

Introduction

From February 2 to 6, 2004, about fifty brothers met together in Addis Ababa, capital of Ethiopia, for a week of debate on the topic of “Gospel Brotherhood in a multi-ethnic World”.

The meeting was organised by the Justice, Peace and Ecology Office of the General Curia to give the brothers a chance to become better peace-builders.

No doubt there are few grand gestures the Order, by itself, can make to stop current wars and prevent new ones from breaking out. Yet isn't there something more we can do, as brothers, even in our own limited way? In fact, as a gospel brotherhood, could we not promote models of peace-making that would catch on, and at least keep the threat of war at arm's length? Of course we could! What we need is to humbly recognise in ourselves a force, generated by God's Spirit, that has made us peace-builders who are vowed to peace, expressly dedicated to spreading it around us wherever we are.

True, we sometimes lack the proper tools to do this. This could be the role of the JPE Office – to bring brothers together as a sort of workshop to produce tailor-made resources to help us in this task.

The precise topic of our reflections is ethnicity, one of the essential components of being human. All of us belong to an ethnic group that has produced the culture through which we express ourselves, and which provides us with an essential ingredient of our identity. For each one of us, ethnicity is basic to who we are. No-one would want to be deprived of his or her ethnicity, because we all know that much of our way of loving, and some of our best reasons for being loved, reside precisely there.

But we know, too, that many a conflict has been caused by the coexistence of different ethnic groups, when one or another seeks to affirm its identity in exclusive terms. Ethnicity itself is rarely the source of conflict, but it is often a convenient pre-

text in conflicts that arise from quite different causes. We also see unscrupulous leaders using it to enlist the support of a captive clientele in dubious and often self-serving causes.

What role could our brotherhood play in all of this ? Let us simply put together our profession as peace-builders and the marvellous variety of our ethnic origins. Are we not true brothers, begotten by the one Spirit out of many hundreds of ethnic groups and cultures? Out of this grace, a sound strategy of peace can surely emerge.

Together we embody a communion that is rich in its wealth of differences, and fruitful in all the possibilities it offers. If we really live gospel brotherhood, without erasing what is specific to our own cultures, then we will be offering the world a model of peace that can be imitated. It is up to us, then, to develop our talents in this direction.

The brothers who gathered at Addis Ababa are offering you here, in a letter, ten proposals to help us become better builders of peace in the richness of our contemporary world. These were drafted after they had listened to the input of many speak-



ers and debated at length among themselves in the light of their own experience. The letter we publish here brings you their contribution to the spiritual growth of our Order - a contribution that is both modest and generous at the same time ! Because these brothers had come from all over the world, spoke different languages, and brought with them a wealth of extremely diverse experiences : they belonged to a wide range of cultures and ethnic groups, many of them meeting for the very first time. And yet they succeeded in identifying ways of peace along which we might first walk together before engaging the peoples from which we come.

This booklet also contains two of the main talks given at the meeting, one by M^{gr} Anselm Tianma Sanon, Archbishop of Bobodioulasso (Burkina Faso), and the other by Br. John Corriveau, our General Minister. The first, drawing on anthropology and theology, situates our action within the perspective of divine revelation and human culture. The second draws inspiration from Franciscan sources and from the Order's most recent reflections, to point out some concrete ways of achieving what we have promised.

But first, read the *Letter from Addis Ababa* !

Br. Aubert Bertrand, Director

A LETTER

to our brothers of the Order

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
6 February 2004

Dear Brothers:

May the Lord give you peace!

As brothers sent from thirty nations and five continents by our respective Capuchin conferences to Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, to share our reflections and experiences on the theme of *Gospel Brotherhood in a Multi-Ethnic World*, we are writing to you with a brief report on our meeting, a summary of what we heard and shared, and some proposals that we hope will enrich the quality of our fraternal life and our gospel witness.

We experienced and want to gratefully acknowledge the gracious hospitality of our brothers in Ethiopia. Many of us also were moved by the generous hospitality of the Ethiopian people whom we encountered in Addis Ababa and in the area immediately around St. Francis Friary. We also give thanks for the richness that we experienced in our own multi-cultural liturgical celebrations, which were celebrated in three languages. Finally, we want to thank those who took the time to share their wisdom with us: Aubert Bertrand, Director of the Justice, Peace and Ecology (JPE) Office in Rome; Phillip Baxter, Director of Formation in the Vice Province of Zambia; Alessandra Aula, Senior Advocacy Officer at *Franciscans International* in Geneva; Msgr. Anselme Titianma Sanon, Archbishop of Bobo-Dioulasso, Burkina Faso; and our Minister General, John Corriveau.

We gathered in Ethiopia, an African nation that was never colonized. It is the home of eighty-six different ethnic groups speaking over eighty languages and two hundred dialects. One fifth of its sixty million inhabitants live in bustling cities, while the majority are settled in remote villages. Some of its people are computer engineers

and financial managers, while others are farmers or retain the pastoral and nomadic ways of their ancestors. The people of Ethiopia are religiously diverse and represent the richness of the Christian, Islamic, Jewish and various animist traditions. The Catholic community, while small, is vibrant and reflects that vibrancy not only in its many pastoral and social ministries but also in the liturgical variety and beauty of the Ge'ez and Latin rites.

OUR EXPERIENCES OF BROTHERHOOD IN ADDIS ABABA

The presentations that we heard addressed the many dimensions of the challenge and promise of living our evangelical and fraternal life in a multi-ethnic world.

At the last General Chapter, our brothers from Africa called us to become more committed to the cry of the poor. Some regions and provinces of the Order have responded with particular projects to address problems such as the HIV/AIDS pandemic, while others have taken action to respond to the international debt crisis, wars and internal conflicts in Iraq, Colombia, Liberia and elsewhere. As a Capuchin fraternity, living and ministering virtually everywhere in the world, we have a unique opportunity to be “instruments of peace,” particularly in those situations of conflict that are driven by ethnic tensions, religious intolerance and economic and social injustice.

Ethnic diversity is a sign of God’s creative power. It helps to shape our various cultures. Because most people highly value their own culture, ethnicity and language, they assume that others will hold them in similar high esteem. Sometimes, they may even see their own culture or ethnicity as superior to others. This creates competition and conflict.

a. THE CONTRIBUTION OF ANTHROPOLOGY AND SOCIOLOGY

In the face of this situation, we received some insights from the world of psychology. We were challenged to help our fraternities move from mutual respect to love and friendship. This requires both a well-considered ownership of our personal autonomy and the many dimensions of our own uniqueness, including our ethnicity and culture, as well as a mutual willingness to share these qualities with others and to embrace their own uniqueness while standing on the firm ground of our common

experiences, values, interests and aspirations.

We also received reflections from the worlds of cultural anthropology and theology. As *Gaudium et Spes* reminds us, it is only through culture that we achieve our full humanity (53). Our relationships can either be places of damnation or places of resurrection. The violence and corruption in many parts of the world are not endemic to any culture or ethnicity. Peace and reconciliation are rooted in the customs and traditions of many peoples. It is for the good of humanity that we are brothers and sisters of multiple ethnicities and cultures. This enrichment of humanity through various forms of reconciliation, immigration and greater intercultural exchange should be seen as signs of God's grace. Cultural diversity, while often seen as a barrier, is actually an invitation, for a culture only truly finds itself when it encounters another.

b. LIVING RECONCILIATION

The Church, living and working in the midst of globalization, exists as God's instrument of peace and justice. Indeed, through the Church and its mission, God is revealed as peace, justice, truth and love. However, as Pope John Paul II has noted, there can be no peace without justice and no justice without reconciliation.

Reconciliation has both vertical and horizontal dimensions. The vertical dimension depends on personal conversion: I must be changed. The horizontal dimension begins to be realized when I am able to recognize the other person as another me. As those who are called to be "brothers to all peoples without distinction" (Const. 11:2), our Capuchin vocation demands that we strive to realize this horizontal dimension not only interpersonally but also globally.

c. IN THE CONTEXT OF HUMAN RIGHTS

We were also given the challenge to build a culture of human rights as a way of concretely integrating this broader aspect of reconciliation. Because they are universal and both rooted and enforced in international law, human rights transcend the boundaries of ethnicity and culture. However, they cannot be transmitted and integrated into individuals, communities or nations by osmosis; rather, they require a process of socialization and apprenticeship. More fundamentally, they require a movement from the self and outward toward the other. Rooted in the fundamental

equality of all people and in the unity of humanity with the cosmos, the Franciscan charism is ideally suited for helping to promote a culture of human rights in the world and to assure respect for those rights, beginning with our own communities and then in the institutions and structures of the wider society.

d. FRANCISCAN REFLECTION

Relationship, specifically brotherhood with all, is at the heart of our Franciscan charism. Indeed, universal brotherhood and sisterhood are more fundamentally at the heart of our Christian faith, dwelling in the pools of our own baptism in the name of a God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Trinity is a “free communion of persons without domination or deprivation” and thus serves as a model for relationship and more particularly of communion. Christ himself transcended the existing barriers of his own time, place and culture to proclaim to all the good news of God’s reign.

The genius of Francis was that he discovered that relationships start not from the top down but from the bottom up. It was only by renouncing his social position, stripping himself of everything he owned, and embracing the leper that Francis began to realize the call to universal relationship and communion. This call, then, impelled Francis and his brothers outward into the world as missionaries of the gospel from the earliest days of the Order. It was Francis’ integration of that call, in turn, that caused Sultan Malik Al-Kamil to remark that the poor and ragged one who came before him was “a man unlike all others.”

Reconciliation, whether it involves transcending the boundaries of ethnicity and culture or those of religion or nation, is part of our Franciscan witness. It is rooted in relationship and a spirit of humility, which must be more than a pious ideal. Our Constitutions admonish us “not to be fraudulent minors but sincere in heart, word and deed;” and they further warn that, “The signs of humility that the brothers wear outwardly contribute little to the salvation of souls unless they are animated by a spirit of humility.” (33, 2-3). Accordingly, we must critically examine how we make this spirit of humility come alive—or fail to do so—in the manner in which we exercise leadership, address intercultural or inter-ethnic rivalries, and administer the material resources of the Order.

We sometimes conform ourselves to the values and standards of the world that separate people into “us and them.” One group tries to dominate others. Leadership is exercised as power over others rather than service in the building of communion;

and it can be used as a vehicle for allowing one group to dominate others. Economic practices that are not participative and transparent become the vehicles through which authority is abused and one group oppresses others.

e. BROTHERS FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD

In addition to the major presentations summarized above, we learned much from some of our brothers who were invited to give us a sampling of the wealth of cultural variety present among their respective regions and to mention some of the conflicts that arise. While it is impossible to expect that brothers' experiences in a handful of countries could capture the complexity of each region, we were able to discern some common themes and general observations.

OUR ACHIEVEMENTS AND CHALLENGES

Our sharing gave us a better appreciation of the richness of multi-ethnicity and multi-cultural situations, but we were also made aware of points of conflict when one group seeks to dominate the others. At the outset, we found that it is important to distinguish ethnicity from culture. While very closely related, they are different.

We found many things that we considered positive and a cause for thanksgiving:

- The ethnic and cultural diversity of the nearly 11,000 brothers in our fraternity is a true gift to us and to the Franciscan movement and is a sign of God's grace. It is a source of richness not only for the Order but also for the Church and for our world.
- There is a true appreciation of the healthy multi-ethnic experiences in our fraternity, e.g., at the General Curia, the International College in Rome, the inter-provincial formation houses and in the many circumscriptions of the Order.
- Ethnicity can serve as a means of growth, especially when nourished by the gospel and our Capuchin traditions.

- Capuchins around the world are already engaged in the work of reconciliation between people of various ethnicities and cultures. Our brother, Alejandro Labaca, along with Sr. Inés Arango, gave their lives for this cause.
- Gospel brotherhood gives us the opportunity to evangelize and to be evangelized.
- Living in another place and in another culture can profoundly change a brother and cause him to better understand himself, the Order, and the world in new and life-giving ways. Conversely, those who receive him are also enriched.
- There is high value in our commitments to human rights, the poor and marginalized and our defense of the integrity of creation.
- Immigration, while often motivated by great human need and sometimes by tragedy, is a powerful force and presents our Order with many opportunities for cultural enhancement and an increase in vocations.

On the other hand, we also found a number of things that challenge us.

- While conflicts exist—such as divisions of class, caste, ethnicity and the problems of immigration—they are often exacerbated or serve as pretexts for other even deeper problems such as economic disparities, social exploitation, nationalism and the destruction of nature.
- It is easier to reflect on ethnic conflicts outside of our fraternities than to confront those that are within; but such negligence is to our detriment.
- Too often we find it easier to conform to the values and standards of the world around us— even when contrary to the Gospel—than to transform them.
- At the root of many problems is a hunger for power over others, and even more particularly, power over others who are not of one's own group.
- In too many nations, immigrants are looked upon as problems to be solved rather than as gifts for growth and development.
- Sometimes our brothers who live abroad for a substantial time experience different lifestyles and values have difficulties adjusting and reintegrating themselves into their communities when they return.

- The globalization of free market capitalism has created “winners” and “losers.” As lesser brothers, we are called to be in particular solidarity with the marginalized, but we too often live like the “winners” and are dependent on them for our support.
- Our differences are not limited to ethnicity and culture but extend to other elements such as historical experiences and theologies. These can be just as divisive, and gossip or the uncritical communication of prejudices in these areas can also be a barrier to gospel brotherhood.
- Intercultural growth demands that we “die to ourselves” and be willing to participate in a process of give and take with others.
- When members of a specific ethnic community exercise authority without sensitivity toward members of another ethnic community the result is rebellion.

OUR PROPOSALS

We earnestly hope that what we have learned and shared will benefit our Capuchin fraternity worldwide as well as the Church and wider society, and so we offer the following propositions:

- **INVITING PERSONAL REFLECTION**—The animators of our fraternities must encourage their brothers to become more aware of the multi-ethnic realities of the Order and commit themselves to processes of intercultural exchange and sharing. They must also be willing to face ethnic tensions where they are present and address them. In addition, they must also reflect on their own uses of power.
- **SUPPORTING THE VALUE OF DIVERSITY**—We ask the brothers, through their own reflection, to see diversity as a gift of God that should be celebrated and calls us to conversion. Like an orchestra, our Order, Church and world are called to create a symphony out of many different instruments and ethnicities, according to the score written by God.

- **PROMOTING RICHER FORMATION**—We suggest that formation teams assist candidates to overcome ethnocentrism and other tendencies that prevent them from fully embracing the multi-cultural dimensions of our Order. We further recommend that they devote more attention to developing greater multi-ethnic sensitivity, e.g., by requiring brothers in formation to experience other cultures and to learn languages other than their own.
- **REVIEWING THE MISSION CONTEXT**—As the Order implants itself in other nations and cultures, we must insure that those we send are immersed in the cultural situations in which they will be inserted. Where brothers from a given province, however long-established it may be, go to assist a newer circumscription or to make new foundations in countries where the Order is already present, they must fraternally recognize the authenticity and legitimacy of the local fraternity and not try to supplant local customs by importing their own.
- **ENCOURAGING COLLABORATION AND SOLIDARITY**— We wish to underscore a new reality in the Order: in our older Provinces, the number of brothers is decreasing and their age is increasing to the point where their survival as provinces is at risk. Their chances of survival - and we are convinced that they have good reasons to want to survive - depends to a large extent on the brothers coming to them from our younger circumscriptions. Solidarity, as expressed in exchanges of personnel, is already a fact of life. The brothers who are sent and those who receive them must be prepared to face the challenges and promises of diversity. The Provinces and Conferences should carefully study this new reality in the life of the Order and look for ways of using our human and material resources more usefully in the service of giving gospel witness to which we are consecrated.
- **REFORMING THE MINISTRY OF AUTHORITY**—Authority in our brotherhood should be exercised in a spirit of service toward communion and mission. We ask our provinces or conferences to develop the means through which the values of service, integrity, accountability, dialogue, and focus on the common good may be instilled in the brothers, along with the skills necessary to integrate them into our work. St. Francis renounced his social position and became a brother to all. Peace and justice begin with personal conversion. “Brother” is not merely a title but a way of being in relationship with others. All these values should be reflected in the way we exercise authority.

- CELEBRATING LOCAL CHAPTERS—We suggest that local chapters be directed not so much toward problem-solving but toward building community beyond our differences.
- DEVELOPING FRATERNAL ECONOMIES— We denounce any exercise of power in the economic life of our fraternities and ministries that reflects domination, discrimination, greed and similar vices. We urge our fraternities throughout the world to create economies that reflect the values of participation, transparency, accountability, equity and solidarity.
- DEVELOPING FRATERNAL MINISTRIES—We appreciate those friars who are engaged in ministries of charity and direct service to those who are poor. However, we believe it is always necessary to re-examine our social ministries critically, to see whether they reflect these values or instead perpetuate situations of poverty rather than helping people to improve their lives. As our Minister General continues to remind us, “The poor do not need patrons. They need brothers.”
- WORKING WITH RELATED ORGANIZATIONS—We encourage greater involvement with *Franciscans International* and similar organizations as a means of furthering our witness of gospel brotherhood and a contribution to the building of justice, peace and ecology in Church and society. We also encourage greater involvement of the brothers in ministries of solidarity, reconciliation and human rights, with particular attention to the needs and rights of immigrants, ethnic minorities and protection of the integrity of creation.

IMPLEMENTATION

We have been deeply moved by all that we have seen and heard in Addis Ababa. Our proposals are the fruit of our shared reflection as brothers. We offer them to you in a spirit of service to our entire brotherhood.

- We invite our brothers, both personally and in fraternity, to reflect deeply on our experiences and proposals.
- We call on the Provincial Councils to delegate their JPE Commissions or other appropriate bodies to animate reflections on this letter and help to implement these

proposals. Each brother who participated in this assembly will make himself available to brothers in his region to assist in this process.

We recognize that this is slow and often difficult work. However, we are confident that it will bear fruit, not only for our Order but also for the Church and the world. May Christ, “the Word and power upholding all things, the light and expectation of all nations, be our hope. In him all things are possible, pleasant and easy”. (cf.Const. 186:4).

Your brothers gathered in Addis Ababa:

From the General Curia : Br. John Corriveau, Br. John Bednarik, Br. Vicente Karlos Kiaziku, Br. Aubert Bertrand, ROME, Italy ; Br. Patrick Crasta, FRASCATI, Italy. *ASMEN* : Br. François Koussaifi, ANTELIAS, Liban. *CCA* : Br. Charly Azcona, AMBATO, Équateur ; Br. Claudio BedriZan, BUENOS AIRES, Argentine. *CCB* : Br. Wilson Dallagnol, ROME, Italy ; Br. Ildo Perondi, LONDRINA, Brazil. *CCMSI* : Br. I. Jacob, TRICHY, India ; Br. Mathew Parintirickal, ELURU, India ; Br. George Valiyapadath, KOTTAYAM, India. *CECOC* : Br. Ludwik Kalinowski, KRAKOW, Poland. *CENOC* : Br. Joseph Calleja, KALKARRA, Malta ; Br. Kurt Egger, BOZEN-BOLZANO, Italy ; Br. Michel Pihart, PEPINSTER, Belgium ; Br. Guido Tirelire, ANTWERP, Belgium. *CIC* : Br. Gabriel Larraya, PAMPELUNE, Spain. *CIMPCAP* : Br. Paolo Poli, PARMA, Italy. *CONCAM* : Br. Gregorio Álvarez López, HAVANA, Cuba. *CONCAO* : Br. Ambongo Besungu, Br. Gilbert Kambo Yongo, KINSHASA, R. D. Congo ; Br. Charles Mary Eke, ENUGU, Nigeria ; Br. Enzo Canozzi, BOUAR, Central African Republic ; Br. Mario Capriotti, COTONOU, Benin ; Br. Joaquim José Hangalo, LUANDA, Angola ; Br. Zacharie Kolantrin, ABIDJAN, Ivory Coast. *EACC* : Br. Philip Baxter, LUZAKA, Zambia ; Br. Beatus Kinyaya, DAR ES SALAAM, Tanzania ; Br. Ghegremeskel Magino, NAZARETH, Ethiopie ; Br. Franco Marantonio, Br. Angelo Pagano, ADDIS ABABA, Ethiopie ; Br. Paulo Sulvai Minisso, QUELIMANE, Mozambique ; Br. Agapit Mroso, LUSAKA, Zambia ; Br. Donal O’Mahony, ERASMULSKLOOF, South Africa ; Br. Norbert Auberlin Solondrazana, ANTANANARIVO, Madagascar. *NACC* : Br. Thomas Betz, PHILADELPHIA, U.S. ; Br. John Celichowski, MILWAUKEE, U.S. *SAPCC* : Br. Markus Manurung, PEMATANGSIANTAR, Indonesia ; Br. Roger White, MENDI, Papua-New Guinea. *Vice-Province of Ethiopia* : Br. Mathewos Ajabo, NAZARETH, Éthiopie ; Br. Angelo Antolini, Br. Aklilu Petros, Br. Dejene Hidotto,

THE LETTER FROM ADDIS ABABA

WOLAITA, Ethiopie ; Br. Yohannes Bate, WOLDIA N.WOLLO, Ethiopie ; Br. Dominic Jesusdas, Br. Roberto Dalloli, Br. Teklu Daye, Br. Fesseha Tafesse, Br. Gabriel W/Hanna, ADDIS ABEBA, Éthiopie ; Br. Isaias Gaetano, HOSANNA, Ethiopie ; fr. Woldemichael Milkamo, METAHARA, Ethiopie.



*Cultures as mediations of Divine Grace
Ethnic complementarity in faith experience
Diversity as a way of reconciliation*

*M^{fr} Anselme Tianma Sanon
Archbishop of Bobodioulasso*

If you want to know a town, you have to know how people are born into it, live in it, love in it and die in it. If we want to know this African world where we are preaching the gospel, it is wise to know how war is waged here, how people kill one another here, and how they are reconciled.

How then do these peoples (ethnic groups, races, tribes) and their societies go about living together in peace and brotherhood? The text gives an illustration: relationship to the joke, the relationship of kinship with the joke.

How does the God of Judaeo-Christian revelation ensure that peace and justice come about in the world?

How and why must my Church - my Family, my Community - commit itself to peace and justice?

Why is it our mission to live and proclaim this message?

The text takes a very classic approach, weaving together passages drawn from experience and from Christian tradition. Part 1 is ethno-anthropological. It presents a traditional mechanism for building social peace.

I - CULTURES AS MEDIATIONS OF DIVINE GRACE

1.1: One cannot deny that there has been a real effort to cultivate peace, together with justice and truth.

Very briefly: 1) In daily habits: Breaking silences. Greetings : It is better to greet than not to greet one another; when the sons and daughters of the village greet one another, the village lives and grows. To see and visit one another is a celebration. - Welcome and hospitality - Giving each other due precedence - words of cursing / blessing - Cyclic rhythms of return to ancestral harmony.

2) Symbols; Wearing green; Planting a tree; Holding a branch together; Ashes on the forehead; Drinking from the same gourd; A line, a stick, setting up a memorial;

3) Rites and taboos * Weddings, funerals, initiation ceremonies, sacrifices preceded by reconciliation, sharing.

4) Places * a space for explanation and reconciliation * A mountain A tree, a thick-
et

5) Moments * Early, one day in the week, the month, the year.

6) Authorised persons and intermediaries leather craftsmen, blacksmiths, grand-children, clans. All these are part of a cultural mechanism dating back to time immemorial.

1.2: Regulation of conflicts to build understanding and peace

How was peace made? What words and gestures were used to express it ? The word “Peace” itself varies in the different ethnic groups : it evokes how peace was made, the words and gestures used to express it : *maaro, laafi, laafia, hèra, siaara, danmu...* Customary tradition, which we are going to look at, is called « relationship of kinship to the joke ». This is a type of relationship between individuals or groups in which the behaviour and the final outcome are dictated in advance by custom, understanding, welcome. We could think of it as a tightly drawn match between individuals or teams, in which each participant and spectator knows the outcome: a victory with no winners or losers.

On close inspection this mechanism takes account of a past memory - “from time immemorial”- which is respected and jointly accepted. It makes use of the joke genre: the participants hide behind a well proven tradition, and recognise a relationship of kinship whose origins are unknown.

The cultural value of this phenomenon is found in the reasons and motivations, of which the users are no longer aware. To use the mechanism means that many conflicts have to do with things that are often related to the sacred value of peace. For example, during National Culture Week, because of the Relationship of Kinship to the Joke, football matches are organized between opposing ethnic groups. A player can put the ball into his own side on behalf of the other group to make the score equal.

1.3: This mechanism is a means of reducing tensions and regulating conflicts amiably by appealing to deep-rooted cultural tradition.

1) The mechanism is used in inter-racial cohabitation, for example in families

where the husband and wife are from different ethnic groups, or in meeting spaces both before and after solemn celebrations, and in the resolution of serious conflicts.

2) In politics, politicians had recourse to it to put their audience at ease and attract votes. The same device was used by those who wanted to tell the authorities not to take themselves too seriously; it was a way of saying out loud things that others were quietly saying about the chief. Breaking the silence, or silences, is one of the conditions for seeking peace and truth.

3) Various types of assembly resort to the device of kinship relationship to the joke as way of breaking the ice.

In gatherings made up of people from many different origins, there are even deeper reasons for being “related to the joke”:

- 1) recognition, openness, moving beyond the situation;
- 2) same faith , same hope, same brotherhood in the service of peace
- 3) the same blood in our veins, fraternity and new racial identity, thanks to a common ancestor.

At this level culture, often a source of conflict over languages and customs, is seen to be rich in values for communication and communion .It becomes a mediating element between classes and ethnic groups, a chance for grace and peace.

Culture, often a source of conflict over languages and customs, is seen to be rich in values for communication and communion

II - AT THE SERVICE OF A CULTURE OF PEACE AND FRATERNITY AT THE HEART OF GLOBALIZATION

Part 2 places the Church at the heart of globalization as instrument and place of peace and reconciliation. An analysis of key words leads us into the process of Revelation.

- 01: Growth in awareness and responsibility
- 02: Peace in its harmonics - components
- 03: Lasting peace.

God is revealed as God in revealing himself as Holy, the God of peace, justice, truth and love. These sentiments and ways of behaving are basic, saving relationships. The

year 2000 was designated as International Peace Year, working towards a culture of peace, a Millennium for the world and for Christianity, starting from the birth of Jesus the Christ. This anniversary was celebrated by all the Christian churches as the Great Jubilee of 2000. In this connection it is striking to read the very first message proclaimed on the day of Christ's birth. As we read in the sacred text: "A multitude of the heavenly hosts sang with the angel" (Lk 2, 13-14).

Glory to God in the highest heavens: To God, glory in heaven and on earth peace for humanity. For human beings, peace must be built on earth. Such is the message of the angels of 2000 years ago, which accompanied the birth of Jesus Christ (cf Lk 2, 14), and which we heard joyfully resounding on that Christmas night when the Jubilee was officially opened.

« At the beginning of the new Millennium we wish to proclaim once more this message of hope, born in the grotto of Bethlehem: God loves all men and women on the earth, and he gives them the hope of a new era, an era of peace. His love, fully revealed in his Son who took flesh, is the foundation of universal peace.

The Son arouses a thirst for fraternity which can banish the temptation to violence and war.

Welcomed into the depths of the heart, love reconciles each person with God and with him/herself, it renews human relationships and arouses a thirst for fraternity which can banish the temptation to violence and war. The Great Jubilee is inseparably linked to this message of love and reconciliation, which expresses the deepest aspirations of humanity in our day.

REFLECTIONS, CONVICTIONS AND FAITH-MOTIVATIONS

Having been brought to the level of faith, we shall try to reflect on the theology of peace: to discern rationally and methodologically the consequences for religions and faiths in relation to God.

Following St Irenaeus who said: "the glory of God is man fully alive", we could add:

- The glory of God is the man of peace, pacified and peace-loving.

The jubilee year keeps us on the same faith-level. This time it is Jesus himself who introduces the theme, at the age of about 30 (Lk 3, 23). « The Spirit of the Lord is upon me. He has sent me to bring the good news to the poor, to proclaim the Lord's year of favour" (Lk 4, 19).

And so, the birthday of the Incarnation and Evangelisation brings the same good news of joy, grace and peace (Jn 1, 14-18).

The Canticle of Zachariah (Lk 1, 68-79) is like a summary of the two movements involved in our journey:

- 1) Deliverance and salvation, forgiveness of sins and mercy on the one hand;
- 2) Justice, holiness and peace on the other.

And we see it : Peace is a grace and a relationship: Glory to God and Peace to men and women, because God shows them His favour. They are the objects of His loving kindness. He is well pleased with them (Lk 2, 14) just as He is with His Son (Mt 3, 17 and Mk 1, 11).

Any Christian who is at all aware, hearing words such as peace, truth, justice, reconciliation, forgiveness, can hardly help inwardly jumping for joy. He or she thinks of the Master who said

“I am the way, the truth and the life» (Jn 14, 6). He sees Pilate sceptically and mockingly shrug as he hears the prisoner declare: “I have come to bear witness to the truth” (Jn 18, 37). He sees - sadly - the current situations which portray quite contrary realities even under cover of peaceful terms. The prophet long ago denounced this : « They cry for peace when there is no peace » (Ez 13, 16). In fact, Christian tradition, in the spirit of the Bible, instinctively links the ways and means and methods that lead to truth, with life and truth: the trilogy is the prerogative of Someone : the Living and True One. A vital bond links or reunites truth with life and with growth towards maturity, well-being and peace.

In Latin « *via, veritas et vita* » are indispensable to achieve peace. Of course, words are only words : but they lead to truths which proclaim values, and those values must be just and true and must not be used as a cover for other intentions.

01 We begin with the cornerstone of the entire dynamics of contemporary society: social peace.

1) Reading situations spiritually. Over the airwaves and on TV screens, a believer hears and sees nothing that is indifferent to his faith and on the level of salvation.

Situations of “non-peace” are well known:

- disasters of every kind
- famine in the world
- structural under-development in the third world

- widespread social deprivation
- the destructive power of wars
- accumulation of arms on a world-wide scale
- the degradation and dehumanisation of ethical conduct

To know of these is to become aware.

2) What does the gospel message of peace mean in such a world? Is Christianity able to foster peace? to inaugurate peace, to impose peace? The gospel of peace in the tradition of the Bible (Old and New Testaments) is one complete whole. Peace proclaims the disposition of the God who saves humankind; it is his gift of salvation (Ps 28, 11; Is 32, 18). Peace reappears in different disguises:

- 1) Peace ⇒ justice (Is 32, 17; Ps 85, 11)
- 2) Peace ⇒ truth (Za 8, 19)
- 3) Peace ⇒ Law Ps 119, 165
- 4) Peace ⇒ Life Mt 2, 5; Dt 30, 19
- 5) Peace ⇒ tranquillity 1Rm 8, 56
- 6) Peace ⇒ social welfare Is 60, 17; Dt 12, 9 s
- 7) Peace ⇒ health Gn 32, 14

« Peace is not the opposite of war in a negative way, not simply the absence of violence, hatred, quarrels, injustice, or of fear and terror (1Co 2, 18...) Rather, it is something positive: wholeness, well-being, salvation, life in the broad sense, in other words, not just temporal life but also eternal life ».

Peace requires harmonized relationships (just or religious) with God and people. In Christian theology, peace is the inverse of violence, with virtue, justice, forgiveness and reconciliation as its harmonics: in a word, love. Love is the one commandment of Jesus: "Love one another as I have loved you". He translates this one commandment into eight ways to happiness: the beatitudes. (Mt 5, 1-12).

3) The same is true of justice: God reveals Himself as just.

- the just person lives in conformity with the law, and just law is a religious formula;

- justice is right judgement, then it refers to the upright conduct of a person with a rightly formed conscience, and finally to the judgement given by a just judge. Societies today, in addition to moral justice which is sometimes individualistic, are more aware of social justice, often expressed in terms of demands and their attendant violence. The important thing here is the norm or law that must be followed to achieve equity among people and in society.

4) The same applies to the word reconciliation. In reality, societies are familiar only with forgiveness or clemency. To forget requires a different sense of the higher interest which entails a legal, positive act of purification that seals a new pact or covenant or the purification of memories.

The attitude of Christ and his community right from the beginning introduces a new dimension into human relationships, namely reconciliation. This spreads out in three directions : upwards (*katellagein*), horizontally (*sun-allagein*) and across (*diallagein*).

Reconciliation is not merely forgiveness requested or refused, nor is it forgetting. It is a step beyond, a walking with, a negotiation, ending in the creation of a new situation different from that of the beginning.

Reconciliation is a step beyond forgiveness, a walking with, a negotiation, ending in the creation of a new situation different from that of the beginning.

5) Fraternity

The word fraternity (*fraternitas, germanitas* in Latin),is hard to translate in some languages. African languages in particular are familiar with the “elder brother” and “younger brother” concept. In English, we have the words brotherhood and fraternity.

But the inclusive bond inherent in fraternity is easily understood.. This bond of brotherhood implies that a rupture has taken place in what was originally one. Otherness and brotherhood go together.

In Latin, *frater* and *fractio* come from *frangere*, to break. Fraternity is a conscious link recognised as superior to and beyond the break of blood and generation. Every fraternity is a reconciled fraternity. *Adelphote*, is a new word: it means not brotherly love (*philadelphie*) but the fact of being a brother/sister. It means, especially, the community of brothers/sisters.

06) The new cultures

When we analyse our world we find that it, and we ourselves, are shaken by socio-political imbalances, scientific discoveries not under full control, technical inventions widespread as never before, with worn-out ideologies and old systems. Being heirs to a civilising culture that has been emptied of spiritual meaning and is therefore culturally empty also, we have some reestablishing to do.

“A common sentiment seems to dominate the great human family today. Everyone wonders what future to construct in peace and solidarity, in this transition from one cultural era to another.” (Pope John Paul II, 12 January 1990).This address by the



Pope to the Pontifical Council for Culture was intended to open up new horizons for world culture. Looking at the cultural landscape of the world, we see the following: The great ideologies have shown their bankruptcy; self-styled scientific systems of social renewal have collapsed; myths of revolutionary human fulfilment have turned out to be tragic utopias which entailed a regression without precedent in the tormented history of humanity

Barriers are rising between the hopes for justice and their fulfilment, between opulence and destitution in a world where the struggle to have takes precedence over respect for life, and between an earthly messianism and the thirst for a new kind of justice.

But we have also seen the rise of a great hope, for liberty, responsibility, solidarity, spirituality. "The gap between culture and religion, between cultures and religions, is a drama", at least for the Catholic Church.. "The cultural upheavals of our age call us back to the essentials and to rediscover the fundamental concern, which is man in all his dimensions, political and social of course, but also cultural, moral and spiritual. The very future of humanity is at stake.

A dynamic of peace and reconciliation must be introduced at the heart of the upheavals of our age, which is bringing to birth new ways of thinking, acting and liv-

ing. Fidelity to the covenant, with the wisdom of the ages, is the unendingly new source of new cultures.(Pope John Paul II).These cultures will not bring peace except thanks to the presence of those who build peace. Biblical tradition tells of dry bones, clothed again in spirit and flesh by a new prophetic breath.

*A dynamic of peace
and reconciliation
must be introduced at the
heart of the upheavals
of our age*

7)Human Rights

The dynamic of peace through the mechanisms of truth, justice, forgiveness and reconciliation today enjoys a determining factor in human rights. “To make peace, one must appeal to the resources of peace itself, in the first place truth, which is the peace-making force par excellence, because it is spread by its own unrestricted outreach”. If you want peace, prepare for peace, not for war.

But how are we to proceed in the face of violence, itself born of non-truth? The history of law as such, and then of the right of each individual and group, illustrates the efforts made by people to contain violence by providing limits, rights and duties. It often happens that the moments when these rights emerge and are defined are hectic. This is true of the so-called Definition of Human Rights, and for us Christians the human rights of the person. The definition of these rights, as we know, is a hybrid, made up of a compromise between liberals and socialists, whose first concern, in fact, was not obviously human rights at all. Therefore both the interpretation and the definition become problematic, depending on whether you tend towards liberalism or socialism.

Another difficulty stems from the clash of imperialist ideologies. In such regimes, the exercise, like their application, is conditioned.

*If you want peace,
prepare for peace,
not for war*

The third difficulty is important too : it arises from globalization. Is it possible to respect and to inspire respect for human rights in a globalized situation? These human rights of the person remain, for us, the tool by which to obtain the minimum that can be demanded.

03 -Lasting Peace

“The restructuring of international relations, through international organization, has been based on a political approach, symbolised by the UN, and an economic ap-

proach, represented by the Breton Woods institutions and the GATT - succeeded by the WTO . However, world governance is also part of the logic of technological progress, the increasing power of information and ecological and humanitarian considerations. All of these raise awareness of what is universal, encouraging commitments to solidarity for the resolution of conflicts, a greater democracy, improved management of the human heritage and a fairer sharing of world resources." To be viable, the global village must be committed to a social approach.

Now, in any social approach steps must be taken in time, space and relationships. Times and spaces for peace must be created or invented.

To achieve this it is useful to

- * Draw up an inventory of short and long-term peace mechanisms
- * Multiply social institutions that foster peace
- * Initiate significant collective, family, inter-personal initiatives
- * At the level of society, structures generating consensus build peace if they are geared to
 - 1 - civil society, citizens and emerging associations (i.e. not simply NGOs)
 - 2 - target groups : young people (students, unemployed; workers)with a view to social dialogue
 - 3 - Quality social institutions.

*Times and spaces
for peace must be created
or invented*

III - PATHS OF RECONCILIATION

Part 3 outlines the paths to Reconciliation (p 10 - 12)

- fraternity
- cultural diversity
- in Christian fraternities

« 2001, International year for dialogue between civilisations » : the message of the World Peace Days commits Christians to dialogue with different traditions among peoples, for a more reconciled world.

3.1 : The aspiration to fraternity is a given:

“At the dawn of a new millennium, there is growing hope that relationships be-

tween people will be increasingly inspired by the ideal of a truly universal brotherhood.(WPD 2001) “Unless this ideal is shared, there will be no way to ensure a stable peace. There are many signs which suggest that this conviction is becoming more deeply rooted in people’s minds. The importance of fraternity is proclaimed in the great “charters” of human rights; it is embodied in great international institutions, particularly the United Nations; and it is called for, as never before, by the process of globalization which is leading to a progressive unification of the economy, culture and society. For their part, the followers of the different religions are ever more conscious of the fact that a relationship with the one God, the common Father of all, cannot fail to bring about a greater sense of human brotherhood and a more fraternal life together. In God’s revelation in Christ, this principle finds a radical expression: “He who does not love does not know God; for God is love”

However, there are shadows:

- nations with historic wounds : ancient enmities
- ongoing bloody conflicts
- solidarity difficult in relations between peoples and different cultural traditions
- the flood of migration

3.2 : Diversity of cultures and mutual respect (N 7)

Cultural pluralism, or multi-culturalism, is present everywhere..

1) The Past

The past and its shadows remain :

- Incomprehension, conflicts and even wars due to language, to the way of seeing values (morals, ethics, religion)
- The polemical affirmation of certain cultural identities against other cultures, or the oppression of certain identities cause people to close in and reclaim their identities
- Culture and national identity are wrongly linked. All cultures and the entire cultural journey of humanity are imbued with the mystery of iniquity (2 Th 2, 7).

Cultural authenticity today means that the ethos of each culture must be valued, namely to the extent to which its moral and ethical orientation serves authentically human ends.

2) The Present

Again, in our own day :

- The radicalisation of impermeable cultural identities generates violence.
- Passive acceptance of cultures or of some of their major aspects, in accordance with a secularised, liberal, one-dimensional concept, leads to a lowest common denominator.
- Geopolitical zones of influence merge, with cultural repercussions.

3) The way of dialogue

Dialogue between cultures is seen as intrinsic to the very nature of human beings and culture. By culture we mean the historically diversified and contextualised expression of the original unity of the human family. Dialogue becomes the way of safeguarding and understanding the particular, of being in reciprocal communion, of being enriched as we converge upwards, rather than reducing everything to uniformity or enforced recognition or assimilation.

Dialogue between cultures is seen as intrinsic to the very nature of human beings and culture

4) The challenge is three-fold

- Taking the risk of everyday communication in the face of globalised communication
- Migrations and territorial cohabitation
- Inter-cultural cohabitation

5) Education is the most useful tool to awaken :

- awareness of shared values,
- the value of solidarity
- the positive value of peace - the value of life
- awareness of building and contributing to each identity
- forgiveness and reconciliation
- the purification of memory.

We quote at length from the Document : “Fraternal Life in Community” (Rome 1994):

“Religious communities, aware of their responsibilities towards the greater fraternity of the Church, also become a sign of the possibility of living Christian fraternity and of the price that must be paid to build any form of fraternal life.

Moreover, in the context of the diverse societies of our planet—torn as they are by

the divisive forces of passion and conflicting interests, yearning for unity but unsure of what path to follow—the presence of communities where people of different ages, languages and cultures meet as brothers and sisters, and which remain united despite the inevitable conflicts and difficulties inherent in common life, is in itself a sign that bears witness to a higher reality and points to higher aspirations.

“Religious communities, who by their life proclaim the joy and the human and supernatural value of Christian fraternity, speak to our society about the transforming power of the Good News”.

“And above all these, put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony” (Col. 3:14), love as it was taught and lived by Jesus Christ and communicated to us through his Spirit. This love that unites is also the love that leads us to extend to others the experience of communion with God and with each other. In other words, it creates apostles by urging communities on their path of mission, whether this be contemplative, proclamation of the Word or ministries of charity. God wishes to inundate the world with his love; so, fraternal communities become missionaries of this love and concrete signs of its unifying power” (N 56)

REFLECTIONS OR THEOLOGICAL PRO-POSITIONS

Our efforts are inspired by Vatican II (Ad Gentes N 22) : all is subject to Revelation, new theological investigations of tradition and traditions. To tackle questions of multicultural diversity amounts to the recognition that philosophy and anthropology can never fail to include the question of:

- the one and the many
- Africa: one and many
- one man dying for the many.

Here, we are dealing with the paradoxical, mysterious link between the one and the many: a link which we call “relationship”.

In fact, under this term “relationship” we include some fundamental realities: truth, justice, peace, love, solidarity, mediation, reconciliation, intercession, etc..

The Latin roots of the word relationship (*res, ferre, latus*) evoke the gesture of bringing back, binding up again. In this sense, religion is a relationship with the absolute. Relationship has an integrative, « assembling », socialising value. It can be presented as a way or quality of being an individual, “open or closed”, able to contain the other’s being in their global (integral) dimension.

In African thought, to be, to exist, is to be bound together. The African is rela-

tionship. Misfortune or evil is the loss of or threat to relationships, without which he cannot exist and without which society dies.

Our position is that the emergence of the great evils of our times has something to do with the loss of the major relationships in the cosmos, the ecological system and in biological and ethical values.

Our position is that the emergence of the great categories of relationship is a KAIROS, a favourable moment to bring to the world the gospel of creation, the culture of peace, justice and reconciliation.

Our position is that relationships are a challenge to humanity and to the Church requiring a new vision, a new conscience, a new responsibility, a new perspective for preaching and conversion.

Relationship is a source and a resource where sin is multiplied and where grace is abundant. In this, multiplicity is not a grace : it is a chance for grace.

In African thought, to be, to exist, is to be bound together. Misfortune or evil is the loss of relationships.

PARADOXES

Paradox is present in every relationship, like a permanent tension, sometimes difficult and trying, a stumbling block and a reason to pick oneself up again. It is the paradox between:

- union in difference - unity and diversity
- identity and otherness
- variety et complementarity
- personality - community / fraternity
- individuality - collectivity / society
- solitude - communion

Sin is legion and has many names: a complex of fear, closed in on oneself, guilty silences, rivalries, mistrust, frustration, rejection, silent passivity, sectarianism, appealing to relations for self-protection or to exploit them.

But grace is also present there, making relationships vehicles of enrichment for eternity. Identity and otherness, unity and plurality are a call for a renewed humanity, capable of living, in a conscious, responsible way :

- inter-humanly
- inter-personally

- inter-culturally
- inter-religiously
- inter-nationally
- inter-ecclesially

Relationship has its component parts. These are:

- dialogue
- forgiveness
- reconciliation
- justice and peace
- love and truth
- intercession, mediation.

Relationship is given as a secret resource, a KAIROS, a favourable moment, in the midst of globalization.

Relationship is given as a secret resource, a *KAIROS*, a favourable moment, in the midst of globalization. It is given to our world of today in order to deepen :

- humanisation
- fraternity
- conviviality
- personalisation
- socialisation of creation and of societies

The way of the Church, which is our way, follows the road of the Incarnation of inculturation - integration, Redemption, la medication (dialogue), reconciliation.

Pluriform cultures and multi-racial societies and fraternities are places where others are betrayed and crucified.

Equally, they are places of possible holiness and resurrection to a new, world-wide humanity and ecclesial fraaternity.

FEBRUARY 2004 + A.T. SANON



"We experienced and want to gratefully acknowledge the gracious hospitality of our brothers in Ethiopia."

*Gospel brotherhood in a multi-ethnic world
Franciscan and Capuchin Perspectives*

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UNIVERSAL FRANCISCAN MISSION

1.1 Standing before the Areopagus in Athens, St. Paul proclaimed his Christian vision of the unity of humanity: *“From one ancestor (God) made all nations to inhabit the whole earth.”* (Acts 17:26) Our Christian faith gives us hope that one day we will construct such a unity between the diverse children of God that each will welcome the other without condition and without the attempt to colonize or in any other way diminish the other: *“I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.”* (Acts 10: 34-35)

1.2 This understanding did not come easily to Peter. It came as a result of the dramatic intervention of the Holy Spirit. Peter had a vision which shocked his cultural sensibilities. He was told to eat that which the dietary laws of Israel deemed unclean and rendered totally distasteful. He was literally taken and pushed into the home of the Gentile, Cornelius, where he learned something astonishing to a Jew: *“I truly understand that God shows no partiality:”* (Acts 10: 34) Despite the universality of his words, the true conversion of Peter to a universal vision of salvation, where Jew and Gentile stand equal before God, did not reach completion in the home of Cornelius. It led to the confrontation which Paul describes dramatically in Galatians: *“When Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood self-condemned; for until certain people came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But after they came, he drew back and kept himself separate for fear of the circumcision faction.”* (Gal 2: 11 - 12)

1.3 *“I truly understand that God shows no partiality.”* (Acts 10: 34) This was more than a civil rights struggle! It was for Peter and the apostles a struggle to understand and embrace the nature of the Church which from the very moment of its birth in the Pentecost event was revealed as universal, breaking all racial, ethnic and cultural barriers separating humanity: *“Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is*

it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphilia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs - in our own language we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power." (Acts 2: 7-11). "God's deeds of power" unite the inhabitants of entire world known by the apostles. St. Paul speaks of this as a "mystery ... made known to me through revelation." (Eph. 3:2) Paul says that this mystery "was not made known to humankind" in previous generations and, therefore, is an essential part of the newness of the gospel. (Eph 3: 5) "The Gentiles have become fellow heirs, members of the same body, and sharers in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel." (Eph. 3:6) It is a vision uncompromising in its universality.

1.4 The redemption revealed in the death and resurrection of Jesus goes beyond the Church, embraces all humanity and effects profound change in human relationships: "In him the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross." (Col 1: 19 - 20) The Church is commissioned to be the sign and mediator of God's universal love for all peoples and cultures. "I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him." (Acts 10: 34-35)

*From the very beginning
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1.5 From the very beginning of his conversion, Francis lived a universal vocation within the Church. Standing before the Bishop of Assisi, he visibly and publicly abandoned his social position as the son of Pietro Bernardone. By identifying himself with those lacking all social standing, Francis paradoxically became brother to all. The mission of his brotherhood was universal not only in its social dimension, but in its world-embracing concern for all peoples. When he had only eight followers, Francis instructed them: "Go, my dear brothers, ... two by two through different parts of the world, announcing peace to the people and penance for the remission of sins." (1Cel XII, 29) His biographer tells us, "Brother Bernard with brother Giles hastened on the way to Santiago, Saint Francis with one companion chose another part of the world. The other four, two by two, went to other regions." (1Cel XII, 30) Francis' mission was universal in its message of a brotherhood/sisterhood which includes all. The Legend of the Three Companions tell us that at the conclusion of the Chapter held twice a year at the Por-

tiuncula, Francis sent his brothers out into the world with this injunction:

“As you announce peace with your mouth, make sure that greater peace is in your hearts. Let no one be provoked to anger or scandal through you, but may everyone be drawn to peace, kindness and harmony through your gentleness. For we have been called to this: to heal the wounded, bind up the broken, and recall the erring.” (Legend of the Three Companions, XIV, 58)

*There shall be
no attempt to colonize
or in any other way
diminish the other
religiously.*

We see still another marvelous indication of the universality of the Franciscan vocation in Francis' encounter with the Sultan Malik al-Kamil who *“recognized (Francis) as a man unlike any other.”* (1Cel XX, 57). Perhaps as a consequence of this encounter, Francis instructed his brothers to be the signs and the mediators of God's universal love for all peoples and cultures. *“The brothers ... can live spiritually among ... nonbelievers in two ways. One way is not to engage in arguments or disputes but to be subject to every human creature for God's sake and to acknowledge that they are Christians. The other way is to announce the Word of God, when they see it pleases the Lord, in order that (unbelievers) may believe in almighty God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.”* (Earlier Rule, XVI, 5 - 7) There shall be no attempt to colonize or in any other way diminish the other religiously.

A COMMUNION OF COMMUNITIES

2.1 Karl Rahner believed that Vatican II, in terms of its profound and fundamental shift in the life and theological orientation of the church, was on the same level as the “Council of Jerusalem” in 49 AC in which the church had to embrace the wider vision of welcoming Gentile Christians into the former Jewish-Christian community and the Constantinian Adoption of the church as the Imperial Religion in the fourth century. Vatican II did not occur in a social and political vacuum! It occurred in a post-world war II period which reshaped the map of the world based on the inalienable right of peoples to self-determination. Celebrated in this context, the Council realized that the church does not exist in the abstract: it is incarnated in specific regions, cultures and peoples that make up a given local church. In the 1960's the church suddenly realized that it simultaneously existed in hundreds and even thousands of different cultures. In order to embrace such diversity, the church has to dis-

cover the source of authentic unity which goes beyond the mere uniformity which was presumed to be unity in the past, a uniformity very much based on European cultural experiences. Vatican II found this unity in the mystery of the Trinity: “the universal church is seen to be a people brought into unity from the unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit” (*Lumen Gentium*, 4). The Trinity is a communion of love in the diversity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The church is to live this communion on the earth, drawing the diverse children of humanity into the very life of the Trinity. In the words of *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, the Church exists as “the home and school of communion” for the world. (parag. 43) Living an intense communion of life and love in each local church, the universal church is a communion of communities whose diversities can be reconciled only when “brought into unity from the unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit” (*Lumen Gentium*, 4).

In the 1960's the church suddenly realized that it simultaneously existed in hundreds and even thousands of different cultures.

2.2 Like the Church itself, the Order moved in the Vatican II period from being a fraternity centered on Europe to a world-wide/multi cultural, multi racial and multi ethnic fraternity. Mirroring the Church, the Order now finds the majority of its brothers outside of Europe. The theology of communion has had a profound impact upon the Order's understanding of her identity and mission in the world. Gospel brotherhood is the Franciscan incarnation of the theology of communion. We are a brotherhood of evangelical witness.

Furthermore, just as the universal Church does not exist in the abstract, but in hundreds and even thousands of local churches incarnated in precise regions, cultures and peoples — so the universal Order does not exist in the abstract, but is incarnated and inculturated in hundreds of local fraternities. Just as the Church is redefined as a communion of communities, each Province and the Order as such must be reborn and re-founded as a “network of local fraternities”. In the theology of communion we find our mission: each local fraternity of our Order, living the reconciling love found in the gospel, is to be the “home and school of communion” for the local church. The communion of local fraternities formed into provincial networks, becomes a visible expression of, and catalyst for, the unity of the church itself spread throughout the world.

The universal Order does not exist in the abstract, but is incarnated and inculturated in hundreds of local fraternities.

A SPIRITUALITY OF BROTHERHOOD

3.1 In his Apostolic Exhortation, *Novo Millennium Ineunte*, Pope John Paul II reaches the conclusion that it is not sufficient simply to restructure the Church as communities. He sees an urgent need for a “spirituality of communion” wherein the life of the Trinity becomes our model of interaction with the world. (Cf. NM, 19). The Holy Father indicates the importance of such a development:

“Let us have no illusions: *unless we follow this spiritual path, external structures of communion will serve very little purpose*. They would become mechanisms without a soul, “masks” of communion rather than its means of expression and growth.” (NM, 43)

The urgency of the Pope’s concern is evident when we look at our world in constant conflict. It is more than evident that relationships between social, ethnic and religious communities require redemption if the world is to live in peace. Our Order has begun to respond to the Pope’s call for a “spirituality of communion” through the Sixth and Seventh Plenary Councils which re-image and re-interpret the gospel values of poverty and minority within the theology of communion thus creating a “spirituality of brotherhood”.

A FREE COMMUNION OF BROTHERS

4.1 We must rediscover our identity as lesser brothers in order to redeem relationships in our multi-ethnic world. Humility opens human hearts to the experience of relationship. Humility is the virtue which causes us to reach out and embrace the other. Humility is at the heart of Franciscan minority. The model of Franciscan humility or minority is the Holy Trinity. Following the inspiration of St. Bonaventure, the Trinity has been described as a “*free communion of persons without domination or deprivation*”. The Trinity *is* communion. The Trinity is “*free*” communion, a love which liberates. The Trinity is communion without imposition or domination. The Father does not dominate or control the Son, the Son does not condition the Holy Spirit. The Trinity is communion without deprivation. The Father is always and eternally Father without in any way diminishing the Son or the Holy Spirit. St. Francis rightly says that God *is* humility because our Trinitarian God is, by nature, relational. Humility expresses the relational nature of God. Humility likewise expresses the relational nature of our humanity. To be humble is to glory in the fact that we were cre-

ated in love and redeemed through love to live a loving relationship with the Triune God who created and redeemed us and with all creatures with whom we share life. The Trinity is the model of relationship which we seek to make our own as lesser brothers: “a free communion of brothers without domination or deprivation.” Such a fraternity is a source of communion for our multi ethnic world.

Humility opens human hearts to the experience of relationship.

4.2 “A free communion of brothers without domination or deprivation” flows from what our Constitutions call the “loving obedience” of the brothers. Franciscan obedience is ordered to relationship! “Loving obedience - a distinctive characteristic of our fraternity by which the brothers serve one another” draws us into communion. (Const. 84.2). The Holy Spirit, whom Francis calls, “the General Minister of the Order” is at the center of loving obedience because the Holy Spirit - the bond of unity between the Father and the Son - draws us into relationship.

4.3 It is interesting to note that for “loving obedience” to form a communion of brothers without domination, conversion begins not with the so-called “subject” but with the minister. This is evident from our Trinitarian model. It is not we (the subjects) who enter into relationship with the Trinity, it is the Holy Spirit, the General Minister, who draws us into relationship. Where relationships are filled with tension and conflict, we must first change our manner of exercising authority. The primary purpose of the exercise of authority in the Order is not to get the job done! Nor is it to “make the right decisions”! Rather, the primary role of authority is to draw the brothers into communion.... the role model of Franciscan authority is **the** “General Minister” of the Order, the Holy Spirit!

This is clear from our Constitutions when they describe the underpinnings of authority in our Order. *Service* is the first and primary source of authority: “Christ did not come to be served but to serve. To show this he washed the feet of the apostles,... Therefore the ministers...[should] serve the other brothers” (Const. 156.1, 2). The second source of authority is *coherence of life*. Ministers must practice what they preach: “Let the ministers preside over their fraternities in charity, becoming an example to them from the heart” (Const. 157.1). Thirdly, a minister receives authority through his capacity to listen to and dialogue with his brothers: “In a gospel spirit, let them [i.e., the ministers] willingly initiate dialogue with the brothers,...and accept their advice” (Const. 157.4). Finally, when all else fails, a minister finds authority in his of-

face: "...it is the responsibility of the ministers, in virtue of their office, to make the final decision" (Const. 157.4).

4.4 *Loving obedience* forms a communion of brothers without deprivation. St. Bonaventure uses the word *circumincessio* to describe this dimension of the communion of the Trinity. The Divine Persons "move around one another" in a communion of love. It is this mutually respectful collaboration of gifts which *loving obedience* seeks to form among the brothers for the service of the fraternity, the church and the world. "Whoever envies his brother the good that the Lord says or does in him incurs a sin of blasphemy because he envies the Most High himself who says and does every good thing" (Adm VIII, 3). "Blessed is that servant who no more exalts himself over the good the Lord says or does through him than over what he [the Lord] says or does through another" (Adm XVII, 1). "What a person is before God, that he is and no more" (Adm XIX, 1-2). In a Pentecost sermon, St. Anthony states that the Holy Spirit descended upon the apostles and disciples as parted tongues of fire. St. Anthony notes that in the communion of the primitive church these tongues of fire coalesced to form a river of fire which engulfed the world. *Loving obedience* is respectful of all the gifts of the fraternity. When *loving obedience* guides the gifts of the fraternity toward the growth of communion, these gifts coalesce to form a "river of fire" bringing the truth of the gospel to the world.

In the model of authority flowing from minority, it is the role of authority to enable and empower the gifts of the brothers as outpourings of the Holy Spirit for the building of the community. The ideal minister ensures that the gifts of his fraternity are actualized and fills in with his own works, what is lacking in the others. In a dominating model, the minister casts a great shadow over all. His gifts dominate and control. Others are called to do what he is unable to perform. In the latter model, authority is not the source of unity, rather it provokes competition and division.

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It is the role of authority to enable and empower the gifts of the brothers as outpourings of the Holy Spirit for the building of the community.

4.5 *"You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. It will not be so among you... ." (Mt 20:25-26)* Every ethnic and cultural community has its unique manner of exercising authority ... whether in the family or in the broader society. These models are inevitably based on that power which dominates and overshadows. Therefore, when the member of one ethnic community, in a non-reflective manner and according to his own ethnic tradition, exercises authority over members of other ethnic communities, it is inevitably perceived as the attempt to ethnically dominate. All structures of authority require the purification of the gospel! When this is not done, the exercise of authority becomes a source of ethnic tension. If our fraternities are to be the home and school of communion for the world, we must look at the manner in which we exercise authority on all levels ... within the fraternities and in the ministries of service we exercise in the church and society. There must be a studied and conscious effort to adopt a common "Capuchin" manner of exercising authority based on the spiritual values of our Constitutions.

Withdrawal into one's own ethnic community is an instinctive reaction to dominating and overshadowing power. This is true within civil society. It is equally true within the Church and the Order. The reform of authority structures is essential to the creation of multi ethnic fraternities. Where authority is exercised as a power which dominates and overshadows, competition for office results and divisions based on ethnic identity quickly enter in!

4.6 The reform of the exercise of authority must begin in the earliest stages of initial formation. Every brother is *"given to the brotherhood by God"* (Cons.26.1). *"With the greatest freedom, (he) must give a response of love to (God's call) that the dignity of the human person may be in harmony with the will of God."* (Const.14.2) The Constitutions continually repeat phrases such as, *"all formation is primarily the work of the Holy Spirit,"* (23.1), *"active formation requires the cooperation of those being formed"* (23.2), *"taking into consideration their individual personalities and gifts of grace..."* (25.4). In all cases, but particularly in multi cultural and multi ethnic situations, formation cannot be imparted through imposition and domination. Where domination exists, the young brothers instinctively withdraw into their ethnic communities to find strength and protection! The building of a multi ethnic fraternity requires formation structures without domination. When brothers sense that they are individually valued, they are able to grow and embrace relationships beyond their ethnic roots.

4.7 *“Let us cultivate mutual dialogue, sharing experiences with confidence and manifesting our needs to one another. ... let the spirit of brotherly understanding and sincere esteem permeate everyone”* (Const. 84.2). A fraternity conceived as communion cannot exist without dialogue and mutual esteem. It is exactly within this context that our Constitutions situate the local chapter: *“Special attention should be given to the local chapter as a primary means of promoting and expressing our growing together and the quality of our fraternal communion”* (2000 Const. 84.2). Properly conducted, the local chapter is an indispensable instrument to build communion in multi cultural situations. While reflecting on the local chapter I happened to read from the Acts of the Apostles: *“When he [Paul] had come down to Jerusalem, he attempted to join the disciples; and they were afraid of him, for they did not believe that he was a disciple”* (Acts 9:26). Three years after his conversion Paul continued to inspire fear in the Jerusalem community. Paul was no longer arresting Christians, but they still feared in him that power which dominates. There was the fear that Paul had substituted one ideology for another. *“They did not believe that he was a disciple.”* To gain the trust of the Jerusalem church Paul had to demonstrate that he, too, was subject to obedience! Trust grows among the brothers when they show respect for one another. The tenor of the local and provincial chapter is an excellent litmus test of the spirit of minority in the fraternity. *“Let all the brothers not have **power** or **control**...especially among themselves”* (ER, V, 9). While the local chapter is essential in every fraternity, it has particular importance in multi cultural situations. How many local and even provincial chapters end in disaster because one or more of the brothers are intent more on instructing and dominating the brothers than listening to them and esteeming them? When Provinces or Vice Provinces tolerate “unredeemed Pauls”, both local and Provincial chapters become impossible. This is one more reason why our fraternities must exorcize from their midst the “unredeemed Pauls” of our Order by consciously choosing a style of leadership based on service. The leadership of dominating power enslaves all (paradoxically, beginning with one’s own ethnic family), a leadership of service liberates the talents and the hearts of the brothers.

To gain the trust of the Jerusalem church Paul had to demonstrate that he, too, was subject to obedience!

A FRATERNAL ECONOMY

5.1 The Sixth Plenary Council, *Living Poverty in Brotherhood*, was held in 1998. The Seventh Plenary Council, *Our fraternal life in minority: as pilgrims and strangers in this world serving the Lord in poverty and humility*, will be held in March of this year. Thematically, the CPOVI should have followed CPOVII, because in the plan of Francis, evangelical poverty is the guardian and protector of evangelical humility. A “*fraternal economy*” is an essential dimension of a “*free communion of brothers with domination or deprivation*,” This is clearly stated in proposition six of CPOVI:

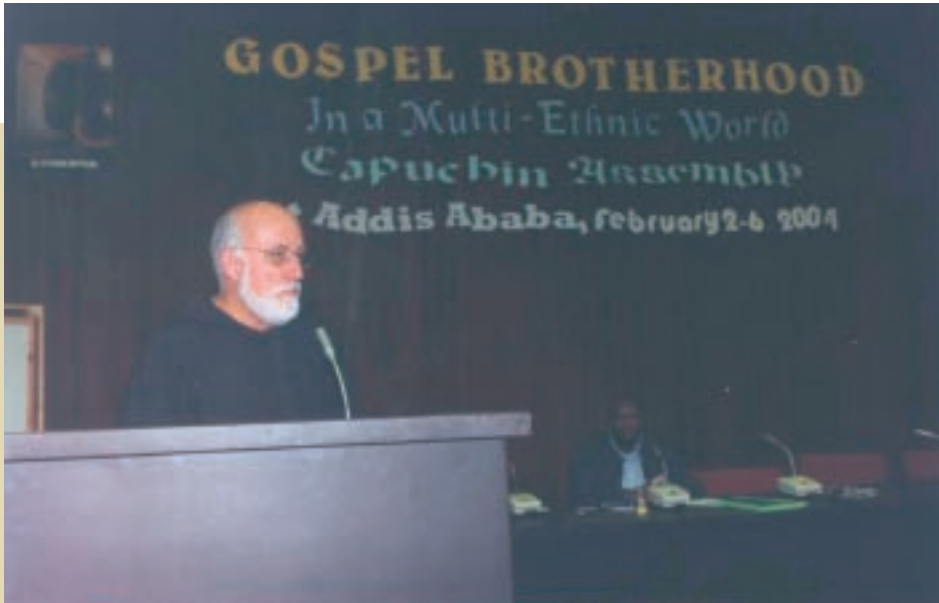
“Francis judged that greed and avarice disrupt relationships with God, just as ambition and competition damage the sense of brotherhood among people. In order to live the gospel ideal of love and brotherhood in its fulness, Francis and his first companions adopted a form of life that involved courageous choices of poverty for those times.” (Prop. 6)

5.2 A *fraternal economy* differs radically from the *global economy* of our day. The central objective of the *global economy* is to increase wealth. The central objective of a *fraternal economy* is to increase communion between people. The means which the *global economy* uses to achieve its end include cut-throat competition and the concentration of wealth and power in the hands of a few by the domination and control of financing, production and marketing. The means to achieve the purpose and end of the *fraternal economy* are solidarity and mutual dependence, participation, and protection of the weakest. The principles of a *fraternal economy* will profoundly change our attitude toward the goods of the earth, work, the poor, as well as administration. This, in turn, will transform our relationships to one another and to the peoples of the earth. The *fraternal economy* will never replace or overturn the *global economy* but it will make our Order “*the home and the school of communion*” in this newly emerging economic world.

5.3 I think that I can honestly say that unless the economy of your Province, Vice Province or Custody was consciously changed and reformed following CPOVI, you are probably still functioning, in whole or in part, according to the principles of the *global economy* wherein the object of the provincial or local economy is the protection of money and there are no conscious links between the administration of goods and the growth of communion.

Where protection of money rather than growth of communion is the central objec-

tive of the economy, abuses enter. Economic authority is concentrated in the hands of a few, financial decisions are made autonomously by individual brothers without accountability and great secrecy or confusion surrounds the administration of money. Very often, those in control of the money are perceived as benefactors or patrons



of the other brothers. These become men of dominating power. In such situations, we cannot speak of *"a free communion of brothers without domination or deprivation."* When such an economy exists in multi ethnic situations, ethnic divisions are not surprising.

The central objective of a fraternal economy is to increase communion between people.

"Francis judged that greed and avarice disrupt relationships with God, just as ambition and competition damage the sense of brotherhood among people. In order to live the gospel ideal of love and brotherhood in its fulness, Francis and his first companions adopted a form of life that involved courageous choices of poverty for those times." (Prop. 6)

If we wish to build *"a free communion of brothers without domination or deprivation"*,

source of communion for the Church and the world, we must find the same courage as Francis to adopt a radically different economy. If the economies of our Provinces and local fraternities are critiqued and reformed according to the three principles: *solidarity*, *participation* and *transparency* much will have already been done to build a more fraternal economy and to redeem relationships between brothers themselves and between the brothers and the people they are called to serve.

CONCLUSION

6.1 Identification with one's ethnic group, as an extension of familial relationships, is a source of identity and security for people. Unfortunately, it is also a source of contrast and division. Our Capuchin brotherhood, existing today in 97 nations and embracing hundreds of ethnic communities, has a particular vocation to be a *home and school of communion* (see *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, n. 43; see also *Consecrated Life*, n. 51). Sociology and politics alone will never transform ethnic relationships. Change requires the power of God, for "to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, **not of blood** or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God" (Jn 1:12-13).

Only upon this faith foundation can we create authentic fraternities empowered to give witness to the fact that the water of baptism is stronger than blood! Baptism – and specifically, its expression through the bonds of Franciscan brotherhood – forges a solidarity, a unity and mutual dependence which is stronger and more effective than any ethnic bond. *Water is stronger than blood!* This conviction demands a profound conversion on our part. The conversion born of baptism and the conversion to Franciscan brotherhood must be demonstrated through decisions to act differently and to give concrete expression to what is envisioned in the Rule:

"If a mother loves and cares for her son according to the flesh, how much more diligently must someone love and care for his brother according to the Spirit?" (Later Rule, VI, 8).

Our Capuchin brotherhood, existing today in 97 nations and embracing hundreds of ethnic communities.