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The Meaning and the Effects of the II Vatican Council for the Inter-religious Relations of the Catholic Church in India

By

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Well before, even centuries before the II Vatican Council there were a lot of theological activities in India in the context of the different religions, particularly in the context of Hinduism. But the Council's articulations on the Church's relation with the non-Christian religions gave a tremendous boost to the theological movement in India. Almost all theological reflections in India began to situate themselves in the context of non-Christian religions, especially Hinduism. These theological reflections did not remain solely in the theological circles. They began to trickle down, perhaps hesitantly, into the official ecclesiastical circles. These elements may be considered in the near future by the magisterium of the Church.

The reflections in this article are mainly based on: 1. The II Vatican council's and the post-consiliar magisterium's teachings on the Church's relation with the non-Christian religions. 2. "Instrumentum Laboris" which was prepared taking into consideration the theological activities in Asia, and of course in India, and was published on Feb. 1998, in preparation for the Special Assembly for Asia of the Synod of Bishops. 3. Some of the interventions of the Bishops, especially from India, on the floor of the special assembly held on 19<sup>th</sup> April to 14<sup>th</sup> May 1998.

The Active Universal Saving will of God in Other Religions

The II Vatican Council recognises the Universal Saving Will of God (II Vatican, *Lumen Gentium*, 16). It is because of this universal saving will there are workings of God in other religions. Although the workings of God in other religions are hidden, they are not totally

unknown to the Church. In the ways of conduct and of life of the people, and in the precepts and teachings of the religions *Nostra Aetate* perceives the reflection of a ray of the truth, the Christ who enlightens all (II Vatican, *Nostra Aetate*, 2). John Paul II stated that in Christ God is working out the salvation in a way also through the different religions of the people. God makes himself "present in many ways, not only to individuals but also to entire peoples through their spiritual riches, of which their religions are the main and essential expression, even when they contain 'gaps, insufficiencies and errors'[1]"[2]. The document jointly published by the Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue and the Congregation for the Evangelisation of the peoples once again clarifies the mind of the II Vatican Council. The document stated that it may be the providence of God that the people belonging to the different religions, through the different very true religious efforts, may achieve salvation (II Vatican, *Ad Gentes*, 3, cf. also *Lumen Gentium*, 16). Concretely "it will be in the sincere practice of what is good in their own religious traditions and by following the dictates of their conscience that the members of other religions respond positively to God's invitation and receive salvation in Jesus Christ, even while they do not recognize or acknowledge him as their Savior (cf. II Vatican, *Ad Gentes*, 3, 9, 11)"[3].

### Operation of the Spirit in Other Religions

The presence and activity of the Spirit are universal, limited neither by space nor by time (cf. John Paul *Dominum et Vivificantem*, 54; *Redemptoris Missio*, 28). *Gaudium et Spes* states that the operation of the Spirit had started well before the Christ-event (II Vatican, *Gaudium Et Spes*, 22)[4]. In *Dominum et Vivificantem* Pope John Paul II said that our vision must not be limited to the two thousand years which have passed since the birth of Christ. It must go further back, to embrace the whole of the action of the Holy Spirit even before Christ – from the beginning, throughout the world, and especially in the economy of the Old Covenant[5]. The operation of the Spirit is still continuing in other religions even after the Christ-event, for Christ died for all. (II Vatican, *Gaudium Et Spes*, 22; cf. *Lumen Gentium*, 16; *Ad Gentes*, 4). The risen Christ is now at work in human hearts through the strength of his Spirit (cf. II Vatican, *Gaudium Et Spes*, 38)[6].

The universal working of the Spirit of God is in the world, in the human values which pursue justice and kinship, peace and harmony (cf. II Vatican, *Gaudium Et Spes*, 32, 38, 39, etc.). He is working in the heart of every person "through the 'seeds of the Word,' to be found in human initiatives – including religious ones – and in man's effort to attain truth, goodness and God himself [7]"[8]. The Spirit "is at the very source of the human person's existential and religious questioning ...which is occasioned not only by contingent situations but by the very structure of its being"[9]. The people's religious life is influenced by the Spirit (II Vatican, *Gaudium Et Spes*, 15, 37, 41, etc.). The Spirit's presence and activity affect not only individuals but also society and history, peoples, cultures and religions[10].

### Activity of the Spirit not only in the Church

Vatican Council perceives the presence and operation of the Spirit even outside the visible body of the Church. Basing on II Vatican, *Gaudium Et Spes*, 22, Pope John Paul II writes that the Council "reminds us of the Holy Spirit's activity also 'outside' the visible body of the Church"[11]. With the backing of the New Testament assertion, the Spirit 'blows where he wills' (Jn 38), John Paul II affirms that there is the operative presence of the Spirit of God in the religious life and religious tradition of the non-Christians. The "firm belief of the followers of the non-Christian religions" is "also an effect of the Spirit of truth operating outside the visible confines of the Mystical Body ... "[12]. It is the same Spirit that is also active

in the Church. Therefore "the universal activity of the Spirit is not to be separated from his particular activity within the Body of Christ, which is the Spirit"[13].

### Recognition of the Value of the Sacred Scriptures and Symbols of the Religions

Because of the universal saving will of God and the operation of the Spirit even outside the visible body of Christ, the religions have seeds of the Word, shades of truth and goodness[14]. It is the Spirit of the risen Christ "who sows the 'seeds of the Word' present in the various customs and cultures, preparing them for full maturity of Christ (II Vatican, *Lumen Gentium*, 17; cf. (*Ad Gentes*, 3, 15)" [15]. The Church is ready to embrace all the elements of truth that are the results of the working of the Spirit of the Risen Christ in other religions[16].

One can find the seeds of the Word in the Sacred Scriptures of the different religions. In the past some western philosophers considered those scriptures as if parallel to some of the western philosophical systems. This took away the religious dimension of the Hindu scriptures and reduced them to mere philosophy. This misunderstanding is still continuing. But in the light of the II Vatican Council, the Church in India recognises the religious status of Hinduism and its sacred scriptures which were guiding the people down through the centuries for the arrival of the fullness of Truth, i.e. Christ.

The *Instrumentum Laboris* for the Asian Synod discovers the value of the non-Christian religions. It states that the great religions "have been in a concrete manner, the way to God for a majority of the peoples of Asia and God's way to them. The Spirit of God was at work in the minds and hearts of the ancient sages of the Asian continent. They have left to its peoples the record of their spiritual enlightenment in their sacred books. Their teachings still govern the religious, moral and social life of many peoples of Asia"[17].

There is a desire in the Catholic Church in India to give appropriate place for the Sacred Scriptures in the context of the administration of the Sacraments. In the recent "Special Assembly for Asia of the Synod of Bishops"[18], Patrick D'Souza, Bishop of Varanasi, India, expressed the view that there is a need for exploring the possibility of reading the Hindu Scriptural Passages in the Christian sacramental celebrations. Following is his intervention in the assembly: "Hinduism is kept alive by a strong tradition of myths and stories, embodied in the narratives known as *Katha*. All Indians, including Christians are familiar with this popular devotional literature. We must build on this heritage. *Nostra aetate* urges us to acknowledge and promote the good in all religions.

Undoubtedly there is the danger of forgetting or downgrading the Christ event. But the opposite is worse. There is a greater danger of forgetting that the Lord is the God of history; that he has prepared our people for our Lord Jesus....This will...nurture the necessary continuity from the Hindu experience of the mystery of God and the Christian experience. The Gospel should become *Yesu Katha*, story of Jesus in India. Jesus would be the fulfilment of Indian folklore and mythology, emphasizing the pilgrim, searcher character of the Church.

The Liturgy of the Word, whether in the daily Breviary or in the Eucharist should positively nurture the continuity of God's providence, with well-selected passages from Hindu literature. It is difficult to produce any theological reason against this procedure. It would affirm effectively the working of the Spirit even outside the Church, teaching God's progressive manifestation of the story of salvation in the life of the nations, and thus in the saving mystery of Jesus, the only mediator between God and man"[19].

It is because of the workings of Spirit that there are reflections of Truth in the sacred scriptures of other religions. Similarly it can be considered that the Spirit is operating through the various religious symbols. Bishop Gali Bali, Chairman of the CBCI Doctrinal Commission, while reporting the theological trends in India writes: "Many symbols of the Divine have had a positive influence on the authentic spirituality of our ancestors and many of our contempo-

raries. The incarnation of the Divine in Jesus seems to have liberated us from the fear of representing the Divine in Human form. Those symbols are not 'idols' in the biblical sense of the word. To what extent can they be tolerated, accepted or integrated into the cultural and religious expression of Indian Christianity is a matter of ongoing discernment and theological discussion"[20].

### Saviours and the Saviour Jesus Christ

II Vatican Council's respect and appreciation for the other religions are all centred on Jesus Christ. That is why basing on the New Testament the Council instructed that in the multireligious context Jesus Christ has to be presented as the unique and the universal saviour. The Church in India is aware of the challenges involved in implementing Council's mandate. The problem was articulated in the *Instrumentum Laboris* for the Asian Synod. It has stated that the followers of various religions are increasingly prepared to accept Jesus Christ even as God. "However, this does not seem to be a reason for them to accept him as the only Saviour. The trend among the followers of these religions, especially the Hindus, is to consider all religions as equally good. For them, the Hindu gods and Christ are only the different manifestations of the same God. Even those who believe in Christ as God do not see the necessity to embrace the Christian religion ..." (30)[21].

There is no doubt that the Catholic Church in India is confessing and proclaiming the uniqueness and universality of Jesus Christ in the context of the gods, the saviours and the founders of the various religions. Still, the Church in India struggles to answer the question: 'How effectively and convincingly can she explain Christ as the one and only Saviour and unique mediator of salvation distinct from the founders of India's other great religions?' (cf. 30)[22].

### Presence of Jesus Christ in Other Religions

The II Vatican council recognises the presence of Jesus Christ and the operation of the grace of his Spirit in other religions in an unseen way (II Vatican, *Gaudium Et Spes*, 22, cf. *II Vatican, Lumen Gentium*, 16).

Consequently there are a lot of attempts in the Catholic Church in India to present Jesus in the Indian garb using the support of various philosophical and cultural concepts of Hinduism (30)[23]. Christ was presented, for example, as the *Guru*[24]. This concept is more appealing to the Indian mind than Christ as 'the Liberator' which is "too restricted to a worldly philosophy and outlook" (26)[25].

The Indian theology gave serious attempts to articulate Church's desire "to discover and acknowledge the signs of Christ's presence and the working of the Holy Spirit"(32)[26] in other religions. The concept 'Unknown Christ of Hinduism'[27] is the result of such an attempt.

### Christ in the Context of Religions seeking Harmony

The II Vatican council perceived the human beings' religious aspirations and the fundamental questions expressed in their religions (II Vatican, *Nostra Aetate*, 1). The basic desire of the people expressed in the Sacred Scriptures of Hinduism as well as in that of the other religions, is for the harmony between the realm of the divine and the human, the transcendent and the immanent, emptiness and fullness death and life, suffering and joy, the finite and infinite, poverty and riches, weakness and power, the temporal and the eternal, the historical and the cosmic. These apparently contrasting and contradictory realities paradoxically merge into one in Hinduism especially in advaita vedanta. The Church views that such "an encoun-

ter between the divine and the human, the absolute transcendent and the finite has definitively taken place in Jesus Christ ... In Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word of God, crucified and risen, the above paradoxes find a point of convergence" (30)[28].

### Missionary Task of Dialogue and Proclamation

The Spirit working in the Religions inspires the Missionary task of dialogue and proclamation. (John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, DEC. 7, 1990. 29)[29] This shows that evangelisation has two intimately interconnected and complementary tasks (John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, DEC. 7, 1990.55)[30].

One is Dialogue and the other is proclamation. Thus Inter-religious dialogue is a part of the Church's evangelising mission[31].

### Fellowship and Dialogue with the People of Other Religions

The Council calls for dialogue with the non-Christian religions (cf. II Vatican, *Gaudium Et Spes*, 92; *Nostra Aetate*, 2). This dialogue has its roots in the very concept of Religion, which is a dialogue between Man and God (Cf. Paul VI, ES 70). The Pope said in Madras, India, that "dialogue is a means of seeking after truth and sharing it with others"[32]. It is this 'Truth' that has come to unite all the people as one humankind in love[33].

### Truth, the Cornerstone of Inter-religious Dialogue in India

It is the Truth what "human beings have in common and on what promotes fellowship among them" (cf. II Vatican, *Nostra Aetate*, 1). "The Catholic Church recognizes the truths that are contained in the religious traditions of India"[34]. Religions in India, especially Hinduism, are ardent seekers of Truth. In this context "dialogue is a means of seeking after truth and sharing it with others"[35]. *Dignitatis Humanae* of Vatican II states that by dialogue people will be sharing "with each other the truth they have discovered, or are convinced they have discovered, in such a way that they help one another in the search for truth" (DH 2).

### Dialogue seeks Unity respecting the Plurality of Religions in India

The Vatican Council's call for inter-religious dialogue does not mean a superficial disregard of the profound differences that exist between Church and the other religions. Pope John Paul II says that it is precisely because the different religions in India, such as the Hinduism, Islam, Sikhism, Buddhism, Jainism, Parsiism and Christianity, "often differ on certain important points that an attitude of mutual respect and esteem is all the more necessary"[36]. The religions must enter into dialogue not only because of the disagreeing points "The Church is strongly convinced that there are many religious, [and] social...questions in which close and fruitful collaboration is possible, indeed necessary"[37].

According to Pope John Paul II, in the multireligious society like India, the Inter-religious dialogue will help the people to work together for the defence of shared human and spiritual values, and for the promotion of integral human development. The dialogue will be a catalytic agent for giving a sense of solidarity among all religions in their effort to fight against the militant religious fundamentalism which threatens the unity of the people of India[38].

### Discovering the Riches of Other Religions

The Vatican Council instructs the need for a deeper study of the cultures and religions of the people and to have inter-religious dialogue to discover the working of the Spirit in those re-

ligions. The in-depth studies on Hinduism and the dialogue with Hindus are producing amazing fruits in the inter-religious realms.

First of all it enables the Church and the theologians to remove the past prejudices[39] on Hindu religious experiences. For example, the *advaita* experience was marked as a monistic philosophy and was viewed with suspicion. Theologians are now gradually coming to the understanding that *advaita* does not mean to say that the relation between Brahman and the world is neither one nor two. The relationship between the two is a non-dual mystery.

The inter-religious dialogue also helps to evolve new theological insights through a process of reinterpretation of Hindu religious concepts. For example, human experience of the relation of Brahman and Athman expressed in the Upanishad as *aham brahma asmi* (I am Brahman) need not be interpreted as God is man or vice versa. It can be interpreted as the deep blinding mystical experience of man in union with the brightness of eternal mystery of the Light or the Truth that illumines all. Pope John Paul almost touches upon this *advaitic* experience when he talked in Madras to the representatives of the various Religions of India. While sharing his views on the spirituality of interiority, he said: "Spirituality teaches that at the core of all outward appearances there is that inner self which in so many ways is related to the Infinite. This Spirituality of inwardness ... is ... predominant in the Indian religious tradition"[40].

In the dialogue context even the methodology of inter-religious dialogue itself will be changed. Such a dialogue will begin from a prior dialogue with God that takes place in one's 'cave of the heart'[41].

#### Dialogue and Inter-religious Prayer meetings

The Spirit of God is working in the prayers of the people of different religions. In a message to the people of Asia taking inspiration from St. Paul's letter to the Romans, John Paul II said that in the prayer of the human spirit "an echo will be heard of the same Spirit who, knowing the limits and weakness of the human person, himself prays in us and on our behalf ... (Rom. 8:26)"[42]. Therefore "Every authentic prayer is under the influence of the Spirit 'who intercedes insistently for us...because we do not even know how to pray as we ought,' but he prays in us 'with unutterable groaning' and 'the one who searches hearts knows what are the desires of the Spirit' (Rom. 8:26-27). We can indeed maintain that every authentic prayer is called forth by the Holy Spirit, who is mysteriously present in the heart of every person"[43].

In India in the inter-religious dialogue situations of sharing of intimate religious experiences the dialogue flourishes to the inter-religious prayer sessions. Almost all the inter-religious Dialogue centres in India have such regular prayer sessions. There is no need to describe here that the Present Pope is well known for his giving leadership to the inter-religious prayers in the different parts of the world for example in Assisi (Oct. 27, 1986)[44].

#### Need for Evangelisation as the Right of the People to know Christ

Dialogue "does not dispense from evangelisation" (John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 55)[45]. In a letter to the Bishops of Asia, the Pope wrote that the Church acknowledges the traces of true and holy elements "in the religious traditions of Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam as reflection of that truth which enlightens all. ..." But this "does not lessen her duty and resolve to proclaim ... Jesus Christ ... (II Vatican, *Nostra Aetate*, 2)" [46]. We must respect and hold the religions in high esteem. Still, at the same time it is the duty of the religion of Jesus Christ to proclaim the Gospel, because the people of the other religions "have the right to know the riches of the mystery of Christ (cf. Ep 3:8)" (EN 53)[47].

## Evangelisation in the Asian Context

Evangelization in the Asian context is very much a sharing of religious experience rather than mere proclamation. "In Asia, words are not enough, it is the religious experience that transforms one's life which gives credibility to what one says and does"[48]. Here the preaching of the Word has to be in the form of sharing of religious experience. This is because "the emphasis in Asia has always been on religious experience rather than on dogma ... Christ is better communicated, not on the purely theoretical or verbal level in an orderly presentation of doctrines, but thorough a shared experience. In Asia, the medium of approaching the Absolute or Divine is not word, but silence. The most effective and credible proclamation of the Risen Lord is the unspoken witness of a person who has undergone a deep god-experience and whose life is transformed accordingly" (47)[49].

Christians who have been transformed by faith in Christ must "share what is deepest in their lives, their experience of faith"[50]. In the Asian inter-religious dialogue context the spontaneous question to the other is not, 'What do you believe?' but 'What has been your spiritual experience?'. Such interaction of faith experience "is perhaps the only kind of proclamation possible in some parts of Asia." (47)[51].

The present Pope was convinced of the need of sharing the religious experience rather than mere preaching in the Asian context. From the contact with the representatives of the non-Christian spiritual traditions the Pope was convinced that "the future of mission depends to a great extent on contemplation".[52]

## Religion and Culture

The Council upholds that Church is the ordinary means of salvation and reminds us about Christ's affirmation of the necessity of baptism. In the missionary situation of India, baptism sometimes puts people in a difficult situation of severing them from their social and cultural heritage. Valerian D'Souza bishop of Poona, India, has raised this concern on the floor of the Synod of Bishops of Asia. He has said that there are people in India, who wish to be baptised, but because of some serious reasons these 'believers' do not ask for Baptism. Conversion often fuels animosities towards Christianity. According the Hindu personal law a convert to other religion will totally disinherit the ancestral property. Finding a marriage partner becomes difficult. For example, even the sisters of a Hindu lady who gets baptised will find it extremely difficult to find partners, because of her conversion. These 'believers' have accepted Christ and wish to belong to the Church and to receive the Holy Communion. But they belong neither to their own religious community nor to the visible Church. In this background the Bishop calls for the need for a deeper theological and pastoral study of the baptism of desire and its relationship with the visible Church. "The Church has to discover ways of dealing with these believers in Jesus Christ, on the one hand, to understand their social, cultural, economic and family difficulties and, on the other hand, to lead them to full communion with Christ and his Church"[53].

It will not be the mind of the Vatican Council that those who embrace Christ and his Church be cut of from their familial, social or cultural heritage. The question here is one that of distinguishing between the cultural elements and the elements fundamental to the Christian faith. The above-mentioned situations in India make the Church to reflect on how in the past the problem of circumcision was tackled by the Jerusalem Council as described by the Acts of the Apostles.

## Anxieties of the Catholic Church in India

The Church in India is aware that she is living in a country with different religions strongly convinced of the uniqueness of their own faith. Sometimes this conviction leads to the ex-

tre form of religious fundamentalism. Because of the experience of the aggressive mission practised by some missionaries in the past by the backing of the colonial powers, the religions in India are still suspecting that Christianity is indirectly exercising the colonial power over them. In this context the Christian expression of the faith convictions expressed by II Vatican Council and the subsequent magisterium such as: Jesus Christ is the only unique and universal saviour, Church as the ordinary means of salvation, the discernment of the Spirit's presence among the people is the responsibility of the Church (John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 29)[54] are all often misunderstood as "apparent expressions of superiority or cultural imperialism"[55]. In a Colloquium of Bishops and Theologians in India (1997) this concern was expressed: "In contact with those of other faith persuasions, one comes across an objection levelled against Christianity that with its dogmatic formulations, Christianity gives the impression of exhausting the mystery of God. Some felt that Christianity makes itself absolute and by implication looks down on others"[56].

Here the Church in India is experiencing the tension between faith conviction and the expression of the faith conviction. She is struggling to communicate her faith guided by Christian principle of *kenosis* and *agape*. She is convinced that the "special presence of the Spirit in the Church is not a reason to claim superiority"[57], but for a service to the humanity after the model of Jesus Christ who laid down his life for the salvation of the people. In doing so she hopes that she will not be suspected of having in her a hidden militant fundamentalism and authoritarianism; on the contrary she will be able to expose her true nature as a humble agent of Jesus Christ in working out the "unity and love among [the people], indeed among the nations"(II Vatican, *Nostra Aetate*, 1).

### Conclusion

The basic impact of the positive attitude of II Vatican Council on the Catholic Church of India is that the Church feels that she is a co-pilgrim with the people of other religions having one origin and one ultimate goal (II Vatican, *Nostra Aetate*, 1). This Church who is living in a largely pluralistic situation humbly meditates in the cave of her heart on the gift that God has given her and also to other religions. She is sharing her experience of the Risen Lord and the wonders that the same Lord is working in other religions with her fellow pilgrims with Christ's own principle of love. This helps the Church in India to be a witness for the peace and harmony in the society of different religions often ridden with religious intolerance, fundamentalism, religious and communal tensions and conflicts.

1] Paul VI, *Address at the Opening of the Second Session of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council*, Sept. 29, 1963.

2] John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, Dec. 7, 1990. 55. Unless otherwise stated all the references concerning Papal Encyclicals and Letters, and different documents from Vatican except the Documents from II Vatican Council are taken from Francesco Gioia, (edt.), *Inter-religious Dialogue: The Official Teaching of the Catholic Church (1963-1995)*, USA: Pauline Books & Media, 1997.

3] Joint Document of the Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue and the congregation for Evangelisation of Peoples, (May 19, 1991), *Dialogue and Proclamation: Reflection and Orientatioons on Inter-religious Dialogue and the Proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ*, (29).

4] cf. also II Vatican, *Gaudium Et Spes*, 32, 38, 39, *Lumen Gentium* 16, *Ad Gentes*, 4.

5] John Paul II, *Dominum et Vivificantem*, 53.

6] Cf. also John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 28.

7] Cf. II Vatican, *Ad Gents* 3, 11,15; *Gaudium Et Spes*, 10-11, 22, 26, 38, 41, 92-93.

8] John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 28. Cf. also John Paul 9, *Dominum et Vivificantem*, 54.

9] John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 28.

10] John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 28.

11] John Paul II, *Dominum et Vivificantem*, 53.

12] John Paul II, *Redemptor Hominis*, 11, 12; cf also *Dominum et Vivificantem*, 169; *Redemptoris Missio*, 29.

13] John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 29.



- 14] II Vatican, *Nostra Aetate*, 2.
- 15] John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 28.
- 16] Cf. *Ad Gentes*. 3,11,15; II Vatican, *Gaudium Et Spes*, 10-11, 22, 26, 38, 41, 92-93. Once again it is the same Spirit that is also active in the Church. Therefore "the universal activity of the Spirit is not to be separated from his particular activity within the Body of Christ, which is the Spirit". John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 29.
- 17] "*Instrumentum Laboris: Special Assembly for Asia of the Synod of Bishops*," in *L'Osservatore Romano*, (Ed. English), 25 Feb. 1998, p. VII.
- 18] It was convened in Rome from 19<sup>th</sup> April to 14 May, 1998.
- 19] Patrick Paul D'Souza, "Build on Hindu heritage to spread Good News of Christ," in "*Special Assembly For Asia Of The Synod Of Bishops*," (19th April-14 May, 1998), in *L'Osservatore Romano*, (Ed. English), 6 May 1998, pp. 6-7. The need for reading, in the context of eucharistic celebration, selected passages from the Scriptures of other religions was under discussion among the Indian theologians. Cf. D.S. Amalorpavadass (ed.), *Research Seminar on Non-Biblical Scriptures*, Bangalore: 1974. Cf. also Ishanand Vempeny, *Inspiration in the Non-Biblical Scriptures*, Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, 1973.
- 20] Gali Bali, *Meeting with the Bishops of India (21-24 October 1996)*, Report of Cardinal Ratzinger and Theological Trends in India, New Delhi: Doctrinal Commission, CBCI Centre, 1998, 1998, p. 27.
- 21] "*Instrumentum Laboris: Special Assembly for Asia of the Synod of Bishops*," in *L'Osservatore Romano*, (Ed. English), 25 Feb. 1998, p. VI.
- 22] *Ibid.*
- 23] *Ibid.*
- 24] Cf. Xavier Irudayaraj, "Christ, the Guru," *Jeevadhara*, 2 (1972), pp. 241-249; cf. Also Xavier Irudayaraj, "The Guru in Hinduism and Christianity," *Vidyajyoti*, 39 (1975), pp. 338-351; Vandana, "The Guru as Present Reality," *Vidyajyoti*, 39 (1975), pp. 352-357.
- 25] "*Instrumentum Laboris: Special Assembly for Asia of the Synod of Bishops*," in *L'Osservatore Romano*, (Ed. English), 25 Feb. 1998, p. VI.
- 26] *Ibid.*, p. VII.
- 27] Cf. Panikkar, *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism*. London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1964.
- 28] "*Instrumentum Laboris: Special Assembly for Asia of the Synod of Bishops*," in *L'Osservatore Romano*, (Ed. English), 25 Feb. 1998, p. VI.
- 29] John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 29.
- 30] The Church "sees no conflict between proclaiming Christ and engaging in inter-religious dialogue. Instead, she feels the need to link the two.... These two elements must maintain both their intimate connection and their distinctiveness; as though they were interchangeable" "John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 55.
- 31] John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 55.
- 32] John Paul II, "To Representatives of the Various Religions of India," (Madras, February 5, 1986), as in Gioia, *op. cit.*, pp. 325, § 509. The Council perceives the incomplete but real presence of 'Truth' in the other religions and respects the other religions. It is in this context the Council called for dialogue with the non-Christian religions (cf. II Vatican, *Gaudium Et Spes*, 92; *Nostra Aetate*, 2). John Paul says that through "dialogue, the Church seeks to uncover the 'seeds of the Word' (II Vatican, *Ad Gentes*, 11, 15), 'a ray of truth which enlightens all men' (II Vatican, *Nostra Aetate*, 2) and thus to discover and acknowledge the signs of Christ's presence and the working of the Spirit in the individuals and in the religious traditions of mankind (John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 56).
- 33] It is the duty and task of the Church to promote "unity and love among men, indeed among the nations" (II Vatican, *Nostra Aetate*, 1). Therefore the synod "ardently implores the Christian faithful to maintain good fellowship among the nations" (II Vatican, *Nostra Aetate*, 5). The fellowship among the religions can be achieved first of all by Christians' familiarity with the national and religious traditions of the people. By inter-religious dialogue they can uncover the seeds of Word, the Truth that unites all in love hidden in the different religions (II Vatican, *Ad Gentes*, 11). Through dialogue and collaboration with the followers of the other religions the Christians can recognise, preserve and promote the good things, spiritual and moral as well as the socio-cultural values found among the people (II Vatican, *Nostra Aetate*, 2).
- 34] John Paul II, "To Representatives of the Various Religions of India," as in Gioia, *op. cit.*, p. 324, § 507.
- 35] John Paul II, "To Representatives of the Various Religions of India," as in Gioia, *op. cit.*, p. 326, § 509.
- 36] John Paul II, "to Representatives of the Indian Community of Rome," as in Gioia, *op. cit.*, pp. 339-339, § 527.
- 37] *Ibid.*
- 38] John Paul II, "To the Bishops of Bombay, Goa, Hyderabad, Nagpur and Verapoly, India on Their *Ad Limina* Visit," as in Gioia, *op. cit.*, p. 561, § 845.

- 39] Pope Paul VI, "Message to the Council of Religions of Vietnam," Dialogue "will contribute to the dissipation of misunderstandings, to the prevention of unjustifiable barriers that separate the sons and daughter of the same land...." As in Gioia, *op. cit.*, p. 144, § 231.
- 40] John Paul II, "To Representatives of the Various Religions of India," (Madras, February 5, 1986, as in Gioia, *op. cit.*, pp. 325, § 507.
- 41] Cf. Abhishiktananda, *Hindu-Christian Meeting Point: Within the cave of the Heart* (revised edition), Delhi: ISPC, 1976, p. 48.
- 42] John Paul II's "Message to the People of Asia", Manila, 21 Feb. 1981, ND 1040.
- 43] John Paul II, "To the Roman Curia," December 22, 1986, as in Gioia, *op. cit.*, p. 366, § 572. (This speech was given after his participation of the World Day of Prayer for Peace, which had been held at Assisi on 27 October 1986). Cf. Also John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, DEC. 7, 1990. 177.
- 44] Cf. John Paul II, "To the Representatives of Various Religions of the World Day of Prayer for Peace." as in Gioia, *op. cit.*, pp. 343-345.
- 45] John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 55.
- 46] John Paul II, "Letter to the Bishops of Asia", Rome, June 23, 1990, as in Gioia, *op. cit.*, p. 437, § 685.
- 47] Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, (Dec. 8, 1975), Apostolic Exhortation, as in Gioia, *op. cit.*, p. 82-83, § 143.
- 48] "*Instrumentum Laboris: Special Assembly for Asia of the Synod of Bishops,*" in *L'Osservatore Romano*, (Ed. English), 25 Feb. 1998, p. X.
- 49] *Ibid.*
- 50] *Ibid.*
- 51] *Ibid.*
- 52] As quoted in *Ibid.*
- 53] Valerian D'Souza, "Obstacles that stand in the way of Baptism in India," in "*Special Assembly For Asia Of The Synod Of Bishops*," (19th April-14 May, 1998), in *L'Osservatore Romano*, (Ed. English), 6 May 1998, p. 6.
- 54] John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 29.
- 55] Gali Bali, *Meeting with the Bishops of India (21-24 October 1996), Report of Cardinal Ratzinger and Theological Trends in India*, New Delhi: Doctrinal Commission, CBCI Centre, 1998, 1998. p. 28.
- 56] Gali Bali, *Colloquium of Bishops and Theologians*, NBCLC, Bangalore, 10-13 Dec. 1997 (report), New Delhi: CBCI Doctrinal Commission, 1998, p.2.
- 57] *Ibid.*, p.3.