

THE MISSIONARY CHURCH IN 2025

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Trying to peer more than two decades into the future is a very risky undertaking. If we were to place ourselves backward for the same length of time, would we have predicted the collapse of the Soviet Union, the end of the Cold War, and the rise of globalization? The best which we can do in all of this is make some extrapolations from the present. In the previous presentation I tried to do some of that by looking at how the lens through which the leaders of our institutes in 2025 is being formed. That was less an act of future-gazing than a careful look at present forces already at work in the world. To look further ahead requires a careful scrutiny of things already underway now that are likely to continue to that distant point, and the hope that there will not be significant disruption of those patterns in the ensuing two decades. There remain, of course, many imponderables, especially events in the future which we cannot now anticipate.

Yet peer into the future we must. Despite its many hazards and difficulties, those in leadership in our religious institutes have a responsibility to look beyond the present so as to prepare for the future as best they can. It is with that same sense of responsibility that I undertake this task here, fully aware at the same time that future events can alter radically the scenario described here.

The presentation here will be in three concentric circles, starting with the outermost one and then moving toward the center. The first circle will be a sketch of the world in the year 2025. The second will look at the Church (i.e., especially the Roman Catholic

Church, but also with reference to the other Christian churches). The third will look at missionary institutes, and how they will situate themselves within that larger picture.

The World in 2025

Enrique Marroquín has given us for this seminar a detailed account of macrotrends already in evidence in our world, many of which are likely to continue in the two decades ahead.

In looking toward the world of 2025, I understand my task as one of sketching out a possible scenario of what we know of those trends. Again, all of this is done with the proviso that events which we cannot foresee could drastically change the shape of that scenario. This scenario centers around three factors which will continue to shape the coming world. The first is demographics, that is, the size and various distribution factors of the population, with the social consequences which flow from them. The second factor is economics, with consequences for things such as wealth and poverty in and among nations. The third is politics or arrangements of power in the world.

Demographics

Earth currently has some six billion inhabitants. It is estimated that the number will have risen to eight billion by the year 2025. The distribution of that increase will not be even across the planet. It will continue to be concentrated in the poorer countries of the world (the poor typically have more children than the rich, since infant mortality rates are higher and children are the only security for care in one's old age for the poor), and in countries which already have the highest level of population, namely, China and India. A look across the planet through the lens of demographics might produce a scenario like the following. I note with this scenario some of the possible social consequences.

At the turn of the twenty-first century, it was already obvious that Europe was heading toward a crisis. No country in Europe was producing enough children to replace the current population. This meant that the median age of the population was rising.

Inasmuch as the people who will be bearing children in 2025 in those countries are nearly all already born, the picture--at least from the perspective of those already living in the European countries--is not likely to change. This has a number of social consequences.

First of all, as the median age rises, fewer people will be in the work force to support the elderly, who will constitute as much as thirty-five percent of the population. Working adults may find themselves having to engage in a kind of triage of their resources: how much to allot to raising their children, and how much to supporting their aged parents and grandparents. The welfare state developed in Western Europe in the second half of the twentieth century will come under greater challenge, since the money will not be there to support it. Because of the massive amounts needed to care for the elderly, less money will be available for investment. The likely product of this will be a significant decline of the standard of living in Europe from what it was at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

Second, technological innovation, which has been the major source of the creation of new wealth in societies since the sixteenth century, is typically the product of young people in their twenties and early thirties. One only need look at who has created the communications technologies of the decades of the eighties and nineties of the twentieth century. With fewer people in this age cohort, Europe's technological edge will also go into decline. This, combined with the strain on social services, will make for a different picture of wealth in Europe, and Europe's leadership in the world. Europe may find itself slipping back toward the relatively insignificant position it held prior to 1500. At that

time, the largest city in the world was in Mexico, and the technological leader of the time was China.

Europe's only chance to stay even with where it is now will be to allow immigration on an even greater scale than it has already undertaken. This is especially the case for the countries with the lowest birthrate, such as Italy and Spain. Immigration, as was already evident at the beginning of the twenty-first century, brings with it a host of social consequences. Europe will need to move away from the ethnic and cultural homogeneity which has been the source of much of its social cohesion. The struggle over how one defines oneself as French, German, or Italian, and the debate over whether Europe is a place of relative cultural homogeneity or a continent of immigration (*Zuwanderungsgesellschaft*) will reach its peak by the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century. In the second decade of the twenty-first century, Europe (or perhaps, the European Union) will have to decide its demographic future.

The debate has more than economic and cultural consequences, however. Unless European countries deliberately seek out sub-Saharan African Christians, the immigrants coming to Europe will likely be Muslim or Hindu. Probably about the same time as a decision about Europe's demographic future is being made, the Christian churches will be engaging in efforts to revitalize Christian faith on the continent among nominal Christians and non-Muslim people. However this part of the scenario works out, one thing seems likely: the lavish financial support the churches enjoy in much of Europe today will be gone. Islam and other religious traditions will claim their share. The financial disestablishment of the churches will be called for even by Christians, who see it as key in revitalizing faith. This will have enormous financial consequences for the Church

worldwide, especially for the Vatican and the many churches in poor countries. The Catholic Church will not only be a church of the poor because most of its members are among the poor, but also because it will not have the financial resources it enjoyed at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

Africa. Africa will have become the most populous Christian continent by 2025. Its overall population, however, will not have grown at the rate it did through much of the twentieth century. The reason for that has to do with the consequences of the HIV/AIDS pandemic which had such devastating consequences through the first decades of the twenty-first century. Although effective and inexpensive medicines against HIV will be available by 2025, the demographic consequences of having lost the better part of a generation of young people will have had catastrophic consequences for a continent already beset by more than its share of troubles, due to wars and government corruption as well as continued exploitation of its natural resources by powerful outside countries. In the general social instability which war, disease, and corruption and crime create, Africa will find itself continuing to struggle to survive. Because of these unstable conditions, the best young minds will continue to try to emigrate, making the plight of African countries even less hopeful.

Religiously, there will be three major forces at work in Africa: Islam, mainline Christianity, and Pentecostal-charismatic faith. African traditional religion will survive, but practiced alongside or within one of the three major forms of faith. Pentecostal and charismatic Christianity will be the largest form of Christian faith after Roman Catholicism; indeed, a significant proportion of Roman Catholics will be charismatic. This form of faith flourishes among the poor, and those trying to prepare themselves to enter

the middle class. Much of the vitality of the Church will be found among this enthusiastic, Spirit-filled form of faith.

The Americas. The United States and Canada will have been able to continue to maintain their population because of their policies of immigration. This will allow them to retain a relative level of innovation and prosperity, although they, like Europe, will have a larger elderly population. The Latin American countries will likely have more megacities and a depleted population in the countryside. Pentecostal and charismatic faith will be widespread on the continent.

The Caribbean islands will continue patterns of population depletion as their inhabitants move to North and South America, and to Europe.

Australia, New Zealand, and the Pacific Islands. Australia and New Zealand, as lands of immigration, will exhibit patterns similar to North America. Australia will continue to be the most multicultural country in the world. An increasing proportion of its population will be of Asian and Pacific Island descent, as fewer Europeans and Latin American choose to emigrate. Debates will become stronger in both Australia and New Zealand about how large a population each country can sustain, given the arid interior of Australia and the mountainous regions of New Zealand.

Asia. The populations of China and India will constitute about forty percent of the world's entire population. There will be emigration continuing from both countries. Asia, because of its population, has the chance to be the most vital culturally and technologically by the year 2025. As Europe decreases in significance the much-vaunted "century of the Pacific" will be a reality.

The estimated percentage of Christians in the world's population did not change significantly between 1900 and 2000; it remained about thirty-four percent of the world's population. This number was maintained only because of very energetic evangelization efforts among Christians to recruit new members. That percentage of the population is likely to decline somewhat by 2025, because of the median age of Europeans, and the growth of population in Asia, which is largely non-Christian.

Economics

Given the turbulence which often is part of economics based on markets, long-range prediction of economic patterns is perhaps the most difficult to undertake. At the beginning of the twenty-first century the globalization of neo-liberal capitalism held center stage in the world of economics. It would be natural to predict that such will be still be the case some twenty-five years hence.

While this pattern of globalization seems at this time inevitable, inasmuch as there is no visible alternative to it, one cannot foreclose other developments. The turn of the twentieth century, in 1900, was an earlier period of globalization, and people predicted at the time that it would go on unrestrained into the foreseeable future. The Great War of 1914 caused it to falter, and the worldwide economic depression of the 1930's made it stumble altogether, unable to rise again until the end of the 1970's. We cannot presume that something may not happen to cause the current round of globalization to stumble again.

Although we cannot know if such events might again intervene with globalization as we now experience it, we can point to certain factors which, if not attended to, could cause such a thing to happen again. At the beginning of the twenty-first century,

antiglobalization sentiment, both in poor and in rich countries, continued to mount. If steps are not taken to give a more human face to the processes of globalization which disrupt so many people's lives, reactions to it could imperil its future. It is now evident that nation-states will not disappear in the world of borderless transnational corporations, despite dire predictions made in the 1990's. Certain aspects of the nation-state, however, will have to be strengthened if the wealth-creating potential of globalization is to survive. The care of the poor and those who suffer because of globalization will have to be addressed if popular opinion is not to sweep globalization away. Also, the struggle for the natural resources needed to sustain economic growth and populations--especially fossil fuels and water--could lead to a closing of borders and a breakdown of globalization.

What needs to be done--what Pope John Paul II has called a "globalization of solidarity"--is taking rather clear shape. As a matter of social justice, church people will have to engage their energies to help address this world problem.

But if there are no significant interruptions of the current directions of the economy, what can be expected? Recent studies suggest that net world wealth will continue to grow, but possibly not at the rate it did in the 1990's. If one divides countries and populations into three groups--the wealthy, the middle, and the poor, the scenario is as follows. The wealthy group will continue to grow more wealthy, but at a slower rate. This wealthy group would include the countries of Western Europe, North America, Japan, South Korea, and Australia and New Zealand. The most dramatic growth will be among the middle group--countries now engaged in modernization. These would include especially China, India, and Vietnam, as well as some of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, and certain Latin American countries (Brazil, Mexico, Chile; Argentina

may also rebound). Because of the often significant growth in some of these countries, the actual median gap between rich and poor will continue to narrow, as it has been since the middle 1990's. This median gap is narrowing because of the rapid economic growth in China and India, the world's two most populous nations. However, for the poorest countries, there will be no significant growth and, for some, actual decline. Thus, while the *median* gap between rich and poor will be narrowed, the *real* gap will have become even greater. This will affect much of sub-Saharan Africa, and the poorer countries of Latin America, Asia, and the Pacific Islands. Thus, the division between rich and poor will become even greater, if nothing is done to aid the poorest countries.

Politics

What are the political implications of the demographic, social, and economic directions toward 2025? Large populations of young people will be concentrated in parts of the world where they can be least sustained. World ecology is already threatened, but the desertification of parts of Africa threaten an already fragile situation. Wars will be fought less over ideologies, as they were for most of the twentieth century, than over natural resources, especially water and fossil fuels. Large concentrations of people, especially in warm climates, make the spread of contagious diseases possible. Migration, already a major issue at the beginning of the twenty-first century, will only increase. Concern for diverse populations being able to live together will shift in focus increasingly from finding ways to recognize and appreciate difference, to discovering forms of social cohesion in often very unstable circumstances. The poor will cry out for their fair share of what is needed simply to survive; the rich will discover that they cannot maintain their lifestyles without the poor. As already noted Europe will have to decide its future in the second

decade of the twenty-first century: will it age, gray, and decline? Or will it maintain its creativity by becoming a more ethnically and religiously diverse world than it is now?

Because so much of the world's young population will be concentrated in poor parts of the world, the chances of violence increasing even over the rates which were the case at the beginning of the twenty-first century is likely. The relative size of the age cohort between fifteen and twenty-five years of age (especially the number of males) contributes significantly to relative peace or unrest in a society. The upheavals in Europe and North America in 1968, and the instability in much of the Muslim world at the beginning of the twenty-first century were both partially the result in a bulge in population in those areas. Perhaps one of the most important antidotes to this potential violence will be increased efforts to educate women in the same age cohort. Men create far more of the world's violence than women; indeed, it is women who are able to restrain violence to some extent, and who also contribute disproportionately to peace-making. A more educated female population, and a greater place for women in the public forum, will contribute to the likelihood of greater peace in the world.

What form will world governance take? There will still be national sovereignty, but regional cooperative efforts, first on the economic level, and then gradually on the political level, will become more common. Even military and economic behemoths such as the United States will have to accept some multilateralism. Because of the interconnectedness of communication, there will be an increasing number of parallels to governments and regional collaborations. The number of NGOs (non-governmental organizations) stood at some 16,000 in 2000; that number will have increased significantly by 2025. Concomitant

with this growth will be syndicates of crime, victimizing especially the poor countries, but menacing the middle and rich ones as well.

As has already been noted, the Century of the Pacific could already well be underway. The economic power of China, and the growing economic power of India, will be heading toward a world which will look more like 1500 than 2000: China will be the most economically and militarily powerful country after the United States, and will be closing that gap rapidly. China has been known in its history to have been on the threshold of a significant move onto the world stage, but only to withdraw from that possibility because of internal unrest. Such was the case in the first part of the fifteenth century, when China was poised to become a great colonial power. What happens to China in the first two decades of the twenty-first century, as it grows economically rapidly, and must weather concomitant social change, will be watched closely.

A further factor affecting the balances of power in the world of 2025 will be how Islam, in the course of two decades has or has not come to terms with modernity and postmodernity. Islam was the fastest growing religious tradition at the beginning of the twenty-first century, both through conversion and through birthrate. It will be the major dialogue partner with Christianity in 2025. How countries with majority Muslim populations deal with the turbulence of the next two decades will be decisive in understanding the shape of the world in 2025.

The Church

Where will the Church, especially the Roman Catholic Church, find itself in 2025? It will be more a church of the poor than in 2000. Unless re-evangelization efforts in the second decade of the twenty-first century are successful, it will also be materially much more poor

as well. It could also likely find itself in the midst of a worldwide spiritual revival which has been brought about by a number of different factors. Pentecostal and charismatic forms of Christianity will become either more a part of Catholic Christianity (because of its prevalence among the poor and newly middle class), or prompt efforts within Catholicism to stir up a revival to match the intensity of the experience of faith comparable to Pentecostalism. Competition with Islam will be a second element which will prompt greater religious fervor in many parts of the world. A third factor would be efforts in the wealthy and newly wealthy countries to find some values beyond the material values of financial well-being and wealth, as well as a surcease from the rapid movement which globalization created.

Karl Rahner once famously said that the Church of the twenty-first century will be contemplative or it will not be at all. That is likely to be the case on two fronts. On the one hand, the rapidly changing world will cry out to find a still point in which it can orient itself and rediscover deep and fundamental truths which the superficiality of rapid change does not reveal. It will also be necessary to work at the seemingly intractable challenges of the quest for reconstruction and justice in shattered societies, of struggling against unrelenting poverty, and seeking reconciliation and social cohesion. The nearly insurmountable nature of these problems requires being rooted in God, who is the ultimate Lord of history and our destiny. And this rootedness cannot happen without a contemplative posture before God.

Spiritual revival takes on two faces: a large, mass face, and an intimate, immediate face. Movements of spirituality will continue to be of great importance, using the social media as well as mass gatherings. The secret to their long-term success, however, will

require small, face-to-face communities where the passion for God is both cultivated and experienced. It will be a great opportunity for a Church which has the spiritual breadth and depth to respond. The spiritual fervor will be evident on many fronts. It will fire a passion for justice in the hearts of many. It will make survival possible for those who see no justice forthcoming.

For such a spiritual revival to be possible, the idea of inculturation will have to be implemented far more seriously than it was at the beginning of the twenty-first century. The allowing of the seed of the Gospel to take deep root in a cultural setting, so as to flower in a way both true to the Gospel and true to the culture, will be the necessary foundation of such a spiritual revival. It will have to be more than liturgical ornament. An embrace of what appears to be a culturally alien Gospel may, for a time, give the sense of cosmopolitanism (i.e., identification with the rich countries) or form part of an act of resistance against a local culture. But such a posture cannot be long-lasting. Without this double-rootedness in the Gospel and in the local setting, spiritual revival evaporates into a frothy effervescence.

If Asia, especially China and India, takes center-stage in the twenty-first century, Christianity has to accept a deeper sense of inculturation in that part of the world if it is to have any effect. As the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences has frequently said, it will take a three-fold inculturation: an inculturation in Asia's religions, an inculturation in Asia's poverty, and an inculturation in Asia's many cultures. With a possible decline of the significance of Europe, and an assuredly expanding importance of Asia, the Church has to reach out, through inculturation to the peoples of that continent. Pope John Paul II has recognized as much, in his presentation of the Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia*.

One can hesitate at the assertive and (to many Asian ears) aggressive tone with which the Exhortation was introduced, but one cannot gainsay the importance of Asia for the twenty-first century. Without serious efforts at inculturation, Christianity will have lost its chance to be a voice for justice and peace in an unstable world.

Attending to this possibility of spiritual revival, and to the inculturation which will sustain it, will be the major internal challenges to the Church. Its external challenges will be threefold. The first of these challenges will be regarding violence and peace-making. Neo-liberal capitalism is an unstable form of economy, an instability which can foment violence. The struggle over natural resources, the quest for a measure of autonomy in the midst of the loss of local control over one's life, the fear and experience of environmental ruin which threatens survival, the frustration and anger which grows from being excluded from a life of well-being--all of this contributes to an atmosphere where people can turn to violence. Religion can be used to legitimate violence, especially when the "other" is of a different religious tradition or perceived to be of no religious faith. Religion can be used to cover baser motives, such as the quest for power or sheer greed. Moreover, promoters of violence can turn to themes in each of the religious traditions where God is seen to legitimate violence or even be violent as a god. To wrap potential violence in a mantle of transcendence can prompt otherwise peaceable people to march forth in the name of God to engage in action destructive of others and themselves. Religious leaders may decry this misuse of their traditions, but without taking effective steps to undercut this use of their traditions, and to be seen to be actively about the work of peacemaking, they will have little credibility. The powerful message of peace and reconciliation which may be the most important form the Good News of Jesus Christ takes in the first decades of the twenty-

first century must be a message that takes on concrete form in the lives and deeds of the members of the Church.

A second, related challenge to the Church as it faces the world is how to mediate the gap between the wealthy and economic middle groups, on the one hand, and the poor, on the other. As already noted, the Church will be a church of the poor, unless Europe experiences some revival and patterns of religious belonging change in India and China (which I hold to be unlikely). To put it succinctly, the Church will need to strive to be the conscience of the rich and the voice of the poor. The call to a solidarity of all peoples, in a globalization of solidarity which does not exclude people and leave the poor behind, is incumbent upon a Church which has justice at the heart of its social teaching. What other transnational organization can speak with a single moral voice on this matter like the Church? At the same time, as a Church of the poor, it must make the voice of the poor heard when the press and other social media ignore it, and when the rich try not to hear it. It must expose the machinations and the systems which keep the poor in their state of bare survival, and impede their chances for betterment. It must cry not just for alms and charity, but for change of those structures which disadvantage the poor.

The third challenge for the Church faces as it faces the world is to engage the other great religious traditions for the sake of human well-being. In the first instance, this engagement must be such that religions cannot be invoked as a means for legitimating violence of, say, Christian against Muslim, or Muslim against Jew, or Hindu against Christian, or Buddhist against Hindu. Only strong interfaith councils in lands where conflict is brewing can prevent such use of religion for the sake of violence. But there are other issues as well. These are especially issues which know no national boundaries. One

set of issues has to do with the dignity of human persons: their human rights, both political rights and rights to a decent life. Thus, matters of immigration, treatment of minorities, living together in multicultural societies, and negotiating modernity and postmodernity in those societies will be of prime importance. The other set of issues has to do with matters which no single national can resolve. Certainly the largest of these is the preservation of a sustainable environment, something which will loom as a challenge even larger in two decades than it does now. But other issues, such as the plight of refugees, the treatment of temporary foreign workers, trafficking in women and children, the struggle against international crime will figure into this.

What kind of leadership will the Church need to face the challenges of spiritual revival and inculturation, on the one hand, and the three challenges of violence, poverty, and interreligious cooperation, on the other? A different balance between the central and the local will have to be struck than the one we see at the beginning of the twenty-first century. The center will have to be concerned with the capacity to speak with a moral voice which can be heard, which can give guidance in a complex and confusing world. But that voice will ring hollow if it does not represent vital communities of faith which are committed both to their immediate surroundings and the universal good of humankind. Without inculturation, that protection and nurture of the local will wither because the Gospel has taken such shallow roots. It will seem more a potted plant than one which is fed and committed to local soil. Genuine inculturation requires a decentralized view. The world is too complex to be understood by a single individual or agency. The current centralization we experience at the beginning of the twenty-first century cannot respond to immediate problems adequately. As an example at this writing, the clergy sexual abuse

scandal in my own country, the United States, will take a local solution. This does not negate the importance of universal law in the Church. It requires the re-establishment of trust in the Church's local leadership, and that in turn requires a restoration of trust which makes sense in the U.S. context--a matter of inculturation of the solution to the crisis.

Can the Church of 2025 strike this balance between the center and the local? If it is to be as vital as the Gospel it preaches, it will have to try.

Religious Institutes in the Church of 2025

What will be the role of the religious institutes in the missionary Church of 2025? The work of the Church as it faces the world around it has just been delineated. Facing violence and seeking reconciliation, being the conscience of the rich and the voice of the poor, seeking greater interreligious cooperation for the sake of the survival of the planet and of humankind--these are some of the challenges which face mission in 2025.

As we already know, the majority of the members of religious institutes will be from the Church of the poor. It is that perspective--from what it means to be a poor Church--which they will bring to their work. They may share more in the Pentecostal and charismatic spirituality of the poor and newly middle class than their predecessors in their institutes. They will be imbued with a strong sense of spirituality and spiritual integrity.

Many of them will inhabit that unique place in postmodern thinking and living which has an ambivalence toward modernity because at least some of them will have known the dislocation of premodernity (as exhibited among those who in the Southern hemisphere have moved from rural areas into the megacities) as it encounters both modernity and postmodernity. Modernity itself will not be the same kind of measuring rod for assessing all things that it was for the previous generation who came of age with the Second Vatican

Council and the efforts at reform in the decade following. They will be able to move more readily between different worlds--not so much because they feel comfortable doing so, but because they have had to within their own lifetimes. This has the potential of making them more flexible in meeting people in those different worlds. It will certainly prepare them more aptly for the interreligious cooperation which will be so important to their work. Their capacity to live in multiple worlds may suit them better too to the work of reconciliation, since that involves being able to see more than one side in a dispute, and to reframe events so as to read them from different perspectives.

Missionary institutes, as founded in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, were frequently very centralized in their government. As the Church tries to keep a central moral voice and promote inculturation at the same time, missionary institutes will have to seek a capacity to be both unified and rooted in local contexts. Many have already made efforts in this direction. Living out this kind of dialectic will be one of the challenges of 2025. The often unstable situations will create a tendency to identify unity with stability at the expense of diversity. Room will have to be found for both dimension if the religious institute, and *a fortiori* the Church, is to be responsive both to the Gospel and the world in which it is to be preached.

Will the large number of members of religious institutes coming from India make a difference in how Christianity is presented in Asia? One would hope that such would be the case. The struggles between the Vatican and the theologians of India at the beginning of the twenty-first century in some way prefigures the kinds of changes which will have to happen in Vatican thinking before the Gospel can be genuinely heard in Asia. Because of the importance which Asia will have in the world, the Church cannot afford not to be a

sacramentum mundi, a sacrament to the world, in that great continent. It will take vision and courage on the part of religious institutes to do this: with great human resources in the form of men and women religious from Africa, the Philippines, Indonesia, and India especially, but often with very little by way of financial resources. It will be a form of mission less dependent upon worldly power which will be the hallmark of the missionary Church in 2025.