



Spiritan Justice, Peace, Integrity of Creation and Interreligious Dialogue

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INTEGRATING PEACEBUILDING IN SPIRITAN MISSION

Jude Nnorum, CSSp.

Pope Francis' message for the 2017 World Day of Peace is entitled, *Nonviolence: A style of Politics for Peace*. In this 50th message for the world day of peace, the Pope recalled the words of his predecessor Blessed Pope Paul VI, "Peace is the only true direction of human progress – and not the tensions caused by ambitious nationalisms, nor conquests by violence, nor repressions which serve as mainstay for a false civil order." Political repressions, violence and conflicts retrogress human advancement, while peace extends the human potential for good. In his message, Pope Francis invites us to recognize peacebuilding as a style of politics that advances nonviolence while recognizing the need for promoting our human potential for peaceful resolution of conflicts. Peace in this regard seeks to redress structural violence by advocating for a constructive change in the structures that create and sustain conflicts in the world. The Pope reminds political

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Nonviolence: a style
of politics for peace
- Message for the
50th World Day of
Peace

actors that political goals are attainable through peaceful and nonviolent means.

His message also highlights Catholic peacebuilding initiatives. It is a recognition of Catholic missionary witness and presence in conflict areas in the world. A nonviolent and non-partisan presence, which continues to minister to victims and perpetrators of conflicts. No doubt,

such a presence is risky! It exposes missionaries to grave dangers. Sometimes, their presence within conflict zones are mistaken as support for belligerents! At other times, their impartiality is mistaken for indifference! Notwithstanding, the missionaries' choice to remain in conflict zones, when international agencies, NGOs, UN peacebuilders and oth-

ers pack their bags and leave, is a style of politics that is both prophetic and courageous.

Spiritans and other Catholic missionary congregations are courageously advancing this style of politics today. They integrate peacebuilding activities into mission. While peacebuilding may not be their initial impetus for mission, they incorporate it when necessary. In activities such as education and formation, advocacy for humanitarian assistance, healthcare programs and others, Spiritans incorporate peacebuilding seeking



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to intervene pastorally and socially before, during and in post-conflict situations. Our confreres, John Skinnader, Boniface Mwuema, Nolasco Mushi, and Peter Kiarie courageously continue their ministry of education, pastoral work and peacebuilding in South Sudan despite the failed peace agreements and the seemingly intractable conflict in this newest country in Africa. The war in

South Sudan is described as “a dirty business...that inevitably degrades us all...that diminishes our humanity as steadily as we dehumanize our adversaries... that has sharpened the distinction between 'them' and 'us'.” Brian Starcken shares his experience of being “thrust” into peacebuilding when the war in Liberia streamed into Sierra Leone. Michael Kilkenny writes about Spiritan presence during the war in Angola. Notwithstanding the risk of “staying” with the local people, the choice to be present unbeknown to Spiritan missionaries was interpreted by ordinary people as a ‘Humanitarian response and a form of peacebuilding’. John Kingston reflects on a question often posed during conflicts. Who else would be brave to be on the road with the sounds of bombs and shells? Only the three Ms; the Military, Madmen and Missionaries! While the military are busy fighting, and madmen are oblivious of what is going on around them, missionaries continue their ministry despite the ongoing conflict. In all conflict situations, our confreres offer hope in the midst of war, using their impartial presence to bear witness.

Prevention of wars and conflicts is another style of the politics of Peace. Retired Spiritan Bishop Mário Clemente Neto of the prelature of Tefé in Brazil

shares his experience of advancing the integrity of creation in Brazil. In our Interreligious section, Bill Headley writes about the relevance of religion and religious practices in our world today. Our Interreligious ministry affirms the relevance of religious peacebuilding in our world.

In this edition of our newsletter, we invite you to explore the experiences of these confreres who integrated peacebuilding in the mission. We are grateful to them and many others who share similar stories. However, we are mindful of other confreres who had traumatic experiences in conflict zones. Many may not want to share their experiences, because it will bring back hurtful memories and rekindle old wounds. This edition of our newsletter is a recognition of their hurts and an encouragement to further reflect and converse about Spiritan peacebuilding initiatives. It also invites us to pay more attention to the needs of our brothers and sisters who were exposed

to the brutality of war and conflicts, in the mission. For the confreres who died in the midst of conflicts and wars, we salute them, remember their bravery and commend them to the mercy of the Lord.

We also wish to honor the memory of late José Manuel Sabença. He was the 2nd Assistant Superior General responsible for JPIC at the General Council. As we pray for the repose of his soul, we thank him for his commitment to JPIC and say to him in Zulu “*Hambe Kahle!*”

Peace to all!



R.I.P. FR JOSÉ MANUEL SABENÇA, CSSP

PEACEBUILDING ECHOES FROM SOUTH SUDAN



CONFRERES IN MINISTRY IN SOUTH SUDAN

Since we, as Spiritans, came here 4 years ago we do not have any great stories to tell of peace building success here, we are just mainly doing our pastoral and educational works - which we hope add

to the peace building of the nation.

Mapuordit Minor Seminary is my work at present. Here, we have 45 students representing every parish in the Diocese of Rumbek. The significance of this is

John Skinnader, CSSP

that in South Sudan the Dinka clans are constantly fighting and killing each other but here in the seminary we have all the clans of the diocese living reasonably peacefully together. It is an opportunity for them to get to know each other and have discussions on why their own clans and communities are fighting each other.

Fr. Boniface Mwuema (Kenyan) is based about 2 hours' drive from me where he is establishing a new mission station. It is an area of high clan-fighting and a lot of insecurity. Already Boniface has had the tires of his car shot at in the area and robbed twice. However, when the government started an initiative to build peace among the clans, Boniface joined in and spent a week going from community to community where all the chiefs and elders met to discuss the ongoing violence in their communities. In

the evenings, they slaughtered a goat or two, had a festive meal and shook hands on building peace together. However, the newly founded peace deals only lasted a month or so. More goats need to be slaughtered!!!

Fred Nolasco and Sospeter work with another ethnic group, the Jur Bel. Here in their pastoral ministry they are concentrating on education. There are no major conflicts going on in the Jur Bel communities or between communities, they are a peace loving people.

One of the big peace initiatives that we are supporting is the Good Shepherd Peace Center that was opened in October by the Nuncio from Kenya. I attended the opening ceremony.

Below is an account of what the center stands for.

The project of the combined Religious in South Sudan to build a center for human, pastoral and spiritual formation, peace building and trauma healing for South Sudanese and church personnel - lay, clergy and religious - at Kit near Juba, South Sudan, was launched officially by Archbishop Paulino Lukudu Loro on

put many hours into the project bookkeeping and banking.

Appropriate ecological systems have been used, consisting of a 50 kw solar power system, a straw shredder and briquetting press to replace the use of firewood and charcoal, a solar hot water system for kitchen and laundry and a wastewater biological treatment plant. There are forty, en-suite bedrooms each capable of taking two beds plus a youth hostel that can accommodate 60.

The initial community to staff the Centre consists of a South Sudanese Comboni Priest, two members of Solidarity with South Sudan - a Vincentian priest from the Philippines, and a Sister of the Immaculate Heart of Mary from the USA - plus a Jesuit priest from Rwanda and a St Martin De Porres Brother from Uganda. It is being staffed by a team living unity in diversity.



It was reported yesterday that 'South Sudan's National Security Service arrested and tortured a journalist over an article that allegedly criticized President Salva Kiir for failing the country.' The report went on to say: 'South Sudan has intensified its crackdown on journalists since about mid-2013 before the current civil war started and continuing to-date.' There are often rumors of fighting and impending attacks that never eventuate but it is also true that access to areas where there is fighting is denied to those who might report critically.

So let me suggest what I think is happening as I try to make sense out of all I read, hear, and experience. The ordinary people are appalled by what has become of their country. Yesterday our local cook was obviously upset that two men had tried to break into her tukul the night before. Fortunately, she has a very strong door and some noise frightened the intruders away but the ordinary people feel very insecure. Many people, including soldiers and police, have not been paid. They cannot buy food - so they take from others what they need. That much is understandable but when law and order declines, opportunistic looting, raping and killing increases. There are many, fine people here from other neighboring countries who provide vital services that help South Sudan, but there are also those who come here because there is more chance to rob without being caught. Our Kenyan finance officer was set upon by three armed men lying in wait for him to emerge from a restaurant. They stole his personal goods and our vehicle. He recognized them, from their language and appearance, as Ugandan.

That the Centre exists at all shows that a lot can be achieved against the odds. It is a gift of hope for the people of South Sudan and especially for all who will go there.

Also, the 4 Spiritans are chaplains to the Loreto secondary school where they have over a hundred girls coming from all over the country. They have a very active peace club.

Below is also a report from Br. Bill who is the leader for Solidarity for South Sudan. It gives a good insight into what is going on here.

Sense of the Senseless

The senseless violence continues in South Sudan and an early end to conflict looks increasingly remote. It is hard to be clear on exactly what is happening when there is so much denial of the truth and deliberate misinformation and disinformation.



COMBONI MISSIONARIES BESIDE THEIR DESTROYED VEHICLE

11th October 2014. Thanks to the drive and energy of Fr Daniele Moschetti, Chairperson of the Association, and of Comboni Brother, Hans Eigner, a skilled engineer, this centre is now named as the 'Good Shepherd Peace Centre'.

Given the conflict within the country and the difficulty this posed in bringing in materials and employing a capable workforce, the completion of this Centre is a remarkable achievement. More than 2.7 million US dollars were raised to construct the Centre and it has been completed within budget. Brother Denis has

I am told South Sudan has more than 600 'Generals' matched only by the USA and Russia, but operating within a very much smaller area! Some do lead the Government troops and some are part of the opposition but others simply have their own militias and many have swapped sides, and some have swapped back again, since the conflict erupted in December, 2013. The prime loyalty of many of the generals, and the troops they lead, is to their ethnic group. They are strong in their home area but are only loosely aligned to the Government or Opposition leaders. In other words, Salva Kiir and Riek Machar do not speak, nor decide, for them. The situation in South Sudan has moved from civil war towards anarchy. Anarchy is more difficult to resolve, especially when it is combined with deep tribal resentment.



NO PLACE TO HIDE FROM THE BOMBS

One local writer, Jacob Lagu, warned that violence in South Sudan was polarizing communities saying, 'War is a dirty business. It inevitably degrades us all. It diminishes our humanity as steadily as we dehumanize our adversaries. We are all locked in conflicting victimhood narratives. Each side believes wholeheartedly that they are the victims of injustice.'

Each side believes that their adversary is the unrepentant aggressor. What makes this state of affairs particularly pernicious is tribalism. It causes us to associate a person with their community. It has sharpened the distinction between 'them' and 'us'. It has led us to the tragic calamity of collective punishment,' he stated.

It is clear that the Government is in a position of greater strength than when the conflict started. Dinka now dominate the Government army and that army is better equipped than the rebels. The President's decree creating 28 states was clearly designed to put more areas under Dinka control. There has also been a clear tactic of destabilizing areas that had remained peaceful during the

first years of the conflict with attacks on civilians by 'unknown soldiers'. So it is that Juba is now quite secure whereas Yei is engulfed in lawless misery. It is simply not clear who is fighting whom. Yesterday, three buses taking people from Juba to Uganda on the main highway were attacked. The Eco bus, the one owned by Dinka, was the only one burned. It is not clear what happened but it seems anyone identified as Dinka was executed or taken captive. To me it appears the conflict is entering a new phase of guerilla resistance to the Dinka-led Government. Such situations can last for many years.

To some the situation may appear hopeless, but there are many good people offering support and practical assistance to the people of South Sudan. We can begin by working closely with the people in re-establishing 'pockets of peace' out of which a wider peace will grow. We are soon to open the Good Shepherd Peace Centre, an initiative of the combined religious in South Sudan. It will offer programmes focused on reconciliation and unity. It will be a sign of hope, and an aid, to a lasting peace.

- Br Bill

A SMALL PEACEBUILDING PROJECT IN SIERRA LEONE

The civil war in Liberia broke out in late 1989. Throughout 1990 there was much discussion in Sierra Leone as to whether the conflict would spread across the border into Sierra Leone. The general opinion was that the conflict was a Liberian problem and that Sierra Leone would not be affected. This opinion was held by the government, by the army and police, by the ordinary people and by religious leaders as well.

Already, a large number of refugees had crossed the border into Sierra Leone. Those refugees who had some money made it to the larger towns, like Freetown, Bo and Kenema, where they were actually hosted by friends or by local families. Those who has no resources stayed in camps close to the Liberian border and were catered to by a small number of international NGOs

like UNHCR and the Red Cross.

Working with Liberian Refugees

At the time I was working in the Archdiocesan Pastoral Centre in the town of Bo and the humanitarian agencies asked if they could use the Centre as a food distribution point for the 'few hundred' Liberian refugees living in the town. This was not a problem and so I had my first 'hands on' experience of doing some work with refugees.

In March 1991 rumours began to filter through of 'skirmishes' along the Liberian border in the east and south of Sierra Leone. At first we understood that these 'skirmishes' had to do with cross border trade as a lot of the 'looted' goods from Liberia were traded across the border into Sierra Leone. These 'skirmishes' were, in fact, the first of the rebel incur-

sions into Sierra Leone – and the country was totally unprepared. The army border posts were quickly disbanded, the soldiers fled and the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebels had free passage into the country.

The first people to be badly affected were the Liberian refugees in the camps along the border. They were told by the NGOs to walk to Bo and stay at the Pastoral Centre!! One Saturday morning around 6.30 a.m. in April of 1991, I was going out to say Mass in the local

Brian Starcken, CSSp





PEACEBUILDING TRAINING IN SIERRA LEONE

church. When I opened the door I was shocked to see hundreds of people just lying on the very long veranda of the Pastoral Centre and under the trees on the compound. I was shocked. The refugees we had been delivering food to for the previous months were all in reasonably good health – but these new arrivals were in a terrible state. They had walked well over a 100 miles through the bush to reach Bo. They were exhausted, emaciated and hungry. They told me that a number of them had died on the way from the camps.

We were able to get these refugees temporary accommodation in a local school. We had some food for them, and a local doctor gave medical assistance to the people who were very ill. For me this was a very sobering experience and my first real exposure to the plight of refugees fleeing conflict.

During the following months we had a large influx of people displaced by the now raging conflict in the south of Sierra Leone. They were too numerous to be hosted by relatives and friends in Bo so we had to set up a 'displaced camp' outside the town.

I worked in this camp full time for the next three years. Most of the time was spent responding to one crisis after another

as we tried to provide shelter, food, medical facilities, water, sanitation, clothing and security for the people living in the camp – which, in a very short space of time grew to over 80,000 displaced people.

Some Work on Reconciliation

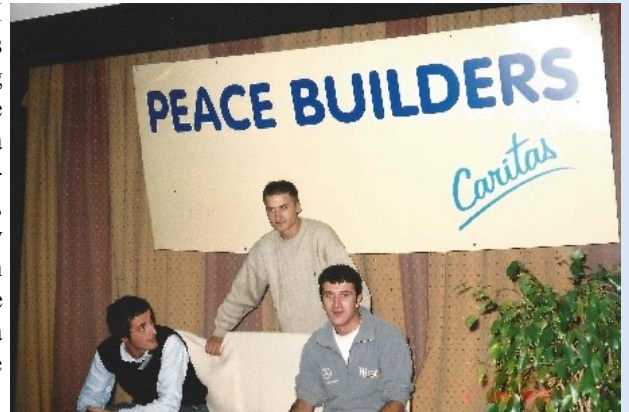
In 1994 I was asked to move to the National Caritas Office in Freetown. Caritas International was interested in providing humanitarian assistance to those affected by the conflict in Sierra Leone. I worked closely with Catholic Relief Services (U.S.) in developing a programme for Caritas S.L. As I was co-ordinating a Church response to the crisis I often wondered if we, as Church, should be doing something to promote peace and reconciliation in Sierra Leone. Humanitarian assistance (food, shelter, health, water and sanitation) is vitally important when working with refugees and displaced people but surely the Church is in a very strong position to engage in peacebuilding.

I floated the idea of developing some kind of Reconciliation programme in Sierra Leone at a meeting of Caritas International. The response was very positive and they offered to support the project.

I gathered a group of interested people together in Freetown and we began to plan. We had little knowledge of Conflict Resolution but we did have a lot of skills and knowledge in the group that allowed us to move forward. We spent

months gathering information concerning the conflict and what people thought were the root causes of the conflict, how they were affected by the conflict and what they thought might be the major issues to be addressed in post war reconciliation. We travelled all over the country meeting people in the major towns and in refugee and displaced camps. We invited religious leaders, local politicians, traditional rulers, army and police and representatives of civil society to share their views with us.

The aim of the exercise was to assist us in developing a needs-based peacebuilding 'training of trainers' for all Catholic Church personnel in the country. We were very lucky to have been helped by a Conflict Resolution NGO called Conciliation Resources who were based in London. They heard about the



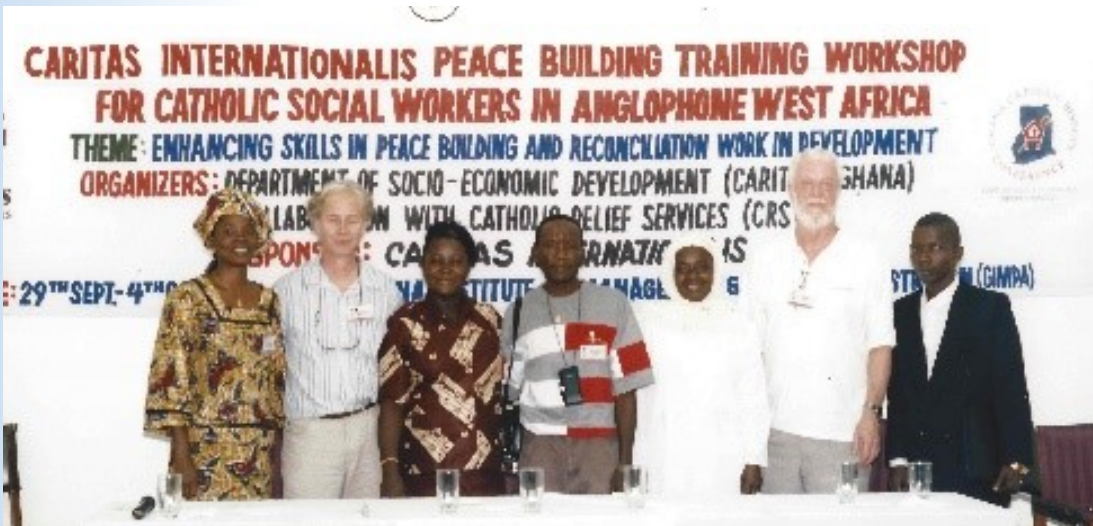
PEACEBUILDING TRAINERS

work we were doing and provided advice and guidance at various intervals until we were ready to implement the programme.

We ran a 6 week pilot training programme for Bishops, priests, teachers and catechists who were then expected to replicate the training at local level – with our help. The training programme was quite successful and we were then approached by other International and National NGOs working in the conflict to do similar training with their office and field staff.

Caritas Internationalis Peacebuilding

At their General Assembly in 1995, Caritas International decided to make work on Reconciliation a priority for its 1995-1999 mandate. They set up a Working Group that was chaired by Bishop Francisco Claver of the Philippines and each region of Caritas was represented on the Working Group. I was invited to repre-



sent the African Region.

For those four years we worked on a Reconciliation Handbook for Caritas and Church workers. We wanted it to be practical and to provide ideas that would enable members to better understand conflict, to plan a reconciliation programme as part of their daily activities and to look at the kind of reconciliation activities that are appropriate to Caritas/Church activities with an emphasis on the importance of keeping a cultural perspective on our work.

At the General Assembly in 1999 the Working Group was asked to continue its work. During the next four years and

with great help from Catholic Relief Services and a number of expert practitioners in the field of Conflict Resolution, we developed the Caritas Peacebuilding Training Manual. This was an ambitious project providing theory as well as appropriate exercises and learning tools in the whole area of working for peace.

The final leg of our journey as a Working Group, during our third mandate, was to implement training programmes in every Region of the Caritas Federation. For me this was an amazing experience. During these trainings we came in contact with inspirational people, work-

ing with the Church at a very local level, and deeply committed to building peace in their communities and their countries.

No matter where in the world we work on Mission, we will encounter conflict and we will be required to resolve conflicts and promote justice. Mostly we will be required to address 'low level' conflicts in communities, but many missionaries work in countries mired in overt internal conflict. Peacebuilding is always a challenge. Working for justice is always a challenge. When we are working for justice, we are also working for peace.

PRESENCE AS A HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE AND PEACEBUILDING IN THE MIDST OF WAR

I arrived in Angola in the autumn of 1986. At that time, there was a generation of Angolans who knew only war. My 1st appointment, with another colleague, was to Malanje city, a large Provincial Capital in the north-central part of Angola, about 450 kms from the capital Luanda. Following a period learning the local language, Kimbundu, each of us was allotted responsibilities for small catholic communities within a radius of 30 miles from the centre. I had perhaps 20 or so such communities to visit frequently as well as many others within the city itself.

In my early years in Angola there was always a fine line that could not be crossed. This was the boundary between government controlled and UNITA controlled territory. As the years rolled on, that boundary was getting closer and closer to Malanje city. When the warring parties reached a peace agreement in 1991, to culminate in free and fair elections in September 1992, there was little more than a 10 kms radius around the city that was still controlled by the Government. As the number of communities under my responsibility gradually fell under UNITA control, I decided to continue to visit them. This ran two risks. How would the government soldiers manning the frontier controls react to me going where they could not? Secondly, how would UNITA react to having me enter their territory? On those trips, apart from religious services, we always carried medical supplies for the sick in these cut-off villages.

During the summer of 1991, I replaced another Spiritan in a mission called Cacusso, about 50 miles from Malanje city. It was the only town outside the provincial capital still in government hands. During my first year, there was great relief among the people at the prospect of permanent peace. The roads reopened to passing traffic and the political parties launched their election manifestos for the upcoming elections. Together with the four Dominican Sisters in the town, we planned to reopen the primary school recently returned to Church ownership. We got funding for 200 school desks which we ordered from a factory in Luanda. We hired a couple of train carriages to transport them to the mission. New windows and doors were to be made by local tradesmen. At the same time, a sponsor had agreed to fund a new parish multi-purpose centre for the training of local community leaders. This included a 30 bedroom building to accommodate people attending the centre from rural communities.

The General Election in September, 1992

I would like to summarize the work myself and the Dominican Sisters were engaged with in Cacusso under the following headings: Advocacy, Emergency Responses and 'Presence'.

Advocacy: When the outcome of the election gave victory to the government MPLA party, it soon became clear that UNITA, the movement which was win-

Michael Kilkenny, CSSp

ning the war hands down, wasn't going to accept defeat at the ballot box. Following three weeks of talks between both sides, brokered by the UN, to try and form a government of national unity, war broke out again.

In Cacusso, during the three weeks of talks, UNITA moved in and took control of the town without a shot being fired. The whole Province was now under UNITA control except the city of Malanje itself. As the fighting spread, the UN peacekeeping forces made a hasty exit from the country. The country was abandoned to its own fate. In this new politi-



cal and military scenario, UNITA now controlled up to 80% of the territory but only two of the 18 Provincial capitals. When UNITA settled in to governing our small town, eventually people were beginning to disappear from their homes at night. They were arrested during the night-time hours and never seen alive again. It emerged that those disappearing had participated in the organization of the elections in the town. UNITA had concluded that they were cheated out of electoral victory through fraud and those who participated in the election charade should pay the ultimate price.

The local Kimbundu population, who at first remained calm at the UNITA takeover, were now in fear of their lives as no one knew who was going to disappear next. Many tried to make their way back to the government held Malanje city but those who were caught also paid the ultimate price. I had many visits during these first six months from UNITA delegations, expressing their view that we, as missionaries, should make ourselves at home under their governance and we were free to continue with our missionary work unimpeded. I often asked them to put a stop to the disappearances, but with little response. Later, UNITA blew up the only bridge leading into the government held Malanje city so a new 'fine line' was declared.

Emergency Responses: On the Monday morning before Ash Wednesday, 1993, 6 months after the elections, I organized a meeting with the Sisters and a number of others to discuss the idea of opening the primary school. Then, a message was delivered from UNITA headquarters in the town to say that government forces had broken through the UNITA cordon around Malanje city and that they would most likely be arriving in Cacuso the following morning. UNITA decided to evacuate all its personnel from the town and asked the missionaries to leave with them. For us missionaries, there were two choices facing us: one was vocational and the other political. To run would be to betray the

gospel description of the good shepherd as the one who remains with the flock when the dogs of war attack. The second choice was more political in nature. It was essential as missionaries to remain neutral in a civil war and to treat people from both sides equally. Ultimately, our best chance of survival was to be seen to be neutral. However, it had to be tested. This was the test. We unanimously agreed to stay put. As darkness fell, there was no-one to be seen in the town and one could hear a pin drop.

As foreseen, the attack came at dawn. It lasted only three or four hours as it soon became evident to the government forces that UNITA was not defending the town. By mid-afternoon, a few people came to

the fighting raged all day. In the end, UNITA failed to retake it. There were many more casualties, mostly civilians, as the mission continued to fill up with many more people traumatized by the fighting. During the following week, I gathered all the catechists I could find and formed teams of three to go and bury the dead to avoid disease setting in. In general though, there were thousands of people still in their homes and relatively happy that their forces had resisted the UNITA attack. As the days went by, catechists came to me saying that, at night, they could hear the sound of lorries on the outskirts of the town. It became clear that UNITA were preparing another attack but no one knew when it

would come. Sure enough, it came at dawn a week after the first attack. By midday, they had put the government troops to flight as well as practically all the remaining people in the town. When a rocket landed on the veranda of the mission, we evacuated the scores of people in every room and out-house and opened the Church to let them shelter



MINISTRY TO SOLDIERS BY M.AFR. PRIEST

the mission and handed over three children, a girl age 8 a boy aged 5 and a 6 months old baby. Their parents had been shot dead outside their house, probably as a result of being identified as from the Umbundu people, predominantly associated with UNITA. I opened the doors of the mission and its internal outhouses to accommodate people who were fleeing in fear of their lives from what was happening in the town. The killing continued on the following day. I had the ash Wednesday ceremony in the church at 4pm. Outside the compound, in a local market square 40 yards away, people were being killed and often burned at regular intervals. Never before or since had liturgy and life become so intertwined.

Unexpectedly, on the following morning, UNITA launched a counter-attack to retake the town. We hurriedly sheltered down in a corner of the mission house as

there. Soon, these were joined by hundreds of others fleeing through the mission compound. Most kept going south with a view to getting to the Capital 300 miles away.

The following morning, I was standing in the middle of the church observing the scene in front of me. There were scores of people huddled all over the available space, terrified and vulnerable. What was normally a house of prayer was transformed into a refugee camp. The occupants were tired, hungry and traumatized by what happened the day before. As I was contemplating how to respond to this situation, the sacristan arrived. She immediately suggested that the blessed sacrament should be removed from the tabernacle and the sanctuary lamp extinguished. My immediate gut response was 'no'; surely this was the privileged place where our God, as revealed by Jesus, was to be found,

among the poor and the disenfranchised, the lonely and the lost! Now, were we going to remove the 'Real Presence' so that 'our' God would not be embarrassed by all this chaos?

Missionary Presence: Fast forward now 10 years later, to 2004. Our General Chapter was held in Lisbon, Portugal, that year. We spent a weekend in Fatima as part of the programme. The Portuguese Dominican Superior who lived through the war in Cacuso was now back in Portugal. She organized a meeting with a number of families who had fled to the mission and had eventually made Portugal their new home. We spent hours and hours remembering what had occurred. While we missionaries were happy enough with the limited service we provided to the community during

the war, the Angolans had a different point of view. "But Fr.", they reminded us, "did you never realize that, for the people, while what you did was wonderful, for them your principal contribution was staying with the people. *Your presence meant that UNITA was unable to do as they liked and your presence stopped them from doing much worse.*" I had never before considered presence as part of a humanitarian response. It was a reasonably sane decision to remain in Cacuso. In other wars, like in Sierra Leone, or perhaps currently with Boko Haram in Northern Nigeria, staying with the people effectively meant running with them. There would have been no one to stay with.

When the government finally retook Cacuso, in 1994, they held a rally in the

town square the following day. They publicly thanked the missionaries for having stayed with the people. For them, we had passed the neutrality test. We were judged, at least by the government forces, not to have taken sides in the conflict.

The war in Angola finally came to an end in 2002 when the UNITA leader was killed in an ambush. In truth, UNITA was fed up with the war and morale had dropped to an all-time low. For a crucified people, that well-worn African saying had been truly lived out: 'When two elephants fight, it is the grass that suffers'. While our political presence may have been judged to be neutral, from a religious point of view, believing in a God who gets his/her hands dirty, can never be a neutral presence.

MINISTRIES IN AREAS OF CONFLICT

John Kingston, CSSp.



My first mission appointment was to the new Province of Angola founded in 1977. I arrived in Angola on December 21st that year and returned to Ireland, my Province of origin to work in formation there in 1992. Of those fifteen years spent in Angola the civil war went on for fourteen with a one year respite in 1991. In 1984 the war was increasingly present in the Province of Malanje where I was working in the diocese of the same name with other young Spiritans.

An international team of 4 confrères had arrived in the diocese in 1977. At the bishop's request we worked in missions in over half of the diocese. This was because of the scarcity of priests. At the same time we were running a catechist course in the Cathedral parish compound. We also visited the communities served by those catechists. It was most interesting and rewarding work.

In 1984 when UNITA were quite an established presence in the Malanje area,

the roads were becoming dangerous. The catechists were increasingly distracted by the sound of MIG fighter jets roaring overhead. They were concerned about their families back in the village communities. We had to suspend the course and send them home. We continued to visit their communities. It was said at that time that only the three Ms were on the roads, Military, Madmen and Missionaries. Most of the missions we served had sisters residing in them and collaborating with us. At this point some sisters were withdrawn either by the Bishop or by their Congregation superiors. Three of us were then residing in Kiwaba Nzoji mission, Frs. Joao Kuvalela (Angolan), Jean-Etienne Wozniak (French) and me (Irish). We finally withdrew to the Cathedral mission in Malanje in late April of 1985. Since we were 100 kilometres from Malanje city and this was long before mobile telephones, I had insisted that our community would stay as long as possible in the mission of Kiwaba Nzoji but would finally decide if and when we should withdraw. When we did withdraw to Malanje, the neighbouring towns had been attacked by UNITA and nobody but us was sleeping in the town at night. Four days after our withdrawal the

town was very severely attacked including our residence. People who were surprised at the timing of our withdrawal then praised us for staying as long as possible and withdrawing just in time.

When we arrived in Malanje the bishop, Eugenio Salessu was not in town and arrived back on Friday night. We went to see him on Saturday morning to explain how we had withdrawn from Kiwaba Nzoji. He had difficulty in accepting that we just consulted each other and decided to withdraw. An hour after we left him a messenger on a bicycle arrived from Kiwaba Nzoji telling him that the town had been attacked that night. He was then a little happier with our decision. An event in the bishop's life later on gave me an understanding as to why he had difficulty with our withdrawal. He who is now dead was a member of the Umbundu tribe in southern Angola, the tribe most



strongly associated with UNITA. There was a movement in Malanje to attack the bishop. The governor of the Province, former priest Joao Bernardo went to tell the bishop that he had a small aircraft fuelled and ready to take off with the bishop to Luanda, for his own safety. The bishop replied that he would continue in his own house wearing his soutane and that if they killed him they would know that they had killed the bishop. His own courage was what made him find withdrawal difficult to accept. A month later on Pentecost Sunday Jean-Etienne and I were on the road back to Kiwaba Nzoji to keep our promise to celebrate the Eucharist there on Pentecost Sunday when we were ambushed. He was killed instantly and I having been hit by 4 bullets was kidnapped and held for ten days moving around the bush.

Pastoral ministry in most of the diocese had changed a lot by now. The catechists who had mostly all been trained by us were now key ministers in their areas. They performed baptisms and did much that in previous times the priests would have done. Most were very faithful and remained at their posts. Many people migrated to the cities for security and some catechists moved with them. Most of the catechists were honest but some became corrupt. Much of the animation was now done by correspondence. In Malanje diocese Fr. Bernard

Ducrot invented a publication which he called 'Cartas as Comunidades' (Letters to the Communities). It took inspiration from 'Vida Nova' a monthly review published in Nampula Diocese in Mozambique. In this publication the bishop usually contributed a page. Letters from around the diocese were included, reflections for the Sunday liturgies were included and a page about health and especially herbal remedies. What used to amaze us was that during a very difficult time for travel and communication this publication seemed to reach its destinations all round the target area. People were glad to carry it and those who received it expected to receive it in good time. The news from around the diocese helped people to keep going despite the many difficulties.

After the ambush in which I was injured

I eventually was well enough to travel home to Ireland where I convalesced. In my first week at home the Provincial wanted to include me in his new council. I insisted that it was important I would return to Angola. My father was appalled that I could decide to return to where I had suffered so much so recently. When I was a boy I did much horse-riding since my father had horses. He told me that if ever I was thrown off a horse I should get back up immediately so as not to become nervous. I told him I was taking this approach in deciding to return to Angola. He accepted to be beaten by his own wisdom.

After my return to Angola I was transferred to Huambo in the south to work in spiritan formation. For my first five years in Huambo there was a serious attack on one night each week. More friends and confrères were killed. In



Huambo it was very much the case of the three Ms being on the road. The city was more or less under siege and one could not travel out far. Confrères and other priests, sisters, catechists and others risked their lives in order to reach out to isolated communities. Many paid for this generosity and courage with their lives. With hunger being a daily staple in Huambo, the work of Caritas was very important. I used to help unload the freight planes in the airport and was given some share of the maize and other food being brought in. Some of the cargo was sent by our own procurator in Luanda, at that time Argemiro Geraldo. I felt conscience bound to share some of our food with the very thin people begging at our door. Some of our confrères remained in their missions out in the country but were isolated and very seldom could they appear in the city. The

war was going on around them and they continued to serve the people. Some like Fr. Afonso Moreira in Bailundo paid with their lives. The Church went on. Ministry went on conditioned a lot by the situation. Once on Holy Saturday the archbishop was lighting the paschal candle at 16.00hours because the people could not move about after dark. Formation went on but at some cost. One day when a small convoy of church vehicles was transporting seminarians from Benguela back to the seminary in Huambo after the holidays they were ambushed on the road. Some were killed. This convinced the Bishop of Benguela who had many seminarians, to build his own seminary in Benguela.

UNITA had a base called Jamba in the far south-east of the country. Some priests went there to minister to the people. Our confrère Bernardo Bongo was appointed Episcopal Vicar for the base and spent some years there. Other confrères went to work with Angolan refugees in neighbouring countries.

A remarkable chapter in all of this was the 55 day siege of Huambo in which our young confrères in formation finding themselves in the big Spiritan College with no directors because they had been impeded from returning to the house. They organ-

ised themselves into a kind of hierarchy to respond to the authorities and emergencies as they appeared. They did remarkable work even caring for the very people who said they had been sent to attack them. There are many stories of greatness of soul, courage, maturity and creative responses in terribly difficult times.

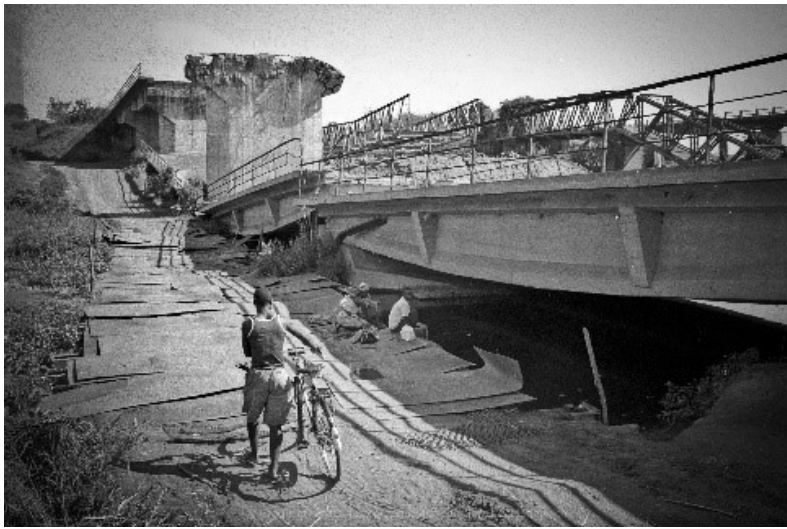
Mozambique

In 2000 when I was resting at my parents' house and preparing to leave for Mozambique the floods appeared on all TV channels. A woman gave birth up in a tree. My mother asked me "And you are going there?" I replied "Mother it is not a war". She was happy about that. Now of course there is a new war in Mozambique and one of the main battlefields is the district of Bárúè where our parish is situated. RENAMO the biggest

opposition party is in conflict with FRELIMO who have governed Mozambique since 1975. RENAMO had a very strong showing in the last general election and want to govern in parts of the country where they won. They also accuse FRELIMO of rigging elections to make sure they win the overall result.

Although this does not seem to be an all-out war, the battles are mainly on the main roads which cross Mozambique between the countries west of us and the ports on the Indian Ocean coast especially Beira. The main road (number 7) which cuts right through the district of Bárue and therefore our parish, is extremely busy and two convoys with military escort come north and two go south each day. The tactic was to burn out trucks from Malawi and Zambia whose owners threatened not to use our roads if there was no protection. At the same time there are many assassinations being carried out by people from both sides and this has terrorized the people.

The result is that many of the villages where we had Christian communities are now deserted or occupied by military. All pastoral activity in those communities is at a standstill because the people



One of the many destroyed bridges in Mozambique

have fled. In some of the larger villages and towns people carry on. It was strange to see that during the bishop's pastoral visits this year he would address the people at length and deal with difficult issues including the present conflict speaking quite explicitly but without taking any side. At the end he would throw the conversation open to the floor and invite comments of questions or disagreement with what he had said. In the majority of the communities nobody dared speak about anything. This is obviously due to fear of being denounced as being on one side or the other. The situation has created distrust at the heart of our communities. The people are weary and many are afraid to go and work their fields which will later cause hunger. Right now between drought, conflict and economic

crisis the people are tired and sad.

We always pray for peace and appeal to the parties to cease the conflict. Strange to say it is easier and seemingly safer for us to travel out to distant rural communities than for the people to go to a neighbouring community or come to any meetings or other events we organise. People in the very distant communities in the Macossa district dare not move around because this causes suspicion and some military seem to have as a principle “when in

doubt kill”. Sadly young people have been killed here because they did not have a complete set of identification documents. One of the strong points of our pastoral approach here is that we have an emphasis on small Christian communities and they being very local can function more or less as usual.

Trying to make sense of or at least somehow interpret my own situation after the ambush and the death of missionaries in Angola I concluded that God could very well invent a way for ministry to happen without any of us but has condescended to invite us to collaborate in the divine plan. What a privilege this is and our response can only be one of gratitude for such a privilege.

TEFE: A COMMITMENT TO LIFE AND TO THE ENVIRONMENT



Bishop Mário Clemente Neto, CSSp

In April 2017, we will celebrate the 70th anniversary of the arrival of Fr. Joaquim de Lange CSSp in Tefé. He was destined to become the first bishop of the Prelacy. Recalling his contribution in this Spiritan mission, we come to appreciate what he did for the people of the region in promoting their human dignity, in saving many people from miserable situations, as well as helping them to find solutions to their precarious situations in the areas of health and education. In fact, thanks be to God, this is characteristic of the pastoral action of the Prelacy of Tefé. It has been in harmony with the Spiritan mission approach - committed to the people and their integral development, in the heart of the Amazon - and has led, in a natural way, to the defence of nature and the environment.

A Church Close to the People

Shortly after the 2nd Vatican Council – Bishop Joaquim participated in all the sessions – a general assembly of the Latin-American episcopate took place at Medellin in Colombia in 1968¹. There, the bishops sought to apply the decisions of the Council to the reality of Latin America by taking a strong preferential option for the poor. Then, in 1972, the bishops of the Brazilian Amazonia met in the city of Santarem to adapt these orientations to their Church. There they decided that “the creation of basic Christian communities had to be a prime objective of pastoral work in Amazonia²” - as well as the promotion of “diverse ministries” - a commitment to seeking “integral human development” and full support “of the providential CIMI (Indigenous Missionary Council) organisation”.

Shortly afterwards, Tefé and its neighbouring Prelacies began a programme to update pastoral agents: priests, religious and laity. In



Téfé, a programme was organised for the training of ministers of Sunday celebrations. The *Radio for Rural Education* and the *Movement for Basic Education* (MEB) were also set up to promote basic literacy and the education of river-side communities. When I arrived in 1980, I found this basic structure well established.

A COMMITTED FAITH

Before going to Téfé as Bishop, I was in south-central Brazil, where I worked in the diocese of Divinópolis (in the state of Minas Gerais). It devoted its energies to the formation of rural communities, with courses and training for those who led Celebrations; presidents, treasurers, health agents, etc. At this time the laity were taking on their role in the Church. At that time, the Brazilian National Bishops Conference (CNBB) was offering an ever more active resistance in relation to the military dictatorship then ruling the country. It gave its support to the social movements and to the *Basic Church Communities* (CEBs) that were socially active and were considered to be a new way of being Church.

In São Paulo where I worked for three years, Archbishop Paulo Evaristo Arns courageously supported a pastoral policy that defended human rights. From there, I was appointed to Téfé, where I found the same sort of free, participative and ministerial Church. In councils and



assemblies, we set up structures to achieve these objectives. In the rural area, we encouraged the coming together of families to facilitate the improvement of their living conditions; the setting up of schools for children and adults, the getting of the generation of electricity and the introduction of health services, etc. with the support of these communities came the organisation of administrative councils, of a community council, of Sunday celebrations, and of Biblical reflection groups.

For these groups, we had printed material that we called “*Ajuri* of the Word of God” to be distributed to those who came together to read and share the Word of God in ‘*ajuri*’. *Ajuri* is the indigenous word given to community work groups that prepared plantations in the fields. It is the name given to the creation of a community garden or to the getting of resources for such a project.

THE BIBLE AND LIFE

The reading of the Bible in these *ajuri* had two stages: firstly one tried to understand what the Bible was saying (the word of God in the Bible) and secondly the application of the Bible to living situations (the lived Word of God). It was there that people discussed their different living situations - whether personal, communal or circumstantial. Decisions taken had the merit of having been discussed and shared together and taken on board in faith. Thus, they were strongly rooted in people’s lives. All felt well supported by the Prelacy and by the Church. In this process, the work of the CNBB and that of the MEB were very important. That of the MEB, besides literacy work, also gave training and explanation of the way society functioned and the rights of citizens.

THE PRESERVATION OF THE LAKES

It was in these biblical reflection groups (*Ajuri*) that there arose an awareness of the importance of acting together in facing up to the problems that people were experiencing in their lives. One such problem was the destructive fishing carried on by big boats, with their freezing facilities. Both big and small fish were caught. The smaller fish, already badly dealt with by the mesh of the nets and which were of poor commercial value

were systematically thrown overboard with little chance of survival. Worse still, when they found shoals of fish of greater commercial value, tons of already harvested dead fish were dumped overboard, leading to terrible contamination. The communities soon began to experience the lack of fish, their basic food.

Communities generally exist close to lakes on which they depend for their food. They began to defend these lakes and to put pressure on others to cultivate fish in more distant places. Here, they forbade access or any local activity that would drive the fish away. Other lakes were judged suitable for commercial fishing. Brother Falco Michiels CSSP was one of the founders of this movement and was even threatened with death.

JURIDICAL PRESENCE

The struggle has been difficult: Juridical protection has been poor and the fishery businessmen, have put pressure on the civil authorities. Community members took turns, day and night, to protect the lakes. But what could be done when facing repeated invasions? Sometimes they succeeded in preventing access to the lakes by joining their frail family boats with the families and opposed the entrance of the big boats. They even succeeded in taking the fishing equipment off smaller invaders. They brought them before the head of the local police in the town, but he did not know how to deal with the issue. There were some peremptory arrests. But to find an answer, there were two possible routes: On the one hand to fight for new laws and regulations; on the other to discover the juridical possibilities already in place.

In the 1980s, after 20 years of military dictatorship, there was a movement for a new constitution. Supported by the CNBB, the Church sought to encourage all of society to participate, not to get privileges for itself, but to obtain better legal conditions favouring a more just society that would give opportunities to all. For our part, united with other sectors and movements with similar views; indigenous peoples, peoples of African origin, landless peasants etc. we proposed amendments to defend the preservation and appropriate use of natural resources. The task of establishing the new constitution had an important effect at both state and regional levels in establishing organic constitutional laws.

VOLUNTEER ENVIRONMENTAL AGENTS

At another front of the struggle, with the support of some organisations, the Prelacy sustained legal support to serve the needs of rural areas, of the indigenous



there he discussed with them their situation, whilst seeking possible solutions. They decided to organise themselves as a trade union. Distances were enormous and the only means of transport for them were rowing boats. Groups of residents were organised at every junction of the river. They built houses for their meetings, using the locally disposable materials - wooden planks, creepers and palm leaves. For the

meetings, each family brought a hammock to sleep on, fishing equipment and cassava flour for food. In my first year in the Prelacy, I went upriver with some indigenous and union leaders at the inauguration of various union offices. It was a journey of more than 170 hours and more than 1,700 km. There was joy, celebration and new hope. Many of those who came had travelled for days in rowing-boats.

The union system was very important for the training and concientization of the people, but it did not put pressure on the “bosses” because there was no relationship of employer and employee between them. It was an independent commercial relationship. Once put under pressure, the *regatão* simply ceased to go up the river and the rubber-tappers had no means of survival. Later I personally felt the vulnerability to which they were constantly exposed. The federal government, in an effort to control national inflation, decreed that the profit margins of the businessmen had to be limited to a certain percentage. Because of this the *regatao* stopped going up the rivers. On my visits, I came across upon desperate situations. For example, each night a person had to stay awake so that the fire would not go out, because there were no more matches and the neighbours lived far away!

RUBBER-TAPPERS OR SERINGUEIROS

Other solutions, such as agriculture, were offered to the rubber-planters, but the distances to the consumer centres were too far away. I visited one of these groups who had invested in a big plantation of cassava flour. The distance to the nearest town market was five day’s journey: the costs of transport were higher than the value of the product.

The extraction of rubber took place in a real situation of slavery, despite the late abolition of slavery in Brazil. In 1980, when I arrived in the Prelacy, the situation had not changed; indeed, it was aggravated by the devaluation of rubber. The former owner of the rubber plantation was replaced by the “*regatão*” – the owner of boats, which travelled the rivers buying the rubber harvests and supplying the rubber harvesters of what they needed for their living. The “*séringueiro*” had no alternative - the “*regatao*” fixed the price of rubber and the products that he sold to them. The Prelacy made an agreement with an organisation to help the indigenous people and others from the remote regions. Amongst those who gave help was the great campaigner for social justice, Fr. Egon Heck. He went to live with the rubber harvesters on the Jutai river and

EXTRACTIVIST RESERVES

In the state of Acre, in southern Amazonia, Chico Mendes, a great leader of the rubber-tappers, suggested the creation of “extractivist reserves”, where the residents would harvest the product methodically, without destroying the environment. Fr. John Derrickx CSSp, a great defender and promotor of the rights of the Juruá river dwellers, took part in meetings on this topic and brought these new ideas to our Prelacy. Thus we fostered the creation of various “extractivist reserves” along the Juruá, Jutai and Solimões rivers.

The plans for the creation of these extractivist reserves offered good prospects. Some things happened: training meetings took place and lakes were better managed; there was an annual quota of fish that could be harvested and sold; there was specific help available at times when fishing was prohibited or between seasons. However, the fishing had to be done in the space of only some weeks and for this reason the fish had to be sold at a very low price. The promised sustainable extraction of wood, which had raised great hopes, never functioned after more than 20 years in existence.



The laws on the reserves were written by technocrats very removed from the concrete realities and guided by an environmentalism that I could only describe as fanatical.

In the council of a reserve that I am involved with, we have struggled without success to obtain approval of a plan for the management of wood. Only the use of fallen and dead trees is approved. We set up a workshop to manufacture marquetry (carved objects). Various woods are needed for this - dark woods found in the heart of trees and lighter coloured wood from newly cut trees. But to cut these lighter coloured trees is forbidden! Trees may not be cut down! Also, to make use of dead trees, a technician with a GPS device must be brought from Manaus (1.000kms. away). He will mark

the trees, registering each of them and then make a request to cut them down, without an idea of when or if he may get permission to go ahead!

OTHER MODELS FOR PRESERVING THE ENVIRONMENT

As well as the model of “extractivist reserves”, there are other types of reserves such as “Biological Reserves”, “the National Forest”, “the Lasting Development Reserve” and others. The experiences we used in the communities of Tefé Prelacy were very important for all the models set up in our region. As well as the organisation and formation of the communities, we are happy that the principal leaders in this work are those who were formed in our Prelacy. They show a great capacity and experience in community organisation, in their relationships with authorities and in group and assembly discussions.

It is important to say how precious was the presence of Spiritans, throughout this process of the preservation of the environment. The importance of their commitment is to be seen in the present phases. Their contribution has been necessary so that the whole process can be

rooted in Christian values. Amongst these values, we see above all respect for the human person and care that benefits be available to all and not just to small groups of privileged people. It is easy to see self-interest of economic groups and countries behind big financial contributions to organisations to supposedly protect the environment. The Cristian contribution of Spiritans is indispensable to this cause.

The Conference produced the important “Medellin Document” – 1968. They showed that the people of the Continent with the greatest number of Catholics in the world lived amongst huge social injustices, in archaic social structures in which a minority controlled wealth and power in detriment to a poor minority.

The Santarem Document was published in

May 1972. The bishops’ objective was the revision of pastoral practices in the light of the decisions taken on the occasion of the 2nd Vatican Council (1962-1965) and of the 2nd Latin American Bishops’ conference in Medellin (1968). Dom Joaquim was an important leader at this encounter, at which was born the united pastoral plan of the Brazilian Amazonian region and the option for an incarnate reality and liberation evangelisation.



INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

OUR TIMES: SECULAR AGE OF GOD'S CENTURY

Bill Headley CSSp



In a research trip to Thailand in 2012, I stood on a bridge over a small river. It flowed through one of Bangkok's best-known Hindu monasteries. Below, on the bank of the river, a small cluster of people gathered mournfully around a prone cloth-draped body. The deceased rested on a metal stand raised a few feet from the ground. Soon a flame was lit. The cremation began.

From time immemorial, thoughtful people have pondered life's trajectory: One is born, matures, experiences delights and disappointments along the human journey, grows old and eventually dies. Then the haunting question, “is this all there is to existence?”

Religions is the societal institution people have traditionally turned to when confronted with such imponderables. Since the 17th and 18th centuries, with the onslaught of modernity, faith traditions have seemed gradually but assuredly to be losing their position as this grand arbiter. Famed US sociologist of religion, Peter Berger predicated that by “the 21st century, religious believers are likely to be found only in small sects, huddled together to resist a wonderful secular culture.”

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found only in small sects, huddled together to resist a wonderful secular culture.”

Events have not unfolded the way Berger and others expected. Granted, the West has seen the growth of secularism. But that is not necessarily an accurate barometer for the world. This leads to several important insights about religion in our time.

RELIGION'S RESURGENCE

There has been a seismic change worldwide in religion during the last 40 to 50 years. According to a 2012 Pew Research Center study on “The Global Religious Landscape,” religious adherence globally has jumped from 50 percent in 1900 to 64 percent in 2000: “Worldwide, more than eight-in-ten people identify with a religious group.” Much of this growth, of course, may be attributed to demographic dynamics.

POLITICAL THEOLOGY

During this growth period, religion has moved from being a private devotion to also being a motivation for public and political action. Recent years have seen religious actors move from homes and houses of worship as private devotion to social expressions in media and public fora.

TECHNOLOGICALLY SAVVY

Modernity's modes of transport, communication and financial transfer were



HINDU CREMATION CEREMONY

expected to leave believers and their faith traditions in the dustbin of history. Instead, religious actors and religiously motivated groups have used them as effective tools for self-expression, recruitment and intimidation. The sophisticated devastation of 9/11 bore grim witness to this.

Religion and religious actors are deeply entwined in the militant movements of our time. Scholars are reluctant to refer to ensuing conflicts as “religious” by nature. Nor do they want to embrace a form of reductionism that brackets out religion, attributing the causes of such violence to economic deprivation, despotic leaders or disgruntled youth.

It is the work of the sub-discipline of interreligious peacebuilding to bring the enlightening tools of field research, teaching and service to situations where religion is a significant factor in a violent conflict. It will do this best if it strives to

become an integral part of the parent field of peacebuilding. And if, in turn, it is welcomed as a significant contributor to the search for peace.

Learnings from my personal field work, students and colleagues are rich and ever deepening. A Nigerian religious sister who works with Boko Haram spoke about the motivational force the Islamic religion can be for them. She told how her faith influenced her own peacebuilding. It was in Rwanda shortly after its genocide that I experienced people of faith in a village gacaca (an indigenous reconciliation process) deal with humanitarian violations in their community.

With the changing nature of war, the role of religiously motivated women as facilitators of peace is becoming better known. We at the Kroc School learn from examples of this annually as we gather four Women PeaceMakers from all over the world to hear of their work. Unique assets of religious leaders are becoming better understood and intentionally employed. In summary, we are coming to appreciate as never before the role and functioning of religion before, during and after violent conflict.

Yes, religion is changing in our time, but not the way or with the implications that many expected. As a peacebuilder, it is exciting to follow these trends and movements with the hope that they will yield new ways of advancing peace.

YOUR COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS AS TO HOW WE CAN IMPROVE THIS NEWSLETTER ON JPIC/IRD ARE MOST WELCOME .

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