

PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR CULTURE

***TOWARDS A PASTORAL
APPROACH TO CULTURE***

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INTRODUCTION

New cultural situations, new fields of evangelization

1 « From the time the Gospel was first preached, the Church has known the process of encounter and engagement with cultures » (*Fides et Ratio*, 70), for «it is one of the properties of the human person that he can achieve true and full humanity only by means of culture» (*Gaudium et Spes*, 53). In this way, the Good News which is

Christ's Gospel for all men and the whole human person, «both child and parent of the culture in which they are immersed» (*Fides et Ratio*, 71), reaches them in their own culture, which absorbs their manner of living the faith and is in turn gradually shaped by it. «Today, as the Gospel gradually comes into contact with cultural worlds which once lay beyond Christian influence, there are new tasks of inculturation» (*Ibid.*, 72). At the same time, some traditionally Christian cultures or cultures imbued with thousand-year-old religious traditions are being shattered. Thus, it is not only a question of grafting the faith onto these cultures, but also of revitalizing a de-Christianized world whose only Christian references are of a cultural nature. On the threshold of the Third Millennium, the Church throughout the world is faced with new cultural situations, new fields of evangelization.

Faced with the challenges of «our times [which] are both momentous and fascinating» (*Redemptoris Missio*, 38), the Pontifical Council for Culture would like to share some convictions and practical suggestions. They are the result of several exchanges on a renewed pastoral approach to culture; thanks particularly to fruitful collaboration with Bishops, as diocesan pastors, and their co-workers in this field of apostolic work as a privileged point of encounter with Christ's message. For all culture «is an effort to ponder the mystery of the world and in particular of the human person: it is a way of giving expression to the transcendent dimension of human life. The heart of every culture is its approach to the greatest mystery: the mystery of God»(1) The decisive challenge of a pastoral approach to culture, for «a faith that does not become culture is a faith not fully accepted, not entirely thought out, not faithfully lived».(2)

The suggestions offered respect Pope John Paul II's urgent request to the Pontifical Council for Culture: «You must help the Church to respond to these fundamental questions for the cultures of today: how is the message of the Church accessible to the new cultures, to contemporary forms of understanding and of sensitivity? How can the Church of Christ make itself understood by the modern spirit, so proud of its achievements and at the same time so uneasy for the future of the human family?».(3)

I

FAITH AND CULTURE: SOME GUIDELINES

2. *The Church is the messenger of Christ, the Redeemer of man. She keeps in mind the cultural dimension of the person and of human communities.* The Second Vatican Council, particularly the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World and the Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity, the Synods of Bishops on the evangelization of the modern world and catechesis in our times, extended by the Apostolic Exhortations *Evangelii Nuntiandi* by Paul VI and *Catechesi Tradendae* by John Paul II, offer precious teachings in this respect, further specified by subsequent special Assemblies, continent by continent, of the Synod of Bishops and the Holy Father's Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortations. The inculturation of the faith was the object of a detailed reflexion on the part of the Pontifical Biblical Commission(4) and the International Theological Commission.(5) The Extraordinary Synod of 1985 for the Twentieth Anniversary of the Conclusion of the Second Vatican Council, cited by John Paul II in the Encyclical *Redemptoris Missio*, presents it as «the intimate

transformation of authentic cultural values through their integration in Christianity and the insertion of Christianity in the various human cultures» (52). In many addresses during his apostolic trips, like those to the General Conferences of Latin American Bishops in Puebla and Santo Domingo,(6) Pope John Paul II has updated and specified this new dimension of the Church's pastoral work in our times, for it to reach human beings in their culture.

The careful examination of the different fields of culture proposed in this document show the breadth of what is meant by *culture*, this particular way in which persons and peoples cultivate their relationship with nature and their brothers and sisters, with themselves and with God, so as to attain a fully human existence (Cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, 53). Culture only exists through man, by man and for man. It is the whole of human activity, human intelligence and emotions, the human quest for meaning, human customs and ethics. Culture is so natural to man that human nature can only be revealed through culture. In a pastoral approach to culture, what is at stake is for human beings to be restored in fullness to having been created «in the image and likeness of God» (*Gn* 1:26), tearing them away from the anthropocentric temptation of considering themselves independent from the Creator. Therefore, and this observation is crucial to a pastoral approach to culture, «it must certainly be admitted that man always exists in a particular culture, but it must also be admitted that man is not exhaustively defined by that same culture. Moreover, the very progress of cultures demonstrates that there is something in man which transcends those cultures. This 'something' is precisely human nature: this nature is itself the measure of culture and the condition of ensuring that man does not become prisoner of any of his cultures, but asserts his personal dignity by living in accordance with with the profound truth of his being» (*Veritatis Splendor*, 53).

In its essential relation to truth and good, culture cannot only spring from the experience of needs, centres of interest or basic requirements. «The first and fundamental dimension of culture», as John Paul II stressed to UNESCO, «is healthy morality, moral culture».(7)« A When they are deeply rooted in experience, cultures show forth the human being's characteristic openness to the universal and the transcendent» (*Fides et Ratio*, 70). Marked as they are by the very tensions aimed at achieving their fulfilment and the human dynamics of their history (Cf. *Ibid.* 71), cultures share also in sin and, by this very fact, require the necessary discernment of Christians. When the Word of God takes on human nature in all things but sin (*Heb* 4:15), he purifies it and brings it to fulfilment in the Holy Spirit. Revealing himself in this way, God opens his heart to mankind «by deeds and words, which are intrinsically bound up with each other» and lets men discover in human terms the mysteries of his love in order to invite and receive them into his own company» (*Dei Verbum*, 2).

Bringing the Good News of the Gospel to different cultures

3. *In order to reveal himself, from the rich panoply of age-old cultures born of human genius, God chose for himself a People whose original culture he penetrated, purified and made fertile.* The history of the Covenant is that of the rise of a culture that God himself inspired in his People. Sacred Scripture is the instrument willed and used by God to reveal himself, that which raises it to a supracultural plane. «To compose the sacred books, God chose certain men who, all the while he employed them in this

task, made full use of their powers and faculties» (*Dei Verbum*, 11). In Sacred Scripture, the Word of God, which constitutes the *original inculturation of the faith* in the God of Abraham, the God of Jesus Christ, «the words of God, expressed in the words of men, are in every way like human language» (*Ibid.*, 13). The message of the Revelation, inscribed in the sacred History, always presents itself in the guise of a cultural package from which it is inseparable, and of which it is an integral part. The Bible, the Word of God expressed in the words of men, constitutes the archetype of the fruitful encounter between the Word of God and culture.

In this respect, the call of Abraham is significant: «Leave your country, your family and your father's house» (*Gen* 12:1). «By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place he was to receive as an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was to go. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, living in tents... For he looked forward to the city which had foundations, whose builder and maker is God» (*Heb* 11:8-10). The history of the People of God begins with an adherence of faith which is also a cultural split and culminates with what can be seen as another, the crucifixion of Christ. He was lifted up from the earth, but at the same time became the focal point which directs the history of the world upwards and gathers in unity the scattered children of God: «When I am lifted up from the earth, I shall draw all men to myself» (*Jn* 12,32).

The cultural break with which Abraham's vocation began, he who was the «father of believers», conveys what happens in the depths of the human heart when God erupts in the existence of human beings, revealing himself and arousing the commitment of their whole being. Abraham was spiritually and culturally uprooted to be, in faith, planted by God in the Promised Land. Indeed, this break emphasizes the fundamental difference of nature that exists between faith and culture. Unlike idols, which are the product of a culture, the God of Abraham is totally different. It is by revelation that he enters Abraham's life. The cyclical time of the ancient religions becomes obsolete: with Abraham and the Jewish people, a new time begins and becomes the history of man walking towards God. It is not a people making itself a god, but God giving birth to a people, a people of God.

The culture of the Bible has a unique place. It is the culture of the people of God at the heart of which he became incarnate. The promise made to Abraham culminates in the glorification of Christ crucified. The Father of Believers, intent on the fulfilment of the Promise, announces the sacrifice of the Son of God on the wood of the Cross. In Christ, who came to recapitulate the whole of creation, the love of God calls all men to share in the condition of sonship. God who is totally different from us, manifests Himself in Jesus Christ as totally one with us: «the Word of the eternal Father, when he took on himself the flesh of human weakness, became like men» (*Dei Verbum*, 13). But faith has the power to get to the core of every culture and to purify it, to make it fruitful, to enrich it and to make it blossom like the boundless love of Christ. The reception of Christ's message thus gives rise to a culture whose two fundamental components are, in a completely new way, the *person* and *love*. Christ's redeeming love unveils, beyond human persons' natural limitations, their deep value, which blossoms under the effects of Grace, God's gift. Christ is the source of this *civilization of love*, for which men, since the original fall in the Garden of Eden, are nostalgic, and which John Paul II, like Paul VI, incessantly calls us to make into a practical reality with all people of good will. For the fundamental bond of the Gospel,

that is of Christ and of the Church, with man in his human nature is a creator of culture in its very foundation. By living the Gospel, as two millenniums of history demonstrate, the Church illuminates the meaning and the value of life, broadens the horizons of reason and strengthens the foundations of human morality. Lived authentically, the Christian faith reveals in all its depth the dignity of the human person and the sublime nature of man's vocation (Cf. *Redemptor Hominis*, 10). Pioneers like Saint Justin and Saint Clement of Alexandria, Origen and the Cappadocian Fathers bear witness to this. This fruitful encounter of the Gospel with the different philosophies through the ages is evoked by Pope John Paul II in his Encyclical *Fides et Ratio* (cf. 36-48). «Faith's encounter with different cultures has created something new» (*Ibid.*, 70), *in this way it creates an original culture*, in the most varied contexts.

Evangelization and inculturation

4. *Evangelization as such consists in the explicit proclamation of the mystery of Christ's salvation and of his message*, for «God... desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth» (1Tim, 2:4). «Everyone, therefore, ought to be converted to Christ, who is known through the preaching of the Church, and they ought, by baptism, to become incorporated into him, and into the Church which is his body» (*Ad Gentes*, 7). The newness which springs forth constantly from God's Revelation through «deeds and words, which are intrinsically bound up with each other» (*Dei Verbum*, 2), communicated by the Spirit of Christ working within the Church, shows the truth about God and the salvation of man. The proclamation of Christ «who is himself both the mediator and the sum total of the Revelation» (*Ibid.*), highlights the *semina Verbi* hidden and sometimes buried in the heart of cultures, and opens them to the infinite capacity He creates and which He fills gradually with the marvellous condescension of eternal wisdom (cf. *Dei Verbum*, 13), transforming their search for meaning into a quest for transcendence, and these stepping-stones into moorings for the acceptance of the Gospel. By explicitly witnessing their faith, Jesus's disciples impregnate the plurality of cultures with the Gospel.

- *For the Church, evangelizing* means bringing the Good News into all the strata of humanity, and through its influence transforming humanity from within and making it new... It is a question not only of preaching the Gospel in ever wider geographic areas or to ever greater numbers of people, but also of affecting and as it were upsetting, through the power of the Gospel, mankind's criteria of judgment, determining values, points of interest, lines of thought, sources of inspiration and models of life, which are in contrast with the Word of God and the plan of salvation.

- What matters is to evangelize man's culture and cultures (not in a purely decorative way, as it were, by applying a thin veneer, but in a vital way, in depth and right to their very roots), in the wide and rich sense which these terms have in *Gaudium et spes*, always taking the person as one's starting-point and always coming back to the relationships of people among themselves and with God.

- The Gospel, and therefore evangelization, are certainly not identical with culture, and they are independent in regard to all cultures. Nevertheless, the kingdom which the Gospel proclaims is lived by men who are profoundly linked to a culture, and the building up of the kingdom cannot avoid borrowing the elements of human culture or

cultures. Though independent of cultures, the Gospel and evangelization are not necessarily incompatible with them; rather they are capable of permeating them all without becoming subject to any one of them.

- The split between the Gospel and culture is without a doubt the drama of our time, just as it was of other times. Therefore every effort must be made to ensure a full evangelization of culture, or more correctly of cultures. They have to be regenerated by an encounter with the Gospel. But this encounter will not take place if the Gospel is not proclaimed» (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 18-20). In order to do this, it is necessary to proclaim the Gospel in the language and culture of men.

This Good News addresses human persons in their complex wholeness, spiritual and moral, economic and political, cultural and social. The Church therefore does not hesitate to speak of the evangelization of cultures, that is to say mentalities, customs and behaviour. «The new evangelization requires a lucid, serious and ordered effort for the evangelization of culture» (*Ecclesia in America*, 70).

While cultures are subject to change and decay, the primacy of Christ is an unquenchable source of life (cf. *Col* 1:8-12; *Eph* 1:8) and of communion. As bearers of the absolute novelty of Christ to the heart of different cultures, Gospel missionaries incessantly exceed the limits of each individual culture, without allowing themselves to be ensnared by the earthly visions of a better world. «Since the kingdom of Christ is not of this world (cf. *Jn* 18:36), the Church or People of God which establishes this kingdom does not take away anything from the temporal welfare of any people. Rather she fosters and takes to herself, insofar as they are good, the abilities, the resources and customs of peoples. In so taking them to herself she purifies, strengthens and elevates them» (*Lumen Gentium*, 13). An evangelizer, whose faith is itself linked to a culture, must always give clear witness to Christ's unique role, to the sacramental nature of his Church, and to the love his disciples have for every person and for «everything that is true, everything that is noble, everything that is good and pure, everything that we love and honour, and everything that can be thought virtuous or worthy of praise» (*Phil* 4:8), which implies rejecting everything that is a source of sin and fruit of sin in the heart of cultures.

5. «A further problem that is strongly felt these days is the demand for the evangelization of cultures and the inculturation of the message of faith» (*Pastores dabo vobis*, 55). The evangelization of cultures and the inculturation of the Gospel go hand in hand, in a reciprocal relationship which presupposes constant discernment in the light of the Gospel, to facilitate the identification of values and counter-values in a given culture, so as to build on the former and vigorously combat the latter. «Through inculturation the Church makes the Gospel incarnate in different cultures and at the same time introduces peoples, together with their cultures, into her own community. She transmits to them her own values, at the same time taking the good elements that already exist in them and renewing them from within. Through inculturation the Church, for her part, becomes a more intelligible sign of what she is, and a more effective instrument of mission» (*Redemptoris Missio*, 52). «Necessary and essential» (*Pastores dabo vobis*, 55), inculturation, the very opposite of backward-looking archeologism and worldly mimicry, is «called to bring the power of the Gospel into the very heart of culture and cultures». In this encounter, not only are the cultures deprived of nothing, but they are actually stimulated to open themselves to the

newness of the Gospel's truth and to find in it an incentive for further development. (cf. *Fides et Ratio* 71).

In tune with the objective demands of faith and its mission to evangelize, the Church takes account of the essential fact that *the meeting of faith and culture is a meeting of things which are not of the same order*. The *inculturation of faith* and the *evangelization of culture* go together as an inseparable pair, in which there is no hint of syncretism:(8) this is the genuine meaning of inculturation. «In the face of all the different and at times contrasting cultures present in the various parts of the world, inculturation seeks to obey Christ's command to preach the Gospel to all nations even unto the ends of the earth. Such obedience does not signify either syncretism or a simple adaptation of the announcement of the Gospel, but rather the fact the Gospel penetrates the very life of cultures, becomes incarnate in them, overcoming those cultural elements that are incompatible with the faith and Christian living and raising their values to the mystery of salvation which comes from Christ» (*Pastores dabo vobis*, 55). Successive Synods of Bishops, including both the African and European ones, and the Fourth General Conference of Latin American Bishops at Santo Domingo, insist on the particular importance for evangelization, for inculturation to be understood in the light of the great mysteries of salvation: Christ's Incarnation, his birth at Christmas, the mystery of his Passion, the Redemption at Easter, and Pentecost C which allows everyone, by the power of the Spirit, to hear the marvels of God in his own tongue.(9) The nations gathered in the Upper Room at Pentecost did not hear in their respective tongues a discourse about their own human cultures, but they were amazed to hear, each in their own tongue, the Apostles proclaim the marvels of God. «On the one hand the Gospel message cannot be purely and simply isolated from the culture in which it was first inserted ... nor, without serious loss, from the cultures in which it has already been expressed down the centuries ... On the other hand, the power of the Gospel everywhere transforms and regenerates» (*Catechesi Tradendae*, 53). «While it demands of all who hear it the adherence of faith, the proclamation of the Gospel in different cultures allows people to preserve their own identity ... to foster whatever is implicit in them to the point where it will be fully explicit in the light of truth» (*Fides et Ratio*, 71).

«Given the close and organic relationship that exists between Jesus Christ and the Word that the Church proclaims, the inculturation of the revealed message cannot but follow the Alogic» proper to the *Mystery of the Redemption* ... This emptying of self, this *kenosis* necessary for exaltation, which is the way of Christ and of each of his disciples (cf. *Phil 2:6-9*), *sheds light on the encounter of cultures with Christ and his Gospel*. «Every culture needs to be transformed by Gospel values in the light of the Paschal Mystery» (*Ecclesia in Africa*, 61). The dominant wave of secularism spreading through the different cultures, harnessing the suggestive power of the media, frequently idealizes life styles that are opposed to the culture of the Beatitudes and the imitation of Christ; poor, chaste, obedient and humble of heart. Indeed, there are some major works of culture that are inspired by sin and can incite sin. «By proposing the Good News, the Church denounces the presence of sin in cultures and delivers them of it. She stigmatizes the counter-values and exorcises them. She thus provides a critical element to cultures ... critical of idolatries, in other words of the values that are held up as idols or of values so-called cultures hold as absolute».(10)

A pastoral approach to culture

6. *In service to the proclamation of the Good News and thus to man's destiny in God's plan, the pastoral approach to culture* emanates from the very mission of the Church in our times, in the renewed awareness of its demands as expressed by the Second Vatican Council and the Synods of Bishops. The awareness of the cultural dimension of human existence brings with it a particular attention for this field of pastoral work. Anchored as it is in Christian anthropology and ethics, this pastoral approach gives rise to a Christian cultural project which gives Christ, the Redeemer of man, centre of the universe and of history (cf. *Redemptor hominis*, 1) the scope of completely renewing the lives of men «by opening the vast fields of culture to His saving power».(11) In this sphere, the means are practically infinite, for the pastoral approach to culture focuses on real situations so as to open them to the universal message of the Gospel.

In service to evangelization, which constitutes the Church's essential mission, her grace, her very vocation and her deepest identity (cf. *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 14), *pastoral work*, in seeking «the means that are most suitable and effective for communicating the Gospel message to the men and women of our times» (*Ibid.*, 40) uses complementary means: «Evangelization is a complex process made up of varied elements: the renewal of humanity, witness, explicit proclamation, inner adherence, entry into the community, acceptance of signs, apostolic initiative. These elements may appear to be contradictory, indeed mutually exclusive. In fact they are complementary and mutually enriching. Each one must always be seen in relationship with the others» (*Ibid.*, 24).

An inculturated evangelization thanks to concerted pastoral efforts enables the Christian community to receive, celebrate, live and translate its faith into its own culture, in «compatibility with the Gospel and in communion with the universal Church» (*Redemptoris Missio*, 54). At the same time, it affirms the absolute newness of Revelation in Jesus Christ and the need for conversion which is manifestly the result of meeting the Saviour: «Now, I am making the whole of creation new» (*Rev* 21:5).

This shows the importance of the specific tasks of understanding in loyalty to the faith and of pastoral discernment that are incumbent on theologians and pastors. The sympathy with which they are bound to approach the various cultures using «the concepts and language of different peoples» (*Gaudium et Spes*, 44) so as to express Christ's message cannot go without a stringent discernment, in view of the great and serious problems which emerge from an objective analysis of contemporary cultural phenomena, whose weight cannot be ignored by the pastors. What is at stake is the conversion of persons and, through them, of cultures, the Christianization of the *ethos* of peoples (cf. *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 20).

II

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

A new age in human history (*Gaudium et Spes*, 54)

7. The conditions in which modern men and women live in these final decades of the second millennium have been so profoundly altered that the second Vatican Council spoke boldly of «a new age in human history» (*Gaudium et Spes*, 54). For the Church, it is like a new *kairos*, when the time is ripe for a new evangelization in which *the new features of culture are to be seen as both opportunities and challenges for a pastoral approach to culture*.

The Church in our time is well aware of all this, as a result of the efforts of the Popes, who have developed and articulated the Church's social teaching, from *Rerum Novarum* in 1891 to *Centesimus Annus* in 1991. It has inspired Federations of Bishops' Conferences and Synods of Bishops to develop practical responses appropriate to their countries' particular situations. While these situations vary greatly, there are some common factors in responses.

In the cultural situation which prevails in different parts of the world today, priority is given to subjective criteria and measures of truth (cf. *Fides et Ratio*, 47). Positivist presuppositions on the progress of science and technology are now seen as questionable. After the spectacular defeat of collectivist atheistic Marxism-Leninism, the rival ideology - liberalism - is struggling in its efforts to bring about happiness for the human race and to ensure responsible dignity for each person. An anthropocentric pragmatic atheism, blatant religious indifference, all-embracing hedonistic materialism are marginalizing the faith, making it appear evanescent, lacking in cultural substance and relevance, in the context of «today's prevalently scientific and technical culture» (*Veritatis Splendor*, 112). «In a widely dechristianized culture, the criteria employed by believers themselves in making judgements and decisions often appear extraneous or even contrary to those of the Gospel» (*Ibid*, 88). In celebrating the twenty-fifth anniversary of the conciliar Constitution on the liturgy, Pope John Paul II recalled: «Cultural adaptation also requires conversion of heart and even, where necessary, a breaking with ancestral customs incompatible with the Catholic faith. This demands a serious formation in theology, history and culture, as well as sound judgement in discerning what is necessary or useful and what is not useful or even dangerous to faith» (*Vicesimus quintus annus*, 16).

Gallop ing urbanization and cultural rootlessness

8. Under various pressures, such as poverty and the under-development of rural areas deprived of indispensable goods and services as well as, in some countries, armed conflicts which force millions of people to leave behind their home and culture, the growing number of people on the move is emptying the countryside of people and causing the great cities to expand excessively. In addition to these economic and social pressures, cities have the fascination of the well-being and entertainment they offer, as vividly portrayed by the means of social communication. Through lack of planning, the outskirts or suburbs of every megalopolis are like ghettos. These are often huge agglomerations of people who are socially rootless, politically powerless, economically marginalized and culturally isolated.

Cultural rootlessness, which has so many causes, shows how important cultural roots are. It contributes to a loss of people's social and cultural identity and dignity. People whose lives are thus unravelled become easy prey for dehumanizing business practices. In this century, as never before, people have shown how capable and

talented they are. But, at the same time, never throughout history had there been so many denials and violations of human dignity, bitter fruits of denying or forgetting God. Cultural fragmentation confines values to the private sphere: this alters morality and weakens spirituality to such an extent that one reaches the terrifying concept of the «culture of death», a real semantic nonsense for a counter-culture which reveals the sinister contradiction between the affirmation of a will to live and an obstinate rejection of God, the source of all life (cf. *Evangelium Vitae*, 11-12 and 19-28).

«The evangelization of urban culture is a formidable challenge for the Church. Just as she was able to evangelize rural culture for centuries, the Church is called in the same way today to undertake a methodical and far-reaching urban evangelization through catechesis, the liturgy and the very way in which her pastoral structures are organized» (*Ecclesia in America*, 21).

Mass media and information technology

9. «The first Areopagus of the modern age is the world of communications, which is unifying humanity and turning it into what is known as a "global village". The means of social communication have become so important as to be for many the chief means of information and education, of guidance and inspiration in their behaviour as individuals, families and within society at large ... The very evangelization of modern culture depends to a great extent on the influence of the media ... It is also necessary to integrate that message into the «new culture» created by modern communications. This is a complex issue, since the «new culture» originates not just from whatever content is eventually expressed, but from the very fact that there exist new ways of communicating, with new languages, new techniques and a new psychology» (*Redemptoris Missio*, 37). The advent of the information society is a real cultural revolution: television, for instance, transforms language and presents new icons. This «involves a fundamental reshaping of the elements by which people comprehend the world around them and verify and express what they comprehend... The media can be used to proclaim the Gospel or to reduce it to silence in human hearts».(12) The «live» information provided by the mass media lessens the impact of distance and time but, more importantly, it affects the way things are perceived: what people come to know is not reality as such, but what they are shown. So the constant repetition of selected items of information involves a decline in critical awareness and this is a crucial factor in forming what is considered as public opinion.

The influence of the media which has no frontiers, especially as regards advertising,(13) «calls upon Christians to be creative and innovative, so as to reach hundreds of thousands of people who spend a significant amount of time every day watching television or listening to radio programmes. Television and radio can be a means of cultural formation and development, and also of evangelization, a way of reaching out to those who have no point of contact with the Gospel or the Church in secularised societies. The pastoral approach to culture must provide a positive answer to John Paul II's crucial question: «Is there still a place for Christ in the traditional media?».(14)

The most startling innovation in communications technology is, without doubt, the Internet. Like any other new technology, the Internet involves risks which have become tragically clear in cases where it has been used for evil purposes, and this

calls for constant vigilance and reliable information. It is not simply a question of moral use of the Internet, but also of the radically new consequences it brings: a loss of the intrinsic value of items of information, an undifferentiated uniformity in messages which are reduced to pure information, a lack of responsible feedback, and a certain discouragement of interpersonal relationships. But, without doubt, the Internet's immense potential can be enormously helpful in spreading the Good News. «This has already been proved by various promising initiatives the Church has taken, calling for a responsible creative development on this Anew frontier of the Church's mission» (cf. *Christifideles Laici*, 44).

A great deal is at stake. How can we not be present and use information networks, whose screens are at the heart of people's homes, to implant the values of the Gospel there?

National identities and minorities

10. If the fact that they share a common nature makes all people members of one great family, but the historical character of the human condition means that they have a more intense sense of attachment to particular groups, from their family to their people or nation. The human condition is thus located between universality and particularity in a lively tension which can be remarkably fruitful if it is lived in a balanced and harmonious way.

This is the anthropological foundation for national rights, which are nothing less than human rights considered at this specific level of the life of a community. The first one is the right to exist. ANo-one C neither a State nor a nation nor an international organization C is ever justified in asserting that an individual nation is not worthy of existence.(15) Its right to exist naturally implies that every nation also enjoys the right to its own language and culture, through which a people expresses and defends its cultural sovereignty.

While the rights of a nation express Aparticular» requirements, it is no less important to emphasize universal requirements, with the duties they imply for each nation regarding other nations and humankind as a whole. The primary duty is undoubtedly to live in a spirit of peace, respect and solidarity with others. Teaching younger generations to live with diversity, to integrate diversity into their own identity, is a major priority in cultural education, given that pressure-groups frequently do not hesitate to use religion for political purposes that are alien to it.

While nationalism implies contempt or even hatred for other nations or cultures, patriotism is an appropriate particular C but not exclusive C love of and service to one's country and people, as remote from cosmopolitanism as it is from cultural nationalism. Each culture aspires to the universal through the best it has to offer. Cultures are also called to purify themselves of their share in the legacy of sin, embodied in certain prejudices, customs and practices, to enrich themselves with the input of the faith and to Aenrich the universal Church itself with new expressions and values» (*Redemptoris Missio*, 52 and *Slavorum Apostoli*, 21).

At he same time the pastoral approach to culture relies on the gift of the Spirit of Jesus and his love which Aare meant for each and every people and culture, in order to

bring them all into unity after the example of the perfect unity existing in the Triune God» (*Ecclesia in America*, 70).

New Aareopagus» situations and the traditional areas of culture

Ecology, science and bioethics

11. The development of ecology is a sign of a new awareness in people. But it is not new for the Church: the light of faith clarifies the meaning of creation and the relationship between humanity and the rest of nature. Saint Francis of Assisi and Saint Philip Neri are symbolic witnesses of respect for nature, which comes from the fact that nature does not belong to the human race but to God, its creator. God appointed us stewards of nature (*Gen 1,28*), so that we might respect it and thus discover the true basis of our own existence (Cf. *Centesimus Annus*, 38-39).

The spread of scientific knowledge has shown people where they fit into the immensity of the cosmos and left them captivated with their own abilities and with the world, without even adverting to God as the creator of it all. The challenge for a pastoral approach to culture is to help people to discover transcendence, to convince them that right reason will enable them to make wise use of the best achievements of modern science, and to invite them to tread anew the path which leads from human experience and understanding to knowing our Creator. While its great prestige allows it to penetrate so much of contemporary culture, science cannot grasp the essence of experience or the inner reality of things. A coherent culture is based on the transcendence and superiority of spirit over matter, and harmonizes scientific knowledge and metaphysics. In the realm of knowledge, faith and science are not to be superimposed, and their methodological principles ought not to be confused. Rather, they should overcome the loss of meaning in isolated fields of knowledge through distinction, to bring unity and to retrieve the sense of harmony and wholeness which characterizes truly human culture. In our diversified culture, struggling to integrate the riches of human knowledge, the marvels of scientific discovery and the remarkable benefits of modern technology, the pastoral approach to culture requires philosophical reflection as a prerequisite so as to give order and structure to this body of knowledge and, in so doing, assert reason's capacity for truth and its regulatory function in culture.

AThe segmentation of knowledge, with its splintered approach to truth and consequent fragmentation of meaning, keeps people today from coming to an interior unity. How could the Church not be concerned by this? It is the Gospel which imposes this sapiential task directly upon her Pastors, and they cannot shrink from their duty to undertake it» (*Fides et Ratio*, 85).

12. It is also the task of qualified *philosophers* and *theologians* to study the dominant scientific and technological culture and competently to identify challenges to the proclamation of the Gospel, but also positive points of contact. Thus philosophical and theological formation will need to be revised, since dialogue and inculturation depend on a theology which is perfectly in tune with the deposit of faith. A pastoral approach to culture also calls for *Catholic scientists* who will offer their due contribution to the life of the Church by sharing their reflections on the encounter between science and faith. The lack of people who are both qualified in theology and

competent in science makes for a patchy presence of the Church at the heart of a culture produced by scientific research and its technical applications. And yet *we are living in a period which is particularly favourable to the dialogue between science and faith.* (16)

13. While science and technology have established themselves as ways of increasing people's knowledge, power and wellbeing, their responsible use demands ethical criteria which they themselves cannot provide. The ethical dimension of scientific questions often asked by scientists themselves *reveals the need for a dialogue between science and morality.* This quest for truth, which transcends the experience of the senses, offers new possibilities for a pastoral approach to culture which aims to proclaim the Gospel in scientific circles.

The breadth of the scope of bioethics makes it quite clear that it is far more than a scientific discipline; it is a cultural trend with political and juridical dimensions, which the Church deems to be of the greatest importance. In reality, the evolution of legislation in the area of bioethics will depend on the authority invested in legislators, and on their choice of values. There is a stark basic question which constantly needs to be asked: how should moral values relate to civil law in a pluralistic society (Cf. *Evangelium Vitae*, 18, 68-74)? When basic ethical questions are left to a series of legislators, is there not a risk of establishing as a constitutional *right*, what in moral terms would be a sin?

Bioethics is one of the sensitive areas which invites man to seek out the fundamentals of faith, of anthropology and morality. The role of Christians is irreplaceable in forming an ethical social conscience and civil principles, by means of serious but respectful dialogue. This new cultural situation calls for a thorough preparation in bioethics, both for priests and for those lay men and women who are working in this crucial area.

The family and education

14. *At the family, as a community of persons, is... the first human society.* It arises whenever there comes into being the conjugal covenant of marriage, which opens the spouses into a lasting communion of love and life, and it is brought to completion in a full and specific way with the procreation of children: the *communion* of spouses gives rise to the *community* of the family» (*Letter to Families*, 1994, 7).

As the cradle of life and love, the family is also the source of culture. It is the place that welcomes life and the school of humanity, where future spouses are best formed to become responsible parents. The growth process which it guarantees within a community of life and love, in certain civilizations, goes beyond the family nucleus and constitutes, for instance, the great African family. And material, cultural and moral misery can jeopardise the institution of marriage and threaten to drain the very springs of life. When this happens, the family must nevertheless safeguard its basic role as the primary place of humanization for the person and society. As experience shows, civilization and social cohesion depend, above all, on the human quality of families; particularly on the complementary presence of both parents to fill their respective roles as father and mother in the education of children. In a society where

the number of people without families is growing, education is becoming increasingly difficult, as is the communication of a culture shaped by the Gospel.

Painful personal situations call for understanding, love and solidarity, but what is a tragic breakdown of family life should never be put forward as a new model for society. Anti-family and anti-birth campaigns and policies are merely attempts to modify the very notion of «family» to the point of robbing it of meaning. In this context, forming a community of life and love which unites spouses in association with the Creator is the best cultural contribution Christian families can offer society.

15. Today more than ever before the specific role of women in society is a key topic of reflection and initiatives. In a number of contemporary societies with an «anti-child» mentality, caring for children is seen as a threat to autonomy and to a woman's possibilities of self-affirmation. This has somewhat overshadowed the rich significance of motherhood. Bearing in mind Revelation's message, which spread in spite of the vicissitudes of Christian history and cultures, about the fundamental equality of man and woman, created by God in his image (*Gen 1:27*) and manifest in the artistic heritage of the Church, a pastoral approach to culture must take into account the profound change in the condition of women these days: «In recent times some trends in the feminist movement, in order to advance woman's emancipation, have sought to make her like a man in every way. However the divine intervention manifested in creation, through desiring woman to be man's equal in dignity and worth, at the same time clearly affirms her diversity and specific features. Woman's identity cannot consist in being a copy of man». (17) The specific characteristics of both sexes work together in a mutually-enriching spousal relationship in which women are the first artisans of a more human world.

16. «The primary and essential task of culture in general», (18) *education* which, since the times of early Christianity, has been one of the most remarkable areas of the Church's pastoral activity, at the religious and cultural levels as well as on the personal and social plain, is now more complex and crucial than ever. It is primarily the responsibility of families, but calls for the help of society as a whole. Tomorrow's world depends on today's education, and education cannot be seen merely as a transmission of knowledge. It forms people and prepares them for their participation in social life by fostering their psychological, intellectual, cultural, moral and spiritual maturity.

So the challenge of proclaiming the Gospel to children and young people, from school to university, calls for an educational programme for evangelizing culture. Education in the family, at school or at university creates a profound relationship between the educator and the one being educated, but also makes them both sharers in truth and love, that final goal to which everyone is called by God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit» (*Letter to Families*, 16). Education does not simply form individuals, but initiates them into social life and citizenship, into relationships based on respect for rights and duties, in a spirit of welcome and solidarity, and with a moderate use of property and possessions which will guarantee just conditions for everyone, always. The future of humanity will depend upon the fully human development and solidarity of all (*Populorum Progressio*, 42). In their various different ways, families, schools and universities are called to bring the leaven of the Gospel to the third millennium.

Art and leisure

17. In a world which seems increasingly obsessed with instant gratification, the lure of gain, the pursuit of profit and the overriding importance of possessions, it is striking also to acknowledge a persistent, even growing, fascination with beauty. It may take different forms, but these all seem to indicate an aspiration for «something intangible», which can show us the magic and mystery in things and even far beyond them. Intuitively, the Church was aware of this from its origins and centuries of Christian art magnificently illustrate this. Every true work of art is potentially a way into religious experience. Recognizing the importance of art in the inculturation of the Gospel means recognizing that human genius and sensitivity are akin to the truth and beauty of the divine mystery. The Church shows profound respect to all artists, irrespective of their religious convictions, since works of art bear an imprint of the invisible, as it were Art, like every other human activity, looks beyond itself for its absolute goal: its nobility comes from being directed to the ultimate goal of the human person.

In Christian artists, the Church finds extraordinary potential for the expression of new formulas and for the definition of new symbols or metaphors through the brilliance of liturgical genius in all its creative force, steeped in centuries of Catholic imagery with its ability to express the omnipresence of grace. Every continent has had its Christian artists, whose Christian inspiration can attract people - of any faith or of none - to beauty and truth. Support and encouragement for Christian artists is an excellent way of reaching a whole host of people who may have no other contact with the message of Christ.

At the same time, the Catholic Church's rich cultural heritage, in the form of its cultural assets, bears witness to a fruitful symbiosis of culture and faith. It constitutes an inexhaustible source of beauty and a permanent resource for a cultural education which is also a genuine catechesis, one which unites the truth of faith to the genuine beauty of art (cf. *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 122-127). As the fruits of a community which has lived its faith intensely, and continues to do so, the cultic and cultural treasures of the Church should not be seen in exclusively cultural terms, or their meaning will be lost. They could be a real inspiration for humanity at the dawn of the third millennium.

18. *The world of leisure and sport, travel and tourism*, is undeniably an important element in modern culture, along with that of *labour*, in which the Church has long been present, and so is becoming another new forum of evangelization. The concept of «work» is changing profoundly, which undeniably affects leisure and cultural activities. From the perennial need to earn one's daily bread (cf. *Laborem Exercens* 1), work is one of the means of responding to the ever more insistent desire for self-fulfilment, on a par with cultural activities. Elsewhere, new ways of organizing labour, which are part of a process of technological and economic development, go hand in hand with an increase in unemployment at every level of society. This not only gives rise to material impoverishment, but sows in those cultures the seeds of doubt, dissatisfaction, humiliation and even crime. The precariousness of such living conditions and the need to see to the necessities of life frequently lead people to consider the artistic and literary elements of culture as superfluous and reserved for a privileged élite.

Having become almost universal, *sport* undoubtedly has its place in the Christian vision of culture and can promote both physical health and interpersonal relationships. However, sport can be taken over by commercial interests or become a vehicle for expressing tribal, national or racial rivalries, and give rise to occasional explosions of violence which reveal the tensions and contradictions which are part of contemporary society, and thus become an anti culture. So it is an important area for a modern pastoral approach. Despite their variety and complexity and the clutter of symbols and commercialism, leisure pursuits and sport create not just an atmosphere but a whole culture, a way of life and a value system. Well-adapted pastoral policy will find there all the genuine educational values and a springboard for celebrating everything in human nature which is rich, in the image of God and, like the apostle Paul, announces salvation in Jesus Christ (cf. *I Cor.* 9:24-27).

Cultural diversity and religious plurality

19. What is most noticeable about the world in which the Church carries out her mission of evangelization today is the diversity of cultural situations which have developed from the perspectives of different religions. This affects every continent and every country, since there are ever more frequent intercultural and interreligious exchanges in the global village.

This was brought out in the special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops. There Christianity and Islam have come into contact with traditional religions, which are still thriving today, since they permeate African culture and the social life of individuals and communities. When the evangelization of Africa began, the positive cultural values of these religions were not always taken seriously enough to be integrated with the Gospel. Today, particularly since Vatican II, the Church recognizes these religious values and promotes those which are consonant with the Gospel. It is fertile ground for cultivating conversion to Christ. «Africans have a profound religious sense, a sense of the sacred, of the existence of God the Creator and of a spiritual world. The reality of sin in its individual and social forms is very much present in the consciousness of these peoples, as is also the need for rites of purification and expiation» (*Ecclesia in Africa*, 30-37, 42). The positive values enshrined in these traditional cultures, such as a sense of family, love and respect for life, veneration of ancestors, a sense of solidarity and community, respect for the chief and elders, are a solid basis for the inculturation of faith, whereby the Gospel penetrates the whole of culture and brings it to fruition (cf. *Ibid.*, 59-62). However, the Good News of Christ the Saviour, as expressed in the Beatitudes (*Mt.* 5:1-12), will offer a firm and resolute challenge to attitudes from these traditions which clash with the Gospel.

20. The countries of the immense continent of Asia have ancient cultures, which are profoundly influenced by non-Christian religions and traditions of wisdom, such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Shintoism, Confucianism and Islam, which need to be considered very carefully. Asia as a whole may well still appear unaffected by the message of Christ, but is that not chiefly because Christianity is still perceived there as a foreign religion introduced by Westerners, which has not been sufficiently adapted, thought through and lived in the cultures of Asia? This shows how broad a pastoral approach to culture in this continent must be.

Many elements of spirituality and mysticism, like holiness, self-denial, chastity, universal love, a love for peace, prayer and contemplation, bliss in God and compassion, which are very much alive in these cultures, can lead on to faith in the God of Jesus Christ. Pope John Paul II recalls this: «In India particularly, it is the duty of Christians now to draw from this rich heritage the elements compatible with their faith, in order to enrich Christian thought» (*Fides et Ratio*, 72). Religions are an expression of man's search for God, and evidence of the spiritual dimension of the human being (cf. *Nostra Aetate*, 2). In a world at the mercy of secularisation, they are a reminder of the divine presence and the importance of spirituality as the living core of cultures.

It is an enormous pastoral challenge to start from these rich cultural traditions, such as the age-old wisdom of China, and to steer their ancient quest for divinity towards an openness to the revelation of the living God, who makes us his partners by grace in Jesus Christ, the one Redeemer.

21. As was highlighted by the Special Assembly for *America* of the Synod of Bishops, other large parts of the world whose culture is profoundly shaped by the Gospel message are at the same time a prey to the penetrating influence of materialist and secular life-styles, which manifests itself particularly in the rejection of religion by the middle classes and by men of culture.

The Church asserts the dignity of the human person, is struggling to cleanse society of violence, social injustice, the abuses of which street children are victims, drug trafficking, etc... In this context and affirming her preferential love for the poor and the excluded, the Church is duty-bound to promote a *culture of solidarity* at every level of society: government institutions, public institutions and private organizations. In striving for greater union between people, between societies and between nations, the Church will associate herself with the efforts of people of good will to build a world that is ever more worthy of the human person. In doing this, she will contribute to: «Reducing the negative effects of globalization, such as the domination of the powerful over the weak, especially in the economic sphere, and the loss of the values of local cultures in favor of a misconstrued homogenization» (*Ecclesia in America*, 55).

In our times, religious ignorance is feeding the different forms of syncretism between ancient and now extinct cults, new religious movements and the Catholic faith. The world's social, economic, cultural and moral ailments serve as a justification for new syncretic ideologies that are increasingly present in many countries. The Church there has taken up these challenges in particular in its work to evangelize poor people, to promote social justice and to evangelize native cultures and the evolving megalopolis-cultures.(19)

22. *The countries where Islam dominates* are in a cultural world of their own, although there are differences between the Arab countries and the other countries of Africa and Asia. Islam is not just a religion in the classic sense of the word: it is also essentially a society with its own legislation and traditions, and the whole forms a vast community, or *umma*, with its own culture and plan for civilisation.

Islam is currently expanding rapidly, particularly due to migratory movements from countries with rapid demographic growth. Countries with a Christian tradition, where, except in Africa, population growth is slower or even negative, often see the increased presence of Muslims as a social, cultural or even religious challenge. Muslim immigrants themselves, at least in some countries, encounter major difficulties as regards social and cultural integration. Furthermore, the alienation of a traditional community often leads to a crisis in Islam as in the other religions to the loss of certain religious practices and to a cultural identity crisis. True collaboration with Muslims on the level of culture in real reciprocity may foster fruitful relationships in Islamic countries and with Muslim communities established in traditionally Christian countries. Such collaboration does not dispense Christians from bearing witness to their christological and trinitarian faith in relation to other expressions of monotheism.

23. *Secularized cultures* have a profound influence in various parts of the world where the acceleration and complexity of cultural changes have increased. Born in countries with a long Christian tradition, this secularized culture, with its values of solidarity, generous dedication to others, freedom, justice, equality between men and women, an open mind, a spirit of dialogue and a sensitivity to ecological issues, still bears the imprint of these fundamentally Christian values which have imbued culture over the centuries and of which secularization itself brought the fruits to civilization and nourished philosophical reflection. On the eve of the third millennium, the questions of truth, values, existence and meaning with regard to human nature, reveal the limits of a secularization which, in spite of itself, gives rise to a quest for the spiritual dimension of life is being sought after as an antidote to dehumanization. This phenomenon, the so-called «Areligious revival» is not without ambiguity, but it also represents an opportunity... Here too there is an «Areopagus» to be evangelized» (*Redemptoris Missio*, 38).

When secularization transforms itself into secularism (*Evangeli Nuntiandi*, 55), there is a serious cultural and spiritual crisis, one sign of which is the loss of respect for the person and the spread of a kind of anthropological nihilism which reduces human beings to their instincts and tendencies. This nihilism which nurtures a serious *crisis of truth* that has been justified in a sense by the terrible experience of evil which has marked our age. Such a dramatic experience has ensured the collapse of rationalist optimism, which viewed history as the triumphant progress of reason, the source of all happiness and freedom; and now, at the end of this century, one of our greatest temptations to despair» (*Fides et Ratio*, 91). By putting Christ back as the keystone of existence and restoring the place of reason enlightened by faith, a pastoral approach to culture could strengthen Christian identity by a clear and enthusiastic invitation to holiness. In this way, individuals and communities could rediscover a reason for searching in every situation for the Lord who comes, and for the life of the world yet to come (*Rev* 21-22). Those countries which have recovered their freedom from the stranglehold of Marxist-Leninist atheism have been profoundly scarred by a violent «Adeculturation» from the Christian faith: the link between humanity and nature was modified artificially; the creature's dependence on his Creator was denied; the dogmatic and ethical truths of Christian revelation were attacked. This «Adeculturation» was followed by a radical questioning of the values essential to Christians. The reductive effects of the secularism that spread through western *Europe* towards the end of the 1960s are at present contributing to the destructuring of culture in Central and Eastern Europe.

Other countries with traditional pluralistic democracies, against a background of massive social and religious adherence, are experiencing the thrust of a mixture of secularism and popular religious expressions brought in by migratory flows. This is why the Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops for America gave rise to a new missionary awareness.

Sects and new religious movements(20)

24. People are searching once again for spirituality - more than religion - in a whole variety of ways, in a society which is reminiscent of the Areopagus in Athens, the scene of some of Saint Paul's great debates (cf. *Acts* 17:22-32). There is a need to recover a spiritual dimension which will also give meaning to life, and a deep desire to rebuild the framework of affective and social relationships which, in some countries, has been dismantled by the increasing instability of family life. This can be seen in revivalist groups within Christianity, or in forms of syncretism which are part of a «Aglobalizing» tendency, a search for unity beyond particular religions.

Many very different groups may be classified under the polysemous heading of *sects*. Some are of gnostic or esoteric inspiration, some are Christian in appearance, and others, in some cases, are hostile to Christ and the Church. These groups succeed quite clearly because they respond to frustrated aspirations. Many of our contemporaries can communicate easily in such groups and experience a feeling of belonging; they find affection, brotherhood, even apparent protection and security. This feeling stems mostly from the simple answers and *apparently clear* but, in reality, *illusory solutions* like the «*Gospel of success*» which sects *appear* to offer to the most complex questions, and a pragmatic *theology* which exalts the self society has treated so badly. In some cases people are psychologically wounded or suffer rejection or total isolation in the anonymity so prevalent in urban life; they readily accept a spiritual vision which restores lost harmony and even offers a feeling of physical or spiritual healing. This shows the complexity and the transversal nature of the problem of sects, which combines the existential ailment with rejection of the institutional dimension of the religions, and is expressed in heterogeneous forms and expressions of religion.

However, the proliferation of sects is also a reaction against secularised culture and a consequence of social and cultural upheavals which have uprooted traditional religion. One of the challenges the Church must take up is that of getting through to people affected by sects, or in danger of it, in order to proclaim to them the message of salvation in Jesus Christ.

Indeed, «A new age in human history», already detected by the Second Vatican Council, is emerging from one continent to another. This realisation calls for a new pastoral approach to culture, one which can take up these new challenges, in the spirit of that conviction which prompted John Paul II to create the Pontifical Council for Culture: «Hence the importance for the Church, whose concern it is, of a careful and farsighted pastoral activity with regard to culture, and in a particular way to what is called living culture, that is, the principles and values which make up the *ethos* of a people» (*Letter instituting the Pontifical Council for Culture, op. cit.*).

III

CONCRETE PROPOSALS

Primary pastoral objectives

25. The new challenges which must be taken up by an inculturated evangelization based on cultures shaped by two millenniums of Christianity and reference points identified at the heart of the new Areopagus-situations to be found in our times, call for a renewed presentation of the Christian message, rooted in the living tradition of the Church and sustained by the witness of genuine Christian living of Christian communities. Conceiving everything anew, based on the newness of the Gospel proposed in a fresh and persuasive way becomes a major requirement. In a perspective of Gospel preparation, the primary objective of the pastoral approach to culture, is to inject the life-blood of the Gospel into cultures to renew from within and transform in the light of the Revelation the visions of men and society that shape cultures, the concepts of men and women, of the family and of education, of school and of university, of freedom and of truth, of labour and of leisure, of the economy and of society, of the sciences and of the arts.

But the fact that something is said is not enough to guarantee that it will be understood. When those listening were basically in tune with the message because of their traditional culture imbued with Christianity, and generally well disposed towards it through their overall social and cultural background, what was offered could be received and understood. With the cultural pluralism of the present, there must be coherence between the message itself and the conditions of its reception.

The success of this great undertaking implies the need for continual discernment, with the light of the Holy Spirit invoked through prayer. It also calls for adequate preparation and appropriate formation through simple pastoral means C homilies, catechesis, popular missions, schools of evangelization C together with modern means of communication so as to reach men and women of all cultures. The Synods of Bishops since Vatican II have recalled this ever more insistently, for lay people as much as for priests and religious. Bishops' Conferences find that *cultural commissions (or committees)* - which it is important to create where they are as yet lacking - are an excellent tool for collaboration in this field. They can promote the presence of the Church in the various areas of cultural development, and foster the many types of creativity which are born of faith and express and sustain it. «To this end, each particular Church should have a cultural project, as is already the case in a number of countries». (21) These are the stakes involved in a pastoral approach to culture, which is perhaps more complex in its demands than the first evangelization of non-Christian cultures.

Religions and the religious dimension

26. In her mission of proclaiming the Gospel to all men and women of all cultures, which also always involves the inculturation of faith, the Church comes into contact with traditional religions, above all in Africa and Asia. (22) Local Churches are invited and encouraged to study the traditional cultures and religious practices of their own

region, to reach a discernment of values, customs and rites which might help root Christianity more deeply in local cultures (cf. *Ad Gentes*, 19 and 22).

The «return» or «reawakening» of the religious dimension in the West certainly calls for rigorous discernment. It is often more a question of religious feeling than of a demanding personal commitment to God, in a communion of faith with the Church. Still, none could deny that a growing number of men and women are turning once again to a dimension of human existence which they call spiritual, religious or sacred, as the case may be. It is worth noting, by the way, that this is largely something which affects young or poor people - which is all the more reason to pay careful attention to it - and brings them back to Christianity, which had left them quite disillusioned. Some of them will have turned to other religions, and others will have been enticed into sects, or turned to the occult.

All over the world, a whole new range of possibilities is opening up for a pastoral approach to culture to bring the light of Christ's Gospel to the hearts of men. On many points there needs to be a re-formulation of Christian faith which is more accessible to dominant cultures, because of the competition caused by the profusion on all sides of diffuse forms of religiosity.

A search for dialogue and its necessary correlative - *a clearer identification of what is specific to Christianity* - are an increasingly significant area of reflection and action in the proclamation of faith in our cultures. This is the frame of reference of the challenge a pastoral approach to culture faces in sects (cf. *Ecclesia in America*, 73), whose cultural effects are closely linked to those produced by their «Aspiritual» content. This situation calls for rigorous reflection on the way we live tolerance and religious liberty in our societies (cf. *Dignitatis Humanae*, 4). Priests and lay people must, of course, be better trained to be competent discerners of sects and the reasons for their success, but we should never lose sight of the fact that the best weapon in the fight against sects is the quality of ecclesial life. Priests need to be ready to face the challenge from sects, but also to help the faithful who are in danger of leaving the Church and giving up their faith.

«Ordinary» ways of experiencing faith: popular piety, the parish

27. It is a fact that, in what are known as «Christian» countries, from one generation to the next there had developed a whole way of understanding and living the faith which eventually, to a greater or lesser degree, permeated people's individual and social lives: local feasts, family traditions, various celebrations, pilgrimages and so on. This created a whole culture which effectively included everyone, a culture built on faith and organized around it. Such a culture appears to be particularly threatened by secularism. It is important to support the better efforts which have been made to revive such traditions. However, this must not be left to specialists in folk heritage or politics, whose aims are often alien, if not hostile, to faith; pastoral workers, Christian communities and qualified theologians, should also be involved.

If they are to touch people's hearts, proclaiming the Gospel to the young and to adults, and celebrating salvation in the liturgy demand not only a profound knowledge of the faith, but also a knowledge of the cultural environment. When people love their culture as the special part of their life, it is in that culture that they live and profess

their Christian faith. Bishops, priests, men and women religious and lay people need to *develop* a sensitivity to this culture, in order to protect and promote it in the light of Gospel values, above all when it is a minority culture. Such attention to culture can offer those who are in any way disadvantaged a way to faith and to a better quality of Christian life at the heart of the Church. Men and women who have integrated a deep faith with their education and culture are living witnesses who will help many others to rediscover the Christian roots of their culture.

28. Religion is also memory and tradition, and *popular piety* is one of the best examples of genuine inculturation of faith, because it is a harmonious blend of faith and liturgy, feelings and art, and the recognition of our identity in local traditions. Thus, «America, which historically has been, and still is, a melting-pot of peoples, has recognized in the mestiza face of the Virgin of Tepeyac, in Blessed Mary of Guadalupe, an impressive example of a perfectly inculturated evangelization» (*Ecclesia in America*, 11). Popular piety is evidence of the osmosis that takes place between the innovative power of the Gospel and the deepest levels of a culture. It is one of the foremost opportunities for people to meet the living Christ. There needs to be a constant pastoral discernment of popular piety as it evolves, in order to discover its genuine spiritual values and bring them to fruition in Christ «so that... it might lead to a sincere conversion and a practical exercise of charity» (cf. *Ibid.*, 16). Popular piety is the way a people expresses its faith and its relationship to God and his Providence, to Our Lady and the saints, to one's neighbour, to those who have died or to creation, and it strengthens its belonging to the Church. Purifying and catechising expressions of popular piety can, in certain regions, be a decisive element for an in-depth evangelization to support and to develop a true community awareness in the sharing of faith, particularly through the demonstration of the religiosity of the people of God as in the celebration of major religious feasts (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, 67). These humble means are available to everyone, and allow the faithful to express their faith, be strong in hope and demonstrate their love. Daily life in many lands is coloured by a strong sense of the sacred. A valid pastoral approach should promote and make the most of holy places, sanctuaries and pilgrimages, holy days and holy nights, liturgical vigils and adoration, holy things or sacramentals, remembrances and the sacred seasons of the liturgy. Several dioceses and university chaplaincies organize, at least once each year, a journey on foot to a sacred place, following in the footsteps of the Hebrews who sang the *Canticles of Ascent* with real joy as they drew near Jerusalem.

Popular piety naturally cries out for artistic expression. Those with pastoral responsibility must encourage creativity in all areas: ritual, music, song, decoration etc... They should also see to it that these things are of good cultural and religious quality.

The parish, «the Church placed in the neighbourhoods of humanity» (*Christifideles Laici*, 27), is one of the major assets of the history of Christianity and for the vast majority of the faithful it remains the focal point for the ordinary practice of their faith. The vitality of the Christian community, united by the faith, gathered to celebrate the Eucharist, bears witness to the living faith and to Christ's love and it constitutes a profoundly human centre of religious education. In a variety of forms, depending on the age and capacities of the faithful, the parish provides a practical inculturated illustration of the faith, as it is professed and celebrated by the community of believers. This early formation experienced within the parish is

decisive. It introduces people to the tradition and lays the foundations of a living faith and of a profound understanding of the Church.

In the complex and sometimes violent urban context, the parish fulfills an irreplaceable pastoral function as a place of Christian initiation and inculturated evangelization, where different groups of people find unity in their joyful celebration of a single faith and the apostolic commitment of which the Eucharistic liturgy is the soul. As diversified communities, parishes are in an excellent position to respond to new cultural demands by implementing a pastoral approach to culture based on listening, dialogue and support, thanks to priests and parishioners who are well prepared in matters of religion and culture (cf. *Christifideles Laici*, 27).

Educational institutions

29. «Education can play an outstanding role in promoting the inculturation of the Gospel» (*Ecclesia in America*, 71). Education brings the child through adolescence to maturity. It begins within the family, which is always the best context for education. Any pastoral approach to culture and any deep evangelization relies heavily on education, and has the family as its starting-point; At the place where the education of the person primarily takes place» (*Ibid.*).

But when families are beset by so many different problems, they cannot be expected to cope alone. Hence the greater importance of educational institutions. In many countries, the Church carries out her mission as an educator and teacher by running nurseries or kindergartens, schools, colleges, high schools, universities and research centres. These Catholic institutions have the specific vocation of bringing Gospel values to the heart of culture. In order to do this, those who are pastorally responsible for these institutions must draw the substance of their educational projects from Christ's message and from the teaching of the Church. However, to implement their mission, such institutions depend largely on means that are often scarce. One must accept the facts of the matter in order to grasp the challenge: the Church is obliged to dedicate a considerable part of its human and financial resources to education so as to respond to the mission it received from Christ, to proclaim the Gospel. In all cases, one need remains: that of associating a concern for deep human and Christian formation with that of providing serious academic formation.⁽²³⁾ For the multitude of young people who attend educational institutions throughout the world can frequently, despite the efforts and the competence of teachers, be fully educated but partially deculturated.

In the broader picture of a pastoral approach to culture and with a view to providing students with the specific formation which they have a right to expect, Catholic universities, colleges and research centres should take care to ensure a fruitful encounter between the Gospel and the different cultural expressions. These institutions can contribute in an original and irreplaceable way to a genuine formation in cultural values, which is an ideal basis for the symbiosis between faith and the intellectual life. In this respect, it is recommended that special attention be given to the teaching of philosophy, history and literature as they are essential elements for the encounter between the faith and the different cultures.

The presence of the Church in the university and in university culture,(24) together with those practical initiatives which make this presence effective, demand rigorous discernment and unstinting efforts to promote a new Christian culture, one which is enriched by the best achievements in every field of university activity.

Priests, men and women religious, and well-prepared lay people are urgently needed in this task of human and Christian formation. Their joint efforts will allow Catholic educational institutions to bring their influence to bear on the production of educational material, as well as on teachers themselves (professionals of culture). They can also help spread a Christian model of relationships between teachers and pupils, at the heart of a genuine educational community. Forming minds and consciences is one of the principal goals of a pastoral approach to culture.

30. *Schools* are, by definition, places of cultural initiation and in certain countries, for many centuries, places where a culture forged by Christianity is transmitted. While «Areligious instruction» is allowed in schools in many countries, this is not the case everywhere. But, in both situations, we are faced with the same basic question: the relationship between religious education and catechesis. There is reasonable concern that those whose job it is to teach obligatory «Areligion» classes will, in reality, have to restrict them to basic religious education. It seems inevitable that, with ever fewer young people having access to catechesis worthy of the name, and without support from elsewhere, religious culture among the younger generations will soon collapse. Hence the urgent need to re-think the relationship between religious education and catechesis, and the need to find a new way of relating the need for exact and impartial information C which is in danger of vanishing C to the overriding importance of witness. Schools and parishes need to complement each other in this area. Choosing teachers who can link these two areas more clearly is indispensable if this demanding but promising pastoral challenge is to be met successfully.

Centres of theological formation

31. We must recognise that, while in many countries an adequate religious formation was given, until recently, to the children of Catholic families, an increasing number of young people are now deprived of it, and some of them bemoan the lack of a rigorous theological formation. Their request is a new and encouraging one, for at least three reasons. First, because many educated Christians find doctrinal fidelity and growth in faith impossible, unless they can reflect on faith just as seriously as they do on their profane culture or on their professional life. Secondly, the better equipped they are to argue for their faith, the more they will be able to contribute to various services the Church may ask of them: liturgical ministries, catechesis for school children, caring for the sick and preparing people for sacraments, above all baptism and marriage. Finally, if they can integrate their job with their Christian faith, this will, in the long run, make for a better osmosis between these two elements in their lives.

The need for serious theological formation is ever more pressing today as we face the new challenges of our times from a religious indifference to an agnostic rationalism. A sound knowledge of the tenets of the faith in the first place is indispensable for a true evangelization. Such knowledge of an intellectual nature, interiorized through prayer and liturgical celebrations, fosters an intelligent personal assimilation on the part of the faithful, enabling them to be witnesses to Christ himself and to his message

of salvation. In a cultural context characterized on the one hand by a resurgence of fundamentalist trends, adequate theological formation is undeniably the best means by which to counter this grave danger which is a threat to the genuine popular devotion and culture of our times.

A pastoral approach focused on the evangelization of culture and on the inculturation of the faith implies competence in two areas: in the field of theology and in the field of pastoral work. Whether for beginners or for people who already have some qualification, general or specialised enough to merit ecclesiastical recognition, courses in theology are certainly to be encouraged wherever in the Church they are not yet offered, in accordance with the wishes of the Second Vatican Council (*Gaudium et Spes*, 62, 7). This is without doubt one of the best channels of communication between contemporary culture and Christian faith, and for the latter to imbue the former so that daily life may be inspired by a sound formation and understanding of the faith made stronger by study of the Word of God and the tradition of the Church.

Catholic cultural centres

32. Wherever it has been possible to create them, Catholic cultural centres are an enormous pastoral help in the sphere of culture. Very much part of their culture, they can tackle urgent and complex problems encountered in evangelizing culture and inculturating faith. They start with points of contact which come from a largely open debate with all those who create, work in and promote culture, in accordance with the spirit of the Apostle (*I Thess* 5:21-22).

Catholic cultural centres are a rich and varied phenomenon, whether it is a question of names (Cultural centres or circles, academies, university institutions, houses of formation), of orientation (theological, ecumenical, scientific, educational, artistic etc...), of chosen themes (cultural trends, values, intercultural or inter-religious dialogue, science, art etc...), or of the activities undertaken (conferences, debates, courses, seminars, publications, libraries, artistic and cultural events, exhibitions etc...). The very concept of a «Catholic cultural centre» brings together the variety and the richness of the different situations in a country: there are institutions linked with an ecclesiastical body (parish, diocese, Bishops' Conference, religious order etc...) as well as initiatives on the part of Catholics which are private, but still in communion with the Church. All these centres offer cultural activities with a constant concern for the relationship between faith and culture, in the form of dialogue, scientific research, formation, and the promotion of a culture which faith inspires and makes fruitful, refreshing and powerful. They draw attention to the cultural projects and achievements of Catholic artists, writers, scientists, philosophers, theologians, economists and journalists, and promote enthusiastic personal commitment to values enriched by faith in Christ.

Catholic cultural centres offer to the Church the possibility of presence and action in the field of cultural change. They constitute in effect public forums which allow the Church to make widely known, in creative dialogue, Christian convictions about man, woman, family, work, economy, society, politics, international life, the environment» (*Ecclesia in Africa*, 103).

The Pontifical Council for Culture has recently published its first list of such centres, based mainly on information received from Bishops' Conferences.(25) This first international document on Catholic cultural centres should facilitate contact between them and improve pastoral care for culture, especially if it is used in conjunction with up-to-date communications technology.

Mass media and religious information

33. To those responsible for pastoral care, it is particularly striking that culture is becoming more and more global, under the influence of mass media and information technology. Of course, the different cultures of the world have always had reciprocal relations. But today, even the least widespread cultures are no longer isolated. They benefit from an increase in contacts, but they also suffer from the pressures of a powerful trend towards *uniformity*, where - to cite the extreme example of the distribution of forms of materialism, individualism and immorality - the merchants of violence and cheap sex, omnipresent in video cassettes and films as well as on television and the *Internet*, risk prevailing over the educators. In addition, the media of mass communication (mass media) broadcast a multitude of religious proposals concerning very different religious groups, linked to ancient and modern cultures, which all have equal exposure nowadays on a single platform and at the same time.

On the level of mass communication, even the most modest Catholic television and radio stations, particularly the latter, have a significant part to play in the evangelization of culture and in the inculturation of the faith. They reach people in the ordinary circumstances of their lives and thus make a powerful contribution to the way their life-styles develop. Where they can exist, Catholic radio networks enable dioceses without great resources to benefit from the technology available to those which are better off, and they also stimulate cultural exchanges between Christian communities. It is very important for Christians to become involved not only in the religious media, but also in state-run or commercial media, which naturally speak to the whole of society. Through them the Church can get through to people who, otherwise, would be beyond her reach. In countries where the media are open to what religion has to say, some dioceses produce advertisements which they have broadcast, to bring out those Christian values which are essential elements of a truly human culture. In other places, Catholics award prizes for the best professionals. This use of the media is to be seen as direct evangelization, inasmuch as its quality and seriousness contributes to the promotion of a culture in line with the Gospel.

Daily papers and periodicals, and other Catholic publications, have an influence not only in the life of the local Church, but also in the wider society, because they are the sign of a lively faith, and of the special contribution Christians make to cultural life. This remarkable potential sphere of influence calls for journalists, authors and publishers with a broad cultural perspective and strong Christian convictions. Where local languages are used alongside official ones, some dioceses publish a journal or at least some articles in the local language, which gives unparalleled access to so many families.

The extraordinary possibilities of communication offered by today's technology can be used to beam the message of the Gospel throughout the world and to give culture a soul. In order to make the best use of the most up-to-date communications media, a

pastoral approach to culture must promote the training of Catholic specialists: «For the new evangelization to be effective, it is essential to have a deep understanding of the culture of our time in which the social communications media are most influential» (*Ecclesia in America*, 72). The presence of Catholics in the media will be all the more fruitful if pastors have been introduced to these means of communication in the course of their own formation. Well thought-out and accountable involvement is the only way to avoid the pitfalls and face the challenges of the media.

34. The pastoral approach to culture needs to pay particular attention to press, radio and television journalists. The questions they ask are sometimes embarrassing or disappointing, especially when they in no way correspond to the message we have to get across, but these disconcerting questions are often asked by most of our contemporaries. The various sectors of the Church would communicate better with journalists, and the resources, organizers and methods of cultural and religious networks would be better known, if a sufficient number of people were properly trained in communications techniques: the best place to start would be with young people in formation in seminaries and religious communities. In addition, many young lay people have an inclination to work in the media. A pastoral approach to culture will ensure that they are prepared to be an active presence in the world of radio, television, books and magazines, the bearers of information which are also the daily reference-point for the majority of our contemporaries. Neutral, open and honest media offer well-prepared Christians a front-line missionary role: it is important that they should be well-trained and supported.

As a way of stimulating creativity with a substantial moral, spiritual and artistic component, several local Churches organize cinema and television festivals, and offer prizes in the style of the Catholic Cinema Prize (*Prix catholique du cinéma*). Several professional associations and trade-unions, with the intention of promoting good journalism by means of effective training, have worked out a *Media ethical charter*, a *Code of conduct for journalists*, and have also founded a *Media ethical council*. Others have founded groups to cater for professionals in the field of information, for series of talks on ethical, religious and cultural questions, and for days of retreat or recollection.

Science, technology, bioethics and ecology

35. For centuries, and in spite of incomprehensions, the Church and society as a whole have had the benefit of the expertise of Christians versed in the exact and experimental sciences. Now that the postulates of scientism have been ruled out, the Church must be alert to the contributions, questions and challenges of science, technology and new biotechnologies. Science and technology both have a part in the creation of culture. *Ars Medica* is of fundamental importance for the human person, and so it is especially important to follow its current paradigm-shifts, but also to rely on the work of recognized professionals and reliable moral theologians, to have a deeper understanding of the Truth in this field. The development of a coherent pluridisciplinary approach will help create a favourable climate for the dialogue between science and faith, which has been undertaken in recent decades. If it is to succeed, a pastoral approach to culture will require:

— the formation of qualified consultants in both physical or life sciences and theology or philosophy, who are able to express themselves via *Internet*, radio or television and who can deal with the many points of friction and controversy between science and faith, namely: *creatio ex nihilo* and *creatio continua*, evolution, the dynamic nature of the world, scriptural exegesis and scientific study, man's place and role in the cosmos, the relationship between the concept of eternity and the spatio-temporal structure of the physical universe, epistemologies etc.

— Communication networks linking Catholics who teach in Catholic institutes of higher education, state universities, private educational institutions and research centres, and similar networks linking scientific academies, associations of technologists and bishops' conferences.

— The creation of pro-life academies or study-groups specializing in this subject, run by Catholics recognized for their professional qualities and their faithfulness to the Church's magisterium.

— Mass-market Catholic press and publications, staffed by men and women truly qualified in these areas.

— Catholic booksellers who can give a competent orientation in the ever-increasing number of scientific series, reviews and other publications.

— Increased availability of resources in parishes - books, reviews, videos - and an openness to consultation on subjects touching the relationships between science, technology and faith.

— A pastoral approach which will engender and sustain growth in a deep spirituality for scientists.

Art and artists

36. Linking aesthetics with the pursuit of goodness and the search for truth is certainly one of the main veins to be worked today in a pastoral approach to culture which aims to proclaim the Gospel in a way which is in tune with the signs of our times. Pastoral concern for artists requires sensitivity as much to aesthetics as to Christian values. In our culture, where a deluge of often banal and brutal images are churned out daily by the television, the cinema and videos, a fruitful union between the Gospel and art will bring about new manifestations of beauty, born from the contemplation of Christ, God made man, from the meditation of his mysteries, from their shining forth in the Virgin Mary and in the saints (cf. John Paul II, *Letter to Artists*, 4 April, 1999).

At an institutional level, diversification and fragmentation call for renewed dialogue between the Church and artistic institutions and societies. From parishes to chaplaincies, from dioceses to Bishops' Conferences, from seminaries to formation institutes and universities, the pastoral approach promotes organizations with the capacity of developing a fruitful dialogue with artists and the art world. Those local Churches which have distanced themselves from art cannot fail to gain from a renewed contact, making use of appropriate opportunities to meet artists and other professionals from the world of the arts.

At the level of creativity, experience has shown that, in conditions which do not favour real culture C which presupposes freedom C the Catholic Church has acted as advocate and protectress of culture and art, and many artists have found in her the place where they can exercise their creative freedom. This historic role of the Church is as relevant as ever, especially in the fields of architecture, iconography and religious music. By appealing to artists to become a part of her life, the Church is inviting them to renew Christian art. She engages in a confident relationship with artists, one which is built on listening and co-operation. This relationship is to make the most of what educates man and elevates him to a higher level of humanity, by allowing him to participate more intensely in the mystery of God, who is true beauty and supreme goodness. If they are to bear fruit, the relationships between faith and art must not be restricted to a search for creativity. Advice, confrontation and discernment are necessary, for faith is fidelity to the Truth. Liturgy itself is a marvellous milieu, because of its power to inspire and the various possibilities it offers to artists in all their individuality to implement the guidelines set by the Second Vatican Council. What is needed is an expression of faith which is both *indigenous* and *Catholic*, while respecting liturgical norms.(26) The need to build and decorate new churches leads on to a deeper reflection on the church as a *holy place*, and on the character of the liturgy. Artists are urged to express these spiritual values in their art. Creativity in sacred art should mean that iconography and musical composition develop in a way which is accessible to most people, so that they can see the transcendence of God's love and be led to prayer. The Second Vatican Council did not hesitate on this point and its guidelines call for its permanent implementation AEvery effort should be made, therefore, to make artists feel that they are understood by the Church in their artistic work and to encourage them, while enjoying a reasonable standard of freedom, to enter into happier relations with the Christian community. New art forms adapted to our time and in keeping with the characteristics of different nations and regions should be acknowledged by the Church. They may also be brought into the sanctuary whenever they raise the mind up to God with suitable forms of expression and in conformity with liturgical requirements» (*Gaudium et Spes*, 62,4).

At the level of formation, pastoral attention to art and artists presupposes the right sort of formation.(27) Those responsible for the artistic education of priests and lay people, done in symbiosis with theological, liturgical and spiritual formation, need to discern who will be responsible for pastoral work with artists, since it is so important that well-trained, competent personnel be able, on behalf of the Christian community, to make enlightened judgements and well-founded assessments of contemporary art.

The possible initiatives in this field are many and various. Associations, artists' and writers' guilds and academies, all show the important cultural role of Catholic men and women, and all of these can support a more fruitful dialogue between the Church and the world of art. The idea of *cultural weeks* has been very successful, too, and could spread along the lines of *Christian cultural weeks*, which are based on a number of cultural events open to as wide a public as possible. National or international *Festivals* or *Prizes* could put the spotlight on sacred music or religious films and books.

Cultural heritage and religious tourism

37. In the context of the development of *leisure time* and *religious tourism*, it seems right to point out some initiatives which may safeguard, restore and make the most of the existing religious cultural heritage, and also pass on to future generations the treasures of Christian culture.(28) To this end, it seems advisable to promote and encourage several initiatives:

— the introduction of «Pastoral care for tourism and leisure» or «Acatechesis through art», as an identifiable and regular activity in a diocese.

— Designing diocesan or regional devotional itineraries based on the networks of holy places which constitute their spiritual and cultural heritage.

— Making churches open and welcoming, by exploiting resources which are sometimes modest but significant.

— Setting up a pastoral programme for the most frequently visited religious buildings, to give visitors the benefit of the message they bear, and publishing documents on religious tourism or simply about tourism on a human scale in association with the appropriate local authorities.

— The creation of «Catholic guides' organizations», which would provide tourists with a high quality cultural service backed up with the witness of faith. Such initiatives can also create jobs, even if only temporary ones, for young or unemployed people.

— Support for international organizations like the E.C.A., *European Cathedrals' Association*.

— Setting up and developing museums of sacred art and religious anthropology: to bring out the quality of the objects on view, with a lively pedagogical presentation, to avoid such museums being storehouses for «dead objects».

— Encouraging the formation and expansion of funds or libraries specialised in the Christian and profane cultural heritage of a region, to put as many people as possible in touch with it.

— Despite problems in publishing and book sales in some countries, supporting - and perhaps also starting - Catholic bookshops, especially in parishes and at pilgrimage sites. These need to be run by qualified people who would be able to give useful advice.

Young people

38. A pastoral approach to culture affects young people through teaching, higher education and leisure, in a process of evangelization which makes a deep impression on people. While the family is essential in the *transmissio fidei*, amid all the various initiatives for young people, dioceses, parishes, Catholic schools and universities, as well as many Church movements active in all walks of life, are at the forefront in promoting:

- places where young people will want to meet and form good quality social relationships and which constitute a supportive environment for the faith.
- Talks and reflection groups, suited to different levels, based on issues of common concern affecting Christian life.
- Cultural associations or social clubs offering a variety of open leisure and culturally formative activities, such as music, theatre, cine-clubs, etc.
- Cultural collections - of books or videotapes - for Christian cultural information and formation, and for exchanges with other young people or adults.
- Good role-models, given that the ultimate aim is to form young adults who can live their faith in their own milieu, whether they are students, researchers, workers or artists.
- Pilgrimage itineraries to allow small meditative groups as well as large festive gatherings to quench their thirst for culture through spiritual life in a climate of radiant and communicative fervour.

All these initiatives are an integral part of the Church's global pastoral effort to implement: Aa new kind of dialogue, which would make it possible to bring the originality of the Gospel message to the heart of today's mentalities. We must then rediscover the apostolic creativity and the prophetic power of the first disciples in order to face new cultures. Christ's word must appear in all its freshness to the young generations, whose attitudes are sometimes difficult for minds to understand but who are far from being closed to spiritual values». (29) Young people are the future of the Church and of the world. Pastoral commitment on their behalf, both in universities and in the workplace, is a sign of hope on the eve of the third millennium.

CONCLUSION

Towards a cultural approach to culture renewed by the power of the Spirit

39. Culture, understood in its widest sense as defined since the Second Vatican Council (*Gaudium et Spes*, 53-62) appears to the Church, on the eve of the third millennium, as one of the fundamental dimensions for pastoral care, and «authentic pastoral work in the area of culture ... is decisive for the new evangelization». (30) Those who are pastorally responsible for culture are resolutely committed to finding ways for evangelization to reach minds and hearts, and to transform cultures in a way which also enriches them. They weigh up the elements of culture which are open to the proclamation of the Gospel, and the challenges which have arisen from cultures which are indifferent, or sometimes hostile, to the faith. «The Gospel brings culture to its perfection, and authentic culture is open to the Gospel». (31)

Many meetings with Bishops and men and women from various cultural backgrounds - science, technology, education, art - have revealed what is at stake in such a pastoral

approach, as well as its presuppositions and demands, the obstacles involved and where it can look for support. This field of apostolic work is so enormous, in this immense Areopagus» (*Redemptoris Missio*, 37) the cultural areas are so complex, that it is evidently necessary for all levels to work together, parishes with the Bishops' Conference, regions with continents. The Pontifical Council for Culture, in line with its mission,(32) is committed to facilitating co-operation and to promoting exchanges, especially between the dicasteries of the Roman Curia, Bishops' Conferences, and international Catholic organizations universities, historical, philosophical, theological, scientific, artistic and intellectual organizations, as it does with the Pontifical Academies(33) and Catholic cultural centres.(34)

«Go, therefore, make disciples of all the nations; baptise them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to observe all the commands I gave you» (*Mt* 28,19f.). The pastoral approach to culture follows the way the Lord indicated. Closely linked to the Christian witness of individuals and communities, it is part of the mission to proclaim the Gospel to all men and women of all times. It is an excellent way of inculturating faith and evangelizing cultures. «The need for such involvement has marked the Church's pilgrimage throughout her history, but today it is particularly urgent ... The process ... is a lengthy one ... a profound and all-embracing one, which involves the Christian message and also the Church's reflection and practice. But at the same time it is a difficult process» (*Redemptoris Missio* 52). On the eve of the third millennium, who can fail to see what is at stake for the future of the Church and the world? The proclamation of Christ's Gospel urges us to build living communities of faith, bearers of hope and love, to bring about and nurture throughout the world a civilization of truth and love and a culture of life, in which each human person will be able to respond both as an individual and as part of a community to his or her vocation as one of God's children in the fullness of Christ» (*Eph* 4:13). The pastoral approach to culture has a great urgency about it, it is a mammoth task, it involves many approaches and there are immense possibilities, on the threshold of the new millennium commemorating the coming of Christ, Son of God and son of Mary, whose message of love and truth fulfils the basic need of every human culture. «Faith in Christ gives cultures a new dimension, that of hope in God's kingdom. It is the vocation of Christians to instil in cultures this hope in a new earth and a new heaven ... Far from threatening or impoverishing them, the Gospel increases their joy and beauty, freedom and meaning, truth and goodness».(35)

In fact, the pastoral approach to culture in its many forms has no other aim than to help the Church to fulfil its mission of proclaiming the Gospel. On the threshold of the new millennium, with the full force of the Word of God, «the inspiration of the whole of Christian living» (*Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, 36), it is helping man to overcome the drama of atheistic humanism and to create a new humanism» (*Gaudium et Spes*, 55) capable of giving birth, throughout the world, to cultures transformed by the prodigious newness of Christ who «became man so that man might become God»,³⁶ renew himself in the image of his Creator (cf. *Col* 3:10) and «put on a new nature» (cf. *Eph* 4:24). Christ renews all cultures through the creative power of the Holy Spirit, the infinite source of beauty, love and truth.

Vatican City, 23 May 1999, the Solemnity of Pentecost.

Paul Cardinal Poupard
President

Bernard Ardura, O. Praem.
Secretary

NOTES

(1) John Paul II, *Discours à l'Assemblée Générale des Nations Unies*, 5 October 1995, n. 9; *Documentation Catholique*, XCII (1995) 920.

(2) John Paul II, Letter instituting the Pontifical Council for Culture, 20 May 1982, AAS LXXIV (1982) 683-688.

(3) John Paul II, Address to the Pontifical Council for Culture, 15 January 1985.

(4) Pontifical Biblical Commission, *Foi et Culture à la lumière de a Bible*, Leumann, Editrice Elle Di Ci, 1981.

(5) International theological commission, *Faith and Inculturation*, in *Origins*, vol. 18, no. 47, pp. 800-807.

(6) *Puebla, la evangelización en el presente y en el futuro de América Latina*, 1979, n. 385-436; *Santo Domingo, Nueva evangelización, promoción humana, cultura cristiana*, 1992, n. 228.

(7) John Paul II, *Address to UNESCO*, 2 June 1980, n. 12, *L'Osservatore Romano*, weekly edition in English, 23 June 1980.

(8) Cf. *Indiferentismo y sincretismo. Desafíos y propuestas pastorales para la Nueva Evangelización de América Latina*, Simposio, San José de Costa Rica, 19-23, January 1992, Bogotá, Celam, 1992.

(9) Cf. IV Conferencia General del Episcopado Latinoamericano. *Santo Domingo, op. cit.*, n. 230.

(10) Cf. III Conferencia General del Episcopado Latinoamericano, *Puebla, op. cit.*, n. 405.

(11) John Paul II, *Homily of the enthronement Mass*, 22 October 1978, *L'Osservatore Romano*.

(12) Pontifical Council for Social Communications, *Pastoral Instruction Aetatis Novae*, Vatican City 1992, 4.

(13) Pontifical Council for Social Communications, *Ethics in Advertising*, Vatican City, 22 February 1997.

- (14) John Paul II, *Message for the 31st World Communications Day*, 11 May 1997.
- (15) John Paul II, *Address to the United Nations Organization*, 5 October 1995, 8.
- (16) Cf. Various Authors, *Après Galilée. Science et Foi, Nouveau Dialogue*. Paris (DDB) 1994. Italian translation, Piemme, 1996.
- (17) John Paul II, *Address at the General Audience*, 6 December 1995.
- (18) John Paul II, *Address to UNESCO*, 2 June 1980, *L'Osservatore Romano*, n. 10.
- (19) Cf. *IV Conferencia General del Episcopado Latinoamericano. Santo Domingo, octubre 12-28 de 1992*. Nueva evangelización, promoción humana, cultura cristiana, Bogotá (Ed. Celam), 228-286; *Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation A*Ecclesia in America**», 22 January 1999, n. 64.
- (20) Cf. Special assembly of Cardinals in Rome (4-6 April 1991); *Les Sectes, défi pastoral pour l'Église*, Cité du Vatican, 1986. *Sects and New Religious Movements. An Anthology of Texts from the Catholic Church 1986-1994*, edited by the Working Group on New Religious Movements, Vatican City. Washington, United States Catholic Conference, 1995.
- (21) John Paul II, *Address to the Pontifical Council for Culture*, 1997, 405.
- (22) Cf. two letters of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue: *APastoral Attention to African Traditional Religion*», *Bulletin*, no. 68 (1988) XXIII2, pp. 102-106; *APastoral Attention to Traditional Religions*», *ibid.*, no. 84 (1993) XXVIII3, pp. 234-240.
- (23) Cf. Congregation for Catholic Education, *Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith*, 15 October 1982; John Paul II, *Post-Synodal Exhortation A*Christifideles Laici**», *on the vocation and mission of the laity in the Church and in the world*, n. 44.
- (24) Cf. Congregation for Catholic Education, Pontifical Council for the Laity, Pontifical Council for Culture, *The Presence of the Church in the University and in University Culture*, Vatican City, 1994.
- (25) Pontificium Consilium de Cultura, *Catholic Cultural Centres*, Vatican City, 1995. Pontificio Consiglio della Cultura - Commissione Episcopale CEI per l'Educazione Cattolica, la Cultura la Scuola e l'Università, *I Centri Culturali Cattolici. Elenco e indirizzi*, Roma, Città Nuova Editrice, 1996.
- (26) Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, *IV Instruction for the Right Application of the Conciliar Constitution on the Liturgy (nn. 37-40): The Roman Liturgy and Inculturation*, Rome 1994.
- (27) In this respect, the new university courses for the formation of future officials responsible for the Church's cultural heritage should be noted, as for example at the Pontifical Gregorian University (Rome), at the Institut Catholique in Paris and at the Catholic University in Lisbon. Cf. Pontifical Commission for the Cultural Heritage of

the Church, *Circular letter on formation regarding the cultural heritage of the Church in Seminaries*, 15 October 1992.

(28) Cf. John Paul II, *Address to the first Plenary Session of the Pontifical Commission for the Cultural Heritage of the Church*, 1995.

(29) John Paul II, *Address to the Pontifical Council for Culture*, 18 January 1983, Vatican.

(30) John Paul II, *Address to the Pontifical Council for Culture*, 14 March 1997, *L'Osservatore Romano*, 26 March 1997.

(31) *Ibid.*

(32) AI established the Pontifical Council for Culture to help the Church be involved in the saving exchange in which inculturation of the Gospel goes hand in hand with the evangelization of cultures» *Ibid.*

(33) The Pontifical Academies' Coordination Council established by Pope John Paul II on 6 November 1995 promotes their joint contribution to Christian humanism on the eve of the new millennium. On the occasion of its first public session presided by the Holy Father on 28 November 1996, he announced the creation of the yearly Pontifical Academies' Prize. Its aim is to support promising talents and initiatives fostering Christian humanism and its theological, philosophical and artistic expressions. On the occasion of the second public session of the Pontifical Academies, on 3 November 1997, Pope John Paul II awarded this prize for the first time.

(34) Cf. the mission and competence assigned to the Pontifical Council for Culture: John Paul II, *Letter instituting the Pontifical Council for Culture*, 20 May 1982, AAS LXXIV (1982) 683-688, and the *Motu Proprio Inde a Pontificatus*, 25 March 1993, AAS LXXXV (1993) 549-552.

(35) John Paul II, *Address to the Pontifical Council for Culture*, 14 March 1997, *L'Osservatore Romano*, 26 March 1997.

(36) Saint Athanasius, *De incarnatione*.