

THE PASTORAL LAND COMMISSION

Participation of Fr John Mary Cauchi
Paraíba – Brazil

CORREIO DA PARAÍBA

Paraíba - Quinta-Feira, 28 de Abril de 1994

Últimas

CORREIO 5

Padre sofre atentado em São Miguel de Taipu

□ Marcos Lima



O padre correu para não morrer

As terras da fazenda Engenho Novo, no município de São Miguel de Taipu, interior do Estado, voltaram ontem a ser palco de emboscadas e tiroteio, conforme denunciaram na redação do CORREIO, uma comissão de posseiros. As mais novas vítimas foram o padre João Maria Cauchi, da Paróquia de São Miguel e Pedras de Fogo (PB); Severino Ramos de Oliveira (secretário do Sindicato dos Trabalhadores Rurais de Pilar), e Roseane do Nascimento.

Os três se dirigiram a uma reunião da Comissão Pastoral da Terra (CPT), em João Pessoa, quando foram seguidos por uma caminhonete, cabine dupla (Chevrolet), de cor azul clara, dirigida por Artur Meira Lins, que se diz proprietário da fazenda, e mais seis capangas.

Segundo os denunciantes, ao passarem numa estrada de barro, Artur e os capangas começaram a segui-los, advertindo-os, para que os mesmos parassem. "Não tinha o que dizer para eles. Ao vê-los, imediatamente corri, dirigindo uma

Toyota. Tivemos que fugir, pois não sabíamos a intenção deles", afirmou o padre João Maria.

Artur Meira, de acordo com o padre e demais posseiros, que estiveram na redação, disseram que ele seguiu todos até a pista, ocasião em que desistiu ao perceber que os ocupantes da Toyota não iriam parar. Outro incidente ocorrido no local, de acordo com os posseiros, também foi registrado na manhã de ontem. As vítimas foram posseiros que não estiveram em João Pessoa para participar da reunião. "Quando estávamos a poucos metros da Fazenda Engenho Velho, ouvimos vários disparos de arma de fogo efetuados por capangas de Artur Meira", disse Pedro Manoel da Silva, um dos posseiros.

A Fazenda Engenho Novo, na cidade de São Miguel de Taipu, possui 3.160 hectares de terras, conforme o Incra. São 404 famílias de posseiros que estão no local há longas datas. O próprio Incra, através do superintendente do órgão, Ronaldo de Queiroz Fernandes, afirma em ofício remetido ao juiz da Comarca, que os posseiros nunca foram invasores e sim pessoas que moram

no imóvel há muito tempo.

Missa - O arcebispo da Paraíba, Dom José Maria Pires; o vigário geral, padre Carlos Avanze; e o pró-vigário geral, padre Antônio Maria, além de integrantes da Comissão Pastoral da Terra, estiveram reunidos ontem pela manhã, no Palácio do Bispo, em João Pessoa, ocasião em que decidiram pela celebração de uma missa campal, na Fazenda Engenho Novo, para amanhã (dia 29), a partir das 15h00, em solidariedade pelos posseiros em sua luta pela defesa da terra, como também o direito pela cidadania.

"O fato já foi denunciado à CPT nacional no que diz respeito a situação de violência que está se abatendo sob os posseiros de Engenho Novo. Solicitamos que o fato seja levado ao conhecimento internacional", afirmou frei Anastácio Ribeiro, coordenador da CPT, regional Nordeste. A Fazenda Engenho Novo, em São Miguel de Taipu, foi palco recentemente de outros atentados, quando cinco posseiros foram feridos a bala por capangas do homem que se diz proprietário do imóvel. Outras 14 pessoas foram presas. O fato aconteceu no último dia 21.

FR JOHN CARUANA



CHRIST THE LIBERATOR, ST THERESE OF THE CHILD JESUS AND THE POOR

On the right hand side are the fallen chains around the Cross, representing the oppression of the people. To the left is Our Lady of the Magnificat, pregnant, declaring her option for the poor. She is pointing to Christ, the Liberator, who saved humanity from the individual and social sin. The workers are marching confidently towards their Liberator. On the right, is the Cathedral, with rays of light showing the support given to the land reform. At the top, is St Therese patron of the Missions, approving this option of the Church in Latin America! – Sculpture the Late Eder Portalha

The Pastoral Land Commission

Participation of Fr John Mary Cauchi

Paraiba – Brazil

Fr John Caruana

The Pastoral Land Commission

Dedication

To all the participants of the Land Pastoral Commission (CPT) who in the State of Paraíba and all over Brazil, dedicated all their energies in favour of the landless, to Bishops Mgr José Maria Pires, Mgr Helder Camara, and Mgr Tomás Balduino who were protagonists in the creation of this pastoral activity, and to Frei Anastácio, member of the Legislative Assembly.

Appreciation

I wish to thank the Pastoral Land Commission (CPT) of Paraíba, as well as Severino Ramos de Oliveira (Raimundo) for his indispensable help in providing me with excellent material; my sincere gratitude also goes to Bishop Mario Grech for his introduction and his support with the launch of this book. Professor Flávio Donizete Batista who helped me with editing the Portuguese version; and Ms Lisa Pace who helped me with editing the English version. I would also like to thank Fr Alex Cauchi, nephew of Fr John Mary for his help.

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Preface

Practically since my first days in Brazil, on the advice of my colleagues, I became involved in the work of the social movements, both in the city and in the interior. Those in the city worked in favour of the workers, victims of precarious jobs and unemployment; those in the interior tried to bring about land reform. As these movements were cropping up when the military regime was approaching its end, within the Church, as a result of the *Latin American Church's Evangelical Option For The Poor*, the *Pastoral Operaria* (PO), and the *Pastoral Land Commission* (CPT) were created. The Pastoral Operaria supported the small and various trade unions, while the CPT supported the social movements struggling for land reform. Both pastoral activities were supported by my Archbishop Mgr Jaime Luis Coelho.

As the years and the decades passed by, I admired more and more the work of the Pastoral Land Commission (CPT) in Brazil. Its branches could be found in the South, in São Paulo and Paraná, where I lived. Gradually, it spread to other parts of this continental country, including the North East in Alagoas, Pernambuco and Paraíba, where Fr John Mary Cauchi works.

Fr Cauchi's involvement was backed by his bishop, Mgr José Maria Pires. As a Maltese priest, I admired Fr John Mary's work because it was more aggressive and dangerous as this small contribution will demonstrate. The book has two parts: in the first part I tried to give a better idea on what the pastoral and social work of the Church consists of. The second part delves into the work of Fr John Mary Cauchi.

Thankyou!

Fr John Caruana

About the Author



Fr John Caruana, born in Mosta, Malta on June 3rd, 1941, was ordained priest in Malta on the 11th March, 1967. He always felt the missionary vocation, but had to wait for seventeen whole years to fulfil his missionary calling.

During those seventeen years, Fr John served as vocation director for a couple of years, then moved to St Julian's Parish where he served for thirteen years as ViceParish Priest.

During this period he involved himself in the Council of the Vice-Parish Priests where he formed part of the *Kunsill Rappreżentattiv Djoceasn (KRD)*. He also served as president of the '*Christus Rex Society*' and on the editorial board of the monthly publication '*Pastor*'. He was also cofounder of the weekly page, known as '*Catholic Outlook*' in the Sunday Times of Malta.

He left for Brazil on the 7th September, 1984 and was soon appointed parish priest of the Nossa Senhora das Graças Parish in Sarandi, which at that time, had a population of about 40,000 people. Fr John dedicated himself to the pastoral work among the church base communities which were being planted at that time, and he actively backed the social movements, especially those working in favour of land reform.

Before returning to Malta for two years, he worked in Guajarámirim in Rondonia, within the Amazon region, in a parish twinned with his Diocese in Maringa. After spending two and a half years in Malta, he returned to his original Parish, Nossa Senhora das Graças in Sarandi, PR, Brazil as viceparish priest.

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Declaration:

Fr John Caruana assumes the responsibility for any mistakes that may be detected in orthography or language

About the Cover

The front cover illustrates a photo of Fr John Mary Cauchi as appeared in the front page of the Brazilian newspaper “O Correio” when he suffered the first attempt on his life.



MARIO GRECH

BISHOP OF GOZO

MESSAGE BY H.L. MSGR MARIO GRECH BISHOP OF GOZO

The prophet is the man who proclaims the word, denounces, consoles and inspires hope. This definition of a prophet describes Fr. João Marie Cauchi, a priest from my Diocese who has worked in Brazil from the day of his ordination on the 24th December 1967. It was therefore most fitting that Fr John Caruana writes his biography not so much as a beautiful story for us to recount but as an example on which we can go on building this story.

When I started to write this forward to the book, I took up several letters that Fr João wrote to my predecessor Bishop Nicholas Joseph Cauchi over a period of fifty years. I have to state that when I was reading these letters I could not keep back the tears of joy as his writings give away who this Gozitan priest truly is.

On the commemorative Holy Picture of his priestly ordination which took place in Joao Passoa, Fr João writes: “*Para server ao povo de Deus João Marie Cauchi foi unido sacerdote.*” These words are proof that even from the very first moment of his ministry Fr João had already set down his pastoral programme! He does not believe in an auto-referential church, on the contrary he believes that Christ set up the Church as service to humanity. The Church is open to the world and her mission is to give hope to the poor. Like Helder Camara, Fr. João is convinced that “politics is a chapter of the gospel”.

In a letter he wrote in April 1977, Fr João says: “When I visit chapels I do not only baptise, preach, say mass, and train catechists to teach their brothers the fundamentals of the faith; I also try to show them that the image of God in man demands that we do something beautiful so that man can have a better life even a better material life”. His friends are the poor. As I can attest from what I have seen when I visited him in 2011 in his parish of Sao Miguel de Taipu, Fr. João lives a poor life among the poor. He not only interested himself in social problems but he held to heart agrarian reforms being active in the movement *Sem terra*. I remember him taking me to a family of farmers where with a tone of great satisfaction he related how he was able to obtain the land where they could build their home and work the land.

The fight against poverty and injustice was not an easy one. First of all as Fr João writes, “the poor man makes use of many fatalistic proverbs that keep him chained to his present condition. He would say that ‘the poor man will only go a step forward when he hits a stone’, or that ‘the poor is born poor and will die poor’. The rich people are aware of the situation of the poor and they do their best to sow more fear amongst them”. Even worse, those who defended the poor were persecuted. In the words of Fr João, “the laity are generally

persecuted and at times even a priest is killed. Persecution is a positive sign for the Church of Christ as it means that the Church is doing something for the exploited”.

Fr João was persecuted and accused that he encouraged the invasion of the land belonging to a farm in Sao Miguel de Taipa. He was condemned to one year house arrest. Fr Antonio Cauto of the *Coodenacao Nacional* wrote that Fr João suffered all this because “his work in favour of the poor farmers drew the wrath and reaction of the powerful who are backed by the authorities, even judicial authorities” (30th May 2000). On this occasion Bishop Don Tomas Balduino, President of the *Comissao Pastoral de Terra*, wrote a beautiful letter to Fr João telling him that

the ways of those who fight for justice are full of incomprehension, repression and persecution. This was the same way of the prophets, the way of Jesus and the way of those who were his disciples in these two thousand years. In the Gospel, Jesus consoles and strengthens us when he tells us: “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake for theirs is the kingdom of heaven”. It is not the thoughts of the powerful which should worry us but the thoughts of the poor which we serve. The Pastoral Commission of the land is proud to have amongst its member a person like you who faces with courage the powerful of this earth. (14th April 2000).

I sincerely treasure this letter as being one of the best certificates ever done in favour of one of the clergy of our Diocese!

In the words of Leonardo Boff the prophet is the one who has his ears open to the Word of God, both the one resounding in his conscience and that coming from the mouth of the poor. This can be said also of Fr João who as much as he listens to the poor so he is convinced of the value of prayer. “Shortcomings, sloth, abuse, routine, and prayer hastily or incorrectly said all kill the voice of God within us.” (13th December 1973)

These details from the life of this priest are enough to indicate the precious resource this missionary is for the Church and for society. While I salute Fr. João and wish him *ad multos annos*, I pray to God to breathe on this hidden ember in order to light up the flame of love in many generous hearts who are ready to team up with Fr João in this battle against poverty.


✠ Mario Grech
Bishop of Gozo

The Pastoral Land Commission

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FIRST PART

Land Reform in Paraíba, Brazil

The all important Second Vatican Council document ***Gaudium et Spes*** (*Joy and Hope*) in its chapter *On Certain Principles Governing SocioEconomic Life as a Whole*, promulgated in 1965, in paragraph 71, discussing *Access to Property and the Latifundio* states:

“By its very nature private property has a social quality which is based on the law of the common destination of earthly goods. If this social quality is overlooked, property often becomes an occasion of passionate desires for wealth and serious disturbances, so that a pretext is given to the attackers for calling the right itself into question.

In many underdeveloped regions there are large or even extensive rural estates which are only slightly cultivated or lie completely idle for the sake of profit, while the majority of the people either are without land or have only very small fields, and, on the other hand, it is evidently urgent to increase the productivity of the fields. Not infrequently those who are hired to work for the landowners or who till a portion of the land as tenants receive a wage or income unworthy of a human being, lack decent housing and are exploited by middlemen. Deprived of all security, they live under such personal servitude that almost every opportunity of acting on their own initiative and responsibility is denied to them and all advancement in human culture and all sharing in social and political life is forbidden to them. According to the different cases, therefore, reforms are necessary: that income may grow, working conditions should be improved, security in employment increased, and an incentive to working on one’s own initiative given. Indeed, insufficiently cultivated estates should be distributed to those who can make these lands fruitful; in this case, the necessary things and means, especially educational aids and the right facilities for cooperative organization, must be supplied. Whenever, nevertheless, the common good requires expropriation, compensation must be reckoned in equity after all the circumstances have been weighed.”

1

Methods and strategies in Brazil and in the World

Origin Wikipedia

In the world

There are theoretical differences on the method to be followed for the redistribution of land. In the history of Brazil there were two proposals: one to bring about the Agrarian Reform, distributing the land institutionally, and another proposal was that the only way to bring about the land reform is by an Agrarian Revolution, consisting of a reform made by force. There are several examples of countries that have carried out land reform within the institutional framework.

Italy is an example: increasing the tax on large estates encouraged the landowners to sell their land to small farmers, who received loans at low interest from the Italian Government.

In the People's Republic of China, the revolution was the opportunity to bring about the agrarian reform. A civil war lasted for 20 years. In this scenario, the distribution of land was given by the expropriation of large estates which were distributed to the peasants.

The Soviet Revolution and The Cuban Revolution expropriated the landowners without compensation. In the United States, with the end of the American civil war in 1865, the Republican Party made an attempt of land reform in the country by releasing land to black people, distributing plots of 40 acres and a Mule. The Homestead Act of 1862, by which every citizen could receive 160 acres and after 5 years of produce would obtain full ownership of the farm, had a better effect. Thus, 600,000 farmers received 80 million acres.

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In Brazil

Brazil settled the land problem through a strategy of abundant estates investing in cheap labour. The plantations meant for export, used cheap labour provided mostly by African slaves. Despite the abundance of land, access to land has always been hampered by the presence of perennial “owners”. According to *Celso Furtado*, the same was exploited by the so-called “agriculturalcommercial company”, a consequence of European

commercial expansion. The livestock was introduced because of the demand for meat and draft animals, and transportation to meet the needs of the agromercantile companies, and subsequently for the needs of the mining industry that was developing.

The first land grants in Brazil were made to men who had resources, that is, who were economically powerful, able to take on costs with great facilities and acquisition of slaves. The new population of free men that arrived through migration had no access to land, which was already owned by the very rich. They became, therefore, dependent on the large owners, working as artisans, soldiers or adventurers, which permitted the ownership in their hands. The small farmer has a place where to reside and as small businessmen, they fell the forests or are given a small job with the great firms.

Celso Furtado quotes donation of land for coffee plantations in the Estate of Espirito Santo to the families (almost all Germans) that were under the control of the merchants, who have monopolized the Land. The author claims that «*ownership of land was used to form and shape a certain kind of community, which was born serving the objectives of the agromercantile company.* This explains why the slaves in their totality remained in the hands of the great firms, without affecting negatively the company’s business in the country. In this sense, it confirms the opinion of the authors who qualified the latifundio as a system of power, which maintains the control of the land.

In Brazil, in two historic moments during the 20th century, peasant movements defended the thesis of the agrarian revolution. The first took place between 1920 and 1930, with the Column Prestes and the creation of the Brazilian Communist Party (PCB). Another moment occurred in the Decade of 1960, with the creation of the Peasant Leagues with the slogan “land reform in the law or the hard way” and in the episode of the Araguaia guerrilla.

March 13, 1964 is marked by the Rally held in Central Brazil when President João Goulart signed the Decree, which determined the expropriation of land on the margins of the highways and railroads. João Pinheiro Neto, President of the supervision of Agrarian Policy, the entity responsible for the implementation of land reform, was the one who drafted the Decree but with the deposition of the Government on March 31 1964, the new regime annulled the said Decree of 13 March. Removed from the direction of the above, Pinheiro Neto had the political rights suspended by Institutional Act 1, was arrested and responded to three military police investigations.

The Constitution of 1988 ensures the expropriation of unproductive land for public purpose and to serve the social interest, such as the expropriation of the land with the aim of agrarian reform or the creation of ecological reserves. The expropriation of properties that have been invaded is not permitted. Compensation is made to the former owners. One aspect often criticized in this system is the lack of financial aid for settled peasants, which often ends



up generating a new rural exodus. “Rural exodus” means the abandonment of the field by its inhabitants, who, in search of better living conditions, abandon the areas considered less sustainable than others. This can occur from rural areas to urban centres.

Inequalities in the country are among the biggest in the world (1% of owners holding about 50% of land), there is the INCRA (*National Institute of Colonization and Agrarian Reform*), which is the governing body responsible for the management of these issues

There are also various movements organized by peasants: one which stands out is the *Landless Workers Movement (MST)*, whose proposal is better division of Brazilian lands, demanding that the federal Government fosters complementary measures to the simple farmer, the electrification and irrigation of fields, grant rural credits and implementation of programmes that aim to stimulate the agricultural activity and the subsistence of the farmer and his family.

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Discussion

For advocates of land reform, land redistribution (physical space) and agricultural reform (economic and social activity) are considered essential to the economic and social development of a country. It would give opportunity for the abandoned rural populations, the poor workers who do not have conditions to provide their livelihood. At the same time, it would strip the large unproductive land owners of their land and give it to small farmers, which would lead to an increase in the productivity of these lands.

According to critics of land reform, however, the possibility of expropriation of the land would generate insecurity among the owners, discouraging investments to enhance production.

Part of the criticism are based on the fact that illegalities have been verified in the process, as cases of farmers who are given land but who already have properties. There are also many cases of settlers who abandon their land or sell them after they gained the land.

In conclusion: land reform as a general concept, as we have seen, is the system that regulates and promotes the “equitable” division of land in a State. In the case of Brazil, specifically, it must act in order to repair centuries of unjust land distribution, which lasted until the present day, causing a very large disparity between large portions of land owned by great landowners and people who want to have a piece of land to live and produce.

Currently, the agrarian reform in Brazil takes place basically as follows: the Union carries out the purchase or expropriation of large estates considered unproductive from individuals in various areas of the Federation, and under the surveillance of *INCRA (National Institute of Colonization and Agrarian Reform)*, distributes it in lots to families, as well as providing financial assistance, consultancy and supplies so that they can produce in these lands.

In fact, there exists, specifically for the purpose of agrarian reform, the expropriation law, guaranteed by the Constitution of 1988, established by the National Agrarian Reform Plan, under the Decree of law n° 3,365, of 21 June 1941, reformed by the Constitution, which ensures the right of the Union to expropriation of Lands of individuals considered unproductive. This law procures the public interest, especially the purpose of Agrarian Reform. There may also be other priorities of usefulness on the part of the Union.

There were several Agrarian Reform experiments in Brazil over the time. There are many differences regarding its implementation in Brazil. There is a proposal for the institutional problem of land, as well as a proposal of the agrarian revolution, resulting in a movement which pressurizes without the use of force by the classes concerned and affected by the uneven distribution of land.



Thinking positively, in equating the problem of land division in Brazil, the Government has for decades developed a system of reform, although it dealt with the problem slowly, it has given longterm results, solved differences with groups fighting for land as the *MST (Landless Peasants Movement)*, and other problems as they were identified and updated.

When new problems identified, new demands of government policies and strategies are sought to address them. Maybe this is the main reason why agrarian reform in Brazil moves slowly. There are problems which, although common to all regions, demand different action plans according to the region and the socio situation of the country.

Another factor that explains the slowness with which the restructuring in Brazil is made, no doubt, as stated earlier, is the long period of time of an unjust land distribution policy. Brazil, since its discovery, until a recently historically time (late 1950s), practiced a policy of land based on large properties and colonels who held these properties.

The picture has slowly changed. However, many improvements are still necessary in this regard. The 2009 data of the IBGE (*Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics*) estimate that the agrarian situation in Brazil in rural lands remained practically unchanged over the last 20 years.

The agricultural properties that have up to 10,000 hectares represent a total of only 2.7% of all land coefficients for the farming, being a vast majority formed by large estates of more than 1,000 hectares. That is, the great landowners still remain with the majority of land, though very poor in production, while thousands of families still have no place to live and produce.

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The *IBGE* survey concluded that the total number of establishments or land intended for agriculture represents an amount of 330 million hectares, equivalent to 36% of the entire national territory of Brazil. This means that of these 330 million hectares of agricultural land, approximately 141,900,000 hectares are large estates. It requires a historical and a structural reform by the State and the awareness of the great landowners.

Permit me to note three historical social sins that came out from this comprehensive summary, namely that:

1 The first land grants in Brazil were made to men who had resources, that is, who were economically powerful, able to take on costs with great facilities and acquisition of slaves. Brazil settled the land problem through a strategy of abundant estates investing in cheap labour.

2 The plantations meant for export, used cheap labour provided mostly by African slaves, and as a consequence the new emigrants coming from Europe, had no access to land which was already owned by the very rich. As a result, they became dependent on the large owners, working as artisans, soldiers or adventurers.

3 The March 13, 1964 rally held in Central Brazil when President João Goulart signed the Decree which determined the expropriation of land on the margins of the highways and railroads was followed by the deposition of the legitimate Government of João Goulart by the military junta on March 31 1964 which lasted for 20 years. These two happenings in the same fateful month of March 1964, prove beyond doubt that the generals were not preoccupied with the threat of communism, but of the impending land reform embarked upon by the legitimately elected government of President Goulart!

With regards the MST the Landless Peasants Movement, which I had the opportunity to follow and support in my region, the North of Paraná, I can state that the great media led by the allpowerful and to me notorious Rede Globo, has during the last three decades tried to criminalize this authentic movement.

As we have seen in the essay above, the MST is a strong but unarmed movement. João Pedro Stedile, the national coordinator of the movement, when challenged about whether as a policy they believe in arming the farmers to bring about the reform, gave a very blunt answer: *“When this question came up amongst us when we were discussing our policy, we came to the conclusion that the great land owners have all the money they need to defend themselves by corrupt ing legislators, media, police and whome-*

ver they need to win over for their cause we on the contrary have no money; the Government has the army, air force and police to defend itself and the great land owners we can never equal this force; we have one thing which those who stand against us do not have five million families who need land reform. Our challenge is to organise these families.”



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2

The Latifundio

(The Great Land Estates)

Origin Wikipedia

In the document entitled “Towards a Better Distribution of Land” published by the Pontifical Commission for Justice and Peace in 1997, during the pontificate of Pope John Paul II, in paragraph 32 under the section entitled “Condemnation of the Latifundio” we read:

“The social teaching of the Church takes the principle of the subordination of private property to the universal destination of goods as its basis in analyzing the exercise of the right to ownership of the earth as productive land, and in condemning latifundia as intrinsically illegitimate.”

A latifundio is a large agricultural property belonging to a single person, a family or business and which is characterized by extensive exploitation of its resources. The extension required to consider a property as a latifundio depends on the context: while in Europe the great estate may have a few hundred acres, in Latin America, it can easily overcome the 10,000 acres. In addition, other features of what is known as large estates are: low income, land use unit below the maximum operating level and low capitalization. The latifundio has traditionally been a source of social instability, coupled with the existence of large masses of landless workers. To solve the problems caused by large estates, different formulas were embarked upon, depending on the type of Government: since the change in the structure of the property (land reform), including expropriations as also, the modernisation of agriculture.

Concentration of rural property

The concentration of land in possession of large farmers has been frequently cited as the main cause of social injustices, responsible for swelling the demographic of large cities and increased violence as a whole. The latifundio and its aftermath intermingle with the beginnings of agriculture. Historically this regime goes back to Greco Roman antiquity. It is known that Plato, in the Republic, argued that the land should be owned by the collective as a common law. His disciple, Aristotle, on the other hand, recommended that the ideal method for the development of the agrarian society should be exercised through private property.

It is also known that the Romans tried to put an end to large estates and limited private



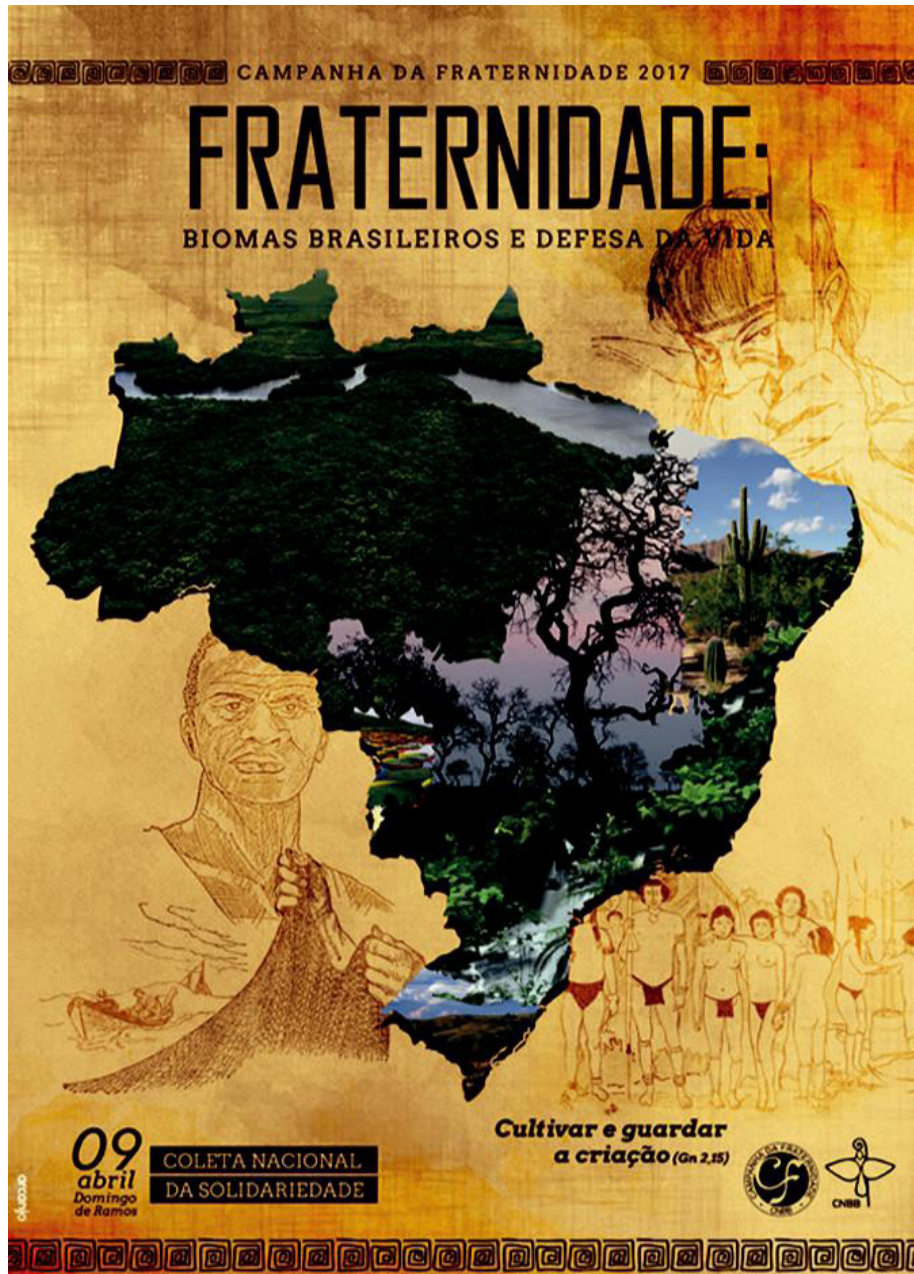
rural property around 500 jeiras (about 125 acres). They adopted the land system to serve the interests of the State and to a privileged minority. The large estates produced food for the needs of the Empire, such as cereals, vegetables, wine and pork.

French Revolution: Harvest of strawberries in TronvilleenBarrois, Meuse.

At the time of the French Revolution, the social problems of agrarian archaic structure were the main causes of its outbreak. Already in the 19th century, Napoleon valued private property, inspiring in this way the civil code through the liberal proposal that favoured the concentration of rural properties reducing social groups. This ended up favouring the agricultural exploitation of farm workers, thus reducing the work options and increasing the rural exodus and misery.



Currently, latifundio is still present in poor countries and underdeveloped regimes responsible for the underemployment of the countries and in the cities. This disproportionate distribution system is still common in rural Brazil and is still discussed in the light of the Statue of the Land. Traditionally the latifundio has been at the root of all social instability.



Floresta Amazônica, Cerrado, Caatinga, Mata Atlântica, Pantanal e Pampas

3

The Birth of Pastoral Land Commission (CPT)

Origin Web CPT



The Pastoral Land Commission (Comissão Pastoral da Terra CPT) was born in June 1975, during the meeting of bishops and prelates of the Amazon, called by the National Conference of the Bishops of Brazil (*Conferencia Nacional dos Bispos do Brasil CNBB*), held in Goiânia. It was founded in the middle of a military dictatorship, as a response to the serious situation experienced

by rural workers. Those who occupied the lands, particularly in Amazonia, were exploited in their work, subject to conditions analogous to slavery, or evicted altogether from the land they were occupying.

From the beginning, the CPT was always linked to the Catholic Church. The link with the National Conference of Bishops of Brazil (CNBB) helped the CPT people to perform their mission and resist at a time when the military oppression reached priests, laity and popular leaders. Soon, it acquired an ecumenical character, both in the sense of the farmers that were supported, and the incorporation of other Christian Churches, notably, the *Evangelical Church of Lutheran Confession in Brazil ECLCB*.

The Aims of the CPT

The CPT was created to be a service to the farmers and support to their organisations. The farmers themselves define their objectives and goals. They are the protagonists of their own history. The CPT accompanies them, respectfully, even if critically.

The Protagonists of the CPT Those who occupied land in the Amazon were the first to receive the attention of the CPT. In no time, its mission was extended to the entire country because the small farmers and the peasants in their various categories, wherever they were, all faced serious problems.

It stood out for the defence of their rights, especially of those that were occupying the underdeveloped land or were resisting the threat of being ousted from the land where

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they have been working all their lives. The democratization of access to the land, they believe, was the only means to break the yoke they were under. Therefore, the CPT got involved directly with the various struggles and demonstrations in favour of land reform. In each region, the CPT

adopted a different modality according to the challenges that they were presented with.

Soon, the CPT became involved with the farmers who were hit by projects of large dams which displaced thousands of families for the construction of hydroelectric power plants, as the Itaparica Dam, in the São Francisco River, and the Itaipu Dam on the Paraná River.

Later, the reality of millions of landless families searching for a small plot of land to ensure their livelihood appeared all over Brazil. The problem of the organisation and marketing of production earned special attention. But it could not be just any production. It needed to be healthy, respecting the environment in a harmonious coexistence with the various ecosystems. It had to be one that combats the indiscriminate deforestation, the burning and the use of pesticides. In this logic, organic production and agroecology came to the rescue of traditional seeds or creole.

A Fraternity Campaign is celebrated every year during lent. In 2017, the campaign discussed the Brazilian Biomes and Defence of Life, with the motto Plant and Save Creation (Genesis 2:15). We read in the prepared text of the campaign:

“a biome is composed of all living beings in a certain region, whose vegetation are similar and continuous, whose climate is uniform, and whose formation has a common history. In Brazil, there exist six biomes – the Atlantic forest, the Amazon, the Cerrado, the Pantanal, the Caatinga and the Pampa.”

Water an Axis of CPT

This concern for the environment brought into question the problems surrounding water which became an axis of action. The CPT has entered firmly in defence of water as a right of mankind and other living beings and against every attempt at privatization. It denounced the destruction of the sources of water, pollution by pesticides and the action of mining companies. As a result, the CPT coined the word hidronegocio to explain capitalists' attempt to make water a commodity like any other.

CPT and Human Rights

From its creation to this very day, the CPT is concerned with rural and sugar cane employees, with special attention to those submitted to conditions analogous to slavery.



Because of this initiative, the CPT can be considered a Human Rights organisation. It defends the right for the small farmer to own his plot of land, the right to stay and work in one's land, the right to access to water, and the right to work in respectful conditions.

In the promotion and protection of the right to work, the CPT has excelled in the condemnation of slave labour. In 1997, it created the national campaign to combat slave labour with the theme: Open your eyes so you don't turn into a slave.

The denunciation of violations of workers' rights, the defence to own a piece of land, and the defence of the victims of these violations, led to threats, persecutions and even the death of its members. To step up the fight for human rights, the CPT has created a documentation section, known as *The Information Centre Dom Tomás Balduino*, which registers the conflicts in which men and women working in the fields are involved and the violence they suffer. Every year it publishes a report on these conflicts containing all the occurrences recorded.

What is the importance of this document? In the Introduction of the document "Conflicts of the Land" (2015), the CPT explains:



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“As a pastoral action of the Church, the CPT has at its root and source the Gospel and as recipients of its action, the farmers and the problems surrounding the waters of the planet. By fidelity ‘[...]to God of the poor; to the land of God and the poor of the planet’.”

As is explicit in the definition of its mission, the CPT undertook the task of registering and denouncing the conflicts of the land, of water and the violence against workers and their rights, creating a centre which in 2013

was renamed Dom Tomás Balduino Documentation Centre, after the late founder of the CPT.

The task of documenting has a theological dimension because according to the biblical tradition, God heard the cries of his people and is present in the struggle of workers (Exodus 3:710). This fight is the rite for celebrating this presence and hope that animates the farmers.

Moreover, the CPT justifies its registers in other dimensions: ethical, political, scientific, historical, and pedagogical.



Ethical because the struggle for land is a matter of Justice and must be considered in the context of a just social order

Political because the struggle is done so that the worker, having a better knowledge of his reality, can safely take responsibility for his own life, becoming subject and protagonist of his history.

Pedagogical because the knowledge of pedagogical reality helps to strengthen the resistance of the farmers to forge the necessary transformation of society.

Historical – because every effort of the farmers’ struggle of today cannot be forgotten and should encourage and instigate the struggle of generations to come.

Scientific – because for the sake of accuracy, the methodological and theological procedures help systematise data consistently and explicitly. The concern to give a scientific character can help and strengthen the farmers themselves in their confrontation with the landowner. This is not simply to produce mere statistics, but also to record the

history of the struggle of a class that for centuries was exploited, excluded and raped.

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Environmental Activists Murdered

According to a *BBC Brazil* article dated 4th July, 2012, half of the environmental activists murdered in the last decade are Brazilians.

A study of the *NGO Global Witness* concluded that 711 activists were murdered around the world over the last decade by protecting the land and the forest – and more than half are Brazilians.

According to the survey, released during the Rio +20, 365 Brazilians were killed between 2002 and 2011 to defend human rights and the environment. After Brazil, the two countries with the most deaths in the period are also in South America: Peru, with 123 deaths, and Colombia, with 70.



For the British researcher *Billy Kyte*, the high number of deaths in Brazil is due to a combination of factors that make the competition for land and natural resources intensify and generate more

pressure and tension in the field. He enumerates the inequality in land ownership in the country, with the concentration of properties in the hands of landowners, the large number of communities that get their livelihood from the land, and the performance of sectors whose production consists also in exploring the land, such as the agricultural, mining and logging.

But Kyte also believes the numbers are highest in the Brazilian case because the monitoring is better, thanks to the annual report produced by the Land Pastoral Commission (CPT) on land conflicts in the country. Especially in countries of Africa and Asia, the NGOS had difficulty in raising numbers of dead, since the reports are sparse.

“There are probably many other cases that have remained hidden. And the study does not take into consideration the thousands of people being intimidated or threatened,” he says. “There is a serious lack of information about these deaths on a global level, and no one is monitoring.”

A death per week: According to Kyte, the research seeks to fill a gap by providing an international panorama of the dangers in the field. Entitled, “A hidden crisis? Increase in deaths stemming escalation of the conflict because of the access to land and forests”, the study indicates that there is, on average, more than one murder a week in contexts

related to environmental protection.

The number of deaths has been increasing, having doubled in the last three years compared to the rest of the period. According to Kyte, the goal is to expose the UN Conference for sustainable development that the protection of the environment and human rights is becoming a battlefield for resources, and bring more and more risk for people.

“We ask that Governments investigate these killings, do justice and give compensation to families who are defending their rights to land and forest,” says Kyte.

The cases investigated by the study are of people killed in attacks or clashes resulting from protests, investigations or complaints against activities of mining, logging, farming, plantations of trees, hydroelectric dams, urban development and poaching. Seven of those cases were presented at *Rio + 20*, in a photographic exhibition with pictures of seven activists and their story of life and death.



Brazilian Nísio Garcia was part of the exhibition. The leader of an Indian camp GuaraniKaiowá in Mato Grosso do Sul, he was taken by 40 armed men in November 2011 and his body has never

been found. The territory was in the process of being officially recognized as territory of the community, but was being used by farmers and local farmers.

Different Variations of Farmsteads

Origin : Website of the National Pastoral Land Commission

As a result of its experience accompanying the rural communities, the CPT perceived that there exist a great variety of traditions and cultures within the population spread in the interior of the country.

Every group of farmers has their own characteristics and different identities. As a result, the CPT began giving more importance to this diversity and sought to give special treatment to each category *indigenous, quilombolas, landless, extractive, rubber tappers, faxinalenses, geraizeiros, peasants, retireiros do Araguaia, those who live along the rivers,*

those who occupied land, those without land, those affected by the mining, those hit by large projects, traditional farmers, those affected by the damns, migrants, small farmers, youth, women who own the land collectively and many others. Several of these communities are classified as traditional communities. One of the characteristics that identify them is the common use of the land for their living.



Meaning of Terms

The Indigenous those who, because of their historical existence before the invasion and colonialization of their territories, consider themselves different from other sectors of society and are determined to conserve, develop and pass on to future generations their ancestral territories and their ethnic identity, respecting their proper living styles, their social institutions and juridical systems. (Definition given by the UN)

“*Quilombolas*” – attributed to the slaves who sought refuge in “quilombos” or better, to the descendants of the slaves whose predecessors, at the time when slavery reigned in Brazil, escaped from the sugar cane farms to small properties, where through their manual work, they formed small villages called “quilombos.”



Posseiros rural workers who occupied a piece of land without having the legal title of their property, and cultivate the land to guarantee their living, with the work of their families.

Extrativismo briefly, it signifies all the activity which collects the natural products whether originating from animal, vegetal or mineral. It is the most ancient human activity which preceded agriculture and industry.

Seringueiro is the typical worker of the region of the “seringais”. He extracts milk from the trees and transforms it in natural rubber. “*Seringueira*” is a Brazilian plant (*hevea Braziliensis*) of the Euphorbiaceous family, original of the Amazon.

Faxinalenses – those who live in a rural closed area, where the exploitation of the land is made collectively, and determine the area to be preserved as a “reserved area” where araucarias and herbalpine are planted.

Geraizeiros – traditional farmers that live in the “cerrados” of the north of Minas Gerais. The origin of the word “gerazeiros” comes from the word Gerais – from the name of the State Minas Gerais.

Fundo e Fecho de Pasto these communities are known by this name because they are diverse in their formation, being a mosaic of different social groups. They are constantly alert in their struggle for the right to have the land, for maintaining it, and for their right to preserve their culture.

Sesmaria a plot of land distributed to one person in the name of the King of Portugal, with the object of cultivating virgin lands. It started as an administrative measure in the final stage of the Middle Ages in Portugal a concession which was adopted especially in the colonial period of Brazil. As an administrative measure, it was abolished when Brazil gained Independence in 1822.

Capitanias Hereditarias – in the year 1534, King John III divided the new colony in 15 huge estates. Each of these huge plots of land would integrate the system of inheritance, where people enjoyed the possibility to pass on pieces of territories to third persons. The King delivered a territory to members of his Court. The owner known as Captain could not sell it, but could pass it on to his heirs – hence the word capitanias hereditarias.

Coroneis during the Regency period (1831-1840), a series of popular uprisings broke

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out across the country. To control them, the Government created the so-called National Guard. This was divided between influential gentlemen who won the title of “Colonel.” From the beginning of the Republic, they gradually lost importance and ceased to exist in 1922. But the prestige and influence of the colonels continued remaining politically influential in the areas where they possessed the land.

Retireiros – persons who on one hand live on the earnings from the land, raising cows for their subsistence, and on the other hand are bent to acquire more land to make more money.

Assentamento basically, a rural settlement is a number of agricultural units independent of each other, installed by the Incra, where originally there was a rural property that belonged to a single owner. Each of these units, called plots or lots, is delivered by Incra to a poor family to acquire and maintain a rural property in other ways. The amount of lots in a settlement depends on the ability of the area to sustain the number of families settled. The size and location of each lot is determined by the geography of the terrain and the conditions of production that the site offers.

Occupation vs. Invasion there is quite a difference between one and another. The term invasion is used when the person or persons try to occupy a land which is already being used. The term occupation is used when the site in question does not satisfy the social function of property provided for in the Constitution, namely, is unused or abandoned. Ribeirinhas people who live on the edge of the rivers and who are generally extremely poor, suffer from the pollution of the rivers (sewage), and from erosion. The Amazon Riverside community lives in houses on stilts. They survive on craftsmanship, agriculture, and breeding of animals that is complemented by hunting, fishing and vegetal extraction.

Acampados landless farmers who are in camps hoping to win the land. Sometimes they have already had the areas expropriated, but still do not receive the lots.

The Landless The Landless Movements are organized in 24 States in the five regions of the country. In total, there are about 350,000 families who acquired land through

the Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra (MST The Landless Workers Movement) and other smaller movements. Even after they are settled, these families remain attached to the MST since the conquest of land is only the first step towards the realization of the land reform.

Mineração farmers and indigenous are adversely hit by extreme exploitation. They are organised in a movement to expose the sufferings caused by the mining companies to those who have their farms at the margins of the exploited areas.

Migrants the history of the Brazilian people is a story of migration, caused by the fickleness of economic cycles and a planned economy with no concern to the needs of the population. The migration due to drought that struck the northeast in the 1960's is



a case in point. Thousands of people were evicted from their homes in the sertao for lack of alternative agricultural policies in the region.

Another historical example was the migration that occurred at the end of the 19th century when the people of the Northeast migrated to the North of Brazil. This came about for two reasons: the beginning of the cycle of Rubber and the great drought that devastated the NorthEast. There was also the movement of the Northeastern population to the

Southeast Region of the country, the only Brazilian industrial pole in the 1970 seeking a better life.

Pequenos Agricultores most of the Brazilian farmers live in small and mediumsized properties all over the country. The farm is run by family members. These properties are often devoid of technological resources (agricultural machinery, mechanical milking and farm inputs) and also lack technical support of a professional such as agronomist. Therefore, they have low levels of productivity. Nevertheless, about 70% of all food that supplies the Brazilian domestic market is derived from these small rural properties.

CIMI the Indigenous Missionary Council is a body linked to the National Conference of the Bishops of BrazilCNBB. It was created by the Brazilian bishops in the year 1972 with the goal of fighting for the rights of the indigenous peoples and their diverse cultures.

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FUNAI Fundo Nacional Dos Indigenas, is a Brazilian Government Agency that deals with all matters relating to the indigenous communities and their lands. FUNAI was created on the December 5th, 1967, to protect and support the original people, promoting sustainable development policies in favour of the indigenous populations.

The Mission of The Rural Youths consists in evangelizing and fomenting conscience awareness, especially of poor youths, with the aim of forming active Christians, missionary disciples of Jesus Christ who contribute to the transformation of society. Through this Mission they participate in the construction of a Popular Project articulated with the outside society, defending the value of life in Planet Earth.

The Women Acting Collectively during the month of March, on the occasion of the International Day of the Woman, the CPT publishes various themes that reflect the different realities of the “Woman in The Field”.

The principal objective of this activity is to give visibility to the dimension of the struggles of these women, which is not sufficiently publicised nor assumed politically. One of the first publications in this series dealt with the “March of the Women in Favour of Life and Archaeology” that occurred for the first time in the State of Paraíba organised by the female leadership of the CPT.





T h e

Indigenous People In Brazil

The struggle for the survival of the Indigenous people in Brazil (often incorrectly referred to as Indios) is backed by the Pastoral Land Commission wherever it still exists in any part of Brazil. The indigenous people of Brazil include a large number of different ethnic groups that inhabit the country since millennia before the beginning of the colonization. When the invasion by the Portuguese occurred in 1500, it is estimated that some eleven million people, already inhabited Brazil. The study of this people in Brazil includes indigenous culture, indigenous art, their social organization, cacique, pagé and indigenous religion.

The 1988 Constitution of Brazil defends these indigenous people and some progress like defending their right for their land in the deep forest occurred. Still, violence against this people persists. The most recent violence denounced by the Pastoral Land Commission as another brutal act of violence committed by henchmen against the life of the Gamela people occurred in the State of Maranhao instigated by a message on Whatsapp which originated from the great landowners of that region.

In the words of the child above, the Pastoral Land Commission supports the struggle of the indigenous people so that their blood and dream remains present in their live!

Mgr Tomás Balduino interviewed on his 90th Birthday



Dom
Tomás
Balduino
1922 - 2014

“In a country like ours, which has so many resources and where you have many flourishing churches of enviable temples in size and comfort, the so-called border pastoral activities, such as the Pastoral Land Commission, are impoverished.”

Dom Tomás Balduino, founder of the CPT4 Mgr Tomás Balduino, Bishop emeritus of Goiás, belongs to a generation of Brazilian Bishops that identified a social transformation in the mission

of the Church. He was a head of the creation of the *Pastoral Land Commission – CPT and the Indigenous Missionary Council (CIMI)* where he still participated with a lot of enthusiasm at 90 years of age!

In the following interview, granted by phone to the *Instituto Humanitas Unisinos (IHU)* online, Dom Tomás recalls his trajectory in the Church and emphasizes that the «CPT was born in a moment of great enthusiasm, determination and energy in favour of the poor. This was the result of the Second Vatican Council and Bishops’ Conference at Medellín.” He says that both the CPT and the CIMI «brought into the Church an opening, because living with these people brought, in the person of pastoral agents of the CPT, the concern of the Church about their situation.» And he concludes: “there was a growth in the ecclesiastical institution itself.”

Dom Tomás is a Dominican priest, born on December 31, 1922. He is a Catholic theologian, Bishop emeritus of Goiás and Advisor of the Pastoral Land Commission. A few days before turning 90 years old, Dom Tomás Balduino said that he feels ‘free’, “I do not have the government of a diocese, but I still belong to the Episcopal College. So, I’m in Church activities still fulfilling the mission of a shepherd.” After having experienced difficult moments in the Church, as during the military period,



Dom Tomás looks to the future of the Church ‘hopefully’. “The near future is the continuity. Now, the remote future belongs to God. I think there is an element of renewal within the Church. Does this spirit of renewal have access to the Church government in the person of the Pope? I don’t know” he concludes.

On Social Injustice

What marked me deeply was the issue of social injustice practised by the Government of the State of Pará, selling land without regard to the local population that was farming within the same territory. There had been conflicts and I addressed them at the beginning because later I was transferred to Goiás, as a diocesan bishop, where I remained for 31 years. There I was faced again with the question of land, because it is a region of very large estates, dominated by the great landowners. At the time I lived in Goiás, I helped inaugurate two important institutions for the Church and for society: the Indigenous Missionary Council, (Cimi), gradually replacing the old paternalistic attitude; and the Land Pastoral Commission (CPT), which emerged thanks to the Bishops’ Conference in Medellín and the Second Vatican Council, in the years 1972 and 1973. The CIMI emerged as option for the poor, but considering the poor as subjects and protagonists of their own life and struggle.

At that time, CIMI and CPT completely changed the attitude of the Church about indigenous people and about respecting farmers. Experience im
pelled us to create organisations and associations of the rural workers linked religiously to the Church. In the Pastoral Land Commission, which w a s
born in 1975, there was a Copernican



revolution, just as happened in the Indigenous pastoral world where the indigenous themselves became the protagonists at the centre of the action rather than merely the object of charitable action.

IHU online: You were cofounder of the Indigenous Missionary Council (CIMI) in 1972 and you are the second President. How is the indigenous question in Brazil, today, 40 years later?

Progress was made in the direction of the indigenous organisations. The Indigenous Missionary Council itself has a new policy of treatment of indigenous peoples. Instead of wanting to confine them in a

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place, as was formerly envisaged, the CIMI came out with a proposal – which at first shocked us all but then came to be likened to ‘Columbus’ egg’ – namely to encourage assemblies of heads of different tribes. We were afraid because they were often hostile towards each other. But surprisingly, they responded positively to the invitation to meet. We started to gather Indios, and they came out convinced that the enemy was never the other Indian, that they needed to retrieve their culture and, consequently, the lands. Hence, they began to organise themselves in various regional and national associations. Therefore, on the side of the Indians there was progress and they continue advancing. The problem came from the Government’s end which, allied to capitalist groups of agro and hydrobusiness, refused to demarcate indigenous lands, weakening FUNAI, their government agency and also the INCRA. The unwillingness to help solve indigenous people is the same unwillingness to help the farmers regarding land reform.

IHU online: How did you work on the Pastoral Land Commission (CPT) considering the historical and political context in which it arose? And how do you see your performance today?

The CPT, as I already explained, happened at a time of great enthusiasm, determination and energy in favour of the poor. It was the result of the Second Vatican Council and of the Bishops Conference in Medellin. There was a general climate of enthusiasm within the Church, in the dioceses, especially within the religious congregations. Therefore, the CPT was born with the acceptance of the Church, as was the CIMI which one can describe as frontier pastoral activities. The CPT and the CIMI brought into the Church an opening because living with these people brought in the Church in the person of the pastoral agents of the CPT the concern about their situation. There was also a development within the ecclesiastical institution.

But things have changed in the government ministered by Pope John Paul II. There was a setback in the Church in the sense of mistrust about this outside world, these pastoral activities, the very liberation theology, which is the fruit of these two pastoral activities. As a result, then, the Church has lessened its activity, responding to what one can refer to the movement of the pendulum. The CPT was even prohibited in certain dioceses which somehow, explain the climate that we live in today.

With regards to the work done before the creation of these two entities, it reminds me of the Good Samaritan, I’d say. What did the Samaritan do? He leaned in front of the fallen. But he did not create an institution to pick up those fallen and others that might fall in the future. The CPT, on the contrary, has created various permanent instruments. I mean, in the evolution of the pastoral activity, we realised that human



rights, land and water are three priorities. To help the people of the Land, it has created a body of lawyers to help the struggles of the farmers when they fall in the hands of the judiciary itself. To help them against all the forces of the elite bent to ensure the status quo, whilst the farmers were bringing about a transformation through the land reform. They occupied the land and what could the CPT do visavis the arguments brought forward in favour of the legality of the ownership of the property? It supported the occupation of land in a new perspective the constitution defended the social function of the land. This wasn't very well accepted, neither within the Church nor within society. The judiciary itself was too committed to old standards of absolute rights of private property. That was being broken.

The CPT, in another moment, sought the help of the agronomists because the people recovered the land, but needed advice on how to work it.

IHU online: What are the difficulties of maintaining the CPT in the situation that was evolving within the Church?

In respect to how to sustain the CPT, it is in fact 'worrying' it lacks the necessary funds. It suffers, because in the beginning it was supported by external resources coming especially from Europe. But due to the economic crisis and the decline in Catholic participation, funds have decreased. Another phenomenon is that these entities have entered into an agreement with the Government and began to come across capitalist demands. So the CPT has this challenge to resolve. It is not a question of the dissolution of the CPT, but it is a fact that in a country like ours, which has so many resources and where many churches are flourishing with enviable temples in size and comfort, these border pastoral activities are impoverished.

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A look to the future

At the age of 40 years, the CPT defines the essential elements to guarantee its future.

They are:

The reaffirmation of its spirituality and pastoral characteristics.

The strengthening of communities and their protagonism.

The complaint of actions that favour the marketcapital, to the detriment of the rights of farming communities.

The construction of social relations between power and gender, the valuation and liberation of the women farmers and the strengthening of initiatives in favour of youth in the rural area.

The development of the formation of its members to strengthen the CPT and the communities.

The CPT needs to suit its organizational structure to be able to face the challenges of the new social reality and ensure its pastoral, political and financial sustainability.

Mgr Óscar Romero Award 2017



Bishop Enémesio Lazzaris, President of the CPT.

On the of 28th March 2017, at Dayton University (USA), Bishop Enémesio Lazzaris, President of the CPT, received the Blessed Óscar Romero Human Rights Award on behalf of the CPT. He dedicated this honour to those who struggle for land reform.

I want before anything else to remember Saint Romero of America, martyr of Salvador, assassinated in 1980, Sister Dorothy Stang, daughter of this land who fell victim in defence of the people in the Amazon in 2005, and lastly the 1,833 men and women assassinated in the Brazilian latifundio since 1985. In the name of the CPT – the Pastoral Land Commission – I greet with deep respect each and every one of you present, ladies and gentlemen, with a special mention of the

organisers and promoters of this event, especially Dr Eric Spina, President of this University of Daytona.

The Pastoral Land Commission completed 40 years of existence in 2015. It was created in 1975 and since then the entity backed, accompanied and counselled the people of the land, of the waters and

of the forests. It encouraged men and women to organise themselves in associations and movements like the *MST (The Landless Workers Movement)* the *MAB (The Movement of those hit by Damns)* and the *MMC (The Movement of the Women in the Countryside)* to struggle for their rights and resist the violence. The CPT is spread all over the country and is organized in 21 regions having 120 base teams, 725 lay persons and 525 male and female volunteers.

Sensitive to the clamour of the people of the land, the waters and the forests, men and

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women like Pedro Casaldaliga and Tomás Balduino (both bishops), Chico Mendes, Sister Dorothy, Fr Josimo Tavares, Bishop Luis Cappio, Jose Claudio, Maria do Espirito Santo da Silva, Adelaide, Chicao Xucuru and Gringo, denounced the slavery of the workers in the fields, defended the people of the forest, struggled in defence of water, the

rights of those who work in the land, and above all for a Church that involves itself permanently for the rights of the poorest. Some of these are still with us, illuminating our path and actions. Others have already gone, others have succumbed victims of the merciless arms of the powerful latifundio. Their blood fertilised the land, reinforced our resistance and watered and fertilized many seeds of hope.

Since its beginning, the CPT notes and denounces the conflicts and violence that involve the male and female farmers. Today it has in its possession a rich archive of documents on this subject. Since 1985, every year, the CPT publishes an edition of “Conflitos no Campo Brasileiro.” It registers the history of the struggle of a class that for centuries was exploited, excluded and violated.

This publication aims to sensitise society at large about the violence and conflicts of which male and female farmers are victim and ferment and strengthen the struggle and resistance of the farmers themselves. Since 1985, 1,833 assassinations were registered amongst whom men of law, farmers and the leaders involved in their struggle for the land reform.



The year 2016 was marked with a reverse in the conditions of those in the field, the indigenous, the quilombolas, those who work in their own field, the fishermen, the craftsmen and many other traditional communities, who were abandoned by those who usurped power in Brasilia. They are threatened of losing their rights which they gained in the Constitution of 1988.

The latifundio became more violent in resisting occupation of lands by the social movement, including making use of armed militias. Jointly with the rural congressmen who believe in the use of force, the latifundio came in full force of the farmers and the

indigenous people causing in 2016, 61 victims. Of these, 49 occurred in the Amazon region with 21 assassinations in the State of Rondonia.

Impunity turned out to be the principle cause, in our country, for multiplying a chain of violence. One can say that the Brazilian judiciary has at least been guilty of omission, by limiting itself to condemn the assassins who were caught redhanded, letting go free at least 90% of those who instigated them to kill.

One can clearly perceive that the constituted bodies, namely the judiciary, the latifundio and the people of agribusiness are linked. The small are judged and condemned whilst the powerful continue to do what they think best.

It is a fact that the intensification of the conflicts is occurring where the agribusiness



is expanding, in the mining areas and where great projects of infrastructure are embarked upon. One of the great challenges of development of agriculture in Brazil, at the moment, is privatisation and the handing on to foreigners no less than 75

million hectares, situated in the regions of the Cerrado in the States of Maranhao, Tocantins, Piaui and Bahia – commonly

known as Matopiba.

This new agricultural frontier constitutes a major threat not only to the territories of native peoples and traditional communities, but also to the whole rich and vast biodiversity present in these four States. In view of greater production of commodities for export, more infrastructure highways, railways, ports, airports and waterways are being expanded. All this will destabilize communities and territories and will bring disastrous consequences to all biodiversity, especially for wild fauna and flora.

In this reality of antikingdom behaviour, like shepherds among wolves, we are called as prophets to take care of the sheep, announcing to them the good news of the Kingdom of justice, love and peace. Powered by utopia of a new heaven and a new land reform, and extending solidarity with men and women of good will, we will continue struggling and fighting for the land of all, a common home of living space not only for humans, but for all creatures.

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In tune with Pope Francis' words, "we won't let them steal our hope" and will continue to be the messengers of the Kingdom of Jesus of Nazareth, announcing the Gospel of joy, committed to the care of the common home, always defending the integrity of the creation, contemplating the beauty and diversity of our people, as well as of the biomes, which comprise the Brazilian territory.

In the global economy, agriculture is subject to the logic of markets and exchanges and daily life is increasingly mediated by technology. However, the land remains as what underlies the universality of rights, because all of us human beings were born of the same soil in the same land.

Sister Dorothy's witness reminds us that Land is not a commodity and much less a financial variable like vultures who grab land tend to consider but a sacred value to be protected, a requirement for the affirmation of human dignity, "raw material" and living fountain of the culture and identity of peoples.

Sister Dorothy and Óscar Romero, both canonized at the heart of our people, have left precious message, to those who still repeat the refrain that the Church should abstain from politics to devote herself to the things of heaven, preaching a numbing spiritualism, which has nothing to do with Jesus Christ and with the Gospels. The true Christian, on the other hand, is one who agrees to make the world better: The Earth more habitable, today and always, defending human rights, especially the rights of the poor and marginalized.

Honoured and deeply grateful for this "Óscar Romero Award", the CPT will continue taking care of the House and of our brothers and sisters most in need and marginalized, both natives or migrants, committed to the Evangelical testimony of the Angel of the Amazon, Sister Dorothy, and the faithful Shepherd Mgr Romero.

While we fight for Justice and for what is right, they will remain alive, walking beside us. Forever! Dorothy, Present! Óscar Romero, Present!!

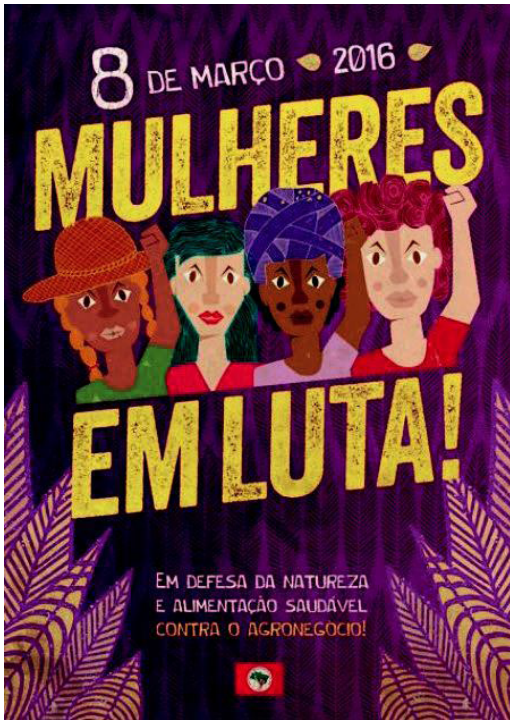
Thank you!

8

Women Honoured

Legislative Assembly, the State of Paraná 2006

Origin: Thea Tavares, journalist



Sister Hulda Lia Francener of Joaçaba, State of Santa Catarina, whose parents were small farmers, joined the Filhas da Caridade de São Vicente de Paula e Luzia de Marilac in Curitiba a congregation which is at the service of the poor people and especially where life is threatened. She was an educator at the Institute Santa Luzia, Porto Alegre, specializing in occupational therapy for the visually impaired. She was also a teacher of various disciplines of the Humanities in the Southwest of the Pato Branco, Paraná.

In the early eighties, she served in the popular organization of the Association of the Neighbourhood of the Community of Cachoeira em Almirante Tamandaré. She was also an educator of the MST, (The Landless Workers Movement) and helped build a methodology for teaching practiced in Agrarian Reform settlements and camps. She worked in the Pastoral Land Commission of Guarapuava and was counsellor to the Comunidades Eclesiais de Base (Church Base Communities), in projects focused on ecology, natural medicine, food safety and the solidarity economy.

Maria Izabel Da Silva a small farmer of the municipal PinhaoParaná, leader of the farmers in its community and also leader and cofounder of the Association of Small Farmers in Pinhao. She was also counsellor of CresolPinhao and Director of he Union of the Small Farmers of Pinhao. Maria Izabel is also a religious leader in the Community of Guarapuavavinha. Her Christian faith inspires her and gives her courage in her struggle within the popular movements.

Maria Pinheiro Pereira (D. Lina), born in Minas Gerais moved to Londrina in the North of Paraná in the midsixties. She involved herself in the organization of women

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through the Land Pastoral Commission (CPT) and the Church Base Communities (CEBs), backing the popular struggle for a dignified habitat.

She was an educator in the APEART Associação Projeto Educação do Assalariado Rural Temporário a project meant to help youth and adults in literacy to regain the dignity of the workers and farmers. She also involved herself in the Movimento Negro of Paraná the Black Movement in combating prejudice, in the rescue of self-esteem of marginalized populations and promoting black consciousness.

She is also a member of the MSTPR and other popular local movements linked to human rights. She later moved to Oliinda Quilombo dos Palmares in Jardim Olinda.

Maria Salete Escher. A small farmer and defender of agro ecology, in the municipal of Campo Magro in Paraná. She was coordinator of the joint Southern Women Farmers, of the Rural Department of CUTPR (Central Unica de Trabalhadores) of which she was Vice President. Escher was Secretary of the Social Policies of the Federation of the Agricultural Workers in the South region. She was also part of the State Commission of Rural Female Farmers (1994 to 1997), director of the Department of Rural SocioEconomic Studies and Secretary of the Formation of the Rural Workers Union of Camo Magro.

Centre for Biblical Studies (CEBI)

Popular Education: A Great University



The Centre for Biblical Studies (CEBI) is a great popular university. It animates and links a great association of Christian formation and popular education, directly involving more than 10,000 base groups, biblical circles, weekend seminars, biblical schools that stretch for several weeks, one month courses enabling the formation of leaders, intensive sixmonth courses which last several years, and postgraduate courses for the formation of counsellors in biblical knowledge.

On Rediscovering the Word of God

At the community level, the CEBI has organised several activities jointly with leaders, laity and counsellors. In these activities, one finds an infinite number of biblical groups that meet to reflect on the Word of God. These groups are the CEBI functioning at the base. On the level of the different States and Regions, larger discussion groups, biblical schools and refresher courses occur. On a national level, meetings are held on specific themes. Every two years a course is held for new counsellors, on the methodology of the CEBI.



Citizenship: On Life and Dignity

The strengthening of the leaders is a constant preoccupation of the CEBI. Giving top priority to the condition

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of the poor and the marginalized, CEBI does not stop only at biblical study. The formation of male and female citizens preoccupied with the struggle in favour of a dignified, life is an important objective of bible reading at the base communities.

Gender: Reciprocity and Partnership

The biblical text is marked by paternalism, not only in its original version, but also by the traditional interpretation given by the different religions. The feminist reading is present in the way the CEBI understands the bible. It aims to reinterpret and discover the forgotten memory of women in the bible. Many women Biblicists, in their dedication to the biblical study, preoccupy themselves specifically with this aspect in their interpretation. The Formation Programme that materialised in the year 2001 and embarked upon every two years, was the first meeting which discussed the Gender and the Feminine Hermeneutic.

Ecumenism: Life is more Important than Religions

Since its beginning, it was quite clear for the CEBI that in its work it needs to be ecumenical, because the defence of life and its basic needs, overrides the religious frontiers. For the CEBI, it is important that ecumenism in the base communities always becomes stronger. It understands that ecumenism in its turn awakens the ethical potential and the urge to defend life, which are present in all religious communities.

Spirituality: Drink from the Fountain of Life

Since its beginning, the Word of God, as it developed in the daily life and the text itself, was a source of living water that flows and kills thirst. In times of discouragement, it foments hope and resistance to sustain the struggle. The biblical circles, the meetings, the courses and seminars are permeated with a profound mysticism. This can be seen in their celebrations, in the friendship created, the acceptance, the solidarity and commitment with life. The team responsible for the moments of spirituality, make an effort to preserve this source of life. These efforts can be perceived in the music that he CEBI creates, and produced in its CDs.

Ecology: Land, Water and Fire

The promotion of life passes through a balanced ecology. One can feel the importance given to ecology today within the numerous social movements influenced by the CEBI. CEBI will be even more present in the coming years with publications, meetings and seminars discussing especially the ecological theme.

Exchange: Definition and Partnership

Within two decades of study and reflection, the popular reading of the Bible developed by the CEBI surpassed national frontiers. The entity established institutional links with different organisms through courses, different meetings and seminars. Today, there are partnerships with Latin America, the Caribbean, Africa and Europe.

The CEBI is developing institutional links with the Southern Forum of NGOs, the Brazilian Association of NGOs (ABONG), Resources of Ecumenical Partnership (CER); the Latin American Evangelical Commission of Christian Education (CELADEC), the National Council of Christian Churches (CONIC), the Latin American and Caribbean Ecumenical Biblical Association (REDLAC), the Ecumenical Association of Lay Centres of the Consul and the Catholic Federal Association (FEBIC).

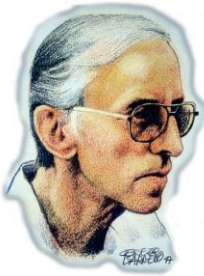
In Europe, especially in Germany and Italy, CEBI presided over various seminars and meetings, with the aim of forming multipliers of the Popular Reading of the Bible. Gradually, it is building a relationship with African groups

Pilgrimage of the Martyrs of the Way

Pe Suresh R. Silva Júnior A Salentine Missio

Theme: Lives for the Kingdom!

Where do they come from and who are these pilgrims?



Bishro Pedro Casaldaliga

The Church Experience in Latin America is enriched with different experiences and ven new vocabulary, amongst other terms the word Caminhada, literary meaning alkway! The pilgrims romeiros who come to this pilgrimage romaria are participants of the social struggles, of the solidarity groups committed to help the poor of the church base communities social struggles, of the solidarity groups committed to help the poor of the church base communities.

They are persons of different accents, of different costumes, cultures and different formation; people of different nations and ethnic groups – but with a common characteristic: they share the same dream of proclaiming the Kingdom! This really and truly identifies us. In the midst of so many appeals we are called to, there is this One which is very particular: The Romaria (Pilgrimage) of The Martyrs!

Deep in the CentreEast of Brazil, in the midst of the dense wood, people with indigenous traits or of migrants, people of the remote interior, people of Araguaia gather. It is for this place that the Prelazia of St Felix of Araguaia calls these people to celebrate the pilgrimage not minding the dust and the long journey, From time to time these people meet to remember women and men, mothers, youth and children,



PE EZEQUIEL RAMIN MISSIONARIO COLOMBIANO



Steadfast in The Land, Planting Life

indigenous, farmers, male and female religious, priests, bishops, lawyers, journalists, committed laity, landless farmers, workers, committed citizens with human rights, dedicated in favour of life, justice, liberty and a true peace.

What happens in the Pilgrimage of the Martyrs?

It is a profound moment reflecting the martyrdom spirituality. Without failing in respect to all other pilgrimages that we celebrate in our religious universe, in which we celebrate an apparition, a devotion to a saint, seek water from a fountain in a cave, in the pilgrimage dedicated to the martyrs it is different. One seeks to drink from the mind and testimony of those “who have been through great persecution, and have bleached their clothes in the blood of the lamb.”

In Ribeiro Bonito, Mato Grosso, on the 11th of October 1976, two women of the interior, Margarida and Santana, were being tortured in prison at a time when the people celebrating the novena of Our Lady of the Apparition. On this day, Bishop Pedro and Fr John Bosco, a Jesuit who worked with the indigenous tribe Bakairi, arrived. Both men went to intercede for the two women. A soldier opened fire in the face of Fr John Bosco, punched him, and with his rifle gave him the fatal shot.

After some time, the Sanctuary in honour of the Pilgrim Martyrs was built in Riberao to remember not just Fr John Bosco, but many many others who during centuries, painted the history of this continent with their blood. The pilgrimage is organised collectively, in a group families receive the pilgrims, others collect the ingredients for the preparation of the meals, others engage in voluntary work and the



If They shut the voice of the prophets, the Stones will Speak Out!

miracle of participation occurs. In the midst of varied symbols, occurrences that one

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Fr Josimo Martyr during the military regime!)

cannot easily explain are felt deep down in the intimacy of the pilgrims' hearts. We see in this pilgrimage an explosion of generous gestures which express what the words by themselves are not able to convey:

In the colours the red and wine used by the participants in the different covers of the altar, the stole and the decorations.

In the vestment traces of indigenous customs in the liturgical vests, varied colours *in the tunics* dressed by the youths who bring the offerings on the altar, the clothes of the women who gave the blessings.

In the gifts given – tapes, torches and vessels with drawings and pyrographed with the words: “*Lives Given for The Kingdom.*”

The drawings – traces of the indigenous.

In the Liturgical objects – made of pau of Brazil or vessels all painted differently.

In the banners made in cotton fabric and having printed the photo of every martyr.

In the fire of the torches.

In the singing the choruses, the sound of the flutes, tabacados, and the loud drums.

In the food which was prepared by sharing: some gave rice, others beans and banana.

A Day of Prayers and Fasting

Remembering The Martyred Missionaries

On the way the pilgrims were received with open hearts.

Bishop Pedro Casaldaliga recalled the Commitment of the Pilgrimage to which the pilgrims consented:

We embrace, in love, these commitments:

In the family, at work, and at leisure, we will always be joyful witnesses of Easter.

We will reflect, announce the Word of God and Celebrate Faith and Life in our community.

We will be an Ecumenical Church, welcoming the various cultures and be open to every religion which respects life

We will participate actively in the world of politics, and of the popular movements

We will take care of Nature as a Gift of God.

We will fight for Land and Housing for Health and Educational work and at leisure.

And we Denounce, prophetically neoliberalism and the latifundio, corruption and the servility to consumerism and manipulation.

Young People, Children, Women and Men of the interior and of the cities, enjoy different cultures and equal rights!

We will be a people, many people, in this “Large Motherland!”

With all people who show solidarity with this world.

In Bishop Pedro Casaldaliga’s words, “the memory of the martyrs did not let anyone sleep peacefully.”

All returned showered by the blood of the martyrs, fed by the solidarity and welcome, enkindled with the fire of hope and praying to the Lord the God of the Poor: “pour out thy spirit of unity, of strength and of joy, so that we dedicate completely our lives for the cause of your Kingdom”.

The Office of the Martyrs of the Latin American Pilgrim Church

Our America is the continent of death and hope

We write especially to you

In the name of all our People

The Pastoral Land Commission

And all our churches

Who owe you the courage to live

Defending your identity

And your steadfastness in following and announcing the Kingdom

Against the wave of this AntiKingdom neo liberalism

And in spite the corruption of our governments

And the retreat of our hierarchies

And our very retreats

We believe that as long as that there is martyrdom there is credibility

As long as there is martyrdom there is hope

You have washed the clothes of your compromise, in the

Blood of the Lamb

And your blood in His Blood.

Continue to wash our dreams

Our fragilities and our failures.

As long as there is martyrdom there is conversion

As long as there is martyrdom there is efficiency

The seed of the wheat, dying multiplies itself.

We write to you, against the prohibition

Of the powerful and the dictatorships military, political and economical

And against the cowardly memory negation of our churches

In truth they want to impose

An amnesty that will be more of an amnesia

And a reconciliation that is more of closing one's eyes.

Useless.

You know how to forgive but you want to live

We will not permit to suffocate the supreme cry of love.

We will not permit that your blood be shed in vain

Also we will not superficially or in an irresponsible manner

Show your posters

Sing your names in a pilgrimage

or Cry your memory in a play.

We will assume your lives and your deaths

We assume the causes you lived for

These concrete causes

For which you gave your lives and death.

These Causes so Divine and so Human

That grow in a historical moment and efficient charity

For the major cause of the Kingdom.

For which He gave his life, his death and resurrection

The First amongst the death

Jesus of Nazareth, the Crucified and Resurrected forever.

We will remember you one by one, male and female,

And if we do not mention now any of your names clearly and loudly,

Is to claim yourselves, males and females,

In one loud voice:

OUR MARTYRS!

Women, Men, Children and Elderly, Indigenous, farmers, workers, students,

Mothers, lawyers, professors, religious – male and female, mayors, Pastors, priest's catechists and bishops...

Known martyrs already included in our Book of Martyrs The anonymous, but registered in the Book of God.

We feel that we are your heirs, witnesses, a martyr church, Deacons on pilgrimage,

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In this long Pascal night of this continent, So dark yet, but destined to victory.

We will not give up, we will not betray, we will not deny, This major example that was your Life, Which was the same model of Jesus

And which is the dream of God for all his sons and daughters of all the different worlds for the only world and multi fraternal:

the Kingdom, the Kingdom, his Kingdom

With Saint Romero of America and with all of you and united with your voice and common commitment of all the brothers and sisters in solidarity

that accompany us, we declare ourselves, “Happy for following, like Jesus (like you) the same risks.

for identifying us with the causes of the havenots”

In this world that prostituted itself totally to the market forces, And to an egoistic wellbeing, we take an oath in your name, with humility and determination:

“Far from us be that we glorify ourselves

not in the name of the Cross of Our Lord Jesus Christ With Him and with You

We will follow singing songs of Liberation!

And our life”

For Him and for Your sake

We will know how in a jubilant manner resurrect “Even at the Cost of our Lives”



Sister Dorothy Stang, was an American born, Brazilian member of the Congregation of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur. She was murdered in Anapu, a city in the state of Pará, in the Amazon Basin of Brazil.



Margarida Maria Alves, assassinated at the treshold of her house in front of her young son , once said, during a celebration of 1st May that it is better to die in during the struggle, than die of hunger!

SECOND PART

11

Fr John Mary Cauchi

“He has a silent story, but which says a lot”

With these words, the young secretary of the Pastoral Commission for Land Reform of Paraíba, Maria das Graças Teixeira Rodriguez described the work of Fr John Mary Cauchi. “He always worked together with his companions as a team, defending the farmers who were being threatened by the great landowners. He never imagined that he would be involved in this kind of work. The circumstances pushed him into it. He followed closely the suffering of the farmers and despite the difficulties all this involved, he never regretted the battles he had to fight.”

Fr John Mary Cauchi was posted to a rural parish where the small farmers were being expelled from their lands because the landowners wanted to invest in the sugar cane, in great plantations. The first unjust result of monoculture is that it leaves no space for the small farmer. “*It was our mission, then, to defend the small farmer who has a right to his piece of land to sustain his family and provide food for the masses,*” declared the CPT on several occasions. “*The Land belongs to humanity as a whole and not to a few selected landowners: The Land belongs to God and as such should be considered as being The Land of the Brethren.*”

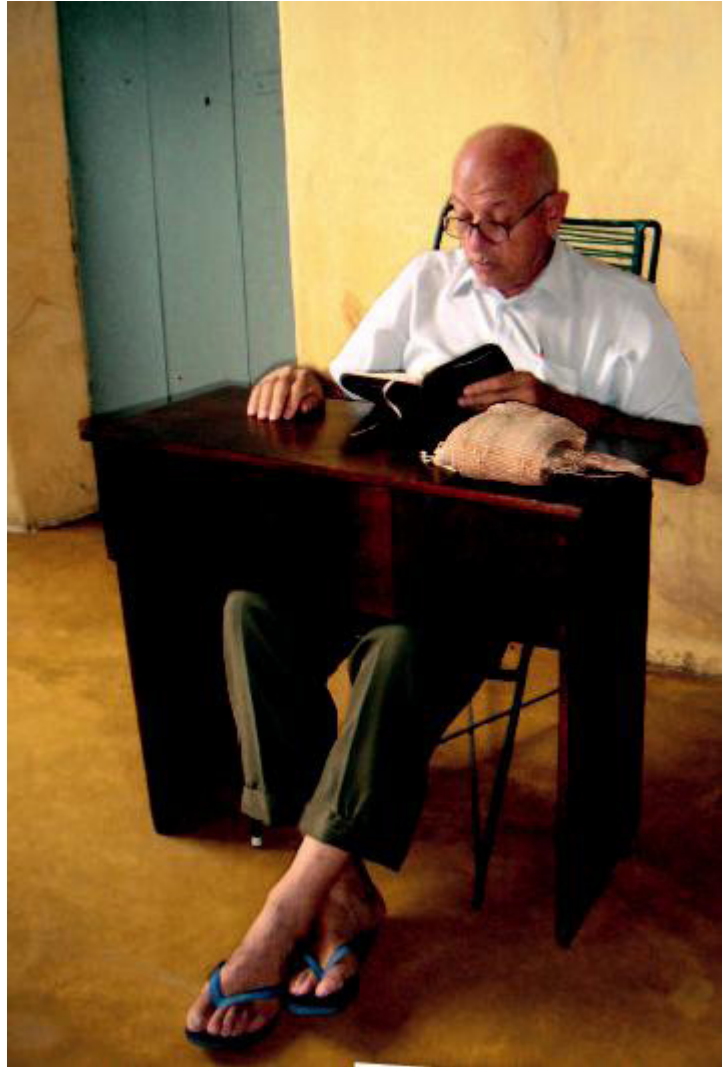
As time passed and the farmers became more organised, they fought for the land they were threatened to lose, and by so doing, they attracted the attention of the authorities. According to the Statute of the Land enacted by the military government, the land whose title of ownership was the cause of social tensions would be misappropriated for land reform. The farmers responded to this threat of the great landowners by resisting claiming that “*from their land they wouldn't be ousted; it was theirs for keep.*”

This was the struggle in which Fr John Mary Cauchi, jointly with his companions of the CPT and of the Catholic Church, backed by his Bishop José Pirez, became involved. In truth, Fr John Mary admits he was remotely prepared for this kind of priesthood and pastoral activity way back at the Seminary in Recife under the responsibility of Mgr Helder Camara. In his Seminary days, theologians like the Belgian José Comblain, one of the founders of the Theology of Liberation, who was prefect of studies, and a certain Padre Sena responsible for the University Catholic Youths, lectured them on Holy Scripture. It was at this time that many priests were being expelled from Brazil.

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As seminarians, in the weekend and in the summer months, as part of their formation, they were sent to the poor areas of the periphery, where they faced this crude reality of exploitation of the poor.

It was the time when the Church in Latin America declared *the evangelical option for the poor*, and the bishops made it a point that during their formation, the seminarians must experience the conditions of the masses abandoned and excluded in the great favelas of the great metropolis. Fr John Mary remembers how things grew worse under President Medici. All the Church leaders who like him were defending the farmers in their rights, were visited by the Federal Police in their homes, and questioned about their documents, facing the risk of being expelled from Brazil. It was prohibited for two persons to even keep talking on a bus stop in Brazil. Very often Fr John Mary had to face the police.



They had to report their movements to the police if they wanted to leave their town of origin to visit a friend or relative in another city. They endured all kinds of harassments. He had faced twenty intimidations because of his involvement in the struggle for the land reform. According to the secretary of the CPT, at one moment he had more sittings at the Law Courts to attend than Holy Masses to celebrate. The CPT with Fr John Mary

Cauchi as coordinator for two decades or so, gained land for as many as five thousand families. Persons in the know would confirm for us that no lay militant movement in favour of land reform succeeded in gaining as much land for so many families in one particular State. Of these, five hundred families gained their piece of land within the precincts of the town where his parish stood – no mean achievement, those in the know would confirm.

The nuns who accompanied Fr John Mary Cauchi for a decade or more, through the CPT quote the farmers as saying: *“Where would we be today if we did not have Fr John Mary with us in our struggle?”* For them he was *“our Father, our brother and our friend.”* He was a person who made their battle his own, irrespective of the consequences. The farmers admired his simplicity, his dedication and his loyalty to their cause. *“As a man of prayer, when we returned home very late at night, after a day of hard work and a difficult journey, he would ask us to open the church and prepare the altar to say Mass. If this was not feasible he never failed to recite his breviary.”* When a new bishop was appointed and Fr John Mary realized that the new appointee was not all in favour of land reform as practiced by the CPT, he waited in silence and humility till the new bishop learnt from his priest companions and committed lay people who John Mary really was. When on one occasion he fell sick, the doctors at the hospital were surprised at the backing he received from the young parishioners. At no time did they leave him alone. Even his bishop, José Perez, asked for an extra bed in his room so that he could be near him. *“The respect that Fr John Mary commanded was total”* – the nuns concluded.

This song, paraphrased from Portuguese, epitomizes the spirituality of the struggle of Fr John Mary Cauchi and his colleagues in favour of the Land Reform:

The Land, God gave it to us to sow and produce to collect and share, to live! Let us lift up our hands to God so that He showers on us work, rain and bread.

Let us Bless God and ask for His Love, Justice, Health and Peace. God gave us the Land so that we can cultivate it and nobody lacks the daily bread.

God wants us to be conscious of the millions without bread, without a roof.

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Gratitude

Author: Josias Antonio Dias – Almir Muniz

You came from afar to the North East to evangelize us,

Faithful to the Lord, a struggling priest, came to help us.

And day in day out, you always asked God for protection,

To help the suffering people and farmers to win.

Chorus

Loyal companion of God and messenger of Jesus Christ.

Loyal in your promise to be a companion of the multitudes,

In the land occupation, you represent hope to the farmers.

You defend them from the threats and assassinations.

Chorus

Your hunger strike spread your name to the interior.

Ever strong in your faith,

you always address God and ask for His protection

For the suffering and struggling landless people.

You always pray and are faithful to Our Mother in heaven.

Chorus

Veronica and Albertina, two dear companions of John,

In their difficult task against the great land owners and the oppressors, They tirelessly dedicated their life together with the CPT, Defending the people they acclaim you for your help.

Chorus

In *Almir Muniz*, the people are happy for believing In a prophecy you professed that God will not fail Those who look to God for their victory here in the field. Amidst a lot of suffering we seek support in you Fr John. *Chorus*

Josias Antonio Dias

Almir Muniz Farm

Itabaiana PB

The Agrarian Conflict as reported in the Newspapers

Fazenda Engenho Novo (Large Estate 'Engenho Novo) São Miguel de TaipuPB



Fazenda Engenho Novo has an area of 3,160 hectares. The occupation started in December

1993, when the INCRA, in view of the request of the landless farmers, made a survey in the area for

purposes of expropriation. In March 1994, a fierce dispute began between the landless farmers and property owners. Seven farmers were arrested.

The media gave great importance to these arrests in the news with. The “Correio” reported that police evicted farmers and arrested farmers in Pilar, showing pictures in the front pages of the unions with banners denouncing “We Were Attacked”! The lawyer of the trade union Central Unica dos Trabalhadores defended Frei Anastácio, Brother Roberto, Fr John Mary and Benedict. It was also reported that farmers in front of the Mamaniguape Forum sympathised with Fr Euphrasius and Ascendino, a farmer. The CPT tried to free those arrested by asking for bail and the judge freed seven farmers.

Other farmers in the region made a public act in front of the police station demanding the release of their companions accused of invading the farm in São Miguel de Taipu. The farmers were shot at by the police and members of the CPT reported the assault to the Secretary Arthur Cunha Lima and asked Involvement of Fr John Mary Cauchi for government intervention. The clashes left five landless farmers injured.

On Saturday 23 April 1984, the newspaper “Uniao” of João Pessoa, announced that a

Priest suffered an attack on his life in São Miguel de Taipu and Fr John Mary had to run for his life.

Mgr José defends landless in the area of conflict

Bishop José celebrated Mass in solidarity with the farmers in São Miguel de Taipu. Hundreds of farmers took part in the Holy Mass celebrated in *Fazenda Engenho Novo*. The holy mass was

attended by 12 priests of the Archdiocese of João Pessoa.

Making an evaluation of the conflict areas in the State, Mgr José said the situation is improving despite the recent events, because people are organized and aware of their right to struggle for the land. In the specific case of *Engenho Novo*, he stated that these are farmers who have been living and working in the farm for many years and that they are very well organized and aware of their rights.

During the celebration, Mgr José recalled the struggles that went on for several years and which required a lot of suffering from the farmers. But they were victorious at Algemar and Abiai which today are fully expropriated. He spoke of being proud “to have ordained priests the likes of Fr Anastácio of the CPT and Fr John Mary Cauchi, parish priest of Pilar, who faced all kinds of danger in the struggle in favour of the people. They are priests who struggle for the poor, suffer hunger, often they remain without sleep and even risking their own lives, “citing as an example the assault suffered by Father John Mary in São Miguel de Taipu during the week.

Bishop José confirmed that the information he had received from some landowners that farmers and Members of the Catholic Church were invading the farms was in fact not true. It was the farmers and their pastoral leaders and Trade Union members who were being assaulted and threatened with death. Don Jose also stated that the right to work and have basic necessities are far more important than the right to property.

Peasants Make Joint Effort to Plant

According to the “Uniao” newspaper dated April 30, 1984, 400 families worked in the farm and decided to plant. They amounted to 800 men, women and children from 20 communities in the vicinity. This union among the farmers, according to the leaders

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of the CPT, helped several conflicts in areas in Paraíba to be resolved in favour of the land reform.

The landless workers involved in the rural conflict area planted crops such as potato, cassava (*mandioca*) and beans. According to the *Association of Farmers of São Miguel de Taipu*, these plantations were



destroyed three times by the big land owners. The CPT sent representatives to guide the farmers in their effort, pointing out that the right to work is anterior to the right of property. So they cannot stop the squatters from planting, even according to INCRA (National Institute of colonization and agrarian reform).

On 7th June 1994 the newspaper “O Norte” reported, “The Landless of Engenho Novo Denounced Death Threats.”

The farmers went to the newsroom to denounce the death threats made by henchmen armed with guns using a Ford truck, destroying 25 hectares of crops. The landless went to the National Institute for Land Reform (*INCRA*) (*National Institute of Colonization and Agrarian Reform*) demanding the expropriation of the farm. INCRA feared that now that the farm was divided among 16 heirs, it will be used as a strategy to prevent the expropriation in the required time. A former police officer, known by the farmers, was organizing the henchmen to prevent residents from leaving their homes, according to the “*O Correio*” of 16th June.

The farmers made a desperate effort to regain their tools. They made protests and demonstrations in front of the jail and succeeded to recover the equipment. But again the farmers lost their crops in São Miguel de Taipu which were destroyed. Farmers were beaten by thugs and the police investigator went to the area marked by various conflicts, according to the “*Uniao*” of October 8.

The farmers prepared the land for planting once again, but the police prevented the joint effort of the farmers. The landless denounced being beaten and that the climate

may result in lynching if a policeman working with the roughnecks was not arrested.

According to the newspaper “*O Norte*” of 14 January 1995, INCRA said that it will “*misappropriate the Engenho Novo Farm.*”



Father John Maria Testifies about the invasion of the Fazenda “Uniao” 22 February 1995

Rural workers of Pilar, about 1000 farmers with their families, protested with placards against the accusation made on Fr John Mary. The Judge was

surprised by the amount of people outside of the region; “*have you ever seen that amount of people out there?*” inquired the judge talking to reporters. According to Fr John Mary, “*the indictment formalized by the big land owners and cattle raisers is unfounded. I didn’t tell anyone to invade lands. I didn’t do anything. In fact, I didn’t show up in the place where the police is saying that I was.*”

Fr John Maria evaluated that justice had made its work correctly, and the Church had done her duty in a perfect way: “*Justice has done its role very well. About our work, as the Church, we will always be attentive to the problems in the interior and in the city. Look at all these people, this human solidarity. This is recognition of our struggle for life with dignity,*” he stressed.

This was said when he got out of the law courts where there were applause, hugs and songs popular with the peasants, who came in trucks, buses and cars from all over the region. The President of the Union of the Farmers said the



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owners not only want to charge Fr John Mary Cauchi, but also denounce all the work of the Church, of the trade union movements, the workers and popular movements. Fr Anastácio said that the farmers knew very well what they want, the agrarian reform throughout the country.

In the end, the defence lawyer said, “*John Mary didn’t commit any crime. Proof of that is this manifestation. The prosecution was based only on reports in the newspapers – it did not present any police investigation.*” The people went to Nossa Senhora do Pillar church where there were speeches, prayers and expressions of affection to Fr John Mary!

The CPT Reaffirms the Charges According to the “O Norte” of Thursday 3 August 1995

Fr Anastácio, President of the CPT, insisted in stating that the President of the heirs Julio Paulo Neto, was responsible for all kinds of violence, destruction of crops and beatings of the landless in Engenho Novo. In July 1994, Jose Fernandes da Silva, who was beaten and taken to the country hospital, reported the happening to the police and judicial investigation.

The CPT is discussing impunity in cases of violence in the field

Rather than calm the violence, delegates contributed to the intensification of the same violence being the “representative” of the Secretary of State defending the owners. The command of course denies the charges, saying that providing lunch to the police doesn’t mean collusion with the owners. The farmers made rallies asking for the removal of the Secretary. The Secretary defended himself saying that the police were complying with court order.

The big landowners denounced the INCRA because it tampered with the measurement of the property declaring it measures 678 acres and not 428 acres, which the public notary had declared. The conflict in the area began in 1992 and was worsening a year later, when Justice ruled the repossession of the farm to the great landowners.

This is the story of the occupation of the Engenho Novo Farm. This story repeats itself hundreds of times in every occupation that the landless made in Paraíba and from Brazil till today!

13

Learning from Popular Pastoral Methodology

Compiled by Gabrielle Geacomelli

*The Union of Rural Workers of Mogeiro – PB,
in the midst sixties and early seventies*



Many people in the Church were detained, during the military dictatorship because of their work within the Church. Most were laymen and laywomen. One case was that of a school teacher who came from the interior, from the

parish of Mogeiro, who at the time was the leader of the community. *Arrested* She was arrested at her home and taken to the Federal Police. She was interrogated all day long, charged on the activity that they were doing and that there were outsiders in the group. They wanted to know the identity of the outsider that was guiding the meetings. She replied that there was no outsider. In fact, they were seeking to banish the vicar Fr John Mary Cauchi from Brazil. *“He supports us, but he’s not the one who prepares the meeting”* she insisted.

Bishop José Maria Pires, found out what was happening and became intrigued. He admired the whole thing and faced the authorities telling them: *“Now ... you want to know who the outsider is? Look here! For you he can be an outsider, but for us he is not! Who guides us is Our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

Popular Education

In Paraíba, during the 60s and the 70s, a great number of people connected with the Catholic Church involved themselves in popular movements and literacy campaigns. The very Archdiocese of Paraíba, enlivened by the teaching of Vatican II (1962-1965) and by the pastoral suggestions coming from the Latin American Bishops Conference in Medellin (1968), devoted itself to a renovated work with the people in base communities, seeking

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to reduce the distance between the hierarchy and the populace. This training during the military repression became a reference and a point of resistance for the civil society.

A Base Group

The city of Mogeiro is located in a rural region in the South of Paraíba, positioned in the middle of the triangle formed by Campina Grande, Recife and João Pessoa, and is an autonomous municipality since 1965. As it happens with myths that are the result of stories told and heard several times, so the words of Anunciada, Renato, Isac, Manasseh, Manuel, Dona Inês, and John Martins, were weaving a sort of legend. To our hearing, these were facts, repeated very often but really and truly they never were a repetition! Everytime there was a new bit connected to the present day, an old and at the same time a new lesson for life and one's faith. Repetitions are tedious in writing, and therefore should be avoided or softened. But we are never tired of listening because each time the same words sound differently. Like when we hear a song we like for a number of times.

We listen and we transcribe a narration, without worrying about the 'truth' of this story. We therefore leave the bulk of this work to the words of Anunciada, Isac, Renato, Manasseh, Dona Inês, Manoel, and João Martins. Our part, shared with them, was to arrange the text, take away some repetitions, add some notes, or some suggestions. Trying to form, in a way, a synthesis... In other words, we tried to join the little wisdom of Mogeiro, which is not that little, I assure you. A summary, a presentation, of what would likely be our attitude and conclusion to the story told by them. A story that they believe was true, and that they have the right to defend as their truth.

Contrary to other positions, we recognize with respect their right to think differently as true. We just ask that none of these 'truths' appears as 'a' or 'the only' truth, asking the other to submit his version. In fact, we share with Maxwell of Chowdhury, the introductory reflections on the history of Canudos' Settlement (situated in the city of Cruz do Espírito Santo, Paraíba), told by a group of farmers: *"there are those who canonize written documents, thinking that they are, or contain, the truth, forgetting that the written versions of events are interpretations made by someone from some point of view, from one's interests, for better or for worse, consciously or unconsciously.*



And for some reason only the so-called graduates in history, are recognised as historians, and may enter the territory of history.”

We know that in the big official story, the people are not protagonists. Only the ‘great men’, the heroes, make history. We, however, do something different: instead of the version of the press, or of historians and academics, we present the version of what they do and live in their camps/settlements. They will speak

of themselves, and we, by theoretical and methodological option, will not know about the veracity of their assertions. We are not against other versions. We are just trying to say that the

version of living, in history, is not to be discarded. At the same time, we affirm our politicaleducational objective: we want a workers’ camp/settlement experience in our research that in fact they are historians of their story, that is, subjects and authors of a story they are living.

So we start by inviting the participants to present themselves:

“My name is *João Martins de Farias*, born and raised in the hills where Manasseh also lived a long time. Four years ago I came out of the hills, and I’m on the farm in the campi of Mendonca. We are in the struggle for the last four years.

I am *Manasseh Luciano Rodrigues*. I wasn’t born here. I’m from Pernambuco. I married and came to live here in the camp, not in the city.

I am *Isac Luciano Rodrigues*. I am also from Pernambuco, but it’s been a long time since I live here in Mogeiro, more than 40 years. I have always worked, and I’m still working here in the city. Now I’m in the settlement João Pedro Teixeira. I have been President of the Union for 14 years.



I’m *Maria da Silva Anunciada*; I live here in Mogeiro, and am Secretary of the Union.

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I'm *Maria Inês Rodrigues*. I was born and live in Marin. I'm the wife of Renato, and form part of the movement.

People call me *Renato Luciano Rodrigues*. I'm the brother of both Isaac and Manasseh. I live here, but pass part of my time in the Benta Hora of Mogeiro.

My name is *Manoel João da Silva*, and I'm a Brazilian, born here in Benta Hora and live here in the city. I had been living in Marin, in a settlement area, for four years with the people living there. Agnes is my wife. Although she

didn't get used to city life, I live there. I'm on the Board of the syndicate as Second Secretary, and I participate in the struggle of the Workers' Movement, and that is important to me. I think it is very important to live together with the community, together with the Union, along with the Church, along with the workers. Who knows? It is our hope it isn't us who now what's missing; it is the people who know best. The people, them and us, different but together.

The Struggle

The struggle started by the year of 1968. Because of the limits of communication, we used the blackboard, with the task of stressing the important elements and themes that in our view, point to questions and suggestions, as sign plates along the highway. Indications from my reading are offered as one among other possible readings.

[Isac]

We started the struggle here. We started by a Biblical Circle. We began the reading of the Bible and we gave work to do. Work helps. [Anuncia da] Our struggle began when the priest called Manasseh to pray the Rosary, to invite the people to read the Bible on Sundays, and to discuss it. There, in a place, called Guararema. Then, when it was over, he asked if there was another Manasses that enjoyed reading the Bible, who loved to pray the Rosary. Manasseh said I am who I am, because my father was

a virtuous man, and I think what I am today is a result of that. And I gave my name.

[Manoel] I started this way. I was at home and met a teammate, one of the companions, and asked me if I'd accept a meeting at my house. I was already aware, and I accepted. "They will do it in my house."... It was a long conversation.



And I joined with the three who started, and there I was. I'm not a hero, I'm not very strong in the struggle, but the companions who fight have my support. I believe in the struggle, I believe in the fight and that we're not going to do good work by just praying and by only listening the talks that we had in the circle.

[Isaac] They started a biblical circle there in Guararema, which was the first one. Then it was expanding, for other farms, Benta Hora, Mangueira, Granjeiro, isn't it so? And it started, doing some little actions, like helping a person whose house had fallen down, another poor person came to join us...



we were increasing. Within a little time, less than a year, we had more than 100 people who gathered here in this place, then in another ... And, from the reflection, in the course of the week, we were doing those actions, we built a stretch of road that was in a bad state. Because we, in addition to the meeting, had action too. And, mainly, we helped those most in need.

Comment

The situation of the interior in northeastern Brazil was well summed up, in his own time, by Celso Furtado: *“Three parts of the North East are hungry every day of the year; [and] this misery results from the fact that the northeastern citizen has no opportunity to use his ability to work and that at the same time the people*

of the Northeast are subutilized” (ANDRADE, 1998).

On the question of ownership of land, we made use of the date provided by Bishop *Mgr*

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Jose Maria Pires, the archbishop, in 1972 during a lecture he gave to a group of young peasants: “another cause for an agricultural revolution is the possession of the land. Don't tell me that the greatest cause of misery of our people is the drought! Right! On the coast and in the forest there is no drought, however those who live in the forest are as miserable as those who live in the interior... Land is poorly distributed. Want some examples? I quote data provided by IBRA Brazilian institute for Land Reform (1967).



In Brazil we have:

Number of Properties 3.646.117;

Total Area 360.418.098 hectares;

Distributed Thus;

Large Estates 298.137.059 hectares (82%);

Small farms 45.281.125 hectares (12.5%)

Rural Enterprises 16.459. 914 hectares (4.46%)

Let us take the four Northeastern States: Alagoas, Pernambuco, Paraíba and Rio Grande do Norte. The situation of properties, although slightly better than in the whole of Brazil, has however a very similar picture of concentration; almost everything in the hands of the few.

Religiosity, meaning of life, passion for the land, civil conscience and dignity: everything is mixed and interconnected in the story of the protagonists. Always listening to those with experience of life, guiding the paths that from time to time we have chosen, without ever losing touch with reality and without giving up the responsibilities that reality itself imposes on us.

Conscience Awareness and Action

When we become conscious, we cannot then be indifferent [Isac] we grew up with

prayers, with pilgrimages. I like praying, but I feel that we have to do things. We can only pray after action. We act and then pray. We have three moments; we meet before, during the work and after the action.

[Anunciada) Pray and Act, and as such we grew up as people. And when we become conscientious, we cannot then be quiet. You cannot ignore the suffering around you. When we see things and we find out the causes, why it happens, and who is benefiting from this, we cannot stop, we can't stop. We wanted to fight, because religion is not only prayer, to do processions. It's not just praying the Rosary, going to church and confessing. Religion is to live the Gospel in our daily life, isn't it?

Persecution

(Isac) We improved the road to help the people meet, because we saw that the road was in a very bad state. We used the road to carry the merchandise and to travel. It is then that we discovered that we were doing what was not our job. We had to go to the authorities. I mean, to insist with the responsible authorities to take the necessary measures. We knew it was a matter of the Mayor, but the interest of the people was so great that we were going to perform the job, with work and joint effort. And that's how we started the struggle and began to achieve results. And we came to the point that Manasseh and Dona Anunciada were arrested by Federal Police and were testifying there in João Pessoa, in the Federal Police Department.

It began with the first reflections. Persecution was something that had never happened here in this area. The persecution started because in the meetings we were talking of land, of people starving to death, abandoning the property, leaving the place to go elsewhere, and they had a sycophant, slipped in as a spy. And thus the persecution began. So we gave the information about Paraíba and Rio Grande do Norte referring the information that the archbishop gave us!

The Rural Youth

This is the biggest obstacle: the rural youth. If one continues in the field, one can't show what he is worth, because he has no place where to work. On the contrary one is subject to inhuman conditions of leasing and marketing of the product, it must be sold to the owner of the land, and he dictates the conditions.

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[Isac] I remember the persecution started because of a survey we did. [Anunciada] That's it! We started reflecting and we discovered our rights. Why the farmers suffered and are suffering so much, and there are a lot of people out there who live a good life? And whoever works lives badly, and leads a life of suffering. We did a survey of all we reaped, of everything we grew, the situation, and why that happened. From then on it fell on the ears of some curious people, and so the persecution began.

What was meant to be 'production'? We had to write a report with full details, even a straw hat to defend us from the sun; we had to put a value on it: everything, everything! Everything was valued! There we found out that we live too bruised, we live downtrodden beneath the feet of the bourgeoisie.

There we began to inquire. The narration of the persecutions took most of the time on the memories of the group. Anger and outrage accompanied the story by showing a great firmness and unexpected and wonderful strength to address the landowner. In a beautiful, simple and witty way. In the interrogations, the sanity and wisdom of these farmers is all too clear.

We Don't Have a Boss

[Anunciada] Now, most of the questions were to find about Fr John Mary or Mgr Jose, or Joe the Deacon. They asked: "Who meets with you there?" I answered: "the workers." "And who's the boss?" "There's no boss. The head of the workers are those that work there, are the crops that they grow, and the owner that puts the cattle inside our farm to destroy our plantation, when the crop is ready for harvest. That's what makes the people come together. We Involvement of Fr John Mary Cauchi are forced to give one day every week for free to the employer. That's what makes the people come together. We have no Boss!"

It was quite a job to work on the field at that time [Dona Inês]. The life of the workers was sandwiched, in those twenty years of military dictatorship. Because the owners took advantage of the military Government and the bourgeoisie were always on the side of the Government; and the Government always supported the bourgeoisie, and we the poor had no importance.

Everything was easy, to the Northeasterners, whilst the large estates for us were very bad. Hence the struggle started over the land, because there in the Northeast the people

live from agriculture. What they always defended insistently was to have land to work.

Survey

That is why we read the Gospel, the Bible, to find strength and pass on our reflection to our companions. This was part of the struggle.

[Isac] In that fight, the Church has always helped us, I mean in the person of the priests. Only one was neutral and we haven't had a lot of help from him, but the others always helped us. The survey was part of the sociological method of MER (*Movement of Rural Evangelization*). Socorro Barbosa, a pastoral agent, explains the method used:

Firstly, a survey of the problems noting the main points, is taken; and then passes on the results to the companions and starts a plan jointly with those people who think alike. Then we would meet and begin the work of formation: the reading of the Gospel, reflecting deeply on it, which gave us the strength to act in relation to that situation. I attended the group every two weeks, and depending on the development of the group, when I felt that the time for an expansion had come, I would pass on to other farms to form another group. My activity began in Salgado de São Félix; then it was in Mogeiro, at the invitation of Fr John Mary. But it is always God that inspired us in our work.



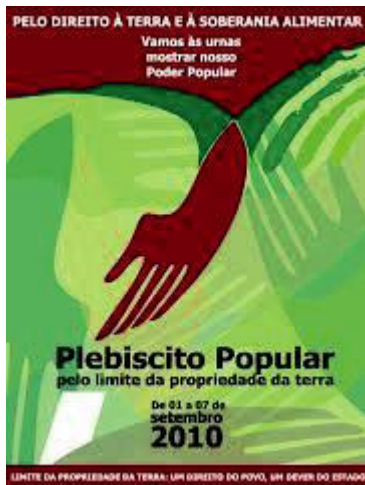
The Council

“The Church before that time had the priests celebrating with their back to the people, the preaching concentrated only on Lord Jesus Christ and that God is Almighty. One had to accept being poor, and the poor became poorer and poorer. It was a way the people accepted the suffering, believing that one day one will save himself. The Second Vatican Council brought a transformation. And the priests helped us to discover that God and His Salvation are not only of the soul. God wants the salvation of the whole man. “

Bishop Jose Pires: Before and After

Bishop José himself helps us to draw the comparison between before and after the action of the Church, in a more institutional dimension. “Government and Clergy, Church and State were once closely united in Brazil. The union was so great that the hierarchy depended on the Government. This paid something to the dioceses and the parishes. Government

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gives his ‘placet’ for the appointment of bishops and the investiture of the pastors. The Republic, with its positivity, brought us a great benefit that was the separation. As much as the defenders of the validity of the past centuries mourn the separation and keep stating that Church and State should remain united, in fact, this absolute independence between civil and ecclesiastical power is much better – each power in its specific area. Independence, however, does not mean opposition. It was after the Second Vatican Council that the rejuvenation of the Church began to manifest through a conscientious participation of the people. Before, such participation already existed only in certain cultural or social milieu.

The Catholic Action

Catholic action was the major pioneer of lay mobilization that began to act more directly in the liturgy and in social life, especially in politics. The Church of Brazil will be always grateful to the Catholic Action, for the dynamism that it planted. The Catholic Action, however, had two characteristics that were at the same time, its strength and its limitation: it was a movement of elites and was, by nature, an extension of the work of the hierarchy. It is defined as ‘a participation of the laity in the apostolate of the Church hierarchy.’ These beliefs do not carry that importance any more, from what is observed today. Wherever the Church shows itself active, it is no longer by elite groups but of groups of the common people. In these groups, the concern is not so much to check out your options with the decisions of the hierarchy, but with the Gospel. One cannot ignore the importance of the purity of doctrine, but one insists more on the importance of concrete actions. What we realized is that the Church is disappearing from the great centers but is appearing in the peripheries. It is irrelevant at the top but it strengthened in the base, remains static and ritualist among the great but creative and shows solidarity with the small. The Church gladly waived the privileges and asks nothing from the Governments for itself apart from the liberty to evangelize. Sure, she always takes as a reference the standards issued by the Holy See which is obvious and on the other side, the laws of the country. But the main concern is not that of rules and laws, but the calls of the Holy Spirit transmitted through the signs of the times. That’s why she has gained back, a special affection from the people, by seeking to identify herself with the needs of the people. The people very often, without direct interference of priests or nuns, are organizing themselves in biblical circles, in groups or in small Christian communities. People who don’t get anxious about challenging institutions, systems or regimes. They are people that have no interest in The

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Forbidden

In several places, we are forbidden to gather in a group. By the delegate of the local police; we can't get together to read the Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ. The delegate is trying to get the signature of who is responsible for our work, but he is not after that of the simple a farmer....but of Fr John Mary.

[Anunciada] When we are saying that it all started on the Bible, it is because it was from the Bible, really and truly. We realize that to pray, to read the Bible, to sing, taking part in processions that is very good and easy to do. Everybody participates. But when one is invited for action, then we have the answer. "I don't, I don't want, no." Because that's something that hurts. We have to donate ourselves. We know, and also found in the Bible, that Jesus Christ was, and is still today, the world's most revolutionary comrade. Jesus Christ is a good comrade. He is that fellow who takes us on his lap and is our guarantee. He is a good comrade. Just to pray and go to church, and make processions is good. But, this alone, is very empty, and it's great to see that where you have the Gospel, there is life, which is what one is going through right now.
Support

[Isac] This time we received very large support in the diocese of Paraíba, and there on the hills. We received strong support from Mgr Helder Camara, and we did a lot of training in that former Seminary in Olinda and also in João Pessoa. And we grew fortified realizing our situation of very simple farmers who never had any importance, who only succeeded to learn a little how to read and write. This was the situation, until we had support from Pernambuco. Mgr Helder was supportive in the struggle of Paraíba, in the struggle for Land. Helder himself came here to help Mgr José to drive away the bulls of the great land owners which were let lose to invade our farms. Because it was there, in the fight for Land, that the farmers were discovering that the problem consisted in the existence of the large estates, and that people were starving because they had no place to work; and because the great landowners brought the cattle and invaded the farms, and let the people, small farmers, without work. And then the farmers began defending the land. And there started the struggle. It was a position that the Church took to support the farmers for them to have a job. And that's why even today, the workers would have no capacity to struggle, if they didn't have the massive support of the Church, of the diocese, in the person of Mgr José,

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and of the priests and pastoral agents. And there they began defending the land.

The Mogeiro Group Balance

The Mogeiro group was not born loose without a stimulus. There are educators, pastoral agents and priests working in it. There is around you, a Church procuring to be loyal to the Gospel. But the group was not created by the church: the group grows by learning to be autonomous, without ever isolating itself, and at the same time, thankful for being accompanied, helped and stimulated.

A Balance

In respect of the Group of Mogeiro in relation with the parish priest, and the people of MER (Movement of Evangelization), as well as with the ‘Church’ in general, one perceives the pursuit of a wise balance:

The group is grateful to the priests and pastoral agents and to the Church as a whole, but at the same time one does not feel dependent or bound formally. The Church, with its educators and pastoral workers is an ally in these struggles. It is an important and precious companion, and the members of the group feel part of it, but without having to necessarily be part of its organisation or bound to the hierarchical structure.

Here follows the list of the settlements that the Pastoral Land Commission of Paraíba acquired for some 5,000 families during the last decade:

Municipality	Name of Settlement	No. of Families
Alhandra	Arvore Alta	272
	Subauma	99
Conde	Barra de Gramamae	78
	Dona Antonia	110
	Frei Anastacio	18
	Gurugi I	82
	Gurugi II	86
	Mata da Chica	450
	Paripi III	26
	Rick Charles	51
Caarorã	Capim de Cheiro	112
	Muitos Rios	29
Capim de Maman guape	Paulo Gomes do Nascimento	21
Curral de Cima	Jardim	42

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Cruz do Espírito Santo	Corvoada	40
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Involvement of Fr John Mary Cauchi

	Dona Helena	105
	Campo, Sementes e Mudas	45
Itabaiana	Urna	19
	Santa Clara	18
	Sítio Salomão	09
	Nossa Senhora Aparecida	30
	Almir Muniz da Siva	24
Jacaraú	Antonio Chaves	28
	Boa Esperança	42
	Jaracateá	15
	Novo Salvador	97
Juarez Távora	Novo Horizonte	33
Mogéiro	Benta Hora	11
	Dom Marcelo Carvalheira	70
	Pe. João Maria Cauchi	37
Pilar	Corredor	82
	Barra de São José	14
	Nova Conquista	98
Pedras de Fogo	Corvoadas	31
	Engenho Novo	40
	Engenho Novo II	57
	Fazendinha	84
	Itabatinga	107

Participation of Fr John Cauchi

	Mata de Vara	106
	Nova Aurora	98
	Santa Emilia	15
	Santa Terezinha	62
Pitimbú	Apasa	150
	Camucim	41
	Andressa I e II	130
	Sede Velha	49
Rio Tinto	Compart I	100
	Compart II	136
Salgado de São Felix	Algamar	1000
	Campos	130
	Sítio Souza	50
Sapé	Boa Vista	121
	21 de Abril	60
	Padre Gino	62
	Santa Helena	206
	Rainha dos Anjos	49
	Vida Nova	68
	Nova Vivência	48
São Miguel de Taipú	Água Branca	73
	Amarela I	54
	Amarela II	42
	Novo Taipú	60
	Maravalha	44

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Besides achieving these settlements, the CPT of Paraíba is still involved in the struggle to bring about Land Reform in these eight municipalities that are part of 10 *fazendas* (big estates), involving around 430 families:

Municipality	Name of Estate	No. of Families
Sapé:	Fazenda Antas	11
Mogéiro:	Fazenda Paraíso II	38
	Fazenda Fazendinha (Esta çãõ)	56
	Fazenda Salgadinho	29
Rio Tinto:	Fazenda Mangue	80
João Pessoa:	Fazenda Ponta de Gramame	38
Pilar	Fazenda Paraíso I	51
Pitimbu	Fazenda Marinas	28
Caaporã	Ouro Verde (Fazenda Alvora da)	40
São José Dos Ramos	Fazenda Pauapique	60

14

Testimony of Frei Anastácio Ribeiro, OFM

Father John Mary Cauchi: the “*Good Samaritan*”

I met Father John Mary in 1975, the year I also started to work in the Archdiocese of Paraíba, when Don José Maria Pires was archbishop. At that time, the land conflict in the State of Paraíba, followed the example of the farmers of the great Mucatu, Pitimbu and Alagamar, municí

palties located on the South coast and Agreste, cradle of the agrarian reform in the State.



That year, a group of men and women, religious and lay people, with the support of the Bishop José Maria Pires, started a joint activity with the farmers in their struggle for land. Until then, there was no ecclesial organisation working in this direction. At first, the Rural Pastoral Commission was created, which years later, became the Pastoral Land Commission (CPT). Father John Mary always contributed to the CPT, forming part of the coordination on a Diocesan level.

In this way, we had the role of articulating the movement of the landless farmers and other social movements linked to the social pastoral of the diocese. And in this context, Fr John Mary had a key role in the Northeast region of Paraíba. Despite not wanting to be in front of the Commission because of his meekness, he gave a great hand, ever present contributing to the collective work.

During the mobilizations of the farmers, he had always been, and still is, present in all the spheres of the struggle. Father John always acted as the ‘good Samaritan’, in logistical support taking water and food during the long walks, mobilizations and pilgrimages in the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Paraíba. He also used his Toyota truck for transporting farmers, when necessary, in occupations, mobilizations, protests, health care, hearings in court and visiting families when the farmers were arrested.

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Because of this tireless struggle in defence of the humble, Father John Mary suffered attempts on his life. He was a victim of an ambush planned by henchmen hired by the great landowners who wanted to take his life. In one of them, he had his car riddled with bullets, but by divine miracle, in gratitude for all the good he always did, no bullet hit him. Because of his involvement in the defence of the farmers, he faced several lawsuits in court, all linked to the struggle for land. In some of them, he was sentenced to prison, but managed to prove his innocence, in the Federal Court of Appeal of the 5th region in Recife and in the Supreme Court defended by the lawyers committed to the cause.

Another striking feature in the life of Father John Mary is the fact that he always showed solidarity, at any time of the day or night, with families of prisoners unjustly condemned and of farmers who lost their lives in the struggle for land. Another remarkable fact was a hunger strike that he did, along with religious and lay persons, in the Legislative Assembly of Paraíba, in protest against the injustice committed with farmers and laity committed with Pastoral Land Commission. In Paraíba , between 1962 and 2016, 25 farmers have been killed in the struggle for land.

As a priest, I can say that John Mary is a zealous Vicar, dear to the people and is a living testimony of a missionary loyal to the Gospel. During all the years I've known him, I always saw him living a humble life, with no special resources, living a simple life, modestly dressed, and with deep respect to the Church and to his Bishop.

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Testimony of Mgr José Maria Pires

Father John Maria Cauchi was first sent as a “Fidei Donum” seminarian to Recife. Bishop Helder Camara contacted me saying that the seminarian John Mary Cauchi is not feeling well in Recife which was a great metropole. He wanted to work in a place which is poorer and where common people abound. I accepted him immediately and in fact his arrival in Paraíba was really a blessing. I ordained Fr John Mary at the age of 25 years in December 1967. He was not a great orator but he knew how to communicate well with the farmers. That epoch was marked by two special happen



ings: the military dictatorship and Vatican II. The Council taught us that the Church is the People of God. The people in Paraíba consisted mostly of poor and simple people.

As a result it is our duty to help organise these people and help them understand that the poor are the preferred people before the Almighty. The poor are those who do not have money, who are not educated, who do not have any certificate but only have virtues. They are the preferred of God and the privileged of the Gospel. Evangelising in our diocese was not about simply praying, celebrating the Eucharist and administering the sacraments. It was all this, but also about being near to the people, living near the people, participating in their struggles, their sufferings and in their victories. John Mary evangelised more by his example than by his words. He lived the Gospel of nonviolence, he was present and near the people in their struggles in favour of their right. He was persecuted and suffered attempts on his life. The signs of this attempt remained marked on the body of his Toyota with bullets that were destined for the driver and his passenger at the time. But he did not give up his commitment to the farmers.

Every time that I as bishop had to go to defend the farmers with my presence, John Mary Cauchi was always present. On a Maundy Thursday when we were about to start the Mass of Unity, John Mary and Fr Anastácio arrived with their clothes all wet

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and covered with mud. They had spent the night with the farmers and their families who had been expelled from their fields the day before. They came straight to the Cathedral to celebrate the Mass of Unity because they did not have time to go home to take a bath and change their clothes. I can of course say much more on the evangelical commitment of Fr John Mary Cauchi. This short testimony reflects my appreciation and gratitude for this priest who dedicated all his life to the cause of evangelization in Paraíba.

Bishop Jose Maria Pires



Epilogue

It is a fact, that the Church, these last hundred and fifty years, respecting the principle of “development of doctrine” has given us outspoken and relevant teaching on the concept “property”. I firmly believe, that it is opportune to bring to mind, the recent teaching of the Magisterium of our Church in this regard. Without doubt, as we have seen in this humble contribution, this teaching of the universal Church influenced the Church in Brazil as in other countries, and gave rise to the setting up of bodies like the Pastoral Land Commission – CPT. In turn, the CPT influenced priests, religious and committed laity, like Fr John Mary Cauchi, to assume this challenge, a dangerous challenge one must say, which is, the struggle to bring about the Land Reform.

I believe that people like John Mary felt illuminated with the universally acclaimed document “Gaudium et Spes”, following the Vatican Council II, which in paragraph 71 states,

The council taught us that:

- a. By its very nature private property has a social quality which is based on the law of the common destination of earthly goods.
- b. In many underdeveloped regions there are large or even extensive rural estates which are only slightly cultivated or lie completely idle for the sake of profit, while it is evidently urgent to increase the productivity of the fields.
- c. Not infrequently those who are hired to work for the landowners or who till a portion of the land as tenants receive a wage or income unworthy of a human being.
- d. According to the different cases, therefore, reforms are necessary: that income may grow, working conditions should be improved, security in employment increased, and an incentive to working on one’s own initiative given. Indeed, insufficiently cultivated estates should be distributed to those who can make these lands fruitful.

One can conclude with the thoughts of Pope Francis in his speech at the *World Meeting of Popular Movements in Bolivia* where he defended the Land Reform and made harsh criticism of agrobusiness. On citing the Social Teaching of the Church Pope Francis recalled that *‘the land reform apart from being a political necessity is a moral obligation.’*

He is also preoccupied with the exclusion of so many farmers from their lands, not because of wars or natural disasters, but rather, as a result of being expelled.

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Participation of Fr John Cauchi

1. Methods and Strategies in the World and Brazil

2 The Latifundio

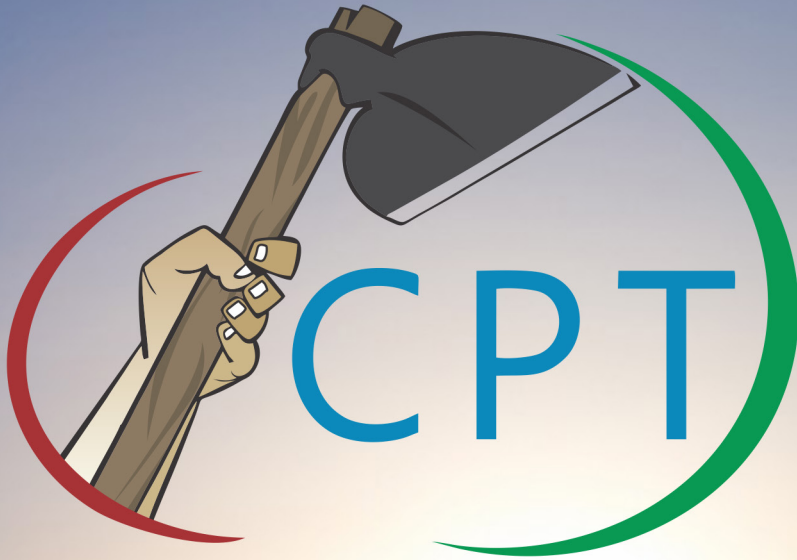
3 The Birth of The CTP

5. Different Variations

8. Women Honoured

10. Pilgramege of The Martyr

13. Learning From the History of the Popular.Pastoral Activity....



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