

THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE CELAM CONCLUSION CONFERENCES IN PUEBLA AND SANTO DOMINGO CONCERNING INCULTURATION.

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1. The III General Latin American Episcopal Council in Puebla:

“Rooted in this faith in Christ and in the bosom of the Church, we are capable of serving human beings and our peoples, of penetrating their culture with the Gospel, of transforming hearts, and of humanizing systems and structures.” (John Paul II, Opening speech at the 3rd. Latin American General Episcopal Council, México, 01-28-1979: AAS 71 (1979) 191).

On December 12, 1977, the Pope Paul VI formally summons the III Latin American General Episcopal Council, which did not take place on the appointed date due to the decease of the Pope on August 6, 1978. It is John Paul I who summons it again for the beginning of 1979.

Eleven years after Medellin, the Latin American Bishops gathered again in Puebla de los Angeles, México. The III General Latin American Episcopal Council was inaugurated by John Paul II, on January 27, 1979 at the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe. The meeting took place from January 28 to February 13, with 356 participants, to meditate about the theme: *Evangelization in the present and in the future of Latin America*.

Due to the theme and to the circumstances, the influence of the former Synods of Bishops is clear (about evangelization in 1974 and about catechesis in 1977), of Paul VI through the apostolic exhortation *Evangelii nuntiandi*, from the Vatican Council II and from John Paul II, mainly in his Opening Address.

1.1 Conclusions or Document of Puebla¹

1.1.1 Vocabulary

When referring to culture and its relation with faith, the Document of Puebla does not mention the term inculturation. We think that we can explain this as follows:

- In the evangelization theme, it is a document which uses the language of the pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes* and of the apostolic exhortation *Evangelii nuntiandi*.
- In the proper language at the time in which the Council took place, it was not usual to use this term. It is true, however that it was used in the Advice Document and in the Work Document, but when it is used one can still feel a confusion of terms, a characteristic situation when a concept begins to be used and a deeper reflection or a better comprehension and propagation of the same are missing.
- The doctrinal development in relation with the term inculturation was beginning. One can think of a lack of custom and a certain ignorance of some members of the Conference about the significance and meaning of that term. Let us remember the recent date in which the term was used for the first time in an official Church document: the Message of the Synod of Bishops in 1977, October 10, 1977 to be exact, which is nearly more than a year after the Conference celebration.

Puebla talks, studies and analyzes the evangelization of culture. And precisely for this reason, we will study the texts which are about the evangelization of culture, and from there we will try to discover the characteristic elements of inculturation. It is not strange to find these two terms in the texts, as an explanation of the inculturation concept was still necessary as well as its relation with other terms.

It seems that when we talk about Latin American culture, the Puebla Conference differs from the Medellin Conference² in two aspects:

¹ Cfr. 3rd. Latin American General Episcopate Council, Latin American Evangelization in the present and future, Document of Puebla, CELAM, 1979. From now on and in order to facilitate the reading, this document will be quoted as DP, immediately followed by the respective number. As usual and in order to highlight some ideas or useful concepts, the *script* letters used here are ours.

² Cfr. 2nd. Latin American General Episcopate Council, The Church and the Latin American transformation at the light of the Council, Document of Medellin, CELAM, Bogotá 1968. From now

Puebla sees the Latin American cultural unity as a result or as the fruit of a cultural crossbreeding: *The incarnate Gospel in our peoples gathers them in one originality historical culture that we call Latin America. That identity is very luminously represented in the mestizo face of Mary of Guadalupe which rises at the beginning of Evangelization* (DP 446), sealed by the Christian faith (DP 28, 51, 307, 412, 437, 1028, 1099, 1133, 1257 and 1300), which underlies the evident cultural differences. Puebla sees this unification cultural substrate preserved above all in the peoples, in their wisdom (DP 17, 18, 239, 413, 414, 570 and 743), and with a clear manifestation in the ways of their popular religiosity (DP 413 and 452). On the other hand, Medellin recognizes a common substrate, which is the fruit of not only the Christian impression but also of the ethnical elements; it recognizes its diversity which comes mostly from the superposition of several cultures and from the present process of cultural transformation (DM: Message 2; Conclusions: 1, 2; 1, 13; 4, 3; 4, 7; 5, 11; 6, 1).

b) Puebla negatively evaluates the universal –or urban-industrial- cultural arrival. Not only for its aggressive trait and the subduing of other cultures (DP 416 and 421), but also for the secularization consequences (DP 83, 418, 431, 627, 783, 851, 1014 and 1300), which turn the entire life of man upside down (DP 417, 419, 422, 423, 431, 433), inducing consumption attitudes (DP 55, 46, 528, 642, 851, 1156 and 1171) and ideologies (DP 307 and 418). On the other hand, Medellin speaks positively of this cultural change or transformation, even though it accepts some negative points (DM: Conclusions 6, 1; 8, 2; 8, 5; 8, 12; 16, 1; 16, 16).

1.1.2 The Evangelization of Culture (DP 385-443)

The pastoral option of the Latin American Church, made by its own bishops, was the evangelization of the proper culture in the present and towards the future (title of DP 394 and 395).

Our analysis will be focused in the second title of the second chapter in the second Part: the Evangelization of Culture (DP 385 to 469). To facilitate the study, a detailed scheme of this second title is enclosed, to provide a better understanding of the different points to study. Each title has its respective numerals which are:

on and in order to facilitate the reading, this document will be quoted as DM, immediately followed by the respective number, for example DM Justice 2.

2. Evangelization of Culture (DP 385 to 443)
2.1 Culture and Cultures (DP 385 to 393)
2.2 The Pastoral Option of the Latin American Church: the evangelization of the proper culture in the present and future (DP 394 to 396)
Purpose of Evangelization (DP 394)
Pastoral Option (DP 395 to 396)
2.3 Church, Faith and Culture (DP 397 to 407)
Love to the peoples and knowledge of their culture (DP 397 to 399)
The encounter of faith with cultures (DP 400 to 407)
2.4 Evangelization of Culture in Latin America (DP 408 to 443)
Types of culture and stages of the cultural process (DP 409 to 419)
The evangelizing action: challenges and problems (DP 420)
The arriving universal culture (DP 421 to 428)
The city (DP 429 to 433)
The secularism (DP 434 to 436)
Conversion and structures (DP 437 to 438)
Other problems (DP 439 to 443)

1.1.2.1 The concept of culture in Puebla

In the first numbers of the chart that we are studying, the concept of culture is presented such as the Document of Puebla acknowledges it, mainly supporting itself on the Constitution *Gaudium et spes*, no. 53 and the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii nuntiandi* nos. 18 and 20.

We have to highlight that in the *Document of Puebla*, in developing the diverse aspects of the culture concept, stresses the *totalizing, religious and dynamic* character of human culture:

“The word «culture» indicates the particular way in which the peoples – men - develop their relation with nature, among themselves and with God (GS 53b) so that they can arrive to a «true and total human level» (GS 53a). It is «the style of common life» (GS 53c) which characterizes the diverse peoples; thus we refer to a «plurality of cultures» (GS 53c)” (DP 386).

The sense of culture described up to here (DP 386a) could be called anthropological. We can also talk about the ethnological sense of culture, as the one given in the Constitution *Gaudium et spes* no. 53c, when it refers about the *plurality of cultures* (DP 386b). In the ethnological sense,

culture means *the style of common life* (GS 53c and DP 386b), which characterizes the peoples. Thus we talk about an Asian culture, Latin American, European, etc. Each people have a (proper, peculiar, different) style to relate with God, with men and with nature. As it is seen, and following the Constitution *Gaudium et spes* no. 53, Puebla understands culture as a proper *activity* of man: only a man generates culture. It is a creative and perfecting activity of creation and of itself: it is precisely through culture, as a creative activity, that man improves himself and improves his qualities. Therefore, the Bishops give to culture an *essential humanizing finality*, as they will state further on (DP 1024); practicing it, man achieves with a divine vocation (cfr. Gen 1 and DP 391).

In a more concrete way, man makes cultural activity in three dimensions, which are the reality dimensions God-Man-Nature. In all activity which involves a relation with God, Man and Nature, it generates culture. In this way he develops all his human potentials, *so that he can arrive to a true and total human level* (GS 53a) (DP 386).

The Document of Puebla keeps on censuring the characteristics of the given culture concept, and at the same time suggests some ideas on how to accomplish the evangelization of culture.

1.1.2.2 The values and the forms of culture

“Culture, understood as such, embraces the totality of peoples’ life: the group of values which enliven it, and of under-values which weaken it, and when it is acted in common by its members, it gathers them to a self «collective conscience» (EN 18). Culture involves as well the ways through which such values or under-values are expressed and take shape, as customs, language, the social institutions and social structures, when they are not hindered or repressed by the intervention of other dominant cultures” (DP 387).

The first words in that paragraph give an exact idea of the totalizing character of culture: a style of life which encompasses the totality of peoples’ life, as mentioned before. It is the system of values and under-values that when they rule and are lived in a determined way, they take shape as a collective conscience (cfr. EN 18), for example: the attitude towards work (responsibility-idleness), hospitality (xenophobia), solidarity (social indifference), etc. Such values and under-values have social impacts and take the shape of customs, language, social institutions and social structures or social habits.

For Puebla, the under-values have two origins: on one side the sin and human deficiencies which darken men's conscience facing truth and good; and on the other side the super-position of cultures. That is why Puebla demands to reach and transform *the root of culture, the zone of fundamental values, creating a conversion which can be the base and guarantee of the structure transformation and of social environment* (DP 388).

1.1.2.3. The orders or layers of culture

“The essential of culture is formed by the attitude in which peoples affirm or deny a religious association with God, by the religious values or under-values. They are related with the ultimate sense of existence and reside in that deepest zone, where men find the answers to those basic and definite questions which harass them, whether they are given by a positively religious orientation or, on the contrary, an atheist one. So it is religion or impiety what inspires all the other orders of culture: familiar, economic, politic, artistic, etc., as it frees them towards the transcendental or locks them in their own immanent sense” (DP 389).

The first lines of this point are a new and daring affirmation in the descriptive definition of culture which we are reviewing: the essential element, the fundamental nucleus and the ultimate root of all cultures in *the attitude in which peoples affirm or deny a religious association with God, by the religious values or under-values*.

According DP 389, culture is formed by orders (dimensions, layers, levels, strata); which are the constitutive values of culture (of the under-values also) forming in it various strata. Thus they order in it, for example, values of economic nature, social, politic, artistic, ethic, familiar, legal, etc.

But the most important is that, at the bottom of all the value orders, the stratus of the *religious values* is located, like a substrate or like the beginning from which the opening shines to the transcendental of the other values. (cfr. also DP 448). So, *evangelizing culture is also evangelizing all the value orders – and under-values – of culture, beginning by the religious order* (cfr. DP 452).

The religious values of evangelized Latin American peoples are mainly concentrated in what is called popular religiosity: the religion of Latin American peoples in its most characteristic cultural way is the expression of Catholic faith. It is a popular Catholicism (DP 444, see also DP 396, 464, 466, 469 and 937). From this popular Catholicism in Latin America, the evangelization of multiple cultural values is possible (cfr. DP 390 and 450).

1.1.2.4 The dynamic character of cultures

Puebla also affirms the social, historical and dynamic character (nature, quality) of culture:

“Culture takes shape and transforms based in the continuous historical and vital experience of peoples; it is broadcasted through the process of generational tradition. Man is born and develops in the bosom of a determined society, conditioned and enriched by a particular culture; he receives it, creatively modifies it and continuous broadcasting it. Culture is a historical and social reality” (DP 392).

“Always subdue to new developments and to reciprocal encounter and interpretation, cultures pass in their historical process through daring periods by new values or under-values, by the necessity of realization of new vital synthesis. The Church feels the need of its presence with the Gospel, particularly during the periods in which old ways decay and die, according to which man has organized his values and cohabitation to give way to new synthesis. It is better to evangelize the new cultural forms from their birth and not when they are grown up and stable. This is the present global challenge that the Church faces, as it possible «to talk reasonably of a new human history era» (GS 54). That is why the Latin American Church seeks to give a new impulse to evangelization in our Continent” (DP 393).

The societies, the peoples and men who live in a community are generators of culture. It is a collective, social and communitarian product, in such way that there are no peoples, regardless of being primitive, without culture. This social character of culture has already been seen when we studied the concept of culture in Puebla (cfr. DP 386a). On the other hand, individuals are born in the space of a specific culture, and since then remain under its conditioning or determination, even if they provide their contribution to the development and transformation of that culture; besides and above all, they are agents of its broadcast to others (DP 392, 336).

The Gospel should penetrate the zone of fundamental human values, his criteria, interests, lines of thought, etc., achieving the conversion of people, of culture and of the structures (DP: 343, 350, 395, 399, 407, 428, 1060):

“...Through its evangelizing action, the Church seeks to reach, not only the individual but the culture of peoples. It tries «to reach and transform with the strength of the Gospel the criteria of judgment, the determinant values, the points of interest, the lines of thought, the inspiring sources and the models of human life, which are in contrast with the Word of God and the

salvation plan. We could express all of this saying: what is important is to evangelize, not in a superficial way like a varnish, *but in a vital and deep way and until the very roots of culture and the cultures of man»* (EN 19-20)” (DP 394).

Pastoral Option

“The evangelizing action of our Latin American Church has to have as general goal the constant evangelic renovation and transformation of our culture. This means, the penetration by the Gospel of the values and criteria which inspire it, the conversion of men who live according to these values and a more complete human change, requiring the structures in which they live and express themselves” (DP 395).

As an example, the Bishops mention some *values-under values* of the Latin American peoples together with some *ways* in which some and others incarnate (the under-values examples are quoted in numbers DP 54 to 62)³. For this reason, to evangelize culture is to strengthen the Christian values of the peoples and of their structures, as well as to uproot the under-values and the structures in which they are manifested (DP 345, see also DP 288, 338, 380, 381, 395, 466, 1215).

To carry out its evangelizing mission, the Church must get acquainted with Latin American culture, without the risk of falling to believe that the knowledge is the only one given by the social sciences, but of being a knowledge that must be guided by *love to the peoples* in order to penetrate discernment, instinctively, in the inner most of that culture in order to support and collaborate in the historical challenges in which they are confronted (DP 397)⁴. Within this knowledge of cultures, the *Document of Puebla* gives as well an important criterion to deeply know the culture of peoples and to be able to evangelize the soul of culture, which has been called the *ethos*:

³ Also as an example of under-values (sins) there are some which have acquired structure forms (sin structures, according to John Paul II – cfr. Homily in the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Zapopan, México, 1-31-79, 3: AAS 71 (1979) 230 and DP 281; or as called in DP 495: institutionalized injustice), and according to the Bishops, the relation of under-values which have affected popular religiosity, DP 455-456, polluting it with strange and deformed ways of Catholicism; in contrast with DP 454 where it is talked in its authentic ways.

⁴ Keeping the idea of Puebla, this implies that not all cultures are equally valuable; it will more or less depend on the scale in which individuals are humanized. This necessarily leads to the problem of an adequate concept of man as master to judge the diverse cultures. Puebla tries to solve it in the section: The truth about man: human dignity (DP 304-339).

“An important criterion which must guide the Church in its effort of knowledge is the following: it must understand *where the general movement of culture is going*, more than to its enclaves stopped in time; to *the actual current expressions* more than to the merely folklore ones” (DP 398).

1.1.2.5 What is not assumed is not redeemed

The following numerals gathered under the sub-title *Encounter of faith with cultures* (DP 400-407) seem to be the central nucleus of the *Document of Puebla* about the relation between faith and culture:

“The Church - Peoples of God, when they announce the Gospel and the peoples welcome faith, it incarnates in them and assumes their cultures. Thus, an identification is not established, but a close relation with it.

“The Church - Peoples of God, when they announce the Gospel and the peoples welcome faith, it incarnates in them and assumes their cultures. Thus, an identification is not established, but a close relation with it. In fact on one side, the faith broadcasted by the Church is lived from a presupposed culture, that is, by believers «deeply related to a culture and the construction of the Kingdom cannot but take the elements of human cultures» (cfr. EN 20). On the other side, it remains valid in the pastoral order, the principle of incarnation stated by Saint Irenaeus: «What is not assumed is not redeemed». The general principle of incarnation is summarized in several particular criteria:” (DP 400).

“Cultures are not an empty soil lacking authentic values. The evangelization of the Church is not a process of destruction, but the consolidation and strengthening of such values; a contribution to the growth of the «seeds of the Verb» present in cultures (cfr. GS 57)” (DP 401).

“The Church assumes with great interest the specifically Christian values found in peoples already evangelized which are lived by them according to their own cultural modality” (DP 402).

“The Church starts its evangelization from those seeds scattered by Christ and of these values, the fruits of its own evangelization” (DP 403).

“All of this implies that the Church – obviously the particular Church – meticulously adapts, making a pouring effort of the evangelic message into

the anthropological language and into the cultural symbols in which it is inserted (cfr. EN 53, 62, 63; GS 58; DTP⁵ 420-423)” (DP 404).

“The Church proposes the Good News, denounces and corrects the presence of *sin* in cultures; purifies and exorcises the *under-values*. It establishes, therefore, a critic of cultures. The contrary of the announcement of the Kingdom of God is the critic of idolatries, this is, of *the erected values in idols or from those values which, not as such, a culture assumes as absolutes...*” (DP 405).

“Therefore, *evangelization cannot be seen as an assault when it invites to abandon the false conceptions of God, anti natural behaviors and aberrant manipulations of man by man* (cfr. DP 424)” (DP 406).

As already said, the term inculturation is not used in the Conclusions; its presence, however, is easily noted on the above mentioned points about the theological concept and of some basic elements now embraced in the term inculturation, as well as some of its characteristics and its proposals, logically with some limits.

1.1.3 Challenges of the Evangelization of Culture (DP 408-443)

After talking about the Church, Faith and Culture, the Document of Puebla also mentions some matters as the challenges and problems of the evangelizing action. As it is somehow related with the evangelization of culture and inculturation of faith, we will briefly discuss them.

On first place, in the evangelization of culture, deeply-rooted social problems of not easy solution occur: migrations, shiftings in search of better social-economic conditions, invasion of sects, cultural changes, negative influences of the social media, consumption, anti-conception programs, etc. (DP 419). All of these problems present a constant challenge to the Church’s evangelizing mission, and require a discernment work for the election of the best solutions (DP 420). Following this, Puebla dedicates several numerals to concrete problems: what is called the *arriving universal culture*, the city, secularism, the structures, together with other organizing problems.

⁵ Cfr. 3rd. Latin American General Episcopate Council, Latin American evangelization in the present and future, Document of Work, CELAM, Bogotá 1978. From now on and in order to facilitate the reading, this document will be quoted as DW, immediately followed by the respective number.

According to Puebla, the *arriving universal culture* is characterized by a scientific-technical mentality which together with efficiency and dominated by the world powers, impose a determined *style of life*, which includes a determined hierarchy of values and preferences (DP 421-424, see also 529 and 1300).

Puebla conceives this *arriving universal culture* as a strange one and apart from the Latin American cultural reality, something which comes from the outside and not from the Latin American cultural *ethos*. It warns about its capacity to absorb and even eliminate the other cultures (DP 416 and 421). Facing this panorama, the Church proposes a renewed commitment for the evangelization of the existing cultures in Latin America (DP 425-428).

Due to the great migration of the rural zones into the urban ones in the majority of Latin American countries, the *city* tends to become what is called a mega-city with its characteristic social problems, as paradoxically it sponsors inhumanity and sin, and constitutes therefore a challenge for evangelization (DP 429-433).

The Bishops are also worried that this structure changes the life of man (DP 431, also 417, 419, 422, 423), *making the interpersonal relations become anonymous and merely functional* (DP 433), emphasizing *certain values (...) as work and a greater possession of consumption goods* (DP 423). It is the consumer's attitude widely criticized by Puebla (DP 55, 56, 528, 642, 851, 1156, 1171; also significant 469).

Another problem already mentioned is *secularism*, which with its new forms of atheism (practical and militant) its new consumption and hedonist style of life, and its will of power and dominium, represent, maybe, one of the most serious challenges (DP 435)⁶.

The *poverty structures*, the denial of the Christian spirit which a society must reflect, are seen by Puebla as a true scandal, showing that faith needs a new vitality, especially for penetrating the criteria and the decisions of the responsible sectors of the ideological leadership, and of the organization of the social and economic interaction of our peoples (DP 437).

⁶ See also DP 83, 418, 627, 783, 851, 1014 and 1300.

1.1.4 Evangelization and popular religiosity (DP 444-469)

Once the second part, Evangelization of Culture (DP 385-443), has been studied, we will study the section which speaks about evangelization in relation with popular religiosity: (DP 444-469).

The crossbreeding –racial and cultural– that historically took place, has deeply marked the continent and it is a key point to understand it and to analyze it: according to the Bishops, the Latin American cultural unity is a product of cultural crossbreeding (DP 307 and 409). This crossbreeding has given origin to a *cultural sediment* (DP 411) or to a *common cultural patrimony of historical and Christian faith traditions* (DP 51), which through history has been capable to absorb and integrate cultural currents (DP 410-411).

From this Latin American cultural sediment, its deep Christian character excels: it is a radically Christian continent (DP 1300) which has a radically Christian culture (DP 1028 and also: DP 28, 51, 307, 412, 437, 1099, 1133 and 1257).

This Christian substrate has manifestations which vary from country to country, but it has common elements and perfectly marked characteristics: it contains contemplative traits (DP 413), it is strongly marked by heart and intuition (DP 414), it is very sensitive to the sense of a person's dignity (DP 452), and has a solid character towards the family (DP 413), it is enrooted in the love for the soil (DP 19), it is lover of parties and resistant to suffering (DP 454, see also DP 17, 18, 239, 570 and 743), with a great Marian devotion (DP 168 and 446).

The Bishops find the confirmation of this Latin American Christian cultural character in the religion of the peoples:

“By religion of the peoples, popular religiosity or popular piety, we understand *the group of profound beliefs sealed by God, from the basic attitudes derived from the convictions and the expressions which manifest them. It is about the way or of the cultural existence that religion adopts in a determined group of peoples. The religion of the Latin American peoples, in its most cultural characteristic, is the expression of Catholic faith. It is a popular Catholicism*” (DP 444).

The text underlines the profound religious character of those beliefs and of the attitudes following them, the product of a true historical incarnation of the Gospel: it is a religiosity incarnated in culture.

However, it is still the objective of evangelization as there are peoples or ethnic groups where the Gospel has not arrived yet, or social aspects in which the Gospel has to enlighten society with more strength:

“This popular Catholic piety in Latin America has not arrived to adequately *impregnate nor has it achieved evangelization in some native cultural groups or from African origin, who possess very rich values and keep «seeds of the Verb»* waiting for the living Word” (DP 451).

“If popular religiosity rules the Latin American culture, *it has not been sufficiently expressed in the organization of our societies and estates.* That is why it leaves a gap for what His Holiness John Paul II has called again *«structures of sin»* (John Paul II, Homily in Zapopan no. 3: AAS 71 (1979) 230). Thus, the gap between the rich and the poor, the threatening situation lived by the weak, unfairness, postponements and indignant subdues which they suffer, radically contradict the personal dignity values and solid brotherhood. Values which the Latin American peoples carry in their hearts as imperatives received by the Gospel” (DP 452a).

Therefore, the Bishops see in this same popular religiosity an evangelizing strength, which must be taken care of in order to avoid deviations and deformations (DP 450a, 455, 456 and 457), but also be used to continue evangelization:

“The popular religiosity is not only *the objective of evangelization* but also of *what is contained in the Word of God incarnate, it is an active way from which peoples are themselves continuously evangelized»* (DP 450).

1.1.5 Some limits of the Puebla proposal

To finalize, we present a brief reflection on what we could call the *limits* of the teachings of Puebla about the relation between faith and culture.

It has been clearly stated that Puebla mainly refers about evangelizing culture and not about inculturation, even though many elements of the same are present, as seen in the previous block. Its contribution to this theme has not been a poor one but the opposite. We could briefly mention, however, some aspects which in our judgment, a deeper development could be made.

1.1.5.1 The shapes

Stating the shapes through which cultural values and under-values are expressed and take shape –customs, language, social cohabitation

institutions– the examples mentioned in the document of Puebla mostly refer to structures than to shapes. If DP 387 refers to value-shape, the next number, DP 388, refers to value-structure, and the next references are made to these two concepts rather than to the original value-shape, which is richer in contents and more related with culture.

1.1.5.2 The technical culture

Another theme which could be mentioned is that Puebla mainly refers to a humanist culture and few times to the technical or to what could be called a technical-scientific culture. It attracts the attention that if a globalizing concept is assumed as stated in DP 387, the technique should be present and considered when referring to cultural shapes, and mention it when referring to cultural evangelization. It is a cultural dimension which has now-a-days an undeniable importance, and also in those days, even though in lesser scale⁷.

1.1.5.3 The lays people in the evangelization of culture and inculturation

It seems to us that the action and role of lays in the evangelization of culture and of inculturation of faith, is seldom mentioned in the conclusions of the Document of Puebla. According to Puebla, lays are characterized because they are both in the Church and in the world, completely in both (DP 786, 787).

So definitely, their mission is to re- make the social, economical and political structures according to God's plan (DP 154), because in the evangelizing mission of the Church, the promotion of justice is (...) what is more directly concerned to the lays' doing, always in union with the Shepherds (DP 827).

Reference is made in another points as for example: DP 524, 553, 786, 787, 789, 790 791, 793, 811, 813, 145, 827, 962, 1216 and Message 7, but in our judgment a clear reference of its doing in the cultural field is missing, as well as the immense panorama of possibilities involved in it, not only in cultural and educational levels but also in personal levels: family, work, social life, etc.

⁷ Cfr. Monsignor Antonio Do Carmo Cheuiche, O.C.D., Culture and Evangelization, CELAM, Santa Fe de Bogotá, 1992, page 108.

2. The 4th Latin American Episcopate General Conference in Santo Domingo

“We are presented now with the formidable challenge of the continuous *inculturation* of the Gospel in your peoples, a theme which you should take with clairvoyance and deepness during the next days. Latin America, in *Saint Mary of Guadalupe*, offers a great example of perfectly inculturated evangelization...In the mestizo face of the Virgin of Tepeyac the great principle of inculturation is summarized...” (*John Paul II, Opening Speech of the 4th General Conference of the Latin American Episcopate in Santo Domingo, October 12th, 1992, no. 24: AAS 85, 1993, 826*).

On December 12th, 1990, the definite theme of the 4th Conference became public, approved by the Pope John Paul II: *New evangelization, human promotion, Christian culture*, with the slogan *Jesus Christ, yesterday, today and always*.

A qualified group of experts, presided by the President and General Secretary of CELAM, worked in the definite elaboration of the *Consulting Document*, during the days from April 1st to the 10th, 1991, which was handed in Buenos Aires during the 23rd CELAM Ordinary Assembly in April 1991, and which has the same title: *Consulting Document. New Evangelization, Human Promotion, Christian Culture*.

On June 14th, 1991 the Pope's decision about personally inaugurating the 4th Conference was officially known, and on June 29th he officially summons it for October 12th, 1992.

CELAM continues the preparation of the 4th Conference and elaborates three more documents: *Prima Relatio* and *Secunda Relatio*, during the year of 1991, and the *Document of Work* in 1992.

Prima Relatio is an internal document published in October 1991, which summarizes since its beginnings all the preparation process until the appearance of the *Consulting Document*. Following the steps of the *Preparatory Document*, which is an answer to the critics that many contributions of the Episcopal Conferences to the *Preparatory Document* have not been taken into consideration in the *Consulting Document*.

Secunda Relatio is another internal document, more extensive and important than the previous one which compiles the reflection process, in

particular Churches and Latin American ecclesiastic organizations since the publishing of the *Consulting Document*.

During these years of preparation, CELAM published moreover eleven auxiliary texts, fruit of investigations, meetings, seminaries, contributions and reflections, with the purpose to help in the preparation of the 4th Conference⁸: *Intensive work, professional, with great pastoral view, social and cultural, with a service spirit to particular Churches that journey in Latin America, and with great respect and loyalty to the Vicar of Christ*⁹.

2.1 Conclusions or the Document of Santo Domingo¹⁰

As it is known, the 4th General Conference of the Latin American Episcopate took place from October 12th to the 28th, 1992 in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, in the auditorium of *Casa San Pablo*, a pastoral center of the Santo Domingo archdiocese. There were 356 participants (307 members, 24 guests, 20 experts and 5 observers). The inauguration act was presided by John Paul II on October 12th.

2.1.1 The relation faith-culture

There are many references in the whole Document about the relation between faith and culture, and more specific to inculturation; it is, however, in Chapter III of the second part - Christian Culture – where there is a more systematic development of inculturation of the Gospel.

⁸ For more enlarging information about the preparation of the Conference, consult: Oscar Andrés Rodríguez Madariaga, S.D.B., Towards Santo Domingo, from the Social Doctrine of the Church, CELAM, Santa Fe de Bogotá, 1992, pages 69-86 and 97-103, Guillermo Melguizo Yepes, The preparation of a General Conference, in AA. VV., Great Themes of Santo Domingo. Reflections from CELAM, CELAM Document Collection # 132, pages 49-70.

⁹ Javier García, L.C., Santo Domingo in Motion, Authors Collection No. 9, CELAM, Santa Fe de Bogotá 1994, page 48.

¹⁰ Cfr. 4th Latin American General Episcopal Conference, New Evangelization, Human Promotion. Christian culture, Conclusions, CELAM, Bogotá 1992. From now on and in order to facilitate the reading, this document will be quoted as DS, immediately followed by the respective number. When the number has several paragraphs divided by a full stop period, they are numbered by small letters, for example: SD 228c refers to the third paragraph of the number. When the Message of the 4th Conference to the Latin American and Caribbean Peoples is quoted, it will appear as SDM, followed by the respective number. As usual and in order to highlight some ideas or useful concepts, the *script* letters used here are ours.

2.1.2 The concept of culture

As in Puebla, we will begin studying the concept of culture contained in the Document of Santo Domingo. Contrary to Puebla, Santo Domingo does not define culture. It could be assumed that, by the continuity they wanted to give to this Conference in relation with the other three and its closeness to the third, that it accepts the concept which Puebla works with, as it is (cfr. DP 386)¹¹.

Now we will analyze the task of the Church in relation to culture according to the *Document of Santo Domingo*, especially in what it calls Christian culture¹². For this we will study the meaning and way in which the *Document of Santo Domingo* deals with the terms *evangelization of culture* and *inculturation of the Gospel*.

2.1.3 Evangelization of culture and inculturation

In reading several numbers in the Document of Santo Domingo, they give the impression of equivalence between *evangelization of culture* and *inculturation of the Gospel*; for example the following numbers: SD 33d, 44, 91b, 228a, 229b and c, 252d, 253b, 271, 275.

Which means the term evangelization of culture seems to be used equivalent to the term inculturation of the Gospel, or at least the difference loses its importance or is not clearly seen.

¹¹ The closest definition or description of what Santo Domingo considers as culture can be found in the first numbers of the Chapter as an introduction: "(...) In that way, culture is cultivation and expression of all the humane in loving relation with nature and in the community dimension of peoples" (SD 228b).

The idea of culture as cultivation of the relations that man establishes appears in other numbers, cfr. SD 255a. The concept of culture also appears implicit in some other numbers, as the following in which it is noted that culture has to do with the common feelings of peoples, cfr. SD 229a.

The concept of culture is also closely related with the identity of every peoples, with their project, for example: SD 13b, 279a.

¹² One of the main topics of the Conference was precisely Christian Culture. When we ask ourselves, what is Christian culture according to Santo Domingo? There are various quotes which talk about this topic; the first one is in no. 25 from the Opening Speech of John Paul II (Opening Speech of the 4th Latin American General Episcopate Conference, Santo Domingo, 10-12-92: AAS 85 (1993) 808-832). There are several points which give us an idea in the Document of Santo Domingo, for example: SD 13b, 22d, 229, 263. When reading and re-reading these texts it is clear that for the Document of Santo Domingo the expression Christian culture is the result of evangelization of culture and inculturation of the Gospel in that culture, cfr.: SD 1b, 55f, 58c, 76b, 84c, 87, 103; 276b, 292, 302d, 303f and the title before 298).

We have to warn that the clearness expressed about the subject in the *Consulting Document*¹³ – cfr. DCSD 138 – states that a difference should be made between evangelization of culture and *inculturation*, and as it is also discretely stated in the *Secunda Relatio*¹⁴, it is not present in the *Document of Santo Domingo*. As already said, the difference between evangelization of culture and inculturation is not stated, as there is only a small indirect reference when talking about the new challenges that a new culture presents...*scarce conscience of the necessity of a true inculturation as a path towards evangelization of culture* (SD 253b).

It is possible that this fact is due on one side, to the same confusion between the terms that exist in the preparatory documents (*Consulting Document, Secunda Relatio, Document of Work*) and on the other side, to the many-times-expressed wish that the Santo Domingo document were of prevalently pastoral character. And for this reason, it is possible that many did not want to dwell on those details.

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Inculturation is only an aspect of evangelization of culture, seen as a goal to achieve; inculturation stresses that the presence of the Gospel in everything human, therefore in culture, should be incarnate¹⁵.

¹³ Cfr. 4th Latin American General Episcopal Conference, *New Evangelization. Human Promotion. Christian Culture. Consulting Document*, CELAM, Bogotá 1991. From now on and in order to facilitate the reading, this document will be quoted as CDS, immediately followed by the respective number. As usual, and in order to highlight some ideas or useful concepts, the *script* letters used here are ours.

¹⁴ CELAM, *Secunda Relatio. Lights of Dawn of Santo Domingo. The Conferences speak*, CELAM, Santa Fe de Bogotá 1993, no. 299: “This process (of inculturation) is a necessary dimension of evangelization, even though it is not totally identified with it”.

¹⁵ We find the following comment very accurate: “Inculturation of the Gospel is not an «alternative program» nor a «complement» of evangelization of culture, but an internal dynamism of the last one. Santo Domingo seems to underline this perspective in an explicit way and in several occasions when it asserts that «evangelization of culture...is manifested in the process of inculturation» (SD 229), or when it highlights that «inculturation of the Gospel is a most in following Jesus» (SD 13). Thus, from the Gospel arises the imperative of inculturation, which is but a manifestation of evangelization of culture. The same fact that Santo Domingo places the mysteries of the Nativity, Easter and Pentecost as paradigms of inculturation of the Gospel, shows that the evangelic event is the starting point of the later evangelization expressions and methods. It is even clearer underlined

2.1.4 Inculturation

Let us make a detailed analysis of the more significant points about inculturation, avoiding the repetition of some already quoted:

Introduction

“When in incarnation Jesus Christ assumes and expresses all the humane, except sin, then the Verb of God steps into culture. *Thus, Jesus Christ is the measure of all humane and therefore, culture as well. He who was incarnated in the culture of his peoples, brings to every historical culture the gift of purification and of plenitude.* All the cultural values and expressions which could be addressed to Christ promote the authentic humane. *What does not pass through Christ is not redeemed*” (SD 228c).

By our radical loyalty to Christ, *we have committed in baptism to strive that faith, fully announced, thought and lived, becomes culture...until «placing the evangelic message in a thinking base, in its fundamental principles of life, in its judgment criteria, in its action norms»* (John Paul II, Opening Speech, 24) and from there *«the ethos of the peoples is projected...in their institutions and in all their structures»* (ib., 20)” (SD 229a).

“This evangelization of culture, which invades its most dynamic nucleus, is manifested in the process of inculturation, which John Paul II has called «center, path and objective of the New Evangelization» (John Paul II, Speech to the International Council of Catechism, 26.9.92): *The authentic cultural values, discerned and assumed by faith are necessary to confront in*

in another passage that inculturation «is a process conducted from the Gospel» (SD 243). Then, there is no inculturation of the Gospel without a previous reference to it, because the incarnation of the Gospel in cultures can only be given from someone who has always incarnate and referred to the Gospel during all his life. Inculturation is a vital process and not an experimental or operational one. Thus we can say that evangelization of culture (...) is the general frame from which inculturation of the Gospel comes” from Alfredo García Quesada, *The Evangelization of culture in Santo Domingo*, in «Life and Spirituality» 9 (1993/2) 51-52. This statement can be found in other authors: Hervé Carrier, “Inculturazione II. Inculturazione del Vangelo”, in René Latourelle – Rino Fisichella (edd.), *Dizionario di Teologia Fondamentale*, Edizione italiana a cura di Rino Fisichella, Cittadella Editrice, Assisi, November 1990, page 590. Luis Alvaro Cadavid Duque, *Actuality and force of the Vatican Council II in front to the 4th Latin American General Episcopate Conference*, in AA. VV., *Towards the 4th Conference*, Auxiliary no. 4, CELAM, Santa Fe de Bogotá 1992, page 125. Voice, *inculturation of the Gospel*, in Hervé Carrier, *Dictionary of culture for the cultural analysis and inculturation*, Editorial Verbo Divino, Navarra, 1994, page 283. Sergio Silva G., ss.cc., *Evangelization today*, 4.1.6, in «Theology and life» XXXV (1994) 248. Andrés Tornos, S.J., *Directive Principles for evangelization of cultures*, 5, in «Miscelánea Comillas» 54 (1996) 43. Melchor Sánchez de Toca y Alameda, *The dialogue Faith-Culture in Contemporary Magisterium*, Second part, 3.2.1, in «Cultures and Faith» 7 (1999/4) 264-275.

that same culture the evangelic message and the reflection and praxis of the Church” (SD 229b).

“The Virgin Mary accompanies the apostles when the resurrected spirit of Jesus *penetrates and transforms the peoples of diverse cultures*. Mary, who is an example of the Church, *is also an example of evangelization of culture*. She is the Jewish woman who represents the peoples of the Old Alliance, with all its cultural reality. But it opens to the newness of the Gospel and she is present in our lands as an equal Mother...” (SD 229c).

Inculturation of the Gospel

“...It is necessary to inculturalize the Gospel in the light of the three great mysteries of salvation: the Nativity, which shows the way of Incarnation and moves the evangelizer to share his life with the evangelized; Easter, which leads through suffering to the purification of sins to be redeemed; and Pentecost which by the strength of the Spirit enables everybody to understand in their own language the wonders of God” (SD 230a).

“Inculturation of the Gospel is a process which presumes the acknowledgement of evangelic values which have kept more or less pure in the present culture; and the acknowledgement of new values which coincide with the message of Christ. Through inculturation we seek that society discovers the Christian character of these values, appreciate and keep them as such. Besides, it attempts to incorporate evangelic values which are absent in culture because they have darken or have disappeared...When incarnated in those cultures, faith must correct its faults and avoid syncretisms. The particular churches are responsible for the task of inculturation of faith under the supervision of their shepherds, with the participation of all the Peoples of God” (SD 230b).

In the *Introduction* paragraph, these are in our judgment, the most significant points about the theme inculturation:

- The evangelic command includes evangelization of all peoples and therefore, of their cultures.
- The insistence that Jesus Christ is the measure of all the humane and therefore, of their cultures: he assumes and expresses all the humane except sin. *What does not pass through Christ cannot be redeemed*: again another formulism of Saint Irenaeus’ principle, «*What is not assumed is not redeemed*» already stated by Puebla and called then general principle of incarnation: cfr. DP 400.
- The presence of *seeds of the Verb*.

- The necessity of faith becoming culture. Faith must arrive to the cultural ethos of the peoples, incarnating in it.
- Facing a cultural crisis of unsuspected proportions, it is proposed to respond with the effort of inculturation of the Gospel, which is the center, path and objective of the New Evangelization.
- Inculturation leads to culture purification, which implies a clear discernment avoiding syncretisms.
- The relation made between inculturation and the mysteries of the Nativity, Easter and Pentecost. It wants to make clear that the inculturation process has close relation with these mysteries of faith. The Nativity: the evangelic message should incarnate in culture; Easter: as a consequence of this incarnation, culture must also pass through a sin purification into the light of the Gospel; Pentecost: with the strength of the Spirit, that message is fully understood and re-expressed with the own genius and values of culture, thus getting a purification of culture and increasing the richness of human elements in the Church who serve to correctly express faith¹⁶ (it is very possible that this statement comes from *Secunda Relatio* no. 205).
- It is about a process which assumes the acknowledgement of evangelic values which have maintained pure in the present culture and those which are compatible with the Gospel.
- *Inculturation* is a task of the particular Churches under the supervision of their shepherds.
- The process of *inculturation* embraces the *announcement, assimilation and re-expression of faith* (SD 256), themes already present in the DCSD.

We continue now with the study of the second title, *Unity and Plurality of Native, Afro-American and Mestizo Cultures*, from which we have selected some points, to avoid the repetition of some mentioned before and of others which are not significant to the theme:

¹⁶ Paul Cardinal Poupard says about it: “Evangelization of cultures and inculturation of faith are an authentic salvation processes in which faith incarnates in the life style of every peoples, purifies it and opens it in communion, in the Spirit, with all men. This is a beautifully expressed concept in the Conclusions of the Document of Santo Domingo, which relates the inculturation process with the three great mysteries of salvation: The Nativity, Easter and Pentecost; or, which is the same as Incarnation, Purification and Communion...”, Paul Cardinal Poupard, *Christian Faith, creator of culture for the third Millenium*, in «Cultures and Faith» 3 (1995/4) 247.

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“The action of God through his spirit, *is permanently given in the interior of all cultures...God sent Jesus Christ, His son, who assumed the social and cultural conditions of the peoples...*” (SD 243a).

“The analogy between incarnation and the Christian presence in the socio-cultural and historical context of the peoples *lead us to the theological question of inculturation. This inculturation process is guided from the Gospel to the interior of each people and community with the help of language and, in agreement with the Church judgment, of comprehensible and appropriate symbols*” (SD 243b).

In these numbers, from which some concrete references about cultural and human ethnic promotion have been eliminated, the Bishops propose a pastoral of Native, Afro-American and Mestizo cultures, and conclude speaking about an *inculturated evangelization*.

For our theme, it is of special interest the mention of the theological fundament of *inculturation*: the analogy between Incarnation and the Christian presence in a determined context.

We consider convenient to mention that, referring to *inculturation* itself, Santo Domingo insists that:

- It is related with the *New Evangelization* project (SD 229b, 230a, SDM 32). But the relation is not only with it but with all the authentic evangelization as well: *Every evangelization must be, therefore, inculturation of the Gospel* (SD 13b).

- As we have already seen in so many mentioned numerals, it has the capacity of purifying cultures: SD 22d, 13b, 228c and 230b. The texts not only speak about purification of cultures but about perfecting cultures from the inside (SD 22d) and of strengthening the identity of each peoples (SD13b), as well as the defense of values (SD 243c). The theological fundament of this defense, respect and appreciation of the peoples’ authentic cultural values, come from the fruit of an action of God, they are expression of the *seeds of the Verb* (SD 2, 17, 245a).

- Thus, the inculturation of the Gospel emphasizes the dynamic incarnation that the evangelization of culture must follow, and it tries to explain inculturation from the mystery of the Nativity-Incarnation (SD 243). If a kenosis is given in Incarnation, a downing

of God towards all the humane and then an uplifting of all the humane towards God, those two directions are also present in inculturation: the humane is assumed to purify it and take it to plenitude.

- It tries to «broadcast» the Gospel to cultures through the Church; in an «incarnatory» way and «assuming» all the humane; to «introduce» and «renew» cultures in the dynamic related to the Gospel. Thus, the whole dynamism of Incarnation is clearly explained as a paradigm of *inculturation* of faith.
- In this way, the inculturation of the Gospel underlines that evangelization is not the broadcast without more than a doctrinal body to be simply applied, without listening to the concrete human circumstances – therefore cultural – but that evangelization is dynamism of life which as such respects and assumes the humane as in human and therefore, the culture of peoples.
- Who is the one who will carry it out? First, and in a general way, it talks about the baptized: “By our radical loyalty to Christ, *we have committed in baptism to strive that faith, fully announced, thought and lived, becomes culture...(SD 229a)*. The subject of inculturation is, however, the particular Church: *The particular churches are responsible for the task of inculturation of faith under the supervision of their shepherds, with the participation of all the Peoples of God” (SD 230b)*.

Even if the following numerals also offer some very concrete points about *inculturation* of the Gospel, we think convenient to gather them in the next block in which we have the intention of commenting some ways for *inculturation* of the Gospel proposed in Santo Domingo.

2.1.5 Ways for Inculturation

After having seen the different numbers about *inculturation*, we continue now in this block with the exposition and comments of some numerals which propose concrete ways to *inculturalize* the Gospel, mentioned in different sections of the Document of Santo Domingo. As the different proposed ways for evangelization of culture are not included in only one block, we will try now to gather them.

2.1.5.1 The liturgy

Logically, the mention of liturgy cannot be missing. Even though the points are somehow repetitive, the insistence of the Bishops in this field is made very clear:

“...Finally, it is especially through liturgy as the Gospel penetrates *in the very heart of cultures*...the language of signs is the best vehicle so the «message of Christ can *penetrate* in the consciences of peoples and (from there) it projects in the *ethos* of peoples, in their vital attitudes, its institutions and in all its structures»...” (SD 35).

“We have to *promote a liturgy* in full loyalty to the spirit in which the Vatican Council II tried to recover all its purity, and search within the norms given by the Church, *the adoption of shapes, signs and actions of the Latin American and Caribbean cultures*...” (SD 53).

“To promote an inculturation of the liturgy, embracing with affection its *symbols, rites and compatible religious expressions with the clear sense of faith*...” (SD 248d).

2.1.5.2 The struggle for sanctity

Also within the ways, and even though it is mentioned in an implicit way in the Document of Conclusions, the search for sanctity must be mentioned:

“... Thus, the best evangelizer is the saint ...” (SD 28b).

“... *Only a life of sanctity nurtures and determines a true human promotion and Christian culture*...” (SD 31).

... “*Sanctity «is the key of renewed passion in the New Evangelization» ...*” (SD 32).

“Keeping in mind that *sanctity is a call to all Christians*, the shepherds will provide the adequate ways *to favor lay men with an authentic experience of God*...” (SD 99c).

It is not a coincidence that the Document of Santo Domingo underlines that *the best evangelizer is the saint*, because it is he that by a radical conformation with Jesus Christ (SD 28) achieves to be a full man,

generating thus a profound humanizing and cultural activity (SD 97c and 229a).

2.1.5.3 Doctrinal formation and Unity of life

Even though it is not expressly mentioned, we can also include the doctrinal formation and unity of life as a vehicle for *inculturation* of the Gospel. It is necessary to live coherently with the Gospel and with faith, as well as to deeply know the moral contents of the Gospel in order to evangelize society:

“Among our own Catholics, *the fail to recognize the truth about Jesus Christ and the fundamental truths of faith, is a very frequent fact, and in some cases, that ignorance comes together with a loss of the sense of sin...*” (SD 39).

“The consequence of all this is *the lack of coherence between faith and life* in many Catholics, including ourselves sometimes or some of our pastoral agents. *The lack of doctrinal formation and of deepness in the life of faith, makes many Catholics easy preys of secularism, hedonism and consumption which invade modern culture and, in any case, makes them incapable of evangelizing it*” (SD 44).

“...*The life coherence* of Christians is a *condition of effectiveness* of the New Evangelization...” (SD 48).

“Catechisms are very important subsidiaries for catechizing; they are at the same time path and fruit of a *process of inculturation of faith...*” (SD 49).

2.1.5.4 Popular Religiosity

It comes indicated as well as a *privileged expression of inculturation of faith* (SD 36), that must continue to be cultivated and preserved from alien elements (SD 39 and 53). The little relief that the Document of Santo Domingo gives to popular religiosity as a vehicle of *inculturation*, is in contrast with the extent given in the Document of Puebla, even if there are references in other points: cfr. SD 18, 38, 247.

2.1.5.5 The role or mission of Lay people

The role or the mission of lay people is mentioned in the Document as one of the indispensable ways¹⁷ for *inculturation*. The Bishops say: “We have to implement these great lines:

- To renew the parishes from the structures allowing the division of the pastoral in sectors through small ecclesiastic communities, *in which the responsibility of faithful lay people appears* (SD 60a).
- To qualify the formation and participation of lay people, *training them to incarnate the Gospel in the specific situations where they live or interact*” (SD 60b).

b) Challenges for lay people

The urgencies at the present time in Latin America and the Caribbean demand:

- *That every lay person becomes a player of the New Evangelization, the Human Promotion and Christian Culture. The constant promotion of lay people is necessary, free of every clericalism and with no reduction to the intra-celestial.*
- *That the baptized, non-evangelized be the principal consignees of the New Evangelization. This will only succeed if lay people are aware of their baptism to answer the call of Christ to convert into players of the New Evangelization.*
- *An urgent effort, in the context of ecclesial communion, to favor the search of sanctity of lay people in the practice of their mission* (SD 97).

¹⁷ In reference to the use of the word “protagonismo” (in the Spanish version) or “leadership” concerning the role of lay people in the SD texts, we find the comment expressed by one participant very accurate: “Lay people had an important place in Santo Domingo. As stated in the final text of the Document, even the term “protagonismo (leadership) of lay people” was included to stress the importance that they have in the new evangelization. I think, however, that a more adequate term could have been found to express the responsibility of lay people – as baptized and therefore as full members of the Peoples of God – in relation with the evangelizing mission. In fact, the expression “protagonismo” (leadership) has a negative connotation which is even used in Psychology referring to a disorder feeling when someone wants to participate at any rate. I think that the importance of lay people in the Church – central in Santo Domingo and deeply highlighted by the Vatican Council II and more recently by the Exhortation *Christifideles laici* – deserved a more precise expression, without the negative connotations before mentioned” (Alfredo García Quesada, *About Santo Domingo, Interview with Cardinal Dom Lucas Moreira Neves, in «Life and Spirituality» 9, 1993/3, 35-36*).

- “The importance of *the presence of lay people* in the task of the New Evangelization...allow us to assert that a priority line of our pastoral, fruit of this 4th Conference, *must be a Church in which the faithful lay-Christians be the players*” (SD 103).
- “By our radical loyalty to Christ, *we have committed in baptism to strive that faith, fully announced, thought and lived, becomes culture...*” (SD 229a).

It is precisely by this commitment of trying that faith becomes culture, placing the evangelic message in the thoughts, actions, judgment criteria, norms of action and in the *ethos* of peoples, incarnated in the acting Gospel, that lay people contribute to *inculturation* of the Gospel, a process that is called by the Pope: *center, path and objective of the New Evangelization* (SD 229).

About this mission, responsibility and urgency of participation of properly-formed lay people, it is discussed several times in other points: SD 42, 60, 80a, 91a, 94, 96, 99, 100, 102, 176, 193, 203, 254, 293 and 302.

2.1.5.6 The theological reflection

The contribution that the theological work can do is also mentioned:

“...the contribution that theologians offer to the peoples of God (cf. John Paul II, Inaugural Speech, 7)...Their work thus achieved, *may contribute to the inculturation of faith and the evangelization of cultures*, as well as to nurture a theology which impels the pastoral that promotes an integral Christian life until the search of sanctity...” (SD 33d).

“To accompany its theological reflection, *respecting their cultural formulations which aid them to give a reason of their faith and hope*” (SD 248e).

2.1.5.7 The Educational Action of the Church

Another way mentioned in the document for *inculturation*, is all the field of education in which the Church has had and still has enormous possibilities. It is described in the theme 3.4 - *The Educational Action of the Church*, from which some points have already been mentioned. We now propose a selection of the same ones:

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“Education is the assimilation of culture. Christian education is the assimilation of Christian culture. *It is the inculturation of the Gospel in the proper culture...*” (SD 263).

“We particularly believe that the Catholic University...is summoned to an important *dialogue mission between the Gospel and Cultures* and of human promotion in Latin America and the Caribbean” (SD 276).

“...*The adequate education to the different cultures* is also a challenge, especially to native and Afro-American cultures...” (SD 270).

“Undoubtedly, our commitment in the educational field summarizes in *the pastoral line of inculturation: education is the methodological mediation for the evangelization of culture...*” (SD 271).

This section ends with a series of pastoral challenges: the lack of basic education levels (SD 267), the challenge of the Catholic University and the University of Christian inspiration (SD 268), relations between the state and Christian education (SD 269), informal education and the adequate one to native and Afro-American cultures (SD 270).

2.1.5.8 The social communication media

As expected, the Bishops mention the social communication media as a vehicle to broadcast faith and therefore, for faith and the Gospel *inculturation*:

“Thus it is given a *very close relation between evangelization, human promotion and culture* based in communication, which imposes tasks to the Church and concrete challenges in the social communication field...” (SD 279c).

“We know that we are in the *new culture of the image*, and that *the evangelic Message must inculturalize in this culture* and thus, become expressive of Christ, the maximum communication...” (SD 279d).

2.1.5.9 Other ways

Another theme that we could mention as a way of *inculturation* is *dialogue*, which comes not only as a way of *inculturation* but as a condition to get it: *we will focus the dialogue challenge between the Gospel and the different elements which shape our cultures, to purify and perfect them from the*

inside, with the teachings and example of Jesus, until achieving a Christian Culture (SD 22d).

A dialogue that, as the magisterium has insistently reminded, must be a *respectful, honest and fraternal dialogue* (SD 248b) with cultures and their religions (SD 138d). It must be also considered *to intensify the dialogue between faith and science, faith and expressions, faith and institutions which are big boundaries of modern culture* (SD 254b). A dialogue which always implies a *Christian discernment* (SD 24, 254d) and in which the risk of syncretism must be avoided (SD 230, 138g).

Finally, we could mention the *lay movements*, also mentioned in the *Document of Santo Domingo*, relating them with *inculturation: it is necessary to accompany the movements in a more defined process of inculturation, and encourage the formation of movements with a greater Latin American impression* (SD 102c).

2.1.5.10 New culture

The Document also approaches the theme of new culture, as it was done in the *Conference of Puebla*, calling it *incoming culture*, not as a way but as a challenge¹⁸, as a pastoral problem to be confronted, and where *inculturation* of the Gospel acquires some proper elements, given the diverse circumstances of that reality in Latin America: SD 252b and 253. It proposes a pastoral line accordingly: *To promote knowledge and discernment of modern culture accordingly to an adequate inculturation* (SD 254f).

2.1.5.11 The city

Finally, when referring to the pastoral consequences of the urban city phenomenon, it says:

“To perform an urban inculturated pastoral in relation to catechesis, liturgy, and to the organization of the Church. *The Church must inculturate the Gospel in the city and in urban man.* To discern its values and under-values; understand his language and his symbols...” (SD 256).

¹⁸ The challenges of new evangelization mentioned in SD can be summarized like this: the sect problems (SD 139-152); economical and political problems (SD 164-209); religious formation (SD 99 and 237); indifference and atheism (SD 153-156), new urban culture (SD 253 and 255); separation between faith and culture (SD 44, 161 and 253); return to ancestral cultures (SD 251). For a detailed explanation, see: Fabio Duque Jaramillo, o.f.m., *Inculturalized Evangelization in Latin America*, II, in «Cultures and Faith» III (1995/1) 18-30.

“...Besides, the city structure demands a pastoral specially conceived for that reality. *Big cities, where new forms of culture emerge* and communication must be the privileged places of the mission.

2.2 Appraisal of the Conclusions of Santo Domingo about Inculturation

From the study of the *Conclusions of Santo Domingo*, we can make the following and brief valuation:

- Santo Domingo uses the same idea of the concept of culture used in Puebla, or it takes it for granted.
- The Bishops recognize a certain Latin American cultural unity, in transformation due to present changes, and the external influences (secularism, hedonism, moral relativism, etc.).
- For the *Document of Santo Domingo*, the expression *Christian culture* is the result of evangelization of culture and *inculturation* of the Gospel.
- The *Document of Santo Domingo* does not establish a difference between evangelization of culture and *inculturation*, and uses the terms as equivalents. Only in SD 253b there is a simple reference that *inculturation* is a part of evangelization of culture.
- The *Document of Santo Domingo* refers to *inculturation* in an extended and profound way. It speaks about its most relevant characteristics and attributes, enriching the texts with frequent quotations of the magisterium documents.
- In several occasions, it insists that Jesus Christ is the measure of all the humane, and therefore of culture.
- It establishes *inculturation* in the mystery of Incarnation; and besides Incarnation with Easter and Pentecost. The Nativity: the evangelic message must incarnate in culture; Easter: due to that incarnation, culture must also pass through purification of sin into the light of the Gospel; Pentecost: with the strength of the spirit, this message is grasped in plenitude and re-expressed with the genius and proper values of culture, achieving culture purification and increasing the richness in the Church of human elements who serve to correctly express faith.
- It reminds of the principle of incarnation mentioned in Puebla: *What does not pass through Christ is not redeemed*.
- *Inculturation* is conceived as a process which supposes to recognize the evangelic values kept pure in culture, and the acknowledgement of the new values which are compatible with the Gospel, so that society discovers the Christian character of these values, appreciates and keeps them as such.

- The process of *inculturation* includes the announcement, assimilation and re-expression of faith.
- In the *Document of Santo Domingo*, there is no clear mention about popular religiosity as a characteristic expression of Latin American identity, nor is it given as a place of relief as a vehicle for evangelization and therefore for *inculturation* of the Gospel, as done in its moment in the *Document of Puebla*.
- It concludes that all evangelization must be *inculturation* of the Gospel, calling it *inculturalized evangelization*.
- It tries to broadcast the Gospel to cultures, in an incarnatory way and assuming all the humane, to thus renew cultures and lead them to perfection.
- Of the proposed vehicles to promote *inculturation*, we think that the mention of sanctity – even if it does not explicitly appeared – gives a perhaps forgotten dimension when mentioning *inculturation*, which is, that when a Christian lives coherently his faith, he already makes an effort to turn the Gospel into culture, starting from his family and carrying its influence to all society.
- Within these vehicles, the education labor has a special importance. It is clear that in every educational project, there is a man project which will bring him near or will estrange him from faith.
