

Volume 6 (2011)

Quaderni

Bangladesh – Filippine – Giappone – Indonesia – Taiwan



del
Centro
Studi
Asiatico

Xaverian Missionaries
Ichiba Higashi 1-103-1
598-0005 Izumisano
Osaka - Japan

2

Quaderni del Centro Studi Asiatico

I *Quaderni del CSA* ospitano articoli e studi che riflettano su alcuni fenomeni religiosi, socio-economici, politici, culturali e missionari delle Regioni Saveriane presenti in Asia. Essi si propongono anche di far conoscere eventi o esperienze che possano arricchire ed essere di aiuto ad altri missionari coinvolti nelle stesse attività.

DIRETTORE

Tiziano Tosolini • Giappone

REDAZIONE

Eugenio Pulcini • Filippine

Matteo Rebecchi • Indonesia

Sergio Targa • Bangladesh

Fabrizio Tosolini • Taiwan

Quaderni del Centro Studi Asiatico
Xaverian Missionaries
Ichiba Higashi 1-103-1, 598-0005 Izumisano, Osaka – Japan
Tel. (0724) 64-3966 / Fax (0724) 64-3969

INDICE

VOLUME 6, N. 2

2011

- 67 Il nulla assoluto come preludio al divino
Tiziano TOSOLINI

RELIGIONI E MISSIONE

- 71 *Summa Xaveriana*
A Commentary to Letter 90 of Saint Francis Xavier (second part)
Fernando GUILLEN PRECKLE
- 93 La missione: quale motivazione?
Francesco MARINI
- 99 A Look at the History of the Catholic Church in Japan Today
A Dialogue with Fr. Franco Sottocornola
Carlo PELLICCIA

CULTURA E SOCIETÀ

- 115 Un detto di Confucio
Umberto BRESCIANI
- 119 Situation of Women and Children in Indonesia
Marcoluigi CORSI

IN MARGINE

- 127 La fede nella malattia
Kaoru YAMAZAKI
- 130 Sulle «note» della Chiesa
Commento in margine a un articolo
Franco SOTTOCORNOLA

Il nulla assoluto come preludio al divino

TIZIANO TOSOLINI

La scuola filosofica di Kyoto (fondata da Nishida Kitarō e proseguita con pensatori della statura di Tanabe Hajime e Nishitani Keiji) ha influenzato con la sua idea di «nulla assoluto» non solo studiosi di etica giapponese come Watsuji Tetsurō, cultori di estetica come Kuki Shūzō, interpreti e specialisti dell'influenza dello Zen sulla cultura giapponese come Hisamatsu Shin'ichi o teologi cristiani come Takizawa Katsumi e Mutō Kazuo, ma anche architetti famosi come Tadao Ando (1941).

I principi a cui si richiama questo artista minimalista ce li illustra lui stesso con queste parole: «L'architettura deve essere un *luogo* dove viviamo e moriamo, dove pensiamo alla vita e alla morte, al mondo di questa vita e al nirvana (*nehan*). Mediante l'architettura ricordiamo coloro che sono morti e ci risvegliamo alla realtà della nostra caducità». È quindi facile capire come mai Tadao abbia trovato in Nishida un ispiratore per i propri progetti e opere. Il «luogo» appena menzionato, infatti, corrisponde a quel *locus* o *topos* che Nishida aveva posto al centro delle sue riflessioni filosofiche sul nulla assoluto, cioè a quel «luogo» inteso come un universale che fa emergere tutte le operazioni della coscienza, quello sfondo su cui si riflettono e sono collocati sia la realtà dei fenomeni che l'autoconsapevolezza del soggetto. Il *luogo* del nulla assoluto, per Nishida, è quell'orizzonte incondizionato ed infinito che contiene e costituisce ogni forma o figura; nel contempo, questa stessa forma non è altro che una determinazione e concretizzazione del luogo stesso. Come egli scrive: «L'esistenza del sé è un'esistenza che è posta in tale luogo... La riflessione non è altro che l'attività di questo *luogo* che riflette sé stesso in sé stesso. Tutte le operazioni della nostra coscienza possono essere comprese a partire da questo *luogo*».

Il debito che Tadao sente nei confronti di Nishida appare dunque evidente: «Ciò che ho imparato da Nishida è che si deve cercare la profondità del sé. Il nulla risiede nella continua ricerca del sé». Per accorgersi di questo fatto, basta soffermarsi ad ammirare non solo l'opera da lui dedicata al filosofo (il *Museo della filosofia di Nishida Kitarō*, 2002), ma anche, e dal punto di vista dell'architettura religiosa, la *Chiesa della luce*, completata nel 1989. Quest'ultima struttura si presenta come un volume rettangolare chiuso sulla cui parete principale vi è un'incisione a forma di croce che lascia penetrare la luce dall'esterno. L'interno è estremamente sobrio e scarno, senza raffigurazioni o immagini che potrebbero distogliere lo sguardo dalla croce luminosa che sembra quasi galleggiare nel buio.

«La croce della *Chiesa della luce*» — afferma Tadao Ando — «non è semplicemente una forma, ma vacuità e luce. Nella cultura occidentale, viene data importanza alle cose in sé, ma in Oriente l'enfasi è posta nella zona intermedia. Mentre nelle pitture occidentali sono molto più importanti le parti colorate, nella calligrafia giapponese è lo *yohaku*, o lo spazio bianco, che è più importante. Quando noi percepiamo la croce all'interno della *Chiesa della luce*, dobbiamo rammentare questa differenza. La croce è visibile, eppure invisibile. La croce modifica se stessa con il passaggio del tempo, richiedendo in ciascun momento a colui che la guarda una diversa risposta emotiva, intellettuale e spirituale. La croce non è un simbolo convenzionale. Essa crea varie forme e impronte non solo in un ambiente altrimenti buio, ma anche sulle superfici delle pareti. La croce non è analizzata, ma percepita col corpo... La croce introduce oltre alla luce una parte del mondo esterno. Essa connette l'esterno e l'interno. La luce che penetra da una finestra d'ufficio è solo luce. La luce filtrata dalla croce è diversa. Questo perché la luce è carica di spiritualità, di senso religioso, di significato emotivo. La croce compie questa trasformazione della luce ponendosi nel frammenzo».

Queste parole di Tadao evidenziano un'inusuale sensibilità spirituale, oltre che artistica. La croce come luce e nulla, come fenditura trasparente nel muro che dà forma al luogo e al soggetto che vi si pone, è senz'altro un simbolo suggestivo e potente di come nel visibile risplenda e si renda manifesto qualcosa di misterioso e di affascinante. È proprio della luce, infatti, rivelarsi in ciò che essa illumina, è proprio della vacuità mostrarsi e dispiegarsi in ciò che modella e scolpisce. Eppure... basterà tutto questo per annunciare la presenza di Dio accanto a noi o a dare voce alla nostra nostalgia, lode o invocazione nei suoi confronti? Il luogo, la luce, la vacuità, la croce..., infatti, paiono più avere il significato di rimando e di richiamo, piuttosto che inaugurare o testimoniare la prossimità del Dio con noi. Non vi è dubbio che la continua ricerca del sé possa (o debba) iniziare da questo spazio inondato di ombre, di chiaro-scuro e di nulla, ma essa potrà avere un termine solo quando ci si porrà all'ascolto di ciò che il sé non è, di ciò che sorprende il sé abbracciandolo di amore e di perdono. In fondo, il silenzio è tale solo se permette alla parola di essere udita, così come lo spazio diventa sacro solo se è preludio di un incontro con il divino.

La *Chiesa della luce* è e sarà davvero «chiesa» e metafora della nostra esistenza solo se «alla sua luce vediamo la luce» (*Sal* 36,10), solo se cioè in essa riusciremo a percepire — oltre ai mutevoli bagliori del sole di giorno o i tenui riflessi della luna di notte — anche quella «luce vera che rischiara ogni uomo» (*Gv* 1,9) e che sola può imprimere sulla nostra mortalità, temporalità e finitudine un'invisibile traccia di trascendenza, di consolazione e di irriducibile speranza. Il resto è luce, sì, ma una luce priva di ogni extra-ordinarietà...

Religioni e missione



Summa Xaveriana

A Commentary to Letter 90 of Saint Francis Xavier

(second part)

FERNANDO GUILLEN PRECKLER

La missione: quale motivazione?

FRANCESCO MARINI

A Look at the History of the Catholic Church in Japan Today

A Dialogue with Fr. Franco Sottocornola

CARLO PELLICCIA

Summa Xaveriana

A Commentary to Letter 90 of Saint Francis Xavier (2 part)

FERNANDO GUILLEN PRECKLER

We will conclude our description of Xavier's spirituality with some remarks about the «Christian virtues.»¹

Humility

Undoubtedly, «interior humility»² is the horizon of the whole of Letter 90. As we have seen in many previous quotations, this «humility» is above all an inner consideration of the smallness of self, a low esteem of oneself and the one's own holiness and abilities—«what little we can do.» But it is also, especially for the students, an inner acceptance and practice of humble offices at home through obedience. To Francis, this grounding in humility is absolutely necessary to be a preacher of the Gospel in pagan lands, and we have to practice it also toward the Superiors of the Order and toward the ecclesiastical hierarchy. Xavier is here really radical.³ Let us again transcribe a full statement about humility in a truly emotive exhortation:

O brothers! What will happen to us in the hour of our death⁴ if we do not prepare and dispose ourselves in this life so that we may know how to place our hopes and confidence in God, for at that hour we shall have to see ourselves in greater trials, dangers and temptations than we have ever experienced in either soul or body?⁵ Those who live with desire to serve God should therefore strive to *humble* themselves greatly, always *making little* of themselves, placing their great and firm foundations in God, so that, in the great toils and dangers of both life and death, they can hope in the supreme goodness and mercy of their Creator, since even though they experienced repugnance in conquering temptations, no matter how little these were, they learned how to do so; for in their great

1. Remember the title of the classical treatise of Jesuit spirituality *Ejercicio de perfección y virtudes cristianas* written by Fr. Alonso Rodriguez. For centuries it has been the handbook of asceticism in religious communities.

2. Maybe we can see there a veiled polemic against the practices of «exterior humility» in Coimbra.

3. See the demanding letter to Fr. Alonso Cipriano in Mailapur, from Goa (April 1552): Letter 113, op. cit., 392–94.

4. It is a current subject in Ignatian spirituality. See: *Autobiography*, n. 32–33. It appears also in the writings of Xavier.

5. The meditation about death has been traditional in the First Week of the Spiritual Exercises (cf. n.71). The death of Xavier was very peaceful, according to the witness Antonio China: «With the name of Jesus on his lips, he returned his soul into the hands of his Creator and Lord with great calm and tranquillity» (cf. J. Costelloe, op. cit., xxiii).

humility, they distrusted themselves and strengthened their souls through their great confidence in God, since no one is weak when he makes good use of the grace he has received from God our Lord.⁶

This is the spiritual horizon of his soul since his conversion. According to his character and the spiritual guidance of Ignatius, Xavier will exercise himself in this «great humility», which is the only guarantee of accomplishing «great services» for the glory of God and the salvation of souls.⁷

The insistence on humility appears particularly in the section of the Letter dedicated to the «religious instructions» (n. 20–37). There Xavier opens his heart to the students of Goa and his advice always has a personal colour. Let us see some samples:

Remember that God is more pleased by good will filled with *humility*... than he prizes and esteems the services that are rendered unto him...⁸ Be ready, since it is quite likely that I shall write to you within two years that many of you should come to Japan. *Dispose* yourselves, therefore, to search for great *humility*, doing violence to yourselves in things which cause, or should cause you to feel repugnance, striving with all the strength that God gives you to *know yourselves interiorly* for what *you are*; and in that way you will increase in greater faith, hope and confidence and love of God and in charity for your neighbour, since it is from distrust of one's own self that true confidence in God is born; and you will in this way attain *interior humility*, which you will need everywhere, but more here than you think.⁹

We turn here to the missionary context of this «great humility». Indeed, to Francis Japan requires this disposition in a very special way because of the high level of Japanese education.¹⁰ We are pleased to quote now a paragraph in which we discover autobiographical traits. Xavier, under the common formula—«I know one»—is speaking of himself:

I know one to whom God has granted a great grace, since he has frequently undertaken, both in the midst of dangers and apart from them, to place all his hopes and confidence in him; and it would take very long to put in writing the profit which he has gained from this.¹¹ Since the greatest trials which you have experienced up till now are small in comparison with those which you who come to Japan will have to face, I ask and entreat you

6. L. 90, 9, op. cit., 296.

7. About the conversion of Francis in Paris see: X. Leon-Dufour, op. cit., 31–34: Xavier's personal ambitions were transformed in Xavier's «great desires» and deep prayer. «*Vir desideriorum*» is a frequent name applied to Daniel (9: 23, 10:11; 10: 19) that became a symbol of deep spirituality.

8. L. 90, 20, op. cit., 300.

9. L. 90, 20, op. cit., 300.

10. Cf. infra «nipponica».

11. Xavier prefers the silence. We do not have a «missionary diary» which would have been impossible in his life in the midst of toils and travels (in some Missionary Congregations of nineteenth century this kind of diary was a prescription of their Rule).

so much as you can that, for the love and service of God our Lord, you earnestly prepare yourselves by resolutely renouncing your own affections, since they are an impediment to so much good. Pay much attention to yourselves, my brothers in Jesus Christ; for there are many in hell who during their lifetime were through their words the cause and instrument of the salvation of others and of their going to the glory of paradise, but who, for want of *inner humility*, have gone to hell because they built upon a false and treacherous opinion of themselves;¹² and there is no one in hell who, when he was in the present life, toiled and used the means with which he obtained this *inner humility*.¹³

We guess that the great grace of God to Xavier was to be aware, to fight for and to receive «inner humility». Here he is comparing this inner disposition for the missionary work to the false and treacherous opinion of oneself. He uses his experience as a warning for his brothers, the students of Goa.

Xavier pursues this theme by quoting his favourite sentence: «What does it profit a man...» (Mt 16:26), and insisting on the good example of elders precisely in humility: «The elders who are concerned with this¹⁴ are greatly troubled and are more disposed to seek for an *interior* than an *exterior humility*. They renew their strength and spirit in order to regain what they have lost; and through this example and good repute they are a source of great edification to the novices and the others with whom they deal.»¹⁵

Let us end this section with other Xaverian texts which speak in favour of «missionary humility.»

If you should persevere in this, I do not doubt that you will always grow in *humility* and spirit and that you will produce much fruit in souls, since you will be calm and secure wherever you may wish to go.¹⁶

And at the end of this Letter filled with hope for Japan we read:

Since such a great opportunity is opening up, it is only proper that your first desires should be to show yourselves to be great servants of God in heaven; and you will do this if within your souls and lives in this world you are *interiorly humble* and leave to God all your concerns, so that he may grant you credit with your neighbours here on earth.¹⁷

12. The «fear of God» is also a feature of Ignatian spirituality (see: Spiritual exercises n. 370), like the meditation on hell (ibid. n. 65–72).

13. L. 90, 24, op. cit., 301–2. Xavier followed the case of Fr. Antonio Gomes, who was finally dismissed from the Society of Jesus and who died in 1554 in the wreck of Sao Bento while returning to Europe in order to appeal his case to Ignatius, (cf. J. Costelloe, op. cit., 212, note 14, L. 107, 3, op. cit., 373 and L. 112, op. cit., 391).

14. That is the thought of failing in progress after so many years in the Society of Jesus.

15. L. 90, 25, op. cit., 301. Is this yet another veiled personal confession?

16. L. 90, 36, op. cit., 305.

17. L. 90, 59, op. cit., 312.

Obedience

Close to humility is obedience.¹⁸ We intend to give only one Xaverian thought of true Ignatian spirit.

Do not importune your *rector*, as some do who importune their *superiors* so much, and use so much force with them, that these come to order them to do what they themselves ask, though this is very harmful to them. If these do not get what they wish, they say that they are very desolated, not seeing that the sadness which afflicts them is born in themselves, and it grows and increases from their seeking to do their own will after they have already relinquished it through their *vow of obedience*, when they made a complete oblation of themselves to God our Lord. The more such individuals strive to follow their own will, the more desolate and troubled in conscience they become. There are many such subjects who, because they are so possessive and enamoured of their own opinions and judgments, never willingly *obey* their Superiors except insofar as these latter order what they themselves desire.¹⁹

The doctrine is so clear that it needs no comment.²⁰

Confidence

We have seen that in the pen of Francis the three theological virtues are normally formulated as faith, hope and «confidence.» We often find these threefold Christian virtues, but in Francis we discover a strong preference for «confidence»,²¹ which takes the place of the more commonly used charity or love. Can we add any Xaverian statement about this «confidence» in God to those we have often already found in our previous exposition? Overall, we recall that «confidence in God» is the aim of humility: we do not trust in ourselves, but we put all our confidence in God, in such a way that we are completely in his hands and become his means for the salvation of souls, but first of all, of our own perfection and peace.

Let us recall some expressions: «In their great humility they distrusted themselves and strengthened their souls through their *confidence* in God, since no one is weak when he makes good use of the grace he has received from God our Lord.»²² And there is this lengthier passage of Xaverian spirituality where again he is advising the students of Goa:

18. See: above, notes 29–32.

19. L. 90, 32, op. cit., 304. (See: X. Leon-Dufour, op. cit., 84–86).

20. See: San Ignacio de Loyola, op. cit., L. 86, p. 849–860.

21. The Spanish word *confianza*, also appears very often in the works of Ignatius as a personal attitude and as advice to souls. See e.g. n. 32 of the Spiritual Diary of Ignatius (op. cit., 350). Later in the Jesuit tradition we can recall Fr. De Caussade and his deep idea of the «abandon to the Divine Providence».

22. L. 90, 9, op. cit., 296. (See also the paragraphs 7 and 21).

I therefore ask you to base all that you do entirely *upon God* and not to trust your own abilities, knowledge or reputation; and in this way I shall know that you are ready for all great trials, spiritual as well as temporal, which can afflict you, for God raises up and supports the humble, especially those who in small and lowly matters have seen, as in a polished mirror,²³ their own weaknesses and have conquered them.

When such individuals see themselves in worse trials than they have ever experienced before and are engaged in them, neither the demon with his minions, nor great storms at sea, nor evil and barbarous peoples on land or sea, nor any other creature can injure them,²⁴ since they are convinced because of their *great confidence in God*, that these can do nothing without his permission and consent.²⁵

It is not difficult to read this paragraph in a personal key. Xavier has crossed all these spiritual and temporal trials. He is now encouraging the young people to dispose themselves to enter into this «great confidence in God.» About the spiritual situation in Japan he writes: «We are compelled to place all our faith, hope and *confidence* in Christ our Lord, and not in any living creature.»²⁶ Later he insists with concrete allusions to the intercessors in the missionary struggles:

We live with great hope that he will grant us this grace, even though we have *no confidence* whatever in our own strength, since we are placing all our hopes in Jesus Christ our Lord, and in the Most Holy Virgin, St Mary his Mother, and in all the nine choirs of angels, taking from among all of them as our special protector St Michael the Archangel, the prince and champion of the whole Church militant, having great *confidence* in this archangel, who has been especially entrusted with the guarding of this kingdom of Japan.²⁷

It is one of the scarce paragraphs in which Xavier alludes to his «devotions.» They really resonate with the piety of his time.²⁸ This horizon of confidence and trust pervades the whole letter.

We conclude this section with an aspect characteristic of Xavier: his confidence in the intercession of the members of the Society of Jesus: «...and we have great *confidence* in recommending ourselves as we should to the whole celestial court that all our faults and failings will be overcome by the blessed of our *holy Society*, who are there continuous-

23. The mirror is a classical image in spirituality (cf. 1Co 13:12).

24. Cf. Ro 8:39.

25. L. 90, 22, op. cit., 31. See also paragraphs 24 and 31.

26. L. 90, 42, op. cit., 307. See also n. 43 and 48.

27. L. 90, 49, op. cit., 309.

28. St Michael is greatly worshipped among the Basque people even today, as well as in the whole Church (cf. in Rome the tradition of Castel Sant'Angelo, and the prayer of Leo XIII at the end of the Mass).

ly offering up our poor desires to the Most Blessed Trinity.»²⁹ The Society of Jesus is yet very young. It was approved by Paul II in 1540, which means only nine years previously, although some of their members have already died.³⁰

We must take as our intercessors on earth all those in the blessed *Society of the name of Jesus* and all those who are its friends and are devoted to it, so that we may, through their intercession, be presented to our holy Mother, the Universal Church, the bride of Christ our Lord and our Redeemer, in whom, we firmly, and without the possibility of a doubt, *believe*; and we *trust* that she will share with us her many endless merits.³¹

We underline his confidence in the «blessed Society» and also his profession of faith in the Catholic Church, which is yet another proof the Ignatian spirit of Xavier.³²

In summary, the spirituality of Francis Xavier is very simple. We have to dispose ourselves to *inner humility* during the formation period through the *experience* of distrusting ourselves and entrusting ourselves to God, with *great confidence*. Obedience and spiritual direction will help us to win the *temptations* of the *enemy* against it (e.g. the illusion to be more useful in another place).

In the apostolic life, through *great trials, toils and persecutions*, God gives us the *grace* of *inner humility*, embracing his will with much *confidence* and *consolation*, defeating the external *impediments*—storms, persecutions...—and the internal *temptations* of Lucifer—trust in our own abilities and reputation—and therefore we can *free souls* from the demon's slavery for the *glory of God* and their *salvation*. Obedience, prayer and discernment will help us to attain this religious and missionary fullness—«perfection.» This is the purpose of the Society of Jesus in sending its members to the Indies for the Mother Church's extension.

«Missionalia»

Francis does not usually employ the term «mission», but in his writings we find many elements and reflections that are indeed missionary. We would like to recall some of them in our Letter 90.

29. L. 90, 49, op. cit., 309.

30. For instance, Blessed Pierre Favre, one of the first companions of Ignatius and Xavier, who died in 1546 and was beatified in 1872.; but also Jean Codure who died in 1541.

31. L. 90, 51, op. cit., 309.

32. See: at the end of the Spiritual Exercises: «Some Rules to be observed in order to truly feel with the militant Church» (n. 352–370).

Voyage

The first paragraphs of our Letter (1–5) represent a description of the voyage from Malacca to Japan. This is the first purpose of the letter: «I must now let you know how God our Lord, in his infinite mercy, brought us to Japan.»³³ Xavier with Cosme de Torres, priest, Juan Fernandez, brother, and the three convert Japanese,³⁴ embarked for Japan in the afternoon of the Feast Day of St. John, 1549, in a ship of a pagan Chinese merchant who had promised the Portuguese captain of Malacca to bring them to Japan. The wind was excellent. Xavier realizes at once two problems: one practical and other religious. The voyage was a concrete experience of the hindrances to mission. Let us see his narration:

There were two things which were of particular concern to us during our voyage: the first of these was to perceive that we were not taking advantage of the favourable wind and weather which God our Lord was giving us and were running the risk of missing the monsoon which would take us to Japan, and would thus be forced to remain a year in China waiting for another monsoon;³⁵ the second was with regard to the many idolatries and sacrifices which the captain and his crew were constantly offering to the idol which they brought with them upon the ship,³⁶ and our inability to prevent them. They frequently cast lots, asking them if we could go to Japan or not, and if the winds needed for our voyage would last. At times the lots turned out to be good, but other times bad, according to what they told us and they themselves believed.³⁷

We can guess at the worry of Xavier since the beginning of the journey that lasted from June 24 to August 15. After taking on some supplies at an island—rudders and timbers—they set sail again. Xavier gives us some details of the kind worship on the ship:

The pagans trusting in the idol which they have very reverently placed with lighted candles on the poop of the ship, making it fragrant with incense derived from aguila wood;³⁸ and we placing our trust in God, the Creator of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ his Son, for whose love and service we had come to these regions for the increase of his most holy faith.³⁹

Later, another casting of the lots gives the answer that the ship would arrive in Japan but

33. L. 90, op. cit., 293. Xavier has recalled his previous report of the voyage to Malacca (cf. letter 84).

34. Cf. L. 85, 2 (from Malacca, on June 22, 1549), op. cit., 277–78.

35. Xavier was really upset. Finally, they will arrive in Japan after overcoming so many difficulties and hesitations. Xavier always sees the will of God. Through the letters we also understand the conditions of navigation at the time.

36. It was a Chinese custom, and J. Costelloe, refers to some studies about Chinese practices and superstitions e.g. H. Bernard, *Aux portes de la Chine*, Tientsin, 1933, in op. cit., 293 notes 5–6.

37. L. 90, 2, op. cit., 293.

38. It is a fragrant wood coming from Cochinchina that was used as incense (cf. J. Costelloe, op. cit., 294, note 9).

39. L. 90, 3, op. cit., 203–94. Note the outstanding missionary intention and prayer of Xavier.

not return to Malacca and the sailors began to «lost heart» and they «thought of wintering in China». The comment of Francis is yet again a trait of his missionary spirit: «See the trials that we were able to endure on this voyage, for it depended upon the demon and his minions whether we went to Japan or not...»⁴⁰

Xavier describes two disasters that they encountered on the eve of the Memorial of Mary Magdalene (July 21).⁴¹ There was a storm and the companion Manuel China, «because of the high seas... he fell down into the hold. We all thought that he was dead because of the length of this fall and the large amount of water that was in the hold... he suffered from a serious wound which he had received in his head... he remained for a long time unconscious. God our Lord was pleased to give him back his health».⁴² But the same day the daughter of the captain fell into the sea «and she... drowned near the ship before the eyes of her father and the rest. The tears and lamentations were so great that day and night that it was most pitiful to see the great misery in the souls of the pagans and the peril that threatened the lives of all of us who were on board the ship».⁴³ The problem grew because through casting the lots there was an answer that the «she would neither have died nor fallen into the sea if our Manuel, who had fallen into the hold, had died».⁴⁴

The commentary of Francis echoes this: «See upon what our lives were depending, upon the lots of demons and upon the power of their ministers and servants. What would have happened to us if God had permitted the demon to do us all the harm that he desired?»⁴⁵ This is what gives rise to the long digression about the demon which we have explained above. Let us now see the arrival in Japan, after overcoming another trial:

To return now to our voyage: when the seas became calm, we weighed anchor and let out the sail. With great sadness we all started on our way, and within a few days we reached the harbour of Canton in China. The captain and his crew were all in favour of wintering there; we alone with prayers, fears, and threats opposed them, saying that we would write to the captain of Malacca and tell the Portuguese how we had been deluded and how they had failed to keep their promises. God our Lord was pleased to change their minds so that they no longer wished to remain on the islands of Canton.⁴⁶ We therefore weighed anchor and set sail for Chinceo...⁴⁷ But when we were on the point of entering it in order

40. L. 90, 4, op. cit., 294.

41. They are crossing the present Vietnam. The Portuguese called Cochinchina the Kingdom of Annam, the region between Champa and Tonking.

42. L. 90, 5, op. cit., 294.

43. Ibid.

44. Ibid.

45. L. 90, 6, op. cit., 294–95.

46. It is Sancian and the neighbouring islands, where Xavier will die on December 3, 1552.

47. Changchow, a city of the province of Fukien, located to the West of the city of Amoy (see: J. Costelloe, op. cit., 297, note 17).

to winter there, since the monsoon for sailing to Japan was dying down, a sailboat came up and told us that there were many thieves in that harbour, and that we would be lost if we entered it. Because of this news and the sight of the ships of Chinceo that were a league from us, the captain, seeing that he was in great danger decided not to enter the harbour; and since the wind for taking us back to Canton was blowing against the prow and was assisting us at the poop for going to Japan, the captain and his crew, though unwilling, were forced to sail for Japan. Neither the demon nor his minions could block our passage, and, on the Feast of our Lady in August 1549, God thus brought us to these lands which we had so ardently desired to reach. And since we could reach no other harbour in Japan we sailed to Kagoshima⁴⁸ the land of Paul of the Holy Faith (Anjiro), where we were received with great love by all, both by his relatives and by those who were not.⁴⁹

A magnificent narration that needs no comment. We point out only the providential view of Xavier in all the events of the voyage.

First Contacts

Francis returns to the story of his arrival in Japan later in his report. He is really convinced of the good dispositions of the Japanese towards the «Holy Faith» and the presence of Anjiro is truly providential in these first moments:

In the city of Paul of the Holy Faith, our good and faithful friend, we were received with great kindness and love by the captain of the city and the major of the land and also by all the people, who were much amazed at seeing priests from the land of the Portuguese.⁵⁰ They were not at all offended by the fact that Paul had become a Christian, but rather had a high regard for him; and all, both his relatives and those who were not, were happy that he had been in India and had seen things which those here had never seen. The duke of this land was greatly pleased with him and paid him much honour, and he asked him many things about the manners and means of the Portuguese. Paul gave him an account of everything, and the duke showed that he was much content with it.⁵¹

The Duke of Satsuma was Shimatzu Takahisa (1514–1571). The Portuguese first arrived in Japan in 1543, on the island of Tanegashima, within his territories. From then on trade was conducted in his harbours and the use of bombards was introduced. The duke was a member of the Sōtō Zen sect.⁵² In a letter of January 20, 1548 from Cochin to his companions residing in Rome, Xavier tells us of his first contact with Anjiro—Paul of the Holy

48. It is the capital of the province of Satsuma on the island of Kyushu (J. Costelloe, op. cit., 297, note 19).

49. L. 90, 11, op. cit., 96–297.

50. The Jesuits, under the Portuguese Padraodo, were the first missionaries to evangelise Japan. Later, Valignano will defend this primacy and exclusivity. The missionary history of Japan will experience difficulties because of the different missionary methods of other Religious Orders that arrived from the Philippines. Cf. N. S. Fujita, *Japan's encounter with Christianity* (New York: Paulist Press, 1991), 125f.

51. L. 90, 38, op. cit., 306.

52. Cf. J. Costelloe, op. cit., 306, note 43. Note that from the first arrival of the Portuguese, there was only a span of 6 years (1543–1549).

Faith—and through him, his perceptions of the Japanese people. It is worth following this providential preparation for the Japanese mission:

A Japanese by the name Anjiro came with these Portuguese merchants in search of me, for the Portuguese who had gone there from Malacca⁵³ had spoken to him about me. This Anjiro came with the desire of making a confession to me, since he had told the Portuguese about certain sins which he had committed in his youth and had asked them for a cure so that God our Lord might pardon him for such grievous sins.⁵⁴ The Portuguese advised him to come with them to Malacca and to converse with me. He followed their advice and came to Malacca with them;⁵⁵ but when they arrived there, I had already left for Maluco. When he learned that I had gone to Maluco, he decided to sail back to his country of Japan. When he was within sight of the islands of Japan, such a great tempest arose that they were on the point of perishing. The ship on which he was sailing then turned around to go a second time to Malacca, where he met me and was happy to be with me. He came to visit me with great desires to know about the things of our law. He spoke Portuguese reasonably well and thus understood everything that I told him, and I all that he said to me. If all the Japanese were as eager to know as Anjiro, it seemed to me that this race was the most eager of all the peoples that had been discovered. This Anjiro wrote down the articles of the faith when he came for Christian doctrine. He frequently went to the church to pray, and he asked me many questions. He was a man who was very eager to know what was a sign of one who would make much of himself, and who would in a short time come to a knowledge of the truth. Eight days after Anjiro arrived in Malacca, I sailed for India and would have been very happy if this Japanese had come on the same ship that I did; but since he had acquaintances among other Portuguese who were going to India he did not think it would be good to leave the company of those who had treated him with so much honour and friendship. I expect him to arrive here in Cochin within ten days. I asked Anjiro if the people of Japan would become Christian if I went with him to his country. He replied that those of his country would not immediately become Christians but would first ask many questions and would see how I answered them and what I believed and, above all, if I lived in accordance with what I said. If I did two things well, that is, if I spoke well and replied satisfactorily to their questions, and lived beyond reproach, within half a year after they had come to know me, the king and the nobility and all the other prudent people would become Christian, since they are, according to him, a race ruled solely by reason.⁵⁶

This long quotation offers us a very personal insight into the background of Xavier's mission to Japan. The interest in Anjiro and his spiritual problems, the obstacles to their meeting and how they are overcome, the encounter with Xavier in Malacca, the cultural level of Anjiro, the further encounter in India and his baptism, and finally the information about the Japanese people and their reasonableness, with the two conditions neces-

53. He is Jorge Alvares, author of a famous letter that Xavier asked him to write in order to know Japan (cf. J. Costelloe, *op. cit.*, 178, note 63).

54. Anjiro had committed murder and he was looking for the peace of his soul (cf. J. Costelloe, *op. cit.*, 177, note 56). We stress the spiritual purpose of his conversion.

55. It was in 1545.

56. L. 59, 15–7, *op. cit.*, 177–78.

sary to embrace the Christian faith—answers and witness—weighed in favour of Xavier’s decision to travel to Japan.⁵⁷ From a missionary perspective we focus on the two conditions pointed out by Anjiro for the conversion of Japanese: doctrine and witness. We have here very important principles applicable to all kinds of missionary situations and that is to preach the Gospel in such a manner that it becomes an answer to the vital questions of the people who receive the evangelist. Hence, the need for deep preparation both philosophical and theological.⁵⁸ But also the need of a holy lifestyle. The missionary will be submitted to thorough observation in all the aspects of his conduct: words, deeds, garments, meals, rest, relationships, character, reactions, humour and prayer.⁵⁹

We know also that in the case of Xavier obedience, as normally expressed in religious life, would be impossible to practice because of the difficulty to consult and to receive answers from superiors. According to the Ignatian spirit, which Xavier had so well assimilated, the way to a good «election» (decision) was the coinciding of external circumstances with internal experience of the will of God, through consolation. Therefore, Francis dared to write to Ignatius in January 1549:

For these and many other reasons that it would take too long to relate, and because of the abundant information which I have on Japan, which is an island that is near China, and since there are no Moors or Jews in Japan but only pagans, and they are a race that is most inquisitive and eager to know what is new, both with respect to God and to other natural things, I have, with much interior satisfaction, decided to go to this land, for it seems to me that a people of this kind should by themselves continue to reap the fruit which those of the Society are producing during their own lifetime.⁶⁰

This last aspect seems to have special importance. Normally the religious are sent to a mission by the Superior, and Xavier is planning to do that with the students of Goa. However, in some particular cases, the missionary must take a decision on his own responsibility. He must then to be able to ponder the external call in the light of the circumstances and his interior experience through spiritual consolation. The decision would not be a caprice, but a mature «election», to use the Ignatian term.⁶¹ That was the case of Xavier. In this sense his missionary life appears rather more «charismatic» then

57. We would like also to emphasize the difficulties with the Portuguese governor and administrators, the abundance of Jesuits in India and the interior feeling of Francis, according to his deeply spiritual sense of mission (see Letters 59–61 and 70). (Cf. X. Leon-Dufour, op. cit., 261–69).

58. As we find often in the Jesuit missionaries, like de Nobili, Ricci and de Rhodes.

59. The importance of witness for the missionary work has been emphasized especially in the modern Church’s documents. See: *Ad Gentes* n. 11–12; *Evangelii Nuntiandi* n. 41 and *Redemptoris Missio* n. 42–43.

60. L. 70, 8, from Cochín on January 12, 1549, op. cit., 219. Note the «interior satisfaction.»

61. See: *Spiritual Exercises* n. 169–188.

«institutional.» He is closer to the Spiritual Exercises than to the Constitutions.

Language

We have here another missionary aspect of great importance. Xavier realizes immediately the necessity of the language. From the very beginning he encourages Anjiro in his translations.⁶² The feeling of Francis is well expressed in the following paragraph:

May it please God our Lord to grant us a knowledge of the language so that we can speak to them of the things of God, for we shall then, with his grace, favour and assistance, produce much fruit. We are now like so many statues among them. Since they speak and talk much about us, while we, not understanding their language, are mute. We are now learning the language like little children and may it please God that we may imitate them in their simplicity and purity of mind. We are forced to employ the means and to dispose ourselves to be like them, both in learning the language and in imitating the simplicity of small and innocent children.⁶³

This should be the first step of inculturation. In fact, in many cases missionary work in this linguistic field has been very important.⁶⁴

Missionary Intention

In our document there is a passage that deserves to be copied. In it Xavier states in a very spontaneous manner the intention of mission:

What we *intend* to do here is to bring the people to a knowledge of their Creator, Redeemer, and Saviour, Jesus Christ our Lord. We are living with confidence and trust that he will give us the strength, grace, help, and assistance to succeed in this. It seems to me that we shall not be opposed or persecuted by the laity themselves if they are not greatly encouraged to do so by the bonzes. We do not seek to quarrel with them, nor shall we cease through fear of them to speak of the glory of God and the salvation of souls. They can do us no more harm than what is permitted by God our Lord; and the evil which comes from their part is a favour which our Lord will confer upon us, if for his love and service and our zeal for souls, we should shorten the days of our life, since they would be the instruments through which this continuous death in which we live would come to an end; and after we had fulfilled our desires in a short time, we would go to reign forever with Christ. Our *intention* is to manifest and proclaim the truth no matter how much we may be contradicted, for God obliges us to have a greater love for the salvation of our neighbours than we have for our own mortal lives. With the help, favour and grace of our Lord, we *intend* to fulfil this precept if he gives us the inner strength to manifest him in the midst of so many idolatries as there are here in Japan.⁶⁵

62. «Paul (of the Holy Faith) wrote many things about our faith in his language» (L. 90, 39, op. cit., 306).

63. L. 90, 4, op. cit., 306.

64. The main book of Matteo Ricci (*The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven*) was written in Chinese. The Vietnamese even now use the alphabet invented by Fr. Alexander de Rhodes. The examples are countless.

65. L. 90, 48, op. cit., 308–309. (See: on the term «purpose», L. 90, 19, op. cit., 300).

We touch here the missionary summit of our document. Xavier establishes the purpose of the mission of the Society of Jesus in Japan, which not only lies in his personal awareness and but is also the goal of the Church's mission. Moreover, he gives us also the spirit in which he intends to accomplish his task, the prevision of hardships, and the ultimate end which is death and the eternal glory of the Christ's Kingdom, the fullness of the grace of God. The initial statement is extremely precise in its missionary perspective: «What we intend to do here is to bring the people to a knowledge of their Creator, Redeemer, and Saviour, Jesus Christ our Lord.» Note that the word «conversion» or the allusion to the sacrament of baptism is not present. We know the passionate interest of Xavier in baptizing pagans, and his joy on the Indian coast.⁶⁶

However, in our text from Japan, Xavier's formula is explicitly: «To bring the people to a knowledge...». We can interpret it saying that the intention of mission is to propose to the Japanese people the Gospel, or to give them the opportunity of listening to it. *Fides ex auditu*: «Faith comes from what is heard» (Ro 10:17). This is exactly to preach, to announce, to proclaim. The content of the message is Jesus Christ, «Creator, Redeemer and Saviour.» It is again a very complete formula. Jesus is the Creator Word; he is also the Incarnate Word, first to redeem us from our sins—«justification»—but also to lead us to the fullness of holiness and life—«salvation». Twice in this passage «confidence» in God for the fulfilment of this intention appears, and always with abundant synonyms: «He will give us the *strength, grace, help and assistance*»; «with the *help, favour and grace*... inner *strength*».

Xavier's perspective is from within the soul of the missionary. He has a very deep awareness of his own incapability, and he has constantly reflected on this necessity of God's grace, avoiding all manner of self-sufficiency. We can extend this necessity to the souls of the audience who wish to embrace the «holy faith». Here too the help, favour, grace, strength and assistance of God is absolutely necessary.⁶⁷

Also in our paragraph there is a consideration about «persecutions» that points to the horizon of death and martyrdom. This is the context of mission, the perspective of the cross and death in the missionary vocation.⁶⁸

66. Let us recall the famous passage of his Letter 20 (Cochin, January 15, 1544): «There is such a great multitude of those who are being converted to the faith of Christ in this land where I am that it frequently happens that my arms become exhausted from baptizing, and I can no longer speak from having recited so often the Creed and the Commandments in their language...» L. 20, 8, op. cit., 68.

67. See the doctrine about faith of Vatican II in *Dei Verbum* n. 5. Here we can insert the prayer of the missionary for the complete success of his ministry.

68. X. Leon-Dufour has studied the «thirst for martyrdom» in *St Francis Xavier* (cf. op. cit., 269–74). We find similar feelings in the Jesuit Martyrs of Canada.

The foresight of Francis is very concrete. The persecutions will not come from laymen, but from the bonzes. He does not intend to quarrel, but he will never cease in his missionary purpose. Once again, the confidence in God's Providence springs from his soul, and we realize his magnificent vision of these hindrances: the sufferings will be lived in «love», «service» and «zeal» and the enemies will be «instruments» to reach the everlasting kingdom of Christ through a death that will shorten the days of earthly life. Let us put a biblical question here: is there any clear «precept» in Scripture for having a greater love for the salvation of our neighbours than we have for our own mortal lives? Maybe the answer lies in this statement of John: «And we ought to lay down our lives for one another» (1Jo 3: 16). And elsewhere in the New Testament where it says that we do not fear those who can kill our body (Mt 10:28) and it is better to lose the life than to conserve it (Mt 10: 39). And finally, there is not greater love than to give up our life for those whom we love (Jo 15: 13), with the command of the Lord is preach the Gospel to all creatures (Mk 16:15).

Xavier declares: «We intend fulfil this precept», but always humbly, if God gives «the inner strength». Three years later, on December 1552, Xavier will pass away in the peace of the faithful servant, the apostle who has accomplished his mission (2Tm 4:7).

Missionary Call

We conclude this section about mission with another passage of our Letter which expresses a very universal call to spread the evangelisation. After an allusion to the leaders of Christian universities to come to Asia, Xavier adds:

Wishing to be taken by them as their least sons, we shall write to them as we would to our elders and fathers about the fruit which could be gained with their *help* and *assistance*, so that those who cannot come here may assist those who will come to offer themselves for the *glory of God* and the *salvation of souls*, and to share in greater *consolations* and spiritual *joys* than those which perhaps they have there. If the *disposition* of these regions will be as great as it is seems increasingly to be, we shall no hesitate to inform His Holiness,⁶⁹ for he is the vicar of Christ on earth and the shepherd of those who believe in him and also of those who are *disposed* to come to a *knowledge* of their Saviour and Redeemer and to be under his spiritual jurisdiction.⁷⁰ Nor shall we forget to write to all the devout and blessed friars who are living with many holy desires to glorify Jesus Christ in souls that do not know him; and no matter how many may come here, there will always be a place in

69. At that time the Pope was Paul III. (Among the letters of Xavier there are none directed to the Pope, but many allusions to His Holiness are found in them).

70. We observe here a rather juridical vision of the *ministerium petrinum*, according to the emphasis of the time which opposed the Reformers. (See: L. 142 of Ignatius to the emperor of Ethiopia, in San Ignacio de Loyola, op. cit., 951–56).

this great kingdom for them to fulfil their desires, and in another which is greater, China, where they can safely go without being ill-treated by the Chinese if they bring with them a safe-conduct from the king of Japan, who, we hope in God will be our friend and will readily provide us with this safe-conduct.⁷¹

With this call to the universities, to the Pope and to the Religious Orders for the mission of the Far East, we can conclude these remarks about the missionary vision of Xavier. The horizon of China becomes more and more attractive for the efficacious diffusion of the Gospel. Xavier is dreaming about a global missionary effort of Christianity in Asia for the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

«Nipponica»

This should be the last section of our analysis of Letter 90, the *Summa Xaveriana*. We have already found many remarks and impressions about Japan during our study. Now, we would like only to point to some concrete information and judgments in the pen of Xavier. They will show us his ability to observe the people in order to announce the Word of God.

Customs

Our writer dedicates one paragraph to describe Japanese meals and food. He recognizes that there is not «abundance of food» in Japan. The people did not fatten animals to eat. They learned to eat chicken from the Portuguese. «At times they eat fish, and rice, and wheat, though only a little. They have many vegetables to eat, and a limited number of fruits. They enjoy marvellously good health, and there are many who are elderly.»⁷² Xavier has an ascetical vision of this aspect of the Japanese culture and he testifies to «an excellent state of physical health.»⁷³ Of course, the observations about moral customs are more abundant and they manifest the great esteem of Xavier for the Japanese people.

First of all, the people with whom we have thus far conversed are the best that have as yet been discovered; and it seems to me that no other pagan race will be found that will surpass the Japanese. They have, as race, very fine manners; and they are on the whole good and not malicious. They have a marvellous sense of honour and esteem it more than anything else. As a race they are generally poor, but poverty is found among the nobles

71. L. 90, 56, op. cit., 311. Unfortunately, the later presence of friars—Franciscans and others—was not easy for the mission because of the different methods and policies (see: N. S. Fujita, op. cit., 25 f).

72. L. 90, 45, op. cit., 308.

73. Ibid. However, Xavier notes the excess in drinking: «As a race they are temperate in eating, though they are somewhat excessive in drinking.»

and for those who are it is not deemed to be a matter of reproach.⁷⁴

Xavier relates also some customs about marriage: a noble, though poor, never gets married outside of the noble families, and even if he is very poor, he will not accept an occasion of enrichment through a union with a family of wealthy commoners. The nobles, although poor, are always respected by the people. Francis shows admiration for this habit: «They thus have a greater esteem for honour than for wealth.»⁷⁵

He adds an interesting detail about arms: «As a race they are very courteous in dealing with each other; they have a high regard for arms and great confidence in them; they always carry swords and daggers, and all do so, both nobles and commoners; they carry a sword and dagger from the age of fourteen.»⁷⁶ In this same trend of honour, Xavier observes: «As a race they are intolerant of any offences or contemptuous words.»⁷⁷

The description of the society gives us a framework in some senses close to Medieval European society: «The common people are greatly attached to the nobles, and all the nobles consider it a great honour to serve the lord of the land, to whom they are very submissive.»⁷⁸ It is interesting to know the global description of Japanese morality directly from Xavier:

They are men who never gamble, since this seems to them to be a great disgrace, for those who gamble want something that is not theirs and can thus become thieves. They swear little, and when they do swear, it is by the sun.⁷⁹ A large proportion of the people can read and write, which is a great help in learning prayers and the things of God in a short time.⁸⁰ They do not have more than one wife.⁸¹ There are few thieves in the land, and the reason for this is the strict punishment which they inflict upon those whom they discover to be such, since they spare the life of no one; they have a profound abhorrence of this vice of theft. They are a people of great good will, very sociable, and eager to know.⁸²

74. L. 90, 12, op. cit., 97. The sense of the honour was also very deep in sixteenth century Spain.

75. L. 90, 13, op. cit., 297. Again, we find examples of this attitude in the theatre of classical Spanish writers, like Lope de Vega, Tirso de Molina, Ruiz de Alarcón and Calderón de la Barca.

76. Ibid, 397–98. Hideyoshi (1586–1592) forbade it under penalty of death; only soldiers could carry swords and daggers, according to Valignano (cf. Ibid, note 20).

77. L. 90, 14, op. cit., 298. That is a key to understand Japanese pride that we encounter in Japanese history, especially in modern times (cf. the Pacific War 1941–1945). Xavier will insist on this aspect of the Japanese people in Letter 96, 2, op. cit., 327.

78. Ibid.

79. According to the note of Schurmmar, this should be the Sun Goddess Amaterasu, the mistress of the imperial family (cf. Ibid., p. 298, note 24).

80. Xavier was always very attentive to this aspect (cf. L. 90, 40, op. cit., 306).

81. This is an enormous advantage for evangelisation. Polygamy constitutes a terrible hindrance (cf. some African customs, especially for chiefs).

82. L. 90, 14, op. cit., 298.

The educational aspect of Japan comes again at the end of the letter, when Xavier speaks of Miyako (Kyoto), the capital of the country and the residence of the emperor: «We have been told great things about this city, which is said to have more than ninety thousand dwellings, a large university with five main colleges, and more than two hundred residences for bonzes, and for others, like friars, who are known as Gixu,⁸³ and for nuns, who are called Amacata.»⁸⁴ And he adds:

In addition to this university of Miyako, there are five more leading universities, the name of which are as follows: Coya, Negru, Fieson and Omy.⁸⁵ These four are in the vicinity of Miyako, and we are told that each one of them has more than 3,500 students.⁸⁶ There is another university many leagues from Miyako that is called Bandu.⁸⁷ It is the largest and most important in Japan, and it has more students than any other... We are told so many things about the magnitude of these lands and universities that we shall first have the pleasure of seeing them before we can relate and write the truth about them; and if it is as we have been told, we shall write to you in great detail what we shall have learned from experience.⁸⁸

We underline the great attention of Francis to all the educational aspects and his admiration for this «learned people» of Japan. For him there is a «great disposition» to become Christian and he is planning an increasing presence of Jesuits in Japan. When he came back to India, only Fr. Cosme de Torres and Fr. Juan Fernandez remained there. The latter learnt Japanese in a short time. The translations of Christian payers into Japanese started immediately.

Religion

What are the impressions of Xavier on Japanese religion and monks? First, we have this general description:

They take great delight in hearing about the things of God, especially when they understand them... They do not adore idols in the shape of animals; most of them believe in men of ancient times who, according to what I have learned, were men who lived like philosophers.⁸⁹

83. Jisha, «servants,» the lowest order of bonzes.

84. L. 90, 53, op. cit., 310. The name Amacata means: *Ama* (Buddhist nun), *kata* (person).

85. Xaverian translation of Koya-san (Shingon sect), Negoro-dera, Hiei-zan and Kinsho-ji in the town of Kobe (cf: ibid, 310, notes 54–57).

86. It seems that the number is too large.

87. Ashikaga-gakko, in the province of Shimotsuke (Kwanto). See also: L. 98, 3, from Cochín to Simon Rodrigues, on January 30, 1552, in which Xavier proposed Bandu for the studies of Jesuits (op. cit., 349–350).

88. L. 90, 54, op. cit., 310–311. Letter 96, from Cochín, on February 29, 1552, to his companions in Europe, is this other report of Xavier's experience in Japan. Overall, we find confirmation of his first information.

89. L. 90, 15, op. cit., 298.

This is probably an allusion to the Buddhist gods Shaka (Buddha) and Amida. Xavier is more explicit in the letter he wrote from Cochin, after his stay in Japan. There he corrects his first opinion:

I tried to learn if these two, Amida and Shaka, had been men dedicated to philosophy. I asked the Christians to make an accurate translation of their lives. I discovered from what was written in their books that they were not men, since it was written that they had lived for a thousand and two thousand years, and that Shaka will be born eight thousand times, and many other absurdities. They were thus not men, but pure inventions of the demons.⁹⁰

As we can see, the knowledge of Francis about Buddhism was just incipient, and his judgment very negative. In our letter, we also have a slight allusion to Shintoism, the national religion of Japan, in these words: «Many of these worship the sun, and others the moon.»⁹¹ But Xavier adds: «They delighted in hearing things that are conformed to reason; and, even though there are sins and vices among them, when they are given reasons that show them that what they are doing is wrong, it seems to them that what is in keeping with reason is right.»⁹²

Xavier has often spoken of «bonzes», and he introduced this term into European languages. He distinguishes between the bonzes dressed «like friars» and the bonzes dressed «like clerics».⁹³ Sodomy is a public sin of bonzes. The paragraphs of Xavier here are very explicit:

These are inclined to sins abhorrent to nature, which is something that they admit and do not deny; and this is so public and manifest to all, both men and women, young and old, that they are neither surprised by it nor do they abhor it, since it is so very common. Those who are not bonzes are delighted to hear us condemn this abominable sin, since they believe that we have good reason for saying how evil, and how much they offend God, are those who commit such a sin. We frequently tell the bonzes that they should not commit such shameful sins; and they condescend to everything that we tell them, since they laugh at it and are not the least ashamed at being reproached for such a hideous sin. These bonzes have many boys, sons of noblemen, in their monasteries, whom they teach how to read and write, and they commit their abominations with them; and this sin is so

90. L. 96, 30, op. cit., 337 (see also: Ibid., 327–328). For a modern simple approach to Japanese Buddhism see: J. Renard, *Responses to 101 Questions on Buddhism* (Bandra, Mumbai: Better Yourself Books, 2001), especially pp. 46–53 (questions 16–18).

91. Susan-o, brother of the goddess Amaterasu who was frequently worshiped as the moon god (L. 90, 15, op. cit., 298, note 27).

92. L. 90, 15, op. cit., 298. In the city of Yamaguchi, the discussions about Christianity – the law of God – yielded many conversions, as Xavier reports in Letter 96, 16–17 (cf. op. cit., 332–333).

93. The first are married and belong to the Ikko Buddhist sect. They worship only Amida. The others belong to the Zen sect (see: L. 96, 29, op. cit., 336–37).

common that, even though it is deemed evil by all, they are not surprised by it.⁹⁴

Let us now see the description of married bonzes:

Among these bonzes are some who dress like friars: they are dressed in a grey habit; they are all shaved, and it seems that they shave both their head and beard every three or four days. These live very freely: they have nuns—*bikuni*—of the same order and live together with them; and the people have a very bad opinion of them, since they think that so much contact with the nuns is bad. All the laymen say that when one of these nuns feels that she is pregnant, she takes a drug which immediately expels the fetus. This is something that is very well known; and from what I have seen in this monastery of monks and nuns, it seems to me that the people are quite right in their opinion of them.⁹⁵

For Xavier that is the effect of the «persistence in vices that are contrary to nature.»⁹⁶

However, he tells us also of his friendship and frequent discussions with an old bonze:

I have frequently spoken with some of the most learned of those bonzes, especially with one who is highly esteemed by all in these regions for his learning, his life, and the office which he holds, and also for his advanced age, since he is some eighty years old. He is called Ninjitsu, which means «heart of truth» in the language of Japan.⁹⁷ He is like a bishop⁹⁸ among them; and if his person was in keeping with his name, he would be blessed. In the many conversations which I have had with him, I have found him hesitant and unable to decide if our soul is immortal, or if it dies together with the body; at times he has told me that it is; and at other times that it is not. I am afraid that it is the same with the other scholars. This Ninjitsu is an amazingly good friend of mine.⁹⁹

We discover here a little of Xavier works and his apostolic method: «many conversations». We realize also the steadfastness of the doctrine in our missionary since the content of his conversations are theological and anthropological points.

Later, Francis touches again on the life of bonzes and he gives us new aspects about their position in Japanese society: «...a large number of Japanese are bonzes, who are greatly obeyed in the land where they live, even though their sins are manifest to all. The reason why they are held in such great regard, it seems to me, is the fact that they are very abstemious: they never eat fish, or flesh, but only vegetables, fruit, and rice, and this only

94. L. 90, 16, op. cit., 299, about the non-married bonzes, but the same occurs with the married ones (see: Ibid., 17).

95. L. 90, 17, op. cit., 299. That is the reason why regarding morality Xavier praises more the laymen than the bonzes (see: Ibid., n.18)

96. Ibid, 18.

97. He was bonze of the Sōtō sect who was scholar and superior of the monastery of Fukusho-ji. He died in 1556 regretting that he had put off being baptized for so long (cf. Ibid, 300, note 32).

98. *Todo* in Japanese is a title of distinction.

99. L. 90, 19, op. cit., 300.

once a day and with great moderation; and they are given no wine.»¹⁰⁰ We observe here the asceticism of Buddhist monasteries.

There are many bonzes, and their houses have very poor incomes. I think the reason for the high regard in which they are held is their continuous abstinence, their refraining from intercourse with women under penalty of death, especially on the part of those bonzes who are dressed in black like clerics. And their ability to give some account—or better, to tell fables—about their beliefs. Since our tenets with respect to the knowledge of God and the salvation of men are so opposed to theirs, it is quite likely that we shall be severely persecuted by them, and not merely in words.¹⁰¹

This last paragraph introduces a balance to the severe judgment Xavier had previously formulated on the bonzes' morality. Even if the sexual abuse of boys in the monasteries seem to be accepted by all, monks and laymen, the style of life was really ascetical and the knowledge of Buddhist traditions so deep. In many of them continence was a true practice. According to Xavier, the main school for bonzes' formation was Bandu.¹⁰² After some months in Japan, and based on his close observations, Xavier comes to a positive opinion about the evangelisation of the country:

I am letting you know one thing for which you should all give great thanks to God our Lord, namely, that this island of Japan is well disposed for there to be a great increase of our holy faith in it.¹⁰³

Conclusion

Our purpose in this paper was only to comment on Letter 90 of St Francis Xavier as a summary of his spirituality and missionary experience. It deals with a historical document in order to know and to understand better the spirit of St Francis Xavier. After the introductory aspects—context and sources—we have tried to do an analysis in three chapters: *Spiritualia*, *Missionalia* and *Nipponica*.

The spirituality of Francis is the mature fruit of his encounter with Ignatius in Paris, his practice of the Spiritual Exercises and his first experiences with the Companions from Paris to Venice and Rome. He has embodied the Ignatian doctrine of «Discernment of Spirits» and during the short time of his missionary activity—1542 to 1552—he has applied

100. L. 90, 46, op. cit., 308.

101. L. 90, 47, op. cit., 308. These foresights of Xavier are truly prophetic here.

102. For a complete vision of this subject in history and today see: Y. Takeuchi, ed., *Buddhist Spirituality. Later China, Korea, Japan and the Modern World* (New York: The Crossroad, 1999).

103. L. 90, 20, op. cit., 300.

and lived the «Principle and Foundation»: the glory of God and the salvation of souls. Therefore we were able to encounter in Xavier a constant attention to his inner experience, beyond all theories and spiritual illusions, to discern through «desolation» and «consolation» the true will of God, and to make the correct «election» in his itinerary. We admire especially the abundant and ineffable «consolations» that God granted to his servant, even in the midst of all kind of terrible struggles. Because for Xavier the Christian life, and a fortiori the missionary life, is a true battle, in which the «temptations» of the «enemy» are always on the alert. He is particularly attentive to the illusion of the better service of God in other places and commitments, and in the subtle thought that we are able to do something for God by ourselves. And we understand very well in this passionate character the constant desire for «humility», which becomes the true foundation of spiritual life, since the beginning in the college, to the end in the core of the mission. We understand also that obedience is the concrete means to reach this humility and that finally the whole soul appears as clinging to «confidence», the love of the only God our Lord. This is the true strength of the apostle and the source of his peace.

This deep spirituality is lived and practised in the midst of temptations, trials, toils and persecutions. The description of the voyage to Japan in this sense is like a paradigm of the spiritual situation of the apostle. But in every encounter and new experience, Xavier is able to discern a further call of God. He obtains even the grace of transforming dangers into reasons for thanksgiving, in a progressive understanding of God's plan of salvation.

No doubt the abundant advice he gives to the students of Goa are really a mirror of his soul, his internal and external fights, his frequent spiritual enlightenment by the Lord; but he does not forget the concrete efforts necessary in order to proclaim the Gospel. His observations about the language constitute a missionary rule which is everlasting. His statements about the «intention» of the mission are the confession of his apostolic heart in which proclamation and witness match in a perfect synthesis of faith and love: «Our intention is to manifest and proclaim the truth no matter how much we may be contradicted, for God obliges us to have a greater love for the salvation of our neighbours than we have for our own mortal lives. With the help, favour and grace of our Lord, we intend to fulfil this precept if he gives us the inner strength to manifest him in the midst of so many idolatries as there are here in Japan.»

Indeed, we have found also very interesting information about Japan and the customs and the religion of the Japanese people. Through his letters, Xavier contributed to the knowledge of this culture in Europe. We stress here his accuracy on all kinds of features of Japanese culture, but especially his attention to the moral and religious aspects.

Even if the difficulties appear enormous, his confidence and trust in God and his vision of the good disposition of the Japanese for the Gospel were unwavering.

Finally we understand his appeal for the mission, which is a veiled critique of the comfortable and somewhat selfish European Christianity, especially in universities and clerical structures. Xavier Leon-Dufour, in his beautiful essay on the «mystical itinerary» of Francis Xavier states that he «has crossed the world as a contemplative in the action.»¹⁰⁴ Indeed, we behold in St Francis Xavier the accomplishment of this new ideal of holiness proposed by the Society of Jesus, and the simultaneous canonization of Ignatius and Xavier on 1622 by Gregory xv is like a seal on this spiritual itinerary to holiness.

The message of Xavier today is then the message of the living spirituality of the missionary life according to the will of God, and we can conclude with Leon-Dufour: «The itinerary followed (by Xavier) is not then the conquest of the world by the apostle, but the conquest of the apostle by God, or better, through the conquest of the world, the apostle allows God to conquer him.»¹⁰⁵

Do not the richness and wholeness of Xavier's Letter 90 from Kagoshima to Goa merit the title of *Summa Xaveriana*?¹⁰⁶

104. Cf. op. cit., 320. We recognize here the famous formula of Fr. Nadal applied to the life of St Ignatius.

105. Op. cit., 24.

106. Fernando Guillen Preckles, Sch.P., belongs to the Order of Saint Joseph Calasanz, Piarist Fathers and he is currently teaching at the Loyola School of Theology in Manila. We wish to thank Fr. John Fagan sx, for having revised the text.

La missione: quale motivazione?

FRANCESCO MARINI

Grandi cambiamenti sono intervenuti nella missione in questi ultimi decenni. Diversi fattori hanno reso la missione discutibile in teoria e difficile nell'attuazione pratica. Ma la ragione più profonda della sua crisi è interna: c'è incertezza sulle motivazioni stesse della missione¹. Su questo fattore, sulla proposta di una nuova motivazione e sulle sue conseguenze, intendo fermarmi qui, brevemente.

La missione fino al Vaticano II

L'annuncio della fede è stato sempre messo in relazione con la «salvezza» dell'uomo; ma cosa si deve intendere oggi per «salvezza»? Fino al Vaticano II, «salvezza dell'uomo» significava in pratica «salvezza dell'anima» ossia «andare in Paradiso dopo la morte»². Per la soteriologia preconciliare questo era obiettivo assoluto e universale; condizione per la sua realizzazione era la vita di grazia o «soprannaturale», che si riceve con i sacramenti e tutto ciò presuppone la fede esplicita; da qui l'urgenza dell'annuncio del Vangelo che rende possibile quella fede.

Questa visione ha orientato la missione dalla rinascita missionaria del Medioevo fino a san Francesco Saverio e ai missionari del xx secolo. I missionari si sono sobbarcati ai più grandi sacrifici «pur di salvare qualche anima»³.

1. Questa incertezza è tanto diffusa che costituisce quasi un punto di partenza per la *Redemptoris Missio* (RM). Gli interrogativi che circolano nella Chiesa vengono così riassunti dal documento pontificio: «È ancora attuale la missione tra i non cristiani? Non è forse sostituita dal dialogo interreligioso? Non è un suo obiettivo sufficiente la promozione umana? Il rispetto della coscienza e della libertà non elude ogni proposta di conversione? Non ci si può salvare in qualsiasi religione? Perché quindi la missione?» (RM 4).

2. Per raggiungere una più grande chiarezza, il discorso viene fatto qui in «bianco e nero» e quindi un po' semplificato. Per onor del vero occorre notare: a) la motivazione della missione era teologicamente più sfumata (fin dai tempi di S. Tommaso) anche se *in pratica*, la comprensione rigida del «al di fuori della Chiesa non c'è salvezza» era mentalità comune; b) l'attuazione della missione aveva una prospettiva abbastanza vasta, pur avendo il centro nella preoccupazione della «salvezza dell'anima»; c) questo obiettivo non è cosa da poco, anzi è importantissimo (e non viene perso nella prospettiva qui presentata) solo che era inteso in senso troppo stretto ed è oggi troppo lontano dalla sensibilità e visione comuni.

3. Una espressione chiara di questa visione la troviamo ancora in un testo del Congresso di Chicago (del 1960) sulla missione mondiale: «Negli anni del dopoguerra, più di un miliardo di anime è passato all'eternità e più della metà è caduta nei tormenti dell'inferno senza aver mai sentito parlare di Gesù Cristo: chi era e perché è morto in croce sul Calvario» (cit. da A. Torres Queiruga, *El diálogo de las religiones*, Cuadernos Fe y Secularidad, n. 18, Sal Terrae 1992, p. 7).

Però adesso questa concezione della salvezza non è più difendibile. Il Vaticano II ha diffuso la convinzione che ogni uomo che segue la sua coscienza viene in qualche modo raggiunto dalla grazia del Mistero Pasquale e quindi si può salvare: «Il cristiano, associato al mistero pasquale, assimilato alla morte di Cristo, andrà incontro alla risurrezione confortato dalla speranza. E ciò non vale solamente per i cristiani ma anche per tutti gli uomini di buona volontà, nel cui cuore lavora invisibilmente la grazia... Perciò dobbiamo ritenere che lo Spirito Santo dia a tutti la possibilità di venire in contatto, nel modo che Dio conosce, col mistero pasquale» (GS 22; cfr. anche LG 16).

Ma allora, per qual motivo la missione? Quale ne è l'obiettivo, se la fede esplicita in Gesù non è più condizione assoluta per salvarsi? La missione non è ormai superflua?

L'obiettivo della missione: quale salvezza?

C'è una stretta connessione tra la visione cristiana della salvezza e la missione: il cambio nella soteriologia comporterà inevitabilmente cambi nell'obiettivo e nelle modalità di attuazione della missione.

La soteriologia dopo il Vaticano II. Tentativo di sintesi

— Il Dio annunciato da Gesù non è semplicemente la ripresentazione del Dio dell'Antico Testamento, né si può paragonare con quello di altre religioni e tanto meno coincide con la figura del Dio della filosofia... Il Dio di Gesù è Padre misericordioso. Il suo è un amore incondizionato e gratuito. Non impone leggi per provare la nostra fedeltà, per vedere se per caso meritiamo il premio che ci vuol dare. Dio non si arrabbia perché offeso dalla disobbedienza dell'uomo⁴ fino al punto che deve punirlo. Il suo unico interesse è la vita piena dell'uomo. Per questo crea, e per questo entra nella nostra storia, facendo comunità con noi. Egli si pone così al servizio dell'uomo. Tutto ciò che va contro l'uomo, va contro Dio;

— Questa rivelazione della paternità di Dio è criterio di lettura per tutte le altre verità del Nuovo Testamento e per la nostra stessa esperienza umana. Guardando la bontà dell'uomo, Gesù commenta: «Quanto più il vostro Padre celeste» (Lc 11,13);

— Il Padre è la fonte della dignità, della autonomia e della libertà dell'uomo; anzi, Egli lo vuole creatore e salvatore⁵. Il progetto del Padre è fare dell'uomo un prolungamento del

4. «Non enim Deus a nobis offenditur nisi ex eo quod contra nostrum bonum agimus» (St. Thomas, *Contra Gentiles*, III, 122: «Dio non è offeso da noi se non in quanto agiamo contro il nostro stesso bene»).

5. La gloria di Dio è proporzionale alla potenza e alla vita dell'uomo. Difatti, come dice S. Tommaso, «non

Figlio, da introdurre al suo stesso livello di vita. Il Padre non vuole servi, ma figli; non chiede che l'uomo sia per Dio, ma che vivendo di Dio, sia come Lui — ossia dono di sé;

— La piena realizzazione dell'uomo, intesa nella creazione, si raggiunge nella comunione offerta da Cristo (ecco la salvezza) e questa pienezza costituisce la gloria di Dio: «*Gloria Dei vivens homo; vita autem hominis, visio Dei*» (S. Ireneo, *Adversus Haereses*, IV, XX, 7)⁶. La comunione alla quale Dio chiama è talmente profonda che non può essere vinta da nulla: la viviamo ora in maniera incipiente e la vivremo in pienezza oltre la morte, come sua continuazione e coronamento;

— La salvezza cristiana è un fatto profondamente personale⁷ non solo nel senso che tocca la persona ma soprattutto perché si realizza in una relazione interpersonale. Dio si rivela e contatta gli uomini «per invitarli e ammetterli alla comunione con Sé» (DV 2; cfr. 1Gv 1,2-3). Ogni persona è oggetto di apprezzamento e amore da parte del Padre, a prescindere o meglio nel contesto della propria situazione e limitatezza. Egli difatti conosce il nome di ogni stella e chiama per nome ognuna delle sue pecore. Così che ogni persona può dire, come Paolo: «Cristo mi ha amato ed ha dato se stesso per me» (*Gal* 2,20), «che sono il primo dei peccatori» (*1Tim* 1,15). Anzi, dove il peccato ha abbondato, lì è sovrabbondata la grazia (cfr. *Rom* 5,20);

— La salvezza cristiana è personale, ma non individualistica. Anzi, ha un influsso molto ampio fino a raggiungere il campo sociale, storico e perfino politico: ha la stessa estensione della vita umana stessa;

— La salvezza cristiana come «comunione» è anche «liberazione»: dalla nostra condizione di separatezza e peccato e quindi tendenzialmente, da ogni male. La vita umana difatti viene sempre sperimentata anche come limitatezza e sconfitta: l'uomo è umiliato e colpito dalla sofferenza, dagli errori/colpe e alla fine, dalla morte. La comunione con Dio rappresenta (a suo modo) una liberazione e un superamento di quella negatività, co-

est minoris potestatis, sed maioris, facere aliquid per alios, quam per seipsum» (ST, III, 42, 1 ad 2). Perciò l'invidia o il sospetto nei confronti di Dio sono inconcepibili secondo la rivelazione cristiana. La contrapposizione tra Dio e l'uomo è frutto della teodicea illuministica e di una teologia cristiana acritica. La Bibbia presenta la contrapposizione Dio-uomo come opera dell'Avversario: il pensare Dio come antagonista dell'uomo, è la menzogna che fa morire l'uomo (cfr. *Gen* 3).

6. Nella vicenda di Gesù abbiamo una tale identificazione di Dio con l'uomo che tutte le affermazioni che Gesù fa su di sé nel Vangelo, si possono applicare al credente e addirittura all'uomo in quanto tale.

7. Nella fede cristiana il «per chi» ha sempre la precedenza nei confronti del «per che cosa». È nella relazione che trova avvio e compimento la ricerca del senso (la verità) e la scoperta della responsabilità (i valori) ed è nella relazione che si condensa e si perfeziona il senso del tutto (l'estetica). «Occorre evangelizzare... in modo vitale, in profondità e fino alle radici, la cultura e le culture dell'uomo... partendo sempre dalla persona e tornando sempre ai rapporti delle persone tra loro e con Dio» (EN, 20). La salvezza cristiana non consiste in un ordine di cose, ma in una relazione più piena.

minciando già fin d'ora. Perciò il Vangelo non è un codice morale che deve essere attuato perché l'anima poi possa salvarsi, ma una proposta di vita piena, già fin d'ora (cfr. Gv 10,10)⁸. Dalla comunione con Dio si origina una vita nuova e piena⁹. «La missione di Dio deve superare la estraneità radicale dell'uomo — estraneità umana da Dio, dal prossimo, da se stesso, dalla natura — per superare qualsiasi sfida, per convogliare ogni cosa verso un'armonia vertice dove regna sovrano il suo Amore»¹⁰.

— La salvezza quindi non è qualcosa che accade al termine della vita, come introduzione alla situazione nuova e definitiva, né un episodio della o nella vita, o una aggiunta speciale, una qualità supplementare al vivere normale (la grazia come qualità dell'anima o disposizione benevola di Dio nei nostri confronti). La salvezza non tocca una parte o un aspetto della vita: è tutta la vita che è salvata; la nostra vita storica, nelle sue condizioni attuali, qui e ora. È vivere in una nuova relazione con Dio, con gli altri, con la natura;

— La vita come ce l'ha insegnata Gesù e cioè, vivere con e come Gesù stesso, significa quindi sviluppare pienamente le potenzialità umane, come Figlio e come fratello. L'uomo è creato come creatura che ha bisogno di ed è capace di ricevere la pienezza nella relazione profonda e globalizzante con il Padre e con i fratelli/sorelle. *Diventare cristiano significa quindi diventare pienamente uomo*. Il Vangelo ci insegna a vivere («la grazia ci insegna a vivere saggiamente...», Tt 2,12) attraverso «la Parola di Dio umana e umanizzante...», *Fides et Ratio*, n. 102). In Gesù, grazie alla rivelazione cristiana, il mistero dell'uomo si rischiera (cfr. AG 8) e l'enigma del dolore e della morte si illumina (cfr. GS 22). *Il Vangelo ci mostra e ci offre il modo di diventare veramente umani*;

— La salvezza (questa comunione e liberazione) che viene offerta e attuata da Dio in ogni

8. Come dice Bonhoeffer, diventare cristiani non significa entrare in una nuova religione, fare degli atti religiosi, distinti da altri, ma semplicemente diventare uomini. Cristo non ci chiama ad una nuova religione, ma semplicemente alla pienezza della vita umana (cfr. D. Bonhoeffer, *Resistenza e Resa*, Milano: Mondadori, 1969, p. 266).

9. «La salvezza nell'aldilà deve delinearsi in una forma di vita che renda l'uomo quaggiù umano e perciò conforme a Dio» (Joseph Ratzinger, *Fede Verità Tolleranza. Il Cristianesimo e le religioni del mondo*, Siena: Cantagalli, 2003, hal. 216).

10. E. Castro, citato da N. E. Thomas (ed.), *Teks-teks Klasik Tentang Misi dan Kekristenan Sedunia. Melengkapi Adikarya David Bosch, Transformasi Misi Kristen*, Jakarta: PT BPK Gunung Mulia, 2001, p. 191. E Bianchi aggiunge: «Nel Cristianesimo... io trovo quella totale valorizzazione dell'umano che mi porta a dire che ciò che è autenticamente umano è anche veramente spirituale, e che criterio dell'autenticità spirituale è il rispetto della verità dell'umano. In questo senso io comprendo l'affermazione neotestamentaria che Gesù Cristo «ci insegna a vivere» (Tt, 2, 12)» (E. Bianchi, *MicroMega* 2000/2: 80). «La verità della fede la si misura sulla verità e sulla bellezza della vita che suscita... Si tratta di vivere una vita bella, dove il termine designa la qualità delle relazioni sia con Dio che con gli uomini, che con le realtà terrene e le creature tutte: la fede, infatti, è questione di relazioni! Questa bellezza deve declinarsi come comunione, come capacità di creare comunità in cui uomini e donne vivano insieme gratuitamente, semplicemente per onorare il primato dell'Evangelo, e narrare che vale la pena vivere e morire per Cristo» (Ivi, p. 83).

tempo, verso ogni persona, diventa chiara in Gesù. Per salvare le anime, bastano le religioni; anzi, basta la coscienza. Ma per riempire la vita di un uomo, ora, per sviluppare le sue potenzialità appieno, ci vuole il Vangelo. La qualità della vita di una persona non è la stessa a seconda che uno conosce, riceve e entra nella comunione con Dio oppure non la riceve, sia pure senza sua colpa;

— La salvezza cristiana rende l'uomo protagonista umile e libero nel ricevere dal Padre, forte e responsabile nel servire il prossimo. Come il Padre dona se stesso all'uomo (e in questo modo ci dona tutto) così il discepolo di Gesù dona se stesso per il servizio ai fratelli. E come Gesù realizza la sua relazione di figlio attraverso e nella solidarietà con i fratelli, così pure il credente attualizza la sua comunione trinitaria nel consegnarsi ai fratelli. E come tutto dipende da Dio così tutto è consegnato alla responsabilità umana, sia nel campo della natura come della storia e della salvezza. Dio non si immischia nelle faccende della storia come un fattore tra tanti¹¹. Ci fa dono di Sé e così «compie» la nostra umanità e ci abilita a costruire una vita e una storia nuova ossia veramente umana¹².

L'urgenza della missione

Se quanto detto sopra è vero, allora possiamo capire perché l'annuncio del Vangelo è necessario, anzi urgente.

Le leggi fisiche lavorano anche quando noi non le conosciamo. Le caratteristiche di un carattere influenzano il comportamento, anche quando non ne siamo coscienti. Ma una relazione interpersonale e un compito di cui essere responsabili non possono essere attualizzati senza la consapevolezza e la libertà. Anche se uno dicesse che la presenza di Dio si trova misteriosamente nel cuore dell'uomo, bisognerebbe sempre riconoscere che non potremmo viverla in maniera umana senza conoscerla (l'annuncio del Vangelo), perché appunto solo attraverso la consapevolezza e la libertà noi umani possiamo vivere qualcosa umanamente. Al di fuori di quella consapevolezza e libertà, possiamo *subire* qualcosa, ma non *viverlo in maniera specificamente umana*.

Se un bambino, cresciuto in un orfanotrofio, con la convinzione di non avere genitori, un certo giorno incontra una persona che è effettivamente suo padre, non è possibile

11. «Il Signore ha fatto l'uomo e nello stesso tempo gli ha affidato la responsabilità riguardo a se stesso» (Sir 15,14): l'uomo è voluto come creatore e salvatore.

12. La vita cristiana non è che la continuazione e la traduzione in pratica di quella comunione teologale. «Il discorso morale e l'insistenza etica, fondamentale e irrinunciabile, è conseguenza della fede cristiana e non il suo contenuto qualificante» (G. Colzani, «Moderno, postmoderno e fede cristiana» in *Aggiornamenti Sociali*, 12/1990, 793).

che instauri con lui una relazione filiale, data la sua convinzione di essere orfano. Perché quella relazione diventi reale, occorre prima che sappia che ha un padre e che è quella persona lì, davanti a lui. Solo allora potrà scoprire una dimensione nuova nella sua vita.

Senza l'annuncio del Vangelo, non è possibile che un uomo viva *in maniera umana* la sua relazione con Dio come Padre, con tutte le conseguenze che ne derivano. Ora, precisamente quella salvezza che viene offerta da Gesù è annunciata attraverso il Vangelo. Essa può umanizzare la vita di una persona se è conosciuta e accettata.

Il proprietario del terreno dove era nascosto il tesoro in nessun modo ne poteva godere, perché neanche sapeva della sua esistenza. Ma il lavoratore che ha scoperto il tesoro, si è comportato di conseguenza e la sua vita è cambiata radicalmente (cfr. Mt 13,44).

Dio vuol salvare l'uomo *umanamente*, non a prescindere dalla sua consapevolezza e libertà. È per questo che si è fatto solidale con l'uomo e così facendo gli mostra come diventare pienamente umano. Il Vangelo ci insegna a vivere in pienezza, non a morire in modo da «andare in cielo».

Ma c'è un altro motivo, più contingente, che, almeno a me nella situazione in cui mi trovo, mi induce alla comunicazione del Vangelo e cioè che ciò che trovo attorno, nelle religioni non cristiane, nelle ideologie... è veramente diverso (pur nella sua ricchezza, s'intende) e, credo, desideroso di alcune novità proprie del Vangelo. Valori come la gratuità, il rispetto e l'amore per ogni persona nonostante le differenze da noi, la libertà dal legalismo, l'intimità della relazione con Dio... sono cose che non si trovano e sono talmente apprezzate, che quando appaiono, sono più forti della calamita: attirano fortemente e sono contagiose! Non c'è bisogno di molti discorsi con gli altri: solo la spiegazione e un po' di esempio sono già «sconvolgenti».

In conclusione, la missione è urgente perché offre all'uomo una proposta che lo rende più umano, a cominciare da ora. L'annuncio del Vangelo non *illumina* solo ciò che l'uomo sta vivendo, ma è una notizia che *rende possibile* un modo nuovo di vivere. Ognuno deciderà ciò che gli sembrerà meglio, ma presentare questa proposta del Padre, non può essere ristretto a qualcuno, né si può rimandare a quando ci saranno migliori condizioni per il suo annuncio, costituendo essa stessa le nuove «condizioni del vivere» per la persona umana (cfr. EN 5)¹³.

13. P. Francesco Marini attualmente svolge la sua attività missionaria in Indonesia. Per dodici anni è stato Generale dei Missionari Saveriani.

A Look at the History of the Catholic Church in Japan Today

A Dialogue with Fr. Franco Sottocornola

CARLO PELLICCIA

This paper aims to present the Catholic Church in Japan today through a dialogue with Fr. Franco Sottocornola.¹ The latest statistics, recently published by the Japanese Bishops' Conference, maintain that the number of Japanese Catholics is still low. The Catholic Church represents a small community in a country rich in religions. José Maria De Vera SJ describes it in his study as a little bonsai: small, exquisite and cultivated.² In spite of many difficulties, Catholics work lovingly in many fields of the Church. They spread the message of the Gospel, remembering the apostolate of the first European missionaries and the persecutions of many «heroes». Four hundred sixty-two years after the arrival of Francis Xavier (1506–1552), on 15 August 1549, in Kagoshima the Catholic community once more has an important goal: to lead people to know the message of Jesus Christ.



C.P.: In an interesting book written by the Italian missionary Pino Cazzaniga,³ PIME, I read that the Catholic Church in Japan is able to speak about dappi 脱皮. This is the translation of the term inculturation: the transformation of a culture by faith and the cultural re-expression of faith by culture.⁴ A professor from University of California in his recent article⁵

1. Franco Sottocornola is a Xaverian Missionary born in Bergamo in 1935, in Japan since 1978. After the doctorate in Philosophy at St Thomas University in Rome and in Theology at the Institut Catholique in Paris (with a specialization in Liturgy), he taught for many years at the Theological Institute of the Xaverians in Parma. He is a Consultor of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, member of the Commission for Interreligious Dialogue of the Japanese Bishops' Conference and member of the Liturgical Commission of the Japanese Bishops' Conference.

2. J. M. De Vera, «I Gesuiti in Giappone ancora sulle orme di Saverio,» in C. Pelliccia (a cura di), *Atti del Convegno di Studi sul Giappone. La missione cattolica nella Terra del Sol Levante—23 maggio 2005* (Napoli: Tipografia Stagrame, 2005), 24–31.

3. P. Cazzaniga, *Giappone missione difficile. I 50 anni del PIME nel Paese del Sol Levante 1950–2000* (Bologna: EMI, 2001).

4. The Japanese Church uses the *gairaigo* 外来語 from the English: インカルチュレーション or sometimes *jisseika* 実生化. Cf. F. Tosolini, «Inculturazione: alla ricerca di paradigmi,» *Quaderni del Centro Studi Asiatico*, 2006/4: 148–55.

5. Cf. G. Vanderbilt, «Postwar Japanese Christian Historians, Democracy, and the Problem of Wartime Christianity on Japanese Terms,» in *Christianity and the State in Asia, Complicity and Conflict* (Singapore: Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore, 2007).

deals with Nihonteki Kirisutokyō 日本的キリスト教 — that is «Christianity on Japanese terms»: the Catholic Church has to create an «indigenization,» an «Asian Christianity,» for in this way it could avoid the dangers of evangelism.

How far has the inculturation of Japanese Religious Values in Christianity gone in this direction?

F. S.: A whole book would be needed to answer this question. «Inculturation» is an abstract term. And the question usually put with this term, as in this case, is an abstract question. To this abstract question there is no answer—I think. To start with, and leaving aside the question of what we mean by the term «culture,» to what do we refer when we speak of: «Japanese culture»? Do we mean the «classical» culture (*kimono*, *shamisen* music, the tea ceremony, the *samurai*, life on *tatami* mats, and so on)?

To be sure: modern young people would not feel at home with this kind of «Japanese culture». Food, housing, speech, dress, way of thinking and behaving have undergone a deep transformation, first with the Meiji «cultural revolution» and then, after World War II, with an even deeper, and fast evolving, new «cultural transformation» that is still going on. «Western» ways of life and thinking are mingling with «classical» or ancient ways of life and thinking. Globalization is an ongoing process. What is the meaning of «inculturation» within this on-going process?

Let us take, for example, the problem of «inculturation» in the field of Christian Liturgy, a subject I am particularly acquainted with, since I have been working with the national Committee on the Liturgy for the past twenty-four years. (Cf. F. Sottocornola, «La traduzione del Messale Romano in giapponese,» *Ad Gentes*, 2010, 14/2: 215–23). What elements or aspects of «Japanese culture» should we keep in mind when we think of the «inculturation» of the Liturgy? Inculturation is a long historical process which needs centuries to develop, not so much by means of visible external changes, as by means of a spiritual change. Culture is first of all a «spiritual» dimension of human social life, which expresses itself in visible signs. This long process (the inculturation of Christianity in modern Japan) is still at its very beginnings. However, here at Shinmeizan,⁶ we have

6. Shinmeizan was founded in 1987 by Fr. Franco Sottocornola with the cooperation of Ven. Tairyū Furukawa, founder of the Buddhist Temple Seimeizan in Kumamoto, dedicated to the memory of Dr. Albert Schweitzer. It is a house of prayer and centre for interreligious dialogue, situated in the midst of woods on the southern hills of the town of Nagomi, on the island of Kyūshū. In this silent spot, in the midst of living nature, Shinmeizan aims to foster a Christian spiritual experience that takes inspiration from the treasures of the cultural tradition of Japan. Following the invitation and the guidelines of the Catholic Church, Shinmeizan engages in sincere and friendly interreligious dialogue, understood as a participation in God's own dialogue of salvation with all humankind. This house wants to promote, through several activities,

made a choice. Considering that every culture has a kernel, a point in its history, when some particularly typical elements of this culture develop and begin somehow to define its identity, we have chosen three of these elements, and have tried to build on them our attempt to inculturate our life here in the spiritual tradition of Japan.

a) The perception of nature as a place («*locus*», «*topos*») of religious experience (dialogue with Shintō, the original religion of Japan, provides the cultural background and the incentive to rediscover this element of biblical revelation);

b) The appreciation and the practice of silence, not only as a form of ascetical discipline, but also as a way of «apophatic approach» to the mystery of God, stressing and experiencing His transcendent ineffability (dialogue with Buddhism demands that we re-value and deepen this aspect of the Christian spiritual tradition);

c) The spirituality of the *tea ceremony* (*sadō*) as the art of human encounter, the experience of human harmony, which stresses a very Japanese way to live the Christian commandment of love.

I think that here we are at the heart of the Japanese classical tradition, and that these cultural values are not only to be preserved for the new and the following generations, but also to be shared with the rest of the world.

C.P: *When Pope John Paul II visited this country in 1981 he noted in the Church of Japan a strengthened sense of responsibility for peace, a renewed enthusiasm for evangelization, and a lively consciousness of self-identity. The Episcopal Commission for Social Activities also wants to defend the dignity and the mission of human beings, created by God and redeemed by Jesus Christ. When the missionaries arrived in Japan they wanted to live and to testify God's Mercy: to clothe the naked, to give food to the hungry, to take care of the sick.*⁸

cooperation among cultures and religions both at the local and at the international level. Currently, the residents are two Xaverian Missionaries (Fr. Franco Sottocornola and Fr. Daniele Sarzi Sartori), two Xaverian Missionaries of Mary (Sr. Maria De Giorgi and Sr. Reyna Hernandez) a Conventual Franciscan friar (Fr. Pietro Sonoda) and a Missionary of the Christ the King (Sr. Machiko Hirama). Cf. M. De Giorgi, «La montagna della vita. Un'esperienza di dialogo interreligioso in Giappone», *La Rivista del Clero italiano*, 1995/76: 611–26; M. De Giorgi, «La montaña de la verdadera vida: experiencia de diálogo en Japón», *Testimonio*, 2005/209: 99–105. M. De Giorgi, «Tradizione spirituale giapponese e preghiera cristiana. Il cammino di Shinmeizan», in C. Rossigni and P. Scialdini, eds., *Dizionario della preghiera* (Città del Vaticano: Editrice Vaticana, 2007), 710–18; M. De Giorgi, «Shinmeizan. Il tempio per dialogare», *Missione Oggi*, 2009/7: 4–14; M. De Giorgi and F. Sottocornola, «Shinmeizan: un cammino di dialogo interreligioso in Giappone», *Ad Gentes* 2007/1: 18–26.

7. A. Tollini, «La resa del termine "amore" negli scritti dei primi missionari occidentali in Giappone», *Asiatica Veneziana*, 2001–02/VI–VII: 249–64.

8. Cf. J. Monsterleet, *Storia della Chiesa in Giappone dai tempi feudali ai nostri giorni. Storia e problemi missionari* (Roma: Edizioni Paoline, 1959).

What is the social action of the Catholic Church at the present time?

F. S.: The life of the Church, including the Church of Japan, has always been characterized by attention and care for the needy, thus fulfilling the Lord's commandment to love our neighbors as ourselves—or, better still: as He has loved us.

In 1987 the *National Incentive Convention on Evangelization* (NICE) was held in Japan, asking for, and promoting, an open Church, i.e. a Church which, in line with the orientation of Vatican II, would not live apart from, but with and for the world. Since then, even at an official level, the involvement of the Catholic Church in social life has become more and more active and lively. So much so that, because of the human propensity to go from one extreme to the other, not a few people now are concerned with a Church they see as being more involved in social issues than in evangelization and catechesis. One of the main structures for the social activity of the Catholic Church in Japan is *Caritas Japan*, with its diocesan and national organization, and its overseas activities.

Another field of social involvement is the active support given to the religious and political movement that is fighting to protect article 9 of the Constitution (renouncing war as a way to settle international disputes and barring Japan from deploying or having atomic weapons, or having an army, except for self defense). But most of all, one has to remember the enormous efforts made by the Catholic Church in Japan, especially through the work of Religious Institutions, to run schools, from kindergartens to universities, homes for the disabled and for the aged, etc. Given the relatively small number of Catholics in Japan, their social presence and involvement is very impressive. (Statistics for the year 2010 can be found in *Japan Mission Journal*, 2010/64–4: 286).

As Shinmeizan, we have taken part for a decade (since 1989) in the pilgrimages for reconciliation, from Japan to China, organized by the late Ven. Furukawa Tairyu, to promote a better knowledge of the events that accompanied the Japanese invasion of China, especially the massacre of Nanking. We crowned this campaign by building, with the help of the Chinese Red Cross, a Center for disabled children in Fangshan, 70 km South of Peking (1997).

C.P: *In Japan there are many famous Catholic schools and universities. When the English ambassador came to Japan in 1932 he said that «The Roman Catholic mission schools have a high reputation in the country».⁹ These places of education are based on the teachings*

9. A. Zambarbieri, «Religione, cultura, nazionalismo. Un'immagine del cattolicesimo in Giappone alla metà degli anni trenta del xx secolo,» in *Atti del XXVIII Convegno AISTUGIA*, Venezia 2004: 321.

of Christianity and the Catholic spirit.¹⁰ In the first Catholic University of Japan, Sophia University (Jōchi Daigaku 上智大学), founded in 1913 under the direction of Hermann August Hoffman (1864–1937)¹¹ the Jesuits promoted many interesting and intellectual activities, while at the same time laboring to spread the message of the Gospel.¹² Many students aren't Catholic, but they attend a Catholic school to receive a good education and sometimes they become friends with teachers and religious men.

How do the Catholic schools and colleges contribute to increase the number of the Japanese Catholics? Can we consider them a valid instrument for the «new evangelization?»

F. S.: I would answer in a positive way to the question. According to the results of research carried out years ago among Catholics baptized as adults in Japan, asking for the reason or occasion which had prompted their request to be baptized, the first answer, i.e. the largest number, quoted the influence received while studying at a Catholic school.

The most common involvement in education by the Catholic Church in Japan is at the level of kindergarten. There are 537 Catholic kindergartens in Japan, with 68,540 children. That means a lengthy contact with almost as many families, and, moreover, contacts with always new children and families, as a child usually goes to kindergarten for no more than three years. Another level of the Church's commitment to education is in the universities. There are 21 Catholic universities in Japan! To which one must add 17 Junior Colleges. Not all the schools, however, use their great opportunity to bring the Good News of Christ to young people to the same extent. They certainly offer an opportunity for an encounter with Christ, but much depends on the teachers and their preparation, their personal commitment and involvement.

At Shinmeizan, since 2001, on the request of Prof. Fujino of the University of Industrial Medicine of Kitakyushu, we have held annual courses for university students on «Religion. Religions. Interreligious Dialogue.» One of Shinmeizan members, Fr. Peter Sonoda, OFM Conv. is president of Nigawa Gakuen (Nigawa, Hyogo-ken), an educational institution, from kindergarten to High School, with about 2.000 pupils, which could be rightly described as a model Catholic school in Japan. Both Fr. Franco Sottocornola and

10. Cf. P. G. Manni, «Lasciate che i pargoli vengano a me (Mt 19,14). L'esperienza di primo annuncio nelle scuole materne cattoliche dei Missionari Saveriani in Giappone,» *Quaderni del Centro di Studi Asiatico* 2010, 5/1: 9–15; P. Oggioni, «La nostra vita in Giappone,» *Il Vincolo* 1958: 27.

11. P. Pfister, «Japon – CJ restaurada (desde 1908),» in C. O'Neill - J. M. Dominguez, *Diccionario Historico de la Compania de Jesus, Biografico-Tematico II* (Madrid: Universidad Pontificia Comillas 2001), 2136–38.

12. L. Muratori, «Le missioni e la scuola in Giappone,» in *Atti della quarta settimana di studi missionari*, Milano 1964, 62.

Sr. Maria De Giorgi of Shinmeizan, have taught for several years in Japanese Universities.

C.P: In today's churches, the number of young adults (aged 18–30) is dramatically low. Young people don't like to attend church because they consider it very boring, «an institution with many strict rules.» Some missionaries work with young people to introduce them to the knowledge of the Catholic Church and the Gospel. They are sometimes happy to have the task of witnessing to the faith in a special way in the present. John Paul II said, at World Youth Day in 1989 in Santiago de Compostela, that the young can build a new civilization of love, of justice and of peace. In this way some young people can set in motion the desire to follow Jesus with their own life or to choose consecrated life.

How can the Catholic Church spread the Gospel message to the young generations? How can it attract them to engage in some Catholic activities?

F. S.: Not only I, but all the Bishops and Priests, and, especially, all Catholic parents of Japan would like to know the answer to this question! It is a big problem. But, unfortunately, not only for Japan! It is the same in Europe, as far as I know. The main reason, in my opinion, lies in the fact that modern society has reduced considerably, or broken away entirely from, the importance of tradition in education.

Since World War II, but especially since the 1968 cultural revolution, parents have become unwilling, or even unable, to hand down their own faith to their children. It would take a book to search for and to explain, the causes of this social phenomenon. But the fact is that, while up to that time, the elders, especially parents and grandparents, wielded a moral authority in society, and tradition was considered to be a value in itself, since then the spotlight has been focused on the young as the center of social life, and both parental authority and the moral authority of tradition in general have been deprived of their particular role in the education of the young people. The Church belongs to this tradition. And as such it is no longer looked up to by young people as an attractive and inspiring source of motivation for personal decisions. Add to this the ever increasing exposure to the frivolous and even, often, immoral influence of the mass media (especially television). Parents, teachers, the Church, have to deal with the impact which the mass media have on the children. It is an uphill struggle. The remedy would be:

a) a strong family life, emotionally rich, rooted in strong faith, with the parents teaching first by their example (while families themselves are today in a very bad situation! Also in Japan!);

b) a program of activities, by which the Church cooperates with the school in filling the gaps of the latter in the education of young people (something which does not exist in Japan! On the contrary, the school here totally absorbs the students, taking away even their Sunday time, while the teaching of religion in public schools is forbidden!).

C.P: *In the «Christian century» (1549–1640)¹³ many laymen worked in the Catholic Church. They were invited to spread the Gospel among non-Christians. They helped the priests in activities, such as preaching in many rural areas, guiding the prayer of the Christians gathered together on Sunday when the priest could not be there to celebrate the Eucharist, religious education, preparation of confessions and spiritual support of the sick. Some Jesuits and mendicant friars organized Third Orders and Brotherhoods for common prayer, communal festivals and to care the poor, widows and orphans.¹⁴*

When the Tokugawa bakufu 徳川幕府 banished the Church and started the persecution, the kakure kirishitan 隠れキリシタン lived their Christian faith secretly.¹⁵ On 17 March 1865 Bernard Thadée Petitjean (1828–1884), met a group of Christian women in Ōura church in Nagasaki.¹⁶ They continued to practice what they remembered of the Catholic faith.

What is the role of the laity in Japanese society?

F. S.: Japan in general, is a very harmonious society, where the different roles are respected and valued. The Catholic community in every Parish is well organized. Usually, the lay members have their own organization (信徒会), presided over by one of them (会長). They have committees and subcommittees for various activities. The Japanese are very good at organizing events and carrying out activities together. In some Dioceses, the lack of priests has been taken as an opportunity to educate the faithful further in their responsibility as full fledged members of the Church. However, unfortunately, this approach seems to be leading to a doubly wrong attitude.

First, at times this emphasis on the role of the laity (in the absence of a priest) may result in underestimating the essential role of the ordained ministers in the Catholic

13. Cf. C. R. Boxer, *The Christian Century in Japan 1549–1650* (Manchester: Carcanet Press, 1993).

14. Cf. J. P. Oliveira e Costa, «The Misericordias among Japanese Christian Communities in the 16th and 17th centuries,» *Bulletin of Portuguese/Japanese Studies*, 2003, 5: 67–79; J. P. Oliveira e Costa, «The Brotherhoods (Confraria) and Lay Support for the Early Christian Church in Japan,» *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*, 2007/34–1: 79–80;

15. Cf. S. Turnbull, *The Kakure Kirishitan of Japan: a Study of their Development, Beliefs and Rituals to the Present Day* (England: Japan Library, 1998).

16. P. Nosco, «Secrecy and the Transmission of Tradition Issues in the Study of the “Underground” Christians,» *Japan Journal of Religious Studies*, 1993/20–1: 14.

community. Secondly, the commitment of the laity in this case is seen more as a way to replace the priests, rather than as the fulfilment of the role of the lay faithful as such in the Church. In this respect, it must be said that this attempt seems to lack the foundation of a clear and sound ecclesiology, both as regards the role of the ordained ministers and also that of the lay faithful as such in the life and activity of the Church.

The process of educating the laity to perform their specific service in society as lay members has still a rather long way to go and faces great difficulties. The first difficulty comes from the fact that 99% of the society in which they are called to exercise their Christian service does not recognize Christ or His Church. Secondly, the family, which ought to be the first place of lay apostolate is often under siege from its «pagan» environment and is fighting for survival, to say nothing of «evangelizing» it! Thirdly, there is a lack of proper training of the faithful on the part of Priests.

C.P.: In Japan many people died for the faith. After Francis Xavier landed at Satsuma in 1549 Oda Nobunaga 織田信長 (1534–1582) first and then Toyotomi Hideyoshi 豊臣秀吉 (1536–1597) were happy to welcome the European missionaries. But many people in Japan believed that the Europeans intended to invade the country, and that the Church was only the vanguard. For this reason Taicosama 大君様 wanted them to leave the country and he ordered that the missionaries who continued to spread the faith be burned alive, crucified or beheaded, some of them with small children in their arms.

The Jesuit Juan Ruiz-De-Medina declares that the Japanese Catholic Church is rich in lay and religious martyrs-witnesses to the faith.¹⁷ In the mind of a young or old Japanese: Who is the martyr? What does she/he represent? Is it fascinating to follow his or her example?

F. S.: Japan is indeed a Country with a very large number of martyrs! Thousands, tens of thousands of them! Among these, the 26 martyrs of Nagasaki (so called because they were executed there on Feb. 5, 1597) who were canonized in 1862. Another 16 martyrs associated with the Dominican Order were canonized in 1987. Another 205 martyrs have been beatified, and recently Peter Kibe and another 187 martyrs were beatified, in Nagasaki, on November 24, 2008. The history of the persecutions in Japan continues until 1873!

During 250 years the «hidden Christians», most of them scattered in small islands around Nagasaki, succeeded in handing down their faith from generation to generation.

17. Cf. J. Ruiz-De-Medina, *El Martirologio del Japón 1558–1783* (Roma: Institutum Historicum S.I., 1999).

These martyrs are the glory and the ancestors of the Catholic Church in Japan. Almost half of Japanese Catholics today are the descendants of those hidden Christians! But, up to now, it has not been easy to identify with them and to express the pride of sharing their faith.

For centuries in Japan, Christianity, has been referred to as the «bad religion» (邪教). Catholics have been admirable in preserving the memory of the martyrs, in researching their history, erecting monuments to them, or simply marking in a special way the many places connected with their martyrdom. Things have changed a lot recently, i.e. after the beatification of Peter Kibe and another 187 martyrs in 2008. The media presented the event in a positive way, praising the courage of the martyrs in professing their faith and, therefore, standing up for the freedom of conscience and religion, even against the edict that had proscribed Christianity. Previously, it had been difficult to get this point across to the ordinary Japanese: how to praise people who had gone against the law, and resisted civil authority? This was something they found difficult to accept!

An example of this new attitude of public opinion towards these martyrs is the foundation, a couple of years ago, of a group of experts (many of them are not Christians) in Kumamoto, to investigate and publicize the abundant archeological traces left by the Christians of the XVI and XVII centuries in the area. Sr. Maria De Giorgi, of Shinmeizan, is also a member of this group (Cf. Conferenza Episcopale Giapponese, *Il Giappone, il secolo dei martiri. Pietro Kibe e altri 187 martiri giapponesi infrangono un silenzio di 4 secoli e ci raccontano la loro storia*. Brescia: CSAM, 2008).

C.P: *Prayer is a common practice in all the religions to activate a volitional connection to God, or any deity. Various spiritual traditions offer a wide variety of devotional acts. There are morning and evening prayers, graces said over meals, and reverent physical gestures. Eastern religions also have this practice,¹⁸ but here prayer is seen as a form of meditation or an adjunct practice to meditation.¹⁹ The Catholic Church is founded on the importance of prayer: «Then he told them a parable about the need to pray continually and never lose heart» (Lk 18,1). The Carmelite Augustine Ichiro Okumura in his book Inori 祈り²⁰ explains*

18. Cf. M. Raveri, «La preghiera nella tradizione religiosa dell'Asia orientale,» in M. Piantelli, ed., *Le preghiere del mondo. Un'antologia delle più belle invocazioni a Dio, dai popoli privi di scrittura fino ai nostri giorni* (Milano: San Paolo, 1998), 243–77.

19. Cf. M. Raveri, *Itinerari del sacro. L'esperienza religiosa giapponese* (Venezia: Cafoscarina, 2006); M. Bianchin, «Come prega il Giappone I,» *Infor-Pime*, 2006, 170: 53–64; M. Bianchin, «Come prega il Giappone II. La preghiera del cuore giapponese buddhista,» *Infor-Pime*, 2006/171: 52–62.

20. Cf. A. I. Okumura, *Inori* (Tokyo: Edizioni Paoline, 1974). This book has been translated in Italian by M. Bianchin, *Il gusto della preghiera. Fascino dell'anima giapponese* (Roma: Città Nuova, 1984).

the value and the goal of Christian prayer and he invites the Catholic community to begin Seikatsu Soku Inori 生活促祈り, that is, a prayer that would bring together not only its psychological dimension or ontological level, but the whole existential sphere.

How does the Japanese Catholic Church pray, today? Do Japanese people show a particular fidelity to prayer? Does prayer articulate a man's life and his daily routine?

F. S.: I do not know how much Japanese Catholics pray in their private life. Statistics testify to about 25% of them usually attending Mass on Sunday. This percentage would be higher than that of most countries in Europe, I think. What strikes me most in this regard is the fact that, with a total Catholic population of only about 450.000 faithful, there are in Japan two Trappist monasteries of men and five of Nuns; to which one must add two Communities of Carmelites and nine Convents of Carmelite Sisters, a Benedictine monastery and two Benedictine Convents of Nuns, four Communities of Passionists, and other several Convents of cloistered Nuns (Redemptoristines, Sisters of the Precious Blood of Christ, Poor Clares, etc.).

It is this remarkable phenomenon of dedication to contemplative life on the part of the Catholic Church in Japan, especially on the part of women, that prompts me to think that Catholics in Japan feel a deep attraction (vocation) to prayer, especially to contemplative prayer. What is regrettable is that, forty years after Vatican II brought about the renewal of the Liturgy of the Hours and offered it to all the faithful, inviting them to join Deacons, Priests, and Religious in this official Prayer of the Church, the one volume Japanese translation is incomplete and cumbersome to use, and is still awaiting a final edition that would make available to all the faithful its full wealth of texts and inspiration for communal and personal prayer. Japanese Catholics also appreciate and practice personal or private devotions, such as the Rosary or the Stations of the Cross. What is lacking, it seems to me, is, once again, is competent and fervent guidance (and example) on the part of priests.

C.P: *In our world we need to create a valid form of communication among religions*²¹ (sho shūkyō taiwa 諸宗教対話).²² *The Catholic Church wants to promote a sincere dialogue among different cultures and religions.*²³ *In October 1986, Pope John Paul II organized the*

21. Cf. A. Pacini (a cura di), *Le religioni e la sfida del pluralismo. Alla ricerca di orizzonti comuni* (Milano: Paoline, 2009).

22. I. Iarocci, *Quelle croci a Nagasaki. Storia dei 26 protomartiri in Giappone e del loro tempo* (Bologna: EMI, 2001), 164.

23. Cf. S. Piano (a cura di), *Le grandi religioni dell'Asia. Orizzonti per il dialogo* (Milano: Paoline, 2010).

first international interreligious meeting, where he invited the leaders to pray for the peace and the fraternity among countries. Japan was the first nation to experience the «Spirit of Assisi»²⁴ and in 1987 the Buddhist Etai Yamada wanted to meet Japanese religious leaders and improve cooperation among religions.²⁵ Some years ago they founded many institutes or centers for research to study the most important elements of that cooperation and to create an interreligious dialogue.²⁶ Many European missionaries and priests and religious dedicated their vocation to the «dialogue of life».²⁷

What is the role of the Japanese Catholic Church in this interreligious dialogue? What are the most important and well-known initiatives?

F. S.: Thanks especially to the now famous Interreligious Prayer Meeting of Assisi (1986) the Catholic Church is looked upon as a pioneer in interreligious dialogue. Japan has a long history of interreligious encounter, since the sixth century when Buddhism arrived in this archipelago. Down through the centuries, Shintō (the original religion) and Buddhism have found a good way to coexist. Japanese need to be in harmony among themselves, and this applies also to relationships with people of other religions.

Many Catholics in Japan live in non-Christian families, or, at any rate, in a non-Christian society. Attendance at non-Christian marriages or funerals is an everyday experience. Of course, if interreligious dialogue is not properly explained (according to the guidelines given by the Church since Vatican II) many Catholics feel uneasy with it, as if it were a compromise with their Christian faith and commitment. But, when properly explained, it is welcomed as a long awaited answer to their need to live in harmony with people of other religions.

In 2003, the Episcopal Conference of Japan once again established a Subcommittee in charge of interreligious dialogue at an official and national level. In 2006, this Subcommittee published a compendium of the official documents of the Catholic Church on interreligious dialogue, accompanied by some explanations; and, in 2009: *Guidelines on Interreligious Dialogue for Catholics in Japan*. The English version of these guidelines appeared in 2010, and Portuguese and a Spanish translations are being prepared for the use

24. Pontificia Commissione Justitia et Pax, Assisi. *Giornata mondiale per la pace* (27 Ottobre 1986), (Città del Vaticano: Tipografia Poliglotta Vaticana, 1987), 143–50.

25. T. Michel, «Monte Hiei: l'incontro mondiale delle religioni in preghiera per la pace,» *La Civiltà Cattolica*, 1987/138–3: 499–505.

26. S. Ticozzi, «Il dialogo interreligioso in Estremo Oriente,» *Ad Gentes*, 2001/5: 19.

27. Cf. M. A. De Giorgi - C. Molari, *Seimeizan. Frammento di un dialogo tra cristiani e buddhisti* (Bologna: EMI, 1989), 89–124.

of the many Catholic immigrants present in Japan. Fr. Sonoda, Sr. Maria De Giorgi and Fr. Sottocornola of Shinmeizan have been working with the Subcommittee for interreligious dialogue since its foundation in 2003. (Cf. F. Sottocornola, «Interreligious Dialogue in Japan,» *Quaderni del Centro Studi Asiatico*, 2009/3: 143–53).

C.P: The biggest problem facing the Catholic Church in Japan in political affairs has been the separation of state and religion. With the passing of Emperor Hirohito in January 1989, the constitutional principle of separation of state and religion is observed. The religious rites aren't considered state functions and do not receive state funding.

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of Japan declares that «the separation of government and religion is often misunderstood as «separation of religious life and political activities,» in other words that religious organizations and individuals should not engage in political matters... The Catholic Church rather realizes that it has important roles, such as contributing to spreading further justice and love at home and abroad based on love of Christ, and making ethical judgment even on political matters, if necessary, for basic human rights and salvation.»

What is the role of the Catholic religion in the Japanese state?²⁸ What is the relationship between Japan and the Holy See?

F. S.: I do not feel very confident in answering this question. All I can say is that the Catholic Church is a very small minority in Japan (about 0,3% of the total population) and I do not know of any special contact between the Church as such and the government. The mass media do not usually cover events concerning the Catholic Church. There have been some declarations or statements on the part of the Catholic Bishops' Conference on social matters, such as immigration, discrimination, etc. But I do not know what influence, if any, they have had on the government or on public opinion.

Japan now has full scale diplomatic relations with the Vatican. Up to last year (end of September), the Ambassador of Japan to the Holy See was Ueno Kagefumi. He was deeply interested in the chances his position offered him not only to know Rome, but also to see the world from Rome. During the four years of his service, he wrote eighteen letters to friends and persons who wanted to keep in touch with him (Shinmeizan was among them), commenting on events and situations. They are very instructive for anyone who wants to know what an Ambassador of Japan to the Holy See does, sees, and thinks!

28. Cf. J. Metzler, *La Santa Sede e le missioni. La politica missionaria della Chiesa nei secoli XIX e XX* (Cini-sello Balsamo: San Paolo, 2002).

One of his last conferences in Rome (on the cultural differences between East and West) reveals a deep knowledge of both East and West. A summary of it was published in the weekly English edition of the *Osservatore Romano* (1 September, p. 4).

Again, the *Osservatore Romano*, in the daily edition of 28 November 2010, carried the speech addressed by Pope Benedict XVI to the new Ambassador to the Holy See, Yamaguchi Hidekazu. The Papal Nuncio to Japan is now His Excellency Archbishop Alberto Bottari de Castello. His past experience as a missionary in Africa has provided him with a keen pastoral sense and given him a strong religious orientation in the exercise of his diplomatic role.²⁹

29. Carlo Pelliccia graduated in Comparative Studies from the University of Naples L'Orientale. He is doing research on the history of Christianity in Japan, especially the presence and the apostolate of some mendicant Orders in sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Cultura e società



Un detto di Confucio
UMBERTO BRESCIANI

Situation of Women and Children
in Indonesia
MARCOLUIGI CORSI

Un detto di Confucio

UMBERTO BRESCIANI

I *Dialoghi* di Confucio (551–475 a.c.) sono un testo che riporta delle brevi conversazioni fra Confucio e i suoi discepoli, fra Confucio e qualche personalità del suo tempo, oppure ancora qualche commento dei discepoli riguardo al loro maestro. Sono composti da venti parti (solitamente chiamati *libri*), a loro volta divisi in brevissimi brani (usualmente detti *capitoli*), che a volte riportano semplicemente una sola brevissima frase. Leggendoli, si avverte che sono una raccolta di note dei suoi discepoli, priva completamente di un ordine logico nel contenuto, compilata in un secondo momento da qualcuno dei discepoli (o dei discepoli dei discepoli). In tempi recenti c'è chi ha avanzato teorie molto più critiche. Ad esempio sostenendo che il testo fu compilato un po' alla volta, nell'arco di oltre due secoli, sicché il testo sarebbe stato più volte rimaneggiato e il suo contenuto spostato avanti e indietro, per venire incontro alle esigenze ideologiche e politiche delle diverse epoche storiche. Alla fine le *ipsissima verba* di Confucio conservate nel testo attuale sarebbero davvero pochissime. Queste nuove teorie, però, non sono molto convincenti sia perché contraddicono le pur scarse informazioni lasciateci dagli scrittori antichi, sia perché esse contrastano con il fatto della provenienza dei detti: se appartengono a dei secoli diversi, vorrebbe dire che dietro a questi detti esiste qualche altra persona della medesima statura morale di Confucio. Chi era? Come mai non si conosce chi sia?

Un testo così antico — esso risale a cinque secoli prima dei Vangeli — non fa meraviglia che sia stato scritto in uno stile estremamente conciso, anzi lapidario, che non poche frasi siano scarsamente intelligibili, e che quindi ci siano numerosi problemi di ermeneutica. Ci sono tuttavia anche molti detti che sono estremamente chiari nel significato, e che si possono interpretare con una certa sicurezza, grazie anche alla concordanza con altri detti simili, i quali si illuminano e si confermano a vicenda.

Uno dei celebri detti di Confucio è il seguente: «Zilu domandò come si devono servire gli spiriti e le divinità. Il maestro rispose: “Ancora non sei capace di servire gli uomini, come puoi servire gli spiriti?”. Zilu domandò: “Posso chiedere cos'è la morte?”. Confucio rispose: “Ancora non sai cos'è la vita, come vuoi pretendere di conoscere la morte?”» (*Dialoghi*, XI, 12).

È utile esaminare un po' questo detto per capire che cosa esso riveli o voglia dire (e che cosa invece non voglia dire). Qui si ascolta una conversazione in atto fra un discepolo

(Zilu) e Confucio, dove il discepolo fa due domande. La prima domanda riguarda il come si devono servire gli spiriti, cioè quale culto si deve offrire agli spiriti (dove per «spiriti» si deve intendere gli spiriti degli antenati) e alle divinità (o alla divinità: nella grammatica cinese singolare e plurale sono uguali; inoltre in questo momento non prendiamo in considerazione questo problema). Poi fa un'altra domanda, che riguarda il problema di che cosa sia la morte, e cioè di cosa avviene quando uno muore, e di conseguenza, della sopravvivenza dopo la morte, dell'aldilà.

Alla prima e alla seconda domanda, Confucio risponde in modo simile, cioè con un'altra domanda. Si tratta di una doppia domanda retorica: «Come puoi pretendere di saper servire gli spiriti se non sei ancora capace di servire gli uomini? Come puoi pretendere di voler sapere cosa c'è dopo la morte se non sai ancora cosa veramente è la vita?».

La prima domanda riguarda il pensiero religioso di Confucio, di che cosa egli pensava della divinità e del culto che l'uomo deve offrire alla divinità. Questa richiama alla mente un altro detto famoso di Confucio, dove dice: «Fan Chi domandò che cosa è la saggezza. Confucio rispose: "Garantisci i diritti del popolo; rispetta gli spiriti e gli dèi, ma tienili a una certa distanza. Questa è la saggezza"» (*Dialoghi*, VI, 22a).

È in base a questi due detti che molti in passato, e anche studiosi cinesi del secolo scorso (preoccupati di far vedere che Confucio *non era religioso*), hanno parlato di un Confucio ateo o agnostico. In verità, riflettendo su altri detti dei *Dialoghi*, non si può proprio interpretare la figura di Confucio come quella di un ateo (egli credeva sinceramente nel Cielo) o di un agnostico (il suo intento era quello di dare un forte rilievo ai doveri morali). Il detto appena riportato deve essere compreso nel contesto. Al tempo, Confucio aveva aperto una scuola per giovani aspiranti alla carriera politica. Ecco perché il discepolo Fan Chi gli domanda quale sia la saggezza nel governare. Confucio gli risponde elencando due cose. La prima cosa è il concetto di governo responsabile, cioè l'impegno di servire il popolo per garantirne il benessere e i diritti. È questo un concetto che ritorna più o meno esplicito in svariati passi dei *Dialoghi*, e palesemente più tardi nel libro di *Mencio* 7B, 14) e che è costante nelle teorie politiche di Confucio: chi governa lo fa per un incarico del Cielo a servizio della gente.

Il secondo requisito per avere la saggezza è il rispetto verso gli spiriti (degli antenati) e la divinità. La parola «rispetto» implica ovviamente anche i doverosi atti di culto. Anche questo secondo criterio di saggezza non è strano perché in Confucio il senso religioso è un qualcosa di scontato, come si può notare in tante altre circostanze. Ad esempio: Confucio una volta stava parlando di Yu il Grande, un antico (legendario) imperatore, modello di virtù, e ne esprime un suo apprezzamento al riguardo: «In Yu io non trovo alcun difetto.

Era molto frugale nel mangiare e nel bere, ma dimostrava la massima devozione nelle sue offerte agli spiriti e alla divinità; portava dei vestiti di panno grossolano, ma usava delle splendide vesti liturgiche. La sua abitazione era molto modesta, ma spendeva tutte le sue energie nel salvare il paese dalle inondazioni. In Yu io non trovo alcun difetto» (*Dialoghi*, VIII, 21).

Riguardo a questo punto — del rispetto da dimostrare agli spiriti e alla divinità — Confucio aggiunge una precisazione: *ma tienili ad una certa distanza* (oppure, secondo un altro modo di tradurre: *tieniti ad una certa distanza da loro*). È una precisazione un po' strana, che non manca di lasciare perplessi. Ma anche questa precisazione diventa comprensibile se è vista nel contesto storico della sua epoca. Come testimoniato dall'archeologia, i signori feudali del tempo di Confucio (e anche dei secoli precedenti) passavano la maggior parte delle loro giornate nel celebrare riti solenni per gli antenati. Inoltre dissanguavano i contadini con le tasse, spendevano somme ingenti per i templi, il vasellame liturgico di bronzo e d'oro, le vesti, gli strumenti musicali, ecc. Confucio obiettava fortemente a questo sistema per la scarsa saggezza che questo comportamento esibiva: si doveva porre un limite a tutto questo, ci voleva moderazione anche nel rispetto verso gli spiriti.

Considerato sotto questa luce, allora, Confucio non appare più come un ateo o un agnostico. Rimane però da approfondire la risposta di Confucio: «Il maestro rispose: «Ancora non sei capace di servire gli uomini, come puoi servire gli spiriti?»». Qui Confucio vuole sottolineare che è più importante impegnarsi a servire in modo etico il prossimo. Se uno riesce a far bene questo, certamente saprà anche servire in modo adeguato la divinità. Un tale modo di ragionare richiama alla mente certe espressioni del Nuovo Testamento, come ad esempio questa: «Chi non ama il fratello suo che vede, non può amare quel Dio che non vede» (1Gv 4,20).

La seconda parte del detto che stiamo esaminando continua poi così: «Zilu domandò: «Posso chiedere cos'è la morte?» Confucio rispose: «Ancora non sai cos'è la vita, come vuoi pretendere di conoscere la morte?»». Confucio aveva sempre ben presente questo principio: «Parla di quello che sai». Nei *Dialoghi* troviamo questa massima: «Il maestro disse: «Zilu, ti dico io che cos'è la sapienza. Essere cosciente di quello che si sa e riconoscere di non sapere quello che non si sa. Questa è la sapienza»» (*Dialoghi*, II, 17).

Anche qui non si tratta di considerare Confucio come un materialista miscredente noncurante dei valori spirituali. Con le sue parole, Confucio non intende dire che il problema dell'aldilà non sia importante. Nei *Dialoghi* è riportato un detto di Zengzi, discepolo di Confucio, che ovviamente rispecchiava le idee del maestro, e che dice: «Quando

si celebrano con gran cura i funerali dei defunti e si mantiene viva la memoria degli antenati, la virtù del popolo raggiunge la perfezione» (*Dialoghi*, I, 9). La risposta retorica di Confucio sulla morte e l'aldilà possiamo esaminarla in questo modo:

— Ovviamente, dato che il problema dell'aldilà è molto importante, l'uomo dovrebbe interessarsi di conoscerlo;

— Però conoscere la vita presente ha una priorità necessaria e indiscutibile. Le due cose sono legate. Se uno non conosce la vita, non potrà conoscere la morte;

— Chi riuscisse ad acquisire una conoscenza profonda della vita (e delle responsabilità e doveri morali che la vita comporta), sarà arrivato anche ad essere capace di comprendere la morte e il suo mistero;

— Conclusione: è necessario prima conoscere la vita, le proprie responsabilità nella vita presente. Una volta conosciute (e adempite) queste, verrà facile e naturale conoscere anche cosa c'è dopo la morte;

— Un'ulteriore conclusione: per l'uomo che non conosce il significato della vita, è impossibile capire cosa sia la morte. Sono due facce della stessa medaglia;

— Un'altra conclusione: volendo conoscere qualcosa sulla realtà della morte, ci si dovrà rivolgere a chi ne sa qualcosa;

— Secondo la logica di Confucio, possiamo dedurre una cosa: che chi è esperto della vita umana dovrebbe saperci insegnare qualcosa sull'aldilà;

— Questi esperti della vita umana non sono tanto gli scienziati, quanto invece gli esperti di umanità, i grandi letterati (come Dante o Shakespeare) o i grandi filosofi (come Platone o Aristotele). Personalmente collocherei qui in primo piano i grandi fondatori di religioni;

— Alla fin fine, forse rimane vero quanto dice Confucio: quello che insegnano i grandi, in particolare i grandi fondatori di religioni (e primo per noi è Gesù Cristo) non diventa comprensibile se non per chi riesce a vivere per davvero l'ideale cristiano nella sua vita quotidiana. Se sai cos'è la vita e come va vissuta, saprai certamente anche cosa è la morte e ciò ci attende dopo.¹

1. Umberto Bresciani received his MA and PhD in Chinese Literature from National Taiwan University. He also holds a BA in Religious Studies (ITS, Parma, Italy) and a BA in Chinese Studies (University of Maryland, USA). He has lived in Taiwan for forty years. His main research interest is Chinese philosophical and religious thought and comparative cultural and theological studies.

Situation of Children and Women in Indonesia

MARCOLUIGI CORSI

The Republic of Indonesia, a nation comprising an archipelago of about 17,000 islands, has considerable ethnic, religious and linguistic diversity and an overall high degree of pluralism, tolerance and stability. It is not only the world's fourth most populous nation but also the country with the largest Muslim population. Its population (232 million)¹ increases by approximately 3 million each year, with a total fertility rate of 2.4 and life expectancy at birth of 69 years, creating a demographic window of opportunity for Indonesia to invest in youth.

Since 1998, Indonesia has undergone major political and socio-economic transformations, emerging as a vibrant democracy with a decentralized Government and greater social openness and debate. Indonesia is already one of the most decentralized countries in the world, with almost 500 provincial, district and city governments being the decision makers for the majority of all governmental matters. According to the World Bank 2007 Indonesia Public Expenditure Review, nearly 40 per cent of public spending is undertaken at the local level; this represents a level of fiscal decentralization higher than the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development average.

Between 2004 and 2008, Indonesia consolidated democratic institutions and returned to political and macroeconomic stability. The country has largely recovered from the 1998 economic crisis, when millions of its citizens were in poverty and Indonesia regressed to low-income status. Indonesia is once again one of the world's emergent middle-income countries, with a nominal gross domestic product (GDP) of \$2,271 in 2008.² Since 2002, Indonesia's real GDP has grown at 5 per cent to 6 per cent annually, and the country succeeded in maintaining a 4.5 per cent growth rate in 2009, making it the third best performing economy in the world, despite the global financial crisis. Indonesia has kept inflation under control and has a strong balance of payment. These achievements can be credited to prudent fiscal management and sound macroeconomic and trade/investment policies as well as a strong local market.

However, Indonesia is struggling to translate the opportunities from its political and socio-economic transformation into sustainable human development, particularly

1. Indonesian population projection 2009.

2. Based on World Bank threshold for country classification.

for children. Inequalities are rising (Gini index 39.43)³ and while poverty levels decreased, from 23 per cent in 1997-1998 to 14.2 per cent in 2009, more than 40 million people live on \$2 or below per day, a figure nearly equal to the total in all of the rest of East Asia, excluding China.⁴ Many Indonesian households cluster around the \$1.55 per day national poverty line and numerous non-poor are vulnerable to poverty in the face of various shocks. Despite good progress in many sectors, there are still a number of child-related indicators in which Indonesia is seriously lagging behind and where special attention is required.

The maternal mortality rate of Indonesia has improved slowly, from 334 per 100,000 live births in 1997 to 230 per 100,000 live births in 2007 — currently three times that of Vietnam and six times that of China or Malaysia. The 2007 Indonesia Demographic Health Survey reports skilled health personnel attend only 72 per cent of births. While infant mortality decreased (from 68 per 1,000 live births in 1991 to 34 per 1,000 live births in 2009) and under-five mortality declined (from 79 per 1,000 live births in 1991 to 44 per 1,000 live births in 2009), malnutrition rates are high: 28.7 per cent of children below the age of five are underweight. Stunting rates have increased in recent years despite reductions in poverty. Though more accessible, health care quality is unreliable; inefficiency results in significant out-of-pocket spending and increased inequities.

Despite good progress towards universal primary education (97 per cent in 2009 compared to 94 per cent in 2004), achieving gender parity in enrolment rates in primary and secondary schools, and improvements in learning achievements recorded in the 2003 and 2006 Programme for International Students assessments, transition rates from primary to secondary school are still low (79 per cent). Only 55 per cent of children from low-income quintiles are enrolled in junior secondary schools. For primary and junior secondary levels, just 55 per cent and 73 per cent of teachers, respectively, possess minimum qualifications required by the Ministry of National Education.⁵ In addition, although approximately 70 per cent of education expenditure is at the sub-national level, it is mostly non-discretionary routine spending, with the majority of the development budget still spent by the central Government.

Only 36 per cent of rural areas have access to sanitation. An estimated 70 million people still defecate in open spaces, and access to water supply remains a challenge for the poorest. Eighty per cent of the rural poor and 59 per cent of the urban poor do not

3. A low Gini coefficient indicates a more equal distribution, with 0 corresponding to complete equality, while higher Gini coefficients indicate more unequal distribution, with 1 corresponding to complete inequality.

4. *Indonesia Public Expenditure Review*, World Bank, 2007.

5. *Investing in Indonesia's Education*, World Bank, 2007.

have access to septic tanks, and less than 1 per cent of all Indonesians have access to piped sewage services, the lowest percentage in the region and among comparable countries. There is low public awareness of the adverse impacts of inadequate sanitation systems or the potentially huge benefits of improving them. Indonesian policy dictates that basic sanitation is the responsibility of private households, even though the national health and environmental costs of inadequate sanitation are substantial, especially in cities.

The country continues to face child protection challenges. Violence is found in schools, on the streets, in the workplace and in institutions, such as orphanages and detention centers. A recent UNICEF-supported study on the quality of care in child care institutions, conducted by Save the Children and the Ministry of Social Affairs, indicates that an estimated 5 million children live in 7,000 childcare institutions, even though 94 per cent of them have one or both surviving parents and extended family members. Girls under 18 comprise one third of women trafficked for sex work, a result of lack of policy and low public awareness around issues such as birth registration, justice for children, abuse, neglect, trafficking, child labor and children living and working on the streets. In 2007, a gender study carried out by UNICEF in Papua showed that cases of violence against girls and women are generally not reported to the police. Law 23/2004 on domestic violence, effective since 2005, is neither known by the rural population nor enforced by the justice system. This is largely because provincial and district regulations on how to respond to domestic violence have not yet been passed.

Increasing new HIV infections in Indonesia make the epidemic one of the fastest growing in Asia, although the aggregate national prevalence is as low as 0.2 per cent. At the end of 2009, about 333,200 people were estimated to be living with HIV, 25 per cent of them women.⁶ Data indicates that every year 3,000 to 5,000 people die of AIDS in Indonesia — almost 10 people per day. Most of these deaths are preventable through earlier diagnosis and timely treatment. In 2008, HIV/AIDS affected an estimated 200,000 children across Indonesia, with seven new HIV infections among children every day. Although the epidemic in Indonesia is concentrated among high-risk populations, it has become a generalized epidemic in Papua and West Papua provinces. A province-wide, population-based survey conducted in 2006 estimates adult HIV prevalence at 2.4 per cent, reaching 2.9 per cent in less-accessible lowland areas. Among 15 to 24-year-olds, HIV prevalence was 3 per cent.⁷

6. Country report on the follow up to the declaration of commitment on HIV/AIDS (UNGASS), 2008–2009, National AIDS Commission, Republic of Indonesia, 2009.

7. Ministry of Health Indonesia and Central Bureau Statistic, 2007.

Considerable disparities exist for most child-related indicators across and within provinces. The poverty rate is 15.7 per cent in Java-Bali and 38.7 per cent in more remote Papua. Although poverty incidence is higher in Eastern Indonesia and remote areas, most of Indonesia's poor live in the densely populated Western regions of the archipelago. For example, while the poverty incidence in Java/Bali is relatively low, the island is home to 57 per cent of Indonesia's total poor, compared to Papua, with only 3 per cent. In Java, the average distance of a household to the nearest public health clinic is 4 kilometers, compared to 32 kilometers in Papua.

The infant mortality rate (IMR) in the Nusa Tenggara Timur (NTT) Province is 80 per 1,000 live births, four times the IMR in Bali. Disparities across socio-economic groups show under-five mortality rates as high as 77 per 1,000 live births among the poorest households, compared with 22 per 1,000 live births among wealthiest households. Some 66 per cent of the poorest quintile in Java/Bali has access to improved water, compared to 35 per cent in Kalimantan and 9 per cent in Papua. About 50 per cent of rural poor have access to an improved source of water, compared with 80 per cent of urban poor.

Climate change has been acknowledged as a major threat to the future of Indonesia. Indonesia is the world's third largest greenhouse gas emitter, with 80 per cent of its carbon footprint attributed to the degradation of peat land and the logging of its forests. Indonesia is one of the most vulnerable countries to natural disasters. As a result of climate change, natural disasters are likely to get worse. Mudslides and floods occur yearly in Indonesia. Sitting along an active tectonic plate, the country is prone to high levels of seismic activity.

The massive December 2004 earthquake and tsunami devastated large parts of the country's Aceh province in Northern Sumatra, leaving around 200,000 Indonesians dead or missing and hundreds of thousands without a home. Emergency response represents a consistent draw on national financial resources.

Indonesia's main constraint to addressing the remaining challenges faced by children is not a lack of financial resources. World Bank sectoral expenditure reviews show that inadequate local technical and administrative capacity hinders translating available resources into better development outcomes for children. For instance, while the National Program for Community Empowerment and other social protection schemes — such as Operational Aid for Schools Programme (BOS), School Health Programme (UKS), Rice for the Poor Programme (RASKIN) and the Social Safety Net on Health (*Jamkesmas/Jamkesda*) — focus on poverty and disparity reduction with national and subnational governments accessing considerable resources, inadequate evidence-based planning, budg-

etary allocations and absorption capacity affect the realization of the rights of the most vulnerable and socially excluded.

The transfer of greater political and administrative authority to district governments has brought governance closer to the people, along with resources to carry out new functions. However, each local government has its own prerogatives, affecting legal and policy enforcement as well as decision-making processes and up-scaling and replicating of programmes. Commitment at the national level does not necessarily translate to the sub-national level, where there are also problems of capacity, including absorption of nationally allocated resources.

The 2010 to 2014 National Medium-Term Development Strategy (RPJM) shows the Government's increasing commitment to address socio-economic development and institutional challenges, providing opportunities to development partners to support this phase of transformation and second generation reforms. Failure to address these reforms will create a middle-income trap, with stagnant poverty levels, persisting disparities, depleted natural resources and rising threats to social cohesion.

The continued transformation of Indonesia depends on tackling organizational and institutional issues. For UNICEF, supporting those changes means shifting from a project-oriented approach to a systemic approach, offering targeted technical assistance to local and national institutions to develop capacity for evidence-based planning and resource allocation, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation for programmes that address child disparity and poverty and provide quality social services to vulnerable and disadvantaged populations.⁸

8. Marcoluigi Corsi is assistant head of UNICEF in Indonesia.

In margine



La fede nella malattia

KAORU YAMAZAKI

Sulle «note» della Chiesa

Commento in margine a un articolo

FRANCO SOTTOCORNOLA

La fede nella malattia

KAORU YAMAZAKI

Non ho mai espresso pubblicamente queste cose, tuttavia se la mia esperienza può essere di aiuto a qualcun altro sono sicura che Dio mi insegnerà come esprimermi e che cosa dovrò dire. Ecco perché ho accettato di raccontare la mia esperienza di fede nel dolore.

La malattia mi ha colto all'improvviso. All'alba del 19 luglio 2008, ho avvertito un lancinante dolore allo stomaco. Mi sono recata dal medico di fiducia e da lì in ambulanza sono subito stata ricoverata all'ospedale centrale di Kishiwada per degli esami urgenti. I medici hanno riscontrato una malattia ginecologica grave e hanno quindi deciso di ricoverarmi subito all'ospedale di Kaizuka.

Sono stata sottoposta ad un intervento immediato, al quale è seguita l'operazione vera e propria, con sei cicli consecutivi di chemioterapia contro il cancro, per un totale di cinque mesi di vita in ospedale. A causa della chemioterapia mi sono subito caduti tutti i capelli. Le persone vicine cercavano di consolarmi dicendo: «Non preoccuparti! Vedrai che ti ricrescono subito!», e per questo le ringrazio. Ma per me, che ero l'interessata, vedermi in quello stato mi dava una pena indicibile così che il dolore che già provavo fisicamente si moltiplicava di due o tre volte in acutezza.

L'esito degli esami mi giunse il giorno seguente l'operazione condotta d'emergenza. Mi ricordo che ero praticamente sola, stesa sul letto, e mi fu detto: «Signora Yamazaki, le è stato riscontrato un tumore maligno. Tuttavia abbiamo fiducia di poterla guarire perché il cancro è appena allo stadio iniziale». Sul momento non sono stata capace di accettare la dura realtà della malattia, e dentro di me è iniziata una ribellione potente e angosciata. Mi chiedevo il perché di tutto questo e come mai proprio a me: non riuscivo a credere neppure ai dolori che sentivo.

«Forse ho fatto qualcosa di male perciò Dio mi sta punendo. Se è così ti prego, Signore, perdonami!... Mentre un giorno pregavo in questo modo mi è venuta in mente un passo del Vangelo che avevo sentito diverse volte in chiesa, e precisamente il versetto di Gv 9,2: «Rabbi, chi ha peccato, lui o i suoi genitori, perché egli nascesse cieco?». Rispose Gesù: «Né lui né i suoi genitori, ma è così perché si manifestassero in lui le opere di Dio». Così cominciai a considerare il fatto che la mia malattia non fosse tanto una punizione divina nei miei confronti, quanto piuttosto un modo attraverso cui Dio voleva

manifestare la sua opera. Analizzando la mia situazione in questo modo, ho percepito come se il dolore e lo sconforto avessero abbandonato il mio cuore e mi sentii subito meglio dentro.

Da bambina avevo imparato che per vivere un'esistenza pienamente umana, la cosa più importante da accogliere e realizzare erano gli ammaestramenti della religione. Questo insegnamento — che quando stavo bene in salute neppure mi aveva sfiorato la mente tanto lo davo per scontato — adesso, nella mia malattia, mi si era affacciato di nuovo in tutta la sua autenticità e io lo stavo comprendendo in tutta la sua profondità, a tal punto che mi ritrovai a ripeterlo da sola ad alta voce.

Cominciai allora a pensare: «È proprio così: è la fede che salva» e in questo modo riuscii ad aspettare e ad attendere con fede il lento passare del tempo. Dio mi aveva sempre ricolmato di beni e sempre aveva operato cose buone per me. Capii che vivere nella malattia e nel dolore non privava la mia esistenza del suo senso e del suo significato profondo. A causa dei tremendi dolori che avevo provato ero giunta al punto di desiderare la morte, e infatti pensavo che forse sarebbe stato molto meglio se fossi morta di cancro piuttosto che vivere soffrendo in questa maniera. Ma dopo aver ritrovato la mia fiducia in Dio, anche questi lugubri pensieri svanirono completamente dalla mia mente.

Non intendo però dire che per il solo fatto di avere la fede la mia malattia sia guarita con facilità e senza problemi. Anzi, dopo essere stata dimessa dall'ospedale, iniziarono delle sofferenze che prima neppure potevo immaginare. Ogni giorno ero quasi distrutta dalla paura, mi spaventava il fatto di dover rimanere in casa da sola, non avevo il coraggio neppure di fare un passo fuori dall'uscio di casa. In questa condizione penosa, desiderando di aggrapparmi ad un'ulteriore ancora di salvezza, ho cominciato a leggere la Bibbia. Ed è veramente sorprendente come la lettura della Parola di Dio risuonasse dentro di me in modo molto limpido e chiaro, che penetrasse fin nelle profondità del mio cuore. Sono convinta che attraverso la sofferenza Dio ha fatto sì che io rivolgessi i miei occhi verso di Lui. Il modo con cui mi metto di fronte a Dio, il modo di raccogliarlo è cambiato radicalmente: non vi è confronto tra il prima e il dopo della malattia. È cambiato il significato della mia vita, è cambiata la mia scala di valori, è cambiato profondamente persino il mio modo di pregare.

A questo punto vorrei citare una frase che mi piace molto. L'ho trovata in un libro della scrittrice giapponese suor Watanabe della Congregazione di Notre Dame: «Ci sono delle preghiere che non possiamo offrire finché non diventiamo malati, ci sono dei miracoli che non si possono credere finché non ci ammaliamo, c'è un volto che non si può contemplare finché non si è sofferenti». Ciò significa che i dolori e le sofferenze non si

riducono solamente ad esser quel che sono, ma che piuttosto c'è un qualcosa che li oltrepassa. Così pure le pene ed i dolori, non sono senza significato, ma hanno un senso molto preciso. Ciò che si impara dopo aver provato la sofferenza è qualcosa che si è ricevuto perché ci si è avvicinati di più a Dio. In questo modo ho superato anche la paura della morte. Infatti non ho più paura di morire. Anzi voglio andarmene presto verso il cielo, per vedere finalmente il volto di Dio, quello della Madonna e di san Giuseppe. Il fatto di avere la prospettiva di incontrarli è per me fonte di grande gioia.

A questo punto vorrei dire chiaramente che Dio mi ha guidato sino a questo punto attraverso le mani, la bocca e i piedi di moltissime persone in carne ed ossa. Ho avuto la grazia di essere sostenuta, consolata e guarita attraverso un numero enorme di persone.

Per tre anni ancora devo vivere sotto controllo costante dei medici. Certo, ho paura che il cancro compaia di nuovo, tuttavia se questa è la volontà di Dio penso di poterla accettare, perché Dio solo sa cos'è il meglio per me — e me ne fa dono. Attualmente mi sento molto debole e fragile, ma desidero ardentemente poter rispondere bene alla Sua chiamata e per questo prego ogni giorno.

Vorrei aggiungere un'ultima cosa. Durante la permanenza in ospedale, grazie a mio marito, ho potuto ricevere la santa Comunione ogni domenica. Per me che ero nella sofferenza e nel dolore il poter parlare con Gesù presente nell'Ostia consacrata era una grande gioia, diventava forza per vivere. La santa Comunione è infatti il cibo per la vita eterna. Sono fermamente convinta che fosse il Signore stesso a venire al mio capezzale quando ero disperata attraverso la presenza di mio marito che mi portava la Comunione.

Questo è tutto. Ringrazio tutti coloro che hanno avuto la pazienza di leggere la mia testimonianza.¹

1. Questa testimonianza è stata raccolta e tradotta da p. Silvano Da Roit, che qui ringraziamo per la sua preziosa collaborazione.

Sulle «note» della Chiesa

Commento in margine a un articolo

FRANCO SOTTOCORNOLA

Pubblichiamo di seguito una nota a commento di quanto il Sig. Kawano Masao di Osaka, in Quaderni del CSA 2011/1, pp. 9–10, scrive a proposito dell'ordine delle «note» della Chiesa nella traduzione giapponese del Credo di Nicea-Costantinopoli.



Nel tradurre un testo non basta tradurre i termini della proposizione. Occorre, per quanto possibile, tener conto della struttura grammaticale della lingua, e, per esempio, dell'incidenza sulla valenza semantica dei termini da parte della loro posizione all'interno della frase. In Latino (da cui viene fatta la traduzione dei testi liturgici) la sequenza degli aggettivi (che indicano le «note») qualificanti la Chiesa è la seguente: «*unam, sanctam, catholicam et apostolicam Ecclesiam*».

In questa enumerazione c'è un ordine di importanza? Questo ordine di importanza è espresso dall'ordine di disposizione successiva? In questo caso, si tratta di ordine crescente o decrescente?

A queste domande che hanno una chiara dimensione teologica non è facile rispondere. Eppure queste domande vanno tenute presenti nel tentativo di tradurre, non solo i termini in se stessi, ma anche il «senso» che essi hanno nella struttura grammaticale della frase o proposizione.

È proprio ciò di cui sembra preoccuparsi il sig. Kawano. Ebbene è proprio per sottolineare l'importanza dell'unità della Chiesa, che il Sig. Kawano giustamente richiama come la più importante delle «note» elencate nel Simbolo di fede come caratteristiche della Chiesa radunata da Cristo, che — *in giapponese* — si è voluto collocare questo aggettivo non «al quarto posto», quasi fosse l'ultimo, ma al posto più importante nella struttura semantica della frase giapponese, ossia il più vicino al sostantivo «Chiesa» per sottolinearne — *in giapponese* — l'importanza.

Certo si potrebbe discutere sull'effettivo rendimento semantico-grammaticale di questa collocazione dell'aggettivo immediatamente prima del sostantivo al quale le quat-

tro «note» della Chiesa si riferiscono. La discussione tra «esperti» di lingua giapponese, anche su questo importante dettaglio, non è esclusa, anzi sollecitata dalla Commissione Liturgica Nazionale che da undici anni sta lavorando per una revisione della traduzione del Messale Romano, opera veramente impegnativa e difficile, come anche questo esempio dimostra. Ma che, se tutto va bene, dovrebbe essere ormai verso la fine...¹

1. Franco Sottocornola, missionario in Giappone, è fondatore e direttore del Centro di spiritualità e dialogo interreligioso Shinmeizan, oltre membro della commissione liturgica della Conferenza Episcopale Giapponese e della sottocommissione per la traduzione del Messale Romano.

