



# Diakonia – the transformation into the hands of God



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Diakonia – The transformation  
into the hands of God

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*Translation by David A. Thorp*

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# Introduction

## “Diakonia and the Lutheran Communion in Latin America and the Caribbean”

*Translation by David A. Thorp*

In publishing this book, the Lutheran World Federation would like to put into your hands some samples of the diaconal work of the Lutheran Communion in Latin America and the Caribbean.

In response to the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, we are offering a contribution to society with this unique book written in Spanish and Portuguese. This call implies an active response and commitment to a fuller, deeper life, facing the shortcoming that afflicts the individual and social life of our people. We announce and manifest that our service as churches takes place in the following way: In their 2015 Leadership Conference in La Paz, Bolivia and guided by the theme “Freed by the Grace of God to serve: a practical diakonia” (model or service) of the Lutheran churches has affirmed to serve by following Christ in announcing the good news in the holistic way: offering spiritual and material support and recognizing the diaconal/service as a brand, an expression and identity of the Christian church.

The Gospel is a constant proclamation in word and action – this we call Diaconal Action of the church – we understand that the neighbor does not see only the human person, poor, oppressed, helpless, excluded, stigmatized, rejected but to the whole person created in the image and likeness of God who has been robbed of his or her rights. This work is constantly trying to recreate and understand each person in the joint and

permanent search for a dignified and abundant life that God desires for all creation.

Through these reflections and testimonies, you will be able to learn about the multifaceted participation and commitment of these believers in service (diakonia) in the defense of life and all its expressions. They do so with the conviction and assurance that Jesus our Savior identifies with the weak, marginalized, those who are rejected and accepts them and reintegrates them into society, in contrast to the ideology of consumerism, which constantly treats human beings as disposable.

Being followers of Christ demands each one of us to concentrate our efforts so that they may be signs of the Kingdom of God here and now. Jesus not only shows the way and moves forward but it accompanies us and sustains us in our journey despite the fact that the criteria of powerful, businesslike and indolent would like to immobilize us.

The book is a theological and practical resource, therefore a tool to rethink the diaconal task. It systematizes local diaconal experiences of various churches, making shared experiences into a participatory document that shares achievements and learning for the good of all.

The first part deepens biblical-theological bases of the diakonia, recovering for example, the message of divine reconciliation we find possible at the Lord's Table and in the diaconal loving act (of service).

The second part offers the aspect of diaconal "interconnections", that is, the shared experiences of transformation work in a network that intertwines the actions whose main objective is to serve and give dignity to people. Engaging in this work takes on an important role allowing the integration of actions that promote life in dignity.

Finally, the third part relates daily experiences in diaconal work. For example we share diverse actions within diverse contexts and challenges where the churches serve in the mission of God. We explore trauma and health issues; the search for peace; prison ministry; work with heirloom seeds and taking care of nature; comprehensive care of women's health; education and ministry of native peoples are all part of this chapter.

We pray to the Lord that the demonstration of our work will be a reaffirmation of Christian commitment and inspiration to serve God and neighbor.

Rev. Dr Gloria Rojas  
Vice President of the Lutheran World Federation  
for Latin America and the Caribbean



# Part I

## Biblical and Theological Foundations of Diakonia



# Philanthropy and Charity/ Diakonia: Dialectic between Julian and the Galileans<sup>1</sup>

*Helio Aparecido Teixeira<sup>2</sup>*

*Translation by Marie Ann Wangen Krahm*

## Introduction

What does philanthropy consist of? There are those who interpret philanthropy as the social history of moral imagination. In modernity, philanthropy consists of the ever-increasing removal of human beings from the uncivilized milieu in which the processes of material and spiritual scarcity tend to bind the human beings.<sup>3</sup> This removal is virtually conceived by the process of awareness-raising of the potentialities of the human genre in social relations. The word philanthropy, of Greek origin, is led to Latin through *humanitas* based on the cultural processes in the Greek notion of *paideia*. The terms philanthropy and *humanitas* are, in this sense, semantically interconnected in that from which they concur from the term *caritas Christi*, the junction between the practice of Christian love and philanthropy as a principle

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<sup>1</sup> This article makes part of the doctorate thesis defended in 2014 in the Faculty EST – Graduation Program under the advisory of Professor Dr Wilhelm Wachholz. The thesis was supported by the Coordination for Professionalism of Staff at Superior Level (CAPES). The article includes some changes.

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<sup>3</sup> SLOTERDIJK, Peter. *Regras para parque humano: uma resposta à carta de Heidegger sobre o humanismo*. São Paulo: Estação Liberdade, 2000, 16.

which inoculates *humanitas* (humanity) in the individuals of a certain society based on certain social relations. The Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen once saw the joining of these principles as the dawning of a new period in which the spirit of solidarity among human beings would emerge as an *epocality* if one can say it thus, transcribed in the work *Emperor and Galilean*. Ibsen places on the lips of his characters the possibility of a correct human which would join the Galilean spirit with Greco-Roman civilizing logic, converging into a Third Empire.<sup>4</sup>

In the history of Christianity, the first attempt of a great governing person to suggest the practice of philanthropy as state policy in the attempt to bar processes of social disintegration is conferred upon Emperor Julian. This historic fact is seen in the disputes that the emperor had against the Christian groups in the fourth century of our Christian-Jewish-Roman-Greek era. Based on this experience in which the social value of the daily practices of domiciliation and sororal help is recognized, the origin of philanthropy became merged with the will and the spirit of goodwill of a specific citizen in favor of the good functioning of society. It is birthed in the will and desire of a person who owns goods or financial resources, who, faced with situations of scarcity, seeks to encourage the palliative remediation or even mark the initial point of social suturing of the anomic states in which certain social groups are found.

This article seeks to analyze the notion of philanthropy from the paideutic perspective, the filiation of which to humanism made possible the elaboration of practices aimed at the educational formation as the wholeness of the social being. In this sense, aspects concerning the history of the term philanthropy and its intimate ties to Christian *caritas*, that is, the theological notion of the love of God will be evaluated.

## 1. Philanthropy as a paideutic notion

The use of the word philanthropy is tied to the Roman emperor Flavius Claudius Julian, or Flavius Claudius Iulianus (331-363), a Roman emperor

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<sup>4</sup> Ibsen wrote *The Emperor and Galilée* in the same time in which Germany got unified (1871). William Archer believed that Archer sow in this some element of the religious tradition coming together with “pagan” elements about the possibility of centralizing power. Archer believe that Ibsen describes Juliano as a government that did not how to understand (read) *the spirit of his time*, he didn’t understand that the development of the Christian religion was an unstoppable process in the fourth century. IBSEN, Henirk. *Emperor and Galilean*: a world-historic drama – Introduction by William Archer. London: William Heinemann, 1907, 22.

who reigned from the year 361 to his death, two years later, and who is considered the last non-Christian emperor. He sought to restore the ancient worships of Rome. To do this, he started persecuting the Christians even after the Christian churches were already imbued in the social structures of the empire.<sup>5</sup> Countering the Christians who emphasized the *Caritas Christi* (Christian love), based on the love of God (*Deus caritas est*), Latin translation of the Greek term *Agape*, he proposes a form of love of humanity, philanthropy (*φιλανθρωπια*), joining the terms *filos* (*φίλος*) which means friendship and *anthropos* (*άνθρωπος*) which means human. Following the formula of Christianity, he puts forth the following question: “What is the best way to imitate the gods?,” and the answer comes through the emperor Marcus Aurelius, “have the least number of needs and do good to the greatest number of people possible.”<sup>6</sup> Julian had been raised under Christian tutorship and was baptized while still young. However, wishing to improve the situation of the empire, he sought to dissuade the people from the Christian worship and persecute those who did not accept serving the ancient divinities of Rome.<sup>7</sup> Faced with food scarcity and with various situations of impoverishment of the population, the criticisms and the crises raised against him made him indignant to point of exclaiming: “In the name of the gods, why are you ungrateful toward me? Because I fed you with my own goods?” Julian used his goods to lighten the difficulties of parts of the population. He was a *friend of humanity*, one of the *Philanthropist* of the empire.<sup>8</sup> According to some historians, Julian lived in an ambiguous relationship with the Christian faith, and would have said on his death bed: “You have won, oh Galilean!”<sup>9</sup> a bitter expression of his recognition that Christianity was, in the end, incorporated into Roman society.

The contraposition suggested by Julian was not accidental. The Christian groups understood that love was not owed to humanity, but to God, who had shown his love first, making himself a person among people. The love of God was owed to the neighbor as an intermediary<sup>10</sup> determination which

<sup>5</sup> Juliano, O Imperador. *Contra os Galielus*. Cadernos de Tradução, Instituto de Letras UFRGS, n. 27, jan/jun 2011.

<sup>6</sup> SOCK, Bower. *Julian: the Apostate*. Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1978.

<sup>7</sup> IBSEN, 1907, p. 22.

<sup>8</sup> GABBARDO, Gabriel Requia. Antióquia e a Fome: dois imperadores romanos entre a sanguinolência e a sátira. *Revista do Corpo Discente do Programa de Pós-Graduação em História da Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul (AEDOS)*, v. 1, n. 1, 2008. Available on: <http://seer.ufrgs.br/aedos/index>. Accessed on: 21 Oct. 2013.

<sup>9</sup> MEDEIROS, Walter de. Venceste, ó Galileu! Memória do último imperador pagão. *Revista Ágora, Estudos Clássicos em Debate*, n. 4, p. 119-126, 2002.

<sup>10</sup> Kierkegaard affirms that love of God expresses an intermediate determination between human beings. He affirms that the understanding from afar is one aspect (so that we do not

shines in the clearing of human existence in the midst of the difficulties which life in society can generate. Julian's proposal rendered him the epithet of apostate, the one who renounces the faith. Just as the question of the young rich man to Jesus pointed to the formula of following and imitating (Matthew 19: 16-30), Julian also proposes recapturing what would be the best way of imitating the gods saying: "We must take care! What godliness (that is, Christianity) has promoted most of all is human friendliness toward strangers, care for interment of the dead, and apparent purity in one's way of life. Each one of these virtues must, I think, be exercised by us with sincere zeal."<sup>11</sup> Julian's zeal, in fact, suggests sincerity. The testimony of his spirituality seems to indicate as such: "Graciously bestow upon all men felicity, the summit of which is the knowledge of the Gods."<sup>12</sup>

In this way he presents his proposal to counteract the Christians in another form of friendship toward humanity, pointing to the practice of the Christian groups as a strategic model to be imitated with the intent of showing the Romans that the ancient values, sought in the theologies of the Roman divinities, could create a better environment if articulated to the needs of the empire, which he considered were weakened due to the internal fights of the Christian groups, the followers of the Galilean.<sup>13</sup>

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act according to what we believe), and another is to understand closely when we practice what we confess. KIERKEGAARD, Søren. *As obras do amor: algumas considerações cristãs em forma de discursos*. Petrópolis: Vozes; Bragança Paulista: Universitária São Francisco, 2005. p. 130-131.

<sup>11</sup> BROX, Norbert. *Making Earth into Heaven: diakonia in the early Church*. In: GREINACHER, Norbert; METTE, Norbert. *Concilium: diakonia church for the others*. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark LTD, 1988, 35.

<sup>12</sup> JULIAN THE APOSTATE (331-363 AD) – Flavius Claudius Julianus or The Emperor Julian. *Oration to the Mother of the Gods*. Loeb Classics Translation by Wilmer Cave Wright (c.1913,1919,1923). In: Greek and Roman Literature: Home, Greek and Roman, Babylonian and Egyptian. Available on: [www.brainfly.net/html/julian.htm](http://www.brainfly.net/html/julian.htm). Accessed on: 25 Oct. 2013.

<sup>13</sup> The fourth century was marked by intense struggles among Christian groups. It is a period of disputes between groups that defended orthodoxy against heresies. The so-called Orthodox was made of groups that, to a large extent, were linked to political and military power in almost ambiguous way. These processes triggered all sorts of theological interpretation. We venture to say that there were those who saw in it the Christian faith overcoming difficulties under divine protection and, on the other hand, those who refused to see in this form of alliance any spirit consistent with Christian eschatology, almost always denying the absolute authority of power called "temporal". By orthodoxy, we can call the theological notions that have been made official accomplishing it by means of the intervening force of the State. That notion seems to be more the result of specific situations in dispute covering certain socio-cultural and political conditions. A religion mostly of slaves, the Christian faith empowers the subaltern classes in the empire, since the theological notion of the incarnation heralded the universal brotherhood. FOX, Robin Lane. *Pagans and Christians: in the Mediterranean World from the Second Century AD to the Conversion of Constantine*. London: Viking, 1986.

With Julian, philanthropy becomes a conceptual counterpoint to charity/diakonia.<sup>14</sup> It is about a Greco-Roman formula historically antithetized by the leader of the Roman State against actions of social character of the Christian groups which were spread throughout the whole empire in the first centuries of the Judeo-Christian era. The emperor Julian himself recognizes the political potential of charity.

It is at this point in particular (human love) that attention has to be given and a treatment has to be found. It has, I believe, reached the stage where the poor have been overlooked and neglected by our priests with the result that the godless Galileans (that is, the Christians), having noticed this, have applied themselves to this practice of love of their fellow-men. In this way the child thieves are exchanging their sacrifice for cake.”<sup>15</sup>

In the period of the Roman Empire, “the notion of Roman charity was not mediated by piety, but by prestige, associated to the usual language of magnanimity.”<sup>16</sup> The Christian groups had in the religious spirit the foundation for their actions of charity.<sup>17</sup> While the emperor proposed a spirit closer to the needs of the citizens, the Christians acted in an effective way in tending to the needy, as he himself recognizes:

Hellenism, however, does not advance as expected because of us, we who profess it [...] certainly, such a great transformation and of such quality in so little time, nothing would have dared to neither do little nor demand it. This means that we believe the situation is sufficient and that we do not see what more has contributed to the growth of atheism and humanity toward the foreigners and providing for the internment of the dead and the supposed seriousness of life? [...] Thus it is embarrassing that among the Jews there are no beggars and the

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<sup>14</sup> Christianity and diakonia are concepts for discursive and praxis-logical actions institutionalized or not. They were taken up in the nineteenth century by Christian groups dealing with social questions in Europe, mainly in Germany. See. TEIXEIRA, Helio Aparecido. *Antropofagapia: a public-idade cívica da prática social cristã*. São Leopoldo, RS, 2014. 276 p. Tese (Doutorado) – Escola Superior de Teologia, Programa de Pós-Graduação, São Leopoldo, 2014.

<sup>15</sup> BROX, 1988, 36.

<sup>16</sup> FIGUEIREDO, Daniel de. Conflito político-religioso no século IV dC: uma análise do discurso do imperador Juliano contra os galileus. Anais do II Encontro Nacional do GT História das Religiões e das Religiosidades. *Revista Brasileira de História das Religiões* (ANPUH), Maringá, v. 1, n. 3, 2009. p. 14. In: [www.dhi.uem.br/gtreligiao/rbhr/conflito\\_politico\\_religioso\\_no\\_seculo\\_iv.pdf](http://www.dhi.uem.br/gtreligiao/rbhr/conflito_politico_religioso_no_seculo_iv.pdf). Accessed on: 20 Oct. 2013.

<sup>17</sup> ULHORN, Gerhard. *Christian charity in the ancient church*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1883. p. 8-9.

Galilean ungodly ones feed ours besides theirs, while ours see that they are without our help.<sup>18</sup>

The worship of the gods was almost always marked by the distribution of food, mainly the meat of animals sacrificed in honor of the Roman authorities and the ancestors. These forms of worship, in turn, carried out specific configurations of distribution of supplies, many times provided by the authorities themselves and by the emperor himself. Many Christians would gather at these public festivities of cultic and distributive character, not without conflict, according to the episode which the First Letter of the Apostle Paul to the Corinthians describes (1 Corinthians 5). The emperor Julian was notorious at his festivities, says a witness that:

He (Julian) stained the altars with the blood of an excessive number of victims, sometimes offering one hundred bulls at once, with [more] uncountable herds of animals and with white birds hunted on earth and at sea, at such a level that almost every day his soldiers, which gorged themselves on the abundance of meat, living in a rude way and corrupted by their desire to drink, were carried (through the city) [...] on the shoulders of the passers-by of the public temples, where they rejoiced in banquets which deserved punishment, instead of indulgence, especially Petulantes and the Celts, whose lack of discipline at the time exceeded all limits. Besides this, the ceremonial rites were excessively augmented with heavy spending of money, which was rare before this. And now that it was permitted, anyone who professed knowledge of divination, the wise as well as the ignorant, without limits or rules placed upon them, could question the oracles and the entrails, which sometimes revealed the future.<sup>19</sup>

The emperor sought to revive the spirit of ancient cults by recognizing that the practice of love towards human beings would be a viable path. For this, he sought in the teaching of rhetoric the necessary tool to reach his goal, encouraging the dissemination of philanthropy among the teachers of rhetoric and the art. Julian prohibited the Christians from teaching in philosophy schools and from practicing their theology, that is: to read the

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<sup>18</sup> JULIANO. *Contra los Galileos, cartas y fragmentos, testimonios, leyes*. Introducciones, traducción y notas por José García Blanco y Pilar Jiménez Gazapo. Madrid: Editorial Gredos, 1982, 84.

<sup>19</sup> AMIANO MARCELINO *apud* GABBARDO, Gabriel Requia. *A disputa em torno da memória do imperador romano Juliano Augusto, dito o "apóstata", expressa nos séculos IV e V d.C.* Dissertação. 150 f. (Mestrado) – Programa de Pós-Graduação em História, Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS), Porto Alegre, 2010. Available on: [www.lume.ufrgs.br/bitstream/handle/10183/36056/000816281.pdf](http://www.lume.ufrgs.br/bitstream/handle/10183/36056/000816281.pdf). Accessed on: 23 Jul. 2014, 15.



philosophers and thinkers from the perspective of the Christian faith. He passed laws which impeded Christians from teaching. “Among these laws was that implacable one which prohibited Christian professors of rhetoric and in the second from teaching, unless they taught the adoration of the gods.”<sup>20</sup> He would say, jokingly: “why do you waste your time teaching from the Greek [texts] if the reading of your scriptures is sufficient for you?”<sup>21</sup> And he would finish saying: “[.] go back to the church of the Galileans and comment on Matthew and Luke.”<sup>22</sup> He also sought to revitalize the cities, trying to thus occupy the administrative gaps in the localities, which produced a growing process of centralization of the Roman State as of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century A.D., besides avoiding that the Christian leaders continue to exert influence in the regions distant from the capital of the Empire. In the attempt to place obstacles to the growing process of ascension of Christians to the Roman institutions and to the army, Julian sought to subsidize educational, administrative, legal, fiscal and philanthropic measures which had as their goal to establish a *pax juliana* in which the ancient religions of Rome, from a neo-platonic perspective, would foment the administrative centralization through the plurality of the cults. The hegemony of the Christian religion, which was emerging in that period indicated according to Julian’s discourses, was a danger to the empire. According to his *teurgia neoplatônica*, a practice that consisted in rites which were capable of purifying the soul and the body to contemplate what the gods did and wanted, Julian wanted to see each large religious group based on the specific characteristics which its culture substantiated. Thus, said he:

[...] Tell me, therefore, what causes the Celts and of the Germans to be valiant, the Greeks and the Romans in general to be politicians and humanitarians and, at the same time, firm and bellicose, the Egyptians more intelligent and resourceful, unskilled at war and the Syrians effeminate, and at the same time intelligent, exalted, vain and good at learning. [...] Thus, if these differences have grown ever greater and more important without the intervention of a greater and more divine providence, why are we going to uselessly make an effort and render worship to someone who does not, at all, watch over us? In truth, he does not concern himself with our lives, nor with our characteristics, nor with our customs, nor with our good governance, nor with our political institutions, but, in spite of this, it is proper that he receive honors from us? Absolutely not.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>20</sup> AMIANO MARCELINO *apud* FIGUEIREDO, 2009, 15.

<sup>21</sup> JULIANO, 1882, 229.

<sup>22</sup> JULIANO, 1982, p. 61.

<sup>23</sup> JULIANO, 1982, p. 61.

The emperor wanted to see expressed the religious culture of the peoples as the expression of a cosmogony in which Rome would be the greatest socially and culturally positively valued substantiation in the religious pantheon of antiquity. He said that the ideal characteristics of the peoples were being culturally established and that, because of this, it would be imprudent to render worship to a divinity which was in the genetic line of Judaism, a religion of a people who did not even have a nation and who did not foment any concern for the survival of the empire. Since the Roman Empire was the Neo-Platonic realization of the ideal characteristics of a specific people, the Romans, submission to a single form of worship would mean not giving due attention to the imitation of the gods, who clothed the Roman empire with glory from its beginning. In this way, in a polemical writing against the Christians, Julian urges that they return to Galilee.<sup>24</sup>

## 1.2 Philanthropy as *humanitas*

The philanthropy proposed by Julian, in this way, would be a concept based on a theology of the ancient cults of Rome, bound by a Neo-Platonic perspective which proposed a form of friendship toward the human (*Amicus humani generis*) as a way to imitate the gods and foment the donation of certain values in kind or in money for the promotion of the human good. He recognized that the lack of attention to this practice of love toward human beings had permitted the practice of charity by the Christians to spread. In making use of the concept of friendship towards humans to carry out his reforms in the empire, Julian seems to connote the need for a broad and necessary process of awareness raising of citizens that life in the city is imbued with the need for concern with the paths of the generating center of civility, the city as a place of law and right. In this sense, Julian's theological proposal brings together the words philanthropy and *humanitas*, present in the history of education as synonyms to designate people who learn the arts and cultivate the spirit of words, encouraging their use among human beings, indicating the sense of the term *παιδεία* (*Paideia*).<sup>25</sup> The term *φιλανθρωπία* (philanthropy) which means complacency, sweetness, benevolence, almost always appears with the approximate sense of the Greek word *παιδεία* (*Paideia*), which designates erudition and instruction in the fine arts, education in the broad sense (*erudito et institutio in*

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<sup>24</sup> JULIANO, 1982, p. 25-27.

<sup>25</sup> HEIDEGGER, Martin. *Carta sobre el humanismo*. Madrid: Alianza, 2006, 22.

bonas artes).<sup>26</sup> This cultivation of the arts and of languages as part of the process of caring for oneself reveals a gradual increase of values devoid of violence and aggression through which *humanitas* emerges.<sup>27</sup> Aulo Gélío explains that: “those who learn and are more interested in these arts are those who most deserve to be called *humani*. This study, to which only man among all living beings can dedicate himself, is called *humanitas*”.<sup>28</sup> Philanthropy in this sense is intimately related to a notion of cultivating the human development. In the city, there would be patterns of behavior specific to the city and its orderly environment, not savage, barbaric. This is the sense of the adjective *humanus*, characteristic of the person who lives in the city, someone befitting with the city ethos. This is how the talk of *ius humanum* began. One must observe certain elitism in the genealogy of the notion of philanthropy.

With regard to philanthropy, there is in it a binding term to *humanitas*, illocutionary behavior consistent with the educational processes that privilege the cultivation of feelings, virtues, dispositions and convictions regarding the *human condition*.<sup>29</sup> Such findings began to be perceived in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, in the period of the emperor Julian, heir to a *humanitas* intermittent with the Roman structures, against the Galileans, practitioners of a *caritas* of universal pretension, crossing through the history of the Judean-Christian West by operational syntheses to conjunctures which interpret in a consequent way the legacy of both charity as well as philanthropy, framed in conceptual formats of a *ius humanum*, which galvanize theories and legislations guided by constant advances in the gradual reduction of social violence which human beings, as social beings, need to overcome scarcity.

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<sup>26</sup> The concept of *paideia* was conceived in the 18<sup>th</sup> century as set of activities carried out as a humanizing process, in the sense of classical humanism, in which the human being receives as perception of learning the notion of his inability, that is, a being never completed. The word received several translations like formation in Portuguese, *bildung* in German, *dannelse* in Norwegian, *educación* in Spanish, JAEGER, 2001.

<sup>27</sup> The sense of caring as dehumanizing was well depicted by Heidegger and followed by Foucault and Boff. process HEIDEGGER, 1978; FOUCAULT, 2010; BOFF, Leonardo. *Saber cuidar: ética do humano, compaixão pela terra*. Petrópolis: Vozes, 1999.

<sup>28</sup> AULO GÉLIO *apud* CECATO, Cleuza. *Comentários Gramaticais de Aulo Gélío: uma proposta de tradução*. Dissertação. 231 f. Master thesis in Letras da Universidade Federal do Paraná, Curitiba, 2005. p. 197. Available on: [www.classicas.ufpr.br/projetos/dissertacoes/CleuzaCecato-ComentariosGramaticaisDeAuloGelio.pdf](http://www.classicas.ufpr.br/projetos/dissertacoes/CleuzaCecato-ComentariosGramaticaisDeAuloGelio.pdf). Accessed on: 25 Oct. 2013.

<sup>29</sup> Bauman affirms the word *humanitas* started to be used while Políbio described wars and violence when soldiers engaged with imprisoned persons. Contrary to *humanitas*, they acted in an unworthy way in the *civitas*. AUMAN, Richard A. *Human rights in Ancient Rome*. London and New York: Routledge, [s.d].

### 1.3 Philanthropy as a concept in dispute

The philanthropic and charity/diakonia entities, many times maintained by religious institutions or by philanthropists, men and women who had sufficient means for fiduciary deposits, begin to appear in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as palliative forms of social help, softening the impact caused by impoverishment and remediating possible spaces of social rupture, as in the case of abandonment of children, elderly and people with special needs, unable to work in the factories, housing women in situations of social frailty, among other forms of action. These practices already existed, however, now they emerge as social actions around a social *issue*.<sup>30</sup> This means that the systematic process of industrialization casts significant portions of the rural populations to the outskirts of the cities under the auspices of the authorities and of the various sectors of the societies which were, in large part, incapable of aggregating these population contingents to the processes of social assistance. Ever since the 14<sup>th</sup> century, according to Castel, the categorizing of poverty propitiated the formation of a group called *supernumeraries* or the *useless of the world*, which, due to a deficit of occupiable places in the social structure, resulted in the systematic segregation as a reserve army, leading to specific forms of qualification of the condition of poverty for the then existing forms of helping the poor.<sup>31</sup>

Throughout the last century, philanthropy has usually been tied to educational and health systems which provided study scholarships for young people without means and payment of certain hospital treatments.<sup>32</sup> The financing of studies of young people without means for self-sustenance as philanthropy can be identified in the actions of the churches (maybe these have invested the most up to the present time), masonic groups, Rotary groups, Lions groups, businesses, etc.<sup>33</sup> However, although philanthropy may be viewed through a paideutic perspective, many authors diverge as to its exact conceptual definition considering the new circumstances which the global configuration has taken on after the Second World War. Many consider each act of kindness in relation to a third person, even in the bosom of the family, to be philanthropy.<sup>34</sup> There are others who

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<sup>30</sup> See specific question in chapter 2.

<sup>31</sup> CASTEL, 2012, p. 96-97.

<sup>32</sup> CUETO, Marcos (Org.). *Missionaries of science: The Rockefeller Foundation and Latin America*. Bloomington; Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994.

<sup>33</sup> HALL, Peter Dobkin. *A Historical Overview of Philanthropy, Voluntary Associations, and Nonprofit Organizations in the United States, 1600–2000*. Available on: [www.hks.harvard.edu/fs/phall/Powell%20Essay-Final%20-%20rev.pdf](http://www.hks.harvard.edu/fs/phall/Powell%20Essay-Final%20-%20rev.pdf). Accessed on: 28 Oct. 2013.

<sup>34</sup> PROCHASKA, Frank. *Christianity and Social Service in Modern Britain: The Disinherited Spirit*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2006.

define philanthropy in a more restrictive way, as voluntarism, donation of money and material resources to improve society;<sup>35</sup> and there are those who understand it in relation to the legitimization of the social differences (*différence*)<sup>36</sup> when they defend the legitimacy of the direct and free action, without the red tape of the state bureaucracy.<sup>37</sup> Philanthropy is described as a field of various practices which does not combine actions with aims at profit.<sup>38</sup> In this field various forms of civil associations participate. In the 20th century, the Rockefeller Foundation became noteworthy for being an institution promoting very significant financing through partnerships in scientific research and in the distribution of study scholarships for researchers in technological areas of various parts of the world.<sup>39</sup> These people or institutions are known as *philanthropists*, *patrons*, *donors*, *well doers*, etc. According to Nielsen, these forms of social action constitute the concept of traditional philanthropy, which does not have its beginning based on the structuring of strategic-organizational bases and which specializes in promoting methods of action according to the market logic. The modern view of philanthropy began to be thought of along with human development as a social process.<sup>40</sup>

The *new philanthropy*, as designated by some, is based on the transformation of a donation into a social investment, having as base a strategy and specific methods of organizational planning. In this model, superior results are sought and the broadening of benefits to the whole social group as the goal of the donations and not that they are simply given for the solution of sporadic issues with short-lived results. In that sense, philanthropy can take on the characteristics of an investment that is based on organizational principles of the business world, since the underlying idea is the maximization of results and impacts for the common good

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<sup>35</sup> MCCARTHY, John D. Resource mobilization and social movements: a partial theory. *American Journal of Sociology*, Chicago, n. 6, v. 82, 1977. In: [www.jstor.org/discover/10.2307/2777934?uid=3738744&uid=2&uid=4&sid=21102833896097](http://www.jstor.org/discover/10.2307/2777934?uid=3738744&uid=2&uid=4&sid=21102833896097). Access: 29 Oct. 2013.

<sup>36</sup> DERRIDA, Jacques. A escritura e a diferença. 4. ed. rev. e ampli. São Paulo: Perspectiva, 2011.

<sup>37</sup> OSTROWER, Francie. *Nonprofit Governance in the United States: findings on performance and accountability from the First National Representative Study*. The Urban Institute, 2007. In: <http://hsozkult.gesgeschichte.hu-berlin.de/tagungsberichte/id=1149>. Access: 29 Oct. 2013.

<sup>38</sup> ZUNZ, Olivier. *Philanthropy in America: A history*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011.

<sup>39</sup> FARIA, Lina; COSTA, Maria Conceição da. Cooperação científica internacional: estilos de atuação da Fundação Rockefeller e da Fundação Ford. *Dados*, Rio de Janeiro, v. 49, n. 1, 2006. In: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/S0011-52582006000100007>. Access: 20 Oct. 2013.

<sup>40</sup> NIELSEN, Waldemar A. *Inside American Philanthropy: the dramas of donorship*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996.

of society.<sup>41</sup> Methodologies of financial management and organizational administration are used to increase the possibilities of managing resources and strengthening them through capacity building, for the long term, for seeking partnerships and attaining better results from private investments or even in partnerships with the public authorities.<sup>42</sup>

This *new philanthropy* would therefore, be interested in achieving the common good based on the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It seeks to surpass palliative results, leveraging results that are useful to the whole society. The figure of the social investor permeates the concepts which are gaining increasing space in contemporary society.<sup>43</sup> According to this view, the best strategic decisions are made about ways of working, priorities, management and evaluation of the impacts produced. In Brazil, these social actors move within a culture strongly marked by *traditional philanthropy* which is based on goodwill and paternalist assistencialism which tends to reify – in turn – ancient archetypes and remark ritual passage areas that are refractory to individualization, as DaMatta says, with respect to the capacity of daily universalization as the rejection of the hierarchical system.<sup>44</sup>

Philanthropy is currently recognized as the practice of institutions which do not have the goal of profit. They are known by the term non-profit which was coined by economists at the end of the 1940's, as part of an effort to describe and classify practices which were not placed in the same institutional domain and were not subject to taxes, and regulatory policies as businesses and financial agencies. *New philanthropy*, in this way, is understood as the work of an immense range of institutions which carry out activities in the absences of state (defined social contexts in which State policies should be present, through the creation of territorial infrastructure, in the construction of systems of actions which permit individuals to have access to tools of humanization such as school,

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<sup>41</sup> BRYSON, John M. *Strategic Planning for Public and Nonprofit Organizations: a guide to strengthening and sustaining organizational achievement*. 4. ed. São Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2011.

<sup>42</sup> SAIIA, D. H; CARROLL, A. B; BUCHHOLTZ, A. K. Philanthropy as Strategy: When Corporate Charity "Begins at Home". *Business & Society*, 42(2), 169-201, 2003.

<sup>43</sup> VIEIRA, Roberto Fonseca. A Iniciativa Privada no contexto social: exercício de cidadania e Responsabilidade Social. *RP em Revista*, Salvador, ano 5, n. 22, maio 2007. In: [www.rp-bahia.com.br/revista/a\\_iniciativa\\_privada\\_no\\_contexto\\_social3.pdf](http://www.rp-bahia.com.br/revista/a_iniciativa_privada_no_contexto_social3.pdf). Access: 2 Nov. 2013.

<sup>44</sup> This situation taken as a Brazilian dilemma by Roberto DaMatta is summarized in the famous "do you know who you are talking to?" which is structured in the sphere of where the law comes very slowly. DAMATTA, Roberto. *Carnavais, Malandros e Heróis: para uma sociologia do dilema brasileiro*. Rio de Janeiro: Zahar, 1980. p. 191.

health, entertainment, mobility, etc.)<sup>45</sup> These make use of organizational methods of management to achieve the proposed goals. This new form of philanthropy presents five fundamental points which characterize it: 1) Non-governmental; 2) Non-profit; 3) Have their own social capital; 4) Have their own curators and directors; 5) Promote common good, education, charity and the guarantee of religious freedom.<sup>46</sup> *New philanthropy*<sup>47</sup> goes beyond the individual initiative and seeks to make it lasting, to transform it into a social investment. Donating in current society always implies taking into account that to make better use of it, it is important that it be done in a strategic, efficient way which will reach the maximum number of people without losing the quality implied by the goals which the donation seeks to reach. This contemporary philanthropy works in those spaces of complementarity, substitution and partnership of the State.

In contemporary times, philanthropy, traditional or new, usually emerges in the absence of a presence called State. The State is a structure which does not exist by itself, it is a relational resolution of social groups which experience daily situations and which seek to tie certain interests to the normative processes affirmed in legislation.<sup>48</sup> The modern Democratic State of Law is the amplification of the recognition of other sectors of society as agents of legal pretensions based on well specified social relations which are developed from modular actions of the press and the associations and the social movements, etc.<sup>49</sup>

## Conclusion

Philanthropy as a paideutic notion treated the humanist perspective about human development as the foundation of social relations in modernity through the perspective of illustration based on the idea and diaconal practice of *caritas christi*. Diakonia, as a Christian practice, is the socio-religious mediation<sup>50</sup> of an intermediary determination, whose dialectical

<sup>45</sup> SANTOS, Milton. *A urbanização brasileira*. São Paulo: Hucitec, 1993, 27-29.

<sup>46</sup> ORGANISATION FOR ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT (OECD) Philanthropic Foundations and Development Co-operation. *Off-Print of the DAC Journal*, Paris, v. 4, n. 3, 2003.

<sup>47</sup> FLORINDO BORGES, Jacqueline; MIRANDA, Rodrigo; VALADÃO JÚNIOR, Valdir Machado. *Revista de Administração de Empresas*, v. 47, p.1-15, 2007.

<sup>48</sup> CASTEL, 2012, p. 30-31.

<sup>49</sup> TARROW, Sidney. *O Poder em Movimento: movimentos sociais e confronto político*. Petrópolis: Vozes, 2009.

<sup>50</sup> See STARNITZKE, Dierk. *Diakonia: fundamentação bíblica, concretizações éticas*. São Leopoldo, RS: Sinodal, Faculdades EST, 2013.

discursiveness leads to interpersonal proclamation of the Good News through concrete and “institutional” actions in the spaces where the State is not present. That absence which Julian complained about, has in the social ballast of philanthropy its range of action, since the legislation – at least in Brazil – recognizes non-profit organizations as supplementary partners in the action of the State concerning the social development, fulfilling in this way Julian’s proposal through constitutional indicators, the social goal of the Brazilian State, be it understood as a right or as charity.

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# Diakonia and Development

## Reflections about an incarnational diakonia

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### Introduction

The two terms of the above title, considered separately, are so broad and complex that they could lead to unending reflections. In considering them in the relation proposed in the title the chance of understanding them does not become simpler but, at least, a clearer framework is established. Since the historical approach to this relation needs to be reduced as much as possible due to the brevity of this text, I propose following a path which will help unveil the role of diakonia in the contexts of transformation, underlining its possible contributions to an explanation that contributes to overcoming the narrative of development.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> The relationship between diakonia and development has been worked in the Salvadoran Lutheran University and the course has been turned into a book. GASPAR, M.; KÖHLER,

## **I – Economic development and Christian morality – an intimate story**

### **1.1 – Stories of love and abandonment<sup>3</sup>**

The end of the colonial experiences opened up the era of industrialization as the era of inequalities. However, the rapid evolution and accumulation of wealth resulting from the processes of industrialization explained the growing wealth of some nations and the poverty of the others. Some nations were in a better situation because of a successful set of actions which went by the name of progress and which would sustain their material development.

Adam Smith explained the internal logic of progress adequately in “The wealth of nations” (1776). According to him, each individual would seek to make the best use of the capital which he/she possessed (money or work force). The interest of each one would work converging toward the achievement of a collective benefit, producing the necessary goods for the needs of the people. Thus, the interested, egotistical actions of the various protagonists would work in a complementary way harmoniously promoting social well-being.

Obviously, this conception centered on the individual interest was in flagrant contrast to Christian ethics of a solidary, that is, that people who had possibilities should help the people who did not have what was needed for their sustenance. The morality of the individual interest strongly contrasted with the Christian morality of charity/love.

This conflict with the solidary Christian morality became even more evident in the theory of population elaborated by Thomas R. Malthus. Malthus understood that human beings were also moved by unstoppable sexual desires which led to a disorderly population growth and always greater than the production of food. It was necessary to control this growth. The moral mechanism of sexual constraint in favor of smaller families, thus also avoiding the dissipations of wealth, was the responsibility of the superior people. As a form of preventive control, the poor had their vices and birth control.

He understood that these mechanisms were not sufficient and, based on the principle that the poor were incapable of respecting any moral

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H.; BOOTZ, E. V. (Coord.). *Diaconia y Desarrollo*. San Salvador: FLM/Universidad Luterana Salvadoreña, 2004.

<sup>3</sup> The following reflection follow the following books: HUNT, E. K.; SHERMAN, Howard J. 7. Ed. *História do Pensamento Econômico*. Petropolis: Vozes, 1988. BRUM, Argemiro J. *O desenvolvimento econômico brasileiro*. 8. Ed. Petrópolis: Vozes, 1987. MAZZUCHELLI, Frederico. *A contradição em processo*. O capitalismo e suas crises. São Paulo, Brasiliense, 1985.

restriction; he recommended the systematic use of positive controls to increase the mortality rate (wars, lack of basic sanitation, plagues, restricted access to therapies and/or medications). If none of this worked, the growth of the population beyond the availability of food would lead to hunger and starvation which, in the end, would fulfill the role of the final control.

In sum, the central ideas of the understanding of development resulting from industrialization were in direct conflict with the solidary Christian moral of charity/love. However, another set of ideas, which was being established since the 18<sup>th</sup> century, permitted a different perception of development than the one sustained by industrial progress and a new approach to Christian ethics. It was about the emergence of the socialist ideas.<sup>4</sup> Combining the ideal of equality of all people with the solidary Christian moral, in which each one is also responsible for the other, the socialist comprehension began to strongly criticize the inequalities and the injustices which the industrial development was producing.

Throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, however, the strong competition generated by the growing industrialization accelerated the concentration of capital. The violence of this process and consequent situation of social impoverishment because of the constant cyclical economic crises began to cause dissatisfaction among many defenders of these ideas and even among many business people. In this way, a new fusion of Christian solidary ethics begins, now with the perspective of industrial progress. The theme of poverty returned to occupy the reflection and the solution seen before received strong cooperation – no longer pure competition – among the leaders of the large companies.

It was proposed that this new modality cooperation would control the crises and would improve the life conditions of the population. People of a higher personal morality would have the distributive strength when managing the accumulate wealth. This became visible in a type of socialization of the wealth through the construction of hospitals, schools and the maintenance of universities, museums, libraries, art galleries, etc. with generous donations. The churches and their missions also received generous funding. This new solidarity constructed upon the Christian morality pacified the violent competition and produced a set of instruments which made it possible for the North American society to overcome the First World War and the Great Depression in the 1930's. This culture of "endowment" remains deeply rooted in the North American business universe.

This fusion of the solidary Christian morality with the economy will be taken on again with force after the Second World War to explain the changes that occurred in the new economy. The enormous prosperity

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<sup>4</sup> I do refer to ideas of Babeuf, Saint-Simon, Fourier, Blanqui and Proudhon.

of the post war North American economy accentuated even more the concentration of the economic power and the tremendous asymmetries in the distribution of income both in the country itself as well as in the world. There were difficulties in seeing the business person as a benefactor.

It was necessary to review this image. The explanation came in the change that occurred: the old capitalist business people were substituted with a new class of people, the professional business people with a clear managerial role. This new class, formed in the best universities, brought a deep vision of the public good and felt themselves intimately responsible for amplifying this well-being. The corporate morality supported now the vision that the corporation itself was generous since it was not focused only on profits. Soon this change revealed its weakness. The corporations and their managers sought profits as much as the business owners.

This short trajectory helped to perceive how development became a constitutive element of the life of societies, and how this development was associated with the material progress of economies based on the dynamic of industrialization which unleashed asymmetric processes of accumulation of wealth. This logic grew, developed and transformed itself historically into a permanent quarrel with the solidary morality of the Christian tradition based on the practices of charity, of love.

Once the accumulations and the asymmetries generated exposed the contradiction of this economic logic, the solidary morality of Christianity was always reintroduced, to the same measure that it was continuously distorted, as a form of legitimation of the injustice of the announced development. Even so, it is worth noting that a certain comprehension of Christian solidary morality, combined with a radical vision of the equality of the people, also had the force to signal the critical potential of the solidary morality of the Christian tradition, demanding profound changes in the form and in the structures of production and distribution of wealth.

## 1.2 – Stories of resistance<sup>5</sup>

The period after the Second World War redefined the geopolitics of development. Suddenly, the war ended and power relations were redefined, and thus the new rules of the economic game, a new cycle of economic growth and industrial development began in the mid-20th century. The

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<sup>5</sup> The following reflection is based in studies on VILLAREAL, René. *A contra-revolução monetarista*. Teoria, Política Econômica e ideologia do Neoliberalismo. São Paulo: Record, 1984. POLETO, Dorivaldo Walmor. *A CEPAL e América Latina*. Porto Alegre, EDIPUCRS, 2000.



Latin American and Caribbean nations felt, then, a chance to finally join in the universe of developed nations.

The founding of the United Nations (UN) in 1945 made it possible to initiate a new scenario for development in Latin America and the Caribbean. Demanded by the Latin American countries while suffering strong resistance from the United States of America (USA), the UN created a “*think tank*” to elaborate development programs in Latin America. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) emerged in 1948 with its headquarters in Santiago de Chile. ECLAC was constituted with a focus of debates about development, cooperation and regional integration in Latin America and the Caribbean.

More than this, ECLAC made it possible, for the first time, to get out of the theoretical poverty which impeded political scientists, sociologists and economists from grasping the reality in which they lived in. ECLAC opposes the idea of seeking to adjust the reality to development models received from outside with the idea of basing them on an interpretation of the surrounding reality itself, considering the forces and agents that are contrary to the transformation that is proposed.

The theoretical effort of ECLAC has led to an innovative interpretation of the Latin American and Caribbean reality. The region's poverty, he concluded, could not be explained by its insufficient development (or underdevelopment as Truman<sup>6</sup> proposed) and, more than that, this moment was not a necessary stage on the path to development. ECLAC's research demonstrated that there were unfair structural mechanisms in the exchange relations which not only impeded development but also maintained countries in a situation of continuous dependency in these exchange ratios. Quoting Eduardo Galeano it was possible, therefore, to say that: “Underdevelopment is not a stage of development. It is its consequence.”<sup>7</sup> Without entering into the merits of ECLAC's theoretical achievements, it is worth noting that the political reach of these conclusions established a new paradigm to address the theme of development. In addition, it is worth noting that more than a criticism of a development paradigm,<sup>8</sup> ECLAC also concretely indicated another path. The conclusions of ECLAC impacted beyond the economic area.

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<sup>6</sup> It is important to emphasize that this term appears for the first time in an inaugural President of the United States, Harry Truman, before the National Congress in January of 1949. Speech available in [https://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/50yr\\_archive/inaugural20jan1949.htm](https://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/50yr_archive/inaugural20jan1949.htm). Accessed 05.10.16.

<sup>7</sup> GALEANO, Eduardo. *As veias abertas da América Latina*. 34. Ed. Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1992, p. 307.

<sup>8</sup> For deeper analysis on CEPAL see SOUZA, Ezequiel de. *Entre a Dependência e a Libertação: mudanças epistemológicas na teologia latino-americana a partir da apropriação da Teoria da dependência pela Teologia da Libertação*. Tese. 252 f. (Doutorado) – Programa de Pós-

At this point of the analysis, it is of interest for this reflection to consider the impact of this new scenario in the universe of the churches, but specifically of the theology which was in gestation in this context. Between the mid-fifties and mid 1960s there occurred the decade of development. Theologians dedicated themselves to elaborating a theology of development, considering in a positive way the possibilities it could bring, since it was introduced in the human<sup>9</sup> vocation itself. Part of these theologians, faced with the glaring contradictions of development, elaborated a theology of revolution.<sup>10</sup>

However, as to the theological elaboration, the one that most clearly incorporated the debates and the new paradigm of development which grew from the research of ECLAC was Liberation Theology.<sup>11</sup> The idea itself of liberation sprouted from the affirmation that the situation of “underdevelopment” is a result of the dependence economically produced by the economic mechanisms.<sup>12</sup>

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Graduação em Teologia, Faculdades EST, São Leopoldo, 2015. SOUZA, Ezequiel; TEIXEIRA, Helio Aparecido Campos. Libertação e dependência: a leitura teológica das ciências do social na América Latina. *Protestantismo em Revista*, São Leopoldo, v. 36, 21-31, jan./abr. 2015. Available on: <http://periodicos.est.edu.br/index.php/nepp>.

<sup>9</sup> HOUTART Francois. *Hacia una teología del desarrollo*. Buenos Aires: Latinoamérica libros, 1967. COMBLIN, Joseph, *Teología do desenvolvimento*. Belo Horizonte: 1968; ALVES, Rubem. Apuntes para una teología del desarrollo, *Cristianismo y Sociedad* 21 (1969); COMBLIN, Joseph. *Cristianismo y desarrollo*. Quito: Instituto Pastoral Latinoamericano, 1970; BAUER, G. *Towards a Theology of Development*. Genebra, 1970.

<sup>10</sup> SHAULL, Richard. *Hombre, ideología y revolución en América Latina*. Montevideo: ISAL, 1965; SHAULL, Richard. *Encounter with Revolution*. New York: Association Press, 1955. SHAULL, Richard. *Revolutionary Change in Theological Perspective*. In: BENNETT, John C. *Christian Social Ethics in a Changing World: An Ecumenical Theological Inquiry*. New York: Association Press, 1966, p. 23-43. SHAULL, Richard. Igreja e teologia na voragem da revolução. In: ALVES, Rubem. (Org.) *De dentro do furacão: Richard Shaull e os primórdios da teologia da libertação*. São Paulo: Editora Sagarana; CEDI; CLAI; Ciências da Religião, 1985, p. 117-134; COMBLIN, J. *Teología de la revolución*. Bilbao: Desclée de Brouwer, 1973; COMBLIN, J. *Teología de la práctica revolucionaria*. Bilbao: Desclée de Brouwer, 1979; TÖDT, Heinz Eduard. *La revolución como nueva concepción socio-ética: análisis de contenido*. In: RENDTORFF, Trutz; TÖDT, Heinz Eduard. *Teología de la revolución*. Caracas: Monte Ávila Editores, 1975, 7-45.

<sup>11</sup> ARROYO, Gonzalo. Pensamento latino-americano sobre desenvolvimento e dependência externa. In: *Fé Cristã e transformação social na América Latina*. Encontro de “El Escorial”, 1972. Petrópolis: Vozes, 197, p. 270-283. ARROYO, Gonzalo. Considerações sobre o subdesenvolvimento na América Latina. In: ID. 1977, 284-293.

<sup>12</sup> The most known, studied, and challenged aspects of the external debt system that seems to resist the big and coordinated efforts to overcome. SCHAPER, Valério. A dívida e a dádiva. In: KRÜGER, R.; FURLAN, Ángel. *Un sistema ilegítimo*. La ideología neoliberal y sus estructuras econômicas em perspectiva ético-teológica. Buenos Aires: FLM, 2014, p. 39-58;

Thus, the aspirations of the poor people which were directed toward development were now called upon to move towards liberation.

As Shaull<sup>13</sup> correctly captured the concern of the human being with the neighbor, once linked to the more immediate circles, is now broadened and comes to encompass ever larger communities, reaching entire contingents living in underdeveloped countries. However, as Gutiérrez<sup>14</sup> observed, rather than the development of preexisting possibilities, it was about the gradual conquest of new forms of concretizing the human, fulfilling them in it in a solidary way with the human collectivity. Thus, development found its full meaning in liberation, which presupposed the continuous conquest of a creative and renewed freedom of a new humanity. This new and full humanity is presented to the human being in Christ, bearer of definitive liberation.

The experience through which the Latin American and Caribbean countries, churches and peoples passed represented a change. This change, however, included two decisive breaks. On the one hand, it was about a cognitive break sown. Countries, churches and peoples became aware that there was more than one side to the story and more than one perspective possible about development.<sup>15</sup> The other break was ethical.

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GRIFFITH-JONES, Stephan; SUNKEL, Osvaldo. *O fim de uma ilusão*. As crises da dívida e do desenvolvimento na América Latina. São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1990; HINKELAMMERT, Franz J. A dívida externa da América latina. O automatismo da dívida. Petrópolis: Vozes, 1989. PADILHA, A.; BITTENCOURT FILHO, J.; DIAS, Zwinglio M. (Eds.). *Dívida externa e igrejas*. Rio de Janeiro: CEDI, 1989. Nos últimos anos as novas engrenagens e lógicas desencadeadas pela globalização têm colocado novas questões ao tema da pobreza e do desenvolvimento. MSHNA, Rogate R. (Ed.). *Poverty eradication and injustice: Differences and Common Ground*. The World Council of Churches Encounter with World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Geneva: WCC Publications, 2005. *No nos dejes caer em tentación*. Respuesta de las iglesias a las políticas de las instituciones financiera internacionales. Documento de referência. Geneva: WCC, 2002.

<sup>13</sup> SHAULL, Richard. Uma perspectiva cristã do desenvolvimento histórico e social. In: ALVES, Rubem. (Org.) *De dentro do furacão: Richard Shaull e os primórdios da teologia da libertação*. São Paulo: Editora Sagarana; CEDI; CLAI; Ciências da Religião, 1985, p.111.

<sup>14</sup> GUTIÉRREZ, Gustavo. *Teología da Libertação*. Perspectivas. 6. Ed. Petrópolis: Vozes, 1986, p. 28-45.

<sup>15</sup> Post-colonial discourses and theories of decolonization add to this. QUIJANO, Aníbal. El fantasma del desarrollo en América Latina. In: [www.cesla.uw.edu.pl/cesla/images/stories/wydawnictwo/czasopisma/Revista/Revista\\_1\\_quijano.pdf](http://www.cesla.uw.edu.pl/cesla/images/stories/wydawnictwo/czasopisma/Revista/Revista_1_quijano.pdf). Accessed on 01.10.16. ID. Bien vivir: entre “desarrollo” y la des/colonialidad del poder. Available on: [https://www.vientosur.info/IMG/pdf/VS122\\_A\\_Quijano\\_Bienvivir---.pdf](https://www.vientosur.info/IMG/pdf/VS122_A_Quijano_Bienvivir---.pdf). Accessed on 05.10.16. MIGNOLO, Walter. La retórica del desarrollo y la colonialidad del saber. In: <http://waltermignolo.com/laretorica-del-desarrollo-y-la-colonialidad-del-saber/>. Acessado em 06.10.16. OMAR, Sidi M. Rethinking Development from a Postcolonial Perspective. *Journal of Conflictology*,

The notions of charity, love, aid and justice are directly affected. Of course, this did not mean that one doubted or questioned the good intentions of the aid development programs. The hard truth is that, despite good intentions, all the development aid was producing more injustice and more inequality. It was perceived that the notions of charity, of love, of solidarity remained prisoners of the complexity of economic logic, transforming them into administrable moralities and the diaconal action ran the risk of becoming a “useful innocent” in the hands of interests which tended to perpetuate suffering.

Since the actions of state, civil or ecclesial international organizations were founded on a morality, it is this that enters into a deep crisis at this moment. Liberation theology, elaborated in this context, has the hard tone of prophecy and will affect Christian morality especially with regard to the service that the churches provide to the countries, churches and impoverished people through their “diakonia.” Certainly, faced with the crisis related to the idea of development, the action of the local churches with the people in situations of poverty or need suffer an equal impact. Therefore, it is appropriate to examine the trajectory of the concept of diakonia and the impact it suffered faced with reiterated attempts at cooptation and, considering the breaks mentioned above, how it redefined itself and corrected its focus.

## **II – Diakonia<sup>16</sup> – the dark and complex faces of love**

### **2.1 – Of love and its care**

The creation of a world federation of Lutheran churches (The Lutheran World Federation – LWF) was strongly marked by a sense of urgency in favor of solidarity with people in distress. Thus, the creation of the LWF in 1947 had a strong impact on the urgency of providing humanitarian aid to people suffering from the consequences of World War II.

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Volume 3, Issue 1 (2012). In: <http://journals.uoc.edu/index.php/journal-of-conflictology/article/view/vol3iss1-omar>. Accessed 07.10.16.

<sup>16</sup> As reflexões sobre diakonia aqui supõe os resultados dos seguintes importantes trabalhos: NORDSTOKKE, Kjell (Org.). *Diakonia: fé em ação*. 3. Ed. São Leopoldo: Sinodal, 1998. GAEDE NETO, Rodolfo. *A diakonia de Jesus. Contribuição para a fundamentação teológica da diakonia na América Latina*. São Leopoldo: Sinodal, CEBI; São Paulo: Paulus, 2001. TEIXEIRA, Helio Aparecido. *Antropofagia: a public-idade cívica da prática social cristã*. São Leopoldo, RS, 2014. 276 p. Tese (Doutorado) – Escola Superior de Teologia, Programa de Pós-Graduação, São Leopoldo, 2014.

The LWF Refugee Service has been very focused on helping the family of faith, since in the post war time, one in every six Lutherans was a refugee or displaced and needing help. This strong emphasis on humanitarian aid has continued in the LWF through the creation of the Department for World Service (DWS). But it has been broadened towards substantive ecumenism and, in more recent times, towards interreligious action, since, of course, the focus and interest of the DWS were aimed at tending to people in need regardless of any other determination.

Since the 1970s, due to the droughts in Africa, the LWF<sup>17</sup> coordinated actions with the World Council of Churches (WCC) and international Catholic agencies. New coordinated actions among ecumenical organizations followed. The truth is that international diaconal actions have characterized the ecumenical movement from its earliest beginnings in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. These various ecumenical diaconate actions eventually converged into the World Council of Churches (WCC), created in 1948. The creation of diaconal organizations grew as well as the ecumenically coordinated forms of action. This action advanced carefully and progressively until, in 2010, it the ACT Alliance, a Protestant platform, was created to combine the efforts of coordinating the ecumenical action with regard to the persistent and growing needs, above all in the contexts of the global South.

Taking up this historic journey summarily described above it is possible to present a more systematic approach. We will take up here the typology elaborated by Carlos Emilio Ham Stanard. Ham presents in his doctoral dissertation a typology which interprets diakonia throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century according to three phases or models, considering the way in which the term diakonia was conceptualized and how the issue of empowerment was being conducted.<sup>18</sup> Although Ham basically considers the action of the World Council of Churches (WCC) in his thesis, this periodization helps

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<sup>17</sup> The following part is based on NORDSTOKKE, Kjell (Ed.). *Diakonia em contexto: Transformação, Reconciliação, Empoderamento: Uma Contribuição da FLM para a Compreensão e a Prática da Diakonia*. Genebra: FLM; Porto Alegre: IECLB, 2009, p. 52-59.

<sup>18</sup> STANARD, Carlos Emilio Ham. *Empowering Diakonia: A Model for Service and Transformation in the Ecumenical Movement and Local Congregations*. Amsterdam: Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, 2015, p. 46. [Tese de doutorado defendida na Universidade Livre de Amsterdã em novembro de 2015]. Segundo o autor o critério para a periodização é exclusivamente interno, isto é, ele toma com referência as estruturas, reflexões e recomendações do Conselho Mundial de Igrejas. Em sua tese o autor apresenta um quarto modelo ("Empowering Diakonia model"). Como se trata de modelo-tese proposto pelo autor, deixamos fora desta tipologia. Além disso, a proposta de relacionar diakonia e empoderamento parece retomar – no afã de superar, é claro – as recorrentes dicotomias que têm marcado os esforços de definição da diakonia em sua interface com a sociedade, com o desenvolvimento. STANARD, 2015, p. 183.

to elaborate an overview of the evolution of diakonia during the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Ham affirms that the first phase or model can be defined as a “model of charity” or “phase of charity”. Coming from the post war efforts of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, diakonia in this phase still remained strongly focused on the concept of helping the people in need. Although it can be said that this model was in place throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Ham concentrates his analysis of this phase on the period which goes from 1968, using as reference the important debates about diakonia which took place at the IV Assembly of the WCC in Uppsala,<sup>19</sup> until 1986.

In this period of aid, basically between churches, diakonia dealt with the transference of resources from the churches of the Global North and of the organizations related to them with the goal of supporting people and diaconal projects, diminishing suffering. The consultations which took place, especially those of the 1960s, led to a progressive change of perspective. The concept of “relief” in emergency situations gave way to concepts marked by ideas of “social action” and of “social development”.

The perception that the causes and consequences of poverty were more complex also led to the observation of how controversial the diaconal action carried out was. The urgency and provisional nature of the aid is replaced by the gradual observation of the structural character of poverty as the churches and their organizations expand their presence in the Global South. Thus, the theme of justice became part of the semantic universe of diakonia, deepening the challenge of the response of the churches of the North faced to the clamor that they heard from the representations of the churches of the South as they also began to actively participate in the consultations of diakonia which were carried out in that period.

Obviously, we cannot disregard, as already mentioned above, the reflections which, based on the research developed by ECLAC, gravitated around the notion of “liberation” and outlined many theologies which were beginning to be developed in this context. Gustavo Gutiérrez’s book, *A Theology of Liberation*, after a chapter on the notion of liberation in theology, presents a chapter on development. In this chapter, after a critical approach to development understanding, the author places the human being at the heart of the notion of development.<sup>20</sup>

By insisting on the proposal of development that is inseparable from the centrality of the human being and in the radical affirmation that the

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<sup>19</sup> Stanard reports that there were three important consultations on diakonia in the WCC context during this period (Genebra, 1965; Swanwick, 1966; Creta, 1978). A de Swanwick impactou muito a IV Assembleia do CMI (Uppsala).

<sup>20</sup> GUTIÉRREZ, 1986, p. 44-45.

human being that is to be taken as the starting point is precisely the poor, the most vulnerable within the current development model, Latin American theology established a new reference for diaconal action. It was no longer about helping the poor, the needy, but of standing side by side with them in their struggle for liberation of development models which were treating them unjustly and continually threatened their dignity. This did not only imply just a transfer of resources but also helping to organize communities capable of resisting the violent and continuous dehumanization processes.

The shift from the registration of aid to that of solidarity in the struggles for justice aroused suspicion and generated conflicts within the churches. This development of the reflection on diakonia in the 1970s and 1980s was, however, the embryo of the new phase: that of the **model of reciprocity**. In this new phase, one of the most important conceptions of diakonia at the ecumenical level was elaborated. This was the notion of “Ecumenical sharing of resources.”

This new vision presupposed the perspective of a new economic order, made possible the emergence of a vocabulary around the idea of partnership and considerably broadened the theme of “resources”, which came to include spirituality, human resources but also financial resources and material goods. This movement toward a more horizontal perspective of relationships gave rise to the idea of reciprocity. A mutuality of actions and benefits would be gradually integrated into the understanding of relationships at the same time as they were opened up to exchanges with other organizations of civil society and other religions.

The idea of “sharing” was developed slowly but not without difficulties. The participation in the decision making advanced but there was still not an adequate sharing of the “power.” It was becoming ever clearer that a real sharing of power presupposed an authentic change of structures, in other words, a new political and economic order. Thus, the necessary prophetic character of diakonia was becoming evident.

The people benefitting from the cooperation projects challenged the power relations implicit in the diaconal actions of the North in relation to the South. The current discourse about liberation signaled the need to liberate oneself from the hierarchical practices of power in the direction of empowering practices. Although the various consultations which took place through the 1980s gathered precise formulations about these necessary changes, in practice there was still a good theory.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> STANARD, 2015, p. 60: “Nevertheless, time and again, I keep coming back to the issue of reception in really practical terms. All these statements were radical in theory, but one gets the impression that they were not self-evident for those in charge of the diaconal projects.”

However, it was necessary to recognize the advances made. The reflections and deliberations that took place in seminars, consultations, assemblies of the WCC clearly showed an undeniable sign of change. One of the relevant aspects of these changes was of theological character. Diakonia, as a ministry of sharing, healing and reconciliation was reaffirmed as being intrinsically ecclesial, that is, the church was diaconal in nature, but this did not in any way mean the restriction of diakonia to the institutional reality of the church. As “liturgy after the liturgy”, diakonia was an activity of the church in and for the whole world. This theological perspective was overcoming the persistent dichotomy between mission and service. This new understanding emphasized that all the service actions (struggle for justice, dignity, peace, cure, reconciliation, etc.) were inseparable from the mission of God.

The profound changes which occurred in the world geopolitics, with symbolic reference to the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, open up a new stage in the reflections of the ecumenical environment dedicated to the service of cooperation. This third phase characterized by the transformative model, gathered multiple efforts conducted by the many networks which make up the WCC and especially those made up of people involved in struggles against exclusion from society and even from the churches. To the voices of the refugees caused by various situations (war, hunger, climate, etc.) and the voices of the poor of all latitudes and longitudes other multifaceted voices have been added, such as the indigenous peoples, the Afro-descendants, people with disabilities, women, carriers of the AIDs virus, homosexuals, ethnic minorities, etc.

There were clear changes in this phase. There was the transference of the diaconal issue from the North to the South. Obviously, the resources and the strength of the organization of the large diaconal institutions continue in the North. The displacement is more thematic and indicates coherence in the journey of the ecumenical diaconal action. The various ecumenical and inter-religious networks and platforms for action also signaled as complex forms and models of cooperation. This presented a new level of demands: that of professionalization. The churches and their organizations always had and still maintain good theoretical and theological conditions to accompany this evolution. However, the institutional capacity to implement the necessary activities in constantly changing contexts has become increasingly decisive. Evidently, what was verified in many contexts is the persistence of previous models of relationships as a strategy of resistance.

Nevertheless, the previous activities of reflection and action led to the Consultation which took place in Colombo, Sri Lanka in 2012 which results reached the 10<sup>th</sup> Assembly of the WCC, in Busan, Korea. The core



of these documents signaled the perception that the diaconal actions directed toward the marginalized had as their base the empowerment of the excluded people capable of giving form to practices of transformation in harmony with the values of the kingdom and going beyond the Western paradigm of development. In this way, diakonia was emphasized as a practice capable of introducing changes since it was founded on a “spirituality of transformation.”

It certainly became evident that diakonia, as a theological concept which seeks to express Christian love in a concrete way, experienced throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century a palpitating trajectory. It is fair also to affirm that this trajectory has represented a continuous and coherent effort of the churches – the donors and beneficiaries – to seek an increasingly consequential and increasingly Biblical and theologically relevant answer for all, according to their specific contexts.

In this enormous and permanent effort, it was clear that the market mechanisms of the current economic order compromised the elaboration of the notion of diakonia, continually depleting and distorting the concepts and the action models. Thus, it can be inferred from the above that every effort to pair the diaconal actions with the expectations of an equitable development seemed similar to the movement of the straight lines of Euclidean geometry, prolonging them in parallel indefinitely. It was necessary to explore the possibility of non-Euclidean geometries.

## **2.2 – Of development and of new narratives**

### **2.2.1 – Development: the rough history of an idea**

It serves the purpose of this reflection to once more take up the history of development since the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, the post war period.<sup>22</sup> Many historians believe that our current understanding of development was forged during this period and has a date and birth certificate: US President Harry Truman's, inaugural speech before the Congress in January of 1949. The fourth point of a framework program described in an astonishingly synthetic way what would become a type of unquestionable parameter for the future life of all peoples. Truman declared that the time had come when the benefits of scientific progress and the industrial advances of the US would be made available to the “underdeveloped” areas of the

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<sup>22</sup> RIST, Gilbert. *The History of Development: From Western Origins to Global Faith*. 3. Ed. London/New York: Zed Books, 2008.

planet.<sup>23</sup> In a certain way, the program announced by Truman's speech complemented the ideological doctrine of a new monetary order designed by the Breton Woods Agreement (1944).

Thus, begins the "development age" under the auspices of a time of prosperity based on economic growth, which was measured by the production of wealth. The internal product, product of the nations, divided by the number of inhabitants, provided the "per capita income", signal and sign of progress, a true mythology that came to be the only narrative capable of offering meaning and horizon for the longings of improvement and the quests for happiness of the peoples and nations.<sup>24</sup>

The euphoria of the economic growth as of the second half of the 20th century guided the first wave of development. The notion of progress, based on the supposition that it was possible to have unlimited growth, and instrumentalized by the concept of modernization (technology and institutional adaptation) promised to accelerate the passage from underdevelopment to development. Embracing this unavoidable linear evolution, the countries of the Global South would leave behind poverty and backwardness.

Given this absolute paradigm, Latin America has tried, through ECLAC, to question the normative character of this newly established development model. The normativity of this model took on with time the character of an enrooted mythology which maintained within the same web all the characters. Celso Furtado captures this mythological character and expressly denounced it in his known work "O mito do desenvolvimento" [the myth of development], published in 1974, when he negates the possibility of fulfilling this proposed development model.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Discourse in [https://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/50yr\\_archive/inagural20jan1949.htm](https://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/50yr_archive/inagural20jan1949.htm). Accessed 05.10.16.

<sup>24</sup> It is important to remember here the contributions of the economist Amartya Sen, which led to the elaboration of another indicator of progress. Sen proposed the creation of a Human Development Index (HDI). This indicator is now used alongside others, such as GDP. The HDI responds clearly to the reflections that were already being drawn in the scenario, focusing on the quality of development in its capacity to develop the qualities and potentialities intrinsic of individuals, empowering them. SEM, Amartya. *Desenvolvimento como liberdade*. 6. ed. São Paulo: Cia das Letras, 2007.

<sup>25</sup> "We now know that peripheral economies will never develop in the sense of similar economies at the present center of the capitalist system. (...) It must therefore be said that the idea of economic development is a simple myth. Thanks to it, it has been possible to divert attention from the basic tasks of identifying the basic needs of the collectivity and the possibilities that open the way for the advancement of sciences in order to focus them on abstract objectives such as investments, exports and growth". FURTADO, Celso. *O mito do desenvolvimento econômico*. Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1974, p. 89.

Before this work of Furtado, but without the same intentionality, another research had already shaken the discourse of development with infinite progress. The report of the Roman Club, entitled “Limits of growth” had been published in 1972. The research carried out examined the possibilities of unlimited growth on a planet of finite resources and unleashed what has been conventionalized to be called an “ecological alarm.” This planetary way of putting forth the issue of development led to the conclusion that to accomplish economic and ecological balance would require a “Copernican revolution of the mind.”<sup>26</sup>

However, many signs growing concern for the environment have been appearing since the 1960s. This movement grew out of the organized civil society. The number of non-governmental organizations dealing with environmental issues, according to UNESCO, had passed from 2,500 in 1971 to 15,000 in 1982. Curiously, Lynn White Jr.,<sup>27</sup> a historian, put into circulation in 1967 a thesis which, without going into the merits of its pertinence, raised the question of the relation between religion and capitalist development. According to White, the belief in the idea of perpetual progress enters into the social imagery thanks to the Judeo-Christian theology. The theology of creation suggests, according to him, that nothing physical exists that is not for the benefit of human purposes. This provocative thesis puts a new ingredient into this debate: the participation of religion in the construction of the myth of development. Religion moved out of the condition of “useful innocent” to that of “cunning villain.”

The ecological debate about development brought a new set of arguments to reflection, but in a certain sense it gave more weight to the reflection that was being developed. Besides, obviously, accentuating the issue of the planetary limits when questioning the voracity of the high indexes of consumption of goods and of energy of the highly industrialized societies, the environmental concern raised the question about what type of threat poverty presented to the environmental integrity, besides, of course, signaling the transference of the environmental degradation from the central societies to the peripheral ones seeking natural goods and cheap services.

This advance led to an important level of reflection which culminated in 1987 in a new report, now elaborated by the World Commission on Environment and Development, which brought the suggestive title of “Our

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<sup>26</sup> MEADOWS, Donella et all. *Limites do crescimento*. Um relatório para o Projeto d Clube de Roma sobre o dilema da humanidade. 2. ed. São Paulo: Perspectiva, p. 191.

<sup>27</sup> WHITE JR, Lynn. As raízes históricas de nossa crise ecológica. In: <http://paulo-loucao.blogspot.com.br/2013/05/as-raizes-historicas-da-nossa-crise.html>. Accessed on 05.10.16. A deep analysis to this thesis was not given good attention.

Common Future,” but came to be popularly known as the Brundtland Report.<sup>28</sup> This report expressly recognized that the external debt and the asymmetric commercial relations contributed to the environmental degradation of the poor countries. Visualizing a solution, the report recovered the notion of sustainability and associated it to development, proposing a type of dynamic of development able to tend to the needs of the present without compromising the needs and aspirations of the future generations. The concept of sustainable development thus established a new model which rapidly won over minds and hearts.<sup>29</sup>

However, voices even more radical, understood that this was the most perverse elaboration of the mystifying trajectory of the ideology of development. According to Latouche,<sup>30</sup> the previous affirmation that development was unsustainable due to the finitude of resources fed the idea that, in some moment, it would be victim of its own contradictions and would end its destructive career. The new elaboration granted it survival.

The idea of sustainable development assures an eternity to development since the only security barrier – the limit of resources and the level of degradation of the environment – gets passed on to the exclusive control of the business initiatives and to the various scientific instances which create indicators and measure environmental damage. There is a mystification of the theme of development like never before.

The discursive expansion of the idea of sustainability and its popularization created the impression of a deep democratization of the mechanisms of vigilance confronted with the blunders of development. In practice, the logic of development gained a clear safe conduct and society saw itself enmeshed in complex debates about environmental sustainability, without gaining any clear consensus, for example, not even with respect to the climate issue.

Latouche insists that it is necessary to overcome the economic imagery where more is always synonym of better. To do so, the battle now involves overcoming the concept of sustainable development. It becomes evident thus, that Latouche represents a set of voices which began to speak of

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<sup>28</sup> BRUNDTLAND, Gro Harlem. *Our common Future*. Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development. In: [www.onu.org.br/rio20/img/2012/01/N8718467.pdf](http://www.onu.org.br/rio20/img/2012/01/N8718467.pdf)

<sup>29</sup> SCOTTO, Gabriela et al. *Desenvolvimento Sustentável*. 5. Ed. Petrópolis: Vozes, 2007; VEIGA, José Eli. *Sustentabilidade. A legitimação de um novo valor*. São Paulo: SENAC, 2010. BOFF, Leonardo. *Sustentabilidade. O que é O que não é*. Petrópolis: Vozes, 2012.

<sup>30</sup> LATOUCHE, Serge. *O desenvolvimento é insustentável*. Entrevista com Serge Latouche. IHU Online, n. 100, ano 4, 10 de maio de 2004, São Leopoldo: IHU-UNISINOS, p. 3-6. ID., *Pequeno tratado do decrescimento sereno*. São Paulo: Martins Fontes, 2009.

“post-development,”<sup>31</sup> that is, a movement began which defends the need to overcome the developmental paradigm which maintains hostage the discourses about the future of the peoples and nations. Latouche and other thinkers advocate the need to begin a program of coordinated “decrease.” This is not about a return to a simple agrarian life, but the gradual and planned reduction of the negative externalities, to begin with.

However, Latouche understands that post-development needs to use plural discourses. The discursive hegemony of developmentalism was founded on a totalitarian concept of world and society. The world contains worlds and, therefore, many diverse ways of tracing the trajectory of a society. In this sense, “The Declaration of the Rights to Development” proposed by United Nations Organization in 1986<sup>32</sup> represented a great advance. It needs to be highlighted that this declaration cannot be interpreted only in the sense of a right to have access to a model of hegemonic development but, and above all, the right that peoples and nations have to draw out a sovereign path for their future according to its own criteria and in corresponding to their own history.

The scenario presented clearly indicates an openness of possibilities. On the one hand, there is a broad path drawn by the notion of sustainable development. On the other hand, a path of “post-development” is opened which, because of its plural nature, permits a great variety and still unexplored range of possibilities.<sup>33</sup> It is up to diaconal reflection to approach these debates, for it is within these reflections and in, many cases, in the involvement in some of these practices already in action that the essential will be decided. If diakonia rigorously maintains its theological

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<sup>31</sup> RADOMSKY, Guilherme T. W. Desenvolvimento, pós-estruturalismo e pós-desenvolvimento. A crítica da modernidade e a emergência de “modernidades” alternativas. RBCS Vol. 26 n° 75 fevereiro/2011. In: [www.scielo.br/pdf/rbcsoc/v26n75/09.pdf](http://www.scielo.br/pdf/rbcsoc/v26n75/09.pdf). Accessed 06.10.16. ESCOBAR, Arturo. ‘Post-development’ as concept and social practice. In: ZIAI, Aram (Ed.). *Exploring Post-development Theory and practice*, problems and perspectives. Abingdon/ New York: Routledge, 2007, p. 18-32.

<sup>32</sup> SANTOS, Boaventura de Souza. *Direitos humanos, democracia e desenvolvimento*. São Paulo: Cortez Editora, 2016, p. 86.

<sup>33</sup> The Millennium Development Goals, proposed by the UN and hosted in 2001, and the Sustainable Development Objectives, coined in 2012 at Rio + 20, and which became effective in 2015, introduced an important reference for reflection, in addition to bringing clear and measurable goals. However, these same objectives have raised debate about their real scope. For many, they remain hostages of the Western development model and have not sufficiently discussed ways and means to achieve their goals. FANTASIA, Ana. *A agenda Pós 2015. Uma leitura a partir da teoria crítica do desenvolvimento*. In: [www.vida.org.pt/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/Agenda-p%C3%B3s-2015.docx-revisto-Artigo-VIDA.pdf](http://www.vida.org.pt/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/Agenda-p%C3%B3s-2015.docx-revisto-Artigo-VIDA.pdf). Accessed on 01.10.16. ALVES, José Eustáquio Diniz. Objetivos de Desenvolvimento Sustentável (ODS): boa intenção, grande ilusão.

and methodological coherency it will be decidedly implicated in the social and political ramifications of the contexts in which it finds itself. Before advancing more in this direction it is fitting that, yet a more attentive incursion be made into the new narratives which emerge in opposition to the idea of development as formulated so far.<sup>34</sup>

### 2.2.2 – The end of development and the new narratives

The globalization of the economies as a triumphant rhetoric of the development model of capitalist markets after the end of the socialist experiments suggested the need to accept an unquestionable realism: there was no other possibility to development thinking. Finally, it was the full realization of the global connection of all the economic realities initiated in the 16<sup>th</sup> century with the great navigations. However, it was really only about one more chapter of the same mystification associated to the hegemonic discourse of the Atlantic Western modernity.<sup>35</sup> The “decolonial” discourses tried to deconstruct this narrative, revealing its deep links to the whole colonial endeavor and the permanence of assumptions in new languages and practices.<sup>36</sup>

The post-colonial discourses assumed the need for a post-development and opened the doors to the emergence of innumerable new narratives about possible social, political, economic and cultural trajectories. However, these new narratives emerge in complex situations and the possible purity of their voice gets confused with the general uproar of all the narratives which are taking place. It is urgent that an effort be made to recover these voices, relating them to the quest for dialog which Christian diakonia establishes as part of its pedagogy.

Returning to the theme of development in the context of globalization has triggered rethinking of developmentalism in the 1960s and 1970s, reconsidering the insertion of peripheral nations into the global economy. The re-democratization of Latin American and Caribbean nations as of the

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<sup>34</sup> SUCUPIRA, Fernanda (Ed.). *Por um outro desenvolvimento*. São Paulo: ABONG, 2012. The document brings experiences of diverse NGOs demonstrating diverse alternatives of development.

<sup>35</sup> BLOOMQUIST, Karen L. (Hrsg.) Verantwortung füreinander – Rechenschaft voreinander. Neoliberale Globalisierung als Anfrage na die Lutherische Kirchengemeinschaft. Geneva: FLM, 2005; DUCHROW, Ulrich. Alternatives to global capitalism: drawn from biblical history, designed for political action. Utrecht: International Books; Heidelberg: Kairos, 1998. SANTA ANA, Julio (Ed). Sustainability and globalization. Geneva: WCC, 1988.

<sup>36</sup> MIGNOLO, Walter. A colonialidade de cabo a rabo: o hemisfério ocidental no horizonte conceitual da Modernidade. Buenos Aires: Clacso, 2005. In: [http://bibliotecavirtual.clacso.org.ar/clacso/sur-sur/20100624094657/6\\_Mignolo.pdf](http://bibliotecavirtual.clacso.org.ar/clacso/sur-sur/20100624094657/6_Mignolo.pdf). Accessed 06.10.16

second half of the 1980s led to the experience of popular governments as of the 21<sup>st</sup> century onwards, concretizing what has become called “neodevelopmentalism,” associated with a new stage of world capitalism classified as “neoextractivism.”<sup>37</sup> This modality of exercising the right to development entered into conflict with other sets of rights: the rights of the indigenous populations, rights of the Afro-descendants, the right to a healthy environment, etc.<sup>38</sup> Combating poverty was the center of these efforts. Statistics indicate significant changes in the levels of poverty. However, the whole process is showing itself to be contradictory, since it takes up again, without new contributions, the parameters of the developmentalism of the 1960s and 1970s,<sup>39</sup> causing clashes without solution among the human rights.

New and old narratives about development were mixed up in these political efforts to profile a new cycle of development. The great climatic, environmental and human tragedies brought on by these models informed by old and new narratives are part of a new way of comprehending the current logic of the development of the capitalist economy. Negative externalities are now integrated into the destructive logic of the economy. As Naomi Klein points out, capitalism develops the logic of disaster management.<sup>40</sup>

The economy produces disasters and makes possible, by the same logic, the cure of disaster as another economical practice. Capitalism manages the disaster and the cure. This can be easily integrated into a sustainable perspective which goes from calculations and plans of reducing damage to technologies of suppression of the unavoidable collateral damage and also, all the humanitarian help necessary for contention of the worst damage. In a universe of economy and finite resources, the disaster is one of the ways to assure the continuous functioning of the capitalist economy.

The new narratives are broadened and combine many elements. Faced with the brutal forms of cultivating the land and the massive production of contaminated foods, other planting narratives and other forms of nutrition

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<sup>37</sup> Regarding new-developmentalism linked to new-extractivism, IHU offers an entire journal to the topic: *Neodesenvolvimentismo e neoextrativismo*. IHU, nº 451, ano XIV, 25 de agosto de 2014.

<sup>38</sup> SANTOS, 2016, p. 94-95.

<sup>39</sup> IHU organized a journal focused on this theme. IHU. *Desenvolvimentismo em debate*, n. 382, ano XII, 14 de maio de 2012. BEIGEL, Fernanda. A teoria da dependência em seu laboratório. *Crítica e Sociedade: revista de cultura política*. v. 4, n. 2. In: [www.seer.ufu.br/index.php/criticasociedade/article/view/26115](http://www.seer.ufu.br/index.php/criticasociedade/article/view/26115). Accessed 07.10.16. No Brasil, o cientista político, é quem tem se dedica com frequência ao tema. FIORI, José Luis. *O Poder global*. São Paulo: Boitempo, 2007.

<sup>40</sup> KLEIN, Naomi. *A doutrina do choque. Ascensão do capitalismo de desastre*. São Paulo: Nova Fronteira., 2008.

retrieve memories, combining them with new logics and practices.<sup>41</sup> These new narratives about production, circulation and distribution of the wealth rewrite the place of women in new practices which walk toward a new gender justice.<sup>42</sup>

The proliferation of new actors and actresses in these narratives draws new possible scenarios of other forms of affection going against a heterosexual and patriarchal economy.<sup>43</sup> People with disabilities rewrite the scenario of work, questioning the normativity in practice of the concept of an economically active population.<sup>44</sup> Diverse ethnic groups (indigenous, quilombolas, riverside populations, etc.) practice economic ways and forms of commerce which are very different from the hegemonic ones.<sup>45</sup>

All of these narratives – and many others – translate and give rise to a radicalization of the concepts of empowerment. The announced professionalization which the milestones of cooperation signaled served a new narrative: the quest for ways to plan, ways of forming technical staffs and leadership, ways of managing and ways of accounting (transparency, results, etc.) which respond to certain criteria based on the narratives themselves.<sup>46</sup> The experiences themselves of economy insert themselves

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<sup>41</sup> OLIVEIRA, Willian Kaizer de. Teologia “boa para comer”: comensalidade, hábitos alimentares, sustentabilidade no horizonte da teologia da libertação contemporânea. São Leopoldo: PPG-EST, 2016.

<sup>42</sup> MOMSEN, Jeanett H. Gender and Development. London: Routledge, 2004; PEARSON, Ruth; JACKSON, Cecile (Eds). Feminists Visions of development. Gender, Analysis and Policy. London: Routledge, 2000. PAIXÃO, Márcia. Diaconia, gênero e desenvolvimento: diálogos necessários. In: VAN ZEELAND, Angelique J. W. M. (Org.). Economia Solidária, diaconia e desenvolvimento transformacional. Por mudanças significativas e duradouras. Porto Alegre: FLD; São Leopoldo: Oikos, 2014, p. 60-68.

<sup>43</sup> DOREY, Kit. The sustainable development goals and LGBT inclusion. Available on: [https://www.stonewall.org.uk/sites/default/files/sdg-guide\\_2.pdf](https://www.stonewall.org.uk/sites/default/files/sdg-guide_2.pdf). Acessado em 15.10.16; JOLLY, Susy. Poverty and Sexuality: What are the connections? In [www.sxpolitics.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/sida-study-of-poverty-and-sexuality1.pdf](http://www.sxpolitics.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/sida-study-of-poverty-and-sexuality1.pdf). Accessed 15.10.16.

<sup>44</sup> METTS, Robert. Disability and development. In: <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/DISABILITY/Resources/280658-1172606907476/mettsBGpaper.pdf>. Acessado em 15.10.16. MEAGER, Nigel; HIGGINS, Tom. Disability and skills in a changing economy. Institute for Employment Studies. In: [www.oiph.fi/download/140962\\_equality-disability.pdf](http://www.oiph.fi/download/140962_equality-disability.pdf). Accessed 16.10.16.

<sup>45</sup> These alternative forms structure the universe of solidarity economy – is a motivating reflection about the relation between solidarity economy which is found in the journal by the Lutheran Foundation of Diakonia VAN ZEELAND, Angelique J. W. M. (Org.). Economia Solidária, diaconia e desenvolvimento transformacional. Por mudanças significativas e duradouras. Porto Alegre: FLD; São Leopoldo: Oikos, 2014.

<sup>46</sup> This challenge was captured finding good reflections in: BOCK, C; GARCIA, D.; MENEZES, M. N. (Orgs.). Fé e transformação. Papel e relevância das organizações de base ecumênica. São Leopoldo: Sinodal; Quito: Equador, 2016.



in others and new forms of narrating and experiencing economic practices in the perspective of solidarity and of justice.

These narratives all gained expression in a theoretical mark which emerged precisely from another and new references. Recovering ancestral experiences of the Latin American indigenous peoples and combining them with political and academic reflections, there emerged the Andean “well living.” There are, in truth, a plurality of narratives which use the theoretical mark of “well living” as a reference. They express them in the scenario of post-developmental solutions and represent theories and practices of new ways of life and conviviality with the totality of the cosmic community.<sup>47</sup> The reflections unleashed by the “well living” reestablish an elementary issue: the necessary connection between practical ways of life and the spiritual ways of conceiving life.

### **III – Diakonia: a grammar for the new social narratives.**

#### **3.1 – Diakonia – the love that is transformed as it transforms**

The final declaration of the Global Consultation realized by the Lutheran World Federation in November of 2005, in São Leopoldo, Brazil, with the theme “The diaconal ministry in the Lutheran churches,” affirmed that, faced with the effects of globalization which posed challenges to the witness of the church, whose credibility cannot be taken for granted, diakonia demands increasing importance and can provide a new credibility.<sup>48</sup> Being as diakonia is inseparable from the nature itself of being church, this credibility can flow back over to the church itself. However, more than safeguarding the credibility of the church or its own, diakonia is at the service of witnessing the prophetic values of the kingdom of God. Interested in reflecting on the possibilities of the diakonia to enable new grammatical inflections for the ongoing narratives.

Without forgetting the ecumenical character of diakonia, as previously described, it is of interest here to consider diakonia from the perspective of the Lutheran communion in Latin America and the Caribbean. In this regard, it is important to remember the “Lutheran Conference on Social

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<sup>47</sup> DILLENBURG, Scheila. (Re)construindo o (des)envolvimento: a perspectiva andina do bem viver e suas contribuições ao ethos sócio-comunitario-religioso no contexto latinoamericano. São Leopoldo: PPG-EST, 2016.

<sup>48</sup> BOETCHER, Reinhard (Ed.). The Diaconal Ministry in the Mission of the Church. Geneva: Luther World Federation, 2006, p. 82.

Christian Responsibility in Latin America” which took place in Caracas, Venezuela, in May of 1968, as part of the regional conferences before the V Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation which took place in Brazil in 1970.

At that Conference, the theme was social responsibility (or social ethics, as the documents mention) in Latin America, “social planning” was in debate, which, in other words, was the discussion about how the social service would concretely, intentionally and coordinately, fulfill the responsibility of the church. P. Dr. Ernesto Schlieper, at the time the president of the IECLB and of the Latin American Commission of the LWF, in the opening sermon, expressly said that the social responsibility of the church was its “diakonia” which stemmed from the same and only Gospel of Jesus Christ.<sup>49</sup>

He further mentioned that the church would be nothing other than the congregation of those people who remain in Christ and serve him. Thus, there would be no way to split up the social task from the preaching of the Gospel. There would not be something like a social Gospel, but just the Gospel of God’s love, whose center was Christ, through whom God reconciled the world.<sup>50</sup>

Considering the emphasis that the V Assembly, held in Evian, France in 1970, gave to human rights, one can perceive that the understanding of diakonia outlined in Caracas became even clearer and more concrete. The declaration of Evian about human rights was lifted to the category of a guide for the action and commitment of the LWF with people and groups involved in liberation struggles for the recognition of their dignity. The Assembly of Evian was decisive in themes, with clear diaconal ramifications: the inclusive participation of the churches of the Southern Hemisphere, of the women and the youth and the strong emphasis on human rights as a central ethical reference. In 1997, the LWF council ratified the promotion of rights as an inseparable aspect of its comprehension of diakonia. This reference to human rights was increasingly taken into consideration to deepen the comprehension of diakonia of the LWF.

In 2002 at a Global Consultation held in Johannesburg, South Africa, the LWF introduced the biblical concept of prophecy into its

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<sup>49</sup> SCHLIEPER, Ernesto. Sermón de apertura. In: Responsabilidad social Cristiana. Conferencia Luterana sobre responsabilidad social Cristiana en America Latina. Buenos Aires: Federación Luterana Mundial, 1969, p. 21. It is the only time the word is written in the document.

<sup>50</sup> “The church, which exists only to witness to this love of God to humanity, does not stop being interested in it (...) there is no social gospel. There is only one gospel of the love of God in Christ. But this gospel includes all sector of human life and, therefore, it is eminently social.” SCHLIEPER, 1969, p. 22.

comprehension of diakonia. With the title of “Prophetic diakonia for the healing of the world,” this consultation summarized the many advances of the theological reflection of the LWF and of ecumenical diakonia.<sup>51</sup> The reflections of the consultation reaffirmed that diakonia belongs to the heart of the church and its calling is directed toward the whole church and to all people without distinction. This calling is clearly oriented. The cross which forms the theology of the Lutheran churches does not permit them to ignore any suffering in the world, since the cross does not mystify nor ignore reality. The cross reveals and accuses. The cross empowers for prophetic denunciation.<sup>52</sup>

This consultation once again took up in an express way the theme of poverty as one of the signs of the cross which the churches cannot ignore. In a specific way, the theme of poverty was associated to violence and to the HIV/AIDS epidemic. The connection of the culture of violence as a form of conduct problem solving and the neglect and exclusion of the ill, especially when the illness is related to areas of human sexuality, is deeply associated with a development model which generates misery and demeans the dignity of people in so many ways. In these terms, the consultation repositioned the relation of prophetic diakonia with the development model, indicating the need to confront the situations of extreme poverty<sup>53</sup> and reorient the current development model, which tries to reduce poverty, towards more justice. In a way, the idea of “reorientation” means a very simple judgment of the development model, because its problem seems to reside in an issue of appropriate orientation.

Another decisive reference for the constitution of diakonia as a grammar for the new narratives took the form of a publication *Diakonia in context*. The work organizes, synthetizes, and elaborates a significant set of themes, definitions and methodologies from the universe of diakonia, becoming a reference work. Effectively it is a theoretical-practical “vade mecum” of diakonia. The concern of placing diakonia in direct relation with the context clearly signals that an essential issue of the relation between diakonia and development was established: diakonia always occurs in contexts that over-

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<sup>51</sup> BOETCHER, Reinhard (Ed.). *Prophetic Diakonia—For the Healing of the World*. Report. Geneva: WLF, 2003.

<sup>52</sup> “A theology of the cross calls things what they really are, moving beyond politeness and pretense, breaking the silence and taking the risk of speaking truth to power, even when this threatens the established order and results in hardship or persecution. This is at the heart of the prophetic diaconal calling.” BOETCHER, 2003, p. 7.

<sup>53</sup> “The current development paradigm that seeks to “reduce poverty” must be reconsidered to become more justice-oriented. Poverty is a symptom of the deeper problems of injustice, greed and the massive accumulation of wealth, encouraged by the neo-liberal paradigm and implemented through multilateral corporations and institutions.” BOETCHER, 2003, p. 7

determine it. The contextual over-determinations are dynamic, especially if one considers the impacts of the diaconal relation itself.<sup>54</sup> More than the necessary flexibility for adaptations, the relationship with contexts needs to provide diaconal action of calculations of incidence, that is, it is not an agonizing search of how to always do the same or more with much less. It is about the creative reflection capable of signaling how to potentiate the action by reaching the never points of the contexts that produce injustice. The prophetesses and prophets do not only denounce but they also have visions. Prophecy is always a sum of courageous audacity and vision.

Focused on the needs of the people, diakonia, in the Christian tradition, has an eye on the people in situations of vulnerability, but it mainly has an eye on the structures which, in contexts, produce vulnerabilities, especially those relative to poverty, but also those relative to gender, ethnicity, disability, and environment. Vulnerabilities are not destiny or fatalities. They are produced and, when produced by nature, are aggravated by human action.

Thus, among the goals of diaconal action are the following: affirm and defend the dignity of people, point out and promote their rights, initiate processes of empowerment, create spaces for them to access their rights, establish signs which aim at social transformation.<sup>55</sup> Thus, diaconal action, besides aiming at social transformation, also aims at reconciliation among people, propitiating the reconstruction of destroyed bonds and affections. In a more immediately, diakonia should provide the empowerment or “dignifying” people and groups. These three purposes of diakonia establish a necessary symbiosis among themselves while aiming at the creation of communities in which all belong and in which all learn, the promotion of civic-ecological citizenships and the promotion of networks of distributed relations.

It is possible to conclude that the accents which diakonia developed placed it in conditions of confronting the challenges placed by the complex conjugation of a globally connected economy, that is technologically oriented, complexly structured in multicultural and plural realities from the religious standpoint, multifaceted in terms of gender, ecologically threatened, etc.

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<sup>54</sup> The topic about the “option for the poor” is linked to the context of poverty that experience changes that is important to recognize. OLIVEIRA, Pedro A. *Opção pelos pobres no século XXI*. São Paulo: Paulinas, 2011.

<sup>55</sup> “When these elements are in place, there is good reason to hope that diaconal work may contribute to substantiate change, not only in the life of individuals, but also in Church and in society. This may correspond to a concept which is also applied to development: a process of transformation of the human condition that envisions justice, peace and the integrity of creation.” NORDSTOKKE, Kjell (Ed.). *Diakonia em contexto: Transformação, Reconciliação, Empoderamento: uma Contribuição da FLM para a Compreensão e a Prática da Diakonia*. Genebra: FLM; Porto Alegre: IECLB, 2009, p. 43.

However, one must ask, as was done above, if diakonia has effectively been able to confront the theme of development from the point of view of overcoming it. In other words, one must ask if diakonia has been able to debug its grammar so that it may make possible new narratives.<sup>56</sup>

Certainly, this is the biggest challenge of diakonia. This retrospect was able to cover the huge and continuous effort that diakonia, at the ecumenical level and in the context of the Lutheran communion has done to guard its vocabulary and establish creative grammatical structures able to deal with the permanent process of linguistic expropriation that the diaconal language suffers in its purpose of empowerment, reconciliation and transformation. Love is said in many ways, most of them inappropriately. The unfinished and incessant search for purer language re-emphasizes the post-development theme as a challenge to be more decidedly assumed by the diaconal reflection. Although, of course, nothing guarantees that it would be definitive grammar. What sounds promising in this scenario is not so much the offer of a safe place, but the awareness that post-development is made up of many voices, although love is inappropriately said in so many ways. As Proverbs 11:14 says: “in an abundance of counselors there is safety.”

### **3.2 – “Does this church have a doctrine?” The perplexities of a bewildered love**

It would not be fitting to end without an indication, however small, of this scenario of plural narratives and disjointed affections. Here I use of biographic language since narratives are personal. The story which I will narrate I have told countless times. I realize today that I am only now beginning to understand it. The title question, to this section, was addressed to me by a woman who was visibly intoxicated in the context of a diaconal work of the Lutheran Congregation of Belo Horizonte, Southeastern Brazil. I was leading a biblical activity at the beginning of a meeting of mothers in a daycare center maintained by the congregation in a peripheral municipality of the metropolitan region of Belo Horizonte.

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<sup>56</sup> Nevertheless, a deep reflection and analysis that aims at designing the framework of an “economy of care”, it is important to ask, for instance, if the twelve steps for a Program to Recover Economy proposed at the end of “Beyond Poverty and Affluence” are not driving towards the current model of development which logic is the market economy. OUDZWARRD, Bob; DE LANGE Harry. *Beyond Poverty and Affluence. Toward an economy of care*. Geneva:WCC; Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdman, 1995, p. 134-161.

As I said, I have told and interpreted this story many times. My first interpretation was to try to understand the question, putting aside the fact that such a question could seem offensive for a person of the rich and proud – in a good sense -Lutheran doctrinal tradition. That lady, surely – maybe not totally aware – had something else in mind with the question and some years of reflection were necessary for me to, finally, begin to realize something simple.

My initial interpretations revolved around a central issue of “Lutheran doctrine”: the theme of law. Our comprehension of the rich and complex relation between law and Gospel seemed, in my understanding, to be a confessional component of difficult assimilation by the people. I supposed that the woman wanted a rigid catalog of rules, like, for example, don't drink (alcoholic beverages). For a time, then, I hesitated to think of pedagogical ways of translating this doctrine into some type of spirituality accessible for missionary activity. I believed I had foreseen in this an important aspect of the missionary action of Brazilian Lutheranism.<sup>57</sup>

I was right, but in the wrong direction. I had not realized that this reflection, of missionary character, occurred in the institutional body of a diaconal activity, whose presence and action were more continuous than that momentary missionary discourse. In a way, that woman signaled the existence of narrative short-circuit between religious (missionary) speech and the diaconal action – for the development of that locality – since a daycare center is complexly inserted in the daily networks of the struggle for survival which seeks to balance work and caring for the children.

There was, undoubtedly, an enormous “gratitude” for that “humanitarian” aid, but this help did express itself in the language of a “doctrine” capable of configuring subjectivities, behaviors and values with the massive force of reorienting the insertion of these actors and actresses into the complex

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<sup>57</sup> The sensitivity to the renewed understanding aroused from FREEMAN, Denan. *The Pentecostal Ethics and the Spirit of Development*. In: ID. (Ed.). *Pentecostalism and development. Churches, NGOs and social change in Africa*. New York: Palgrave MacMillian; Jerusalem: The Van Leer Jerusalem Institute, 2012, p. 1-40. The author understands that Pentecostals churches in Africa have been more effective agents of transformation than NGOs doing development. She insists that Pentecostalism focuses on certain aspects of change that secular NGOs continue to overlook. She understands that Pentecostalism is very successful in producing empowerment and transformation folks. It provides moral legitimization values that are in contradiction with values local communities and are able to radically rebuild families and communities that support these values and the new behaviors. The author understands that without these transformation economic changes and development proposals do not find effectiveness. The author takes up, in this reflection, elements of Weber's thesis on ethics Protestant and the spirit of capitalism. Perhaps, our defensive readings in the Weber have hitherto prevented us from grasping its illuminating aspect.

dynamics of the dehumanizing economy. This was the continuous short-circuit between diakonia and mission.<sup>58</sup> The question then, is whether Lutheran diakonia continues to be hostage to the secularist principle which separates development and religion, faith and economy.<sup>59</sup> Curiously, as demonstrated, the economy always seeks to relate its development models to Christian morality. Maybe, in the eagerness to delegitimize these efforts a certain reading of the “doctrine of the two kingdoms” may have sharpened the gap further limiting the transforming force that religion could come to play.<sup>60</sup>

If it were possible to synthesize the reflection made so far, we could say that diakonia is how the church can incarnate itself into the world. When, finally, it is deeply faithful to the imperative of the incarnation, diakonia leads the church to its experience of death and resurrection. In this dynamic of death and resurrection there is the chance that the church might, then, articulate not only a new grammar but, perhaps, a new language capable of saying things as they are.

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<sup>58</sup> The booklet “Poverty and Development. An interreligious perspective,” results from a consultation with various religious leaders held in 1998, under the auspices of the Inter-religious Dialogue World Development Organization (DWARD). It registers one of the approaches about the relationship between religion and development. However, the booklet does not go beyond the realization that true development assumes certain virtues whose principles are solidarity, altruism, fellowship, respect, tolerance, forgiveness, and mercy. It does not advance in demonstrating how religions contribute to the constitution of these behaviors. DIRMD. *Pobreza e desenvolvimento. Uma perspectiva inter-religiosa*. São Leopoldo: Sinodal, s/d.

<sup>59</sup> The book, resulting from the consultation jointly held by FLM and Mission Eine Welt in 2012, walks in this direction. Many of the presentations tent to explore the relationship between religion and development, seeking to overcome easy dichotomies. MTATA, Kenneth. *Religion: Help or Hindrance to development?* Geneva: FLW; Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2013.

<sup>60</sup> DUCHROW, Ulrich (Hrsg.). *Zwei Reiche und Regimente. Ideologie oder evangelische Orientierung? Internationale Fall- und Hintergrundstudien zur Theologie und Praxis lutherischer Kirchen im 20. Jahrhundert*. Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1977.





# Universal reconciliation as a diaconal project of communion at the table of Jesus<sup>1</sup>

*Rodolfo Gaede Neto*

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## 1. Initial considerations

For the biblical foundation of diakonia, reconciliation is a fundamental theological concept. This concept is central to the understanding of diakonia, especially based on 2 Co 5:18, where Paul affirms that God “gave us the diakonia of reconciliation,” that is, God gives us the task of promoting the reconciliation of the world.

This is one of the reasons for the choice of this theme. The other is that the proposal of universal reconciliation constitutes itself as the base of what Jesus taught and practiced in his *common table*. We could also say that reconciliation is the key to understand that which Jesus understood as “serving the table,” which is the original meaning of diakonia.

In order to place ourselves before this theme of reconciliation in the context of the Jesus’ *table communions*, the parable of the prodigal son must be considered (Luke 15:11-32). Without a doubt, the text in the loving welcome of the father gives to the lost son who returns is quite visible (v. 20-24). However, the father’s insistence to bring the oldest

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<sup>1</sup> This article is inspired in the theme “the diaconal praxis and the project of reconciliation” developed in the graduate class. This version reformulates and expands the text published in: GADE NETO, Rodolfo. *Diakonia no contexto afro-brasileiro: um estudo baseado nas comunhões de mesa de Jesus*. São Leopoldo: Sinodal/EST, 2014, p. 220-226.

son to the communion table, who was offended with the welcome the father was giving his brother, cannot be ignored (v. 28b, 31, 32). The two sons represent the two parts of a divided people: on the one side, those who considered themselves just, as the fulfillers of the whole system of religious laws (scribes and Pharisees), and, on the other, those who were excluded from the religion (the proscribed) because they were considered unworthy sinners. In the parable, the invitation to sit face to face at the communion table makes evident the desire of Jesus that reconciliation take place between the segments of the people of God, whose relations had been broken due to religious reasons.

It is not said that the father made a preferential option for one of the two sons. This is not a text of judgment. On the contrary, it is one of welcoming for both. The tension in the text cannot be attributed to the father's attitude of unconditionally welcoming the son who had a reprehensive behavior but to the stubborn attitude of the oldest son. The latter refused to step into the new space which the father was creating: the space of the reconciled ("the father sought to reconcile him", v.28).

The new space, which takes place around the table, is not, therefore, the exclusive place of the just son or of the outcast one. That is, the father is not demanding that the younger son take on the identity of the brother who considers himself just since he fulfilled the laws of his religious group, nor that the latter become liberal. Both are invited to a new environment, of gathering and of communion.

What happens is that the oldest son excludes himself from this environment, while the younger one anxiously seeks it out. Therefore, if there is a preferential option in the text, it is made by the older brother: he opts for the design of his closed and excluding religious group, presupposing and even demanding that the father also assume it.

These affirmations about the parable of the prodigal son are representative of the greater part of the texts which refer to the table of communion bringing up reconciliation. In the whole, Jesus presents the project of God's reconciliation in a universal perspective, covering all the dimensions of human life in society, be they in the cultural, social, economic, political, religious or theological spheres. Next, we will present an exercise of interpretation of these texts.

## **2. Reconciliation in a cultural perspective**

"I say to you that many will come from the east and from the west and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven" (Mt 8:11f). This saying of Jesus announces the project

of reconciliation in the ethnic-cultural perspective based on the idea of the great eschatological feast, open to all peoples including the gentiles. All peoples, with their different cultures, races, ethnicities and religions will share fellowship around the table of the kingdom of God.

The story referring to the second multiplication of bread (Mk 8:1-10) points out Jesus' concern with the well-being of those "who have come a long distance" (v. 3), a reference to the gentiles. Another significant fact is that this table of communion with 4,000 people takes place in Decapolis, where the population is ethnically mixed.<sup>2</sup> The table of the kingdom of God does not know exclusion of those who are culturally and ethnically different.

The encounter of Jesus with the Syrophenician woman (Mk 7:24-30) demonstrates that he agrees with the inclusion of the foreigner who is culturally, ethnically and religiously different, in the new communion space which God is creating through Jesus.

In the same way, there is a message of cultural inclusion in the story of the healing of the Roman centurion's servant (Mt 8: 5-13 and Luke 7:1-10). Jesus affirms not having encountered in Israel a faith such as that of this stranger.

Based on these data, the universality of God's design has its expression in the communion of all peoples, all cultures, races and ethnicities. Paulo Suess expresses it thus: "Salvific universalism is not arrogance (...), it means: no-one is excluded. Universalism must be thought of in terms of non-exclusion. All are part of the history of salvation."<sup>3</sup>

### 3. Reconciliation in a social perspective

The stories of the multiplication of bread are unanimous in affirming "all ate and were satisfied" (Mark 6:42; Mt 14:20; Luke 9:17; John 6:11f). Jesus knows the serious social problems of his time and his actions demonstrated another possible reality: no one should be deprived of the right to dignified eating.

In the parable of the wedding banquet or the great feast (Mt 22:1-14), the invitation included at the banquet table people "from the streets and alleys (...) the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame." (Luke 14:21).

According to the words of Jesus in Luke 14:13f, the invitation to communal meals should break the exclusiveness of the equal groups

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<sup>2</sup> Bolyki, 1998, p. 93.

<sup>3</sup> SUESS, Paulo. Desafios da Inculturação: Reflexões teológicas e pistas pastorais. In: BEOZZO, José Oscar (org.). *Culturas e Inculturação: Fé cristã, ecumenismo e diálogo interreligioso*. São Paulo: Paulus, CESEP, 1998, p. 136.

and include “the poor, the maimed, the lame and the blind”, those who “cannot repay you”.

The parable of the rich man and of poor Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31) presupposes that for the well-being of both, it would have been necessary to open the door and divide the plentiful table. The message of the parable proposes the deconstruction of the social abyss which existed between the social classes of Jesus’ time, represented by the two characters of the parable.<sup>4</sup>

The story of Jesus’ visit to Zacchaeus’ house, which included the table of communion, culminates in Zacchaeus renouncing the product of his plundering, returning it to the poor (Luke 19:1-10).

The historic ministry of Jesus is marked by open table communions (Mk 2:15-17), in which the poor people could satisfy their hunger.

The person who does not participate in this common table, of social well-being, would include him or herself in a particular realm. Some examples of these realms are: Herod and the elite with their system of accumulation, conceived and maintained with violence to guarantee a full table only for a minority; the rich man who hid himself behind the door of his house in order to enjoy his accumulated goods alone; or the Pharisees, who, in the name of a purist particularism, condemned the open commensality of Jesus (Mark 2:16; 2:23-24).

In the social perspective, God’s reconciliation project shows itself through the signaling of a society in which the unjust differences between the rich and poor and the social classes they represent are overcome.

## 4. Reconciliation in an economic perspective

The satiation of people’s hunger cannot depend on the condition of having money in an economic system in which access to money is controlled by a minority. The alternative to this pseudo-economy is the system of sharing which guarantees abundance of bread for all people (Mk 6:37).

The economic model of reciprocity (exchange), applied to a context of social disparity, excludes people who do not have the same buying power as their colleagues (those who are not able to repay). Besides this, this model serves for a *clientelist* practice, in so far as the people of lesser buying power become dependent on those who concede them some favor. For this reality, Jesus proposes the establishment of social relations based on the principle of giving (based on the concept of gratuitousness), which aims at the redistribution of the concentrated goods (Luke 14:7-14).

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<sup>4</sup> BOLYKI, 1998, p. 80s.

In Zacchaeus we have a concrete example of redistribution, which signals a new possible economic practice, unleashed by the experience of God's gratuitousness (Luke 1:10).

A person who excludes him or herself from an economy of sharing through greedy accumulation of wealth (Luke 16:19f) and maintenance of the status quo, does not participate in an economy of sharing.

With regard to economic relations, the reconciliation project of Jesus' table of communion aims at the practice of sharing at the level of the whole society.

## 5. Reconciliation in a political perspective

In the comprehension of the authors of the Old Testament, it was the responsibility of the governing people, designated as "pastor", to care for the well-being of the whole "flock." According to Ched Myers, in the context of the prophets, the metaphor "a flock without a pastor," is used to criticize the leadership of Israel (cf. Ez 34:20; Zec 11:5, 17). The governing class is more concerned with protecting their own privileges than with the collective prosperity of the people, becoming, therefore, mercenary instead of pastoral.<sup>5</sup>

Jesus uses the metaphor "pastor-sheep" in the episode of the "multiplication of bread" (Mk 6:30-44) upon realizing that the crowd is famished and disoriented "like sheep without a pastor" (v. 34).

According to Ched Myers, "clearly, linking Jesus – as one who attends to the hunger of the crowds in the desert – with these prophetic traditions is meant as a criticism of the political economy of Palestine and the ruling class who takes advantage of it."<sup>6</sup>

The "pastoring" in this case was the responsibility of Herod Agrippa, who only looked after the well-being of an elite, with whom he held closed banquets in the palace, an elite made up of "his high dignitaries and military officers and the leading men of Galilee" (Mk 6:21). At one of these banquets the death of the popular leader John the Baptist was planned (Mk 6: 14-29). That is why Uwe Wegner affirms that these events are "banquets of death" (cf. Mk 6:14-28). They were banquets of death also because the people of Palestine were dying of hunger as a result of the bad distribution of the wealth and the collection of high taxes.

Herod particularized, privatized the bread table.

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<sup>5</sup> MYERS, Ched. *O Evangelho de São Marcos*. São Paulo: Paulinas, 1992, p. 258.

<sup>6</sup> MYERS, 1992, p. 258.

Countering this situation, Jesus carried out banquets of life: “All ate and were satisfied” (Mk 6: 42).<sup>7</sup>

This episode of distributing the bread to the women, men, children, Jews, Gentiles, elderly and young, in a context of hunger and disorientation, carries a message of political character, indicating the possibility of another model of government, one in which all people may eat and be satisfied. Jesus was moved by the “political” paradigm of the table set for all people.

God’s design of reconciliation is thus expressed in the proposition of a participatory and inclusive political paradigm. In a society where all people can eat and have their fill, the governed-ruler relationship has achieved authentic reconciliation.

## 6. Reconciliation in a religious perspective

In the parable of the wedding banquet or the great feast (Matthew 22:1-14 and Luke 14:15-24) the invitation included “good and evil” at the communion table (Mt 22:10), an indication of breaking the barrier of religious particularism of good people constructed on a rigid system of moral and religious exclusion.

Specifically this breakup is practiced in the encounter between Jesus and the Syrophenician woman (Mark 7:24-30), in the visit that Jesus paid to the religiously excluded Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10) and taught in the parable of the loving father, when he seeks to reconcile the two sons which were estranged because of the proscription (Luke 15:28).

In the narratives referring to the open commensality of Jesus, there are implicit and explicit criticisms of an excluding type of religion (Luke 7:37f; 14:12-14; 15:32; 19:9; Mark 2:17).

Jesus accepts the invitation of the Pharisees to the table of communion (Luke 14:7-14; 7:36), demonstrating that his criticisms of the Pharisaical religious model does not intend to exclude people, but of presenting them to the inclusive project of God (Luke 13:12-17).

It is not possible to detect in Jesus the intention of creating a new religion. The base of his religious manifestations is in the announcement of proximity and in the signaling of the presence of the kingdom of God (Mt 4:17; 10:7f; 12:28; Mark 1:15; Luke 7:18-23; 11:20; 16:16; 21:31). Marc Edouard Kohler faced with the question of whether Jesus wanted

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<sup>7</sup> WEGNER, Uwe. Jesus e Economia no Evangelho de Marcos. *Reflexos da Brisa Leve*. Belo Horizonte: CEBI, 1991, p. 99.

the Church, answers with the words of Alfred Loisy: “No, what he wanted was the kingdom of God, but what came was the Church.”<sup>8</sup>

Jesus’ message on the kingdom of God is an expression of God’s a reconciliation project also in the religious field. “Go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find” (Mt 22:9). There is no election of a determined religion. “But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind” (Luke 14:13). The groups mentioned are all religiously excluded. “Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame” (Luke 14:21). Outside the context of the table of communions, the references of Jesus to the kingdom of God can be summed up in the words of Luke 4:18f: “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor” (cf. also Luke 7:22).

Even so, the theme at hand can raise the question of whether the announcement of the kingdom of God by Jesus could not be interpreted as a proposition of a universal religion, with two dangers: that of globalization (of Christianity!) and that of generalization (trivialization of ethics).

In this regard, the intention of religious uniformity seems not to be the hallmark of Jesus’ design, but rather of his opponents. Uniformity can only be created and maintained through the power of a rigid legal apparatus. With regard to this, Jesus always manifested himself critically. Jesus’ design is characterized, to the contrary, by gratuitousness. The welcoming to the table of communions is distinguished specifically by the unconditional (Mk 2:15; Mt 22:9f; Luke 14:12; 15:20; 19:5). This is the basis of respect for the identity of the different.

With reference to the issue of a generic type of religion, Jesus himself responded: “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord’, will enter the kingdom of heaven” (Mt 7:21). The kingdom of God possesses an unmistakable ethical identity. The evangelist Matthew already indicated this in the parable of the wedding: “But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes” (Matthew 22:11). The expulsion of this intruder demonstrates the existence of criteria which prevent the trivialization of the participation in the kingdom of God.

When, in Matthew, Jesus affirms that not everyone will enter the kingdom of heaven, he is referring to the “false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inside they are ferocious wolves” (Matthew 7:15). We can also mention those who were invited to the banquet “But they paid no attention and went off – one to his field, another to his business.

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<sup>8</sup> KOHLER, 1995, p. 99.

The rest seized his servants, mistreated them and killed them.” (Matthew 22:5f; cf. also Luke 14:18-20).

Summarizing, a person who excludes him or herself because of their prophetic falsehood or because of substituting the Kingdom for a private kingdom does not participate in the reconciliation project of God’s kingdom. Jesus concludes, “by their fruits you shall know them” (Matthew 7:20).

Thus, it seems to be possible to conclude that the criterion for distinguishing the kingdom of God from a generic universal religion is not the religious but ethical one. Therefore, the reconciliation project in the religious field is founded on the ethics of the kingdom of God. This is especially significant for Diakonia.

## **7. Reconciliation in a theological perspective**

In the table of communions, Jesus turns to the Father to thank him for the food (Mark 6:41; 8:6; 14:23; Luke 9:16; 24:30; Matthew 14:19; John 6:11). With this, he makes known his theology, witness God as the Creator who watches over all of creation and all creatures. It is the theology of letting God be God over everything and everyone. Thanking God for bread is to recognize the dependence of all creatures solely on God. It means assuming the filial condition with regard to the only father of all creatures.

At the table of communions, Jesus witnesses the breaking forth of the kingdom of this God of all creatures, when, in God’s name and as God’s messenger (Mark 2:17), God indiscriminately welcomes the people around the table (Mk 2: 15-16).

From the theological focus, God’s reconciliation project is expressed in the witness of Jesus concerning the universal Creator, whose kingdom is manifested where people are accepted without discrimination for satisfying the hunger for bread and the thirst for communion.

## **8. Final considerations**

The reconciliation project announced at Jesus’ table of communions covers all areas of human life in society: cultural, social, economic, political and religious.

Jesus’ proposal of overcoming barriers which promote exclusion points to solidarity as a value that must permeate all the dimensions of human relations with a view to a reconciled world.

The concept of reconciliation – as God’s plan for the whole world – is, therefore, a basic theological fact for the foundation of diakonia, since



it opens the perspective of integration of small local action to the larger horizon of universal reconciliation.

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# Diakonia and Gender

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The idea of this article is to establish dialogic approaches between diakonia and gender using the methodology to deconstruct, reconstruct, and build upon from feminist theology. The theme Gender and Diakonia is present in the daily life of Lutheran congregations, in community spaces in general, in academic training, but their connection to theological themes is still somewhat unknown. The two concepts, which converge with each other, are still marginal in the broad field of practical theology and theology in general. Today, it is appropriate to link both subjects allowing meaning that touches, calls our attention and inspires us.

## Starting the conversation

I do need words

I need them urgently

Words that can be used in cases of emergency

(Words – Titan)

In the field of feminisms, experience – telling her word with her own words is considered raw material; then, an essential element for the process of the liberation of women. In diaconal action, these elements are also fundamental for the transformation of people. One needs to remember that for a long time, experience as the word for everyday practice was

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considered as something minor and remained in the peripheries of knowledge, including in the field of theology. Historically, the idea was that reason/thinking was the noble part in knowledge and the action, which was related to daily life, was referred to common sense. Doing (action) was relegated to a secondary aspect and therefore without relevance in to the academy. In this dominant line, thinking and practice were disconnected in the same way that the public and the private were hierarchically in unequal positions. In this logic, Diakonia and Gender Relations remained at the periphery in the large field of theology because they were related to doing, the experience, everyday life, and to women.

Over the centuries, these ideas and concepts were built and accepted as norm of life in society including the religious field. They were considered suitable, certain, and unique. The institutions and people have appropriated these concepts and naturalized them as fixed rules that determined roles, professions, lifestyles, behaviors for women and men, thus establishing the “natural superiority of men over women” (VARIKAS, 2009, p.117).

At the beginning of the conversation, I make a brief dialogue with history because I understand that it can help us to appreciate where from the norms, dissociations, discriminations, and the exclusions that construct concepts and practices come from. Although historical facts have limitations, still some elements are informative.

The historian Franco Cambi (1999), while telling the history of antiquity leaves evidence of the existence of gender relations at the beginning of social life. In the Early Period (5 million years ago – from the Australopithecus to Homo Sapiens) the division of labor between men and women took place. It was instituted the family, the sexual and social roles, and authority was introduced. In ancient Greece (1600 BC) the woman's place was the domestic space. The woman was mother and wife but socially invisible and subaltern devoted to housework and rising of the children. Outside of home the woman was considered temptingm seductive (of man), and someone that distracted from her duties. Femininity was considered sin, evil, and disorder.

In the ancient world (Cambi, 1999) the woman's place was in the family and her role was one of submission, first to her father and after to her husband. To the last, she should devote absolute loyalty and love. At home, women spun and wove. In Greek myths, female models opposed to domestication and submission were the Amazons, women warriors, considered with “masculine characteristics” for showing courage and strength. The figures of freer women were: priestesses, elderly, and luxury prostitutes. They were negative examples because a woman's place was with the family in the household.

Historian Carla Pinsky (2012) continues speaking about historical facts and says:

In the eighteenth century it was still discussed as to whether women were human beings as men or if they were closer to irrational animals. They had to wait until the end of the nineteenth century to see their right to education recognized and even much more time to join universities. In the twentieth century, it was discovered that women have a history and, sometime later, that they can consciously try to take it in their hands, with their movements and claims (PINSKY, cited PERROT, 2012, p.11)

Historian Michelle Perrot (2012) explains that the invisibility of women in the public space happened precisely because they were confined at home without right to speak. The Greek and Roman history include episodes of the public world: wars and the reigns of public men. Women were “little seen, little were said about them. And this is a second reason for this silence: the silence of the sources.” (PERROT, 2012, p.17)

The place, tasks, and the way of being was built for women. It is made explicit that the domestic/private was the only place allowed for women and that being spinning, weaving, and for child care. No theory/thinking was needed, it only required doing. The dissociation between thinking and doing, public and private, the place of man and woman, submission and domination were constituted under these foundations over the centuries. This domesticated and naturalized the inequalities between genders and perpetuated the norm that women are the ones who should serve and be always available to the whole family even self-sacrificing.

With these concepts, gender relations were established over time. Inequality was settled with “naturalness” because after all, women are worth less. In this way, women were becoming “angels of the home” serving others, totally self-sacrificing, and cloistered with domestic issues. The English writer Virginia Woolf is a woman who is uncomfortable with this place. Woolf does not accept the imposition and denounced the imposed oppression. “Angel of the home” is the adjective that only women receive socially and constitutes a requirement of the “being a woman standard.” Virginia Woolf (2013), in middle of the twentieth century, rebelled against this imposition of angel of the home and invites us to send away this “angel the home” that enslaves and domestics women. Speaking at the National Society of Women’s Service Aid event in 1931, she said:

You who come of a younger and happier generation may not have heard of it — you may not know what I mean by the Angel of the Home. She was intensely nice, immeasurably lovely, totally altruistic, and excellent in the difficult arts of family life. She sacrificed herself daily. If lunch was chicken, she took the leg. If the place to seat was hot given the weather, there was where she was going to sit-in. In short, her temper was never to have an opinion or a will on her own,

but preferred always to agree with the opinions and wishes of others. And most of all — needless to say it —she was pure. Her purity was supposed to be her greatest beauty — and her great grace to build up on that. In those days — the last of Queen Victoria — every house had its Angel. (WOOLF, 2016)

The Angel of the home was a woman who, as a ghost, came to the woman's ear to tell her what to do, how to behave, and how to accept things reluctantly. The Angel of the home was the model to be followed by all women. When a woman acted out of this pattern, the ghost of the angel of the home came to say she should return to her place. In her book, Virginia confesses that she was able to “kill” the angel of the home who insisted on keeping her prey. Thus, she remained free in her profession as a writer which was considered a profession of men.

Subjugation – to be the angel of the home – has been followed women for many centuries. It is a way of being taught and it is installed everywhere: in the family, in society, church, knowledge, and theology. To know the process of oppression implies to name them in order to overcome them. This has been the way that feminists have travelled to achieve gender justice in society.

The philosopher Andrea Nye exemplifies the thinking that became a concept that defined the subordinate place, and naturalized the belief of men's domination over women from Rousseau's ideas:

Women are naturally weaker, suitable for reproduction, and not for public life. Women should be educated to please men and to be mothers. They should be educated on sexual seclusion and chastity that legitimates paternity. In the family men should govern these frivolous creatures. Women must learn to stimulate male desire and at the same time prevent the lust of men. Seduction is unique to her nature: they are eager to please, are modest, tolerant of injustice, cunning, vain, and artists in minor degree (Rousseau, cited Nye, 1995, p.20)

This social construction defined women as beings deprived of reason and from the ability to think and of being in the public space. These concepts were perpetuated for centuries and legitimized dominations, violence, domestication of women from early to the present day. Associated with these social constructions is the idea of objectification of women. So if they are objects they can be used. With this social thought, their bodies do not belong to them and this justifies all violence attributed to their bodies (all kinds of violence and improper attachment of the female bodies with drinks, pornography, and the domestic space). Everything that happens with their bodies is their own “fault.” After all, women are the incarnation of evil. This social thought explains femicide, rape, sexism, the existence of patriarchy,

and violence. This scenario is unacceptable. This patriarchal culture installed and taken as the social norm needs to be overcome. The feminist movement has won many things, but the equality we want is still away and we need to continue the resistance and the production of other social relations.

With this rapid insertion through history, I have tried to show some elements that constituted the inequalities between genres and that became historical and social constructions, imaginary and social practices of exclusion worldwide.

Focusing on the theme diakonia and gender, we can say that there are many convergent points and that we can talk about them. As we have seen, the concept of service was neglected historically and this overloaded and exploited women over the centuries. Then, service brings submission and domination of women and, if we do not work through this at all, the concept will remain with its pejorative meaning for women and for diakonia. Feminist theology criticizes the theology of service when it reproduces the same logic of male domination in the religious context. When we see the diaconal ministry as minor in relation to other ministries; when the diaconal work exercised by Christian people in the communities/institutions/organizations is seen as a secondary action in relation to other community activities; when we link service as something only done by women; when we think that management is something only done by men; when we do not confront human rights abuses; then, we cast down and neglect the example and mandate of the deacon Jesus and running the risk of reproducing the logic of exclusion very “naturally.” To name the inequalities, the sufferings and the pains is a fundamental action to overcome oppression and exploitation. In this sense, diakonia and feminism have traced this theoretical and practical way of seeking egalitarian relationships in all areas.

Thus, it is pertinent to work with this theme and promote new meanings to build a fairer and more equitable community.

## **The meanings of Gender**

The feminists were the ones that, through different social movements, brought to the concept of gender and patriarchy to the social, academic, and religious areas promoting different dialogues, practices, and modes of being. In the public spaces, they named and exposed what was hidden and caused exploitation. There is no definitive agreement on everything contained in the concept, but gender remains a “useful category of analysis” (Scott, 1990) along with other categories like class and ethnicity when analyzing and studying the contexts.

I begin with the concept offered by theologian Ivone Gebara. She argues that gender is an instrument of analysis but also an instrument “of female self-construction and as well an attempt to build up social relations based on justice and equality, and respect for difference” (GEBARA, 2000, p.105). Gebara points out that there are a multitude of differences that need to be considered when talking about gender: social class, ethnicity, age, culture, religion, etc. The differences constitute singularities that need to be considered when talking about the broad field of gender. It is not possible to universalize everyone.

The historian Joan Scott defines gender as,

A way of indicating “social constructions” – the fully social creation of ideas roles appropriately to men and women (p.7) [...] and gender is a constituent element of social relations based on differences between the sexes; and, gender is a first way for giving meaning to the power relations (Scott 1990, p.7 and 14).

The social constructs define the ways of being and the places of women and men. And this is not something small because it will have direct impact on people's lives defining hierarchically their value and who does what or who stays where.

Sociologist Heleieth Saffioti argues that the concept of patriarchy needs to be considered with gender analyses. She explains that patriarchy is one of the systems of domination of society along with racism and capitalism. Saffioti defines patriarchy as a “regime of domination/exploitation of women by men” (SAFFIOTI, 2004, p.44). According to the author, this system/regime is everywhere: family, state, work, leisure, etc. It has to do with political power in order to guarantee the oppression of women. Saffioti points out that the changes in society, the ones that imply the elimination of inequalities and injustices, run through the gender and patriarchy debate, which is part of the political sphere and can have implications on the world.

Feminist analyses have a broad theoretical framework about the development of the concept of gender and patriarchy. Bringing this category of analysis to debate in the religious field is an invitation and a collective challenge to reverse the logic of domination and review practices and discourses. In this sense, to address the theme of diakonia and gender is to keep thinking about its development in the place where we are and think how we can bring/make change. I believe that training and critical analysis on these two major themes can take us away from harmless theology. The analysis from the bases of gender issues stimulates theology in its whole. If questions posed do not unsettle us, the tendency is that theology will become harmless. When the theological discourse does not focus on daily issues to transform oppression into dignity, solidarity, sisterhood, justice,



and equality; then the discourse becomes harmless. When the theological discourse only warms the heart of the believer but does not move to act through diaconal work; then faith is in a state of abstraction. It is the action of faith that will make a difference in the context of suffering.

## **Feminist Methodology**

The context of suffering that appears in everyday life will require a way doing diakonia in an effective way. In this sense, knowing how to interpret and analyze what is happening in the world and in the spaces around me -where I am as a person and institution- are critical steps for the effectiveness of diakonia. The action of faith will need a methodology that takes into consideration the principles of liberation proposed in the Gospel.

Feminist Theology brought an important contribution to all areas of theology by bringing the elements of suspicion to biblical hermeneutics where it analyzes the Christian tradition, history, and the biblical texts. Hermeneutics is translated as interpretation (Croatto, 1986). According to Croatto, every reading is a hermeneutical act of interpretation. In this perspective, the feminist hermeneutics considers as the starting point the experience of oppression and liberation of women. It dives to interpret the context in which the text is inserted. Feminist scholars have theoretically deepened this topic and brought various elements from several areas of research contributing to overcome inequalities at all levels.

The commitment to life, respect, justice, solidarity, overcoming of violence, eradication of discrimination and domination and oppression led theology inevitably to engage theoretically in a critical methodology that could enable new forms of gender relations. The hermeneutics of suspicion is based on the methodology of deconstruction, reconstruction, and construction. In order to bring up new articulations to overcome oppression, this methodology works through didactic steps that assist in the practical exercise of doing diakonia in different contexts.

Theologian Wanda Deifelt (2008) lists five steps of this method that are an incentive to the diaconal and citizenship exercise in all areas. This methodology emphasizes that, in order to deconstruct and reconstruct, it is necessary to know the reality, to understand it in order to be able to change it. In this direction, Wanda (2008, p. 15) proposes: 1. Suspicion; 2. Recovery of forgotten or marginalized memories and traditions; 3. Critique, correction, and transformation of concepts; 4. Rethinking how the academic world operates; 5. Critical self-assessment. In Wanda's points of view, the five steps promote an action of revision: deconstruct, they describe what oppresses and causes exclusion of women; but it also goes after the

causes and arguments that maintain discrimination and exploitation. This methodology breaks and subverts the logic of domination. To use it as a tool of analysis and interpretation in Bible studies, worship by different community groups; we can reconstruct and build other possibilities of dignity and equality for human relations. The everyday life is crying out for effective actions that can end with the logic of exclusion. Clearly, theology alone will not change the world, but by choosing critical methodological approaches and establishing partnership networks with others in society can add to changes that promote dignity for all people.

## **And Diakonia?**

To address the issues previously mentioned has its reason. The history of diakonia in Brazil has linked the diaconal work to women and to service. They are two socially essential elements devalued that were placed at the periphery of theology and were seen as secondary issues. In the IECLB, both ministerial and voluntary diaconal work are performed mostly by women (IECLB. Seminário Nacional de Diaconia, 1997). Based on the social constructs of a patriarchal society, the church also followed the model of hierarchy in the theological field. Theologian Rosane Pletsch exemplifies this by saying,

Even though diaconal activities are highlighted as a liberating opportunity for women, research shows that these were designed and coordinated by male pastors. Women should carry out the diaconal service itself, such as caring for the sick, elderly, children, orphans, poor, former female prisoners, and other services. Likewise, it is emphasized that the deaconesses were subjected to an arduous regime of work, many of them dying because of illness, stress and other causes. (Pletsch, 2001, p.33)

We can say that throughout history diakonia has been neglected in two aspects: a) the gender aspect – in interpreting its meaning, and b) the relevance of the diaconal work in the communities. The concept of service was connected to bondage, submission, and a servile theology producing exclusion, and was maintained in the everyday life of women by the patriarchal logic. Feminist theology did not want to link these aspects as they were attributes of women. The fight for women's liberation implied the end of servitude and a conceptual and political revision of diakonia in all areas. To serve was, for a long time, related to servitude that ended in the exclusion of women deaconesses and volunteers from the task of leadership and management in diakonia. Leadership, word and power

were related to men. These exclusion forms are still present in society and the church using patriarchal mechanisms.

Feminist theology denounced this normative role above women and the connection with servitude that prevents women from active participation in social and religious life. It prevents women's liberation and full development as persons able to think, decide, and to contribute in the public space.

The feminization of the diakonia linked to sacrifice, abnegation, rejection of pleasure on behalf of the will of others (Angel of the home), and dependence has located this service to a lesser activity. Under this, the idea of diakonia as a rule, a woman's service, and it is expected that women should serve others in a passive way was introduced. Therefore, in the diaconal universe the vast majority are women. We have few men deacons and few men volunteers in community activities. Diakonia is a feminine outfit says the patriarchal rule. It is urgent and necessary to overcome these mechanisms of control and dependency.

Feminist scholars (Fiorenza, Ruether, Schottroff – to name a few) are unanimous in saying that analyzes and interpretations of the New Testament were done in a patriarchal way. This way of thinking brought prejudice to the diaconal understanding and the public witness of the church. It emphasized hierarchies within the areas of theology, between men and women, and among the ordained ministries.

In the same way, we can say that the diaconal dimension of Jesus is rarely presented in theological discourse. Jesus presented himself as a deacon, performed work of slaves and women and urged his followers do the same but that teaching stayed completely on the sidelines. When the theological discourse emphasizes the theology of service only to deacons and does not show the liberating proposal of Jesus, the church legitimizes the patriarchal ideology and the structures of domination where some persons are called to serve and others to exercise power.

I want to emphasize here the diaconal dimension of Jesus. Jesus's missionary and evangelizing movement made the participation of men and women horizontal in evangelism. The purpose to follow Jesus is to serve understanding it as a gesture of compassion and tenderness towards the pain of another person; looking for ways to take that person out of that place of oppression. This is the freedom and the commitment contained in the concept of diakonia and rarely are presented and studied. The faith proposed by Jesus transformed old ways of thinking and acting. That is why the relationship between men and women and their service were on equal levels. In this sense, the diaconal work is powerful. It transforms lives and ways of being. It is important to point out that the power of diakonia is not an oppressive one as noted by Pletsch, "diakonia, however, does not mean lack of power, but it is opposed to domination" (Pletsch, 2001, p.92).

In this paper, I will not emphasize the etymological and extra-biblical meaning of diakonia. I want to underline the diaconal dimension of Jesus (Mark 10:43-45; Luke 22:27; John 13:14-17 – some examples) as approach to the theme. I believe that the words, action, and mercy in Jesus's actions contributed to be servants while liberated and this has been the purpose of diakonia over time. So, I emphasize the adjective already contained in Jesus' diaconal ministry – be TRANSFORMATIVE – which is very tied to the word diakonia and it can inspire and motivate us to do diakonia freely, seeking a world that is good, fair, sustainable, and without discrimination. All this is never magic and does not happen without mobilizations. The invitation to this diaconal work is made and it was Christ himself who made it!

Finalizing the unfinished reflection, I want to share the contemporary and challenging concept that the Lutheran Foundation of Diakonia (LDF) team developed to drive its diaconal work, and its position. It emphasizes that love is the essence of service (Mark 12:30) and, in order to express it through words/concepts and concrete action, it is necessary to be done by all Christians, this is our challenge!

This definition can be found in the website of the LDF:

Diakonia is an act of love that mobilizes us to reflect and to develop strategies of transformation; it implies collective planning of actions of empowerment, dignity, protagonism, and communion among people, groups and organizations in overcoming inequalities. It also involves on-going monitoring and evaluation processes. It is also service but in the understanding of “acting in an articulated and loving way”, deconstructing conceptions of service sustained in the logic of servers and those who are served. In Mark 10:43, Jesus says, “it should not be so among you” declaring that oppressions of any kind are contrary to the inclusive, liberating, and transformative practice” (LDF Team).

From all these considerations, the task to link diakonia with action and mercy/love has its horizon in the transformation of the suffering of all persons and it gives a new meaning to its concept and emphasize that all Christian persons are invited to do diakonia in response to God's love.

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Part II

Networking Diakonia:

Case Study about

Management of Diakonia





# Diakonia Network – an initiative to strengthen transformation through diakonia

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## **Diakonia in the Evangelical Church of the Lutheran Confession in Brazil (IECLB)**

The history of diakonia and the Evangelical Church of Lutheran Confession in Brazil (IECLB) are deeply intertwined. Hundreds of initiatives within the scope of congregational diakonia have been, for decades, increased in different regions in Brazil where the IECLB is present. Out of these initiatives, important diaconal institutions were born that nowadays work in the field of human rights.

In terms of structure, in the 1960s, when the church was organized, the Board of Directors in the IECLB created the Development Projects Service that coordinated projects with international ecumenical agencies of cooperation<sup>1</sup>. In 1988, the Department of Diakonia was created to coordinate, train, and promote the different diaconal action and its Project Service. In 2000, after the creation of the Lutheran Foundation of Diakonia (FLD) by

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<sup>1</sup> 50 Years of the Development Project Service (SPD) in <http://lutheranos.com.br/textos/50-anos-da-criacao-do-servico-de-projetos-de-desenvolvimento-spd>

the IECLB, the Project Service developed what today is known as Small Projects Program (PPP). Within the scope of the IECLB, the Department of Diakonia started to function as the Diaconal Coordination linked to the General Secretariat. Since 2008, this Coordination is part of the General Secretariat under the name Secretary of Community Action (SAC).

Diaconal actions are the main channel of the church's activity along with civil society. It searches for opportunities for dialogue and action with governmental institutions, civil society, and ecumenical organizations. Christian actions need to be biblical-theologically grounded breaking the dualism between soul and body, alerting to the risk of proselytism, and thus valuing ecumenical, interreligious dialogue and mutual learning. *“Transformation implies action. To leave the shell and the old in order to become a new creature; it is concrete action. To act in God's name in good will. Transform implies changes. In this process of altering, changing, and transforming; it is very important to act in a reflected way.”*<sup>2</sup> In this sense, the concrete diaconal action has important dimensions: practical (action), prophetic (to denounce and announce of new possibilities), liberating (autonomy), and political (public action).

## **The Lutheran Foundation of Diakonia (FLD)**

The FLD is a confessional-based organization that respects religious diversity and the Brazilian secular state. Diakonia, theology, and Lutheran confessions are important aspects in its work. These elements are in dialogue with the complex and challenging relations between religions and the public sphere, strengthening the affirmation of a secular state and human, economic, social, sexual, cultural, and environmental rights.

The FLD develops its diaconal mandate through transformative actions that seek to address the causes of human suffering, including socioeconomic inequalities, discrimination, segregation, sexism, violence, injustice, LGBTQ phobia, patriarchy, and religious intolerance.

Its activities involve the financial support and accompaniment to initiatives of groups, movements, and organizations that act in the affirmation and defense of human rights through the Small Projects Program. The projects are annually announced and selected by an external evaluation commission.

Another dimension of the FLD's activities involves the political, programmatic, and administrative accompaniment to the Center for Support and Promotion of Agro-ecology (CAPA) and the Indigenous Peoples' Mission Council (COMIN). Both institutions were founded by IECLB to work in the

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<sup>2</sup> NORDSTOKKE, Kjell. *Diakonia: Fé em ação*. Ed. Sinodal: São Leopoldo, 1995, p. 67.

field of Agro-ecology, the defense of farmers, and in the accompaniment of indigenous peoples fighting for their rights. This dimension is directly supported by Bread for the World and more recently it also involved the process of integrating these two organizations into the institutional framework of the FLD.

The work of the FLD integrates management of the projects. In this area, various projects are in progress: Not So Sweet Home is an innovative diaconal methodology focused to overcome domestic and gender violence. There are three projects strengthening garbage and recycle cooperatives and associations: The Solidarity and Fair Trade Network project aiming at accompanying solidarity-based economic entrepreneurs to generate income and for the promotion of fair trade among Lutheran communities and institutions; Education for Solidarity that is an initiative seeking to contribute to the integral education of children and young people. It also sensitizes educators and the whole school community. The schools are integrated within the Synods Education Network sharing daily life social issues and sharing the projects developed by FLD. In the area of social and environmental justice, the FLD develops the Pampa Project. It supports settlements linked to the land reform and quilombola communities that cope with the effects of climate change. In this project, the FLD publishes testimonies and information from eight traditional communities in the Pampa Biome: Quilombola, faith healers farmers, gypsy people, indigenous peoples, fishermen, and artisanal fishermen, Afro-Brazilian communities (terreiros), and Pomeranian people.

In the area of humanitarian aid, the FLD empowers communities to prepare for and respond to disasters with a focus on a community-based psychosocial support. The Diakonia Network has centered its work within the framework of the projects articulated between the FLD and the Coordination Office of Diakonia in the IECLB. From the beginning, this work had significant support from the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), Bread for the World, and the IECLB.

## **The Diakonia Network**

The diaconate institutions of Lutheran Churches have been active for decades in the areas of human rights, indigenous rights, food sovereignty and security, overcoming domestic and social violence, guaranteeing the rights of children and adolescents, women, people with disabilities and the elderly. These institutions generally have a significant recognition in the civil society at local and regional levels and fulfill the diaconal mandate that is an essential part of being a Christian church in the world.

To the extent that FLD and Diakonia Coordination accentuated their relationships to diaconal institutions, they perceived a profound isolation between these institutions. Because there is no space for permanent coordination of institutions within the church, or an expanded area of visibility, many of them have lost their ties with the grassroots communities and congregations that created them. In part, it is assumed that this process was due to the professionalization of the services, but this may also have contributed to the weakening of the congregational diaconal mandate over the years. Some of the diaconal institutions were created by people with a strong diaconal identity, but often without the support of the congregations, and other leaderships were engaged in a deeper and more committed way. Some institutions became deeply fragile when their most engaged leaders failed to act.

From the recognition of the negative effects of this isolation, especially in terms of institutional sustainability, the dream of creating a national network of institutions took place. At the same time, there was the recognition that a network could only materialize in a forceful articulation if this desire grew in a genuine form among the institutions.

Thus, during the National Consultation on Experiences of Overcoming Violence against Children, Adolescents and Youth held in Curitiba from August 22 to 24, 2012, sponsored by the Diakonia Coordination in partnership with FLD, the first step to establish the Network was agreed: “to strengthen and constitute, institutionally and administratively, in the IECLB, a Synod Network of Institutions of Community Action. It will need to articulate actions, to create strategies of both pedagogic and administrative intervention, and focusing on and outlining common policies”<sup>3</sup>.

## The regional articulations

Brazil is a country with continental dimensions, so in 2012, the first proposal for the establishment of the Network presented to the Lutheran World Federation pointed out the need to implement the Network based on regional articulations. The first established articulation was in the state of Rio Grande do Sul with strong presence of the IECLB. The first meeting was held in 2012, even before the project “Strengthening Diakonia in Network 2013-2015” supported by FLM. So far, this articulation has already held eight meetings.

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<sup>3</sup> NORMBERG, Marta. Report of research – national consultation of experiences to overcome violence against children, adolescents and youth. Curitiba, August 2012. (Archives FLD).

The second articulation, involving diaconate institutions of the states of Santa Catarina and Paraná had its first meeting in 2014 with four regional meetings. The first meeting was hosted in Rio Grande do Sul and Santa Catarina/Paraná. In this interregional meeting, the institutions reaffirmed, “we will be constantly debating and reflecting on themes that are part of the daily activities of the institutions, on our diaconal identity, and community bonding. We will contribute to the training of women and men, ministers, workers and volunteers and people who, in general, participate in the active life of the institutions.”<sup>4</sup>

In 2015 the Diakonia Network reached the entire national territory after the first meetings of the Southeast and North/Northeast/Central West regions took place. During 2016, a separate meeting of each of these articulations happened.

The Network is formed by four regional articulations. It has shaped nationally and developed visibility through face-to-face meetings. The most discussed themes in the regional meetings were planning, communication, the secular state and religious diversity, sustainability and resilience, confessional Lutheranism, diakonia, gender justice, and institution-community relationships.

In addition to the meetings, there were visits to the institutions by the FLD team and the General Secretariat of the IECLB. Another dimension adding to the involved institutions on the side of the FLD are the support through the Small Projects Program (PPP), the support of projects to foster evaluation processes and/or institutional planning. During the last six years, eighty-two projects of diaconate institutions/initiatives were supported. In 2015 and 2016, projects specifically focused on diakonia were supported – out of them; twelve were related directly to evaluation processes and institutional planning. The intention that diaconal institutions could work on challenge rethinking, re-signifying, and updating their actions through participatory evaluation and planning processes that effectively respond to the challenges in the Brazil’s social, economic, cultural, environmental and political fields.

The IECLB General Secretariat supported diaconate projects throughout its journey. It intensified from 2015 onwards after launching the call for projects. It included 22 projects in the Inclusive and Transforming Diakonia Project and 23 projects in the Community Action Project covering the following areas: theological, technical and operational training of teams working in the diaconal area, both in communities and in diaconal institutions; institutional development and the sustainability of diaconal organizations, including the strengthening of networking and mobilizing

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<sup>4</sup> <http://redediaconia.com.br/blog/-mensagem-do-1-encontro-da-rede-de-diakonia-articu/>

resources; direct assistance to children and adolescents at risk and with the elderly in situations of abandonment and suffering; training in the area of gender promoting equity between men and women and overcoming all types of violence – especially against children, youth, women and the elderly; training and education of young leaders to strengthen youth leadership in the church and in society; awareness-raising and training for the inclusion of people with disabilities and special needs – including different forms of accessibility; training and support in situations of calamities, catastrophes and emergencies, and environmental education initiatives with a focus on climate justice.

It is relevant to note that, in terms of institutional sustainability, there are institutions that have already undergone evaluation and institutional planning processes while others still respond to the context based on their initial projects. There are organizations that access public resources on an ongoing basis, including funds for their institutional support, and resources from other sources such as foundations and agencies. However, a significant number of diaconal organizations rely only on donors and deeply dependent on resources from the international ecumenical cooperation. There are institutions with an updated mission, after facing changes in the context of public policies; others that insist in keeping their projects practically unchanged for decades. Thus, there are a number of challenges, but also many experiences and accumulated lessons that, when shared in the Network has contributed to the re-signification of the projects that are more fragile from the point of view of institutional sustainability. Nevertheless, sharing contributed to seek strengthen to the sustainability in a broader way encompassing the diaconal, political, financial, and management areas.

The website,<sup>5</sup> which currently contains information of 33 institutions, and the biweekly newsletter, were important mechanisms of communication, dissemination, and visibility of the work carried out by diaconal institutions and the Network itself. This intense process of mobilization, training and articulation of the diaconal institutions had as main result the gradual breakup of the isolation of a significant number of diaconal institutions and it has strengthen them through training focused on the transforming perspective, especially involving women and youth.

Before the creation of the Diakonia Network, the diaconal institutions did not recognize themselves as members of the same unity. The Network gradually changed this reality. There is mutual recognition between persons working in different institutions and a growing sense of belonging to the church.

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<sup>5</sup> [www.rededediaconia.com.br](http://www.rededediaconia.com.br)

The institutions joined in the Network recognize the IECLB's national relevance in terms of its work in the field of human rights. The articulation as a national Network gives the IECLB relevance in the context of overcoming religious intolerance and supports the secular state that guarantees rights. The Diakonia Network within the scope of political influence could have a more significant presence nationally articulating the possibility of participation in councils and forums. Intensifying this participation is one of the challenges in the Network, as well as of the institutions that compose it in the contexts/territories where they are inserted. In addition, as a Network there is the possibility to widen the mobilizing of resources in terms of campaigns and access to public resources. Other results achieved involve the shared management of the project through the national management group of the Diakonia Network formed the SAC and the FLD; the expansion of interest in training in the field of transforming diakonia; the joint action between SAC and the FLD in the development of the project recognized as reference organization for diakonia especially with regard to themes like diakonia, project management, guarantee of human rights and gender justice, and the partnership between the Gender and Religion Program of the Theological Faculty EST and the FLD developing workshops and publishing theological reflection on gender justice.<sup>6</sup>

The Diakonia Network is an innovative initiative engaged in the training on diakonia using the multipliers methodology. It was promoted by the Diakonia/SAC Coordination in partnership with the IECLB Synods. The courses were configured in a significant way giving space for discussion on topics like community relations and diaconal institutions, transformative diakonia, and presentation of the Diakonia Network as a valuable space where diaconal institutions link to the IECLB.

## Diakonia and Youth

With regard to youth, their movement in search of training for diaconal action is growing. The FLD and SAC have carried out many training activities with youth groups at the local, regional, and national levels over the last few years. More recently, SAC and FLD have been working together in the development of training actions involving the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) initiative called the Global Young Reformers Network. This initiative seeks to enhance the engagement of youth in diaconal praxis.

The youth training on the theme “Transforming Diakonia” became an important tool to encourage the participation of young leaders in the

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<sup>6</sup> <http://redediaconoa.com.br/blog/caderno-justica-de-genero-e-diaconiatransformador/>

defense of their rights. Themes like young people and HIV and AIDS, gender justice, youth protagonism and fair trade/responsible consumption, and overcoming violence have been subjects directly associated with a Transformative Diakonia. It promotes prophetic and liberating processes in contexts of suffering and violation of rights. The goal to bring young people closer to diaconal action was developed within the congregations (community diakonia) as well as in institutions linked to communities and congregations (institutional diakonia).

In the current phase, the project aims at promoting the strengthening of youth action the field of transformative diakonia through training on this theme, holding a national campaign to support the transforming diakonia through the mobilization of youth, promotion of exchange/visits of youth groups to diaconal institutions, and support of diaconal projects carried out by youth groups. The project foresees participation of the National Youth Council in the national management group of the Network.

## **Gender Justice Policies**

Following a process launched in 2012, the FLD drafted, approved and started implementing its Gender Justice Policy; and for this, the role of a Women's Group formed by representatives of different diaconal institutions linked to the IECLB was decisive.

The Gender Justice Policy of the FLD guides the entire process of planning, monitoring and evaluation of the Diakonia Network. Among the fundamental elements of the policy are: gender inclusive language; ongoing training and awareness raising on gender issues; support for the empowerment and the protagonism of women and the promotion of the active involvement of men in gender justice; mainstreaming of gender justice in the daily life of institutions; search for representative balance in the network; and the strengthening of the innumerable initiatives of the institutions in the construction of the overcoming of the violence of gender and the fomenting of joint actions. Women and men have an active role in project management and direct involvement in all actions.

Women make up a significant majority in the execution of diaconal work, both community and institutional. This is a characteristic of a patriarchal society where actions aimed at caring for people in vulnerable situations have always been aimed at and attributed to the female audience. In this case, most of the women are directly involved in the execution of the activities, and, little by little, are occupying the spaces of leadership and governance.

Thus, efforts have been made to broaden the capacity for institutional management in the perspective of the empowerment of women managers



in their role of diaconal leadership. The discussions at the regional meetings have provided a greater awareness that the theme of fair gender relations is of great relevance and urgency within diaconal institutions, as well as in the church and in society as a whole. This awareness of gender equality, diversity and justice also aims to reach out to the indirect public formed by community leaders, church leaders and people benefiting from the supported projects.

## **The transformative diakonia**

Transformative diakonia is a mobilizing concept of reflection within the Diakonia Network, seeking to generate a circularity of liberation, transformation and action. We confess and believe in a diakonia that promotes collective actions in realities and groups that live in economic, social, political, cultural, sexist, racist, xenophobic, LGBTQphobic and environmental oppressions.

In the text of Mark 12:30, Jesus points out that love is the heart of diakonia, in establishing the first commandment of love: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with your entire mind, and with all your strength. The second is this, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.” In him, the diaconal understanding is based on the idea that love is a reality that involves thinking, feeling and acting. The plural contexts challenge transformative diakonia to expand, include, and make a compelling evangelical-prophetic option for diversity, with rights for all Creation.

Diakonia is a loving action that mobilizes us to reflect and to devise strategies of transformation; It also implies collective planning of actions of empowerment, dignity, protagonism and communion among people, groups and organizations in overcoming inequalities. It also involves ongoing monitoring and evaluation processes.

It is service, but in the understanding of “acting in an articulate and loving way,” deconstructing conceptions of service sustained in the logic of who serves and who is served. In Mark 10:43, Jesus says, “It should not be so among you,” declaring that oppressions of any kind are contrary to inclusive, liberating, and transforming practice.

## **The national meeting and future challenges**

In 2016, the Diakonia Network held its first national meeting, with 59 participants representing 48 diaconate institutions. This meeting addressed

the topics of transformative diakonia, diaconal identity and freedom of belief, diaconal institutions and Church, diakonia and public policies, and gender justice in daily life of diaconal institutions. The regional articulations also carried out a collective process of evaluation of the Network with the indication of the themes and steps to be taken in the next two years.

Among the proposed changes is the expansion of the Network's National Manager Group, which, starting in 2017, will be made up of representatives of the following segments: an institution that works in the area of children and adolescents, of the elderly, of indigenous peoples, of agroecology, of popular and traditional health, of youth training, of hospitals, the National Council of Evangelical Youth (CONAJE), the National Council of Diakonia (CONAD), the FLD and the General Secretariat of the IECLB. Challenges were sought to increase knowledge appropriation and to implement qualified practices in the following areas: management, planning, monitoring, evaluation, legal frameworks, public policies, resource mobilization, gender justice, overcoming violence, institutional sustainability and interreligious dialogue, requiring continuous and coordinated effort and commitment.

In order to deepen the training processes, the institutions present at the national meeting pointed out the need to hold a training course at a college level of specialization for managers of diaconal institutions. The biggest challenge will be to mobilize resources for such large-scale training. In this sense, the sharing of resources, in which even the diaconal institutions contribute financially to the execution of the actions, will be fundamental. It is noteworthy that this concrete practice of shared sustainability has been substantive in the promotion of the Network, constituting a differential.

Therefore, it is within the horizon of the Diakonia Network to consolidate itself throughout the Brazilian territory, through different actions in the field of mobilization, coordination, training, communication and follow-up, with emphasis on strengthening regional articulations, integration between institutions and their grassroots communities, and in the broadening of youth engagement in transforming diakonia!

# Diakonia and Human Resources Management

**Abstract: Theoretical basis and systematization of the human and institutional capacity development for diakonia in LAC.**

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The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) as a communion of churches understands diakonia as an action of love that: **responds** to the needs and vulnerabilities of others; **reacts** to systemic injustices that perpetuate marginalization and human suffering; and is **proactive** in optimizing interdisciplinary approaches to enhance capacities of multiple actors at different levels and in varied contexts of engagements<sup>2</sup>.

Human Resources Management (HRM) is critical to ensuring effective responses to the increasing diaconal issues and challenges in churches and societies, today. Management of people can be challenging, but it is indispensable and decisive for the wellbeing and sustainability of organizations, including churches.

In some contexts, the notion of human resources appears to be limited to employees only; hence, volunteers are barely considered as essential parts of human resources development and management. This misconception must be altered, since there are growing interests and potentials for voluntary engagements in the holistic ministries of the

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<sup>2</sup> LWF, *Diakonia in Context. Transformation, Reconciliation, Empowerment* (Geneva: LWF, 2009), pp. 74-76.

churches; and it is also evident that capacity needs and requirements cannot be fully met by employees per se.

Compelling insights for human resources management are offered not only by the social sciences, but also by the Scripture. Apostle Paul, for instance, urges the Corinthian church to “pursue love” above all other gifts, “seek to excel the edification of the church” above individual gratifications; and see to it that “all things be done decently and in order”<sup>3</sup>.

Such authentic traits need to be nurtured by competent personnel management, effective coordination, team building; and conscientious efforts in developing staff and volunteers with clear understanding of organizational goals, objectives, strategies and plans; and diversified models of training<sup>4</sup>.

## Education & training – vital investment!

Only 2 decades ago, the UN General Assembly declared that capacity development is an essential path to development, not just a strategy. Earlier this year, an assessment on the follow-up of the declaration indicated that donor agencies and policy-makers are facing increasing challenges to keep capacity development on high priority for investment, in the face of scarce resources<sup>5</sup>.

A related report by the World Bank which focused on Latin America called for greatly expanded investment in education, arguing that acute poverty can be overcome by rapid increase in human capital development. The report emphasized that investments in education must coincide with institutional development that fully incorporates economic and social rationality<sup>6</sup>.

Periodic assessment of global trends similar to the ones highlighted above are critical and need to be carefully considered when decisions regarding investments on education and training have to be made at different levels of organizations, including churches.

LWF has deep rooted heritage of upholding and promoting education and training as vital means of equipping God’s people for effective participation in mission and diaconal services. According to the History of the LWF:

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<sup>3</sup> 1Cor. 14, The Holy Bible, New King James Version, Copyright © 1982 Thomas Nelson.

<sup>4</sup> Jørgensen, Knud, *Equipping for Service. Christian Leadership in Church and Society* (Oxford: Regnum, 2012), pp. 97-105.

<sup>5</sup> World Development, Vol. 79, March 2016: Capacity Development Evaluation: The Challenge of the Results Agenda and Measuring Return on Investment in the Global South **www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X15002739**

<sup>6</sup> World Bank Group, *Poverty, inequality, and human capital development in Latin America, 1950-2025*, <http://elibrary.worldbank.org/doi/abs/10.1596/0-8213-3630-4>

“From Federation to Communion”<sup>7</sup>, education was an important part of the Lutheran World Convention’s support to churches and communities in different contexts, already from the 1920s.

The historical account referred to above further indicates that a handbook for national committees, international commissions and Geneva headquarters was issued in 1948, identifying education as one of the priorities for the Federation when it was just about one year old. In the ensuing decades, the LWF continued to mobilize and provide education and training support to the member churches at different instances.

A more organized programmatic work on education and training was launched in early 1990s, following the restructuring of the LWF Secretariat as decided by the Eighth Assembly in Curitiba, which led to the establishment of the Department for Mission and Development (DMD), including the Desk for Human Resources Development (HRD). From this juncture, it became even more imperative for the LWF to further enhance mutual accompaniments among the member churches, strengthening the development and management of human and institutional capacities at pertinent levels.

Various approaches and models of capacity development were envisaged and deployed in view of furthering the united witness to the Gospel, strengthening participation in mission, furthering diaconal action and alleviation of human suffering, promoting peace, human rights, social and economic justice, care for God’s creation and sharing of resources; and deepening shared self-understanding and joint action in common tasks<sup>8</sup>.

The accompaniment was further strengthened following the LWF 10<sup>th</sup> Assembly in Winnipeg which reaffirmed the Federation’s commitment to education and training as important aspects of communion expression, encouraging and urging member churches to enhance sharing of resources and perspectives with each other; enhancing inclusiveness and equipping and empowering people for witness and service.

In addition to regular training support (scholarships), several member churches and related diakonia organizations in Africa, Asia and LAC were accompanied through Strategic Regional Seminars and local workshops through which specific HICD Frameworks<sup>9</sup> were developed; and staff

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<sup>7</sup> Schjorring, J.H. et al, 1977, *From Federation to Communion*, History of the Lutheran World Federation, pp.11, 49.

<sup>8</sup> Constitution of the Lutheran World Federation (as adopted by the LWF Eighth Assembly, Curitiba, Brazil, 1990, including amendments adopted by the LWF Ninth Assembly, Hong Kong, 1997 and by the LWF Eleventh Assembly, Stuttgart, 2010); p. 1-2.

<sup>9</sup> “HICD Frameworks” are region-specific guides/tools for developing/reviewing human and institutional capacity assessment/planning, management and policy, which were mutually developed in the Strategic Leadership Seminars held in Africa & Asia in 2011; and in LAC in 2012.

and volunteers were equipped with relevant skills in HICD. Experiences and best practices shared during the seminars and workshops in various contexts were mutually affirmed and appreciated.

## Short and long-term results

An important question is whether the LWF's diversified investments on education and training have been/are bringing worthwhile returns in enhancing capacities for holistic mission across the member churches?

Various reports from periodic monitoring and evaluations highlighted below strongly affirm that the investments made in education and training at different levels of the LWF have brought about high value returns with far reaching impacts on the lives and ministries of the member churches:

- a) From 1975–1999, the LWF international scholarship program supported further training of **1,286 persons**, at the total cost of well over USD 12.5 million. A survey report ascertained that 82% of the trained persons returned to the services of the member churches, and almost all of the remaining 18% were also engaged in the services of the constituent communities.<sup>10</sup>
- b) Between 2000 and 2010, the program approved 932 scholarships (Africa: 388, Asia: 347, Latin America: 140, East-Central Europe: 50, West-North Europe/US: 7), supporting the training of **1,516 candidates** in accompaniment of 93 member churches of the LWF. The total cost of training support was about USD 10 million.<sup>11</sup>
- c) During 2010–2014, **570 candidates** (215 in theology and 355 in diakonia) were supported in accompaniment of some 32 member churches. The total cost of training support was about Euro 2.7 million, since funds allocated for theological training were decreasing.<sup>12</sup>
- d) According to the evaluation made in 2015, the regular training supports (scholarships) have eventually achieved high level of gender and generational

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<sup>10</sup> A comprehensive survey which assessed the implementation of the HRD program over a period of 25 years was conducted by the LWF/DMD in the year 2000.

<sup>11</sup> An external evaluation of the HRD program was conducted in 2010; assessed its impacts and provided findings and recommendations for follow-up.

<sup>12</sup> Simultaneous evaluations were conducted and separate reports were made on the theological and diakonia training supports during the 2<sup>nd</sup> semester of 2015.

balances, in that 52% of the trained candidates were female and 48% were male; wherein young candidates (under 30 years) represented over 60%.

- e) During 2013–2015, 11 workshops (3 in Africa, 4 in Asia and 4 in LAC) were facilitated, bringing together over 300 church leaders, theological educators, representatives of women and youth and diakonia/development practitioners; providing them with specific training and experience exchange in HICD. Participation was largely based on 40% adult male, 40% adults female, and 20% youth.
- f) Series of virtual conferences conducted from 2013–2016 provided unique opportunities to more than 400 church leaders, pastors, theological educators, diaconal workers and other stakeholders to share relevant insights and approaches and mutually reflect on diakonia/development themes developed in various contexts of the LWF.
- g) The HICD program evaluations conducted in 2015 attested many encouraging results of the training components. Key outcomes and impacts include the following:

### Diakonia Training Support

- **Upgraded knowledge and skills** for diakonia/development; there are evidences of application of skills in own places of work;
- Women and youth have gained **new insights** for participating and being agents of change;
- Direct contribution made to **improved benefit** of specific communities;
- HICD Frameworks provided **useful foundation** for enhancing leadership competence and human resources management; and
- Visible outcomes of the virtual conferences including some **initiatives** toward “family-based” diakonia.

### Theological Training Support

- Active participation in networks; contributions to theological reflections, ecumenical relations & interfaith dialogue;
- Identifying contemporary theological issues and contributing to some theological & diaconal themes across regions and continents;
- Writing on contemporary issues; and
- Developing teaching materials for bible schools and seminaries.

## Human resources management – broader view!

According to the UNDP Human Development Report 2015, **work** is defined as a major foundation for the richness of economies and human lives. Interestingly, the report underlines that **work goes beyond jobs**, and that activities such as unpaid care work, voluntary work and creative work contribute to the richness of human lives<sup>13</sup>.

The UNDP report also underscores that enhancing human development through work requires policies and strategies for creating work opportunities, ensuring workers' well-being and developing targeted actions. These global perspectives on broad understanding of work and the emphasis on related policies and strategies are extremely crucial for improving human resources management in organizations, including churches.

Despite the many strong efforts made at different levels to increase the availability of human resources for the holistic ministries of the member churches, applications annually sent to the LWF/DMD for training support; and discussions during regional seminars/consultations, local workshops and virtual conferences indicate that there are several areas of capacity needs that have yet to be addressed more effectively and consistently.

It must be admitted that to a larger extent, the recurrent gaps in human and institutional capacity relates to the fact that several member churches live and serve amidst communities deeply affected by complex socio-economic, political and environmental problems; hence, the churches are often challenged by incongruent human resources/capacities to deeply analyze/interpret and effectively address poverty and marginalization.

The other critical factor perpetuating the capacity gaps is inadequate management of human resources/capacities. Human beings have different gifts and aspirations as well as variable potentials for growth/change. Competency and availability of human resources greatly determine innovative and productive capabilities of organizations. Instances at which organizations with low remunerations lose highly qualified/experienced staff to competitive NGOs are increasing. Employee turnovers continue to threaten the sustainability of many organizations; and churches are by no means exceptions. Human Resources Management is, therefore, an integral component of the LWF/HICD program<sup>14</sup>.

It is in this perspective that increasing number of the member churches and related diakonia organizations continually need accompaniment

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<sup>13</sup> UNDP Human Development Report 2015: Work for Human Development, Forward, [http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/2015\\_human\\_development\\_report.pdf](http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/2015_human_development_report.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> Human Resources Development Program Profiles and Perspectives, LWF/DMD, August 2008, p.6



and support for: training of professionals in various fields of diakonia/development; facilitated spaces for reviewing and adjusting organizational/operational policies and guidelines; and consultative processes to improve human resources management and retain/engage diakonia/development professionals in various areas of holistic ministries.

It cannot be overemphasized, therefore, that more effective development and management of human and institutional capacities at different levels should be/remain on high priority with long-term commitment and investment, if the Lutheran churches are to remain effectively diaconal, i.e. continue to meaningfully contribute to mutual efforts of alleviating human suffering and restoring dignified livelihood.

## **Alignment of the HICD**

Until 2010, DMD/HRD was running several programs of education and training which included: International Scholarships (theological, non-theological, and general); Scholarship fund for people with disabilities; Short-term study and research; Professional experience exchanges; Language training courses; and Leadership capacity/competence building.

The methods and approaches of the LWF/HRD program were characterized by initiating several components of capacity development from time to time and responding to the needs and priorities expressed by the concerned member churches and regional expressions in different contexts.

The relative strength of the diversified methods and approaches was in enabling the program to attend to short-term capacity needs of selected member churches within the limits of available funds. On the other hand, the different components running parallel with their restricted funds and narrow goals limited the program's scope of addressing strategic (human and institutional) capacity needs with long-term perspectives.

Based on the external evaluation followed by the global consultation convened in 2010, the program guidelines were thoroughly revised<sup>15</sup> and fundamental changes were introduced in the management and implementation programmatic work.

A strategic shift was made from mainly focusing on scholarships to: an integrated approach toward Human and Institutional Capacity Development (HICD); accompanying member churches in developing systems for planning, management, and policy development pertaining

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<sup>15</sup> The HICD Program Guidelines were revised 1st in October 2012; and 2nd in May 2016; and were approved by the LWF General Secretary.

to human resources; and supporting member churches in discerning and addressing long-term institutional capacity needs.

The different training activities were eventually re-configured and integrated as components of the “Human and Institutional Capacity Development (HICD)” program; focusing on three main areas: (1) Leadership/Management; (2) Theological Education; and (3) Diakonia/Development<sup>16</sup>.

The alignment presupposes that “*Human and institutional capacity development (HICD) is an integrated process of optimizing the availability and efficient utilization of human knowledge, professional skills and competencies/capacities in an organization for the fulfillment of its mission*”<sup>17</sup>.

In practical terms, the HICD components have been and will continue to be more intentionally geared towards enhancing capacity for holistic mission within the framework of the LWF/DMD programs. For the period between 2015 and 2017/18, DMD’s accompaniment through the HICD will relate to two programmatic areas: (1) Capacity for Diakonia; and (2) Church Growth and Sustainability; as indicated in the diagram below.



The diagram above shows that three of the current HICD components: (1) Diakonia/Development Training Support; (2) Diakonia/HRM Workshops; and (3) Virtual Conferences for Diakonia are related to the Capacity for

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

Diakonia Program. Similarly, the Training Support for Theological Education is related to the Church Growth and Sustainability Program.

Workshops and Training Support (Diakonia) will focus on “... *accompanying and empowering the LWF member churches through facilitating skill oriented training in diakonia and human resources management; and supporting further training of diakonia/development workers and volunteers for effective engagement as change agents capable of contributing to sustainable livelihood of societies*”.<sup>18</sup>

Follow-up on the virtual conferences will include efforts to create alternative access to existing on-line resources; and developing further learning materials on contemporary diaconal themes related to SDGs.<sup>19</sup>

Theological Training Support will further promote mutual efforts to increase the availability and effective deployment of qualified and engaged human resources, in support of the member churches’ integral growth and deepening their participation in holistic mission.<sup>20</sup>

## **HICD and Sustainability – integrated approach**

In September 2012, LWF/DMD organized a joint regional gathering of the member churches in Latin America and Caribbean, at Santa Cruz, Bolivia<sup>21</sup>. The meeting was hosted by the Bolivian Evangelical Lutheran Church, bringing together about 45 participants comprising church leaders, theological educators, diaconal practitioners, the Gender Justice and Women network, youth, and persons living with disabilities.

Relevant issues pertaining to the LWF Strategic Plan (2012-2017), recommendations from the global consultation in 2010 and emerging insights from the regional strategic leadership seminars in 2011 (Africa and Asia) were shared and mutually reflected.

A paper elaborating the concept and approach to “Human and Institutional Capacity Development in Perspective of Sustainability” was presented to and thoroughly discussed by participants at the regional gathering. The document examined the traditional approach to capacity development that focused either on individual or organizational needs as stand-alone processes; and contrasted it with the emerging approach to Human and Institutional Capacity Development (HICD) in DMD as integrated components.

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<sup>18</sup> LWF/DMD Program Plans 2017-2018, “Training Support for Diakonia/Development”

<sup>19</sup> LWF/DMD Program Plans 2017-2018, “Transformative Diakonia”

<sup>20</sup> LWF/DMD Program Plans 2017-2018, “Church Growth”

<sup>21</sup> Travel report by the LAC and HRD/HICD Secretaries, LWF/DMD, November 2012

An immediate outcome of the regional gathering was that the need for strengthening interconnection between church sustainability and human and institutional capacity development was affirmed and practical aspects were outlined. Further, it was mutually recognized that (1) capacity development, (2) sustainability and (3) training support/scholarships each play distinctive roles; intentional efforts were called to enhance their inter-connections as appropriate to the specific realities of each member church.

A specific HICD Framework for LAC was eventually developed, with the concept and approach of capacity development which “considers people (who carry their gifts) to be embedded in their context and mediated by their relationships, that is as part of a system. From this perspective, capacities are considered to be in the person; and also in the organization and its broader social context<sup>22</sup>”.

The Framework shares important experiences from the other regions (Africa and Asia) in affirming that that human capacities in the context of churches refer to members, leaders/managers, staff and volunteers that commit their gifts/talents and skills/insights for various ministries. Institutional capacities include communities/organizations, policies, structures, strategies and other resources<sup>23</sup>.

## Follow-ups and prospects

Pursuant to the integrated approach in the accompaniment through training supports, HICD desk was more intentionally engaged in dialogue with the member churches in LAC in disseminating the adaptation and application of the HICD Frameworks in alignment to the Sustainability Program of the region.

From 2013–2015, **four workshops** (Honduras – 2013, Bolivia – 2014, Peru – 2015; and Guyana – 2015 where 2 member churches in the Caribbean participated) were mutually organized and facilitated in LAC, in view of strengthening the development and management of human and institutional capacities through adapting the HICD Framework<sup>24</sup>.

Contents and approaches of the workshops were developed in consultation with LAC desk and the concerned member churches, based

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<sup>22</sup> Human and Institutional Capacity Development: an approach in perspective of sustainability, Developed in the context of SLS/C in LAC, Santa Cruz, Bolivia, September 2012, p.5

<sup>23</sup> Ibid

<sup>24</sup> Reports analysing the contents and outcomes of each workshop were compiled and shared with the concerned member churches for mutual information and follow-up.

on the specific needs. The regional resource person<sup>25</sup> in LAC provided strong support in organizing and facilitating the workshops.

The Strategic Leadership Workshop in **Honduras** (HICLH)<sup>26</sup> took place in Tegucigalpa from 6–8 August 2013. The workshop brought together 24 participants comprising church leaders, pastors, diakonia workers and volunteers who discussed and mutually reflected on the relevant aspects of human and institutional capacity development approach in the context of church sustainability.

**Key outcomes** of the workshop included the following:

- An interesting reflection emerged on the notion of “network of conversations” with reference to project management;
- Insightful comment emerged in the area of knowledge management: “It is right to say that there are things that just do not work out well; and other things that require more effort, or some knowledge you don’t have. We learn from mistakes”;
- A participatory process was mutually established to review and systematize the church policies and strategies in relation to human and institutional capacity development.

The Strategic Leadership Workshop in **Bolivia** (IELB)<sup>27</sup> took place in Cochabamba from 14–18 May 2014. There were 28 participants at the workshop, including church leaders, theological educators, diakonia/development agents, representatives of ministries for women and youth, persons with disabilities and other stakeholders in the life and mission of the church.

Key outcomes of the workshop included the following:

- IELB took concrete steps to formulate and articulate its operational plans for the various departments, programs and projects;
- A proposal was made for developing Human and Institutional Capacity (DCHI) for the church;
- The church was finalizing its Participatory Strategic Plan (PSP) called IELB-2020. Procedures and steps for implementing the PSP through programs and projects were mutually developed.

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<sup>25</sup> Gustavo Driau, local facilitator for the Sustainability Program.

<sup>26</sup> LWF/DMD Sub-program Report 2013, “Strategic Leadership Seminars/Workshops” (part of the Program on Transformative Leadership and Good Governance), pp. 2-3

<sup>27</sup> LWF/DMD Sub – program Report 2014, “Strategic Leadership Seminars/Workshops” (part of the Program on Transformative Leadership and Good Governance), p. 2

The Diakonia/HRM workshop in the **Lutheran Church in Peru** (IL-P)<sup>28</sup> was organized and facilitated in different clusters at Lima, Cusco, and Trujillo from 18–23 August 2015. A 1-day workshop was conducted in Lima, in conjunction with the IL-P pastors' conference; a similar workshop was held in Cusco, where leaders and members of the Talitha Kum Congregation participated.

A larger workshop followed at Belén Retreat Centre in Lima for church leaders and members; and at Trujillo, for participants from 4 congregations. Altogether, 50 persons took part in the different settings of the workshop.

Key outcomes of the workshop included the following:

- “Development of Gifts” is a key area of intersection between the HICD and the Sustainability Program. It is embedded in the biblical/theological understanding that the church is a body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12-12) where each part needs to put its gifts into action; and if a part cannot put its gifts into action, the body suffers.
- Diakonia was seen afresh as deeply related to what the Church celebrates in its liturgy and announces in its preaching. Balanced participation of women, men, youth and persons with disabilities were highlighted and affirmed as critical in the development of gifts and leadership skills in the IL-P.
- The insights gained were highly recognized and appreciated by the leadership of IL-P and members who participated in the different spaces.

The Diakonia/HRM workshop in **Guyana**<sup>29</sup> was conducted in New Amsterdam, Berbice from 22–24 October 2015, in collaboration with the 2 member churches in the Caribbean region, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Guyana and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Suriname.

Diaconal insights & learning from the larger context of the LWF were shared, in the light of which participants reflected on the understanding and practices of diakonia, and the significance of sharing diaconal insights and resources in/with the LWF communion.

Concept and implications of the **HICD Frameworks** in perspective of church sustainability were revisited, with emphasis on some key theological perspectives; and some general principles regarding HICD were also highlighted.

Key outcomes of the workshop included the following:

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<sup>28</sup> LWF/DMD Sub – program Report 2015, “Training Support for Diakonia/Development”- Diakonia/HRM Workshops, (part of the Capacity for Diakonia Program), p.2

<sup>29</sup> LWF/DMD Sub – program Report 2015, “Training Support for Diakonia/Development”- Diakonia/HRM Workshops, (part of the Capacity for Diakonia Program), pp.3-4

- No human action can replace God's action of creating and sustaining the church; our actions must be an expression of responsible stewardship of God's gifts to the church;
- Our resources, talents and gifts are generally untouched and that is why we want to make better connections, better relationships, and friends to make a difference;
- HICD is a process of experimentation and learning, where engagement of local stakeholders should determine the needs, strategies and design of the process;
- Ownership is critical to any HICD process, because change is fundamentally political. Good design of the process means being clear about the desired direction of change, but also leaving space for adaptation along the way;
- Needs and assets assessment is as an intrinsic part of a change process. Analysis should be less about gaps or weakness; and more about recognizing and developing strengths.

During 15–19 August 2016, a similar workshop took place in **Central America** (Nicaragua)<sup>30</sup>, for which 30 participants were invited from the Evangelical Lutheran Churches in Nicaragua (ILFE), El Salvador (ILS), Costa Rica (ILCO), Honduras (ICLH), and Guatemala (ILUGUA).

The workshop provided a space for the representatives of the respective churches to discuss and mutually reflect on common issues and concerns around diaconal understanding and practices across the LWF at large, the LAC region and Central America. Relevant capacity development approaches were examined in perspectives of Diakonia, the LWF HICD framework, and the Sustainability Program.

Key activities at the workshop included:

- mapping the actions and training programs in PME in the last five years;
- revisiting and further elaborating the HICD approach for different levels of work;
- systematizing results of the HICD/PME processes, and articulating steps for improvement;
- synthesizing, establishing agreements, and generating inputs toward HICD/PME policies and strategies.

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<sup>30</sup> "Enhancing Capacity for Diakonia", Workshop with the Evangelical Lutheran Churches in Nicaragua (ILFE), El Salvador (ILS), Costa Rica (ILCO), Honduras (ICLH), and Guatemala (ILUGUA) Nicaragua, 15 – 19 August, 2016, Aide-memoire.

## Concluding remarks

I must acknowledge that I found it challenging and gratifying to share a few perspectives on this demanding topic: “Diakonia and Human Resources Management”. Saying this, I wish to state clearly that I have not deemed it necessary to re-elaborate on the subject matter of diakonia, in recognition of the fact that the LWF has already developed wealth of resources at different levels of its constituencies.

The limited insights conveyed through this short article are, indeed, intended to shed light on and humbly affirm the significance of the overall purpose, methods and approaches and key achievements of the LWF Human and Institutional Capacity Development (HICD) program at the global level; with highlights on the specific accompaniments in the Latin America and the Caribbean region.

Finally, the article is an attempt to encourage the LWF member churches, partners and stakeholders to continue to uphold and promote education and training for the furtherance of God’s holistic mission. Capacity development is a crucial element of sustainability and an essential investment with high value return, which should remain on high priority of churches and societies.

While affirming the presence of immense assets and capabilities in the churches and societies in various contexts of the LWF, it is the most urgent and crucial task for the leaders to maximize and optimize the availability of such resources at different levels, continually assessing the gaps and strengthening further development and effective management (responsible stewardship) of human and institutional capacity.

*Abebe Yohannes Saketa – LWF/DMD, August 26, 2016*



## Part III

# Diakonia in the everyday life: Experiences from the Churches



# THEME: Diakonia and Trauma – Salvadoran Lutheran Church

*Rev. Vilma Rodríguez Belloso*  
*Translation by David A. Thorp*

## **Our reflections as it pertains to Psycho traumatic traumas and diaconal ministry**

Diaconal ministry and trauma are important themes for reflection as it gives the church the opportunity to expand its pastoral vision, open a panoramic view on how we might serve with mercy, love in the name of our Savior with our faith communities and the community at large. I Includes people living in situations of crisis due to all types of abuse, including immigration and consequent family disintegration, victims of natural disasters such as hurricanes, earthquakes, droughts and social violence.

This theme encourages us as the Church to look for the ways to treat therapeutically the consequent emotional crises and post traumatic traumas that victims live; traumas that affect them in their spiritual life, their physical and mental health and that does not allow them to have control over their own lives.

For its part, the Salvadoran Lutheran Church, whose mission is called and sent by the Spirit of God to denounce sin and proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom in this world, to strengthen faith in Jesus Christ Lord and Savior, through prophetic pastoral action including, rights-based in ecumenism. It promotes and is witness to an active devotional life, accompanies and serves others, especially those in need, the poor and marginalized, in their aspirations to build a more dignified, just and solidary society.

A church that carries out this mission through the preaching of the word of God, the correct administration of the sacraments, and diakonia

(love and service to others), which is part of the national reality where the market ethic of the neoliberal system and ideology prevails in the world. We know that when the church incarnates the hurt and suffering of the people and it is this that inspires our diaconal ministry, which rescues the rights and dignity of the people, promoting and celebrating life, community and all that is shared in common. It is for this reason that it is important to discern and develop the gifts and talents of our pastoral and lay leaders in our communities of faith that specializes in the care of psycho-traumas.

We all know that the values of love, truth, justice, solidarity and hope mark Christian life in the love of Christ our Savior is what propels us to serve God and neighbor (I Corinthians 13:13).

We can appreciate that the Church's sense of service is based on Jesus' model "who traveled cities, towns and villages, proclaiming the good news of the Kingdom, teaching the Word of God, casting out demons and healing every disease and sickness. He served with great compassion all those who sought him, followed him and listened table of communions" (Matthew 9: 33-36)

Jesus carried out a ministry of accompaniment; it was not centered in the Synagogue but in community, where he encountered the harsh reality in which the people of Israel lived, a people who were freed out of the bondage of Egypt that had divided itself into Social classes. There were rich and poor, which were dominated by the Roman Empire that imposed oppression, exploitation and death to maintain the Pax Romana or "peace of Rome," which was nothing other than the peace of the tombs, which generated fear and terror for the people of Israel.

It was there in these communities, within the atmosphere of terror that Jesus made Diakonia "on the way", tending to the pain and suffering of all people, strengthening their faith in God, providing them with physical and psychological healing and restoring the dignity of being calling sons and daughters of God.

As the Lutheran Bishop Dr. Medardo Gomez says, "the Theology of Life, is based on Lutheran confessions, life occurs when God reveals him/herself to the world and the faith that recognizes God as Lord and the Savior is born. It's the pastoral practice of the universal priesthood of all believers (1 Peter 2: 9) that strengthens the fellowship of the human being with God and his/her people, who testifies to their faith, their pain and their hope. That inspires a prophetic diakonia that is born from the altar of human dignity.

Why did the Salvadoran Lutheran Church become involved in the care of people living with trauma and trained pastors, lay and community leaders in this area?

El Salvador experienced a bloody civil war from 1980 to 1992, the year in which the peace accords were signed; The Salvadoran Lutheran Church

made a pastoral commitment to accompany the people in their search for peace and social justice. They dedicated themselves to the service of preserving the lives of the civilian population in dangerous combat zones, mainly in the rural areas.

May 1982 saw the beginning of the Faith and Hope (Fe y Esperanza) Refugee Camp, where 500 families, mostly women, children and elderly people, displaced from their places of origin by the repression of the army and armed confrontations. In their flight to save their lives and that of their family members, many refugees lost absolutely everything: housing, land, work, community, many of them were bombed by planes in their communities, many witnessed the army and death squads who took their sons, daughters, spouses from the homes and either abducted or killed them.

For this reason, the exiled population living in Faith and Hope, as well as the seven other shelters provided by the Church during the civil war, experienced severe anxiety attacks and lived with many traumas.

When we refer to traumas that people live according to the DSM-IV, we refer to “direct personal exposure to an event involving actual or potential threat of death or serious injury or other threats to personal physical integrity, or witnessing an event involving death, injury or threat to the physical integrity of another person, or to learn of unanticipated or violent death, serious injury, threat of death or injury experienced by a family member or other close relationship. The person’s response to such an event could entail intense fear, a sense of inability to exercise control or horror. In children, the reaction causes agitated or disorganized behaviors.”

In the face of so much suffering and pain, there was an urgent need to implement a comprehensive pastoral plan of action where shelters were provided as well as food, education, community work, spiritual pastoral care, physical and psychological care.

Persons requesting psychological attention were provided individual, family and group therapy. The therapeutic approaches used were Psychoanalysis and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy based on the work of Carl Roger.

Emphasis was placed on the importance of field work in the shelter through occupational therapy and the organization and establishment of harmonious interpersonal relationships emphasizing mutual support of each other, strengthening their emotional stability and overcoming the traumas experienced by war.

The process of therapeutic accompaniment to overcome the traumas of war experienced by the refugee population in the shelters served by the Salvadoran Lutheran Church, also included in their stay in the refuge, the return of the refugee population to their places of origin once the Civil war ended. The objective is for them to get their bearings in a proactive and organized manner so that their adaptation and empowerment in new

community life in places where they had left and experienced much pain and suffering so that now they can return with hope, love, self-assurance and new expressions of understanding and community solidarity.

Young people and children who grew up in Faith and Hope Refugee Camp received basic education through high school, later when they returned to their places of origin, they continued their university studies and graduated in different careers such as: Medicine, Public Accounting, Social Work, etc. They are now successful professionals, supportive leaders in their communities who continue the diaconal work of the Church, of serving those people who most need it.

The creation of the Faith and Hope Refugee Camp marked in historical terms for the Salvadoran Lutheran Church a change in its Pastoral actions, since it focused special attention on the population most affected by the armed conflict, which meant that the ecclesial leadership became the object of persecutions, death threats, detainments, and killings by state “security” squads.

However, the ecclesial leadership that assumed the responsibility of serving in the shelter were true disciples of Jesus and had clarity of the Words of the Lord when he told his disciples “whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will keep it.” (Matthew 16: 24-26)

There were reprisals against the Church and the refugee community, in August 1987 a bomb that was planted by unknown persons exploded and destroyed the nursery of the Faith and Hope Refugee Camp.

After completing the process of accompaniment reintegrating people in their communities of origin, many people continued to attend the Lutheran Churches and serve their communities through request of services, which were provided through the Psychological Clinic of the Salvadoran Lutheran Bishopric.

## **Testimony of Aracely Ventura, Licensed Therapist**

My name is Aracely Ventura. I am 43 years old and come from a family of farmers from the department of San Vicente. My family is quite large, my mother had three sons and five daughters of which only five of us are still alive, three died in the civil war we lived through. This is the testimony of my childhood, an episode that marked my life forever.

During the 80's at the age of seven, we lived in a humble home, that was very peaceful. I remember that one afternoon we went outside with my cousin who was 8 looking for wood for the stove when we heard an

airplane circling above followed by horrible noises as bombs began to fall. Being girls we panicked and ran home searching for our mothers and siblings, when we arrived we found no one, so we ran to our neighbor's house. A bomb from the plane had struck it there was a dead lady and child there, it was such a horrible picture, to see people blown to pieces as the airplane continued circling firing rounds of shots, and all we could do was run and run. Once the plane had gone my mother, brothers and sisters returned to the house to look for us and they found my cousin and I running in panic and fear through the streets of our village.

On May 5<sup>th</sup>, 1982, we left our home fleeing from the repression and arrived and Faith and Hope Refuge camp founded and served by the Salvadoran Lutheran Church. There we lived safely, but the traumas from all the shocking situations experienced were installed. It was in this refugee camp that I began my basic studies and then continued on to the National University where I received my title as a Public Accountant; I now work as the Administrator for the Salvadoran Lutheran Synod.

However, the traumatic experiences during the war were deeply engraved in my memory and affected me greatly. I had frequent nightmares related to scenes from the war; I could not bear to hear the sound of an airplane overhead as each time it was as if I was reliving this story.

When I heard that a certified program in Psycho-trauma would be taught in the Lutheran Church and that it would be given to pastors and lay leaders, I asked the National Diploma Coordinator to participate in the training. My aim was to find answers to my nightmares and fears, a way to overcome those situations that affected my life. My experience in the study of Psychotraumatology taught me to confront and overcome my war traumas and I have learned to use therapeutic methods to treat other people who live with post-traumatic stress.

## **Community Based Psycho-Social Attention**

In the months of January and February 2001, two very strong earthquakes hit El Salvador and much of the infrastructure throughout the country collapsed. There were many injured, dead, persons missing under the rubble and entire communities buried by landslides in the mountains. The local Lutheran Churches' set people up in shelters that had no place to live and provided many with food, some material help to rebuild their homes, medical care and psychological care.

Nonetheless, these natural disasters caused us to rethink the way in which, to date, we had been approaching psycho-therapy and the development of our process. Therefore, the churches of the different

denominations of the Forum ACT / ALLIANCE of El Salvador, in order to respond more effectively to the psychological needs of the communities affected by emergencies and disasters, began with the support of teachers/facilitators of the Lutheran Church of Sweden, a training process in the topic of Community Based Psycho-social Care.

We have come to understand psycho-social care as a process of personal, family and community support, which seeks to restore emotional integrity to those who are victims of disasters as well as their social networks.

It is known that the psychological and social effects of emergencies can be acute in the short term, but they can also deteriorate the mental health and psycho-social well-being of the affected populations in the long term.

Many people who have been affected by disasters may find that their behavioral reactions are formed by the excessive negative stimulus received during the disaster and consequently, characterizes the way in which they are able physically and emotionally control their reactions to such stimulus.

In this sense, psycho-social care cannot be offered as an isolated treatment, but should be part of a comprehensive strategy of humanitarian, material and health assistance to communities' victims of a disaster, based on the principle that the first psychological aid is the satisfaction of basic human necessities and the assurance of survival.

The first psychological aid is the intervention performed with a person in crisis; first responders consist of members of the psychosocial committees trained in psychosocial care in an emergency response and / or by community leaders trained in the social psychology. They are trained to alleviate the tensions created by the event that threatens life, the security of the individual and or their environment.

Community based psycho-social care includes the individual attention psychologists provide to traumatized victims, as well as follow up care provided through a deepening of the psychological and social training provided to pastoral, lay and community leaders committed to providing continued care in their respective communities. Through the training received, the Psychosocial Care Committee will integrate by continuing to accompany and care for their respective communities.

It is important to take into account the degree of psychological effects upon the victims of the disaster taking into account a number of variables: personal history, habitual defensive mechanisms, support systems, family and social support; intensity and exposure to the traumatic event and particular significance of the disaster for the person.

It is necessary to emphasize that the process of psycho-social care includes "caring for those who are caregivers", as pastoral, lay and community leaders add to their responsibilities, psychosocial care, they can become emotionally overwhelmed. Along with the demands of the com-



munity, there continues to be personal and family needs a well. Therefore, emotional Psycho support for caregivers is vital to their emotional balance and mental health. These are key members of the Community Psychosocial Care Committee because they know the reality in which the community is immersed, have direct contact with the population served and become psychosocial promoters of preventative actions, care and empowerment of the community.

The methodology used in the training provided to pastors, lay and community leaders is based on the guide/manual for the facilitation and animation of psychosocial care activities for communities affected by disasters, edited by ACT ALIANZA, El Salvador, it also includes techniques and Psychological dynamics applicable to group work. This is quite effective for the psychological recovery of people and facilitates the integration of community psychosocial care groups.

Central themes addressed in training in community-based psychosocial care include: Coping with adverse situations; Self-esteem and stress management; Tools for Personal strengthening: Strengthening and Community empowerment.

The topics covered in this methodological process are developed according to the rhythm, time and assimilation of the theme implemented in the workshops in each of the communities served, time that is determined by the level of impact the population has suffered.

Depending on the themes, workshops are developed for pastors, lay leaders and community leaders, who guarantee the replication of the techniques and methods learned in their communities. In each workshop, participatory psychosocial and psychosocial techniques are implemented based on the methodology of popular education. At the end of each workshop, an evaluation of what is learned is done, putting special interest in the expressions of emotions and individual feelings and group participation.

With regards to the theme “coping with adverse situations”, integration techniques are used, including animation, individual and group participation, presentation and expression of feelings. They also use diagnostic techniques that help each person to get to know the group, implement their individual reflections in the face of adversity and creatively find solutions through teamwork. In this process of discovering the importance of creativity in the face of adverse situations, it is necessary to incorporate body work and movement, self-awareness in order to discover the individual and collective internal strengths of each person.

With regards to the topic of self-esteem and stress management, techniques are used that facilitate group communication and promote the participation of persons who may be afraid to express themselves in public. Musical techniques are used to facilitate the self-discovery of

emotions and feelings and the importance of the presence of others in the life of each person. Finally, emotional self-control techniques are used to confront adverse situations in order to achieve emotional balance and thus provide emotional support to others who may need it.

For personal empowerment, techniques are used to strengthen self-esteem, group integration and cohesion, to create spaces where dialogue, discussion, reflection and consensual ideas and thoughts are carried out through direct communication.

In order to strengthen the community, techniques are used that promote participation, reflection, feedback and integration of all as it pertains to the community. Mapping of community networks and existing level of organization in the communities served is done as a resource for all. It also brings to awareness existing resources in the human and material community and promotes the allocation of community responsibilities with the aim of establishing psychosocial care committees in each of the communities affected by emergencies and/or disasters.

For the rehabilitations and reconstruction of community life, one must integrate the actions related to psycho-social care which facilitates renewed adaption and elaboration of each persons' experience, as well as the integration of those families who have also been affected as activities are developed in their respective communities.

## **Members of Community-Based Volunteer Psychosocial Care Promoter Committees.**

### **Diploma in Psychotraumatic Therapy**

In 2010, we came to know through the Deanship of Munich, Germany, a modern method of intervention therapy created by Dr. Lutz Ulrich Besser called Crest model which includes attention to the body, the resources that a person has available and the use of trauma therapy with systemic counseling, all based on discoveries of neurobiology and research in the fields of attachment and stress, trauma therapy and counseling. Psycho Traumatic therapy has therefore developed on the basis of the latest discoveries in neurobiology.

The Salvadoran Lutheran Church, in an effort to update the methods of therapeutic intervention implemented, established with the Deanship of the Lutheran Church of Munich, Germany, and the support of World Mission, a cooperative agreement with the objective of training pastors and lay leaders/with a Diploma in Psycho Traumatology so that they can

attend pastorally to people suffering from post-traumatic stress. They learn and apply newly acquired resource-based and trauma-centered knowledge, such as the areas of post-traumatic stress disorders and ego-state changes, as well as problems arising in the fields of pedagogy, pastoral counseling, therapy and pastoral care.

Traumas are known to be events that are associated with the experience of a subjective or objective threat and feelings of fear, impotence, vulnerability, and often associated with psychic and physical injury and pain. These events go beyond the normal strategies of overcoming the trauma that people have. Even though a person may “survive” the traumatic events in their lives, the effects of those traumatic events pursue them and continue throughout their lives. Many victims of trauma suffer severe symptoms and disorders caused by stress, otherwise known as “post-traumatic stress syndrome (PTSD). The earlier the trauma occurs in a person’s life and the longer the dangerous and uncertain situation he or she encounters persists, the more severe are the traumatic symptoms.

The horrible consequences of a trauma are that the images and experiences are frozen in the brain. Such images are not saved as a normal event, but through sensations or stimuli, such memories of the lived experience can be activated at any time. The victims relive the event and suffer flashbacks or retrospective scenes. They will experience the horrible experience again as if it happened at that time. Other symptoms include nightmares, panic attacks, sleep disorders, physical pain, depression, drug and alcohol addiction, violence and aggression.

Dr. Lutz Ulrich Besser argues that TRAUMA, especially if violence is frequently exercised, forces the victim to have limitations in memory, loss of speech and obsessive repetition of behavior. This applies at the individual, family, community and social levels. The goal of working with trauma is to move the person towards a healthy memory in order to find ways to overcome that trauma. Thus, the person takes control of his/her life again and finds access to his or her own resources.

The issue here is not only about therapeutic care for overcoming trauma, but also about educational approaches. Traumatized people need to have people in their churches, communities, counseling centers, schools, who can explain what causes trauma, what the symptoms are, and how to deal with those symptoms.

Participants who receive their Diploma in Psycho-Traumatology, once the training is finished, can use the knowledge received for counseling and pastoral care for parishioners in Diakonia, pastoral work with young people, women, children, men, migrants, or anyone suffering the consequences of traumatic events lived.

## **Testimony of Christian Chavarria Ayala, Evangelist**

The Chalatenango area where I was born was one of the most affected by the civil war in El Salvador. At the age of four, I had to witness the death of members of my family, who were brutally murdered in the canton where we lived, a massacre that marked me for life. There was so much repression that all the inhabitants left that place seeking to save their lives. My family and I took refuge in the Mesa Grande camp in Honduras. I lived there from age 5 to 11. I reacted with anguish and tears even when I sensed the smell of grass. My family thought I was crazy.

As an 8 year old boy I discovered my vocation as a painter; I have painted since then and feel that I release all my painful and traumatic memories in my paintings. Art for me has been my therapy for coping with trauma. When I am inspired through painting, I always paint thinking about a better world and the painful memories are converted into a great joy in my paintings.

Studying for the diploma in Psycho Traumatology was for me a new glow that illuminated my soul and heart and helped me to understand that I was not crazy, that I acted differently due to my traumatic experiences in childhood. I learned to handle my emotions and impulses and to have positive control over my behavior. Now I can say, with satisfaction, that my traumatic experiences have been overcome and that I have strengthened myself. Now I can support and therapeutically can serve others who request assistance in the community where God has given me the privilege of serving as an evangelic pastor.

Christian painted the Cross for the worship service commemorating the 500 years Reformation held in Lund, Sweden. Not in the text! This is a testimony

## **Diploma in Psycho Traumatology for Central America**

The Central American region is comprised of five countries that present similar characteristics in terms of population composition, social, economic, political, ethnic and cultural, with emerging democracies. In 1960s to 1990 there were in Guatemala, El Salvador, and Nicaragua historical revolutionary processes that contributed to regime changes from military dictatorships to civilian governments, currently led by pluralist parties of different ideologies, characterized by the proponents of civil society, however, there are still strong remnants of social exclusion by dominant social sectors.

Unfortunately, when the armed conflicts ended and in the post-war period, the regional governments did not give priority to care for the popu-

lation's mental health. They did not implement programs of permanent and generalized psychosocial care for the thousands of families that were affected by multiple war trauma caused by political persecution, torture, sexual abuse, murders of relatives and missing persons. These families even now, still are carrying a series of personality dysfunctions that affects psycho-emotional and in more serious cases, psycho-pathologically, situations that does not allow them to have a full, harmonious and healthy lives.

Presently, the countries known as the northern triangle live in a deep phenomenon of social violence caused by organized gangs and bandits. The phenomenon of increasing migration of minors, organized crime, corruption and impunity in high social spheres, which have economic and political power, continues to keep the majority of the Central American population in extreme poverty. All of this profoundly affects the emotional and psychic stability of the population.

The mental health of the Central American population is also affected by the region's vulnerability due to natural phenomena such as earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, droughts, floods and the phenomenon of climate change. This situation will worsen the economy of poorer families; add to family disintegration due to the lack of access to education, health, and decent housing services. All this influences many young people to focus their life goals on migrating to other countries, mainly to the United States.

Given the positive experiences reached in El Salvador with the therapeutic training of trauma care, the Central American Communion of Lutheran Churches (Comunión de Iglesias Luteranas de Centro América – CILCA) considers this educational process to be important and it is being shared in the Lutheran churches of Nicaragua, Honduras, Costa Rica and Guatemala. The training that began in November 2016 is always taught through the Wing of Hope Foundation, in coordination with the team of pastors and lay leaders of the Salvadoran Lutheran Synod who are already trained in Psycho traumatology, with the support of a World Mission and the Deanship de Munich.

The group of Pastors and trained lay leaders will be the ones who provide the workshops to deepen and reinforce the themes addressed in the modules taught by the teachers and will give follow-up to the development of these practices carried out in the Churches of each of the countries participating in the Diploma in Psycho Traumatology.

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Community Psychosocial Care by ACT / ALLIANCE.

Postgraduate work in Post-Traumatic Stress Care from the Wing of Hope Foundation, Munich Deanery, Germany.

# Sharing What We Have Seen

*Rev. Oliverio Mora*

*Translation by David A. Thorp*

El Cocuy is a municipality anchored in the eastern mountainous range of the Andes. It lies eleven hours by land from Bogota, the capital of Colombia, and is characterized by the kindness and tenacity of its people.

El Cocuy is the place where the first Lutheran missionaries were welcomed, making it the cradle of Lutheranism in Colombia. From 1937, the Lutheran Church has witnessed times of peace and times of violence. Between 1948 and 1952, Lutherans were living witnesses to governmental abuse towards anyone considered “Evangelical” who in those times were called “Protestants.” In the midst of a partisan war, Lutherans were labeled enemies of religious and political conservatism, which was reason enough for them to be listed as “undesirables” ones for cooperating with the alleged corruption that evangelicals could exercise in the official and predominant denomination as it was then the Roman Catholic Church. There were many manifestations of rejection and protests against the Lutheran Church led by the leadership of the catholic priests whose slogan was: “We do want Protestants in El Cocuy for they come only to corrupt us.” The result of this political and religious hatred, Lutheran families had to see their humble homes burned, some were exiles, and their children were refused education in public schools culminating in the assassination of an active member of the Lutheran Church, Joaquin Mora Alvarado.

Today, revisiting what was this partisan war in Colombia, and seeing it in light of Scriptures, it served to anchor this town and country the immovable foundations of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Between 1994 and 2010, Colombia experienced a new wave of cruel violence without boundaries between the guerrilla groups of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia – FARC), the National Liberation Army (Ejército de Liberación

Nacional – ELN) and the State forces. Once again, the civil population is forced to be a part of this. State neglect caused the Municipality of El Cocuy to be dominated by the insurgent groups who in turn disputed control of the territory. The civil population, consequently, had to submit to the will of the guerilla movement under the threat of armed retaliation. The first group to arrive was the ELN. They came with the promise to protect them from cattle rustling. They gained control over the people to the point where they ended up being judges who decided matters on divorce, business, ownership of property, execution of public works and even provide names of people whom they thought should be elected to public office.

In the midst of this reality, the Lutheran Church faced a new challenge: to be a church of resistance without denying its faith. Many years passed for the Lutheran Church of El Cocuy, named “The Savior”, in which they did not have a permanent pastor. Nevertheless, this never stopped the sisters and brothers of the church from assuming leadership and directing worship services, Bible studies, evangelization, the continuation of formal education through the Lutheran Evangelical School (Colegio Evangélico Luterano – CELCO) and active participation in community development projects.

In 1997, having completed my studies financed by the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and for the holy ministry, I was called as a pastor for community the Evangelical Lutheran Church “The Savior”. This Lutheran community was the family that knew me from birth and watched me grow. It was from her blossom, that I studied elementary school, came to know the immense love of God in Sunday schools, knew the joy of salvation through vacation bible schools, and had made my firm confession of being a Lutheran through the confirmation. Son of Lutheran parents and raised in the Lutheran doctrine, I now had the privilege to be present to my community and continue announcing the Gospel. I inherited as a pastor, a community strong in faith, fruit of the love, dedication, and work left by my retired uncle Oliverio Mora Alvarado.

These were difficult times where it was not known for sure, who supported the State and who supported the insurgency. They are scenes that today assail many memories lived with my family, with the local and national Lutheran Church and with society in general. It is from these memories that I wish to speak of today.

I was commissioned by the Lutheran Church “The Savior” to lead the school and the Congregation. The school has been a Lutheran pillar in the municipality since 1953. It has been an open space for formal education for all religious denominations, political affiliations, social and racial classes. Although the school was born in response to Lutheran children being refused education in public schools, this school has been the living testimony of Christian love.



As a pastor, I set up study groups in the field where I traveled once a week to prepare and teach the youth for confirmation. One day I arrived to visit the family of Ussa Salcedo. It was a place where I had a group of four young people; I was received by an ELN commander who forbade me to carry out any religious activity in the field. When asking for the reasons I just received the answer: “This is an order, period”. For almost a year, I was limited to carrying out my pastoral activities exclusively in the center of El Cocuy. More and more my heart became restless, but I did not know how to confront the armed powers that decided what each person, each family and institution should or should not do.

I only found out that prominent people were murdered. The motives: some for robbery, others for supporting the public forces, others for being state informants “toads” others for selling drugs, others for dual militancy, but the truth was never known. One day people came down from the mountains with the news that the ELN had murdered the then Pastor of the Philadelphia Church. This is a Pentecostal community that has contributed to the evangelization in the municipality as well as other bordering municipalities. I knew a little of his doctrine and it seemed to me a healthy doctrine.

The announcement of the assassination of this pastor filled me with great courage, disgust and determination. The Philadelphia community was just forming and their leadership center resided in Tunja, the capital of the Department. Their leaders also feared for their lives and directed their members to seek me out to ask for the favor of offering them a funeral service for their pastor. I gladly accepted. Many people gathered at that service, some to accompany the fallen pastor and others to hear our position on the pastor’s death. I remember that in my sermon I asked the guerrillas if they were going to kill all the evangelical pastors, there we were, we would not leave but please tell us why they were killing us.

Through divine intervention, as there have been countless in my ministry, a high school classmate had installed a radio station with a broad reach. I asked him to sell me a half an hour of radio time for a radio program of the Lutheran Church, to which he kindly accepted. This medium gave me a space to reject and lament any death that happened in the municipality. I remember that my words were: “The Lutheran Church feels the pain of any violent death that happens in our municipality.”

One day I was informed that a truck would leave with a group of people who had been summoned by the ELN commander in charge of control in the Region. With God’s authority and a package of cookies in my pants pocket, I got on that truck without giving explanations to any of the approximately 20 who were traveling there. After hearing the socialist and revolutionary discourse of this ELN commander, he asked if anyone

wanted to share or add anything else. Everyone was silent. I told him I needed to speak to him in private. He accepted my request. Everyone else left so only the commander, a third person and I remained. I spoke of the long struggles of the Lutheran Church over the years so that our people received a comprehensive Gospel where social projects have been a bulwark of the benefits of the Gospel. He told me that he not only knew the work of the Lutheran Church in El Cocuy, but that he also knew the works of the Lutherans in Socotá and that he was also a former student of the Evangelical Lutheran School of Sogamoso. I just managed to say: “Between firemen, let’s not step on the hoses, you do it with weapons we do it with the Word of God.” I asked him to answer several questions: 1. Why do you forbid me to go out to the field to engage in religious activities? His response was: “You can go wherever you want to perform your services but you cannot build new churches.” 2. Why did they kill the pastor of the Philadelphia Church? He replied: “He was a double agent. At first he was ours and then he was also with the FARC, and there were other messes he committed.” 3. Why did they kill two necessities and candy sellers? He placed the barrel of his AK47 gun under his chin, looked up, looked at me and said, “With those, we were wrong, it was an order misinterpreted by the radio operator.”

After a long conversation, God placed the desire to make clear the position of the local Lutheran Church: “We are neutral in the armed conflict; we do not take sides for the armed party nor of the State Army or by any guerrilla group. We are not neutral in the social conflict; we choose and act in favor of the most unprotected.” This position was well received by this guerrilla commander and in this way, my pastoral work was resumed with the clarity of what it meant to be a Lutheran church in the middle of the war.

Years later, the FARC came to the region intimidating the civilian population as well as the members of the ELN, with armed take overs of municipalities, using unconventional weapons like gas cylinders adapted for bombs. This method really caused great damage where they were activated. In the same way, the FARC, also destroyed bridges and communication towers leaving the municipality and the entire region held incommunicado. they frequently threatened the community of El Cocuy of being wiped off the map by their bombs.

In the face of these threats, a group of women from the Lutheran Church “The Savior” called me to a meeting and together we asked ourselves, “What should we do? We took the decision to call the entire population together to pray for peace in our public places. We offered invitations to the Roman Catholic Church, the Pentecostal Church, and the Church of Philadelphia among others. Some joined with great force

and others criticized this initiative. For a long time we spent every afternoon meeting in any part of the town. I had adapted our family car with a precarious sound system and speakers. I would go through the street announcing where the next place of prayer would be. There, the people would gather. All denominations gathered and we participated together. We call this movement of peaceful resistance “ecumenical prayer for peace”.

After a while, we did this only once every week and in the last years and to date, it is done every December 31st. Our symbols of struggle were white flags in our homes, parks and vehicles. In response to this mobilization, God never allowed this municipality to be attacked by FARC bombs.

Our municipality was no longer under the control of the ELN, but now had to coexist with the presence of with the FARC. Our situation worsened as extortions and kidnappings increased. The way the FARC operates is recognized by its merciless acts against the civilian population. To be a pastor, to be Christian and to give witness was not an easy task. To be a Church of the Word and Action in Colombia was to expose itself to great risk and become highly vulnerable.

After the Annual Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Colombia in 2002, we were disappointed by the absence of clear policies to be Church in the middle of the conflict, we met with three people to analyze the situation and to look for solutions. I would like to, at this time, to name those who have been people of great social commitment. They are: Giraldo Barajas Alvarado, Jaime Wilches Diaz and myself, your servant. Several things emerged at this meeting: 1. Alone we cannot confront the situation of violence, especially given the vulnerability of pastors and workers within the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Colombia (IELCO) who live outside of the capital. To this end, we decided to ask, through IELCO, for a permit from the Lutheran World Federation – LWF – to be able to use on our stationery and on the IELCO workers’ cards a place to say that we are members of the LWF. 2. In the face of possible acts of human rights violations against Lutherans at the national level, we did not have an entity to present a defense, complaint or claim. As a solution, we decided that through a team from the Department of Mission and Development of IELCO – DMD – we will manage a project called “Justice and Life”. Thank God both things could be accomplished with the immense cooperation of the LWF.

The FARC’s action in the municipality reached the extremes of removing the few animals from the peasants who did not have cash to pay for their extortions. Personally, I was summoned by the FARC with a death threat if I did not present myself. The reason was that I should pay thirty million pesos (30,000,000) pesos (at the time, this amount was equivalent to fifteen thousand dollars). I went before the FARC extortionists and

for three hours, I told them about the revolution, their mistakes and the regression in which they had put the whole country. While I sat on a rock, the commander in charge of this extortion was walking around me with a pistol in his hand. After this long discussion, I was told I had to pay at least five million pesos. My answer was, “If you force me to pay three hundred thousand pesos, I cannot pay you in cash, but I can stay with you for a week preparing your meals.” By the luck and the grace of God I was not forced to pay anything.

The extortive, intimidating and violating practices of the two guerrilla groups produced a massive displacement of settlers seeking refuge in the large cities of the country. However, as a Church we felt the great responsibility of resisting, not abandoning and being signs of hope for the population. We always announced that, better times would come. Better times and hope arrived with the return that the State made in the region under the government of Alvaro Uribe Velez.

The violence between the state and the insurgency allowed me to see the sovereign face of God acting, by giving his humble people the strength of faith for each situation and a call of vocation to each one of us.

Many other episodes happened and they are not recounted here to avoid hurting sensibilities of others by having to mention names. Those who are considered here seek to reveal the immense faithfulness of God and His sovereignty where “heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away” (Matthew 24:35).

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# To preach together with others: The ministry of proclamation of the Gospel of the Mexican Lutheran Church in the Maximum-Security Prison of Guadalajara, Mexico

*Rev. Roberto Trejo Haager*

*Translated by David A. Thorp*

We must form our estimate of men less from their achievements and failures, and more from their sufferings. The only profitable relationship to others — and especially to our weaker brethren — is one of love, that is the will to hold fellowship with them. Even God did not despise humanity, but became Man for man's sake.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

## **1. Introduction**

The title of this article shows us the concept that from the beginning the work of proclamation in prison was established as: preaching “together” with the other rather than “for or at” the other. This last expression simply sends us the message “this is what you need to learn, this is what you need to know.” This demonstrates a professorial style from the last century when there was no opportunity for interaction in the classroom, because the professor held the truth with the assumption that students knew nothing, and for this reason their opinions were not important, therefore, they

should concentrate on learning and receive the knowledge that the teacher had “for” the students. Nevertheless, the expression “preach together with the other” brings us to a new way of thinking and allows us to explore a common space in which we learn and share “together with”: one is present face to face with each other, we can share our experiences, listen, learn from each other, together with each other, to integrate the group. This has been the salient view from the beginning of this paragraph and the work of the ministry of proclamation by the Mexican Lutheran Church in the reformatory of Guadalajara: the work of the preacher preaching to be inclusive one with the other, to discuss, learn, live together, interact, listen, share the Gospel and bring to light God who continues speaking.

It is clear in this article who “the others” are: the male prisoners from the Maximum-Security Prison. In general, when we speak of the others, the rest, we tend to cross an imaginary divisive line distinguishing our differences between “us-them,” or “the rest of them,” “the others:” the others are strangers, unknown, and in the case of prisoners, they are the imprisoned, in jail, outside of the law. In Vitor Westhelle’s book, *Protest Voices of Latin America*, addressing European colonialism in Latin America, comments that the colonizers sought not only to conquer land but also the soul and “the very culture” of the indigenous peoples. It was their desire to silence the others, “the other voices”. The colonizers imposed their language so that the indigenous society would remain “invisible.”<sup>1</sup> Although the quoted paragraph could bring many themes for discussion to the table, what we want to emphasize is simply the way people talk about others “other voices” as Westhelle states. They are voices that have been silenced, because they had nothing to say, of which there is no need to learn, they are voices from the margin of society and “the margins are not the weak side of society, but the place where the fragility of an entire society is manifested.”<sup>2</sup>

As a church, we are aware that we must know the ground on which we walk on, the conditions of others and of ourselves, in such a way that our preaching can be a work presented, thoughtful. It should be received from the context of the listeners who are prisoners, knowing that they too have something to say, sharing opinions on what they are hearing. Hence, it is the biblical study format that has been used since the beginning of the preaching work, which allows inmates to ask questions, debate, argue about what is presented to them through our preaching. As a Lutheran Church, we help one another understand through our Lutheran theology that in carrying out this work we share with Luther the perspective that

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<sup>1</sup> Vitor Westhelle. *Voces de protesta en América Latina*. México, D.F.: Coedición del CETPJDR y Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, 2000, 35 – 38.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. 38.

what God created is good, but much of was good in the beginning, has been corrupted by sin. Nevertheless, just as we have been freed and transformed by the action of God through Christ in our lives, we also desire this freedom, so that others may be transformed. Luther states with respect to Christian liberty the following: “Christian liberty is not given to anyone to use it for their pleasure and whims, for evil, prejudice or the dislike of others, but exclusively, so that in times of difficulties or crisis of conscience, one can serve and help others with it.”<sup>3</sup>

## **2. The Beginning of Our Work and the Space in Which We Preach**

It has already been mentioned that the proclamation work of the Mexican Lutheran Church “Faith” (“Fe”) in the city of Guadalajara is shared amongst prisoners from the Maximum-Security Prison of Guadalajara. It should be noted that even though this prison is a state penitentiary, it actually operates as a detention center which accepts inmates from the state of Jalisco, of which Guadalajara is the Capitol, and in addition receives inmates from many other states that may or may not border the State of Jalisco. They especially receive inmates that are convicted of federal crimes. This offers the opportunity to get to know a variety of persons with distinct customs and present the Gospel to a broad cross-section of people who will return to their places of origin – generally after having served their sentences – and will continue to disseminate the Gospel in their towns. The Maximum-Security Prison has a high concentration of males who are awaiting their sentences. Generally, when the sentences are given to them, many complete those sentences in an adjoining prison named “Cereso” (Center for Social Reinsertion) though there are cases as well in which prisoners have completed their sentences in the Maximum-Security Prison.

The proclamation ministry of the church began in August of 1993 and came to life in the following manner: a brother member of the Lutheran congregation in Guadalajara asked Pastor Daniel Trejo, of Faith Lutheran Church (“Fe”) in the aforementioned city, if he could share the Gospel with his biological brother. Pastor Trejo agreed to the request and initiated the paperwork necessary for him to enter the Maximum-Security Prison once a week (Monday afternoons) to converse with that person and share the Gospel. Little by little the visits and conversations took shape and slowly converted into Bible Studies and changed from visiting a prisoner

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<sup>3</sup> Martinho Lutero. Obras Seleccionadas Tomo V. São Leopoldo: Coedición de Editora Sinodal y Concórdia Editores Ltda, 1995, 274.

to a meeting of friends who came together to hear the word of God.<sup>4</sup> Over time, a working team of 6 persons, all members of Faith Lutheran Church, came together to meet and in different ways supported the preaching work in the prison. There was a time it was possible to bring a keyboard into the prison and before Bible Study, hymns were taught, that the prisoners could identify with and then sang with much passion. As of January of 2016, Pastor Roberto Trejo took charge of the preaching ministry.

The preaching ministry has always taken place in an open space called “The Terrace.” It is an area made available to prisoners to receive their relatives who come to visit them. An outdoor area, distinct and well made, with surrounding gardens and an overhead masonry roof with columns and no walls. In the first years of ministry, those people who visited the prisoners left around 2:00 pm. with the homilies began at 5:00 pm in total calm. From about five years to date, the visiting hours have been extended to 7:00 p.m. This means that one must get accustomed to preaching amongst people passing through, children playing soccer or shouting loudly, or inmates offering their merchandise (handbags, toys, food, crafts that they make) to the people who come to visit the inmates. Sometimes one is under the impression of preaching in a market place and must have good concentration in order not to lose the point of what one is saying. Recently, the preaching time has been reduced significantly: 8 years ago, one could count on more or less an hour and a half for worship and there was enough time to sing, preach and afterwards talk with the inmates. Now, only half an hour is made available (between 5:00 and 5:30 p.m.) for preaching and dialogue. One must be punctual in finishing as after 5:30 the prisoners become restless and must return to their cells, because at 5:45 there is roll call and if they arrive late without excuse the Prison Director imposes sanctions. In this sense, it is better to finish sermons within the allotted timeframe.

On the other hand, the diaconal purpose of the Church to present the Gospel in the Prison has always been clear: to preach but not proselytize, discarding the idea of forming members for the Lutheran Church. Besides the Lutheran Church there are other Evangelical Churches who preach as well, because of this, it was never thought of competing with the other churches but to plant the seed, or to water what others had already planted as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 3:6 “I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters

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<sup>4</sup> In regards to the proclamation of the word, Nelson Kirst in his book *Rudimentos de Homilética* expresses: “Preaching is a very essential link in the process of the relationship between God and people. Without the proclamation the relationship is not possible.” In: Nelson Kirst. *Rudimentos de Homilética*. São Leopoldo: Coedición IEPP y Editora Sinodal, 1996, 12.



is anything, but only God who gives the growth.”<sup>5</sup> This brings us to think about mission<sup>6</sup> that the church over time is the repository of the Gospel, to present it “to the whole creation,” according to Mark 16:15<sup>7</sup> even in prison, according to Mathew 25:36.<sup>8</sup> In this manner, the Gospel can be planted and the Church in doing its mission can offer liberty to the prisoners and they can choose the church of their preference to meet in.

### 3. Who Are the Prisoners?

Whenever we speak of prisoners, we are referring to that group of people to whom we share the Gospel, which is the group of prisoners we know and with whom we have contact.

We know that we cannot generalize as we try to describe something, and in this case, a description of a particular group of human beings can have its peculiarities, nonetheless, we can say that the inmates who come to our Bible Studies are the following:

- a) They are literate persons. Some have had professional careers, though the majority of the population is made up of persons who only completed one or two grades of basic education (Elementary and/or High School). As best as we can remember over the last 23 years of work with the inmates, only two persons were illiterate. A few know English as some were illegal migrant workers in the United States and learned the language there. Upon returning to Mexico, for distinct reasons they turned to crime and were moved to the prison system. (Maximum-Security Prison)
- b) The social class is varied. In general, they belong to the lower middle class and below. Some have certain levels of self-maintenance within the prison which is provided for them by the people who visit them, yet,

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<sup>5</sup> AAVV. Nuevo Testamento Multiversiones. Brasil: Sociedades Bíblicas Unidas, 2003.

<sup>6</sup> In relation to the mission, in the book: Gospel, Church and Kingdom, which presents studies comparisons of world mission theology, the writer quotes Plitt, who in turn cites Luther in this way: “It is seen that the distortion of the gospel message has led to the degeneration of the mission, transforming it into ecclesiastical propaganda, into conversions forced, papal crusades and non-evangelical methods; Luther’s obedience to order to do mission meant the restoration of the Church on its sole foundation true in Christ Jesus and in the gospel. For Luther, Plitt said, mission is a task essential of the Church in all times, but can only make one mission Church that is, itself, grounded in the gospel. “The theme can be expanded consulting the book: James A. Sherer. Evangelho, Igreja e Reino. São Leopoldo: Editora Sinodal y EST/IEPG, 1991, 44.

<sup>7</sup> AAVV. Nuevo Testamento Multiversiones. Brasil: Sociedades Bíblicas Unidas, 2003.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

all are required to find work within the prison as this gives favorable points to them when it comes time for their sentencing.

- c) They are there for crimes they have committed. Honestly, we must say that there are some people who have been unjustly accused and are serving a sentence that they do not deserve, but in general, the majority are in the Detention Center for crimes they committed related to street fights, sale and trafficking of drugs, arms trafficking, kidnappings and armed robbery to name a few. As a group that is sharing the Gospel, we never ask the prisoners why they have been incarcerated. When they feel trust is built, and they decide, they have approached a pastor or the group that accompanies them and in a straight forward fashion begin to simply share about their lives. Not all come to this point but many do.
- d) They are persons who need to be heard. The majority have the need to share something. From what may seem trivial to the listener – the gift of clothing from the person who visited them, or how hot the jail cells are – to even the deepest confessions: “I dedicated my life to killing people and enjoyed doing it,” or “They sent me to jail because they found, heavy weapons, hand grenades, weapons exclusively designed for military use in my house and the police were not pleased...” Actually when most prisoners choose to do this exercise to tell part of their life, they do so without expecting the listener to say something, or react with words to their story; they simply have the need to share and be heard. In these kinds of exercises, it is the prisoners who speak and it is necessary to listen to them since, this exercise is a monologue and not a dialogue. They do not need to justify why they are in prison, yet they need to share it. Sometimes they will share matters related to their personal families; about the prisoners they live with and the problems generated by living together; the lack of work; about the evangelizing that they themselves do with their cellmates; or with regards the news they receive concerning the judicial process of their cases, and other things.
- e) Body Language. For the inmates it is important to have physical contact among themselves – greetings through handshakes, but also a hug with both hands. The same form of greeting that they share amongst themselves is extended to the persons who share the Gospel with them even though they do not belong to their primary social circle. The greeting shared with the pastor will also be a handshake and a hug. Eye contact is always important. Prisoners always greet one another

with eye contact.<sup>9</sup> It is very rare during a greeting that prisoners will look away. In general, they will always look one another in the eyes. Eye contact creates trust<sup>10</sup> in the group, it is treated as a means of openness, and as well, they will feel greeted and accepted by the group upon seeing signs of closeness by means of a handshake or hug.

### 3.1 Their Cells and Dormitories

The prisoners live in cells that are inside of their dormitories. A dormitory is a type of neighborhood. There are 74 cells per dormitory. The cells measure 4 X 4 meters and though they were built to hold a maximum of 6 prisoners, in truth there can be up to 10-15 prisoners per cell. This is the cause of many overcrowding problems and it makes living together with your roommates difficult. There are 14 dormitories and each one is classified according to the crimes committed. There is another dormitory known as “Observation” where prisoners who require certain medications are sent. There is also the dormitory known as “Admissions” where prisoners who have recently arrived to the Detention Center are sent to stay for four to six weeks “probation period”. They will then be sent to be classified according to the crime committed and then assigned to one of the fourteen dormitories for their custody. Consequently, there are 16 dormitories in all at the Detention Center.

## 4. The Prison Authorities

Everyone knows through the grapevine that there are two types of authority in the Maximum-Security Prison: a) The “Official” authorities to call them something, who are comprised of the director and deputy directors of the prison, and the Metropolitan Prison Commission, which is responsible for the supervision of all the penitentiary centers,<sup>11</sup> and b) the “other authorities.”

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<sup>9</sup> Visual contact is positive always respecting the other person. Judi James. *El lenguaje corporal*. México, D.F.: Coedición de Paidós y Booket, 2015, 165.

<sup>10</sup> “Regarding trust, Bonhoeffer says: “Trust will always appear to us as one of the greatest, most unusual and blessed gifts of human coexistence (...) We have learned not to give ourselves under any circumstances to the wicked, to abandon ourselves without reserve in the hands of those who deserve our confidence.” Dietrich Bonhoeffer. *Resistencia y sumisión*. Salamanca: Ediciones Sígueme, 2004, 19.

<sup>11</sup> It was mentioned in part 2 that the incarcerated network in prisons In Jalisco also operates under CERESO and there is one more prison center, the Feminine Prison. With this, there are three centers under the work of the Commissary of the Metropolitan Prison.

It is before the official authorities that we have to do all the necessary process to enter the Maximum-Security Prison and preach. In general, we can say that the interpersonal relationship has always been cordial and the authorities have never opposed that we enter and preach in the prison. On the other hand, the authorities who are responsible for review and inspection of all persons and things entering the prison (known as prison guards or “custodians”) sometimes opposed our entry making us wait in the registration area much longer than usual, arguing that some inexistent error was made by the prison authorities, “but was nothing that can’t be fixed.”

The “other authorities,” were made up of convicts who hold certain power and influence in spite, of being imprisoned. They are allowed visitors outside of normal hours, articles and goods considered prohibited (cell phones, certain weapons and drugs), to charge for certain services offered inside the prison (laundry service, water for personal hygiene, household items and more) all of which should be the responsibility of the State. Are permitted to hold meetings and parties, as echoed by the prisoners, may last through the night and dawn of the next day, thus disturbing their sleep. The official authorities deny these things, but the prisoners know who really controls the prison, at least from “the inside” and know what they can or cannot do or get away with.

The sentence-making authorities, the judges, often do their work properly, although often not, and they can delay the prisoner’s sentencing, hoping that the prisoner offers some gift to expedite the proceedings of his case.

## **5. Proclamation**

Now we have an idea of the profile of the persons to whom we share the Gospel with.

These persons are many times weighed down by the crimes they have committed; persons who wrestle with “other authorities” whom we mentioned in the previous section, who want to charge them fees to have access to basic service in the prison, and have to face prison corruption in general. In section three, we mentioned that the prisoners are accustomed to greeting one another with a handshake and eye contact. We have observed that the inmates feel vindicated, in spite of all the emotional baggage they carry on their shoulders, when they feel accepted by the group where we share the Gospel with them. As we shared in section one, they feel part of the group and comfortable sharing their feelings; the same section where we quoted Vitor Westhelle, who alluded to the silencing and the isolation of those who are on the margins of society. It is our hope through Biblical reflection amongst the inmates, who are on

the margins of the law; that they will trust and share their opinions during the Bible Study, and have a sense of pastoral accompaniment through the message of the Gospel.

Speaking from our experience, we are also aware that there are prisoners who have no interest in the Gospel as they demonstrate this through their attitudes in the group or will outright say so. They will attend our group because everything that is talked about will seem new and it gives them the opportunity to get away from the hustle and bustle of their daily routines. Nonetheless, they have no real interest in following the Gospel. Who are we to say what the Gospel can do in their lives so the seeds are sown in hope.

On the other hand, it is important to be aware that many of the prisoners drawn to the study group will feel vulnerable. This can be like a two-edged sword: if they feel like their sense of space is being invaded, they put up a defensive shield, they listen but do not accept what is being said or they just quit coming to the meetings. The other side is that this feeling of vulnerability can be useful when presenting the Gospel to them, identifying themselves with work of Christ, who also became vulnerable, “he humbled himself” according to Philippians 2:6-8 and was later exalted by God. This can help them understand their own vulnerabilities. God accepts them as they are and they can “empty” themselves before God and be transformed into the persons they desire to be. This deepens the prisoners understanding of how God loves and accepts, and how this makes them capable of loving God and accepting of those around them. Through this practical exercise of faith, the prisoners can face their realities and practice their faith through forgiving and loving others, for example, those who betrayed them and for whom they in jail. The “other authorities,” who charge them quotas to have access to certain services (see section 4); their own families, who at times do not come to visit and leave them disheartened. The official authorities, as many times the cases in the judicial process take too long due to the saturation of the court system or corruption, and the list goes on and on. Spiritual exercises or practices do not come easy for the inmates. However, they know that sooner or later, they will face the consequences of their actions, whether it is for lack of evidence and they go free or that they will have to serve their sentence. That is why they must prepare themselves psychically and spiritually.

As a Church, we are aware that we are not the only group that works with the prisoners. In compliance with the Rules of the prison, inmates must complete a series of requirements before being freed upon the completion of their sentences. Requirements consisting of having a clean health certificate, a history of good conduct, which means that your prison record is free of confrontations, fights, problems with the inmate community (other inmates as well as the authorities and includes not having

been placed in an isolation cell). That your life has been useful through work, sports, school attendance, or, if you have higher education, that you were able to teach others. In short the list goes on and the inmates know that they will have to face a present and future that will be demanding and they can feel worn down due to the tension they may suffer trying to live up to these and other obligations. For these reasons, we insist on presenting the Gospel as a liberating message but also one that commits them to face their reality whatever it may be.

One way in which to achieve this is to make them inmates part of the Bible Study group, shaping community<sup>12</sup> life around the Gospel; in such a way that they come to understand that their life makes sense starting with the Gospel. And for some life has become meaningful when they know the Gospel because they have come to express that if they had not known it, perhaps they would not even exist, because the burden of problems they have had led them to take more drastic roads such as taking one's life, for not being able to face reality. That is why the community of believers will be important for the development of faith and the emotional state of the new believers.

Moreover, as a Church we recognize that there are principles of the Gospel found within people in general, because God has not left his word without testimony. However, it is also true that people need to be instructed in the Gospel. When we say that the prisoners ought to be listened to during our Bible Studies, recognizing that they need to share their sense of voice, we also understand they need to learn. Even Jesus recognized this as he mentioned in Matthew 28:16-20, also known as the Great Commission: "Go forth and make disciples of all nations, (...), 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you..." Teaching is ever present in the Scriptures: as an example, a part from that just mentioned in the interchange between Jesus and his disciples, we can see that Priscilla and Aquila instructed Apollos in Acts 18:26 "they took him and explained to him the way of God more accurately."

The Gospel consists in learning something new: the good news of salvation, but it is also related to "unlearning" behaviors and actions that have

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<sup>12</sup> In relation to the community, Bonhoeffer mentions: "Through presence of the brother in faith, the believer can praise the Creator, the Savior and the Redeemer, God Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The prisoner, sick, isolated Christian recognizes in the brother who visits them a visible and merciful sign of the presence of the triune God. Is the real presence of Christ what is experienced when they see each other, and their encounter is a joyful meeting. The blessing that they give each other is that the one coming from Jesus Christ. Now, if this encounter between two believers produces so much joy !how ineffable happiness will feel those to whom God allows to live continuously in community with other believers! In: Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Vida en Comunidad*, Salamanca: Ediciones Sígueme, 2003, 11,12.

harm or hurt one's life, the lives of prisoners, and the lives of others, actions that for many of them, have been the causes for which they are being held in prison. The Apostle Peter, in his first letter, 1 Peter 1:18: "You know that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your fathers..."

In this way we realize that according to these words, prisoners will have the opportunity to learn a new way of living, leaving behind behaviors that had been established as a norm of life. Behaviors and customs that were accepted in the environment in which they grew up, but that they were oppressive behaviors that opposed what God wants for them.

The life of the prisoners when relating to the Gospel is an exercise in patience. Many come to know the Gospel with great enthusiasm, however, when problems arise or it feels like God is not responding to what they have asked for, many forget about the Gospel. They think that God has not heard them and does not love them because they are bad, and once again, it is necessary to speak of the forgiveness of God. The liberation that God offers through the Gospel, the way God receives their lives, the love that God shows them through the daily blessings and the life in community, also, that the Christian life is related to knowing how to exercise patience, with knowing how to wait for God's response. In the Letter to Hebrews, chapter 12:1-2 "and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith." Prisoners will need a lot of patience as their cases are being considered, as many times sentences last much longer than they are supposed to; to be able to wait to be released: even after some have had sentences made in their favor they have had to wait to be freed due to the bureaucratic paper work that moves so slowly and through a corrupt penal system. These situations can discourage them, wear them down, exacerbate their guilt, or make them think they have not done enough for God to respond. That is why it will be necessary to speak again of the God who accompanies, the God who enlivens, of the God who through his Son forgives us, loves us, and accompanies us in community, even though the experiences lived are not exactly the most favorable.

## 6. The Prisoners Voices

But.... What do the prisoners think of the Gospel? How do they see it, feel it? Is there some resonance of it in their lives? Some prisoners speak and present a small testimony of what it has meant for them to know or to rediscover themselves with the Gospel.

For Salvador, coming back to the Gospel in prison was shocking; because he already knew him when he was free but did not live it. Through

the Gospel, he could feel a total transformation of his life that led him to feel restored and to ask for forgiveness from those he had hurt.

For Karim, to know the Gospel in prison meant to feel joy and be able to have peace, for the first time in his life, because he was a person predisposed to the moment and ready to seek fights. Although he recognizes that the authorities do not always act in an adequate or fair way, he keeps himself out of things, so as to not get in trouble and be punished; rather he shares the Gospel among his fellow inmates and has learned to respect them.

Antonio feels that from the knowledge of the Gospel the relationship with his wife improved, even if just a little. He assures everyone that he never used drugs but did become a very aggressive person, both with his paternal family and with his wife. Although he recognizes the problems he faces in connection with his judicial process, he feels strengthened from the Gospel. He sees the rest of his cellmates (who do not know the Gospel) as his family and works for harmony among all.

Oscar did know the Gospel when he was free but, as he himself says, “it was not part of my life.” However, he sees his imprisonment as part of God’s purpose for him, since his life has changed. He left behind drugs and now presents the Gospel among his fellow inmates, because he wants others to have the privilege of knowing the work of God in Christ. Despite the difficulties he has to face, he feels strengthened in God.

Erik states that his life was empty before he knew the Gospel; He felt dead. Although in his home his mother spoke to him of the Gospel, it was until he went to jail that the Gospel became part of his life. Now he shares it with his wife, when she visits him, and feels calm despite the hostile environment of the prison. He presents the Gospel to his cellmates whom he sees as his brothers.

Ramon was a man who had a penchant for fighting, he “liked” to fight and insult others. In his own words “how ugly it is to live without God”; now he feels a total transformation in his life and wishes to continue in the Gospel once he leaves prison. Although his character was once quick-tempered, he can live the love of God in his daily life, serve all his companions and respect the authorities.

## **7. The Official Authorities**

The following opinion was gathered in an informal talk that this writer had with the director of the Maximum-Security Prison, María del Carmen Cárdenas Ramírez, on June 20, 2016, at the premises of the Maximum-Security Prison. The director acknowledged that there is a change in the



life of the prisoner when the prisoners know the Gospel. She said that the interactions she has with the prisoners who know the Gospel is different with those who do not know it. She characterized the evangelical prisoners of very joyful, and optimistic; they have a different way of seeing things, even if they are fraught with problems. In addition, she said that they create a different environment in their own cells, because they avoid getting into fights and try to make peace between everyone. She also mentioned that she sees the preaching of the Gospel as something positive.

## **8. The Lutheran Church**

The Lutheran congregations “Faith” (Fe) in Guadalajara and “Holy Spirit” (Espíritu Santo) in Ahualulco, both in the state of Jalisco support the prison ministry, as they constantly pray for the work of preaching in the Maximum-Security Prison to continue and be sustained, and to be meaningful in the lives of the prisoners. In addition, with the offerings of these Churches, prisoners are provided with resources such as Bibles, devotionals and some Bible studies that are distributed among the prisoners for the spreading of the Gospel. The Church is not allowed to enter the Maximum-Security Prison with other non-religious items (such as clothing or food) to distribute among the prisoners. In the Church in Guadalajara, three former inmates and their families have joined the congregation and integrated into the life of the church community. The pastors and prison ministry team that was working in this field, thank God for the opportunity to serve in this ministry and want the seed of the Gospel to continue to be sown in this place, despite all the difficulties the work entails.

## **9. Acknowledgments**

The author would like to thank the following people, who without their collaboration, this work would not have been possible: Minerva Pérez, Violeta Trejo, Rev. Daniel Trejo, Héctor López, Blanca Palma, Cecilia Martínez, Rev. Ari Trejo, Salvador Ángel, Karim Saíd, José Antonio González, Oscar Clara, Erik Jamer, Ramón Farías, as well as the director of the Maximum-Security Prison, the Lic. María del Carmen Cárdenas Ramírez and her work team for the space and facilities provided to interview the inmates.

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## The Author

The author is originally from the city of Guadalajara Mexico, an Agricultural Engineer graduate of the University of Guadalajara receiving his degree in 1995. In 1998 entered the Augsburg Lutheran Seminary in Mexico City, where he serves as a professor and in 2015 he completed his Master's Degree in Biblical Sciences from the Theological Community of Mexico (Comunidad Teológica de México). He is currently a pastor serving the Lutheran congregations "Faith" (Fe) in Guadalajara and "Holy Spirit" (Espíritu Santo) in Ahualulco, and the prison ministry at the Maximum-Security Prison of Guadalajara.

# The Diaconal Ministry

## “Seeds of Hope”

*Deacon Licensed María Parras*  
*Translation by David A. Thorp*

Every point of view has a point of view. Every person reads with their eyes and interprets from where their feet land.<sup>1</sup>

The diaconal ministry of “Seeds of Hope” (Semillas de Esperanza) is implemented since 2003. It intersects many actions like points of views related to the care of creation, mutual accompaniment, walking together with many social organizations, concrete action work. It is a way of being, doing, understanding, and building up and tearing down, of relationships. Diakonia is mobilized by faith through the diaconal ministry of the United Evangelical Lutheran Church (IELU).

The ministry of “Seeds of Hope” is placed Misiones Province – the red land- situated over the world’s water reserve called the Guarani Aquifer and in middle of the jungle “paranaense” (which suffers a process of flagrant and tragic deforestation). It neighbors the regions of Paraguay and Brazil.

Historically, the IELU has worked in the three great urban areas of Misiones Province: Posadas, Oberá, and Eldorado. The agricultural makeup of the regions is oriented towards small subsistence farming and medium agro business as a result in history of colonization and later on invasion of the lands of the territories. The social and economic means is based in the crop of herbal tea called yerba mate- *Ilex paraguaiensis*. It is cultivated with cultural pride as its cultural roots come from the Guarani

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<sup>1</sup> Leonardo Boff. El águila y la gallina: una metáfora de la condición humana,” 2002.

(indigenous people) and Jesuit missionaries. Tea, tobacco, reforestation for wood, horticulture and agriculture for food are also produced.

Settlers – as farmers in the region call farmers and most of them were migrants, were “owners” of the land, production, labor, and regional economics. Nevertheless, the advancement of capitalism generated the decomposition of this sector disrupting relationships and hampering production processes that once provided for their livelihood. Throughout in Argentina has different processes of concentration of land and capital; this is the oblivious reality also in Misiones.

“With what they are paying us for yerba mate we cannot live. We will complain, go out on the streets ... but we are afraid ... I am afraid that history will be repeated, I am afraid of the same thing that happened to our settlers in the Massacre of Oberá,”<sup>2</sup> the words of a member of the church and leader of an herbalist at an IELU assembly.<sup>3</sup>

In 2001, hundreds of farmers from the province gathered in front of the Posadas Provincial Government house for seventeen days and in the following year they stayed more than one month.

Given a sense of call, The United Evangelical Lutheran Church (IELU) took the challenge to accompany the farming families in different ways according to the needs: some requested letters of support, theological reflections; space for their assemblies, public events, participation in public manifestations, round table dialogues, etc. This was the beginning of “Seeds of Hope.” It was from this moment on that IELU began to respond in different ways to each situation as may have been demanded. Yet at the root of everything was the need to learn and develop methodologies of struggle, citizen participation, and social empowerment.

It has been upon this journey of struggling alongside of the herb farmers that the IELU, their pastors, congregations, and diaconal workers learned to joint local base community socially organized (Like APAM) as well as Non-Governmental Organizations (like SEHAS Housing Service and Social Action in Córdoba) that has its expertise in areas respect of

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<sup>2</sup> The Oberá Massacre was a historic event that took place on Mar 15, 1936 in Oberá, Misiones. The events began when a group of tobacco settlers from neighbouring towns marched to Oberá claiming for better prices for their products. On arrival, they were ambushed, beaten, and shot down by the police. Several were injured, women were raped, settlers imprisoned, and four were dead including a 14-year-old girl; although some historians hold a higher number of persons affected.

<sup>3</sup> Testimony of Engineer Hugo Sand who is agronomist and leader of the Agricultural Producers Association of Misiones.

knowledge, history, power of word in each person, active participation. Nevertheless, other organization also learned from the church and the communities of faith.

What has been learned from those struggles continued to inform up to this day, God continues to pour out his/her gifts into different people and organizations and if we are open, we find others who struggle better than we do. Yet, we can build together with them from our common values that interest all humans, such as the preservation of living under one roof (in community), respect for the dignity of the body, the defense of life under all its forms, love of truth, compassion, fighting corruption and violence among others. We can find great companions on the journey where God walks with us.

Over the years, the proclamations of caring for creation and walking together have opened the doors to new themes: preserving of native seeds; food sovereignty; accompaniment in diversification of crops and productive conversion of tobacco farmers and the joint proclamation for the non-installation of mega dams in Garabi and Panambi on the Uruguay River, along with the promotion of the debate of other forms of generating energy.

Walking together with the most impoverished farmers who produce tobacco, we find systems of economic, social, political, and health exploitation that are cruel. Here one can accompany with unconditional love, applying alternative lessons from the faith, learning not to judge, and keeping in step with change. The grace and unconditional love of God poured out upon all of us moves us together to share the perverse effects in the use of Glyphosate in agriculture (which produces genetic deformities in future generations, respiratory problems in adults and those who fumigate). The IELU supports restructuring technics of production. It includes articulation it with other social actors to access to public policies but also to accompany and stay in touch with those who chose to remain within the system and still producing using products that will cause negative health effects. To continue being present as a team we ask that God embraces us, accompanies us, and gives us strength to walk in the pain and struggle for a dignified life for all.

An important task of “Seeds of Hope” is to generate spaces for exchange of knowledge, experiences, training, and concrete actions regarding water protection (springs), and conversations with networks of agro-ecology and permaculture. The economic support to develop agriculture with the diversification of crops experienced by families that once were dependent exclusively upon the tobacco industry has led to greatly witness the way families share with others their experiences; the purchase and use of machinery through cooperative efforts; renewed social economic values of reciprocity, trust, in the production of food without agro-chemicals, in the

use of their own seeds, and the exchange and valuation of native seeds for sustenance and a dignified life.

While this new socio-economic model may go largely unseen, it produces a large part of the economy in Misiones: cooperatives, associations, churches are all contributing to the social fabric through the multiple social enterprises. But they are not recognized, because big companies do not let this social fabric be seen.

The Diaconal Ministry “Seeds of Hope”, of the IELU has, in recent years, promoted the development of leadership training in many organizations, including members of the church and its faith communities. Within this strategy, the coordination with the National University of Misiones was articulated in the development of a Diploma in Social Economy of which today four young people of the church participate.

During an event, the students were asked by an experienced teacher to introduce themselves as persons from the “church.” He listen their experiences and finally asked the question:

Please tell me: “Why does a church deal with these themes?”

So to my dear readers: I would like to extend to you that same question and ask you as well: In what issues do you think your own churches should be involved in their contexts?

## **The author**

Maria Elena Parras is a deacon in the United Evangelical Lutheran Church in Argentina and Uruguay and serves in the Olaus Petri Congregation in Oberá, Misiones of the North District. Parras is also licensed in Social Work by the National University of Misiones – Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanity.

# The Christian Lutheran Church of Honduras (ICLH) contributes to comprehensive care in women's health

*Suyapa Ordoñez*

*Translated by David A. Thorp*

The Christian Lutheran Church of Honduras (ICLH), in its prophetic diaconal mission announces the good news of salvation and denounces injustice. The church has been interested in the common welfare of all the people it serves, especially with women living in vulnerable conditions and with little access to healthcare and their fundamental human rights.

The Health and Women program is implemented in partnership with the San Francisco Community Health Center where women volunteer health workers from this community and other nearby communities are involved: La Ramón Amaya Amador, La Arcieri, La San Buenaventura, La Nueva España, La Vista Hermosa, La Nueva Capital, La Fátima, La Australia and laurels, as well as local healthcare volunteers from the local Red Cross.

The topics covered revolve around physical, mental, spiritual and community health in the areas of Domestic Violence, HIV-AIDS, Cervical-Uterine Cancer, Early Pregnancy, Menopause and Postpartum period. Other topics include as well, the issue of sexual and reproductive rights around the comprehensive care of women's health, knowledge shared from a participatory methodology. Without neglecting the socialization of international agreements such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against women, better known for its English acronym as CEDAW; this instrument serves to raise the awareness and consciousness of women that they might defend their human rights

in order to advocate, as they actively participate in solidarity walks on international commemoration dates of the Day of Nonviolence, World AIDS Day and Community Fairs which promote Health Information Exhibits on Domestic Violence. Here healthcare volunteers offer blood pressure tests which serve as a mechanism for the healthcare volunteers and promoters to draw near to the men and women of the community, as their main interest is focused on the health of the body. The spiritual concerns of the women are addressed through devotional studies and meetings which refer themes of concern.

As a result of the training meetings, these women volunteers were integrated into the training process for the formation of the Network against violence against women. It has been extended to the community of Nueva Suyapa where ICLH is present. Among its achievements we can mention the interactions with the authorities of the City Hall, the Minimum Agenda that reflects the needs of the women of the communities involved. Another achievement in the alliance with other feminist organizations, such as the Center for Women's Rights (CDM) and the Center for Women's Studies (CEMH) to have annual meetings in the hall town open to women. The purpose is to be active in the creation of the new Comprehensive Law against all Violence, which is being discussed at the level of the National Congress.

This mission for comprehensive health care of women has been carried out by the ICLH with the support and accompaniment of the Mission EineWelt, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), and the Lutheran World Federation (LWF). Rubí Flores is the Coordinator of Diakonia and the program is facilitated by Suyapa Ordóñez, Coordinator of the Pastoral Care of Women along with Josefina Santos, Coordinator of the Health Program and Vera Lucia Morales, Promoter of the Health Program ICLH.

## **The author**

Suyapa Ordoñez is member of the ICLH and Coordinates the Women Ministry. She also develops pastoral work in the Congregation "Emmaus Road" and is member of the Women and Gender Justice Network of the LWF member churches in Latin America and the Caribbean.



# The Albert Schweitzer School in Puente Alto

*Sabine Kohler*

*Translated by David A. Thorp*

The Albert Schweitzer School was founded in 2003 by the initiative of a group of people linked to education and work with children in vulnerable situations, supported by the community of the Redeemer Lutheran Church, in Santiago of Chile. The need to carry out an educational project was born out of the awareness of the great differences in the quality of education in the country and the lack of support of children with learning disabilities living in vulnerable situations. The school is located in Bajos de Mena, an area declared by the regional government as one of the districts with the highest levels of crime, drug addiction, and unemployment in the country.

Albert Schweitzer seeks to be a school that provides for students, children, and adolescents with learning disabilities the opportunity to continue their studies and overcome the educational gap. In 2003, there was no support for vulnerable children with these difficulties in the Chilean school system. It had serious consequences for the lives and future opportunities of children. Learning disabilities, specific difficulties in reading and writing, and attention deficit disorders, lead to a generalized school gap due to a low reading comprehension, pedagogical delays and as a consequence, many times to a history of failing in school. All of this adds to behavioral problems due to low self-esteem, which ends in many cases with an early desertion “dropping out” causing difficulties in socio-cultural integration.

Presently, the school serves 240 children between Pre-Kindergarten and the 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Today, after 13 years of continuous service, teachers have known that poverty here in Puente Alto goes hand-in-hand with emotional spiritual deficiencies. From neuroscience we have learned that a

violent environment or with depressed adults (and many fathers or mothers are in that situation) produces hyper-alert children (and parents), who constantly defend themselves against the world they perceive as hostile. They, instead of developing relations with other children, are always attacking others. Emotionally detached children become young adolescents without a life project, teenagers who are looking for an early pregnancy to fill an emotional void, or others follow delinquency to access symbolically to a social status that could allow them to feel like someone in life.

Humbly, we want to offer our students some happiness, an alternative narrative during their time with us, a narrative that fills that void. As Jesus says, the kingdom of heaven (or heaven on earth) becomes flesh when two or more people are gathered in his name, which is love, where humans recognize each other as legitimate persons and connect with each other. Many of our children do not experience that in their families; rather they learn that the world is a hostile place. We cannot change their families, but we can show the light of an alternative world. Our purpose is to show signs of the kingdom. Because of this, we do more than to educate, we create a space of coexistence, or living together.

Humbly, the school wants to offer students some antidote against that void which is called happiness. As Jesus says, the kingdom of heaven (or heaven on earth) becomes flesh when two or more people are gathered in the name of God which is love – when humans recognize each other as legitimate others and connect with each other. Many of the children do not experience it within their families; rather, they learn that the world is a hostile place. We cannot change their families but can show an alternative. For that reason, more than to educate, we need to create, to coexist.

Then we are focused on being a community, a loving place where we can hold and be accompanied, and a place where we can cultivate human joy. Happiness comes from nutritious human relationships, a place to be welcomed and where the person is seen. We try to form a teaching community where teachers have the best working conditions and in which we all learn and grow together. No one has all the answers in front of difficult questions but we can be a learning organization.

Slowly, we have improved our learning models and outcomes. Currently, we are focused on giving our students greater tools for self-knowledge and for emotional self-regulation in order to recover the moral reserve. This involves forming new habits and recognizing in their stories in daily life the difference between good and evil, between shared happiness and enjoyment at the cost of others. In a recent study, we concluded that in 60% of our young students, these notions are severely distorted. The reason lays in the fact that they come from families involved in crime and drug trafficking that promote anti-life/community values.

For this we have a committed and enthusiastic team of women and men, willing to look for new strategies and paths, many of them have shown the way to self-improvement. So, our team can resonate with the life and difficulties of our children.

In the team work, we greet each other in the morning with a hug and share conversation during breakfast for a while. We affirm community while in dialogue and eating together before each of us go to the endless tasks that the children and parents demand. Besides, to be part of the team we must have the sense of humor, optimism, and the ability to laugh at ourselves. These are the best medicines against fatigue and hopelessness.

We are inspired by our model – the visionary Albert Schweitzer, who with his discovery of “Respect to life” was a human being: artist, healer, and scholar. He understood that to love the neighbor includes respect to all life surrounding us. Since now we now that we are part of the creation, we understand that we must care for the land that God has given us because it sustains our own lives.

A few of our students learn this at the school garden. Our best pay is our alumni, who come to see us from time to time, they tell us about their lives, they tell us how much they miss us and ask if the school will open services for middle school (the four years of education leading to the completion of school before university).

## **The author**

Sabine Kohler is a psychologist working independently. Kohler is Chairs the Council of the Albert Schweitzer School and is the legal representative. She participates in the Evangelical Lutheran Congregation the Redeemer in Santiago of the Lutheran Church in Chile (ILCH).



# The Diaconal Ministry from the Indigenous Peoples of the Lutheran Church of Costa Rica (ILCO)

*Pastor Gilberto Quesada Mora*  
*Translation by David A. Thorp*

## **1. Historical background of the diaconal ministry among indigenous communities in Costa Rica**

At the beginning of the decade of the 1990's the indigenous peoples Ngöbes, who reside on the border with Panama, suffer from an extreme legal cause. They are a people without an identity due to a lack of "identity" cards or documentation.

The indigenous movement gathered in the atrium of the Catholic Cathedral in the capital city. With a strike which lasted several days; they managed to put pressure on the Costa Rican authorities to find a solution to their problem of having no identity cards.

It was on this occasion that, lawyer Rubén Chacón, came into contact with the indigenous peoples and the struggle waged by the indigenous Ngöbes. From this moment on, a concern in the ILCO aroused to accompany this and other struggles that would come along in the future. On the path, Rubén Chacón met with Pastor Melvin Jimenez, who was already leading the Lutheran Church, took the first steps in forming a diaconate ministry with participation of indigenous populations in Costa Rica.

## **2. Defense of Indigenous Populations' Human Rights**

Soon afterwards, the alliance between Chacon and the Church served to lay the foundations for what will later become the Legal Rights Program. The goal was to accompany the struggles of indigenous populations. This was planned to be developed systematically working in the defense of their rights; especially the right to land. In the same way, during the last four years, the program accompanied individual cases of conflict resolution in indigenous territories, trained leaders, and lead to the creation and permanence of the Tribunals of Own Law or Customary Courts.

## **3. Discovering signs of the Kingdom through Interreligious dialogue**

After several years of accompaniment through the Legal Rights Program, the Church began to recognize the possibilities of interreligious dialogue with indigenous communities in places where the program established more alliances. This is how a healthy religious and theological relationship was born allowing dialogue and given communities to know more about their religious identities. For more than 25 years, the ILCO maintained a relationship of deep respect for the culture and autonomy of indigenous peoples. They always defended the right of these communities to live out their faith affirming their culture and confess their devotion to Divinities that never collided with the God of Jesus, but rather complement each other.

## **4. Learning to walk together**

The history of submission experienced by the indigenous populations in Costa Rica is one of complicity. The church, making use of its power position, took away their culture, faith, divinities, religious practices, and lead them to incorporate western practices. The imposition of the western culture was marked by exploitation and denial of their identity.

The Costa Rican Lutheran Church made efforts to maintain the respect for the indigenous peoples' autonomy at all levels of the daily coexistence. The church has promoted respect for their traditions, religious manifestations which added learning driving to review its own Ecclesiology in a more practical way of being holistic making indigenous communities real actors of their faith.

The ILCO has founded, along with other churches, the interreligious dialogue allowing indigenous and ILCO's communities to reinforce their

practices and traditions instead of denying identities on either side. This process has strengthened the churches' own identity and facilitated the processes of defending of indigenous rights, especially the defense of territories. The ILCO understood the indigenous' strong connection to their sacred places where historically they venerated their divinities TOKO or SIBÚ.

For the ILCO, the path walked with the indigenous communities allowed to mold the identity reshaping its purpose in the Costa Rican society.

The native communities helped the church to be transformed and to understand its role in advocacy and renew its ecclesiology one that is inclusive and in solidarity with the most vulnerable.

Following Jesus examples of transformation in the peripheral areas in his time, Jesus transformed peoples' life and announced God's Kingdom, and the ILCO is accompanying communities through dialogue to know more about the indigenous cultures and contributing to strengthen both identities.

## **The author**

Rev. Gilberto Quesada Mora is the Pastor President of the Costa Rican Lutheran Church and was elected in 2014. Quesada has worked closely with indigenous communities, the rights of venerated people, and in mission.









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Jesus' missionary and evangelizing movement made the participation of men and women horizontal in evangelism. The purpose to follow Jesus is to serve understanding it as a gesture of compassion and tenderness towards the pain of another person [...] This is the freedom and the commitment contained in the concept of diakonia and rarely are presented and studied. The faith proposed by Jesus transformed old ways of thinking and acting. That is why the relationship between men and women and their service were on equal levels [...] the diaconal work is powerful. It transforms lives and ways of being.

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