Response to Major Superiors

To the Theological Seminar of the Unions of Superior Generals of Men and Women Religious held in Rome 8-11 February 2011

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Introduction

At the Theological Seminar of the Unions of Superior Generals of Men and Women Religious held in Rome 8-11 February 2011, the following are some of the observations made:

“Because of the situations of ageing, lack of vocations, difficulty of administering institutional works, activism and fragmentation of the community, Apostolic Consecrated Life risks further falling apart and loss of identity and significance ... and is strongly feeling and deeply experiencing problems of identity, credibility and visibility”.

Vatican II wants us to be open to the world and active in transforming it in the direction of justice. Religious life must be “committed to justice.”

The Major Superiors request suggestions of:

Three Topics of theology, relevant to apostolic consecrated (religious) life to be studied by theologians with priorities with a development of contents and rationale and

Three Steps to continue the process of theological reflections and rationale.

Subject to correction, I propose three topics and steps for their study and action. My comments relate mainly to the Asian continent:

- **Drawbacks in Traditional Catholic Theology and Return to Jesus Christ**
  The distortion of Christian theology from Constantine to mid 20th century and return to Jesus Christ. Christians must take a critical view of traditional Christian theology and return to the life of Jesus Christ and his teaching on love of God and neighbour, witnessed to in four gospels. (cf. my “Jesus Christ and Human Liberation”, CSR 1976)

- **Church and Other Religions**
  Catholic Church regarded other religions as untrue and incapable of leading to salvation of souls. How can we build friendly relations among them?

- **Population and Land**
  Redistribution of resources, ecology, climate change, survival of planet earth.

**Steps:**

- Social Surveys of exploitation of colonised peoples. Population and land statistics, and projections to coming half century.

- Continuation of Process and Rationale. This could be study-action, prayer groups that include different religions and regions.

- Life styles. Exhaustion of resources, policies for safeguarding mother Earth... a world authority needed with power to safeguard the planet. Spirituality for saving the planet... prayer, meditation.
I. Drawbacks in Traditional Catholic Theology and Return to Jesus Christ

A. Drawbacks in Traditional Catholic Theology

1. Traditional Catholic theology does not study critically the presuppositions and assumptions on which the ongoing Catholic theology is based. It accepts the theological interpretation of the beginnings as in the Bible, that from creation of the world, humanity is living in a situation of original sin; for salvation from which it is required to restore the relationship between God and humankind, by a divine-human redeemer making amends to God the Father. Humans have to enter the Church through baptism and be absolved of their original sin. Persons who are not baptised were seen as eternally doomed. This gave the Christians a sense of superiority in claiming exclusive privileges of salvation.

2. It does not analyse critically the impact that secular powers, including Roman Emperors, have had in defining Catholic doctrine and dogmas over the centuries, as Emperor Constantine did at the Nicene Council in 325.

3. The Catholic Church consequently taught as dogmas perspectives concerning God that cannot be known by human reason such as concerning three persons in one God, the Trinity, their “consubstantiality”, the second person of the Trinity is assumed linked (hypostatically) to the human person Jesus of Nazareth... incarnation.

4. God the Father is supposed to send His only son, Jesus Christ, to make amends for assumed human sinfulness. Hence the interpretation of the death of Jesus as accepted willingly by him as amends for human sin. The death of Jesus as “the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of humankind” is repeated daily in all the Eucharists world wide.

In the process the real cause of death of Jesus as sentenced to death by the Jewish high priests and the Roman authorities, because of his radical teaching and taking up the cause of the poor and marginalised, is generally forgotten. Christian spirituality has thus lost much of its radical challenge.

Hence religious life accentuates charitable activities, but generally fails to engage itself in the hard struggle for social justice at different levels from local to global. Thus for over 1500 years Christians have been offering Holy Masses, while being supportive of the world’s greatest colonial conquerors and slave holders. At the same time such a theology prevents Christians from engaging in a deep spiritual dialogue with people of different religions to deal with the problems of the time in a common commitment.

5. Alliance of Catholicism and capitalism and colonialism, specially since Columbus. The implicit participation of the Church in economic domination of capitalism along with multi-national corporations with their investments and trade, even after the independence of the former colonies. Neglecting also the research on the debt of the wealthy colonizers to the exploited colonized. Thus the complicity of the Church in much colonial and neo-colonial exploitation

6. Legitimising slavery and benefiting from it during many centuries, till today in the way some people deal with their servants, and as such keep the gap between the rich and poor in the countries.

7. Legitimising the establishment of the United Nations Organization after World War 11, with the global military hegemony of the USA and the super powers. A million citizens killed in Iraq since 2003, without international criminal justice. Nuclear power retained by super powers.

8. The need for a world authority to care for the ecology, and to safeguard the scarce resources of planet earth.

9. The major superiors of religious need to reflect on the ethical implications of the world system. These issues need to be studied by international commissions of competent
scholars. Calculating the reparation due to the oppressed for such gains from capitalist colonial exploitation and regretting the wrongs of the Church in the past centuries concerning other religions and social and gender justice, they can relate to a representative body of members of other religions and humanists, for a vision and strategies for re-building a just world.

10. The major superiors, being a global organisation could correspondingly re-think their global mission and influence the Catholic Church, their houses of formation, Catholic universities and student movements to work for a more just world with civil society movements. They have to foster a movement of internal reformation, if religious life is to survive especially in the West where people are largely alienated from traditional Christianity.

God is unknown and unknowable by human reason. But traditional Catholic theology affirmed that whole of humanity was in original sin due to the alleged fall of assumed first parents in Eden.

This theology was based on acceptance of presuppositions and assumptions of the mythical story of creation and fall/ redemption of humanity. Hence the need of a divine-human redeemer. God is said to have decided on sending the only son to earth as Jesus Christ the Incarnation of God-man.

Christians had to evolve the thinking on Jesus Christ as redeemer of humankind. After long centuries of debate they evolved teaching on how two natures – human and divine – were united in Jesus Christ. The Councils of Nicaea 325, and Chalcedon 451 dealt mainly with the question of two personalities in Jesus Christ, until finally a decision was arrived at, that was made obligatory as orthodox. Several Popes, Emperors, Bishops and theologians were involved in debates/conflicts that arrived in this decision. Is not much of this story mythical, imaginary?

If and when we exclude presumptions and assumptions from belief, how do we construct our Catholic faith?

We accept the belief in God as the necessary creator of the universe, as the one who explains our fact of conscience, our sense of right and wrong from young days. This is also the source of our concept of natural law, and common law. We can posit the core values of the world religions as an implicit Divine message communicated to humanity. Their message, though expressed in different languages is more or less the same. Thus the teachings of the four religions:

Modern options for Apostolic Religious, with decline in numbers and aging.

Jesus shares divinity, but God is not limited to Jesus.

How worship and meditation can be done together by persons and communities of different religions and persuasions.

How will religious life participate / lead in rebuilding a just world order with inspiration, courage, relevant strategies and justice to all. Can apostolic religious join in civil society movements related to their initiatives such as the World Social Forum.

Challenges to the Catholic Church in 21st Century

Historically the Church bears much responsibility for the injustices in the modern world... such issues as land distribution among peoples, hunger and food, youth unemployment – nature, – climate change – exhaustion of natural resources, oil and energy – human rights, freedom of peoples; gender inequality – arms production and arms sales – US military hegemony with some European Union members.

Criteria for Evaluation of Presuppositions of Theology

Negatively: if a presupposition is unjust to any section of humanity, it cannot be from God who is love, and is just. Traditional Catholic Theology viewed other religions as untrue,
till Vatican II (1962-65). Millions of non-Catholics were presumed to be not saved, as not saved by Jesus through baptism.

Positively: any good in any religion has to be from God, as all good is from God. Correspondingly we have to revaluate our traditional theology, and relationship to other religions. Purgatory (Limbo?), Plenary Indulgences.

There are interpretations on the mythical Genesis story, according to which different theological positions were affirmed over the centuries. Thus Pelagius and his supporters held that human beings received adequate grace of God on their own to lead a good life. On the contrary St. Augustine regarded original sin was an inclination to sin — concupiscence — to overcome which humans needed a divine redeemer’s help.

On the basis of such interpretations, theologies of human life and salvation were developed by theologians and church authorities during the first five centuries of the Church, with many debates, including exile of theologians and bishops by secular rulers. The line of interpretation that was accepted as Catholic tradition after St. Augustine was that God the Father was so offended by the disobedience of the first parents, Adam and Eve, that their reconciliation with God was said to be not possible without a divine mediator making amends to the Father for humanity’s sins.

In this background, it is said that God decided that the second person of the Holy Trinity would go to earth taking human form as God-man to offer a sacrifice to God the Father as reparation for the sin of the first parents and humanity. The theological view was built up that Jesus Christ as God-man sacrificed his life as amends to God for human sins.

Thereby Jesus Christ was considered the unique savior of the human race, and his supernatural grace of salvation was communicated to humans through the Church, primarily through the sacrament of Baptism. From this assumed presupposition it was concluded that the mission of the Church was to bring about the conversion of non-Christians to the Catholic Church by baptism.

Thus the liturgy of Holy Week, and the passion of Jesus are described in such an assumed background... cf. Exultet “O felix culpa”. “For Christ has ransomed us with his blood and paid for us the price for Adam’s sin to God.

Catholic theology assumes and affirms “Tradition” is part of divine revelation.

It would be interesting to study which dogmatic teachings of the Catholic Church are ultimately decisions of the emperors and political authorities of a given time.

During many centuries the Mission of traditional religious life was the salvation of souls, by baptism, and conversion of persons to Catholic Church. The apostolic congregations of religious regarded evangelization as the principal mission of their members.

Mission of the Church. Is it the presentation of Jesus Christ as unique savior? This is an interpretation in which the whole of Catholic theology is diluted and distorted; and the life work of Jesus is interpreted as forgiveness and charity, but not as of justice and reparation to the victims of injustice.

How different the impact of the Eucharist would be if “sins of the world” would include the grave inequalities that distort the world order. If each Eucharistic celebration would deal with the injustice in the countries and among the nations, Christianity would then be a radical message of social justice from Jesus Christ, as mentioned in the gospels.

On the contrary the present day Eucharistic celebrations confirm inequalities among persons and as produced by Transnational Corporations. Millions go for Mass every Sunday with hardly any direct reflection on the wars of colonialism, not to mention in contemporary Iraq and Afghanistan. In a city parish thousands attend Mass and receive communion... they travel: some by private car, others by bus, others walk and the inequality keeps growing.

B. Return to Jesus Christ
One of the tasks of Christian apostolic religious could be to dialogue with persons of other religions to study the similarities of the good they seek and work together to achieve the ideal type of world order as we journey through history. This could be a creative function of the core spirituality of the united religions of the world.

Would not the giving up of arrogance, pride and of selfishness in wealth, possessions be the path of holiness for religious personally and religions collectively? In the process there would be a recognition of a path of self purification of religions and nations, in view of historical past? How much violence and wars were involved in this process of empire building by Western Europe since 1492? Such purification of peoples could be the path for building the “kingdom of God on earth”, that Jesus taught his disciples to pray for in the “Our Father”.

The prayers of the Eucharist could be reflected on and prepared collectively:

It could also be a criterion, a direction for the development of a universal liturgy of the Eucharist, meditating on our sins and asking pardon for our faults...This could be the commencement of our common prayer together. The readings could be from the scriptures of the religions on agreed themes.

The feasts of the religions such as Buddhist Vesak, Prophet Mohamed’s birthday could be celebrated together by all the religions in different countries and continents, honoring the good where honor is due. (cf. my web: article of 1969 on honoring the Buddha.)

Similarly repentance could be performed publicly for wrongs of the past involving religions. We could join Pope John Paul II in asking pardon for our wrongs to others. We should possibly go further and examine our past and repent publicly for wrongs done towards other religions in our teachings and actions.

The gospel reading can be complimented with relevant readings from the other religions, followed by prayerful meditations. Similar reflections can be prepared regarding other prayers of the Eucharist with relevant adjustments, including the Gloria, offertory, prayers of participants, Preface, Sanctus, prayer to the Absolute Divine to be present among us, remembrances of the living and the departed, shared forgiveness, kiss of peace, blessing of one another, farewell greeting, sharing communion appropriately and meaningfully.

We can reflect on the transforming effect that such a common, community prayer can have on religious groups. All religions can learn much from participating in one another’s meditations and prayers. Youth in formation for religious life may zealously come together in such experiences.

Mission of apostolic religious can be to see the good in the core values of all religions as in Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam and other world religions. If the theological options that were debated in the first four centuries were kept open up to recent times, how open would the Church have been to other religions and issues such as rebirth, equality of women and men in society and Church, salvation open to all persons of good will.

The Catholic religious congregations can review their foundations, analyze the theological and socio-political background of their religious congregations. We need to distance the religious congregations from the political powers of the nations.

Mission of the Church can be: to jointly promote the common human good, locally, nationally and globally.

Formation of apostolic religious to include the study of other religions, meditating together with persons of other religions. We can study the Councils of the Church being interfered by the secular powers... even to bring pressure to decide theological issues concerning the unknown and unknowable such the identity of Jesus Christ as at Councils of Nicaea and of Chalcedon: definition of God as Trinity, by Church Councils. How much of the Creed that we recite every week is from the secular powers?
The powerful tend to dictate who exercises spiritual powers. Male domination decides only males have the spiritual power of the clergy. How much are these unknowable assumptions, perhaps shared by other religions also according to social power?

Laity can take the role of clergy and apostolic religious, reducing in numbers. In the West the lay leaders now look after some functions of former clergy.

Why did Jesus die? Was he killed by the Jewish high priests and Roman colonial powers for being critical of them? Or did he die as a sacrifice of amends to God the Father? What is our view of God the Father… a God of love…? Would such a loving Father, want his only son killed? Had not the traditional Catholic teaching placed the vast majority of non-Europeans in hell, as non-baptized?


Do not many full timers of church mission live in implicit alliance with neo-liberal capitalism and colonialism, with Multinational Corporations (TNCs) as the main investors and beneficiaries of the global world order. Catholic social teaching implicitly legitimizes Capitalism and its exploitation of rest of world.

Catholic theology needs to be re-thought regarding repentance and reparation. There is need of a new world order: need to preserve natural resources, redistribute resources more justly according to population and resources as in Asia and Africa. Religious life has a future in Latin America, but how will they re-think slavery of past, and future justice to indigenous peoples many of whom were annihilated?

Socio-Political power of nations and relationship of religions.

Modern options for Apostolic Religious, with decline in numbers and aging. Be prepared for decline of numbers in the West, correspondingly decline of power base in the West. Be ready for radical changes in ideas, life style, relationships, mission as humanity moves to a new world… implying a paradigm shift in relationships.

How will world order be 40 years hence, how will the desirable changes come about in a planned and peaceful manner? How will religious life participate / lead in rebuilding a just world order with inspiration, courage, relevant strategies and global justice.

If we exclude the presuppositions and assumptions from Christian theology, there would be a big difference in Christianity.

1. The story of original sin would have no foundation and evidence.
2. There would be no truth in God being offended by the first parents, and
3. Punishing the whole of humanity for supposed sin of Adam and Eve, and
4. No corresponding need of a divine-human mediator to make amends to God.
5. Baptism would not have the mythical power to resolve the supposed original sin.
6. There would be no understanding of the mission of the Church as the conversion of all humanity to Christianity.
7. There would be no justification of violence for conversion, and alliances of Christianity with political powers. Thereby disapproval of the 1500 years of distortion of story of Jesus Christ as lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, while neglecting justice.

How far secular powers, Emperors have had a decisive share in determining Church doctrine, creeds, theological education of religious controlled by a central authority from
Rome. This alliance of Church and State continues with growth of Western imperialism and Capitalism during period 1492 to 1945, and thereafter still goes on.

8. The cause of crucifixion of Jesus would have been better understood by humanity historically, without implying God the Father wanting it.

9. Last supper would have been understood as the Jewish memorial of pass over, and not linked to the Eucharist as a sacrificial meal.

10. The Mass would not be linked to pass over from purgatory to heaven, and stipends charged for Masses.

11. Giving up granting of indulgences, including plenary indulgences, by the Church.

12. The causes of the Protestant Reformations in 16th century, to be studied.

13. What is the role of God in relation to other religions? God loves all humanity of diverse cultures, religions, women and men of all ages and generations.

14. The negative relationship of the traditional teaching of the Catholic Church concerning other religions in the world: regarding them as false and not capable of saving souls after death. Hence the millennial alliance of the Catholic Church with secular powers, including use of violence to implement its mission, understood as spreading the faith throughout the world.

According to the Christian theology of the incarnation, the second person of the Divine Trinity is supposed to be the only son of God and to be united to the human Jesus. This neglects or negates the possibility of God being present in others, including the religious leaders, and in their teachings.

There is no proof that other religions cannot save soul. Should there not be justice and equality of persons of different religions before God?

Historically peoples have tended to express their religious beliefs in different languages, stories, parables... However have not the religions all similar core values that converge towards the love of the transcendent God, the Absolute? Vatican 11 teaches that God would find ways for all persons to reach eternal salvation. (Lumen Gentium) This teaching of the Church makes us ask: how did the Catholic Church come to its earlier teaching concerning the exclusive salvific action of Jesus Christ? How wrong was the Church on a most important matter of religion and salvation? And that for how long?

15. Exclusivity of Christian claim of Jesus to be the unique saviour of humanity. Jesus message of universal love as salvific is open to all humanity. This teaching is not limited to Jesus and Christians. Is not Maitriya, or loving kindness, common to most/all world religions?

16. An eternity of hell, as punishment for sin, seems incompatible with a loving God. Asian religions, Hinduism and Buddhism have a cycle of rebirth, death and purification after death till the soul is purified.

17. The claim of the Pope to be God’s representative on earth is questionable with reference to the history of the papacy. The Pope as head of the Catholic Church is deemed infallible when he speaks ex cathedra on matters of faith. This is open to question on issues of dogma as well as of morality. The approach of the Papacy to other religions is open to millennial questioning.

The Pope has the right to nominate the Cardinal electors of the Conclave that chooses a new pope when there is a vacancy in the Papacy. This can ensure a continuity of teaching and administration that is favourable to one line of thinking or a group in power. This may impede the Church from carrying out necessary reforms as in medieval times, or as now, even half a century after Vatican II. Apostolic Religious worldwide can support the call for a
new Council, that can reform the Church, taking off from where Vatican II was stalled. (cf. Aloysius Pieris S.J. “Give Vatican II a Chance”)

19. The male domination and exploitation of women in society and church. The rights of females in the Church and in society must be respected. Jesus did not discriminate against females. Women are reported to have been quite compassionate and loyal to Jesus in his ministry, in his trial and passion and beyond his death. Women not being admitted to Catholic priesthood would not be approved by Jesus Christ. Are apostolic religious prepared to support the oncoming feminist revolution in theology and in life and action in the Church?

20. The Church has had complicity in colonialism of over 500 years since 1492, and in occupying the lands of the conquered peoples, and thus set up the unjust modern world order of European supremacy. The Church should repent these wrongs and work for reform of world system in 21st century.

21. The Christians and apostolic religious must develop a spirituality relevant to challenges of present day ecology and climate warming and live an exemplary life style with care for nature and non-renewable resources such as petroleum. These should enter the pastoral care of the church mission.

22. The catechesis, preaching, liturgy and spirituality of the Church has to be updated to respond to the challenges of the modern situation. The global responsibilities of the nations should be developed according to the requirements of the worsening situation of natural disasters. The poor peoples would seem to suffer further from the experience of climate change and the impact on Ozone layer. The affluent among nations and within countries do not seem willing to accept their fair share of the sacrifice involved in reducing carbon emissions. Christians would have to reflect what Jesus teaching in this situation would be, for instance meditating on story of Lazarus and Dives and of Zacheus.
II. Apostolic Religious and Other Religions
(Morality as a common base for the members of all religions)

A. Christianity

1. Teaching of Jesus

a. Our Father – His teaching in Beatitudes and the Parables... others

It is significant that he makes the forgiving of others the condition of our forgiveness by God. This too brings a communitarian and human dimension to our relationships with God. A readiness to forgive all and fully from our hearts is made the highest priority. Mercy and reconciliation are incumbent on the follower of Jesus. Hatred, envy and jealousy can have no place in his/her heart. This requires a preparedness to be deeply unselfish. In it the community of persons is implied in the heart of our relationships. We cannot be at peace with God the Father if we do not have a profound inner peace within ourselves in relation to all other human beings. We are perhaps so accustomed to reciting these words that we do not often realize their radical and mystical dimension.

A Christian committed to social change has also to nurture a profound love and compassion for all persons. S/He must contest the evils in society; but inner forgiveness has to temper one’s relationships. This is a fine combination of revolutionary commitment and love for all. In this sense Jesus is a revolutionary and a lover, a revolutionary because he is a lover. We have to live the dynamic of this tension and struggle for integral human liberation with a profound love for all. Jesus thus gives a new criterion and code of human relations that is both a motivation for commitment and a programme of continuing inner personal purification. Forgiveness has to be a liberation of both oppressor and oppressed in a transformed relationship.

b. God is love

A central theme of the teaching of Jesus is a revelation of the nature of God whom he called “Abba”, Father. He had a loving trust in the Father. God loves us, understands us and fulfils us. In return we must love God and all human beings in God. This is the substance of his message. If anything is to give specificity to the followers of Jesus, it has to be the living of his deep revelation of the Divine nature and of human fulfillment in response to such love understood in the context of our interpersonal and societal relationships.

With this central theme Jesus introduced a new understanding of the human person and of social institutions. Every human being was important and had to be cared for. This was the criterion for the admission to the Kingdom: “I was hungry, and you gave me to eat... Enter into the Kingdom”... (Matt. 25) Jesus preached a new view of life. As against the abuses of the religions of his day he witnessed to God as love. Where there is genuine love there is God; and where there is no real love, God is not there.

The love of God for humans is such that that anything done for a person unselfishly and disinterestedly is accepted as done for God in Christ. “Whatever you do to the least of these my brothers you do unto me”. God’s love is universal; it makes no discrimination between Jews and Samaritans, Pharisee and publican.

The message of Christ has love as the principal virtue, motivation and constituent of goodness. The love has to be operative, effective, creative. Love bridges the gap, tends to unite, to build solidarity and brotherhood. Love shares, is self-sacrificial and other-centred. In
this sense love is radical; it does not compromise with injustice, corruption, and waste. Love is active, tenacious and even ferocious when the loved one is in danger – as a mother when her child is endangered.

Sin is the turning away from God who is love. Sin is lovelessness. Love requires sharing; sin is selfishness. Sin is untruthfulness, insincerity, a turning away from God, who is the truth. Jesus therefore opposed sin as contrary to the values of the rule of God on earth. The Kingdom of God is a situation in which sin, selfishness, untruth and injustice are overcome and love, mercy truth and justice prevail.

Jesus taught this in the prayer “Our Father... Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as in heaven... Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.” Mercy and forgiveness are essential conditions of the reign of God over us. One would say that Jesus even conditions God’s mercy to our forgiveness of others. With unforgiving hatred of others we cannot be friends of God; for God loves all. Hence Jesus worked for a condition in which mercy and love would be predominant.

It will be noticed that Jesus emphasized the Kingdom or rule of God over us rather than the rule by any earthly power or organization. The Kingdom of God is primarily within us. He did not stress the power of a religious authority. His evangelization was concerning the values of the kingdom rather than about the institutions or power of a temporary nature. It is a movement rather than an organization. He speaks constantly of the kingdom and very seldom of a Church. Jesus speaks twice of the Church: in Mt. 16.18. “On this rock I will build my Church” and Mt 18. 17. “Tell it to the Church and if he refuses to listen to the Church...” The whole of his teaching on the other hand is concerning the Kingdom of God: e.g. seek ye first the Kingdom of God (Mt. 6.33); difficulty for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God; Mt. 19.24 harlots go into the Kingdom of God, Mt. 21.31; preaching the Kingdom of God, Mt. 14; better to enter the Kingdom of God with one eye, Mark 9.47; I must preach the Kingdom of God, Luke 6.20; behold the Kingdom of God is within you, Luke 17.21; is nigh at hand, Luke 21.31.

He speaks also of his kingdom, the kingdom of heaven, the kingdom of the Father. The prayer he taught is “Thy Kingdom Come, Thy will be done...” The eternal reward is in the kingdom of heaven. “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven”, Mt. 5.3.; “Blessed are those who are persecuted for justice’ sake, for theirs’ is the kingdom of heaven.” Mt. 5.10. “Not everyone who says to me ‘Lord, Lord’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.” Mt. 7.21.

The apostolic religious can regret the millennium in which they have regarded other religions as erroneous and pagan. They should reflect seriously on these sinful positions and take steps to correct the Church of its past wrongs. They should undertake a process of self correction, in thinking, in actions, in prayer life and in sharing of resources. They should be ready to set up new relationships of understanding among the different religious communities. They should be open to claims of divine revelations by other religions.

They can study how Jesus can be presented and witnessed to others as a non-exclusivist personality and role: Jesus’ love of the poor, marginalized, defense of the abandoned.

How worship and meditation can be together by persons and communities of different religions. Religious can think how readings at the Mass can include texts from other religions.

In Asia the Christian religious can relate to the spirituality and forms of worship of the other religions. This of course presupposes that we accept that the Asian religions are also inspired by the Divine. Such an approach will also help the religions to relate to the social economic and practical problems of the countries for the common good. The formation of the young religious can also be related to the situations in the countries.

In the coming decades the influence of the feminist movement will grow in significance. The religious can also participate in the critique that feminism makes of society and religion. Women and men could work together for a more equitable, just and fully participatory society.
The demands of such a mission would involve also changes not only at the level of countries but also of continents and globally.

For bringing about such changes, in a planned and peaceful manner there should be a world authority that is competent to direct such a process. It can relate to the processes of migration already taking place in the present world. There could be more provision for the people’s of overpopulated lands, to go to the under populated lands. This took place in the past. In the coming decades there should be a planned approach towards the problems of migration and investment. The path of liberation can be expressed in terms of core values that the religions propose as good and desirable. Though these values are expressed in the language and idiom of different cultures they have a similarity in content when thought of in relation to practical life in given situations.

Christianity should not have taken the world conversion and conquest as its mission specially of the five centuries since 1492. At the present time Christianity should confess its faults and work for repairing world justice. Conscious of its necessity and the inadequacies of the UNO, the apostolic religious would work for a competent commission for global justice.

The apostolic religious, along with other groups of good will would care for mother earth. They would stress on lifestyles, that do not exhaust the non-renewable scarce resources of the world such as forests and petroleum. They would reduce the transportation by private motor cars, preferring public transportation by railways and buses.

Likewise care for animals, fish, plants and nature.

The religions, mindful of their common core values to be fostered, and the evils to be avoided, can meditate together on the needs of humanity and of mother earth. They will foster policies that encourage the common good of persons and countries. Groups of apostolic religious can develop worship together, reflecting on the messages of the religions and actively applying them to improve human relationships and conditions. The religions can lead humanity to a life style that prevents the warming of the climate and its dangerous effects such as the melting of the ice and the rising of the sea level. The prayer life of the religions can make us mindful of the urgent need of reducing of inequality of incomes and wealth and help reform the social injustices of today’s world.

Given the new world situation and conscious of the search for new orientations and meaning of life by the modern youth, it is important that the formation of young aspirants to the religious congregations be provided the opportunities to experience the mysterious and prophetic call of the divine (of Jesus) in the modern times and situations.

They can be freed from the baggage of legalism, ritualism and dogmatism in an isolated formation, and trained to be daring to search for and welcome in a pluralistic society that is multi ethnic, multi religious and of conscious women and men. Both women and men need to be liberated from theologies and structures of male domination. The students must be accompanied during their formation by spiritual directors and guides, women and men, who have experienced the type of changes, required and are prepared to struggle with the conservatism of the authorities at different levels.

For this Major Superiors themselves and the Vatican Curia need to be liberated from the traditional theology and canon law in which they have been brought up. In the present situation it is necessary that the youth have confidence in the way the authorities in the Church are chosen and formed at all levels. The College of Cardinals, who elects the next Pope, should be truly representative of the world Church and trustworthy to choose a worthy leader at the next conclave. The Major Superiors of Religious should try, along with movements of civil society, to improve the way the College of Cardinals is appointed. Otherwise they would be accomplices in the establishment of conservative trends in the management of the Church. If a new conciliar movement fails to reform the Church from within, it is to be expected, (feared) that reforms will come from outside the Church or by a split of the Church as in the 16th century.
The Constitutions and Rules of most apostolic religious congregations were drawn up in the past centuries when the Church was not facing some of the present trends and challenges. They can reflect together and decide on new orientations to face modern challenges: such as openness to other faiths and secularism. Participation of the laity in Church management, following the example of the early Church.

All our religions teach similar norms for righteous living and finding meaning in life, and include the respect for all humanity. A person genuinely faithful to one’s religion would respect other religions and be a loving and lovable human person.

B. Hinduism

Hinduism is the predominant religious tradition of the Indian Subcontinent. Hinduism includes a wide spectrum of laws and prescriptions of “daily morality” based on the notion of karma and dharma. It grants a great degree of freedom of belief and worship. Also, the concept of heresy is absent. Hinduism is formed of diverse traditions and has no single founder. Hinduism is often called the “oldest living religion” or the “oldest living major religion” in the world.

The moral dimension of Hindu Dharma is embodied in yamas (restraints) and (niyamas) observances:

The yamas are non-violence; not stealing; disciplining desire; abjuring lust and greed; curbing arrogance and anger; not lying; avoiding injustice; shunning wrong doing and evil company.

The niyamas are: be pure in mind, body and speech; love humankind (karuna, maitriya), seek contentment; cultivate devotion; develop forbearance; give charitably; study the scriptures; perform penance and sacrifice.

Rabindranath Tagore, (May 7, 1861 – August 7, 1941) the bard of Bengal immaculately brought out the essence of Eastern spirituality in his poetry like no other poet. His spiritual vision, as he himself said, is imbued “with the ancient spirit of India as revealed in our sacred texts and manifested in the life of today.” The following poems show the spiritual depth of his experience:

Light

Light, my light, the world-filling light,  
the eye-kissing light,  
heart-sweetening light!  
Ah, the light dances, my darling, at the centre of my life;  
the light strikes, my darling, the chords of my love;  
the sky opens, the wind runs wild, laughter passes over the earth.  
The butterflies spread their sails on the sea of light.  
Lilies and jasmines surge up on the crest of the waves of light.  
The light is shattered into gold on every cloud, my darling,  
and it scatters gems in profusion.  
Mirth spreads from leaf to leaf, my darling,  
and gladness without measure.  
The heaven’s river has drowned its banks  
and the flood of joy is abroad.

Deliverance?

Where is this deliverance to be found?  
Our master himself has joyfully taken upon him the bonds of creation;  
he is bound with us all for ever.  
Come out of thy meditations and leave aside thy flowers and incense!
What harm is there if thy clothes become tattered and stained?
Meet him and stand by him in toil and in sweat of thy brow.

**Mind Without Fear**

Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high;
Where knowledge is free;
Where the world has not been broken up
into fragments by narrow domestic walls;
Where words come out from the depth of truth;
Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection;
Where the clear stream of reason
has not lost its way into the dreary desert sand of dead habit;
Where the mind is led forward by thee into ever-widening thought and action—
Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake.

**Fool**

O Fool, try to carry thyself upon thy own shoulders!
O beggar, to come beg at thy own door!
Leave all thy burdens on his hands who can bear all,
and never look behind in regret.
Thy desire at once puts out the light from the lamp it touches with its breath.
It is unholy — take not thy gifts through its unclean hands.
Accept only what is offered by sacred love.

**Leave This**

Leave this chanting and singing and telling of beads!
Whom dost thou worship in this lonely dark corner of a temple with doors all shut?
Open thine eyes and see thy God is not before thee!
He is there where the tiller is tilling the hard ground
and where the pathmaker is breaking stones.
He is with them in sun and in shower,
and his garment is covered
with dust.
Put off thy holy mantle and even like him come down on the dusty soil!

**C. Buddhism**

A possible way of trying to identify the core values of the
world religions can be found in the *five main precepts of the Buddha.*

Each of them teaches giving up of a basic evil and promotes goodness in an important sphere of life and action.
The five precepts can be expressed briefly in relation to modern times.

The first is respect for all life, non-violence, and the
cultivation of compassion. It teaches the ability to remove
suffering and transform it by protecting and promoting lives of
people, animals, plants and minerals. It is against killing and
hence the production of armaments. It includes also the care for nature that nurtures human
life.

The second precept is generosity, loving kindness at a personal level and in structures
of society. It is the intention and capacity to bring joy and happiness to another person or
living being and to communities. The practice of loving kindness requires that we see the
situations of exploitation, social injustice and oppression. It is against the stealing of what
belongs to others. Individuals and groups are invited to share their time, energy and
resources with those in need to make one another happy and have the basic essentials for living. This precept motivates us to resist injustice and prevent others from profiting from human suffering or the suffering of other species on earth. This promotes the giving of one’s time and resources for others, especially for those suffering and in need.

The third precept teaches sexual responsibility to protect and promote the safety and integrity of individuals, couples, families and society. Sexual relations are to be based on love and a long-term commitment. The welfare of children is also to be safeguarded and children preserved from sexual abuse. Children should not be made to suffer due to sexual misconduct. Sexual relations with love and long term commitment can heal persons, families and society. Such a behavior promotes the capacity to bring joy and happiness and transform pain and suffering. It is good for all and brings about understanding, stability and peace in society on the basis of equality in dignity and rights of persons.

The fourth precept is respect for truth. It promotes deep listening and loving speech. Negatively this precept is against the speaking of untruth and the promotion of suffering and conflict by lies. Positively it encourages speech that is truthful, and brings joy and happiness to others and relieves others of their suffering. This requires mindfulness in speech, the effort at understanding others and helping resolve conflicts by reconciliation. The truth has to be found by each one without assuming that it has already been discovered and is possessed exclusively by someone. Encouraging the truth is very important in relation to the mass media which have a vast influence nowadays due to rapid and widespread global communications.

The fifth precept promotes the healthy diet for body and mind and discourages intoxicating drinks and excess in food and drink. It promotes mindfulness and consciousness that leads to good thoughts and good actions, unlike liquors and drugs that reduce mindfulness and lead to waste, anger, and violence. Hence the importance of cultivating good health, both physical and mental for oneself, one’s family and for society, including the global society. (cf. Thich Nhat Hanh: “For a Future to be Possible”; Parallax Press, Berkeley, California; 1993 pp 1-83.

D. Islam

Islam is the monotheistic religion articulated by the Qumran, a text considered by its adherents to be the verbatim word of God (Arabic: Allah), and by the teachings and normative example of Muhammad, considered by them to be the last prophet of God.

Muslims believe that God is one and incomparable. Muslims also believe that Islam is the complete and universal version of a primordial faith that was revealed at many times and places before, including through Abraham, Moses and Jesus, whom they consider prophets. Muslims maintain that previous messages and revelations have been partially changed or corrupted over time, but consider the Qumran to be both the unaltered and the final revelation of God. Religious concepts and practices include the five pillars of Islam, which are basic concepts and obligatory acts of worship, and following Islamic law, which touches on virtually every aspect of life and society, providing guidance on multifarious topics from banking, politics, and welfare, to warfare and the environment. With about 1.41-17 billion Muslims, comprising about 21-23% of the world’s population, Islam is the second-largest religion and one of the fastest-growing religions in the world.

The Five pillars of moral conduct are:

- Schahada, Profession that there is only one God, Allah.
- Salat, to pray every day five times.
- Zakat, giving to the poor and needy.
Saum, observing the period of fasting, Ramadan.

Haddsch, the pilgrimage to Mecca.

Examples of the Prophet’s sayings:

‘God has no mercy on one who has no mercy for others.’

‘None of you truly believes until he wishes for his brother what he wishes for himself.’

‘He who eats his fill while his neighbor goes without food is not a believer.’

‘The truthful and trustworthy businessman is associated with the prophets, the saints, and the martyrs.’

‘Powerful is he who controls himself in a fit of anger.’

‘God does not judge according to your bodies and appearances but He scans your hearts and looks into your deeds.’

E. Similarities and common Values in the Four main Religions in South East Asia

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (2 October 1869 – 30 January 1948) was the pre-eminent political and ideological leader of India during the Indian independence movement. Gandhi led India to independence and inspired movements for civil rights and freedom across the world. Gandhi is often referred to as Mahatma or “Great Soul,” an honorific first applied to him by Rabindranath Tagore. In India, he is officially honored as the Father of the Nation. His birthday, 2 October, is commemorated in India as Gandhi Jayanti, a national holiday, and worldwide as the International Day of Non-Violence.

Gandhi strove to practice non-violence and truth in all situations, and advocated that others do the same. He lived modestly in a self-sufficient residential community and wore the traditional Indian dhooti and shawl, woven with yarn he had hand spun on a charkha. He ate simple vegetarian food, and also undertook long fasts as means of both self-purification and social protest.

The core teachings of the four main religions in South East Asia are similar in their emphasis on care and concern for the other:

Do naught unto others which would cause you pain if done to you (Hinduism).
Hurt not others in ways that you would yourself find hurtful (Buddhism).
Do unto others as you would like them to do unto you (Christianity).
Be kind to all living beings so that God may be kind to you (Islam).

The religions teach a moral code that includes:

Truth, justice, freedom, equality, non-violence and respect for life;
Buddhism is opposed to lobha (greed), dosa (hate), moha (delusion), against selfishness, deceit, immorality, theft, violence, as do the other religions.
All these Religions advocate the care of nature and simplicity of life. The consequence would be an accent on sharing and caring for one another, and the stress by all religions on global justice in the world. The religions of the world could work for global trends in migration that would give all humans a chance of healthy livelihood on mother earth.
III. Population and Land

A. New World Order

The present world system is generally taken for granted. The West is decreasing in population, except the USA which increases, partly due to immigrants from the rest of the world. Asia and Africa are increasing in population. Their populations are younger than those of the Western countries. The indigenous peoples of South America and Oceania are also increasing in numbers and growing in the consciousness of their rights, as Bolivia led by Evo Morales.

Christianity: numbers decrease in North both due to reduction in population and alienation from practice of Christian religion and secularization of society. Significant decrease and ageing of clergy and of religious: closure of seminaries and sale of churches and buildings of religious communities in the West. Christianity is becoming more a lived religion of the South: Latin American, African and some Asian peoples.

How did the present world system come into being and its implications for moral theology and global ethics? The present world system came into being since 1492 as part of the process of the conquest of the “new world” by the European nation states.

That process involved the invasion of the Americas, Oceania and the African and Asian peoples by different European powers. Portugal and Spain had the initiative in this conquest of the “new lands”. They were followed by Britain and France in the subsequent centuries. The Dutch and Belgians joined later in this colonial expansion as in Indonesia in Asia and in Africa.

In the 1880s Germany and Italy claimed their share of the spoils of colonial empire and were led by Bismarck at the Congress of Berlin 1884-1885 to divide up Africa among the European nation states. The original native inhabitants of the Americas and Oceania were incapable of resisting the European invaders. Many of the native peoples were annihilated by the militarily more powerful European powers. The native indigenous peoples who escaped such annihilation retreated to the interior of these lands leaving the areas they had formerly inhabited to the European invaders.

The Western invasions virtually exterminated almost the whole native population in North America. It is estimated that there were 80 million Native American population in these lands in 1492, but by 1600 their numbers had been reduced to one million due to wars and diseases brought by the invaders (cf: Joerge Rieger “Christ and Empire” Fortress Press Minneapolis, 2007, p. 283, quoting Mathew Fox)

Ulrich Duchrow writes “… the conquered territories are robbed of their precious metals and raw materials with the aid of fire-arms and slavery, and ninety percent of their inhabitants are killed in the greatest genocide in world history. Robbery and murder of the peoples of America, Africa and Asia is the basis of Europe’s, wealth and world leadership”. Ulrich Duchrow “Europe in the World System 1492-1992”, WCC Publications Geneva 1992, p. 4.

The map of the modern world was made mainly by European (colonial) expansion, with such annihilation and expulsion of the natives, by wars among colonial powers, and by purchase of vast areas of land from other colonizers, usually after their conflicts. Thus the purchase by the USA from France in 1803 of an area covering 2,144,000 sq km / 828,000 sq mi, including the present-day states of Louisiana, Missouri, Arkansas, Iowa, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota and Oklahoma. The price paid was $ 15 million or roughly 4 cents an acre. The purchase doubled the size of the USA. It is called the greatest land deal in history.

Texas was bought from Mexico in 1848 for $ 15,000,000. Mexico ceded to the United States nearly all the territory now included in the states of New Mexico, Utah, Nevada, Arizona, California, Texas and Western Colorado, and the U.S assumption of it’s citizens claims against Mexico.
Alaska was bought for $7,200,000 from Russia in 1867. It is the largest state in the USA. Thus USA was bought and formed in large measure for $37,000,000. Are these land transactions legal according to international law, or even rational thinking? Are they not sales of territory conquered or stolen from previous occupants such as the native Americans?

Such chasing away and annihilation of the indigenous peoples of the Americas and the Aboriginals of Australia and of New Zealand was followed by the settlement of Europeans in these lands. The European colonial empires were thus established over the centuries. The scramble for Africa is particularly revealing because of the collective effort to share the spoils of the dismemberment of Africa at the Council of Berlin in 1884-1885.

It is from such processes that International Law evolved its concept of sovereign states, without any consultation of the subjects involved. Europeans presumed themselves to be civilized peoples with the right to carve out imperial regimes from the “terra nullius” inhabited by inferior (uncivilized) peoples. Most of the European wars of the centuries from 1492 till 1945 were for the annexation of empire in the rest of the world, even though they spoke of fighting for human rights and democracy. Thus the wars of Napoleon and the impact of his eventual defeat at Waterloo in 1815 and the advance of the British in Canada.

The Migration to the new colonies from Europe built up the new colonial states.

Overseas Migration from Europe between 1846 and 1924

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Migrants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Great Britain and Ireland</td>
<td>18,030,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>804,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>1,145,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>349,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>207,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>4,533,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>172,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>307,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>497,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>4,314,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>1,633,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>342,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>8,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria \ Hungary</td>
<td>4,878,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>9,474,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

55 million people migrated from Europe between 1846 and 1942. Thus the European population expanded rapidly in these centuries of colonial expansion. This is probably the greatest migration and settlement in human history? In this period Chinese, Indians and Japanese also moved, but much less and often as labourers. (Times, History of the World. Pp. 209, 225, 245) Slavery added to migrants and the work force of the colonies.

Future Trends... Population Extrapolation... 2000 to 2150 (Ageing of population)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>1750</th>
<th>1800</th>
<th>1850</th>
<th>1900</th>
<th>1950</th>
<th>1999</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2050</th>
<th>2150</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>World</td>
<td>791</td>
<td>978</td>
<td>1,262</td>
<td>1,650</td>
<td>2,521</td>
<td>5,978</td>
<td>6,707</td>
<td>8,909</td>
<td>9,746</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>767</td>
<td>973</td>
<td>1,766</td>
<td>2,308</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>502</td>
<td>635</td>
<td>809</td>
<td>947</td>
<td>1,402</td>
<td>3,634</td>
<td>4,054</td>
<td>5,268</td>
<td>5,561</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>276</td>
<td>408</td>
<td>547</td>
<td>729</td>
<td>732</td>
<td>628</td>
<td>517</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin America and the Carib *</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>511</td>
<td>577</td>
<td>809</td>
<td>912</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
We can note how the population of Europe decreases from 732 millions in 2008 to 628 millions in 2050; from 10.9% of global population to 7% in 2050. It is now an ageing population, including many immigrants from the other continents. European countries may not now have enough workers to keep up their social services, especially for their ageing population.

Hence Western countries, including Oceania are looking for new migrants, specially skilled personnel to keep up their work force in numbers and young in age.

In the meantime the population of Asian and African countries is on the increase. The Asian population increases from 1,402 millions in 1950 to 4,054 millions in 2008 i.e. an increase of 2652 million in 56 years; and is estimated to grow from 4,054 million in 2008 to 5,268 million in 2050 i.e. an increase of 1,200 millions in 42 years, and is relatively younger in age, without an increase in the area of arable land.

The Chinese population has increased from 552,000,000 in 1950 to 1,264,587,054 in 2000 and is projected to be 1,465,224,000 by 2050.

The poorer countries will feel more the impact of climate change and the pollution of the earth, waters and air, and the exhaustion of the non-renewable natural resources.

China has tried to enforce a one child policy per family in order to control their population. The growing population of India, China and Japan have little room for expansion. With about 2.58 billion citizens they comprise 39% of the human race and are confined to 10 percent earth’s surface. On the other hand, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, with 65 million or 1 % of the world population among them, control 13 percent of the earth’s land.

Data of African countries: examples of Nigeria 154,729,000 which is 8th and Ethiopia 79,221,000 which is 15th in population in the world.

The relative inequality of the distribution of land to population by countries will worsen in the coming decades. The advantage is for the countries populated by the White race, to the disadvantage of the “people of colour”. This shows that the world system is racist.

Global justice demands a redistribution of the land without people to the people without land. But there is no means in the world system to bring about a rationally planned and peaceful redistribution in the present world.
The international law that prevails is the law that “might is right”. The world has a system of international lawlessness. The war in Iraq since March 2003 proves this. There are mass movements of millions of people of US and elsewhere, converging at demonstrations for peace throughout the world as before the invasion of Iraq in 2003.

Need of reform of the UNO to be able to bring about world justice, to ensure a means of livelihood for the increasing populations especially of Asia and Africa.

**B. Christianity and Land Distribution**

The core teaching of Jesus is that God is love, and we are called to love God and love one another. This includes interpersonal relationships and equitable community sharing of the earth’s resources among all humans. There is adequate resources on earth for all humanity, provided there is a fair sharing of it among all persons. For this the land of the earth must be equitably shared among all persons. For land is the source of food, water and housing for all.

Unfortunately land is not shared equitably among persons and communities on earth. Some peoples have occupied much of the arable land suitable for human habitation, while some others are condemned to live in places less suitable for human habitation, such as deserts, dry lands and in overcrowded urban slums.

The Christian Churches shared in this colonial expansion of the European nation states. The European peoples and Churches regarded the native indigenous peoples of the rest of the world as non-Christians, unbelievers. According to the traditional theology that prevailed in Christendom during over 1500 years from the fifth century to modern times, these peoples were considered not destined for eternal salvation.

Christians possessed over nearly 56-60% of the land surface of the earth. They also controlled migration and settlement in these vast new expanses. In the period 1492 to 1945, before the Second World War, it was possible, for the rising population of Europe to settle in those lands. This gave the countries in which the European Christians reside control over vast resources not only of agricultural land but also of minerals and a considerable quantity of the world’s oil that was required for industrial development. Of the 35% of the human race who are Christians many are in Africa and Asia. So the descendants of the European peoples who may constitute less than 25% of the world population have effective control of about the 55 to 60% of the lands. There was thus a link between the colonizing powers and their Churches.

By the beginning of the 20th century most of the world was divided among the European powers and their descendents who had migrated to the colonies. This injustice had also a racist implication, as most of the European peoples were of the White race, except where there had been inter marriages among the different races as in South America.

The European peoples had a policy of excluding non-whites from their colonies till recent times. While the population of Europe was increasing in the 17th to the 20th centuries, they had almost the whole world open to them for their migration and settlement. If the native peoples migrated from Africa and Asia to the colonized countries it was as slaves or indentured labour as from Asia – mainly India and China.

Another consequence of the colonial expansion of European peoples was that the Christian peoples had occupied much of the land space of the earth. North and South America and Oceania became Christian according to the Christian denomination of their rulers – Catholic, Protestant or Orthodox with Russian expansion.

The process of the making of the world system by the military and migratory expansion of the European peoples from 1492 to 1945, while spreading Western education, science and technology to the colonies had also the injustice of the White race and Christians taking over much of the habitable land of the earth for their settlement and development. This went hand in hand with the relative decrease of the Asian and African populations in the 17th and 18th centuries.
On the other hand at the present times there is a reversal of this trend. The coloured races are increasing in numbers. The White European peoples are ageing and decreasing in numbers, with also a decrease in the number of children per family.

C. Population is one of World’s Most Challenging Problems

The world’s population is now more than 6.8 billion and continues to grow by 83 million people per year. During the last half-century, the world’s population more than doubled. Between 1960 and 2010, the world population rose from 3 billion to 6.8 billion. In other words, there has been more growth in population in the last fifty years than the previous 2 million years that humans have existed. Currently the rate of population increase is 1.2% per year, which means the planet’s human population is on a trajectory to double again in 58 years.

The extreme growth in human population – now counted by an additional billion people every 12 to 13 years – is mortally taxing the Earth and its resources. Each individual person has a unique impact on the planet’s environment. Some people may be relatively less damaging than others, but no living individual is without an ecological footprint. In other words, each person needs basic resources and almost all people aspire to utilize significantly more resources than are required by their basic needs. As these needs and aspirations are multiplied by a factor of 6.8 billion, day after day and year after year, the stability of the planet’s ecosphere has been, and will continue to be, severely compromised.

As a result, the Earth is attempting to impose its own checks on human population. We can witness these “checks” in the form of widespread disease and the emergence of new disease strains, food and water shortages, poor harvests and violent and destructive weather caused by climate change. While it should be obvious that the Earth is a finite sphere and cannot endure infinite growth by any single species, we should also remember that Earth’s current web-of-life is the result of billions of years of complex evolution. It is irreplaceable.

Beyond the dour environmental implications of current and future global population growth, there is a human tragedy in process as well. When we look forward to the next 40 years, the most significant population increases will take place in the areas of our world where natural resources and the infrastructure of modernity are already the scarcest. Ninety-five percent of human population growth is occurring in countries already struggling with poverty, illiteracy and civil unrest. In fact, developing countries are in need of approximately $1 trillion per year in new infrastructure (school rooms, for example) to accommodate the dramatic increases to their populations. This figure is effectively impossible to meet, which means the continued expansion of human population will result in an increase in the number of people living in poverty, unemployment and with inadequate health care.

The median projection of population size by the U.N. Population Division suggests that population growth rates will decline over the coming several decades, with a possible stabilization around the year 2050. But achieving this will take an enormous amount of hard work, creativity and financing – it is by no means a fiat accompli. And, even if population is stabilized between 8 and 9 billion, a scenario which becomes less likely with each passing day, the increase to human population will still be between 20% and 30%.

That magnitude of this increase, coming on top of the unprecedented growth that has occurred in the last half-century, will be felt in all aspects of life. It will further stress already strained ecological systems and worsen poverty in much of the developing world, thus aggravating threats to international security.

Population growth is not the only threat facing humanity, but it will be a major contributor to the crises that await us and the planet in the coming century. Overpopulating the planet puts us all at risk of extreme environmental and social consequences that we are beginning to witness today.
D. Trends of Population and Land 
in the Coming Decades 2000-2050

1. Injustice of the Global Order

Asia has not enough arable land for food cultivation and to prevent urban slums and shanties. The globalized world system permits liberal movement of capital and production and trade, but not the movement of people.

Responsibility of Christians and Churches to correct the errors of the past. To make reparation for damages done to other religions,

Reparation for territories taken from other peoples, how can the native indigenous people be repaid, for damages done to them, Reparation for lands taken over, for productive activities destroyed. Trade inequities, protection of the European markets from colonial exports, and subsidized exports from Europe to colonies. The European Union tends to prosper at the expense of former colonies.

How can the world’s lands be equitably redistributed to needy peoples in Asia and Africa? The failure of the UNO to bring about a just world order.

Need of a global authority. From 1492 onwards the European Nation states were blessed, encouraged and supported in their colonial enterprises by the Churches.

As colonialism spread the European powers set up their authority over conquered areas. They occupied the new territories, made use of their resources for production of exports and brought slaves from Africa as forced labour.

The moral theology of the dominant colonizers was determined by the ruling powers, justifying their actions by invoking the cause of salvation as the mission of the Church, and the social goal of “civilizing the natives”. As capitalism advanced in the subsequent centuries, the Churches de facto justified the capitalist economic order, siding with the conquering nation states, the local elites and the growing companies who benefited from the new order.

2. Global Ethics

a. The 21st century faces several problems of global ethics.

The global order must provide for the realization of human rights of all peoples living today. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights of the United Nations recognizes among its 30 articles

- civil and political rights (including the rights to life, liberty, and a fair trial)
- economic, social, and cultural rights (the right to social security...).

During the past 500 years, while much development has taken place in the colonized lands in education, health services, and economic productivity, the inequalities within and among the countries have been growing. It is accepted as normal that about 20% of the world’s population have possession of 80% of the global resources. There are great differences in the realization of the right to life, food, health, housing, education, ownership of land.

The world we live in is one that is dominated by the Europeans, many of whom are of Christian origin. The opportunities of migration to open land spaces are still very much controlled by the Euro-North American peoples.

b. Need of a global ethic

How can the world order deal with the reality of the huge gap between the rich and the poor, and the changes in the relative population of the countries and peoples of the world. If the present policies of the countries of Europe and the Americas and Oceania continue for the next 40 years till 2050 the distribution of the world’s land among the peoples will be even more unjust. As these statistics indicate in 2050, the world population will increase to nearly 9 billions (8,909 millions).
The population of Europe would then have decreased from 732 million in 2008 to 628 million in 2050; i.e. from 10.9% of the world population in 2008 to 7.0% in 2050. The population of Asia will increase from 4,054 millions to 5368 million in 2050 i.e. an increase of 1.314 millions; relative to the global population this will be a decrease from 60.4% in 2008 to 59.1% in 2050.

The population of Africa will increase from 973 million in 2008 to 1,766 in 2050, i.e an increase of 793 millions in 42 years, i.e. over 18.880 million per year. Africa would increase from having 14.5% of the world population in 2008 to 19.8% in 2050. Every fifth person would be an African.

The population of Latin America would increase from 577 million in 2008 to 809 million in 2050 i.e. an increase of 232 million in 42 years, i.e. increasing by 5.52 million annually. Latin America would increase from 8.6 % of the world population to 9.1% in 2050.

North America would increase its population from 337 million in 2008 to 392 million in 2050, i.e. an increase of 55 million in 42 years i.e. 1.30 million annually. North American population will decrease from 5.0% in 2008 to be 4.4% of world in 2050.

Oceania will increase from 34 million in 2008 to 46 million in 2050; i.e. an increase of 12 million in 42 years; i.e. an annual increase of 285,714. Oceania will have 0.5 % of world population from 1950 to 2050 and even in 2150.

c. World population in 21st century

Population growth in the industrialized countries has essentially stopped. Demographic growth has now shifted almost entirely to the less developed countries of Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

In Europe, fewer babies are born each year than there are deaths, leading to “natural decrease,” or population decline, except where it is offset by immigration. This situation is due both to the low birth rate and to higher proportions of older people in the population.

E. Consequence of European Expansion and Colonization

That population increases by so much in Asia and Africa is in part due to the economic development of these countries. The spread of education, specially of women contributes to better health and care of children, and at the same time leads to increased use of contraceptives that controls the birth rate progressively to lower than replacement level of the population (2.1 children per woman).

Reflecting on the situation in Asia, this continent faces a shortage of arable land for food production, a deforestation in the villages, and over crowding in the cities with enormous slums and shanty towns. There are many millions of Asians who live on less than $2 per day.

In that sense European peoples made the modern world through conquest, settlement, colonialism, control of the economies and global trade. Thereafter international peace and justice are understood as the maintenance of this inequitable world system built on violence and plunder. The UNO and the Security Council are supposed to be guardians of world peace guaranteed by the recent military hegemony first of the two superpowers and later by the USA after the fall of the Soviet Union.

The global situation is likely to lead to more conflicts within or among the Asian and African peoples due to search for land and food. There is no authority in the world that can deal with such population imbalances among the continents. How can the nations, religions, Churches and civil society deal with the need of a radical transformation in the distribution of land, population, resources, and technology in the world. A study of global population and land can make practical recommendations on providing land for needy farmers, and space for overcrowded urban areas as in India.
A more valuable approach would be to appoint an impartial international commission to inquire and report on the debt of the North to the South’ (cf. Francois Houtart: “The debt of the North to the South: Logos Vol. 41 n.1 pp7-19)

In the coming decades these formerly oppressed peoples will claim their rights to land and resources, and a due place in the community of nations – the United Nations and related bodies like IMF, Security Council, World Bank.

The studies made by researchers show that the process of extraction from the South to the North still continues. One step would be the enactment of international law that would be related to economic exploitation of poor countries by richer countries and powerful multinational corporations. An international Court of justice against economic injustice would be a need to prevent economic crimes. Another practical need is the creation of public opinion on these matters. Peoples movement can work together on issues as does the Amnesty International and the International Red Cross.

These trends increase the injustice in the distribution of land and resources among the peoples of the world. The situation is worsening with the passage of time. The projections of population up to 2050 show an unbearably unjust situation. India and China with their limited land space will have an increased population of over 1000,000,000 each, even with their decreased rate of population growth.

At present there is no global authority to ensure justice in a rapidly changing world. The UNO and its ancillary bodies such as the IMF and the World Bank and World Trade Organization are meant to maintain the global status quo as it was set up by the victors of the Second World War in 1945.

Christian theology, up to recent times, has been built on two major assumptions:

a. the doctrine of the fall and redemption of humanity from original sin
b. the present world system set up by historical forces over the past five centuries.

Both these favour the Christian peoples and the White races from Europe.

There is therefore a two fold task:

a. of purifying and reforming of Christian theology and of the imaginary Genesis story of the origin of the human race,
b. of correcting the unjust world system of land and population.

Both these were generally taken for granted by the Christians and Western peoples and other scholars. These are major issues for Christian theology and for global scholarship and justice.
F. What can be done?

While those who have passed away cannot now be accountable for the past, we have to recognize the injustices of the past. The present inheritors of past injustice are not responsible for the past, but they can be illegitimate present beneficiaries of the past. They must therefore take steps to remedy the present wrongs from which they benefit.

The first stage in this reparation is to know the historical injustices and their continued implications. One example is the knowledge of the treasures in the museums of the West, and the way they were acquired. What would be the moral responsibilities for possession of such stolen property, along with enormous amounts of gold and silver? What would be the responsibility for the land purchases as of Alaska by the United States of America from Russia for 7.2 million US dollars in 1867. What would be the damages due to African peoples and countries for millions of slaves taken to other countries as forced labour, and for the deaths of millions in the process?

How far was the development of Britain and France and other colonial powers due to the exploitation of the resources and markets of their colonies in Africa and Asia? Correspondingly what did the colonies receive from the colonizers in terms of all round development?

These are difficult and unpleasant questions to ask of the present generations, but they need to be faced in the quest for a just world.

A second line of inquiry would be: how is the required redistribution of land without population to the people without land, to bring about justice in an ongoing manner in the coming forty years, say till 2050. Who would be entitled to make such global planning and be responsible to implement them in a culturally acceptable manner?

If humanity does not deal rationally and peacefully with these and related problems in due time, there is likely to be much human suffering and unrest, if not illegal migrations and violence in the not distant future. Already there are numerous refugees who try to cross the seas in search of new lands and food.

The global climate change and the exhaustion of the resources needed for the present life style will make this inequality more poignant and calling for a better sharing of land and resources among the peoples of the earth. The warming of the earth and climate change seem to increase the suffering of the poor in the poor countries, especially those who live in low lying islands such as in Indonesia, Bangladesh, the Philippines and the Maldives. This is a new global crisis that adds to the problems of the people, especially the very poor. The wasteful life style of the affluent is partly the cause of this worsening climate.

The present hegemonic financial and military powers of the USA and the European Union may resist any attempts at a just redistribution of land and resources. On the contrary they may tend to increase their control over resources as shown by the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. These add to the global problems and make it more difficult to find peaceful solutions to the adjustment of population to land.

The present global economic crisis that has led to the closure of several banks and loss of fortunes and savings of many persons also affects very much the poor unemployed workers in the free trade zones of the poor countries. This crisis is due to the operations of the free market economy in which investors seek profit for shareholders by creating credit without reliable collaterals. Awareness of these issues and their complexity is a challenge to the world social movements to find just and effective remedies for these problems.

G. Responsibility of Moral Theologians

Christian (moral) theologians need to deal with these issues, and be pathfinders to lead fellow Christians to understand their responsibilities in the modern world? This has to start at the personal level, in working for justice in the local areas. From there they can pass to the national level and finally to the global level. The Christian churches have been accomplices in
building the present unjust world system, both by their teaching about sin and salvation by Christianity, and by participating in imperial expansion of European powers. The Churches can and need to be active in undoing the injustice of this world system. This has to be one of the principal goals of the mission of Christians, and of apostolic religious, in the modern world.

Moral theology and spirituality would have to keep in mind the changes that are taking place in the world with reference to land and population. In this century the number of Christians in the Western countries will decrease. Over time the majority of Christians will be in the South: Latin America, Africa and Asia. Correspondingly the decision makers in the Churches will have to include more representatives from the South. They will bring a greater consciousness of the issues and needs of the South to Christian reflection and action. The teaching of moral theology and practice of spirituality would have to accentuate the sharing of food, waters, and housing facilities with the poorer peoples who will continue to be in the South.

How is moral theology taught in the universities in Europe, Americas and elsewhere? Is not the map of the world, as it is now, taken for granted? The distribution of earth’s land among the peoples of the world is accepted as the given reality. The fate of the native peoples of colonized lands is hardly mentioned, except perhaps in the countries of Latin America where these peoples survive in numbers, and are beginning to exercise political power as in Bolivia.

The papal encyclicals on social issues do not remind the Christians of their responsibilities for the reparation due to the colonized peoples. Pope John Paul II apologized on more than hundred occasions for the injustices committed by the sons and daughters of the Church to others but did not proceed further in the reparation of the damages. The Pope and World Social Forum can recommend that the UNO charge a tax on lands without population and not used for economic production.

Moral theology should take into consideration the very dramatic change that has taken place in the relative population of the formerly colonized countries and the colonizers in the past 100 years. As the demographic statistics of the period since 1700 to 2000 show, centuries of the increase of population of the European countries have been followed by decades of their relative decrease in the rate of growth of population and latterly by an actual decline in the numbers of the population of some of these countries such as Russia and Germany. (See the chart 3 above)

On the other hand the population of African and Asian countries has grown rapidly in recent decades Thus China and India have increased in the past 100 years. Europeans and Christians should reflect on the ethical obligation they would have to respond to this changed and changing situation. The right they have to occupy so much of the earth’s land (if ever they had such a right) would decrease as their relative share of the global population decreases. They should take steps to bring about a peaceful change in the land available for these formerly colonized peoples and for China.

The Eucharist should lead to a reflection of the teaching of Jesus on sharing the daily food with the hungry. This is a lesson of the early Christians that remembered the sharing of bread of Jesus and they shared their property so that there was no one in need. This had a good social impact as their numbers increased rapidly. It may be asked whether the de-Christianization and secularization of present day societies is due to the neglect of such sharing of land and food. It is said that there are millions of persons in the world who do not have enough food daily.

In the treatment of migrants from Africa and Asia, the peoples of the affluent colonizer countries can remember their debt to these peoples and help by the formulation of policies to receive them kindly and justly. Christians can think of the welcoming of such Christian migrants at the Eucharistic service when they meet such persons weekly. All migrants of all faiths can be received with warm welcome, and there could be a recalling together of the common core values of the four main religions of our peoples.
Given the growing injustice in the race relations of the peoples of the earth, and the absence of structures for change, persons convinced on the need of changes can form local peoples movements that can help create public opinion for racial justice. They would have to counter the views of more racist or nationalist and fundamentalist groups that campaign for political power at elections. Cross country networks as in the European Union can be alliances for justice inspired by the core values of the religions and of rational humanism.

Given the enormity of this challenge faced by humanity, this issue can be presented to the emerging World Social Forum (WSF) hopefully for creating global public opinion. But this will not be an easy task as the WSF includes the land rich states of South America.

The Churches can bring considerable influence to bear in all the countries of the world. For this they would have to undergo a conversion of heart and mind to acknowledge the rights of the poor peoples of the world. Some changes are already taking place due to the arrival of millions of migrants in the rich Western countries. They are becoming regular workers and some are becoming citizens of these countries. Their children grow up as citizens of these Euro-American countries and Australia and New Zealand. Thus gradually nations of mixed races are being formed and this trend will grow in the coming decades of the 21st century.

The youth movements of the Western countries can generate future leaders of Western countries who will be more open to friendships across the borders of religion, race and nationality. The next half century will thus see a reversal of the trends that prevailed in the 500 years of European expansion in the colonial empires. The religions will likewise face a movement of openness to the core values of the faiths and of humanism. The faiths will probably realize the wisdom of the basic intuitions of the religions, and not be separated by the dogmatic assumptions concerning the human condition before birth and after death. The shared problems of facing the difficulties and dangers of life in planet earth with climate warming, reducing non-renewable natural resources and an ageing population may impel humanity to live more justly and with compassion for one another, instead of antagonistically competing with one another for limited resources. This would be the core message of the world’s religions, and the wisdom emanating from the global humanism of secularization.

The apostolic religious can lead in research on these issues and take public interest in finding solutions to the local and global problems of population and land. Generalates of apostolic religious could discuss these three major questions:

a. The purification of traditional Catholic theology and return to Jesus Christ
b. Church and other religions
c. Christians and world justice

As to the policy of the international congregations:

Decentralisation of policy making so that the provinces of the different continents can meet more often together and adopt their policies to the needs of the country.

The Generalates can be sort of travelling generalates, that is not confined to Rome, but moves from continent to continent, staying one or two years in each continent. This will enable them to be closer to the people and to relate better to the different continental realities.

There should be a line of policy as mentioned earlier: gender justice, ethnic harmony, relation to climate. These general themes can be worked out with reference to the local areas.

The spirituality of Apostolic Religious can be rethought in view of the issues and challenges raised by these three topics with a collective reflection by all the religious and communicated to the Major Superiors of all the Congregations.