

FINAL VERSION

27th General Charter of the Missionaries of Africa
10th May – 12th June 2010

Status Quaestionis: 'Faith doing Justice in Mission': What link?
Where we are at – some fault lines

Presentation by Peter Balleis SJ, Jesuit Refugee Service
Wednesday 19th May 2010

1. PAST: The change of my own understanding of mission as “faith doing justice”.

The reflection is not a theological presentation, nor a reading of documents such as the recent document of the African Synod, but a reflection and sharing on my own time and development of the mission concept in Africa. I try to speak from a reflected experience.

- a. The changes in my 'missionary' life and understanding in a changing context in Africa
 - i. In 1976 a visit to Kenya to a classic mission station of missionary Benedictines sparked of my personal call to become a missionary. My image of mission was the integration of the proclamation of the Gospel with development
 - ii. From 1984 – 1988 I worked as young Jesuit in post-independent Zimbabwe on two mission stations with parish, schools and hospital, missions in a classic sense. After this I studied two years of theology in Kenya together with young Jesuits from all over Africa. This opened my eyes to the growing African Society of Jesus and give me the sense of the end of the 'classic mission'. My perspective changed from development towards the social questions and issues of structural justice.
 - iii. From 1989-1990 I chose to study in Brazil in the field of Social Teaching of the Church and Liberation Theology. This time has shaped my mind and a new concept of faith and justice. The model of the classic mission faded away and I become more a social activist.
 - iv. From 1991-1994 back in Zimbabwe I worked at a Social Centre, doing analysis and critique of the Economic Structural

FINAL VERSION

Adjustment Programs being implemented by the Government. On the pressure of the World Bank, IMF and donor countries. As a social activist I attacked the structures, the international institutions because SAP was hurting the poor. The Washington Consensus was the 'enemy'.

- v. From 1995 – 1999 I was called to work with refugees as JRS Regional Director in Southern Africa. It meant a change from advocacy, structural analysis to humanitarian work setting up humanitarian and pastoral services in refugee situations, in particular in Angola. I was not anymore fighting against but fighting for. It meant a deeper spiritual change.
 - vi. From 2000 – 2007 I was asked to return to Germany and to become Mission Prokurator. We raised funds (12 Million a year) in support of the works of mainly local Jesuit Provinces and local Jesuits all over the world. The time was gone when the mission office was for the German Missionaries. Their number reduced quickly and no young people went anymore to the missions. I visited Jesuit projects all over the world. This opened my eyes to the cultures of Asia (India, Indonesia, and China). In Africa, the Church and Society of Jesus had passed from being a missionary church to be a local African church. I saw my role not anymore as 'missionary' but as supporting the young churches.
 - vii. End 2007 till today I work with refugees and forcibly displaced people as International Director of the Jesuit Refugee service.. This work brings me in contact with over 50 countries, mainly the conflict zones of the world; it brings me in contact with the 'fault lines' – the frontiers – today. 50% of JRS work is happening in Africa
- b. The change of the context and the change of "mission"
- i. Within 50 years Africa changed from Pre-Independence to Post-Independence time in Africa. Many countries gained Independence 50 years ago, in some only 30 or 20 years.
 - ii. Within 100 years the church changed from a Missionary Church (since 1890) to a local Church in (1990...) within 100 years.
 - iii. Within the last 30 years the understanding of mission changed from the classical missionary tasks of evangelization, health care and education (development) to concerns about justice and culture.

FINAL VERSION

2. PRESENT: The challenges to “Mission” in Africa today

There are many good things happening in Africa and there is a lot of hope. For the sake of our theme let us focus on the challenges to our ‘mission’ in Africa today.

a. Leadership in Post-Independent Africa

- i. In several countries the old guard of Freedom Fighters and their party who led their countries into independence still holds on to power and claims their right to rule. Some liberators have become the new dictators, e.g. Zimbabwe.
- ii. Many African states have gone through democratic transitions, but a number of them are struggling.
- iii. The inefficiency and corruption of some governments is being made responsible for lack of development or even decline of the situation.
- iv. Some states are being considered as failed states where not State exists beyond the capital city were civil conflict and rebel groups control areas and resources.

b. Economic problems

- i. The level of Human Development (education, life expectancy and per capita income) is in many African countries very low. The HDI Human Development Report of the UNDP counts 23 out of 179 states among the group of low Human Development, of these 21 states are in Africa with a high level of poverty, low level of education, health problems and a low life expectancy. AIDS is one major factor.
- ii. Despite macroeconomic growth and the raising price for minerals, the gap between the small elite (those who control the state) and the poor is growing and a concern in all countries.

c. Struggle for Identity

- i. Minorities struggle for their identity
- ii. But ethnical and cultural differences are in several cases being manipulated for political purposes and turned into civil wars. Political manipulation of ethnical differences. What seems to be a struggle for ethnic identity is a struggle for power and the control of resources.

d. Geopolitical interests in Africa: the new run for Africa or the new grab of Africa

- i. Africa has been once the colony and domain of European states. Europe has lost some influence. The US has come on stage and more recently Asian countries, in particular China. All

FINAL VERSION

seem to compete for a control of Africa's natural wealth: minerals, timber, land and water.

- ii. Africa is being newly divided and exploited and one can speak of a neo-colonial phase.
 - iii. Outside powers, but also major African countries compete for the control of the markets. South Africa (Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Malawi, and Tanzania) and Angola (DRC) are in competition and expanding their regional position.
- e. Conflicts as Resource wars with ethnical color
- i. The conflicts are concentrated where the resources are concentrated: DRC, South Sudan, Chad, CAR
 - ii. The income from the minerals feeds the wars. Rebels and Governments try to control the mineral areas.
- f. Refugees, Internally displaced people as consequence of conflicts
- i. According to the UNHCR Report of 2009: At the beginning of 2009, there were more than 10 million people of concern to UNHCR in sub-Saharan Africa, including some 2.1 million refugees, 305,000 asylum-seekers, more than 6.3 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) and an estimated 100,000 stateless people. In contrast with global trends, the number of refugees in the region is on the decline. However, nearly 98 per cent of the refugees who remain have been trapped in exile for protracted periods.
 - ii. The refugees and displaced people are concentrated in the region of Central and Eastern Africa. South Africa receives a very high number of asylum seekers and migrants.
- g. Migration as consequence of conflicts, poverty and bad governance
- i. The migration from rural areas to urban centers causes a fast urbanization and is a road from rural to urban poverty
 - ii. The migration from other African Countries to South Africa is a road which meets an increasing xenophobia.
 - iii. The migration from Africa to Europe is a road through a dangerous desert, a dangerous journey on the sea in shaky boats and meets an ever higher wall around Europe. Those who make it meet rejection, end up in detention or are exploited through lower wages and remain vulnerable because of no social security and also no legal documents.
 - iv. Migration of professional Africans and middle class drains the continent of its human resources.

FINAL VERSION

3. TODAY: Our Mission

a. Inspiration drawn from the triple mission of JRS work and experience in Africa

The Jesuit Refugee Service has a triple mission to accompany, to serve and to advocate. This triple can be one source of inspiration on how to respond to the challenges of today.

i. Accompaniment means:

1. To feel compassion with people, just as Jesus felt compassion.
2. To be with the most vulnerable
3. Pastoral and psycho-social care
4. 'to accompany' is the cornerstone of the mission. It guarantees that all our services are not 'just humanitarian services' and that our advocacy is always rooted in reality.

ii. Services needed by the people:

1. Jesus served people, he taught them, healed them and feed them.
2. Education (primary, secondary, tertiary) is a source of hope and a promotion of human dignity, it opens up a future.
3. Informal training for income generating activities promotes small scale economic activities.
4. Health care (not a strong field of JRS) is a vital service.

iii. Advocacy

1. Jesus spoke about unjust structures, repressive laws, the structures of power in the world. He criticized the temple as market place.
2. Structural Analysis is needed understand and name the root causes of poverty, conflict and displacement.
3. Advocacy means to defend the Human Rights and rights of refugees on local, regional, continental and international level.
4. Advocacy for local integration of foreigners and refugees against raising xenophobia.
5. Advocacy for durable solutions, for peace and reconciliation.

FINAL VERSION

- b. The places of our mission today
 - i. The Frontiers where we meet the challenges of our mission today are:
 - 1. Geographical borders between states in remote rural areas:
 - a. To work with the rural poor;
 - b. The classical mission station becomes again a centre of education, health care and of protection.
 - 2. The cultural borders between ethnical, cultural and religious different communities
 - a. The Sahel Zone where Islamic influences meet with traditional and Christian Africa.
 - b. Great Lakes Region
 - c. North and South Sudan
 - 3. Areas of conflict, where governments and different groups exercise authority and people are caught in between.
 - a. CAR
 - b. Chad
 - c. Somalia
 - 4. Humanitarian crisis and response to refugee and IDP.
 - ii. Urban areas
 - 1. Urban parish are privileged places for our mission today:
 - a. To work with the poor. E.g. the places where the Jesuits are mostly involved with the poor are the parishes and schools.
 - b. To attend to refugees and migrants and help their local integration.
 - c. To reach out to the most vulnerable, the sick through home based care for HIV.
 - 2. Schools for poor people
- c. The contents of our mission today
 - i. It is a mission of FAITH doing and JUSTICE.
 - ii. It is a mission of depth of faith and the transformation of culture
 - 1. The Gospel – Faith and Justice - will not be spread anymore so much by reaching out to remote areas and evangelizing people and to establish new missions and parishes.

FINAL VERSION

2. Faith will grow by going to the depth of the culture, promoting the good values and transforming the societies to become more human and just.
 3. The Gospel will be proclaimed and deepened by deeds of love – Deus Caritas est.
- iii. It is a mission of DIALOGUE between the Christian faith with other religions, cultures and also the modern society.
- iv. It is a mission of peace and RECONCILIATION
1. The rich African heritage of reconciliation
 2. The Gospel of forgiveness and love
 3. The promotion of reconciliation between God and people, (FAITH), between people and creation (ECOLOGY) and among people (JUSTICE).

Santo Domingo, 7th May 2010
Rome 17th May 2010

Peter Balleis SJ