

FASTENOPFERPOLICY-STATEMENT

building communities | living our faith



core theme 1

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1 Introduction

Fastenopfer (Swiss Catholic Lenten Fund/SCLF) is a Catholic relief agency that was started in 1962. It is firmly anchored in the Church in Switzerland. Since this time, it has collected more than CHF 800 million and its development policies have become more and more active. For many decades, *Fastenopfer* has supported pastoral projects, formerly known as "missionary" projects, and development cooperative projects. This work contrasts with the work of other church agencies that support exclusively Pastoral Mission projects (e.g. *missio* or *Adveniat*). In addition, we differ from those organizations, which only support development cooperation projects (e.g. *Helvetas*, *Swissaid*), whether they be church or not. Over the years this explicit connection between pastoral cooperation and development cooperation has been judged in many ways, sometimes stronger and sometimes weaker, depending on the point of view. Today, the challenge is to make this connection between "secular"-development work and church pastoral cooperation more fruitful. This is a challenge due to the common attitude that development work cannot stand up to contextual analysis without the components of religion and spirituality. This reciprocal relationship must be rethought¹.

The effects of globalisation are challenging the Christian identity with its ethos of charity. This is a special challenge because of the strengthening, radicalisation and instrumentalisation of religious traditions and systems in areas and in social classes that belong to the globalisation losers. We cannot turn to the question of Christian identity without considering our actual socio-political situation. This context must be a part of the question that deals with what is specific about a Christian relief agency today which is embedded in the pastoral way of thinking, operating in cooperation with partners in many countries of Asia, Africa, Latin America and Switzerland.

With this concept, *Fastenopfer* wants to disclose its position considering the tension between development work and church pastoral cooperation. It also wants to show its position openly as a Catholic relief agency when referring to religion and development cooperation. The following builds the background of this position:

- the Mission Statement (17 June 1998)
- the foundation paper of *Fastenopfer's* self-image as a church relief agency (31 March 2003), as well as the document
- Area South - Program and Project Work (31 March 2003)

These basic principles contain binding objectives that will also shape the future identity of *Fastenopfer* and its program work.

The title of the first central theme to be developed in this concept, is a program. "Building Communities – Living our Faith" refers to the theology of the people of God that was reconfirmed during the Second Vatican Council: The Church - the wandering people of God - lives its Faith and continues the work of Christ. Based on this principle, *Fastenopfer* exclusively supports groups and communities (not individual persons). In addition, it supports primarily lay people, who support and try to improve life in their communities.

This thematic concept "Building Communities – Living our Faith" will lay the foundation for the thematic complex Pastoral and Religion in project and program work. The addressees of this concept are primarily the program officers of *Fastenopfer*, coordinators and partner

¹ cf. the brochure of Annemarie Holenstein, Role and Significance of Religion und Spirituality in Development Cooperation. A Reflection and Working paper, Bern 2005

organizations. At a later date, "Toolboxes" will complete this project work concept. "Toolboxes" will include criteria for the evaluation of comparable projects (e.g. animator training sites).

This concept will influence the educational work and *Fastenopfer's* public relation work. In addition, it will influence development-political advocacy and lobbying.

The thematic concept includes the following points:

- Context and Topics
 - Preliminary considerations
 - Challenges
 - The *Fastenopfer's* experience
- Strategies and Priorities
 - Fundamental positions of *Fastenopfer*
 - Methods of *Fastenopfer*
 - Procedures of *Fastenopfer*
- Operational Guidelines

The thematic concept was developed after consulting the people who are responsible for the program and *Fastenopfer's* consultants. After very productive discussions with *Fastenopfer's* pastoral partners in South Africa, improvements were made. On 28 September 2007, it was approved by management and on 27 May 2008 again passed in a slightly revised version.

2 Context and Themes

2.1 Preliminary considerations

Some important terms of core theme 1 below are defined in *Fastenopfer's* understanding.

Sociologists define **religion** as a system of beliefs that is anchored in larger populations. These beliefs deal with the existence of realities that go beyond the daily and more general experience (metaphysics). These beliefs, which are conveyed by rituals, are part of arrangements of life, exist in various forms in all communities and in this respect pertain to human beings. These definitions of world and the guidelines for life management have grown from a long tradition and have led to institutions called communities of faith because of these Christian traditions. Christian belief, to which *Fastenopfer* has committed itself, starts out of the experience of a loving God as He has shown Himself in the history of the People of Israel and in the life of Jesus.²

In German speaking regions, the word **spirituality** has only been in use for a good 50 years and its use is manifold. When it is practiced, spirituality is experienced as a deeper relationship to God or as a gate to a last absolute reality. Christian spirituality knows itself to be united with God through the Holy Spirit, who, as Jesus knew, carried him.

The term **pastoral**, as it is used in today's Catholic theology, brings us closer to the practices of *Fastenopfer* and its understanding of the relationship between development cooperation and church mission:

Since the Pastoral Constitution 'Gaudium et Spes' of the Second Vatican Council (1962 - 1965), pastoral refers to the relationship between the Catholic Church and the whole of

² Quotation translated from: "Grundlagenpapier zum Selbstverständnis des Fastenopfers als kirchliches Hilfswerk", p. 1

(historical) reality. It is about "the salvation of mankind and the development of human society"³. Pastoral is concerned with the whole person, not just the religious aspect. In this development of mankind, the goal is to carry forth the work of Christ, who "came into the world to bear witness to the truth, to rescue, not to sit in judgement, to serve and not to be served"⁴. "The goal of pastoral activity is 'witnessing' and proclaiming the Faith in word and deed."⁵ In pastoral, it is the essence of christian practice, where the love of God is inseparable from the love of man⁶, where "martyria and diaconia meet in a creative relationship".⁷ Both things, witnessing (martyria) and works based on Faith (diaconia), define pastoral⁸; neither can stand without the other, nor can one claim the term pastoral for itself. This viewpoint differs from a practice where the witnessing of Faith is either specifically not addressed or is a taboo. Furthermore, a proclamation that limits itself to the Word will not be supported. This aforementioned fundamental pastoral attitude is open to questions from industry, politics, international relations, all of which appear in 'Gaudium et Spes'.

Literally translated, the term **mission** means "sending". It has been tainted by church history and is burdened with a self-criticizing potential. The word "mission" is a reminder of the divine mission of the church "to carry the saving word of Christ throughout the ages, to tell it and to bear witness".⁹

From a theological point of view, it is a matter of "establishing the Kingdom of God" which points to a "life of abundance".¹⁰

The resulting "Pastoral and Development Cooperation came about in dialogue with and out of respect for other people, local churches, religions and cultures." "As a church relief agency, *Fastenopfer*, together with people of good will, wants¹¹ ... to strengthen positively the religious and spiritual aspect of communal living, which means promoting life, and to contribute to the growth of God's kingdom." Mission is ultimately the living testimonial of people's experiences, who are consciously trying to follow in the footsteps of Jesus, and who are willing to talk about them (cf. 1 Peter 3:14). Through their words and deeds, they are inviting others to choose the same path.¹²

³ Gaudium et Spes, 3.

⁴ Ibid

⁵ R. Bucher, Was unterstützt Adveniat, wenn es pastorale Arbeit unterstützt? Zu den unterschiedlichen Dimensionen kirchlichen Handelns. In: D. Spelthahn u.a. Gelebte Solidarität - 40 Jahre Solidarität, Mainz, 2002, 119.

⁶ cf. K. Rahner, Über die Einheit von Nächsten- und Gottesliebe, in Ders., Schriften zur Theologie, Bd. IV, Zürich/Einsiedeln/Köln² 1968, 277-298

⁷ Bucher, 136

⁸ Directly after the Second Vatican Council, three principles of church practice were spoken about within Catholic theology: Besides the proclamation of Faith (martyria) and its works for the poor (diaconia), the Church fulfills itself with prayer and thanksgiving (liturgia). This viewpoint was later completed with the term *koinonia* (solidarity within the community).

⁹ The term Mission that is valid for Fastenopfer is developed in detail in both brochures of the Swiss Catholic Mission board, which also takes responsibility for Fastenopfer: Plattform zum Missionsverständnis, SKM-CMCS, Freiburg 2002. Sowie: „Ich habe das Elend meines Volkes gesehen ... und jetzt geh!“ Missionarische Charismen verwirklichen, SKM-CMCS, Freiburg 2006.

¹⁰ The term Mission that is valid for Fastenopfer is developed in detail in two brochures of the Swiss Catholic Mission Board, which is also responsible for Fastenopfer: Plattform zum Missionsverständnis, SKM-CMCS, Freiburg 2002. Sowie: „Ich habe das Elend meines Volkes gesehen ... und jetzt geh!“ Missionarische Charismen verwirklichen, SKM-CMCS, Freiburg 2006.

¹¹ The term "people of good will" was coined by the Second Vatican Council and has become a symbol for a Catholic Church, which, based on respect and dialogue, is in contact with people of other religious beliefs and life styles.

¹² cf. G. Collet, Sich der Gegenwart aussetzen. Missionstheologische Bemerkungen zum Glaubenszeugnis in unserem Kontext, in: Freiheit Gottes und der Menschen (FS Thomas Pröpfer), M. Böhnke - M. Bongardt - G. Essen - J. Werbick (Ed.), Regensburg, 2006, 381 - 393.

2.2 Challenges

The theme pastoral is of vital importance to *Fastenopfer* for various reasons:

- Like a golden thread, the questions surrounding the relationship of pastoral cooperation to development cooperation are a constant factor in the history of *Fastenopfer*. This question is connected to the identity of *Fastenopfer* as a Catholic relief agency, which is also in dialogue with its southern partners concerning the issues of religion and faith. Also included are the questions of enculturation which refers to the practice of the Catholic Faith in each individual culture¹³. It is the express wish of *Fastenopfer* that the religious issues of its southern partners be taken seriously.
- In the current discussion about "the roll and meaning of religion and spirituality in development work"¹⁴, *Fastenopfer* can offer many insights which are based on decades of experience in development cooperation with pastoral partners. This experience binds and positions the work of *Fastenopfer*.
- *Fastenopfer* as a foundation for Swiss Catholic pastoral and development cooperation (as part of the local church of Switzerland) is in intense contact with local churches in the south and supports them because its criteria are transparent.
- Many of *Fastenopfer's* partners belong to local Catholic churches in the south. In addition, there are others who belong to different religious communities. This double orientation, which respects the "differences in people, cultures and religions" (mission statement), is also valuable for the institution *Fastenopfer* and is trend-setting for a multicultural and interconfessional world.
- The TINA-Syndrome ("there is no alternative")¹⁵ shapes countless people's viewpoint of the current world situation. Innumerable people in the north and in the south feel powerless and at a loss. The Church with its message of the Gospels must make its prophetic voice effective and offer solutions that "reduce inequality, eliminate discrimination, free people from slavery and empower them to assume responsibility for their own material welfare, their moral advancement and their spiritual development"¹⁶
Providing essential input here will result in a spirituality like Jesus of Nazareth's.¹⁷

In the coming years, many demands will be made of *Fastenopfer* concerning its pastoral direction:

- According to Catholic understanding, pastoral work - and therefore also *Fastenopfer's* pastoral cooperation - is the continuation of the work of Jesus Christ, the building of a humane society, the salvation of the human being, i.e. it is about the whole person and not just their religiosity.¹⁸
For this reason, the core theme "Building Communities - Living our Faith" - is inextricably bound to *Fastenopfer's* other core themes as well as to its transversal themes. In the following such connections will be outlined.
 - In its action for justice (core theme "Living in Justice - Strengthening Communities") the plausibility of proclamation is shown, which brings "the Good News to the poor"

¹³ The relation between indigenous religious traditions and the Christian proclamation and its practice is a part of the question of inculturation. *Fastenopfer* holds indigenous religions in high esteem and together with the local partner organizations aims at a respectful relationship between indigenous and Christian traditions.

¹⁴ see as well the discussion within the framework of the DEZA, cf. footnote 1

¹⁵ Margaret Thatcher coined this term during her unwavering pursuit of neo-liberalism.

¹⁶ Paul IV Encyclical *Populorum Progressio*, 34 (translation B. Domenghino)

¹⁷ cf.: Albert Nolan, *Jesus Today. A Spirituality of Radical Freedom*, Capetown, 2006.

¹⁸ Cf the explanation of the term pastoral in section 2.1

in the tradition of the prophets based on the authority of Jesus Christ. (cf. Luke 4:18 ff.)

- In addition, the reference to human rights (concept Human Rights) is biblical, as shown in Jesus's talk about the Last Judgement (Matthew 25:31-40) in which fighting to guarantee an individual's basic needs is considered the main criteria for being a Christian. Since the encyclical 'Pacem in terris' (1963) "human rights" have also become a vital part of Catholic social teaching.
- The core theme "Promoting Peace – Fostering dialogue" cannot be separated from religion. Three exemplary statement flashes demonstrate this:
 - "Solving conflicts without the process of reconciliation is impossible."
 - "Many peace initiatives have church sponsorship."
 - "Disagreements between the followers of different religions conceal a potential for violence."

The two notions "peace" and "justice" (e.g. Psalms 85, 11) appear to be siblings in the Bible. They still show today a lasting interdependence. In this sense, the social encyclical 'Populorum Progressio' 1967 coined the sentence: "Development is a new name for peace."¹⁹ Development cooperation should counterbalance rich and poor and therefore, serve peace.

- The theme, using and conserving creation, was mentioned on the first pages of the Bible. The example of the Brazilian Bishops' Commission for Rural Pastoral shows that the core theme "Secure Minimum Subsistence - Encourage Access to Resources" is also relevant for current pastoral work.
- The transversal theme "Gender" must be made a subject of discussion within the program work with pastoral partners against the background of a structure of the Catholic Church which at its grassroots level is sustained substantially by women and lead almost exclusively by men. The dignity and equality of woman and man, created in God's image (Genesis 1:27), are central aspects of our theological argumentation.
- The Catholic Church has taken a stand on questions concerning the transversal theme HIV/AIDS, which do not always correspond with the reality of our partners' lives. In this respect, *Fastenopfer* is in dialogue with its partners and is looking for contextual solutions. It knows itself, however, to be bound to the life giving strength of the Gospels and to the findings of human science.
- Pastoral is solely concerned with Christian practice. This means also that differing societal, cultural and political environments demand differing pastoral answers. Each pastoral has a common point of reference - the proclamation of the Good News in the varying contexts and the commitment to and with the prioritised target group of this message: the poor, respectively, the disadvantaged.²⁰ Differing continental and national (pastoral) theologies have developed from this background. The most well known example of a continentally grown theology is Liberation Theology. In many documents, such as the statement to the "Church of the Poor" by the Philippine Catholic Church (1991), a theology appears that answers a societal situation based on the Gospel and on Catholic social teaching. The decision which pastoral answer is better suited to which specific context can only result from cooperation with those directly involved, resp. with the local grassroots experts.

¹⁹ Paul VI, Encyclical 'Populorum Progressio', 76

²⁰ cf. the explanations of the term pastoral in section 2.1

- "The values of the Gospels are not compatible with the values of capitalism which are concerned with the maximizing of profit, shareholder values and the privatising of creation. A global economic system whose goal is not the fulfilment of basic human needs, must face up to the challenge of the Gospels."²¹ The Good News and the solidarity with the message's target group, the excluded, support the political positioning of *Fastenopfer*.
- The point of any pastoral cooperation is witnessing, based on faith and the development possibilities of those directly involved. With this in mind, a dialogue between representations of *Fastenopfer* as an institution and its partners on faith and development possibilities is indispensable. Neither one can be ignored.
- *Fastenopfer* is aware of the ambivalence of religion - that it can be supportive of life and also be hostile to it. Pastoral cooperation that does not serve life and is not specifically concerned with the improvement of the life quality of the target group, the poor, is then not in accord with the Good News of Jesus and the mission statement of this organisation.
- Cooperation with the partners of different religious denominations or communities takes place through reciprocal dialogue and respect. In an interconfessional context, the consequences of pastoral decisions on the coexistence of different confessions and religions (analogue to the "do no harm" approach in peace work) must be questioned. The goal is always a peaceful co-existence and life quality improvement for the disadvantaged, independent of religion. In this way, our program work distances itself from any kind of fundamentalism as a misuse of religion.

2.3 Fastenopfer's Experience

Fastenopfer has gained multifaceted experience in its pastoral work with its southern partners. In the following, the six areas of current pastoral work will describe this diversity and each area will be substantiated with one example. Each area will be introduced by a sentence from the mission statement. In this way, not only will the experience be placed within the whole concept of the institution *Fastenopfer*, but also it can be understood as an indication of *Fastenopfer's* prioritising of pastoral cooperation. This will be done in the conviction not to re-invent the wheel of practical experience, but to critically re-think it, and when necessary, to make the appropriate corrections.

2.3.1 Demands of church grassroots communities

"Fastenopfer promotes exchange between local churches and co-operates with grassroots movements and organisations in poverty-stricken regions of the world."

- Example

Communautés d'Églises Vivantes de Base CEVB, Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo): In these church grassroots communities, of which there are over 1800 in Kinshasa alone, questions of community and development are being discussed based on the four Gospels and together, change is being initiated. Proclamation and diacony form a unit. In addition, this joint form is an independent attempt to transform the functional African community and its way of life, which has been lived in rural areas for centuries, into an urban context.²²

²¹ Peter Balleis SJ, *Leidenschaft für die Welt*, Würzburg 2007, p. 41

²² Mörschbacher Marco, *die kirchliche Basisgemeinschaft in Kinshasa – das Dorf in der Grossstadt?*, in: von Fürstenberg u.a., *Zukunftsfähige Gemeinde. Ein Werkbuch mit Impulsen aus den Jungen Kirchen*, München 2003.

2.3.2 Supporting a liberating biblical pastoral

"The biblical vision of the Kingdom of God promises a 'life in all its fullness' (John 10:10), for all people, regardless of social and religious status."

- Example

CEBI (Centro de Estudos Bíblicos), Brazil: The Ecumenical Institute for Bible Studies is working on (organisational) material for grassroots communities, based on biblical foundations and liberation theological methodology. These foundations have played an important role in the building of community and the strengthening of society's marginalized. They are leading these people to increased self-awareness and motivation in their commitment to more just circumstances. In parishes, these materials support the commitment for a just division of the land.

2.3.3 Education of pastoral animators, who work with an integral (spiritual-biblical and development-political) approach.

"Fastenopfer promotes the missionary activities of the local churches and their active participation in many different liberation programs, whether these are economic, social, cultural or religious."

- Example:

IFAK (Institut de Formation pour Animeurs de Communautés de Kikwit), Kikwit, Democratic Republic of the Congo: The future pastoral workers - they are all lay people in the church context - will be trained theologically (e.g. activities dealing with the biblical foundations, human rights as a part of the christian ethic, African Christology, et al.) and, in addition, they will be trained in development questions (fundamentals of project management, farming methods). They will, then, be capable of proclaiming the Faith and doing works of diacony as a part of an integral development.

2.3.4 Media work with the option of developing political awareness

"It [Fastenopfer] views society and economics in the light of the Gospel and church social teaching and calls for actions that are based on a full sense of responsibility." "Fastenopfer aims to provide a platform for voice for the poor and the victims of injustice. Together with other organisations it will stand up for their rights in the public domain and in discussions with power brokers of the country."

- Example:

Radio Pachamama, Puno, Peru: This radio station is the idea of a group of Christian lawyers. It is on the air 18 hours per day in Spanish and in the local dialect. The target group are the farmers and the poor urban population in one of the poorest regions of Peru. Inspired by the values of the Gospels and Catholic social teaching, the listeners learn something about human rights and possible political participation. Reports inform about alcoholism or violence to women and what can be done against them.

2.3.5 Human rights work as a pastoral obligation

Fastenopfer seeks to bridge the ever-widening gap between rich and poor and is committed to working for a just and sustainable development.

- Example:

Justice et Paix, Port-au-Prince, Haiti: As a result of 'Populorum Progressio' (1967), Justitia et Pax commissions were founded worldwide by national Bishops' Conferences, also in 1970 in Haiti. This commission systematically documents human rights injustices, educates social and pastoral leaders in the area of human rights, supports

victims of violence, thus showing that the Church wants to provide a platform for voice in questions of human dignity and human rights.

2.3.6 Interconfessional cooperation and ecumenicalism

"Fastenopfer's work is inspired by a comprehensive understanding of the mission of the Church and the importance of living and proclaiming the values of 'God's renewed world', particularly among the marginalized sectors of society. All tasks are therefore carried out in the spirit of dialogue and mutual respect for other religions and cultures."

Interconfessional (development) cooperation is actually a term that is often used, but one that is in need of more defining for reciprocal understanding. There are several levels²³, in particular between a "dialogue of life", a "dialogue of deeds", a "dialogue of theological exchange" and a "dialogue of religious experience".²⁴

In the endless number of world conflicts, religion has been instrumentalized to force political or economic interests. Interconfessional cooperation can pull the floor of religions legitimation out from under the feet of the conflicting parties. This is very important for justice and peace.

- Example:

DIMT (Diocesan Itinerant Mission Team) in Mindanao, the Philippines: This project strengthens and supports grassroots communities, in which Muslim, indigenous and Christian families live together and organically work their small pieces of land. Here they experience their own faith as something strengthening and learn to respect the possible different beliefs of their neighbours.

3 Strategies and Priorities

3.1 Fundamental Positions of Fastenopfer

- For *Fastenopfer*, pastoral cooperation is an inseparable mix of diacony and proclamation. This bond distinguishes pastoral from the projects of development cooperation, in which the proclamation (of Faith) is explicitly not an issue.
- In our opinion, this pastoral concept as promulgated by the Second Vatican Council in 'Gaudium et Spes' and used by Fastenopfer makes terms like "integral pastoral", "holistic pastoral", "social pastoral", as well as other similar terms, obsolete. The taking of (among others, social) reality seriously, the judgement of which is based on the Gospels and social teaching, builds an indivisible whole with the resulting actions of word and deed.²⁵ This does not mean that pastoral terms cannot be studied in detail

²³ cf to this point: Johannes Müller SJ, *Interreligiöse Entwicklungszusammenarbeit. Ein viel versprechender Weg zum Dialog der Religionen*, in: Forum Weltkirche 1/2006. The response article in the following numbers gives an interesting survey on this current discussion: Martin Salm, *Wunsch oder Wirklichkeit? Interreligiöse Entwicklungszusammenarbeit*, in Forum Weltkirche 4/2006; Hermann Schalück ofm, *Mit welchen Ressourcen und Methoden? Anfragen an die Interreligiöse Entwicklungszusammenarbeit (IREZ) aus der Sicht missios*: Forum Weltkirche 4/2006.

²⁴ cf. *Päpstlicher Rat für interreligiösen Dialog / Kongregation für die Evangelisierung der Völker, Dialog und Verkündigung, Überlegungen und Orientierungen zum Interreligiösen Dialog und zur Verkündigung des Evangeliums Jesu Christi* (19 May 1991), Bonn (Ed. Secretary German Bishop's Conference) 1991 Verlautb. d. Apost. Stuhls 102 No.42

²⁵ cf. e.g., statements from Archbishop Pennacchio, the Apostolic Nuntius to Thailand. In his keynote address at the Asian Bishops' Conference celebrating the 40th anniversary of Gaudium et Spes, he said: "We have also enough and more to praise God for what this conciliar document contributed to the proclamation of the Gospel of Justice and Peace by the church with real social concern to the

and used in a particular country programs by local southern churches, especially because they stress this social aspect.

- *Fastenopfer* is bound to the paramount option of a "church of the poor", which was born from the practical experience made by Christian grassroots communities in Latin America. This option was accepted and developed in the general meetings of the Latin American Bishops' Conferences in Medellin and especially, in Puebla and under Pope John Paul II, it became the mission statement of the Catholic Church.²⁶
- Fighting for human dignity is a basic tenet for *Fastenopfer* and therefore, also its commitment to human rights. Catholic social teaching and the whole of internationally defined human rights build the foundation.²⁷
- Basically, pastoral in the southern churches must be shaped by those directly affected by it and by those responsible for it. For reciprocal understanding in questions of pastoral, dialogue between the program officers of *Fastenopfer* and those locally responsible, especially from the local churches, is of central importance.
- In its pastoral activities, *Fastenopfer* does not support individual persons in the selected southern countries. It supports only groups and institutions. As subjects of their own self-determination, groups, communities and institutions have more and a longer lasting power than the initiatives of individuals. Looking at it from a Christian point of view, the way of God's people is also a communal adventure.
- In its pastoral cooperation, *Fastenopfer* invests in people. This is done primarily through building projects or by supporting processes which encourage organization (capacity building, e.g. the grassroots communities and parishes), in which proclamation and diacony are united as one. Infrastructure, buildings, etc. are only supported in well-justified cases.
- From its beginnings, *Fastenopfer* has above all supported the laity, men and women who contribute to a (local) church which serves the people.
- *Fastenopfer* is committed to human dignity: "The human being is the source, the centre and the goal of all economic and social life" ('Gaudium et Spes' 63). However, "A human being is a part of God's creation and bears responsibility for it. We do not own the Earth, we are only its stewards."²⁸ Besides justice and peace, the preservation of Creation is a high priority of *Fastenopfer*.
- *Fastenopfer* consciously fosters the sharing of life and the unified action of the various religious groups. This is understood as interconfessional cooperation.²⁹

3.2 Basic Approaches of *Fastenopfer*

- *Fastenopfer* takes its partners and what they have experienced seriously. An example is the experience made by its many southern partners that the prevailing paradigm of the economic system makes the one person richer and the other poorer. According to religious teachings, these southern partners work for God's economic order, which centres on human beings and not profit. This other economic order can be reached by

problems affecting the continent of Asia.", in: 40th anniversary of the Pastoral Constitution of Church in the Modern World (Gaudium et Spes), 2007, Manila.

²⁶ cf. Josef Sayer, in: Gutierrez/Müller, *An der Seite der Armen. Theologie der Befreiung*, Augsburg 2004, P. 8f

²⁷ cf. *Fastenopfer's* concept "human rights", passed by management on 25 April 2007.

²⁸ Peter Balleis, *Leidenschaft für die Welt*, Würzburg 2007, p. 43

²⁹ for this point, see corresponding remarks in section 2.3.6."Interconfessional Cooperation and Ecumenism"

sharing.³⁰ This prophetic voice of the southern partners forces *Fastenopfer* to initiate political options, next to the educational mandate.

- *Fastenopfer* wishes to raise its prophetic voice together with and pushed by its southern partners against economic, social and religious structures and situations that are hostile to life and that increase the gap between rich and poor and between the north and the south.
- *Fastenopfer* supports pastoral partners, who improve their situation using their own initiative and competence (beginnings of empowerment, "help to self-help").
- In pastoral cooperation, *Fastenopfer* also supports people of other religions. This direction of our pastoral cooperation with its irrevocable linking of proclamation and diacony is shared by our pastoral partners.

3.3 *Fastenopfer's* Procedures

When considering methodology, it is important to consider that

- the needs of each local church are considered,
- a contextual analysis is the basis for dialogue with those directly involved,
- in this contextual analysis, which is based on the Second Vatican Council's understanding of pastoral, the social and economic questions are looked at, then judged in the light of faith (biblical message and church social teachings), from which perspectives for action are finally developed,
- current project management methods (e.g. PEMU / PCM) are also used in pastoral cooperation projects,
- in pastoral projects, the question of enculturation (of the Catholic Faith in the particular cultural context) is discussed,
- during the pastoral projects, the consequences of support are questioned, such as how it affects co-existence with other religious communities.
- the questions in *Fastenopfer's* transversal themes - gender, HIV/AIDS - are also a subject of discussion, especially in pastoral projects³¹,
- in an interconfessional context, interconfessional sensitivity is encouraged and differentiated between the various levels of interconfessional cooperation³².

4 Action Guidelines

- Pastoral Cooperation Projects will be preferred in the areas that have been mentioned in section 2.3. Concretely, this means:
 - the encouragement of grassroots communities
 - the support of a liberating biblical pastoral
 - basic education and further training of native (lay) pastoral workers
 - media work with the option of awareness development
 - human rights work as a pastoral obligation
 - interconfessional cooperation and ecumenism

³⁰ cf. for this representing many others: The Diakonia of Council of Churches, The Iikos Journey, A theological reflection of the Economic Crisis in South Africa, Durban/South Africa, 2006

³¹ cf. the explanations in section 2.2

³² cf. section 2.3.5

This can take place in close cooperation with local partners, helped by *Fastenopfer's* know-how gained from decades of work, and finally in accord with other relief organizations.

These strategies and positions (3.1 Fundamental Positions, 3.2 Basic Approaches, 3.3 Procedures) build the foundation of pastoral cooperation. Essentially, these positions have grown from the foundation in and the further development of Criteria for the Evaluation of Project Proposals from 1983.³³ Most of the criteria that were mentioned in this over 20 year old document are still valid today, in particular:

- that the projects serve evangelisation, whereby this service is understood as the "liberation from mental and religious hardship and as the overcoming of injustice and oppression",
 - that self-help and self-determination (beginnings of empowerment) are promoted.
 - that the projects have a true pastoral need, which can be controlled by the desire to make a personal contribution,
 - that a project's goal is a commitment to and with the poorest sectors in society,
 - that the importance of situational education for local church employees is recognized, in particular, laity collaboration,
 - that when "new projects are planned and implemented, importance is attached to the cooperation of existing church institutions (dioceses, mission organizations etc.) with other Christian and non-Christian communities as well as with government offices. The reason is that better integrated projects facilitate pastoral effectiveness and cultural exchange."
- Employees of the Catholic Relief Organization *Fastenopfer* cultivate friendship with representatives of a particular local church, where projects are being supported. In this context paying a visit to the local bishop is expedient.
 - *Fastenopfer's* employees, who are in contact with local church partners in the south, have a bridge building function between the local southern churches and the church in Switzerland: development-political and church-political issues and also liturgical or other practices³⁴ could thus influence Swiss practice or even challenge it, e.g. within the ecumenical campaign of Brot für alle (Bread for all) and *Fastenopfer*.
 - There is a plan to issue so-called Toolboxes to the individual branches (see 2.3), which will make this theme concept more concrete for project work. It will contain criteria which can be used to evaluate comparable projects (e.g. support for a liberating biblical pastoral).

³³ In the regulations dealing with project handling, passed by *Fastenopfer's* board of trustees on 23 March 1983. A comparison of this document with the document from 1983 shows a coherence and further development of the action guidelines.

³⁴ An impressive example of pastoral exchange between the south and the north is the 7-step method to read the Bible (LUMKO-Institute), which was developed in South Africa and has been taken up in many places in the German-speaking region. This method was further developed to the Asian Integral Approach AsIPA in the Asian region and as a pastoral approach, influences many employees of the Catholic Church in Switzerland.

5 Conclusion

Over 40 years ago, Pope Paul VI's encyclical 'Populorum Progressio' was published. It raises the question about the integral development of mankind and also mankind's solidary development. Technically speaking, especially a church relief organization should not separate individuality and society or spirituality and politics. "The point is to build a world, where each person, irrespective of race, creed or origin, can lead a full human life, free from human enslavement (...)"³⁵

In his first encyclical 'Deus caritas est', Benedict XVI strengthens the declarations of his predecessor John Paul II who declared in 'Sollicitudo rei socialis' "the readiness of the Catholic Church to cooperate with the charity organizations of these (i.e. other, editor's note) churches and communities, since we are all acting with the same basic motives and thus, have the same goal: a true humanism that recognizes God's likeness in each person and wants to help them realize a life of dignity."³⁶

Fastenopfer feels itself obligated to these options also in the future, primarily in cooperation with our southern partners³⁷, but also in educational work and lobbying work in Switzerland, e.g. in *Fastenopfer's* annual ecumenical campaign with Brot für alle (Bread for all), we stand up for a world, where, with God's help, we can make a contribution, so that God's Kingdom becomes more real.

³⁵ Pope Paul IV, Encyclical 'Populorum Progressio', 47.

³⁶ Benedict XVI, Encyclical 'Deus caritas est', Paragraph 30

³⁷ Based on Benedict XVI's first encyclical, the following statement is allowed that a majority of our partners are "religious lay people", who see it as their calling "to work for a just order in society." (Paragraph 29)