

Justice and Charity in the Mission

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We all know the warning of our holy founder: “If any among us should be of the opinion that they belong to the Congregation in order to preach the Gospel to the poor, but not to alleviate their distress, and to provide for their spiritual needs but not for their temporal ones, to them I say in rebuttal that we must come to their aid ourselves or have others come to their aid.” (1)

Faithful to his charism during missions, St. Vincent, apart from preaching and teaching catechism, devotes himself always to the foundations of charities for the relief of the material needs of the poor. Times have now changed. The “irruption” of the poor into society and into the church, the deepening awareness of the dignity of the human person and of his/her exigencies in all the demands of life, the clamour for justice in the face of a world become more and more unequal, today raises for us disciples of St. Vincent, if we wish to be faithful to his spirit, the urgent question of justice in the Mission. Hence the title of our reflection: Justice and Charity in the Mission.

We’ll take our reflections in 3 stages: a) present day ethical perspectives discussed in the debate which will follow and I shall present some lines of action, in the light of our reflections and our experience as missionaries in Brazil. b) rooted-ness in biblical theology, c) Vincentian perspectives. I shall propose a few questions to be.

Right at the start, the question could be asked: What justice is in question? Everyone knows the definition and distinction, traditionally coming from Aristotle (2), while passing through Thomas Aquinas and the teaching at school, referred to as: communicative, distributive and legal justice.

The definition, as well as the etymology to which the word is generally associated with the word itself(4) shows sufficiently the insufficiency and ambiguity of the classic triad: a) the tendency “to enclose justice in the formal schema of habitués virtue”, by imposing on it “a subjective marking”(5), b) the concretising of the object of justice within the limits of a pre-determined order, or the qualification of strict requirement tends towards a legal minimum. Consideration of others finds itself oriented, on the other hand, towards interpersonal relationships—individual or juridical persons among themselves—on the horizontal plane.

The vertical plan, ascending or descending: Individual---state, individual---society, or vice versa is ill-proposed due to the fact that the conception of these last named (state and society) presents them as realities which are perfect and unchangeable, which demand the respect of law and order, ignoring the sense of justice as moralisation and transformation of social structures, economic structures and political structures.

The accent and tangential predominance of commutative justice(6) or at least of the commutative aspect or of changes (in all dissection meanings) according to the system—all come back to the taste of the liberal palate and are very well assimilated, because easily manipulated are made into instruments by the masters of the global market.

The longing for equality and for participation, springing up from within society of technical progress, reveals a progress of the human conscience, as Paul VI already mentioned. From there new and legitimate demands arise, in the context of difficult relationships of people among themselves.

Attention is today directed towards the different obstacles to a balanced existence which faces the growing complexity of the social organism, which tends to block out irresponsibility and to dilute into anonymity the connivances and inertias which are contrary to a solid engagement in favor of life. This brings up the urgent need of a definition of justice in world in a fuller way.

1. For a re-definition of Justice

There are rights and basic demands of the human person which are anterior to any concrete juridic order. There are “adjustments” changes and transformations to be carried out not only within and arising from systems or from an established order, but to establish and to implant into the heart of the structures, the creative function of law, already present in the Geneva conference (1996) in the Church and Society(8).

Rather than an order to be respected and to be given status in conformity with the classic concept of justice, one is faced with a disorder to be undone and a new order to be created. Already in 1962 Mgr. Bruno Solages presented audacious and very pertinent ideas on this question in his excellent work “Initiation Metaphysique”(9)

This new understanding has given rise to the expression “social justice”, given currency by Pius XI and used subsequently in later documents on the Social Documents of the Church. Since then it appears, assimilated into theory, in almost all political programs, making explicit the ethical ideal of an economic and social order.(10)

The phenomenon of severe impoverishment of immense crowds of humanity, a new “sign of the times” drives human consciences and especially those of Christians towards the inescapable problem of justice in a still larger sense. It is a question of its dynamic and evolving face, in a continuous and never-achieved effort to articulate dialectically its utopian horizon with the reality of possible ways forward, (which might be) absolutely necessary and inevitable.

For believers it is the link-up, always in a fertile tension of the “not yet” of the eschatological ideal with the “already there” of the presence of the liberating grace for all people, especially the poor, for life.

In fact, justice today is a question of life. It is the radical and dynamic conscience of a struggle and an action in favor of life. Because life, of itself, is the source of the fundamental law to survive with dignity, to be agent and subject of one’s own history, to affirm one’s citizenship by participating at different levels of human existence and activity. Such is social, economic, political, ecological justice.

As formerly with the people of God in Egypt, an ethical clamour is arising for a new exodus (11) out of a situation which is more and more unsustainable.

3. A Stifled Clamour

People having power within the system tend today, not without an evident dose of cynicism, to stifle the cry of the poor, disqualifying them in order to silence their clamour. They seek to empty their conscience of “the oppressed”, in order to appease their attitude of domineering masters of the world by proclaiming “They’re not being exploited. They are not needed”(12).

It is clear that the long standing and monstrous exploitation of workers, the imposition of unjust and belittling conditions within commercial enterprises between groups and nations (13) based on power structures has made possible a continuing and fantastic accumulation of resources in the haves of the powerful. The immense potential for productivity, which now is based upon technical and informational progress, secured at the price of the blood and sweat of the impoverished, is in the process of eliminating the

working force more and more, those who were previously bought up at a base price on the open and saturated market of the “industrial reserve army”.

For the poor, then material to be pushed aside, a marginalized and embarrassing multitude, there doesn't even remain the possibility of a justifiable cry. They might be at the most an object of pity, a good means of nourishing one's vanity, to relieve one's conscience in promotional propaganda about certain types of campaigns of solidarity and humanitarian aid.

More than ever, then, there arises the challenge of an authentic ethical-historical reflection in order to awake among people an awareness of the present situation of injustice and to establish the radical and primary right to survive and to live for each man and woman who comes into the world. Further, never was there such urgent need for a vision of justice by way of a global task, by way of conquering movement, within the concept of human life as a process and continual march toward a Utopian goal of total humanitarianism, in the midst of which there should arise ever new exigencies, responding to the development of the human person, more and more sensitive to the call of life, as rights in justice.

Consequently the task is to construct a life, a worthy life, always a fuller life, since life “is a reality, through nature itself, always open to something more.”(14) What is at stake obviously is the life of the impoverished, the marginalized, the people excluded, but who are the chosen ones and those preferred by the heart of God and the liberating project of Christ, assumed with a mystic passion through the charism of our holy founder: to announce the Gospel of Life, the Kingdom of God and His justice(15).

Now we will pass to another area for reflection

PART II

REFERENCES IN BIBLICAL THEOLOGY

1. The word “justice” in the Bible.

Before recalling the two key categories of the Bible which are proper to our reflection, we've made it useful to make an allusion to analysis of the terms used in order to express the concept of justice in the ancient Near-East, and the people of the Bible, following the interesting study of Leon Epstein (16).

The results from minute observations, based on numerous and serious quotations, that it is absolutely impossible to confine the biblical concept of justice in a single meaning and to reduce it to one simple area. (17)

Long before any biblical elaboration, but in the same context there comes up “the idea of plenitude and abundance of a happy life where everything is found in its place and where nothing is lacking.(18) Precisely this elasticity of the word sends us back to the plenitude of the Kingdom of God and his justice in the New Testament, which means liberation and life for the poor.

2. The Kingdom of God in the Gospel and a new order of justice.

“Seek first the kingdom of God and his justice and all that will be given to you over and above(19)” This verse occurs in the full context of the evangelical discourse recounted by Matthew. It follows immediately the sever warnings of Jesus:” No one can serve two masters”(20) which he makes clear in these words: “You can't serve God and money.”(21) So, far from blaming the efforts, full of anguish and grief, of the poor in order to survive, there's a clear reprimand against the unsatiable desire to consume, to accumulate, a reprimand which sets and exclusion order against the wicked rich people of his world. Don't amass treasures for yourselves on earth. (22)

The “over and above” is neither encouragement of inertia nor approval of non involvement. The exegesis of the poor is illuminating. “In a new world where there will be established more just relationships throughout the extent of people’s lives, where people will be valued for who they are and not for what they have or for the power they possess, where fundamental laws of the human person will be respected, where the sovereignty of a just God will be honored and also radical equality of all his children. In a word, where people would seek the Kingdom of God and his justice, the “over and above” would mean a worthy life for everyone which would be a consequence, a spontaneous fruit of the true order, of the new order of justice and of “love without pretence”.(23)

“the spirit which is life” is present when they discover that small undertakings and successes, as with the miracles of Jesus, make present the reality of the the Kingdom

It is precisely in the light of this central category of the Bible that we best grasp the meaning of the justice of the God of the Kingdom. Kingdom the fullness of which they await in hope and that they are already living in faith.

Once again it would be cruel and I think it would be neither theological nor biblical, to postpone the hopes of the poor and to situate them exclusively at a transtemporal level in the final parousia of the Lord.

This intuition of the faith and this experience of life are expressed by our theologians with competence and in an appropriate fashion. (34) We shall see later an aspect of this “organic theology”, that of sin, closely linked to our subject.

3 Covenant and the justice of the God of the Kingdom

Because of time, I shall limit myself to some quick references to two important aspects of our subject.

The justice of God in his Covenant with the people holds first of all a certain juridical character which his goodness and mercy wished to confer on it: “I am your God and you shall be my people”.(35)

Obviously it doesn’t mean equal partners. But the sense of gratuity and of gift in the Covenant, doesn’t take away the obligation of justice.

In proposing the Covenant as a pact made between two, God wishes to oblige himself to be faithful to it since he is a God of justice.

The justice of God is therefore his fidelity to the Covenant and to all that it involves: election, promise, land, numerous descendants, blessing, protection and life.(36)

That is also why to protect the life of the people, by establishing justice and rights “is one of the great exigencies of God in the Old Testament. It is in this mission that is best expressed fidelity to the Covenant between God and his people. The God of life and of love wishes that among his people justice should reign and the rights of all should be respected., especially those of the poor”....Those are the fruits which ought to be produced by the vine which the Lord has planted and takes care of”.(37)

But the justice of the God of the Kingdom is elevated and transfigured especially in the character of espousals in the Covenant, present so forcefully and so suggestively in the Old Testament(38) as well as in the parables of Jesus (39). This spousal character of the Covenant binds the Lord to give himself to his people and to bestow on them all that the love of a spouse requires: presence, protection, tenderness, fidelity, justice, giving of self and of life. “in light of the Covenant between Yahweh and his people (between Christ and the Church) social themes (let’s add: economic, political, ecological themes and those of radical justice) are transformed into questions of faith, into elements which characterise the quality of the faith and cannot be reduced to the level of simple social legislation. In its light also we judge the “false jubilees” which only ease the situation of the poor in order to keep them under the yoke, adding in a gratitude complex”. (40) Finally, in the light of the New Covenant” one sees that Christ loved the Church and gave himself for it”.(41)

4 Justice of the Kingdom and new notion of sin

The wide breath of the justice shown forth in ethic perspectives finds its echo and its deepening in theology.

There one speaks of structural disorder. Here one speaks of sin, structural sin, social sin, systematic injustice in so far as fundamental sin against the gift of life received from the Creator and won back by the Cross of Christ.

One cannot understand justice-life, in Christian terms, starting from any predetermined historical project, nor from any elitist criterion of social perfection or fitting into a supposedly established order, so we have said, nor inside any power-system whether civil, ecclesiastical or mixed.(42)

The eschatological dimension of the plenitude of life and of justice which reveal the holiness of God(43) maintains us in a critical and vigilant attitude in the face of any kind of historical project and invites us to “relativise” all structures, institutions or specific organisations of human life--since it is always open to something more, as we have already said--always in tension, let us now add, towards a meta-historical and supernatural plenitude,

Starting from biblical reflexion on the liberation of the people of God from the slavery of Pharaoh, the outcry of the poor of our Basic Communities, with their vigorous tone, is awakening the conscience of the Church: “The clamour of millions of people calling on their pastors for a liberation which is not coming to them from any quarter”(44) has touched the hearts of the bishops of the second General Conference of the Latin-American Bishops. The prophetic document of Medellin denounces the “fact of collective misery” as an “injustice which cries out to heaven”(45). It speaks of the “situation of injustice”, “of the institutionalised violence”(46), and of the “unjust inequalities” as a “rejection of the Lord”(47).

This language becomes a theme in moral theology. Henceforth the expressions “structure of sin”, “structural sin”, “social sin” keep occurring in other official documents of the Church. Pastoral theological reflexion understands these to be in opposition to the life-project revealed in the Exodus, when the people fall away from this project.

God is there defined as “just” and “our Justice”(48). To be the mirror of a just God and a friend of life, in the reciprocity of the Covenant, welcoming into the promised land, the offer of life(49) through structures of fraternal life, such is the vocation of the people of God since they will one day give birth from in their midst to a Saviour and Lord of life, whose mission will be the redemption of the life of everyone, especially the poor.(50).

The sin of individuals and of the entire people would be to destroy this project, choosing death.(51).

Our theology has met the challenge of making a theory of this project of life, rescuing it from an “ancient pietistic and ritualistic model”(52). It links virtue and the fundamental attitude of the Christian who seeks justice to the appeals of “the Spirit who is life through justice”, and “whose desire is life”(53). Let us mention here the prophetic intuition, more contemporary than ever, of our martyr the great Mgr Romero, who, paraphrasing St Irenaeus, used to say “The glory of God is the life of the poor”.

This life is always sacrificed on the altar of the sacred demands of market forces!

It is appropriate to refer here to Hugo Assman who cleverly unmasks the “sacralisations” and “theologisations” which liberal economists and neo-liberals like to make in order to legitimise, in a subtle and underhand way the “untouchable” structures, exigencies and rituals of the market, whose “natural laws” are guided by an “invisible and providential hand”(54). He unmasks the process which aims at silencing the outcry of a clamouring reality, where the poor person counts only as a variable in the equation of the economic system which seeks only effective productivity.,

The “religious”, “unshakeable” and “idol-worshipping” certitudes of an economic rationale impose more and more “sacrificial rites”, in the offering of human lives on the altar of the god of the market, postponing ceaselessly the hopes of the poor or the ignorant to the profit of the dizzy voraciousness of dreams of power and domination. Here one makes contact with the root of the great present-day sin: idolatry of the god Money, sharply attacked by Jesus modulaed by the Apostle Paul: “Money is the root of all evil. Because they gave themselves to this , some have fallen from the faith”(55). It finds itself encrusted into legislations and social organisations, present in perverse reports of work and commerce, inserted into death-dealing structures of an unequal system

Structural sin, sinful situation, institutionalised injustice which has has awakened theology to a new concption of sin.

Ecclesiastic instances and perplexed teologians have manifested some anxiety about this notion of structural sin - sin without sinner?- and efforts to focus meaning and warnings given have not been lacking(56).

John-Paul II rightly recalls its analogical character since the proper subject of moral responsibility is always and only the person.

And nevertheless one is not being faced with a pure and simple metaphore when one speaks of structural sin. In fact he structures of sin, a consequence of a multitude of personal sins, once it installs itself , acquires a relative independance and act with a certain particular and perverse logic, encouraging and favouring persona l sin (without suppressing free will, obiously). These in their turn have and effect back on the structures establishing a vicious circle.

One has to place oneself into this dialectical vision in order properly to understand and throw light upon structural sinas a moral category, always bringing this back to personal responsibility.

It is appropriate to recall here the deep biblical roots of this sin in the sin of the people who break the Covenant, move away from the project of love and of life, oppress the poor the orphan and the widow(57).

There is question here of real participation in the “mystery of iniquity”, which all of us are responsible for, through inertia omission, laziness indifference or even by complicity or connivence, passive or active, “which often hide themselves behind an alleged impossibility of transforming the world, or behind a flight from fatigue or from sacrifice, sometimes invoking so-called reasons of a superior order”(58).

This worries the Church, calling into question a whole way of living within the Church and doing theology there. This worries society, calling into question its methods of discrimination and domination.(59)

In order to assimilate it,, it is necessary to call into question our own particular manner of being Church, and to open ourselves to a new ecclesiology starting from an “option for the poor” which is effective and coherent.(60)

We must also be ready to change “our place in society” in order to be coherent with the Option for the Poor and with what we are invited to in our Constitutions Statutes(61). To pass over to the poor person’s side who will become a subject in the Church and will have a word to say to him about his way of speaking and of situating himself when faced with social and economic structures and the masters of the system. To make a change of axis, to allow ourselves to be challenged in a gospel way by the poor who are the first to be destined for the Kingdom. To take sides, to revise our friendships, to re-make our pacts. It is a matter of changinon the level of practice and of understanding. Hence of theology, of sin, of justice, of understanding of the “Kingdom of God and of his justice”.

Wouldn’t there be a place here to carry out that conscience-examination proposed by the Pope

for all the Church-disciples, families, institutes, religious - taking solidarity with the poor as a starting place, as suggested in *Redemptoris Missio* (62)?

5 Justice of the Kingdom and charity

At the start we asked : what justice are we considering?

Now we are asking : what charity?

In treating this question we are going to throw into relief official doctrinal references of the Church in order to support our reflexions.

5.1 The works of charity

The decree “Ad Gentes” in the chapter on “missionary work itself” alludes to the active presence of Christians, who after the example of Jesus bring help to material miseries and insists on the witness value of such presence (63).

The decree on the “Apostolate of the Laity” claims works of charity as “a duty and a right which are inalienable for the Church” (64)

John-Paul II in “*Redemptoris Missio*” again stresses the value of “works of charity” and their particular efficacy for expressing the soul of missionary activity: love which is and becomes the motive force of the mission” (65).

One has only to look at the world with the compassionate heart of Christ to see that the works of charity are still very much needed: victims of war and violence, prisoners, handicapped persons, drug-addicts, etc. are all there. It would be an insensitivity incompatible with the mercy of the gospel and the gratuity of love (66) to close one’s eyes to their appeal: “You give them something to eat, says our Lord.(69). “Consider the story of Lazarus and the parabol of the Good Samaritan as anachronistic and you are not understanding the essence of Christianity” (68)

It falls to us to discover, in a creative fidelity, to discover how to put this into practice in the respect due to the person of the poor in a manner as liberating as possible.

5.2 Political charity

This involves a rather broad subject, and a controversial one perhaps, which takes in our previous reflexions about justice and charity.

The expression comes from Pius XI in his allocution of 18 December 1927 addressed to the *F&U>I* where his text reads: “Charity is political”. It later appears in “*Quadragesimo Anno*” under the expression “Social Charity” (69)

The Council speaks of “charity and political force” as attitudes of Christian involvement(70).

Present-day theology has begun speaking of the “political” character of charity particularly within Liberation Theology in the struggle for the transformation of structures.

There then appears the liberating pastoral activity, by Christians, religious and priests, of the Ecclesial Communities, as well as the pastoral sensitivity of numerous Third World bishops whose prophetic voice has resounded vigorously in the clear and express “preferential option for the poor”. This also appears in the proclamations and denunciations of the two great official documents of the General Conferences of the Latin-American Episcopate, that of Medellin (1968) and then that of Puebla(1979).

The theological theorisation of political charity and the pastoral activity engaged on frightened those politically responsible for the system.

The celebrated document of Santa Fe on the political strategy for “America” states textually: “the external politics of the United States of America must begin to meet head on (and not merely react subsequently) Liberation Theology. The role of the Church in Latin-America is vital for the concept of political liberty. Lamentably Marxist-Leninist forces have used the Church as a political arm against Private property (sic), and the capitalist system of production, infiltrating into the religious community ideas which are more communist than christian”. (71).

It is easy to notice the noise provoked in political and religious circles exacerbated subsequently by Santa Fe II: suspicions, doubts, incomprehensions, accusations and above all, frequent denunciations where ideologies, to tell the truth, came on to the scene and not simply love of truth and the Gospel.

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Personally during my 11 years of missionary work in a regions of extreme poverty and conflict in the west of Bahai in Brazil, I never knew of any deviation which menaced christian faith or morals. Quite the contrary, the poor people are very believing and love their pastors and the Church.

However that might be, in the face of so many rumours, the just preoccupations and guardedness of superiors were understandable. They were already contained in Paul VI’s *Evangelii* evangelical non-violence(74), sin, responsibility and the need for personal conversion(75), the integral character of christian liberation embracing all dimensions of people, openness to the absolute of God(76).

There is no condemnation at all. On the contrary, there is a recognition of the necessity of transforming action on the social structures and with regard to institutionalised violence(77), the need to announce liberation as the content of mission(78) and the reality of the Kingdom which has already begun in the world(79).

Not to do this would be to ignore the Gospel, to lack love of the neighbour(80). There we have obviously a new facet of charity--political charity

Finally in these documents there is given stimulating encouragement to every christian who in the name of his faith gets involved in these struggles(81), as well as to the Basic Ecclesial Communities whose evangelising capability and “missionary radiance” are a “sign of the vitality of the Church” and “a point of depart for a new society in the civilisation of love”. These orientations are clearly recognised in *Redemptoris Missio*, No.51.

5.3 Political Charity, a new mystique

One sees therein being born, in the engagement springing from political charity a new mystique engendering a new type of sanctity. Happily we possess new witnesses and martyrs of this.

This mystique, quelling a first ethical indignation against a culture of death, develops and draws vitality and finds nourishment in a deep experience of the Saviour who proclaims through the poor person, those excluded and forgotten by the system, words of justice and life.

“I’m hungry”: Fill me with bread, with the Word, with life.

“I’m thirsty”: Slake my thirst with justice.

“I’m naked”: Clothe me with the right to be a person, a brother/sister, a child of the same Father!

III VINCENTIAN PERSPECTIVES

1 Docility to Providence:” I have a special devotion to following the adorable Providence of God step by step(82)A traditional phrase invoked against precipitation. This is the time I believe to take another reading of it not in the light of these words and the justified cautions of the founder, but that of his practice and of his sense of innovation. And so we are always invited and stimulated to lengthen and hasten generously our pace , docile to the calls of god who in those excluded, pushed aside forgotten, call us to have “hunger and thirst for justice”

We know well just how far St Vincent went in this welcoming Providence, docile to the signs of the times. he was a pioneer of courageous and totally new initiatives in his day. The courage to follow the steps of Providence will help us to make much progress in our missions.

2---Concrete and effective love: ”Let us love God my brothers, let us love God, let it be at the expense of our arms and in the sweat of our brows”(83).

It is possible that works of mercy and helping will not demand today as much strength and sweat. But how much strength, blood, sweat and tears for humble but intrepid action of the David’s of the Mission against the Goliath’s of the system, in favour of justice, involvement for transforming structures, to benefit the life and the liberation of the poor, of solidarity with those without land or shelter, with the crowd of those forgotten by the marketplace. What a price to pay in order to direct ourselves towards those more effective and vast horizons of involvement in political charity, subversive of the reigning order and of the false justice of today’s scribes and Pharisees.

The visit of St. Vincent to Mazarin in order to suggest his resignation says a lot in this regard.

3. Creativity: “Love is infinitely inventive” (84).

It is not necessary to repeat St. Vincent as it is not necessary to repeat Jesus Christ: “Truly I say to you, he who believes in me will do the works that I do. He will do even greater works” (Jn. 14:12). What counts, is the inventive fidelity to the charism received as our heritage. “To loose the dynamism of the charism our regretted Mother Guillemin said, Is to betray most gravely the charism and the founder and the Holy Spirit which inspired it.”(85).

The crowd of forgotten people, goes impoverished in every way, those discriminated against, migrants, those who are no use to the marketplace, or to structures, those who are in danger of elimination: They are all there. They constitute a challenge to the evangelical creativity of the missionaries for justice and for life.

We would need, who knows, to descend from our horse, to leave our high positions, like the good Samaritan not only to embrace the victims of attack but also to confront the assailant, clothed with the “shield of faith” and the “helmet of salvation”, and the “breastplate of justice”, carrying ”the sword of the Spirit”, that is to say the Word of God, shod with zeal, inflamed with love-ininitely inventive- in order to “fight against Principalities, against powers, against Rulers of this world of darkness” in order to “ resist the wiles of Satan” and “quench the flaming arrows of the Evil One”(86).

4. The Entire Person

“If there is any among you who thinks they have entered the Congregations to evangelise the poor and not to assist them...etc...(87).

In this age of well established Christianity where the missions were only a preaching of salvation of the soul, the evangelical intuition of the heart of Vincent sees the entire man body and spirit. “the poor are dying of hunger and are being damned”. His heart is beating in sympathy of that of Christ. “I have pity on this multitude who for 3 days have been with me... tired and worn out like sheep without a shepherd... and he began to instruct them...give them, yourselves, something to eat”(88).

5. Mystic and exclusive option for the poor.

“The poor priest of the mission are only for poor people.”(89). “A company, oh God! who is going to announce the Gospel only to the poor: and never-the-less that is our rule”.(90) “Our heritage then is the poor”(91). That is left “like a monument to the company a memorial for posterity”(92).

It suffices to pay attention to the accents of joy, to the expressions full of faith of this conference of 17 May 1658 in order to be convinced that there is a profound spiritual experience of faith in it, a contemplative experience, a mystical option.

An exclusive option, let us add, based on his all too clear and convincing words. That is precisely the “unheard” character of which he is speaking (93): fundamental, institutional, constitutive option-not preferential in our case.

And yet exclusivity without exclusion. Exclusivity in fidelity to others, chosen by a vow to God, like that of spouses. Fidelity to this exclusivity renders the love of spouses more fruitful, more open, more ready to welcome others.

Our fidelity to the poor will make us more open to universal love, to the great causes of humanity, more useful to the church of God, more fruitful for the Kingdom and its justice.

Conclusion

Our key to reading the meaning of justice and charity in the mission makes us go beyond the dichotomy horizontal-vertical and the meaningless opposition between justice and charity. They tend towards the same objective, provoke identical initiatives.

From the Christian point of view it is urgent to go beyond the dichotomy of justice/charity. The key to this going beyond is precisely the conception of justice under its radical aspect of plenitude, of exigency for life for all, and of charity in its political aspect.

Charity without justice has no concrete content. On the contrary, justice reaches the horizon of plenitude in charity.

Love means and makes radical the exigencies of justice and gives it a new motive, an interior thrust and force.

They are two expressions of the same Christian reality: the necessary effort of the Christian in the construction of a human society in accord with the ideal of eschatological salvation realised by Christ.

That is the same reality with diverse and complementary nuances.

Charity makes obvious the religious horizon (Intentionality and Christian Cosmology).

Justice puts the accent on the intra-historical content of Christian salvation.

“Human action for justice under this aspect contains a special density and keeps a close link with the definitive Kingdom. It cannot be reduced to a simple means of salvation for the individuals who participate in it. Insofar as it is a struggle against objective evil and human sin, it is the anticipation of the definitive Kingdom in the temporality of history” (94) The presence of love and Christian liberation in the tissue of the world and of human relationships (95).

Under this integrating conception there falls to the ground distinctions which lead to distortions (96).

Justice and charity spring from the same source, are nourished from the same source, and flow into the same sea: the love of God “beyond all understanding”.

They make up together missionary Kerygma. They call people and the system to the “metanoia” of the kingdom.

To announce the risen Jesus, to proclaim that God has delivered him from death, he, the holy and the just one (97), is to announce Life. To say that God has approved of him(98), is to proclaim that the project of the liberation of Jesus of Nazareth for the poor of the kingdom is approved.

It is thus that the resurrection and the witness of the apostles have been understood by the disciples of the first Christian community: they loved one another with a single heart and a single soul, “faithful to the prayers and teachings of the apostles”; “among them no one was in need” ; “no one called his own what belonged to him”, but “they sold all that they possessed and shared everything”, in “the joy and simplicity of their hearts”, “praising God” in fraternal union “the breaking of bread” and the “communion of life”(99).

In the mission we are called to awaken in the heart of the poor the hope of a “new world”, to involve ourselves and to help them to become involved in this struggle to conquer the Kingdom of justice and of charity.