

FIRST EVANGELIZATION, ABORTION AND FORMATION OF CONSCIENCES TO THE VALUE OF LIFE SINCE ITS BEGINNING?

AN OPEN LETTER to the XVIII GENERAL CHAPTER

By Fr. Francesco Chemello mcej
Leer - Rep.South Sudan 01/12/2014
frchemello13@gmail.com

Last year 2013, while reflecting on the “*Ratio Missionis*” and the many challenges involved, many important issues passed through my eyes, and many challenges too regarding old and present evils, like various types of slaveries and abuses to human life, which were already there at the time of our Founder St. Daniel Comboni and, since his time, not only they multiplied in number but also in new forms. Then, of course, the type of mission proper to us MCCJ in a globalized and de-Christianised world with all its relativism. Finally the issue of “Ad Gentes or Inter Gentes”, In Africa, in Asia, in Europe and America.

While reading and reflecting, I realized that there was an issue which was never tackled as a challenge and it was precise this one:

“IN OUR FIRST EVANGELIZATION how do we tackle the issue of Formation of Consciences to the Value of Life since its beginning, in front of a widespread ‘ABORTIONIST SOCIETY’ ?”

Surely this is not a “Comboni issue”, I told myself! Our Founder St. Daniel Comboni never tackled this issue, he had many more relevant issues to tackle like that of how to survive inside Africa, the proclamation of the Gospel, slavery, paganism, oppression of the Africans, “Save Africa with Africans” and a strong spirituality capable to give meaning and support to all these undertakings.

This was completely true, but it was also true that, at his own time, “**Life since its beginning was not threaten**”, everybody, African people and non, believers and non-believers, atheists and even the slave traders, all of them had a deep sense and respect for human life at its birth and nobody would question it or engage in abortionist practices. But now, in our present times, this issue is a burning issue already put in evidence 20 years ago by “*Evangelium Vitae*”¹ 1995, No. 3, 4, 13, 17 and taken up again with strength by our present Pope FRANCIS in *Evangelii Gaudium* and in his homilies.

I then went through the documents of our last chapter and relevant letters of the Superior General and his Council and also the Joint Letters with the Comboni Sisters (who still have a good number of sisters in the field of health care and work side by side with secular NGOs). **I could not find anything on this issue**, except that, in the last chapter, among “Other Documents”² of Justice and Peace, is reported that Dr. Walley of MCI - Matercare International³ was invited to share and give an input on this issue, but all ended there. Was it an “**irrelevant passing issue for us**”, since the Chapter documents never took it up?

¹ Pope John Paul II, in his letter (Encyclical-25 March 1995) “**GL. The Gospel of Life**” (EV.= *Evangelium Vitae*)

http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25031995_evangelium-vitae_en.html

² In fact it is among the “*Other Documents*” of JPIC that the only reference to the Encyclical Letter of Pope John Paul II is found and that is in the presentation of Dr R. L. Walley of Matercare, when he says: “*MCI aims to be a prophetic witness by reflecting on the Gospel values of Life and Love as presented to us in the late Holy Father’s Encyclical, Evangelium Vitae, and most recently in the present Holy Father’s first Encyclical Deus Caritas Est.*”

³ <http://www.comboni.org/contenuti/101941-matercare-international-mci> Dr R. L. Walley <http://matercare.org/>

QUESTION:

My conclusion was, if that **was not a “Comboni Issue”** at the time of Comboni, **it is quite a relevant issue in our time**, why is it not felt as such? Why are we not touched at all when other societies make this issue the very reason of their existence? Is that we are not specialized in this field? Yes! This is it! Surely our specialization is in other fields, but not in this one!

But if this is the case, what type of “First Evangelization” are we carrying out? If it is a “good message” who has the power of changing the lives of the people, then it must touch their consciences, if it does not, then the message is irrelevant, useless. Many can say: “Africa and many of the southern countries in the world appreciate life” and, therefore, we do not need to take care of this issue!”

That Africa and the other places mentioned appreciate life is true, thanks to God, but there is a **full range of abortionist companies who are throwing billions into this issue in order to change the conscience of people according to their profitable way** in Africa and the other parts of the world, and make big business out of destruction of life in a relativistic way. They are so well prepared and professional in this field to convince people that this is **“a need and a right to be upheld”** in society and legislations should be introduced in every country. This is precisely the reason why the issue is urgent and, unfortunately, **“We are not specialized in this field.”**

1. It is true: “We Comboni Missionaries” are not prepared to face this critical issue critically. Science and medicine have developed fast in this field...
2. In our houses of formation we may form students to all other issues, but if we ask some question on how to tackle this one, I am sure, the answer would be quite vague.
3. Our Comboni Experts and Theologians: they deal with a wide range of issues from the spirituality of Comboni to the New Trends of Missiology, Psychology and Human rights issues etc., but, this issue is like a “taboo” not very popular. In fact, I have no recollection of such a topic, or related ones, dealt in a proper way recently by a Comboni Missionary.
4. Abortion: if relativism has affected the world (and also enslaved it) it has clearly affected also our Christian world. Can we say that it has not affected us as Comboni Missionaries? If the question of abortion were put directly to us personally, how many “surprises” would we find? How many Yes, No, May be, Not me, but I leave to other people free choice.... (*Would we leave “free choice” for death penalty or fight for the abolition?*)
5. If this is not an issue in our formation houses, how do we pretend the new confreres, thrown into (pastoral) missionary work, will be able to enlighten the consciences of other people, especially youth, and be able to face the **“high professional skill”** of all the thousands of NGOs in the field of health carrying on **“normally”** with “artificial contraception methods, abortive programmes and temporary or permanent sterilization?”
6. Pharmaceutic Giants, Population planners, Rich Foundations (eg. Rockefeller. Bill Gate, etc.) Government grants, Planned Parenthood Association, Mary Stoop clinics and related institutions, have launched long ago a full scale scientific war on this issue. Can we Comboni Missionaries ignore that all this affects the **“GOOD NEWS IN THE LIFE OF A PERSON”**? That means, it is affecting **“OUR FIRST EVANGELISATION!”** itself.

It is out of common sense and of direct experience to say that a bad seed will give bad fruits, and a good one good fruits, and that, when a tree is crooked/twisted when it is small, it is quite difficult to make it “straight” later on. So the issue is sensitive to Evangelisation/Good News.

“IN OUR FIRST EVANGELIZATION HOW DO WE TACKLE THE ISSUE OF FORMATION OF CONSCIENCES TO THE VALUE OF LIFE SINCE ITS BEGINNING, in front of a widespread “ABORTIONIST SOCIETY ?”

This is the reasons why this issue, in my opinion, cannot be disregarded in our present time, if we really want to be **“Well Prepared Missionaries for First Evangelization”**, because “First Evangelisation” has to deal with **“the seed we plant”** and with what makes the life of a person

“Meaningful and joyful” since its start. There cannot be “Good News” if the seed is not good and if we do not open (enlighten) the consciences of the people we evangelise on the **“evil tricks”** of our present society at this stage of life, especially the Young People.

When a mentality of abuse, **“as a normal way of life”**, is there since the beginning of life, it will bear the fruits in all other type of abuses in the grown up life, just because the conscience is led to think that **“there is no problem”** and all other factors, profit, interest, pressure, timidity, incapacity of standing up for human values, will come out later on in the life of people and society as a consequence. **“If we evangelizers sleep”**, the opposite side **“does not sleep at all !”**

We Comboni Missionaries have many prophetic undertakings which, as it was with our founder, St. Daniel Comboni, keep us on the “front line”, but we cannot be in the front line without taking care and noticing that, in this field, the society and the world have completely changed and in this issue, may be, **we find ourselves still living in the “former world”**, without this issue. We may be taken up very much and with passion for the **“Abolition of Death Penalty”**, a true human right issue, though the cases may be a few thousand (many more cases, instead, are the extrajudicial execution done regularly), but we may just bypass the premeditated **“Death Penalty and Execution”**, by law, of more than **one billion (1.000.000.000) aborted children⁴** in less than 70 years of world history, with all its previous preparation and follow ups (**Planned Artificial Contraception methods, Abortion and Sterilization**).

FINAL DREAM

I would be very happy indeed to see this point really tackled in the coming Chapter, adding to “Evangelium Vitae” also “Evangelii Gaudium”⁵ of Pope Francis and his homilies on the topic, since the main theme of the Chapter bear his taste **“COMBONI MISSIONARIES DISCIPLES: CALLED TO LIVE THE JOY OF THE GOSPEL IN TODAY’S WORLD.”** A joy also and especially for those without voice, who are the most poor and abandoned. **Finally, I would like to state again the main topic and leave to each one of us, and to the XVIII Chapter, (through the Pre-Capitular Commission) five questions for reflection.**

“IN OUR FIRST EVANGELIZATION HOW DO WE TACKLE THE ISSUE OF FORMATION OF CONSCIENCES TO THE VALUE OF LIFE SINCE ITS BEGINNING, in front of a widespread “ABORTIONIST SOCIETY ?”

1. How do we help our students in formation to be sensitive to this issue?
2. How do we make it an “open forum” for discussion, since the topic seems to be a *“Taboo”* and it has never been discussed properly at level of Comboni Missionaries?
3. Can we include also this issue among the **“Comboni Prophetic Issues?”**
4. Where is the “beginning” of our Spirituality? (Is it not the Good Shepherd with the Heart Pierced for the Life of Humanity?)... A life starting where and when...?
5. Can we just dismiss this point from our “First Evangelisation?” Why?

Fr. Francesco Chemello mccj.

⁴ Comboni Missionaries’ First Evangelisation, Abortion, The Gospel of Life. Formation of People’s Conscience - (2013) <http://segretariato-evangelizzazione-mccj.over-blog.com/archive/2013-08/>
http://data.over-blog-kiwi.com/0/51/25/32/201308/ob_1eb3b2_first-evangelisation-abortion-gospel-of-life.pdf
(Part I – a reflection; Part II – references)

- http://data.over-blog-kiwi.com/0/51/25/32/201309/ob_68bef9_mccj-first-evangelisation-abortion-the-gospel-of-.pdf (Part III - World Abortion Statistics)

- Life and Abortion: - <http://francischemello.simplesite.com/189720233>

⁵ APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION *EVANGELII GAUDIUM* nn. 51, 52, 64, 110, 209, 213, 214,259.
http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html