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The Holiness of Eugene de Mazenod

Conference given at Aix-en-Provence, December 3, 2005

10th Anniversary of the Canonization of the Founder

Fr. Bernard DULLIER, OMI, Provincial of France

Introduction:

What is our idea of holiness?

Often we identify holiness and innocence. For us, a saint is often someone who has no sin; someone who, in some way, was born with a halo behind his head.

But that is not the Christian meaning of holiness. Biblical holiness means a daily effort to try to live in imitation of God, the only One who is truly holy. It means to try to lead a life that will continually reflect this holiness of God. It is thus that one could speak of holy King David. We are well aware of the many sins he accumulated during his lifetime. But his life was an enduring quest for life with God, under the watchful eye of God.

One does not achieve Christian holiness by arm-twisting. It is achieved and it is nourished throughout a lifetime. It is never achieved once and for all.

Nor is it reserved for a few exceptional persons. Every man, every woman is called, because man and woman are the image and likeness of God, the image and likeness of the only one who is Holy.

Why celebrate the 10th anniversary of the recognition of the holiness of Eugene de Mazenod?

We need guides and models on our own path to holiness, saints who speak to us today and who tell us: "This path which I have walked, this path that led to the full blossoming and the achievement of my life, you too can walk that path today."

Eugene de Mazenod was one of those persons. The authenticity of his holiness, his nearness to us in time and space can be guides for our lives. He can be for us one of those "big brothers" about whom they speak so often these days.

He can make us want to imitate him because he has made a success of his own life and the same human pathway that we walk today.

Eugene de Mazenod is someone within our reach, with his good qualities and his faults.

No, he was not born with a halo behind his head. He kept his personality with all its faults. Thus, he is as proud as a peacock when he receives the pallium! He is as mad as an old rooster when he does not receive the cardinal's hat. He seems vain to us when he gives himself the title of "count" when he does not have the right to do so. His temper tantrums are terrible; for example, when he tears the breviary out the hands of his first companion, Fr. TEMPIER, and throws it on the floor.

But with all that, he is hardly different from a lot of other saints and that leaves us room to hope for our own eventual canonization.

Therefore, what is the holiness of Eugene de Mazenod and on what paths can he lead us today?

I. The holiness of Eugene de Mazenod is simply to let oneself be turned upside down by Christ.

Brought up by the rules of the Old Regime, a nobleman destined to live according to the principles of his social class and to try to restore them after the Revolution, Eugene de Mazenod is above all someone who let himself be turned upside down by Christ, one who is willing, as was St. Paul, to give up everything because of Christ and for Christ.

Having experienced a personal encounter with Christ, he leaves aside all of the images of himself that he had from his times, his culture and his class to allow Christ lead him on a day by day path of gradual revelation. The face of Christ is little by little

revealed to him through events and encounters. And as the days go by, he is ever more astonished.

Each phase of his life is a new discovery of Christ. He appears to Eugene first of all as someone very much alive, waiting for him with open arms. Then he discovers Christ as his Savior, the One who loved him first and will always love him, no matter what he does. Christ reveals himself to him as the Friend who is there for him in the dark night of doubt and despair. He manifests himself to Eugene as the Spouse, the one whose coming John the Baptist announced, the one who satisfies human hearts and opens man to the size of God's heart.

There are two events in the Old Testament which, it seems to me, sum up perfectly the way in which Eugene de Mazenod allowed himself to be seized by Christ: the experience of the patriarch Jacob ("You were there, Lord, and I did not know it." Gen. 28:16) and that of the prophet Jeremiah ("You duped me, Lord, and I let myself be duped." Jer. 20:7).

This is also the experience of John the Baptist, the Friend of the Spouse, who humbles himself to let Christ have the place of honor. It is especially the experience of Mary who lets herself, step by step, be guided by the life, the encounters, the words of her Son.

For Eugene de Mazenod, Christ is always fresh, always new, always young and inviting.

It is this passion for Christ, his awe at the love with which he is loved, freely and definitively, that will give direction to his whole life and all of his apostolate.

"You are not only my Creator and my Redeemer; you are my benefactor, you are my gentle friend, because you have loved me first, without reservation, totally and forever, whatever I do. You carry me on your shoulders; you keep me warm at your breast... You are my God, gentle and merciful. I want to spend my whole life proclaiming just that. I want everyone to someday have that same experience of your gentle love." (Retreat, December 1811)

II. The holiness of Eugene de Mazenod is to look at the world through God's eyes.

Eugene de Mazenod became a priest in a Church touched both by two centuries of Jansenism and by the brutal ordeal of the Revolution. That leaves many seeing the world in terms of "black and white." That leads them to search for the old "moral values." The episcopacy and a large part of the clergy, as well as many laity, are convinced that they should take a step backward, to restore the old privileges, often in a spirit of triumph and revenge.

Even though his noble origins and his predilection for order could lead him in this direction, Eugene de Mazenod purposefully takes another path by adopting a biblical view of man and of the world. Having a clear sense that he is loved freely and with no merit of his own, but simply because God is God, and that God is a God of love who is totally in love with mankind, Eugene de Mazenod looks at mankind with God's eyes.

Nevertheless, he is not naïve, after the manner of Rousseau and the Encyclopedists or of certain revolutionaries such as Fabre D'Eglantine. He knows that mankind is capable of terrible horrors. He was a frightened witness of the carnage of the Reign of Terror and the violence of the Revolution of 1830. He was shocked to witness the bloody repression of the "hunger strikes" in June, 1848, in Marseille. He was a contemporary of the Crimean War and the conquest of Algeria. He knows that man is capable of the very worst. He himself was a victim of calumnies and of anonymous accusations. He was shamefully deprived of his French citizenship. Because of the meanness of others, he did not become a cardinal.

But he believes that each person, even the cruelest, the most depraved, is a creature who is loved by God and predestined to become like God. Enraptured by a God who loves enough even to die on the cross, he believes in the greatness of human destiny. He dreams great dreams for humanity, for every person, and especially for everyone who is forgotten, crushed, without hope, who even believes himself to be forgotten by the compassion of God.

Thus, he looks at humanity with God's eyes when he starts his ministry with youth. He brings together not only the son of the imperial procurator for Aix, but also the street children, those whom the Mar-

quis d'Arlatan calls "the rabble." He loves them and respects them so much that he calls each one "Mister." He believes in each one of them so much that very quickly they see him as a father, revealing to them the fatherhood of God.

Thus, he looks at humanity with God's eyes when, for Lent of 1813, he gathers together the poor of Aix-en-Provence, those whom many pass by without noticing them, those who are without hope and he tells them, in the Church of the Madeleine:

"Come, especially you, the poor of Jesus Christ! Please God I may make my voice heard in the four corners of the world... We shall begin by teaching you who you are, what your noble origins are, the rights you derive from them, as well as the obligations they impose upon you.

Man is God's creature.

You, the poor of Jesus Christ, the afflicted and wretched, the sick and suffering and covered with sores, etc., whom misery overwhelms, my brethren, my dear brethren, my dear respectable brethren, listen to me. You are the children of God, the brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ, the co-heirs of his eternal Kingdom, the cherished portion of his inheritance; you are, in the words of Saint Peter, the holy nation, you are kings, you are priests, you are, in some way, gods.

God alone was worthy of your soul. God alone was able to satisfy your heart." (*Sermon at the Madeleine, March 3, 1813*)

Thus, he looks at humanity with God's eyes when he cares for prisoners and particularly, those condemned to death and when he sees in them the very face of Christ:

"Thanks be to you, my God! For having arranged some joy for me, in the midst of the boredom and adversities of a painful trip, by procuring your glory and doing some good, a lot of good, for several souls that you have redeemed with your blood.

I came to Gap to confer the sacrament of Holy Orders...but there was to be no ordination. But the good God had not brought me to Gap for that

reason. In the depths of a jail cell there was a man faced with a public curse, a vile criminal, a scoundrel condemned to death waiting to see himself led to the scaffold.

There was nothing more to be done for him except to recommend him to the mercy of God. Such would have wished the horrible prejudice, the barbarian abuse which mercilessly refuses any other religious comfort to a man condemned to death.

Today I went to say Mass in the prison. All the prisoners and some other people took part in it. We obtained permission for the condemned man to be freed from some of his irons to be able to come to the chapel.

At Communion time, I moved everyone aside to station him on the lowest altar step. The feast was for him, the honors were due to him since, even though he was condemned to death and weighed down with chains, as I saw him, he was then reconciled with God. God had pardoned his crimes; to my eyes he was to be admired, a privileged person for whom the Lord had worked marvels, someone predestined and for whom Christ had shed his blood. It is only to him that I spoke.

After the Holy sacrifice, I had the condemned man come forward again and spoke to him as an immediate preparation for receiving the Holy Spirit through the sacrament of Confirmation that I was to administer to him.

I concluded by giving a blessing with the Blessed Sacrament. It was fitting that there be nothing lacking in the solemnity of this day." (*Diary of July 16, 1837*)

For Eugene de Mazenod, holiness is truly the participation in the very nature of God and his plan as Creator for each person. Since God is one who has great dreams for humanity, Saint Eugene had this same dream for all those whom he saw or who were in his thoughts.

But it is not only in dreaming but also in acting that man can become what he is in God's heart.

His effort to do everything possible for the service

of humanity invites him to become involved in the world, in imitation of Christ on the cross who looked at the world with love. Since God is true to his word, since God's love is active, Saint Eugene truly loves, not only with words, but with actions (see John's first Letter: "Whoever says that he loves God and does not love his brother is a liar.")

His love for Christ gives direction to his love for humanity: a love as big as the world, because that is the size of God's heart.

"May the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all ... so as to strengthen your hearts, to be blameless in holiness before our God and Father (I Th 3:12-13)

III. The holiness of Eugene de Mazenod is an Incarnation holiness, lived day by day.

Eugene de Mazenod is not a theologian, even though he made a solid study of theology and though, unusual as it was in his day, he had an excellent biblical and patristic background.

He is above all someone who fully lives each minute of each day. Each event, big or little, every encounter, is for him an opportunity to discover the call and the presence of God, the opportunity to accomplish the work of Redemption "for the glory of God and the salvation of men."

His discovery of God is first of all the discovery of an Incarnate God. Also, for him, life is important because God is present in this world in everything that lives.

Eugene de Mazenod wrote a very long Lenten Pastoral Letter on the angels. That might surprise us that he would seem so removed from the life of the people in his diocese. But in the Gospels, the angels are the sign of God's presence. They are there at the Annunciation and on Christmas. They are there to minister to Christ after the temptation in the desert. They are there in the Garden of Olives and on Easter morning. They are there again at the Ascension. Their presence, in both happy and sad circumstances, means that the promise of God is being carried out: "The Holy Spirit will overshadow you...;" "I proclaim to you news of great joy...;"

"Do not seek the Living among the dead..." Their presence means that God always does what he said he would do. Their presence tells man that he is precious in the eyes of God.

In this sense, the holiness of Eugene de Mazenod is an "angelic" holiness," just the opposite of "disembodied." It is an embodied holiness, anchored in life in this world, signifying and accomplishing the presence of God in each event of the life of each person, inviting all to participate and collaborate in the salvation desired by God.

It is holiness personified in a young priest who was touched by the hardships of children come from Savoy to clean the chimneys of wealthy hotels in Aix, exploited children, left to themselves, sleeping in the street. It is for them that he began a ministry with the "little chimney sweeps."

It is holiness personified in the bishop who made people wait for him at an official dinner given by the prince of Joinville, son of the King of France. He considered it to be more important to help a dying old drunken woman in the Panier neighborhood of Marseille, a poor woman he knew well who had been abandoned by everyone.

It is holiness personified in the Founder who was touched by the concern of Bishop Bourget of Montreal who had no one to care for the most abandoned people in his diocese. It is for him that he sends six Oblates to Canada, without regard for the fragility of the jus blossoming Congregation.

It is holiness personified when he can not bear to see soldiers dying of the plague and of cholera without anyone to help them.

"That was the last event in a very disturbing and painful day for me. I am confiding it to this diary before going to bed, even though it is very late, and I am truly exhausted in mind and body. Poor soldiers! They are dying during all these discussions. That is what distresses me. God knows that I am weeping for all those who perish so miserably abandoned. To feel them so close to me, in my diocese, under my windows so to say, and not to come to their aid, that breaks my heart. I have made an extraordinary effort and for two days have moved

heaven and earth to come to their assistance, yet I am disappointed at not being able to move fast enough all the gears that needed to be put in motion. I am going to bed; I will sleep if I can..." (Personal Diary of October 31, 1837)

It is holiness personified in a "Prince of the Church" who was delighted to be able to entertain a gang of noisy children, even if that disrupted his already full appointment book.

"I woke the whole house well before dawn. What a disappointment! The sky is covered in cloud and there is even a light drizzle. What can we do? It would be just too embarrassing to go back to Marseille. 'Children, must we go to the mountain which the clouds are hiding from our sight?' – 'Yes, yes,' is the cry which comes from all sides. 'We will go since you want to do so but beware of the rain.' – 'We must go nevertheless!' Here we go with the children climbing onto the carriage which was to carry them and their provisions. I could see clearly that it was going to rain but what is a little drop of rain compared to the happiness of the good little children? It would take all the water of the deluge to quench their enthusiasm. The group was numerous and happy. Were about thirty, between children and grownups." (Personal Diary of October 29, 1838)

It was holiness personified in a normal day of his life as a bishop.

"What a morning! It is not merely a question of giving money, but to be faced with unfortunate people and to realize that, even doing the impossible, I am not able to meet their needs, is more than I can cope with. A widow whose husband has died in Cayenne and who hasn't a penny either to live or to return to her country. A young man, of Belgian nationality, coming out of a hospital where he spent all his money and who is now worn out by his illness and by frustration, has only the 10 francs given him by his consul to get him back to Belgium. An old lady, the sister of a priest of the diocese who died a long time ago, who has all her belongings in the pawn shop and who has not the wherewithal to go to her son who would at least give her a bowl of soup to prevent her dying of hunger.

So many other cases of misery as well! I just cannot keep going. Apart from what I was able to give, I wrote a letter of recommendation for the widow to a lawyer. I wrote a letter on behalf of the young Belgian to a member of the administration of charity. After all that, try to sit down to table and eat if you can!

The day was not yet over for my heart already so mangled. I learned that the parish priest of Saint Julian has been vomiting blood for three days. In spite of the rain, I hastened to him. This was my duty, I, the father of my diocesan people, who love the priests like the elders of my spiritual family. " (Personal Diary of September 5, 1838)

IV. The holiness of Eugene de Mazenod is the holiness of daring.

"One has to keep going forward... that something God demands of me. Therefore, above all, I have to work seriously to become a saint. Charity must be creative. We have to find new ways to meet new needs." (Retreat of 1837)

Christ is someone who, although being God, was daring enough to not cling jealously to being equal to God. He dared to commit himself to our human condition, to face the intolerance and the rules of the law, to run the risk of death, death on a Cross.

How could one claim to share the holiness of Christ without running these same risks? That is the final aspect of the holiness of Eugene de Mazenod: a daring holiness for the Glory of God and the salvation of mankind.

He was daring enough to believe that he had been called by God to become a priest, and then a missionary religious, in spite of his youth and the "worldly" life he had lived until he was 26.

He was daring enough to have confidence in his first companions who were not a bunch of "choir boys" and to believe that with this little group of men, the Lord could work wonders.

He was daring enough to go against public opinion, the "politically correct," the traditionalists and those

who thought they knew everything, those of his own family, of his social caste, even the clergy.

He was daring enough to gather street children and to teach them so that they, in their turn, could teach others.

He was daring enough to risk preaching a theology of gentleness and mercy instead of the prevalent rigorist theories.

He was daring enough to come to the defense of Félicité de Lamennais and to write for him letters of recommendation to the pope.

He was daring enough to stand up to the powerful of the world: emperors and kings, prefects and mayors, cardinals and bishops, whatever the risks might be.

He was daring to launch the adventure of the foreign missions even though his group of missionaries had only about 40 members.

He, the Senator of the Empire, the dean of the French episcopate, was daring enough to be seen in public with prostitutes, the fishmongers, the shipyard workers, the soldiers ill with typhus...

He was daring enough to offer his friendship, never taking it back, even when he felt betrayed.

Finally, he was daring enough to work as if everything depended on him and then to put all his trust in God as if everything depends on him and him alone.

You, LORD, give light to my lamp; my God brightens the darkness about me.

With you I can rush an armed band, with my God to help I can leap a wall.

God's way is unerring; the LORD'S promise is tried and true; he is a shield for all who trust in him. (Psalm 18:29-31)

May this prayer become our own. Like Eugene de Mazenod, if we dare to put these verses into practice, we too will become saints for today's world.

The Superior's ministry is to love all the more...
by Marcello Sgarbossa, OMI

Father Marcello SGARBOSSA, OMI, Provincial of Italy, wrote this letter to the Oblates of the Italian Province about the role of the Superior in an Oblate community.

November 2005

Dearest brothers,

I closed the meeting of Superiors with these words:

"We have completed a period of ongoing formation and we have promised to look at our service as nurturing that quality of Oblate life which is the first of our priorities.

We are certainly aware that today the person of the Superior is understood differently; there are new ways understanding the individual person, as well as the community, and it is clear that in the social, ecclesial, and religious context in which we live, it is more difficult to render this service.

It will be our presence, our closeness, the breadth of our humanity, our prayer, our faithfulness, our dependability, in a word, our belief in Jesus Christ and in the mission, that will give us the authority we need to animate, to lead, to support, to encourage, to correct our brothers who are given to our care.

In a word, the ministry of the Superior is to love all the more."

To speak about the Superior, it was necessary to speak about responsibility, about corresponsibility, and about community. In fact, if there is a Superior, there are brothers to serve and a community to animate.

“In rediscovering the meaning and quality of consecrated life a fundamental task is that of superiors, to whom the service of authority has been entrusted, a demanding and at times disputed task. It requires a constant presence which is able to animate and propose, to recall the raison d’être of consecrated life, and to help those entrusted to them to live in a constantly renewed fidelity to the call of the Spirit. A superior cannot renounce the mission of animation, of brotherly/sisterly support, of proposing, of listening and of dialogue. Only in this way can the entire community find itself united in full communion and in apostolic and ministerial service.” (Starting Afresh from Christ, #14)

Therefore, the quality of our life is entrusted to the Superior.

This first priority, expressed in unmistakable terms in both the Planning and the Strategy Documents, presupposes what our Constitutions and Rules tell us: “Each of us, moreover, is the principal agent of his own development; throughout life’s various stages, we are called to respond generously to the promptings of the Spirit. . . . Formation is a process which aims at the integral growth of a person and lasts a lifetime. It enables us to accept ourselves as we are and develop into the persons we are called to be. . . . The goal of the formation process is that each of us become an apostolic man, capable of living the Oblate charism. Inspired by the example of Mary, we live in creative and ongoing fidelity our personal commitment to Jesus Christ, while serving the Church and God’s Kingdom. (CC. 49, 47, 46)

Having stated each one’s personal responsibility, the CCRR insist very clearly on the responsibility of Superiors, on all levels, to help the Oblate on this journey. Giving direction and guidance for religious life, and the animation of the spiritual life of the community are the duties of the Superior. This is not something that can be assigned to others.

“The exercise of authority. It is a necessary and precious service meant to assure an authentically fraternal life, while seeking the will of God. In reality, it is the Risen Lord himself, present again among his brothers who are united in his name (cfr. PC 15) who points out the road to travel.

Only if the Superior, on his part, lives in obedience to Christ and in sincere observance of the rule, then will the members of the community clearly see that their obedience to the Superior is not only not contrary to the freedom of the children of God, but makes it mature with Christ, obedient to the Father. (Benedict XVI in the Osservatore Romano, 30 September 2005.)

My second visit to the communities of the Province and of the Delegations had as its objective to remind the communities of this essential factor in our life.

I can state that, in fact, the communities are trying to be faithful to a simple and welcoming lifestyle, to a rhythm of common prayer and that they are attentive to the apostolic project of the communities. I do not have much to say on an official level, other than that too often, community life takes second place to the duties of ministry. I believe that what needs to be constantly highlighted is that “unity of heart and mind” which the CCRR point out to us as our first witness and as the first step in evangelisation. (Cfr. CCRR #37)

In order to take a step forward toward dynamic communities, I believe it is important to have established times and places for interaction (community meetings), so necessary for arriving at true communion. It is not a question of planning meetings during which pastoral duties are assigned, or simply to plan anniversaries and vacations, but meetings to help us discuss that life which once we all freely chose, the “following of Christ” in community, according to the spirit and the charism of the Oblates.

It is up to the Superior to conduct these meetings and we know how difficult it is to get reactions.

The CCRR speak of the Superior as the promoter of the community’s apostolic project, as a theological symbol of Oneness of Life and therefore, a sign of the Lord’s presence. The Chapter document, “Witnessing in Apostolic Community,” speaks of the Superior as the pastor of his brothers. This biblical image recalls the figure of the Good Shepherd. It suggests an attitude of brotherhood, of mercy, of awareness, but at the same time, of commitment, of working for the flock. The Good Shepherd calls

them each by name; he knows them and he leads them by walking in front of them. All of this is a clear call to be a witness.

In this context, the Superior seeks, along with the community, a quality of life. He seeks consensus about the values of the community and the ways to express them in an Oblate way, certainly taking into account that times have changed since the Founder's day and many years have passed. It is not easy these days to stay the course, guided by the evangelical counsels, by a peaceful encounter with the Word of God, by the CCR which give us our identity. It is not easy to refuse to go along with a certain worldly mentality. It is not easy to tell the world: we are consecrated to God, and therefore, we are your servants.

Today more than ever, it is necessary to unfurl our sails to the Spirit's wind in order to avoid becoming pulled in by the snares which the world passes off as modern and up-to-date, with the danger of being left behind by many laity who cling with joy and enthusiasm to an authentic Christian life.

The Superior is at the helm of the fragile and too often tiny community boat, but he is not a lone navigator. Other brothers are in the boat and all are called to collaborate and thus steer the course through the storms.

Service of authority is essential so that everyone can live well and together take the necessary steps to arrive at what the Founder calls "the glory of God, the salvation of souls, and our own sanctification."

Global Trade and the Common Good

by Andrew Small, OMI

Fr. Andrew SMALL, OMI, is Foreign Policy Advisor to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and was a member of the Holy See Delegation to the Sixth Ministerial Meeting of the World Trade Organization in Hong Kong in December 2005.

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In his 2003 Encyclical on the Eucharist, Pope John Paul II repeated St. Paul's admonition to the early church: "[I]t is 'unworthy' of a Christian community to partake of the Lord's Supper amid division and indifference towards the poor." In the year of the Pope's passing, there are positive signs that concern for the poor is alive and well.

At the start of 2005, Americans donated \$1.3 billion to tsunami-hit areas to help with relief efforts – a record for an overseas disaster. The public gave \$1.7 billion after hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf Coast on August 29. At the same time, America continued to lead the global fight against HIV/AIDS. And the commitment of the Group of Eight (G8) leading economies to cancel debt of heavily indebted countries is evidence that the poor are not abandoned.

Despite these positive signs, the poor are getting

poorer, and the gap between rich and poor is getting wider. The combined wealth of the richest 500 individuals is greater than that of the 416 million poorest ones. Ten percent of the globe earns over fifty percent of the world's income, while forty percent earns just five percent.

Inequity, not prosperity, is what ails us and no amount of public or private wealth sharing, however necessary, can realistically overcome that fact. What is required is a reform of the rules of the global economy itself, starting with the global trading system. As 2005 ends, there will be a chance to make the global economy work for all.

This December, the 148 nations of the World Trade Organization (WTO) will gather in Hong Kong to advance the latest round of trade negotiations. Dubbed the Doha Development Agenda, because

of its goal of making trade promote development, success will depend on two things. First, the WTO will have to right the wrongs of the past by fixing unfair trade rules. Second, rich countries will need to go the extra mile and make sure poor countries are afforded generous trade terms.

So far, increased trade has worked well for a few, and it's easy to see why. While preaching open markets and free trade, rich countries have maintained a formidable range of protectionist measures that have skewed the benefits of globalization in their favor. Inequality is not the work of a hidden hand. Inequality has its causes. Equally, it has its solutions, though they may require patience and perseverance in a world that has little time for either.

Economic and Social Compacts

In a wide-ranging talk to members of the US Congress and Catholic bishops from across the hemisphere recently, Chicago's Cardinal Francis GEORGE, OMI, recognized the significance of global trade in battling inequality and promoting a culture of life.

The Vice-President of the US Bishops' Conference recalled the legacy of Pope John Paul II and his struggle against totalitarianism. False promises brought down communism, the Cardinal said, and, though of a different order, false promises create problems for the social contract in the United States.

Under communism, the Cardinal said, people were promised social justice in exchange for personal liberty, an internal contradiction that led to communism's demise. The free market, on the other hand, promises that if we accept inequality long enough then, in the end, there will be more wealth for everyone. While there is evidence that this promise brings increased prosperity, there is also evidence that it does not work for all and the cost to the poor is too great.

Cardinal George has pointed to a fundamental flaw in current efforts to liberalize the global economy. It follows, therefore, that no system of laws can accept growing inequality as a means to an end. Justice cannot be traded for wealth. While economic globalization has its own logic, it does not have its own ethic. Without a moral framework, the logic of

greater economic integration may increase wealth while failing to respond to the needs of all, especially the most vulnerable. And that, sooner or later, would be its undoing.

Behind the complicated economics, divergent opinions on free trade rage. Some see free trade as the solution to all problems; others see it as the source of all problems. For this reason, the Cardinal's insight comes at an important moment for global trade. The US Congress is still smarting from a bruising battle over the US-Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) that passed by a smaller margin than the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) ten years earlier. Clearly NAFTA's benefits are not obvious to everyone. Meanwhile, the United States and 147 other members of the World Trade Organization are locked in tense negotiations in the run-up to Hong Kong. Trade was supposed to unite people and nations. It is in danger of doing just the opposite.

Doha and the post-September 11 world

Two months after September 11, 2001, WTO members met in Doha, Qatar and agreed to make trade an engine of development, echoing the plan of the Allied powers after World War II to link fair trade rules with global stability.

The Doha Declaration recognized that trade was not working for poor countries, and placed their interests "at the heart" of the current trade round. For now, agriculture is both a keystone and stumbling block in Doha negotiations. Some 1.3 billion people, about half the work force in developing countries, are employed in agriculture, usually as small farmers. They face multiple disadvantages in converting their labor into economic growth. They are confronted not only by subsidies and tariff levels in developed countries; but are beset by poor physical and financial infrastructure as well as environmental degradation and political insecurity.

The World Bank estimates that poor countries are losing \$200 billion annually in agricultural trade alone because of current trade rules. Most of the world's poor still live in the countryside. In the short term, unlocking their potential by building capacity and affording them access to markets – local or interna-

tional – may offer a bridge between poverty and opportunity.

By itself, trade is not a panacea, but a global agreement on agriculture at the WTO offers the royal road to converting losers into winners. This is a complex process that needs to be finished before US trade negotiating authority expires in 2007. For the moment, the WTO needs to tackle the following three areas: market access/tariffs, subsidies and special and differential treatment.

Market Access and Tariff Rates

People are familiar with a progressive tax policy: the more you earn the more you pay. Trade policy is the reverse. The poorer you are, the higher the tariff (border tax) rate. High tariffs shut out poor-country exports. Rich countries impose tariff barriers on poor countries that are three to four times higher than those faced by other rich countries. Tariffs tend to be highest on the products that poor people and poor countries produce: agricultural commodities and garments, footwear and food products.

So Bangladesh with a per capita income of \$440 pays more in tariffs to the US than does France which has per capita income of \$24,000. France pays less even though the United States actually imports 15 times more French goods than goods from Bangladesh. The American system is not the only offender but generous tariff cuts on exports from poor countries could significantly increase their income.

In addition, the more “value” that poor countries add to a product, the greater the barrier to developed country markets. So poor countries can sell peanuts, but heaven help them if they try to sell peanut butter.

This amounts to a modern-day form of mercantilism. If the return of Hong Kong to China in 1999 helped erase the stain of *political* imperialism, it seems right that Hong Kong should be the place to dismantle *economic* imperialism from the global trading system.

Agricultural Subsidies

The last trade round ended with the Uruguay Agreement in 1994. To secure the consent of developing countries, there was an understanding that rich countries would begin to reform their agricultural policies and cut the hundreds of billions of dollars they spend each year on their agricultural sectors. Alas, in 2005, rich countries will likely spend record amounts on these sectors.

Subsidies that are linked to production can depress world prices. For example, the United States spends up to \$4 billion per year in supporting 25,000 of its cotton farmers. Meanwhile, West African cotton farmers, who produce very high quality cotton, are unable to sell their goods on world markets because of cheaper (highly-subsidized) US cotton.

Bishop Álvaro Ramazzini of Guatemala said it well in testimony before the US Congress on the likely impact of CAFTA on Central American farmers: “Guatemalan farmers can compete with farmers in the United States, but they cannot compete with the US Treasury.”

Special and Differential Treatment

Different needs require differential treatment. Developing countries have their own challenges in ensuring that increased trade actually benefits the poor in their countries. These include reducing their own tariffs, as well as implementing transparency and good governance measures. There is a danger that fragile countries will not be afforded the flexibility they need to manage market integration evenly.

It is worth remembering that rich country economies grew over a long period of time and enjoyed protective barriers. Poor countries will need to protect themselves, for example, against sudden surges in cheap imports that may pose serious threats to the domestic economy. WTO rules should afford poor countries this protection so that they can manage the risks that come with increased openness to the global market.

Marvellous Exchange

Hong Kong offers a unique opportunity to set global trade on the path to sustainable development. Reforming global agriculture entails a shake-up of

some very entrenched special interests. This will require commitment not just from elected officials, but from the traders themselves, including multinational corporations. US citizens who wish to express their solidarity with the poor enjoy three potent attributes in this regard: they vote, they consume and they invest.

As US Administration officials negotiate with other WTO members, they are in constant contact with Members of Congress. Given its oversight responsibility, and its role in ratifying any WTO agreement, Congress can make sure that the US fights for its interests in a way commensurate with the common good. Members of the Administration and Congress are in the best position to answer the question: what impact will a WTO agreement in Hong Kong have in the short-term on the poor of the world? Is anyone asking them the question?

Second, the retail stores that millions of people will inundate from Thanksgiving to Christmas are the gatekeepers to developed country markets. What do we ask our global suppliers to do to promote development? Are prices our only criteria? How can big-box retailers realign their business model if they never hear from their customers that the conditions of workers or the impact on the environment are important considerations when we go shopping?

Third, seventy million US households are connected in some way to the stock market. They are invested in mutual funds, 401(k)'s, pension plans and the like. Multinational corporations are also pushing their interests in Hong Kong. Investors can insist that the companies they invest in do good while doing well. Indeed, there is evidence that socially responsible investment matches or outperforms investments with no social filter.

We may not all be able to travel to Africa. But our ballot-power, buying-power and banking-power offer proximate ways to shape the global economy so that it serves people, and not vice-versa. Meanwhile, we still need to share what we have with others.

As Pope John Paul cautioned, indifference towards the poor taints our worthiness to partake in the Eucharist. The Final Message of the recent Synod of Bishops dedicated to the Eucharist reiterated this: "The poor of every generation and of today...challenge us. They remind us of Christ's agony, until the end of the world. These sufferings cannot remain extraneous to the celebration of the Eucharistic Mystery which summons all of us to work for justice and the transformation of the world in an active and conscious fashion." When people of faith mobilize in behalf of the least among us, they can achieve a great deal.

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C.P. 9061, 00100 ROMA-AURELIO, Italy
Fax: (39) 06 39 37 53 22 E-mail : information@omigen.org