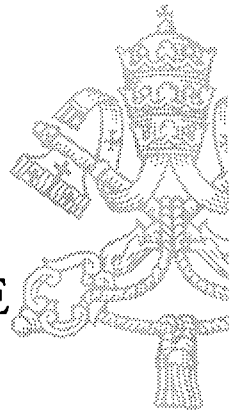


CATHOLIC EDUCATION AND THE CHALLENGE OF INCULTURATION: CONTRIBUTION OF THE CONTINENTAL SYNODS



David J. Fleming, S.M.

One of the treasures in the museum of the Marianist General Administration in Rome is an exquisite Buddhist home-altar, offered in 1933 as a beautiful work of exotic indigenous art to the Superior General of this Roman Catholic teaching congregation by the parents' association of their secondary school in Osaka, Japan. In presenting this work, the association took pains to point out that the artist, an alumnus of the school, "is well acquainted with the Catholic religion but has not been able to embrace it because of his situation." Thanking the president of the association for this costly gift, the Superior General of that era, a Frenchman, assured the parents that "our teachers will make every effort in the future, as has been the case in the past, to inculcate in their students sentiments which characterize true Japanese: love for the country, fidelity to its laws, and attachment to the imperial family."

This little work of art bears witness to the way in which inculturation and inter-religious dialogue already existed within the ambit of Catholic education, subtly, long before these topics became objects of reflection in theology. Read with the hindsight of history, the Superior General's response hints at some of the strengths and pitfalls of an overly close identification between religious and political systems.

Still, for the most part, it was assumed in the past that a key task of Catholic education in non-Christian lands was to communicate the European culture in which Catholicism had flourished.

The picture has changed radically today. "Inculturation" is a key theme of reflection and a criterion for all realms of the Church's mission, and it is obviously central in the mission of Catholic education.

The extensive efforts of the Church in the formation of people, in reflection and in research, bring about a synthesis between faith and culture. Such a synthesis is always a two-way street: it implies a purification of the manifold human cultures in the light of the Gospel and at the same time an enrichment of our understanding of the Gospel through ever deeper and more adapted expression in cultural life. We can say that an integration of faith and culture in service to people is the chief aim of the Church's commitment to education.

Inculturation was one of the most important topics in the Continental Synods. Together with the theme of the "new evangelization," inculturation was a *leitmotif* linking all of these Synods, one of their most characteristic contributions to the development of ecclesial life in our time. Inculturation will remain a key theme in the Catholic educational mission for a long time, the foreseeable future.

In what follows, I would like, first, to examine the rich development of this theme in the teaching of the Popes and Synods from the time of the Second Vatican Council until the Continental Synods. Then, I will reflect on the reality of inculturation in Catholic educational work across the world. Finally, I will suggest some directions concerning the process and content of inculturation in the work of education and scholarly research.

The Theme of Inculturation in Official Church Teaching

The theme of inculturation has steadily grown in importance in the post-conciliar period. The Continental Synods and the Apostolic Exhortations which reflect them allude to previous references to the topic, beginning with documents of the Second Vatican Council.

Reference is repeatedly made to *Lumen Gentium* 16, 17; *Gaudium et Spes* 22, 53; *Ad Gentes* 3, 4, 7, 11, 15, 22; and *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 37-40 ("Norms for Adapting the Liturgy to the Temperament and Traditions of Peoples"). However, many of these conciliar references touch the theme only tangentially. In the Council documents, the word "inculturation" is not yet used.

The word gained widespread attention in ecclesial circles when it was used by Father Pedro Arrupe, then Superior General of the Jesuits, in letters to the Society of Jesus during the 1970's. He defines "inculturation" as follows: "inculturation is the incarnation of Christian life and of the Christian message in a particular cultural context, in such a way that this experience not only finds expression through the elements proper to the culture in question,...but also becomes a principle that animates, directs and unifies the culture, transforming and remaking it so as to bring about a 'new creation'."¹

The important document *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, issued by Pope Paul VI in 1975 as a synthesis of the Synod of 1974, still does not use the word, but it contains a seminal treatment (no. 20) of the role of culture and the necessity of a "full evangelization of culture, or more correctly of cultures" with the observation that the split between faith and culture is "the drama of our time, just as it was of other times."

The word "inculturation" appears in papal documents for the first time in one of Pope John Paul II's earliest Exhortations, *Catechesi Tradendae* (16 October 1979). Paragraph 53 of this document asserts that this new word, even if it is a neologism, "expresses very well one factor of the great mystery of the Incarnation." It states that the "Gospel message cannot be purely and simply isolated from the culture in which it was first inserted, nor...from the cultures in which it has already been expressed down the centuries." Still today, "the power of the Gospel everywhere transforms and regenerates" and "rectifies many elements of culture." The Gospel must not be accommodated to the

¹ Letter to the whole Society "On Inculturation" dated 14 May 1978.

fashions of any culture, but "it is a different matter to take, with wise discernment, cultural elements, religious or otherwise, that form part of the heritage of a human group and use them to help its members to understand better the whole of the Christian mystery."

The theme of inculturation was developed much more fully in the Encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* (7 December 1990). Entitled "Incarnating the Gospel in People's Cultures," paragraphs 52-54 of this Encyclical emphasize the urgency of inculturation in the Church's missionary activity today. The twofold direction of the task of inculturation (integration and purification of authentic cultural values by the Gospel, and the development of Christian expressions in the idiom of each culture) is underlined, with a quotation taken from the conclusions of the Extraordinary Synod of 1985. The Pope expresses his conviction that "through inculturation, the Church...becomes a more intelligible sign of what she is, and a more effective instrument of mission."

The Encyclical urges missionaries to "immerse themselves in the cultural milieu of those to whom they are sent, moving beyond their own cultural limitations." It notes with approval the process by which "developing ecclesial communities...will gradually be able to express their Christian experience in original ways and forms that are consonant with their own cultural traditions." The Pope warns missionaries against the occupational hazard of overestimating culture, for it needs to be "healed, ennobled and perfected" (cf. *Lumen Gentium* 17) by the Gospel. He recommends that the process of inculturation be slow and gradual, the "work of a mature faith."

Earlier (pars. 28-29), the Encyclical had touched a related theme which we will find recurring throughout the Continental Synods, namely, the universal role of the Holy Spirit in every time and place, in the heart of every person, planting "seeds of the Word" throughout history and culture. The Encyclical states that "the Spirit's presence and activity affect not only individuals but also society and history, peoples, cultures, and religions." It is the origin of noble ideals and aspirations, and serves as a "preparation for the Gospel."

Especially in view of the strong statements made at the Synod of Asia, it is interesting to note the Pope's insistence in *Redemptoris Missio*, eight years before the Synod, that the "future of mission depends to a great extent on contemplation" (par. 91).

Previous teaching thus prepared the way for extensive reflection on inculturation by the world's Bishops during the Continental Synods of 1994-99. In particular, it was the Apostolic Exhortations issued by Pope John Paul II after the Synods on Africa and Asia that broke new ground with a systematic and extensive approach to the problematic of inculturation.

Ecclesia in Africa: Theological Reflection on the Meaning of Inculturation

As the first in the series of Continental Synods preceding the Great Jubilee 2000, the Synod on Africa, celebrated in April-May, 1994, played an important role in setting the tone for subsequent Continental Synods and showed a way ahead in treating key themes.

At this Synod, the theme of inculturation was the focus of the greatest number of interventions by participants. The post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Ecclesia in Africa*, developed an extensive theological treatment of the theme. It emphasized that authentic inculturation must have a twofold dimension, already noted in *Redemptoris Missio* and elsewhere: 1) the transformation and purification of cultural values through their integration into Christianity, and 2) the expression of Christianity in new cultural forms.

With this twofold dimension in mind, the Exhortation qualifies inculturation as "a priority and an urgent task" in the life of the particular Churches, "one of the greatest challenges," a "requirement for evangelization," and a "path towards full evangelization" (*Ecclesia in Africa*, pars. 59, 78).

The document presents the incarnation of the Word of God in history as the primordial theological basis for inculturation (par. 60).

Just as the Word became flesh, so "the Word of Jesus Christ proclaimed to the nations must take root in the life-situation of the hearers of the Word. Inculturation is precisely this insertion of the Gospel message into cultures."

The *kenosis* of Jesus expresses the proper "logic" of the redemptive mystery (par. 61). Jesus became fully human and emptied himself. In an analogous way, every culture needs to be transformed by Gospel values in the light of the paschal mystery." Once values and counter-values of cultures are discerned, "the inculturation of the Good News takes on all authentic human values, purifying them from sin and restoring to them their full meaning."

The mystery of Pentecost is presented as an additional theological foundation for the process of inculturation (par. 61), harking back to *Redemptoris Missio* 28-29. It is the Holy Spirit who "draws gifts and talents into unity." When new peoples enter the Church, they experience "a new Pentecost, profess in their own tongue the one faith in Jesus and proclaim the marvels that the Lord has done for them." On the natural plane, the Spirit is the "true source of the wisdom of peoples." With a supernatural enlightenment, the Spirit leads the Church "into knowledge of the whole truth." So it is that the Church, assuming the values of different cultures, becomes the Lord's "bride who adorns herself with her jewels."²

The Exhortation proceeds to consider the criteria for valid inculturation (par. 62). Two basic criteria, already mentioned in *Evangelii Nuntiandi* 20, are identified for the acceptance of new cultural elements: "compatibility with the Christian message" and "communion with the universal Church." Noting the importance of avoiding any kind of syncretism, the Synod declares that inculturation aims to be "a movement toward full evangelization," seeking to empower people to accept Jesus Christ in the whole of their personal,

² For the synodal background of this theological development, see MARIA ELISABETTA GANDOLFI, "Cristo il figlio dell'Africa," *Il Regno*, XXXIX, n. 727 (15 maggio 1994), 309-10.

cultural, economic and political existence, "so that they can live a holy life in total union with God the Father, through the action of the Holy Spirit." Thus inculturation is placed within a trinitarian perspective.

Paragraph 62 of *Ecclesia in Africa* continues with some general reflections on the proper domains for inculturation ("theology, liturgy, the Church's life and structures"), and the succeeding paragraphs develop some of these applications more fully. The document notes the need for research to guide the process of inculturation, and exhorts the local Churches to make the maximum possible use of possibilities that are already permitted by current Church discipline.

Concretely, the Exhortation recommends the family as model of the Church in Africa, and suggests this theme as fruitful and necessary for African reflection in ecclesiology (par. 63). In the domain of liturgy, it urges the creation of study commissions about marriage, reverence for ancestors, and the role of spirits (par. 64). A later section (par. 67) cites the positive values of traditional religions, echoing patristic themes by qualifying them as a "preparation for the Gospel" and as *semina verbi*, seeds sown by God's word in human history. An interesting passage in par. 71 notes the importance of oral tradition in Africa, and urges the necessity of giving courageous and untiring verbal witness to the faith.

In speaking of the extensive network of Catholic educational institutions in Africa, the Pope qualifies these schools as appropriate arenas for inculturation of the Gospel message (par. 102). Catholic universities are urged to integrate into their research the truths and experiences of faith, helping people to internalize them by studying important theological and social questions, "by developing an African theology, by promoting the work of inculturation especially in liturgical celebration....and by contributing to a scientific study of cultures" (par. 103).

Ecclesia in Asia: Pastoral Approaches to Inculturation

The Asian Synod was noteworthy for a very large number of synodal interventions on inculturation. Along with inter-religious dialogue, it

was the topic of nearly half the interventions on the Synod floor. The work of the Synod on Asia and the succeeding Apostolic Exhortation, *Ecclesia in Asia*, represent a significant further step in reflection on inculturation.

The approach of the Apostolic Exhortation following this Synod, *Ecclesia in Asia*, perhaps assumes the theological foundations already laid at the African Synod and proceeds to draw out a rich series of pastoral implications particularly applicable in Asia. The introductory paragraphs make a detailed cultural analysis of the continent, noting its great variety of cultures, peoples and religions (par. 1) and qualifying the "encounter of Christianity with ancient local cultures and religions" as a pressing one (par. 2). The document cites with approval the long-standing efforts of the Federation of Asian Bishops Conferences to take an inductive approach and to promote a threefold dialogue with peoples, religions and cultures (par. 3). It expresses respect for the "ancient religious traditions and civilizations, the profound philosophies and wisdom" characteristic of Asian peoples (par. 4).

Asian cultures generally demonstrate a rich variety of religious and cultural values, some of which are listed in par. 6: "love of silence and contemplation, simplicity, harmony, detachment, non-violence, the spirit of hard work, discipline, frugal living, the thirst for learning and philosophical enquiry," family-centeredness, compassion, and "a highly developed sense of community." The Asian approach tends to be integrational, "not confrontation and opposition, but complementarity and harmony."

Jesus himself was born in Asia. "In Jesus Christ, God assumed the features typical of human nature, including a person's belonging to a particular people and a particular land" (par. 5). Despite this, the Exhortation recognizes the fact that the Church in much of Asia has been considered foreign, "often associated in people's minds with the colonial powers," particularly before the Second Vatican Council (par. 9). Nevertheless, "no individual, no culture is impervious to the appeal of Jesus who speaks from the very heart of the human condition" (par. 14). The Holy Spirit has been present as "a hidden power at work in

history, guiding it in the ways of truth and goodness" (par. 15), preparing Asian peoples "for full maturity in Christ" (par. 16) and gathering them into unity "with their different customs, resources and talents" (par. 17).

Paragraph 20 of the Exhortation is a particularly rich reflection on inculturated pastoral ministry. An "evocative pedagogy" is recommended, so that Jesus will be presented "with an Asian face," as the "fulfillment of yearnings expressed in the mythologies and folklore of the Asian peoples" (par. 20). Narrative methods should complement the ontological notions characteristic of European thought "by more relational, historical, and even cosmic perspectives." Stories, parables and symbols are recognized as particularly effective, together with personal contact. A beautiful list of images of Jesus suggests that he might be presented to Asians as "the Teacher of Wisdom, the Healer, the Liberator, the Spiritual Guide, the Enlightened One, the Compassionate Friend of the Poor," etc. Thus the proclamation of the Gospel will "challenge all cultures to rise to new heights of understanding and expression."

The Exhortation returns in par. 21 to the theme of "the test of true inculturation," reminding us that "evangelization and inculturation are naturally and intimately related to each other," but that they are not identical. As we have seen, a disastrous split between gospel and culture was recognized already by Pope Paul VI in *Evangelii Nuntiandi* as "the drama of our time." The Church "renews culture from within, but she also takes from the various cultures the positive elements already found in them." Thus the various cultures, "when refined and renewed in the light of the Gospel, can become true expressions of the one Christian faith." The Holy Spirit, already present in some measure in all human cultures, should be the "primary instrument of the inculturation of Christian faith." The Church must understand culture first; once she knows and understands it, she can begin "the dialogue of salvation."

Key areas needing inculturation are listed in par. 22. These include theological reflection, liturgy, the proclamation of the biblical word, the style of evangelization. The two criteria of "compatibility with the

Gospel and communion with the faith of the universal Church” are repeated as touchstones for valid inculturation. The Exhortation sees “spirituality and prayer” as “akin to the Asian soul, spirituality and lifestyle.” The following paragraph (23) develops at greater length the important links between the future of mission and the life of contemplation - a theme which, as we have seen, had already appeared in *Redemptoris Missio*, par. 91.

A related theme, the “dialogue of life and heart,” suggests the spirit in which the threefold dialogue with peoples, cultures and religions needs to be pursued. This theme is beautifully developed in par. 31: “The followers of Christ must have the gentle and humble heart of their Master, never proud, never condescending, as they meet their partners in dialogue (cf. Matt. 11:29).” To this end, “love of others is indispensable. This should result in collaboration, harmony and mutual enrichment.” Holiness of life will count for more than intellectual argument (par. 42).

The Synod on Oceania: Supplementary Reflections on Inculturation

An Apostolic Exhortation following the Synod on Oceania (autumn, 1998) has not yet appeared. However, the *Instrumentum Laboris* shows that the preparation for the Synod included much reflection on the interplay between traditional and Western cultures. According to reports of journalists, numerous interventions in the Synod hall concerned problems of inculturating Christian faith. By this point, inculturation seems to be an expected theme of such Synods, part of a well established pastoral and theological framework.

The *Instrumentum Laboris* lists the components of any particular culture as “the values held by its members, the customs they follow, the beliefs they have, the language they speak, the stories they tell, the way they organize their work, their time, and above all the way they express their world-view and their religious convictions” (par. 10). The document stresses, once again, the interplay of Gospel and culture,

noting that the Gospel transforms culture, challenging, elevating, purifying and enriching it. Culture in turn “offers positive values and expressions which can enrich the way the Gospel is preached and the Christian faith is lived” (par. 12).

Noting in Oceania a great mixture and interdependence of varied cultures, most of them threatened by uncritical acceptance of a Western lifestyle, the pre-Synodal document takes a rather critical view of culture, stressing that “change must come in whatever is opposed to the truth as proclaimed by the Gospel.” It points to a number of “negative cultural realities” in the Western culture so pervasive in this region, such as secularism, “individualism, materialism, liberalism and destructive competition” (pars. 12 and 13), while at the same time noting “positive aspects” such as “the promotion of the dignity of the person, the right to freedom and happiness, the contribution that all should make to decision-making, and the progress and prosperity of human society” (par. 13).

Traditional island religions, which still influence the lives of many people, provide “seeds of authentic God-awareness” which offer “possibilities for a creative interpretation of Christian ideas” (par. 12). Later on, the document gives some examples, singling out positive attitudes toward the value of all life and the importance of marriage and the family (pars. 41 and 44).

In paragraph 14, devoted to inculturation as a pastoral issue, the *Instrumentum Laboris* mentions the enrichment of liturgy and devotional practices, the design of church buildings, bible translation, styles of catechesis, marriage and burial rites. It emphasizes that inculturation must be a gradual process, developed principally by the people themselves. “The positive effect of a well-guided inculturation,” according to the document, “is that members of a given cultural society feel more at home in the Catholic faith and worship.”

Modern youth culture is an interesting element of reflection (par. 15), since “youth culture is different from the general culture” in modern society. The *Instrumentum Laboris* identifies a “need to inculturate essential elements of the Christian truth and faith in forms

understandable to young people," who are the "hope of the Church." No doubt this seminal reflection would apply as well, with only slight differences of nuance, to all the other continents. This theme presents a key challenge for Catholic educators, and we will return to it later.

Other Continental Synods: Some Sidelights on Inculturation

The Synods on America (1997) and Europe (1999) dealt with regions which have a longer or more deeply embedded Christian cultural tradition, yet which today are challenged by the above-mentioned tendency to separate gospel and culture. Observers of Church life are practically unanimous in observing the difficulty found in communicating with the secular culture that dominates Western civilization. The Synods on America and Europe focussed more on the evangelization of culture than on the inculturation of the faith. Yet the two themes cannot and should not be opposed or separated. Even though inculturation was naturally less prominent as a theme of these assemblies, it played a significant role.

Paragraph 70 of *Ecclesia in America* is devoted explicitly to the evangelization of culture, recalling its link with the mystery of the incarnation. It urges preachers to inculturate their styles, so that they can speak in ways appropriate to the language and culture of their audiences. It presents the *Virgen mestiza* of Guadalupe as a symbol of appropriate inculturation, so that the Gospel will penetrate hearts and cultures, transforming them from within. The following paragraph notes that "in the overall work of the new evangelization, the educational sector occupies a place of honor," and that the extensive educational network of the Church in the Americas "can play an outstanding role in promoting the inculturation of the gospel."

Speaking of the problems of discrimination experienced in the Americas by indigenous peoples and by those of African descent, the same document urges pastoral workers to work to "satisfy legitimate culture requirements" and to use "inculturated" methods (par. 64).

Referring to the vast and continually growing number of immigrants, the document urges respect for them and their cultures, an effort to reach out to them with appropriate pastoral means, and to join them in defending their rights (par. 65).

One has the impression that more needs to be said about inculturation of the faith in the Americas.³ Perhaps the problem lies partly in finding points in common between North and South and partly in making the link between modern cultural styles and the Christian heritage. This heritage originally evolved in Europe. During the periods of colonization and immigration, it dominated, replaced or deeply masked indigenous cultures in the "New World." In this situation it is not easy to know how to go about inculturating the faith and evangelizing cultures. Inculturation of the faith may well be an unfinished task in the Americas.

An Apostolic Exhortation after the 1999 Synod on the Church in Europe has yet to appear. Since European culture has been throughout history the principal vehicle for expressing the values of the Gospel, the theme of "inculturation" might seem scarcely applicable to this Synod. Still, the *Instrumentum Laboris* for this event refers again and again to the changing cultural situation in Europe. In particular, paragraph 21 analyzes the "signs of the times" from the viewpoint of the various cultures vying for dominance in Europe. This document suggests that a method of cultural analysis has now been internalized quite commonly in the work of the Church. Reports on the process of the Synod itself indicate that such cultural analysis formed a very important part of the interventions.

³ A much more detailed treatment of the theme was offered already at the Third General Conference of the Latin-American Episcopate at Puebla in 1979. See *Puebla: La Evangelización en el presente y en el futuro de América Latina* (Madrid: BAC, 1979), pars. 384-443.

The Current Problematic of Inculturating Catholic Education

Catholic educational ministry plays a pivotal role in implementing this rich body of teaching about inculturation. Many initiatives concerning inculturation originate in the work of researchers, educators, and educational institutions. Nevertheless, wholehearted service to the inculturation of faith requires a major reorientation in the direction of Catholic educational efforts. First, I would like to develop this thought with reference to Catholic education in Africa and Asia, where the need for inculturation seems most evident and urgent. Later I will point to some implications for other countries, in the history of which the Christian heritage has played a more dominant role.

In most non-Western countries, when local people step on to the campus of a Catholic educational institution, they feel like they are entering a new world, a still unfamiliar environment in which special rules of conduct apply. Normally the roomy buildings are constructed in a typically Western style of cement, brick and mortar - a style sometimes in striking contrast to the buildings immediately outside the compound. Western notions of order and organization dictate the placement of buildings, their decoration and their maintenance. The desks in the classrooms, the equipment in the laboratories, the equipment in the offices - all enhance the impression of a foreign environment. The local people may want and prize such a style, and it may indeed be inevitable and necessary for the objectives of the institution. Rarely does there seem to be a viable alternative. But these facts do not change the impression that Catholic education still seems to represent something transplanted from abroad.

In fact, Catholic education outside Europe and America was born, principally during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as part of a missionary project that did not envisage inculturation. In that era, the objective of Roman Catholic foreign missions was understood as the conversion of all people to visible membership in the Church. Educational institutions aimed to gain prestige for this project,

inculcate the faith, train converts in it, and even assist the colonizing "Christian" nations of the West in forming an elite of local people with a Western (presumably Christian) mentality.

Since conversion to the true faith was the ultimate objective, there was no felt need to learn about the faiths of other people or to re-enforce their teachings in their adherents. Rather than dialoguing with local religions and teaching respect for them, Catholic schools often sought to confute them and point up their errors, sometimes in noteworthy ignorance of the teachings and mentalities inculcated by these religions. We have seen in our introductory example that, in fact, there existed some friendly communication among cultures and religions. But this was peripheral to the conscious aim of Catholic educational institutions.

Catholic education of that era often failed in its professed aim of making numerous religious conversions. However, it had a great impact in making Christianity known and respected. In addition, it had an immeasurable cultural impact. Catholic educational institutions, like other colonial ones, played a key role in communicating the normative Western culture.

In a famous educational proposal written for the British rulers of India in 1835 (mostly non-Catholic Christians), Lord Macaulay gave classic, unambiguous expression to the educational objective that prevailed throughout Asia and Africa for more than a century. He called for creating an entire system of education in India that would give rise to an elite that would think and act in a way thoroughly indistinguishable from that of Englishmen. Of course, this aim seems quixotic today, and it was never fully attained. What is striking, however, is the surprising degree of success this enterprise enjoyed, not only in India, where it was officially articulated, but again and again, around the world, in one colony after the other. By the time of independence after the Second World War, a good number of the world's former colonies did in fact possess an elite educated in the Western way, with an appetite and an admiration for the comforts and achievements of Western culture, and with scant appreciation for or knowledge of the ways of their own heritage.

Catholic education was naturally caught up in this trend, and all too often its results seemed indistinguishable from cultural colonization and westernization. A split or even a distinction between Christianization and westernization was almost unthinkable. The object of Catholic educational institutions, which dominated the scene in many colonies, was largely understood to be the replacement of an indigenous culture, considered inferior and negligible, by a colonial one imported with practically no adaptation from Europe.

Hardly anyone would advocate such a role for any Catholic educational institution today. Yet this link between Westernization and educational institutions still explains the ambivalent reactions of the public to these institutions in some places. On the one hand, parents flock to enroll their children, and Catholic schools and universities enjoy great prestige. Most people want their children to enjoy the benefits of Western science and technology, to measure up to Western cultural standards, to learn the skills deemed necessary for economic success and prestige. On the other hand, people long to go back to their cultural roots. In some places, they maintain a discrete distance from the religious aims of Catholic schools, eschewing any attempts at conversion, politely for the most part, but nonetheless firmly. Political and societal leaders occasionally fan flames of resentment, pointing to the capacity for cultural alienation present in this style of education. People all too often live in a love-hate relationship with their local Catholic schools and universities.

Catholic educational institutions today, like all society, are in the midst of a profound cultural transition, caught up in a process that is pushing them towards being intercultural and pluricentric. The culture of Europe and North America exerts enormous influence, but it is no longer the standard for everything. Developments in Catholic life in the past few decades have encouraged the faithful to accept religious and cultural leadership, not only from Rome, but also from sources closer to home. The process is often confusing and stressful. At the same time, it offers great potential for a new, still more catholic and universal, approach to culture and religion. New syntheses of faith and culture, appropriate to each place and time, are beginning to appear.

In the Context of Globalization

Today, no culture is a closed universe. The response of Catholic educators to local cultures happens in the context of a world which is becoming ever more inter-related. Some regard globalization positively, as an opportunity for greater communication and sharing. Others have an exclusively negative judgment; for them, globalization means foreign domination, exploitation of the poor by the rich and the destruction of ancient cultures. Pope John Paul II (notably in *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 40) speaks in a nuanced way of a globalization that needs to be humanized, directed for the good of all people, a globalization of solidarity and compassion. All of the Continental Synods reflected on negative consequences as well as the potential for humanization and Christianization in the globalizing process.⁴

Genuine globalization of consciousness permits us to learn from, and show full respect to, the cultures and experiences of all peoples. Every human group has a cultural-spiritual wealth to offer to others, and every one should be able to become a protagonist in our increasingly inter-communicating world. Every human group should preserve a certain autonomy, balanced by interdependence. Every human group should have an equal capacity to "lead" and "animate" others, drawing on the values of its heritage. Catholic education can help each culture develop its unique contribution to the good of the whole.

In the Church, globalization is a fact. It is also a challenge. Every entry into a new culture is enriching, but also costly. The collective experience of the People of God is enhanced by the gifts of each new group of members. The new possibilities of global awareness and communication can lead to *interculturalization*, the ability to pass over to the perspectives of others and learn from them, to relativize one's own viewpoints, to appreciate and experience the wealth of a variety of cultures. But it is not painless to pass over to another's viewpoint,

⁴ See, for example, *Ecclesia in Africa*, par. 39; *Ecclesia in America*, pars. 20, 55; *Ecclesia in Asia*, par. 39; *Instrumentum Laboris* for the Synod on Europe, par. 8.

appreciate the wealth of his perspective and ways of action. It can only happen as the result of a long process of education and dialogue.⁵

Global consciousness and interculturalization today require continuing efforts at better communication and linkage among local and particular Churches. More than ever before, we need to collaborate, to build on one another's strengths, correct one another's blind spots, use our worldwide organization to work toward the ideals of justice, equality, fraternity, and universal charity. Twinning arrangements between institutions and associations of Catholic educators coming from different parts of the world can foster understanding of the distinctiveness of cultures and place them in an enriching dialogue with other realities.

The gifts of each local and particular Church can be seen as a "common patrimony" at the service of a global mission. In facilitating this "exchange of gifts" Catholic educators can play a leading role.

An Attitude of Dialogue

In forming the new synthesis of faith and cultures in our times, an attitude of dialogue is fundamental. Ever since Pope Paul VI's memorable first Encyclical, *Ecclesiam Suam* (1964), an emphasis on dialogue as a positive value has been a hallmark of the post-conciliar Church. Later chapters in this volume will develop the specific skills and sensitivities necessary for ecumenical and inter-religious dialogue.

The Continental Synods stressed the importance of a dialogic stance and its relevance for inculturation. The post-Synodal Exhortation on Africa qualifies dialogue as "the mode of being of the Christian within his or her community, as well as in relations with other believers and with all men and women of good will" (par. 65). A large proportion of the Asian Bishops interwove dialogue and inculturation in their

⁵ See the study reflecting the work of an Assembly of the Union of Superiors General at Ariccia (Italy), in November, 2000: *Nella Globalizzazione: Verso una comunione pluricentrica e interculturale* (Roma: Il Calamo, 2001).

remarks on the Synod floor. The Exhortation on Asia (par. 29) explains that dialogue is "not simply a strategy for peaceful co-existence among peoples; it is an essential part of the Church's mission because it has its origin in the Father's loving dialogue of salvation with humanity through the Son in the power of the Holy Spirit." It is a way to "seek the truth in love."

Dialogue is at the core of the Church's educational mission. From the earliest levels, students should be taught to listen to others, understand and appreciate them, share values and experiences. Centers of research and study aimed at productive dialogue in view of understanding, peace, and justice, should be established wherever possible. In efforts to promote a new synthesis of faith and culture in every cultural context, Catholic educators will necessarily work with a great openness to learning from others and to appreciating ways of thought, action and expression that are unfamiliar. The human sciences - psychology, anthropology, sociology, the study of organizational behavior - have a special contribution to make in the process of intercultural dialogue, helping all involved to analyze differences and attain better mutual understanding.

Preparing Inculturated Catholic Educators and Scholars

The agents of this new approach to Catholic educational culture are no longer, for the most part, foreign missionaries, but professional and dedicated lay Catholics of each cultural area. By now, for a variety of reasons, they have become the main agents of the Church's educational mission. This fact opens up new dimensions in Catholic scholarship and education, and at the same time presents new challenges. Steeped in their own cultures, these Catholic educators can make a significant contribution by advancing the integration of faith and culture in our time.

But this integration will not happen automatically. Certain key traits ideally characterize Catholic educational institutions: personal concern

for the person of each student, respect for human differences, a sense of partnership with parents as the primal educators, a clear-sighted and experience-based commitment to social change and development, a sense of solidarity and compassion, an approach that integrates the intellectual with the moral and the religious. In the past, when many Catholic educators were foreign missionaries with a similar formation and training, a great deal of the Catholic educational and cultural tradition was presumed to be passed on by osmosis from one generation to the next. Today, in order to inculcate traits similar to the ones just listed, we need a conscious and explicit process to form and sustain Catholic educators and scholars, laity as well as clergy and religious. This process must respect both the fullness of the Catholic heritage and the uniqueness of each culture.

Only those who have made a personal synthesis between their cultural roots and their Christian faith will be able to communicate a vision that authentically integrates the two, without falling into syncretism. The ministry of forming new educators and scholars with such an outlook is crucial to the transmission of the faith in our time.

Some Steps in the Process of Inculturation

Catholic educational institutions are already reflecting many of the orientations voiced in the Continental Synods, but the process of implementing them is a permanent challenge. Here are some of the steps necessary for successful inculturation in Catholic education today:

1. *Understanding and appreciating culture.* A first step is to devote the considerable resources of Catholic educational institutions to understanding and appreciating the cultures that surround them. Such understanding and appreciation will be the result of close solidarity and empathy with the local people. Listening to them, scholars will come to a deep understanding of the richness of local cultures. All the human sciences can then be harnessed to shed light on these cultures and to

appreciate the truth, goodness, and beauty latent in them. Students should be expected to know the heritage of their people, to feel fully at home in it, to savor it and delight in its characteristic expressions.

2. *Discernment in the light of the Gospel.* Once a culture is known and appreciated, a next step involves analysis and discernment. No human culture is all good or all bad. As we have seen above, the Church recognizes "seeds of the Word" and the "action of the Holy Spirit" in all cultures at all times, while at the same time asserting the primacy of the Gospel. In the light of the Gospel, every culture - Eastern or Western, Northern or Southern, ancient or contemporary - needs to be "purified," "elevated," and "ennobled." Concretely, every culture has its blind spots and its malicious tendencies as well as its beauties and insights. Most cultures exclude certain groups of people while exalting others. Most tolerate certain moral and social evils, while emphasizing other virtues. Social and cultural analysis will be necessary in order to discern the good from the bad.

In a paper given at the International Missiological Congress at Rome in October, 2000, Claude Geffré, O.P., noted how difficult it is to make the necessary discernment.⁶ It is an ongoing process that will no doubt engage us for many generations. This is all the more reason why scholars need to focus on a critical approach to culture. Students need to learn ethical principles and skills for analysis, the capacity to think critically and creatively about the cultural mix in which they live. They need to be motivated to continue reflection and search, so that they can make a positive contribution to cultural evolution throughout their lifetimes.

3. *Inculturating understandings and expressions of faith.* A further step, proper to committed Christians in Catholic educational institutions, involves theological reflection and catechesis. What the Pope and the Synods have called the *semina Verbi*, the "seeds of the Word" present in

⁶ "La prétention du christianisme à l'universel: implications missiologiques," in *Sedos Bulletin*, vol. 33, no. 3 (March, 2001), 67-76.

surrounding cultures, must be incorporated into the presentation and expression of the Gospel. Most cultures offer interesting and enriching points of departure to help believers probe the meaning of their faith. Conceptual frameworks characteristic of each culture, values highly prized, characteristic philosophies and bodies of wisdom, respected attitudes and ways of behavior will at least serve as a "preparation for the Gospel," helping the people of the culture integrate the truths of Christian faith.

In many cases the new inculturation of Christian faith will also have an impact on the universal Church, illuminating and enriching everyone's understanding of faith, opening the door to new perspectives of value everywhere. The creativity and art of every human group - their music, dance, painting, sculpture, architecture, poetry and drama - can provide vehicles of expression for the Gospel message. These new expressions can be particularly apt in helping the members of the culture to interiorize their Christian faith. Often they will also be refreshing and renewing for Christians of other cultures as well. Those who attend papal liturgies in Rome in recent years have seen many beautiful examples of such cross-cultural enrichment.

4. *Developing a new evangelization.* For an inculturated expression of the Gospel teaching, as Pope John Paul II has regularly insisted, it will be necessary to find new language and develop new methodologies. Foreign academic terminology and philosophical categories rooted in another time and place may pose an obstacle rather than help in the presentation of the Gospel truth. Catholic educators need to find new vehicles - concepts, words, images, artistic expressions - to express the truths of faith in ways more easily understood by those to whom they are speaking. They need to involve learners, so that the faith becomes experiential, understood as a living process of response to life's most important questions, rather than as some abstract speculative enterprise.

The proclamation of the Gospel will need to be understood as a "proposal" rather than as an imposition, an invitation to discovery and growth, a sharing in the fundamental search for meaning and purpose. In Western countries, in post-Christian, post-modern environments,

the Church is increasingly understanding its role as "proposing" a help and an accompaniment in the spiritual quest of people, rather than imposing a traditional framework determining belief and culture.⁷ The same stance will be most helpful in non-Western environments. After a long season of colonial dominance and impositions of Western ways, people need to understand that the Gospel is intended as a guide in their spiritual quest rather than an authoritarian system expressive of a dominant foreign culture.

5. *Exploring new approaches to faith.* Even the contents of theological reflection and catechesis will need adaptation in a Catholic educational institution that takes inculturation seriously. The fundamental truths of faith cannot change, but at different times and places the Church undergoes development in its way of understanding these truths. People change the questions they ask and the concerns they bring to the process of growing in faith. Old answers elaborated in a foreign context will often be experienced as inadequate. Certain truths of Christian faith have been analyzed and developed in order to answer the questions and concerns of given times and places in the past. A good example would be the extensive treatment of the question of substance and accidents in medieval sacramental theology. Other concerns may be underdeveloped in Christian history and need development on contact with a new culture. A good example would be the honor due to one's ancestors, so important in Africa or in China; or the sensitivity to nature as sacred, characteristic of many tribal cultures. Christian teachings about the communion of saints and human stewardship for creation might undergo rich new developments in response to the sensitivities and questions of these cultures. Through a combination of sensitivity to the cultural concerns of the local people and reflection on the contents of Christian faith, Catholic educators can play a key role in the work of new evangelization across the world.

⁷ See Letter of the Bishops of France, *Proposer la foi dans la société actuelle: Lettre aux catholiques de France* (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1999).

The end result of such a process will be a new style of ecclesial life. As has so often been remarked, we are witnessing in our time the emergence of a Church that is pluricentric and multicultural, anchored in Catholic identity but rooted more firmly in the native soil of the people it seeks to serve.

Inculturation at Each Level of Education

Some of what has been said above may appear to concern only the higher levels of education. Research into culture and development of new theological approaches may be characteristic of Universities. The truth is, however, that every Catholic educator needs to be engaged in the task of inculturation outlined in the teaching of the Continental Synods.

Basic attitudes toward life, human and cultural values, and the fundamental approach to the faith are the special concern of those who work with children. Young children must be led to understand and prize their own culture, as well as to respect that of others. Images and explanations used in the catechetical presentation of faith need to be in harmony with their cultural surroundings. For example, in an Asian setting, most of the images of Jesus mentioned by the Synod ("the Teacher of Wisdom, the Healer,...the Spiritual Guide,...the Compassionate Friend of the Poor,...the Good Shepherd, the Obedient One") can be readily understood and savored even by children (*Ecclesia in Asia*, par. 20). Only by presenting faith in this way will it seem real and relevant to the young, something that responds to their aspirations and needs. Thus elementary education becomes an important setting for the work of inculturating faith.

Those who work with teenagers and youth have a particularly important role to play. As we have seen, the *Instrumentum Laboris* for the Synod on Oceania emphasized the special need to speak to today's youth culture. It noted that youth culture "expresses the particular interests, needs and desires of the young, often seen as a protest against

the older generation" (par. 15). Many sociological studies have documented the difficulty of the Church in reaching this youth culture, very particularly in Western societies.⁸ The Synodal document on Oceania points to the "need to inculturate essential elements of the Christian truth and faith in forms understandable to young people." As they mature and gradually form an integrated adult life-stance, young people need to hear the truths of the Gospel in language and cultural forms with which they can identify. This is a great challenge to educators and youth ministers.

Clearly, the work of inculturation is also a challenge to scholars and researchers. In a stimulating paper given at the International Conference on Dialogue of Civilizations (Institute of Islamic Studies, London, 27 October 2000), Professor Jorgen S. Nielsen of the University of Birmingham pointed to a number of areas that need particular attention at the present time. He stressed the need for historians to "rediscover and reinterpret our various histories and the histories of their interaction." Concerning theologians and religious thinkers, he notes that certain aspects "have been subjected to highly developed scholarship over generations, while others have hardly moved beyond the original bare statements of belief, injunction or advice." Some elements may have "lain dormant, held in reserve until such time as they might be needed." Educationists and textbook writers, who have handed down ideas from one generation to the next, "must now be persuaded and trained to pass on interpretations and

⁸ See, for example, JOHN FULTON et AL., *Young Catholics at the New Millennium* (Dublin: University College Press, 2000). JOSÉ MARÍA ARNAIZ, S.M., in a recent lecture given at the Pontificia Università Salesiana in Rome, speaks insightfully of the cultural challenge of contemporary youth culture: "The world [of youth culture] is becoming more and more multicultural; on the one hand, full of a religious thirst, on the other, skeptical about faith, sincerely respecting individuals and distrusting institutions. Words do not move it much, but it is fascinated by information technology, by a world of music and songs, by volunteer gestures and by the search for meaning. *How can we enter into this world? How can we make contact with all that is vital and creative in this new culture, learn from it and assume it into our life?*"

approaches which are more appropriate for the 21st century"- a task which involves special problems "of politics, logistics and resources." The author also suggests that the training of religious professionals in seminaries and schools of religion requires special attention.⁹

Inculturation and Catholic Education in Europe and America

The problematic of inculturation is more evident and pressing in Africa and Asia, but it is a challenge everywhere. As we have seen, the Bishops of America and Europe in Synod have also stressed this theme. Catholic educators in these continents, whose culture has been more deeply and extensively formed by the Christian heritage, are also finding a need for inculturation as an integral constituent of their mission.

In Europe and America, the Church long ago shaped a classic synthesis of faith and culture. Today, however, everyone notes the impact of rapid cultural change. We seem to be at the end of one age and do not yet feel clear about the cultural direction of the future. The classic synthesis is wearing thin. Many people do not seem able to find themselves at home in it. These are the "post-moderns," whose culture has already been the object of much insightful analysis.¹⁰ It seems clear that the future will surely not be a linear extrapolation of the past. Artists and philosophers have been signaling a significant cultural shift for a century already. Today's youth, as noted in the Synods for Oceania, Europe, and America, seem to be developing a new cultural

⁹ "The Contribution of Interfaith Dialogue towards a Culture of Peace," *Sedos Bulletin*, vol. 33, no. 2 (February, 2001), 54.

¹⁰ See especially the descriptions of the post-modern mentality in *New Vocations for a New Europe: Final Document of the Congress on Vocations to the Priesthood and to Consecrated Life in Europe* (Vatican, 1998); and HERMANN SCHALÜCK, O.F.M., "Everything is Possible, Nothing is Certain: Religious Vocations in Post-Modern Times," in *Vocations for Consecrated Life in the Context of Modern and Post-Modern Society* (Rome: USG, 1999).

style that remains incompletely evangelized, even as it offers interesting openings to the Gospel message.

Not unlike Africa and Asia, these continents are also marked by a large-scale reorientation of Catholic education to new cultural realities. In these continents the mission of Catholic education for the past two centuries has usually been understood as that of forming Catholics in an unshakable faith, so that they are ready to struggle for it. In some situations, the struggle aimed particularly at a Protestant culture, often virulently hostile to Catholic Christianity. In others, the struggle was against a powerful post-Enlightenment cultural environment which involved hostility or indifference to all religion. In still others, the enemy was perceived as social and political ideologies in conflict with Catholic teaching. Whatever the nuance of each situation, Catholic education aimed to form a powerful antidote to such enemies. Rather than dialogue and synthesis, it focused on protection and confutation.

Today, in the wake of *Gaudium et Spes* and *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, Catholic education in Europe and America has turned a more positive and lucid eye to emerging cultural phenomena. It seeks to play a key role in promoting the greatly desired but still elusive synthesis of faith and culture. The process of inculturation recommended in the Continental Synods, as we have outlined it above, may serve as a useful help in the new evangelization necessary in face of the post-modern mentalities and life-style that characterize many today, especially youth. This is not an easy challenge, but it is one that deserves the best concerted efforts of Catholic educators in Europe and the Americas today.

Some Ecclesial Criteria for Inculturation in Educational Work

Whether the context is Africa or Asia, Europe, America, or Oceania, the Post-Synodal Exhortations offer many important guidelines for working at inculturation of the Gospel.

A Spirit of Communion

First of all, this delicate task requires an attitude of *communion within the universal Church*. The Exhortations stress the role of the local Churches in making sure that their efforts at inculturation are in accord with universal norms and respect the directions of the overall Church leadership, so that innovations in one place do not become a cause of scandal or confusion elsewhere. No doubt in a pluricentric and multicultural Church it is possible to lose the sense of communion in one catholic truth and a sense of global unity in faith. Most Bishops are highly sensitive to this danger, careful to maintain the sense of communion with the See of Rome and with their fellow Bishops across the world. Leaders in Catholic education, researchers, scholars and pastoral theologians, also need to be sensitive to this aspect of communion with the universal Church. Although there certainly are exceptions, it is my experience that in fact most Catholics are rather sensitive to this need for communion, since universality and a sense of worldwide union in faith are characteristic of the Catholic approach to life. The respect for communion among all Catholics, worldwide, forms part of the *sensus fidelium*.

In the realm of *liturgical inculturation*, one of the richnesses of the Church in recent years has been the creativity unleashed by a more open attitude toward adapting elements of local cultures into worship. Catholic scholars and educators have taken the lead in creating and proposing such elements. Those of us who are privileged to participate in liturgies in different cultural regions can attest to the beauty, the variety, and the fundamental unity of contemporary Catholic worship. Far from giving rise to scandal or confusion, most inculturated liturgies enhance one's admiration for the manifold expressions of God's spirit and for the unity of faith expressed in a beautiful variety of sacred idioms.

A certain amount of time and experience may often be required to verify whether any given element is fitting and effective in enhancing a prayerful environment. Catholic educational institutions have often

played a useful leading role in developing and testing inculturated liturgies.

The attitude of communion also requires an encouraging attitude on the part of central Church leadership, the respect for a certain subsidiarity and for legitimate differences within the Church, so that creativity is not quenched and so that the unique competence of local Church leaders in the domain of their own cultures is given full scope. Such attitudes were urged repeatedly on the Synod floor and they are generally encouraged in the post-Synodal Exhortations.

Much of what has just been said about liturgy can also be applied to the areas of *theological reflection and pastoral practice*. These areas must respect the need for unity and communion with Christians of other cultures. An authentic Catholic reflection on faith that is valid for one place cannot be scandalous for another. (Of course, this does not mean that we can on all occasions prevent a few biased observers from taking "pharisaical scandal.") A way of presenting the faith should be recognizably Catholic to any empathetic fellow Catholic. But this does not mean a unitary theology or a monolithic pastoral practice. The days for uniformity are definitively past. The acceptance of the principle of inculturation implies an openness to some variety, within the bounds of Catholic unity, in theological systems and pastoral approaches. Catholic educational leaders must often struggle with the plurality of viewpoints and approaches. Their willingness to recognize the validity of approaches which are different from their own, and yet still in accord with the guidelines of the universal Church, is a test of their commitment to the synthesis of faith and culture in our time.

A Gradual Approach

The creation of our accustomed Roman Catholic liturgy, theology, and pastoral practice was the work of centuries and the result of long processes of inculturation, with Jewish, Hellenistic, Latin and Germanic elements playing a role. Trial and error played its role in the creation of this synthesis. Today the integration of new cultural

elements, reflecting the much greater variety of local cultures present in the Church and responding to the needs of different age groups and mentalities, will similarly require a long process. The work of inculturation in ecclesial life should proceed carefully and gradually, but without undue fear or exaggerated caution. It will be impossible to avoid some mistakes or experiments that will prove unviable in the long run. Necessary attitudes in the process of inculturation include patience and a willingness not to reject as bad what is not absolutely good. Educators are well acquainted with the need for such attitudes from their years of work with the human and cultural development of their students. Once again, Catholic educational institutions can provide a natural arena for proposing and testing new theological, liturgical and pastoral elements appropriate to each setting.

Avoiding Syncretism

All the post-Synodal Exhortations warn against the danger of syncretism, i.e., the attempt to integrate into Christian thought and life doctrinal elements and spiritual practices from other religions which are at variance with Catholic teaching and practice. Catholic scholars, educators and their institutions need to be sensitive to this danger. Syncretism may be the result of misunderstandings about Catholic teaching or of misinterpretations of other religions. It may be an unintended result of the effort to render the Gospel understandable and appealing in a given cultural context. Since religion and culture are so deeply intertwined, it will not always be easy to separate elements which can validly be inculturated from doctrines or practices which are unacceptable. Some three hundred years ago, the experiments of missionary leaders like Robert de Nobili and Matteo Ricci were condemned because they seemed syncretistic. Today, both of these men are approvingly cited as examples of missionary inculturation in *Ecclesia in Asia* 20. In order to avoid syncretism today, theologians will need to collaborate with philosophers, sociologists, anthropologists, artists and historians in order to clarify the meaning and the

connotations of cultural elements introduced into Christian worship, thought, and pastoral praxis.

An Inculturated Pedagogy of the Faith

Pedagogy is one of the first and most characteristic areas for inculturation. Learning styles are deeply influenced by culture, and they differ considerably from one people to another.¹¹ At every level our pedagogy for communicating the faith should take local cultural sensitivities into account. We have seen that the Synod on Asia recommended "an evocative pedagogy, using stories, parables and symbols so characteristic of Asian methodology in teaching" to present the truths of Christian faith (*Ecclesia in Asia*, 20). *Ecclesia in Africa*, par. 123, is devoted to "traditional forms of communication" such as "songs and music, mimes and theater, proverbs and stories" which are understood to be "vehicles of wisdom and of the spirit of the people." All the post-Synodal Exhortations devote attention to the importance of modern mass-media for communicating and inculturating the faith. Catholic educational institutions can make a significant contribution by emphasizing research into the sciences of education and communication, with a view towards an inculturated pedagogy of the faith.

Conclusion

A new approach to culture is coming about in Catholic schools and universities, almost everywhere. The Continental Synods and the documents reflecting them contribute significantly to the emergence of this new approach. It aims to be thoroughly rooted in Catholic identity and faithful to the specifics of Catholic teaching as well as to a more loosely defined, but still quite identifiable Catholic world view. At the

¹¹ See the interesting chapter entitled "Culture, Politics, and Pedagogy" in JEROME S. BRUNER, *The Relevance of Education* (New York: Norton, 1973), 98-107.

same time it does not dictate uniformity across the globe, but rather prizes the unique characteristics of each local culture. This new approach has appeared both in lands of traditional Catholic culture and in those where the Church is still young and fresh.

The Continental Synods offer Catholic educators everywhere encouragement and direction in working towards a Church that is truly world-wide, in every sense of the term, unified in Christ but speaking all human languages, pluricentric and multicultural.

Bibliographical Note

DAVID J. FLEMING, S.M., (14 April 1939, Topeka, Kansas) is an American educated in the Universities of San Antonio, Chicago, and Friburg as well as other European Universities. As a member of the Society of Mary, he has fulfilled various responsibilities: in education, and as Assistant, Superior, Director of Novices, and from 1996, Superior General. Father Fleming has published numerous articles in scientific and religious journals: Review for Religious, The American Ecclesiastical Review, Humanistic Lovaniensia, Modern Philology, Renaissance Quarterly, Southern Humanities Review. He is a member of various religious organizations and is interested in linguistics and in intercultural communication.