adam and Eve for self-sufficient freedom and independence from God. They perceived that to be self-dependent is to be free. It was their inability to see the hidden meanings of the essence of life that made them experiment with life without adherence to the Word of God. It is this inability to understand the hidden mystery of the plan of God that made them question the relevance of God to their lives. They had all the material things in life but could not relate this to their inner identity that was rooted in the original intention of God to make life pilgrim flowing from the mystery of God. Without the understanding of the real meaning of Creation, humanity will never know its destiny. To put away and to discard the true nature of our inner identity is to say we have lost the compass and thus life as a destiny becomes a journey of adventurism. We are thus ready to struggle aimlessly seeking freedom and truth devoid of the inherent wisdom of the promptings of the inner voice of God. We don't see the relevance of God in our lives and we are thus happily encumbered by material cargo (materialism) and magnified ego (egoism) and glorified privatisation of self-importance (individualism) as the necessary companions. We thus decide to walk in the dark without God and in the dark alleys of our neon lit streets. We will be reluctant to wake up from the nightmares we have created for ourselves because of the denial of the God who is Love that Jesus proclaimed to all nations. God's love for us is fundamental for our lives, and it raises important questions about who God is and who we are.

Over the centuries religions have articulated the relevance of God in our lives but secularism is asserting with confidence that we

can build a new world order without the transcendental. We have failed to realise that devoid of God, we will live in a void and thus the penchant for the material and the ephemeral, the erratic and the exotic seem inevitable. Looking back again at the story of the God of mystery alive in human history makes us realise that the relevance for God is intimately linked to reverence for life. The prevalence of conflicts, violence and wars, in the name of God throughout human history gives us some indications of the God that we have inherited and passed down to the young of each generation. What we have handed over as legacy have been more often the outer manifestations and practices of religious patrimony rather than as cherished gift to be cultivated and nurtured in the human heart and imbibed in the human psyche. Religion with its rhetoric, rules, rites, ritual and regimes has been more at self-preservation than God-Incarnation. Religious external deprived of inner mystery and permanent life-giving energy becomes irrelevant and even dangerous. God who gave dignity and rights embodied in life to human persons and harmony within nature has been gradually forgotten. God's norms embodied and entrenched in our very nature, our forms of nurture, our cultural manifestations and in the structures of society are gradually giving way to new idols and icons. Jesus reminded us: "You will see and see again but you will not perceive, hear and hear again and you will not understand because the heart of this people has grown coarse".⁴ We gradually lose our sensitivity to the other and to the world.

When we gradually lose our perspectives of life it is not strange that we will also lose our directions in life. We falter and we fall and become fragmented within as believers and people of various faiths and religions become divided among themselves. Our divisions are the result of divided visions. The world today is in need of a Faith Vision. This inner retina of God sensitivity and the light from the human drama allows us to see ourselves as we are, to know who we really are and to go where God wants us to go. This God consciousness flows from being able to look at everything with the eyes of God, to view our lives in the light of God's plan for the world and to attribute everything that is happening in the world as our way to the Kingdom of the Father. We are afraid to

⁴ *Matthew 15:15.*

lose our external identity that often seeks uniformity for the sake of conformity. Relevance cannot be nurtured by uniformity in the externals and conformity to currently accepted norms but by our docility to the Spirit that moves one to being ready to become one with God only in total submission to the thoughts and ways of God.

We know that the essence of Consecrated Life is the life and being of Jesus of Nazareth. His total consecration to the Will of the Father and the Kingdom of the Father was the Truth of His Being, the Ways of His Love and thus the Foundations of our New Life. These are the fundamental pillars for the emergence of a New Heaven and a New Earth. We need to propose a new organic life-endowing culture of unity for the growth of a humane ecology. How can Consecrated Persons be salt and leaven in a mechanistic and dualistic civilisational edifice? The renewal of Consecration as the perfection of the charity of Jesus is not about “rebranding” and “repackaging” but about re-discovering a new relevance that is based on a new relational enterprise. This process of making the relational the essence of the deep desire of Jesus: “Father, May they all be one, even as You and I are One”. This desire for Union with the Father and resultant Unity among His Friends seems to be source of the energy and impetus for the seed to grow in the new nursery of the human heart. We are called to a new consecration as prophets of Relational Harmony. To alter the formative processes in life, we need a “Reflective Mode of Life”.

2. The Inner Voice of the Father as Commitment

Consecrated life is about the consecration of the self to living the memory of Jesus. The consecration of the body and the death of Jesus “Do this in memory of me” is not about the bread and wine alone, it is about the whole life of Jesus: his birth, his baptism, teachings, works, his sufferings and death. His Consecrated Life is now the memory that we are called live fully and not just a selective memory! The consecration of Jesus at his Baptism is also his commitment to the Father when He hears loudly this inner voice “This is my beloved Son”. His commitment towards consecration begins with the inner listening in the desert. This sensitive listening leads to the rejection of status, glory, power and material

wealth and thus the readiness for the self-consecration to the Will of the Father and the Kingdom of the Father.

It is this contemplative meeting of the rejection of Satan's gifts and the Father's dream that prompts Jesus to read from Isaiah (*Luke Chapter 4*) and thus proclaim to all of us loudly and clearly that: It is this contemplation on my own life and the Word of God that I dare to accept this mission of compassion so intimately linked to my mission of the Father. It is this same compassion of Jesus that is the hallmark of his ministry that has been contested by the religious leaders of his times who believed that the law, the rules, the rhetoric, the rights, the religious practices are the way to salvation. Jesus offers a counter proposal. That counter proposal is that we need to be born again in the Spirit. The Spirit of the Father's love and therefore the whole life of the memory of Jesus were about incarnating the Spirit of the Father's love into his relational harmony with others.

True Mission for the Kingdom thus flows from and through an inner reflectiveness mode of life. Our process of commitment to the Kingdom is also a journey from our external world to the consciousness of our inner world. Our review of the world around us has to be subjected to a Reflective Mode of Life drawing insights from the Word of God and voices around us. Consecrated Life also flows from our reflective mode of seeking to understand our celebration of the final act of Jesus when we are consecrated as the Eucharistic Body of Christ. "Do this in memory of me" is not just a commemoration of what happened at the Table of the Last Supper but the culmination of a life totally consecrated to and in submission to the will of the Father. Consecrated Life is the Way in Truth lived in Love. The essence of the evangelical counsels is the life-long commitment and taking him into our being, so that we become both the embodiment and the life of Jesus as presence in us in the world today. The Body and Blood of Jesus are also the inner thoughts of Jesus rooted in Him and in the ways of the Father. To partake in the life of Jesus is to participate not just by our physical participation but by the full taking over of the Spirit of Jesus. But this participation can only come about in and through the emptying of what is within and thus to be able to imbibe the very being of Jesus into our own being. The pre-condition for participation is to be able to remove from within us those elements and conditions that prevent union. Communion

has to begin with the identifying of those conditions that are counter-union within and counter-productive in the outside.

It is not strange that the *Pastoral Constitution on Church in the Modern World (Gaudium et Spes)* identifies the artificial dichotomy between Faith and Life as one of the gravest errors of the people in the modern world. The serious rupture within and thus our fractured outside becomes not a sign of communion but a contradiction to others. When there is no connection between the inside and the outside, the soul and the body, the parts of our being become strangers over time. We become lifeless institutions purely functional and utilitarian. We become the symbol of a body that is lifeless and we are thus not life-giving as a result of the connectivity of the World, the Word and Worship.

3. Consecration is sustained by the Relational Encounters in Life

It is therefore not strange that the story of Cain and Abel is about the dialogue between God and humanity with the premise that walking away from our original state of the goodness of God within brings us to a non-relational state of existence. When infected with the presumption that God is no longer relevant to our lives, we dare with arrogance to ask, *“Am I my Brother’s Keeper?”* Without the inner recognition of God in our being, we no longer see the relationship with God and thus the unimportance of the Truth of God and the Love of neighbour. Without union with God we see the irrelevance of communion with the neighbour, the family, with society and with the whole of humanity.

When the Truth that is God meets the love implanted by God in the human heart, this results in the personal yet public dimension of our faith. This intertwining of Truth and Love as the innate dimensions of our Christian Faith as brought to us by Pope Benedict is striking: *“Through this close link with truth, charity can be recognized as an authentic expression of humanity and as an element of fundamental importance in human relations, including those of a public nature. Only in truth does charity shine forth, only in truth can charity be authentically lived. Truth is the light that gives meaning and value to charity. That light is both the light of reason and the light of faith, through which the intellect attains to the natural and supernatural truth of charity: it*

grasps its meaning as gift, acceptance, and communion. Without truth, charity degenerates into sentimentality. Love becomes an empty shell, to be filled in an arbitrary way. In a culture without truth, this is the fatal risk facing love. It falls prey to contingent subjective emotions and opinions, the word “love” is abused and distorted, to the point where it comes to mean the opposite. Truth frees charity from the constraints of an emotionalism that deprives it of relational and social content, and of a fideism that deprives it of human and universal breathing-space. In the truth, charity reflects the personal yet public dimension of faith in the God of the Bible, who is both *Agápe* and *Lógos*: Charity and Truth, Love and Word.⁵

He goes on further to say: “When the State promotes, teaches, or actually imposes forms of practical atheism, it deprives its citizens of the moral and spiritual strength that is indispensable for attaining integral human development and it impedes them from moving forward with renewed dynamism as they strive to offer a more generous human response to divine love”.⁶ What is therefore the meaning of Consecrated Life in union with the Trinity in a world that is divided and fragmented, torn apart by both inner strife and outer conflicts and struggles? The world of materialism and secularism that alienates human persons from their inner being and in the process loses their inner identity and consequently their final destiny.

4. Consecrated Life the Antidote for the Pandemic of Humanity

The crisis of post-modern humanity is about our inability to seek the deepest roots of the struggle between the “Culture of Life” and the “Culture of Death”. By restricting ourselves to the perverse idea of freedom for the self without God we see the tragic experience of modern humanity as reflected in the gradual eclipse of the sense of God and of the human person. This is typical of a social and cultural climate dominated by secularism that offers salvation based only on human reason and knowledge. We can easily be influenced by this climate and easily fall into a sad vicious circle:

⁵ BENEDICT XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, No. 3.

⁶ *Ibid.*, No. 29.

“when the sense of God is lost, there is also a tendency to lose the sense of man, of his dignity and his life; in turn, the systematic violation of the moral law, especially in the serious matter of respect for human life and its dignity, produces a kind of progressive darkening of the capacity to discern God’s living and saving presence”⁷. It is the radicality of the Gospel lived anew in Consecrated Life that is the road to hope for the whole of humanity. Radicality is not about superiority but of the unicity of God and the universality of humanity in a globalised but fragmented world. Consecrated Life can bring back the sense of God and the sacred when we are ready to infuse into humanity a new transformative spirituality based on evangelical obedience, poverty and chastity.

5. Evangelical Obedience in and within Communion as Total Submission in Humility

Living in a world with governance structures that is not conducive for the promotion of truth and justice, we need to regain the meaning of obedience within the framework of the renewal of the personal, communitarian and institutional aspects of Consecrated Life. We are all aware that the task of the restoration of the greatest act of goodness of God at Creation set in place the way forward for humanity for the coming of the New Heaven in the here and now and the New Earth in God’s time. The New Heaven and New Earth are two different entities but one reality. The common denominator is the process of total submission to the Will of the Father. This is not just obedience to the Law in the Books but the docility and submissiveness to the transcendental implanted in the deeper recesses of the divine-inspired human spirit. Obedience is thus the creation of conditions when one in utter humility is able to say “Not my will but yours be done”. We cannot separate “Your Kingdom come on earth” from “As it is in heaven”. Obedience to the Spirit of God is the diluting of pride and arrogance of the status quo and the reinstatement of humility. We cannot say yes to the minority conglomerates of power that are making status-seeking a way of life while indifferent to the majority deprived of life-giving necessities. Corporate and institutional power cannot supersede the inherent power of dignity

⁷ JOHN PAUL II, *Evangelium Vitae*, No. 21.

incorporated into the very essence of the human soul. No one can take away this divine right of common men and women and replace it with the law of submission to the God of Mercy.

The radicality of evangelical obedience of Consecrated Persons flows from our conscious commitment to a life-transforming body, that seeks in communion to be totally, not partially incorporated in the memorial Body and Blood of Jesus and the contemporary Body and Blood of Jesus as evidenced by the counter-positioning of personal and common lives in private and public. It is this credibility of our oneness and unity that creates a new forum in the world to stand up to its glaring contradictions and blatant paradoxes. This global forum of Consecrated Persons and Communities is the network of “trans-local communities”. They are more than the local because to bring the evangelizing power to the ends of our globalised world calls for a new networking of minds and mainstreaming of hearts. We create new Upper Rooms of dialogue, discernment and discovery leading us to deeds that convey the power of the Spirit of Jesus alive today. Our intense listening to the inspirations from hearts devoid of egoism and individualism are ready to become the other-respecting communities. We voluntarily set aside our ordinary will to live and survive to a new level of engagement: seeking together for the common will of the Father for the common good of the whole of humanity. We seek consciously to keep our eyes open to realities that secularise and dehumanise because we know that mission today is about the transmission of the universal Gospel of Jesus to all who have not heard of the story of the God of Love. Because we have learnt the art of listening to one another, as strangers who have become friends of Jesus we develop a new sensitivity to the voices of those unable to speak of God and too weak to raise their voices when deprived of their dignity and rights to allow them to stand on their feet.

The emergence of individualism as a way of life today has to resist the temptation of various subtle forms of institutional egoism bordering on even unethical competition. The ways of the world based on the Mechanical-Utilitarian paradigm gives prominence to material and numerical and statistical criteria for evaluating success and gains. We without shame think of both collegial and collective discernment of the needs within the Local Church and take to heart the most urgent needs of the people of our times. If the effectiveness of our mission is to be judged by the power of hidden dimensions of communion and visible unity, there should be less reluctance to make missionary ventures truly the commu-

nitarian endeavours of Consecrated Persons. We need to be vigilant of the growing lack of communication among members of Consecrated Life in issues that have global dimensions. Before the Church can reach out to the millions in need of our services we need new and creative channels for collaboration and networking among ourselves.

In the Acts of the Apostles⁸, when Peter and John are in the Temple, they encountered the lame beggar who was crippled since birth. The beggar had all the characteristics of disempowered poor people: they are without material things, self-effacing, dejected, humiliated, and have very low self-esteem. It is to these poor today that we are called to profess the power of Jesus that we have in us. Peter and John, therefore, found a new way for the restoration of the will of the Father in the human arena. Solidarity today is about accompaniment with the weak and the fragile. It has to be about empowerment of their dignity and the process through which we allow them to stand on their feet to proclaim aloud that God saves when we journey hand in hand with each other. The weak need the strong and the rich need the poor.

Obedience to God is to rediscover our complementarities as children desiring to seek first the Kingdom of God. We suppress our vocal voices to a sensitive listening to the Young amidst us because they possess deep within cultural gems and spiritual treasures, they can share with us as natives of the technological culture. Although we may be experts of the age of reason and the logical era we can learn from their culturally developed wisdom for the education of this generation. I believe that it is difficult listening to those who live close to us, especially children and young, who know immediately the glaring gap between our words and our lives. "Let the little children come to me" can be a threat and danger because we know that we can convince them with our words but not influence them with our lives. We thus unconsciously either put them in the periphery of our lives or keep them away from our "listening circles" and decision-making processes. We very discreetly send the message that "No prophet is accepted at home" because we don't want them to change the "home". We instead seduce them to accept the status quo or busy

⁸ *Acts of the Apostles*, 3:1-10.

themselves in the mean time to try to change the world through their works. The same would be with our associates in mission who not only need to be heard but to be participants in our discernment processes at all levels. Each generation and each culture has something new to offer, especially if we wish Consecrated Life to be still relevant today. Relevance is about restoration for the future and being Useful is about perpetuation of the present. Here lies our challenge in the 21st century.

6. Evangelical Poverty as the Eviction of the Material through Simplicity

Consecrated Life as the spiritual dedication of the self to God and neighbour begins with the process of self-emptying of the material world within. How can we begin this self-emptying process when affluence is becoming a way of life and poverty as a permanent feature of the world that is here to stay? The epidemic of 'affluence' is sweeping many parts of the world as an obsessive, envious and keeping with the Joneses trend as a result of the demands of 21st century living, states Oliver James in his book *Affluenza*. He comes to the conclusion that issues like consumerism, property fever and the battle of the sexes vary across societies with different values, beliefs and traditions. This leads us to an unavoidable and potentially life changing conclusion that to ensure our mental health we can and must pursue our needs rather than our wants.

Our personal and institutional lives as Consecrated Persons are a part and parcel of the process of globalisation: where materialism – money and consumerism – institutional expansion is not just a way of life but something without which we will not survive in this world nor be able to ensure the growth of our mission to our people. The market-driven and profit oriented economies makes us believe that monetary and financial considerations and resources are the most important determinant in defining the future of our mission. This has been the tragedy of charity and travesty of justice of the era of the Development Aid Decades that attempted to bring to reality the Millennium Development Goals supported by Foreign Financial Assistance and Corporate Social Responsibility. Society has focused on the political and the economic and even the technological but forgetting the cultural.

Today after years of the Development Decades we have yet to bridge both the gap within nations and among nations and even continents. What is obvious is that we cannot eradicate material poverty without going to the root causes of moral poverty.

As Consecrated Persons, it is interesting to reread the story of the Rich Young Man who comes to Jesus enquiring about gaining eternal life. The invitation to give up all what he has and follow Jesus makes him go away sad. His notion of Eternal Life is about a reward after life by keeping the Law but Jesus offers him the experience of the Kingdom of God through voluntary renunciation and simplicity of life in service to others. He goes away sad because he did not realise that happiness can be gained by giving away the self and one's material possessions and one's time and energies. We don't need to talk about the hundred-fold that we have in this life as Consecrated Persons and assume this to be the Kingdom of God that Jesus promised in this life.

Contrasted with this is the Good News of the Beatitudes, where the option to be poor, simple, humble, pure, suffer for the sake of right is the source of happiness for the followers of Jesus. The Beatitudes are not about satisfaction as articulated by the world but happiness that flows from the satisfaction of the inner yearnings of goodness in the human heart and the resultant willingness to face suffering and persecution. The experience of goodness is the experience of a God in Jesus, who gets more joy from sharing than from accumulating, more peace from knowing that he will be put to shame for standing up for what is right. Many Consecrated Persons today are struggling to not just pack their bags and walk out to the wilderness of poverty but learning to live comfortably in simplicity and to generously share their God inspired gifts with others. Their small experience of the "Beatitudes inspired Kingdom of God" within is the little pearl that they want to share with others so that others in their own lives and in their relational lives with people will exchange them for the Big Pearl in God's time. Evangelical poverty is not only to share our material goods but more importantly to walk in humility and simplicity with those unable to experience fully the love of God. To walk with is our path of mutual healing and a experience of the Kingdom of God in togetherness and friendship resulting in happiness and joy.

It is with this fundamental perspective in mind that we can better understand the issues related to global poverty and injustices. Our lives of simplicity are not about deprivation alone but it is in this culture of non-obsessive possessiveness, in which we foster generosity of persons and institutions. Living in the growing culture of materialism and consumerism does not allow one to see that the need for evangelical poverty and the sharing of possessions in common can be the source of happiness and fulfilment. Evangelical Poverty that is accompanied by obsession with possessions of an institutional nature has been one of the obstacles to the moving into the margins of society, where the Gospel of Good News to the poor needs to be announced.

With the now evident increase of numbers of elderly in our societies and also within Religious Congregations there is the dilemma of looking after Health and Retirement needs and the commitment to investing in mission, especially those involving our associates. It is public knowledge that hundreds of Congregations have been left numberless with millions left as patrimony for the dead. Evangelical Poverty is not about saving money or investing money but ensuring the holistic development of the Young to carry on the mission entrusted to us. The axiom "Love for money stops the eyes from seeing poverty and the heart from sharing this with them". This has to be a conscious commitment not just to charity but also an education to truth and justice.

7. Evangelical Chastity as Total Inclusivity and Availability to God's Universality

In the 19th century, most people have grown up in mono-cultural, mono-ethnic and mono-religious environments. Today in the beginning of the 21st century because of the borderless world and the migratory process and inter-ethnic families and inter-faith marriages, people are beginning to see different facets of humanity and especially our common spiritual heritage.

Consecrated Life coming into dialogue with both the world of diversity and universality has begun to be more in touch with the core human concerns of our epoch. The real drama of our times involves the mandate to bring about a new consciousness and the transformation of our consciences. To be inclusive is not to bring

people into our theological and philosophical constructs but to be ready to move to new epicentres that will lean on the side of the right and the good in the creation of alternatives. We will thus be able to whisper with confidence to those around us that we need no longer to follow naively the massive evils that menace the world today.

Our sensitivity and our receptivity to the God of Goodness is about our courage to resist the temptation to being seduced by immediate interests and satisfactions that are shaped by individualistic and subjective demands of our post-modern world. Today our availability is restricted by undue importance given to the trivial aspects of our lives that are urgent and important to continue what we have done in the past. We can begin to be more open and available to new and emerging needs that may not be right at our door steps but will entail a stepping out to new terrain and undiscovered territories. The early missionaries of the past two centuries moved away from home, we now need to look for people in need of our unique evangelical assistance in the areas of human promotion and integral human development. Our availability is not our power of control but our power of influence in their lives and of their milieu.

How can we therefore give a new meaning of our total availability as Consecrated persons to continue our founding inspirations, in communion and union for the advancement of the evangelizing mission of Jesus? How do we therefore move away from this narrow world-view of Consecrated Life when juxtaposed with potential realm of cooperating with all God's people driven by the desire to seek the restoration of our divinely inspired made that encompasses the whole of humanity. Mission Ad Gentes was often identified as the numerical and geographical expansion of the Church within the machinery and ethos of the Empire Builders of the 17th and 18th century. Mission Inter-Gentes opens the doors to the mission of the reconstruction of the Kingdom of God without in any way drawing us away from both Jesus Christ, the "corner stone of a new humanity" and the original inspirations of our Founders who made Consecrated Life the on-going intervention of the Spirit of Jesus in their time and place. We need to walk to the other side of humanity and the underside of the strata of human society. It has to be based not just on what we have but what people need today. It is their needs that define our avail-

ability. This indeed seems to be the essence of the relevance of Consecrated Life today: to be the living presence of God when often despair, violence, poverty make God seem absent. This moving away from where we are to where God is calling us is the prophetic leadership for a people in the wilderness in search of new paths to salvation.

Without our affiliation to any particular family, we can truly be representatives of the family of God, not just in the Church but for all peoples. This indeed has been the specific contribution of Consecrated Life in the context of Asia where that value of the family is still held in high regard. Consecrated Persons, both men and women, have indeed a very unique contribution to make to the natural family and the domestic Church by giving a very special preference for the education of children and youth. As specialists in formation, education, and communications Consecrated Persons as networks of families can pave the way forward in the nurturing of a culture of life in and through the family. We are a family truly at the service of each family and the whole human family. The growing multi-cultural and multi-ethnic composition of the members of Consecrated Life in all the continents is indeed the new medium through which we can witness to the universality of the message of the Gospel in a globalised world.

III. Re-creation of the way forward to the Kingdom of God

Introduction

The changed world and a renewed understanding of Consecrated Life in the 21st century also calls us to rethink and redefine the meaning and approaches to our evangelizing mission.

We know today that the aim of our evangelizing mission in the Post-Modern World is to bring into focus in a vibrant way our inner realization that we must transmit the Gospel by living it. This is the central axis of evangelization since our baptism in Christ and the experience of the love of Jesus in our lives becomes the hidden power and energy of the Good News and the power of His Spirit to renew the face of the earth⁹. We are called to heal the world and make it a better place!

Our conviction as Church invited to renewal at the Second Vatican Council is to the mission of Jesus. We therefore have to ask ourselves: Are we better prepared and equipped to proclaim the Gospel by putting Him and His values in the minds and hearts of humanity today? Since Jesus Himself, the Good News of God was the very first and the greatest evangelizer, to evangelize is to begin to express in a complete synthesis the meaning, the content and the modes of life as Jesus conceived it and put it into practice. He proclaims the Kingdom of God as the very heart of His Mission and His life lived close to the ways of the Father was His Evangelizing Mission.

His message about the Kingdom is about a new experience of love of God in our hearts that needs to be shared in community so that is shared. Being part of the Kingdom and thus a participant in the eternal designs of the Father is juxtaposed with the happiness the world has to offer us.

Since the Church is born of the evangelizing activity of Jesus and the apostles and disciples, it has to continue to be the permanent

⁹ PAUL VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, No. 4.

and living presence of Jesus. It is clear that the Church is an evangelizer, but she begins by being evangelized herself and it is for this reason that the Second Vatican Council and the Synod of Bishops on Evangelization in the Modern World invited all the People of God to be converted and renewed by the Gospel of Jesus so that we can communicate the Good News to world with credibility.

To being evangelized is not to remain complacent with our personal ideas or even our dominant cultural constructs but to seek a total fidelity to the Gospel of the Incarnated Jesus in the here and now. It is for this reason that the Synod on Evangelization in the Modern World states so emphatically that *“For the Church, evangelizing means bringing the Good News into all the strata of humanity, and through its influence transforming humanity from within and making it new: Now I am making the whole of creation new”*¹⁰. Evangelization is the conversion solely through the divine power of the message she proclaims, both the personal and collective consciences of people, the activities in which they engage, and the lives and concrete milieu which are theirs. Thus the *“Strata of humanity which are transformed: for the Church is a question not only of preaching the Gospel in ever wider geographic areas or to ever greater numbers of people, but also of affecting and as it were upsetting, through the power of the Gospel, mankind’s criteria of judgment, determining values, points of interest, lines of thought, sources of inspiration and models of life, which are in contrast with the Word of God and the plan of salvation”*¹¹.

Evangelization is about the restoration of the original designs of the Father, manifested to us through the life of Jesus so that the Spirit of Jesus is the governing and guiding Spirit for the recreation of a New Heaven and New Earth. Evangelizing Mission is not a set of organized activities and well structured plans but the constant and complete openness to the Spirit of Jesus alive in the world today. It is not strange therefore when St. John Crysostom claims that *“Those who are in Heaven are those who have learnt to listen to the Spirit while on Earth”*.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, No. 18.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, No. 19.

1. Evangelizing Mission as Restoration of Confidence in the Power of the Spirit as path to Inner and Outer Transformation

Today, we are tangled within and this shows itself in our attitudes and behavior, competitiveness, self-interest, ego, self-image, family image, congregational interests, and national pride. The individual is thus unable to make a distinction between various forms of conflicts in the inner world and the outer realities. We are not sure when we are governed by the ways of the Gospel and designs of the World. Situations are often irreconcilable and too divisive that it needs more than reason, it needs faith. The ongoing wars and violence in so many parts of the world, especially in the Middle East, shows our inability to mix the ways of peace of God and the desires and designs of humanity to continue supremacy and the imposition of hegemony by a minority. Over time, we gradually imbibe views and opinions that are all stored in our memory and absorbed into our system. They just flow into words and find expressions in our behavior and ways of life. It takes time for a more critical appraisal of our thoughts to scrape away these embedded judgments that have been cultivated over the years. It is not surprising that we lose our confidence and withdraw into our little ghettos of ethnic and religious confines amidst impending dangers and threats.

It is in the context of this dangerous world outside that we need to be evangelized firstly with confidence in the Good News and courage to follow Jesus on the way to the Kingdom of Truth and Justice. This seems to involve both the process of draining away the poison and toxics that flow from the tangled and fragmented perspective of life and restoring our confidence in putting faith in God back into our lives and our being. It is for this reason that *Gaudium et Spes* reminds us that “The gravest error today is the artificial dichotomy between faith and life and between word and witness”. We are truly in need of a new compass for humanity. It is therefore not surprising that Pope John Paul II reminded us in the beginning of the new millennium thus: “What a treasure there is, dear brothers and sisters, in the guidelines offered to us by the Second Vatican Council! For this reason I asked the Church, as a way of preparing for the Great Jubilee, to *examine herself on the reception given to the Council*. Has this been done? The Council

held here in the Vatican was such a moment of reflection, and I hope that similar efforts have been made in various ways in all the particular Churches. With the passing of the years, the Council documents have lost nothing of their value or brilliance. They need to be read correctly, to be widely known and taken to heart as important and normative texts of the Magisterium, within the Church's Tradition. Now that the Jubilee has ended, I feel more than ever in duty bound to point to the Council as *the great grace bestowed on the Church in the twentieth century*: there we find a sure compass by which to take our bearings in the century now beginning"¹².

It is our growing conviction that the Council, "the greatest blessing of this century" gives the Church confidence that the Gospel of Jesus that the Church has inherited will truly be the legacy for the next generations. We can truly be agents for the transformation of culture of today. We have become more and more conscious that the cultural conditioning of the past has to be re-examined in order to allow the original seeds of the Gospel to take new roots in new and diverse soils and human ecologies. We need to regain our confidence in the power of the Gospel to bring transformation to humanity.

We are also reminded that the essence of the Gospel of Jesus is about the restoration of the Kingdom of God, which is about the revival, and revitalization of the new heaven and the new earth, in the human persons, in the human communities and in society. This triple integration of the self, community and society has to be part of this process.

We have the inner confidence that we have something to offer to the world. Our confidence is not arrogance or superiority but a willingness to listen to the voice of the others. This is our openness to the constant and gradual revelation of the voice of God in the human community.

2. Evangelizing Mission as the Integration of Life

The world today is in need of integrity and the integration of life. In a fragmented and divided world, the social fabric is being torn

¹² JOHN PAUL II, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, No. 57.

apart and the inner fibre of lives is being replaced by the artificial and the synthetic. Life is no longer organically linked and joined together. Life has to be reconstituted so that there will be an organic unity of the entire constituent parts. The entirety has to reflect its wholeness and be complete in its essence and essential elements. There can be no gap between the inner voice and its outer manifestations. This process of interiority is dealt with the innermost being and the sense of direction that one draws from the a renewed sense of direction based on one's scale of values and priorities as opposed to external norms and workings of the institutions of society. This interiority is essential to completeness and wholeness. No one will deny the fact that one of the main reasons for the declining numbers of vocations is because the entire Catholic living is declining. We see the glaring gap between our Word and our Witness and cultures and structures. The Church seems often to be comfortable in little islands of affluence amidst the ocean of poverty.

Disintegration and fragmentation has to do with one of the greatest challenges in our infatuation with modernity and with Satan as the principle of evil and Mammon as symbol of greed. This is a mark of a limited understanding of the inner cultural forces in our society that makes us unable to distinguish the ephemeral from the permanent. To be infatuated is to be inspired with a foolish and extravagant love or desire to such an extent that we would agree with anyone on anything. We come to believe what we believe even if it seems foolish regardless of what anyone would say to us. It is a strong unreasoning attachment to something unworthy of attachment.

Life has thus to become a process of the restoration of the Kingdom of Truth and Love and thus harmony within the human person. This results in altering both our micro-relation with friends, even enemies, with family and community. It is this personal and micro-communion that will lead to renewed macro-relationships at the level of the social, economic and the political. Consecrated life in its radical conception is not a state of existence but a process of being totally and constantly evolving to live the memorial life of Jesus.

The change in our pedagogical approaches requires a balance in the communication of Information, the Formation in values and

the creation of an alternative culture that will be able to sustain on-going holistic Transformation

3. Evangelizing Mission as Transformative Encounters for Truth and Justice

Transformative Education is about the formation of conscience which helps individuals to be ever more human, leads them ever more fully to the truth, instills in them growing respect for life, and trains them in right interpersonal relationships. There is thus the need for education about the value of life from its very origins. It is an illusion to think that we can build a true culture of human life if we do not help the young to accept and experience sexuality and love and the whole of life according to their true meaning and in their close interconnection. Sexuality, which enriches the whole person, “manifests its inmost meaning in leading the person to the gift of self in love”.¹³

Education has to be the process for awakening the inmost stirring moving the world in its depths. The formation to a new consciousness is to prevent people from being either subjects of fatalistic resignation to their present condition or a fanatical recourse to violence as the avenue to seek revenge and thus retaliation as the answer to injustices. The Gospel of Jesus has a unique contribution to offer to the new movements among people to build a better world.

This education for transformation has to begin with a new sensitivity to the Poor. Listening to the cry of those who experience grief and anguish as a result of the insensitive external world that does not allow them to experience the God-bestowed and innate dignity is the very vocation of the Church. The proclamation of Jesus of the Good News to the poor, freedom to the oppressed, and joy to the afflicted begins in and through the power of the Holy Spirit who frees people from personal sin and from its consequences in social life.

It is for this reason the Synod of Bishops on Justice in the World links the preaching of the Gospel with the Evangelizing Mission

¹³ JOHN PAUL II, *Evangelium Vitae*, No. 97.

*“Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel, or, in other words, of the Church’s mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation”*¹⁴. It is our sensitivity to the human condition that gives us the opportunity to be agents of divine intervention.

3.1. The Path to a New Consciousness and Renewed Consciences

We must therefore be prepared to take on new functions and new duties in every sector of human activity and especially in the sector of world society, if justice is really to be put into practice. Our action is to be directed above all at those people and nations that are silent, indeed voiceless, victims of injustice. The task of our evangelizing mission is to awaken consciences of those in the power centres of the “affluent world” (both in the First and Third Worlds) and to offer hope to those who live in inhuman conditions and suffer many forms of persecution on various grounds.

3.2. Reaching Out to the New Poor to offer Truth and Justice

We will only know who they are when we encounter the New Poor in new territories. We need to go to the margins, to the migrants and refugees, our indigenous peoples and street children, the homeless and the single parents, the elderly and persons with HIV/AIDS. If we claim to be the followers of Jesus the Good Shepherd it is not today about looking after the one Lost Sheep that the Founders of our Congregation brought back home to give pastoral care but about the ninety-nine that are have now gone astray in the wilderness. Pastoral Care for them has also to be a path to seek permanent cures through social advocacy.

We have to discard the fear of the other so that we can proclaim together the saving actions of the God of Mercy and Love. Dialogue today is an essential characteristic of our living and proclaiming. We need together to listen to what the Spirit is saying to the Churches (cf. Rev 2:11). We need to become more aware of the growing need for people of all faith traditions to work together for a new world, our religions cannot any longer be addressing the basic and per-

¹⁴ 1971 The World Synod of Bishops, *Justice in the World*, No. 6.

sonal question as to “How should I live and prepare myself for the next life?” but How can our religions in mutuality learn to live in harmony”? The path of the People of God is to encounter the joy of all God’s People as a result of living in harmony.

In the culture of narrow individualism and excessive competition that exalts possessions we need to give people an inner identity that can only come from the renewal of heart. This renewal inculcates a truly and entirely human way of life in justice, love and simplicity. Since this education makes people decidedly more human, it will help them to be no longer the object of manipulation by communications media or political forces. It will instead enable them to take in hand their own destinies and bring about communities which are truly human.

We cannot remain small isolated, ineffectual, Christian ghettos scattered across the world if they reinforce arrogance, aggression and communal conflict.

3.3. Our Journeying together with all God’s People as Faith Encounters

We are ready to walk into the lives of people of other faiths around us so that we will have more opportunities to listen to a diversity of voices. We want to believe that they can also be a part of the fabric that God wants to weave for the human family today. Their unique contributions to the followers of Christ is to make the Gospel more alive to us since the people of other cultures and religions have something to offer us in the forms of prayer, their lives of simplicity, the acts of compassion, their respect for nature and their readiness to be fully submissive to the will of God. The deep religiosity of the people of Asia has given us this confidence as the followers of Jesus in Asia that His Gospel is for the whole of humanity.

3.4. In Solidarity with the New Emerging Concerns of the Modern World

The education to Truth and Justice is about our common faith commitment to ecological concerns, global interdependence, human rights of the marginalized, the abhorrent situation of women and children. It is clear today that human dignity and human rights cannot be separated and segregated. Neither can we separate the hunger for Truth of God from the hunger for the Bread

of Justice. Thus, the education of the conscience has to go hand in hand with the promotion of compassion. Our evangelizing mission has to bring these two elements of salvation in and through the one Body of Christ offered to the whole human family.

Today, education to Truth and Justice is thus the fostering of the transcendent relationship with God as the driving impetus and an imperative to change social institutions and public policy. This begins a movement where under the burden of poverty and deprivation, the human spirit strives to claim its radical right to be human, to be free to hope and live in dignity. Thus, a truly humane education today removes gradually the darker side of human history. It acknowledges that our remarkable advances in knowledge and communication, in science and technology move us to help solve illiteracy and hunger, oppression and the digital divide. We create little Light Houses that offer direction to those wanting a new direction in life. We have to take up the challenges of creative alternative models of life in contrast to those in our dominant world and own institutions and structures that are important useful but may be in need of a new Spirit that will bring to the consciousness of all of the power of the Gospel to influence the inner workings of humanity. We have to ask ourselves if we are ready and willing through our mutuality to being evangelized people of other faiths and cultures?

4. Evangelizing Mission as the Birth of a Transformative Ecology

The Word that we believe, the Worship that we celebrate, the Witness that we bear prepares the new culture of life to become the new Womb for rebirth in our lives rooted in the divine and the sacred. The need of a new formative service, dedicating themselves in a particular way to the inculturation of the Christian message has to link the Gospel and the various branches of knowledge. It is the Church's Social Doctrine that makes Christian education an efficacious means towards love, justice and peace, as well as for a conscious maturation of moral and social duties in the various cultural and professional fields. Incarnation is inculturation of the divine in the human. The transformative process is about the engendering of a new ecology as the melting point and melting pot of human transformation.

We are becoming more and more aware that the work of transformation of humanity has to begin with a return to the spirituality of transformed persons, as the new building blocks of the new global architecture and as the new seeds for the germination of the new Garden of Eden. It is founded on a deeper understanding of both the seeds of the Word and the roots of our cultures. It is this return to the transcendental WORD rooted in our divinity that paves the way for the emergence of a new paradigm that is God centred, people oriented and life promoting. The central role of people, with their aspirations, attitudes, beliefs and spirituality, is gradually recognised as a pre-requisite for the successful transformation of persons and communities.

A new spiritual-cultural nursery generates self-respect, resists exploitation and domination and offers meaning to what people produce and consume, to life and death, to pain and to joy. In the final analysis, culture is about an environment for nurturing growth. This requires a spirituality that organically links the immanent and the transcendental dimension of human existence. We have to foster a spirituality that will have left behind both individualism (the fragmentation of the inner being and consciousness) and social disorder and inequalities (the outer manifestations of the inner disorder). A cultural revitalization is necessary to enhance development by generating self-confidence and mutual trust. This will lead to more participative democracy, to creative technological change and more sustainable poverty reduction. These new nurseries of people gathered in the presence of God to build Civil Society that will bring through democratic participation and commitment to the Common God the emergence of a Civilisation of Love.

Evangelization becomes a reality when the Church creates an ecology necessary to promote a culture of life. The culture that we promote is contrasted with the tomb that does not offer the necessary conditions for life. The culture and structures that we need today have to be the new womb of life. The new womb of life that allows us to return to the words of life as discovered in our dialogue of life in all the people of all faiths and cultures. This is the result of new encounters of movements of people engaged in the holistic transformation of life. These are two pre-conditions of mission in Asia: our return to the words of life and new unity among those who work for life among all people who believe in one God.

4.1. Evangelizing Mission as the promotion of a Culture of Life in the Church

According to Pope Benedict XVI, without the guidance of charity in truth, the global force today is causing unprecedented damage and creates new divisions within the human family. Hence, charity and truth confront us with an altogether new and creative challenge, one that is certainly vast and complex. It is about *broadening the scope of reason and making it capable of knowing and directing these powerful new forces*, animating them within the perspective of that “civilization of love” whose seed God has planted in every people, in every culture¹⁵.

What is urgently called for is a general mobilization of consciences and a united ethical effort to foster a serious and courageous cultural dialogue among all parties. While the urgent need for such a cultural transformation is linked to the present historical situation, it is also rooted in the Church’s mission of evangelization.

We need to begin with the renewal of a culture of life within Christian communities themselves. Too often, it happens that believers, even those who take an active part in the life of the Church, end up by separating their Christian faith from its ethical requirements concerning life, and thus fall into moral subjectivism and certain objectionable ways of acting. With great openness and courage, we need to question how widespread is the culture of life today among individual Christians, families, groups and communities in our Dioceses. With equal clarity and determination, we must identify the steps we are called to take in order to serve life in all its truth. At the same time, we need to promote a serious and in-depth exchange about basic issues of human life with everyone, including non-believers, in intellectual circles, in the various professional spheres and at the level of people’s everyday life¹⁶. The all-important question is: How can Consecrated Persons and Consecrated Life bring about a more critical review of both the intra-ecclesial renewal that is urgently required and our priority for our evangelizing mission?

¹⁵ BENEDICT XVI, *Caritatis in Veritate*, No. 33.

¹⁶ JOHN PAUL II, *Evangelium Vitae*, No. 95.

5. Evangelizing Mission as Prophetic Witnessing to the God of Love in the 21st Century

The Way Forward in mission as Consecrated Persons as we have seen is to being witnesses to Transformative Love in the world. We would therefore like to recall with joy and pride persons, who have been living witnesses to the true meaning of evangelizing mission in the post-modern world. The lives of two great persons who have touched the lives of the people of today throughout their lives and with their whole lives, for many of us in Asia are Mother Theresa of Calcutta and Pope John Paul II. The millions who witnessed their funerals knew that they reflected the face of a loving God, whom they have already experienced in their hearts. They had healed the world of two of its greatest ills, the lack of compassion for their neighbours in need and to stand up and speak to the world of the need for peace. People were able to see the faces of contemplation and compassion: For people of many faiths in Asia these are the two faces of God: the God who listens and the God who cares. People thus begin to contrast these special sons and daughters of God with their own lives and being. It is interesting to note that a person generally acclaimed as the Pope who changed the world and the spiritual leader of the world, is looked upon as the traditionalist with “conservative values” on abortion, contraception and homosexuality, especially by those within the Catholic Church. How does this make sense when the views and perspectives of people of other faiths, including Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists and Jews have such a great respect for this person and for the positions that he had taken. They seem to stand with him on these issues and recognise the force of his personality and convictions and the intensity of his spirituality. He and Mother Theresa are the new icons of the contrast to the growing secularism that is also related to liberalism, relativism and of course materialism and individualism.

It is incredible that the death of John Paul as the Shepherd of Rome and Mother Theresa as the Angel of the Poor of Kolkata (Calcutta), was a sacred moment for hundreds of world leaders together with millions of people to reassure through their tears of sadness that they are missing them but that God must be smiling

to accept them into the heart of God's presence. They shared their truths with a passion from their heart but also lived their lives of compassion with courage and joy. Through their lives, especially Pope John Paul, proclaimed, that we must oppose "God-lessness" be it the dialectical materialism of communism and was equally vehement in the condemnation of secularism and "soulless materialism" of Western style capitalism. People got the same message when he took dictators to task for the injustices and preached a gospel of compassion and peace throughout the World. There was a certain inconsistency when people are able to see at once that there is no contradiction in a man who has equally strong views on the death penalty, as well as the war in Iraq. He showed that our credibility rests on the truths we uphold and lives them out in authenticity and this makes others recognise one's integrity. This is what seems to have made John Paul II different and admirable. He had made a home in so many nations of the world and showed that Rome is not about the Catholic Church but a home for Peoples of the World who still believe that God has still a place in our lives.

It is also interesting to note that people of all faiths in Asia not only regarded John Paul as the Bishop of Rome and the Leader of the Catholic Church today but as a great spiritual leader and an advocate to holiness through justice and peace for all peoples today. Mother Theresa was not just a Catholic nun but also a true Indian in total love for the poorest among the people of India. Her Sisters today have become the face and loving hands of Jesus in so many parts of the world of the new poor. The names of Mother Theresa and John Paul II, and their works and lives have come to represent the highest human values of compassion and justice. Is this not the new face of the God of Love in the world?

Many people, especially the multi-religious people of Asia have seen the face of Jesus in and through the lives of not just Mother Theresa and Pope John Paul II but hundreds of others who have been silent witnesses to Jesus and the power of the Gospel of Jesus. They have all, I want to believe, been truly influenced by the deep and profound insights of the Second Vatican Council that literally dragged the Church from its excessive Intra-Ecclesial concerns to be more missionary in its outlook in dialogue among nations and peoples. Pope John Paul's visits to 129 countries were not to bring the leader of the Church to the Nations but for the Church to be

the New Dialogue among Nations for the emergence of the Kingdom of God. It was the prophetic journeys of John Paul that revealed to the people of today that he was not just the Pope from Poland and she the Nun from Albania but a simple reflection of the Jesus of Galilee who offered a new way of life for humanity.

It is this understanding of mission as transmission that brings about a new life-giving culture. It is this life-giving culture that develops as a humane ecology. When we begin to understand that our pre-Vatican II theology often emphasised or was promoted in the context of Empire Building. Today the world has been transformed into a world where globalization has brought the effect of homogenization and marginalization. The preaching of the Gospel to the people of today has thus to be a process of allowing them to have an insight into their world so that this inner reflection will find new forms of outer expression to the world.

Mission for a consecrated person is about the renewal of the heart. The word of God that we believe has to be in consonance with the words that we speak. The worship that we celebrate has to be reflected in the way the community lives this worship. And the witness that flows from worship is our way of life in the world. We need today an evangelization that will provide a new transformative ethos. The Gospel will be relevant when people of today begin to incarnate their total image of Jesus to a relevant ethics and moral vision so that they can see the world in new light and thus listen more intensely to the cries of the people of this generation. They thus live more fully as persons ultimately invited to bring about a new world, a new earth and a new heaven.

6. Mission *Inter Gentes* in the Third Millennium

Our understanding of Evangelizing Mission thus moves us from *Missio Ad Gentes* to *Missio Inter-Gentes*. From Mission to the Nations to Mission Among the Nations. We move away from preaching the Gospel to incarnating the Gospel in the very lives of persons and the whole of humanity. Our new mission territory is the world of globalization.

The sacred Scriptures of peoples of all religions are an invitation to re-order creation at its genesis to ensure that human persons, human communities and human societies are always in the

process of the re-creation of the world. The heightened pluralism that globalization creates through interconnection will force us into new insights about pluralism itself, something which should aid our articulation of an adequate and faithful theology of religions. We see the need to be connected to people of all faiths for peace and human solidarity as the eternal plan of God. Glory to God in the Highest and Peace to all people of Goodwill is our prayer of the heart.

The Church in Asia over the years has developed its own vision of A New Way of Being Church in Asia. Our process of Triple Dialogue with the poor of Asia, their cultures and their religions has been one of our core concerns in the past. Our return to make the wealth of our religio-cultural heritage of the people of Asia has to be the foundation for the dialogue-discernment and deeds that the Church in Asia needs to rediscover. Right from its early years, Church members in Asia have understood the need for a newness in focusing on this fundamental dimension of our mission of evangelization in the context of Asia. It is this return to the Council and its teachings that gives us strength and confidence in the New Ways of Truth and Justice that lies before us in the years to come.

Something that appeals to the people of today is our common responsibility towards creation and we must assert this responsibility in the public arena. We must defend not only earth, water and air as gifts of creation that belong to everyone but protect humanity from self-destruction. The deterioration of nature is in fact closely connected to the culture that shapes human coexistence: *when "human ecology" is respected within society, environmental ecology also benefits*. Just as human virtues are inter-related, such that the weakening of one places others at risk, so the ecological system is based on respect for a plan that affects both the health of society and its good relationship with nature¹⁷. We need to reflect more seriously on our common responsibilities as Consecrated Persons.

7. Evangelizing Mission as Social Evangelization

An overview of the history of the Social Doctrine of the Church

¹⁷ BENEDICT XVI, *Caritatis in Veritate*, No. 51.

and the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* by the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace outlines clearly that our evangelizing mission in the world must be guided by the social message of the Gospel. This is our way of being engaged in the all important twofold pastoral activity: that of helping men and women to discover the truth and to choose the path that they will follow, and that of encouraging Christians to bear witness with a spirit of service to the Gospel in the field of social activity.

We have to make the fundamental link between understanding the truths and a commitment to fundamental beliefs and the attempts to interpret and incarnate them in our common task of bringing renewal to these social realities as they exist at the global, regional and local levels. This is possible if we allow *all to bear witness to the truth of the human person and growth of the values that govern every well-ordered and productive human society: namely truth, justice, love and freedom.*

The *Compendium* states, *“The Church’s social doctrine is an indispensable reference point for a totally integrated Christian formation.* This has to be the source of inspiration for the apostolate and for social action that comes from the conviction that it constitutes an extraordinary resource for formation in exercising our responsibilities in various fields of social and public life. It is obvious that it is this lack of knowledge that has contributed to the failure of the laity to be suitably prepared to reflect this in concrete behaviour in society today”.

Without this formation in the values of holiness and generous service to one’s neighbour and as an eloquent and prophetic sign of the Church’s social doctrine, we will not be able to carry on the mission of the whole Christian people in the Church and in the world. Being nourished by the *sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and the Eucharist* and being rooted in Christ all of us have the responsibility, but especially the laity, to proclaim the Gospel in the *temporal realities*: family; professional commitment in the world of work, culture, science and research; the exercise of social, economic and political responsibilities; the Good News of the Gospel.

Many of us believe that it is the Social Doctrine of the Church that will make the Gospel become more meaningful for the people of today, As *Evangelium Vitae* reminds us: “The eclipse of the sense

of God and of man inevitably leads to a practical materialism, which breeds individualism, utilitarianism and hedonism”¹⁸. The Social Doctrine is the new light for our steps in the 21st century. Without this, we risk being lost in the world today and even risk the future of humanity. It is in this context that Pope John Paul II in *“At the Beginning of the New Millennium”* invited all the People of God to Stake everything on Charity. “Beginning with intra-ecclesial communion, charity opens us to a service that is universal – it inspired us to a commitment to a practical and concrete love for human beings. Millions living on the margins of society, dying of hunger, condemned to illiteracy, without basic medical care, without a root over their heads call for a “New creativity in charity”. “Without this form of evangelization through charity, and without the witness of Christian poverty, the proclamation of the Gospel, which is itself the prime form of charity, risks being misunderstood or submerged by the ocean of words which daily engulfs us in today’s society of mass communications. The charity of works ensures an unmistakable efficacy to the charity of words”¹⁹.

Conclusion

This attempt to identify the way forward in mission for Consecrated Life in the 21st century is obviously a work-in-progress of all people of goodwill. It is based on the journey of the little flock in Asia to make the Gospel relevant to two-thirds of humanity, especially after the Second Vatican Council. A new generation of Catholics and Consecrated Persons has been nurtured in these renewed theological and pastoral orientations but more importantly are striving with difficulties to also nurture culture and ecology both in the Church and in the world. The stories that we have shared are about our experiences of the grief and anguish of our people and through this process of immersion in their lives, we have also seen the emergence of joy and hope in the world of Asia.

This we believe has been the result of the encounter of the evangelizing power of the Gospel of Jesus and the profound respect for

¹⁸ JOHN PAUL II, *Evangelium Vitae*, No. 23.

¹⁹ JOHN PAUL II, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, No. 50.

the religio-cultural heritage of all the peoples of Asia. We pray that this narrative of the Asian pilgrimage is also our contribution to the on-going journey with the universal Church to the Promised Land. Consecrated Life for many peoples in Asia is also the Road to Hope because we are capable of incarnating the Asian face of Jesus to all the Peoples of Asia and to the rest of the world.

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