

RELEVANCE OF NEW EVANGELISATION FOR ASIA

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Abstract: Relevance Of New Evangelisation For Asia. Church has a significant role to play in God's continuing mission of humanising humanity and mending the whole of creation. Christ continues to be faithful to the new covenant he made with the Church, which in a mysterious way, is his body. Jesus' prayer that all his disciples may be one, just as he and his Father are on (Jn 17/21) is over-quoted without expounding its implications for today's ever-dividing and fragmented world. The sign of unity and reconciliation among all Christians in single fellowship is the challenge for an effective witnessing in Asia. The power of evangelisation will find itself considerably diminished if those who proclaim the Gospel are divided among themselves in all sorts of ways. We need to collaborate in obedience to the Lord and His teachings. Catholics, Protestants and Orthodox, either we come together as brothers and sisters or die as fools.

Keywords: church, new evangelization, Asia

Abstrak: Relevansi Pewartaan Baru Bagi Umat Katolik di Asia. Gereja sangat berperan baik dalam melanjutkan perutusan Allah maupun menjaga segala ciptaanNya dengan baik. Kristus senantiasa setia pada janjiNya terhadap Gereja dengan cara ilahi melalui tubuhNya. Yesus berdoa agar para muridnya senantiasa bersatu, sebagaimana Ia dan Bapa, meskipun tanpa menjelaskan implikasi terhadap situasi dunia yang senantiasa pecah dan terkotak-kotak. Tanda perdamaian dan persatuan antara semua orang Kristen dalam persaudaraan merupakan tantangan bagi kesaksian di Asia. Karena itu, kekuatan evangelisasi akan lenyap manakala orang-orang yang mengakui diri sebagai pewarta sabda Tuhan terpecah belah. Kita perlu bekerjasama dengan taat pada Tuhan dan ajaranNya. Katolik, Protestan, dan Ortodox harus segera bersatu sebagai saudara dan saudari atau sebaliknya akan mati sebagai orang bodoh.

Kata Kunci: gereja, evangelisasi baru, Asia

INTRODUCTION

The present moment is a time of great promise because of globalisation, technological advancement, growth in communication facilities and internet. People have come closer and become more interdependent. Yet, at the same time, increased violence, a growing forgetfulness of God, and consequent feelings of fear and insecurity have become a reality in Asia. Furthermore, such phenomena as religious fanaticism and terrorism threaten our future hopes. In this situation, we have to discover once again the meaning of the Christian mission. As the Church evangelises in a real world that is constantly changing, the emphasis in mission also changes with

time. A new understanding of evangelisation is called for today in order to make the Gospel relevant today and contribute to the good of the society through our primary mission of evangelisation.

NEW EVANGELISATION

What is New Evangelisation?

'The new evangelisation for the transmission of Christian faith' is the theme announced for the XII ordinary general assembly of the synod of bishops in Rome, which will be held from 7-28 October 2012. According to the Lineamenta, the aim of this synod is "to examine the present situation in the particular churches and to trace, in communion

with the Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI, the Bishop of Rome, and Universal Pastor of the Church, the new methods and means for transmitting the Good News to people in our world today with a renewed enthusiasm proper to the saints, who were joyous witnesses of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is and who was and who is to come” (Rev 4/8).

How It All Started?

It was in fact Pope John Paul II, who began to reflect seriously on 'New Evangelisation' in his exhortations. He initiated this theme during his visit to Poland, his home country (1979). Later he exhorted the Latin American countries, to reawaken with a spirit of new evangelisation. The term was officially given by him at Port-au-Prince in Haiti in 1983. He said that the need of the hour is not 're-evangelisation' but 'new evangelisation', new in its ardour, methods and expression. Urgency of the New Evangelisation was expressed visibly by Benedict XVI with the advent of a new Pontifical Council for promoting new Evangelisation in 2010. His apostolic exhortation *Verbum Domini* (2010) emphasised again its need. The Lineamenta for the synod proposes reflections and questions to analyse the theme in the different cultural contexts of today. Church needs to discover new paths in responding to the changing circumstances and conditions facing the Church in her call to proclaim and live the Gospel. Benedict XVI aptly called the year (October 2012 to November 2013) that would follow the Synod as the 'Year of Faith' in order to recommit ourselves in transmitting this Christian Faith.

Consecrated life implies a call to mission, a call to serve others and to give witness to Christ, who was a man for others. Consecration and mission are intrinsically and intimately related to one another and complement each other. The missionary call implies radical discipleship, because it implies total availability and surrender to God. The vocation of the disciples sprang from their personal call by Jesus (Mk 1:16–20; Mt 4:18–22), and their mission in the world.

What is New, about 'New Evangelisation'

For those in the West, it is certainly a call within a much secularised world where people who were born Christians then grew up into a totally secularised world that offered little faith-formation either in the homes or in schools. Their top priority today is to bring Catholics back to the Church. For a whole

variety of reasons, people who were once strongly practicing the faith have ceased to practice the faith or may be don't practice it with the same strength that once they did. It is stated in the preface of the Lineamenta that "new evangelisation is primarily addressed to those who have drifted from the Church in traditionally Christian countries." So their challenge is to bring them back to Christ and in a relationship with the Church.

While responding to a crisis of a loss of faith or no faith, the Church is being challenged to 'preach the gospel afresh'. For this we need to understand the issues of the world today and resonate with the thirst of the people of a secularised world. Recent studies have shown that people even in a much secularised world still seek God and still seek religion for a better life. So the question that challenges us today is to readdress the question of proclaiming the gospel 'afresh' with an emphasis on 'afresh'.

For us in Asia, the issue may be somewhat different. It is not secularisation that is of prime importance but a very different culture as that of the West. We need to ask whether we are sufficiently attuned to the Asian ethos when we proclaim the gospel. The gospel remains alien to the lives of people when it is packaged within a foreign culture; then the people become aliens in their own land. So the Church in Asia needs to address the call to New Evangelisation in a different perspective, a socio-cultural context.

What is not and what is New Evangelisation?

The Lineamenta makes it clear, "the new evangelisation is not a matter of redoing something which has been inadequately done or has not achieved its purpose, as if the new activity were an implicit judgment on the failure of the first evangelisation. Not is the NE taking up the first evangelisation again or simply repeating the past. Instead, it is the courage to forge new paths in responding to the changing circumstances and conditions facing the Church in her call to proclaim and live the Gospel." (5)

What is Our Particular Context For New Evangelisation?

The context of Asia was well studied and deliberated in the post synodal apostolic exhortation for Asia. Asia retains a unique status from the perspective of the Church, since it being the birthplace of Jesus and of the Church. "A critical

awareness of the diverse and complex realities of Asia is essential if the people of God on the continent are to respond to God's will for them the new evangelisation" (EA 5). New Evangelization in Asia has to take into consideration the two important factors: (1) First if all the Church in Asia needs to be conscious of being a community of disciples of Jesus Christ. (2) Secondly, it has to take into serious consideration the social, political, religious, cultural and economic realities of Asia (EA 5).

Asia is proud of its religious and cultural diversity. It is the cradle of world's major religions and spiritual traditions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism etc. Asia is proud of its spiritual and cultural heritage such as love of silence and contemplation, simplicity, harmony, detachment, non-violence, the spirit of hard work, discipline, frugal living, thirst for learning and philosophical inquiry (EA 6). Living in a multi religious-cultural context, we need to discover new ways of 'being church' and proclaiming the Gospel.

Along with it Church in Asia has to take into consideration the existent economic and political realities. On the one side Asia is enviously looked upon by the developed countries; but on the other side we suffer from poverty, crime, terrorism, prostitution and exploitation of the weaker sections. Religious fundamentalists turn to be hostile towards other religions. It is a true challenge to be an authentic Christian and to undertake the mission of evangelisation in this situation (EA 6).

What are the sectors of New Evangelisation?

The first sector of evangelisation is culture. Today culture is characterised by the various elements of the modern fast evolving global world.

The second sector we need to consider is the social sector. In this sector we need to be very much aware of the reality of migration.

The third sector of focus in NE is the Ø means of social communication. It determines the moral and cultural values of human society.

Fourth sector is economy. The moral Ø values of justice, equality and respect for human life are to be infused into every sphere of economy.

Fifth sector is scientific and Ø technological research. They are becoming today's new idols. In a digitalised and globalised world, science can easily be considered a new religion.

The sixth sector of NE is civic and political life. Ø In the various changing situations of the world

Lineamenta proposes endeavours like living together, dialogue and collaboration.

Missio Dei - Divine Sending

The common missiological understanding is that God's mission is addressed to the world and everyone is a missionary of God, to fulfil the divine plan. This universal mandate ensures the universality of the Gospel that is proclaimed. Christian existence can be characterised as missionary existence. The inclusiveness of the message is the defining element. This proclamation, a participation in the *missio Dei*, takes on particular forms in response to specific times, places or needs.

What is the basic purpose behind this divine sending or mission? Mark describes the beginnings of Jesus' mission as a call to "repent and believe in the good news" (1/14-14). "By calling the people to repent, Jesus is not asking them to leave Judaism and join the Church, but to turn to God by turning away from Satan and Mammon" (Amaladoss 2011: 42). But in the course of history the basic purpose of Christian mission got oriented towards the salvation of souls, conversion, planting of the Church and its establishment. It was the zeal for the souls that made many missionaries to leave their country in order to preach the Gospel to the people of the world, especially among the non-Christians. What does evangelisation mean in the Asian context? Paul Puthanangady, who was the director of this national centre, answers that "the purpose of evangelisation is not salvation of souls, but the creation of a new earth and new direction for human history" (1992:3).

The Church's mission in Asia is caught in a dilemma: We are conscious of the mission entrusted by Jesus to his disciples to be his witnesses to the ends of the earth (Acts 1/8). The urgency of this mission in our world has been proposed anew by the Council and was emphasised by the post-conciliar popes, Paul VI and John Paul II. But both felt that the missionary spirit has lost its vigour. A note of sadness is reflected in the words of John Paul II that "the missionary activity, specifically to the nations appears to be decreasing. This is deplorable because "missionary zeal has always been sign of vitality", just as it's lessening is "a sign of the crisis of faith". The fulfilment of this mission remains also today "the primary service the Church can render to every individual and to all humanity in the modern world" (RM 2).

Reflecting on the changing understanding of the Church down through the ages, Avery Dulles in his book, *A Church to Believe In*, proposes a modest model of the Church as a "Community of the Disciples of Jesus" moving away from the lofty, triumphalistic and exalted traditional models such as the "Body of Christ", "People of God" or "Sacrament of Unity." Pope John Paul II of happy memory suggested this model in his first encyclical *Redemptor Hominis*, "If then we want to have a true picture of this immense and diversified community ... then, it is a Community of Disciples, each of whom follows Christ" (RH 21). This model is also rooted in the Acts of the Apostles, which describes the early Christian community as a community of disciples (6:2). And, perhaps, we can add here something that should be dear to all missionaries, namely, the mission command as recorded in Mt 28:19, "Go, therefore, make disciples of all nations!" Proclaiming the Good News, building up the Church is making disciples. Mission, in other words, is making disciples of all nations.

New Horizons of Evangelisation

"Today we face a religious situation which is extremely varied and changing" (EN 32). God has placed us in this world and he has given us a variety. And it is part of the mystery of God that there is variety that can be complementary and that it can make a contribution to the totality. So we have to work with other religions, their insights and we have to recognise the positive value of the different cultures. No single religion, conditioned by history and culture, can make a presentation of the total ' Gospel'.

The Second Vatican Council has brought about a new understanding of the religious world of nations. All peoples are included in God's saving love from the beginning. The awareness of God's grace comes to the people in many ways, mostly through their own religious traditions. In the Declaration on non-Christian religions the Council recognised with respect "all that is true and holy in these religions" (NA 2) and declared that also people "who through no fault of their own do not know the Gospel of Jesus Christ or his Church" can find salvation if in their life and work they follow the light of their conscience" (LG 16). In the Mission Decree, the Council also demands that the Christian message should not alienate people from their culture but that every Christian community should

be "endowed with the cultural riches of its nation and deeply rooted in the people" (AG 15).

Indian Theological Association in its statement says, "The religions of the world are expressions of the human openness to God. They are signs of God's presence in the world. Every religion is unique and through this uniqueness, religions enrich one another. In their specificity, they manifest different faces of that supreme Mystery which is never exhausted. In their diversity, they enable us to experience the richness of the 'One' more profoundly" (ITA 1989:32). So it seeks to develop a radically new theology of religions relevant for our times, and to evolve new models and styles of inter-religious fellowships.

The mystery of God is much larger than we can imagine. No doubt, it is symbolised or articulated in the Christian tradition. But the mystery of God is also present in the other religions, traditions and movements of people. So the seeds of the Gospel grow, when we recognise the 'beauty' of the land of Asia. Its beauty lies in the deep spirituality that has emerged from the cries of the poor in their anguish and sorrow. The values of the Gospel, centred on hope cannot give way to despair. In the religious context of Asia in general, the Church is called to work towards a living synthesis of an inter-religious spirituality for a human social order. This horizon brings us to a new task, the task of bringing this world into a kind of new fellowship to go forward, trying to understand what the future holds for us.

The Council's wider vision of God's all embracing saving love and of the religious traditions all over the world has placed the Church's mission in a wider perspective. For ever, Jesus' message has a transforming impact on human society. Pope Paul VI defined the goal of evangelisation as "bringing the Good News into all strata of humanity and through its influence transforming humanity from within". This impact on human society will come about not through laws only, but through the change of hearts, through "conversion", understood, however not simply in changing religion. Rather "the Church seeks to convert solely through the divine power she proclaims, both the individual and collective consciousness of the people" (EN 18).

Thus, in our time the Church's primary concern is the impact on the actual world to which we belong. Here we come closer to Jesus' mission who summed up his own message in the proclamation and

inauguration of God's reign, in renewing the world with God as its centre, and people of all nations, all social groups becoming sisters and brothers in solidarity. Hence, the need of the hour is to work for human communities, where there is freedom from consumerism, greed and hatred, communities where people will be brothers and sisters to one another, caring for one another and sharing the earth of God. That has to be the frame of reference in our mind when we plan our mission, so that beyond the walls of separation we can get-together as the children of God.

In the multi-religious context of Asia, evangelisation has a mutually complementary double process: "Communion with Christ, in which the Church and people of different faiths and ideologies share their experience of their ultimate values, and an exchange of brotherly and sisterly love in a tangible form, as they strive together and cooperate with each other for a common end, i.e. fuller and authentic human life" (Karakaran 1978:263). We need to respect followers of other religions as co-pilgrims. Hence, in our context, "Christian mission is better termed *missio inter gentes* (mission among the nations) than *missio ad gentes*" (Burrows 2005:27), which is the Catholic understanding of evangelisation today.

This broad understanding of evangelisation, meaningful in the general Asian context, is contained in documents of Vatican II (GS, NA, DH and UR). Putting these insights together we can conclude that evangelisation today is the leavening of the world, considered as a leavening of gospel values and as making it easier to reach the final goal of building up a new humanity. The proclamation is realised in the mutual self-gift and consequent mutual enrichment of Dialogue, which the SVD XV General Chapter (2000) renamed as a four-fold Prophetic Dialogue with faith seekers, with people of other faith traditions, with people of other cultures, and with the poor and marginalised. 'What is expected of missionaries is to listen, to follow, to give witness to, and proclaim the Word of God, and to denounce without fear all that is opposed to the Gospel and the Kingdom of God' (IDW-2/31). Prophetic dialogue is the deepest and best understanding of one's vocation. Missionaries are called to enter the four-fold prophetic dialogue today (Prophetic Dialogue, 2003:17).

Since the religions are at the service of the world, inter-religious dialogue cannot be confined

to the religious sphere but must embrace all dimensions of life: economic, socio-political, cultural and religious. It is in their common commitment to the fuller life of the human community that they discover their complementarity, the urgency and relevance of dialogue at all levels socio-economic, intellectual, and spiritual among the common people in daily life as among scholars and people with deep religious experience (Cf. BIRA 1984: III/7). This reflection of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences gives full backing to the SVD Chapter's redefinition of its mission as prophetic dialogue, "Dialogue is the characteristic mode of the Church's life in Asia" (EA 3). We have to discern signs of God's presence and purpose in the world in a spirit of dialogue (GS 11).

This new horizon of mission is actually a liberating experience for the missionaries, who were too much attached to the institutions, in order to increase the members of the Church. It was more of proselytisation than evangelisation. What is new is the shift from the institution to the people; it is a people oriented evangelisation, which alone makes sense today. Hence, today we need people oriented missionaries, who can gather communities that take care of every member and every section that were neglected. So it is a way of recapturing what was marginalised. So the new horizon of mission is a kind of evangelisation from the periphery.

Paradigm Shift in Mission

David J. Bosch points out the contrasting tone needed for mission today. "It is a bold humility or humble boldness. We know only in part, but we know. And we believe that the faith we profess is both true and just and should be proclaimed" (Mission in Bold Humility 1997). The significant shift that came with regard to mission was from the 'mission of the Church' to the 'mission of God - *Missio Dei*'. This paradigm shift did clarify a few things including that the primary motive of mission is the love of God towards all creation. It made clear that mission has its origins not in the official Church or in special groups within the Church. It has its origin in God. God is a missionary God who crosses frontiers towards the world. *Missio Dei* implied a shift from a Church-centred mission to a mission-centred Church. "The mission of the Church and our mission are only at the service of God's mission" (AG 2). There were different interpretations of how the Church stood in relationship to the

other movements for humanisation but there was general agreement that *Missio Dei* was about the renewal of the world, not just renewal of the Church.

I would like to quote from the missionary wisdom of a bishop, "The mission of the Church refers to its task in the world and includes varieties of service in the community. It includes political action and prophetic witness, dialogue with persons of other religions and ideologies, and proclamation of the Gospel. In this context we have to keep in mind that the mission of Jesus Christ was to usher in a new order of life not merely to gather a company of disciples who acknowledge his name. We have also to note that he is the Lord of all history, not merely of the history of the Church but also of national histories through their various phases. And so we must enfold in one overall vision what the Lord is doing both in the Church and in our nation, when we engage in mission at the present time" (Wickremsinghe, 2009:13).

Church has a significant role to play in God's continuing mission of humanising humanity and mending the whole of creation. Christ continues to be faithful to the new covenant he made with the Church, which in a mysterious way, is his body. Jesus' prayer that all his disciples may be one, just as he and his Father are on (Jn 17/21) is over-quoted without expounding its implications for today's ever-dividing and fragmented world. The sign of unity and reconciliation among all Christians in single fellowship is the challenge for an effective witnessing in Asia. "The power of evangelisation will find itself considerably diminished if those who proclaim the Gospel are divided among themselves in all sorts of ways," says Paul VI and asks, "Is this not perhaps one of the great sicknesses of evangelisation today" (EN 77)? We need to collaborate in obedience to the Lord and His teachings. Martin Luther King Jr. declared at a crucial moment in his campaign, "Catholics, Protestants and Orthodox, either we come together as brothers and sisters or die as fools." Western 'Christendom' seems to have chosen the latter, while Churches in India point to yet a third category, 'live as fools' (Israel, 2009:21).

Go and do Likewise: Mission in Asia Today

Jesus goes about reconciling people and giving them new hope. His mission is to forgive, heal, feed and to alleviate the sufferings of people. In doing so the Kingdom or the Reign of God comes. It is

the ideal society he envisages, where people care for each other and love each other like the Good Samaritan. He creates this story and at the end of it says, "Go and do likewise" (Lk 10/37). This is mission in Asia today. Many of our sisters and brothers are doing the same. We have the ideal in Mother Teresa. In doing that, Rani Maria gets killed in Madhya Pradesh and the Australian missionary Graham Stuart Staines and his two minor sons Phillip (11) and Timothy (7) were burnt to death.

The whole theology of mission and practice of mission are indicated in the Good Samaritan story. Jesus includes a priest and a Levite for a contrast in order to explicate what is not religion, what is not service of God, and what is not his mission. He quietly puts here Hosea 6/6, which is a revolutionary thinking. In his teaching, the primacy is for the brother, and not for altars or sacrifice (Mt 5). In the concluding part of the teaching section Jesus said, "Just as you did it to one of the least ... you did it to me" (Mt 25/31–46). He identified himself with the needy and the victims. That is how one can belong to the Kingdom in such situations. FABC theological consultation on 'Evangelisation in Asia' says, "The Kingdom of God is therefore universally present and at work" (1997:200), clarifying that the real enemies of the Kingdom are not other religions but Satan and Mammon. Evangelisation is directed against Satan and Mammon not other religions.

Secondly, "God so loved the world that he sent his Son" (Jn 3/16). This world is something that God loved into existence, including human beings. He destined them all to companionship with himself, sharing his life and love, his glory and eternal life. There is only one God who created everyone. He has been in communication with all peoples and cultures throughout the ages, "whose faith is known to you alone," as we pray in the old 4th Eucharistic Prayer. Paul says that the whole world is created in him and the people have experienced the divine in various ways and expressed it in various ways and symbols (Col 1). We are sent to discover God who has been there all through the ages, what He has done there, whom He has guided, and also to discover the saints God has fashioned. Hence, the two areas of concern for the missionaries in Asia are: (1) Caring for the needy and the poor, building up solidarity, giving dignity and hope, and making all brothers and sisters, so that we can all together say the Our Father, and (2) Find out what God has been doing throughout the ages and history, and to discover all those who have carried this tradition.

Mission as Building Communities of Harmony

There is a growing understanding among many common people, among good well-meaning Christians and knowledgeable and enlightened theologians committed to Jesus Christ and to the Church, that the Catholic Mission has got to be reinterpreted just as each age has got to reinterpret the way in which God is speaking to it. The Church in Asia should apply a critical understanding in its theologising experience and assess what has been taken for granted in the past. To understand mission in our context, we need to frankly reflect on questions like: (1) What is the role and status of the unbaptised devotees of Christ, (2) What is the effect of the variety of religions living and working together for common good, (3) And how do we recognise the genuine prophetic witness of individuals and network with peoples' movements, outside the Church, struggling collectively for a better society?

We need to think of mission today as an awareness that we are called to live a particular way of life that is humanising, ennobling and bringing up the true dignity of the human person as willed by God. We know this already in the person of Jesus. Therefore, a Christian believer has a point of reference in Jesus Christ in order to understand the scope of mission, extend of mission and the way mission should be carried out. What the Church is doing now is to witness to this sense of mission that is made present in Jesus Christ, which we would like to share with others as a way of life.

Working for the Kingdom primarily implies an economics of sharing. The rich and the poor is a reality in the world today and any serious economist would say that we cannot accept the capitalist economy of profit nor can we accept the socialist economy of equity without growth. We need growth with equity. That is the economy of Jesus Christ, i.e., the economy of sharing. Therefore, the economic question of the Kingdom is very much relevant today. In the Kingdom ideal established by Jesus, the rich will share what they have with the poor. Jesus told Zacchaeus that salvation has come to his house, because he gave to those whom he cheated four times, and was ready to share half of his property with the have-nots.

Secondly, the Kingdom ideal is equality. In this country we still have caste discrimination and status of various types in society. Church in Asia has a

duty to make people aware of their human dignity as persons and give them a new self-understanding so that they do not become oppressors in their turn in order to be somebody. If they have discovered in themselves a sense of dignity and worth, then they would not want to put down somebody else. They should learn to look at no one as higher or lower, inferior or superior, but as brothers and sisters. Jesus had table fellowship with publicans, sinners, and even prostitutes. For the Jews, table fellowship meant equality. Today the Eucharistic table fellowship is a call to sharing and to live in equality. In such a community, love is the life-principle of authority, where the leadership is exercised from below through service, as demonstrated by Jesus by washing the feet of the disciples.

In order to do this, our mission is to share with others a way of bringing out their true inner attitudes whereby they themselves find fulfilment, they themselves can be partners with others in enterprises that will bring hope, joy and peace to the world; enterprises in which we slowly build up a community of humankind, and Church is at the service of this enterprise. This rethinking is also a response to the objections raised against the so-called 'missions' that deculturise people, making them less true to their origins, their roots, and their nationality. Because they have made us rethink on this point we have also begun to understand the wider ramifications of what mission and its meaning imply. That is a positive step in the way the Church understands its mission today as a call to create communities of harmony and peace, and has begun to find ways to articulate and carry it out.

The Spirit is accompanying us with this mission in the third millennium. The proof of it is in the Charismatic Movement in the Church, which is a powerful tool for renewal today. It is a good movement, but often there is an over emphasis of the sentimental, the ritual and the expressional, instead of going deeper into faith experience. So instead of making the emotional expression an end in itself, we must consciously emphasise the meaning of faith as a kind of rational and total concern of people that is carried out into the whole of society. As a movement it has to be more outward looking, and find ways and means to transform society. The goal of the Church's mission is to transform persons by the power of the Spirit so that all can live together and share a communion in love.

Mission as Reconciliation

In the plurality of the world today there are different models of mission: when mission is dialogue in our context, it is inculturation in Africa and liberation in Latin America. An important new comer in the world-scene of evangelisation is 'mission as reconciliation'. This felt need is caused by a general sense of brokenness in human society today exasperated by globalisation, and fragmentation that creates it. This sense of division, woundedness, trauma, and dislocation is caused by the upsurge of ethnic conflicts and wars justified by religious fanatics. In this situation of hopelessness people all over not only long for healing but also desire to recreate the whole. In those moments of brokenness, dividedness and alienation people can have an experience of God, and there, I think, we articulate the Good News, trying to help people experience what has happened to them. It is an experience of new creation in the midst of terrible tragedies like the recent tsunami. In the deepest theological terms, the search for the whole is the search for the Reign of God.

Reconciliation as paradigm for Christian mission is expected to address issues of how people of different communities can live together and building bridges towards the society of love, justice and harmony. Christians need to prove that they are followers of Jesus by striving for unity amid diversity as Jesus did (John, 17). Reconciliation is seen as an inspiring creative paradigm for mission in the present time. Christian mission is based on the Triune God's plan of salvation where reconciliation is considered as a goal of mission. This may be based on the prevailing situations in many countries having Truth and Reconciliation Commissions formed after civil wars and oppressions, especially after 1990s. Robert Schreiter emphasised that reconciliation is primarily and foremost the work of God. He understands reconciliation starting with God as initiator and completing it within us through Jesus.

In a situation of communal conflict and violence, a missionary is called to be a peacemaker. As Church is missionary by her very nature, Christians in general are called to be messengers of peace. "Blessed are the peacemakers" (Mt 5/9) is a conviction that has come down to us and is a great challenge in the conflict-ridden world today. You become a peacemaker when you experience security in God's power, especially in your weakness and limitations. A member of the Kingdom is primarily a peacemaker

and a reconciler, creating harmony among human beings.

The Church today needs to recognise that reconciliation must take place not only at a personal and socio-cultural levels but today's situation demands a third level of reconciliation, which might be called political. Personal level could be extended to reconciliation between all victims and their oppressors. Socio-cultural reconciliation between members of oppressed cultural groups like the Dalits and those who have oppressed and marginalised them for centuries. In the context of the present day wars justified by terrorist threats, calls for a political reconciliation between the so-called Christian allied forces and Islamic world. "Reconciliation, insists Robert Schreiter, involves much more of a spirituality than a strategy...In a world that is torn apart by so many conflicts of religion, politics, and human tragedy, the church needs to recognise that Jesus' ministry of reconciliation and peace has been entrusted to us (2 Cor 5/18–19)" (Bevans 2003:53).

A New Vision for Mission

The whole of Christian life is like a great pilgrimage to the house of the Father. This pilgrimage takes place in the heart of every person and in the heart of every believing community and reaches to the whole humanity (Catechism, 458–459). To keep this pilgrimage going the Church needs to renew her life and missionary spirit all the time. "Missionary activity renews the Church, revitalises faith and Christian identity and offers enthusiasm and new incentive. Faith is strengthened when it is given to other" (RM 2). For this we already know what needs to be done in the religious context of our country: (1) To move from institutions to deep interiority, to the experience of God's presence and action. The Church has to become a praying community inserted into the context of time and culture of our people. (2) To move from individualism towards an authentic community of faith, for Christianity is not a matter of individuals but community. The movement in India toward the Basic Christian/Neighbourhood Community expresses the desire to be vibrant and caring communities (FAPA, 1982:56). These communities would be characterised by the following basic attitudes: respect for the dignity and individuality of every human person, irrespective of one's caste, creed or ethnicity; a concern for one another that is ready to share that is ready to share without being selfish; a sense of togetherness a

participation shown in dialogue and collaboration that is the mark of a real democratic society. (3) To empower the laity with a spirituality of discipleship. Religion can spontaneously communicate through feasts and family events. My book, "Religion as Communicating" has established that in the context of Andhra Pradesh, "Mission is responding to the human situation, cooperating with people of good will in service, sharing mutual spiritual experiences in prayer and participating prudently in life that is celebrated in feasts and festivities" (Religion as Communicating 1995:229). (4) And finally the Church must be known for its active service to the people offering life with integrity and dignity, life with compassion and sensitivity to all issues. Everyone knows the famous words of Mahatma Gandhi that to a hungry person even God would dare to appear only in the form of bread.

New Way of Being Church

Be sacrament of God's love in the world (Jn 3/34-35). Pope John Paul II says that the Church has but one purpose, "to serve people by revealing to them the love of God made manifest in Jesus Christ" (RM 2). In this context the definition of David J. Bosch on Mission as "the Good News of God's love, incarnated in the witness of a community, for the sake of the world" (1991:519), summarises well for us the Catholic understanding of evangelisation.

Be the salt of the earth and light of the world (Mt 5/13-16). The mission command of the Sermon on the Mount is thus strongly theocentric; leading people to give glory to God (5/16). The ultimate manifestation of the glory of God is God's Reign (Mt 6/9-10). Mission does this whenever it contributes to the realisation of God's plan for human and cosmic liberation. The aim of mission is, therefore, leading history to its fulfilment in the full realisation of the Kingdom of God. This understanding of mission is especially appropriate in Asia today. Because of its pluri-religious horizon, an Asian Missiology will tend to be centred on God. Such a Theocentric focus is nothing to be embarrassed about, for it is completely faithful to the Bible. The biblical story begins and ends with God who is all in all (Rom 11/36; 1 Cor 8/6).

Be a contrast community - Mission in our context is Theocentric (giving glory to God by building up God's Kingdom) and the way to this mission is not so much individual proclamation as community witness. Unless the Church lives as Church, that is,

as the symbol and servant of the Kingdom it cannot engage in authentic mission.

Be open to other religions - discover truth and goodness in others and mutual enrichment through dialogue, adopting the two principles of dialogue - commitment and openness. Following the leadership of the Pope in Assisi in October 1986, the Church can be an instrument of peace. Commentators said that the Pope could not have done this if he did not believe that the members of other religions could pray - i.e. be in touch with God - and that their prayers would be heard. John Paul II also declared that every authentic prayer is from the Holy Spirit, "The Spirit manifests himself in a special way in the Church and in her members. Nevertheless, his presence and activity are universal, limited neither by space nor time (RM 28). It has already been playing such a role in the various kinds of dialogues and live-in sessions that it has been organising in Asia over the past many years. Gandhi had launched the practice of inter-religious prayer much earlier in India. The fruit of such a national colloquium, which brought together over 100 social activists from various faith traditions and ideologies at Pune, is the book entitled, *Promise of India Pluralism and Solidarity*, published in 2011.

CONCLUSION

Evangelisation has twofold basis: "first, the missionary commissioning of the Risen Lord for the participation in the mission of the Most Holy Trinity and second, the impelling force of the joy of Christ experience (Jn 1/39-45; 4/29-30, 40-42; 1 Jn 1/1-4)" (Namita, 2000:204). Down through the centuries there was an over emphasis on the first centrifugal model of mission. It is time, perhaps, that we call a moratorium on an exported idea of mission or a mission necessitated by a western understanding of the Church, in order to make evangelization relevant in Asia today. As the very word 'mission' is loaded with suspicion and evokes hatred in the multi-religious context of Asia, it is time that we cease not only using the word but throw away the whole baggage of activity conceptualised in a foreign context and take up seriously the second model, the centripetal model of mission. It is well established by the missionary dynamics of the Fourth Gospel and the mission model of Peter in the Acts of the Apostles.

It is beyond doubt that we stand at the definite end of a specific era of the mission. Asian theologians

are proposing, "A new missiological paradigm, *missio inter-gentes* for meeting the challenges of the task of carrying out the Christian mission in the diverse and pluralistic Asian *Sitzen-im-Leben*" (Jonathan 2004: 672). It is based on the conviction that all are called to transcend their present state in growing towards a fulfilment, which will be the work of the Spirit of God. The missionary is the one who comes to meet, sharing the gift of faith, but at the same time honouring the mystery of the God who was there from the beginning. The indifference in relation to the other in turn generates the existential peripheries. Strengthening the dimension *cum gentibus* (with the people) would help missionaries in Asia to be closer to their everyday problems.

Perhaps it is not an overstatement to assert that 'Spirit consciousness' is uniquely necessary for all evangelisers, particularly in the Asian context. Only the Spirit can foster the awareness and sensitivity needed to approach the diversity of Asian peoples, cultures, and religions. Many people are in poverty and underdevelopment, requiring deep social transformation; the cultures should find authentic religious expression within Gospel-inculturation; religions and their followers must be treasured because, as Asian bishops have noted, "we accept them as significant and positive elements in the economy of God's design of salvation" (FABC-I, 14). Evangelisers are always conscious of the personal Spirit maintaining them in mission: (1) Source of their optimism, courage, unity, patience, detachment, poverty and even martyrdom (Rom 15/18–19), (2) Inspiration to bring forth enduring fruit and convincing witness (Jn 15/16; Gal 5/22–23), and (3) Causes people to discern the signs of the times—signs willed by God (EN 75).

All these gifts surely have as their source "the love of God that has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit" (Rom 5/5), that the joy of the gospel may reach to the ends of the earth, illuminating even the fringes of our world as proposed by Pope Francis in his encyclical *Evangelii Gaudium* (288).

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