

The Cry of the Indigenous in Latin America

The history and the reality of the indigenous people who inhabit the Guatemalan State is a history of suffering, of pain, and of death. It is a history marked by agonizing signs of life. They are signs which can be revitalized or extinguished. The reflections which Fr. Robert Schreier presented in his book In Water and in Blood gives us a blueprint and necessary orientations for responding with a spirituality of solidarity in a world torn apart by conflict, divisions, and violence. Little by little that spirituality of solidarity and the challenges it presents are giving form to and taking hold in the diverse situations which conform our world, especially in Latin America.

To speak of the spirituality of the Blood as a spirituality of solidarity in countries where "the ethnic minorities" live (John Paul II, January 1989) is becoming relevant. Guatemala and other countries which have indigenous groups constitute "the ethnic majorities" which live in situations of oppression and desert. In Exodus 3, 2-9 God enters into solidarity with his people and comes to meet them because "he has seen their tribulation" in Egypt, and has "heard their cries due to the hardness of their foremen", "and knowing what they are suffering", has come down to liberate them from the hands of the Egyptians; "and to help them go from that land to a good and spacious land, a land of milk and honey". "Summing up, the cry of the sons and daughters of Israel reached" the ears of God; and he "saw their affliction and how they were oppressed".

This see, hear, come down and liberate Israel from the hands of the Egyptians on God's part are concrete facts, acts of solidarity, a way of identifying himself totally with the oppressed, the marginalized, and the poor who are oppressed by a small minority. They are slaves, exploited by a small structure. God takes on their pain and their suffering. God comes into solidarity with them, not in a romantic but in a practical way: Come and see, free my people from Egypt (Exodus 3,10). God becomes incarnate in the people, he becomes the God of the people and Israel, the People of God. He is inculturated because he becomes perceptible, enters into dialogue and is near, and that is why the Covenant reads: "I am your God and you will be my people". If Yahveh is known by his people, it means that God understands them in their cultural context, in their language, in their daily lives, in their suffering, and in their food, because he uses the same cultural codes in order to give of himself and to communicate with the suffering people of Israel in Egypt.

The Inculturation-Incarnation is a central mystery of our faith. God, in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, takes on human nature: "The Word became Flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14). Jesus of Nazareth, the historical man, with a human genealogy, Son of Mary, is the "One sent by the Father" (John 10:36). He is the Son of Yahveh. From this flows that the intrinsic vocation of the Church is that of being missionary, a vocation which stems from the trinitarian mystery. In Jesus Christ the pedagogy of Inculturation, of Incarnation and of Liberation were concretized. He, without any blame (Heb. 4:15), became a person like us, with human consciousness, a man with subjectivity, spontaneity and historical freedom. The human consistency does not diminish the divine filiation, but rather they grow proportionally and along side one another.

In order to respond with an authentic spirituality of the Blood of solidarity and of hope, to the indigenous peoples and nations who have been destroyed and disfigured, we must come to a spirituality of solidarity configured and determined as INCULTURATION, that is, one which is a clear and firm answer to a culture. Even though the term Inculturation is anthropological, it has been theologized and has become a Christian answer of the Church. It is even more so for those men and women who are inspired and are nourished by the Spirituality of the Blood.

Inculturation is presented to us as a means for reaching the indigenous peoples in which the signs of death are more imminent. Inculturation will be the necessary means so that the people, destroyed and faceless, become once again integrated and configured as a people. With inculturation all the possible means and instruments at our disposition are put to use. Inculturation is not reduced to the

translation of manuals and latin texts into a determined culture. Nor is it a simple adaptation of the truths. Rather, it demands work and multiple and complex studies of the entire culture, with all its religious expressions, as well as anthropological and linguistic studies. Inculturation refers to a new expression and reformulation of the faith in the molds of another culture. It is a task and a praxis, rather than a body of doctrines. It penetrates all the aspects of the christian message and of the human realities. It is a pluralistic and polifacetic process which is realized indistinctly in the womb of the cultures. Inculturation is a process by which the gospel message is inserted in a culture, penetrating and transforming it from within. It is a process by which the christian message is inserted progressively in a culture starting from the underpinnings of that very culture. Inculturation is the sewing of the seed of the Gospel in a culture and at the same time the discovering and the germination of the Seeds of the Gospel already present in a given culture, that is to say, the latin-christian elements, so that in this way the faith can germinate, develop itself and express itself according to its own species, and to its own cultural identity; that is, according to its cosmovision.

Our C.P.P.S. presence among the indigenous peoples of Guatemala wishes to be an answer to our spirituality of the Blood, a spirituality which is in solidarity with and which wishes to be inculturated, to become incarnated and inserted.

(Darío Caal, C.P.P.S. "The Spirituality of the Blood: A Challenge for Inculturation", Fifth Workshop of Precious Blood Spirituality, pp. 27-28, Santiago, Chile, January 1990)