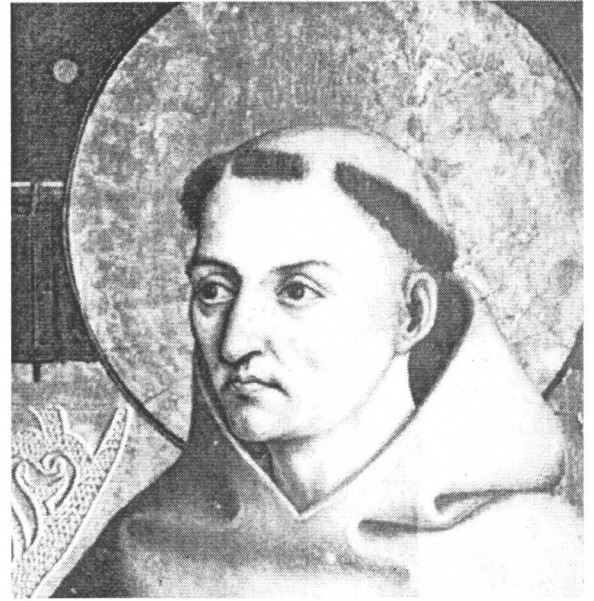


Go,
Rebuild
My Church!

**Comprehensive
Course on the
Franciscan
Mission
Charism**



Inculturation
as a Franciscan
Commitment

Lesson Unit 17

The documents of Vatican II, Pope Paul VI's *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, and Pope John Paul II's *Redemptoris Missio* have deeply affected the understanding of mission. Constant efforts are being made to clarify its purpose and objectives, and to determine the most appropriate methods to carry it out. *Go, Rebuild My Church: A Comprehensive Course on the Franciscan Mission Charism*, provides a particular context to stimulate dialogue about the many dimensions of mission and the inevitable recognition of the equality, dignity and humanity of all persons. The course is unique, since it is genuinely inter-Franciscan and inter-cultural. An ongoing process for exchange among all members of the Franciscan Family from six continents provides for a creative meshing of the best in current theology, Franciscan research and pastoral practice. The vast and profound changes of present-day society make all the more urgent our search for a fuller understanding of humanity in the light of the Gospel and the Person of Jesus Christ.

As Franciscans, with the world as our *cloister*, we welcome this refreshing moment of intercultural dialogue. Francis was the first among founders to situate the missionary dimension of the Gospel call clearly within his rule. This study reawakens us to the challenge and genuineness of Francis' message for our own times.

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Lesson Unit 17 - Inculturation as a Franciscan Commitment

**Go, Rebuild My
Church!**

*A Comprehensive
Course on the
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Charism*



**Inculturation
as a Franciscan
Commitment**



Lesson Unit 17



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Inculturation as a Franciscan Commitment

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From the Sources



How Francis learned from another Culture

In 1219, Francis stayed in the country of the Muslims. He heard how the Muezzin called the people to prayer every noon from the minaret. He saw how they all went down on their knees, bending low to the ground to give glory to God.

When Francis returned to Italy, he missed the deeply religious culture of the Arabs. So he wrote a letter to the governors and rulers in the whole world that they should introduce something similar.



Every evening the call of a herald or some other sign should call the people to prayer to give thanks and praise to God the Almighty (cf. Ltr).



Introduction



Message for all People

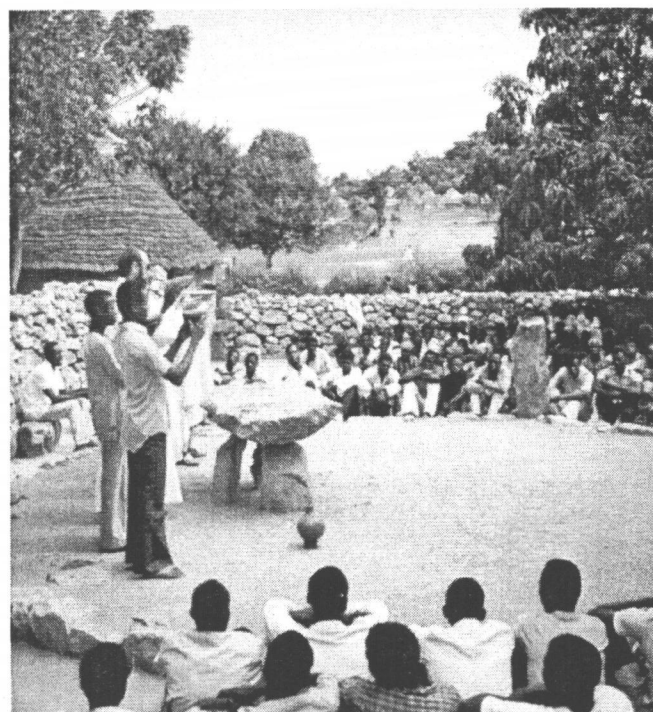
Francis and Clare lived in turbulent times. They were born into the “Century of commercial revolution”¹, which, in terms of its consequences for that time, can be compared to present-day globalization of the economy and of ideas. The movement started by Francis and Clare is in itself a fruit of this deep-reaching change, and within the Church it became even its motor. Through the lively trade and, unfortunately also in connection with armed conflicts, people of different walks of life, cultures and religions met more often. Theology, too, tried new ways unusual for that time, adopting the thinking of the pagan philosopher Aristotle to reconcile faith and reason in a new way.

After a long time of self-sufficiency the Church began to look again beyond its own border. It was Francis who made the Church aware that a message for all peoples had been entrusted to her. Francis and his brotherhood felt the responsibility to take this message beyond the borders of Christianity. Francis knew that he was understood and spiritually supported in this by Pope Honorius III, who in 1221 wrote the first papal bull on mission “*Ne si secus*”. But there was obviously no instruction on how mission should be carried out. This can be seen in the difference between the attitude of Francis and that of the first friars in their encounter with the Muslims (cf. Lesson 16).

This lesson deals with the theological as well as with the practical necessity of allowing the Gospel to take root in the different cultures. But we have to be aware of the fact that every culture is

created by living people and so it is in itself subject to constant change.

Hence, inculturation is a process which is constantly going on in all cultures, also in so-called Christian cultures. Inculturation also includes those communities who want to live the Gospel in the footsteps of Francis and Clare.



Cameroon: Instead of building a church the Eucharist is celebrated here in the ancient place where sacrifices had been offered to the ancestors.

¹ The invention of bills of exchange originated from the 12th Century. This Century was, therefore, called the “Century of the commercial revolution” (R. Sonntag).



Survey



Spiritual Legacy of Brother Francis and Sister Clare

In the first part of this lesson we want to become aware by a short historical overview how *inculturation* happened or was rejected and how the Church finally recognised anew that inculturation is one of her essential tasks. After that we deal with the Early Church, in which inculturation happened quite naturally, although not without tensions. At the same time the danger of founding "colonial churches" will become recognisable.

In the second part of this lesson we try to make ourselves acquainted with the theological reasons for inculturation and with its practical consequences. In the third part we shall ask the challenging question which role the Franciscan Family has to play in the present processes of inculturation. And finally we let others ask us what meaning inculturation could have for the spiritual legacy of Brother Francis and Sister Clare.

Information



A new Term for a Natural Process

In the mid-seventies the Word *inculturation* emerged as a new word in the usage of the Church and gradually became a determinant concept of present-day missiology. First of all it describes a matter of course: The word of the Gospel meets with people who live in a grown culture and who are decisively shaped by it. Culture is defined as a network of relationships that sufficiently satisfies the physical, psychic, social and religious basic needs of a group or a society (cf. L. Lutzbetak). Culture defines what is beautiful and good, right or wrong, God-willed or condemnable, a good or a bad habit. In one word: Culture is the particular manner in which people "behave towards nature, towards others and towards God" (Puebla 386).



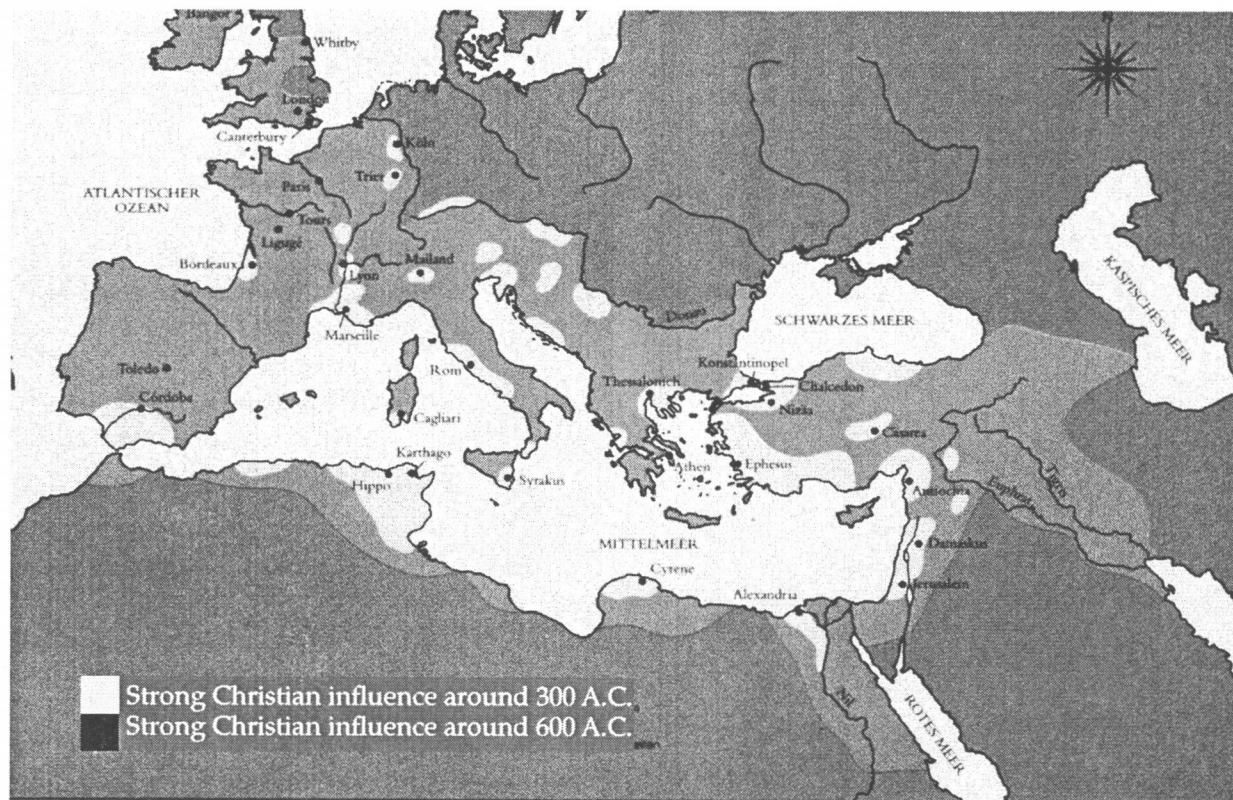
A further description shows the complexity of culture. According to this description, culture is "the typical set of values and ways of living of a mutually organised group of persons in their material and interpersonal environment. This includes traditions, norms, language, mentality, world view, kinship, social relationship, forms of government, types of economy, creation of art, technologies, science, tools, emotions, attitudes, activities, behaviour patterns, convictions, symbols, and habits" (E. Nunnanmacher).

In every culture one can find elements that are nearer to the Gospel than what societies who call themselves *Christian* have practised. So one can expect that the lived faith finds different expressions, corresponding to the culture in which



it takes root. Thus the various forms of the one faith came into being in such different ancient Churches like the Syrian, Syromalabaric, Syromalancaric, Coptic (Egyptian), the Greek-

Slavic-, Orthodox-Churches and the Roman Catholic Church, but also the different forms of folk piety.



Expansion of Christianity in the first centuries.

Inculturation presupposes the appreciation of culture



Since the Church of Rome had become linked to political power in the time of the Emperor Constantine (306-337), colonisation², civilisation³ and Christianization⁴ have often been going hand in hand. The first victims of this attitude were the Germanic peoples. Since the Romans regarded them as *Barbarians* – that is, people

without a culture – inculturation seemed impossible, and at any rate unnecessary. Thus, these Barbarians had to accept together with the formulated creed, also the Roman calendar, the fixed Roman liturgy in Latin, a language which was completely incomprehensible to them, and on top of that the Roman concept of law and

² Colony: an ethnic group which as an offshoot of a people lives outside its territory (motherland) and keeps its identity. Colonization: Mostly violent conquest of a country by a group of a foreign state or the state itself, linked with the political deprivation of power of the indigenous population and changing of their culture according to the maxims of the colonia

³ Introduction of one's own, mostly external manners of living and behaviour to people who are considered as inferior.

⁴ Mission work organized with the goal of conversion into Christian faith and integration into one of the existing historical Churches.



political structures. This means that the Church, as it had developed in the city of Rome for centuries, was *transplanted* as a whole and was more and more considered to be unchangeable. Since the 8th Century, the above-mentioned other cultural forms of the one Catholic Church were decisively weakened by the onslaught of Islam. The world-wide missionary outreach, therefore, became increasingly the sole responsibility of the Roman Catholic form of the Church. When the Western Church, with Pope Honorius III and Francis, made a new effort again to spread the message of Jesus beyond its own boundaries, it happened as a transplantation of a Church which was already more than a thousand years old. With the 16th Century, the so-called age of discoveries and expansion of the European powers, a new age of mission begins. As a rule, *mission* was carried out as an enterprise in connection with the political powers. It was at the same time characterised by a feeling of superiority, which generally considered foreign peoples and their cultures as inferior.

Accordingly scant and modest were the attempts to understand foreign cultures as the native ground for a new kind of Christian culture. Nevertheless, the attempts prove that the thought of a necessary inculturation in the Church has never been lost completely.

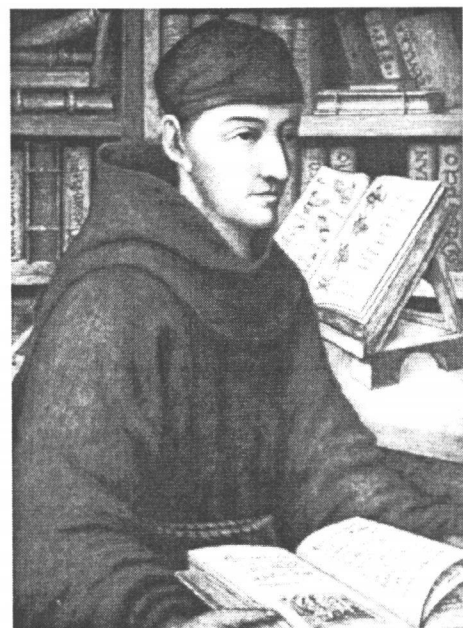


Discovery of the New World. In 1492, Columbus lands on Guanahani.

Important - yet failed - attempts

The attempts at inculturation in China and India which are associated with the Jesuits Matteo Ricci (+ 1610) and Robert de Nobilis (+ 1651) are well known. The quarrel within the Society of Jesus and with the Franciscans and Dominicans escalated into the famous Chinese Rites Controversy (cf. Lesson 8). Finally, the controversy was put to an end by a papal word of command. Through the papal bulls "*Quam singulari*" (1742) for China and "*Omnium sollicitudo*" (1744) for India, Pope Benedict XIV forbade any attempt of adaptation to the native culture. This strict prohibition was relaxed only in 1939 for China and in 1940 for India.

The efforts of the Franciscan Bernardo Sahagún (1500-1590) towards inculturation in Mexico (cf. Lesson 18) may be less known. His intensive scientific work brought him the title "*Father of Ethnology*". With the College of Tlaltelolco, which



Bernardo Sahagún.



opened in 1536, he created an instrument for the training of an Indian lay elite and an Indian clergy, which should be at home in both the Mexican and the Spanish culture. These efforts for an indigenous culture were all the more astounding since they aimed at a people that had been subjected by military force. Unfortunately, the College of Tlaltelolco – after ten years of very fruitful work – fell a victim to the lack of understanding from Bernardo's own brothers and the

hierarchy, as well as of the political will of the Spanish crown. The political goal was not a Mexican Christian kingdom but a "New Spain" and the goal of the Church was a Spanish Church cleansed of all that is *pagan*. This was how – with a few exceptions – the *old* European Church became the only guiding principle, not only in Asia and Africa but also in the "New World", well up into the second half of the 20th Century.

The end of the colonial period as a chance for inculturation



That inculturation plays such an important role today is due to the changed political situation and the corresponding developments within the Church.

If already the First World War had caused the people of the south to doubt the moral power of Europe, the Second World War would become an ultimate declaration of bankruptcy of the "Christian nations". With this, however, the peoples of the south were given a chance to rediscover and reassess the values of their own cultures. Up to this point one had often presumed that underneath the military, economic and intellectual strength of the colonial powers was a corresponding religious and moral power that was superior to one's own. This cultural, political and often also national new consciousness, in the course of decolonization, also affects the Church. She must prove outwardly and increasingly also within that she is autochthonous⁵ and not a remotely controlled alien element, no collaborator or political backer of foreign powers.

Papal encyclicals since the time of Benedict XV (e.g. "Maximum illud", 1919) have repeatedly pointed out the danger of such an appraisal of the Church. With the appointment of indigenous bishops the Church has at least taken one important political step. However, a local leadership does not yet make a Church rooted and at home in the respective culture.



India : Virgin mother with child.

⁵ old established, indigenous.



Fruitful tension between unity and diversity

It was only the Second Vatican Council that brought about a breakthrough with the rediscovery of the dignity and the value of the local Churches. The keyword is the term *aggiornamento* coined by John XXIII. It can be translated best with "to prepare the Church for the present day" and it is accepted everywhere, by the old Churches of the industrialised countries as well as in the regions of rural cultures where the Church is hardly older than 100 years.

The whole Church is therefore involved in an ongoing and naturally difficult process. Not only political and social conditions change frequently. Also the cultures themselves are in a process of continual change.

Moreover, this process of inculturation is taking

place in the tension between "incarnation of the Word" in different cultures and the concern about the unity of the Roman Catholic Church. There is the claim of a centre that takes all the decisions, a claim that has been cultivated for centuries, and in contrast to that is the theological dignity of the local Churches. Franciscans stand right in the middle of this tension: as office-bearers in the Roman Curia, as bishops of a diocese, but also as ordinary members of a Franciscan community that sets the course on the local scene of action. They have to face the decision whether to enforce a colonial mentality and uniformity or to create a fruitful unity in diversity.



Good News for All People – The One Christ for All

The Gospel – as we call our faith for short – wants to be Good News for all peoples and shall therefore take root in all cultures. Such a self image may seem outrageous to some; to others nonsense or presumption, like in the times of the apostle Paul (cf. 1Cor 1:23). Nevertheless, this is the reason, why all over the earth people have heard the message of Jesus and try to live the Gospel.

When we talk about inculturation then, our starting point is clear: It is all about Jesus, the Christ, who died for all and as the risen Lord has gone ahead of all to prepare a home for us. What matters is His message that all people are sisters and brothers and that this is a symbol of the beginning Reign of God, the community of those who witness to this message as their common conviction. A living faith is moulded by the cul-



Jesus with Pharisee and publican.



tural heritage, by the character, the life situation and life experiences of each individual person. People who have newly come to believe in Christ, are met by the faith of the Church as people who have already their own story of life

and have been socialised in their own culture. This fact has already been taken into consideration by the oldest Gospel, the Gospel according to Mark.

Good News also for Non-Jews

2.1.

The Gospel of Mark is addressed in the first place to Gentile Christians. Therefore, in this Gospel, the author explains Jewish traditions, customs and institutions as well as Aramaic words and sentences. Questions which are very important to Judeo-Christians are not mentioned, at all, e.g. the question whether Jesus ultimately abolishes the Law, and if yes, what right he has to do so. In the other Gospels we can find similar efforts to proclaim the message in a manner which does justice to the respective culture. This means that the authors respond to the conceptions of their main addressees and take cultural differences into consideration.

In this connection the Prologue of the Gospel of John, which speaks in the language and expressions of Greek philosophy and culture, is very striking. The early Church shows us both the necessity of inculturation and the difficulty of this process.

This process becomes particularly clear in the Acts of the Apostles. We know from this early source that the Christians who came from a background of Judaism followed very naturally their religious tradition. They celebrated the Jewish feasts, observed the usual rites, the laws for circumcision and food, and in Jerusalem they went to the Temple to pray. What distinguished these Christians from the rest of the Jewish society was the fact that they "*broke the bread*" in their homes, which, according to our understanding is the celebration of the Eucharist (cf. Acts 2:42). Seen from outside, this was the only particular symbol of their following of Christ. As for the rest, they were considered as one of the many special groups practising the Jewish faith.

We can see the difficult process of inculturation when looking at the problem, which preoccupi-

ed the so-called Apostles' Council. The Judeo-Christian community in Jerusalem naturally regarded itself as the norm in everything. This shows itself in the letter of the Apostles and Elders to the Community in Antioch, in which they inform them of the decisions of the Apostles' Council. Although the "first council fathers" had clearly recognised that for the followers of Jesus not even the circumcision as the prevailing symbol of the Covenant was important, yet they still seemed to think that abstinence from food sacrificed to idols, from blood and the meat of strangled animals was necessary for a Christian life (cf. Acts 15:28 ff). This means that the Jewish understanding of *clean* and *unclean* should be



*The evil spirit leaves its victim
through the mouth.*



taken over by Christians who knew no such laws in their culture. Apparently, not even the word of Jesus, recorded later by Matthew, helped in this matter: "Not what goes into the mouth defiles a man, but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man" (Mt 15:11). Paul will illustrate expressively the "freedom of the Christian" (cf. 1Cor 8) by using the example of consumption of "food sacrificed to idols" and state simply that no food will bring us before God's judgement.

Thus Paul ignores already here the culturally determined custom. In his letter to the Galatians he writes – literally translated from the Greek

original – about Peter: "When Cephas came to Antioch I opposed him to his face" [katà prósopon auto anésten] (Gal 2:11). By his behaviour Peter was about to make the Judeo-Christian community of Jerusalem with all its cultural peculiarities an obligatory model for all Christians without considering their completely different ethnic composition and culture. The conflict between the Christian community in Jerusalem and the "gentile-Christian" communities rankled until the destruction of Jerusalem and connected with it the decline of its community.

The one faith in different cultural forms

The living Christian faith in a different culture calls for a different way of celebrating liturgy, theological thinking and also a different discipline. A different liturgy is necessary because the traditional Jewish liturgy is not easily accessible for the so-called gentile-Christians. Even within our present-day Roman liturgy, we can find the contribution of the gentile-Christian communities. The use of incense, genuflection, mitre and crook of the bishops, as well as the traditional vestments for Holy Mass came into our liturgy from non-Jewish traditions.

The Greek intellectual world moulded already decisively the theological thinking of the early Church and contributed profound thoughts about the activity of God in the world. Although the dualistic world picture also entered into the theology (cf. Lesson 10) it also enriched it with important concepts which are still of significance today, e.g. the concept of the person and of the *Logos* (the Word). It is precisely this theological thinking that helped in recent times to reconsider and reassess how God is at work also in other religions. Even in the area of organisation, the gentile-Christian communities have not simply accepted the Jewish structure of the Church with the *Elder* (presbyteroi) but they also made use of their own cultural tradition. So we have already in the apostolic age a second model of community structure, with bishops (episkopos) and deacons.



Bishop Otunga of Kenya after his ordination as a bishop.



The respective cultures
as fertile soil
for the Christian faith



The *mzambi nkisi* of the Congo is one of the results of the fusion of Christian and pagan ideas.

2.3

“Pagan people” were and are no atheists. Their concepts of God or deities, the manner of worshipping or appealing them, may greatly differ. What is common to all is that a religious calendar of feasts and therefore also a public liturgy defines their lives. The primitive Church built on these quite naturally. The Christian community in Rome, therefore, could consciously interpret one of the Roman national holidays, the birthday of the undefeated sun (“*Natalis Solis Invicti*”) - which was seen as a deity - as the birthday of Jesus “*the sun of justice*”. Later, in the Christian Roman Empire, the Church retained this feast.

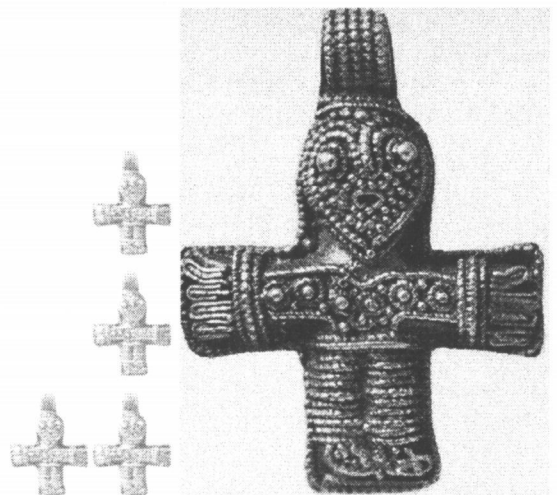
Methods of mission
under the claim of inculturation

2.4

Pope Gregory the Great (590–604) was inspired by similar considerations when he dispatched the following instruction through Abbot Mellitus to Augustine of Canterbury, the first missionary to be sent by Rome to England:

When, by God’s help, you reach our most reverend brother, Bishop Augustine, we wish you to inform him that we have been giving careful thought to the affairs of the English and have come to the conclusion that the temples of the idols in that country should on no account be destroyed. He is to destroy the idols...in this way, we hope that the people, seeing their temples are not destroyed, may abandon idolatry and resort to these places as before, and may come to know and adore the true God. And since they have a custom of sacrificing many oxen to devils, let some other solemnity be substituted in its place... If the people are allowed some worldly pleasures in this way, then they will more readily come to desire the joys of the spirit (Bede: A History of the English Church and People. Translated by Leo Sherley-Price; Penguin Clas-

sics, 1955, and still being reprinted). We encounter here a mission method which allows the external trappings to remain, but changes the content.



A pagan Viking wore a Thor amulet in order to ward off evil powers. So a Christian Viking wore a cross amulet.



A similar process can be seen in the encounter of the Christian faith with Greek philosophy. First, theologians, like Justin the Martyr (+ 165), looked for "seed-corns of the Word", i.e. elements which correspond to the truths of our faith. Soon, however, the Christian theologians used directly the spiritual tools of the philosophers in order to merge the message of Jesus, the thinking of the Apostles and the thinking of the early Church into one system of doctrines. For more than a thousand years, the neoplatonic Plotinus (+ 270 A.D.) determined the special theological language. What is meant by this becomes evident in the "Great Confession of Faith", the Nicene Creed, or even in the preface of Trinity Sunday. We confess in the Great Confession of Faith that *"we believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen. We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father. Through him all things were made..."* This is neither the language of Jesus nor the Bible but the result of an intellectual effort to explore and define our faith through reason. Greek

philosophical patterns of thinking moulded the theological concepts of all the councils from the Nicene until Vatican Council I. First it was Plotinus, then Aristotle who, with Thomas of Aquinas and Bonaventure, determined the theological reflection. Only the Second Vatican Council draws again more often from biblical thinking or uses concepts of modern sciences in order to make the faith intelligible. So the Church is being described as "the People of God" and not as before as "perfect society" (*societas perfecta*), an attribute that according to Greek thinking it had in common with the State, which regulates all the earthly concerns for people, just as the Church does for their supernatural concerns. The Second Vatican Council does no longer speak of "the Church as such" but of a believing community, which shares the joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the people of our time, especially of those who are poor and afflicted (cf. GS 1). Such empathy with the circumstances of the people as a response of faith to certain situations has something to do with the "incarnation of the Word today" and must be assigned to inculturation.



Holy Eucharist in
Chingola, Zambia.



Cultures are shaped by living people

2.6

At the time of the apostles the Churches of Antioch, Corinth, Ephesus, Athens and Rome came into being, taking into consideration the people shaped by different cultures. They all show a very clear cultural colouring, by which they differ from the community in Jerusalem. During the first three centuries we owe to the same attitude the emergence of a variety of Churches, which have their own external appearance as well as their own liturgy, judicial structure and theology. Until the third century *inculturation* was a matter of course. One example is the letter of the belligerent Bishop Firmilian (230-268) of Caesarea in Cappadocia (in today's Turkey) to Cyprian of Carthage (in present-day Tunisia):

In Rome the primitive tradition is not followed in every detail and it is fruitless to invoke the apostles as witnesses. This is illustrated by the fact that certain deviations can be observed in the celebration of Easter and other liturgical mysteries. Not all that is done in Jerusalem is imitated in Rome. Similarly in other provinces there are different observances corre-

sponding to different regions and peoples. But this has never led to separation from the peace and unity of the Church (Firmilian of Caesarea, in: Bede, A History of the English Church).

One and a half century later, Augustine (354-430) shows us the culturally conditioned variety within the Catholic Church. In a letter he describes what the whole Church has in common:

What we have in common is the annual celebration of the Passion, Resurrection, Ascension of the Lord, the Coming of the Holy Spirit or whatever the whole Church observes where it exists. Other customs differ according to region, country and village. Some fast on the Sabbath (i.e. Saturday) others do not. Some receive the Body and Blood of Christ daily, others only on certain days. In some places the Eucharist is celebrated daily, in others only on the Sabbath and Sunday, in still others only on Sunday. These and similar practices are a matter of free choice. A sensible and genuine Christian does not rate one practice better than another, but rather follows the practice of where he actually is (Augustine, On the Customs of the Church).

From the local church to the colonial church

2.7

In the course of history, this natural variety has been more and more restricted by Rome. Obviously, the political centre of power in Rome has also rubbed off on the Church's ministry of unity and on the way the papacy understood itself. This led to the result that examples of early *inculturation* survived almost exclusively only in those churches that were separated from Rome. Just as the political Rome had centralised and colonised, so the Roman Church evangelized without essentially taking into account the cultures of new peoples. So Christianization began under a colonial sign, meaning "*Transplantatio Ecclesiae Romanae*" (the transplantation of the complete Roman Church). Since the Churches of the East and of Northern Africa either became victims of the Islamic conquest completely or

were at least considerably weakened by it, mission work gradually became the exclusive task of the western patriarchate, i.e. the Church of Rome.

Starting with the Germanic peoples, the Slavic peoples in the immediate neighbourhood, in the "German Eastern Mission", from the Conquista mission in America to the colonial mission of the 19th and 20th centuries in Africa and Asia: it was always an implantation of the Roman Catholic Church with its clear-cut structure.

Small freedoms for "mission regions" in the area of church discipline are not enough to prove the opposite. Local cultures, even very advanced civilisations, remained unconsidered, were regarded as *pagan* and therefore inappropriate for the leaven of the Gospel.



Attempts of individual missionaries, even of well-known ones like Ricci, De Nobili, Bernardino de Sahagún failed as a rule. But also the directive of 1659 of the “highest mission authority” of the Congregation for the Proclamation of the Faith, was not put into practice. In the letter to the Apostolic Vicars in China, it was stated:

Put not value in and persuade the people under no pretext to change their rites, habits and customs, unless they are clearly against religion and good morals. For what would be more absurd than to bring France, Spain, Italy or another part of Europe to China? Do not bring these things there but the faith, which does not scorn or damage the rites or healthy customs of any people, but on the contrary wants to see it strengthened and protected ... Just as little, don't compare the customs of those peoples with the customs of the Europeans, but on the contrary, try to follow their customs as closely as possible (Instructio Vicariorum, 702).



Jesuit Missionary to China, Matteo Ricci, in the costume of a Mandarin, with Paul Ly, a Christian member of the emperor's family (17th century).

2.8. Giving in to the prevailing spirit of the time

Unfortunately, such texts are nothing more than a sign that the Church has never lost completely the feeling that there cannot be one universally valid form of the Christian faith. In reality, mission work was done under the omen of the superiority of one's own civilisation or colonial claim to power. Both barred or hindered the access to the spiritual values even of very advanced civilisations.

Many missionaries in a colonial context deemed

it unnecessary to learn the language of the country or of a people and to study their literature. The national language of the colonial power seemed to them the most appropriate means of *civilising* and for the proclamation of the faith. Both, the Church and the people in the Church were widely seen as identical, even by missiologists, an attitude that, interesting enough, was repeatedly critiqued by popes.

2.9. Back to the beginning

From the end of the 19th century onwards, Rome's demand that the training of future missionaries must include studies in ethnology, has contributed to a new appreciation of the religious thinking and ways of life in other cultures, in world religions as well as in tribal religions. New chairs for missiology and studies of reli-

gions in church and state universities have been created. At the same time this requires a new mission practice. It starts again, like in the time of the apostles, with the search for the “seeds of the Word”, as starting-points for the proclamation of the Good News in other cultures. Simultaneously an awareness is growing that the west-



ern Church, as it had developed in 1900 years, would have to adapt itself respectively to the many changes in the western culture. These still timid attempts of a change are paraphrased by

terms like *adaptation* and *acculturation* (adjusting to the culture) whereby the Roman Church continues unchanged to remain the norm.

The re-discovery of the local church as a chance for inculturation

2.10

The breakthrough to an understanding of missionary activity as the early Church had known it quite naturally, was successful only at Vatican Council II. The precondition for this was the re-discovery of the dignity of the local Churches as it had been in the time of the apostles, and which “by divine providence” - as the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church puts it - “while safeguarding the unity of the faith and the unique divine

constitution of the universal Church, enjoy their own discipline, their own liturgical usage and their own theological and spiritual heritage” (LG 23). It is also emphasised that “this variety of local churches, with one common aspiration is splendid evidence of the catholicity of the undivided Church”.

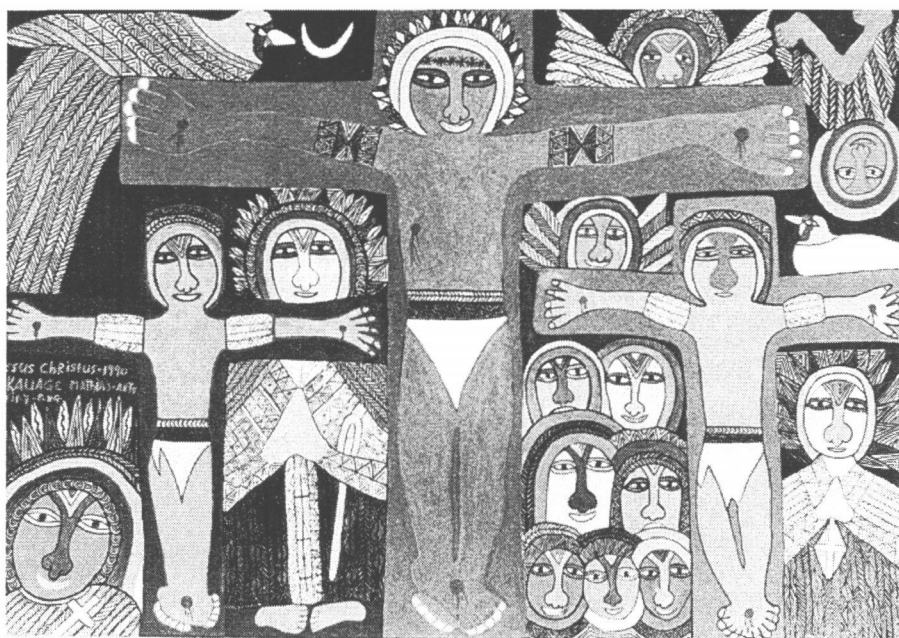
Another important point: today the Bishops’ Conferences could take on the role of the Churches founded by the Apostles.

Inculturation as an ongoing process

2.11

In the *Mission Decree*, the necessary process of inculturation is related – as one can expect – exclusively to the “young churches”. But one can anticipate the whole range of this process. It says there: “just as happened in the economy of the incarnation, the young churches which are rooted in Christ and built on the foundations of the apostles, take over all the riches of the nations which have been given to Christ as an inheritance (cf. Psalm 2:8). They borrow from the customs, traditions, wisdom, teaching, arts and sciences of their people everything which could be used to praise the glory of the Creator, manifest the grace of our Saviour, or contribute to the right ordering of Christian life” (AG 22).

With such fundamental words, the horizon for an *aggiornamento* of the churches in their respec-



Crucifixion: Painting from Papua New Guinea.

tive cultural native soil seemed to be opened wide, also theologically. However, the implementation proves to be slow, cumbersome and difficult.



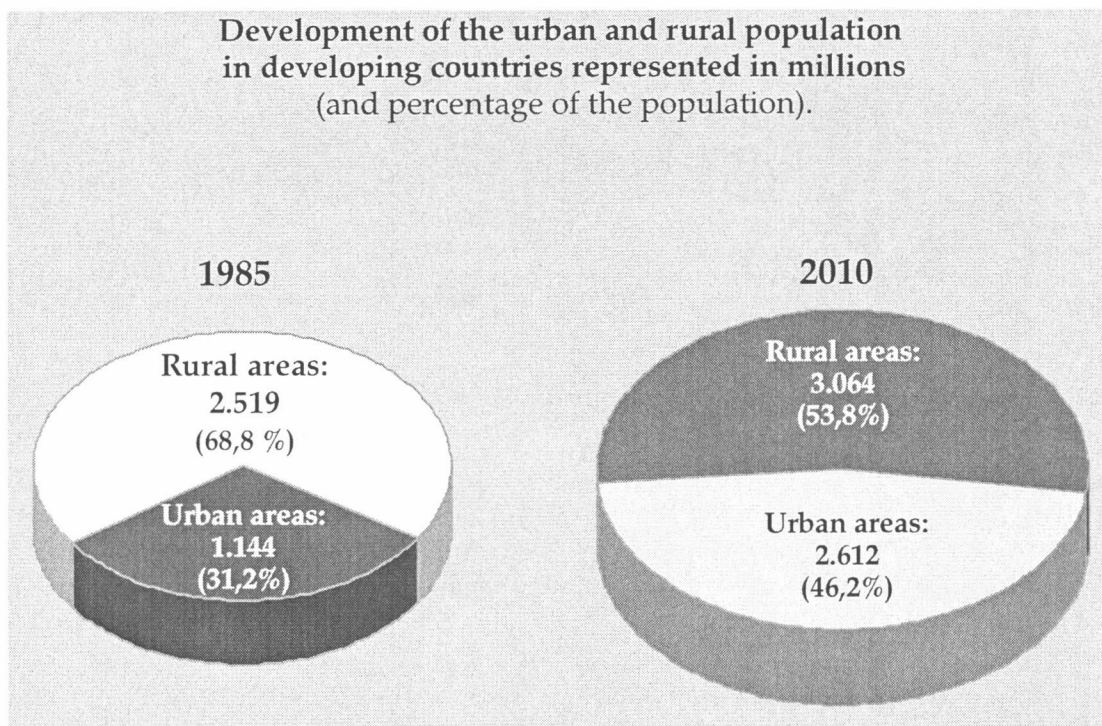
One difficulty in the process of inculturation is caused by the efforts to correct the mistakes that had been made before. Wherever the church had gained ground in the last one thousand years, she did so, – as we have already seen, – with the structures and the thought patterns of the western church. So the traditional religions and their customs were considered as unsuitable for the “true divine worship”. Generations of African Christians, for instance, had to abandon their religious dances, and now in their old age they are told that it was a mistake to banish dance from the Catholic liturgy with regard to an authentic African Church. Some Christians who after an inner struggle had eventually accepted to renounce religious dance, now find it difficult to understand that the dance, which in the past was denounced as pagan and sinful, should suddenly be holy and pleasing to God, because it is the deepest expression of worship which the African soul is capable of.

The situation in the old churches is just as difficult. These churches which had been rooted in

rural and feudal societies for almost two thousand years, having been moulded by them and moulding them in return, have lost their inner ties in the industrial societies and their post-industrial cultural forms.

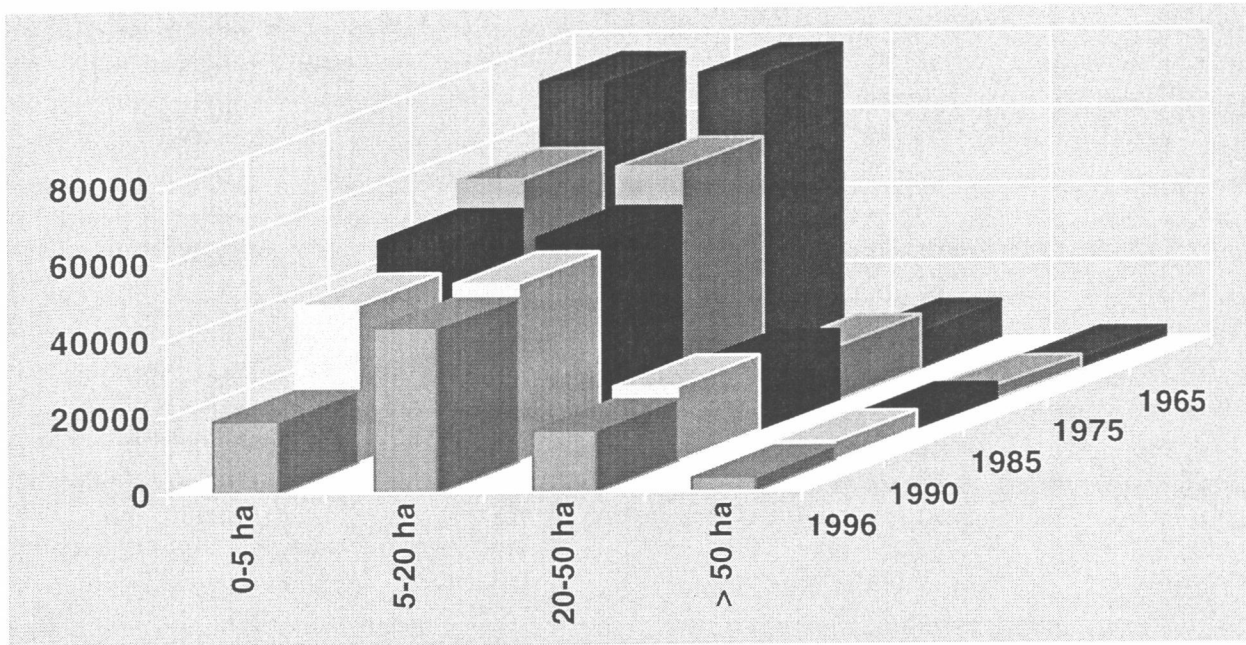
The “harvest festival” for example, is still being celebrated as it has been for centuries, while the pious farmer knows that he owes his plentiful harvest not primarily to God’s blessing but rather to the use of chemicals which have disastrous effects in the long run. Besides, a good harvest no longer means securing the livelihood for one year, but a severe loss of income, because the prices for his products go down. The farming community, who is “dependent on God’s blessing”, that is, favourable weather, has long formed the backbone of the people’s church in the industrial countries.

Today, not only the number of farmers is dwindling, but they have also become agricultural businessmen, who in this way have secured their place in society, which seems to be as independent of God’s blessing as other professions.



Farms, employees and mechanisation in the area of farms in Switzerland.

(Source: Federal Office for Statistics)



| Farms | 1965 | 1975 | 1985 | 1990 | 1996 |
|-------------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|---------------|
| 0-5 ha area under cultivation | 74.799 | 57.509 | 50.083 | 41.093 | 19.093 |
| 5 - 20 ha | 76.976 | 60.705 | 50.430 | 46.549 | 43.025 |
| 20-50 ha | 9.940 | 14.069 | 18.141 | 19.432 | 16.411 |
| > 50 ha | 699 | 843 | 1.077 | 1.222 | 950 |
| Total | 162.414 | 133.126 | 119.731 | 108.296 | 79.479 |

In remembrance of the market place in Athens where Paul preached and gave an example of inculturation, John Paul II calls the new market-places *Areopages*. Here in the economic centres, focal points of intellectual and cultural discus-

sion, the old churches have not been able to make themselves heard so far. They have not yet found the right access to this new culture (cf. RM 37c).

The power for inculturation



The idea that, one could create forms of inculturated religious life for regions or even for the whole world for long or even let experts create such forms, is a mistake, since cultures change constantly, in our days even at an accelerated pace. In this respect the admonition of John Paul II in his encyclical on mission is worth a reflection: Inculturation "must be an expression of the community's life, one which must mature within the community itself, and not be exclusively the result of

scholarly research. The safeguarding of traditional values is the work of a mature faith" (RM 54).

When we interpret correctly this message of the Pope, then we may trust that the faithful will have a sense for the truth and the ways of inculturation. At the same time, this word may be understood as a hint for the authorities in the church not to suppress the Spirit by formalism and a misunderstood juridical authority.





The Pattern for Inculturation: the Incarnation

What can be said theologically about inculturation is in its essence written in the letter to the Galatians: *"But when the designated time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to deliver from the law those who were subjected to it, so that we might receive our status as adopted sons"* (Gal 4:4-5).

Paul wrote this sentence for a gentile-Christian community who, under the influence of Judeo-Christians, was about to gamble away their freedom won by faith. It was not only about pressing their faith in Christ again into a Judeo-Christian garb. Behind this was the temptation of making God's special benevolence or mercy dependent again on a faithful fulfilment of the law instead of faith in Christ. That would be "another Gospel", a relapse in their thinking which puts human achievement in place of God's mercy and therefore renders meaningless the healing and liberating work of God in the incarnation. Paul vehemently fights against this attitude. Repeatedly he says, *"But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we preached to you, let him be accursed"* (cf. Gal 1:8), and *"Pay close attention to me, Paul, when I tell you that if you have yourselves circumcised, Christ will be of no use to you!"* (Gal 5:2). The temptation was obviously great in following Jesus to imitate everything which was important in his life as a Jew and to declare it as obligatory for a Christian life.



Circumcision of Jesus.

Born of a woman

"Born of a woman" means: Jesus could be recognised by his looks as his mother's child, by his physical build and his complexion as a Semite. As all mothers do, Mary brought him up according to the values and customs of her own culture. This

culture was characterised by the Law of God, as it is laid down in the Bible, and by the conviction of being God's Chosen People. The second part of the sentence in Paul's letter *"born under the law"* leads us to the theology of salvation. God



demands from these special people, his "Chosen Ones" that they fulfil the whole Torah⁶ to the letter in order to be righteous before him and worthy of his special affection and grace. Nobody who had already been conceived in sin was able to live up to the demands of the law, and this means for Jewish understanding the demands of God (cf. Ps 51:7). Therefore, the righteous one Himself had to come into the world and once and for all, as representative of all, had to fulfil the Law, to gain God's grace and redeem everybody from the burden of the Law. Referring to him when thinking of God or worship-

ping Him, they all may - translated into their different languages, - call Him without fear by this loving name that Israeli children use for addressing their father *Abba*, for He freed them all - by faith in him, God's envoy, - from becoming automatically guilty. What does this mean for our topic of inculturation? As expressed by the highest authority of the church, Vatican Council II, inculturation has to happen according to the pattern of the incarnation. So we have to keep in mind that God so loved the world that he sent his only Son to take on our human nature and so become one of us (cf. Jn 3:16).

Every culture is called to be fertile soil for the Word

3.2.

Just as the eternal *Logos* was incarnated in the concrete Jewish culture, so shall the word of the Gospel be incarnated in other cultures. Basically, every culture is appropriate and called to become "fertile soil" for faith in Christ. God's Spirit is indeed working in the "seeds of the Word" and in the hearts of all people and in their religious search. *"The Spirit's presence and activity af-*

fect not only individuals but also society and history, cultures and religions. Indeed, the Spirit is at the origin of the noble ideals and undertakings which benefit humanity on its journey through history" (RM 28). With this sentence, the encyclical *"The Mission of the Redeemer"* (*Redemptoris missio*) confirms the attitude of Vatican Council II.

Cultures put to the test

3.3.

As Jesus prophetically denounced wrong developments in synagogue and society and proclaimed a new understanding of being a child of God, so also today his message will put to the test every culture and every cultural development. This will often involve a correction of traditional ideas, but also emphasise and enhance those cultural values that are closer to the Gospel than, for instance, those that had developed in the history of the West. For example, cultures which regard the land as common property are nearer to the thinking of Jesus and of the young Church than the "culture of fences" exported from Christian Europe with its terrible abuse tempting people to join house to house and add field to field until there is no more room left for others (cf. Is 5:8).



Drawing from Asia.

⁶Revelation of God's will in the Old Testament.



Between claim and reality

3.4

Principally the Church has emphasised again and again the necessity of inculturation as did Pope Pius XII in his encyclical "*Evangelii praecones*" (The Proclaimers of the Gospel) in 1951. He wrote:

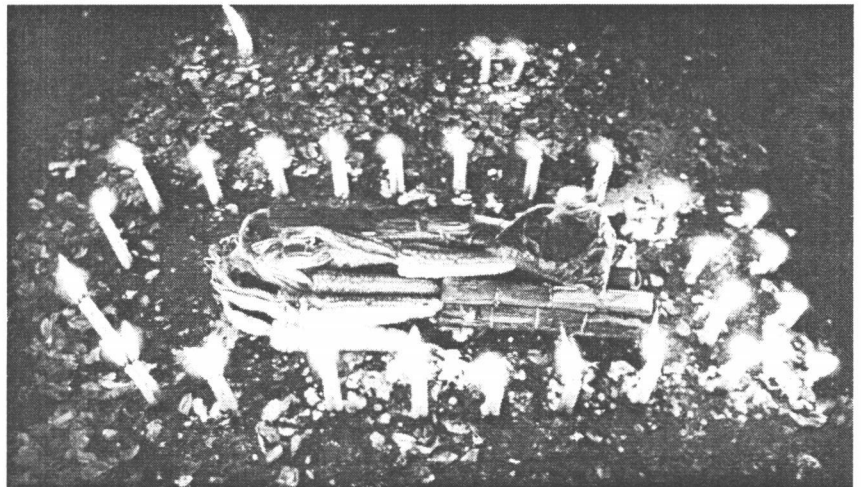
The Church from the beginning down to our own time has always followed this wise practice: let not the Gospel on being introduced into any new land destroy or extinguish whatever its people possess that is naturally good, just or beautiful (EP 56)... This is the reason why the Catholic Church has neither scorned nor rejected the pagan philosophies. Instead, after freeing them from error and all contamination she has perfected and completed them by Christian revelation (EP 58).

Such words are difficult to understand before the background and the history of the last 800 years. They are the expression of an ecclesiastic

self-confidence which – similar to the Judeo-Christian community in Jerusalem – sees "Christian wisdom" now realised only in the Roman form of the Catholic Church. Despite the basic recognition of inculturation in Vatican Council II, the Church still finds it difficult to put into practice what it recognises as a necessity.

To approach a respective culture with understanding cannot be done from a centre or from outside. It can only be achieved by the community of the local church. It is a sign of maturity to find one's own ways and to follow them without losing sight of the communion with the whole Church or endangering it. So the endeavour of inculturation rather resembles walking on a tightrope which requires steady steps, prudence and freedom of mind.

*Chichicastenango, Guatemala.
The Indians offer holy water,
incense, corn, rose petals to God
and to Mother nature
as a sign of gratitude for a good harvest.
Corn is the staple food of the Indians and,
therefore stands as a symbol for fertility,
for wealth and for the goodness of nature.*



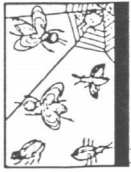
The role of religious communities

3.5

In the course of history, spiritual freedom has not only inspired individual women and men again and again, to renew the church in root and branches in the spirit of the Gospel as single fighters. It has also moved people to join a particular religious community. Today many of these communities have taken root in different re-

gions, continents and cultures. Ideally, their local groups are fully embedded in the respective indigenous culture there. At the same time they form an important link with other cultural areas and with the whole Church because of their experiences as a supra-regional or global community.





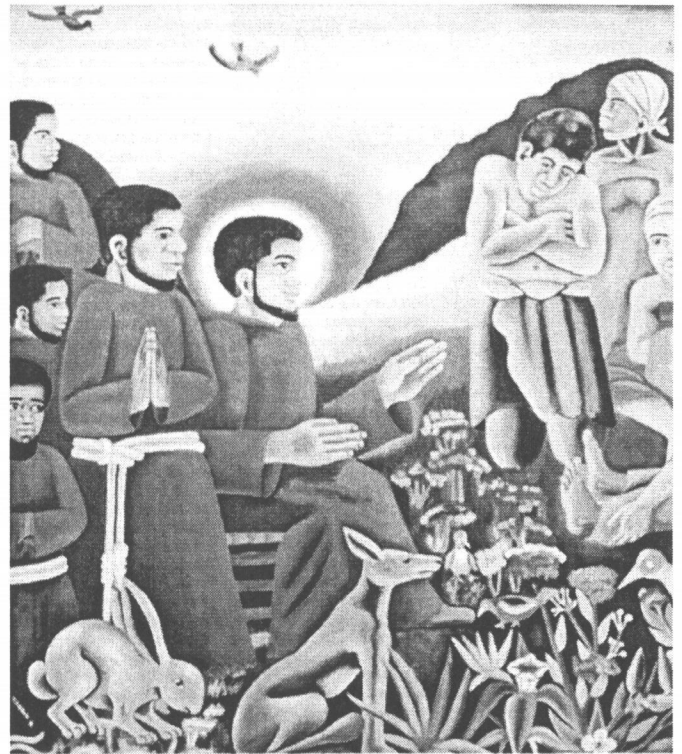
Inculturation as a Franciscan Task

According to diversity of places, seasons and cold climates

What applies to religious communities in general is also true for those men and women who follow Francis and Clare and – beyond their own community - know themselves united with the whole Franciscan Family. This world-wide experience, which, from the start, has characterised the Comprehensive Course on the Franciscan Mission Charism, could also help the Church to accept the necessary “incarnation of the Word” because the test model, so to speak, of “unity in diversity” (*Church as Communio*, 16) already exists.

The experience of a foreign way of life and a hitherto unknown climate is reflected in the Rule of St. Francis in the words: “*The brothers should clothe themselves according to [diversity of] places and seasons and cold climates*” (LR 4). For, when the first brothers together with Jordan of Speyer crossed the Alps and went to Germany in their shabby, Umbrian peasants’ clothes, they were not only the laughing stock of the children in the streets, they also felt miserably cold during the long cold winters. The wise advice of the Rule of the First Order was something like a call for inculturation.

What Francis really would have to say about inculturation, we can only guess. We know, however, that for his time he was an unusually open and free man who allowed himself to be impressed by the piety of the Muslims and the expressions of their faith, that is, by their culture.



Francis of Assisi and his brothers among the poor and lepers.

He named Lady Jacoba simply “Brother Jacoba” in order to solve the problem of the Canon Law about having a woman in the community of brothers. We may therefore assume that inculturation would have been a major concern of Brother Francis.



The model of transplantation

4.2

Unfortunately we have to say: The Franciscan Family in its various forms, - just like the Roman Church, - has simply transplanted groups of its respective communities into other cultures, mostly without any particular reflection about inculturation. This applies to clothing, the kind of architecture of convents, the way of life and the customs of a community, and the field of activities they decided upon. Most of the time, even until today, one can still identify the national origin of a community according to these features.

What made a deeper impact, however, is the unquestioned transplantation of cultural standards of value. For example, the idea that parents whose children have joined a religious community, must forego every natural claim, which they may have on their children because of their culture. For most peoples, the lifelong

care of the children for their parents belongs to their cultural "Fourth Commandment". Nobody, no bishop, priest, nor any religious, whether man or woman, can back out of this duty without sinning or getting into a serious inner conflict. By the way, this conflict is not triggered off by having to weigh a *supernatural* value of the Gospel against a *natural* value of the family. What is to be weighed is simply one possible variation of the Fourth Commandment against another that is probably not less in accordance with the Gospel. Therefore an inculturated community, when accepting a new brother or sister, would have to take into account the lifelong obligation towards their parents. This means respecting the cultural background of a person and his/her right, in fulfilling the Fourth Commandment not to be bound to follow foreign concepts of values.

On the side of the poor - for justice and reconciliation

4.3

The option for the poor, - as the Latin American Church has made the whole Church again aware of this essential duty of our faith in Christ, - is as uncomfortable and partly dangerous nowadays as it was during the time of Brother Francis. As the great majority of the poor are the ones who were made poor, i.e. their poverty is the result of the sinful behaviour of others, the struggle for justice for the people without a voice and without rights has priority. Even Franciscans are often in danger of talking about peace and reconciliation before justice has been restored and a readiness for the atonement for guilt and crime is shown. But the ways of atonement and reconciliation are most profoundly determined by the respective culture. This is shown by the futility of some UN missions for peace. The good intention to help is often enough misunderstood. Even more misunderstood by the people of the cultures are the court pro-

ceedings that follow international, but ultimately European, patterns. This is particularly true, when victims must see how judges are forced to acquit criminals guilty of crimes against human-



Conflicts are settled not in a secular court but in the Small Christian Community.



ity, "due to lack of evidence" according to international law, because of the defence by clever and expensive lawyers. One can't create peace without atonement. Therefore, people, as in Mozambique, have formed "truth commissions" on different levels down to villages. With their help, they bring the horrible and mostly suppressed facts of violence and murder into the light, which those summoned had been involved in. Based on this truth that has been brought to light, the culprits are able to judge their own behaviour. Instead of submitting to the sentence and judgement of others, they themselves offer atonement and through this do the first step towards real reconciliation. Similar ways of reconciliation also exist in South Africa and Guatemala.

This practice reminds us not only of the early Church, in which conflicts were settled in the

Christian community and not before a secular court, it is also definitely promoted by Christians. This practice also makes clear that there are different culturally conditioned forms of resolving conflicts and a different understanding of justice and atonement, which is probably nearer to that found in the Gospel than the forms for the finding of justice and forms of retribution for violence and crime that were developed in Europe and are internationally recognised.

The situation described above seems to be a special and twofold challenge for Franciscans. The first would be the spiritual attitude of being "*subject to all*" and therefore not to act as so-called *peacemakers*, who create victors and losers and sow new stuff for conflict. The second would be a keen sense for such forms of reconciliation which are developed in the respective culture or could be developed from its values.

Back to the sources - looking ahead



Francis and Clare have started a movement. It was a response from the western culture to the inroads of early capitalism and to a church who was so busy with herself that she seemed to have lost sight of her world-wide mission. Today we live in a no less dramatic time of global dimension. The peoples must take issue with an unrestrained capitalist market mentality under the keyword *globalization* and a growing world civilisation under the keyword "*global village*". In this situation the spirituality of Francis is more than ever in great demand.

The development in the centres of market and in mega-cities seems to be unstoppable.

In the over-congested urban areas, people live and develop a culture, which transcends continents, forms of society, value systems and religions. If the Church wants to do justice to her task of proclaiming convincingly the mes-

sage of the Reign of God also to these people, and thus to contribute that the future culture retains human features, she will need Christians who, like Francis and Clare in their times, offer responses that are supported by the witness of their lives.



Slum in Indonesia: Inhuman conditions are a challenge to the followers of Christ.



Church Documents and Franciscan Sources:

| | |
|---|---|
| Scripture | Is 5:8; Ps 51:7; Mt 15:11; Jn 3:16; Acts 2:42; 15:28f.; 17:22-32; 1Cor 23:8; Gal 2:11; 4:4 ff.; 1:8f.; 5:2. |
| Church documents | AG 22; EN 20; EP 69f.; GS 1; 53; LG 23; RM 28; 37c; 52ff; Puebla 386. |
| Franciscan Sources | LtR; LR 4. |
| Inter-Franciscan Documents | |
| OFM, OFM ^{Cap} , OFM ^{Conv} | |
| Poor Clares | |
| Third Order Regular | |
| Secular Franciscans | |
| Supplements | |

Note: The sources may be completed by the participants of the course.

Exercises



As preparation for the following exercises read Acts 17:16-32 and the quoted texts below.

a) Encyclical on Mission Societies "Sancta Dei civitas," 1880, Pope Leo XIII:

The holy City of God, which is the Church, not being contained within the borders of any State, has received from its founder this infused power to enlarge the space of its hut and to widen its tents. However, the many violent storms that were unleashed against the Church, ... have caused damage also to the institutes that had been founded for the civilisation of barbarian peoples.

b) Apostolic Letter "Maximum illud", 1919, Pope Benedict XV:

The Duties of the missionaries.

1. A supernatural attitude.

And now we address you, our most beloved sons, who cultivate the Lord's vineyard, to whose hands is more immediately entrusted the propagation of Christian wisdom and salvation of so many souls - the mission

entrusted to you is divine and far above the littleness of human reasoning, to bring light to those who lie in the shadow of death and to open the way to Heaven to those who are rushing to destruction. Understanding, then, that to each one of you the Lord has said "Forget your people and your father's house," remember that it is not a kingdom of men which you have to propagate, but the Kingdom of Christ; and that you have to make citizens not of any country on earth, but of the heavenly country. And indeed, it would be deplorable, if any missionaries should be so forgetful of their dignity that they should think rather of their country than of the heavenly, being unduly desirous to widen their own nation's influence and glory above all else. This indeed would be a very plague in the Apostolate; should he in any way follow worldly considerations and would not conduct himself altogether as an apostolic man, but should seem to be engaged in doing the business of his own country, - at once his



whole work is suspected by the multitude, and people may easily conclude that the Christian religion is the religion peculiar to some foreign nation and that anyone who embraces it is to be considered as having put himself under the protection and orders of some foreign state and to have renounced citizenship of his own.

We have been greatly grieved by certain publications on the subject of missions that have appeared in the last few years, in which less desire is apparent for the increase of God's Kingdom than for the influence of the author's country. No Catholic missionary worthy of the name can write like this. He will always remember that he is an ambassador not for his own country but for Christ...

3. Acquisition of a solid training.

Now before the missionary arrives at the apostolate he must make a diligent preparation, notwithstanding any assertion that one who proclaims Christ to completely uncivilised peoples need not be master of so many fields of knowledge... Among the essential subjects for a missionary the language of the people to whose salvation he is to dedicate himself must have first place.

c) Encyclical "Rerum Ecclesiae", 1926, Pius XI:

1. In reviewing attentively the history of the Church, one cannot fail to notice how, from the first ages of Christianity, the especial care and solicitude of the Roman Pontiffs have been directed to the end that they, undeterred by difficulties and obstacles, might spread the light of the Gospel and the benefits of Christian culture and civilisation to the peoples who "sit in darkness and in the shadow of death".

21. Perhaps it may be said that sufficient attention has never been paid to the method whereby the Gospel began to be preached and the Church of God established all over the world. We ...recalled the fact that from a study of the earliest monuments of Christian antiquity it is clearly evident that the clergy placed in charge of the faithful in each new community by the Apostles were not men brought in from the outside but were chosen from the natives of that locality. ... What, We ask, is the true object of these holy missions if it be not this, that the Church of Christ be founded and established in these boundless regions? How can the Church among the heathens be developed today unless it be built of those very elements out of which

our own churches were built; that is to say, unless it be made up of people, clergy, and religious orders of men and women recruited from the native populations of the several regions? Why should the native clergy be forbidden to cultivate their own portion of the Lord's vineyard, be forbidden to govern their own people?

24. ...This policy, which has been followed in some places, We sincerely wish, nay, We command, shall be followed likewise by the Superiors of all missions, so that it cannot be said that any native youth has ever been kept out of priesthood and the apostolate, provided, of course, he exhibits the mark of a true vocation and is a young man of genuine promise.

26. Anyone who looks upon these natives as members of an inferior race or as men of low mentality makes a grievous mistake. ... Certainly, you should not allow the native clergy to be looked upon as if they were a lower grade of priests, to be employed only in the most humble offices of the ministry. These priests have been admitted to the same priesthood that the missionaries possess, ...

27. ...Therefore, if there are natives who desire to join one or other of the older Congregations, it assuredly would not be right to dissuade them or to prevent their joining, ...

d) Encyclical "Evangelii Praecones", 1951, Pope Pius XII:

59. We ourselves made the following statement in our first Encyclical Letter "Summi Pontificatus." We wrote: 'Persevering research carried out with laborious study on the part of her missionaries of every age, has been undertaken in order to facilitate the deeper appreciative insight into the various civilisations and to utilise their good qualities to facilitate and render more fruitful the preaching of the Gospel of Christ. Whatever there is in the native customs that is not inseparably bound up with superstition and error will always receive kindly consideration and, when possible, will be preserved intact.'

60. And in the discourse which We gave in 1944 to the directors of the Pontifical Missionary Society, We said: 'The herald of the Gospel and messenger of Christ is an apostle. His office does not demand that he transplant European civilisation and culture, and no other, to foreign soil, there to take root and propagate itself. His task in dealing with these peoples, who sometimes



boast of a very old and highly developed culture of their own, is to teach and form them so that they are ready to accept willingly and in a practical manner the principles of Christian life and morality, principles, I may add, that fit into any culture, provided it be good and sound, and which give that culture great force in safeguarding human dignity and in gaining human happiness. Catholic inhabitants of missionary countries, although they are first of all citizens of the Kingdom of God and members of his great family, do not for all that cease to be citizens of their earthly fatherland.'

e) Encyclical "Princeps pastorum", 1959, Pope John XXIII:

Adaptation to the native world of values. With respect for the circumstances that are important not only for the proper intellectual and spiritual formation of the candidates to the priesthood but also for the total needs of the individual peoples and their mentality, the Apostolic See has urged the foreign and the native clerics to study missiology... religion... As you know, the Church does not link itself to one single culture as if that culture were the only one compatible with her and any other were to be despised. The Church does not even throw herself into the arms of the culture of Europe and the western peoples, although she has, according to the witness of history, especially close links with it.

For the task that has been entrusted to the Church is about the religion and the eternal salvation of human beings. The Church, which remains always young and is continually being renewed by the breath of the Holy Spirit, is always full of respect and readiness of acceptance, indeed an actively stimulating force for everything that is spiritually and psychologically doing credit to mankind, even if it has its origin in other parts of the world than in the Mediterranean which was the cradle of its childhood according to God's providence (cf. the Pope's address to Black writers and artists, Osservatore Romano, 3. April 1959, 1).

f) Apostolic Exhortation "Evangelii nuntiandi", 1975, Pope Paul VI:

20. *What matters is to evangelise man's culture and cultures (not in a purely decorative way as it were by applying a thin veneer, but in a vital way, in depth and right to their very roots), in the wide and rich sense which these terms have in "Gaudium et Spes", always taking the person as one's starting-point and*

always coming back to the relationships of people among themselves and with God.

The Gospel, and therefore evangelization, is certainly not identical with culture, and they are independent in regard to all cultures. Nevertheless, the Kingdom which the Gospel proclaims is lived by men who are profoundly linked to a culture, and the building up of the Kingdom cannot avoid borrowing the elements of human culture or cultures. Though independent of cultures, the Gospel and evangelization are not necessarily incompatible with them; rather they are capable of permeating them all without becoming subject to any one of them.

g) "Redemptoris missio," 1990, John Paul II:

37b. *New worlds and new social phenomena: The rapid and far-reaching transformations of today, especially in the Southern hemisphere, are having a powerful effect on the modern picture of the mission world. Where before there were stable human and social conditions everything is now in a state of flux.*

Take, for example, the excessive urbanisation and the massive growth of cities, particularly in densely populated countries. In many countries, over half the population already live in a few great cities, where ordinary human problems are often aggravated by the sense of anonymity in which an ever-increasing population is lost.

Up to now, missionary activity has been carried out particularly in isolated areas, which are far from civilisation and which are hard to penetrate because of difficulties of communication, language or climate. Nowadays, the image of mission to the nations is perhaps changing. Our main targets have to be the big cities, where new lifestyles are coming into existence alongside new forms of culture and communication, which then influence the wider population.

It is true that the "option for the neediest" means that we should not overlook the most abandoned and isolated human groups. But it is also true that individuals or small groups cannot be evangelised if we neglect the centres where a new humanity is emerging, so to speak, and where new models of development are taking shape.

Speaking of the future, we cannot forget the young. In many countries they make up over half the population. How do we bring the Gospel to the non-Christian youth who are the future generations of entire continents? The ordinary means of pastoral work are



obviously not adequate. We need special associations and centres, cultural and social initiatives for young people. Here is a field where modern movement within the Church have ample scope for close involvement with this work.

Among the sweeping changes of the modern world, migration has produced a new phenomenon - the rapid growth of non-Christian populations in traditionally Christian countries. These new populations create new opportunities for contacts and cultural exchanges, calling the Church to hospitality, dialogue, help and, in a word, fraternity. Refugees hold a special place among these migrants and deserve the greatest attention. There are many millions of refugees in the world today. Their number is constantly increasing. They have fled from political and inhuman misery, from catastrophic famine and drought. The Church must welcome them into her apostolic care.

Last of all, we can mention the often intolerable degree of poverty now existing in many countries and causing mass migration. These inhuman conditions are a challenge to the family of believers in Christ.

The proclamation of Christ and the Kingdom of God must become a means of restoring human dignity to these people.

37c. Cultural sectors: the modern areopagus. After Paul had preached the Gospel in many places he came to Athens and entered the Areopagus. Here he preached the Gospel in words suitable to the capacity of his audience. The Areopagus was then the cultural centre of learned Athenians. Today it can be taken as the symbol of the new fields in which the Gospel must be proclaimed.

The first Areopagus of our age is the world of the media, unifying humanity and turning it into the famous 'global village'. The media have become so important as to be for many the chief means of information and education. They look to the media for guidance and inspiration in their way of life as individuals, as families, or as society in general. The younger generation, in particular, is growing up in a world conditioned by the mass media. To some extent, perhaps, we have neglected this Areopagus. For the most part, we have preferred other means of preaching the Gospel and of Christian education. Meanwhile the use of the media is left to the enterprise of individuals or small groups. The result is that our pasto-

ral planning leaves only a secondary role for the use of the media.

But the use of the mass-media goes deeper than a strengthening of the Gospel message.

The very evangelization of modern culture depends to a great extent on the influence of the media. It is not enough, therefore, to use the media simply to spread the Christian message and the authentic teaching of the Church. We must also integrate the Christian message into the 'new culture' created by modern communications.

52. Incarnating the Gospel in Peoples' cultures.

As she carries out her missionary task among the nations, the Church meets different cultures and is herself in turn caught up in the process of inculturation. The need for such involvement has marked the Church's pilgrimage through the ages, but today it is particularly pressing... By means of inculturation the Church enfleshes the Gospel in different cultures. At the same time, she brings peoples and their cultures into her own community. She transmits her own values to these different cultures and takes from these same cultures whatever is good in them so as to renew them from within. The Church, in turn, becomes a more intelligible sign of what she is and a more efficacious instrument of mission.

Thanks to this action on the part of the local Churches, the universal Church herself is enriched with ways of expressing herself and with values touching the various spheres of Christian life - evangelization, worship, theology, and charitable works. She comes to know the mystery of Christ better and to express it better and she has a lasting motive for continual renewal.

53. Missionaries coming from foreign Churches and countries must immerse themselves in the cultural milieu of those to whom they are sent. They must move beyond their own cultural boundaries and learn the language spoken where they work, familiarising themselves with the most important manifestations of the local culture and uncovering its values through first-hand experience. Only if they are equipped with this kind of insight can they bring people to the knowledge of the hidden mystery in a credible and fruitful manner. Missionaries do not have to renounce their own cultural identity. But they do have to understand and appreciate the culture of the place where they are



at work, fostering and evangelising it. In this way they enable themselves to communicate effectively with the local culture while they adopt a style of living which is a sign of Gospel witness and of brotherhood with the people.

Developing ecclesial communities, inspired by the Gospel, will be gradually able to express their Christian experience in ways and forms compatible with their own cultural traditions. But these traditions must be in harmony with the unalterable requirements of the Faith itself. To achieve this, local Churches of

the same region should cooperate with one another, particularly where the most delicate areas of inculturation are concerned. They must also work in harmony with the whole Church, knowing that only through keeping in touch both with the universal Church and with local Churches can they translate the treasure of the Faith in different legitimate ways.

Groups which have already received the Gospel will thus provide the elements for the 'translation' of the Gospel message,...



Exercise

Describe the culture of the Athenians and how it faces us in Acts 17:16-32.



Questions:

1. How does Paul assess this culture?
2. Are there parallels to present-day spiritual trends?



Exercise

On "*Redemptoris missio*", 37 b:



Question:

What is the meaning of this statement for inculturation?



Exercise

On "*Redemptoris missio*", 37 c:



Question:

What does it mean, when this text appears under the title "*Areas of the Mission ad gentes*" (Mission to the pagans)?





Exercise

Regarding all magisterial documents:

4

Assignment:

Try to trace the recognisable intellectual development.



Exercise

On all mentioned texts from magisterial documents about *mission*:

5

Questions:

1. What developments can be seen in regard to:
 - a) the value of other religions,
 - b) the role of the Church?
2. What do sentences like the following mean:
Formation must necessarily not only comprise the whole, orthodox teaching of the Church as it was handed down, but it must also open the mind of the students and sharpen it for the evaluation of the indigenous cultures, especially concerning their philosophy, their theology and their relationship to the Christian religion.

Applications



E

Questions:

1. Do you know philosophies or theologies other than the western ones?
2. Which ones do you know?
3. How has this knowledge changed or deepened your own faith?





Application

Once again on "*Redemptoris missio*," 37 c:

Questions:

1. How do you and your community see the development of the "new humanity" with its models of development
2. What are the concrete responses to these "new areopages"
 - a) in your community?
 - b) are there other emerging needs?
 - c) which can you now tackle together with others?



Application

Read the following story and ask yourself about your own attitude, especially with regard to the *Parable of the Good Samaritan*.

An almost true story

Karl and Maria had got to know each other during a party of their faculty in the university. Both were studying social pedagogy and came from Catholic families with several children. Responsibility and consideration for their younger brothers and sisters, this early exercise in social behaviour, was probably the decisive factor for their choice of career. Both came to love each other and soon they moved together into a somewhat bigger apartment for students. Soon their parents came to know about it and they reproached their children vehemently. They did not want to accept that their children were living together "in sin". Since the two young people would not listen, their parents sought the help of the students' chaplain and requested him to reason with them and urge them to get married. The pastor, who knew both Karl and Maria, tried to calm down the angry parents. This was something the parents could understand even less. As good Catholics, they knew that a pastor must

do everything to influence the young people to put their relationship "in order" before God and the Church. What the parents did not know: Both managed very well with their financial allowance and did not have to work during term break like other students. For this reason they could go regularly to the beach and stay there for three weeks. For the past three years they had even taken two young spastic patients with them, who could walk only with difficulty and were handicapped also in other ways. Naturally they caused a stir on the camping site. Often, Karl and Maria – and even worse, both spastics – had to hear remarks that it was expecting too much of them, having to share the beach with such people; after all, there were homes for such people! When their pastor came to know about it, he thought of the parable of the Good Samaritan. He was a little surprised at the thought, that the *robbers* this time should be more or less well-built, sun-tanned people who live in "orderly



conditions". By the way, the students became social educators. They work as a married couple with children of their own in a children's village. (Othmar Noggler, OFMCap)

Questions:

1. Which cultural changes are shown in this story?
2. How should *inculturation* take place here?
3. Do you know similar examples?



Application

Read the following story:

David, a middle-aged man, is sitting in front of his hut, carving a root, partly to pass time partly as a hobby. He found the root today by the brook as he was driving the cows home. He is satisfied. Now and then he draws at his long clay pipe, which his wife had given him years ago. Carefully he is looking for the figure which is hidden in the old root and which he wants to call forth with his carving knife.

He is satisfied. In a few days, when the moon reaches its first quarter, his son, who is named David after him, will come home. He would have preferred to keep this second born of his six children on the farm, but he seemed to follow a call. Something similar must have happened to him just like to his old friend, the medicine man. Like all his children, he had sent his son David to the mission school. He would have become a good farmer. And then came this evening, when David told him that he would like to go to these men who call themselves Capuchins. He had gone far with them, his son! And in a few days he would be coming home. He is lost in his thoughts while his skilled hands are carving away at the root. While he is working he is looking down the narrow path again and again, looking for the cloud of dust which would signal the arrival of his son.

For a long time now his son David has been ticking off the days on the calendar, which separate

him from the visit to his home. To be at home again, for three weeks, with his parents and with his youngest brother! Once again, he would be breathing in the familiar smell of the fields, the animals and the open fire, which he loves so much. Then the day has come. With a little bit of luck he can make it in ten to twelve hours and be home before dark. The Guardian, a European of about the same age as his father and a paternal friend, has given him enough money for his return home and for a trip with his parents. Would father and mother want to go away at all? At any rate, his youngest brother will marvel at the Land Rover and will always want to be with him just as he himself did not leave Fr. Stephen's side when he was between ten and twelve years old. With such thoughts, he is steering the vehicle dextrously along the dust road and then, faster than expected, he has arrived.

After the warm welcome of his parents and his youngest brother, father and son are sitting in front of the cottage, waiting for the supper that is being prepared by mother. The walls still radiate the warmth of the day, while all around the cool of the evening makes one almost shiver. Silently they relish the joy of being together once more. Then the father points to his shirt and says, "Look, what a poor shirt I am wearing!" The son had not noticed it. He already wants to contradict his father and say that there is nothing



wrong with his shirt and that he looks good in the shirt. Then the father repeats the question and suddenly, the young man feels the blood rise to his face. He did not bring any gift with him! At first he thinks, "the Guardian ..., he should have ... no, it is my fault. I forgot!" And the next question that comes to his mind, occupies him for a long time on that evening, and after, "Am I no longer an African? Have I inwardly turned into a white man?" (Othmar Noggler OFMCap).

Questions:

1. Do you live together with brothers or sisters from other cultures?
2. How much consideration do you or does your community have for these people?
3. How far is your own way of life, your family or community's way of life regarded as the only binding and acceptable one?

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Picture Credits



Picture Credits

Cover St. Francis. Bartolomäus Zeitblom. Regional Museum of Württemberg / Württembergisches Landesmuseum, Stuttgart.

- p. 3 Middle part of a high cross.
- p. 5 Photo: Elisabeth Fuchs-Haufen.
- p. 6 Photo: Vivant Univers, Namur.
- p. 8 From: Atlas der Weltreligionen.
- p. 9 *Top:* Engraving by Theodor de Bry, 1594.
Bottom: Oil Painting by Cecil O'Gorman.
- p. 11 Painting on silk by Tun ch'I-ch'ang, 17th Century.
- p. 12 Ivory sculpture from Milan, 10th Century.
- p. 15 From: Das Zeichen, 10/88, Photo: H. Christoph.
- p. 18 Painting by Matthias Kauage, 1990.
- p. 21 Miniature, taken from a book of the hours, 15th Century, Austrian National Library, Vienna.
- p. 23 From "du", 1/92, Photo: Flor Garduño.
- p. 24 Capuchin Friary in Ifakara, Tanzania. From: Ite, 5/91, Photo: B. Fäh.
- p. 25 From: ADVENIAT, 12/97, Photo: J. Escher.
- p. 26 From: Ite, 5/91, Photo: missio, Freiburg.
- p. 37 Engravings with the episode of the fourth journey of Columbus.



For Reflection



Past

We thank you, Lord,
for we were conquered
but not defeated.
We thank you,
they have taken from us the rivers,
but we continue to be the rivers
and veins of our people.
We thank you,
they have thrown us down,
but they haven't overcome us.
We thank you,
they have squeezed us like oranges,
but we are the containers of sweet water.
We thank you,
for they have brought us the Gospel,
but we are evangelising them.



and yet we shine like stars in the night.
We thank you, Lord,
because they kill us,
but they never come to an end with us.
We thank you,
for they bury us alive,
but we rise.
We thank you, Lord,
because they scatter us among
other peoples,
but we become their salt.

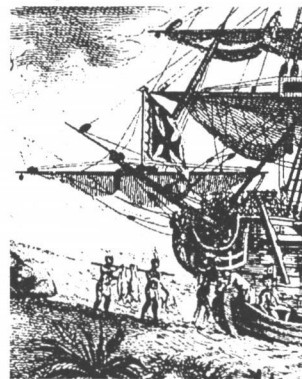
Present

We thank you,
they continue to persecute us
but they cannot reach us.
We thank you, Lord,
for they take the Bible from us
and clean themselves with it,
they burn it,
but your Word is not soiled.
We thank you, Lord,
they imprison us in deep holes,
but our *Nahual*, our spirit comes out.
We thank you, Lord,
for they let us sleep over pools,
but we scare them in their dreams.
We thank you, Lord,
they tear out our eyes
but we still look at them.
We thank you, Lord,
they cut us up like chickens
but we still remain whole.
We thank you,
they disfigure us, drive us crazy,
pull the skin from our faces,

Conclusion

Thank you for your presence
as a secret among us!
We are the poor of the poor,
but we are also the burning thornbush
which never burns up.
For one reason or other,
they study and study us,
and despite that they can't decipher us.
Your presence in us
is like the Mayan letter
which no one understands.
Poor, but rich,
pushed to the margin but yet in the centre,
dead, but raised from the dead.

*Poem by
Ricardo Falla, SJ,
in the form of an Eucharistic Prayer
of the Acción Popular,
May 1985, at the time of the
severest oppression
in Guatemala.
Translation by O. Noggler.*



Abbreviations



Writings of Saint Francis

| English ¹ | Latin ² | | English ¹ | Latin ² | |
|----------------------|--------------------|--|----------------------|--------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Adm | Adm | Admonitions | FormLife | Form Viv | Form of Life for St. Clare |
| BIL | BenLeo | Blessing for Brother Leo | PrsG | LaudDei | Praises of God |
| CtC | CantSol | Canticle of Brother Sun | PrH | LaudHor | Praises to be said at all the Hours |
| LtAnt | EpAnt | Letter to St. Anthony | OfP | OffPass | Office of the Passion |
| LtCl | EpCler | Letter to the Clergy | PrCr | OrCruc | Prayer before the Crucifix |
| 1LtCus | lEpCust | 1 st Letter to the Custodians | LR | RegB | Later Rule |
| 2LtCus | 2EpCust | 2 nd Letter to the Custodians | ER | RegNB | Earlier Rule |
| 1LtF | lEpFid | First Letter to the Faithful | RH | RegEr | Rule for Hermitages |
| 2LtF | 2EpFid | Second Letter to the Faithful | SalBVM | SalBVM | Salutation of the Blessed Virgin Mary |
| LtL | EpLeo | Letter to Brother Leo | SalV | SalVirt | Salutation of the Virtues |
| LtMin | EpMin | Letter to a Minister | Test | Test | Testament |
| LtOrd | EpOrd | Letter to the Entire Order | TestS | TestS | Testament written in Siena |
| LtR | EpRect | Letter to the Rulers | LastWill | UltVol | Last Will written to St. Clare |
| Exhp | ExhLD | Exhortation to the Praises of God | TPJ | VPLaet | Dictate on True and Perfect Joy |
| CtExh | ExhPD | Exhortation to the Poor Ladies | | | |
| PrOF | ExpPat | Prayer Inspired by the Our Father | | | |

Writings of Saint Clare

| | | | |
|------|---|--------|------------------------|
| 1LAg | 1 st Letter to St. Agnes of Prague | LEr | Letter to Ermentrude |
| 2LAg | 2 nd Letter to St. Agnes of Prague | RCl | Rule of St. Clare |
| 3LAg | 3 rd Letter to St. Agnes of Prague | TestCl | Testament of St. Clare |
| 4LAg | 4 th Letter to St. Agnes of Prague | BCl | Blessing of St. Clare |



Early Franciscan Sources

| | | |
|-------|------|---|
| 1C | 1Cel | 1 st Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano |
| 2C | 2Cel | 2 nd Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano |
| 3C | 3Cel | Treatise on the Miracles by Thomas of Celano |
| AP | AP | Anonymous of Perugia |
| LegCl | CL | Legend of Clare |
| LFl | Fior | The Little Flowers of St. Francis. Fioretti |
| JdV | JdV | Witness of Jacque de Vitry |
| ChrJG | Jord | Jordan of Giano's Chronicle |
| LMj | LM | Major Life of St. Francis by Bonaventure |
| LMn | LMin | Minor Life of St. Francis by Bonaventure |
| LP | LP | Legend of Perugia |
| L3C | L3S | Legend of the Three Companions |
| Proc | Proc | Process of St. Clare's Canonization |
| ScEx | SC | The Sacred Exchange. Sacrum Commercium |
| MP | SP | Mirror of Perfection |

1. **English Abbreviations** from: *"Francis of Asisi - Early Documents"* (Volume I, edited by: Regis J. Armstrong OFM Cap, J.A. Wayne Hellmann OFM Conv, William J. Short OFM, Franciscan Institute of St. Bonaventure University, St. Bonaventure, NY, 1999).
2. Frequently used **Latin Abbreviations**.

