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Marcello Zago and the Holy See

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Introduction

When speaking of the Holy See, it is possible to see that title as referring to different entities, or perhaps different levels of the same entity. The Pope, the Holy Father, is the head and personification of that entity. However, even the Pope cannot act alone. He is surrounded by the various departments: the Secretariate of State which is mainly responsible for relations with governments and political bodies; the Congregations for the Doctrine of the Faith, for Bishops, for the Clergy, for Divine Worship and Sacraments, for Eastern Churches, for Catholic Education, for the Evangelization of Peoples, for Institutes of Consecrated Life, for the Causes of Saints; Pontifical Councils, Tribunals, Commissions for the study of special problems. Most, but not all, of these offices are concentrated within the walls of the Vatican City or its environs. To the eyes of faith, all of this very complex organization goes to make up the governing body of the Church founded by Jesus Christ and guided throughout the centuries by the Holy Spirit whom Christ promised to send and be with his Church until the end of time. Humanly speaking, however, the people who staff these offices are men and women with their weaknesses and their strengths, their foibles and their enthusiasm. Many are members of the clergy from various dioceses or from religious congregations, and there are also women religious and lay men and women.

The General Administrations of Religious Orders and Congregations are not considered part of the Holy See. In fact each religious Institute has its representative (Procurator) to the Holy See who negotiates with the various offices whenever necessary. Marcello Zago, during his three years (1983-1986) in the Secretariat for Non-Christian Religions, and again as Archbishop Secretary to the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples (1998-2001), was a member of the Holy See structure. As Superior General and in all his other positions of responsibility, he was, as it were, dealing with the Holy See from the outside. However, he was personally acquainted with many of those who worked in the various departments, both the higher ranking officials and those in more menial positions. Being the man he was, he had the ability to establish friendly relations easily and he maintained his contacts throughout the years. The list of those with whom he exchanged greetings at Christmas or on other occasions is impressive.

The Holy See in the life of Marcello Zago

Father Marcello's life (1932 - 2001) spanned six pontificates: Pius XI (1922-1939), Pius XII (1939-1958), John XXIII (1958-1963), Paul VI (1963-1978), John Paul I (1978), and John Paul II (1978-). Marcello was personally acquainted with Paul VI and John Paul II. Possibly he also knew John Paul I since they both came from the same part of Italy, the Veneto region. The Pope of his boyhood was Pius XI. His studies as a seminarian were done during the pontificate of Pius XII and when he came to the Oblate scholasticate in Rome in 1956 he attended the ceremonies in St. Peter's which were presided over majestically by that Pope. He was present in Rome as a scholastic when Pius XII died and when John XXIII was elected in the autumn of 1958. During most of the pontificate of Good Pope John, Marcello was a missionary in Laos. In 1972, when Marcello led a group of Laotian Buddhist monks to Rome, the delegation was received by Paul VI. From then onwards the name of Father Zago was to become increasingly well known among the Asian bishops and in the Vatican as a tireless worker for inter-religious dialogue and for his writings on Buddhism. It was, however, during the pontificate of John Paul II, that he worked most closely with the Holy See in a wide variety of capacities.

A listing of his appointments by the Holy See already gives the impression of how closely he worked with the Vatican during the last twenty years of his life. From 1981 to 1983 he was full-time professor of Missiology at the Lateran University in Rome and during this time he also lectured at the Urbanian University. On March 14, 1983 he was appointed Secretary of the Secretariat for Non-Christian Religions. In April 1983 he received a further appointment as a "de jure" member of the Pontifical Commission for the Spiritual Care of Migrants and Tourism. Then, on May 25, 1983 he became a Consultor to the Secretariat for Non-Believers and later that same year he received another appointment as Consultor to the Commission for Relations with Judaism, an office which was part of the Secretariat for

Christian Unity. During 1984 he was frequently consulted by Pope John Paul II who was then preparing an apostolic journey to the Far East. It was as Secretary to the Secretariat for Non-Christian Religions that he played a major role in the preparation of the Great Day of Prayer for Peace held in Assisi on October 27, 1986.

In September 1986, Father Zago was elected Superior General of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate. In that capacity he served as a member of the Council of the Union of Superiors General from 1986 to 1997 and also of the special group of both men and women Superiors General who were in regular contact with the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life with whom they met at least four times each year. In 1989 he was appointed a Member of that Congregation. Also as Superior General he was elected by his peers to be a member of the Bishops' Synod on the Laity, an election which received papal approval on July 21, 1987. He also took part in other Synods: the Bishops' Synod on Priests in 1990, the Bishops' Synod on Consecrated Life to which he was appointed Special Secretary by the Pope in 1994, and the special Synod of Bishops on Africa of 1994. On February 25, 1996 another appointment was added to his already busy schedule when he was made Consultor to the Pontifical Council for Inter-Religious Dialogue.

Throughout his term of office as Superior General, Father Zago always worked closely with the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples and with its Prefect, Cardinal Josef Tomko. He was appointed a member of that Congregation by the Pope on January 11, 1996. Then, towards the end of his twelve-year mandate as Superior General, on March 28, 1998, Father Zago was appointed Secretary of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples and titular Archbishop of Roselle. His episcopal ordination by Cardinal Tomko, was held in St. Peter's Basilica on April 25, 1998. Archbishop Zago's last years were spent in close cooperation with the Pope and the Holy See at the heart of the Church's administration of the missions.

Saint Eugene de Mazenod, Marcello Zago's model of devotion to the Holy See

All throughout his life, whether as a student, a missionary or as Superior General, Marcello Zago took as his model the Oblate Founder, Saint Eugene de Mazenod, the one whom Pope Paul VI described as "a man passionately committed to the cause of Jesus Christ" and of his Church. Like Saint Eugene, Father Zago was unconditionally committed to the cause of the Gospel. In one of his letters to Oblates in formation, he expresses this very clearly:

Impassioned for Christ, Eugene was an unconditional servant of the Church. Not just an institution, the Church was above all that glorious inheritance purchased by Christ at the cost of his own blood... the beloved spouse of his only-begotten Son... the mother who appeals for help. As he made clear in the Preface (to the Oblate Constitutions and Rules), his personal motivations and those of his Institute were intimately linked: the glory of God and an ardent love for the salvation of souls went hand in hand and expressed the good and service of the Church. Undoubtedly, he was able to recognize the ills of the Church of his time and the errors of her ministers, while at the same time recognizing her divine dimension. For this Church he worked with devotion and suffered with dignity. He also made her known and loved by his Oblates and the people of his diocese – one cannot love Christ without loving his Church.²

No doubt Marcello consciously modelled his own attitude towards the Church on that of his saintly predecessor. In that same letter he continues:

To respond to the urgent calls for the salvation of souls and the service of the Church, Eugene accepted increasingly heavier burdens: Superior General, Vicar General (of the diocese of Marseilles), auxiliary bishop, Bishop of Marseilles. He progressively understood that the Master of the vineyard was calling him to serve him through these ministries.³

For Marcello, as for St. Eugene, "his administrative functions became his training ground to give himself to God and the concrete way leading him to holiness."⁴

In that letter too, issued in the year of the Founder's canonization and entitled *Renewing Ourselves in the Charism of Eugene de Mazenod*, Marcello insists:

This group of priests (the Oblates) want to be schooled by Jesus in order to be able to evangelize the abandoned populations. ... We find in this text (Preface to the OMI CC & RR) ... the love of the Church contemplated as mystery but seen as abandoned due to the unfaithfulness of Christians and the lukewarmness of her ministers. By putting themselves at her service, the Oblates adopt a form of extraordinary ministry.⁵

In his letter to Oblates in Formation two years later, 1997, Father Zago returns to the theme of fidelity to the Church. The Apostolic Exhortation on Consecrated life⁶ had recently been published and the Superior General chose to promote its study among those preparing for the Oblate mission. In his letter he defines more explicitly what fidelity to the Church must mean to an Oblate, taking, as always, St. Eugene as his model:

Saint Eugene had a lively feeling for the Church right from his youth: it was for love of the abandoned Church that he embraced the priesthood and the ministry of the missions. Right from the beginning of the Institute, he presented to his companions the ideal of the Church, the inheritance and spouse of Christ, which cries out for help to remedy the evils that afflict her ... Throughout his life, the difficulties he had at various times with Church persons or institutions were the occasions for growth in obedience and love for the Church herself, *because it is not possible to separate the Church from Christ*. ... The exhortation might well have quoted St. Eugene on the subject of fidelity to the Church. ... (It) recommends adherence of mind and heart to the magisterium (VC 46; C 6), the special link of communion with the successor of Peter in his unifying and universal mission (cf. VC 47; C 27), a coordinated and active integration in the particular Church which is promoted by constant dialogue (cf. VC 49-50; CC 6, 12). ... Consecrated life grows in the Church and contributes to her life and her mission in creative fidelity to the charism received from the Spirit. The specific contribution of each Institute to the Church is its faithful and creative living of its charism which each local church must respect and foster (cf. VC 3, 48-49; CC 5-7).⁷

The Holy See, the Missionary Oblates and Marcello Zago

Father Marcello was personally known to Pope John Paul II for many years. Time and again, in his personal Diary,⁸ he expresses his admiration for the Pope and for his graciousness and patience in receiving the many people he met each day. In January 1992, as a member of the Council of Superiors General, Father Marcello concelebrated Mass in the Pope's private chapel. Afterwards he notes in his Diary:

During the celebration, I was impressed by the way in which the Holy Father's attention was fixed on what he was doing and by his devotion.... How recollected the Pope is during the liturgy, just as he is amiable in meeting people.

Again, in April of that year, he and Father Gilles Cazabon were present for concelebration in the Pope's chapel. After the Mass, "we were the first to meet him (the Pope). I let Gilles speak with him. Then the Secretary, Monsignor Stanislaw, drew the Pope's attention to the Superior General. 'Yes, yes', said the Pope, 'Father Zago'".

Father Zago's attachment to the Holy See was not merely theoretical or dependent on his devotion to the Founder. During his years as Superior General he had to help, more than once, one or other of his fellow Oblates in their relations with the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. He was prepared to go to any trouble to bring about a reconciliation and invariably the solution was amicable. He was not, however, about to compromise on matters of the Church's teaching. These events caused him much anguish and suffering and even a number of sleepless nights as he pondered how to reconcile his fidelity to the Church's magisterium with his genuine friendship for his fellow Oblate. His own extensive writings reflect an unflinching fidelity to the magisterium which he tried to instill into all the members of the Oblate Congregation and especially the young men in first formation. It pained him to discover that there were Oblates whose regard for the Pope was not what he thought it should be. Meditating on the feast of Saints Peter and Paul, on June 29, 1990, he writes in his Diary:

For me, love for the Pope is instinctive: it developed with my seminary formation and my contacts with the Founder. It pains me when Oblates express doubts

about the Pope. More often I can sense an attitude of indifference or hesitancy when he is mentioned. These people are influenced by the socio-ecclesial background from which they come or in which they live. In spite of the Pope's personality, in spite of his Gospel-based and wholesome teaching, in spite of the fact that he is no longer Italian, there is nevertheless doubt and suspicion in his regard. For me, my love of the Pope is given a real meaning by study of his instructions which show his love for the Church and for Christ.

Father Marcello's sense of serving the Church was not always understood by his colleagues in the Roman Curia. When he left his position as Secretary of the Secretariat for Non-Christian Religions, to answer the call of the Oblate General Chapter which had elected him Superior General, he realized that other Curia members did not see things as he did.

Mixing with the more traditional element of the Roman Curia, I understood that my accepting to become Superior General has broken with tradition in a very specific world. For some, and maybe for many if not for almost all, my action is incomprehensible. I have left the service of the Holy See, of the Pope, and even of the Church. Especially when a person is Secretary the destined way forward is the episcopacy or the cardinalate. I see things in another light. I do what the Lord asks me to do by way of concrete signs. The Holy See asked me to work and I did. The Chapter has asked me to accept and I have accepted. I am at all times convinced that, either way, I am serving the Church.⁹

The documents issued by the various departments of the Holy See and the pronouncements of the Pope were a necessary part of his reading and study. Repeatedly he recommended these documents to the attention and study of the Oblates.

The Word of God proclaimed appropriately has a unique power and missionary effectiveness. One would have to study in depth its value based on the Scriptures, Tradition, Vatican Council II, especially the constitution *Dei Verbum*, Pope Paul VI's exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* and John Paul II's encyclical *Redemptoris Missio*.¹⁰

His earlier studies in missiology, his years of missionary experience in Laos and in Asia and his role as Superior General of a missionary Congregation qualified him to work closely with the Vatican Congregations for the Evangelization of Peoples and for Institutes of Consecrated Life (formerly the Congregation for Religious). As a member of various Synods and Consultor to a number of bodies, he had much to do with the preparation of the various documents issued by the Holy See on matters concerning the missions or religious life. Besides, he was a close personal friend of John Paul II and was frequently consulted by the Pope on various questions within his competence. Several times, Marcello was known to have taken part in a working lunch or evening meal with the Pope and his guests.

A promoter of the teaching of the Holy See

Marcello was an avid reader and student throughout his life. Any document issued by the Holy See he proceeded to study and analyse. Invariably, if the document concerned religious life or the missions, his study resulted in an article for publication in the various periodicals which appealed to him for such a contribution. This was one of the means he used to promote the Church's teaching, both throughout the Oblate Congregation and the Church at large. After the 1994 Synod devoted to Consecrated Life which he attended as special Secretary, Marcello was prompt in preparing an article for publication. It appeared in *Omnis Terra* in January 1995, and therefore before the publication of the Apostolic Exhortation *Vita Consecrata*. There his missionary zeal and his dedication to religious life in the Church, which is the Body of Christ, are spelled out clearly.

Consecration and mission are interdependent. It is our love of Christ expressed through the evangelical counsels that gives impulse and apostolic authenticity to our action ... the mission of consecrated persons must be fulfilled within the ecclesial communion. In the reflection of recent Synods, communion has become the horizon in which all are called to live their own vocation and mission in the Church."¹¹

In his letter to those involved in the ministry of Oblate formation, Marcello wrote:

... it is important that ... you live in harmony with the Congregation, the Church and its magisterium, and that you be attentive to the missionary challenges of today and tomorrow in the world ... The frequent documents of the Church and of the Congregation on these themes (ongoing formation and Oblate formation) should be helpful to you.¹²

He examined the text of the documents concerning religious life and used them as a measuring stick for applying the teaching of the Church. In his diary for March 12, 1990, he writes:

I have read the new document of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life entitled "Directives for formation in Religious Institutes". In general we are already following those directives. Perhaps there are two points to be checked: the pastoral period during novitiate and the six years of study prescribed for candidates for the priesthood. There are many theological and pedagogical points which merit special attention: the work of the Spirit, the ecclesial and community character, the primary responsibility of the person in formation.

Father Zago's attachment to the Holy See was based on his attitude towards the Church as the Body of Christ. That is succinctly stated in an article written on "new evangelization" in 1990:

... the Church is a requirement of new evangelization. God wants to save us together, Christ becomes present in a community. ... It is necessary to believe, to live and to witness the real Church, the one desired by God, as it is presented in the New Testament: people of God, mystical Body of Christ, bride of Christ, mystery hidden from all eternity, God's vineyard, beginning of the Kingdom etc. The Council reminded us of this... each believer must act in such a way that the visible reality of the Church conforms more and more to God's mysterious design for a new evangelization.¹³

Marcello's theology of the Church is based on the mission of the Apostles.

Peter and Paul are the foundation of the Church and express two of its dimensions. Peter represents Jesus, the head who takes care of his disciples, as is obvious from the different tasks entrusted to him by Jesus. Paul represents the missionary dimension of the Church, who must always go in search of the sheep who are not within the fold. Both exercised their role even to martyrdom. This twofold dimension continues in the Church. The Pope continues the role of Peter, confirming his brothers in the faith; he does so by teaching, by preaching and keeping the pastors united. The mission is carried by so many volunteers chosen by the Lord. Weaker communities must be strengthened and implantations made elsewhere.¹⁴

His faith in the Church was strengthened and confirmed by his pilgrimage to the Holy Land in the company of all the members of the General Administration in October 1997. The various places associated with Christ and his Apostles were a stimulus to his belief in the mission bestowed by the Saviour.

The culminating visit was to Caesarea Philippi where Christ questioned his Apostles about what people were saying about him and where he promised to Peter that he would build the Church upon him as upon a foundation stone. It is interesting that Christ chose this city with its temples of Pan and of Augustus: the context in which the Church was founded against "fecundity" and "power"... What I found striking was the link between Peter's confession of Christ and the promise to Peter. Christ must not be separated from the Church nor the Church from Christ.¹⁵

Nevertheless, he recognises that the Church is "both divine and human" and he prays for the shortcomings of its ministers.

O Lord be kind to your Church. Forgive the sins against charity and communion, in whatever way and from whomever they come. Make Catholics, especially bishops, priests and religious, respectful of the truth and of charity.¹⁶

Many of Father Zago's writings were translated and published in a number of languages. Taking account of the various translations and the different versions and editions of the articles he contributed, there are more than one thousand titles under his name. The bibliography published in the December 2000 issue of *Vie Oblate Life* is merely a selection of those titles. All of these writings had one aim, to make the message of the Gospel better known. The Church, the Holy See and the Pope as the representative of Christ on earth were always in the forefront of Marcello Zago's thinking. He saw, as Saint Eugene did, that fidelity to one meant fidelity to the other. In his apostolate as a member of the Administration, he wished to be a missionary.

I ask you, o Lord to send your Spirit upon your Church so that it may give witness and live in the world of today. Send your Spirit on me also so that I may find ways and means of accomplishing the mission that has been entrusted to me. May I never be merely a bureaucrat, but a pastor, docile to the action of the Holy Spirit so as to cooperate in bringing your Kingdom.¹⁷

Rome, November 2002

Notes:

¹ Private Secretary to Father Zago, 1986-1998.

² *In the Footsteps of St. Eugene*, General House OMI, Rome 1997; *Letters to the Oblates in Formation 1995*, p. 112.

³ *Ibidem*, p. 113.

⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁵ *Ibidem*, pp. 119, 120.

⁶ *Vita Consecrata (VC)*, 25th March 1996.

⁷ *In the Footsteps of St. Eugene*, General House, Rome 1997; *Our religious consecration*, 1997, pp. 147-149.

⁸ *Diary*, OMI General Archives, Rome. Father Marcello very faithfully kept a diary in which he noted at the end of each and every day the events he had experienced and the people whom he had met. Quite frequently the daily entry concludes with a prayer for the problem cases, for the sick and the suffering, or for himself and his own perceived weaknesses. On numerous occasions, when he took part in Synods or met with the Pope and dined at his table, his prayer is for the Church and for those who have to lead and guide it. A final entry, on the morning before he died and after a night of pain and discomfort, ends with the words: "Lord may your will be done".

⁹ *Diary*, November 19, 1992.

¹⁰ *Dictionary of Oblate Values*, Association for Oblate Values and Research, Rome 2000, article on *Evangelization and Mission*, by Marcello Zago, p. 336.

¹¹ "At the heart and frontiers of the Church", in *Omnis Terra*, Pontifical Missionary Union, Rome, January 1995, pp. 35 and 39.

¹² Letter to formators, on the occasion of the de Mazenod Year 1996, published in *In the footsteps of St. Eugene*, General House, Rome 1997, pp. 198-199.

¹³ "The Content of the New Evangelization" in *Omnis Terra*, Pontifical Missionary Union, Rome, May 1990, pp. 279-290.

¹⁴ *Diary*, June 29, 1997, Feast of Sts. Peter and Paul.

¹⁵ *Diary*, October 10, 1997.

¹⁶ *Diary*, August 18, 1991.

¹⁷ *Diary*, May 11, 1998, some days after he had taken over his responsibilities as Secretary of the Congregation for Evangelization.

Sharing the Oblate Charism:

Fr. Marcello Zago and Oblate Lay Associates

Stefano Messina, O.M.I.¹

Introduction

“A charism is meant for the whole Church”. This is a recurring idea in the thought of Father Marcello Zago when discussing the question of the Lay Associates. He expressed it clearly, shortly after he became Superior General, when he quoted Saint Paul (1 Cor 12: 27-30),² and repeated it often, practically every time he reflected in a theological way on the topic of ecclesial participation in the spirituality of the Congregation.

Fr. Zago writes for example in 1989, in one of his first reflections on this question: “Even a collective charism, such as the one the Spirit has willed to bestow through Eugene de Mazenod and which we designate as the Oblate charism, is for the Church.”³ Further on he insists on the values of a charism that can be shared with the laity and he affirms:

The Oblate charism is a gift to the Church, ... the living Church which develops its being and its action in time. In fact, every founder experiences an aspect of the life and mission of Christ, and makes that aspect visible, institutionalizes and activates it in some way for the body of the Church... Such a charism is not static, nor is it repeatable in the same way in every place and time; it grows with the Church and is incarnated in cultures, in answer to new needs.⁴

Again, speaking afresh in 1997 and quoting the 1992 Chapter document *Witnessing as Apostolic Community*, he writes: “There are different modes of sharing the Oblate charism (§43). Precisely because we are not the owners of our charism, it belongs to the Church (§40).”⁵

Finally, in 1998:

Today, the Church grows and is more alive where the laity is more engaged and active... For the Oblates, to promote Lay Associates means to promote the evangelizing mission willed by Saint Eugene, and to do this in an integral way as the Church demands of us today. The Oblates and lay associates together can renew themselves in their energy, creativity and efficacy.⁶

“It develops with the Church and incarnates itself in cultures”: reflecting on the changes that have come about in the diverse forms of Oblate apostolate and in the involvement of the laity, Fr. Zago perceives the vital development of the Oblate charism as it is lived by the Oblates,⁷ and therefore sees the necessity (and the responsibility) of a courageous initiative on the part of the Congregation to respond to the expectations of the laity.

The Challenge of a “Sign of the Times”

A chronological and comparative reading of Fr. Zago’s writings reveals his interest in going deeper into the potentiality and the modality of presentation in associating the laity with the Oblate charism. Equally transparent is his lucid and constant method of research, with progressive theological deepening of the subject and the contextual rereading in this vein on the life and work of Saint Eugene, in such a way as to present his views in a two-track style or better, as he himself writes, it is like sounding a “double-keyboard”, namely that of the Oblate source and that of the ecclesial life.

His study as to “how” such an association with the charism can come about, therefore, takes on its direction from a gaze on the historical evolution of the laity in the Church and the relationship between the Oblates and the laity. With this in view, Fr. Zago develops his approach to the life and thought of Saint Eugene and deepens its theology through the study of the Church’s documents, the contribution of

Chapter documents and the Constitutions, as well as drawing from the direct experience of the Oblates.

Certainly, says M. Zago in his interventions regarding lay associations, Saint Eugene did not think of founding associations, third-orders or movements to sustain missions and vocations, or to diffuse the spirituality that animates the Oblates. However, it was a constant factor in the pastoral activity of Eugene de Mazenod, that there was a certain style of forming the laity by giving them a solid Christian formation and a missionary openness. On the other hand, before founding the Oblates, he animated "The Association of Christian Youth" at Aix. Much later, in the course of popular missions, he felt the need of organizing associations, confraternities and other groups to ensure the perseverance of the new converts and also the fruits of the mission. Hence, Fr. Zago concludes regarding the laity and following the nature of the charism received from the Spirit, that the Founder would have had much to say about the sharing of values beyond just the common Gospel, as well as the different ways of pertaining to the Church of Christ.

The initiatives of the Founder in favour of the laity, continues Fr. Zago, were neither continued nor taken up by the Institute. Rather it was espoused and lived by the religious missionaries of our Congregation; the Oblate charism has radiated notably and has known various expressions such as the appearance of various Institutes and Congregations. Thus, from 1905 onwards, all the local associations that were founded came under one umbrella, giving birth to the Association of Mary Immaculate (MAMI), whose aim would be to help the activities of the Oblates and to share in their spirituality.

Further, in promoting the laity, the Oblates have favoured, for example, the organization of Catholic Action and catechists in the missions. They were committed to expanding the Church and the building up of committed communities according to the circumstances and the needs of the time. Moreover, led by the new conciliar spirit, the laity became more intensively associated with various activities and ecclesial ministries. Finally, the request was voiced by some laity to share not only in the activities of the Oblates with whom they were involved, but also in the spirit and mission of the Institute itself, a plea that sought to participate in the Oblate spirituality, and in the very being and activity, mission and life of the Oblates: a request indeed that called for an adequate response.⁸

In fact, Fr. Zago underlines that the Church of the last few decades is characterized by the emergence of the laity and is more intent on renewing the awareness of its proper nature as the Mystical Body of Christ, the People of God and the community of believers in Christ. The Council has deepened this mysterious and integral nature of the Church, and the Synod of 1987 on "the call and mission of the laity", has drawn its due consequences. The laity is defined in relation to their insertion into Christ, and therefore into the Church, and not in reference to their relationship to either clergy or religious. They are fully part of the Church, called to holiness as disciples of Christ and are protagonists of the mission that is confided to the whole people of God. It is in reference to this fundamental Christian vocation that the other vocations and ministries are defined, even though some ministries do not emanate from the community, but are given and exercised in the name of Christ the Head. Today, the various forms of religious life collaborate among themselves more and more, they meet one another, deepen their charism more profoundly, and open themselves to modalities of participation with other members of the Church. The laity organize themselves in new forms of associations and ecclesial awareness. Many movements have given rise to new dynamic ways of commitment and mission in response to the challenges of our time.

The Oblate charism, writes Fr. Zago, "can perhaps be lived in its multiple expressions by the laity themselves in a manner adapted to their diverse states of life", and he affirms that "thereby, the Oblate charism could become a spiritual and missionary movement in the Church."⁹ All the same, it behoves the Oblates to proceed without delay and with zeal in order that "these values of the Demazenodian charism confront the growth of the Body of Christ which is the Church,"¹⁰ and that the request of the laity to participate in such a charism should be welcomed precisely as a work of the Holy Spirit in the Church of today and of the future.

The Urgency of a Response

Theological reflection, writes Fr. Zago again, normally follows ecclesial experience.¹¹ He feels, therefore, deeply involved in such a task as a missionary and as Superior General of the Congregation. He recognizes himself first of all as a witness to the call addressed by the Christian laity to participate and to share in the charism. He then confronts himself with that request and calls it "a challenge" to the Institute¹² and to the Church. Therefore, he questions himself repeatedly about these issues, striving to

single out the various ways of participating in the Oblate charism, searching for the framework that can be adapted, and elaborating the type of collaboration between Oblates and the laity regarding the charism.

Of this constant and repeated preoccupation, he himself gives testimony in an address made at the International Congress of OMI Lay Associates in Aix-en-Provence in May 1996:

In my journeys across the Congregation I came in contact with many lay people, groups and individuals, who shared with me their experiences and their expectations in relation to participating in the Oblate charism of Eugene de Mazenod. Soon I became aware that we must bring together the laity from the various parts of the Congregation, so that they can be the ones who discern the way that they can share in the charism and consequently to make their proposals known to the Congregation. I made this dream of mine known at Notre-Dame du Cap in Canada in 1988,¹³ at the 1992 Chapter, and to the General Council. There were provinces and groups who solicited me to treat this theme and therefore to study it from various angles: in the conference given in 1989 at N.- D. du Cap for the centenary of this sanctuary entrusted to the Oblates; then in the conference given at Collevaenza in 1991 at the National Congress of the Italian Lay Associates, and in the course of this theme taken up with all the groups of laity in Australia during my visit there in 1994. Now this dream of a "mini-chapter" or an international congress of laity who feel they are called to share in the charism of Eugene de Mazenod has become a reality here in Aix where the Congregation of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate was born.¹⁴

The various steps in the evolution of his thinking can be gathered from those events which he himself recalled at Aix-en-Provence in 1996, and which we mentioned above. They are also described in the article "Laity" in the 1996 *Dictionary of Oblate Values*; and finally in his talk at Collevaenza in 1998.¹⁵

In all of these we see his effort to discern the plan of God, as well as his continuous preoccupation with refining the theological dimensions and organizational aspects of an issue that was very dear to his heart.

His textual references are always drawn from the writings and the works of the Founder, the Constitutions and the Acts of the Oblate General Chapters, conciliar documents (especially *Lumen Gentium*, *Gaudium et Spes* and *Apostolicam Actuositatem*), the post-synodal exhortations *Christifideles Laici*¹⁶ (1988) and *Vita Consecrata* (1995).

Fr. Zago draws a new understanding of the life and mission of the laity from Vatican II, and above all from the Synod on the laity (1987) in which he himself actively participated, and from that on Consecrated Life (1994) for which he was appointed Special Secretary by the Holy Father. Regarding Oblate documents, he appeals many a time to the Constitutions of 1980/82 in articles 6, 27 and 28, concerning laity in general and the Oblates. He recalls especially the 1986 General Chapter and its document *Missionaries in Today's World*, which underlines how the project of the promotion of the laity who are close to Oblates could model itself above all on the missionary character of the Oblate charism, meant for the evangelization of the poor. He recalls above all the 1992 capitular document *Witnessing in Apostolic Community* which insists on the various forms of association, not only in reference to the active missionary aspect, but also to the spiritual aspect, as a participation in the whole charism. He judges such forms as a sign of the times and a priority for the future of the Congregation.¹⁷

The Values of the Charism Shared With the Laity

Fr. Zago observes that in examining the question of associating the laity with the charism, some paid attention to the "doing", namely, to sharing the mission with the Oblates. Others though have been interested in structures and modalities of relationship with the Oblates, seeking to specify reciprocal agreements.¹⁸ Fr. Zago shows interest in these as well, but he does so generally within a comprehensive viewpoint, or simply on particular occasions, while reflecting attentively on the role of the laity in the evangelization of the contemporary world¹⁹ or again, while carefully specifying the conditions that brought about the historical development of this reality in the Church as a whole.²⁰ His theological reflection concentrates, however, on the values of the charism that could be shared by the laity, those values that can nourish the spirituality of the laity close to the Oblates, with a progressive development of the diverse facets of that spirituality.

There are Christian values and dimensions of the Oblate charism to which the laity can easily align themselves: the experience and the love of Christ crucified, closeness to the Church mourning the shameful defection of so many of its children, Mary Immaculate, charity and zeal, prayer and union with God. Other values are incarnated better in the framework of religious life. The laity also could live those values like, life-in-common realized in the family or in a group, the beatitudes, even the counsels of poverty, chastity and obedience, but in a way proper to their state.²¹

In Australia in 1994, Fr. Zago speaks more precisely:

The range of sharing by lay people is varied and may go as far as a commitment which is based on the spirituality of the Oblates and their mission in the world. It is in this context that we include the two forms of association generally recognized, namely, the members of the MAMI and the Oblate Associates. The distinction between one category and the other is not clearly defined, with the result that in some places there is only one organization with different degrees of belonging. However, the distinction may be described in this way: the MAMI member supports the Oblate work from without; the Associate shares in the Oblate charism from within.²²

Further, speaking about the promotion of the Lay Associates and the necessity of promoting in particular a common spirituality among religious and secular, he clarifies:

It is necessary to promote a common spirituality which animates the Oblate missionary commitment, resulting from the experience of the same charism. Being centered on Christ the Savior (cf. CC 2 and 4), the exercise of fraternal charity and zeal (cf. C 37), the example of Mary (cf. C 10): these are the essential elements of this spirituality... this which can unite the movement of the Associates with the Congregation in the different circumstances. The forms of ministry and communion may be more diversified even as it happens among the Oblates themselves in the different provinces.²³

Then, with further clarity, in the opening words of another written document of 1998 he takes on the topic again:

The Lay Associates share in the charism of the Institute, namely, its spirituality, mission and communion, according to modalities proper to their lay state. The aspect that is undoubtedly the easiest to recognize and practice, is the sharing of spirituality. It concerns assuming and underlining the traits characteristic of Oblate spirituality as for example, the centrality of Christ the Savior, the Marian character, the love of the Church and the universal missionary sense. Communion with the charism expresses itself by relating in a privileged manner with the Institute, and more by living the characteristic values of this particular dimension of the charism, which are charity and the family spirit. The Associates strive to live 'the charity among yourselves' in the diverse domains and ways of expressing their proper state; for example, in the family, within the group of the Associates and in the Oblate communities that the Lay Associates are in contact with. In the same vein, the mission of evangelizing the poor is approached according to the state of each lay person and it can take on different forms, according to the insertion of the lay person in the world and in line with the collaboration with the Oblates.²⁴

But it is particularly in the speech he made on the occasion of the first Italian Congress at Collevaenza in 1991 that Marcello Zago reflects in depth on the values of the Demazenodian charism which can nourish the spirituality of the laity, putting two and two together, as he says, "in a polarity of tension". – About the founding binomial of the charism, namely' *being disciples and cooperators of Christ*, he observes:

Being Oblates means becoming lovers of Christ, whatever concrete form our vocation takes in the Church. Eugene himself was, according to the expression of Paul VI, "passionately in love with Christ" the Savior. This passion for Christ expresses itself in a radicalism of life which, for the Oblates, involves the practice of the evangelical counsels. Also for the laity, there are ways of expressing this same radicalism in the following of Christ, by embracing in some way the evangelical counsels according to their proper state". Similarly, "the mission consists not only in the proclamation of the Gospel,

but also in the transformation of human realities. This is not only the work of priests or religious, but of the whole people of God.

Given to the Church and being servants of the poor is the second binomial of values which are proper to the history of salvation: "The laity are the Church and they share in the life and the mission of the Church to which we belong as disciples of Christ. As sharers of the Oblate charism we must love the Church and be faithful to her, whatever the cost. Herein lies our peace and growth". In a parallel way,

the mission of the laity is not only internal to the Church by reason of the communitarian and evangelizing commitment, but is also above all anchored in society which is being transformed according to evangelical values. As sharers in the Oblate charism, the laity would become not only attentive to the poor and to their material and spiritual needs, but also to their social exigencies, to local and international justice. This option for the poor demands and qualifies the spirituality itself.

Third binomial: *Animated by mutual charity and zeal for others*:

In the context of the laity who are in communion with the Demazenodian charism, these values can be lived in concentric circles. Charity and unity have to be lived in one way among groups of the laity, youth or families, and in another way in the clerical Congregation. Though animated by the same Spirit, there are some modalities proper to the laity and others proper to consecrated religious, whether in community or in mission. There will also be mutual enrichment and example from the multiple aspects of the religious and secular vocations.

Fourth binomial: *Empowered by the Word and the Eucharist*, about which Fr. Zago says: "In the sharing of the Oblate charism, the Word of God and the Eucharist become the sustenance on the journey of discipleship and missionary commitment".

Fifth binomial: *Sharing in the common and ministerial priesthood of Christ*, about which he writes:

De Mazenod founded a Congregation of priests to which were later added Brothers. The priestly character of the institute qualifies its finality; but the Founder did not forget the common priesthood of all. To see the relationship between the two is perhaps easier today and is certainly more necessary. The secular character and the involvement in the world characterize the common priesthood and the mission of the laity.

The sixth binomial of Fr. Zago's thinking is: *Being a missionary in one's own milieu, but with a universal heart*. He expressed it this way:

The missionary spirit and involvement are values shared by the laity. Without the spiritual and the material support of so many of the laity, the Oblate missions would not be able to develop. A missionary sense qualifies Christian life. Today, however, there are so many new possibilities for the mission, even open to the laity: coming closer to those who are farther away and to non-Christian groups, even in Italy, as well as being involved in projects outside the country.

The last point in Marcello Zago's intervention concerns *Mary as synthesis and confirmation of the Demazenodian charism*. Remembering the tender devotion to Mary passed on by the Founder to his Oblates, Fr. Zago reassumes: "Certainly, it is not possible to think of a Demazenodian spirituality devoid of a devotion to Mary, who being the center of Oblate life and mission is the seal of the Oblate charism, the exemplary way of our consecration to God, model of the Church and of every Oblate. Mary Immaculate is Mother of Christ the Savior and our Mother."

Conditions for Participation in the Charism

For Fr. Zago, lay participation in the charism is possible only under well-defined conditions which he describes in the following manner in 1989:

The first condition is that the central nucleus formed by the members of the Congregation lives to the full its proper identity, its spirituality and mission. There then should be very simple and clear points of reference to express this charism and to form those who wish to draw inspiration from it. Some aspects of the charism are meant to be profoundly renewed in the light of the Church's growth, for example the significance of what it means to be poor, the role of the laity, the values of the Oblate charism which are capable of nourishing a lay spirituality and the way these can be transmitted to those who feel called to share the spirituality and the missionary vitality that the Lord has given to the Church through Eugene de Mazenod. This question is lastly about finding ways and means such as literature, videofilm and cassettes that can be used in order to transmit the charism in initial and ongoing formation.²⁵

Speaking at Aix-en-Provence in 1996, Fr. Zago elaborates on these conditions, especially how it is linked to the baptismal vocation of the Lay Associates which is firstly a Christian and ecclesial vocation. First of all, the need to ensure the Christian identity of this vocation and its ecclesial nature:

Concretely, it means to accept and live the vocation common to all the disciples of Christ as it is presented by the Scriptures and the living Tradition of the Church. It also means respecting the specific vocation of the laity with its proper involvements and its character of sanctification in the world. Negatively, it means avoiding sectarianism, a ghetto-mentality, doubtful views and the forming of super-ecclesial groups. To use a classical expression, it behoves every type of associate to involve himself/herself for the glory of God, the good of the Church and the salvation of souls.

In the second place,

being associated means sharing in a *charismatic identity* within a charismatic group or movement in the Church. A particular charism is a gift bestowed by the Spirit so that it may be shared by the members of the Church for their good and for the good of the whole body of Christ. One must be drawn and called to share it. Here one enters by reason of a vocation, the authenticity of which is verified through discernment. Sharing in a charism is therefore, not participating in some working-group or in a club of common social or religious interest. It concerns participation in the life of the Spirit, which leads one to live the whole of one's Christian existence according to a special orientation. (...) In depth, the same charism can be lived with diverse obligations and styles. The same charism can be shared by persons who find themselves in different states of life. It is about the incarnation of the self-same charism on the level of either the lay or the religious state.

In the third place,

Among the religious and the laity who share the same charism, there is a *relationship of complementarity*. The laity, in fact, are associated with a charism given to the Church through a founder, and they are indirectly connected to the religious institute, even if this institute is incarnating such a charism in a special and integral manner. The religious have certainly a proper manner of integrating and living the charism, adapting it to the needs of the time. Likewise do the associates have their own proper way of interpreting and living such a charism, adapting it to their proper state of life and action.²⁶

Finally, "Lay Associates themselves must create the structures that are proper to them through a realistic discernment which respects the life and the mission of various groups and different contexts."²⁷

Typology for Collaboration Between Oblates and the Laity

Perceiving the vital growth of the charism itself within the changes that have taken place in the forms of the apostolate and with the involvement of the laity, and taking from Oblate documents and synodal texts practical indications for the present and for the future, Fr. Zago has spoken many times about the relationship between Oblate religious and Lay Associates.²⁸ He has recourse to four words: interdependence, complementarity, sharing and collaboration.

The forms of association of the laity with the Oblates, he observes, are many and likewise there are various modalities to the charism. It may be a type of collaboration of the laity with Oblates who exercise a particular ministry, for example in a parish, a school, a mission. In such a case, the Oblates are the expression of the particular Church and the laity involve themselves with them in so far as they are members of the same ecclesial reality. Or, it may simply be finding support and collaboration in the work and life of Oblates since they are a group already existing and have a charism. The range of participation of the laity could be manifold, so much so that it becomes a milestone which models the spirituality and mission proper in the world. In this dynamic are to be found the two forms already mentioned: the members of MAMI and the Associates.

Laity have moved from dependence on Oblate religious and the field of the apostolate to a relationship of participation which always happens when maturity in the ecclesial community is reached. The laity are not asked merely to support in an external manner the work of the pastors and the missionaries with prayer and financial assistance, but they are offered a space for collaboration in the apostolate by virtue of their dignity as members of the Body of Christ. The members of the MAMI are requested to share the spirituality and to make themselves missionaries in their own environment. From this way of life are born communities of people who are consecrated in the world, and committed lay people who are involved. In the actual evolution, we can observe the increasing involvement of the laity in becoming the active subject of missionary activities,²⁹ responsible and creative in the various Christian communities, on the level of an active and integral collaboration in formation and in the programming and realization of apostolic projects. To a communion of action is united the communion of being. Since he who is at the centre of mission is not the missionary but Christ himself, religious and the laity unite themselves in fraternity for a mission that surpasses all, and makes of all cooperators of Christ the Savior: "Therefore, it can be said more justly that we are all together collaborators and disciples of Christ the Savior, after the example of Eugene de Mazenod, than to say, that the laity are collaborators of the Oblates". Sharing in the charism happens according to the diverse states of life. Though the animating spirit is singular and unique, the forms of incarnation vary, bringing reciprocal enrichment.³⁰

In the promotion of the Lay Associates on the part of the religious Oblates, Fr. Zago suggests some evident steps for action. There should be above all, in his view, a promoting of a *common missionary vision*, which in the line of the Oblate charism seeks to realize the evangelization of the most abandoned. He sees also the necessity of promoting a *common spirituality*, in accordance with the values of the Oblate charism illustrated above. He proposes, therefore, a *respect for the lay state*, both in mission and spirituality, according to the double-principle of the safeguarding of the elements of charism and those of the vocation proper to the laity. In the interest of the safeguarding their respective autonomies, he insists that *forms of communion between the Oblates and the Lay Associates* be promoted; though they may not provide forms of common life, they may lead to sharing and collaboration, exchange of information and sharing of experiences. He cites as examples that of regular meetings between Oblates and Lay Associates, and such meetings among the laity themselves in order to form communities of life similar to basic Christian communities, which are an evangelical witness. Regarding *structures*, they should be elastic enough, adapted and lived according to diverse situations and cultural conditions, but nevertheless capable of making visible the family of the Lay Associates and of sustaining, forming and animating them.

Conclusions

"Participation in the charism cannot be imposed and does not happen automatically", writes Fr. Zago in his address of 1998. Participation

is the response to a vocation. Surely today, wherever many people are involved in the activities of institutions (schools, retreat-houses, centers of assistance), it is normal that the Oblates stress the missionary dimension of the work involved and even of the Oblate charism. However, the participation of the charism cannot be forced. It should be a response to a vocation that comes from the Spirit.³¹

Earlier in 1991, Fr. Zago concluded his presentation on the values of the Oblate charism by giving the Lay Associates five accompanying signs:

1) As at the end of the Vows ceremony, I now say to you: 'Do this and you shall live!'

2) In your sharing of the charism, I ask that you discern what the Lord is prompting you to do and to let us know: 'Live the charism and tell us about it!'

3) You need the Oblates and the Oblates need you. As we strive to move forward we enrich each other mutually.

4) I repeat to you what the Founder used to say to his Oblates: 'In the name of God be saints'. I firmly believe that the Oblate charism can make and form saints among lay people too.

5) The charism is a gift of the Holy Spirit to his Church. To be able to live the charism is a grace for which we must pray and learn how to receive. Let us pray that through the intercession of Mary, this charism may be poured out into our hearts and help each one grow in holiness for the good of the Church and the glory of God."³²

"Men who know how to envision the future are the ones who build up history", said John Paul II. Fr. Marcello Zago knew how to do it. He discerned the signs of the times in splendid foresight and was open to the action of the Spirit.

He bequeaths to us this fascinating heritage, as an expression of his love for the Church and his passion for the evangelization of the poor. This heritage is a challenge to the Congregation and every Oblate: we must welcome it ensuring its continuity and translating it into prophetic choices.

The Congregation ... must go ahead courageously, taking the initiative and do what is necessary to meet the aspirations of the laity. We must be attentive to the aspirations of lay people; these aspirations are often broader than our response. Let us call, invite and challenge laity to share the Oblate charism and welcome those who express the desire to do so (*Witnessing in Apostolic Community*, § 44.3). I think we are still shy and not very active both at the provincial and the general level. Although there are some experiences which might indicate the need for caution and discernment, the time has come for action.³³

Tivoli, March 2003

(Translated from the Italian by Leopold Ratnasekera, O.M.I.)

Notes:

¹ Responsible in Italy for the Oblate Lay Associates until 2002.

² Cfr. M. ZAGO, "Un charisme pour l'Église: charisme oblat et laïcs", in *Vie Oblate Life*, 48 (1989), pp. 39-46.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

⁴ So speaks M. ZAGO in his address at the First National Congress of Lay Associates (Collevalenza, April, 1991), published with the title: "Sharing the Same Charism. Values in the De Mazenod Charism which can also Nourish a Lay Spirituality", in *Vie Oblate Life*, 51(1992) pp. 31-47 (see pp. 32-33).

⁵ Cfr. M. ZAGO, Word 'Laity', in *Dictionary of Oblate Values*, 1996, § IV.2.

⁶ Cfr. M. ZAGO, 'Ruolo dei laici associati al carisma oblato nella evangelizzazione'. Text of his address, 25 March 1998, at Collevalenza, the concluding sections. Cfr. also "Le rôle des Laïcs Associés au charisme oblat dans l'évangélisation", in *Vie Oblate Life*, 57 (1998), pp. 369-377.

⁷ "Their closeness to the people, a missionary spirit which is self-propagating, their sensitivity for the Church, Marian devotion, have all contributed to promoting cooperation and sharing in the Oblate spirit to the extent that this is the natural outcome of the Oblate charism". So writes M. ZAGO in his conference to Oblate Associates of Australia in 1994, on the occasion of the Centenary of Oblate presence in that country. Cfr. 'Oblates and Laity can Cooperate in the Light of the Charism', in *Vie Oblate Life*, 54 (1995), pp. 3-16 (see p.5).

⁸ “Hence there are new appeals, which are not pleas to fill the void caused by the diminution of our numbers, but new requests to live an evangelical charism in the many-faceted states of life”, in “Un charisme pour l’Église”, *loc. cit.*, p. 43.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

¹⁰ Cfr. footnote 3.

¹¹ Likewise already in “Un charisme pour l’Église”, *loc. cit.*, p. 41.

¹² It will be recalled among other things that in 1992 the General Administration promoted a study among all OMI provinces and delegations. Fr. Zago observes that among the 36 responses received, 8 affirm that they do have a structure available for Lay Associates and that 5 are working at it; 4 other provinces are hoping to establish them. Another inquiry was done in Dec.1995 in view of preparing the Congress of Lay Associates at Aix-en-Provence. Cfr. *Documentation OMI 213* (January 1997), pp. 18-22.

¹³ “Je rêve non seulement de la créativité et de l’engagement des Oblats d’un peu partout et d’une mise en commun avec évaluation à un niveau mondial, je rêve aussi d’un congrès, d’un mini-chapitre de laïcs, éventuellement à Aix, pour qu’ils discernent les appels et nous indiquent des chemins à parcourir afin que le charisme oblat devienne un charisme pour l’Église d’aujourd’hui”, in “Un charisme pour l’Église”, *loc. cit.*, p. 45.

¹⁴ This is cited in § 1.3 of M. ZAGO’s speech: “Laici associati nel contesto ecclesiale” (Aix, 18-21 May, 1996), in *Religiosi in Italia*, 296 (1996), p. 194. The final document and the general history of the Congress, in L.Roy (and others), “Impassioned for Christ, the Church and the Mission. Congress of Lay Associates, Aix-en-Provence, May 1996”, in *Documentation OMI*, 213 (January, 1997).

¹⁵ In the bibliography of M. Zago published by M. Rostkowski in *Vie Oblate Life*, 59 (2000), pp. 395-429, one can find additional material on this theme other than that referred to in these notes.

¹⁶ We see here an affirmation and a deepening of the vision and orientations which the Oblates brought to maturity in those very years. Cfr. “Oblates and Laity can Cooperate in the Light of the Charism,” *loc. cit.*, p. 8.

¹⁷ Cfr. In particular *Witnessing in Apostolic Community* (§41): “We already know from experience that such a sharing in our life and mission is a source of life, dynamism and fecundity for both Oblates and lay persons alike. In a spirit of creativity and concerted action we will continue to explore structures for communion that are at the service of the mission”. This can be seen also in the preceding §§ 39 and 40.

¹⁸ Cf. among others, A. LALONDE, “Lay Associates: a New Phenomenon”, in *Documentation OMI*, 177 (December 1990); F. JETTÉ, “Oblate Charism and Lay Associates”, in *Documentation OMI*, 237 (January 2001).

¹⁹ “Ruolo dei laici associati al carisma oblato nella evangelizzazione”. Text of the address of 25 March 1998, at Collevallenza, *loc. cit.*; “Le rôle des laïcs associés au charisme oblat dans l’évangélisation”, *loc. cit.* In his preceding works one can recall how much he has written in 1986 as Secretary of the Secretariat for Non-Christians, among others: “Importanza e ruolo dei laici nell’attività missionaria in seno alle singole Chiese locali: Asia, Africa, America latina. La cooperazione con il clero e i religiosi”, in “I laici e l’evangelizzazione. Corso di formazione missionaria per corrispondenza della Pontificia Unione Missionaria” (Roma, febbraio 1986), pp. 3-11.

²⁰ This is the central theme developed by M. Zago at the International Congress of Lay Associates at Aix-en-Provence in 1996. Cfr. “Laici associati nell’odierno contesto ecclesiale,” *loc. cit.*, pp. 190-204. In order to examine the communitarian horizon in which the reality of association with the Oblate charism is seen to be growing, M. Zago browses in that study the actual situation of 15 religious Congregations which have new forms of associates and observes 5 categories of Institutes with forms similar to the style of associates; from secular Third Orders to missionary Institutes ‘Ad gentes’; from those concerned with education or health services to international apostolic Institutes, and to those who have had a long history of animation and collaboration with the laity but, however, have proceeded with restructuring the traditional forms while seeking parallel new forms of association and relationships of interdependence.

²¹ Cfr. M. ZAGO, “Un charisme pour l’Église”, *art. cit.*, p. 44.

²² Cfr. M. ZAGO, “Oblates and Laity can Cooperate in the Light of the Charism”, §4.1, *loc. cit.*, p. 12.

²³ *Ibid.*, §5.2, pp. 14-15.

²⁴ Cfr. M.ZAGO, “Ruolo dei Laici Associati al carisma oblato nella evangelizzazione”, *loc. cit.*, p. 369.

²⁵ Cfr. M. ZAGO, “Un charisme pour l’Église”, *loc. cit.*, p. 45.

²⁶ Cfr. also the final notes of the word “Laity”, in *Dictionary of Oblate Values* (1996): “Oblates and Lay Associates acknowledge their need for each other. Theirs is a living relationship of reciprocity and openness, trust and respect for every person’s vocation. All deepen Eugene de Mazenod’s charism according to their own specific vocation and enrich others with their

discoveries and experience. Oblates and Lay Associates live and complement one another in mutual growth”.

²⁷ M. ZAGO, “Laici Associati nell’odierno contesto ecclesiale,” *loc. cit.*, pp. 203-205.

²⁸ Cfr. in particular, M. ZAGO, “Oblate and Laity can cooperate in the light of the charism,” *loc. cit.*

²⁹ In connection with this, one can refer to M. ZAGO’s theological reflections on the pastoral document “Comunione e comunità missionaria” of the Italian bishops in “La vocazione missionaria della Chiesa”, in *Presenza Pastorale*, 56/9-10 (1986), pp. 123-135.

³⁰ Already in 1976, reflecting on the collaboration of the laity in the parishes, the field of apostolate of a great number of Oblates, M. Zago insists on the kind of attention that Oblates must pay to the relationships with the laity. He writes that Oblates “must strive with the laity to build up living communities by starting from human realities and supporting the different services or ministries to be provided” (see M. ZAGO, “Oblate Parishes”, in *Documentation OMI*, 71/76, p. 6.

³¹ Cfr. M. Zago, “Ruolo dei laici associati al carisma oblato nella evangelizzazione”, *loc. cit.*, in its conclusions. Cfr. also “Le rôle des laïcs associés au charisme oblat dans l’évangélisation”, in *Vie Oblate Life*, 57 (1998), p. 376.

³² Cfr. M. ZAGO, “Partecipi dello stesso carisma. Valori del carisma demazenodiano che possono alimentare una spiritualità del laicato”, § 8, *loc. cit.*; “Sharing the Same Charism. Values in the De Mazenod Charism which can also Nourish a Lay Spirituality”, in *Vie Oblate Life* 51 (1992) p. 47.

³³ Cfr. M. Zago, Conference held in Australia: “Oblates and Laity Can Cooperate in the Light of the Charism”, in *Vie Oblate Life*, 54 (1995), p. 16.

Archbishop Marcello Zago's Contribution to Missiology

Willi Henkel, O.M.I.¹

In the introduction to Marcello Zago's book *Buddhismo e cristianesimo*, one can trace the source of his missionary inspiration.² As a student in Rome, he read Romano Guardini's *The Lord* in the French edition. He found in it an important comparison between Christianity and Buddhism which had been omitted in the Italian edition, but that we can quote from the English edition:

There is only one whom we might compare with Jesus: Buddha. This man is a great mystery. He lived in an awful, almost superhuman freedom, yet his kindness was powerful as a cosmic force. Perhaps Buddha will be the last religious genius to be explained by Christianity. As yet no one has really uncovered his Christian significance. Perhaps Christ had not only one precursor, John, last of the prophets, but three: John for the chosen People, Socrates from the heart of antiquity, and Buddha, who spoke the ultimate word in Eastern religious cognition. Buddha is free; but his freedom is not that of Christ. Possibly Buddha's freedom is only the ultimate and supremely liberating knowledge of the vanity of this fallen world. Christ's freedom is based not on negative cognition, but on the love of God; his whole attitude is permeated with God's earnest will to heal the world.³

Father Zago recalls his experience as a young missionary:

Personally I had the same experience of this challenge when I arrived in 1959 in Laos and came into contact with lived Buddhism. The fact is that such Buddhism was different from the one I had studied in Europe: it appeared to me no longer as a philosophy, but as a way of life with multiple religious facets. During six years I assisted at rites, ceremonies and feasts of a people with a Buddhist conscience. My observations paid attention to the lived practice, the results of exchanges and dialogues with people of all levels, the study of the written sources: they constituted the basis for my doctoral dissertation.⁴

I. The Making and Growth of a Missiologist

A. Student of Missiology

As a student in the Faculty of missiology of the Gregorian University from 1966 to 1970, Fr. Zago paid a special attention to missionary methods regarding the non-Christian religions, and especially Buddhism. The moderator of his dissertation, Professor Joseph Masson, was himself a specialist of Buddhism. After Zago's thesis was published as volume 6 of *Documenta Missionalia* of the Gregorian University, Masson reviewed it in the *Nouvelle Revue Théologique*.⁵ He judged that it was built upon

two extremely solid bases: on the one side, many years of contact in the field with the population concerned, which assures a realistic experience of actual situations; on the other, several years of missiological and anthropological studies during which the author gained a very large erudition to which his bibliography witnesses in an eloquent way. This makes for a work based on an extremely rich experience and erudition.

The first four chapters describe the rites and ceremonies of the monks and lay people of the country. The following chapters examine in detail the divinities; the ceremonies of life: birth, marriage, death; the human activities; the feasts of the calendar. As the author makes clear in the introduction, these chapters are descriptive and phenomenological. But the merit of the book consists in the presentation of a more profound aspect by finishing with a chapter leading from 'the rites to the religion'. Values and functions are presented. A great number of notions and actions are explained, but one never gets lost because of the very clear divisions and the excellent analytical index. For anyone in the future who desires to study Lao Buddhism, which is really *sui generis*,

this book is the indispensable basis. It also clarifies the study of Buddhism in nearby regions.

B. Teacher and Writer

During the following years, Fr. Zago paid great attention to religious experience. When he returned to Laos in 1971, at the request of the Bishops' Conference of Laos and Cambodia, he took charge of a desk for the study of Buddhism. It is in this role that he accompanied a Buddhist delegation to Rome in 1973. His Eminence the Buddhist patriarch Dhammayana Mahatera headed the delegation which was received in audience by Pope Paul VI. On this occasion the Pope expressed the wish for a continuing and friendly dialogue between the two religions.⁶

The members of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) met for the first time in Taipei from April 22 to 27, 1974, discussing the theme of evangelisation in contemporary Asia; Fr. Zago was also a participant. The bishops postulated a constant dialogue with living cultures, religions, and people, especially the poor, and the need to promote justice. Years later, at a meeting on Islam in the offices of the Roman Curia held November 15, 1983, Fr. Zago was able to speak on the orientations of the Asian Bishops' Conferences and explain continental structures and offices of the Church in Asia.

In 1968, Fr. Zago accepted an invitation to give a course in missiology at Saint Paul University in Ottawa, Canada; he returned there annually until the time when he was elected Assistant General of the Oblates in 1974. Later on, from 1981 to 1983, he taught at the Urban University in Rome. One of his many courses was missiography, where he dealt with the actual state of mission, missionary statistics, growth of the local Churches, recent and future developments, problems of the young Churches, the figure of the missionary, evangelization to-day, formation of local clergy, religious and lay people, the poor, communion, inculturation and future perspectives of mission.⁷ At the same time, he taught missiology and Buddhism at the Lateran University. Students appreciated his clarity and openness of mind.

In the meantime, Zago continued and deepened his studies of Buddhism. From 1973 to 1986, his bibliography counts more than 70 titles on the subject.⁸ These were published in many well-known periodicals: *Église et Théologie*, *Lumen Vitae*, *Communio*, *East Asian Pastoral Review*, *Studia Missionalia*, *Documenta Missionalia*, *Kerygma*, *Studium*, *Seminarium*, *Concilium*, *FABC Papers*. Outstanding scholars of Buddhism such as H. Dumoulin and J.C. Maraldo asked for his collaboration in a multi-author work on *Buddhism in the Modern World*.⁹

In 1984, the well-known Italian editor Rizzoli published Fr. Zago's book *Il Buddhismo*.¹⁰ In the foreword, he explained why some authors speak of a philosophy, or also of an experimental science, instead of a religion, when they treat of Buddhism. Fr. Zago remarks that "religion" can be understood in many ways. If we define religion as "credence and cult to a divinity", popular Buddhism may be called a religion. In canonical Buddhism, there exists no creed nor veneration of a personal Absolute, with whom persons communicate. But "if religion is defined as the way of a radical overcoming, or as a search for a definitive salvation, or also a striving towards an absolute goal, then also canonical Buddhism can be defined as a religion."¹¹

Fr. Zago begins with a presentation of the message of Buddhism. At the centre is the mystery of suffering and the Buddhist experience. As a master, Buddha offers an answer to this question of humanity. Fr. Zago gives an outline of his life, his role and his significance. Buddha is only a master, the person has to achieve his or her salvation. Fr. Zago proceeds then to the expansion of Buddhism and its different developments according to countries where it flourished. Buddhism shaped cultural and religious communities with disciples and bonzes. He explains the ordination of bonzes and their everyday life. The pagodas are described as centres of education. The subsistence of the cult is provided by the lay people. Fr Zago praises their generosity, their virtues and merits. Finally, he presents in this phenomenological approach to Buddhism the actual currents of that religion.

One year later, in a new book *Buddhismo e cristianesimo*, Fr. Zago develops the challenge of Buddhism to Christianity. He is aware, as he says in the introduction, that the theme belongs to "the most crucial ones in interreligious dialogue" and that they would require a deepening of the subject and a monographic study. He chooses simpler themes common to the Buddhist and Catholic traditions, such as monastic life, ethics, letting loose, altruism etc. He does not intend to give an exhaustive comparison, and

still less an apology in favour of Christianity, but rather to let emerge common points, convergent directions, which are the base of each one's identity.¹² The book is born from his missionary experience of dialogue. "The dialogue and the comparison have been a stimulus and an enrichment in my life as a man, a Christian, a priest, and a missionary. The challenge has become a stimulus for me and for many others."¹³ He tries to approach other religious men and spiritual researchers "in order to walk together and to share the message of the respective founders, to reach for the Absolute". In the second part of the book, Fr.Zago examines the nature, forms, possibilities, conditions of dialogue, as well as the motivations for engaging in dialogue.

On various occasions, Fr. Zago studied inculturation in the expansion of Buddhism in Asia.¹⁴ He tries to discern elements that characterize the propagation of Buddhism, and arrives at the conclusion that this process was slow and complicated; it was never completely brought to an end. Buddhism needed centuries to become a popular religion and thus to influence in depth the cultures of the different countries. It needed the conversion of the masses and also the support of the political authorities. In order to be able to continue, it required dynamism and creativity. Thus Buddhism experienced times of splendour and regression, support and opposition, appreciation and contempt.

Fr. Zago was a good observer. In his bibliography, there are more than one hundred articles dealing with present day situation in mission countries. They were published in scientific periodicals and journals of missionary animation and actuality. Many of them are dedicated to missionary renewal according to Vatican Council II. We find stimulating titles like: Should we adapt the kerygma or adapt ourselves? How missions changed during the last twenty years: mission as communion; mission as service; mission in countries of Christian minorities. Many articles deal with missions in Asian countries.¹⁵

Three books were the result of Fr. Zago's teaching and travelling as Assistant General and as Superior General: *La Chiesa in Asia oggi*¹⁶ (The Church in Asia Today); *Volti della Chiesa in Asia*¹⁷ (Faces of the Church in Asia); and *Le Chiese in America latina, continente della speranza*¹⁸ (Churches in Latin America, the Continent of Hope). In these works, Fr. Zago presented the characteristics of mission, and the challenges and hopes of mission in every single country of the two continents. In Asia he also indicated the role of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate. In Latin America he presented a sketch of the faces of the Churches, indicating their historical roots in the context of the fifth centenary of the first evangelization of the continent. He paid attention to the cry of the poor, to their hopes and their need for justice.

Along with his teaching and writing, Fr. Zago was invited to give papers at many national and international congresses, mostly in Rome and Italy, but also in other European countries and in Asia. His talks were about the many aspects of evangelization, and after 1986, mostly on the new missionary encyclical *Redemptoris missio*.

II. Secretary of the Pontifical Council for Non-Christian Religions

A. Dialogue and Mission (1984)

In 1983, the Holy Father appointed Fr. Zago as Secretary of the Pontifical Secretariat for non-Christian religions. A careful study of his writings brings into evidence the special contribution of Fr. Zago to the documents of the Secretariat: *Dialogue and Mission* (1984), and *Dialogue and Proclamation* (1991). As Secretary, together with the President of the Secretariat, he signed the first document's official text later published in the *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*.¹⁹

Fr. Zago presented the genesis and structure of *Dialogue and Mission* at the International Congress "Portare Cristo all'Uomo" held at the Pontifical Urban University in 1985.²⁰ He mentioned the favourable reception of the document by the secretaries of the Episcopal Conferences in Asia as well as the criticisms made by some people. He explained that basing itself on Vatican II, the document meant to clarify ideas and serve for animation. He added that it was composed for Catholics and not for believers of other religions who, however, might be encouraged to undertake similar statements. This would help them deepen their own faith and facilitate an authentic dialogue with them. An excellent summary of Fr. Zago's article on interreligious dialogue under the title "Inter-religious dialogue" is included in the foundational

course in missiology entitled *Following Christ in mission*.²¹ The Church recognizes dialogue as a part of her mission, and as having also a special significance for the service of humanity and the promotion of peace and justice.

In 1986, on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of Vatican II's Declaration *Nostra Aetate*, Fr. Zago published a book on this document.²² He explained its impact on the teaching of the Church, especially in the field of dialogue and mission. He expounded its place and significance in relation to conversion and the building up of the Kingdom of God, and showed its challenges to the pastoral care of the Italian Church. Dialogue requires two partners; "it requires the willingness and the capacity of both of them to learn from each other, to exchange with trustfulness, to collaborate."²³ It supposes the recognition of human rights, especially religious rights, among which are the freedom to practice and witness.

That same year, the editor of "Studium" publications asked Fr. Zago for a book on Buddhist spirituality for the series *La spiritualità non cristiana*.²⁴ In the introduction, he explained how man and his experience are at the centre of Buddhist thought. The problem of suffering and liberation from it leads to the core of the Buddhist spiritual message. As in other spiritualities, also in Buddhism, there arose different schools and models of spirituality. Fr. Zago succeeded in showing the central role of meditation in spiritual growth. In the second part of the book he offered a good selection of texts concerning the life and following of Buddha, the perfect person and the walking towards salvation where benevolence and altruism are important attitudes.

B. Spirituality of dialogue (1998)

Years later, Cardinal Francis Arinze, President of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, asked Archbishop Zago to give a Position Paper at the Council's Plenary Assembly of 1998 on the theme: "The spirituality of dialogue". In this paper, the speaker clarifies both the concepts of dialogue and spirituality as they have developed since Vatican II. *Nostra Aetate* formed the basis for a new approach to non-Christian religions. Monsignor Zago observes that "every religion has aspects and values of its own spirituality that can foster attitudes and initiatives of respect, dialogue and cooperation."²⁵ He then proceeds to show how dialogue can take place between members of different religions.

Christian spirituality is based on the participation in the Trinitarian life, the insertion in Christ and ecclesial belonging. "It is not only a tactic, or respect for others, or the expression of charity. It is based on the very elements that qualify the Christian identity. It is a spirituality based on the Trinity and communion."²⁶ The author then moves along the following steps: the Trinity, the Father and the kingdom, the Word made flesh for the salvation of all, the Spirit as agent of salvation, Christ as an example of relationships, the Church as communion. From these result certain spiritual attitudes, which foster positive and constructive relations and activities with members of other religions.

The speaker underlines that since Vatican II there emerges a renewed awareness and consciousness of the central role of the Trinity in Catholic spirituality, which "is providential, because such spirituality can promote dialogue on a sound basis with genuine methods."²⁷ "Dialogue requires the acceptance of one's identity and openness to others. This holds true for all those that accept to relate to others in a constructive manner... A spirituality based on the Trinity encourages both attitudes."²⁸ A deeper experience of one's identity avoids "to close up within itself in any form of fundamentalism, but opens itself up to others without any separatist divisions. God is for everyone. The Church is for everyone."²⁹ Archbishop Zago quotes Paul VI: "Only the man who is completely faithful to the teaching of Christ can be an apostle. And the man who lives his Christian life to the full can remain uncontaminated by the errors with which he comes into contact" (*Ecclesiam suam*, 88).

Charity plays a central role in dialogue. Christian charity is a gift from God, who shares his love with us. In Christ the love of God is incarnated and manifested to humankind. "Dialogue too, therefore, reaches and takes into account the concrete man... Dialogue thus takes on the very qualities of charity: it is universal, gradual, solicitous, fervent and disinterested, without limits and calculations, understanding and adapted to everyone (cf. ES 40-48)."³⁰ Archbishop Zago quotes *Redemptoris Missio* as well: "The soul of all missionary activity: love, which has been and remains the driving force of mission, and is the sole criterion for judging what is to be done or not done, changed or not changed. It is the principle which must direct every action, and the end to which that action must be directed" (RM 60). The missionary must love the Church and men as Jesus loved them; he must be the universal brother (cf. RM 89). "This charity

for all is inspired by Jesus' own charity, which takes the form of concern, tenderness, compassion, openness, availability, and interest in people's problems; it is the source of zeal and of all of the expressions of mission, including dialogue" (cf. RM 89).³¹

Discernment is a necessary attitude for dialogue. "How to concretely love people of other religions for whom Christ died demands discernment, that is, discovery of how the Spirit works in them and calls them to become involved as cooperating agents in his salvific action."³² Mission and dialogue are not primarily a human work, but the work of the Spirit who is the agent of the mission and the main force of salvation.

C. An Evaluation of Walbert Bühlmann

In 1986, Fr. Walbert Bühlmann asked Fr. Zago for an evaluation of his book "*The coming of the Third Church. An analysis of the present and future of the Church*" for the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, with special reference to dialogue with non-Christian religions.

Fr. Zago offers some useful observations in the part of the book dealing with dialogue with the non-Christian religions. He considers the book to be a "precious contribution to the missiological reflection and missionary activity today."³³ Bühlmann begins with problems that are close to life. He mentions the discovery of the world religions, the search for religious experience and meditation, the question of Christian originality, and the impossibility of living in a ghetto. These are genuine problems for missionaries as well as for Western and Eastern Christians. Such questions are posed more from experience than from abstract thinking. Their discovery is a search for the signs of the time and the beginning of a solution. According to Fr. Zago, it is the merit of Fr. Bühlmann to see the problems, to organize them, and to call our attention to them. Concerning the value of non-Christian religions, Fr. Zago finds equivalent affirmations made at the Synod of bishops on evangelization (1974) by Bishops Parecattil, Picachy, Fernandes, all from India, and at the Conference of the Asian Bishops at Taipei in 1974. These affirmations do not question mission, but propose a certain way to realize mission, a way to live as Church, especially in countries that are shaped by the great religions.

The proposed method is dynamic and Christian. It does not give up on mission but rather takes into consideration God's global plan of salvation. Bühlmann's pastoral recommendations help the Church in those countries to come out of its ghetto and become genuine witnesses. Bühlmann does not lack pastoral prudence; he recommends carrying out the alternatives in a progressive and complementary way. The concrete applications must be examined on the spot. The identifying of the pastoral problems is of the highest importance in Asia.

Fr. Zago affirms that Bühlmann's theological and pastoral questions do not cause any damage, but they stimulate the renewal of Christian life, in order to adapt and witness to Jesus Christ. Fr. Zago confirms it from his own experience in Laos, Cambodia and Thailand. He admits that some of Bühlmann's statements can be shocking when taken out of context. They could have been expressed in a more precise way, but these remarks about the expression do not touch the substance. According to Fr. Zago, Bühlmann is animated by a sincere love for the Church and her mission. He thinks that everyone must be ready to being questioned, even when this requires humility and readiness for conversion.

In conclusion, Fr. Zago says that, in his opinion, Bühlmann's exposition contains no errors against the faith and that there are no attitudes that could harm the mission; on the contrary the book makes a positive contribution to mission theology and missionary practise.

III. The Encyclical "Redemptoris Missio"

L'Osservatore Romano of January 23rd 1991 reported that "the encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* was presented on Tuesday 22nd at 11.30, to the journalists accredited to the Vatican. The press conference was presided over by Cardinal Jozef Tomko, Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, and Fr. Marcello Zago, Superior General of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate."

Fr. Zago was to publish more than thirty articles on *Redemptoris Missio* in various periodicals.

Some of these appeared in *Omnis Terra* and were translated into English, French, and Spanish. Some articles make a global presentation of the encyclical while others explain some of its parts. Several articles focussed on the permanent validity of mission, thus echoing John Paul II's cry for mission. Fr. Zago paid special attention to explain the significance of the encyclical for Asia.

Fr. Zago made major contributions to multi-author commentaries of the encyclical, such as Vol. 38 of the *Studia Urbaniana*,³⁴ and he wrote the most important English commentary on the encyclical, published by Orbis Books under the title "Redemption and dialogue" (1993).³⁵ Here, Fr. Zago considers four aspects of the *Redemptoris Missio*'s context: the situation of missions in the world; its continuity with other encyclicals of the century and its proper features; its place in the pontificate of John Paul II; and its relationship to the outlook and dynamics of Vatican II. He then explains to whom the encyclical is addressed, and gives "an evaluation of it before concluding with a word about its structure and the language of the document itself".

A. Missionary Context

Fr. Zago points out how carefully the Pope describes the situation of contemporary humanity and the phenomena that influence mission today. John Paul II looks at them and brings to bear on them the light of faith and evangelical discernment. He calls the new social and cultural phenomena the modern *areopagi*, where missionaries must be present and exercise their ministry. The Pope is optimistic about the future and he thanks missionaries for their dedication and creativity in the past and present. He also points out the difficulties, both external and internal (lack of fervour, joy, hope; fatigue, divisions). He gives new suggestions to the agents of mission (priests, religious, lay people). As values for today he indicates respect for people, ecumenical and interreligious dialogue. John Paul II has travelled to the ends of the earth to show his missionary concern and from this experience he is even more convinced of the urgency of missionary activity. Fr. Zago shows that this encyclical "not only synthesizes and reflects the missionary teaching of John Paul II but it also brings together in a form of 'practical' harmony all his teaching."³⁶ Overcoming the dichotomy between missionary practice and reflection the encyclical integrates the various aspects of mission: dialogue and proclamation, human promotion and inculturation, justice and spirituality.

B. The Encyclical's Audience

Fr. Zago underlines that the Pope addresses his encyclical to all the members of the Church, to all his "beloved Sons and Daughters."³⁷ The mission *ad gentes* depends on all: *Missionary activity is a matter for all Christians.*" It is directed to the universal Church and the particular Churches; young Churches should participate in it as soon as possible. Missionaries are called to renew themselves; theologians are invited to make deeper studies on missions. Catechists, those who carry on new ministries and the new ecclesial movements are invited to respond to that call. The Pope ensures "non-Christians and particularly the authorities of countries to which missionary activity is being directed that all missionary work has but one purpose: to serve man by revealing the love of God made manifest in Jesus Christ" (RM 2). Peoples everywhere are invited, to "open the doors to Christ. The Gospel in no way detracts from man's freedom, from the respect that is owed to every culture and to whatever is good in each religion" (RM 3). John Paul II invites those who are afraid to receive baptism to accept Christ fully and completely by entering into his Church (RM 47).

C. Aims and objectives of the Encyclical

Fr. Zago deals extensively with the aims and objectives of the encyclical. There he shows that John Paul II maintains that "the mission of Christ the redeemer... is still very far from completion..."³⁸ The Pope invites the Church "to a renewed missionary commitment... to give a fresh impulse to missionary activity" (RM 1-2). The number of non-Christians is constantly increasing. "When we consider this immense portion of humanity which is loved by the Father and for whom he sent his Son, the urgency of the Church's mission is obvious" (RM 3). The Pope feels like St. Paul that "it is not for me to boast about preaching the Gospel, it is my duty to do so, woe betide me if I do not preach the Gospel" (1Cor 9:16). The encyclical is an echo of this duty.

In the introduction, the Pope lists ten motivations for the encyclical.³⁹ The first is commemorative.

Twenty-five years after Vatican II and the publication of *Ad gentes*, John Paul II wishes to “renew her (the Church’s) missionary commitment” (RM 2). In a time when the mission *ad gentes* “appears to be waning”, the encyclical aims at the renewal of faith. Missionary activity revitalizes faith and Christian identity. “Evangelizing activity...is the clearest sign of mature faith” (RM 49). “The *universal call to holiness* is closely linked to the *universal call to mission*” (RM 90).

As a second reason, Fr. Zago indicates that missionary commitment renews the whole of Church activity. “Without the mission *ad gentes*, the Church’s very missionary dimension would be deprived of its essential meaning and of the very activity that exemplifies it (RM 34). In traditionally Christian countries the Church renews herself through new evangelization, particularly through a concern for non-Christians at home. “Hence missionary activity *ad intra* is a credible sign and a stimulus for missionary activity *ad extra*, and vice versa” (RM 34). “Missionary evangelization is the most important contribution the Church can offer to each one and to humanity.”⁴⁰ The Gospel offers a force for liberation, it promotes development, recognizes each person’s dignity, and encourages solidarity.

Another reason for the encyclical was to “respond to many requests”; the Pope wishes to answer questions and dissipate doubts and ambiguities. “In reply to positions of anthropo-, kingdom- and theocentric reductionism it is stated that the kingdom cannot be separated from Christ nor from the Church.”⁴¹ Conversions were sometimes considered as “proselytising”; it was claimed that it is enough to become “more human or more faithful to one’s own religion”, or to work for justice, peace and solidarity.

Fr. Zago lists a number of ambiguities that need clarification and shows how the encyclical is a path to solve those difficulties: “the universality of salvation in Christ and the fullness and completeness of God’s revelation in Christ (RM 5); the unity between the Word and Jesus Christ (RM 6); the real possibility of salvation in Christ for all men and women, and the need for the Church in the order of salvation (RM 9); the necessary relationship between Kingdom, Christ and Church and between the terrestrial and eschatological kingdom (RM 18-19); the need to promote the Kingdom of God in the pursuit of the different aims of mission (RM 20); the harmony between the active guidance of the Spirit in the Church and his operative presence in every time and place (RM 24-29); how the different activities for promoting mission in all its requirements are complementary to one another, although priority is to be given to explicit proclamation (RM 41-60); respect for personal liberty and the intentional proclamation of the Gospel (RM 8, 39, 46-47).”⁴² The different facets of the problems still need to be studied in depth. The Pope encourages theologians “to explore and expound systematically the various aspects of missionary activity” (RM 2). “Research in the field of mission theology is far from being exhausted.”⁴³

A further reason of John Paul II for writing the encyclical is “to confirm in their commitment the exemplary brothers and sisters dedicated to missionary activity and all those who assist them” (RM 57). He encourages those who find dialogue the only means given to them “to give witness and serve generously”. With a special paragraph he expresses his appreciation of the presence of women religious missionaries “as an indispensable sign among those peoples and cultures where women still have far to go on the way toward human promotion and liberation” (RM 70). The encyclical confirms also the role of the missionary institutes and welcomes as well new ones.

Another aim of the encyclical is the promotion of missionary vocations. The Pope reasserts the lifetime calling of missionaries a perennial need of the Church (RM 27, 32, 61, 65, 75). Being a missionary is a “special vocation” patterned on that of the Apostles and a “specific charism”. It means “that Christ the Lord calls missionaries by means of the Holy Spirit ... who raises suitable missionary Institutes in the Church.”⁴⁴ “Promoting such vocations is at the heart of missionary cooperation” (RM 79). The Pope addresses families and young people to respond to the call; prayers should be said to obtain vocations. Bishops of “each particular Church must be generous and open to the needs of other Churches” (RM 64).

“Still another aim of the encyclical is to encourage the commitment of younger Churches to send and receive missionaries.” The Pope sees it necessary to “give a fresh impulse to missionary activity” (RM 2). “When the local hierarchies began to be established ... local clergy were entrusted with the more developed parts of these Churches, while the more inaccessible and least evangelised areas continued to be entrusted to missionary Institutes.”⁴⁵ A new relationship between dioceses and missionary Institutes calls for mutual help and reaching outward to the mission *ad gentes*. “Local Churches, according to the Pope, should be missionary right from the beginning (RM 49).”⁴⁶ Many of them are able to send

missionaries to other Churches. Fr. Zago sums up the striving of the young Churches by their concern “about their own identity, about inculturation, and about their freedom to grow independently of external influences with the possible result that they close their doors to missionaries.”⁴⁷ To these Churches the Pope says: do not isolate yourselves; willingly accept missionaries; you need to be in continuous contact with your brothers and sisters in faith.

As the final goal of the encyclical Fr. Zago indicates that the Pope wishes “to reassure non-Christians and governments in which missionary activity is being carried out that evangelization has only one aim in view ‘to serve humanity by revealing the love of God which is made manifest in Jesus Christ’ (RM 2).”⁴⁸ John Paul II observes that “in certain countries missionaries are refused entry. In others not only is evangelization forbidden, but conversion as well, and even Christian worship” (RM 35). “Such negative elements have been met not only in Muslim countries but also in Hindu and Buddhist countries, frequently marked by prohibition of missionaries. According to Zago, John Paul’s appeal to non-Christians is encapsulated in a phrase that has become emblematic of his pontificate: “*Peoples everywhere, open the doors to Christ!* His Gospel in no way detracts from man’s freedom, from the respect that is owed to every culture and to whatever is good in each religion (RM 3).”⁴⁹ Fr. Zago comments: “Far from uttering this in a triumphal way, the Pope sees in these words themes that are repeated throughout the document as intrinsic to Christian mission and the flowering of every human community – respect for basic human freedom, for culture and for all religions.”

Fr. Zago examines also the structure and language of the encyclical. He compares it with the Decree *Ad Gentes* of Vatican II, showing how *Redemptoris Missio* starts from this document by “rooting mission in the Trinity”, and how it builds the first three chapters on this theme in order to present the reasons and the requirements of mission in the light of contemporary problems.”⁵⁰ He then notes that in the encyclical the discourse on the Church is made in relation to the theme of salvation;” thirdly, that “the purposes of mission are developed explicitly and broadly;” and fourthly, that “the concept of mission is developed in the same wide perspective.”

The encyclical develops further theological and doctrinal aspects taking into account conciliar and postconciliar documents and the present-day situation. It is “simpler and more meaningful ... Here dialogue, works of charity and witness are not steps towards proclamation – but integral aspects of mission in and of their very nature ... The various elements that comprise mission arise in love, the moving force and criterion of mission, which discerns the call of the Spirit in the concrete needs of human beings.”⁵¹

D. The Goal of the Mission *ad gentes*

Fr. Zago comments on the nature and context of mission. “In regard to unity and diversity of mission activity, the Pope states that the diversity of activities in mission is not intrinsic to mission itself, but arises from a variety of circumstances in which mission is carried out (RM 33).”⁵² The encyclical describes three situations in relation to faith: people who have received the faith and participate in the life of the Church; others who never received the faith; and those who lost their faith. Towards the first group the Church exercises *ordinary pastoral care*; towards the second group the Church carries on *mission ad gentes*; those who no longer practise are in need of *new evangelization*. The three groups need different approaches. The Pope regards them as “not clearly definable”; it is “unthinkable to create barriers between them” (RM 34). “The three activities are complementary to one another and are interdependent.”⁵³

Fr. Zago helps us define the context of the mission *ad gentes* according to the encyclical which “uses first and principally *ethnic and cultural criteria*.”⁵⁴ Human and cultural groups in which Christ and the Gospel are not known or that “lack Christian communities sufficiently mature to be able to incarnate their faith in their own environment and proclaim it to other groups” (RM 33): these form an “immense portion of humanity” (RM 3). The traditional goal of planting churches is an aim of mission “because the Lord does the work of salvation in a communitarian fashion, not just individually (cf. RM 20, 26...).”⁵⁵

The encyclical speaks of the territorial, social and cultural contexts of mission. The “territorial context is used insofar as the territory in question is inhabited by non-Christian peoples ... Terms like ‘country’, ‘nation’, ‘cultural area’, and ‘human and cultural area’ indicate living, ethnically defined realities

in many milieux.”⁵⁶

The encyclical speaks also of the numerous immigrants who form human and cultural minorities and present a challenge for ecclesial communities (cf. RM 82).

The geographical criteria for mission is still valid if one wants to avoid the risk of putting very different situations on the same level. In today's world, especially in the southern hemisphere, sociological criteria must be applied. The encyclical mentions urbanization, youth, migration, poverty which present a challenge to mission. Three particular *areopagi* are considered: the world of communications; culture, scientific research and international relations; leaders in politics, economy, arts and journalism.

Motivation for universal mission and the future of mission are the last two sections of Fr. Zago's commentary. “Mission can be lived only in faith as the fruit of personal and communitarian faith. Therefore, commitment to universal mission is the yardstick of Church vitality, just as lessening is a sign of a crisis of faith,”⁵⁷ faith in Christ as the one mediator between God and humanity. Fr. Zago shows how the “Kingdom of God cannot be reduced to a mere humanistic, anthropological, or theological level.”⁵⁸ The Kingdom includes the need to proclaim and accept the person of Christ. He explains as well the connection of the Kingdom with the Church, while not excluding the action of Christ and the Spirit outside the Church. “The Church is the sacrament of salvation for all mankind.” “Gospel values which are an expression of the Kingdom and which help people to accept God's plan ...The Church contributes through her witness and through activities such as dialogue, human promotion, commitment to justice and peace, education, care of the sick, and food to the poor and to children” (RM 20).

The encyclical continues the teaching of Vatican II on the action of the Spirit and salvation by Him. The Spirit is at work in the heart of every person “through the seeds of the Word” to be found in human initiatives – including religious ones – and in man's efforts to attain truth, goodness and God himself...The Spirit's presence and activity affect not only individuals, but also society, peoples, cultures and religions” (cf. RM 28).⁵⁹

E. The Future of Mission

The last section of Fr. Zago's commentary deals with the future of mission. According to him the encyclical reaffirms the vision of the Second Vatican Council. *Redemptoris Missio* “harmonizes important aspects of missionary experience of the last thirty years. In so doing, it also gives an energetic thrust toward the future and has been called the *Magna Charta* of mission for the third millennium. The Pope is asking for a radical turnabout, similar to other important historical transitions when the Church set out for new frontiers (cf. RM 30).⁶⁰ The Pope wishes “the whole Church to be mobilized for mission ... no part of the Church can be missionary on its own: priests need laity; natives need expatriates; religious need seculars.”⁶¹ Fr. Zago explains that “the encyclical envisages a *Church that is missionary everywhere*, a community committed to be missionary in a world that is not yet Christian and in which every local Church must live the missionary calling proper to it.

This is a program of action based on the immense needs to which the Church must respond.⁶² Furthermore the location of un-evangelized groups is not restricted to specific geographical areas. The new *areopagi* are to be evangelized wherever they exist. The Church must promote a “new evangelization of peoples and cultures that have ceased to be meaningfully Christian as well as to evangelize those who have never been Christian.”⁶³ John Paul II proposes a renewal of the Church by mission: “*Faith is strengthened when it is given to others!*” (RM 2). Fr. Zago underlines the “*integral vision of mission*, one in which diverse missionary activities are both possible and realized – promoting human development, dialogue, commitment to justice, incarnation, and explicit witness with its natural tendency to proclamation... Integral missionary activity requires the recognition that *proclamation* is to be given pride of place because of its nature at the center of mission.”⁶⁴ Just as Christ is at the center of the economy of salvation “so too all missionary activity is directed to the proclamation of his mystery.”⁶⁵

The last chapter of the encyclical deals with spirituality as mentioned above in presenting Monsignor Zago's spirituality of dialogue. Missionary spirituality is “expressed first of all by a life of complete docility to the Spirit, a life that commits the believer to being renewed and moulded within by the Spirit, making the disciples ever more like Christ.”⁶⁶ The ultimate criterion for evaluating the genuineness of missionary work is charity. Missionary activity is closely linked with the vocation of all Christians to holi-

ness: "Every member of the faithful is called to holiness and to mission" (RM 90). The Pope asks for a "new ardour for holiness among missionaries and especially among those who work most closely with the missionaries."⁶⁷

Fr. Zago concludes that the Church needs not only a new evangelization but also a new sense of mission. "The horizons of Christian mission are limitless... not only because of the many needs that exist, but especially because of the universal, salvific role of Christ... (and) because the Church has been assigned a key role as the necessary instrument of salvation for the building up of the Kingdom of God."⁶⁸

IV. Global Integration of Catholic Missions in the United States Today

A. The Chicago Address

Archbishop Marcello Zago was invited to give the keynote address at the Mission Congress 2000, held September 28 to October 1 in Chicago. In a very able and clear way he opened the Conference by considering the United States as a leader in many ways: "in racial integration, welcoming immigrants of every extraction and giving them citizenship; in the exercise of personal and group freedom, including that of religion; in the economy, producing wealth and work, spreading worldwide; in scientific and technical progress, attracting the greatest experts of the world finding new ways of doing it; in modern social communications, exporting its film productions and its various networks and giving rise to a globalized culture."⁶⁹ For these reasons "the American society appears as a precursor of the emerging world that is globalized and pluralistic."⁷⁰

Monsignor Zago traces the religious impact of the Protestant and Catholic Churches. He praises their generous financial contribution to the missions and the "great generosity as missionaries in many countries". In the past though "the Church had to take care of its own communities and help them become part of the country; its priority was not missionary expansion. The time has now come, however, for the Catholic Church to be more committed to the mission *ad gentes* and to have a missionary approach in all her activities within the country and elsewhere."⁷¹

The speaker develops his talk according to the plan of *Redemptoris Missio*. Concerning the addressees of the Church's mission, Monsignor Zago reminds his listeners that in his postsynodal exhortation *Ecclesia in America (EA)*, the Pope recognizes groups in the American continent that are in need of a first evangelization."⁷² He says: "Unfortunately, the name of Jesus is unknown to a vast part of humanity and in many sectors of American society. It is enough to think of the indigenous peoples not yet Christianized or of the presence of non-Christians (immigrants) ...This obliges the Church in America to be involved in the mission *ad gentes* ...The program of a new evangelization ... cannot be restricted to revitalizing the faith of regular believers, but must strive as well to proclaim Christ where he is not known" (EA 74).

Archbishop Zago focuses on several characteristics of mission which he calls *paths of mission*, such as mentioned in *Redemptoris Missio*. The encyclical underlines witness, proclamation, formation of communities and churches, inculturation, dialogue, human promotion, prayer, and contemplation. He begins with charity: "That which characterizes and animates all missionary activity is *charity*. The mission in fact is an extension of the love of God, who loved the world so much that he sent his only Son."⁷³ Mission is making the love of God visible and introducing men and women into Trinitarian communion. Missionaries are cooperators with Christ and the Holy Spirit who remain the principle agents. "This divine love in us is incarnated in our respect for people, for their values and their way of salvation and is expressed in concrete services and activities according to the needs of those to whom we are sent and the possibilities in the context."⁷⁴

Monsignor Zago continues with *proclamation*, which he describes as the greatest act of charity. "Proclamation is not always something official; it can be a personal conversation, a friendly witnessing and invitation. It is done with ordinary contacts with neighbors and friends."⁷⁵ All forms of missionary activity are directed to this proclamation. An expression of charity is dialogue that today "is becoming more and more necessary". Proclaiming Jesus Christ leads to renewal of all aspects of human life, both personal and social. It involves social transformation, human promotion and commitment to justice. The speaker

gives as examples the work of Mother Teresa of Calcutta and the need for reconciliation among ethnic rivalries in Africa. The presence of more than 200 sisters in Libyan hospitals has changed the image of the Church in the minds of the people. "The Church's response should be holistic and integral."⁷⁶

The importance of *inculturation* has emerged during the last decades. Today "inculturation is essential for effective evangelization that transforms persons and groups."⁷⁷ Further important elements of missionary activity are *prayer and contemplation*. Monsignor Zago refers to the Asian context, in which the validity of Christianity is judged by the practice of prayer and contemplation by its members. "The need for contemplation comes from the fact, that Christ through his Spirit, remains the principal agent of mission."⁷⁸ He concludes: "Prayer and charity embrace the vast range of missionary activities, making them authentic and fruitful."⁷⁹

Monsignor Zago presents *mission as a model for every ecclesial activity*. Pastoral care and new evangelization "should be stimulated by the radicality and fervor proper to missionary activity ... All pastoral activities should not forget the missionary commitments with non-Christian groups at home as well as abroad."⁸⁰ *Redemptoris Missio* argues that missionary activity revitalizes faith and Christian identity. "Without the mission *ad gentes*, the Church's very missionary dimension is deprived of its essential meaning and of the very activity that exemplifies it" (RM 34). Zago sees in this appeal an echo of the great missionary commandment (Matt.28:18-20). "The Lord left us a double commandment: that of charity (John 15: 17) and that of mission."⁸¹

The last part of Archbishop Zago's conference deals with *everyone's duty for mission*. The encyclical reminds us that "every member of the faithful is called to holiness and to mission" (RM 90). The Lord grants a great variety of charisms for missionary activities that lead to many forms of cooperation. The speaker points out that "no one is called to do everything, but together we can do what is needed ... Each one can do it in a direct way in his or her own environment, witnessing to the Good News and working for the evangelical transformation of social structures at the local, national, and international levels."⁸² He underlines the special role of the laity in the social and political spheres. Missionary work receives support through prayer and material aid, and especially through a Christian quality of life. The Lord needs full-time missionaries. "It is necessary to have people who are willing to consecrate their life to the mission... It is a marvellous vocation that fulfils the person and that gives hope and confidence to many people who are awaiting the civilization of love and universal brotherhood."⁸³

M^{gr} Zago expresses the challenges to which each particular Church must respond:

- harmonize the courage of proclamation and the path of dialogue;
- be committed to mission at home and universally;
- promote social justice and reconciliation between peoples;
- work toward inculturation and preserve a universal spirit;
- promote vocations of special consecration and commitment of laity, especially in social and political life;
- intensify ecclesial communion and respect the different charisms with their own identity.⁸⁴

Christians feel themselves to be the Church and could be more involved in missionary work. Local Churches can give witness in a more inculturated way. The assurance that the Spirit as principal agent of mission opens the hearts of those who are receiving,⁸⁵ just as he opens the hearts of the Christians to the needs of humanity and mission.

B. Response to Marcello Zago by Dr. Gerald Anderson

The planners of the Mission Congress invited Dr. Gerald Anderson, former director of Overseas Ministries Study Center and director of the *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* to give a formal response to Archbishop Zago's keynote address. Dr. Anderson admired and appreciated the speaker's analysis of Roman Catholic mission in the American context. He found Zago's observations about the Protestant missionary movement "perceptive". The experience in mission of the Catholic Church in the United States he called "informed and tactful".⁸⁶ Dr. Anderson observes that Monsignor Zago does not hesitate "to speak of the tendency of American Catholics to 'retreat into themselves'", and he notices "the low missionary impact of the American Catholic Church". The reasons for this are "ambiguous"; the Catholic Church has "a certain fear or inferiority complex", or there has been "a concentration on the needs of its own community". According to Anderson, Zago "is aware of the decline of American missionaries serving outside North America". Therefore, he declares: "The time has now come for the Catholic Church (in the United States) to be more committed to the mission *ad gentes*."⁸⁷

According to Dr. Anderson, Archbishop Zago reminds American Catholics of the obligation, both at home and abroad, to preach the Gospel and to establish new Churches where they do not exist. Mission cannot be restricted to revitalizing the faith of regular believers. Anderson agrees with the speaker that the "proclamation of Jesus Christ is the first duty of the Church" and "the greatest gift that we can give".

Conclusion

Marcello Zago has left missiology an exceptionally rich patrimony that future generations will discover when ecclesiastical archives are opened to research projects. He combined in an ideal way missionary experience with the study of missionary theory updated by Vatican II. The highest appreciation of Fr. J. Masson, the moderator of his doctoral dissertation, should be applied to the young scholar's later accomplishments. The quality of his studies is no less impressive than the long list of his writings.

Archbishop Zago has contributed in a special way to promoting and understanding dialogue at the highest level of the Church. His studies on Buddhism will serve as a reference for scholars in the field. His paper for the Plenary Assembly of 1998 of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue is an eloquent example of his thought concerning the importance of dialogue in the missionary approach to other religions. And finally, future mission scholars will study Fr. Zago's contribution to the understanding of John Paul II's *Redemptoris Missio*. His commentary on the encyclical will serve as a classic reference work.

Munich, March 2003

Notes:

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- ¹ Former Professor and Librarian at the Pontifical Urban University, Rome.
 - ² M. ZAGO, *Buddhismo e cristianesimo. Dialogo – Situazione – Rapporti – Convergenze*. Roma, 1985, 5.
 - ³ R. GUARDINI, *The Lord*, Chicago, 1954, 305.
 - ⁴ M. ZAGO, *Buddhismo e cristianesimo*, 5-6. My translation from the Italian.
 - ⁵ J. M. (= Joseph MASSON), M. ZAGO, O.M.I., *Rites et cérémonies en milieu lao*. Coll. Documenta Missionalia, 6, Rome, in *Nouvelle Revue Théologique*, 105 (1973), 807. My translation from the French.
 - ⁶ M. ZAGO, "Voyage du Patriarche Bouddhiste Lao en Italie", in *Bulletin du Secrétariat pour les non-chrétiens*, n. 8,

Rome, 1973, 277-291.

⁷ M. ZAGO, "Missiografia", in *Missiologia oggi*, Roma, Pont. Univ. Urbaniana, 1985, 253-263.

⁸ For a global view on M. Zago's bibliography, cf. M. ROSTKOWSKI, "Il patrimonio teologico e missiologico di Mons. Marcello Zago, o.m.i.", in *Vie Oblate Life* 59 (2000), 395-429. The bibliography is indispensable for all who study Fr. Zago's extremely rich patrimony. M. Rostkowski presents Zago's publications in chronological order. The bibliography is divided into four chapters: Buddhismo e dialogo interreligioso; Evangelizzazione e missione; Vita religiosa; Missionari Oblati di Maria Immacolata. Readers of this article should have in hand this bibliography in order to have a full picture of Zago's writings.

⁹ New-York-London, 1976

¹⁰ M. ZAGO, *Il Buddhismo*, Milano, 1984. 96 p.

¹¹ M. ZAGO, *Il Buddhismo*, 3. My translation from the Italian.

¹² M. ZAGO, *Buddhismo e cristianesimo*, 8.

¹³ M. ZAGO, *Buddhismo e cristianesimo*, 6.

¹⁴ M. ZAGO, "L'inculturazione nell'espansione del buddhismo", in *Prospettive di missiologia oggi*, (Documenta Missionalia 16), Roma, 1982, 229-236; 241-271.

¹⁵ Cf. M. ROSTKOWSKI, "Il patrimonio teologico e missiologico di Mons. Marcello Zago", in *Vie Oblate Life*, 59 (2000) 409-420.

¹⁶ M. ZAGO, *La Chiesa in Asia oggi. Problemi missionari della Chiesa in ambiente buddhista*. Bologna, 1983. 183 p.

¹⁷ M. ZAGO, *Volti della Chiesa in Asia*. Milano, 1990. 150 p.

¹⁸ M. ZAGO, *Le Chiese in America latina, continente della speranza, nel 5° centenario dell'evangelizzazione (1492-1992)*. Milano, 1992. 203 p.

¹⁹ "Dialogo e Missione", in *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, 86 (1984), 816-828.

²⁰ M. ZAGO, "Dialogo e Missione". Presentazione del Documento della Plenaria del 1984, in *Portare Cristo all'Uomo*, vol. I, Roma, 1985, 147-153.

²¹ M. ZAGO, "Interreligious dialogue", in *Following Christ in Mission* (ed. by S. Karotemprel), Bombay, 1995, 101-109; M. ZAGO, "Il dialogo nella missione della Chiesa", in *Bibliografia Missionaria* 47 (=1983), 1984, 348-352.

²² M. ZAGO, *La Nostra Aetate e il dialogo interreligioso a vent'anni dal Concilio*, Casal Monferrato, 1986.

²³ M. ZAGO, *La Nostra Aetate*, 61.

²⁴ M. ZAGO, *La spiritualità buddhista*, Roma, 1986. 249 p.

²⁵ M. ZAGO, "The spirituality of dialogue", in *Pro dialogo*, N. 101 (1999) 237.

²⁶ M. ZAGO, "The spirituality of dialogue", in *Pro dialogo*, N. 101 (1999) 238.

²⁷ M. ZAGO, "The spirituality of dialogue", in *Pro dialogo*, N. 101 (1999) 244.

²⁸ M. ZAGO, "The spirituality of dialogue", in *Pro dialogo*, N. 101 (1999) 244-245.

²⁹ M. ZAGO, "The spirituality of dialogue", in *Pro dialogo*, N. 101 (1999) 245.

³⁰ M. ZAGO, "The spirituality of dialogue", in *Pro dialogo*, N. 101 (1999) 245.

³¹ M. ZAGO, "The spirituality of dialogue", in *Pro dialogo*, N. 101 (1999) 245-246.

³² M. ZAGO, "The spirituality of dialogue", in *Pro dialogo*, N. 101 (1999) 246.

³³ W. BÜHLMANN, *Von der Kirche träumen*, Graz, 1989 (5th.ed.) 128-130. Here we give a summary following the German edition. The English title is: *Dreaming about the Church. Acts of the Apostles of the 20th century*, Kansas City, 1987. Fr. Zago wrote a review of the book in *Bibliographia Missionaria* 51 (=1987) 1988, 276-277. Fr. Zago wrote about 60 book reviews in *Bibliografia Missionaria*.

³⁴ M. ZAGO, "Redemptoris Missio de Juan Pablo II: Un grito por la misión", in *Cristo Chiesa Missione* (Studia Urbaniana, 38), Roma, 1992, 29-41.

³⁵ M. ZAGO, "Commentary on *Redemptoris Missio*", in *Redemption and Dialogue: Reading Redemptoris Missio* (ed. W. Burrows). Maryknoll, N.Y., 1993, 56-90.

³⁶ M. ZAGO, Commentary, 61.

³⁷ M. ZAGO, Commentary, 64-66.

³⁸ M. ZAGO, Commentary, 66.

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- ³⁹ M. ZAGO, Commentary, 66.
- ⁴⁰ M. ZAGO, Commentary, 67.
- ⁴¹ M. ZAGO, Commentary, 68.
- ⁴² M. ZAGO, Commentary, 69.
- ⁴³ M. ZAGO, Commentary, 70.
- ⁴⁴ M. ZAGO, Commentary, 71. See M. ZAGO, "Missionary vocation according to *Redemptoris Missio*", in *Omnis Terra*, (1992) 423-434.
- ⁴⁵ M. ZAGO, Commentary, 72.
- ⁴⁶ M. ZAGO, Commentary, 73.
- ⁴⁷ M. ZAGO, Commentary, 73.
- ⁴⁸ M. ZAGO, Commentary, 73.
- ⁴⁹ M. ZAGO, Commentary, 73.
- ⁵⁰ M. ZAGO, Commentary, 74.
- ⁵¹ M. ZAGO, Commentary, 74-75.
- ⁵² M. ZAGO, Commentary, 76.
- ⁵³ M. ZAGO, Commentary, 76.
- ⁵⁴ M. ZAGO, Commentary, 77.
- ⁵⁵ M. ZAGO, Commentary, 77.
- ⁵⁶ M. ZAGO, Commentary, 77.
- ⁵⁷ M. ZAGO, Commentary, 81.
- ⁵⁸ M. ZAGO, Commentary, 82-83.
- ⁵⁹ M. ZAGO, Commentary, 86.
- ⁶⁰ M. ZAGO, Commentary, 86.
- ⁶¹ M. ZAGO, Commentary, 86.
- ⁶² M. ZAGO, Commentary, 87.
- ⁶³ M. ZAGO, Commentary, 87.
- ⁶⁴ M. ZAGO, Commentary, 87.
- ⁶⁵ M. ZAGO, Commentary, 87.
- ⁶⁶ M. ZAGO, Commentary, 89.
- ⁶⁷ M. ZAGO, Commentary, 89.
- ⁶⁸ M. ZAGO, Commentary, 89-90.
- ⁶⁹ M. ZAGO, "Global Integration of Catholic Mission in the United States Today", in *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* (= IBMR) 25 (2001), 2.
- ⁷⁰ M. ZAGO, Global Integration, in IBMR 25 (2001), 2.
- ⁷¹ M. ZAGO, Global Integration, in IBMR 25 (2001), 2.
- ⁷² M. ZAGO, Global Integration, in IBMR 25 (2001), 3.
- ⁷³ M. ZAGO, Global Integration, in IBMR 25 (2001), 3-4.
- ⁷⁴ M. ZAGO, Global Integration, in IBMR 25 (2001), 4.
- ⁷⁵ M. ZAGO, Global Integration, in IBMR 25 (2001), 4.
- ⁷⁶ M. ZAGO, Global Integration, in IBMR 25 (2001), 4.
- ⁷⁷ M. ZAGO, Global Integration, in IBMR 25 (2001), 5.
- ⁷⁸ M. ZAGO, Global Integration, in IBMR 25 (2001), 5.
- ⁷⁹ M. ZAGO, Global Integration, in IBMR 25 (2001), 5.
- ⁸⁰ M. ZAGO, Global Integration, in IBMR 25 (2001), 5.
- ⁸¹ M. ZAGO, Global Integration, in IBMR 25 (2001), 5.

⁸² M. ZAGO, *Global Integration*, in *IBMR* 25 (2001), 5.

⁸³ M. ZAGO, *Global Integration*, in *IBMR* 25 (2001), 5.

⁸⁴ M. ZAGO, *Global Integration*, in *IBMR* 25 (2001), 6.

⁸⁵ M. ZAGO, *Global Integration*, in *IBMR* 25 (2001), 6.

⁸⁶ G. H. ANDERSON, "Response to Marcello Zago, O.M.I.", in *IBMR* 25 (2001), 6.

⁸⁷ G. H. ANDERSON, "Response to Marcello Zago, O.M.I.", in *IBMR* 25 (2001), 6.

Le père Marcello Zago et la formation de l'Oblat

Sante Bisignano, o.m.i.¹

«Que fit Notre Seigneur Jésus Christ...?»

La vocation de chacun

Dans la communion ecclésiale, chaque personne a un visage singulier et un rôle propre au service des autres, pour le bien du peuple de Dieu et de la société. En effet, chaque vocation est l'expression d'un amour unique, personnel, sans pareil, du Père à la personne appelée qui lui répond en se donnant au Christ pour la mission. «Dans l'unité de la vie chrétienne, en effet, les différentes vocations sont comme les rayons de l'unique lumière du Christ qui resplendit sur le visage de l'Église².» Chaque vocation, donc, en vertu de la communion, est une richesse pour l'Église et témoigne de l'agir de l'Esprit qui moule en nous les sentiments du Christ pour transformer avec Lui l'humanité en «famille de Dieu³.» La vocation est une réalité vécue par un être humain, merveilleux et fragile, riche de dons immenses et d'attentes continuelles, capable de créativité surprenante, mais en même temps freiné par ses limites comme créature, et par les conditions d'une société complexe, qui connaît à la fois les «œuvres de la chair» et le «fruit de l'Esprit» (cf. Gal 5, 18-22). Il s'agit d'un cheminement personnel, avec ses rythmes propres, et il s'agit en même temps d'un cheminement partagé avec d'autres⁴. Comme cela a été pour les Apôtres, le dessein de Dieu sur notre vie émerge peu à peu, comme une semence qui se développe et qui, en mûrissant, exprime le projet qui est inscrit dans son être.

La vocation de Marcello Zago

Dans la vie de Marcello Zago apparaît, claire et décidée, une sensibilité apostolique bien nette ainsi que sa grande passion pour l'évangélisation: vocation d'Église, dans laquelle notre charisme missionnaire est greffé. Voilà ce que j'ai pu remarquer durant les années passées au Scolasticat international, à Rome, alors que chacun découvrait et laissait mûrir au profond de son cœur sa propre identité oblate et, dans la vivacité de la jeunesse, s'ouvrait à l'avenir «jusqu'au bout du monde⁵.» La sensibilité qui mûrit dans la prière et dans le discernement, dans l'échange sur l'idéal entre compagnons, avec les formateurs et avec les missionnaires, commençait à tracer les parcours sur lesquels se dénouera sa propre vie. Parler du «p. Zago et la formation» ne signifie pas seulement exposer sa pensée et le fondement christologique qui l'anime; cela demande aussi d'examiner son expérience de foi, son amour de l'Église et de l'humanité, où l'on trouve sa créativité et, aussi, sa souffrance pour l'évangélisation.

Esprit missionnaire

C'est ainsi que la vie de Marcello nous invite à redécouvrir, à travers ses choix, ses épreuves, ses écrits et ses voyages, la beauté de la vocation de l'Oblat dans l'Église pour une mission courageuse et clairvoyante, dans la fidélité à l'Évangile et au Fondateur. Son témoignage continue d'être sa première œuvre de formateur, «passionné de Jésus Christ et inconditionnel de l'Église», comme l'a été Eugène de Mazenod. Comme Supérieur général, il répétait souvent: «Aujourd'hui, il faut former les multiplicateurs». Il pensait non seulement aux nouvelles générations d'Oblats et d'autres Instituts, mais aussi aux laïcs, aux séminaristes des Églises locales, surtout missionnaires. Cette pensée l'a accompagné jusqu'à la fin. Pourraient en témoigner les personnes avec lesquelles il a préparé, dans les dernières semaines de sa vie, un projet de formation missionnaire. Il m'a dit plus d'une fois, lors d'une promenade à Villa Borghese:

Il faut faire vite, pour qu'il soit accueilli et devienne un programme effectif pour tous les séminaires dans l'Église. L'esprit missionnaire est propre à la vocation chrétienne, mais il doit être avant tout la passion des prêtres. La mission *ad gentes* est un facteur de renouvellement. Mais il y a du chemin à parcourir pour renforcer un esprit qui s'est affaibli. On s'est trop fermé sur soi, dans les problèmes de nos Églises locales, de nos propres Instituts et des communautés. Nous avons besoin d'une grâce.

Faire mémoire de ses expériences

Je voudrais parcourir de nouveau quelques traits du cheminement de Marcello avec l'aide de ses écrits et de quelques souvenirs, sachant que l'on peut seulement effleurer le mystère de son existence. Je désire faire «mémoire» de quelques expériences directes, surtout dans le dialogue avec lui sur la formation, et rappeler quelques points-clef de sa pensée et de son agir comme formateur. Ses écrits révèlent les convictions qui ont guidé sa vie et son service dans la Congrégation et dans l'Église. Et même quand ces écrits posent le problème de façon scientifique, ils surgissent toujours de la vie.

Les écrits

Les écrits du p. Zago sur la formation nous introduisent au cœur du charisme oblat, alors qu'il nous rappelle nos racines et réveille l'audace de l'Oblat devant les défis inédits de l'évangélisation. Il invite à être présents dans les nouvelles agoras de la mission, terme qu'il fait sien depuis l'encyclique *Redemptoris Missio* et l'exhortation apostolique *Vita Consecrata*⁶. Ses interventions visent donc l'identité oblate et sont une description, actualisée, de «l'homme apostolique» selon le Fondateur dans la perspective du mystère de salut. Le but est de servir l'Église et d'agir dans la mission comme «coopérateurs du Christ Sauveur», avec la créativité de la charité, avec clairvoyance, «en mettant tout en œuvre». Il suffit de parcourir les lettres adressées aux Oblats au début de leur cheminement et à tous, pères et Frères, pour sentir les vibrations de son âme, sa souffrance pour la Congrégation, qu'il rêve riche de vitalité et de sainteté. Marcello a ressenti profondément la situation de l'Église et il expose ce qu'il entend par «former l'homme apostolique aujourd'hui» et se mettre à «l'école du Christ⁷...» On notera dans ses écrits sa connaissance profonde du Fondateur et sa participation personnelle dans le cheminement de l'Église universelle et missionnaire.

Plein d'admiration

Le p. Zago était fasciné par le travail apostolique des missionnaires qu'il rencontrait lors de ses voyages. Il le disait aux novices et aux scolastiques après chacune de ses visites. Je me souviens de la résonance qu'a trouvée en lui la lecture de la thèse d'un jeune Oblat sur *Le martyre, «charisme» de la mission chez Eugène de Mazenod et dans sa famille religieuse*⁸. L'auteur soulignait les paroles du Fondateur: «Dans cette déplorable situation, l'Église appelle à grands cris les ministres...». Est-il surprenant que la vue de ces désordres ait inspiré quelques pensées généreuses, ait touché le cœur de quelques prêtres...? Ils se rappellent ce que la grâce leur a inspiré. Il ne s'agissait de rien moins que de s'offrir eux mêmes: *et vellent victimas sese, si expediret, animarum saluti devovere*⁹. Et encore:

Et nos Oblats, c'est impossible de dire l'héroïsme de leur dévouement ... Qu'ils sont heureux de pouvoir se sacrifier pour les âmes de leurs frères qu'ils sanctifient, qu'ils sauvent, qu'ils placent dans la gloire, au prix de leur vie, comme notre divin Maître qui est mort pour le salut des hommes! Qu'ils sont admirables! Mais aussi, qu'ils sont heureux, ces chers martyrs de la charité! Quelle belle page pour l'histoire de notre Congrégation! Mais ce que je vous dis n'est rien en comparaison de ce qu'ils font¹⁰.

Marcello Zago écrivait encore en 1997:

Le martyre est l'expression de la radicalité évangélique qui est inhérente à la vocation missionnaire. Dans la disponibilité missionnaire, il y a une attitude de radicalité du don de soi, qui exclut toute limite. Cette attitude d'oblation complète pour la mission est présente chez les fondateurs des communautés missionnaires et qualifie leur spiritualité même... L'annonce n'est pas seulement et d'abord un témoignage, mais elle est une vie qui se fait parole et témoignage, à l'image du Christ même... Le martyre, même s'il est dans la logique de la mission, est une grâce, que le Seigneur accorde à quelques-uns afin de mettre en relief les exigences radicales de la mission¹¹.

Aujourd'hui, en pensant aux trois dernières années de M^{gr} Zago au service de l'Église missionnaire, les paroles du Fondateur et ce que lui-même a écrit aident à comprendre jusqu'où est arrivé son cheminement spirituel.

Sa grande ouverture sur toute l'Église et sur la société jaillit de son union profonde avec le Christ, de son dialogue avec le Fondateur et avec les premiers Oblats. C'est ici qu'il a toujours voulu nous conduire pour aider chacun à vivre l'aujourd'hui comme «Oblat», dans la complexité des situations humaines et ecclésiales qui le caractérisent.

L'authenticité de notre être chrétien et religieux et de notre action missionnaire dépend de notre rapport personnel avec le Christ.

Il est au centre de notre perception des personnes et des événements. Il est le critère décisif de nos choix et de nos jugements, si nous avons avec Lui une relation personnelle et régulière, alors seulement notre vie est construite sur le roc et ne sera pas détruite ou endommagée par les tempêtes. Ce ne sont pas les qualités personnelles, ni les spécialisations, ce ne seront pas les activités missionnaires, ni même les pauvres, qui donneront un fondement solide à votre avenir. Il n'y a qu'un fondement valide sur lequel vous pouvez construire et jouer votre vie: c'est le Christ.

Il importe que chacun d'entre nous fasse l'expérience bouleversante du Fondateur, le jour du Vendredi saint de 1807; il faut comme lui croître constamment dans la connaissance et dans l'amour du Christ. De cette relation personnelle avec le Christ est née et a été modelée la Congrégation¹².

Convictions profondes

Les lettres et les écrits du p. Zago sur la formation constituent un manuel frais et dynamique sur le charisme et la formation de l'Oblat, actualisés aujourd'hui dans la «fidélité et la créativité¹³». L'insistance que nous trouvons dans ses nombreux écrits n'est pas une répétition mais une emphase pleine de notre identité, parce que l'on ne peut réaliser une communion profonde dans l'Église ni la solidarité avec les pauvres si nous ne sommes pas nous-mêmes. Pour le p. Zago, le devoir de chacun d'être l'Oblat de la Préface est d'aimer l'Église et d'aimer les pauvres. Pour lui, l'heure actuelle de l'histoire contenait un nouvel appel, soit personnel soit comme famille d'Eugène de Mazenod. Cet appel l'a rejoint au plus profond de son cœur et il a voulu y répondre par le don de sa vie, jour après jour, dans toutes les situations.

Qu'on revoie la lettre qu'il écrivit à l'occasion de la canonisation du Fondateur¹⁴. Il ne s'agit pas d'une lettre liée à la circonstance; elle révèle ses convictions profondes et la certitude de la valeur de la vocation oblate pour l'Église. Il l'avait justement constaté dans son service varié en divers territoires dans l'Église, allant du dialogue avec les bouddhistes à ses engagements au Conseil pontifical pour le dialogue inter-religieux, à la rencontre d'Assise, en 1986, aux rencontres personnelles aux niveaux les plus élevés, tout comme lors de promenades dans les rues de Rome ou pendant les visites de nos provinces ou missions. Il avait l'Église dans le cœur. Cet esprit contagieux est un don, mais il est aussi le fruit d'une discipline intérieure et de la prière. Il est pour nous, donc, l'indication d'un parcours constant de formation permanente et il est un objectif de la formation première.

Dialogue avec les jeunes

Un autre aspect de l'engagement du p. Zago pour la formation et la mission est le dialogue avec les nouvelles générations¹⁵. On en trouve une motivation dans une de ses Lettres aux Oblats en formation; il se réfère à l'expérience du Fondateur: «Le Fondateur s'est toujours préoccupé de la formation d'hommes apostoliques de qualité authentiques. C'est pourquoi il visitait les maisons de formation et se tenait constamment en contact avec les formateurs¹⁶.» Nous trouvons une autre motivation dans son regard sur les nouvelles générations, qu'il voit comme porteuses d'une nouvelle façon de «sentir» et des «antennes» qui captent le futur. C'est pourquoi il se faisait un devoir de se mettre à leur écoute avec attention, et de communiquer sa propre expérience missionnaire. Je me rappelle quand il venait à Marino, avec les fiches sur lesquelles il avait recueilli ses observations et ses données sur les rencontres et le dialogue avec les bouddhistes. Il nous les lisait et les expliquait de façon à nous faire aimer ce monde qui nous était si lointain et pour poser des questions sur l'évangélisation¹⁷. Notre responsabilité, répétait-il, est de transmettre aux jeunes les valeurs constitutives de la vocation oblate dans leur vérité, sans y ajouter des structures ou des interprétations personnelles, pour qu'ils les incarnent avec les caractéristiques et les modalités propres à leur génération et à leur culture. Il était frappé de voir comment les jeunes vibraient au contact du Fondateur.

Je me souviens de l'expérience d'Aix, à l'occasion du deuxième centenaire de la naissance du Fondateur¹⁸. Le Bureau européen de la formation avait organisé une session pour les Oblats d'Europe en formation. C'est justement là, à Aix, grâce aux jeunes, qu'est née l'idée de mettre en valeur notre lieu d'origine pour la formation oblate et pour notre renouvellement. Cette expérience a attiré l'attention de l'Administration générale et l'a portée, dans les années suivantes, à créer l'actuelle «Expérience de Mazenod». En plus, le p. Zago avait porté une attention particulière, avec le p. Jetté, Supérieur général, et le p. Ferkinghoff, conseiller pour l'Europe, à la possibilité d'une présence oblate stable à Lourdes. De fait, sur invitation de l'abbé André Cabes, responsable du Service des Jeunes, quelques scolastiques italiens passaient l'été à Lourdes pour l'animation au Centre missionnaire avec le p. Noël Leca; ils avaient aussi aidé pour l'accueil des jeunes pèlerins. Le p. Zago lisait ces événements comme des signes et des appels. Il a voulu aussi être présent à Lourdes dans les moments de la fondation et du développement du «Movimento Giovanile Costruire», qu'il a toujours soutenu et promu¹⁹. C'est un groupe de jeunes du MGC qui, à l'occasion de la canonisation du Fondateur, a présenté, dans la salle d'audiences Paul VI, l'expérience d'Eugène de Mazenod, avec le langage de la danse, de la musique, du chant, avec des chorégraphies d'une efficacité communicative indiscutable.

Le p. Zago croyait aux jeunes et les jeunes le sentaient bien, ils le recherchaient. Au Congrès national missionnaire des jeunes, organisé par les Œuvres pontificales à l'été 1992, il y a développé le thème: «Le style missionnaire des jeunes pour une Europe ouverte sur le monde». Il a proposé de nouveau, en l'approfondissant, le «décalogue du style missionnaire»: «Comment est-il possible à des jeunes d'être missionnaires parmi leurs contemporains, dans leur propre société, dans le monde d'aujourd'hui? Quel est le style missionnaire des jeunes pour une Europe ouverte sur le monde? Quelles sont les valeurs et les attitudes, les chemins et les engagements à prendre?» Après avoir, dans les premiers huit points, relié le style missionnaire aux exigences et aux sensibilités des jeunes, il les conduit à Jésus Christ: «Nous chrétiens avons reçu un grand don: la foi ou mieux la connaissance, le rapport, l'identification à la Personne qui est le Christ. C'est le plus grand don que nous avons, duquel découle un sens pour notre existence, l'espérance pour notre avenir. C'est le don d'une vie nouvelle. Nous ne pouvons pas garder ce don pour nous, nous ne pouvons le cacher aux autres ... Jésus Christ, missionnaire du Père! C'est lui le sens de notre vie et de notre mission. C'est en lui que nous trouvons le style missionnaire jeune pour l'Europe ouverte sur le monde comme pour le monde dans lequel se trouve la petite Europe. Il faut «se laisser former intérieurement par lui [l'Esprit] afin de devenir toujours plus conformes au Christ. On ne peut témoigner du Christ sans refléter son image²⁰.» Il livre aux jeunes dix «paroles d'ordre»: «amitié, communauté, mondialité, joie, service, témoignage, dialogue, annonce, disponibilité, amour du Christ²¹.» Tout vivre «à la façon mariale, comme Marie». Dans une autre occasion, il répète fortement aux jeunes: « Le chrétien ne peut avoir de frontières. Il doit avoir l'horizon du monde du Christ. Nous sommes responsables de la mission universelle. Et le Seigneur nous dit: «Allez! Prêchez! Comme le Père m'a envoyé, ainsi je vous envoie». Pour baptiser, pour faire entrer dans le mystère de Dieu qui est Trinité²².

On retrouve cette même passion, quoique en un style sobre et scientifique, dans ses deux dernières publications posthumes: au mot «Missione», dans le *Dizionario di Pastorale vocazionale* (Dictionnaire de pastorale vocationnelle)²³, et au mot «Inculturazione della vita consacrata» dans le *Dizionario di teologia della Vita consacrata - Supplemento* (Dictionnaire de théologie de la vie consacrée-Supplément)²⁴.

Que fit Notre Seigneur...?

Quelles sont les lignes majeures de sa pensée sur la formation ? Quels sont les points essentiels? Comme première tentative de réponse, j'ai pensé les regrouper brièvement²⁵ autour de quelques aspects, en me référant à la relation entre Jésus et ses disciples à la lumière de l'Évangile de Marc²⁶ et à la Préface: «Que fit Notre Seigneur Jésus Christ lorsqu'il voulut convertir le monde?...», explosion du cœur du Fondateur qui met en lumière sa familiarité avec la parole de Dieu. Le p. Zago fait souvent référence à ce passage de la Préface des Constitutions²⁷.

Il choisit un certain nombre d'apôtres et de disciples. C'est le Christ qui choisit et appelle à partager sa vie. Comme il a appelé les Apôtres, il choisit et appelle Eugène de Mazenod. à marcher sur leurs traces en vue de la mission . Il appelle avec d'autres: c'est la famille oblate.

Le Christ est avant tout celui qui appelle, qui interpelle, qui convoque, qui prend l'initiative, justement parce que c'est Lui qui continue la mission divine, c'est Lui qui sauve et attire tous les hommes au Père à travers son Esprit... Cet appel renouvelé du Christ est à l'origine de notre effort de formation à toutes ses étapes; il nous fait aussi un devoir de nous engager, avec espérance, dans la pastorale des vocations²⁸.

Il s'adresse aux jeunes en ces termes:

La mission n'est pas étrangère à votre vie, elle n'est pas quelque chose que vous attendez seulement pour l'avenir et à laquelle vous vous préparez. Elle est partie de chacun de vous. Vous vous en rendez compte lorsque vous pouvez mettre en pratique et incarner ce que vous portez en votre cœur. Plusieurs d'entre vous ont entendu l'appel, ou celui-ci s'est confirmé, grâce à une expérience missionnaire, ou au contact avec des missionnaires authentiques ou par la découverte des grands besoins missionnaires²⁹.

On constate la vérité féconde de ce qui est écrit dans la Règle: les Oblats perçoivent l'appel de Jésus Christ «à travers les besoins de salut des hommes», et cela est souligné avec une évidence particulière dans la vie du p. Zago: «il se sent Église.» Notre vocation ne se ferme pas sur nous et nos particularités; elle conduit toujours à regarder l'Église, dont on se reconnaît membre et fils.

Dès le début, le p. Zago met notre vocation en relation avec l'expérience du Vendredi saint du Fondateur, dans laquelle il mûrit son appel, appel qui est à l'origine de la famille oblate:

L'expérience spirituelle clé de la vie d'Eugène de Mazenod a été celle du Christ crucifié, survenue le Vendredi saint 1807. Sa vie spirituelle a été toujours orientée vers le Christ et centrée sur lui, de qui vient non seulement sa spiritualité basée sur le Sauveur, mais son zèle missionnaire même, tout tendu vers l'évangélisation³⁰.

C'est cette expérience du Christ, par l'œuvre de l'Esprit³¹, qu'il transmet aux siens et qui devient l'objectif premier de la formation, en tant qu'elle exprime l'identité du charisme de la Congrégation.

On comprend pourquoi il définit la formation comme un processus de croissance personnelle, par lequel le missionnaire s'identifie chaque jour avec la personne, la mission et la vie du Christ. C'est à un cheminement avec Lui. Pèlerins avec Lui et avec les autres, Oblats et non-Oblats... C'est un cheminement théologique³².

Et encore:

Notre formation doit s'appuyer sur quelques piliers essentiels, qui ne nous sont pas exclusifs, mais qui, pour nous, possèdent des nuances et des accents particuliers. J'en indique six: radicalité évangélique, sens missionnaire, maturité humaine et chrétienne, capacité de communion, formation doctrinale, discernement. Ce sont à la fois des points d'arrivée, mais aussi des jalons grâce auxquels on mesure et on évalue le cheminement de la formation. Ce sont des façons d'être à travers lesquelles doit croître tout Oblat³³.

C'est dans le Christ que se réalise l'unité de vie et que mûrit notre identité. Le Christ-Sauveur qui est «le Formateur» de l'Oblat³⁴, c'est à son école que s'épanouit «l'homme apostolique»:

Être des «hommes apostoliques» n'était pas pour [le Fondateur] un idéal éthique et opérationnel, mais évangélique, c'est-à-dire inspiré par l'Évangile, cela suit la même dynamique que celle du Christ... Pour lui, «hommes apostoliques» se réfère toujours non seulement à l'agir mais aussi et surtout à l'être de l'Oblat; l'expression souligne la dimension missionnaire et la dimension religieuse, elle décrit en somme l'unité de vie de celui qui doit suivre le Christ pour être coopérateur de sa mission... Dans l'ordre de l'être l'expression indique toujours l'effort pour atteindre la sainteté, la pratique des conseils, l'engagement que l'on peut qualifier d'amoureux à la suite du Christ jusqu'à l'identification avec lui. Cette expression: «être apôtre» est la condition pour «agir comme des apôtres», pour donner des fruits, pour être des coopérateurs authentiques du Christ.

Pour cette raison également, qui se trouve dans l'impossibilité d'agir peut être missionnaire à part entière³⁵.

Il les forma à la piété, en relation avec lui

La relation avec le Christ crucifié Sauveur est ainsi «le lieu» de la croissance où l'on acquiert «un cœur et une mentalité missionnaires», ouverts sur toute l'Église et sur l'humanité³⁶.

La formation oblate commence exactement lorsque naît une expérience du Christ et plus la vie du candidat se centre, s'intègre et s'unifie dans la relation personnelle avec le Christ plus elle s'approfondit. Si cette relation personnelle avec le Christ n'existe pas, la formation demeure superficielle et l'édifice est dépourvu de bases solides³⁷. – Devenir d'autres Jésus Christ, être coopérateurs du Sauveur, enseigner qui est le Christ, sont des convictions et des mots d'ordre fondamentaux transmis par lui aux Oblats. Les divers aspects du charisme mazenodien se comprennent et se vivent seulement s'il y a une passion personnelle pour le Christ³⁸.

La relation avec le Christ n'est pas seulement personnelle, mais elle est aussi communautaire, «parce que nous sommes missionnaires en communauté». Le p. Zago poursuit sa pensée: «Le rapport avec le Christ introduit dans la vie trinitaire. C'est l'Esprit qui nous fait connaître et croître pleinement dans le Christ, qui nous fait acquérir ses sentiments, sa vision de la vie. C'est l'Esprit qui forme en nous les sentiments du Christ.» Il note ensuite, à propos de la charité comme pivot de toute notre vie, ce qu'a écrit le Fondateur: «La charité se concrétise dans la vie fraternelle, qui trouve d'une part sa source dans la vie trinitaire et d'autre part son modèle dans le Christ qui s'est donné jusqu'au sacrifice suprême de la Croix³⁹.» Le tout (formation-spiritualité-mission) est d'abord don et œuvre de l'Esprit, don qui appelle notre réponse et notre collaboration⁴⁰.

La première façon de coopérer avec le Christ est de le reconnaître comme notre Maître et de «marcher sur ses pas»: par une vie sainte, revêtus de ses vertus, tout sacrifier dans le don total de soi.

Sa grande expérience de la vie de l'Église et son sens du concret portait le p. Zago à souligner

le travail que chacun doit faire pour se rendre disponible à la grâce de Dieu... Sans la maîtrise de soi, sans l'effort quotidien, sans la discipline, l'homme n'atteint pas la maturité et ne réussit pas à accomplir quelque chose de valide et de grand... Pour devenir et être des hommes apostoliques nous avons besoin d'une discipline personnelle, d'un programme régulièrement mis au point et constamment évalué... Mais l'objectif final et la source de l'homme apostolique sont de nature mystique, «expérientielle». On donne sa propre vie par amour de Jésus Christ, en réponse à son amour qui nous devance toujours⁴¹.

En relisant ces textes, je crois y voir décrit son engagement personnel dans la simplicité austère, jusqu'à son dernier jour, celui du «oui» où, enveloppé par la charité des proches qui l'entouraient, il a été porté dans notre «Maison Mère», comme le Fondateur avait coutume de dire.

II les remplit de son Esprit

L'homme apostolique est celui qui est animé de l'Esprit du Christ et des Apôtres, ce qui lui permet de «voir» les besoins de l'Église et du monde et qui sait y répondre avec créativité et audace. «Créativité et universalité» sont des traits du visage de l'Oblat⁴².

Je voudrais souligner deux points, vu leur importance dans la formation initiale et permanente. L'homme apostolique est celui qui est guidé constamment par l'Esprit, en communion avec toute l'Église, et qui agit avec vigueur prophétique et avec un style marial. Il est surtout celui qui partage la compassion du Christ, avec, dans le cœur, l'humanité⁴³. Si la première dimension de notre vocation exige la formation au discernement et la capacité de lire les signes des temps et les défis, la seconde dimension requiert une formation qui rejoint le cœur de la personne et de la communauté, par le moyen d'une fréquentation assidue de la Parole de Dieu et du dialogue avec les gens, en particulier les plus abandonnés. C'est pourquoi le p. Zago insistait sur la capacité de l'écoute, du dialogue, de l'accueil des autres et des autres traditions culturelles et religieuses⁴⁴. «Il existe un rapport étroit entre la perception des besoins de salut de

l'humanité, l'appel du Christ, la participation à la compassion salvifique, la réunion en communautés authentiques, le témoignage et l'évangélisation⁴⁵.»

Tout cela naissait en lui de son rapport personnel avec le Christ et, certainement, de dons spirituels qui enrichissaient son humanité et la faisaient s'épanouir. Quand on lit les textes qu'il adressait à nous, Oblats, on voit apparaître non seulement la compétence du théologien, mais en premier lieu l'homme apostolique à la fois bien enraciné dans le présent et ouvert sur l'avenir, conscient que répondre aux appels de Dieu aujourd'hui, c'est déjà construire le futur. Un exemple: sa collaboration avec Jean-Paul II dans la réalisation de l'extraordinaire «événement d'Assise⁴⁶» a sa racine dans sa sensibilité oblate, dans l'amour de l'Église, Épouse du Christ, et dans ses convictions profondes.

On ne l'a pas toujours compris. Il a beaucoup souffert. Il souffrait en silence quand il voyait des personnes consacrées ou des pasteurs emprisonnés dans leur passé personnel ou dans une vision étroite de l'Église et de la mission. Dans ses dernières années, il me confiait quelques-unes de ses questions «sans réponse» au sujet du «gap», c'est-à-dire du fossé entre, d'une part, la richesse des orientations que l'Église et la Congrégation offraient et, de l'autre, le vécu quotidien: comme si cela était sans incidence sur la vision de la vie, sur les choix personnels et communautaires, sur la mission, sur les chemins de la formation. «On chemine dans la société d'aujourd'hui comme si Vatican II n'existait pas avec tout ce qui a mûri par la suite, et sans s'apercevoir de ce que l'Esprit est en train d'accomplir dans l'Église! C'est pourquoi le renouveau est lent à venir, la mission est peu incisive, les jeunes n'arrivent pas à percevoir l'appel de Dieu». Ce sont des épreuves douloureuses qui font des géants! En parcourant ses écrits, je repense à des conversations familières, toujours très discrètes, empreintes de silence et de prière. «Chaque difficulté est une chance», répétait-il. Je n'hésite pas à partager ces réflexions pour aider à entrer dans son esprit et saisir la passion qui animait ses interventions. En fait, c'est ce qui contribue, plus que tout le reste, à former.

Après les avoir dressés à son école, il les envoya

Le fait d'«être avec lui», dont parle Marc (3, 13-15), n'est pas seulement un événement historique concernant les Douze, mais c'est une donnée permanente qui qualifie la vie chrétienne et les multiples vocations. Le Fondateur propose de nouveau cette expérience, qui fut aussi la sienne, à ses compagnons ainsi qu'à toutes les générations d'Oblats; il joint la formation et l'envoi. Les Apôtres, nos «premiers pères», après un cheminement de formation, reçoivent le mandat du Christ ressuscité (Jn 20,21) dans le partage du mystère de Pâques. Le visage de l'Oblat, tel qu'Eugène de Mazenod le décrit dans la Préface des Constitutions avec une passion convaincante, est tout orienté vers la mission, comme le Christ et les Apôtres.

L'idéal missionnaire du Fondateur est né de son expérience personnelle du Christ Sauveur et de son amour compatissant pour les pauvres, les abandonnés, les laissés pour compte. Être missionnaire pour lui c'est coopérer avec le Christ qui demeure l'auteur principal du salut de tous les hommes. Pour cette raison l'Oblat doit être à l'unisson avec son Maître, s'identifier à lui. Il doit être un homme apostolique, compagnon du Christ dans l'intimité étroite de la coopération. Mais en même temps il doit s'identifier au peuple, en comprendre les besoins et les aspirations jusqu'à en assumer les péchés comme le Fondateur le faisait dans les premières missions, suscitant ainsi l'étonnement de tous⁴⁷.

Nous sommes nés pour la mission et nous existons pour elle... L'Oblat est le missionnaire des pauvres, il est le missionnaire du peuple. Il s'ouvre à tout homme dans la nécessité pour accueillir ses aspirations, l'accompagner dans son cheminement, lui révéler qui est le Christ. Il s'ouvre au monde entier en étant attentif à ses appels et anxiétés, en secondant les engagements de la Congrégation, en se rendant partout disponible. L'avenir de la Congrégation dépendra de la qualité de notre vie, de notre courage et de notre disponibilité pour répondre aux défis et aux besoins là où l'Esprit nous poussera à être les témoins de l'Évangile⁴⁸.

La formation requiert d'avoir les idées claires et d'être en syntonisation avec le projet de salut du Père. C'est pourquoi le p. Zago répète aux formateurs des nouvelles générations d'Oblats:

La nouvelle réalité de la mission prend racine dans cette conscience que le Christ ressuscité continue par l'Esprit sa mission salvifique dans le monde à laquelle il associe son Église. L'expansion du Royaume a ses étapes et ses moments que l'Église doit discerner et avec lesquels elle doit collaborer sans limiter sa générosité... La mission est un appel non seulement à la disponibilité et à la générosité mais aussi à la sainteté des chrétiens et des communautés pour répondre à l'appel de son amour salvifique adressé à toute l'humanité et y collaborer.

Et il explique: «La mission s'exerce toujours dans le concret de l'histoire et des situations». Pour cette activité dans le monde d'aujourd'hui, il indique et décrit sept «médiations privilégiées: le dialogue, l'inculturation, la promotion humaine, le "village global", le témoignage, la charité, la spiritualité»⁴⁹.

Ce sont des domaines qui demandent d'être revisités dans la formation et qui exigent un engagement important avant tout dans la formation permanente. Il souligne en outre que la formation missionnaire concerne tous les chrétiens et non seulement les «spécialistes et animateurs de la mission». Le mandat apostolique de l'Oblat, en conséquence, engage aussi et en particulier dans un tel milieu, car «la formation missionnaire de tous devient une urgence ecclésiale». Il propose donc une ligne d'action:

Une découverte toujours plus claire de la dimension missionnaire de chaque vocation chrétienne s'impose. Tout chrétien est un envoyé, un témoin, un coopérateur dans la construction de l'Église et du Royaume. Cette conscience doit croître avec l'approfondissement de l'identité chrétienne propre et avec l'accroissement de l'émergence propre aux influences sociales. Dans un monde pluraliste, l'identité chrétienne croît par le dialogue, la confrontation et le témoignage. Chaque communauté chrétienne découvrira sa dimension missionnaire, soit en relation avec son propre milieu géographique, soit en relation avec les autres peuples, avec le monde, avec l'Église universelle.

Avec les formateurs, il se pose deux questions:

Si ce sont là les grandes orientations de la mission aujourd'hui pour l'Église, orientations dans lesquelles doit s'insérer notre participation missionnaire spécifique, quelle doit être la formation première de nos candidats aujourd'hui? Si chaque chrétien, chaque communauté doit former à la mission à laquelle tous sont appelés à apporter leur propre contribution, quelle sera notre préparation à nous, Oblats, qui y sommes appelés à titre de spécialistes?

Il tente d'y répondre, pour sa part, en présentant quelques piliers fondamentaux du projet de la formation, d'où ressort une description fascinante de l'Oblat missionnaire dans l'aujourd'hui du monde: l'Oblat, un passionné du Christ; l'Oblat, un missionnaire; l'Oblat, homme apostolique; l'Oblat, homme de communion; l'Oblat, homme de réflexion et d'étude; l'Oblat, homme de discernement⁵⁰. Le mandat ne concerne pas seulement l'agir, mais aussi l'être; il modèlera donc l'identité personnelle et celle de la Congrégation. L'Oblat existe pour l'Église et pour l'humanité, parce qu'il est un avec le Christ crucifié dans l'expression de son «plus grand Amour»: l'expression transformante du Vendredi saint, la racine de notre charisme de consécration et de mission.

Conclusion

Je me suis demandé si l'on peut dire que la vie et l'enseignement du p. Zago sont une incarnation et un développement expérientiel de la Préface du Fondateur. En effet, la Préface s'enracine dans le Christ et elle est ouverte sur les horizons de l'Église et du monde dans la créativité d'un amour tenace et audacieux. En outre, du fait que chaque charisme de vie consacrée est un don du Christ à son Épouse, l'Église, je me suis demandé si le charisme oblat n'a pas contribué à promouvoir, à travers le p. Zago comme à travers la vie de la Congrégation, discrètement et d'une manière mariale, une ouverture croissante de l'Église même sur le monde, sur la mission, sur le dialogue inter-religieux, avec courage, clairvoyance et confiance⁵¹.

Après avoir lu et médité les écrits du p. Zago, surtout après avoir partagé des moments de son cheminement, je crois, avec gratitude, que oui. C'est pourquoi sa vie renferme un message, c'est une

consigne qu'il nous laisse: l'Oblat est homme de Jésus Christ, homme de l'Église, homme de la mission, jusqu'au don total de lui-même. Et il a Marie pour Mère, «celle qui a consacré toute sa personne à la vie et à la mission du Christ.» «Vous n'avez pas seulement à vous rappeler et à raconter une histoire glorieuse, mais vous avez à construire une grande histoire! Regardez vers l'avenir, où l'Esprit vous envoie pour faire encore avec vous de grandes choses⁵².»

Avril 2003

(Traduit de l'italien par Marcel Chénier, o.m.i.)

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- ¹ Compagnon d'études du p. Zago, professeur de pédagogie et de vie religieuse dans les universités romaines.
- ² Exhortation apostolique *Vita consecrata (=VC)*, 16.
- ³ Cf. *Gaudium et spes (=GS)*, 38-40.
- ⁴ Cf. *GS*, 1.
- ⁵ Cf. Règle de 1818.
- ⁶ Cf. *Redemptoris Missio* 37; *VC* 96-99.
- ⁷ ZAGO Marcello, o.m.i., *Sur les traces de St Eugène. Lettres et textes sur la formation*, Maison générale O.M.I., Rome, 1997. 236 p.
- ⁸ GIORGIANNI Maurizio, *Il martirio «carisma» della missione in Eugenio de Mazenod e nella sua Famiglia Religiosa*, Quaderni di Vermicino n. 28, Frascati, 1994. Cf. P. CASTRILLI, *Il martirio nella vita di Eugenio de Mazenod?* Presentazione dello studio di M. Giorgianni, dans *Missioni OMI*, N° unico: *S. Eugenio Uomo dell'Avvento*, 1996/1-2, pp. 8-11.
- ⁹ E. de MAZENOD, *Notes de retraite*, dans *Écrits oblats*, vol. 15, *Écrits spirituels, 1812-1856*, p. 218-219.
- ¹⁰ E. de MAZENOD, Lettre au p. Guigues, le 1^{er} août 1835, dans *Écrits oblats*, vol. 8, *Lettres aux Oblats de France, 1831-1836*, p. 157 s. – Citation dans Maurizio GIORGIANNI, p. 79.
- ¹¹ ZAGO Marcello, *Martirio espressione eminente della missione*, 1^{er} novembre 1997. La conférence a été publiée dans *Missioni OMI*, «Dossier Missione e Martirio», 1998/4, p. 16.
- ¹² *Jésus Christ au centre de notre vie*, Lettre I, o.c., p. 7.
- ¹³ *VC* 37.
- ¹⁴ *Se renouveler dans le charisme d'Eugène de Mazenod*, Lettre IX, o.c., pp. 111- 137.
- ¹⁵ Non seulement avec les Oblats en formation. Lors du congrès national des séminaristes organisé par les Œuvres missionnaires pontificales sur le thème «Prêtre pour la Mission», il a raconté, à leur demande, son expérience personnelle de la découverte de la vocation missionnaire jusqu'aux engagements à Propaganda Fide. C'est une conversation familière, peut-être pas usuelle, très riche en détails. Cf. Marcello ZAGO, *Missione e...* Padoue, 3 avril 1997 (manuscrit).
- ¹⁶ *L'homme apostolique*, Lettre V, o.c, p. 57.
- ¹⁷ Un extrait de son expérience au Laos racontée aux séminaristes: «Dès le début j'avais cette demande, que je partageais avec les confrères. Pourquoi l'Église était-elle absente du monde bouddhiste? Que pouvait-on faire pour les bouddhistes, qui constituaient la majorité du pays et qui portent la culture dominante? Comment leur annoncer l'Évangile? J'admirais le travail des confrères parmi les minorités ethniques, lesquelles répondaient bien. Mais il fallait faire quelque chose pour les bouddhistes du Laos. Avec l'appui des supérieurs, je cherchai à connaître et à approcher le bouddhisme dans ses différentes expressions. Ainsi, à partir de la deuxième année, je dédiai chaque jour deux ou trois heures à faire des contacts avec des fidèles bouddhistes: des moines, des dévots réguliers et irréguliers, des gens ordinaires. Je notais tout. En cinq années, j'ai écrit environ dix mille fiches sur le bouddhisme vécu dans le pays».
- ¹⁸ 1^{er} août 1782 - 1^{er} août 1982.
- ¹⁹ Le «Movimento Giovanile Costruire» (MGC) est né le 21 mai 1988, en la fête du Fondateur, mais officiellement avec les jeunes, le 12 août 1988, à Lourdes. Le p. Zago a remis aux jeunes du MGC, lors de leur III^e Congrès national (été 1992), les «dix points» pour construire dans un style missionnaire.
- ²⁰ RM 87.
- ²¹ Marcello ZAGO, *Lo stile missionario dei giovani per un' Europa aperta sul mondo*, au Congrès du Movimento Giovanile Missionario delle Pontificie Opere Missionarie, Rome, 27-31 juillet 1992.
- ²² Marcello ZAGO, *Tutti I Popoli conoscano Te unico vero Dio (Gv 17,3)*. Aux participants au stage missionnaire des

jeunes des Oeuvres Pontificales missionnaires, Chianciano, le 6 juin 1998.

²³ Editrice Rogate, Roma 2002.

²⁴ Editrice Ancora, Milano 2003.

²⁵ Une recherche systématique serait opportune, avec une thèse de doctorat en théologie de la vie religieuse ou en missiologie.

²⁶ Cf. Gian Paolo PERON, *Seguitemi! Vi farò diventare pescatori di uomini* (Mc 1, 17), LAS, Roma, 2000.

²⁷ Cf. *L'homme apostolique*, Lettre V, o.c., p. 46; *La Préface comme Magna Charta*, Lettre IX, o.c., p. 122.

²⁸ *Le Christ source de notre être*, Lettre VII, o.c., pp. 82s.

²⁹ *La mission oblate*, Lettre III, o.c., p. 28.

³⁰ *Cheminer avec Marie Immaculée*, Lettre II, o.c., p. 12 s. Voir aussi la Lettre IX: *Se renouveler dans le charisme...* p. 111; Lettre X, *Vita consecrata et les Oblats*, p. 138.

³¹ Cf. *Mutuae Relationes* offre une définition du charisme de fondateur qui est à l'origine de nombre d'études dans les domaines historique, théologique et spirituel: «Le «charisme des fondateurs» se révèle comme une «expérience de l'Esprit», transmise à leurs disciples, pour être vécue par ceux-ci, gardée, approfondie, développée constamment en harmonie avec le Corps du Christ en croissance perpétuelle» (n.11) [cité dans Lettre IX, o.c., p. 133]. Quant à Eugène de Mazenod, le p. Zago écrit: «Il était conscient de son propre rôle non seulement au début de l'Institut mais aussi pour en transmettre et interpréter l'esprit, les finalités missionnaires, les modalités du vivre-ensemble» (Lettre IX, o.c., p. 122). Dans la même lettre il décrit les caractéristiques d'un charisme et les conditions pour se renouveler en lui (pp. 132-136).

³² Aux formateurs d'Europe, *Défis missionnaires et formation oblate*, texte XI, o.c., p. 181.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 170. Le thème est développé aux pages 170-180.

³⁴ Cette expression revient constamment dans les écrits du p. Zago. Voir *Sur les traces...* Lettre VII, p. 85, 86; Lettre VIII, p. 95.

³⁵ Lettre V, o.c., p. 46 ss.

³⁶ Cf. Lettre III, o.c., p. 25. Il s'explique en rapportant le passage connu de la Règle de 1818 dans lequel le Fondateur écrivait: ... «quoique, vu leur petit nombre actuel et les besoins les plus pressants des peuples qui les entourent, ils doivent pour le moment borner leur zèle aux pauvres de nos campagnes, leur ambition doit embrasser, dans ses saints désirs, l'immense étendue de la terre entière».

³⁷ Aux formateurs d'Europe, XI, o.c., p. 170.

³⁸ *Vita consecrata et les Oblats*, Lettre X, o.c., p. 145.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 154.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 173.

⁴¹ Lettre V, o.c. p. 54.

⁴² Cf. Lettre III, o.c., pp. 25-27.

⁴³ Dans la Lettre VII *Le Christ source de notre être*, il rapporte deux passages de l'Évangile tirés de la Messe du Fondateur: Mt 9, 36 et Lc 4, 16-21, qui sont «au centre de l'intelligence biblique de notre charisme». Le premier: «Voyant les foules, [Jésus] eut pitié d'elles, parce qu'elles étaient fatiguées et abattues, comme des brebis sans berger», parole qui éclaire la Préface et la mission oblate.

⁴⁴ Cf. Lettre XI, o.c., pp. 175-178.

⁴⁵ Lettre VII, o.c., p. 84.

⁴⁶ Assise, le 27 octobre 1986: Célébration de la journée de prière des chefs religieux chrétiens et non chrétiens.

⁴⁷ Lettre III, o.c., p. 27.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ Aux formateurs d'Europe, ch. XI, o.c., p. 166.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.* pp.169-179.

⁵¹ Deux exemples de sa contribution à la mission: cf. Marcello Zago, *Esprit missionnaire de l'Église*. Séminaire pour les évêques des pays de mission, Rome, le 1er septembre 1997 (manuscrit); *La spiritualità del dialogo*, à l'Assemblée plénière du Conseil pontifical pour le dialogue interreligieux 1998, dans *Missioni OMI*, 2001/6, pp. 11-18.

To Dare With Courage Greater Than the World: A Personal Memory of Fr. Marcello Zago

Fabio Ciardi, O.M.I.¹

I first met Marcello Zago in 1970, during my novitiate in Marino.² Of course, he came to speak to us about the missions – the missions typical of the Oblates. I was just 20 years old, that age when one dreams and decides about giving one's life to realize such dreams. Marcello helped me dream, pointing out to me the ways to make that dream a reality. He opened my mind to the Oblate story of evangelization in the world, making me see the inspiration, the method, the originality.

From that moment, a friendship was born, manifested in mutual esteem and respect that lasted thirty years. One of the first indications was a simple but significant gesture in the life of every priest: the day of my ordination, he vested me with the stole and helped me don the chasuble.

* * * *

When I finished my first formation in 1976, I stayed on at the scholasticate in Vermicino, where Fr. Marcello's visits were more and more frequent. His duty as Assistant General was to meet his brother Oblates in all parts of the world. On returning from his trips, he would come to us without delay, and there would be a celebration. These "ritual visits" were quickly regularised in an expected sequence. Scarcely arriving, he would take off the habit (later, the episcopal habit), and then don the strangest attire that told of his latest expedition. He would then invite one or the other of us for a stroll among the vineyards, where we would be immersed in an intense dialogue which he had initiated. He was interested in everyone and everything, asking, listening and recounting. Returning in the evening, he would celebrate the Eucharist with the community; here, breaking the bread of the Word with simplicity and depth, he was transformed into a spiritual master. At times, when he watched at prayer from his corner in the chapel, he was moved because ours seemed to him too beautiful a community. After supper, the magic moment would arrive, the "diaporama," as he called it. He would show the slides that he had taken during his trips and have us travel with him. This was the way in which he introduced us to places and persons around the entire world. While the images flashed past, he narrated works and facts.

To all of us he was *an extraordinary agent of communication*. He brought the entire length and breadth of the Congregation into our house. He identified the signs of the Spirit in each place, recognising the good accomplished by the Oblates. Moreover, he knew how to be a promoter of the positive since he was convinced and was, at the same time, convincing. He also understood problematic situations and failures well, and knew how to communicate them with a sense of realism. Still, he was never pessimistic. On the contrary, he was always animated with hope and knew how to instil hope.

* * * *

The moment came in 1980 when Fr. Marcello finished his duty as Assistant General, and joined our community at Vermicino. Soon after, in 1982, he became our superior, but already, the following year, he received his appointment to the Holy See's Secretariat for Non-Christians. However, he remained at Vermicino as a member of the community while carrying out this new task.

During those years he continued his formation efforts. He opened the community to all the dimensions of the Church and even beyond, to all of humanity. He was providing instances of dialogue in all its aspects and in a most concrete way, since he brought in his friends from the Vatican and leaders of the various other religions whom he had encountered in his work. He involved all the scholastics in the preparation of that historic, ecumenical meeting, the Assisi Day of Prayer in 1986, which showed him as the principal actor beside John Paul II. All of us were with him in Assisi on that memorable day.

As a result of his assuming his new responsibilities at the Secretariat, I was named superior of the community – this game of switch is normal in religious life. The game continued for a while until I saw him elected Superior General, and he then returned as my superior at a completely other level. Thus, when the members of the General Chapter were received in audience by the Pope, Fr. Marcello introduced me

to the Holy Father as ... his superior! Yes, it was a game. The bonds of friendship and communion went much deeper than the merely juridical. In fact, Marcello was a *man capable of sincere friendship and the expression of authentic communion*.³

Regarding me, his friendship was full of esteem and encouragement: "I read your meditations on Oblate vocation", he wrote to me in 1990. "They are gems in respect to both content and style ... I thank and encourage you to continue writing, since this is also a ministry of formation and animation of the utmost importance." He invited me to study languages: "These (languages) do not make us more intelligent, but they help us to communicate and to shed light."

He continually expressed appreciation for my work and spurred me on to proceed with studies and teaching, with the work of animation of the religious life, and with my commitment to the Focolare Movement: "I just finished your *Eugenio de Mazenod. Genesi di un carisma* (Eugene de Mazenod: Genesis of a Charism)", he wrote me on the 12th of December 1994. "I am pleased with it, both as to the content and the form ... It flows. You make our Founder speak with his own words." He then added his own counsel about two or three chapters that were somewhat too long, and suggested including more about Mary. He ended with a greeting, "in the unity which you have brought out so well in your book".

The book, *Seguire Gesù* (Following Jesus), he read in one night, "thanks to the insomnia caused by the changes of time zones and a bad cold". He found it, "fresh, readable, beautiful, and sprinkled with your experience and that of others ..." He sent me "a joy-filled thanks" for the *Dictionary of Oblate Values*: "Indeed, it treats of something exceptional. I, therefore, thank you. Continue energetically in this work of animation *ad intra* and *ad extra*." He expressed his gratitude for the help I had offered for the preparation and publication of his two books. He found my work *In ascolto dello Spirito* (Listening to the Holy Spirit) "a beautiful synthesis, rich in new approaches and useful for the study of the charism of the founders". He further added appreciations, all personal: "Here one also sees your Oblate identity enriched from the charism of unity which harmonizes you with the charisms of the Church. He then urged me to research the inculturation of charisms, which "calls for a shared reflection which would make the most of shared experience".

Always positive, always encouraging, Fr. Marcello always knew how to enjoy the good of others. Always understanding, he wrote, "vacations for you consist in exceptional work ..."

At the end of my term as superior of the scholasticate, he showed me tremendous gratitude, and at the same time, extended the veil of mercy with great finesse: "For the many years you have spent at Vermicino, especially the last seven as superior, thank you again. You have not only given yourself, but also the Oblate charism which has shone forth through you and has cemented the community. For the rest, God's mercy makes up for you and for others".

* * * * *

One last personal testimony. When I finished my duties as formator, I asked to be allowed to work in a more direct manner with the Focolare Movement. Fr. Marcello, as Superior General, gave me all his support, demonstrating yet again, the breadth of his spirit and vision. His appreciation of this ecclesial Movement was a sign of *his appreciation of all the living forces in the Church*. He loved to recall one of his initiatives⁴ during the Synod of Bishops on the Laity (1987). At this solemn assise, an encounter immortalized in one of his many photographs, he had promoted a meeting between the bishops and the founders of the various ecclesial movements. On Pentecost of 1999, John Paul II gathered them all together in St. Peter's Square.

To demonstrate Fr. Zago's unequivocal love for the Focolare Movement, it suffices to give a few passages of letters addressed to the Foundress, Chiara Lubich.

In January of 1979, he had just returned from his first visit to Fontem in Cameroon, where a "Citadel of witness" had sprung up, a community built by the Movement. In a long letter, he wrote to Chiara: "In Fontem, I have "breathed the Gospel" in the simplicity of their *unity* around Christ. All the Focolarini and Focolarine quickly tune one into Christ and bring about *unity*. Fontem is an important reality for the growth of the Church in Africa and the *Ideal* has an essential contribution to make for the deepening of the faith throughout the continent. The *unity in Christ*, lived out each day, is the necessary condition for the incarnation of the Gospel. ... I am glad that two priests of our Congregation work for and

with the *Work of Mary* for the animation of Religious in Africa. Our General Council has approved and encouraged this commitment of our two Fathers by saying that it fits right within the apostolic commitment of the Congregation. During my visit to the missionaries of Africa and Asia, I was often witness to the religious renewal brought about by the *Ideal's* thrust of the *Work*. On this occasion I want to extend my personal thanks to you and to the *Work*, because you have been an instrument of God for the renewal of many of our religious, especially within the Italian province. Our houses of formation in Marino and Vermicino, many Fathers and especially many young people draw strength from the vitality of the *Ideal*, which has made them more attentive to the charism proper to the Congregation as well as to unity with other vocations. I am not a member of the *Work*. For many years, however, I have been close to those who live inside the Movement. I have noted its beneficial effects from which I myself have benefitted; I encouraged some to commit themselves to it, and also defended it against unjust attacks. By its fruit is the tree known, and these fruits are evangelical. I remain united in prayer and in charity, seeking every day to live Christ abandoned with and in my brothers."

In 1988, Fr. Zago related to Chiara Lubich his participation in the formation congress which had been organised by the Focolare Movement in Castelgandolfo: "It was stupendous! Not only the hall, but moreover the communion of 600 to 700 religious from about 50 religious families. They represented so many charisms which the *Unity* had summoned, enriched and united. ...

I thank the Spirit for this great gift, and I thank you for being such a docile and efficacious instrument."

He then spoke of his trip in 1987, when he had visited 23 countries and met 3000 missionaries: "I have found a thirst for unity everywhere, along with a rediscovery of our own religious and missionary identity." He told her of the Synods in which he participated, often with Chiara Lubich herself. He sent her books that he wrote; he mailed her postcards from the island of Salina, where he spent his summer vacations. He also wrote her from an ecumenical meeting in East Berlin where he was "committed to the task of constructing unity among believers within the Christian communion", and where he deepened and renewed "the pact of unity."

Responding to Chiara's congratulations on the occasion of his election as Superior General, he confided: "I have experienced my unity with the Movement growing, multiplying and becoming more firm in unity with my confrères who are animated by the same ideal." Much later at Lourdes, at the end of a long letter, he concluded: "In this letter I express to you the thanks of a priest who lives and enjoys the wonders which the Lord realizes in today's Church." This was Fr. Marcello: a person who knew and recognized the good, wherever it came from, and who knew how to enjoy it without envy or jealousy.

* * * *

I think that it would be fitting to conclude with the words which Father Marcello once said of the Oblates: "To dare with courage as great as the world and to try new ways, distinguishes many of them. Oblates are among the pioneers on the new frontiers of mission."

March 2003

(Translated from the Italian by James Loiacono, O.M.I.)

Notes:

¹ In charge of the Centre for Religious at the Focolari Headquarters, Castel Gandolfo.

² The Italian province of Italy has its novitiate in Marino and its scholasticate in Frascati (Vermicino). Both are located in the Castelli region, which is in the Alban Hills near Castel Gandolfo, to the south-east of Rome.

³ In this context, the idea of *communion* comes from the Focolare Movement's fundamental Christian stance of unity in Christ Jesus and its *Ideal* of living a *radical communion* of mutual *charity* and *love* in the Holy Spirit. The Oblate formation teams in Vermicino and Marino, as well as Fr. Marcello, were deeply committed to the Movement and had the personal acquaintance of its foundress, Chiara Lubich, and its members at its headquarters in nearby Rocca di Papa, just outside Rome.

In Trento during the chaos and destruction of World War II, Chiara and other committed lay Catholics began the *Focolare* (Italian for "hearth") as a spiritual base for every aspect of their daily lives in Jesus: "The world will pass away, but my

word will never pass away (Mc 13: 31).” Focolare lives the *communion* and *unity* of *Jesus in the midst* of every day life, whether at home, in the workplace or on the street. The *Ideal* is to live the *Gospel* of *unity and love* as the loving, salvific oblation of *Jesus crucified and abandoned* in the midst of the world. The Focolare is a constant witness of community and simple presence and calls to mind the dying words of Bl. John XXIII and the encyclical of John Paul II, “*Ut Unim Sint*,” i.e., “*That all may be one*” (Jn 17:21).

This Movement has become one of the largest in the Catholic Church, having worldwide membership and working among the poor. Its broad ecumenical outreach includes members of the major Protestant and Orthodox Churches as well as Jews, Moslems, Buddhists and Hindus. Closely aligned with the nearby St. Egidio Community of Rome, both have won the heart and love of John Paul II. The Focolare calls its *Ideal*, its very existence and actions, *the Work of Mary*, [*l’Opera di Maria*], and each major centre is called a *Mariapolis*. The membership includes laity, religious and clergy – including bishops, Cardinals and Patriarchs.

⁴ This gesture was indeed nothing less than prophetic, when Chiara Lubich addressed the bishops assembled before John Paul II. In fact, the Holy Father and Chiara Lubich were already well acquainted and in frequent communication.

Le père Zago et la famille oblate

Jean-Pierre Caloz, o.m.i.¹

Introduction

Il serait instructif d'étudier comment le p. Marcello Zago a utilisé l'expression «Famille oblate». Il s'en est sûrement servi en citant les articles des Constitutions et Règles qui en parlent ou en rappelant des expressions du Fondateur. Il y en a de très belles, telles celle que les Laïcs associés italiens aiment bien: «Nous sommes appelés à être la famille la plus unie de la terre².» En attendant cette étude, j'exprime mon sentiment purement personnel: à mon avis, cette expression n'a pas été l'expression favorite du p. Zago. Il voyait davantage les Oblats comme un corps missionnaire, organisé pour et par la mission. Ceci dit, je développerai ce sujet en parcourant les points suivants:

1. La famille oblate: extension du concept.
2. Le p. Zago, membre de la famille oblate.
3. Le p. Zago, animateur de la famille oblate.

I. La famille oblate: extension du concept dans la pratique du p. Zago

La «famille oblate» désigne évidemment en premier lieu, la Congrégation des Missionnaires Oblats de Marie Immaculée depuis la fondation et dans toute son extension missionnaire actuelle. Le terme «famille» connote la dimension affective du Fondateur. Parcourons donc les articles des Constitutions et Règles qui utilisent explicitement cette expression. La C 30 dit que le vœu de persévérance chez nous constitue un engagement spécial à rester fidèle à «notre famille religieuse», la Congrégation. La communauté oblate est évidemment décrite selon le modèle d'une famille. C'est ce que nous retrouvons dans la C 42, et les RR 39b, 56a, 91a. L'expression revient dans la C 125, à propos du Chapitre général, défini comme rassemblement de la famille oblate autour du Christ. L'expression «famille oblate» liée à la dimension internationale de la Congrégation doit inspirer les Oblats que le Père Général peut appeler à Rome, afin de «développer en eux le sens de l'Église et du caractère international de la famille oblate» (R 137c). Enfin, chaque Oblat a la responsabilité de sauvegarder et de perpétuer le patrimoine commun de la Congrégation en suivant «les Constitutions et Règles et notre tradition de famille» (C 168).

Nous voyons ainsi que le terme «famille oblate» s'applique en même temps à la communauté locale, et à la communauté internationale; il peut aussi désigner une tradition historique avec ses mœurs et coutumes, et un héritage spirituel auquel nous sommes appelés à rester fidèles, même si son organisation et ses structures venaient à être supprimées, en cas de persécution, par exemple. Cette collection rapide des références tirées de notre Charte fondamentale donne un riche aperçu de cette notion telle qu'a pu la comprendre le p. Zago.

Les autres membres de la «famille oblate» sont les Laïcs associés et les Congrégations religieuses fondées par les Oblats.

Lorsque les *Laïcs associés* ont pris de l'extension, il a fallu leur trouver une place dans le paysage spirituel de notre héritage. Ce ne sont pas des Oblats, il ne serait pas sain d'ailleurs d'en faire des Oblats; ce ne sont pas des «étrangers» non plus. Ils sont membres de la «famille oblate». Ce concept offre un contenant intéressant qui permet d'associer, sans les confondre, des expériences qui ont leur autonomie et leur identité.

La même chose peut se dire des *Congrégations fondées par des Oblats*. Le p. Zago y voyait le fruit de la fécondité du charisme. Lorsque nous sommes allés à Bangalore, en janvier 1989, il a été frappé par la qualité des quelques «Daughters of Mary Immaculate» à notre service. Elles avaient été fondées quelques années auparavant par le p. Arulraj, o.m.i. Ailleurs dans ses visites, il rencontrera d'autres fondations faites par des Oblats. C'est ainsi qu'a germé l'idée de rassembler ces Congrégations pour

découvrir, dans leur expérience et leur histoire, la richesse de notre charisme. Un inventaire de 41 congrégations a été dressé, des contacts ont été pris; de là est née une rencontre qui a rassemblé à Rome, du 23 au 28 avril 1991, une bonne trentaine de Supérieurs généraux et Supérieures générales. Il s'agissait de rendre présents, à leurs yeux et aux nôtres, ces liens de famille qui nous unissent. Le p. Zago aimait à contempler ce rayonnement de l'œuvre du Fondateur et du travail de la Congrégation. Ce n'est pas ici le lieu d'évaluer les retombées de cette expérience; il est réjouissant cependant de savoir qu'une seconde rencontre du genre est en préparation.

Une autre composante de la «famille oblate» pourrait être la *famille terrestre* du Fondateur. Le comité d'organisation de la canonisation a su profiter de l'occasion pour révéler aux descendants de sa parenté leur appartenance à notre commun héritage. Il y eut un réel intérêt à ce moment-là, mais à l'exception de quelques contacts personnels, il n'a pas survécu à la disparition de l'impact affectif de l'événement lui-même.

II. Le p. Zago, membre de la famille oblate

Son appartenance à la Congrégation

Marcello venait du Grand Séminaire de Trévise. Il y était déjà un élément brillant et dynamique, dans les cercles missionnaires en particulier. Avec quelques autres, il fut à l'origine des rencontres missionnaires des Grands Séminaires italiens. L'étape du séminaire touchant à sa fin, le projet missionnaire le travaillait de plus en plus, il s'est donc mis à la recherche d'un Institut missionnaire. Il avait le choix, beaucoup auraient été heureux de le recevoir, mais c'est chez nous qu'il est venu.

La Congrégation sera-t-elle alors un simple moyen pour réaliser sa vocation missionnaire? Pas du tout! En entrant chez nous, Marcello épousait une forme de vie et pas seulement une tâche. Il s'est passionné pour l'histoire de la Congrégation, pour son aventure missionnaire, et surtout pour son Fondateur. Vraiment devenu Oblat, il vivait déjà ce qu'il exprimera bien des années plus tard en soulignant l'importance de l'être et non seulement du faire.

Un exemple de cette attitude nous vient du Laos, sa première mission. Je me souviens du p. Jean Subra qui aimait à rappeler, en semblant s'étonner lui-même, qu'il avait introduit le p. Zago à la vie missionnaire. Marcello a donc commencé par vivre la mission telle qu'il l'a trouvée sur le terrain. Il est entré dans l'expérience missionnaire de ses prédécesseurs, avant de se lancer sur son propre chemin. C'est ainsi que son travail avec les bouddhistes n'est venu que quelques années plus tard, comme fruit de son expérience, après un discernement communautaire. Loin de se servir de la Congrégation, il a accepté de la servir. De 1974 à 1980, devenu assistant général pour la Mission, il saura sacrifier la vie missionnaire sur le terrain pour se consacrer à un travail de coordination et de discernement au niveau international.

Autre exemple de fidélité à la Congrégation: au Chapitre général de 1980 et à la surprise de beaucoup, il ne sera pas réélu au Conseil général. Revenu à la base, il se remit au travail de la mission, dans l'enseignement d'abord et le Secrétariat pour le dialogue avec les non-chrétiens ensuite. Il fut aussi supérieur du Scolasticat de la Province italienne. Notons qu'il a tenu à résider dans une communauté oblate, y compris lorsqu'il travaillait au Vatican.

Fidélité à la Congrégation encore lorsqu'en septembre 1986, au Chapitre général, il devint évident qu'on pensait à lui pour être Supérieur général. Il y eut certainement en lui un combat intérieur avant d'accepter de se porter candidat. Choisir de répondre à la demande des Oblats signifiait en effet sacrifier sa carrière internationale au Vatican. J'ai eu l'impression qu'un discernement douloureux s'est fait en lui; il y a fait allusion dans l'une de ses interventions. Comme Supérieur général, à l'image de son prédécesseur le p. Jetté, il a scruté en permanence la vie du Fondateur et de la Congrégation. Il a écrit de belles pages sur la vie et la mission de saint Eugène. L'année de la canonisation du Fondateur aura été une année faste pour mettre en lumière la richesse de l'œuvre et de la spiritualité de M^{gr} de Mazenod.

La communauté: milieu de vie du p. Zago.

Le p. Zago vivait en communauté. Devenu, archevêque de Roselle et Secrétaire de la Congrégation pour l'Évangélisation des peuples, il a habité encore quelque temps à la Maison générale tout en allant travailler à la Propagande. Expérience faite, il s'est rendu compte que cela n'était pas pratique. C'est donc à regret qu'il s'est décidé d'aller habiter Piazza di Spagna. Mais pour atténuer son «exil», il a demandé au p. Angelo Dal Bello d'être son compagnon. C'est un simple signe qui montre clairement ce que je veux démontrer: la communauté était son milieu de vie.

Il a aimé la communauté du Conseil général. Il savait inviter pour un apéritif, pour un temps gratifiant, mais rarement sans quelque souci sur lequel il revenait quand la conversation baissait. Il aimait aller à Ladispoli marcher le long de la mer ou se baigner. Souvent ce temps était consacré à parler travail... peu importe, en pleine nature c'était tout de même plus agréable que dans la salle du Conseil! Les repas pris ensemble, que ce soit pendant les sessions ou à Ladispoli, étaient de bons moments de fraternité.

Il aimait ses confrères. Je me souviens à ce propos de l'enterrement du p. Ferkinghoff, conseiller général, le 27 décembre 1987, à Engelport en Allemagne. En arrivant, je l'ai vu dans le hall, près du cercueil de Bernhard, les joues baignées de larmes. «Voyez comme il l'aimait!» De même, il souffrait terriblement lorsque des confrères allaient d'autres chemins et quittaient la Congrégation. Quand on aime on souffre! Ce n'était pas un extroverti, un animateur de société. Il avait des difficultés à trouver des sujets banals de conversation; dès qu'il le pouvait, il retombait sur son terrain de prédilection: le travail. Peu importe, il nous acceptait comme nous étions et nous l'aimions bien ainsi.

Il prenait son mois de vacances... avec des Oblats! Il avait une petite équipe de fidèles – dont le p. Enzo Severo, chargé de la cuisine – avec qui il se retrouvait à Salina, une des îles Éoliennes. C'étaient des vacances, des vraies vacances, ce qui voulait dire pour lui: une demi-journée d'étude et une demi-journée de plage. En rentrant de Salina, beau bronzé, il aimait à nous énumérer les livres qu'il avait lus et les articles qu'il avait écrits!

Les retraites de communauté étaient des moments importants de vie fraternelle. Nous faisons vraiment retraite, avec un vrai prédicateur et un vrai ordre du jour ou règlement! Les prédicateurs ont toujours été des Oblats qui connaissaient le Fondateur: le p. Yvon Beaudoin, le p. René Motte, le p. Edward Carolan. Le lieu des retraites était aussi significatif, et il est certain que le berceau de la Congrégation, à Aix, avait sa préférence.

Nous sommes allés, en tant que Conseil général, faire un pèlerinage en Terre Sainte. Lorsque Marcello nous en a parlé pour la première fois, la proposition a surpris. Les avis étaient mêlés; ce ne fut pas le grand enthousiasme. L'objection principale tournait autour de la pauvreté et de l'exemple que nous donnerions à la Congrégation. Quand ce thème revint, deux sessions plus tard, tout était déjà prêt. Les dates étaient fixées: nous serions en Terre Sainte du 5 au 19 octobre 1997. Nous avons logé une semaine chez les Franciscains à Nazareth et une semaine dans le grand couvent de la Custodie à Jérusalem. Notre guide était le p. Mans, o.f.m., grand connaisseur de la Terre Sainte et spécialiste d'une approche de Jésus à partir de la tradition juive. Ce fut un bon pèlerinage, chacun l'a vécu intensément, je crois. Comme communauté, nous avons partagé des moments privilégiés, par exemple, cette matinée passée dans le recueillement au jardin des Oliviers. En repensant à ce pèlerinage, je me rends compte que ce fut un privilège exceptionnel que nous devons au p. Zago, à son rayonnement et à son réseau de connaissances. Aura-t-il voulu nous en faire bénéficier comme s'il s'agissait d'un cadeau? Pour ma part, je le crois.

Une autre délicate attention illustre ce genre de chose. Nous étions en octobre 1998, après le Chapitre général; M^{gr} Marcello Zago venait d'emménager dans ses appartements, au Palais de la Propaganda, Piazza di Spagna. Il voulut recevoir chez lui les membres de l'ancien Conseil général, avant que nous ne nous dispersions aux quatre coins du monde. Le Cardinal Tomko nous fit les honneurs de la maison. Nous sommes ensuite montés dans les appartements de Marcello pour un dîner fraternel. Nous avons pu voir son bureau, la chapelle, la salle à manger et les trois chambres à coucher. Il nous a dit avoir choisi cet appartement plutôt qu'un autre, également à sa disposition, beaucoup plus spacieux et luxueux, parce qu'il convenait mieux à un religieux. Il avait aussi fait ce choix à cause de deux terrasses qui effectivement lui offraient en même temps le cœur de Rome, un bon morceau de ciel bleu et un bol d'air frais.

La vie du p. Zago débordait du cadre strictement oblat. Il avait gardé de sérieuses amitiés de son temps à la Curie. Son rôle à la rencontre d'Assise en 1986 l'avait propulsé sur le devant de la scène. Il était connu et il répondait volontiers aux invitations que des milieux les plus divers pouvaient lui faire. Il a ainsi participé, à deux reprises, à la rencontre des Maires des Villes riveraines de la Méditerranée. Là se retrouvaient les grandes religions monothéistes. Il y était donc à sa place en tant que personnalité reconnue dans le dialogue interreligieux. La première expérience de ce genre avait eu lieu à Florence en octobre 1958, à l'initiative de Giorgio La Pira, son dynamique et célèbre maire des années 50. Le p. Zago aimait ce genre d'aventures et était heureux de pouvoir contribuer à des causes vitales pour la vie des sociétés. Il appréciait également que plusieurs de ses articles, écrits après ses visites dans divers pays et continents, aient été publiés par *l'Osservatore Romano*. C'était une façon de faire connaître les Oblats et de contribuer à la réflexion dans l'Église.

III. Le p. Marcello Zago, animateur de la famille oblate

Le p. Marcello répondait toujours aux invitations des Laïcs associés italiens ou des jeunes du «Movimento Giovanile Costruire». Il y était très apprécié, on l'écoutait comme un oracle. Il avait le don d'offrir des réflexions très pratiques, sous une forme agréable, telles par exemple «Les 10 commandements du Movimento Costruire³»; cela plaisait aux jeunes. Ce chapitre mériterait un développement à lui tout seul; je m'en tiendrai donc à l'animation de cette portion de la «famille oblate» qu'est la Congrégation.

Un mot-clé: animation.

Ce qui intéressait le p. Marcello, c'était la vie. Il n'était pas d'abord un homme des structures ou des fonctionnements formels. Il s'y soumettait quand il le fallait, et il le faisait bien, mais il n'y aurait pas passé ses dimanches! Quand des questions épineuses surgissaient, il savait se faire aider. Marcello se voyait donc au service de la vie: libérer la vie, permettre un discernement, identifier les points de blocage, éveiller et stimuler la bonne volonté, cela le passionnait. Il n'aimait pas la polémique, et ne cherchait pas à se justifier. Il jugeait sur les résultats, jamais a priori. Son premier mouvement était la confiance et non pas le soupçon.

Le Chapitre de 1992 a «invité l'Administration générale à élaborer un instrument d'évaluation de la communauté locale, que les Régions et les Provinces pourront ensuite adapter à leur usage⁴...» La suggestion fut reprise et mise en pratique. Nous avons ainsi produit huit fiches d'animation communautaire. Les titres en sont significatifs: «Évaluation de la communauté apostolique»; «La communauté comme lieu de guérison et de réconciliation»; «Le projet missionnaire communautaire»; «Le style de vie – Partage financier – pauvreté»; «Le rôle du Supérieur local»; «La communauté locale et les Laïcs associés⁵.» Ces fiches suivaient de près le texte du Chapitre qui disait par exemple: «La vie communautaire appelle... à faire la vérité en soi-même... à clarifier ses motivations... Il n'est guère possible d'éviter des blessures provenant de la vie ou du ministère, voilà pourquoi la communauté a un rôle de guérison et de réconciliation⁶.» Ces textes sont significatifs de l'«animation» de la Congrégation telle que la voulait le p. Zago.

Animation par les contacts

Nous qui étions parfois à la Maison générale, nous avons pu admirer son souci de rencontrer absolument tous les Oblats passant par la maison. Il les invitait pour une promenade dans le jardin, s'intéressant à leur vie et à leur ministère. Les repas servaient aussi à ces rencontres. Il invitait à sa table les membres du Conseil qui connaissaient les visiteurs ou étaient concernés par leurs projets. Le p. Zago croyait beaucoup à la vertu de guérison de la parole: pouvoir s'exprimer, être entendu et compris, avait un meilleur effet que des rappels à l'ordre ou des plaintes. Il regrettait parfois que les Provinciaux semblaient avoir trop peu de temps pour écouter et rencontrer leurs hommes.

Partager la vie, oui, mais pour aboutir quelque part. Il voulait que les conversations débouchent sur des choses concrètes. Au cours des échanges, des projets naissaient dans son esprit, des propositions pratiques se faisaient jour, il les confiait à ses visiteurs, croyant parfois un peu facilement qu'il était compris et suivi. L'essentiel était de ne pas rester dans le vague, peu importe si, par la suite, les décisions n'allaient pas tout à fait dans le sens qu'il avait envisagé.

Animation par les lettres

Les lettres à des Oblats en particulier

Le p. Marcello a écrit beaucoup de lettres. Elles n'étaient jamais très longues, souvent c'étaient des billets manuscrits. Il y rappelait ses contacts avec son correspondant et lui redisait l'essentiel du contenu de leur dernière rencontre tout en lui témoignant son amitié. Les lettres à l'occasion des jubilés recevaient de nombreuses réponses empreintes de gratitude parce que c'était, pour plusieurs, la première lettre qu'ils recevaient d'un Supérieur Général. Même si les lettres étaient des formules communes à tous, elles donnaient du courage. Certains jubilaires auraient souhaité une lettre personnelle, il y aura renoncé devant la charge de travail; les obédiences, par contre, étaient toujours accompagnées d'un mot personnel fort apprécié.

Les lettres à la Congrégation

Le p. Zago n'a pas ménagé sa peine afin de créer dans la Congrégation une mentalité commune. Chaque année il a écrit une lettre aux jeunes Oblats en formation première. Il avait aussi à cœur de souligner les événements importants: la béatification du p. Gérard, la canonisation du Fondateur, la fondation du Centre International de Mazenod à Aix, les Synodes des évêques auxquels il a eu l'occasion de participer, ou pour souligner quelques importants documents romains. Profitant de la coutume de présenter des vœux de Bonne Année, il écrivait chaque année au temps de Noël. Cela faisait partie de son travail pastoral envers la Congrégation. Il ne visait pas tant à offrir des précisions ou à clarifier des questions controversées. Il aimait simplement partager ses convictions et était heureux quand il recevait des réactions. Dans sa lettre aux Oblats en formation première (janvier 1993)⁷, il dit: «Les réactions aux lettres que j'ai adressées aux Oblats en formation première m'encouragent à continuer cette tradition inaugurée il y a 6 ans.»

Une lettre particulièrement touchante est celle qui est datée de la Villa Stuart – une clinique de Rome – le 17 février 1990⁸. Il venait d'y être opéré de multiples hernies inguinales. L'opération avait duré quatre heures et la convalescence avait été plus difficile que prévue. Le P. avait particulièrement souffert à cette occasion. Cette expérience le met en solidarité avec tous les Oblats qui souffrent et que souvent il rencontre dans ses visites; il leur écrit donc pour les encourager. Sa lettre est intitulée: «Le mystère et le ministère de la souffrance.» Il y décrit sa propre expérience: «... moi-même, dans cette ambiance d'hôpital et avec cette opération, j'ai expérimenté un peu ce qu'est la souffrance, comment elle nous affaiblit, nous rend incapables de faire les choses les plus simples. Elle nous anéantit en quelque sorte.» Cette épreuve l'autorise donc à écrire en toute vérité: «... Confrères qui souffrez, vous exercez un ministère important dans la Congrégation. La maladie et l'incapacité physique ne vous rendent pas inutiles, mais ils vous font jouer un rôle important dans la mission de la Congrégation et son authentique renouveau⁹...»

Il y a deux autres «lettres de Noël» sur lesquelles il me plaît d'attirer l'attention: celles de 1993 et de 1994. La première est consacrée à l'Afrique. Cette année là nous avons eu la rencontre avec la Région au Foyer de Charité du Cap des Biches, près de Dakar au Sénégal. C'était également l'année où le p. Marcello avait été invité directement par le Pape pour participer au Synode des évêques sur l'Afrique. Dans cette lettre, il fait un rapide survol de l'histoire des Oblats sur ce continent. Il évoque ensuite les défis auxquels l'Église doit faire face. «Des situations de pauvreté et de misère se prolongent. Des formes d'injustice s'enracinent tant pour des raisons internes qu'externes... La solution à de nombreux problèmes exige la collaboration internationale, à travers un commerce juste des matières premières, l'embargo sur les ventes d'armes, le respect des droits de l'homme, la réciprocité de la liberté religieuse¹⁰...» Il reviendra sur le travail des Oblats le 2 octobre 1994¹¹, pour proposer une politique d'échange de personnel dans la Région, afin de renforcer les Unités oblates qu'il cite: Zimbabwe, Botswana, Nigéria, Zambie, Angola, Sahara... Certains provinciaux auraient-ils alors montré quelque résistance puisqu'à la fin de sa lettre, il réaffirme son droit de transférer du personnel «vers les missions et

Délégations même quand ces dernières font partie d'une Province»? Le ton un peu désabusé de la citation suivante renforce ce sentiment de difficulté: «Le Supérieur général devrait bénéficier de l'appui des provinciaux et des supérieurs majeurs de la Région qui, avec lui, sont coresponsables de la Congrégation et spécialement de la Région...»

La lettre de Noël 1994¹² est consacrée au Synode spécial sur la vie consacrée. Le Père Général devait y participer comme délégué par l'Union des Supérieurs généraux. Le Pape l'avait en outre nommé «Secrétaire spécial du Synode». Il écrit à ce propos: «Avoir été nommé secrétaire spécial du Synode était non seulement un signe de confiance et d'estime envers la vie religieuse et l'Union des Supérieurs généraux qui m'avait élu, mais aussi une manière de rendre visible la Congrégation tout entière.» Il était heureux qu'à travers lui, la Congrégation soit un tant soit peu mise en lumière. Il s'y félicite que plusieurs évêques soient venus lui parler des Oblats qu'ils connaissaient «l'un ou l'autre est même venu avec une carte postale à me faire signer.» Il s'y réjouit aussi de la convergence qu'il trouve entre les insistances du Synode et les intuitions du charisme oblat. Le Synode met en valeur «l'intégration entre consécration et mission qui indique... le rapport essentiel entre pratique des conseils et apostolat, entre prière et action, entre vie communautaire et engagement missionnaire...», non seulement intégration, mais affirmation que «la consécration est mission...» On retrouve là le texte du Chapitre de 1986. Il conclut donc: «Durant l'expérience synodale, j'ai ressenti combien le charisme oblat est en harmonie avec les perspectives ecclésiales d'aujourd'hui sur la vie consacrée.»

On l'aura compris, les lettres à la Congrégation étaient une conversation. Le Père Général parlait à ses frères, et leur partageait son expérience, sans prétention, fraternellement, espérant que son exemple les inviterait à faire de même.

Animation par les retraites

Entre 1989 et 1997, le p. Zago a prêché onze retraites à des Provinces oblates¹³. La première, à la délégation de Recife, en janvier 1989; deux retraites en septembre 1994: au Japon et à Hong Kong; l'année 1995 est tout à fait exceptionnelle, il y a prêché quatre retraites: les États-Unis en mars et trois retraites au Sri Lanka: à Colombo au mois de mai, Kandy et Madhu en juin; deux en 1996: l'Espagne en juin et les Philippines en novembre; puis le Chili en février 1997; et enfin, le Scolasticat international en septembre de cette même année 1997. Il avait en outre accepté de prêcher deux retraites au Cameroun en mai et juin 1994, mais à cause du Synode tout proche, il m'a demandé de le remplacer. Cette simple énumération témoigne de l'importance de ce ministère dans l'esprit du p. Zago. Le travail du Supérieur général, tel qu'il le conçoit, est avant tout un travail d'animation spirituelle, sans pour autant négliger les dimensions administratives inhérentes à une telle charge. Je ne ferai qu'évoquer le contenu de ces retraites en prenant deux exemples. La retraite qu'il a prêchée en Espagne en 1996 est toute centrée sur le Fondateur et principalement sur la Préface des Constitutions. Il invite à regarder le monde, à répondre à ses appels de façon missionnaire, en suivant les traces de Jésus et des Apôtres. Pour finir, il résume l'intuition du Fondateur en trois mots: évangélisation, sainteté, communauté. Dans la retraite prêchée au Scolasticat international, il commence par contempler le Christ au centre de la vie du Fondateur et il termine en méditant sur la communauté des Apôtres. La méditation sur Marie se trouve dans les deux retraites dans une réflexion sur la prière. L'encyclique *Redemptoris Missio* lui fournit aussi d'amples matériaux pour l'animation des retraites.

Animation par les visites

Le p. Zago a beaucoup visité la Congrégation. En 1998, quand il fut élu, le p. Steckling avertit le Chapitre que suite à ses difficultés de santé, il visiterait moins que son prédécesseur! Le p. Zago reconnaissait lui-même qu'il s'était lancé trop rapidement après sa première élection dans les visites à la Congrégation; après sa réélection en 1992, il prit davantage de temps à Rome pour former sa nouvelle équipe.

Lors de ses visites tout l'intéressait. Il travaillait bien sûr avec le Provincial et son conseil, avec les formateurs – il ne manquait jamais ce rendez-vous –, mais surtout avec tous les Oblats. Il était simplement attentif à la vie. Peu à peu, à travers les contacts, une image de la Province se dégagait. Il identifiait des questions et des situations qui méritaient une évaluation; il les partageait avec le Provincial et son conseil. Finalement, rentré à Rome, il écrivait une lettre à la Province. Voici un exemple. En diverses étapes, de la

fin de 1990 à avril 1993, il avait visité toutes les communautés de la Province italienne et avait écrit à chaque communauté en particulier. Puis le 24 avril 1993, il adresse une lettre à toute la Province. Il mentionne qu'il a rencontré tous les Oblats, sauf deux. Il y parle de la santé de la Province, de l'unité toujours à reconstruire, de la vie de communauté, de la mission. À ce propos il attire l'attention sur le travail avec le laïcat, dont les collaborateurs dans les paroisses, mais surtout les adultes et les jeunes qui se reconnaissent dans le charisme de la Congrégation. Sur chacun de ces points la lettre offrait des encouragements. Il y avait aussi un appel très clair sur les points suivants: un meilleur partage financier sur l'ensemble de la Province, mieux intégrer les Délégations missionnaires dans les préoccupations de la Province, s'ouvrir davantage à l'ensemble de la Congrégation.

Comme on le voit, les lettres venaient après les visites. Il pouvait alors ressaisir l'expérience des communautés et suggérer des orientations précises. Parmi ces orientations figuraient toujours la vie communautaire, le ministère des vocations et de la formation, et l'évangélisation. Trop respectueux du travail des Provinciaux, il n'intervenait pas de façon autoritaire dans la vie des Provinces, néanmoins les Provinciaux étaient très attentifs à ses observations. Je ne citerai qu'un exemple: en décembre 1987 – il venait de finir sa première année comme Supérieur général –, il rend visite à la communauté de Mainz qui était en même temps maison provinciale et scolasticat d'Allemagne. Dans la lettre qu'il leur a adressée, il souhaite que le scolasticat, qui comptait à ce moment-là une vingtaine de scolastiques, devienne une communauté indépendante, avec son supérieur, des formateurs et des locaux indépendants. Quelques mois plus tard c'était chose faite.

Les rencontres avec les Régions se faisaient sur ce même modèle. Les membres du Conseil, nous visitons les diverses Provinces et unités oblates de la Région. Nous mettons en commun nos observations; ces échanges dessinaient un premier portrait de cette Région. Suivait alors la session conjointe avec les Provinciaux et Supérieurs des Délégations. Après tout ce partage d'expérience, il était possible de dégager quelques priorités et orientations pour le travail à venir. L'organisation de la session conjointe était laissée entièrement à la responsabilité de la Région elle-même, sous la responsabilité de son Président. Il y avait une grande flexibilité dans la façon de faire: certaines Régions (Canada, USA) invitaient les Conseils provinciaux de leurs Provinces respectives. Le fait de vivre ensemble pendant une semaine permettait beaucoup d'interactions, beaucoup de contacts et de multiples rencontres; le p. Zago ne s'en privait pas ni les participants non plus. Après la session conjointe, le Conseiller pour la Région proposait un projet de lettre, soumis à la révision du Conseil; de son côté le p. Zago veillait discrètement à ce qu'y figure ce qui, à son avis, devait y figurer.

On trouvera, par exemple, dans *Informations OMI* de mai 1989, les conclusions de la session conjointe avec l'Asie datée de Bangalore, le 17 février 1989. Il y est souligné la nécessité de renforcer la mission de Hong-Kong et d'aider d'avantage nos unités du Japon et de Thaïlande. Il est aussi mentionné une probable fondation en Corée (la décision de cette fondation avait été prise). Le travail avec les non-chrétiens est quant à lui fortement encouragé. Un des paragraphes disait aux Provinciaux et Supérieurs de Délégations: «N'ayez pas peur! Osez!». Voilà un exemple parmi tant d'autres. Avec le recul du temps, on peut voir combien ces orientations concernant Hong-Kong, la Thaïlande, le Japon et la Corée se sont vérifiées.

Les visites fraternelles, ordinaires et spéciales

Les Constitutions et Règles approuvées par le Chapitre de 1998 (C 138) parlent de ces trois types de visites. Depuis une trentaine d'années, nous avons abandonné les «visites canoniques» d'autrefois qui n'avaient pas toujours laissé un bon souvenir. Les visites des Supérieurs aux Provinces ou aux communautés étaient des visites «fraternelles» dont le but était de connaître les situations et d'encourager les confrères, comme le dit la R 138a. Cependant des situations nouvelles, telles, par exemple, les Provinces devant se prendre en main à la fin de l'ère des «missionnaires étrangers», faisaient apparaître le besoin d'une visite plus approfondie. Pour permettre de tirer le meilleur parti possible de ces transitions en même temps délicates et pleines de promesses, s'est mise en place une formule en trois étapes. Dans un premier temps, trois Oblats, désignés à cet effet, rencontrent tous les Oblats de la Province pour recueillir auprès d'eux une même information, en fonction d'un questionnaire pré-établi. Les visiteurs font un rapport. Le deuxième temps consiste à réunir le Congrès provincial au cours duquel le rapport des visiteurs est promulgué par le Père Général. Le Congrès se donne des orientations de mise en pratique. Le troisième temps, c'est la mise en œuvre de ces orientations par l'ensemble de la Province. Ce schéma

fut utilisé pour la première fois au Lesotho, puis aux Philippines, au Sri Lanka et à la Maison générale. L'article 138 des CC et RR. est né de cette expérience.

Conclusion

À la fin de ces développements, des citations de lettres ou de messages aux Oblats illustreront à souhait ce qui précède. Ils montreront la perspicacité pastorale et la vigueur apostolique du p. Zago. Laissons-lui donc la parole.

Un premier extrait est tiré d'une lettre au p. Heinz Theo Stens, provincial d'Allemagne. Elle est datée du 4 janvier 1988. Le p. Zago avait participé au Congrès de Province en même temps qu'aux funérailles du p. Bernhard Ferkinghoff. Il était encore un «jeune» Général qui venait tout juste de commencer son travail. Voici donc ce qu'il écrit:

... Restez ce que vous êtes, mais soyez plus audacieux dans votre service. N'ayez pas peur devant les nouvelles façons d'évangéliser. Gardez un œil ouvert sur les pauvres et les abandonnés dans votre société. N'oubliez pas que l'Allemagne est un pays de mission où vivent quatre millions de musulmans et où se trouvent beaucoup de non-croyants. Continuez de considérer la mission *ad Gentes* comme une œuvre prioritaire, apprenez de vos missionnaires. Élargissez vos efforts pour les vocations et diversifiez-en la provenance... Ne craignez pas le renouveau dans la vie communautaire: la vie est plus importante que les structures...

Une lettre enthousiaste et pleine de souffle!

Le deuxième extrait est tiré d'un message «aux supérieurs (des communautés de Pologne) réunis à Obra» -, daté du 16 juillet 1996. Il leur dit:

... Soyez toujours plus missionnaires... Comme le Pape le rappelle dans l'encyclique missionnaire, il faut en permanence évangéliser les communautés chrétiennes... et évangéliser ceux qui sont loin... Soyez toujours plus communautaires... La vie communautaire n'est pas seulement habiter ensemble, mais consiste en un partage de notre chemin et en un engagement humain, chrétien, religieux et missionnaire. C'est une évangélisation mutuelle... Travaillez toujours davantage à devenir des saints... Les maux dans la Congrégation viennent avant tout de nos manquements sur ce point...

Faisant allusion à l'expérience mystique du Fondateur le 15 août 1822, il conclut: «Marie... a fait comprendre à Eugène, en un moment de crise, que dans la Congrégation on trouve tous les moyens pour être vraiment missionnaires, communautaires et saints. Puisse Marie, pour laquelle vous nourrissez une tendre et visible dévotion, vous soutenir dans l'accueil constant du Christ dans vos vies...»

Enfin, le troisième extrait est pris du rapport au Chapitre général de 1998, où le p. Zago porte un regard rétrospectif sur son ministère comme Supérieur général:

Par rapport à la Congrégation, j'ai accordé une attention spéciale aux supérieurs majeurs et aux maisons de formation. J'ai toujours eu conscience que les contacts durables et le poids des difficultés reposent sur les supérieurs provinciaux et que l'avenir de la Congrégation dépend de la qualité de la formation première... J'ai désiré être proche fraternellement de tous les Oblats et je l'ai prouvé de plusieurs manières: les visites aux Provinces et aux autres unités, les rencontres personnelles avec les Oblats là où ils travaillent, ou à Rome lorsqu'ils se trouvaient de passage, la prédication de retraites à de nombreux groupes, un contact écrit personnel ou collectif. Par exemple, la lettre à l'occasion des anniversaires d'oblation ou d'ordination; bien souvent elle a été le tout premier contact direct avec le Père Général. En réponse, beaucoup m'ont exprimé les sentiments qu'ils avaient d'appartenir à notre famille religieuse et leur joie, racontant parfois leur propre vie... Le Supérieur général doit savoir surtout remercier quiconque a travaillé avec fidélité et générosité¹⁴.

C'est difficile de trouver une meilleure conclusion.

¹ Conseiller général pour l'Europe de 1988 à 1998.

² Lettre au p. Guibert, 29 juillet 1830, dans *Écrits oblats*, VII, p.207.

³ Ce fut le cas dans la rencontre du MGC à Rocaraso, au mois d'août 1996.

⁴ «Témoins en Communautés apostoliques» (TCA), n° 20.

⁵ Matériel distribué dans la Congrégation.

⁶ TCA, n° 23.

⁷ Publiée dans la *Documentation* de juin 1993.

⁸ *Acta Adm. Gen.*, XIII (1990), pp. 7-9.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Scolasticat de Roma, Lesotho, le 14 novembre 1993; *Acta Adm. Gen.*, XVI (1993), pp. 13-16.

¹¹ *Acta Adm. Gen.*, XVII (1994), pp. 25-29.

¹² *Acta Adm. Gen.*, XVII (1994), pp. 42-47.

¹³ Informations communiquées par le P. Edward Carolan, secrétaire du Père Général.

¹⁴ *Acta Adm. Gen.*, XXI (1998), p. 125.

Marcello Zago, O.M.I., Secretary of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples

Tony Bissett, O.M.I.¹

Introduction

On 28 March 1998, the Oblate Superior General, Fr. Marcello Zago, pinned a note to the notice board of the General House, inviting the local community to an important meeting at 10 o'clock that morning. When all were assembled, he announced that the Holy Father had appointed him Secretary of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, raising him to the titular Archiepiscopal See of Roselle. Fr. Zago thus became the first Religious to be appointed as Secretary of the Missionary Dicastery.²

Two hours later, he was in the offices of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples (CEP or *Propaganda Fide*, as it is still popularly called), by the Spanish Steps in the heart of Rome, for the official announcement of the same. In the presence of Archbishop Charles Schleck, C.S.C., Adjunct Secretary and President of the Pontifical Mission Societies, of Bishop Alessandro Staccioli, O.M.I., General Secretary of the Pontifical Missionary Union, of the General Secretaries of the other Pontifical Mission Societies, and other personnel from the offices and from the University and Colleges dependent on Propaganda, the Prefect, Cardinal Jozef Tomko, read the official letter of Fr. Zago's appointment. He was to replace the Most Rev. Giuseppe Uhač, who had died on the previous 18 January, the very day the Pope was to announce his nomination as Cardinal.

Cardinal Tomko, presenting the new Secretary to those present, said that he was chosen for this responsibility for three main qualities: his competency in the missionary world, his commitment to interreligious dialogue and his vast experience at the head of a great missionary Order of which he was Superior General for the second mandate.³

In a short address, Fr. Marcello stated: "In my life I have asked for nothing but to be a missionary, but I have also refused nothing,"⁴ and he went on to stress three commitments for his new service: mission *ad gentes*; attention to non-Christian immigrants in countries of ancient Christianity; greater familiarity with those who serve the mission at Propaganda. After greeting each one personally, and spending some time with the Prefect, he returned home, leaving those historic halls and corridors with a certain air of satisfaction and expectation. He would continue in his role as Superior General, thus filling contemporaneously two offices until the forthcoming General Chapter in September that year.

While the announcement took everyone by surprise, in another sense there was no doubt in anyone's mind of the capacity of Marcello Zago for such an exalted office. He was no stranger to the Roman Curia or to Propaganda. He had already served as Secretary of another Dicastery, the Secretariat for Non-Christians (now called the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue); he was consultor to various Vatican offices; he was a member of two Congregations: Consecrated Life and Evangelization of Peoples; he participated in four Synods of Bishops, at one of which he was assigned special secretarial responsibilities; he was very involved in the work of organizing the Prayer of Peace Day at Assisi on 27 October, 1986; he collaborated with John Paul II in drafting the missionary encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* (1990); his well-travelled time as Superior General of the Oblates brought him into direct contact with a wide range of socio-political and ecclesial settings and persons in all the continents; his direct experience in the missions opened the door to a profound dialogue with other religions, leading him eventually to become a major Church authority in that field and a well-known missiologist. Besides, as Superior General he had maintained the long Oblate tradition of committing personnel to Propaganda, for various services: Professors and Librarian at the Urban University, Secretary General of the Pontifical Missionary Union, official in the Congregation, Rector of St. Paul's Pontifical College.

One could certainly not say that Marcello Zago was unknown. On the contrary, he was a most respected and loved figure in the life of the Church and of the Roman Curia. But what was the significance of his new mission, one could ask? What exactly is *Propaganda Fide*? To answer this, we need to take a

few steps back in history, more precisely to the early seventeenth century.

I. History and Nature of Propaganda Fide

1. Origins of the Sacred Congregation 'de Propaganda Fide'

The *Patronato (Padroado)* system, conferred on the Kings of Spain and Portugal at the time of the great geographical discoveries and colonial expansion, seemed initially to be the answer to the Church's desire to bring the Gospel to the ends of the earth. But the disadvantages soon began to manifest themselves, particularly the negative effects of political alignment and the little direct influence of the papacy on those young missions. The Church wished to give priority to the preaching of the Gospel and to respect of the genuine values of the people being evangelized. In this context, on 6 January 1622, the Feast of the Epiphany, Pope Gregory XV established the Sacred Congregation "*de Propaganda Fide*" as the central and supreme organ for the propagation of the faith, with the double task of aiming towards union with the Orthodox and Protestant Churches, and promoting and organizing the Missions among the pagans.

The missionary vision of the new Congregation could be summed up in the programme of its first Secretary, Monsignor Francesco Ingoli: transform the missions from a colonial phenomenon into a purely ecclesiastical and spiritual movement; free the missionaries from all interference of political authority; have a unified approach to the spreading of the faith; and, above all, form the indigenous clergy and erect national ecclesiastical hierarchies.⁵ In the early days, Propaganda had particularly strong links with Religious Orders, on which it depended for missionary personnel.

The new Congregation set up its office in the historic building of Bernini and Borromini, that was also the see of the Urban College, a missionary seminary in the heart of the historic centre of Rome. This College had, among its early pupils and members of staff, such great figures as Cardinal John Henry Newman, Blessed Colomba Marmion, and Saint Oliver Plunket, who is now the Patron Saint of the Pontifical Urban University.

2. Present-day Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples

Today, Propaganda Fide, now called the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, still has its offices in the same building, and continues to be responsible for "directing and coordinating the work of evangelization of peoples and of missionary cooperation in the entire world, except for the jurisdiction of the Congregation for Oriental Churches."⁶ With a few regions of Eastern Europe and the Americas (including North Canada), and almost all of Africa, Asia and Oceania, with the exception of Australia and most of the Philippines, it cares, at the time of writing, for 1075 ecclesiastical units (dioceses, Apostolic Vicariates, Apostolic Prefectures, and "*Missio sui iuris*"). Its responsibilities are wide-ranging, including the creation of new dioceses and ecclesiastical provinces, the appointment of bishops, formation of thousands of seminarians and catechists, links with the Episcopal Conferences, care of diocesan clergy and of Religious Institutes of diocesan right, to mention some of the most important elements. It touches most areas of the life of the local Churches: pastoral, financial, juridical.

In short, it is concerned with the administration of over a third of the Church's dioceses, and also with missionary animation and coordination throughout the whole Church. Integrally linked with this latter role, the Congregation is responsible for the four Pontifical Mission Societies: the Propagation of the Faith, St. Peter the Apostle, Holy Childhood, and Missionary Union. These are concerned directly with missionary animation and with the distribution of funds throughout the mission territories. In latter years, the President of the Pontifical Mission Societies has also been Adjunct Secretary of the Congregation.

3. Functions of the Secretary

The Secretary of Propaganda, who now always becomes Archbishop, is the closest collaborator of the Prefect, assisting in all areas of his responsibility. He shares in the work associated with the developing the local Churches, dealing with Nuncios, Bishops and other religious leaders, visiting mission territories, animating meetings and celebrations, meeting visitors, etc.

In Rome, he is Vice-Chancellor of the Urban University and shares responsibility for the various colleges: the Urban College (Seminary), the two Pontifical Colleges of St. Peter and St. Paul for priests from mission territories, the International Centre for Missionary Animation (CIAM), the Paul VI Foyer, the *Mater Ecclesiae* Catechetical Missionary College, in Castel Gandolfo. Besides, the Fides News Agency is under the auspices of the Congregation. The Secretary also has particular responsibility for the actual material buildings of Propaganda Fide, their internal administration and maintenance, and for the personnel.

II. Archbishop Zago Takes Possession of His New Office

1. Episcopal Ordination in St. Peter's Basilica

On 25 April 1998, in the apse, or Chapel of the *Cathedra* in St. Peter's Basilica, Marcello Zago was ordained a Bishop. In the presence of a large number of people – Oblates, personnel from Propaganda, colleagues from Religious Orders and other contacts, family, relatives and friends –, the solemn ceremony took place in an atmosphere of deep joy and prayer. The chief consecrator was Cardinal Jozef Tomko, Prefect of Propaganda, assisted by the co-consecrators, Bishop Alessandro Staccioli, O.M.I., former Vicar Apostolic of Luang-Prabang (Laos) and now General Secretary of the Pontifical Missionary Union (P.U.M.), and the Most Rev. Paolo Magnani, Bishop of Treviso, Archbishop Zago's home diocese. There were fifteen Cardinals, over thirty Bishops, including two Oblates, Archbishop Exner of Vancouver and Archbishop Quevedo of Nueva Segovia, about forty Superiors General and hundreds of other priests, religious, and seminarians.

2. First steps

Within a few days of his episcopal ordination, His Grace, the Most Reverend Marcello Zago, was at his new desk in the Propaganda Palace at *Piazza di Spagna*, perhaps a bit uncomfortable in his new attire, but wasting no time in getting down to the business for which he was elected.

In the few weeks prior to the announcement of his appointment, he had had time to reflect, in the secret of his own heart, on the onerous task entrusted to him. He, who was so familiar with Propaganda from his missiological studies at the Pontifical Gregorian University, from his days as Professor at the Urban University, and as a member of that very Congregation, was aware of many of the strengths and weaknesses of this great institution. His love for the Church and commitment to her mission led him to breathe the same air and move in the same circles, but at the same time he could not but feel somewhat overawed at his new responsibilities: "I feel a bit of anxiety for the future. Will I have the capacity required to face this life and the problems connected with the universal mission? Will I have the necessary health?"⁷

With deep faith, however, he simply turned to the Person whom he always referred to as the agent of the mission: "O Holy Spirit come down on me, guide me in the task entrusted to me. You guide the Church's mission. Let me be guided by You, to help others be docile to your action. Difficulties await me that perhaps I cannot imagine. Help me to accept these as a contribution to the universal mission. Give me a vision to correspond with the needs of today, that it be above all a reflection of divine love. Help me to discern your action that can help others in the same process".⁸

A few days later, he was already thinking of some practical areas that he might try to develop: "an understanding with the workers, an involvement of theologians and consultors, a clarity in the finances".⁹ He realized the enormity of the task and some of the difficulties that he might encounter: "In fact the task is immense. It is not only about administration, but of animation with regard to persons and to the particular and universal Church. I renew, however, my faith in the agent of mission: the Holy Spirit".¹⁰

In an interview with the *Agenzia Fides*, he further elaborated these latter thoughts: "I am convinced of the need to go beyond a service of administration regarding the Churches (bishops, canonical problems), we must also think of the missionary animation of the young churches. They must be busy not only with pastoral care for those who are already Catholics, but also go out to the non-Christians

in their area, embracing that larger reality of the non-Christian world. In brief, we must entrust mission *ad gentes* to the young churches too, even if they are a minority in their country. How to do this must be given thought and attention".¹¹

He spoke of formation in the seminaries, of the need of greater cooperation between Propaganda and the heads of Religious Institutes, and of the importance of harmony between the different Dicasteries. "CEP's duty", he said, "is mission but she must have relations with ecumenism, interreligious dialogue, human development, justice."¹²

Day-to-day office work

Marcello, who was no stranger to hard work, found the rhythm of his new office very heavy. The six unbroken hours, from 8.00 a.m. until 2.00 p.m., he found long, because they were very intense and usually without even a coffee break. How often he referred to these long mornings as "heavy days", "packed with meetings", "long, long", "overloaded", "intense". The regular work consisted in reading reports, signing correspondence, attending meetings of every kind, and welcoming the almost incessant flow of visitors: Nuncios, Bishops, Religious Superiors, and others.

But, in all this, the Gospel call to love was a constant challenge to him: "Love one another as Christ. A great challenge that surpasses our strength. But the Lord asks it of me and therefore He also gives the means. To love whoever I meet in the office, whoever comes to visit, whoever is behind the correspondence and the dossier to be got through. This is the way of identification (with Him)".¹³ Having been a missionary, he understood the difficulties encountered out in the field, and how important it was to show understanding and give support to everyone he met and in all the correspondence.

Once a week there was a "*Congresso*", a meeting of the Prefect, Secretary and a dozen or so officials of the Congregation, where the most important questions were discussed. At his first *Congresso*, it was as if he had always been there, such was the extensive knowledge and his familiarity with procedures. Not only had he visited most countries mentioned, but he even remembered many of the people that came up in discussion.

In the area of financial administration, he introduced a similar weekly meeting with those responsible for this area. This concerned not so much the world-wide distribution of funds – which was more the responsibility of the Pontifical Mission Societies – but the administration of the Congregation, the *palazzo*, the personnel, the University, colleges and other properties in Rome.

About every two weeks, there was the *Ordinaria*, or ordinary meeting of the Cardinal members of the Congregation. One of the main tasks of this meeting was to consider the candidates to be presented to the Holy Father for episcopal appointment; in other words, after the regular canonical process had been carried out, involving the Secretariat, the Nuncio, and dozens of other people who are normally consulted, one reached this final stage of proposing a name to the Holy Father, for appointment as bishop. Projects of new dioceses were similarly voted upon in this forum.

Marcello's afternoons and evenings, that is, outside official hours, were frequently filled with duties linked with his office – talks, meetings, interviews, congresses, chapters, dinners, celebrations – not to speak of his contacts with Oblates and others, and his usual avid reading and writing, which always characterized his life. No matter how busy the day was, he tried to include some physical exercise, walking in the nearby Villa Borghese or through the historical centre of Rome, with his *confrère*, Fr. Angelo dal Bello, O.M.I., or some other Oblate or friend. He became quite an expert on the centre of Rome, especially on the churches which he visited at every opportunity.

Working in close harmony with the Prefect

The relationship between the Secretary and the Prefect was always very cordial and respectful. They complemented each other in many ways, each bringing different experiences and viewpoints, that helped in seeking solutions to the different problems. While Marcello was well aware that they sometimes saw things quite differently,¹⁴ which was inevitable, considering the vastly different worlds from which they came, this was not an obstacle, but rather an enrichment, in their working together at the service of the universal mission. Cardinal Tomko himself acknowledged: "Although coming from different paths, we found ourselves on a route which was remarkably complementary. We had a common vision. He was a

great support for me. His honesty, the ease with which we communicated, led to cooperation from which the whole of Propaganda benefited.”¹⁵

The Prefect did not only wait until after his death to pay such a homage to the Secretary, but expressed it in a very personal and spontaneous way on the Feast of St. Marcello. Saying that he had offered Mass for him that day, he wrote: “I thanked the Lord above all for the gift that He gives to this Dicastery and to the Church in your presence among us, where you spend your days. Personally I have gained great benefit because you have helped us to establish an atmosphere of peace, of optimism, of dedication; the task of the Prefect thus becomes lighter. I thank you for the cordial and loyal collaboration, for the fraternal comprehension, and above all for the great example that you give us in this period of trial, which is doubly precious in the eyes of the Lord.”¹⁶

Contact with the Pontifical Urban University and Colleges

Archbishop Marcello considered of primary importance the whole area of formation for mission, because much depended on the quality of mission personnel. For this reason he took a particular interest in the Roman institutions of formation and education.

His interest was not purely academic or bureaucratic, but rather he went out of his way to get to know these institutions and the people in them, and not only the staff, but the students also. He saw the fact of having hundreds of priests, seminarians, and religious here in Rome, as an opportunity not to be missed. He wanted to firstly know the situation, before trying to promote any new initiatives, and so he made several visits, sometimes on his own initiative and sometimes on invitation, in order to familiarize himself with the situation of each institution. “He was a person capable of observing things in their reality and complexity”, wrote the Director of the *Mater Ecclesiae* Missionary College.¹⁷

For instance, he spent his first Christmas as Secretary of Propaganda in the Urban College; he conducted a Triduum at the *Mater Ecclesiae* College; he gave retreats and days of ongoing formation at the colleges of St. Peter and St. Paul. The then Rector of St. Peter’s College, referred to one of these visits: “I remember well how I greeted him in the refectory on 22 February 1999, saying that he had already been with us twice. ‘Three times’, he promptly corrected me.”¹⁸ The Rector of St. Paul’s likewise spoke of at least eight visits to their college, and of the positive impression he made on everyone: “He responded to the priests’ questions and I can say that his very person gave them confidence, so that they immediately spoke of their concerns, their problems.”¹⁹

The then Rector of the Urban College, after various meetings with the Archbishop, was left with this overall impression: “Monsignor Zago not only knew the history, but had a deep understanding of the purpose of the Urban College, with the intention of bringing about a renewal, beginning with the ‘return to roots.’”²⁰

The Secretary gave particular attention to the Urban University which, through its affiliated institutes around the world, is considered an important point of reference for reflection and formation with regard to mission. The *Rettore Magnifico* of the University commented: “His deep sensitivity for the mission together with academic competence gave Monsignor Zago the possibility of not only appreciating the value and meaning of the University, but of also promoting its standing at an academic level.”²¹ After much time and energy were dedicated to reviewing the structures and programmes at the University, the Rector was able to assert: “Under his mandate [of Monsignor Zago] the radical restructuring of the Faculty of Missiology was brought to completion, with the erection of the Higher Institute of Catechesis and Missionary Spirituality.”²²

Contact with the Pope

His role as Secretary of Propaganda brought Archbishop Zago into regular direct contact with the Holy Father, in audiences, meetings, concelebrations, lunches. In the absence of the Cardinal Prefect, it was he who presented the names of candidates to the Pope for episcopal office in mission territories. On 6 January, 2000, he was co-consecrator with the Pope at the ordination of twelve new Bishops in St. Peter’s Basilica. On 8 December, 2000, he had the honour of welcoming the Holy Father to Piazza di Spagna, for the traditional ceremony at the statue of Mary Immaculate, in front of the Propaganda Palace. He was allowed out of the hospital for a few hours on that occasion, so he at least had the consolation of

receiving the Pope at his own doorstep, in the presence of thousands of Romans and others packed into the Square and neighbouring streets. The Holy Father personally followed Archbishop Marcello's illness very closely. In fact, Zago thought of resigning at different times because of illness, even within the first year,²³ but even when he did finally offer to resign, the Pope encouraged him to continue in office.

III. Visits Abroad

Archbishop Zago had frequent short trips within Italy and Europe, such as to Lourdes, Rimini, Pescara, Roselle, Trent, Bologna, Treviso, Verona, Bosnia, Austria. But there were a number of important trips to other continents, which had more far-reaching implications and influence. On two occasions he was sent by the Holy Father as Special Envoy, to Angola and Peru respectively, and he participated at the Jubilee Mission Congress in the United States. Each of these was quite distinct in nature, with different aims and objectives.

Apart from these, he had already prepared an address for a Missionary Congress in Shillong (India), but realized, at the last moment, that he had mistaken the year of the event.²⁴ It was, in fact, scheduled for the following year, 2001, but the author had in the meantime departed from this life. His talk was presented, posthumously, by Fr. Galbiati, P.I.M.E., President of the Pontifical Missionary Union, who represented the Congregation on that occasion.²⁵

1. Visit as Papal Envoy to Angola (15-23 October, 1999)

Archbishop Zago was invited to visit the new Catholic University in Luanda, the capital of Angola. At the same time, Pope John Paul II also asked him to act as his Special Envoy, with the purpose of making known the concerns of the Holy Father for the situation of that country, to open up dialogue, and to promote ways of helping the people and the local Church.

Angola, which gained independence from Portugal on 11 November, 1975, had been ravaged ever since by a civil war and, after endless failed peace efforts, had apparently reached a total impasse. It was practically abandoned by the international community. The Holy See had repeatedly called for renewed dialogue, but these appeals fell largely on deaf ears. In this context, the Holy Father decided to send a Special Envoy as a visible sign of his presence and care for the suffering people of that troubled nation.

Monsignor Marcello had planned to go from 18 to 28 July of the same year, which would have coincided with the National Eucharistic Congress, but this had to be postponed for health reasons. An alternative date was fixed for the third week in October, which would coincide with the Assembly of the Episcopal Conference. Despite further minor surgery only a week prior to the trip, he embarked on his long-awaited mission to Angola.

Because of the war, he was restricted to the capital, Luanda, where he followed an intensive schedule of meetings and visits to various civil and religious bodies and institutions. Apart from almost continuous meetings with individual Bishops and others, he met with the Bishops' Conference (CEAST), the diplomatic corps, the priests and religious, leaders of other Churches and religions, and visited the Major Seminary, a parish and other institutions.

Appeal for Peace

At the inauguration of the Catholic University of Luanda, the Holy Father's message, addressed to the Bishops' Conference, highlighted the importance of seeking a solution to the country's troubles, other than war: "May the arms be silenced and new and courageous ways be found for reconciliation. May there come at last the longed-for day of peace. May the life and the nation and its democratic institutions flourish once again: war is never a solution."²⁶

Towards the end of his visit, Archbishop Zago met the President of Angola, José Eduardo dos Santos. "I have been charged by the Holy Father", he said, "to express solidarity with the suffering people of Angola and the Church's concern that peace may be reached through dialogue between the conflicting parties."²⁷

His going brought the plight of Angola to the attention of the international community, which would have to play a part in any solution. "On the one hand there is the political and diplomatic level, and on the

other there is the dispute over the country's prime resources", he said, in reference to the sale of diamonds and oil. He also pressed the diplomatic community for greater initiative regarding humanitarian aid. He said that diplomats "can play an important role for opening humanitarian corridors to bring assistance to the people in the interior and to sensitize their respective countries about the concrete reality of the war."²⁸

The visit was taken very seriously by the civil authorities, by the bishops and by the media. The radio, television and newspaper coverage was considerable throughout the week. While there were no immediate spectacular results, the visit showed how the Catholic Church longed for peace and showed its concern for the people. The presence of a senior Vatican Official was, in itself, a great consolation for the Church and the people, demonstrating in a concrete way the concern of the Holy Father.

Three years after the visit, the civil war came to an end, and the work of rebuilding Angola began. Whatever about the effects on the political leaders in that country, the visit certainly made quite an impact on Marcello himself: "My thoughts and dreams are on Angola, which shows that the visit is engraved in my psyche. During the night I also prayed the Office of Readings and Lauds ... But what can one say in the face of the misery of so many people in Angola and elsewhere?"²⁹

2. Visit as Papal Envoy to Peru (29 January – 7 February, 2000)

Archbishop Zago was sent as Special Envoy to Peru, for the occasion of the Church's Centenary celebration of the first missionary organization in the Amazon region. The original three Apostolic Prefectures from that time have by now developed into eight Apostolic Vicariates, which are dependent on the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples. These are all in the Amazon Region, covering an overall area of 673.000 km. They are situated within the national Peruvian Church which, besides the 8 Vicariates, has 7 Archdioceses, 15 Dioceses, 11 Prelatures and 1 Military Ordinariate. While evangelization of the coastal and hilly areas was reasonably well developed in the aftermath of colonization, the Amazon region remained abandoned because of poor access and of difficulty in cultivation. Its territories are flooded for several months every year, and the many small tribes remain isolated along the banks of the rivers, surviving on a meagre diet.

The work of evangelization in these hundred years has produced many fruits, with the villages gradually developing into Christian communities, each with its own life and structures. The Sees of the Vicariates are reachable by air, but the internal communities only by river. The Bishop of Requena, for instance, lives for half the year in a barge, which he calls the "floating Episcopal palace".

New Thrust for Evangelization

The Centenary was considered an occasion not only to celebrate, but also to initiate a new thrust forward with regard to the mission in Peru.³⁰

While there were celebrations in some of the Apostolic Vicariates, the main gathering of the Centenary was a solemn Eucharist on 30th January 2000 in Lima Cathedral, the historical symbol of evangelization in Peru.

In his homily, Archbishop Zago highlighted three areas in particular:

- the centrality of direct evangelization, as proclamation, witness and personal encounter with Christ;
- respect for the cultures of the peoples;
- integral evangelization, including the promotion of human and social growth, including commitment to justice and ecumenical and interreligious dialogue.

He also underlined the importance of a wider shared responsibility for mission: "But the mission is not entrusted only to those who work in a determined territory. It is the responsibility of the whole Church and in particular of the local Church... the whole local Church must co-operate and be involved, through the Episcopal Conference, through a clergy that is sensitive to the most urgent needs of the country, even to the point of being available as *Fidei Donum* priests, through a missionary consciousness of the Christian people who are called to co-operate with their prayer, with material help, with their life and with vocations. Only in this way can the mission territories become autonomous local Churches alongside the

other dioceses of the country and the world.”³¹

Inculturation

Speaking to the priests of the Vicariates, Archbishop Zago developed the aspect of inculturation in evangelization: “You develop your pastoral activity among peoples that possess a specific cultural identity. The respect that we owe them should not let us forget that the Gospel and evangelization are not incompatible with them; on the contrary, the Gospel is capable of impregnating the culture, assuming its authentic values and transforming them intimately through their integration in Christianity. All evangelization that tends to simplify this process, will remain at a superficial level, without reaching or transforming the personal or collective conscience of persons and will not be able to root itself with firmness (cf. EN 18-20).

The attention to a particular determined culture should not exclude its coming into harmony with the national culture and with the process of cultural globalization that is taking place. History shows us that all peoples that tend to close in on themselves become impoverished. Progress, on the other hand, is the fruit of a reciprocal inter-relationship.”³²

Sanctity and Mission

In that country, which produced many great saints, including the well-known St. Rose of Lima and St. Martin de Porres, the link between sanctity and evangelization was very evident to Monsignor Zago. In an article in the *Osservatore Romano*, he recalled Pope John Paul’s insistence on this essential link, as expounded in *Redemptoris Missio*: “‘At the root of such missionary dynamism was the sanctity of the first Christians and of the first communities’ (RM 90). The same can be said for the beginnings of the Church in Peru and, in particular, in Lima.”³³

3. National Mission Congress in the U.S.A. (28 September – 1st October, 2000)

The Jubilee Mission Congress 2000, held in Chicago, was a major event for the Church in the United States, sponsored jointly by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops (since renamed the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops), the Conferences of Religious, the Pontifical Mission Societies, and other interested bodies. It was a special call to the Church in the United States to reflect on its role in the mission of Christ for the new Millennium. Bringing together representatives of mission Institutes, diocesan and parish mission endeavours, and programs engaging laity in mission and volunteer service, the Congress focussed on contemporary ways in which the Catholic Church experienced and practised mission.

After the welcome address by the hosting Archbishop, Cardinal Francis George, O.M.I., and some preliminary reflections on the history and facets of mission, the keynote address was delivered by Archbishop Zago, with the title, “Global Integration of Catholic Missions in the United States today.”³⁴ Here, perhaps more than in most other occasions as Secretary of Propaganda, Marcello was on his most familiar ground, with the opportunity to expound some of his reflections and expectations, and engage with the participants – from both academic and pastoral worlds – in seeking new responses to the challenges of mission today.

He started off by affirming the role of leadership played by the United States on the world stage, in many areas of life, notably in racial integration, in the exercise of personal and group freedom, including religion, in the economy, in scientific and technological progress, and in social communications. In this context, aided by American political and cultural presence in Latin America, “the Christian Churches of evangelical and charismatic tradition have a widespread and dynamic impact both within the country and world-wide”.

The missionary impact of American Catholics is less visible, he remarked, both abroad and within the country, and the reasons for this are not immediately clear: “The history of the American Catholics, who came from the four winds and who have had to insert themselves into a markedly Protestant society, perhaps explains a tendency to retreat into themselves. The Church had to take care of its own communities and help them become part of the country; its first priority was not missionary expansion”.

Having recognized the situation to date, he went on to say that “the time has now come, however, for the Catholic Church to be more committed to the mission *ad gentes* and to have a missionary

approach in all her activities within the country and elsewhere. There are many signs that the Church is moving in this direction”.

Recalling the three different situations with regard to faith and evangelization, as outlined in *Redemptoris Missio* 33, Archbishop Zago, basing himself also on the postsynodal Exhortation *Ecclesia in America*, emphasized that the Church in America cannot limit itself to non-Christians in the United States, but must extend its missionary efforts beyond the bounds of the continent.

The mission of the Church is carried out through special activities and attitudes, including charity, dialogue, social transformation, inculturation, and contemplation. The mission *ad gentes* should be the model of all Church activity. It concerns everyone, and does not only pertain to a few people (RM, 90); “the Lord grants a variety of charisms so that the missionary activity may be carried on in its different forms. No one is called to do everything, but together we can do what is needed”.

Mission ‘ad gentes’

The U.S. Mission Congress was an opportunity for the Secretary of Propaganda Fide to touch the theme of mission *ad gentes*, which he considered of the utmost importance. The essential call to mission *ad gentes* was repeated time and time again by him over the years, in his various posts. Some months previously, he had taken part in the International Symposium on the Implementation of the Council, and addressed the assembly on this theme. Recognizing the new thrust for mission given by the Council, and the many areas of progress, he warned nevertheless of the dangers of watering down this mandate: “Missionary activity specifically directed ‘to the nations’ (*ad gentes*) appears to be waning, and this tendency is certainly not in line with the directives of the Council and with subsequent directives of the Magisterium (RM 2) ... it is necessary to be open to the Church’s universality, to give from one’s own poverty, to be attentive to the Spirit who calls.”³⁵ “There are many paths”, he said on another occasion, “but it is fundamental that we assume the very soul of the Council, its renewed vision of missionary life, missionary community. The main road is the local Church, open, ready to receive and to give.”³⁶

Missiology in Seminaries

In a formal response to Archbishop Zago’s address, Gerald H. Anderson, a Protestant theologian and former editor of the *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, sums up his impressions: “His observations about the Protestant missionary movement are perceptive. His description of the experience in mission of the Catholic Church in the United States is informed and – shall I say – tactful.”³⁷

Mr. Anderson, as part of the same response, touched on the delicate issue of formation for mission in Catholic seminaries. He expressed his dismay over the fact that only one diocesan seminary in the United States offered courses in missiology on their regular curriculum. “Is it possible”, he asked, “that the absence of missiology in the curriculum of diocesan seminaries may contribute not only to the decline in missionary vocations but also to a decline in passionate concern for mission *ad gentes* more broadly in the Church, and all this despite the specific call in *Redemptoris Missio* (no. 83) for missiology to be included in the teaching of seminaries and houses of formation?”

Mr. Anderson raised the same issue at the Missiological Congress, which took place in the Pontifical Urban University, in October 2000. On that occasion Cardinal Tomko clarified that it was the norm for all seminaries in mission territories to offer courses in missiology. Nevertheless, the question mark still remained concerning seminaries outside the jurisdiction of Propaganda.

The question was in fact taken up subsequently by Propaganda, with the collaboration of the Congregation for Catholic Education and the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life. Norms were being prepared with regard to missiological studies in all seminaries, and this was one of the last projects that Archbishop Zago worked on, even from his hospital bed. Unfortunately, he could not see this project completed, because the Lord’s call intervened. Let us hope that this issue, so dear to Monsignor Marcello’s heart, may not be lost or forgotten, but that the urgency of reform in the seminaries be adequately addressed, in conformity with the desires of *Redemptoris Missio*. Ironically the comments of a Methodist minister might have been the concrete stimulus to action in this whole area.

IV. Duties of Office Inspired by a Missionary Spirituality

How did Padre Marcello cope with his new responsibilities, with the complexities of the missionary dicastery? How did he integrate his work into his personal life and spirituality? These are questions that come spontaneously to anyone who knew him personally, who knew his passion for the missions, his simplicity, his strength of character, his respectful and prayerful presence, his untiring zeal for mission, his interest in people.

1. Living concretely what he preached

It was very noticeable how Marcello based his life on the Gospel, not only in theory but in concrete day-to-day life, with every person and event. The Word of God was central to his spirituality, and inspired his every move and desire. "I am sent not only to love the others, but to do so as Jesus, with depth and total commitment. And now this love must become incarnate with the people of Propaganda with whom I work, from the Cardinal down to the usher. And then to love all those who come into direct contact or through writing, those who are linked with the Dicastery."³⁸

This attitude of showing everyone the same respect, regardless of rank, was not just a theory, but was very evident to all who worked with him, as the following testimonies from some of the personnel in Propaganda show: "how simple he was, really human, as a real person despite the important job entrusted to him", "a friendly word for everyone", "that way of smiling that always had the effect of helping others to continue to go ahead", "he gave everyone his/her dignity as a person", "he was a person that made concrete in his own life his words and ideals", "there was always a friendly word or a concerned enquiry", "a man of great humanity", "an attentive, respectful listener and open to dialogue."³⁹

Outreach to the people with whom he worked

He saw the aim of his work as "making God and Christ known, but in this atmosphere of internal and outward charity."⁴⁰ Christ was not to be made known only to peoples of distant lands, but to the very people with whom he lived and worked: "O Lord, send your Spirit on the Church. Send Him in particular on all those who work at Propaganda, so that we may live unity among us and become instruments of the Spirit, the agent of mission."⁴¹

He considered it part of his ministry, to give time to the staff, to get to know them personally and encourage them in their work. For instance, each Christmas he wrote a personal hand-written note to each and every member of the staff: "It's an act of gratitude and love, to create communion in the Congregation."⁴² On one occasion he was upset to discover that he was not as attentive as he would have liked in regard to the staff: "I realized that a worker had been back for a fortnight and I hadn't yet met him. That means that I am not as close to the workers as I thought."⁴³ He regularly visited the offices of the personnel, and invited them in groups to have lunch in his modest apartment, thus taking every opportunity to develop a personal relationship with them. One of the staff commented: "I was struck by the fact that, on his return from hospital each time, he made the effort to come to the office and greet us."⁴⁴

He sought concrete ways to promote an atmosphere of fraternity and of service. For example, after making an enquiry among the personnel, he introduced an early Mass in the Propaganda chapel each morning before work, and he himself was normally present, to preside or concelebrate. He set up a coffee bar in the building, thus facilitating interaction among the workers, who otherwise had to go out in order to have a cup of tea or coffee. These may seem very small things, but it was such concern for detail that made a difference for many people, reflecting the humanity he brought to every situation, thus developing a spirit of fraternity.

Not only did the Archbishop give so much of himself, he was also very conscious and grateful for how much he received from the people with whom he worked. "From the very beginning of my work", he wrote in his Testament, "I found support and collaboration". Referring especially to the times of sickness, he remarked, "In that situation I experienced understanding, brotherhood and support in prayer from everyone, superiors, officials, employees. I experienced that in the Congregation for Evangelization there was a family spirit."⁴⁵

Tension between bureaucracy and animation

The constant interruptions in the course of the morning – telephone calls, letters to be signed, meetings, consultations, etc. – caused him considerable stress, as he could not concentrate on any one task.⁴⁶ He struggled within himself to reconcile the sheer weight of administration of such a big and complex Congregation, with the need for missionary animation: “Propaganda should become more an animator of evangelization, less responsible for administration and bureaucracy.”⁴⁷ His natural tendency was towards animation, but the administration could not be overlooked. “How can one keep the balance between work and welcoming people, when the former is considerable and the latter unforeseen. Persons take priority, even though the work must be carried out.”⁴⁸

This was very reminiscent of what he wrote, on another occasion, with regard to leadership in Oblate Religious Life: “One could highlight, in fact, some tendencies in religious leadership: a leadership characterized by the priority of animation over administration. The latter has its role – which one cannot forget – but it is animation which must get priority.”⁴⁹

What caused him particular anguish, at times, was the lack of time and energy he had for thinking and reflecting: “one can only do bureaucratic work. There’s no energy for thinking.”⁵⁰ Cardinal Tomko, no doubt aware of this internal struggle, saw nevertheless how he overcame this: “Here [in Propaganda] I would say that his love as a spirit of service came out in a centre that, at first sight, could seem administrative, but which is missionary to the core; this service that he rendered had a spirit that remained imprinted in the atmosphere and in the spirit of my collaborators in this Congregation.”⁵¹

Other collaborators confirmed this impression, and considered Marcello to have found a particular balance in the situation: “Monsignor Zago was an example of how it is possible to unite courage and prudence, bureaucracy and paternity.”⁵²

Keeping up-to-date

Despite his difficulties, he somehow found or made time to read and to pray, and this was often linked directly to the work. For instance, in preparation for his visit to Angola, he wrote: “My study of the situation in Angola leads me to prayer, for that country in a state of civil war, for the people that are suffering and dying.”⁵³ He sought to vary his reading material, so as to keep open to different cultures and theological trends: “I took up the book *Faith and Modernity* of Protestant authors. It is my desire to understand modern and post-modern culture, to bring the ecclesial mission to that setting. One sees in it not only Anglo-saxon reflection, but also the Protestant tradition.”⁵⁴ His personal Secretary recognized his unrelenting work rate, his facility for writing, and his passion for reading. Regarding this latter: “He once told me that to be up-to-date, for example, on theological questions, he tried to read at least one solid work every year by some serious theologian. He did the same for many other questions.”⁵⁵

Deep commitment to prayer

Marcello was always in the habit of praying a lot, often for several hours a day. The almost daily reflections and prayers in his diaries show the depth of his commitment in this regard, and how he drew strength and inspiration for his work from the Word of God and the writings of the saints. One day, preparing to meet a group of Bishops from a troubled mission country, who were coming on their “*ad limina*” visit, he wrote: “Moses felt the weight of his ministry. He complained to the Lord. I ask myself if I carry sufficiently that part of the people of God that God entrusted to me... on my part I see the Bishops crushed by great challenges but very willing, and on the other hand they have their limits and one perceives their tendency, and that of the Church, to close in on themselves. Lord, I pray for them. And with them I must have your love. Every suggestion and observation should flow from this love.”⁵⁶

This contemplative attitude in Padre Marcello, which he considered essential to apostolic life,⁵⁷ did not go unnoticed by the people working with him: “I was immediately struck by the atmosphere of a deep life of union that emanated from him; he gave the impression of being in continual dialogue with the Lord.”⁵⁸ He prayed in many different ways, including the Divine Office, the Rosary, and periods of adoration, but he was also open to new ways, new expressions of faith. He, who was not particularly *au-fait* with modern technology, was nevertheless willing to use it wherever he found it useful. It might have seemed strange, at first, to see him strolling around with a walkman attached to his ear, but he was probably not listening to the latest U2 album or a football match; rather he was more likely to be doing some ‘spiritual listening’: “Today I began listening to the psalms with an introduction. It’s another way of

praying, of entering into an atmosphere of praise and contemplation.”⁵⁹ This was a form of praying that he found particularly helpful during his illness.

The problems encountered in mission territories were indeed many, often caused by external forces, but sometimes caused by the human limitations and weaknesses of Church personnel themselves. Some situations called for clear and swift action, but Marcello’s preferred approach was always to affirm and to encourage: “Comparing the world of today and that of the prophets, I ask myself if negative prophecy is not also necessary. On the other hand, what does one build by condemning? Is it not better to preserve the seeds of good? Is this not also true with regard to my responsibilities? O Holy Spirit, give me discernment in the little things as well as the big. The important thing is to do your Will, which alone knows what is good.”⁶⁰ He believed in the innate goodness of people and knew the value of a bit of encouragement: “I decided to welcome everyone, even those just passing through. It’s something I do with empathy. Encourage everyone.”⁶¹

His long experience as Superior General had helped him to realize that it is often not possible to fully understand or to resolve problems from a distant office. While we must all do our part to the best of our ability, the furthering of God’s Kingdom does not ultimately depend on us: “Prayer is also a means of collaborating for the salvation of humanity, because [God] wanted us to participate in his work. Another thought that impressed me came from Cardinal Tomášek: ‘To work for the Kingdom is a lot; to pray for the Kingdom is more; to suffer with Christ Crucified for the Kingdom is everything’. Maybe I am called to live the three aspects in whatever life remains for me. Lord, make me capable and available for this.”⁶²

Twenty months later, when sickness had reduced his working capacity to a minimum, Archbishop Zago clung to this last element with particular conviction: “When faced with the small and big discomforts of sickness, one is tempted to ask oneself if such a troubled life is worthwhile. And yet life is a gift. Every day is a grace and can be a source of graces, even if one cannot do much. I want to live in unity with Christ every hour, offering everything for the mission. I repeated many times, and I have often written that mission makes progress according to the spiritual quality of the Christian life. Now I am asked to live this in its most pure state. Through the intercession of Mary and St. Eugene de Mazenod, grant that this be achieved in the time left to me.”⁶³ Again he links this directly to the mission: “Even sickness is a way of living my specific mission as Secretary of CEP, at the service of the universal mission. It’s not enough to live it in faith, but also in prayer.”⁶⁴

Sickness integrated as part of his mission

As regards the question of sickness, Marcello began having problems within weeks of his appointment as Secretary,⁶⁵ and his acceptance of suffering was something that grew within him and became steadily integrated into his spirituality and his work. “To the concerns of work can be added the worries about health. I must accept everything with detachment, fixed on the goal of living Christ, to collaborate with Him, to prepare myself for the final meeting with Him.”⁶⁶

On the eve of his visit to Angola, as special Envoy of the Holy Father, his health was far from good, after undergoing three operations in a few months, including major surgery for the removal of a kidney. But the doctors had given clearance for the trip and he felt he could not postpone yet again his long overdue visit to the war-ravaged country. He knew that, humanly speaking, it was well beyond the bounds of duty, but he felt impelled to take the risk of going: “To leave in this state of health is a risk and humanly a foolish thing. I am bleeding profusely day and night. I feel pain, even if it’s not too severe. However, I have had the OK from the doctors. And I trust in the Lord. I couldn’t put it off a third time. It will be my participation in the immense pain of the Church and the people of Angola.”⁶⁷

His health deteriorated steadily, with frequent pain and discomfort, as well as general insomnia, though most people were unaware of the extent of this. “I seem to foresee that the end is coming very quickly. But I am continuing as if everything was going well. The Lord will give me the strength to continue the work at a normal rhythm... I have been crucified with Christ. My whole body is suffering with Him... and will rise with Him. My sufferings are a participation in the passion of Christ and can contribute to my own salvation and that of others.”⁶⁸ He carried in his heart the sufferings of the world that he was called to serve. Even on holidays, he was unable to cut himself off from that world: “The CEP is a part of me. It comes back to me in my thoughts, in my dreams, in my distractions. Last night, in the vigil that began at 2.50, among other things I was thinking of the missionary challenges in Asia, whose focal points are China

and India.”⁶⁹

On 12 September 2000, he was diagnosed with leukaemia and immediately began chemotherapy treatment. The following weeks could hardly have conveyed the impression of a very sick man. “I try to work normally,”⁷⁰ he wrote in his diary, but normality for Marcello is hopefully not the measuring rod for the rest of us. Just looking at the second half of October, apart from normal office activities, we see the intensity of his work, intermingled with frequent visits to the hospital:⁷¹

- 14-15: Shrine of Maria Taferl in Austria;
- 17: meeting at the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, and Missiological Congress;
- 18: day hospital, and Missiological Congress, where he presided at the session on Asia;
- 19: Missiological Congress, lunch with the Pope, and Missionary Congress;
- 20: Missiological Congress, and concelebrated Papal Mass for the opening of the Pontifical Roman Universities;
- 21: day hospital, Expo 2000 and Missionary Congress;
- 22: Mission Sunday, concelebration with the Pope;
- 27: day hospital, Congress in Verona.

This, his last ‘normal’ working spell, was soon followed by another lengthy period in hospital, and then frequent shorter visits.

Towards the end, more perhaps than all the physical suffering, Monsignor Marcello experienced the pain of not being able to do many of the normal things that had characterized his life up to then: “I have been recommended to avoid people and avoid moving about, and not to tire myself with responsibility, planning, reflection. This all costs me, but I accept it as God's will.”⁷² For a man who loved people and who worked incessantly, this was indeed a bitter blow, and yet he adjusted gracefully by seeing everything within the Divine plan. The staff in Propaganda noted his serenity, despite his obvious suffering. One of these, who had a lot of contact with him during this period, wrote: “I was surprised by his tranquillity, his patience, his abandonment to what he said was ‘the will of God’, he never complained, he never showed shame to present himself in the office, and in our offices, with his face transfigured from the sickness, like ‘the suffering servant’. Everything was natural for him, pain, weakness, tormenting work, the cold welcome in the hospital during his frequent visits, the disturbance of the patient in the next bed; he accepted everything with great serenity and naturalness.”⁷³

Such debilitating sickness can have the effect of turning a person in on himself, but not so for Padre Marcello, as another of the staff recalls: “On the day before his death, I met him in the hall and on asking him how he was, received the reply, ‘so so! We are in the hands of God and he knows what is best for us’. There were no complaints about the severity of the chemotherapy or the progress of his illness; instead an enquiry as to how I was.”⁷⁴

Letting go

There were some particularly significant events, especially in the latter months of his life, that Monsignor Marcello should have been part of, but which he had to forego, on account of his sickness. There was the great interreligious event in St. Peter's, on 28 October 1999; as a member of the Central Committee for the Great Jubilee 2000, he was invited to concelebrate Mass and have lunch with the Holy Father, on 6 January; then, on 19 January, 2001, there was the Symposium for the 10th anniversary of the Papal Encyclical *Redemptoris Missio*, which was so dear to his heart. One could feel his disappointment at not being able to partake at these events, especially the latter, and yet he seemed to accept it all with serenity: “It was certainly a sacrifice, but it was better that way. One could not take anything away from the author. He gave it his signature.”⁷⁵

He was aware how the breakdown of the body was also affecting his memory and reflective capacity,⁷⁶ but he never lost his serenity, despite the seriousness of his situation: “One of the signs that the incarnation has taken place is that of inner peace in whoever accepts it. There is this peace in me, even despite the sickness and an uncertain future. In fact the future is not uncertain, but it opens out to

paradise; the definitive encounter with God the Trinity and Christ the Saviour.”⁷⁷

Marcello saw the potential spiritual benefits for him and the Church of living this trial in the right spirit: “Lord, with this sickness you are helping me experience my weakness. It is an experience from which you can bear fruit for the good of the Church.”⁷⁸ “Therefore I offer my suffering for the advancement of the mission, so that the CEP becomes a propelling centre of evangelization, so that the Lord makes of the officials committed missionaries. The fact that two officials have left to take up direct missionary commitments is positive.”⁷⁹

For such a prolific writer – he had written over 800 books and articles in his life –⁸⁰ he felt relatively constricted in his writing productivity, even in times of good health, because of the volume and intensity of the work as Secretary: “I regret not having time to write and study”,⁸¹ he once wrote. Nevertheless, throughout his time as Secretary, he personally wrote all his own talks and homilies, and managed to continually write significant articles.⁸² Towards the end of his life, the lack of this dimension caused him particular suffering, because it had been part of his very identity. “The fact of having no article to write, or rather that I lack the creativity to formulate projects, leave me with a certain emptiness and sense of loss. However, for the moment, I have to build up the sense of my life in a different way.”⁸³ Nevertheless, in his last months he still worked intensely in preparation for the anniversary of *Redemptoris Missio*, and on various other important projects.

2. Always an Oblate Missionary

Throughout his time as Secretary of Propaganda, Padre Marcello kept regular contact with the Oblate General House and with the houses of the Italian Province, especially Via dei Prefetti and Vermicino. His identity as an Oblate never diminished, and he maintained his friendship with many of the men who had lived and worked with him throughout the years. He frequently had Oblate visitors to his apartment, he loved to get out of the city for a few hours with some of his Oblate brothers, for a walk or for a swim at Ladispoli. He even liked to return to the General House, for his appointment with the barber, who was familiar with every diminishing hair on his head over the previous decades.

On one occasion, returning after an evening with some Oblate brothers, Padre Marcello decided to take them on a walk to *Piazza del Popolo*. When they got back to the Propaganda Palace, they were met by the police, for illegal parking. “We received a fine”, he remarked, but immediately adding a more positive note, “luckily the car was not taken away to the pound.”⁸⁴ The amusing part of the story was that they had parked the car in front of his own gate. I am sure it left a slightly bad taste for the new Year, but no doubt the retelling of it will bring a few smiles to many of the brothers who knew and loved him.

In his life at Propaganda, he looked to Saint Eugene for inspiration with regard to his episcopal responsibilities: “St. Eugene intercede for me, so that the episcopate be another stimulus to advance in the way of holiness.”⁸⁵ Again, “At 6 o'clock I presided at the liturgy for the feast of the Founder and I spoke on how the episcopal experience influenced the founder and the Congregation... And what about me, how will this episcopal responsibility affect my Oblate identity? To commit myself all the more to sanctity and to the disinterested service of the Church? Preserve the family spirit and sense of welcome? O Saint Eugene, intercede for me and accompany me so that I be a passionate lover of Christ and the Church”⁸⁶.

We see how the Founder's last words were an inspiration to him in his episcopal office: “What does it mean to me, to be a successor to the Apostles, now as Secretary of CEP? As an Oblate I try to imitate their dedication and zeal for evangelization. Now I'm called to share that zeal for the whole Church, in particular that part entrusted to Propaganda. That means praying for that Church, seeking ways to bring about evangelization and dynamism for this. It also means giving attention and support to the Bishops of those Dioceses. Lord, give me a big heart, true wisdom, ardent zeal to carry out my mission.”⁸⁷

We find references to Oblate material in his spiritual reading, such as the Founder's Diary (Cf. Diary 13 June, 1998),⁸⁸ or articles on Oblate spirituality: “I'm reading an article of Lamirande, on the foundations of Oblate life in the first years of the Congregation. In this way I am preparing myself for the feast of tomorrow. Also in my present situation I am living the Oblate charism, perhaps more than ever.”⁸⁹

Whenever he travelled it was important to him to meet Oblates, whenever possible. Even in the midst of the very intensive and official schedules, such as those of Papal Envoy to Angola and Peru, he greatly valued such brotherly contacts. One can sense the joy of meeting his Oblate brothers during his

trip to Peru: "I was at the central OMI house for three hours, from 12 until 3. There were about fifteen present... It was a family gathering, of memories but not of business."⁹⁰

Marcello Zago, having served as the 10th successor to the Founder and first Superior General, Saint Eugene de Mazenod, and then served the universal Church in his last three years, remained an Oblate missionary to the core, right to the end.

3. Charisms old and new

His vision of the Church and its mission was broad, all embracing. Recognizing the temptation to be always taken up with purely ecclesiastical matters of his office – the problems of the Dioceses, Bishops, Nuncios – he never lost sight of the wider Church, however, with its many expressions. He was always concerned about the mission of the Church, and about ways of bringing the Good News to the ends of the earth.

As an ex-Superior General, he was naturally very aware of the important place of consecrated Life in the Church's life and mission, but he was equally able to appreciate the place and contribution that new charisms were bringing, especially ones with ecumenical and interreligious dimensions, such as the Community of St. Egidio, the Focolare Movement, the l'Arche community, to name just a few with whom he had some contact, and whose founders he knew personally.⁹¹

One day he had Jean Vanier to lunch, and one can detect from his diary the sense of joy and hope he got from such an encounter: "The big event was the visit of Jean Vanier, the Founder of l'Arche and of Foi et Lumière. He stayed for lunch and so I was with him for two and a half hours. A concrete and inspiring man, a profound Catholic and at the same time ecumenical and interreligious."⁹²

V. Return to the Father

Although Marcello Zago continued to live and work as normally as possible during his illness, his condition forced him to gradually reduce his frenetic activity. In the latter months, he was spending more and more time in hospital, as his immune system no longer provided the basic protection needed for normal living. He already knew for some time that he was seriously ill, and he was calmly waiting for the Lord's call.⁹³ That call finally came on 1st March 2001, in his own apartment at the Propaganda Palace.

Cardinal Tomko presided at his funeral Mass in St. Peter's Basilica, on 3 March. With him were seven Cardinals, including Bernardin Gantin, Dean of the College of Cardinals, and Francis George, O.M.I., Archbishop of Chicago, and one time collaborator with Fr. Zago on the Oblate General Council, as Vicar General and Assistant General, respectively. There were about twenty Bishops, over 300 priests, including many Superiors General, personnel from Propaganda and other Roman Dicasteries, many priests from mission countries, and, needless to say, many Oblates.

Before beginning the liturgy, Cardinal Tomko read a telegram from Pope John Paul II, in which the Holy Father spoke of Monsignor Zago's

deep spirituality, his exemplary religious life in the Congregation of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate of which he had been the Superior General, and his pastoral enthusiasm as a priest and Bishop, as well as the calm acceptance of his illness, which he endured to the very end with trusting surrender to divine Providence. I thank the Lord for having given the Church so zealous a minister of the Gospel, who also distinguished himself as a valued collaborator of the Apostolic See, especially in the evangelization of peoples.⁹⁴

Then, during the celebration, the Cardinal delivered a moving homily:

We shared the last months of Archbishop Zago's slow martyrdom. At the end, the sickness required continuous blood transfusions and periods in the hospital. And yet, as never before, in this period of his life, did he manifest to us so much faith, so much charity, so much faithfulness and poverty, in a heart which was always serene and cordial. His illness had slowly transformed him, like the seed which dies and produces much fruit, His witness, filled with pain and tranquil certainty, edified and nourished us like a bread of life.

The mystery of the gift of himself which, thanks to Jesus Christ, became a fruitful gift for the world, is a secret which embraced all of the 68 years of Archbishop Zago's life...

The mission as a way of living love for Christ and the Church: in these words lies the synthesis of his whole life. Archbishop Zago was a missionary at every moment: from the first blossoming of that vocation in the seminary, in its multiplicity of activities, up until the last three years as Secretary of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples.⁹⁵

CONCLUSION

How can one sum up the life of a figure such as Archbishop Marcello Zago, in his role as Secretary of Propaganda? We have analysed some aspects of his life and activity in this regard, assisted by his own copious diary and the testimonies of many of his collaborators. But all such efforts seem to fall short of portraying the full stature of the man. His appointment as Secretary had been seen by many as the culmination of a brilliant career, by others as the hope of even greater things to come. Marcello himself understood how differently people looked on these matters, but he was aware of how easily one can be deceived in this life: "If we give too much importance to men, to one's career, then life will deceive us. All that remains is our love for God and for others. Lord, help me not only to understand this, but to live it."⁹⁶

Humanly, one could be tempted to feel cheated by God, and wonder why He did not leave Marcello for a few more years, to carry on the good work in His Church, and not have all his talents and lifetime of experience go to waste. Many felt like the disciples on the road to Emmaus, whose faces were downcast, whose hopes had been dashed with the news of Christ's death (Lk 24, 13ff). But, then again, one must remember that Jesus had only three years of public life to complete his mission, and it looked to many as if his work was all in vain. But death was followed by resurrection, which transforms everything into new life. What Jesus did is not finished, but continues to live on.

Some of the staff at Propaganda captured in a few words what many others could resonate in their own hearts, that Fr. Marcello is still alive:

... in the short time of his service, not even three years, he managed to leave in my heart a nostalgia for something different, of different relationships, deeper, simpler, clearer, more direct, more evident... thanks for having been with us, keep alive in our hearts the desire that the Kingdom arrive everywhere and soon.⁹⁷

In my mind and in my heart there still remain many memories of this great missionary that passed through Propaganda Fide like a meteorite leaving a bright trail of his great love for the Church and of sanctity.⁹⁸

One must dig deeply, *duc in altum*,⁹⁹ to look beyond the human disappointment and sadness at his premature departure, to understand the full import of Marcello Zago's few years as Secretary of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples. The importance is not so much in the work achieved – which was considerable by any standard – but in the witness of his life, as one who truly believed in the love of God, in the mission of the Son, and in the ongoing action of the Spirit. Not only did he believe it, but our research shows that he tried to live it authentically, up to his last breath. This has more impact on the Church's life and mission than all his conferences, courses, homilies, acts of administration, meetings, and writings. His faithful living of the Gospel authenticates everything he preached and wrote; this is the greatness that remains and that will continue to have an influence in the Church and its mission. As Cardinal Tomko said, "He was an example of what we strive to be: always available, no difference between life in public and life in private, totally absorbed in working for the missions."¹⁰⁰ Or again, "Archbishop Zago's death is not a loss: it is the acquisition of a greater closeness to the heart of Christ and to his love."¹⁰¹

Marcello Zago's mission on this earth was complete, but he continues "to be among the intercessors for the missionary work in the world."¹⁰² In life and in death, he remained, and remains, a faithful servant of the Church and a passionate promoter of her mission. The last prayer entered in his diary, hours before his death, says it all: "Lord, may your will be done."¹⁰³

Notes:

- ¹ In service at the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, Rome.
- ² For a complete list of Prefects and Secretaries of Propaganda Fide, cf. J. METZLER, O.M.I. (Ed.), *Sacrae Congregationis de Propaganda Fide Memoria Rerum: 350 Years in the Service of the Missions 1622-1972*. Herder, Rome-Freiburg-Wien, Vol III/2, pp. 617-624.
- ³ Cf. "International Fides Service" (hereafter referred to as "Fides"), 3 April 1998, p. 231 (English ed.).
- ⁴ *Ibid.*
- ⁵ Cf. *Compendio di Storia della Sacra Congregazione per l'Evangelizzazione dei Popoli o "De Propagande Fide" 1622 - 1972*. Pontificia Università Urbaniana, Roma, 1974, p. 23. For more exhaustive treatment, cf. J. METZLER, O.M.I. (Ed.), *Sacrae Congregationis de Propaganda Fide Memoria Rerum*. Vol I/1, Ch. V, pp. 146-197.
- ⁶ Apostolic Constitution *Pastor Bonus*, 85.
- ⁷ Marcello ZAGO, O.M.I., *Diary*, March 24, 1998. Oblate General Archives, Rome.
- ⁸ *Diary*, March 15, 1998.
- ⁹ *Diary*, March 18, 1998.
- ¹⁰ *Diary*, March 20, 1998.
- ¹¹ M. ZAGO, "Interview" in *Fides*, May 1st, 1998, p. 302.
- ¹² *Ibid.*, p.303.
- ¹³ *Diary*, May 15, 1998.
- ¹⁴ Cf. *Diary*, March 5, 1999.
- ¹⁵ Cardinal Jozef TOMKO, "Interview" in *Fides*, March 9, 2001, p. 139.
- ¹⁶ Cardinal Jozef TOMKO, letter to Monsignor Zago, January 16, 2001. Oblate General Archives.
- ¹⁷ Fr. Luciano BENETAZZO, M.C.C.I., written testimony received personally. *Ibid.*
- ¹⁸ Fr. Manfred Müller, S.V.D., written testimony received personally. *Ibid.*
- ¹⁹ Cf. Fr. Józef KUC, O.M.I., taped testimony received personally. *Ibid.*
- ²⁰ Fr. Francesco PAVESE, I.M.C., written testimony received personally. *Ibid.*
- ²¹ Msgr. Ambrogio SPREAFICO, written testimony received personally. *Ibid.*
- ²² *Ibid.* Cf. also *Annales ab Universitate condita anno CCCLXXII, 1998-1999, Pontificia Universitas Urbaniana*. Roma, 2000, pp. 22-23.
- ²³ Cf. *Diary*, April 11, 1999.
- ²⁴ Cf. *Diary*, June 25, 2000.
- ²⁵ See this text in *Doc. OMI*, 252, April 2003 [NDLR].
- ²⁶ JOHN PAUL II, message to C.E.A.S.T., in *Fides*, October 22, 1999, p. 591.
- ²⁷ Archbishop ZAGO, "Interview" in *Fides*, October 15, 1999, p. 579.
- ²⁸ *Ibid.*
- ²⁹ *Diary*, October 30, 1999.
- ³⁰ For general information surrounding Peru and the visit of Msgr. Zago, cf. "L'Osservatore Romano", January 20, p. 9, and "Fides", January 28, 2000, pp.51-54, February 4, 2000, p. 71. The complete (Spanish) texts of Zago's homily and addresses during that trip are found in the Oblate General Archives.
- ³¹ M. ZAGO, *Homilia en la Catedral*, 30 January, 2000.
- ³² M. ZAGO, *Encuentro con los Sacerdotes de los Vicariatos*.
- ³³ M. ZAGO, *Santidad y Misión en la Primera Evangelización del Perú*.
- ³⁴ Complete text in *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, (25), N. 1, January, 2000, pp. 2-6.
- ³⁵ M. ZAGO, "Implementing the Council Guidelines on the Mission ad Gentes", in *Omnis Terra*, N. 304, February 2000,

pp. 50 and 54.

³⁶ M. ZAGO, "Interview" in *Fides*, March 10, 2000, p. 138.

³⁷ Gerald H. ANDERSON, "Response to Marcello Zago, OMI", in *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, (25), N. 1, January, 2000, pp. 6-8.

³⁸ *Diary*, May 10, 1998.

³⁹ Taped testimony of various Propaganda personnel, received personally. Oblate General Archives.

⁴⁰ *Diary*, May 26, 1998. For further reflection on this theme, cf. M. Zago, "That all Peoples may know You, the Only True God", in *Omnis Terra*, N. 292, November 1998, pp. 341-346.

⁴¹ *Diary*, May 19, 1999.

⁴² *Diary*, January 2, 2000.

⁴³ *Diary*, August 29, 1998.

⁴⁴ Taped testimonies received personally. Oblate General Archives.

⁴⁵ M. Zago, *Testamento Personale*, Attachment n. 4, to the CEP collaborators, in OMI General Archives.

⁴⁶ Cf. *Diary*, March 8, 1999.

⁴⁷ *Diary*, March 23, 1999.

⁴⁸ *Diary*, March 23, 1999.

⁴⁹ M. Zago, "Être supérieur majeur aujourd'hui", *Vie Oblate Life* (53), 1994, pp. 223-233.

⁵⁰ *Diary*, November 11, 1998.

⁵¹ Card. Tomko, *Interview on Vatican Radio*, March 1st, 2001. Oblate General Archives.

⁵² Bernardo CERVELLERA, P.I.M.E., then Director of Fides News Agency, in *Fides*, March 9, 2001, p. 138.

⁵³ *Diary*, August 1st, 1999.

⁵⁴ *Diary*, July 16, 1998.

⁵⁵ Fr. Taddeo WOJDA, S.A.C., written testimony received personally. Oblate General Archives.

⁵⁶ *Diary*, March 17, 1999.

⁵⁷ Cf. *Diary*, February 4, 2000.

⁵⁸ Taped testimonies.

⁵⁹ *Diary*, July 17, 1998.

⁶⁰ *Diary*, August 5, 1998.

⁶¹ *Diary*, May 15, 1998.

⁶² *Diary*, April 8, 1999.

⁶³ *Diary*, January 7, 2001.

⁶⁴ *Diary*, November 10, 2000.

⁶⁵ Cf. *Diary*, July 8, 1998.

⁶⁶ *Diary*, November 15, 1998.

⁶⁷ *Diary*, October 12, 1999.

⁶⁸ *Diary*, March 21, 2000.

⁶⁹ *Diary*, June 19, 2000.

⁷⁰ *Diary*, October 13, 2000.

⁷¹ Cf. *Diary*, October 14-27, 2000.

⁷² *Diary*, December 18, 2000.

⁷³ Written testimony received personally. Oblate General Archives.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ *Diary*, January 19, 2001.

⁷⁶ Cf. *Diary*, July 17, 2000.

⁷⁷ *Diary*, December 29, 2000.

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- ⁷⁸ *Diary*, January 24, 2002.
- ⁷⁹ *Diary*, February 21, 2001.
- ⁸⁰ Cf. Marek ROSTKOWSKI, O.M.I., "Il Patrimonio Teologico e Missiologico di Mons. Marcello Zago, omi," in *Vie Oblate Life* (59) 2000, pp.395-429, and an up-date of the same in this present volume of *Vie Oblate Life*.
- ⁸¹ *Diary*, March 8, 1999.
- ⁸² Some of his addresses and articles were published in *Omnis Terra* during his time as Secretary: "Mission and Interreligious Dialogue," N. 288, May 1998; "Sri Lanka: New Evangelization," N. 290, July-August 1998; "That all People May Know You, the only True God," N. 292, November 1998; "Missionary Cooperation," N. 294, January 1999; "The New Millennium and Emerging Religious Encounters," N. 303, January 2000; "Implementing the Council Guidelines on the Mission ad gentes," N. 304, February 2000.
- ⁸³ *Diary*, January 18, 2001.
- ⁸⁴ *Diary*, January 1, 1999.
- ⁸⁵ *Diary*, March 26, 1998.
- ⁸⁷ *Diary*, September 21, 1998.
- ⁸⁸ Cf. *Diary*, June 13, 1998.
- ⁸⁹ *Diary*, February 16, 2001.
- ⁹⁰ *Diary*, February 4, 2000.
- ⁹¹ The idea of the richness of the meeting of old and new charisms is developed in a recent Vatican Instruction by the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, *Starting Afresh from Christ: A Renewed Commitment to Consecrated Life in the Third Millennium*, 2002, pp. 41-42.
- ⁹² *Diary*, January 19, 1999.
- ⁹³ Cf. *Diary*, March 27, 1999; March 13, 2000; October 13, 2000.
- ⁹⁴ Pope JOHN PAUL II, "Telegram" addressed to Cardinal Jozef Tomko, Prefect of CEP, in *L'Osservatore Romano* (Italian), March 2, 2001, (English) N. 10, March 7, 2001.
- ⁹⁵ Cardinal TOMKO, "Homily" at Funeral of Archbishop Zago, March 3, 2001. *L'Osservatore Romano*, March 4, 2001, p. 7.
- ⁹⁶ *Diary*, January 19, 1999.
- ⁹⁷ Taped testimonies.
- ⁹⁸ Written testimony.
- ⁹⁹ *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 1.
- ¹⁰⁰ Cardinal TOMKO, "Interview" in *Fides*, March 9, 2001, p. 139.
- ¹⁰¹ Cardinal TOMKO, "Homily", *op. cit.*
- ¹⁰² M. Zago, "Testamento Personale", *op. cit.*
- ¹⁰³ *Diary*, February 28, 2001.

La vie spirituelle de Marcello Zago: un témoignage

Angelo Dal Bello, O.M.I.¹

Ma première rencontre avec Marcello Zago remonte au mois de septembre 1955. J'étais alors jeune formateur à l'école apostolique de Onè di Fonte. Lui était étudiant en deuxième année de théologie au séminaire diocésain de Treviso, où j'avais aussi fait mes études en préparation du sacerdoce.

Il se présente chez moi et me lance aussitôt: «Est-ce que je peux être missionnaire oblat moi aussi?» Et de poursuivre: «Au séminaire on a invité le p. Albert Perbal qui nous a parlé de l'Église et de la mission dans le monde d'aujourd'hui. À deux reprises, il est demeuré parmi nous pendant trois jours. Ce père m'a fasciné. Que faut-il faire pour être un Oblat?» Dans ma stupéfaction, et peu au courant des techniques de discernement, je lui réponds que oui, et qu'il s'agissait d'entrer au noviciat, et de poursuivre ensuite... Et lui: «Où se trouve le noviciat? Quand puis-je commencer?» Par la suite, j'ai informé le supérieur de la maison, le provincial. Et à la fin de l'année scolaire, le p. Marino Merlo l'accompagnait au noviciat.

En me rappelant cette rencontre de l'année 1955, je vois comment, déjà à ce moment, Marcello Zago s'est révélé tel qu'il a été par la suite. Je dirais celui pour qui un oui est un oui, un non est un non. Un homme décidé.

J'ai revu Marcello plus tard, à l'occasion de son ordination sacerdotale dans sa paroisse natale, à Villorba. C'était le 13 septembre 1959. J'ai participé à la fête avec tous les jeunes de l'école apostolique. Ceux-ci avaient été préparés à l'événement par un autre Oblat de la trempe du p. Perbal, le p. Jean Drouart, Assistant général, qui, plus d'une fois, est venu prendre ses vacances d'été dans notre communauté. Son séjour parmi nous était comme une école de vie oblate.

Par la suite, j'ai missionné avec Marcello quelque temps au Laos. Lui, c'est l'obéissance qui l'y avait conduit, tandis que pour moi il s'agissait d'un séjour d'expérience missionnaire.

Nous nous sommes retrouvés au scolasticat de Frascati, de 1981 à 1986. Marcello y a été supérieur durant un an, avant sa nomination comme Secrétaire du Secrétariat pour les non-chrétiens. Enfin, durant ses toutes dernières années, après sa nomination comme évêque et Secrétaire de la Congrégation pour l'Évangélisation des peuples, il m'a demandé de l'accompagner à sa résidence de la place d'Espagne. Nous avons vécu ensemble trois années, durant lesquelles j'ai été témoin de la douleur que lui causait sa maladie, témoin aussi de son amour au service de l'Église missionnaire.

Sa spiritualité

Je disais que pour Marcello Zago, un oui est un oui, un non est un non. En fait, cet homme m'apparaît comme l'Oblat de la vérité: il était vrai devant saint Eugène et les saints oblats, vrai devant Marie Immaculée, devant Jésus et l'Évangile, vrai devant l'Église faite de divin et d'humain, enfin vrai devant les pauvres les plus pauvres.

Dans les rencontres fréquentes que j'ai eues avec lui, toujours marquées par une communion intérieure, particulièrement dans ses dernières années, deux points ressortent sans cesse: son union au Seigneur et à la Vierge, puis son amour du prochain. Comment expliciter tout ce dont son cœur vibrait devant cette double exigence: aimer Dieu, aimer le prochain?

1. Le p. Marcello était un Oblat à l'écoute de la Parole de Dieu. Le Seigneur devenait pour lui une présence vivante et tout au long de sa journée il essayait de vivre en communion constante avec Lui. Il me confiait un jour: «Aujourd'hui, je n'ai pas toujours été uni au Seigneur». Il ne manquait pas les rendez-vous avec son Seigneur. Même durant les vacances que je partageais avec lui, si nous passions devant une église, nous nous y arrêtions pour une prière prolongée devant Jésus Eucharistie. Le soir, après sa journée de travail, Marcello aimait encore faire une marche, et il se rendait volontiers dans une église où

se faisait l'adoration eucharistique. Je me souviens aussi d'un événement survenu au Laos; il avait été envoyé dans le village de Sayaboury, où pour la première fois arrivait un missionnaire. Avec quel amour Marcello y a construit un petit autel et le tabernacle! «Le missionnaire est Jésus Eucharistie», me disait-il. Il avait apporté de l'Italie une belle image de Marie immaculée. «Il faut qu'Elle y soit, missionnaire qui donne Jésus à tous». Pour lui, il importait que la célébration eucharistique occupe le moment le plus opportun de la journée; il fallait s'y préparer dans la prière et prolonger l'action de grâce en adoration.

On pourrait continuer sur ce sujet. Je me demande pourtant: Quand donc Marcello parle-t-il de sa spiritualité? Et dans quels écrits? Après son décès, j'ai passé un mois, avec un confrère oblat, le p. Giorgo Scarpellini, à recueillir ses nombreuses publications. Les traits de sa spiritualité? On les trouve dans les passages où il décrit le charisme de saint Eugène et des autres Oblats qui sont nos témoins, les pères Gérard, Cebula. C'est là qu'il faut chercher. Au scolasticat italien, nous invitions les jeunes à conclure leurs études universitaires avec la présentation d'une thèse sur l'un ou l'autre aspect du charisme oblat. Qui dira à quel point la bonne réussite de la thèse était due aux suggestions du p. Zago!

2. Quelle place avait la Vierge Marie dans sa vie? La réponse est toute simple. Pour Marcello, elle était l'Amour. Et comment l'exprimait-il? Surtout dans la prière du rosaire: avec le dizainier qu'il portait dans sa main gauche, puis les chapelets qui étaient déposés ici et là dans son bureau de travail, il priait le rosaire et vivait le mystère proclamé. J'acceptais volontiers son invitation: «Disons un chapelet». Dans la prière, son union avec le Seigneur et sa Mère se réalisait en compagnie du prochain. Par exemple: «Prions pour toutes les personnes que nous avons rencontrées ou que nous rencontrerons». À la prière du matin, il faisait mémoire des personnes qu'il rencontrerait durant la journée. Sur le mur de l'appartement où nous habitions, il avait accroché une image de l'Immaculée; et juste dessous, quatre chapelets: celui des frères musulmans, celui des hindous, un autre des bouddhistes et aussi le nôtre. En vérité, la spiritualité de Marcello manifestait, dans sa prière, un cœur ouvert sur le monde.

3. Marcello était un ascète. Que de fois l'ai-je entendu dire: «Cela, les pauvres ne l'ont pas». Au cours de sa maladie, je m'efforçais de voir à ce qu'il ne manquât de rien, lui ménageant aussi parfois des faveurs par égard pour sa charge. Mais il refusait: «Non, non, nous sommes missionnaires des pauvres».

Son ascèse a fleuri en mystique. Son amour pour le Christ et la Vierge et sa fidélité au charisme de saint Eugène lui faisaient dire: «Nous sommes des instruments et des collaborateurs de Dieu Trinité, qui demeure l'Acteur de notre vie et de notre mission».

La source

Il y a aussi un autre endroit où nous pouvons maintenant saisir des échos de la vie intérieure du p. Marcello. C'est le Journal personnel² de Marcello rédigé depuis 1986, dont je propose ici certains courts extraits écrits entre 1998 et 2001, soit de sa nomination comme évêque jusqu'à sa mort. Ces notes spirituelles sont regroupées sous quelques titres principaux: la vie spirituelle, la nomination à l'épiscopat et, enfin, la maladie.

Rome, avril 2003

Extraits du Journal de M^{gr} Marcello Zago (janvier 1998 – février 2001)

I. Pensées spirituelles

Une nouvelle année (1^{er} janvier 1998)

Je vis une étape qui me rapproche de la grande rencontre avec le Seigneur en qui j'ai mis ma confiance. Je demande au Seigneur, par l'intercession de Marie, de m'assister et de m'aider, de sorte que je puisse cheminer en sa présence et agir selon les inspirations de l'Esprit.

L'oblation (4 janvier 1998)

J'ai reçu les vœux perpétuels de nos jeunes [*ndlr - 7 scolastiques du Scolasticat international*].

Les vœux sont un signe que le Verbe s'est incarné, qu'il habite au milieu de nous, qu'il continue à appeler, qu'il fait des disciples pour les envoyer. Ces jeunes ont entendu son appel pour suivre son style de vie, participer à sa mission. C'est une grande vocation, non seulement pour faire quelque chose pour le Seigneur, mais pour l'imiter dans sa chasteté, son obéissance, sa pauvreté jusqu'à s'identifier à Lui. Est-ce possible? Les Constitutions et Règles disent que l'Esprit forme le Christ en ceux qui sont appelés à le suivre (Const. 44). C'est l'Esprit qui guide les Apôtres et la communauté primitive, l'Esprit qui agit de tant de façons dans l'intimité des cœurs et dans les sollicitations des autres. Aussi, pour moi, l'oblation des autres est stimulant et grâce pour renouveler et intensifier mon oblation comme Marie... Les événements, mêmes les plus importants, passent vite. Qu'est-ce qui reste? La grâce de Dieu! Les lauriers et les opinions passent comme les nuages du printemps. Mais Dieu demeure, Lui, ainsi que notre relation à Lui. Et ce que nous semons en Lui, c'est ce qui demeure et porte du fruit. Le Seigneur m'appelle maintenant à être missionnaire, témoin dans tout ce qu'il me demandera à l'avenir. Je veux garder une entière disponibilité pour faire ce que le Seigneur me demandera par mes supérieurs. Je n'ai pas de plans personnels. Je conserve la liberté intérieure sans m'inquiéter.

Ministères (5 mars 1998)

Ce soir, je conférerai les ministères aux scolastiques [*ndlr - du Scolasticat international*]. Cette cérémonie nous rappelle l'importance de la liturgie et de la Parole de Dieu, deux moyens essentiels pour croître dans l'amitié avec le Christ et découvrir Dieu. Certes, les voies, les cheminements sont importants et nécessaires, mais nous ne devons pas oublier le but qui est Dieu connu, aimé et possédé. Que les saints m'aident ainsi que les jeunes pour que nous ne nous perdions pas en chemin, mais que nous rencontrions Dieu qui est Trinité.

Humilité

(24 février 1998) L'invitation à l'humilité, à ne pas me mettre en avant, à demeurer à la dernière place, à ne pas prétendre ou rêver à quelque chose de grand, vaut pour moi dans cette transition prochaine. Je t'ai servi, Seigneur, et cela me suffit. Je veux te servir encore comme tu le veux en intensifiant la communion avec Toi, te laissant l'initiative. Que ta volonté soit faite en moi et par moi.

(8 mars 1998) L'expérience de Dieu peut avoir des moments fulgurants, profonds. Mais ensuite vient la *Sequela Christi* dans l'ordinaire de tous les jours. L'expérience spéciale ne nous assure jamais de la certitude ni de l'immutabilité du choix. Jusqu'à la fin de notre vie, nous sommes sujets au doute, au changement. C'est ici que se trouve la fidélité qui se réalise dans l'humilité. Nous ne pouvons jamais présumer.

Eucharistie (25 février 1998)

Il y a chez moi la foi en l'Eucharistie. Je suis fidèle à la célébration et à l'oraison. Et cependant je dois dire: Seigneur, fais grandir ma foi. Si l'Eucharistie est le renouvellement de la mort et de la résurrection du Christ, je dois la célébrer avec un esprit missionnaire. Si Jésus est présent dans l'Eucharistie, je dois m'approcher de Lui plus souvent et avec plus d'amitié. C'est là que je rencontre le Christ et m'identifie à Lui d'une façon spéciale, même si ce n'est pas la seule. Si je regarde ma vie, je constate que l'Eucharistie a eu une grande importance pour ma maturité chrétienne et pour ma vocation sacerdotale et missionnaire. Enfant de chœur, j'ai assisté à la messe quotidienne avec dévotion. Alors que j'étais encore à l'école primaire, j'amenais mes compagnons à la visite au Saint-Sacrement après l'école. C'est dans l'adoration silencieuse dans la chapelle du séminaire que le Seigneur me fit comprendre clairement la vocation missionnaire. C'est dans l'oraison devant l'Eucharistie que s'est développée ma compréhension du bouddhisme et des bouddhistes.

Communauté et vocations (23-24 mars 1998)

La Parole de Dieu d'aujourd'hui contient deux messages forts: espérance et joie à cause de la présence active de Dieu. Une communauté qui n'est pas imbibée d'espérance et de joie ne peut faire croître les vocations à la vie missionnaire consacrée. Ce fut là aussi une force dans ma vie et dans mon ministère... Mais j'ai de l'inquiétude pour l'avenir. Aurai-je les capacités voulues? Aurai-je la santé nécessaire? Il n'y a qu'une réponse: mettre toute ma confiance dans le Seigneur et faire de mon mieux. La lecture que je fais ce temps-ci des écrits de sainte Thérèse de l'Enfant-Jésus me le suggère.

II. Nomination comme archevêque

L'appel

(13 mars 1998) Ce matin, le secrétaire du cardinal Sodano m'a téléphoné pour me dire que celui-ci désirait me voir demain à midi. Pourquoi? Pour quelle charge? Des informations? Des avertissements? Nous verrons bien! Ô Seigneur, que je demeure disponible et humble face à ta volonté. Renouvelle ma foi et ma confiance dans ta présence active dans l'Église et dans ma vie. Tu es l'acteur principal. Fais que je devienne coopérateur de ton oeuvre. Malgré mes efforts, des interrogations ont surgi en moi durant toute la journée.

(14 mars 1998) Le cardinal Sodano m'a demandé si j'acceptais d'être Secrétaire de la Congrégation pour l'Évangélisation des Peuples. Ô Esprit Saint, viens, renouvelle ma vie. Fais de moi un instrument docile au service de la mission de l'Église. Ô Esprit Saint, prépare-moi maintenant à accueillir ton action et à lui être disponible. L'ordination épiscopale est le sacrement de l'Esprit pour faire de moi un pasteur d'une façon nouvelle, en communion avec le Collège apostolique. Je suis appelé à être homme apostolique d'une façon plus intégrale. Ô Marie, intercède pour moi!

L'Esprit Saint (15 mars 1998)

Ô Esprit Saint, descends sur moi. Guide-moi dans les tâches qui me sont demandées. C'est toi qui es le guide de la mission de l'Église. Fais que je me laisse guider par toi pour aider les autres à être dociles à ton action. Des difficultés m'attendent que je n'imagine même pas. Fais que je les accepte comme contribution à la mission universelle. Donne-moi une vision qui corresponde aux besoins d'aujourd'hui, qui soit par-dessus tout le reflet de l'amour divin. Aide-moi à discerner ton action de sorte que je puisse aider les autres dans ce même processus.

Aimer (20-22 mars 1998)

Aimer Dieu de tout son coeur et de toutes ses forces et aimer le prochain comme soi-même, jusqu'à chercher à l'aimer comme Dieu l'aime. Voilà le premier commandement pour tout état, pour toute responsabilité. Telle est l'attitude que je veux avoir dans ma nouvelle charge. Je renouvelle ma foi en l'Esprit Saint, l'acteur principal de la mission. Je ne sais ce que me réserve l'avenir, mais c'est dans la paix que je l'envisage. Je continue à travailler comme si de rien n'était.

Marie Immaculée (25 mars 1998)

La disponibilité de Marie m'inspire à tout instant, mais particulièrement maintenant. Comme elle, je renouvelle ma disponibilité au Seigneur et à l'Église. Comme pour elle, l'avenir demeure obscur. Mais l'Esprit descendra sur moi pas seulement avec l'ordination, mais avec sa constante assistance. Je veux être son coopérateur, coopérateur de son oeuvre dans le monde. Ô Marie, rends-moi disponible et coopératif.

L'annonce de la nomination (28 mars 1998)

À 10 heures j'ai fait l'annonce à la communauté. J'ai invité ensuite tout le monde à la chapelle pour le chant du *Veni Creator*. Suivit une accolade spontanée. La volonté de Dieu est pour moi le moment présent, c'est travailler avec qui je me trouverai pour la cause de la mission.

La réponse (2 avril 1998)

Le Seigneur appelle Abraham et continue aussi à m'appeler. Il me faut laisser ma terre et la vie sûre pour entreprendre des chemins et des expériences inconnues. Seule la réponse faite dans la foi permet d'avancer. C'est dans cet esprit que je veux aller de l'avant. Même si l'on dit que je suis l'homme qu'il faut à l'endroit qu'il faut, je connais mes limites et les renoncements. Saint Eugène, intercède pour moi.

Retraite (4-9 avril 1998)

[ndlr - 4 avril, repas chez le Pape et retraite en préparation à l'ordination épiscopale]. Notre mission suit la voie du ministère de salut du Christ. On y rencontre donc opposition, luttés, passion. Mais le Christ est ressuscité et il est présent dans notre cheminement. Je commence aujourd'hui ma retraite.

La visite chez le Pape s'insère aussi dans ce mystère de l'identification au Christ-Prêtre, Souverain et Éternel.

Comment ai-je vécu mon sacerdoce? Certainement avec fidélité et aussi d'une façon active. Jusqu'à quel point me suis-je identifié au Christ-Prêtre? La réponse est plus ardue. J'invoque de nouveau l'Esprit rénovateur, réparateur et sanctificateur. Je suis venu pour faire ta volonté. Cet appel se répète dans les lectures du Bréviaire et dans celles du Fondateur. C'est la voie suivie par Jésus, et il n'y en a pas d'autre qui conduise au salut. J'ai souvent demandé cette grâce pour les années de vie qui me restent. Certes, ce n'est une réalité ni automatique ni toujours facile, mais c'est celle qui porte des fruits de vie éternelle. La compagnie de saint Eugène m'a fait découvrir deux voies maîtresses de cette volonté: l'amour pour les personnes qui me sont confiées, et la recherche de la *sainteté*. Je ne serai pas ordonné pour des activités bureaucratiques, mais pour des *personnes*. Pour moi, ce sont les chrétiens et les non-chrétiens des territoires de mission, ce sont en particulier les évêques, les prêtres, les séminaristes, les personnes consacrées. Quel vaste champ! La sainteté se réalise dans l'union à Dieu, pas seulement par la prière, mais aussi à travers les événements, dont saint Eugène a porté le poids durant de nombreux mois après l'ordination. Il a senti le poids de la responsabilité et il s'est confié encore davantage à l'Esprit. Moi aussi, je ne sens pas d'enthousiasme; j'intensifie donc ma prière: "À vous seul appartient de donner la force à mon âme, vous seul pouvez renouveler le feu sacré de votre Amour qui doit d'abord embraser mon coeur et se répandre ensuite par mon ministère dans les âmes que vous voulez me confier". (*ndlr - en français dans le texte*).

Après avoir lu les textes du Fondateur, je suis passé aux documents et au rituel de l'ordination. Tout ministère hiérarchique dit rapport au Christ et à l'Église. L'évêque est pasteur, prêtre, prophète et chef dans le Christ, représentant du Christ pour permettre à toute l'Église d'être sacerdotale, royale et prophétique. C'est l'Esprit qui modèle dans le Christ et forme en nous le Christ par un sacrement, par l'invocation sacramentelle prononcée par l'évêque consécrateur. Après la transmission silencieuse on prie:

Et maintenant, Seigneur, répands sur celui que tu as choisi la force qui vient de toi, l'Esprit qui fait les chefs, l'Esprit que tu as donné à ton Fils bien-aimé, Jésus Christ, celui qu'il a donné lui-même aux saints Apôtres qui établirent l'Église en chaque lieu comme ton sanctuaire, à la louange et à la gloire de ton Nom. ...

Le oui que je répète devant toute tâche est un engagement solennel. Comment vivre cela pleinement? Seul l'Esprit peut m'en rendre capable. C'est pour cette raison que nous invoquons les saints... C'est une nouvelle vocation, un nouvel envoi, une nouvelle jeunesse que le Seigneur m'offre. En avant donc, au nom du Seigneur *Deo adjuvante!* «Courons avec endurance l'épreuve qui nous est proposée, les regards fixés sur celui qui est l'initiateur de la foi et qui la mène à son accomplissement» (Hb, 12, 1-2). Je ne sais pour combien d'années, ni ce que cela sera. Le Seigneur le sait et c'est en Lui que je mets toute ma confiance pour pouvoir croître en Lui et contribuer à la mission. La mission, et en elle mon ministère, est coopération à l'oeuvre de salut du Christ pour toute l'humanité. Ô Esprit Saint, fais de moi un coopérateur du Christ, et pour cela, rends-moi semblable à Lui. Viens, Esprit Saint, fais que j'accueille et seconde ton oeuvre dans ces nouvelles Églises et chez ces Peuples où le Christ n'est pas connu, et où l'Église, sacrement de ta présence, n'est pas présente.

J'ai célébré la sainte messe *In Coena Domini*. Un peu ému. Devant le Saint-Sacrement j'ai renouvelé mon *Fiat* pour coopérer à l'oeuvre de la mission. La communauté a toujours prié avec moi. Ensemble, on prie bien ...

La croix (10 avril 1998)

La croix du Christ est mon salut, notre salut et celui de l'humanité. Je n'ai jamais eu le courage de demander la souffrance personnelle pour participer à la croix rédemptrice du Christ. Je me sens plus porté à y participer par la prière et le travail. Mais le temps de la Croix viendra aussi.

Seigneur, je ne refuse pas ce que tu m'enverras... Fais de moi un instrument de ton oeuvre de salut... Fais que je t'aime, toi, et toute l'humanité, en particulier les évêques, les prêtres et les religieux missionnaires, les séminaristes, les Églises locales et les non-chrétiens. Donne-moi sagesse et courage. Que je sache semer l'espérance et l'enthousiasme pour Toi et pour ton Règne. Marie Immaculée et saint

Eugène, intercédez pour moi. Ô Seigneur, fais que je croie d'une façon toujours plus vraie et transformatrice.

III. La maladie

Tout est vanité, tout est précieux (23 février 1998)

Ce matin, je me suis levé avec du sang en bouche. La Petite Thérèse s'est réjouie en une occasion semblable en pensant que le Ciel était proche. Avec la lecture de l'Ecclésiaste, je renouvelle ma conviction que tout est vanité, mais dans la perspective de la foi je puis aussi dire que tout est précieux et a une valeur pour la vie éternelle, la mienne et celle des autres. Et pour cette raison il faut agir avec toute l'ardeur possible en union avec le Christ.

Le mystère de la souffrance (28 août 1999)

Le mystère de la souffrance est difficile à comprendre. À l'annonce de la Passion, Pierre réagit en souhaitant que cela n'arrive jamais, il était même sûr que cela n'arriverait pas. Jésus lui répondit toutefois que ce refus de la souffrance et de la mort était une tentation. Du point de vue humain, on repousse la souffrance, on ne la comprend pas. Mais Jésus dit que son disciple doit savoir l'accepter, prendre sa croix et le suivre. La souffrance est compréhensible et acceptable seulement à qui regarde Jésus et le suit... Tous les humains rencontrent la souffrance et ce peut être la façon de suivre Jésus quand on l'accepte. C'est ainsi que Jésus nous associe à sa résurrection et nous rend participants de son oeuvre de salut.

Merci, Seigneur

(24 septembre 2000) Seigneur, je suis en ta présence. Je te remercie de la vie que tu m'as donnée avec tous les dons qui l'ont accompagnée. Cette vie va se clore bientôt. Mais elle s'ouvrira sur une autre, plénitude de la première, communion avec toi que j'ai cherché et servi. Montre-moi ta miséricorde et que Marie m'accompagne pour que ce passage s'accomplisse selon ta volonté. Si tu veux que je continue ton oeuvre au service de la mission, donne-moi toute la santé nécessaire pour la bien faire. Je t'offre de toutes façons les peines que tu m'envoies et je te les offre pour le progrès de la mission.

(8 novembre 2000) Je te remercie de m'avoir créé dans ta sagesse, de m'avoir conduit dans ta providence, de m'avoir appelé au service de la prêtrise et de l'épiscopat, de t'être servi de moi pour faire le bien, de m'avoir donné l'appui de mes confrères et de mes collaborateurs, de m'avoir accordé de longues années de santé et de forces, d'avoir développé en moi l'équilibre et la perception des besoins missionnaires, d'avoir versé en moi l'amour de l'Église et de la mission.

En arrivant au but qui est la rencontre avec toi, il est bon de rappeler les merveilles que tu as accomplies en moi et à travers moi. Tout est grâce. Regardant en avant, je renouvelle ma confiance en toi. Que ta volonté soit faite, que je puisse vivre toujours en union avec toi jusqu'au moment où je te rencontrerai pour toujours.

"In Jesu per Mariam" (25-27 novembre 2000)

Être un avec le Christ, avec l'aide de Marie. J'ai commencé à contempler cette réalité avec les mystères glorieux en y consacrant une heure de prière. Acclamons le Seigneur avec des chants de joie en ce 27^e jour de retraite [ndlr - à l'hôpital, aggravation de la maladie] qui m'est imposée. Prière sur la joie. Je vis la joie des mystères du Rosaire. Je m'arrête sur les versets des Psaumes qui soulignent la joie. Il y a tant de motifs pour se réjouir, même à l'hôpital.

Dans le désert (10 décembre 2000)

Je suis dans le désert pour rencontrer le Seigneur comme l'a fait son peuple, pour proclamer sa venue comme l'a fait Jean-Baptiste. Ce temps de maladie est un désert; je passe les heures seul, détaché de tout. C'est un moment particulier pour être avec le Seigneur. Voilà l'expérience de ces périodes passées à l'hôpital. Je suis en Avent, dans l'attente du Seigneur, avec le désir que le Seigneur vienne transformer ma vie et celle de l'humanité. Le seuil ne peut être loin désormais, même si j'espère ma guérison. Viens, Seigneur, le monde a besoin de toi.

Vers la Rencontre

(21 février 2001) Le message dominant des Psaumes est la confiance dans le Seigneur, car il est bon, il est fidèle et juste. Je ne dois pas me préoccuper. Ma confiance en lui domine tous mes autres sentiments, même si elle devient parfois résignation. Certes, j'accepte pleinement sa volonté, de vivre ou de mourir. Il me semble que dans mon entourage, on tient à ma guérison plus que moi, non pas tellement pour ma personne que pour la mission que je pourrais accomplir pour l'Église. Je partage cette intention. En même temps, je me rends compte que les choses avancent malgré la réduction de mes activités ou mon absence. Cela prouve que nous ne sommes que des serviteurs et des instruments. J'offre donc mes souffrances pour que la mission avance.

(27 février 2001) À qui abandonne tout pour suivre Jésus, le Seigneur promet la récompense. Lui-même est la récompense. Cela me donne tranquillité même dans la situation présente. C'est l'expérience de Marie et de tous les saints, même si maintenant, durant notre pèlerinage terrestre, nous ne nous en rendons pas vraiment compte.

(28 février 2001) Nuit difficile: Seigneur, que ta volonté soit faite.

(ndlr – Ce sont ses derniers mots. À 7h 15, le 1^{er} mars 2001, Marcello rencontra le Père.)

(Traduit de l'italien par Laurent Roy, o.m.i.)

Notes :

¹ Compagnon de Marcello Zago.

² Le Journal de Marcello Zago (*Diario personale*) est conservé aux Archives générales OMI, Rome.

Marcello Zago, O.M.I.

Curriculum vitae¹

(1932-2001)

I. Family Background (1932-1955)

Born August 9, 1932 at Villorba, Province and Diocese of Treviso, Italy

- Father: Angelo (+1950). Mother: Erminia Battistella (+1978).
- Farming family of four brothers and two sisters. Marcello is the youngest.
- Primary education: Public State School in Villorba (1939-1944)
- Secondary studies: Minor Seminary of Treviso (1944-1952)
- Seminary Training: Major Seminary of Treviso, until the 2nd year of theology (1952-1955)

II. Formation as a Missionary Oblate of Mary Immaculate (1955-1959)

1. Novitiate at Ripalimosani (Campobasso), September 28, 1955

- Fr. Carmelo Menegon, Master of Novices
- First religious profession on September 29, 1956

2. Roman International Scholasticate

- Fr. André Nottebaert (1956-1959) and Fr. Joseph Fitzgerald (1959), Superiors
- Completed his theological studies at the University of St. Thomas ("Angelicum") (1956-1959). Baccalaureate in Theology (1957). Licentiate in Theology (1959).
- Perpetual vows on September 29, 1959, at Villorba

3. Clerical ordinations:

- Clerical Tonsure: November 30, 1953, at the Treviso Major Seminary
- First Minor Orders: December 21, 1954, at the Treviso Major Seminary
- Last Minor Orders: July 7, 1957, at Roviano (Roma)
- Subdiaconate: July 12, 1959, at Roviano, by Bishop Luigi Faveri, of Tivoli
- Diaconate: August 9, 1959, at Roviano, by Bishop Luigi Faveri, of Tivoli
- Priesthood: September 13, 1959, at Villorba, by Bishop Antonio Mistrorigo, of Treviso

4. First obedience for the Vicariate of Missions in Laos on May 22, 1959

III. Missionary in Laos – Doctoral Studies (1959-1974)

1. First period in Laos (1959-1966).

- Left for Laos in December, 1959; served as a missionary and in formation ministry
- Member of the Provincial Council, 1963-1966

- Elected Delegate of the Vice Province of Laos to the General Chapter, January 25 to March 23, 1966

2. Roman International Scholasticate. Doctoral Studies (1966-1971)

- Staff member of the Roman International Scholasticate, 1966-1971

- Doctoral studies in Missiology at the Pontifical Gregorian University, under the direction of Fr. Jesús Lopez-Gay, S.J. Defended his thesis on January 9, 1971. Topic: *"Riti e cerimonie in ambiente lao"* (Rites and ceremonies in Laotian Buddhism)

- During these years, and until 1974, he was a guest lecturer in Missiology at Saint Paul University, Ottawa, Canada

3. Second period in Laos (1971-1974)

- On behalf of the Bishops' Conference of Laos-Cambodia, he founded and then directed the Centre for Study and Dialogue with Buddhists, 1971-1974

- April 12-27, 1972, he organized in Hua Hin, Thailand, the first international session on Buddhism and Christianity, attended by 90 bishops, priests, men religious from Laos, Cambodia, Thailand. Similar sessions were organized afterwards, v.g. in Vientiane, Laos (July 18-24, 1972); in Phnom Penh, Cambodia (January 21 - February 7, 1973)

- May, 1972, though he was not a Capitular nor present in Rome at the XXVIIIth General Chapter, several members of the Chapter voted for him as a possible Assistant General in charge of the Mission

- March 1, 1973 (communicated to him on June 3, 1973), he is named Consultor to the Holy See's Secretariat for Non-Christians (today: Pontifical Council for Inter-Religious Dialogue)

- June, 1973, with Bishop Alessandro Staccioli, he accompanied an elite group of Laotian Buddhists on a visit to Pope Paul VI, and the Holy See, with significant visits to sites in Italy: Assisi, Subiaco, Camaldoli, Bologna, Venice, Brescia and Siena

- April 22-24, 1974, he attended the first meeting of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences in Taipei, Taiwan. He remained actively involved with this organism afterwards

- June 3-8, 1974, he took part in a study-session in Vientiane, Laos, on the equivalent of God in the various ethnic groups of Laos

- June 22-28, 1974, he took part in a study-session at Luang-Prabang, Laos, centred on initiation into Buddhism

- July 3-6, 1974, he took part in a study-session at Thakhek, on animism

- July 15-27, 1974, he took part in a meeting in Colombo, Sri Lanka, of Oblates and others involved in dialogue with Buddhists

- July 29 - August 3, 1974, he took part in the International Congress of Christian Missiologists, in Frankfurt, Germany

IV. Assistant General (1974-1980)

Father Zago was not a participant in the XXIXth General Chapter (November 12-December 6, 1974); but when, while lecturing at Saint Paul University in Ottawa, he became a candidate for the position of Assistant General, he was brought to the Chapter. He was elected second Assistant General on December 2, 1974.

- Meetings with Oblates expelled from Laos: August 26-28, 1976 at Saint-Walfroy, France; October 22-24, at Vermicino, Italy; November 9-14, at Solignac, France

- 1976-1980: Vice-President of the Union of Superiors General's Commission on Mission

- April, 1976: PIME's Symposium of theologians and missionaries at the Institute of Asiatic Studies in Milan. He gave several talks at this Institute during the year

- April 26 - May 14, 1976: Congress on the charism of the Founder, in Rome, to which he contributed greatly in terms of both organization and participation
- August 1, 1976: Present at the opening of the Latin American Region's novitiate in Mexico City
- August 11-14, 1976: Took part in the CIAL meeting in Cuernavaca, Mexico
- October 11-14, 1977: Keynote speaker at the Philippines Provincial Congress, Tamontaka
- October 23-28, 1977: Keynote speaker at the first meeting of the Oblate Asian Pastoral Conference, at Quezon City, Philippines
- October 1977: Trip to Borneo, Java and Malaysia
- July 10-31, 1979: Took part in and spoke at the First Congress of European Scholastics at Vermicino, Italy
- September, 1979: Visited the Central and Southern US Provinces
- October 11-19, 1979: Took part in a Seminar "Dialogue with Buddhists" in Bangkok
- November, 1979: Conducted the annual retreat to the scholastics in Sri Lanka, and also lectured at the National Seminary in Kandy
- December, 1979: Resource person at the International Missionary Congress for Asia in Manila, Philippines
- December, 1979: Retreat to the Oblates of the Uruguay Delegation
- December, 1979: Visit to the Oblates in Senegal
- October 26 - December 8: XXXth General Chapter. Father Zago was not reelected as Assistant General. After the Chapter, he received his obedience for the Province of Italy

V. Between Two General Chapters (1980- 1986)

- 1980-1986: Formator at the Oblate Scholasticate at Vermicino. He was Superior from 1982 to 1983
- 1981-1983: Full-time Professor of Missiology at the Lateran and Urbaniana Universities in Rome. From 1983 until 1986, he lectured weekly at each of these two Universities
- August 26-29, 1982: At Tai-Pei, Taiwan, keynote address at the third meeting of the Federation of Bishops' Conferences of Asia
- August 29 - September 15, 1982: Organized and chaired the Oblate Congress on "Evangelization and the Oblates", held at the General House in Rome
- March 14, 1983: Appointed Secretary of the Holy See's Secretariat for Non-Christians (today Pontifical Council for Inter-Religious Dialogue)
- April 26, 1983: Appointed member "de iure" of the Pontifical Commission for the Spiritual Care of Migrants and Tourism
- May 25, 1983: Appointed Consultor to the Holy See's Secretariat for Non-Believers (today Pontifical Council for Culture)
- December 16, 1983: Appointed Consultor to the Commission for Religious Relations with Judaism (part of the then Secretariat for Christian Unity, now Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Unity among Christians)
- June 7-11, 1984: Trip to Paris

- August 15-31, 1984: Trip to Cairo, Egypt, and Nairobi, Kenya
- October 14 - November 1, 1984: Trip to Bali, Jakarta, Bangkok, Sampran
- March 19-24, 1986: Took part in the European Bishops' Meeting in Luxembourg
- April 1-26, 1986: Spoke at the 6th Oblate Formators' Session, Rome
- June 12-23, 1986: Took part in a World Council of Churches meeting at Potsdam

VI. Superior General (1986-1998)

Father Zago participated in the XXXIst General Chapter of 1986 as a Delegate of the Province of Italy. On September 13, 1986 he was elected on the first ballot eleventh Superior General of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate.

1986

- October 27: Great Day of Prayer for Peace at Assisi, of which he was a major organizer
- November 1986 to November 1997: Councillor of the Union of Superiors General. Also member of the 16 Superiors General (8 men and 8 women) who are in regular contact with the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life, and who meet four times yearly
- December 9-22: Visit to Poland
- December 24 - January 5, 1987: Visit to the Province of France-Est, Marseilles, Aix

1987

- January 12: Appointed Consultor to the Secretariat for Non-Christians (today: Pontifical Council for Inter-Religious Dialogue)
- January 19 - February 17: Plenary Session of the General Council, Rome
- February 20-26: Visit to Ireland (Provincial Congress)
- February 26 - March 12: Visit to Zaire (inauguration of the new scholasticate in Kinshasa)
- March 12 - April 22: Visit to South Africa (centenary of the Province of Transvaal), Lesotho (125th anniversary of the Oblates' arrival), Namibia, Zimbabwe, Zambia
- May 9-12: Visit to Paris, France
- May 13-18: Visit to Italy (Naples, S. Prisco, Pescara)
- May 30 - June 5: Visit to Poland (inauguration of a new wing at the Juniorate in Markowice; meeting of the European Oblate Conference)
- June 8 - July 1: Plenary Session of the General Council, Rome
- June 13-15: Celebration of the 150th anniversary of Oblate presence at Notre-Dame-de-Lumières, France
- July 25 - September 16: Visit to Latin America (Paraguay, Peru, Chile, Bolivia, Haiti, Puerto Rico)
- September 16-24: Visit to Canada (Grouard, Edmonton, Fort Simpson where he took part in the Holy Father's visit there on September 20)
- October 1-30: Member of the Bishops' Synod on the Laity, Rome, elected by the Union of Superiors General
- November 6-27: Plenary Session of the General Council, in Burlingame, CA, USA
- November 28 - December 23: Visit of the five Provinces in the USA

- December 23-26: Visit to Spain
- December 26-30: Provincial Oblate Congress in Germany (Funeral of Fr. Bernard Ferkinghoff, General Councillor for Europe on December 27)

1988

- January 5-26: Oblate Provincial Assembly of Cameroun-Tchad
- January: Double hernia operation
- February 15 - March 4: Plenary Session of the General Council, Rome
- March 11-16: Visit to Norway
- March 16-25: Visit to Belgium
- March 25 - April 5: Visit to France (Aix, Lourdes, Paris)
- April 5-11: Visit to Holland
- May 8 - August 11: Visit of Oblate Provinces in Canada. Centenary of Oblates' ministry at the Shrine of Cap-de-la-Madeleine (May 19-21); Plenary Session of the General Council, Arnprior (May 23 - June 18); meeting of Oblates' ministry to the Native Peoples, Lebrét (August 5-11)
- August 11-16: Speaker at the International Youth Congress in Lourdes, France
- September 3-18: Visit to South Africa and Lesotho. On September 15, beatification of Fr. Joseph Gérard at Maseru, Lesotho
- September 18-28: Visit to Mauritius and Madagascar
- September 29 - October 2: Visit to Paris and Notre-Dame-de-Sion, France
- October 3-28: Plenary Session of the General Council, Rome, with retreat of the Council at Aix from October 9 to 15
- December 15-28: Visit to Pakistan
- December 28 - January 18, 1989: Visit to Indonesia

1989

- January 18 - February 5: Visit to Thailand, Laos, India, Bangladesh
- February 6-25: Plenary Session of the General Council, Bangalore, India
- March 14-30: Visit to Senegal and Sahara
- May 22-June 6: Plenary Session of the General Council, Rome
- June 26-30: Provincial Congress in Poland
- July 1-3: Speaker at the European Oblate Formation meeting at Nikolauskloster, Germany
- July 26: Appointed member of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life
- August 4 - September 30: Visit to Asia: Sri Lanka (Jaffna and Colombo Provinces) (August 4-28); Thailand (August 28-29); Japan (August 29 -September 9); Hong Kong (September 9-10); Philippines (September 10-30)
- October 2-24: Plenary Session of the General Council, Rome
- October 25 - November 1: Celebrations of the centenary of the University of Ottawa/Saint Paul University (October 26-27). Received a Doctorate in Theology "honoris causa" from Saint Paul University on October 27
- December 12 - February 7, 1990: Visit to Argentina, Paraguay, Uruguay, Brazil (Recife, Belem, Uberlandia, Sao Paulo)

1990

- February 19 - March 29: Plenary Session of the General Council, Rome
- February-March: Hernia operation and convalescence
- May 3-23: Inter-Chapter Meeting in Rome
- May 29 - June 8: Plenary Session of the General Council, Rome.
- August 8 - September 11: Visit to Latin America: Guatemala (August 8-15); Mexico (August 15-30); Peru (August 30 - September 3); Paraguay (CIAL meeting, September 3-11)
- September 17 - October 5: Plenary Session of the General Council, Rome
- September 28 - October 28: Member of the Bishops' Synod on the Formation of Priests, elected by the Union of Superiors General
- November 3 - December 12: Visit to Oceania: Australia (November 3-26); New Zealand (November 26-30); Tahiti (November 30 - December 12)
- December 21-24: Visit to Italy (San Giorgio, Aosta)

1991

- January 4-9: Visit to Italy (Onè di Fonte, Verona, Brescia)
- January 22: Takes part in the official presentation in Rome of the new Encyclical *Redemptoris Missio*
- January 31 - March 11: Visit to France; Plenary Session of the General Council, Sion and Strasbourg (February 13 - March 8)
- March 12-30: Visit to England
- April 22-27: Meeting of Religious Institutes founded by or related to the Oblates, Rome
- April 28: Speaker at a meeting of laity involved with the Oblates, Collevallenza, Italy
- May 1-10: Visit to the USA. Dedication of the new church of Our Lady of the Snows, Belleville (May 5), Oblate School of Theology, San Antonio, Texas (May 9)
- May 13-June 7: Plenary Session of the General Council, Rome
- July 16-29: 5th European Congress of Young Oblates, Vermicino, Italy, with mass at Assisi
- July 22: Keynote speaker at the Spanish Week of Missiology at Burgos, Spain
- August 15-25: 150th anniversary of Oblates' arrival in Canada. Visit to Cap-de-la-Madeleine, Montreal and Ottawa
- August 30-September 16: Visit to Austria and Czechoslovakia
- September 17-26: Oblate Congress on Communications, Rome
- October 7-29: Plenary Session of the General Council, Rome
- October 14-21: Speaker during the "International Congress of Mayors of Mediterranean Countries for Peace and Regional Cooperation", Bari
- November 1-23: Visit to Spain
- December 1-24: Visit to Germany

1992

- January 15 - February 5: Plenary Session of the General Council, Santiago, Chile
- February 5-24: Visits to Brazil, French Guyana, Surinam
- May 18 - June 10: Plenary Session of the General Council, Rome

- June 30: Appointed consultor to the Inter-Dicastery Commission for an equitable distribution of priests

- August 8-11: Visit to France (Bordeaux)

- **September 1 - October 3: XXXIInd General Chapter of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate. Father Zago is reelected Superior General on September 15**

- November 30 - December 28: Plenary Session of the General Council, Rome

1993

- Between January 7 and March 28: visit to 14 Oblate communities in Italy

- March 22: Appointed Consultor to the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples

- March 29 - April 17: Plenary Session of the General Council, Rome

- April 26 - May 8: Visit to Asia: India (25th anniversary of foundation) (April 26 - May 8); Thailand (May 8-14); Indonesia (May 14-24)

- June 7-26: Plenary Session of the General Council, Rome

- September 13 - October 2: Plenary Session of the General Council, Rome

- October 5 - November 14: Visit to South Africa and Lesotho

- November 22-27: Participation in the Union of the Superiors General's Congress on the Consecrated Life which he helped organize and steer

- December 10-20: Visit to France (Paris, Pontmain)

- December 21-24: Visit to the International Scholasticate, Rome

1994

- January 9-31: Plenary Session of the General Council, Dakar, Senegal

- February 17 - March 11: Visit to Zaire

- March 19-26: Visit to Aix (De Mazenod Experience)

- April 10-24: Member of the Bishops' Synod on Africa, Rome, appointed by the Holy Father

- April 18 - May 14: Plenary Session of the General Council, Rome

- June 20 - July 11: Visit to Australia (Centenary of Oblates' arrival)

- July 14-16: Visit with Cardinal Basil Hume in London re coming Bishops' Synod on Consecrated Life of which he was appointed Special Secretary

- July 19-25: Trip to Lourdes, France, for European Youth Meeting

- August 24 - September 3: Visit to Korea

- September 3-21: Visit to Japan (September 3-10); Hong Kong (September 10-17); China (September 18-19); Thailand (September 19-21)

- October 2-29: Member, as elected by the Union of Superiors General, and Special Secretary, as appointed by the Holy Father, of the Bishops' Synod on Consecrated Life

- November 2-30: Plenary Session of the General Council, Washington, DC, USA

- December 15-17: Visit to Spain

1995

- February 4-9: Visit to Latin America: Guatemala (February 4-9); Mexico (February 9-18); Haiti (February 18-March 1)

- March 1-26: Visit to the United States and annual retreat for USA Oblates

- April 10: Appointed Consultor to the Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life

- April 24 - May 21: Plenary Session of the General Council in Germany

- May 26 - June 27: Visit to Sri Lanka (3 retreats)

- July 5-11: Oblate European Congress on Mission, Odra, Poland

- August 18-28: Visit to St. Boniface, MB, for the 150th anniversary of the arrival of Oblates in Western Canada

- September 1-4: Visit to Germany for the 100th anniversary of the German Province

- September 5-20: Visit to Brazil for retreat and the 50th anniversary of the Oblates' arrival in Sao Paulo

- October 17-19: Visit to Abu Dhabi

- October 20 - November 10: Inter-Chapter Meeting, Bangkok, Thailand

- November 15-30: Plenary Session of the General Council, Rome

- November 17-20: International Symposium on Eugene de Mazenod, Aix, France

- December 3: Canonization of Saint Eugene de Mazenod, Rome

- December 5-6: Meeting of Oblate Bishops, Rome

- December 10-11: Celebrations in honour of Saint Eugene de Mazenod, Marseilles

1996

- January 11: Appointed a member of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples

- January 13-29: Visit to Italy: Atessa and Pescara (January 13-16); Florence and Prato (January 27-29).

- March 18-27: Visit to Aix (talks to the Mazenod Experience)

- April 5-12: Regional meeting of USA Oblates: San Fernando, CA; Belleville, IL.

- April 14 - May 14: Plenary Session of the General Council, Rome and Aix

- May 12: 50th anniversary of the France-Benelux Polish Vice-Province, Vaudricourt

- May 18-21: Congress of Oblate Lay Associates, Aix

- May 22-30: 100th anniversary of the arrival of Oblates in Namibia

- June 7-17: Visit to Ukraine

- June 17-22: Visit to Poland

- June 22-29: Retreat to Oblates in Spain

- July 23 - August 23: Visit to Lake St. Ann, AB, Canada and of St. Mary's Province

- September 12 - October 12: Plenary Session of the General Council, Cap-de-la-Madeleine, Canada

- October 19: Speaker at the Annual Assembly of the Canadian Bishops' Conference in Halifax, NS

- November 3-23: Two retreats to Oblates in the Philippines

- November 28 - December 14: 50th anniversary of the Oblates' arrival in Cameroon

1997

- January 14 - February 15: Plenary Session of the General Council, Lima, Peru

- February 15-25: Visit to Latin America: Retreats to Oblates in Chile (February 15-25); Paraguay (February 25 - March 3); Bolivia (March 4-10); Uruguay (March 10-17)
- April 16-18: Speaker at the General Chapter of Carmelites, Lisieux, France
- April 20 - May 17: Plenary Session of the General Council, Rome
- June 3-10: Hernia operation, Rome
- September 1: Speaker at a seminar of 70 bishops, organized by the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples
- September 12-18: Retreat to the International Scholasticate, Rome
- September 20-24: 50th anniversary of Oblates' arrival in Austria and the Czech Republic
- September 29 - October 4: Speaker at the International Congress for Young Religious, Rome
- October 5 - November 8: Plenary Session of the General Council, Rome
- October 5-19: Pilgrimage of the General Council to the Holy Land
- November 11-18: 150th anniversary in Colombo of the Oblates' arrival in Sri Lanka
- December 17-23: Present at the celebration of the 50 years of priesthood of Father Fernand Jetté, former Superior General, Ottawa, Canada

1998

- January 10-16: Reconciliation meeting with Fr. Tissa Balasuriya in Colombo
- January 17-19: 150th anniversary in Jaffna of the Oblates' arrival in Sri Lanka
- February 1-28: Plenary Session of the General Council, Rome

VII. Secretary of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples – Archbishop of Roselle (1998-2001)

March 28: Father Marcello Zago is appointed Secretary of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples (or of Propaganda) and Titular Archbishop of Roselle. He is ordained bishop in St. Peter's Basilica by Cardinal Jozef Tomko, on April 25. Archbishop Zago remains Superior General until the election of his successor by the General Chapter next September.

- August 22-25: Visit to Lourdes, France
- September 1: Presided at the opening of the XXXIIIrd Oblate General Chapter
- September 16: Appointed member of the Central Committee for the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000
- October: Took up residence at the Palace of Propaganda, Piazza di Spagna, Rome
- December 12-14: Visit to Mostar, Bosnia

1999

- May 21-22: Visit to Lyon, France
- June 16-20: Keynote speaker at an ecumenical missiological Conference, Chicago
- June 28-July 15: Health problems. Removal of a kidney on June 30, followed by several weeks of convalescence at the General House
- October 15-22: The Pope's special envoy to Angola in solidarity with its people. Inauguration of the Catholic University of Angola.
- October: Hospitalized to care for after effects of his surgery in June

2000

- January 29 - February 8: Pope's envoy to Peru for the celebration of the establishment of the first Prefectures Apostolic in the Peruvian Amazon Region
- May 21: Presided the Jubilee Mass for Oblates and associates at Saint John Lateran
- August 14: Presides and speaks at the World Youth Day Mass for 900 young people at Pescara
- September 20: Appointed member of the Pontifical Council "Cor unum"
- September 26 - October 2: Speaks at a Catholic Missiological Conference, Chicago, IL
- October 4-6: Speaker at and participant in the Oblate Bishops' gathering in Rome
- October 14-15: Visit to the Oblate Marian Shrine of Maria Taferl, Austria
- November: Hospitalized for three weeks because of pneumonia and leukemia. He continues chemotherapy treatment afterwards. Goes in and out of hospital

2001

- March 1: Passed away at 07:00 at his residence of Piazza di Spagna
- March 3: Funeral Mass in Saint Peter's Basilica, presided over by Cardinal Jozef Tomko, Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples
- March 5: Burial at the Oblate chapel at the cemetery of Marino, Italy

Note:

¹ The *Curriculum vitae* is based chiefly on O.M.I. official publications (*Acta Administrationis Generalis O.M.I.*, *O.M.I. Newsletter*, *Communique*, etc.), completed by Father Zago's personal Diary. We are aware that many other meetings and talks are not included in the present CV.

M^{gr} Marcello Zago: bibliographie 1998-2001

Marek A. Rostkowski, o.m.i.¹

Dans le volume 59 (2000) de *Vie Oblate Life*, j'ai publié une bibliographie d'une trentaine de pages de M^{gr} Marcello Zago. Ce fut une façon de présenter aux lecteurs ce que j'ai appelé son «patrimoine théologique et missiologique». Le point de départ était les écrits du p. Zago, tels que recueillis par son secrétaire personnel, le p. Edward Carolan. J'avais préparé la description bibliographique ainsi que la présentation chronologique, en utilisant principalement la *Bibliographia missionaria*.

La bibliographie était divisée en quatre chapitres: Bouddhisme et dialogue interreligieux, Évangélisation et mission, Vie religieuse, Missionnaires Oblats de Marie Immaculée. Parmi plus de 800 études et articles publiés dans des revues italiennes ou autres, j'avais choisi les plus significatifs, de sorte que les brefs articles parus dans *L'Osservatore romano* ou *l'Avvenire* n'y étaient pas inclus. J'avais omis également, dans ce choix limité, une soixantaine de recensions publiées dans *Bibliographia missionaria*. La bibliographie prenait en compte les publications jusqu'à 1998, l'année où le p. Zago terminait son second mandat comme Supérieur général de notre Congrégation. C'est au cours de cette année qu'il avait été nommé Secrétaire de la Congrégation pour l'Évangélisation des peuples.

La présente recherche se propose de présenter en ordre chronologique la bibliographie des années 1998-2001, en y ajoutant quelques publications non incluses dans les recherches précédentes.

* * * *

1992-1997

Le Chiese in America latina, continente della speranza, nel 5° centenario dell'evangelizzazione (1492-1992). Milano, Ed. Paoline, 1992, 203 pp.

«Importanza missionaria dell'Enciclica "Ut Unum Sint"», *Omnis Terra* 13 (Roma 1995) p. 242-248.

Anglais: *Omnis Terra* 29 (Rome 1995), p. 488-496.

Français: *Omnis Terra* 34 (Roma 1995), p. 488-494.

Espagnol: *Omnis Terra* 27 (Roma 1995), p. 488-493.

«Nel cuore e alle frontiere della Chiesa. La missione della vita consacrata secondo il Sinodo del '94», *Omnis Terra* 13 (Roma 1995), p. 40-46.

Anglais: *Omnis Terra* 29 (Rome 1995) p. 34-40.

Français: *Omnis Terra* 34 (Rome 1995) p. 39-46.

Espagnol: *Omnis Terra* 27 (Roma 1995) p. 31-38.

«Tolerant Thailand», *Mission Outlook* (London 1995) n° 1, p. 8-12.

«Christians in the new South Africa», *Mission Outlook* (London 1995), n° October, p. 16-17.

«Missionary challenges for the Oblates in Europe (Obra-July 10, 1995). Eugene de Mazenod's charism», *Vie Oblate Life* 55 (Ottawa 1996) p. 9-17.

«Le Christ sauveur et évangéliste», *Omnis Terra* 36 (Rome 1997), p. 20-30.

Anglais: *Omnis Terra* 31 (Rome 1997), p. 20-31.

«Inculturation and dialogue concerning the Balasuriya case», *Indian Missiological Review: Church's mission in Asia. Special issue on the occasion of the Synod of Bishops special assembly for Asia*, 19 (Shillong 1997), n° 3-4, p. 205-211.

Sur les traces de st Eugène. Lettres et textes sur la formation. Rome, Maison Générale OMI, (1997), 236 pp.

Anglais, pp. 326.

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Anglais: *Omnis Terra* 31 (Rome 1997), p. 231-237.

1998

«Dialogo als methode van missie», *Kerk en Missie* 75 (Brussel 1998) n° 290, p. 16-19.

«Mission and interreligious dialogue», *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 22 (New Haven 1998), p. 98-101.

«Che tutti i popoli conoscano te, unico vero Dio», *Omnis Terra* 16 (Roma 1998), p. 186-191.

Anglais: *Omnis Terra* 32 (Rome 1998), p. 341-346.

Espagnol: *Omnis Terra* 30 (Roma 1998), p. 341-346.

«Sainte Thérèse de Lisieux, promue patronne des missions par les missionnaires travaillant parmi les Indiens», *Omnis Terra* 37 (Rome 1998), p. 385-387.

«Os religiosos na Igreja africana à luz dos Sínodos sobre a Igreja em Africa e sobre a vida consagrada», *Omnis Terra* 4 (Roma 1998), p. 22-28.

1999

«Giubileo, missione e dialogo», *Il Veltro* 43 (Roma 1999), n° 1-2, p. 149-163.

«The spirituality of dialogue», *Pro Dialogo* (Roma 1999), p. 233-247

«Mission et dialogue interreligieux», *Missions Étrangères de Paris* (Paris 1999), p. 97-102.

«Evangelization and Lay Participation in the Oblate Charism», *Vie Oblate Life* 58 (Ottawa 1999), p. 357-366.

«Consecrated life in the local Church: needs for insertion and missionary prospects», *Omnis Terra* 33 (Rome 1999), p. 67-78.

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«Cooperatio missionalis. Presentazione dell'istruzione della Congregazione per l'Evangelizzazione dei Popoli», *Omnis Terra* 17 (Roma 1999), p. 106-110.

«La vita consacrata nella Chiesa locale: esigenze per l'inserimento e prospettive missionarie», *Omnis Terra* 17 (Roma 1999), p. 23-33.

Anglais: *Omnis Terra* 33 (Rome 1999), p. 20-24.

Français: *Omnis Terra* 40 (Rome 1999), p. 21-26.

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2000

«Attualità della missione ad gentes» in: ROSTKOWSKI, Marek A., (ed.), *La missione senza confini. Ambiti della missione ad gentes. Miscellanea in onore del R.P. Willi Henkel, O.M.I. ... a cura di ...* Roma, (Missionari Oblati di Maria Immacolata), 2000, p. 27-35.

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Anglais: *Omnis Terra* 34 (Rome 2000), p. 49-56.

Français: *Omnis Terra* 41 (Rome 2000), p. 49-56.

- Espagnol: *Omnis Terra* 32 (Roma 2000), p. 49-56.
- Portugais: *Omnis Terra* 6 (Roma 2000), p. 76-83.
- «The Inculturation of Reason according to the Encyclical “Fides et Ratio”», *Omnis Terra* 34 (Rome 2000), p. 143-149.
- Français: *Omnis Terra* 41 (Rome 2000), p. 144-151.
- Espagnol: *Omnis Terra* 32 (Roma 2000), p. 144-151.
- Portugais: *Omnis Terra* 6 (Roma 2000), p. 185-192.
- «Il nuovo millennio e gli incontri religiosi emergenti», *Omnis Terra* 18 (Roma 2000), p. 7-17.
- Anglais: *Omnis Terra* 34 (Rome 2000), p. 7-17.
- Français: *Omnis Terra* 41 (Rome 2000), p. 6-17.
- Espagnol: *Omnis Terra* 32 (Roma 2000), p. 7-17.
- Portugais: *Omnis Terra* 6 (Roma 2000), p. 6-16.
- «The New Millenium and the Emerging Religious Encounters», *Missiology* 28 (Scottsdale 2000), p. 5-18.
- «Męczennicy jako znamienny wyraz misji», *Misyjne Drogi* 18 (Poznań 2000), n° 3, p. 20-22.
- «Contemplation is the key to missionary progress in Asia», *Mission Outlook* 31 (London 2000), n° 4, p. 9-13.
- «Actualisation des directives conciliaires sur la “missio ad gentes”», *Missions Étrangères de Paris* (Paris 2000), p. 193-199.
- «Contemplation is the key to missionary progress in Asia», *Euntes Digest* 33 (Kessel-Lo 2000), p. 201-206. Cf. *Bibliographia Missionaria* LIV=2000, n°1634.
- «Mission et dialogue interreligieux», *Euntes Digest* 33 (Kessel-Lo 2000), p. 13-21.
- «Elements of the mission *Ad Gentes*», *Origins* 30 (Washington 2000/01), p. 332-335.
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- «Global integration of Catholic missions in the United States today», *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 25 (New Haven 2001), p. 2-6.
- «Défis de la mission dans le monde actuel. Rencontre des évêques oblats. Rome, 6 octobre 2000», *Vie Oblate Life* 60 (Ottawa 2001), p. 87-89.
- «Inculturazione della vita consacrata», *Vita Consacrata* 37 (Milano 2001), p. 579-595.
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- Français: *Omnis Terra* 42 (Rome), p. 149-153.
- Espagnol: *Omnis Terra* 33 (Roma), p. 149-143.
- Portugais: *Omnis Terra* 7 (Roma), p. 125-131.

¹ Bibliothécaire, Université urbanienne, Rome.