

Drago K. Ocvirk

## **Some Basic Conditions for Missionary Activities as Reconciliation and Peacebuilding**

It is a great honour for me to be invited by the Authorities of Mission Congregation to lecture at this Symposium on *The Catholic Mission in the Orthodox Ukraine, Belarus, and Russia* here in this beautiful historical and university town of Vinnitsya.<sup>1</sup>

In three steps I will present the preliminary dimensions, which should be taken in account in all missionary activity if it wants to avoid all kind of violence and to become a work of reconciliation and peace building. The very traditional, even apostolic rule in Christian spirituality is the imitation of Christ and of his very witnesses as reminds us saint Paul: »You became imitators of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit« (1Tes 1,6). Even though this rule is simple and clear its application is far from being evident and easy. Therefore, I will present after few introductory words on Christ's Spirit three inevitable fields, which have to be included in all Christian missionary enterprise if it really wants to not cause animosity, enmity, and rejection. These may be avoided only if Christian missionaries know and involve themselves totally first in a self-engaging exchange, secondly in adopting a host culture and thirdly if they formulate verbally their faith experience out of these exchange and culture.

Jesus' Spirit is revealing himself in Jesus' deeds and words. The Spirit, who inspires him, cannot be any other than this one received by his Father, the Spirit, by whom he was conceived and whom he left to his disciples. All deeds and words of Jesus, as pictured in the Gospel, are a testimony to and proclamation of Father's love. They are also an uncovering of the Spirit of love, whose guidance Jesus freely accepts. Each human being is in this Spirit of love a son or daughter of heavenly Father, and is a sister or brother of Jesus capable of receiving this same Spirit of love. Here we are at the heart of Christian mystery of God's love for us, a love, which enable us to embrace it with all our

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<sup>1</sup> An invited lecture in *Symposium on Catholic Mission in Orthodox Ukraine, Belarus, and Russia* in The Catholic Theological Seminar in Vinnitsya, (Ukraine), 15.-19. September 2003.

heart, with all our soul, with all our strength, and with all our mind, and to share it generously with our neighbour (cf. Lc 10,27). Through the life of Jesus, his activities, and message we are initiated both into relationships between the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and also into their relationships to us. As much as we get into these relationships we are building the Kingdom of God, Kingdom of reconciliation, peace, and love. We weave a web of the new covenant and become »fishers of human beings«, as Jesus says. All what is possible to discover about the Spirit of Jesus in our place and time is relevant for us and it obliges us to conform to it our lives and ways of acting.

### 1. Exchange as a source of life

In the very heart of Christianity is a *communication as offering, a self-engaging exchange*. It is magnificently illustrated by the image of God as a Holy Trinity: three mutually personalising relations, in which each receives himself from the others and offers them himself: »Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, »Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!« (Lc 23,46). Simultaneously, the Father addresses us by his Son - his Word in Jesus Christ - and embraces us by him in the Holy Spirit with his love. »My Father is still working, so I am working, too.« For this cause therefore the Jews sought all the more to kill him, because he not only broke the Sabbath, but also called God his own Father, making himself equal with God« (Jn 5,17-18). To say in a simple way: we are interwoven into God's life, or, let me paraphrase John-Paul II., into »a working charity«. Indeed, when the pope speaks about Christian mission,<sup>2</sup> he emphasis: »It is in fact these 'works of charity' that reveal the soul of all missionary activity: love, which has been and remains the driving force of mission, and is also 'the sole criterion for judging what is to be done or not done, changed or not changed. It is the principle which must direct every action, and end to which that action must be directed. When we act with a view to charity, or are inspired by charity, nothing is unseemly and everything is good.'«<sup>3</sup>

The second no less important characteristic of Christianity, although dependent on communication as offering, is a *message* about God's love for us in Jesus Christ and in his Spirit. These two dimensions are inseparably connected, but in a way that we cannot either mix them or separate one from another. So there is a tension between on one side »*the working charity*«, which is a principle of all and therefore more or

<sup>2</sup> John Paul II., *Redemptoris missio*, n. 60.

<sup>3</sup> Isaac of Stella, *Sermon 31*, PL 194, 1793, quot. by John Paul II., *idem*.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. P. Ricoeur, *La reconnaissance*, Seuil, Paris, 2004.

less explicitly present in all human reality, and on the other side *its expressions, realizations*, which are always more or less its accurate images or representations. It is well known, that a gift is an expression of giver's love (respect, admiration ...) for a receiver, and this love cannot be exhausted by one sole act of giving. The contrary is true: receiver's joy solicits a giver to continue to express his love in new ways. No gift can exhaust a giving; no offer an offering; but a gift emerges from giving and leads to it. By the same token, any word cannot abolish a speaking, any narrative a narration, any message a messaging! Let suppose it happens! What would there be left? A reply to this question could be only: there is neither a human being nor humanity without continuous exchange of goods, words, people; nothing, but a death, an eternal silence.

Such an exchange, communication, sharing is of vital importance as it is shown in a reply the subtle John Duns Scotus gave to the question about an ability of angels to communicate among themselves. Normally it was thought that angels have no exchange among them. Indeed, they are higher beings and they know all, so that there is no reason for exchange, communication, information. However, Duns Scotus took a different point of view. In his opinion an information or message is less important than a mere fact of communicating, talking to, addressing each other. If humans, thought he, who are less perfect than angels have a privilege to communicate, how could it be possible that much more perfect angels are deprived of such a great gift? What is here all about is a mutual acknowledgement, by which each of us became a person in face of the other and acquires their identity in continuous interactions with other humans.<sup>4</sup> Consider how much time we spend together only because it makes us happy and feel well. More over, one should ask if they were self-conscious persons outside societal and cultural networks with »a feeling of existing«. »It is not the existence of self that precedes the coexistence; it is the coexistence that precedes the existence of self. In other words, the *self* is something produced on the basis of relational spheres.«<sup>5</sup> To be sure, I do not promote any kind of collectivism: in this part of Europe it would be indecent only few years after the fall of communist collectivism. But, on the other hand, it becomes more and more clear that an isolating individualism is no solution either. In covenants (family, nation ...), which are before and after us, one emerges as human person with his/her name and identity. In the Church one receives a Christian identity. Personal and societal identities are fruits of human and societal rela-

<sup>5</sup> Cf. F. Flahault, *Le sentiment d'exister. Ce soi qui ne va pas de soi*, Descartes & Cie, Paris, 2002.

tions. All these relations are always in some way structured and instituted. Rowan Williams, speaking of the individual search for identity, wrote that »the self is not a substance one unearths by peeling away layers until one gets to the core, but an integrity one struggles to bring into existence.«<sup>6</sup>

Therefore, the humanity of an individual is first of all dependent on links with others and on the quality of these links. So we can say that the first task of Jesus' disciple - regardless of this or that job; this or that belonging; this or that charisma - is nothing other but a cultivation of good human and societal relationships, a creation of opportunities for a higher quality of relations. Jesus exhibits such behaviour in the synagogue of Nazareth: »The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to proclaim release to the captives, recovering of sight to the blind, to deliver those who are crushed, and to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord« (Lc 4,18-19). Spreading good news or evangelizing is in the first place establishing and nurturing relationships, which solidify life, heal, elevate, lift up, free from demons (of prejudices, ideologies, nationalism, drugs ...). In reality, this is the first and most fundamental act of witnessing. It is for this reason Jesus asks his disciples to serve others and calls them friends, so that they too become friends to others, good Samaritans, saviours of human beings: »A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, just like I have loved you; that you also love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another« (Jn 13,34-35).

## 2. Culture as human world is not neutral

After putting some light on a *communication as offering* or *self-engaging exchange*, as the only source of life and true feeling of existing, we have to underline another inescapable reality when we think about a humanity of human being. I am talking about culture. It was already mentioned that all human relationships are structured and embedded in some framework, which is handed down from the past as cultural tradition or heritage and is recreated by the present generation as a living culture. Culture has strong and mostly unknown influences on factual relationships. M. P. Gallagher shares this anthropological un-

<sup>6</sup> T. Radcliff OP, »Go and make disciples of all nations«. *Preaching the Kingdom or Religious imperialism?* v: *New Blackfriars*, vol. 84 no. 989/990 (July-August 2003), 329-300.

<sup>7</sup> M. P. Gallagher, *Clashing Symbols. An Introduction to Faith and Culture*, Paulist Press, New York, 1998, 6-7.

derstanding of culture, when he defines it »as a cluster of assumptions, values and ways of life«.<sup>7</sup>

## 2.1 All permeating culture

As a fundamental anthropological reality culture has an immense power. Indeed, it involves »not simply a neutral cluster of behavior patterns or values, but a hidden set of control mechanisms that shape our sensibility and our ‘structure of feeling’.<sup>8</sup> Culture can be an unrecognized presence, ‘a highly selective screen’ between us and our world which decides ‘what we pay attention to and what we ignore’.<sup>9</sup> Thus culture is quite simply the main influence on how we see ourselves (what contemporary theorists call our ‘social imaginary’), and it is all the more potent for being largely concealed in its impact. In this sense the Marxist-style claim that context conditions consciousness remains valid: indeed the two-way traffic between the structure of our lives and the cultures we inhabit is a crucial insight in this whole area. The way we live or work shapes how we think and feel and in turn how we think and feel becomes a powerful reinforcer of how we picture our possibilities of changing this world or not.«<sup>10</sup>

With a Gallagher’s help we can illustrate »the inescapable role culture plays in shaping our sense of identity« by some metaphoric parallels from his book. »Culture, therefore, is like:

- an ocean, surrounding us as water a fish;
- an environment that seems natural, especially if it is the only one we know;
- the air we breathe, that may be healthy or polluted;
- a lens, something we see through without realizing that it is not the only way of seeing;
- a transmitter sending almost subliminal messages, that affect our priorities without us knowing;
- a filter, allowing through certain images of normality but not others;
- a cage that is there and not there, as in the acting of a mime artist who pretends to be inside a glass box;
- an iceberg of the common sense of a group, which stays largely submerged or unconscious;
- a baby’s building bricks, the basis for creating a world;
- a flight recorder preserving the memory of humanity’s journey;
- a womb, within which one feels perfectly at home, not knowing

<sup>8</sup> This phrase is from Raymond Williams, *The Long revolution*, Catho & Windus, London, 1961, 48.

<sup>9</sup> E. T. Hall, *Beyond Culture*, Anchor Books, New York, 1977, 85.

<sup>10</sup> M. P. Gallagher, *idem*, 6-7.

there are other worlds;

- an accumulation of unacknowledged habits, like an addiction that resists recognition;
- a conspiracy of silence, imposed by the past;
- a playground of possibilities, inviting one to creative freedom;
- an ever-present horizon, beyond which one cannot see.

In this random litany of images there are tensions between evocations of being trapped and those that suggest space for movement. Both can be true of 'lived' culture: it can encourage creativity or it can prove imprisoning. What all these metaphors have in common is the crucial fact that culture is usually a hidden persuader in our lives. It involves a convergence of massaging messages (as Marshall McLuhan might say) that lull us into assuming that all this is natural, whereas the root meaning of culture - from *colere* in Latin, to till or cultivate - suggests that it is the opposite of natural. In fact it is whatever we have made - whether a Tower of Babel or a Sistine Chapel. It is a human invention over a long time. Although nothing about culture is necessary or inevitable, when we swim in this ocean or see through this lens or receive the transmission of this force around us, everything seems utterly normal and neutral. Awakening to its non-neutrality is a first step towards a Christian response to culture in practice.«<sup>11</sup>

## 2.2. Concrete examples

Let me take as an example people who are missionaries as you here in Ukraine, Belarus and Russia. You strongly experience a difference between your native environment and this one, where you now propose the good news. The difference is not only in a language, but also in mentality, customs, behaviour, institutions ...

Not so far in the past there was a commonly spread idea that is a human person solely a member of our tribe or our people, a human being was supposed to be one who belongs to our society, culture, cult and past. All others were seen as barbarians without language and worship. Here is an example: »*Slovani*« a name of our Slavic ancestors probably comes from the verb »*sloviti*« - *to speak*, and this »*Speaking people*« named its German neighbours »*Nemci*« - *the Mutes*.

Each human is indelibly marked by their original culture, and this concretely means for all of us, that it is not indifferent to the life and work of the missionary. For example, Poles and peoples in Ukraine, Belarus and Russia have not been always in a good relationship. This may still today have some influence in a mutual relationship between

<sup>11</sup> M. P. Gallagher, *idem*. 7-9.

missionaries and people here. Indeed, people may look at Poles differently from the way they view Slovenians or Irishmen. Also there is a different reaction if one declares himself/herself as a French businessperson and Orthodox or as Irish and Catholic missionary. There is an avalanche of unconscious reactions in each meeting caused by undetected cultural influences, which may be evinced as nationalistic, chauvinist, racist, sectarian, intolerant. If we want to really spread good news then we have to check all these hidden influences of our home culture and free ourselves of them. Otherwise, there is no hope that others could recognize Christ's disciples in us.

It is interesting to know that in 1659 the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide acknowledged how damaging for evangelization it was to import European ways into China. »Do not make any effort or use any argument in favor of forcing the people to change their customs or traditions, as long as these are not clearly opposed to religion and morality. What could be more absurd than to import France, Spain, Italy, or any other country of Europe into China? Do not import to them our countries, but the faith, this faith, which neither rejects nor wounds any rite or custom, unless they are detestable, but wants on the contrary, that people should keep and protect them ...«<sup>12</sup> Although it is an excellent and almost rare example of sensitivity for the other and different, today even this generous stance is not any more sufficient. »The congregation tried valiantly to oppose wholesale cultural domination, but it distinguished between the religious and secular aspects of culture. Secular culture was not to be touched, but whatever did not conform to Catholic faith and morals must be uprooted. (...) The distinction between aspects of culture that belong to the sphere of religion and morality, and those which do not, is hard to sustain. In practice, non-Christian religions are cultural systems that underlie and permeate whole cultural traditions. The dualism of sacred and secular, which was coming into vogue in Europe after the Wars of Religion, was not applicable to the indigenous cultures encountered by the missionaries.«<sup>13</sup>

Let me remind you that I started these considerations with a taught that Jesus Christ is as a rule for Christians. It is clear that Jesus was establishing a new type of relationship with the people around him, and that he was critical of his own religious culture, and wished to

<sup>12</sup> Quoted by A. Shorter, *Toward a Theology of Inculturation*, Orbis books, Maryknoll, 1988, 155. Cf. M. Merle, *L'anticolonialisme Européen de Las Casas à Karl Marx*, Armand Colin, Paris, 1969, 67-68.

<sup>13</sup> A. Shorter, *idem*, 155-156.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. A. Paul, *Jésus Christ, la rupture. Essai sur la naissance du christianisme*, Bayard, Paris, 2001.

cleanse it from all that, which altered or destroyed the humanity of ordinary people. Such a rapport to well established customs, inevitably led him to a radical rupture with his own culture.<sup>14</sup> One can hear an echo of his rupture in his famous saying: »You have heard that it was said to the ancient ones ... But I tell you ...« (cf. Mt 5,21-22).

### 2.3. Globalisation

When we talk about the influence of culture on human relations we must also mention a new phenomenon called globalization. What is it? A. Giddens wrote a book about it with a significant title: *Runaway World. How Globalisation Is Reshaping Our Lives*. Because of essential economic, political, informatics, and communicational changes in the world it has become »runaway«, we no longer can control its development. This is a huge change in comparison with traditional society, where people could not master nature and its forces: earthquakes, seas, volcanoes, floods ... Now, for the first time, a real risk is produced by human beings themselves.

»Rather than being more and more under our control, it seems out of our control - a runaway world. Moreover, some of the influences that were supposed to make life more certain and predictable for us, including the progress of science and technology, often have quite the opposite effect. Global climate change and its accompanying risks, for example, probably result from our intervention into the environment. They aren't natural phenomena. Science and technology are inevitably involved in our attempts to counter such risks, but they have also contributed to creating them in the first place.

We face risk situations that no one in previous history has had to confront - of which global warming is only one. Many of the new risks and uncertainties affect us no matter where we live, and regardless of how privileged or deprived we are. They are bound up with globalization, that package of changes ... Science and technology have themselves become globalized. It has been calculated that there are more scientists working in the world today than have been involved in the whole history of science previously. But globalization has a diversity of other dimensions too. It brings into play other forms of risk and uncertainty, especially those involved in the global electronic economy - itself a very recent development. As in the case of science, risk here is double-edged. Risk is closely connected to innovation. It isn't always to be minimised; the active embrace of financial and entrepreneurial risk is the real driving force of the globalizing economy.

I would have no hesitation, therefore, in saying that globalization, as we are experiencing it, is in many respects not only new, but also rev-



olutionary. Yet I don't believe that either the sceptics or the radicals have properly understood either what it is or its implications for us. Both groups see the phenomenon almost solely in economic terms. This is a mistake. Globalization is political, technological and cultural, as well as economic. It has been influenced above all by developments in systems of communication, dating back only to the late 1960s.

(The changes) are creating something that has never existed before, a global cosmopolitan society. We are the first generation to live in this society, whose contours we can as yet only dimly see. It is shaking up our existing ways of life, no matter where we happen to be. This is not - at least at the moment - a global order driven by collective human will. Instead, it is emerging in an anarchic, haphazard, fashion, carried along by a mixture of influences.<sup>15</sup>

The instinctive response to this uncertainty and fear before our future is tendency to fully enjoy a present moment, an entertainment. This is emergency exit, do not blame it! What we can offer as Christians is not a special knowledge about future, but wisdom. The wisdom about a final destination and goal of all humanity: the Kingdom of God. »Our missionary spirituality has to be sapiential, wisdom about a goal, where we are called, wisdom that frees us of fear,« says T. Radcliffe.<sup>16</sup> We do not know how it will happen, but being fortified by our hope and having before eyes the Kingdom of God as our goal, we can and should act in a way of lessening fear, bringing hope and giving back a joy of life. Today individuals are often alone, isolated, naked on a battlefield facing abstract systems, without chance of a decent personal life, because they are without company, friends.

Therefore one must consciously and willingly build a net of relations about him or her, to create permanently a community, where s/he finds his/her home and is really accepted. Because one is interested in many things, s/he realizes themselves in different circles: sportive or cultural; religious community; sharing life with a person of other or same sex. One decides personally, how intensively and permanently to remain in one of these circles. One stays there, where s/he has really good and caring friends, where s/he is sincerely welcomed. As long as relations are genuine and profound one usually finds himself or herself in them, cultivates them and sticks to them. But if they slip into tokenism and mere customs, even hypocrisy one will leave them. A love, caring love, discrete attention attires, - in such a case people do know

<sup>15</sup> A. Giddens, *Runaway World. How Globalisation Is Reshaping Our Lives*, Profile Book, London, 2002, 2-3, 10 and 19.

<sup>16</sup> T. Radcliff, *La mission dans un monde en fuite: les futurs citoyens du Royaume de Dieu*, v: La Documentation catholique, n. 2245 (1. avril 2001), 338.

how to persevere, because their personal growth is at stake, even more, each one in similar circumstances feels themselves capable not only to receive a caring love but also to give it.

### **3. Faith as a verbally expressed relation**

The Christians; members of the new covenant in the name of Jesus Christ, creatively accept fundamental human realities, such as being interwoven in a web of relations, in a culture, today including a globalization too. They do not support them passively, but will constantly try in the light of the faith to make them more favourable to others. They will do all they can to not bury their talents. As already said, faith is relationship. When Jesus meets people he always has not only something to do but also to say: he addresses a sick, oppressed, marginalized, possessed ... with a message. He speaks about God's love for them and manifests it in his deeds, healings etc. This Jesus' way of approaching people may be illustrated by a short reflection on Jesus' meeting with a Samaritan woman (Jn 4). Here we see how a humanizing relationship produces a conversation which moves step by step. This meeting offers an opportunity to stress at least three things:

- The Jew Jesus overcame the cultural and religious prejudices of Samaritans and started a conversation with one demand: he asked for a drink! It may be translated as »Dear woman, I need you!« After that confession of no self-sufficiency he let her know that he too has something to offer to her. In her turn, the woman asks him for the water of life. The conversation became more familiar: about a husband, then God. It was so interesting that the woman went looking for her friends so that they too could know Jesus. Due to her convincing word people go to the well and after a conversation with Jesus they offered him their hospitality. He stayed among them for two days and many begun to believe.

- Jesus did not express any right over the woman in whom he evoked faith. He did not command her either to go in the town or to stay with him; she took her initiative by herself. His disciples were already there and he could easily have sent them. But he did not. He respected woman's freedom, her spirit of enterprise and creativity, which finally came out as extremely wise given the fact she »alarmed« entire town and provoked a huge interest in Jesus, which the apostles as strangers surely could not have done. Missionaries should absolutely avoid underestimating either indigenous people or Christian lay persons. Missionaries must trust them, seek their help and give them the initiative. Do not forget the warning of John, »that God is able to raise up children of Abraham from these stones« (Mt 3,9).

· A missionary has among his collaborators many women. It does not matter whether they are daughters of charity, other religious women or lay women. Today we have become more aware of how a big obstacle to humanizing relations between men and women is the patriarchal mentality, structures and customs, which presume that man is superior to woman. This is contrary to the Gospel. Not only in the meeting between Jesus and Samaritan woman shows this, we also see it in another relationship that with the two sisters in Bethany, and also in his relationship with Mary Magdalene and the other women, who were the first witness to the resurrection.

One could uncover some more aspects in Jesus' way of addressing people, but here I would like to stress heavily the absolute need to express the Christian faith in words by which it is proclaimed and shared. »To us, as to St. Paul, »this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ« (Eph 3:8). Newness of life in him is the »Good News« for men and women of every age: all are called to it and destined for it. Indeed, all people are searching for it, albeit at times in a confused way, and have a right to know the value of this gift and to approach it freely. The Church, and every individual Christian within her, may not keep hidden or monopolize this newness and richness which has been received from God's bounty in order to be communicated to all mankind« (*Redemptoris Missio* n. 11).

Nowadays, there is a widely held idea that all what is clearly defined is bad, intolerant, and violent. It seems this should be especially true for Christian verbal, doctrinal expressions of faith. In the same spirit, missionary vocation and work can be seen as violence against others. A certain kind of indifference to others commands not to bother them with our faith and leave them to think and believe what they want, because nobody knows the truth. »Missionaries who teach are suspected of indoctrination, of cultural imperialism, of arrogance. Who we are to dare to tell others what to believe? A teaching that Jesus is God is rejected as indoctrination - while teaching that God is a sacred mushroom is a part of a rich texture of human tradition!«<sup>17</sup>

Another popular idea would persuade people that all religions are the same and all lead to the same God. »Yet this view seems to me to be false. The verb 'to worship' is an intentional one, like 'to support', as when we say that so and so supports a particular political leader. And just as one can be mistaken about the object one supports, so one can be mistaken about the object one takes oneself to worship. Suppose I

<sup>17</sup> T. Radcliff, idem, *La mission dans un monde en fuite: les futurs citoyens du Royaume de Dieu*, v: La Documentation catholique, n. 2245 (1. avril 2001), 342.

say that I support President Bush and the Republican Party. Suppose you question me about Bush and the Republicans. Also suppose that subsequent discussion proves that I am confusing Bush with someone like Bill Clinton, and Republicans with Democrats. In that case I do not support Bush and the Republicans. For my beliefs about them are wildly off the mark. In saying that I support them I might well be speaking in good faith. But I do not support what people who support them support. By the same token, it could emerge that I do not worship the one true God, if there is such a thing as the one true God. If my beliefs about the one true God are sufficiently off the mark, if I am sufficiently confused and in error about the one true God, then the object of my allegiance will be something else. That is why idolatry is a serious possibility. One may worship as God that which is not God! So if we are concerned with the one true God it matters that we are right in what we believe about divinity ...«<sup>18</sup>

However, this negative stance to the Christian mission and possibility of telling truth in matter of religion cannot stand against the fundamental role of relation, communication, sharing and culture as a vital atmosphere for a life, growth and happiness of human person. Mission means sending and receiving; being guest and host. It is true one can detect a love from deeds, but it is even better if deeds are accompanied by words. Love is even sweeter when is proclaimed and confessed in simply few words: »I love you«. Love need to be heard and hear too. Should I remind you of famous scene at the see of Tiberias where Peter declares his love to Risen Jesus (Jn. 21, 15-17)?

Let me end this third part of the present conference with short story. »Vincent Donovan describes in his book: *Christianity Rediscovered* how he had been working for many years as a missionary among the Massais in East Africa. He built schools and hospitals, but he never proclaimed the faith. He was not encouraged by his superiors to do it. Finally, he could no more to constraint himself, he gathered all his people in order to expose them his faith in Jesus. After this, the ancients toll him: 'We have asking all the time what are you doing here. At least now we know it. Why did you not say this before?'«<sup>19</sup>

#### **4. Conclusion - builders of Kingdom**

It is clear enough the Christian faith does nothing destroy what is genuinely human but gives to it a new impetus. Theological medieval

<sup>18</sup> B. Davies OP, *Letter from America*, in: *New Blackfriars*, vol. 84 no. 989/990 (July-August 2003), 371-372.

<sup>19</sup> T. Radcliff, *La mission dans un monde en fuite: les futurs citoyens du Royaume de Dieu*, v: La Documentation catholique, n. 2245 (1. april 2001), 342.

adage *Gratia supponit naturam* is to be understood in a double sense: grace takes its place in a human reality and improves it. Grace frees anthropological data from its dehumanising elements and heals and ameliorates it. Nonetheless, this does not happen automatically, especially because our vision and expressions of faith are, them also, subject to the common human condition where humanisation and dehumanisation hold hands. For this reason has any Christian who wants to act in Spirit of Jesus Christ to question first his/her own faith vision and expressions by observing and listening to others. Only in this way s/he is capable to invent and create deeds and words critically adapted to a culture of addressee and able to give a new impetus to a humanising communication. By doing so, s/he enter into a long chain of witnesses who testify for love of God and build his Kingdom of reconciliation and peace among people and peoples.

**Summary: Drago K. Ocvirk, *Some Basic Conditions for Missionary Activities as Reconciliation and Peacebuilding***

This paper was delivered as a lecture and brings some signs of a speech. In three steps is shown what fundamentally matters for a Christian mission as reconciliation and peace building. Therefore, there is a talk about: 1. a *communication as offering, as self-engaging exchange*, 2. a *counting on different dimensions* of given culture, 3. a *formation of verbal expressions* of faith in the process of its proposal. By practicing all of three and being critical to his/her own vision and expressions of faith, a believer enter into a long chain of witnesses who testify for love of God and build his Kingdom of reconciliation and peace among people and peoples.

*Key words:* missionary activity, reconciliation, evangelisation, peace, culture, humanisation, dehumanisation, communication, expression of faith

**Povzetek: Drago Ocvirk, *Nekateri temeljni pogoji misijonske dejavnosti kot sprave in dela za mir***

Razprava je nastala kot predavanje na simpoziju Katoliško poslanstvo v pravoslavni Ukrajini, Belorusiji in Rusiji (Vinicija, Ukrajina), zato ima kakšno prvino oralnosti. V treh stopnjah predstavi, kaj je v bistvu potrebno za res krščansko poslanstvo sprave in gradnje miru. Zato je govor o: 1. *darovanjski komunikaciji*, v kateri se človek v celoti angažira, 2. *upoštevanje* različnih razsežnosti kulture in 3. *ustvarjanje besednih izrazov* vere v procesu njenega predlaganja. Ko vernik ure-

sničuje te tri razsežnosti in je kritičen do lastne vizije in izrazov vere, se vključuje v dolgo verigo pričevalcev, ki pričujejo za božjo ljubezen in gradijo Kraljestvo sprave in miru med ljudmi in ljudstvi.

*Ključne besede:* misijonstvo, evangelizacija, sprava, mir, kultura, komunikacija, počlovečenje, razčlovečenje, izrazi vere, krščanstvo