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Towards a Holistic Mission: Going beyond the Paradigm

MISSIONARY ANIMATION CENTRE

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"The mission of the Christian in the world is a mission for all, a mission of service, which excludes no-one; it requires great generosity and in particular the gaze and heart turned heavenward to invoke the Lord's help. There is so much need for Christians who bear witness to the Gospel with joy in everyday life. The disciples, sent by Jesus, 'returned with joy'. When we do this, our heart fills with joy."

(Pope Francis)

Foreword

Spirit-Filled Evangelizers for a Renewed Missionary Venture

The history of evangelization is replenished with stories of heroes and heroines of evangelizing mission who beautifully combined prayer and work as effective means of evangelization. For Pope Francis, "spirit filled evangelizers are those who pray and work." (*Evengelii Gaudium*, 262). The Holy Father insists on the need to understand the importance of the mystical and social dimension of the evangelizing mission of the church. "Mystical notions without a solid social and missionary outreach are no help to evangelization, nor are dissertations or social or pastoral practices which lack a spirituality which can change hearts" (*Evengelii Gaudium*, 262). If we do not understand the importance of an integrated approach to evangelization, we impoverish the very nature of the mission entrusted to us by the Lord to "go into the whole world to proclaim the good news" (Mt 15:16). When we evaluate our missionary approach, we may have to admit before ourselves and before the Lord that at times we fall victims of one sided approach to evangelization. Some of us tend to highlight the mystical dimension and completely ignore the social dimension of the mission. It is of paramount importance that we avoid all types of dichotomy between prayer and work. Our mission ought to flow from our prayer and we should find the source of strength for mission in our prayer.

We cannot think of being spirit-filled evangelizers without cultivating within ourselves an interior space, which enables us to see realities in the light of Christian faith. As spirit filled evangelizers, we ought to have sufficiently prolonged moments of prayer to

encounter God personally in His word and sacrament so as to share His love with those we encounter in our mission. Without a deep spiritual foundation, our many activities might appear empty and meaningless and all the fervour with which we might have begun our mission might gradually die out. Sustained daily prayer is a guarantee for a successful missionary and social involvement. We should also guard against another temptation to be totally engaged in social and developmental activities without a solid spiritual footing, which will gradually lead us to dissipation and meaninglessness at the end of a life spend in hard work and sacrifices. If this happens it would be the greatest tragedy a consecrated person can encounter in his/her life. Therefore, we ought to remind ourselves constantly that "Unless the Lord builds the house, the builders labour in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the guards stand watch in vain" (Ps 27: 1). It is essential that as spirit-filled evangelizers we learn to integrate prayer and work and remain equally faithful to our commitment to prayer as well to our work/mission. At the same time, we need to guard against every temptation to escape from facing the challenges of the present day without lamenting about it. At times we tend to exaggerate the present day challenges and make us feel victims of the same. We often say that things are not as easy as they used to be. This tendency seems to present a mentality that things were so simple and easy in the past and now they have become complicated and hard. But the reality is something different, for we know that every age and period of history had its own struggles to face and the evangelizers of that time faced them with great faith and courage. It is now our turn to face the challenges of the present world with the same inner strength rather than making ourselves victims of changing times and situations. We should never be alarmed at the presence of human weakness, self-absorption, concupiscence which preys upon us all. We should remind ourselves that these things are ever present under one

guise or another; they are due to our human limits rather than particular situations. Let us not say, then, that things are harder today; rather we need to understand that they are simply different. When we are tempted to exaggerate the present day challenges let us turn to the saints who have gone before us, who confronted the difficulties of their own day with grace, courage, faith and wisdom. We ought to walk in their footsteps today trying our best to find new strength and vitality in our personal encounter with the saving love of Jesus through moments of deep intimate prayer and burning with missionary passion to reach out to those who wait to behold the face of the saviour who alone can bring the comfort and solace. Let us then stand erect to the wakeup call to be spirit-filled evangelizers to bring about a radical renewal in our missionary venture. The time is ripe now, Yes, it is time for us to wake from our sleep of mediocrity and work earnestly as agents of God's saving love to the world (cf. Rom 13:11)

Sr. Philomena Mathew
Superior General

Message

Encountering Christ: Goal of Transmitting the Faith

The missionary mandate which the disciples received from the Lord: "teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you" (Mt 28:20), makes an explicit reference to proclaiming and teaching the Gospel. St. Paul the Apostle presents himself as an "Apostle [...] set apart for the Gospel of God" (*Rom* 1:1; *1 Cor* 1:17). Therefore, the Church's task consists in proclaiming and transmitting the Gospel, which is "the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith" (*Rom* 1:16) and which is ultimately identified with Jesus Christ (cf. *1 Cor* 1:24). The Gospel is a living and efficacious Word, which accomplishes what it says. It is not so much a system of articles of faith and moral precepts, much less a political programme, but a Person; and this Person is Jesus Christ, the definitive Word of God, who became Man. The Gospel is the Gospel of Jesus Christ (*Leneamenta* 11). However, not only does the Gospel have Jesus Christ as its content; but even more, through the Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ is also the promoter and the centre of its proclamation and transmission. Consequently, the goal of the transmission of the faith is the realization of a personal encounter with Jesus Christ, in the Spirit, thereby leading to an experiencing of his Father and our Father (*Leneamenta* 11).

Transmitting the faith means to create in every place and time the conditions for this personal encounter of individuals with Jesus Christ. The faith-encounter with the person of Jesus Christ is a relationship with him, "remembering him" (in the Eucharist) and, through the grace of the Spirit, having in us the mind of Jesus Christ (*Leneamenta* 11). Pope Benedict XVI stated, "Being

Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction. [...] Since God has first loved us (cf. *1 Jn* 4:10), love is now no longer a mere 'command'; it is the response to the gift of love with which God draws near to us."(Benedict XVI) The Church realizes herself precisely from carrying out her task of proclaiming the Gospel and transmitting the Christian faith. This personal encounter and communion with Christ allow us to share in the relationship of the Son with his Father and to experience the power of the Spirit. The aim of transmitting the faith and the goal of evangelization is to bring us "through Him in one Spirit to the Father" (*Eph* 2:18). This is the newness of the Christian God. From this perspective, transmitting the faith in Christ means participating in the life of the Church.

The transmission of the faith totally involves the faith of Christians and the life of the Church. The experience of God can be communicated to others only in view of our personally encountering Christ. What is not believed or lived cannot be transmitted. The sign of a well-founded, mature faith is the natural way we communicate it to others. Christ "called to him those whom he desired; and they came to him. And he appointed twelve, to be with him, and to be sent out to preach" (*Mk* 3:13,14). The Gospel can only be transmitted on the basis of "being" with Jesus and living with Jesus the experience of the Father, in the Spirit; and, in a corresponding way, of "feeling" compelled to proclaim and share what is lived as a good and something positive and beautiful (*Leneamenta* 12).

Our efforts will bear fruit depending upon the type of encounter we have with the person of Christ. The courage to speak out against infidelity and scandal which arise in Christian communities as a sign and consequence of moments of fatigue and weariness in the work of proclamation; the courage to recognize and admit

faults; the capacity to continue to witness to Jesus Christ, while recounting our continual need to be saved, knowing that - as St. Paul the Apostle teaches - we can look at our weakness so that in this way we can acknowledge the power of Christ who saves us (cf. *2 Cor* 12:9; *Rom* 7:14ff.); the exercise of penance, a commitment to the work of purification and the will to make atonement for the consequences of our errors; and the unfailing trust that the hope which has been given us "does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us" (*Rom* 5:5), all these are the fruits of transmitting the faith. They result from the process of transmitting the faith and proclaiming the Gospel, a process which first brings renewal to Christians and their communities, as it brings to the world the Gospel of Jesus Christ. 'So that others might experience Christ,' is the goal of transmitting a faith intended to be shared with all, near and far. This goal is an incentive for mission. May the joy of the Gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus.

Sr. Bridget Diengdoh MSMHC
General Councillor for Evangelization

Editorial

Beyond Paradigms

One of the important moments that marks God's salvific plan was realised at the final bidding of Jesus before His ascension. It is by building His Church (cf. Mt. 16:18) and commissioning His followers to proclaim the good news of salvation to all people (cf. Mk. 16:15) that Jesus continues the mission. Strengthened by His never failing promise to be present always until the end of the age (cf. Mt. 28:20), the Church, with its unique characteristics of unity and universality fulfils its sacred mission. Though centuries have passed the mission continues, seeking to unite everyone. The mission of the Church finds its expression in the daily encounters of individuals and groups who remain committed and strive to live the values of the Gospel. It awakens the minds to grasp the meaning of eternal truth, which surpasses all understanding, knowledge and wisdom. It calls for unswerving faith of people who remain open to the demands of the world that is ever changing.

Amidst the challenges of the present, accomplishment of the mission is possible only when one can think beyond the paradigms. Today, much emphasis is laid on inclusiveness that promote acceptance and collaboration leading to the formation of a global society. Pope Francis urges the Church to be inclusive in order to become more effective. Understanding the spirit of inclusiveness can be made more clear when one is able to comprehend meaning of unity in diversity and also the interconnectedness of everything that exist. The ultimate goal of the mission being the unity (cf. Eph 1:10), there shouldn't be place for exclusivism. While the reality testifies to the interconnectedness of everything, there still exist failure of accepting this fact which leads to peril. Selfishness

and narrow mindedness of people keep fragmenting the world. There is hardly any chance for collective thinking and collaboration.

Henri Nouwen, a practical mystic with prophetic vision writes, "In a world so torn apart by rivalry, anger, and hatred, we have the privileged vocation to be living signs of a love that can bridge all divisions and heal all wounds." The need of the hour is to let the world experience God's unconditional love. It is possible through the members of the Church who witness to the reality of His Kingdom by their life of genuine love and care. Theirs is a mission of paramount importance in today's world which remains passive and indifferent. Their beliefs and values may be seen as contradictory and unacceptable to some and a vast majority may continue to protest or remain apathetic. But, it is important to remember that the truth will hold its ground and lead those who resolve to be obstinate and persistent.

This issue of the journal invites the readers to reflect on various dimensions of the Church's mission and calls to remain optimistic towards every situation, seizing all opportunities to work for the unity for which Christ prayed. Let us draw inspiration from John Wesley's advice, which underlines the need to go beyond: "Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as ever you can."

Sr. Shiji James MSMHC

Pastoral Creativity of Bishop Stephen Ferrando

Sr. Rosita Joseph MSMHC

Introduction

Bishop Stephen Ferrando will always remain an outstanding Salesian missionary in Northeast India, though we may have different interpretations of his life. Moved by the urgency of proclaiming the Gospel of salvation he was convinced of his sacred duty of communicating the message of the Good News. It is fidelity and love for Christ, openness to the Holy Spirit, and loyalty to Don Bosco's teaching that sustained his missionary dynamism. Filial devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary reinforced his call to be a disciple of Christ in radical service to the poor. His apostolic creativity was born of the Salesian spirit centred on Jesus Christ and the Gospel. He enhanced his missionary spirit through the inspiration received from the pioneer Salesian missionaries who were outstanding in their zeal for the missions. As a man of deep faith he did not fallen into the temptation of hyper efficiency or desire for power. Humility, communion and renunciation were the shields of his missionary enthusiasm and apostolic creativity.

Outstanding Characteristics of Bishop Ferrando's Pastoral Creativity

Bishop Ferrando made every effort to respond faithfully to the Church's perennial mission: to bring people to an encounter with Jesus Christ, the Truth, the Way and the Life. His missionary spirit and zeal for the Gospel made the Church deeply rooted in

faith. His innovative spirit and communicating methods in mission *ad gentes* and works of charity brought the reality of the Gospel into the lives of many. As a true pastor, he was constantly in contact with the homes and lives of the people. Even in difficult circumstances of the region, he dedicated his energies to help the Christians by providing opportunities for the Christian community to have the presence of the missionaries and catechists. He used all his resources in the service of the Gospel, Church and the people of the region. In 1950 after the earthquake of Assam he wrote to Propaganda Fide: "The little resources that we have is used for the relief of the victims of earthquake and flood. Literally, we have to give the people everything for their survival. The sight of such a misery made me shed tears."[1]

Openness to the needs of the Christian Community

As a creative pastor, Bishop Ferrando's life as a missionary lies in attracting people to Jesus Christ through his compassionate nature and ability to feel at home with people. His long years of missionary life shows us that God leads us to spiritual fruitfulness step by step through varied circumstances. His kindness and compassion towards the people in the villages, his ability to work hand in hand with missionaries and catechists reveals his urge to lead the people to God. Sundays, liturgical seasons and solemnities were planned well to make the Church a family of God. The Catholic association along with the missionaries and religious sisters took care of the spiritual animation of the people. He took seriously every important event in the diocese, with adequate preparations for the celebration of the liturgical seasons, Popes day, oratory day, Eucharistic and Marian processions, cultural festivals, Don Bosco week etc. He also ensured to make certain events memorable like baptism, first Holy Communion, and marriage so that people may understand

[1] ASPF No. 5318, Ferrando to Propaganda Fide, 16.12.1950.

their implications in their Christian life. It also created awareness of the sense of God in the faithful and deepened their faith in God.

Bishop Ferrando initiated a variety of charitable works on behalf of the poor and marginalised people, which helped them to improve their living standard and grow in the spirit of Jesus Christ. Some of his initiatives in this direction are: orphanages, dispensaries, schools in villages, visiting the sick in homes, instruction in hygiene, care of the sick in hospitals and health centres, care of lepers, vocational training for girls, technical and agricultural schools for the young and so on. These charitable works manifested Christian charity to all categories of people and brought about human development. His solidarity with the poor, recognition of their full dignity as daughters and sons of God, gave awareness to them that all believers have the reason to hope (1Pet 3:15). His accompaniment of people made them realise that they are not alone, that the Church is connected to them and we are journeying together to the Father.

In those days there were many women, mothers and children who by their silent suffering and poverty, prepared the way, for the future of their families. When women and girls suffered in society deprived of education and social status, Bishop Ferrando showed great compassion towards them and initiated different kinds of works of charity for their integral development. He linked justice with care of the sick, because they were denied of the necessary means to be healed of their infirmities.[2] When epidemics and cholera broke out after the World War II, he and the missionaries were out in the villages to help the victims with medicine and preventive measures. He promoted loan system for

[2] Cf. ASPF No. 3786 Ferrando to Propaganda Fide 19.10.1946; F. Jala, "Testimony", 18.11.2003, Shillong, in *Copia Publica*, Vol. 1, p. 148; P. Malngiang, "Testimony", 18.10.2003, Shillong, in *Copia Publica*, Vol. 1, p. 84.

the farmers to escape the exploitation of the moneylenders, associations of consumers and work cooperatives as well as grain banks to fight famine. Special assistance was given to Catholic immigrants. The missionaries also defended the Catholics before civil tribunals.[3]

Adaptability

Creativity and adaptability are closely related in the life of Bishop Ferrando, because in order to respond to many obstacles and difficult situations, creativity was needed to arrive at successful solutions. Before all else he placed before him the centrality of God and the preaching of the Gospel. His witnessing life, his teachings and examples, his apostolic works, pastoral visits to the villages and mission centres, proved that he was able to adjust to any given situation. His entry into a new mission territory was always with a view to establishing Christian communities, provide for sacramental life and form missionary leaders from among the people. When he began the new mission at Smith in Shillong and at Chotapukri in Tezpur he wrote: The number of Catholics have risen to 72000. Each year we need to construct new schools for the education of the young and open new possibilities for mission *ad gentes*.[4] In appreciation of the local cultures and annual feasts, he wrote to the Rector Major: "The cultural festivities of the people, traditional annual events, and the dances of people adorned with magnificent costumes when performed before an enormous crowd, one realizes with joy that Christianity does not destroy any culture. But preserves and sanctifies all that is good and true in them that lead to one true God."[5]

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3 Cf. ASPF No. 3293, Ferrando to Propaganda Fide, 7.7.1937.

4 ASPF No. 4100, Ferrando to Propaganda Fide, 24.8. 1955.

5 ASC A 813, Ferrando to P. Ricaldone, "Uno sguardo alla missione", 18.3.1936.

Cardinal Joseph Siri of Genova said of Bishop Ferrando during the funeral oration on 22 June 1978: He walked beside a people who were in search of their dignity, liberty and identity. He made himself one with them by walking into their huts and homes, eating the same food they eat, meeting them where they lived, and struggled to build a world of greater attention to the poor and the needy.[6] He really knew how to interpret the anxieties, struggles and desires of his people. He was a man sent by God to a multitude of tribes and cultures. His life was poured out like libation and he kept the faith till the end (2 Tim 4: 6-7). His life testament as a missionary could be summed up in three significant aspects as observed by the Salesian novices in 1934 at Our Lady's House, Shillong. "My soul to my God, my body to my beloved Assam, my heart to my novices." [7]

Learning indigenous languages

He considered learning local languages as of paramount importance for a missionary, through it one becomes familiar with the important expressions of the local culture and discover its value through direct experience. Language is the way to the heart of a people to understand, appreciate, foster and evangelise cultures creatively and effectively.[8] Bishop Ferrando made great effort to learn the languages of the people, for he knew that peoples and cultures have to be evangelised through an encounter with the Gospel. The encounter will not take place until the Gospel is proclaimed in the language of the people. Bishop Ferrando understood that the important duty of a missionary is to be filled with zeal for Christ and to communicate the Gospel in the language of the people.

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6 Cf. J. Siri, "Funeral Message", 22.6.1978, in *Copia Publica*, Vol. 7, pp. 2181-2184.

7 "Componimento letto dai Chierici", 10.11.1934, Shillong, in *Copia Publica*, Vol. 1. p.196.

8 Cf. *Redemptoris Missio*, no. 53.

The Kingdom, which the Gospel proclaims is lived by people who are profoundly linked to a culture.[9] He communicated the Gospel in simple language suiting to the occasion and context of the people.

Right from the beginning of the Salesian presence in the Missions of Assam, the exposure of the formees to the villages provided them excellent opportunities for learning the local cultures. They held discourses with the people to learn about the origin of their traditions, myths, ethics and religion. They applied themselves assiduously to the learning of the customs and ancestral beliefs of the people. The knowledge of these cultures was a good preparation for the future. Bishop Ferrando realized the role of Salesian joy, as the meeting point between the traditions of local people and the Christian faith.[10]

Pastoral Approach to Cultures

Bishop Ferrando admitted with courage and missionary zeal the fact that human beings always exist in a particular culture and that they can attain full human existence, with their brothers and sisters, with nature and with God only in their culture.[11] The Gospel we proclaim is profoundly linked to a culture and the building up of the Kingdom is possible by borrowing elements from cultures. He believed that if a particular community has to be evangelised, they have to be rejuvenated through an encounter with the Gospel. This meeting will not take place if the Gospel is not proclaimed in the language and culture of the people.[12] What is amazing in Bishop Ferrando and the pioneer missionaries was their undaunted faith. Their life was linked to a culture and they could give clear witness to Christ by fulfilling their unique role in the Church. They adhered

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9 Cf. *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no. 20.

10 Cf. L. Jellici, "Testimony", 28.11.2003, Shillong, in *Copia Publica*, Vol. 1, p. 192.

11 Cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 53.

12 Cf. *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no. 18-20

to everything that is true, noble, good and everything that is pure, everything that is thought virtuous (cf. Phil 4:8) which implies rejecting everything that is a source of sin and fruit of sin in the heart of cultures.

Bishop Ferrando's visit to the villages provided him excellent opportunities for learning the cultures and traditions of the people. Following the recommendation of the Salesian Superior Chapter of 1929 for the promotion of indigenous cultures, Bishop Ferrando attempted to incorporate elements of local culture into the pastoral and liturgical life of the people, provided they did not offend propriety and decorum.[13] The participation in the International Congress in Bombay in 1964 by different tribal groups from Northeast India was a great religious manifestation of the people and their cultural richness.[14] The only aim of his approach to different cultures was to help the Church fulfil its mission of proclaiming the Gospel and in this way renew everyone in the creative power of the Holy Spirit (Eph 4: 24) and make them agents of Christ.

Apostolate of the Press

Assam mission had more than 100 dialects spoken by the people of the plains and the hills besides the numerous local dialects and the region was considered a tower of Babel.[15] The annual report of 1934 speaks of the urgent need for the apostolate of the press to have books, monthly magazines, leaflets and brochures in the vernacular for the people of the hills and plains to communicate effectively knowledge and truth.[16] Right from the arrival of the

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13 Cf. ASPF No. 5205, Ferrando to Propaganda Fide, 24.11.1954; ASPF No. 3562, Ferrando to Propaganda Fide, 19.4.1952.

14 Cf. S. Ferrando, *Nell' India Nord-Est*, pp. 166-167; P. Zerbino, "Il congresso Eucaristico di Bombay", in *Bollettino Salesiano* 88 (1964) no. 11, pp. 188-189.

15 Cf. ASPF No. 3786, Ferrando to Propaganda Fide, 19.10.1946.

16 Cf. ASPF No. 288, Mathias to Propaganda Fide, 29.12.1935.

Salesians in Assam, they effectively used the apostolate of the press for the propagation of the Christian faith. The missionaries translated the Bible, wrote Bible histories, lives of saints, published magazines, periodicals, leaflets and catechism books in English and vernacular languages. Bishop Ferrando organized catechism competitions in different languages. He encouraged dramas, music, radio programmes, seminars, congresses and conventions on Christian themes for the public, to provide inspiration and incentive, as well as to transmit values and virtues.[17]

Whenever a new mission centre was opened for a new tribe, the first priority was to print catechism books, bible stories and prayer books in the native language. He wrote to Rector Major Fr. Peter Ricaldone: "We have just published in Garo language *The Catechism of the Catholic Church,* prayer and hymn books as well as a bi-monthly magazine."[18] In 1946, he wrote to Propaganda Fide: "What could we do to win the hill tribes to Christ? If we leave them thus, other religions will soon conquer them. It is a great responsibility that we have. We need to open new mission centers, houses for Sisters, print books on religion and prayer, at least in five different languages."[19] In a region that had been obsessed by animism and pagan sacrifices, the apostolate of the press disseminated appropriate morality and goodness among the people through religious instruction, basic education and publication of good literature.[20] The translation of the New Testament in Khasi language was done by Fr. Elias Hopewell, when he was the Bishop. The *Ka Iing Kristan* the diocesan news magazine in Khasi

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17 Cf. J. Thekkedath, *History of the Salesians of Don Bosco in India*, Vol. 1, pp. 116-117.

18 S. Ferrando, "La missione tra i Garo", in *Bollettino Salesiano* 56 (1937) no. 10, p. 233.

19 ASPF No. 1337, Ferrando to Propaganda Fide, 26.2.1946.

20 Cf. H. Rosario, "A great missionary Archbishop Stephen Ferrando goes to meet his Master", in *Copia Publica*, Vol. 7, p. 2202.

language and catechetical text books and other publications were directly looked after by him. His articles in *Salesian Bulletin* and *Gioventù Missionaria* on mission, religion, culture and traditions of the people, speak of his interest in the promotion of cultures through apostolate of the press.[21] The *Scintilla Assamesi* (Assamese Spark) was launched in 1924 by the Salesian novices of Shillong. It served as an organ of communication between the formation houses in India and other formation houses of the Congregation. *Don Bosco in India,* was published in English and Italian, and it disseminated news about the Assam mission to the benefactors of the missionaries.[22]

Organizer of Catholic associations and movements

As a pastor of the diocese, his first duty was to prepare his missionaries, train catechists for the missionary work and through them get new people and groups to the Church. Solidarity with the poor was the core of his missionary life. In his teaching and preaching, he upheld the centrality of the poor. His attention to them both individually and collectively was achieved through forming associations and movements. He promoted sound notion of agricultural and vocational development that to a large extent fought against poverty of the people. He opened the door of trust to others, by opening new pastoral horizons in order to reach all the peripheries with the light of the Gospel. He understood well the importance of the promotion of various Catholic associations and movements for boys and girls, young men, women and adults.[23]

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21 Cf. S. Ferrando, "La buona novella è annunziata ai poveri", in *Bollettino Salesiano* 4 (1940) no. 4, pp. 86-87; S. Ferrando, "Nel campo delle conversioni", in *Gioventù Missionaria* 3 (1940) pp. 40-42.

22 Cf. A. Pianazzi, *Don Bosco nell'Assam*, pp. 90-91; L. Mathias, *Quarant'Anni in India*, p. 125.

23 Cf. ASC F188, A. Fedrigotti, *Visita canonica straordinaria*, 11.12.1949 al 27.2.1950, pp. 2-3.

They were important tools for the education and evangelisation of the people, young and old.

When he had to carry the weight of the growing diocese on his shoulders with numerous tribes, languages, and cultures with limited number of catechists and missionaries, these associations came to his rescue. These associations took the initiative in organising the Catholics of the villages and towns to carry the light of Christ to many non-Christians and non-Catholics. They lightened the work of the missionaries, by promoting true and lively faith among the Catholics. They prepared the people for annual retreats, reception of Holy Communion on first Fridays in reparation to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, spread of popular devotions and assisted catechist's meeting. On solemnities and feast days, these associations took leadership initiatives to organise the festivities with the help of the catechists and missionaries.[24] These associations served not only as instruments for charitable and educational activity but also as means of nurturing Christian life among the people.

Formation of the clergy

Right from the beginning of his mission in Northeast India, Bishop Ferrando was convinced of the need to nurture local vocations, a seminary for the formation of the indigenous clergy, training centers for catechists and teachers and raising the vocation and dignity of women. Access to certain regions of Northeast India was forbidden to the foreign missionaries for missionary work. The Christians in those regions lived like sheep without a shepherd. Some parts of Tibet and Bhutan belonged then to the jurisdiction of Shillong diocese. But due to lack of indigenous priests, many regions were still without the Catholic presence. Analysing the situation, Bishop Ferrando said that if there were indigenous priests,

[24] Cf. ASPF No. 3078, Ferrando to Propaganda Fide, 26.8.1936.

the whole region would have been won over to Christ. With the outbreak of World War II, with many restrictions imposed on the missionaries by the government, no more foreign missionaries could come from Europe. The whole region of Manipur was Hindu dominated; the missionaries could stay only for three days in the capital city under the close watch of the authorities without having direct contact with any families. After one of his visits to Manipur he said that if we had local priests, the good news of the Gospel would have reached that region too.[25]

In 1931, during the annual meeting of the Salesian rectors, Bishop Ferrando spoke about the formation of indigenous clergy and the need to start a seminary for them.[26] He was quite convinced that the seminary for the local clergy was a great need, as the entire future of the mission depended on them.[27] But owing to financial constraints and lack of formation personnel, the construction of the seminary was delayed until 1960 though it was one of his major concerns. As a missionary who toured the length and breadth of the diocese, he understood the need for the presence of missionaries in the villages.

Founding the congregation of the Missionary Sisters of Mary Help of Christians

The great interest and vision which Bishop Ferrando had for the promotion of local vocations is realized through two of his great initiatives: starting of the diocesan seminary and founding of the Congregation of Missionary Sisters of Mary Help of Christians (MSMHC). Through these two ventures, the Church in Northeast India witnessed unparalleled growth in local vocations to priesthood

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25 Cf. S. Ferrando, *Nella terra incomparabile*, p. 67.

26 Cf. J. Thekkedath, *History of the Salesians of Don Bosco in India*, Vol. 1, p. 159.

27 Cf. S. Ferrando, Letter to P. Ricaldone, 24.8.1936, in *Copia Publica*, Vol. 4, p. 1151.

and religious life. Speaking about the vastness of the mission and approach to new villages, he wrote of the difficulty to find suitable persons, and the need to foster indigenous vocations. The passion for vocations was so intense in him that he used to tell the mothers of families: "Give me your sons and I will give you priests."[28] He wrote to Propaganda Fide in 1937: "The urgency of the presence of women religious in the region is like manna from heaven. Their presence is indispensable to take care of the education of girls and faith formation of people."[29]

Many of his mission reports had particular reference to the need for collaboration of women in the work of evangelisation. He wrote, "Only those in the mission could understand the importance of the problem of indigenous vocations and the urgency of making sacrifices towards this indispensable work."[30] Considering all these realities of the region, he founded the congregation of the MSMHC and passed on to them his missionary zeal so that they would live concretely the permanent missionary nature of the Church. It was the urgency of the mission of Jesus Christ that gave inspiration to Bishop Ferrando to found the congregation. He wished that through the missionary charism of the new congregation, the Church's apostolate of mission *ad gentes* and catechesis might unfold concretely in the lives of people, and through them the Gospel may reach to the ends of the world (Acts 1: 18).

Ability to see failures and challenges as paths to progress

Bishop Ferrando came to Northeast India as a young priest of 28 years. He had heard of Northeast India's 'Assam Mission' with its Babel of languages and unhealthy climate, poisonous insects and wild animals. Though his life was beset with disasters in the

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28 P. Sun, "Testimony", 19.6.2004, Shillong, in *Copia Publica*, Vol. 2, p. 436; ASC B7090201.

29 ASPF No. 3509, Ferrando to Propaganda Fide, 25.8.1937.

30 ASPF No. 5192, Ferrando to Propaganda Fide, 28.12.1938.

mission he did not give way to despair or doubt his faith in God. When the entire mission was destroyed by the Good Friday fire in 1936 and the eighty Salesians there had no roof over their heads, Bishop Ferrando courageously told them: "All reduced to ashes. Fiat! Fiat! will rise again." (*Tutto ridotto in cenere. Fiat! Fiat! Resurget*). Blessing the new fire on Holy Saturday in the damaged site, he whispered to the fire, "And I must bless you also" (*e ti debbo anche benedire*).[31] Besides the disaster of fire, he also came face to face with numerous other difficulties like, the World War II, internment of missionaries, devastating earth quake of Assam, epidemics, influx of refugees, Chinese invasion of Northeast India, expulsion of missionaries and order to leave India. Though he felt the weight of these negative experiences and problems, his optimism and faith gave him the light to accept realities and move on.[32]

Often during his missionary journeys, Bishop Ferrando had to scale mountains under the blazing sun, make his way through thick jungles infested with wild animals, cross-rivers by wading, and slept in the open at night. No missionaries in the region was spared of malaria. They suffered all kinds of sicknesses, like arthritis, nervous exhaustion, stomach ailments, and heart attacks.[33] In the midst of difficulties and financial problems, he found profound joy in proclaiming the Gospel. Though he suffered physically and mentally, he understood the concerns and sufferings of his people, discovered their deepest needs and reached out to them with compassion and kindness. With God's help, he transformed his attitudes of life and humbly put himself at the service of the people.

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31 AASH, *Chronicles of Assam Mission* (1934-1937) entry, 10.4.1936; 15.4.1936.

32 Cf. E. Pakumala, "The Virtues of the Servant of God Bishop Stephen Ferrando", in *Copia Publica*, Vol. 3, p. 700.

33 Cf. A. Pianazzi, *Dare and Hope*, p. 93.

Conclusion

In his pastoral letters, mission reports and missionary articles, Bishop Ferrando lays bare his apostolic creativity and pastoral concerns. His missionary life was a full participation in Christ's ministry, by bringing light to those in darkness and instilling Gospel values in the lives of people. He lived the teachings of Vatican Council II, which affirms that pastors should not be afraid to lay down their life for their sheep. Being a model to their flock (1 Pet 5: 3) and that they must foster a growing holiness in the Church by their own example.[34] Various testimonies of the diocesan process for the beatification and canonization of Bishop Ferrando bring out different dimensions of his creative missionary spirit: a zealous apostle, an intrepid missionary, a man of missionary vision, a lover of the Church, obedient to the Pope, dispenser of missionary spirituality, a man of faith and a good shepherd. He learned pastoral creativity by his intimate communion with Jesus and contemplation on the Word of God.

[34] Cf. *Lumen Gentium*, no. 41.

New Evangelization in the Indian Context

Sr. Lisa Chettri MSMHC

Introduction

The urgency for New Evangelization was very close to the heart of Pope John Paul II and he did not hesitate to convey the same message at various places during his apostolic tours. It was in his own native land, Poland that the Pope spoke of the concept of 'new evangelization', while delivering the homily at the sanctuary of The Holy Cross, Moglia." A new evangelization has begun, as if it were a new proclamation, even if in the new reality it is the same as ever."[1] New evangelization does not mean proclaiming a "new Gospel", because "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday today and forever" (Heb 13:8).[2] It does not mean taking up the first evangelization again, or simply repeating the past."[3] Further the same Pope proposed it to the universal Church in his Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Missio*:

> "Today the Church must face other challenges and push forward to new frontiers, both in the initial mission *ad gentes* and in the new evangelization of those peoples who have already hear Christ proclaimed. Today all Christians, the particular Churches and the universal Church are called to have the same courage that inspired the missionaries of the past and the same readiness to listen to the voice of the Spirit" (*RM* 30).

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1 John Paul II, "Homily at the sanctuary of the Holy Cross" (Moglia, Poland,June 9, 1979) 1.

2 Cf. *Lineamenta*, n. 23.

3 *Ibid*., n. 5.

The Church in India has a greater responsibility in responding to the new evangelization in proclaiming the good news not only in words, but also through "concrete deeds and structures promoting communal harmony among all human beings and eliciting greater commitment to collaboration among all people, believers and non-believers, to tackle the problem faced by the contemporary humanity."[4]

1. New Evangelization context In India

The importance of evangelization was re-echoed by Pope Paul VI in *Evangelii Nuntiandi* when he says: "Evangelizing is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity. She exists in order to evangelize" (*EN* 14). Evangelization as a mission of the Church assumes greater importance and urgency in the context of the changing world scenario, the deterioration of western civilization and the weak condition of the Church in many parts of the world. Pope John Paul II's urgent call to a New Evangelization is imperative. The entire Church must come to embrace this calling and make it a normal part of Catholic life. If evangelization is the breath of the Church then the call to New Evangelization is a call to the survival of itself. In the context of India where Christ is little known and accepted, New Evangelization would mean not merely deepening the faith of the believers, but seeking new ways and means for mission *ad gentes*.

1.1 Mission *Ad Gentes*

"The Church on Earth is by its very nature missionary…" (*AG* 2). The Church was born as a missionary movement. If we are to separate Church and mission, it is like separating the two sides of

[4] A. Pushparajan, "A response to the *Lineamenta* on the New Evangelization", in *Mission Today* XIV, no.3 (2012) 239.

the same coin.[5] It is mission that becomes the Church. God's plan was made known to us through the person of Jesus Christ. First of all, we have the missionary activity we call *mission ad gentes*. This activity of the Church is important and everlasting. She "cannot withdraw from her permanent mission of bringing the Gospel to the multitudes… this is the missionary work which Jesus entrusts each day to his Church."[6]

The challenge for the Church in India today is to insist on mission *ad gentes* to the 79.8% of Hindus and 14.23% of Muslims who have not accepted Christ. If Christianity has remained stagnant at 2.3% for the last two thousand years, one of the reasons must be the wrong approach we had.Therefore, there is need for a New Mission *ad gentes*. This would imply proclaiming the same Good News in a "new" way using unconventional methods. Some of these would be:

- Changing our attitude towards the Hindus and Muslims and other religious groups. From an attitude of superiority complex and doctrinal arrogance, we need to become humble and engage in dialogue more sincerely.
- We need to reformulate our perspective of other religions and learn to respect their authenticity. There is a need for a give-and-take relationship with these religions.
- There is a need to go beyond the traditional understanding of being a christian, namely from institutional membership through baptism, to ideological association. There are already movements like the *Khrist-bhakta*in some parts of India where thousands of Hindus follow and live the

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5 Cf. Vadakumpadan, Missionaries of Christ (Shillong: Vendrame Institute Publications, 2008) 7.

6 Cf . Apostolic Exhortation , *ChristifidelesLaici*, 30 December 1988,35:AAS 81(1989) 457

Gospel values without however being baptized. Gandhiji himself was perhaps the greatest Indian *Khrist-bhakta*.

- It is true that the Church was "sent by Christ to reveal and communicate the love of God to all peoples and nations" (*AG* 10). This is because the Church is the "universal sacrament of salvation" (*LG* 48).and light to the nations. She is the "salt of the Earth and light of the world" (Mt 5:13-14).However, the concept of New Evangelization tells us that there is not just one way of proclaiming the Gospel, but the evangelizer needs to be attentive to the socio-cultural and religious sentiments of people, pay heed to the signs of the time and learn to use the medium of communication that is most relevant and effective.
- India being still a developing country where millions are still poor and needy, the traditional ever effective missionary method of "charity" and "service" must not be forgotten. This particular missionary approach has earned a good name for the Church and won over the hearts and souls of many.

1.2 Faith Formation of the Christians

The work of evangelization continues in the Church. The church is drawn by the Holy Spirit to fulfil the plan of God who has constituted "Christ as the source of salvation for the whole world" (*LG* 16). Faith formation implies our efforts to form faith. The main action of faith formation is catechesis. Catechesis helps a person to grow in Christian faith. It is the second stage in the ministry of preaching, and presupposes a total acceptance of the Gospel of Christ. In it the faith that is born of the proclamation of the Word of God is further nourished and deepened to enable to live an authentic Christian life. Thus Catechesis is that activity which leads the community and the individual Christian to maturity of faith.[7] In the *General Catechetical Directory* we read: "Its

[Catechesis] function is to develop in man a living and explicit faith, enlightened by doctrine."[8] Therefore an organic and systematic catechesis will help in faith formation of the Christians. "A 'personalized faith,' one that stems out of one's own conviction in the truth of the Gospel that has been proclaimed is the aim of catechesis."[9]*The General Directory for Catechesis* (GDC) proposes a new way of faith education in keeping with the concept of New Evangelization. It has the following statement regarding methods in transmission of faith. It says:

> The church, in transmitting the faith, does not have a particular method nor any single method. Rather, she discerns contemporary methods in the light of the pedagogy of God and uses with liberty "everything that is true, everything that is noble, everything that is good and pure, everything we love and honour and everything that can be thought virtuous or worthy of praise". In short, she assumes those methods which are not contrary to the Gospel and place them at its service.[10]

In the context of India, where faith is often shallow and wanting, faith formation through catechesis is a must. In keeping with New Evangelization, the Church here needs to rethink and revamp its catechetical approaches so as to become more effective in forming the faith of her faithful. Some important steps along this line could be:

- To understand and implement a holistic catechesis, one that aims at the spiritual, moral and socio-cultural development

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7 Mary Thadavanal, "Family Catechesis in North- East India", in Thomas Manjaly, Graviour Augustine, Tomy Palely (eds.) *Challenges of Faith Formation in North-East India* (Shillong: Oriens Publication, 2009) 128-129

8 Congregation for Clergy, *General Catechetical Directory, Ad Norman Decreti* (1971) n. 17.

9 *Ibid.*

10 *General Directory for Catechesis*, 1997, n. 148

of a person. It would imply providing a lifelong total formation for a christian. In the words of John Paul II, "the Christian thus sets himself to follow Christ and learns more and more within the Church to think like him, to judge like him, to act in conformity with his commandments and hopes as he invites us to."[11]

- To promote a catechesis that is able to link Catechesis with the context of India. This would be a catechesis that seeks to bridge the gap between faith and experience. This calls for catechesis to play a greater role in inculturating the faith among the people so as to give an indigenous identity to Christianity in India.
- Catechesis should be able to create a dialogue between the history of salvation and the actual history of the Indian people. In his encyclical *Verbum Domini,* Pope Benedict XVI says: "Catechesis should communicate in a lively way the history of salvation and the content of the Church's faith and so enable every member of the faithful to realize that this history is also part of his or her own life."[12]

1.3 Re-evangelization of the lapsed Christians

Pope Benedict XVI in his advocacy of New Evangelization had given equal importance to re-evangelizing of those who know Christ but have drifted away or rejected their faith.[13]A missionary should keep in mind that baptism is only the beginning of a process of conversion. Catechesis or faith formation is what moulds a baptized person and makes him/her a perfect follower of Christ. It is a fact that in many parts of India, the number of lapsed

[11] John Paul II, *Catechesis Tradendae*, n. 20, in E. Kevane (ed.) *Teaching the Catholic Faith Today*, 225.

[12] *Verbum Domini*, n. 74.

[13] *Proclaim –A missionary Magazine for missionary animation*, Vol. 35 no. 5 (2012) 1-2.

Christians is growing. The main reason for this, is the lack of faith formation or faith follow-up. The Church in India needs to do much in order to retain the quality of faith of the faithful so that they do not leave the church.

* Re-evangelization of lapsed Christians calls for a greater organization of pastoral ministry in the local churches. In many parishes in India due to the emphasis on primary proclamation, many times the pastors forget to cater to the needs of lapsed Christians. Considering the fact that this section of believers is growing in number, it is imperative for the church to consider an elaborate reach-out ministry towards them.

* What we witness in India today is the growing number of lapsed Christians among the youth population. The youth seem to be stuck at an "imitative faith" and not able to cross this threshold to experience an "owned" or "personal faith." Many of them just inherit the faith from their parents and have not personalized it. In this connection there is a need to strengthen family and school catechesis for the youth. The parents ought to take extra care to provide faith formation at the primary level especially through their christian witness. The christian schools and other educational institutions on the other hand have a sacred duty to provide a wholesome and organized faith formation to the adolescents.

2. Challenges and prospects

There are many challenges that the Indian Church faces today in bringing the Good News to the people. Today what we notice is the all pervasive influence of secularization inpolitics, economics, social life, education and media. People seem to be moving to a world where there is no place for God and spiritual values. It is in such over-secularized and materialistic environment that we are

called to bear witness to our faith in invisible realities. There is also the rise of individualisminsociety. Everyone is seeking for name, fame and self glory. We find cut throat competitions and consequent conflicts. Another phenomenon that we find is the various forms of religious self-expression, political use of religion, hatred fostered by the religious fanatic groups and the emergence of the anti Christian elements.

We also notice communal and ethnic conflicts, political violence, and corruption, erosion of cultural values, rapid deforestation and land alienation.[14] Therefore the challenge for New Evangelization in India is to feel the need for developing new and creative approaches towards our goals, to be effective in our efforts and to make our work more sustainable. The Church carries out various ministries such as ministry of apostles, evangelists, prophets, pastors, teachers, miracle workers, healers, speakers in tongues and interpreters. St.Paul urges that we all work together that the body of Christ may be built up (Eph 4:11; 1 Cor 12:28). "All church workers need to join hands together and assist people to become "mature" in their faith and not remain "children, carried by the waves and blown about by every shifting wind of teaching" (Eph 4:13-14).[15]

2.1 Multi-religiosity and Religious fundamentalism

The results of this ongoing project of evangelization, which are generated in the Church as a sign of the life-giving power of the Gospel, take concrete form in the responses given to the challenges of our times. Families need to become true and real signs of love and sharing, with a capacity to hope in virtue of their openness to life. Forces are needed in building communities which have a true ecumenical spirit and are capable of dialogue with other religions.

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[14] Cf. Menamparampil, "Challenges of Catechesis in North-East India", 12-13

[15] *Ibid.*

Joy needs to be more evident in the dedication of one's life to a vocation to the priesthood or the consecrated life. A Church which transmits her faith, a Church of the "New Evangelization," is capable in every situation of demonstrating that the Spirit guides her and transforms the history of the Church, of individual Christians and of entire peoples and their cultures.

New evangelization in the multi-religious context of India calls for new ways of proclaiming the Gospel like:

* Fostering an ecumenical spirit so as to achieve an effective collaboration with other denominations in the common mission of spreading the Good News and the gospel values.
* Promoting an inter-religious dialogue with major religions in the country like Hinduism and Islam. This would help in diffusing the current hate propaganda against Christianity perpetrated by the extremist groups like the RSS, VHP or Bajrang Dal etc.
* Encouraging the process of inculturation of faith which seems to have remained stagnant presently. Inculturation must be undertaken on a larger scale and at a deeper level so as to give an indigenous face to Christianity in this country.
* Courage is needed to sustain initiatives of social justice and solidarity, which put the poor at the centre of the Church's concern. In this regard Dalit Theology and Tribal Theology should be taken more seriously by the Indian Church at all levels.

2.2 Multi-cultural context

India is characterized by a multicultural context where the church should work in the midst of different cultures. The church needs

to give attention in translating the treasure of faith into a legitimate variety of expressions. Those that are "evangelized should will provide the elements for a 'translation "of the Gospel message, keeping in mind the positive elements acquired down the centuries from Christianity's contact with different cultures and not forgetting the dangers of alterations which have sometimes occurred" (*RM* 53). Culture is a human creation therefore it needs to be "healed, ennobled and perfected" (*LG* 17).

Presently, in reviewing the dynamics of the "new evangelization", the expression can now be applied to the Church's renewed efforts to meet the challenges which today's society and cultures, in view of the significant changes taking place, are posing to the Christian faith, its proclamation and its witness. In facing these challenges, the Church in India does not give up or retreat into herself; instead, she undertakes a project to revitalize herself. She makes the Person of Jesus Christ and a personal encounter with him central to her thinking, knowing that he will give his Spirit and provide the force to announce and proclaim the Gospel in new ways which can speak to today's cultures. In this regard, the following aspects must be remembered:

* A "new evangelization" is synonymous with renewed spiritual efforts in the life of faith within the local Churches, starting with a process to discern the changes in various cultural and social settings and their impact on Christian life, to reread the memory of faith and to undertake new responsibilities and generate new energies to joyously and convincingly proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ.[16]

* In the multi- culture context of India, the church should follow the model of the incarnation in bringing the Good News. Solidarity is the first requirement. It is being with

[16] *Lineamenta*, n. 15.

the people, responding to their needs, witnessing the values of Kingdom. Small Christian communities would be very effective.

* Catechesis and pedagogy that is intimately connected to it are ways that will enable it to be open to the new ways in which the Gospel of Jesus must be presented. Our theology must be contextual, responding to God's action in the culture.[17]

2.3 Influence of Postmodernism

Postmodernism (sometimes abbreviated as Po-Mo) is a term applied to a wide-ranging set of developments in critical theory, philosophy, architecture, art, literature, and culture, which are considered to have emerged from, or superseded, modernism, in reaction to it, soon after the end of World War II, which caused people much disillusionment. Many theorists agree that we can distinguish between two senses of postmodernism:

1) Postmodernism as a reaction to the aesthetic "modernism" of the first half of the twentieth century in architecture, art, and literature; and

2) Postmodernism as a reaction to the long-standing "modernity" tradition of the Enlightenment from the eighteenth century.[18]

The Second Vatican Council had taken note of the rapidly changing scenario of the modern world. It also pointed out the outcome of its dangers. India as we witness it today is a country that is rapidly

[17] Cf. Julian Saldanha, "The Challenge of enculturation", in *Mission today,* XII (2011) 78-79 .

[18] Cf. Eteroviæ,Nikola, "New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith",
Statement by H.E. Msgr. Nikola Eteroviæ, General Secretary of the Synod of Bishops, in www.newworldencyclopedia.org(November 9, 2012).

taking up to postmodern ideas and culture. This socio-cultural process has been speeded up by the development in communication technology. The Church in India is no exception to the impact of this new phenomenon. What should it do then in the face of such a challenge?

* New evangelization in the context of postmodernism would imply as Pope Paul VI insisted the "necessity of proclamation for innumerable people who have been baptized but who live quite outside Christian life… for simple people who have a certain faith but imperfect knowledge of the foundations of that faith… for intellectuals who feel the need to know Jesus Christ in a light different from the instruction they received as children" (*EN* 52). Therefore it would mean addressing the pastoral need of all these three groups of believers.

* Pope Paul VI spoke specifically about an atheistic secularism which is 'becoming a striking characteristic of the contemporary world'(*EN* 52). This is a reality that the Indian church as well must confront. Postmodernism with its new age ideology and exaggerated liberalism, has become a nurturing ground for secularism, materialism and religious indifferentism. The Church in India needs to invent ways and means to confront this challenging reality, not by avoiding the problem or circumventing it, but through a creative, relevant and appealing ministry.

Conclusion

The challenges for the church in India is in terms of how to proclaim the Gospel in the midst of a multicultural, multi-religious and a postmodern context. At the same time, the Church in constantly in need of renewal and transformation. New evangelization is precisely a call to a renewed way of not only proclaiming the

Good News, but of living our Christian life as well. New evangelization is the Church's appropriate response to the challenges emerging in the present society. The Church in India would do well if she sheds away the old image of being an "outsider" or a "foreign" religion and enter seriously into the process of indigenizing herself among the people of India. This would mean assuming the socio-political, cultural, economic and religious ethos of the people. It would imply becoming a church from "within" the Indian context.

Inculturation in Mission with special reference to the Khasis

Sr. Genevieve Hazel Sit Khain MSMHC

Introduction

A striking feature characteristic of modern times is the enormous weightage given to a significant human reality, namely Culture. Christian missionaries down through the ages, in proclaiming the Gospel to peoples in various parts of the world had to confront this dimension of reality. The Church in India has been particularly aware of this fact as it is in cultures totally diverse from the cultures in which the Church in Europe grew up. Cultural diversity calls for the proclamation of the Good News using creative ways and means which resonate with people in their particular culture. Methods of Inculturation in the mission of the Church vary from one culture to another. In this article, an attempt is made on my part to reflect on Inculturation in Mission to the Khasis, a tribe in Meghalaya (North East India), in order to understand how the Church has made its efforts to present the Gospel to a people in a way that is meaningful to people in their culture. The article explains in brief the meaning of Culture and Inculturation. It then offers a global understanding of the Khasi Community and its Culture and finally it describes the methods of Inculturation adopted in the Khasi Mission.

1. The Concept of Culture

Culture is "the way of life of a people, it is their way of being human. It is a people with all beliefs, values, customs, language,

music, arts, as they are assimilated by the members of a society and form the ordinary framework of their daily life".[1]

2. Meaning of Inculturation

The term 'Inculturation' envisages "a process by which a 'Particular Church' expresses its Faith and life in and through the local culture".[2] In the process of Inculturation, the message of Christ penetrates into a given social environment, and its values.[3] It makes the believers more committed to their Christian Faith since they understand it through the visual of their own culture.[4] Culture therefore needs to undergo purification (Evangelisation of Culture) while the essence of the Gospel message has to always be re-expressed and reformulated so as to be relevant to a given culture (Inculturation). Therefore, whenever there is Inculturation, purification of Culture (Evangelisation of Culture) also takes place.[5] Inculturation, consequently, is an ongoing process by which a Christian community, rooted in the local culture, expresses, celebrates and lives its Faith in a manner which respects the core of the Faith and, at the same time is congenial to that culture.

2.1 Inculturation in the Church Documents

The Church documents emphasize the need of Inculturation in the presentation of the Gospel. The 1977 Synod on Catechesis stressed the importance of an Inculturated Catechesis.

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1 Francis X. Clark, "Inculturation: Introduction and History," *Teaching All Nations*, 25, 4 (1978), 211.

2 J. Saldanha, *Inculturation* (Bombay: St. Paul Publication, 1987), 9.

3 Thomas Menamparampil, *Cultures in the Context of Sharing the Gospel* (Bombay: St. Paul Publications, 2002), 56.

4 John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Asia*, Apostolic Exhortation on Jesus Christ the Saviour and His Mission of Love and Service in Asia (Trivandrum: Carmel International Publishing House, 2005), 22.

5 Paul Vadakumpadam, *Missionaries of Christ: A Basic Course in Missiology* (Shillong: Vendrame Institute Publications, 2006), 185.

Redemptoris Missio, the encyclical on the Mission of the Church, defines Inculturation as "The intimate transformation of authentic cultural values through their integration with Christianity and Christianity's being rooted in various cultures".[6] *Catechesi Tradendae* clearly states: "We can say of Catechesis, as well as of Evangelization in general, that it is called to bring the power of the Gospel into the very heart of Culture and Cultures".[7] *The General Directory for Catechesis* believes in the process of Inculturation of Catechesis. It is by going to the roots of Culture and the Cultures of humankind, that the Church is able to propose the Gospel in a vital way.[8]

2.2 Fields of Inculturation

Inculturation takes place within the Christian Community. John Paul II in *Redemptoris Missio* had this to say: "Inculturation must involve the whole people of God, and not just a few experts, since the people reflect the authentic '*sensus fidei'* which must never be lost sight of. It must be an expression of the community's life. One which must mature within the community itself...".[9] Hence, the locus and bearer of inculturation is the Christian community. Inculturation is rooted in the local culture. The Gospel message must be expressed in categories familiar to the recipient. It is a living reality that must find a home in the local cultures. The Good News is called upon to penetrate the very heart of the culture and there makes a home, renewing it, not replacing it. The essence of

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6 John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, Encyclical on the Permanent Validity of the Church's Missionary Mandate (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 1990), 52. Hereafter referred to as RM.

7 John Paul II. *Catechesi Tradendae*, Apostolic Exhortation on Catechesis in Our Time (Boston: St. Paul Editions, 2005), 53.

8 Congregation for the Clergy, *General Directory for Catechesis* (Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, 2003), 204.

9 RM, 54.

the Gospel message must take flesh and blood in a particular culture.[10]

3. Understanding the Khasi Culture

The *Divine Origin Theory* presents the Khasis' origin using a beautiful folktale and a popular legend. According to this legend God created the *Khathynriew-trep Khathynriew-skum* (sixteen families/sixteen huts) in heaven.[11] In the beginning there were no human beings on earth. But at the request of mother earth to send someone to look after her and the whole creation, God decided to send seven of these families *(Hynñiew-trep)* to earth while the other nine (*Khyndai-trep*) remained on in heaven.[12] Since then, the *Hynñiew-trep* (Seven huts or seven families) are considered the primordial ancestors of the Khasi. The Revivalist Khasi groups, instead, prefer to identify themselves as *ki Hynñiew-trepHynñiew-skum* today.[13] According to the *Theory of Migration,* the Khasis migrated to these hills from Southeast Asia. The anthropological research done by J.H Hutton, P.R.T Gurdon and others maintain that the homeland of the Khasis was in Cambodia, on the banks of the Mekong River.[14] Another group of scholars like S.K. Chatterji, H. Lyngdoh and others hold a view that the Khasis belong to the Mongoloid race of Indo-China. Sir Joseph Dalton Hooker, opines that the Khasis have a close affinity with the Indo-Chinese family in their speech especially that of the Mon-Kmer.[15] J.R. Logan, Grierson and J.A. Anderson endorsed this view affirming that the physical appearance, language and

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10 Vadakumpadan, *Missionaries of Christ: A Basic Course in Missiology*, 190.

11 Barnes Mawrie, *Faith Formation Among the Khasis* (Rome: Salesian Pontifical University, 2003), 8-9.

12 H. Lyngdoh, *Ka Niam Khasi* (Shillong: Ri Khasi Press, 1937), 2-3.

13 George Maliekal, *History of the Catholic Church Among the Khasis* (Shillong: DBCIC Publications, 2005), 26.

14 Ibid.

15 Barnes Mawrie. *Faith Formation among the Khasis,* 10-11.

customs of the Khasis have a great resemblance to those of the Mon-Kmer people.[16]

3.1 The Social Context

Tribal society always lives in a community or group wherever it is. The tribals have a great sense of belonging and fidelity to the ancestral family or the clan. This characteristic is the basis for the existence of matriliny and the clan system among the Khasis.[17] In the matrilineal system of the Khasis, the right to descent (surnames, inheritance, and property in the family) is passed through the mother (*Kmie*) not the father (*Kpa*). But this does not mean that men have no role in the family and in society. Matriliny is different from matriarchy or matriarchal society where women are supreme and more powerful in all aspects of life. But in the Khasi matrilineal system men have their own role to play in the family as male parents. In the clan, they have a very important role to play especially with regard to religious matters, the property of the clan, social and political affairs of the clan, social and moral instructions, religious and faith formation of the young. Men are involved fully in the governance of the society and in religious matters within the clan or the family.[18]

3.2 The Political Context

In Khasi society, there were leaders who were essentially responsible for the conduct of the affairs of the clan and the village. When the clan extended its domain by further allegiances, *Basanships* were formed. In the process, a male clan ruler (*Rangbah Kur or Basan*) emerged as the leader who was basically responsible for the conduct of the affairs of the clans. In

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16 Barnes Mawrie. *Faith Formation among the Khasis*, 10-11.

17 Ibid., 27.

18 N. C. Shadap-Sen, *Origin and Early History of the Khasi-Synteng People* (Calcutta: Ferina KLM Pot Ltd, 1981), 192.

the second place, *Lyngdohships* were formed when residents of one place formed a village. The priests (*Ki Lyngdoh*) thus emerged as the actual rulers as well as sacerdotal heads of a particular domain.[19] The voluntary combination of many independent *Basanships* in different areas ultimately led to the foundation of the present form of *syiemship* numbering 16 today. The term *Syiemship* means a State ruled by a King (*Syiem)* or a Chief. In the process *Syiemship* emerged as an organ to centralize some common items of administration. It was further linked with other issues such as the opening of markets, the execution of marriage laws, the re-organization of land tenure, the appointment of judicial authority and the maintenance of law and order. The head of Khasi State/*Syiemship* then is the *Syiem* (Chief).[20]

3.3 The Economic Context

Agriculture is the mainstay of the people, which is largely carried out using the primitive method of jhum or shifting cultivation. Nature has endowed the Khasi homeland with the quality of soil and climate suitable for a wide variety of crops, fruits and vegetables.[21] Besides agriculture, there are also many who are involved in manufacturing, the keeping of livestock and trade.[22] A majority of the village industries in the Khasi Hills are forest-based. Industries like carpentry, cane and bamboo work, bee-keeping, broomstick making etc. derive their raw materials from the forest which provides employment opportunities to a large section of the rural people who work in the forests by felling trees and sawing timber, in lime kilns and burning and selling charcoal.[23] Thus, land and

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19 J. F. Jyrwa, *Christianity in Khasi Culture* (Shillong: K.J.P. Assembly Press, 2011), 29.

20 Ibid.

21 Rekha M. Shangpliang, *Forest in the Life of the Khasis* (New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company, 2010), 15.

22 Jyrwa, *Christianity in Khasi Culture*, 22.

23 Shangpliang, *Forest in the Life of the Khasis*, 15.

forest occupy the central place in the socio-economic life of the Khasis.[24]

3.4 The Cultural Context

Many sociologists consider Culture as the conscience of a society because it indicates to the people what is right and what is wrong. In Khasi society too Culture teaches the people to *Kamai ïa ka Hok* (earn righteousness) through *Ki Jingsneng tymmen* (admonition of the elders).[25] At nightfall, the elders gather their children around them and instruct them through *Ki Puriskam* (stories) and *Khanatang* (myths and legends).[26] The Khasis attach a great importance and draw tremendous inspiration from these myths in their daily life.[27] Another way of teaching is through songs known as *Phawar* (like ballads) to communicate to the people something about the past as moral and social instructions. This was the manner in which the Khasis were able to preserve much of their history and perpetuate past events as a cultural heritage.[28] The Khasis have a rich tradition of festivals, dance and music. From time immemorial, every Khasi village performed a dance called *Shadlat* (Thanksgiving Dance) once a year. Some other dances are: *Ka Shad-Suk-Mynsiem, Ka Shad Nongkrem* of *Hima Khyrim,* and *Shad Behdeinkhlam* in the Jaintia hills. These dances depict the unique aspects of Khasi Culture.[29] Another element of Khasi Culture is the dress and ornaments. Traditionally, the Khasis have attached great cultural value to dress.

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24 Ibid.,16.

25 P. Kharakor, *Ka Kolshor Khasi Kumba Paw Ha Ka Litereshor Khasi* (Shillong: St. Mary's College, 2006), 23.

26 Barnes Mawrie, *Introduction to Khasi Ethics* (Shillong: DBCIC Publications, 2005), 57-58.

27 Maliekal, *History of the Catholic Church among the Khasis,* 24.

28 Barnes Mawrie, *The Khasis and their Natural Environment* (Shillong: Vendrame Institute Publications, 2001), 11-12.

29 Ibid.

The characteristic traits of the Khasis are marked by a strong sense of clan loyalty. They have a strong sense of community spirit. They are affectionate, warm, simple, kind-hearted and well-mannered. They are hardworking and generous. They have great respect towards parents and elders.

3.5 The Religious Context

The traditional religion of the Khasis is centred round the myth of their divine origin: The sixteen families called *Ki Khathynriew Trep - Ki Khathynriew Skum* lived with God and came down to earth to work during the day and went back to heaven in the evening through the golden ladder resting on the top of the Lum *Sohpetbneng* (the naval peak of heaven).[30] Another important legend which has had a great impact on Khasi religion is the legend of *Ka Krem Lamet ka Krem Latang* (Mysterious Cave). The legend says that the whole world was in total darkness because the sun was hiding from the face of mankind because sin had taken root in the heart of every person and righteousness had stepped aside. This was the end of the Golden Age.[31] Darkness brought great confusion in the world until human beings got reconciled with God and established a covenant with Him through *Ka Nia* and *Ka Jutang* (reason and covenant) along with rituals and animal sacrifices.[32] In the Khasi Hills, the clan keeps religion in the care of the Godhead, the Ancestress, the Ancestor and the Ancestral Uncle. Godhead here is the God of the clan (*Leilongkur Leilongjait*) which is the name the Khasis give to God. *Ka Leilongkur Leilongjait* is the supreme commander and ruler called *Ka Nonghukum ka Nongsynshar* who takes care of the

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30 H. G. Joshi, *Meghalaya Past and Present* (New Delhi: Mittal Publications, 2004), 194.

31 H.O. Mawrie, *The Khasi Milieu*, (New Delhi: Concept Publishing Co., 1981), 34.

32 Ibid., 35.

clan as a whole.[33] Khasi religion teaches people to live as *Tipbriew – Tipblei* (to live as a human being and a covenanted person). This means to live in peace and harmony with all human beings and with God.[34]

4. Methods of Inculturation in the Khasi Mission

The Gospel found its root in the Khasi Culture primarily through the Khasi language, the language of the people. The Welsh missionaries recognized the need of creating first of all the Khasi script in order to educate the Khasis both in socio-cultural and religious life. Later, when the Catholic missionaries arrived in the region, they worked hard to bring the Gospel to people's lives and culture through mission centres, schools, hospitals, dispensaries, boarding houses and hostels in parishes, technical schools and vocational centres.

4.1 Methods of the Welsh Missionaries

In 1842, Thomas Jones I introduced the Roman alphabet and a new written language was created. This was the beginning of Khasi literature. Besides developing a written form of language, the missionaries were the first to produce literature - grammars, dictionaries, vocabularies, scripture portions and articles. They selected the Sohra dialect as the standard language for official use among the numerous dialects used by the Khasi tribe.[35] Since then, it is used in all the common places, markets, offices, schools and colleges, churches, etc. People could then participate in the government, churches, schools, offices, and other public activities because they had one common language.[36] Thus, the creation of Khasi literature was the first step in the Inculturation for Khasi culture.

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33 Ibid., 37.

34 Barnes Mawrie, *The Khasis and Their Natural Environment*, 8-9.

35 O.L Snaitang, *Christianity and Social Change in Northeast India* (Shillong: Vendrame Institute Publications, 1993), 143-146.

4.2 Methods of the Catholic Missionaries

Since 1876, the presence of Fr. Jacopo Broi PIME (*Pontificio Istituto Missioni Estere di Milano* commonly known as Milan Foreign Mission Society) at Guwahati and his frequent visits to Shillong paved the way for the Catholic Church in the region. The catholic missionaries used creative means to bring the message of the Gospel into the Khasi Culture. They set up mission centres, schools, boardings and health centres which were the most effective ways of evangelizing the Khasis in accordance with the need of the hour and time. The educational system removed superstitions, developed leadership, gave employment, reduced poverty, improved health conditions, and established good relationships among the Khasis. People began to reject the irrational myths and superstitions of the traditional religion and began to accept the teaching of Christianity.[37] Hence, through the ministry of education in schools and boarding houses and through the healing ministry, missionaries were able to enter into the hearts of people, to understand their aspirations and to stay with them in their life's experiences, struggles, sickness, joys and pains, and thereby able to offer them the Gospel message in their life situations and circumstances, within their culture and background.

4.3 Method of the Salvatorians

The arrival of the Salvatorian Missionaries on 27th February 1890, in the Khasi Hills was a milestone for the work of Evangelization and Inculturation.[38] The missionaries looked for fresh ways and means to spread the Gospel. They realized that learning the local language was an urgent need in order to give the people the message of Christ. They worked hard daily to study the Khasi

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36 Ibid., 145-148.

37 Ibid.,149-156.

38 Jacob Aluckal, *The Catholic Church in Northeast India* (Shillong: Archbishop's House, 2006), 25-26.

language. Fr. Otto Hopfenmueller, after mastering the local language set about intensively to translate the prayers and prepare a text of basic catechism in Khasi as well as other books on Jesus, Mary, and the Catholic Faith in order to begin the mission of leading people to the Faith. Faith in the region was also transmitted through mission centres, schools, orphanages, health centres.[39] On the whole, the methods used by the Salvatorian missionaries to catechize people were the printing of prayer books, hymn books, elementary catechism and other religious literature. The *Ka ïing Kristan* (the Christian Family) *a Catholic Journal* which was first published in 1907 served two purposes: religious instruction and apologetics.[40] Other methods used by the Salvatorians for catechising people were family visits, establishing good rapport with the people especially with the young and the elderly and through personal contacts. Schools, health centres and orphanages helped the spread of Faith in a big way.

4.4 Method of the Salesians

It was on 13th January 1922 that the Salesian Missionaries arrived at Shillong, under the leadership of Fr. Louis Mathias and his team.[41] The team assumed immediately the missionary activities in the region and the mission that was planted by the Salvatorian missionaries sprouted and produced abundant fruits. The Salesian Missionaries acquainted themselves with the new situation, and learned both English and Khasi languages. They made visits to mission centres and found that the new mission in the Khasi Hills was immense and promising and that among the Khasis there was a great propensity towards Christianity. The missionaries built

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39 Maliekal, *History of the Catholic Church Among the Khasis*,89-90.

40 Ibid., 107-108.

41 Joseph Thekkedath, *A History of the Salesians of Don Bosco in India: From the Beginning up to 1951-52* (Kristu Jyoti Publications, 2005), 95-97.

a good rapport with the local people. There was trust and cordiality. They showed special interest in children and youth. Despite oppositions from the Protestant groups, the Salesians were daring missionaries constantly visiting families and villages. They also showed great attention to the education of children. They accepted children from remote villages into the boarding houses and schools at the mission centres.[42] The methods they used were highly effective and their friendly approach, personal contact, and good rapport with the people have made it easy for the Gospel to enter into people's lives.

4.5 Methods in the Present Day

The proclamation of the Gospel in the Khasi Hills today is under the direction and the care of the Local Ordinary. The Diocesan Catechetical Commission recognized the need of publishing a new catechism book in Khasi for students as well as a guide book for teachers for use in schools and parishes in order to make the Gospel message more attractive and intelligible to the young. The new catechism book *San ha ka Jingngeit* (Grow in Faith) was published on 26 February 2013. The catechism book becomes one of the tools to communicate the Faith to the young in their own context and culture. In the text books, one can find the symbols, images, pictures, examples etc. drawn from the people's own culture and daily life experiences. This makes learning and teaching very interesting. There is a lot of freshness, creativity and clarity in the texts unlike the Old Catechism which was overly dogmatic. The dedicated commitment of pastors, the diocesan clergy in the parishes, the religious congregations of both men and women, the Catechists, the *Rangbah Balang* (Church leaders) has contributed to a great extent in this important work of inculturating the Gospel in the Diocese. It is noteworthy to

[42] Maliekal, *History of the Catholic Church Among the Khasis*, 163-164.

make a mention of some congregations of women like the IBVM, RNDM, MSMHC, FMA, VSDB and many others who work for the building up of the local church and its Culture through education, village tours, evangelization and catechesis. Other important ways and methods of inculturation in the Khasi Mission are enumerated below.

4.5.1 The Liberation Method

The missionaries work for the liberation of people from within - liberation of the spirit through Catechesis, Faith Formation, Personal Counselling, Prayer, Retreats, Inner Healing Services, through the Sacrament of Reconciliation and the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick. The Khasis commonly believe that if anyone suffers from an affliction and abnormality in a family, it is a sign that God is not pleased. In order to identify the real cause of the affliction, human beings make divine consultation through rituals like the egg-breaking, ritual of examining the entrails of a cock, etc. When the cause of the displeasure of God and the power of the evil spirit are identified, a ceremony of sacrifice called *Ka loit ka Law* to gain atonement for lapses is performed followed by the prayer of thanksgiving to God.[43] Today, people in the Khasi Hills are particularly blessed with the local clergy, the sons of the soil, who are readily available for praying over the sick and those psychologically afflicted. They understand well the thinking patterns, the practices, the customs, beliefs and culture of the people and also perform exorcisms for those whose body, mind and spirit are bound by the evil spirit. Thus, in a number of ways, the Christian Faith liberates people and they attain true freedom of mind, heart, body and spirit.

[43] H.O. Mawrie, *The Khasi Milieu*, 36.

4.5.2 The Cultural Method

Christianity respects the Khasi Culture, takes in what is good, encourages what is pure and beautiful and purifies what is not so good in it. For example, the festival or the dance *Shadsuk Mynsiem* (Happy Dance of the Heart) is mainly a thanksgiving dance of the Khasis. This is a community dance which is still observed today among the Khasis. The same form of dance which is called *Ka Shad Paskha* (Easter Dance) has been adopted by the Church in the Khasi Hills today. It is performed once a year on Easter Sunday. The *Shad Paskha* is not merely for entertainment but it is an expression of the Faith of the people of God. Through this *Shad Paskha,* Christians thank God for the greatest blessing in their life, the blessing of the Resurrection of Christ. Christianity has also adopted Khasi traditional music, Khasi musical instruments, the Khasi language, the traditional dress and ornaments, Khasi utensils and articles etc., in the liturgical prayers and liturgical celebrations in order to give a profound meaning to the Faith that the people profess. As a result of Inculturation, Catechesis and Proclamation of the Good News in the Khasi context has become more pleasing, presentable and acceptable to the people.

4.5.3 The Person-Oriented Method

Inculturation of Faith takes place basically through family visits and personal encounter. Personal encounter and dialogue helps clarify doubts and answers several questions of the believers and non-believers as well with regard to faith and religion. In a big way, it helps create an avenue for priests, religious, missionaries, catechists and lay leaders to build up a close relationship with the people, by understanding their problems, knowing the culture and learning the language. Thus, through this person-oriented method, the doubtful individuals are led to light, the wavering gain confidence, the strong are encouraged, the weak are strengthened,

the erring turn to Faith and people of good will who freely express their desire to embrace the Christian faith are baptised.

4.5.4 The Ecological Method

In general, the Khasis have a deep sense of veneration and respect for nature, which has been rightly acclaimed by H.O. Mawrie as: *U Khasi u im bad ka mariang, bad ka mariang ka im bad u*. (A Khasi lives with nature and nature lives with him). The Khasis sanctify nature and all its elements as gifts from God. One of the clear expressions is the veneration of the forest. This 'sacred' character of the forests finds expression in the customary practice of preserving sacred groves known as *Law Kyntang*, which are held with high veneration even today.[44] These sacred groves are not only used for religious purposes, rituals and ceremonies but they are also a way of conserving nature.[45] Today, with the rapid development of science and technology, there is a lot of destruction done to the natural environment. The Church in the Khasi Hills through eco-catechesis urges and insists on the preservation of nature and the protection of the environment. Parishes are recommended to create this ecological awareness in people by initiating sacred groves. The maintenance of this sacred grove is to bring back to people the sense of the sacred for nature, to experience the presence of God in nature and also to preserve and protect nature for generations to come.

5. Contributions of the Church to Khasi Culture

The fact that the missionary activities brought in a lot of changes. These are seen in the areas of formation and development of a sense of tribal identity, formation of local leadership, and greater freedom to women, changes in lifestyle, social organization and finally the sphere of religion.

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44 Shangpliang, *Forest in the Life of the Khasis*, 20-21.

45 Ibid.,30.

5.1 Arrival of Education

When the Welsh Missionaries arrived at Cherrapunjee in 1842, the Khasis possessed neither schools, nor books nor even a written language. The first thing that the missionaries did was to begin to rectify that situation by opening schools and introducing a written language. This work was started even before churches were organized.[46] The Presbyterian Church was running 436 Primary Schools, 78 Middle Schools, 30 High Schools and one college.[47] The Catholic Church has successfully made much headway in providing higher network of educational and technical schools and colleges more than the pioneering Welsh mission. As of 1990, the Catholic Church runs as many as 879 Elementary Schools, 50 High Schools and 3 Colleges with a number of boardings and hostels in its parishes and centres in the region.[48] According to the Annual General Statistics of 2017, the Catholic Church has 496 Kindergarten Schools, 197 Primary Schools, 74 Secondary schools, 16 Higher Secondary Schools (including Technical, Professional, Teacher Training and Agricultural Schools) and 6 Higher Institutions (Educational Institutes at the University Level).[49]

5.2 Tribal Identity

The creation of a written literature based upon the Roman alphabet and the "universalization" of one language for the whole tribe had the effect of developing a new Khasi society. A fragmented society on the basis of dialects was able to find its identity through the common language. It also worked as an instrument to promote

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46 Morris J.H., *The History of the Welsh Calvinistic Methodist Foreign Mission to the End of the Year 1904* (Liverpool: Carnavor, 1910), 81.

47 Ibid.

48 Natrajan N., *The Missionary Among the Khasis* (New Delhi: Sterling Publication, 1977), 63.

49 Secretariat of State, Central Statistics Office of the Church, *Annual General Statistical Questionnaire,* Archdiocese of Shillong, 2017.

tribal solidarity. A standard language promoted through education, worship and literature helped to create a new sense of cultural community among all the members of the tribe.[50]

5.3 Leadership

Christian missionaries were fully oriented towards generating leadership for the church. One of the main purposes of the mission schools, particularly the Middle English and Training Schools, when they first established was to help develop leadership for the church. Education brought in knowledge and awareness of oneself and his/her existing situation. It was largely due to the education imparted by the missionaries and the encouragement for leadership provided in the church organization that the Khasis began to think boldly and express their opinions with frankness and clarity.[51] The Christian schools also provided the kind of new leadership that was required in the administrative and political sphere in the context of radical social change.[52]

5.4 Freedom for Women

Khasi women were not allowed to attend school due to religious sanctions. Dr. O.L. Snaitang translates the religious sanctions in the following words, "The egg divination always revealed that it is not permissible and should not be allowed at all cost, for any family which, sent their daughters to schools would face great troubles and the women who read books would never have any more children. With the result that their clan would suddenly perish".[53] The missionary works especially education brought about a wide spectrum of changes in the lives of the women folk in the Khasi

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50 Natrajan N., *The Missionary Among the Khasis*, 63.

51 Downs F.S., *Christianity in Northeast India* (New Delhi: ISPCK, 1983), 102.

52 Morris J.H., *The History of the Welsh Calvinistic Methodist Foreign Mission to the End of the Year 1904,* 97.

53 Ibid.

hills. Thus, the 20th and 21st centuries saw a number of working women in the government and non-governmental organizations, holding posts from the lower grades to the key areas in professional and non-professional cadres, as teachers from lower primary schools to the university, as heads of various educational institutions and through active involvement in other research and academic activities.[54]

5.5 Change in Life Style

The missionaries insisted not only on a change in belief but also a change in life style of the individual. The missionaries discouraged some of the bad habits. For example, liquor was discouraged because it adversely affected the quality of life. A Christian should neither commit adultery nor have many spouses. In doing so the missionaries strengthened the institution of marriage. The Reading habit was introduced instead of spending their leisure time hunting, fishing and roaming through the village. Women also adopted new methods of childcare and keeping the house clean.[55]

5.6 Changes in Religion

The religion of the Khasis had been handed down orally from generation to generation. Missionary activities, the arrival of a new religion influences the society and the changing times inevitably had their impact on the Khasi religion. Due to this influence, the Naming, Marriage and Funeral ceremonies had declined or had been simplified among the Khasis. Belief in earlier superstitions taboos and in evil spirits declined among the Christians. Ancestor Worship and belief in the Covenant of the cock with God also died down among the Christians. Some common features like Monotheism, Concept of a Saviour, the Belief of Judgment after

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54 Lamare S.N., *Resistance Movements in North East India: The Jaintia of Meghalaya 1860-1863* (New Delhi: Regency Publication, 2001), 50.

55 Natrajan N., *The Missionary Among the Khasis*, 67.

Death and the Concept of Heaven and Hell have led to the Khasis embracing Christianity without much difficulty. Christianity brought a certain stability to marriage among all sects of the Khasis, a sense of discipline and harmony.

6. Challenges of the Khasi Mission Today

Today, with the fast-changing development in the sectors of science and technology and with the development of education among the Khasis there are a new set of challenges that the Church in the Khasi hills cannot but address. A few of these challenges are noted here.

6.1 Culturally Uprooted

The media while being useful and helpful and while making life easy to a great extent, has also a tremendously negative impact on present-day society. This is not merely in towns and cities but also in villages, specifically among the younger generation. Superficial fashions are adopted and the age-old traditional life has been abandoned in favour of modernization. Even in the game of 'pick and choose' the easy-going lifestyle of the West is adopted. Almost all the social activities of the Khasis were blended with a Western flavour. The education imported by the Christian scholars, no doubt, tended to depreciate tribal customs, dress, music etc., as inferior to Western customs and cultural expressions. Consequently, the youth under the process of education tended to dissociate themselves from tribal cultural values and their expressions. They gradually acquired a Western mentality and disdain for their ancestors' cultural values. There were radical changes with regard to music, dance, art, the way villages began to be formed, and the mode of house construction, property, marriage laws and politics. All these areas of life have experienced marked changes towards the ways of the West.[56]

[56] S. Karotemprel, *The Catholic Church in Northeast India 1890-1915* (Shillong: Becker Institute, 2007), 169.

6.2 The Menace of Militancy

Militancy has been wrecking the process of development in the guise of self-determination or ethnic assertion. The dominant socio-political groupings, The Federation of Khasi-Jantia and Garo People (FKJGP) and the Hynñiew Trep Achik Liberation Council (HALC) have become termites eating into the vitals of society. There is no moral threshold to fall back upon. Insurgency is the greatest threat to the peace and stability of the Khasi hills. In the face of growing unemployment, many of the youth are joining the rank and file of the militants.[57]

6.3 The Problem of Immigration

Illegal immigration from neighbouring countries like Bangladesh and Nepal is often seen as a menace. Several youth groups indulge in violence against the Nepalese, Bangladeshi settlers and other immigrants. The Khasis are afraid of being swamped by outsiders. There is a fear of their lifestyles and histories being destroyed by modern nation-states that bother little about small communities but pay more attention to strategic considerations such as natural resources of the area and their exploitation for the national good.[58]

7. The Role of the Church in the Khasi Mission

It is the Church that draws from the Gospel teachings and strives not only to instruct the mind but also to regulate by her precepts the life and morals of individuals, that ameliorates the conditions of peoples. The Church has the duty and the right to assert the centrality of the human person. In the economic and social realms, the dignity and complete vocation of the human person and the welfare of the society as a whole are to be respected and promoted. For the human person is the source, the centre and the

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57 Ibid., 273.

58 Ibid.

purpose of all economic and social life.[59] We read in the *Compendium of the Social Teaching of the Church* that all social life "… is an expression of its unmistakable protagonist: the human person. The origin of social life is therefore found in the human person, and society cannot refuse to recognize its active and responsible subject; every expression of society must be directed towards the human person".[60] The condemnation of evils and injustices is a part of the ministry of Evangelization in the social field, which is an aspect of the Church's prophetic role. The Christian life as encouraged and preserved by the Church must resist every possible source of deception. It must guard against contamination by error or evil. It must try to correct, ennoble, encourage and justify the modes of thinking and livings. The sources of evil are violence and corruption, which the Church must oppose staunchly.[61] The Church has a clear mandate to be a peacemaker and to be fully involved in the process of peace making. Conflict reduction management has to begin with the preaching of peace. The Church should help in the overthrow of the network of terrorist groups operating in the Khasi hills. The Church can initiate a resistance movement against semi-literate and the non-literate who are ruling the Khasi hills by the proxy of gun power.[62] Christian values of truth, love, tolerance, peace and forgiveness are not mere ornamental words for homilies and coveted articles; they carry the sweet burden of building the society on values of Christianity and humanity. Hence, the Church must continue "to propose the principles and values that can sustain a society worthy of the human person".[63] The Church should not

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59 Karotemprel, *The Catholic Church in Northeast India 1890-191,* 283.

60 Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana) 2004, 106.

61 Karotemprel, *The Catholic Church in Northeast India 1890-191,* 339.

62 Ibid.

63 Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, 580.

limit itself to teaching value education to children in schools. The people have to be taught moral precepts. Every generation needs to know that freedom consists not in doing what one likes, but in doing the right - doing what one ought.

Conclusion

Beginning from the arrival of the first foreign missionaries to the present day, the Khasi society has undergone transformation in many ways. The multi-level and the penetrating changes have been due to the work of Christian missionaries. They have given a new dimension to the Khasi *ethos*; the Khasis are now more self-reliant, independent and dignified. The impact of the missionaries on Khasi society has thus been deep, widespread and lasting. New horizons were opened to the Khasis due to the work of the missionaries. On the whole, we see that in the recent past, the Church in the Khasi Hills has endeavoured to inculturate Faith in the life of the people, using the people's own beliefs, customs, and Culture. It is praiseworthy to see the means and methods the Church has adopted from the Culture in order to make a meaningful presentation of Faith. To continue the immense and demanding task of presenting the Gospel to the people in a way that is relevant to them, the Church is called to spare no efforts to inculturate the Gospel in the hearts and lives of the people.

Towards Restoring Wholeness: MSMHC in the Footsteps of the Divine Physician

Sr. Sindhu George MSMHC

Introduction

The Genesis of any society or institute has a history and the names of those great personalities involved in it become the epitome for the generations to look upon. They leave an indelible mark through their noble contributions and commitments. The Catholic Church in India has a long history of involvement in the healthcare. In this regard, the contribution of Missionary Sisters of Mary Help of Christians (MSMHC) is worth mentioning. The Sisters toiled hard to bring about substantial progress in this ministry. It was a saga of missionary activities, which tiled solid base for the people to enhance their faith in the Lord. For this reason, one cannot ignore the contributions made by the Sisters in the ministry of healing not only to the body but also to the soul. Tony Robbins has rightly said that the human body is the best picture of the human soul. Christ is the only reason for the Sisters to get involved in the ministry of healing for He came to heal the sick. So, keeping in mind the sole purpose of Christ the great physician, the Sisters went around curing the sick and bringing forth substantial change in the lives of people. This article tries to bring to light their involvement with the Church in restoring the health of people.

Teaching and Healing: Commission of Jesus

Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved; for you are my praise. (Jere 17:14) The words of wisdom

of Prophet Jeremiah vividly illustrates the need for sound health. The mandate of Jesus to His disciples is characterised by a double command - to preach and to heal. Thus, there is a link between healing ministry and evangelization.[1]

The outstanding quality of Jesus is His compassion for the people who suffered. "He had compassion for them and cured their sickness" (Mt. 14:14). Life of Jesus presents the compassionate face of God. He went about preaching and healing. People recognised the divinity of Jesus when they received healing. He wanted the good works to be continued and so He called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases (cf. Lk. 9:1). It is apparent from the Gospels that the ministry of preaching and healing is presented together as if it is inseparable. The physician evangelist is one who heals and preaches.[2] The MSMHC undertakes the mission of Jesus and collaborates with the Church in every possible way. Through the ministry of healing, the missionary sisters make known the Gospel of love and compassion and thus they actively collaborate in the work of evangelization.

Preaching and Healing: Two Sides of a Coin

Health is an important aspect of human life. Health services are beneficial for the vulnerable sections of the society. Biju Michael emphasises its importance saying, "Service to life through healing was an essential part of Christ's mission."[3] While proclaiming the

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1 Cf. P.D. Varghese, "The Church's Involvement in the Healing Ministry in Northeast India," in *The Catholic Church in North East India 1890 -1990*, ed., Sebastian Karotemprel (Shillong: Vendrame Institute, 1993) 355.

2 Cf. P.D. Varghese, "The Church's Involvement in the Healing Ministry in Northeast India," in *The Catholic Church in North East India 1890 -1990*, 355.

3 Biju Michael, *Catholic Health Care and Abortion in India* (New Delhi: Bosco Society for Printing & Graphic Training, 2011) 107.

Good News is central to every work undertaken by the MSMHC, healing ministry is considered as one of the means of evangelization introduced by Bishop Ferrando to its members. The ministry of preaching the Gospel and healing the sick are two inseparable activities in the life of a Missionary Sister.[4]

Pope Francis could speak the words of compassion to the suffering in order to bring them healing touch. While addressing at the Inter-religious gathering he said, "What is needed now is healing and unity, not further conflict and division."[5] The world that is broken by narrow domestic walls is in need of healing touch. It does not indicate only the physical healing but also healing of mind and heart. The book of Proverb mentions rightly, "A cheerful heart is a good medicine, but a downcast spirit dries up the bones" (Pro. 17:22).

Bishop Stephen Ferrando: A Pastor with Compassion

Bishop Ferrando, a man with deep compassion for the sick and deeper longing to be a minister in the vineyard of the Lord was born to become the father and founder of the Congregation of the Missionary Sisters of Mary Help of Christians.

His early experiences moulded him to become a person clothed with compassion and mercy. Just like Jesus his Master, Bishop Stephen Ferrando had compassion for the sick and the suffering. During the World War I (1914 -1918) he was made the officer of the Sanitary Department not because he finished his 'MBBS'[6] but because of his outstanding quality of compassion for the people who suffer. He was awarded this post, realizing his courage and loyalty.[7] He was a crowd mover who had passion for souls. During

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4 Cf. Jane Mary Thadathil, *A Great Missionary Legacy*, 128.

5 Antony Pancras, "Healing Touch," *The New Leader*, Vol.128, No.3 Feb, 2015, 3

6 MBBS-The English and Latin Version Combined to form the abbreviation MBBS, which means Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery.

7 Cf. Philomena Mathew, *A Man Sent by God*, 19.

the World War 1, he was ordered to go for fighting irrespective of who he was. He vehemently fought against the enemy and received various dignitaries.[8] But nothing could ever change his mind. He considered all these as useless like St. Paul who said, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord" (Phil. 3:8). He became an expert in taking care of the wounded soldiers. These situations cemented the foundations for the missionary activities in Northeast India. Yes, he became an instrument in making a very solid foundation where the Churches of Northeast India stand proudly today.

A man filled with zeal for missionary endeavour can't be unnoticed by the luminaries. Once he had to risk his very life to rescue one of the wounded soldiers. Stephen Ferrando carried the bulleted soldier on his back for several miles.[9] By entrusting himself to the care of his Madonna, he went about doing good in the battle field. His undaunted courage smoothed the way for the luminaries to raise him to the rank of an officer in the sanitary department. Nevertheless he had no training he did it as though he was professional medical doctor. Stephen Ferrando filled with the desire to be a missionary did everything extremely well. Four years he was kept in the frontline of the battle field. His intelligence, alertness and bravery raised him to the rank of a sergeant.[10]

God was preparing him to become a Bishop in the far away land of Northeast India where he has to take care of the sick, the poor and vulnerable section of the society and those who are in the periphery. So God trained him before hand so that there will not be any problems of carrying the task of shepherding the folk for long 35 years.[11] It is amazing to know the intervention of God in

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8 Cf. *CP*, Vol. III, 674.

9 Cf. Elizabeth Packumala, *In the Footsteps of His Master*, 17-18.

10 Cf. *CP*, Vol. VII, 2346.

11 *Positio*, 3.

the life of Stephen Ferrando right from the beginning of his life. He always says, "There is a God in Israel" (2Kings 5:15). God chooses whomever he wishes and Stephen Ferrando was one of such personality whom God called from all eternity to be in His vineyard especially in taking care of children and women.

Bishop Ferrando did make a good investment in the mission soil of Northeast India, the result of which is reflected even to this present day. He was a man clothed with charity and love for the people who have not known the love of Christ. As the Shepherd of the vast diocese of Shillong, Bishop Stephen Ferrando was keen on doing all what he could to improve the lives of people. Healing the sick was one of his primary concerns. His missionary zeal and thirst for souls urged him to traverse the length and breadth of his diocese.

Like Jesus who walked two thousand years ago on the dust-filled and stony streets of Palestine, leading people to wholeness and well-being, Bishop Ferrando walked through the forests, mountains and valleys of Northeast India to find souls for Jesus. He realized the pathetic conditions of the people in the locality and desired and longed to have more missionaries to evangelize them. In fact, before seeing the poor and needy, Bishop Stephen Ferrando saw Jesus, Jesus suffering in the poor, in the children, Jesus whose face is lost in the suffering humanity.[12] He desired to make known the love of Christ to all people. The women and the children were abandoned and uneducated. Lack of cleanliness and hygiene became the cause of many diseases. Seeing the wretched condition saddened Bishop Stephen Ferrando and he thought of possibilities to help the situation. His faith in the Divine strengthened him and he was sure that evangelization and catechetical instruction would transform the people from these clutches.

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[12] Cf. *CP*, Vol. VII, 2292.

Bishop Stephen Ferrando, true to his motto, 'Apostle of Christ' was trying to imitate Christ all throughout his life. Apostle is one who is sent, so it is a continuous act. There is a cordial relationship with the sender and the sent. The Apostle is called and set apart for a special mission. This involves self – emptying, becoming all things to all. Thus Bishop Stephen Ferrando became all things to all: he befriended the poor, the abandoned, women, children, young and the old, sick and the healthy, rich and the poor. He was a father to all.[13]

Caring the Sick: A Vital Mission of MSMHC

MSMHC is a congregation of charity. The founder wanted it to be called as the congregation of charity, for the little children, for the sick, for the aged, the women.[14] The main charism of the congregation is carried out through different means. The Founder of the congregation, Bishop Stephen Ferrando says regarding the works of charity, "No, no, no social work without speaking about our Lord Jesus Christ; nursing the sick, taking care of the aged, of the children, giving them medicine, clothes and so on – they are beautiful social work, they are not the end but only the means. That is to say through healing the body, we must try to heal the soul."[15] The care of the sick is one of the means through which the MSMHC charism is actualized. Their Founder, Bishop Stephen Ferrando was a professional in taking care of the sick and he entrusted the same task to the sisters.

The missionary vision of Bishop Stephen Ferrando was holistic. A man with deep sympathy for the people, he could stay no longer in the four walls of the Church. He went in haste like Mary (cf.

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13 Cf. *CP*, Vol. VII, 2295.

14 Cf. S. Ferrando, "Letter to the Sisters," 11 April 1973, in *From the Heart of a Father Who Loves You*, 179.

15 S. Ferrando, "Letter to the Sisters," 11 April 1973, in *From the Heart of a Father Who Loves You*, 178.

Lk. 1:39) to the villages to proclaim the Good News to the people. The preaching of the Word of God included the care of all other dimensions, which would promote the holistic growth of human person.[16] His missionary project included education, health care, and all other developmental activities. In a region deprived of trained medical personnel, every missionary - priest, sister and catechist was like a mobile medical unit. After having experienced the care of the sick, Bishop Ferrando described the care of the sick as the "Fifth Gospel" of the missionaries.[17] In this respect, the sayings of Mahatma Gandhi is meaningful, "it is health that is real wealth and not pieces of gold and silver". Care of the sick is another important apostolate of the congregation and is considered as the works of charity.[18]

Gifts and graces are bestowed in order to build up, heal and restore the broken world. The congregation existed over seven decades through thin and thick situations. The Directory of Evangelization of the MSMHC clearly brings to light the importance of healing ministry. It is an important aspect of the work of evangelization. In this apostolate, one should be systematic, understanding and rendering service to all.[19] Bishop Ferrando reminds the Sisters of their call to follow and serve Jesus in the person of the little one, of the sick.[20] He terms caring the sick as the fifth Gospel to show its importance. Hence, caring the sick becomes one of the bounden duties of every missionary sister. Jesus worked miracles throughout his public ministry and made known the compassion of His Father

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16 Cf. *Positio*, 791.

17 Cf. *Positio*, 791.

18 Cf. Mary Thadavanal, "Charism of the Congregation of the Missionary Sisters of Mary Help of Christians," MSMHC, *Acts of the General Council*, 26.

19 Cf. *Directory of Evangelization: Norms and Principles*, 32.

20 Cf. S. Ferrando, "Letter to the Sisters," 20 February 1956, in *From the Heart of a Father Who Loves You*, 72.

to all. Following their Master, the sisters are to care for the people, especially the sick and needy ones. Taking into consideration care of the sick as the most important ministry, the missionary sisters follow Jesus the Divine healer as their model.

Conclusion

In the ministry of preaching and healing, the Sisters have laboured much, in season and out of season to establish vibrant Churches in Northeast India. They have become the instruments in carrying Jesus to all the possible areas. They have been figuratively laying the foundation stone of most of the Churches in this region. They have travelled long on foot, hungry and thirsty, endured untold sufferings and put up with all kinds of deprivations, yet made themselves available to the people. The sick, the dying and those in special need always felt the supportive presence of the Sisters. In every way, the people felt at home in their company and loved their presence amidst them.

Mission *Ad Gentes:* the Heart of Church's Life and Mission

Sr. Celine Zosangpuii MSMHC

Introduction

The Holy Bible tells us that "God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him may not perish but may have eternal life" (Jn 3:16). Salvation of humankind is the reason for which Jesus came into the world. To make known this salvation offered in Jesus Christ is then the mission of the Church through the proclamation of the Gospel. Through the working of the Holy Spirit, variety of charisms are born in the Church through which the mission of Christ is being continued. Therefore, within the framework of mission, there are variety of tasks and different kinds of activities, but all have the same and one final intend: the salvation of all.

1. Mission *ad gentes:* the Charism of the Church

The Church exists in obedience to the command of Christ who said: "Go therefore to all the world and make disciples of all nations" (Cf. Mt 28:19). As a result, mission *ad gentes* is undeniably the identity and charism of the Church, the purpose for which she exists. Having felt compelled by the command of Christ, the Church continuously proclaims the message of salvation. The unfailing presence of the Holy Spirit assists the Church in the fulfillment of this ministry entrusted to her by Christ. The explicit proclamation of the Word of God is the fundamental and distinctive characteristic of the Church. As a matter of fact, the Church

identifies herself with every work of evangelization. For missionary evangelization is the very life-blood of the Church. Therefore, without evangelization, the purpose of the existence of the Church is vain; for she exists to evangelize. Her mission will not come to a completion until Christ is proclaimed everywhere in the world, and mission *ad gentes* will always be the main thrust of the Church's mission.

2. The Concept of Mission *ad gentes*

The term 'mission *ad gentes*' literally means 'to the nations.' The word "mission" is "*Missio*" in Latin and the verb form "*mittere*" appears quite frequently in the Latin Bible, which corresponds to the word "send" in the English translations. Hence there is not only a rich Biblical idea of mission, but the Bible lays the foundation for mission.[1] St. Ignatius of Loyola introduced "mission" as the field of work, a place of "destination" or "territory" to which members were sent by their superiors.[2] Today, with an ever deeper understanding of the concept of "mission," the Church realized that her primary purpose of existence is to evangelize.[3] A variety of words were used to describe this activity such as the propagation of the faith, conversion of the heathen, proclamation of the Good News to the whole world, conversion of the unbelievers, planting the Church and extension of the kingdom.[4]

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1 Joy Thomas, "The Evolution of the Concept of Mission in the Bible," in *Bible and Mission in India Today*, eds., Jacob Kavunkal and F. Hrangkhuma (Bombay: St. Paul's, 1993) 38.

2 Cf. J. Puthenpurakal, "*Mission*" (Shillong: Vendrame Institute Publications, 1997) 2.

3 Cf. Second Vatican Council, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, Apostolic Exhortation on Evangelization in the Modern World, in *Vatican Council II: More Post-Conciliar Documents*, gen. ed., Austin Flannery (Mumbai: St. Pauls, 2007) n. 14. All the documents from Vatican II cited in this study are taken from this edition. Henceforth not repeated.

4 L. Nemer, "Mission and Missions," in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 9, 2nd ed., gen. ed., Berard Marthaler (Washington D.C.: Thomson Gale, 2003) 683.

In general terms, mission involves the sending of a representative of a deity for the purpose of presenting a message or performing a task. In more specific terms, mission includes all those activities of a religious community dedicated to spreading its faith to others.[5] Mission today, in an ecclesiastical sense means the explicit proclamation of the Good News of salvation found only in Jesus Christ. Thus, the word "mission" has a close connection with the missionary mandate of Jesus, "Go, therefore" (Mt 28:19a). So, mission literally includes evangelization and bringing the Gospel to those who have never heard it,[6] and it is in fact, the missionary mandate of Jesus Christ to the Church, His bride.

2.1 Trinitarian Concept

The life and mission of the Church has its origin in the Holy Trinity. The role each person plays is inter-related. The Church continues the mission of Christ who was sent by the Father into the world; and the Holy Spirit plays a primary part in the propagation of the Gospel.[7] This expresses God's relationship with the world and humanity. God created human being and built up friendship with them. With the fall of Adam and Eve, the relationship between God and humanity is shattered; and as a result, they stand in need of redemption and salvation from eternal damnation. When men continue to revile against God, God came humbly in the person of Jesus, by means of true incarnation that he might make men sharers in the divine nature,[8] and that whoever believes in him may have eternal life (Jn 3:16).

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5 Timothy A. Lenchak, "Mission," in *The Collegeville Pastoral Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed., Carroll Stuhlmueller (Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, 2005) 630-631.

6 L. Nemer, "Mission and Missions," 684.

7 *EN*, n. 5.

8 Second Vatican Council, *Ad gentes Divinitus*, Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity, n. 3.

Having accomplished the mission entrusted to Him by the Father, Jesus ascended to heaven and sent the Holy Spirit upon the disciples, whom He sent forth to proclaim the Good News (Jn 20:21). The Spirit continues to inspire persons to a life dedicated to the mission of the Trinity in the Church, and ceaselessly intercedes for the Church according to the will of God (Rom 8:26-27). Hence, the communitarian mission of the Holy Trinity was passed on into the life of the Church, whose mission is therefore, one, apostolic, universal and holy, and communitarian by nature as it originates from the community of the Holy Trinity. Because of this very reason, every baptized person has a share in the salvific mission of the Church and therefore charged to proclaim the Gospel without excluding anyone.[9] Thus, it is the Holy Trinity who constitutes the ultimate source and foundation of the Church's existence and mission.[10]

2.2 The Father Sent the Son

Jesus was sent by the Father to the world to win men back to Him. He is the fulfillment of the Law and the prophets (Mt 5:17). Obedient to the Father who sent him, Jesus went about doing good to all and proclaiming the Good News of the kingdom of God (Mt 4:23), for that was the purpose of his being sent (Lk 4:43). Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him (Jn 3:16-17). God sent his Son into the world and all those who accept him are given power to become children of God (Jn 1:12). Being the beloved Son and revelation of the Father, Jesus listened to the Father and revealed Him to the world. The knowledge of the only true God and Jesus Christ whom the Father sent is without doubt eternal life (Jn 17:3).

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9 Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, Apostolic Exhortation on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today's World, 24 November 2013 (Trivandrum: Carmel International Publishing House, 2013) n. 15.

10 Adam Wolanin, "Trinitarian Foundation of Mission" in *Following Christ in Mission*, ed., Sebastian Karotemprel (Mumbai: Pauline Publications, 1995) 37.

Being sent by the Father to reconcile the world to Himself (2Cor 5:19) and in fulfillment of the purpose of His coming into the world (Cf. Jn 10:10), Jesus went about bringing Good News to the poor, liberating people from oppression and captivity and offering recovery of sight to the blind (Lk 4:18). Christ is the one mediator between God and mankind. No one, therefore, can enter into communion with God except through Christ (Jn 14:6), by the working of the Holy Spirit,[11] for to have seen Jesus is to have seen the Father (Jn 14:9b). The apostles too testified that the Father sent the Son as Saviour of the world (1Jn 4:14).

2.3 The Son Sent the Holy Spirit

When the work given to Him by the Father to do on earth (Cf. Jn 17:4) was accomplished, Jesus poured out on his disciples the Spirit promised by the Father (Acts 2:23)[12] in order that he might continually sanctify the Church,[13] exercise inwardly his saving influence and promote the spread of the Church.[14] The Holy Spirit is the Advocate, whom the Father sent in the name of Christ (Jn 14:26) to be with the disciples forever (Jn 14:16). Having gone back to the one who sent him (Jn 16:5), Jesus did sent the Holy Spirit upon the Church (Acts 2:2-4) as promised by the Father (Acts 1:4b).

At Pentecost, the Spirit made the Apostles go forth from themselves and turned them into heralds of God's wondrous deeds, capable of speaking to each person in his or her own language. The Holy Spirit also grants the courage to proclaim the newness of the Gospel with boldness in every time and place, even when it meets with opposition.[15]

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11 John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, Encyclical Letter on the Permanent Validity of the Church's Missionary Mandate, 7 December 1990 (Bombay: St. Paul Publications, 1991) n. 5.

12 Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, 21 November 1964, n. 5.

13 *LG*, n. 4.

14 *AG*, n. 4.

15 *EG*, n. 259.

Keeping our missionary fervour alive calls for firm trust in the Holy Spirit, for it is he who "helps us in our weakness" (Rom 8:26),[16] and there can be no evangelization without the cooperation of the Holy Spirit,[17] the soul of the Church[18] who ceaselessly renews and sanctifies the Church. In fact, the Church is sustained by the Spirit of God, and under the influence of this Spirit she remains always strong and vigorous.[19]

Indeed, it is the principal agent of the whole of the Church's mission. His action is pre-eminent in the mission *ad gentes*, as can clearly be seen in the early Church (Acts 10; 15; 16:6).[20] Down through the centuries, there had been the intervention of the Holy Spirit in the life and mission of the Apostles, especially after the Ascension of Jesus. The Holy Spirit continues the salvific work rooted in the sacrifice of the Cross. The Spirit who raises up the Church, enlivens her, sanctifies her and bestows on her a variety of the gift of charisms throughout history, makes the mystery of Christ ever present in the Church and in the world, in time and space.[21] Therefore, cooperating with his guidance and docility to his inspirations will enable the Church in her missionary activity bear fruit in abundance. For the Spirit permeates evangelization and makes it fruitful and human cooperation in the work of evangelization is willed by God and as such it is necessary.[22]

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16 *EG*, n. 280.

17 *EN*, n. 75.

18 *EN*, n. 75.

19 Benedict XV, *Maximum Illud*, Apostolic Letter on the Propagation of Faith throughout the World, 30 November 1919, n.4, available at http://www.svdcuria.org/public/mission/docs/encycl/mi-en.htm

20 *RM*, n. 21.

21 John Paul II, *Vita Consecrata*, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on Consecrated Life and its Mission in the Church and in the World, 25 March 1996 (Trivandrum: Carmel International Publishing House, 2011) n. 5.

22 Paul Vadakumpadan, *Mission in the Northeast: A Missiology for the Emergent Church of Northeast India* (Shillong: Vendrame Institute Publications, 2007) 141.

3. Mission *ad gentes* in the Bible

The word "mission" has no explicit mention in the English translation of the Holy Scripture; but the word "send" appeared a variety of times. It is therefore, essentially associated with mission because it is connected to the call of God for someone who is entrusted with a particular task to carry out. For this reason, the task can be termed as 'mission' of the one who is sent. Hence, the word 'mission' has its biblical foundation. There is the sending forth of those who were called both in the Old Testament and New Testament. God called and He continues to call and entrusted them with a task to accomplish. That becomes a mission because it calls for the accomplishment of the task.

So, mission in the Bible is mainly concerned with the task of the liberating and redemptive work of God and the need to abandon ones sinful habits in order to attain the salvation offered to humanity in the person of Christ, whom the Father sent into the world. Therefore, mission would means: to be sent, called, commissioned, commanded, summoned and asked; in fact a purposeful and focused driven life.

3. 1 In the Old Testament

Jesus Christ constantly related Himself, His Message and His Mission to the Old Testament. He did not contradict or destroy but modified, enriched, expanded, and in many ways transformed and glorified the Old Testament.[23] God did not create human beings for nothing. He created them for a purpose. He created them for His glory (Is. 49:3). But the history of mankind from the scriptural point of view is not too pleasant and inspiring. It is not to be proud of because it is a history of sin abounding. In the book of Genesis, we see that sin meets us as stark reality. From then on, we have

[23] George W. Peters, *A Biblical Theology of Missions* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1972) 83.

a history marred by sin, degeneration, destruction and death.[24] Therefore the secret of human destiny must be sought in history, which began in an act of disobedience to God's command (Cf. Gen 3) and is now the scene of God's redemptive work in Christ.[25] This therefore, drives God to initiate his mission of salvation towards humanity.

As a result of sin, humankind stands in need of salvation, liberation and purification. For this purpose, God, the God of Genesis, the "I AM WHO I AM" (Ex. 3:6-17, 4:5, 6:2) appeared to Moses; and summoned him and sent him back to "my people who are in Egypt" (Ex 3:7). Later, He covenanted with Israel at Sinai and constituted a nation by means of a living hope, an organized system of worship, and an abiding moral law. In the redemption of Israel from Egypt, God is but fulfilling a promise to Abraham (Ex. 6:2-9).[26]

With regard to the way of salvation, it tells first of the coming of sin into the world through the fall; then of the utter failure of an early man to save himself, culminating in the flood. Genesis is thus the story first of man's need of salvation, and then of the early stages in the unfolding of God's wonderful plan of salvation.[27] The Bible is most explicit in demonstration and doctrine that salvation originates with God, and finds its source and initiative in God. Salvation and renewal of fellowship originated with Him. We see the same principle operating in the life and history of Abraham and later in Israel in her redemption from Egypt. The initiative lay with God. In the Old Testament, God is known as the" God of salvation," and that salvation of man originates with

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24 George W. Peters, *A Biblical Theology of Missions*, 94.

25 Armando J. Levoratti, "How to Interpret the Bible," in *The International Bible Commentary*, ed., William R. Farmer, (Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, 2004) 16.

26 George W. Peters, *A Biblical Theology of Missions*, 102.

27 Alan M. Stibbs ed., *Search the Scriptures: A Study Guide to the Bible* (Secunderabad: Om Books, 2004) 11.

God and never with man.[28] The wonderful works among the people of the Old Testament were but a prelude to the work of Christ Our Lord in redeeming mankind and giving perfect glory to God.[29] The commissioning of and the sending forth of the prophets and some persons preceded the redemptive work of Christ for humanity, because of which he is the fulfillment of the law and the prophets.

3.1.1 Mission of Abraham

In Genesis, Abraham is presented as that man who was more than any other human being, called, tested and approved by God.[30] The journey Abraham made out of his obedience to God was not an aimless wandering, for God knew the destination.[31] Abraham does not see God, but hears His voice.[32] The word spoken to Abraham contains both a call and a promise; a call to leave his own land, a summon to a new life, the beginning of an exodus which points him towards an unforeseen future.[33] It is a promise to make of him a great nation (Cf. Gen 12:2) and bountiful generation (Cf. Gen 13:16; 15:5; 22:17).

For him, it was faith in God that sheds light on the depths of his being.[34] It was faith that made Abraham obey the command of God, and set out for a new land that the Lord was about to show him (Cf. Gen 12:1). His dependence on and trust in God won him the favour of God and as a result he was given the land as his possession (Cf. Gen

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28 Cf. George W. Peters, *A Biblical Theology of Missions*, 64-65.

29 Second Vatican Council, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, 4 December 1963, n. 5.

30 Demetrius R. Dumm, "Abraham," in *The Collegeville Pastoral Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed., Carroll Stuhlmueller (Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, 2005) 4.

31 Cf. Demetrius R. Dumm, "Abraham," in *The Collegeville Pastoral Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, 4.

32 Francis, *Lumen Fidei*, Encyclical Letter on Faith, 29 June 2013 (Trivandrum: Carmel International Publishing House, 2013) n. 8.

33 *LF*, n. 9.

34 *LF*, n. 11.

15:7) and fathered many generations. He lived his faith even in the midst of testing, uncertainties and impossibilities. He was asked to sacrifice what was most dear to him, namely, his only son Isaac, the culmination of his faith. In all these, Abraham trusted although he did not understand God's ways.[35] It was God who revealed to him the blessings in stored for him; and it was obedience and trust that unfold those blessings. Thus, he became an example for all the believers in living one's faith, especially with regard to responding the call of God for the mission.

3.1.2 Mission of Moses

The Bible presents Moses as the leader chosen by God to deliver the descendants of Jacob from bondage in Egypt and the chosen instrument to transmit the Torah to these liberated slaves.[36] Moses, the shepherd, not of his own (Gen 3:1) was "sent" by God to be an instrument in delivering the people of God, the Israelites (Gen 3:10). Commissioning Moses to deliver the Hebrews from Egypt, Yahweh entrusted him with the credentials of revelation of His identity as Yahweh, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Leader of the Israelites in their exodus from Egypt and their mediator in their covenant with Yahweh at Sinai,[37] Moses guided the Israelite tribes through the difficult period of development. Having accomplished his mission, he died at Mt. Nebo (Deut 34:1) without entering the promised land of Canaan (Num 20:9-12).

In the New Testament, where he is the most frequently mentioned Old Testament personality, he appears primarily as the law-giver

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35 Cf. Jose Varickasseril, "Icons of Faith: Reflection on Hebrew 10:32-12:4," in *Catechetics India*, Vol. XXX, No. 1 February 2013, 5-6.

36 Leslie J. Hoppe, "Moses," in *The Collegeville Pastoral Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed., Carroll Stuhlmueller (Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, 2005) 644.

37 E. Roessler, "Moses," in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 9, 2nd ed., gen. ed., Berard Marthaler (Washington D.C.: Thomson Gale, 2003) 6-7.

(Mt 8:4; Mk 7:10; Jn 1:17) who communicates God's law to man. For this reason, Jesus met opposition in attempting to bring the Law of Moses to final realization. As Moses proclaimed the Old Law from Mt. Sinai, the Gospel writers similarly situated Jesus on a mountain for the revelation of the New Law. He is a model of faith for all Christians.[38] He carried out the mission entrusted to him by Yahweh till his death and later on it was handed over to Joshua to continue the work of leading the Israelites to the Promised Land. Moses is the go-between, a relay runner of messages back and forth between the people and God.[39] He was given a task that was humanly impossible to accomplish. However Moses took every step complying with the wishes of God.[40]

3.1.3 Mission of Joshua

Joshua is not only the successor of Moses but he is another Moses (Cf. Josh 24), whom the people honoured as they did Moses.[41] The death of Moses led to the "commissioning" of Joshua by God to carry on the task entrusted to him by God (Cf. Joshua 1:1, 7). He was asked to be strong and courageous and being careful to act in accordance with all the law as commanded by Moses (Joshua 1:7). Joshua's leadership is a prolongation of that of Moses. Joshua's life is an integral part of the Lord's great redemptive work, namely the exodus and the gift of the land. Because of his participation in the liberation of the Israelites, Joshua is the precursor of the Saviour Jesus. Not just in name but also in their lives and deeds, Joshua and Jesus offer parallel examples. Joshua, the "Saviour" is like Jesus, the

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38 E. Roessler, "Moses," 7.

39 Megan McKenna, *Prophets: Words of Fire* (Mumbai: Pauline Publications, 2002) 35.

40 Jose Varickasseril, "Icons of Faith: Reflection on Hebrew 10:32-12:4," in *Catechetics India*, 6.

41 Leslie J. Hoppe, "Joshua," in *The Collegeville Pastoral Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed., Carroll Stuhlmueller (Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, 2005) 496.

liberator and spokesman of the will of God.[42] In fact, he is considered as the ideal Israelite leader whose faith and obedience helped him to accomplish the mission that God gave him.[43]

3.1.4 Mission of the Prophets

The continuing experience of divine activity raised up persons who spoke the interpretative words. These persons are the prophets and the apostles. Prophecy is the necessary component of a history in which God takes part. The prophets received the divine revelation and were appointed to transmit that divine message to the people of God. Throughout their ministry, the prophets were of being supported by God, of being God's mouthpiece.[44] They give testimony and explained their message in the situation in which they stood. They had irresistible impulse to proclaim the word they had heard and spoke in YHWH'S name as spokesperson of YHWH's mind and will.[45]

The mission of the prophets, therefore, is to speak on behalf of God in making people realized their way of life and bring to their knowledge about the way of God for them. They carry out their mission at the command and order of God. This, they often crowned with their blood. The prophets prophesied the message forcefully in order to convince the people and to return to God. Their spirituality is meant to animate the lives of the hearer; their

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42 Edesio Sanchez Cetina, "Joshua," in *The International Bible Commentary*, ed., William R. Farmer (Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, 2004) 600.

43 Leslie J. Hoppe, "Joshua," in *The Collegeville Pastoral Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, 497.

44 Armando J. Levoratti, "How to Interpret the Bible," in *The International Bible Commentary*, 17.

45 Armando J. Levoratti, "The Power of the Word of God," in *The International Bible Commentary*, ed., William R. Farmer (Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, 2004) 3.

main concern is the peoples' fidelity to the covenant.[46] Thus, the greatness of God's heralds consists in constantly dying to their word in order to communicate with total fidelity the Word of God, the word issuing not from them but the word coming to them.[47]

3.2 Mission in the New Testament

There is a clearer and more explicit understanding of the word "mission" in the New Testament of the Holy Bible. The word "sent" is always accompanied with a task to fulfil, which we call mission. The Angel Gabriel, the messenger of God was sent to Zechariah (Cf. Lk 1:19b) to announce the Good News about the birth of John the Baptist, the man sent by God (Cf. Jn 1:6), who will herald the coming of Jesus, the Messiah and who, in fact turned many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God (Cf. Lk 1:16). He was also sent to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin named Mary (Cf. Lk 1:26-27) with a message of Good News about the coming of Jesus, the Saviour, who is to be the salvation of all humankind and whose kingdom will have no end (Cf. Lk 1:33). Mary could not keep the Good News to herself, and went in haste to proclaim the Good News of redemption in the person of the Messiah, who is to be born of her (Cf. Lk 1:39). Likewise, every baptized person is called to this mission of proclaiming the message of salvation and to prepare the way of the Lord and make his paths straight (Cf. Mk 1:3b).

Mission is not peripheral in the New Testament. In the book of Acts, we see the Apostles at work, first as missionaries to their own people and later as ambassadors of Christ to the nations of the world. The rapid and far-flung spread of Christianity within a few decades is on the zeal and labours of the Apostles. We see an explicit command of

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[46] Cf. Bridget Diengdoh, "Spirituality of Prophets," Class Notes (Shillong: Ferrando Institute of Spirituality, 2013).

[47] Armando J. Levoratti, "How to Interpret the Bible," in *The International Bible Commentary*, 10.

Jesus to His disciples to go into all the world and proclaim the Good News of salvation (Cf. Mk 16:15). Therefore, it is very clear from the command of Jesus that mission is originated from the Father, the Son and the Spirit.

3.2.1 Mission of Jesus

Being sent by the Father into the world for the redemption of the world, Jesus explicitly mentioned his mission when he said, "I must proclaim the Good News of the kingdom of God, for I was sent for this purpose" (Cf. Lk 4:43; Mk 1:38), and that he came to give life in its fullness (Cf. Jn 10:10). The coming of Jesus into the world is for the sake of salvation of humankind offered in Christ himself (Cf. Jn 3:16-17). He came to seek out and save the lost (Cf. Lk 19:10). The motive behind this self-emptying is His love for the Father and for humanity. But the saddest part in the history of salvation is that his own people did not accept him when he came to them (Cf. Jn 1:11). As a result the mission of Christ is left to the Church to bring to completion. Therefore, the mission of the Church is only the continuation of the mission of Jesus Christ. Because of the fact that Jesus was 'sent' by the Father, He in turn 'sent forth' the Apostles to the whole world to proclaim the Good News of salvation.

3.2.2 Mission of Mary

Mary is associated with the mystery and history of salvation from the Annunciation of the Saviour to the accomplishment of salvation in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and the Pentecost event, the sending of the apostles on a mission to proclaim the same salvation in Jesus Christ in the power of the Spirit.[48] The role of Mary in the salvific plan of God was to bring forth Christ into the world and to announce that Jesus is the Son of God. Just

[48] John Esquerda-Bifet, "Mary and Evangelization" in *Following Christ in Mission: A Foundational Course in Missiology*, ed., Sebastian Karotemprel (Mumbai: Pauline Publications, 1995) 143.

as she was the first to receive the annunciation of the Saviour, she was also the first to communicate it to others.[49] The proclamation of the coming of the Saviour was so urgent that she could wait no longer and therefore, went with haste to a distant country of Judea (Cf. Lk 1:39).

For Mary, announcing the Gospel was an immediate task with no boundary to limit its value and purpose. This is what the Church inherited from Mary, who promptly carried out the work of evangelization, with haste and without frontier, under the influence of the Holy Spirit. With the Holy Spirit, Mary is always present in the midst of the people. She joined the disciples in praying for the coming of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:14) and thus made possible the missionary outburst which took place at Pentecost.[50] Jesus sent the Holy Spirit upon His disciples, together with Mary and from then on, they were sent out to proclaim the Good News of salvation to the whole world. The Church, like Mary is open to the salvific plan of God, faithful to the action of the Holy Spirit, contemplating the Word of God, sharing in the redemptive work of Christ, moving towards her eschatological encounter with God in glory.[51] Therefore, the missionary spirituality has a Marian dimension as seen in the ceaseless intercession for all the people, openness to the plan of God, fidelity to the Spirit, contemplation of the Word, and self-donation to the mystery of salvation.[52] In imitation of the footsteps of Mary, the "star of the new evangelization,"[53] the Church continues her journey of faith and hope,

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49 John Esquerda-Bifet, "Mary and Evangelization," in *Following Christ in Mission: A Foundational Course in Missiology*, 140.

50 *EG*, 284.

51 John Esquerda-Bifet, "Mary and Evangelization," in *Following Christ in Mission: A Foundational Course in Missiology*, 141-142.

52 Cf. John Esquerda-Bifet, "Mary and Evangelization," in *Following Christ in Mission: A Foundational Course in Missiology*, 143.

53 *EG*, n. 287.

while still making her way through to bring many souls to the knowledge of Christ, the salvation of all humankind.

3.2.3 Mission of the Apostles

Before ascending into heaven, Jesus commanded his disciples saying: "Go into all the world and proclaim the Good News to all creation" (Mk 16:15).With these words He committed to them a duty, a momentous and a holy charge, that was not to lapse with the death of the Apostles but would bind their successors, one after another, until the end of the world - as long, that is, as there remained on this earth men whom the truth might set free.[54] In fact, the Apostles are the men chosen by Jesus Christ to be with him and to be sent out to proclaim the message (Mk 3:13-14).

They therefore, like the prophets, stand between God and God's people, between God and history, between God and the community of faith. They were chosen by Jesus to follow Him during His lifetime on earth (Acts 1:21-22) and were witnesses of his resurrection (Acts 2:32; 10:39-41). Jesus sent them out on a mission to preach, to heal and to cast out demons (Mt 10:1-2; Lk 9:1-6; Mk 6:7-13). This mission was an extension of Jesus' own ministry as expressed in the saying: "Whoever welcomes you welcomes me" (Mt 10:40; Jn 13:20; Lk 10:16). Their witness to Jesus' teaching, and above all to his death and resurrection, was foundational for the Church.[55] The proclamation of the Good News was the mission of the apostles and the command of Jesus (Mt 10:7; Lk 9:2). Therefore, the mission of Jesus is obviously the mission of the Apostles because they were called upon to perform what was performed by Jesus in His ministry. And this is what the Church is called upon to carry out.

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54 *MI*, n. 1.

55 Armando J. Levoratti, "How to Interpret the Bible," in *The International Bible Commentary*, 17.

3.2.4 Mission of Paul

Paul is the greatest missionary ever lived in the history of the Church. It was Christ who commissioned him to be an apostle to the Gentiles (Acts 22:21). He was set apart for the mission to which the Lord called him (Acts 13:2) that is to make Christ known to the Gentile and rulers (Acts 9:15), and to proclaim Jesus as the Son of God and the Messiah (Acts 9:20, 22) and to proclaim the Gospel (Cf. 1Cor 9:16). This is practically what evangelization is and mission *ad gentes* in particular. The mission of Paul is also a call to a witnessing life which is to be experienced in the flesh (Cf. Acts 9:16) and in the spirit as well (Cf. Gal 4:19). Indeed, he established new Churches and tirelessly moved about to make Christ known to as many people as possible. Paul was deeply induced with zeal for the Gospel that he did not mine to undergo any amount of suffering and affliction only for the sake of the Gospel (Cf. 1Cor 9:23) and for the building up of the body of Christ.

4. Mission *ad gentes* in the Documents of the Church

From the apostolic times, the Church, following her sure instinct as regards her missionary vocation, proclaimed the Good News everywhere notwithstanding persecutions of all kinds. The zeal of her missionaries was unbounded. In every period she bounced back to her missionary dynamism after the initial setbacks. In fact, everything the Church does should flow from its missionary nature. In other words, when Christian life is taken seriously, mission is bound to become the normal expression of one's live faith.[56] So, the missionary journey of the Church can be understood from the Documents it brought forth, where the mission of the Church on evangelization is elaborately stated in a simple and practical terms. In fact, passing down the Christian faith is an essential

[56] J. Puthenpurakal, *Mission*, 5.

mission for the Church.[57] Missionary activity is therefore not the work of a designate few but is incumbent upon all the baptized.[58]

4.1 Documents of the Pre-Vatican Council

The documents of the Pre-Vatican Council are of great importance as it prepares the ground for other documents in the later years. It enables the succeeding Popes to make further reference in their apostolic writings and exhortations to the faithful of the Catholic Church, which indeed clearly reflect the ever increasing need of proclaiming the Gospel. To say, the mission of the Church is ever relevant, urgent and endless until all the people of the world become one flock under one shepherd (Jn 10:16b). In fact, it is the aim of the Mother Church to bring all people back to salvation in Christ. For this, the document urges all the missionaries to work and give themselves generously for the mission while the others should contribute to the best of their ability within their space and time.

4.1.1 *Maximum Illud*

The Apostolic Letter of Pope Benedict XV, on the Propagation of Faith throughout the World consisting of 42 articles, is issued on 30 November 1919 at Rome. It is considered as the first great mission document of the 20th century. It is written soon after the First World War (1914-1918), stating the need to revive the missions from the ruins of that terrible disaster.[59] It is address particularly to those in charge of the missions, on whose shoulder rests the responsibility for the propagation of faith, to the local clergy, to the missionaries and to all the Catholics. The mission of the Church, therefore, is the mission of all, the mission for all and to all.

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57 Benedict XVI, *Ecclesia in Medio Oriente,* Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on the Church in the Middle East: Communion and Witness, 14 September 2012 (Trivandrum: Carmel International Publishing House, 2012) n. 70.

58 Robert Schreiter, "Missions," in *Encyclopedia of Catholicism*, gen. ed., Richard P. McBrien (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1995) 875.

59 J. Puthenpurakal, *Mission,* 34.

The very first paragraph of the document recalls the missionary mandate of Jesus that says: "Go into the whole world and preach the Gospel to all creation" (Cf. Mk 16:15). With these words He committed to the disciples a duty, a momentous and a holy charge, that was not to lapse with the death of the Apostles but would bind their successors, one after another, until the end of the world, as long as there remained on this earth men whom the truth might set free. And ever since the ascension of the Lord Jesus, the duty committed to the Apostles by Him are never forgotten by the Church and never yet has she ceased to dispatch to every corner of the world her couriers of the doctrine he entrusted to her.[60]

It also stated that the responsibility of the propagation of faith and the Church's prospects of expansion lies heavily upon the shoulders of the Bishop.[61] Knowing that the work of evangelization is not an individual activity but essentially ecclesial,[62] they should interest themselves deeply in the work of their priests, and in the work, too, of all others who assist them in the fulfillment of their duty. They should use every means they have - speech, action, writing - to encourage and stimulate these aides of theirs to ever higher achievements. Every individual missionary in his territory must see that he looks on everything that concerns his subjects as something that concerns him personally.[63] Most of all, his primary concern is to expand and fully develop his mission, which has as its highest aim the eternal salvation of every person. In effect, he is not to rest secure and be complacent with the experience of winning many souls to Christ but should strive harder still and see to the spiritual nourishment of these souls and he must not let a single one of them slip away and perish. [64]

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60 Cf. *MI*, n. 1.
61 Cf. *MI*, n. 8.
62 Cf. *EN*, n. 60.
63 Cf. *MI*, n. 9.
64 Cf. *MI*, n. 11.

Another important point to take into account is the promotion and training of local candidates for the sacred ministry of proclaiming the Good News of Jesus to the world. For the involvement of the local clergy can be more effective and helpful for the people, especially during clashes or war because he is one with his people by birth, by nature, by his sympathies and his aspirations, is remarkably effective in appealing to their mentality and thus attracting them to the Faith. Far better than anyone else he knows the kind of argument they will listen to, and as a result, he often has easy access to places where a foreign priest would not be tolerated.[65] It is all the more profitable if they enter upon the spiritual leadership of their people.[66]

The document also urges the missionaries never to forget their divine tasks of bringing light to those who live in the shadow of death and to open the way to heaven for souls,[67] and that he/she is not working as an agent of his/her country, but as an ambassador of Christ. For Christ has commanded his disciples to "go into all the world to the whole creation" (Cf. Mk 16:15) to establish the Church. Therefore, a missionary who is bound to his/her place of origin only is not worthy of this noble task of the Church, is not worthy of being a Catholic Missionary,[68] for the missionary field of the Catholic Church is boundless and limitless because the religion of Jesus Christ is really Catholic and that no part of the world is excluded from it[69] and his conduct perfectly represents a faith that can easily be recognized by anyone watching him.[70]

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65 Cf. *MI*, n. 14.

66 Cf. *MI*, n. 15.

67 Cf. *MI*, n. 18.

68 Cf. *MI*, n. 20.

69 Pius XII, *Evangelii Praecones*, Encyclical Letter on Promotion of Catholic Missions, 2 June 1951, n. 5. available at http://www.vatican.va/holy father/pius xii/encyclicals/documents/hf p-xii enc 02061951 evangelii-praecones en.html

70 Cf. *MI*, n. 20.

The document makes it clear that the missionary's duty is not the extension of a human realm, but of Christ's; and that the goal is the acquisition of citizens for a heavenly-fatherland, and not for an earthly one.[71]

The document also urges all the Catholic faithful to contribute to the best of their ability and to assist the missionary effort of the Church for growth and expansion. It also suggests three general ways in which a Catholic can extend help and support to the Church such as prayer, fostering missionary vocation and lending economic help. Finally, it invites both the missionaries in the field and the faithful at home to meet the obligation of this task as they should for the quick recovery of the missions from the severe wounds and losses inflicted by the war and that in a short time will again show their old strength and vigour.[72] Thus, every baptized person is duty-bound to the growth of the Church.

4.1.2 *Rerum Ecclesiae*

The Encyclical of Pope Pius XI on Catholic Missions was published on 28 February 1926 at Rome. It contains 34 articles. Though it repeats several themes of the previous document, it is very rich in content.

It boldly declares that the only one and purpose of the existence of the Church is to develop the kingdom of Christ on earth and to make mankind participate in the effects of His saving redemption, and it would be a failure for anyone in his special duty if he does not strive by might and main to win over and to join to Christ all who are still without the fold.[73] It highlights the renewed missionary activity of the

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71 *MI*, n. 18.

72 *MI*, n. 41.

73 Cf. Pius XI, *Rerum Ecclesiae*, Encyclical Letter on Catholic Mission, n. 1, available at http:/www.va/holy father/pius xi/encyclicals/documents/hf p-xi enc 28021926 rerum-ecclesiae en.htm

Church after the exhortation of Pope Benedict XV *Maximum Illud* on the Propagation of the Catholic Faith throughout the World.

The two special objectives which ought to be aimed at in all missionary work are that those missionaries who are well trained in the different fields of knowledge be sent for missionary work to a vast regions which are still deprived of the civilizing influence of the Christian religion; and secondly, the faithful should be made to understand with what zeal, constancy in prayer and with what generousity they too must cooperate in a work which is so holy and fruitful.[74] The document states that in all their missionary endeavours, they should turn to the Lord of the harvest (Mt 9:38a) in prayer, to send forth labourers into his harvest (Mt 9:38b) and for the light of the Holy Spirit and for grace, lest their tireless effort and zealous services go for naught.[75] It is also important that our separated brethren be led back to the unity of the Church and that non-Catholics be convinced of and delivered from their errors.[76]

Another very important point for the spread of the Gospel is an increase in the number of catechists, who would be of help to the missionaries in their work especially by instructing and preparing catechumens for baptism[77] because no part of the mission shall be left to be evangelized at some future and remote date.[78] It is also the ardent aim and desire of the Church to bring the light of the Gospel to new races and to form new Christians; and to establish the Church and place it under its own native hierarchy.[79] Thus, the document tries to highlight the need to build up the native clergy[80] who would make the missionary work faster and effective;

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74 Cf. *RE*, n. 3.
75 Cf. *RE*, n.7.
76 *RE*, n. 23.
77 Cf. *RE*, n. 27.
78 Cf. *RE*, n. 29.
79 Cf. *EP*, n. 22.
80 Cf. *RE*, n. 19.

and in case of expulsion of foreign missionaries due to conflict or war, the native clergy will be there to carry the work of evangelization forward. And the missionaries who get involved in works of charity know only too well how much affection and goodwill of the heathen is gained for the Church through the care and the love they showed for the sick, the children and infants; for the human heart readily responds to charity and to kindness.[81] This paves the way for the propagation of faith.

Lastly, the document invites the missionaries to set up mission Churches, centers and schools for the benefit of the poorer sections of the society rather than the proud and the rich, for Christ came to bring Good News to the poor (Lk 4:18a) while we make no negligence of the rich and the better-off section of the society for both history and experience teach that when once the rulers of a people have been converted to Christianity, the common people follow closely in the footsteps of their leaders.[82]

4.1.3 *Evangelii Praecones*

Evangelii Praecones is the Encyclical of Pope Pius XII on Promotion of the Catholic Missions. It was given on 2 June 1951 at Rome, and published on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the Encyclical Letter *Rerum Ecclesiae* of Pius XI. It consists of 73 articles, and is mostly based on the evaluation, principles and method of the missionary activity of the missionaries of the Church in establishing the Kingdom of God throughout the whole world.

The document highlights the work which has been accomplished in the mission field, especially in the non-Christian dominated areas, and the consolation it has brought about in the life of the Church during the past 25 years. The number of the Catholic missions as well as missionaries has grown much to the joy of the Mother

81 Cf. *RE*, n. 30.
82 *RE*, n. 31.

Church. Yet, what still remains to be accomplished in this field calls for an enormous effort and innumerable labourers.[83] It observes that the person, who had been called by God to evangelize distant non-Christian lands, has received a very great and sublime vocation, and that his consecrated life is to the spreading of God's Kingdom even to the farthest end of the world, and that the Church should be loved with a still more ardent devotion than one's own country.[84] For more effectiveness in preaching the Gospel to foreign lands, they should be given sound knowledge of language in addition to spiritual an intellectual training, and should be sufficiently instructed also in the sciences of medicine, agriculture, ethnography, history, and geography[85] as these too can serve as means to propagate faith in Jesus Christ.

According to this document, the object of missionary activity is to bring the light of the Gospel to new races and to form new Christians, which means to establish the Church on sound foundations among non-Christian peoples.[86] It is not the aim of the Church to have domination over peoples or gaining of temporal dominion, but to bring supernatural light of faith to all and to promote the interests of civilization and culture.[87] And the laity, with a great heart and willing mind[88] should cooperate generously, earnestly and diligently in promoting the apostolate[89] of proclaiming the Good News and establishing the Church. The document is also in praise of the missionaries who devout their lives to the care of the sick, infirm and afflicted of every kind. These in fact are the fairest flowers of missionary endeavour which indeed proclaim the vision

83 *EP*, n. 16.
84 Cf. *EP*, n. 20.
85 Cf. *EP*, n. 21.
86 Cf. *EP*, n. 22.
87 Cf. *EP*, n. 23.
88 Cf. *EP*, n. 30.
89 Cf. *EP*, n. 37.

of the Divine Redeemer,[90] who went about proclaiming the Good News of the kingdom and curing every disease and every sickness (Mt 4:23). In fact, such works of charity are undoubtedly of the highest efficacy in preparing the souls of non-Christians and drawing them to the faith and to the practice of Christianity.[91]

Finally, the document paternally urges the missionaries to work in collaboration with their Bishop with zeal for the Church and for the salvation of souls, and if required, they should not hesitate to seek the help of other religious orders or even the laity for the spread of the faith.[92] Adaptation to the cultures of the place in missionary activity and imbue them with the principles of Christian life and morality, instead of doing away with their very old and highly developed culture[93] is necessary while propagating the Kingdom of Christ and bringing salvation to so many still outside the fold.[94] Like *Maximum Illud*, this document also urges every Catholic member to be of help to the missionaries by their offerings, by prayer and by fostering missionary vocations.[95] These exhortations clearly points out that the mission of the Church is the responsibility of every Catholic faithful and therefore should avail themselves to ensure new and ever greater progress for the missions.[96]

4.1.4 *Fidei Donum*

Fidei Donum is an Encyclical of Pope Pius XII on the present condition of the Catholic missions, especially in Africa. It was published on 21st April 1957 and it consists of 83 articles. It is

90 Cf. *EP*, n. 45.
91 *EP*, n. 46.
92 Cf. *EP*, n. 55.
93 Cf. *EP*, n. 60.
94 Cf. *EP*, n. 67.
95 Cf. *EP*, n. 71.
96 Cf. *EP*, n. 72.

directed to the whole Catholic world, stressing to the urgent need of the Church in Africa and thus come to the aid of the mission of the Church there in all the possible way.

It is through imparting the gift of faith to others that we render our gratitude to God, the Father.[97] And it was the recommendation of the Popes to the missionaries again and again to work more zealously with keener interest in the missionary apostolate and set the hearts of the faithful on fire.[98] The mission of the Church is vast and endless as it is not confined to certain regions or peoples only, but also affects those who dwell far beyond the borders.[99] The missionaries, the bearers of the Good News of Jesus Christ, with a fully and "truly Catholic hearts"[100] do not live for themselves alone but come to the help of the ailing members of the Church.[101]

In fact, the true mark of the Catholic character of the living Church is concern for the needs of the whole Church; and therefore, a man is no true member of the Church if he has no desire to see the Church take root and flourish in every land,[102] for the Church by its very nature is missionary[103] and embraces all people and is no stranger to any nation.[104] While on the other hand, she is helpless without the support and cooperation of her children; and therefore she never ceased to ask for a three-fold assistance from her children namely, prayers, material aid and the gift of themselves[105]

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97 Pius XII, *Fidei Donum,* Encyclical Letter on the Present Condition of the Catholic Missions, especially in Africa, 21 April 1957, n. 3, available at http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Pius12/P12FIDEI.HTM

98 Cf. *FD*, n. 4.

99 Cf. *FD*, n. 37.

100 *FD*, n. 47.

101 Cf. *FD*, n. 38.

102 Cf. *FD*, n. 44.

103 *AG*, n. 2.

104 Cf. *FD*, n. 46.

105 Cf. *FD*, n. 48.

for her missionary activities, especially in the responsive areas like Africa and Asia. The mission of the Church is no individual work but it is the joint responsibility of all, for a common goal. It also encourages the missionaries to persevere in the work they have begun, glorying in the fact that they serve the Church; and that at the same time, they should act and carry out their missionary activities in accordance with the promptings and inspiration of the Holy Spirit and be united in the bonds of brotherly love.[106]

4.1.5 *Princeps Pastorum*

This document is an encyclical of Pope John XXIII on the Missions, Native Clergy and the Lay Participation. It was published on 28 November 1959 and it consists of 58 articles.

The subject of this exhortation is based on the necessity and hopes of extending God's kingdom to many parts of the world where missionaries labour zealously, sparing no effort in order that new branches of the Church may grow and produce wholesome fruits;[107] and that all sheep are happily gathered in one fold under the leadership of one Shepherd.[108] The Church, on the one hand witnessed growth and prosperity; whereas on the other hand, the missionary activities are purpled with the blood of martyrs[109] which of course, did bear abundant fruits in due season as a reward of their toil and sacrifices for the spread of the Gospel, and the most noteworthy result is the fact that a local hierarchy and clergy have been increasingly developed in the mission areas.[110]

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106 Cf. *FD*, n. 80.

107 John XXIII, *Princeps Pastorum*, Encyclical Letter on the Missions, Native Clergy and Lay Participation, 28 November 1950, n. 4, available at http:// www.vatican.va /holy father/john xxiii/encyclicals/documents/hf j-xxiii enc 2811959 princeps en.html

108 *PP*, n. 5.

109 *EP*, n. 11.

110 Cf. *PP*, n. 7.

Yet, in spite of this growth, there can never be enough of clergy for the missionary work, and therefore, vocation to priesthood, especially native vocation, should be encouraged and fostered. The missionaries from their part should never foster an attitude of contempt or outright rejection of pagan teachings or cultures, but rather should complete and perfect them with the light of the Gospel[111] and that they learn to embrace all people in accordance with the teachings of the Catholic Church,[112] and not look for power and glory, except the glory of God and the spread of His Kingdom. It would indeed be a sad thing if a missionary thinks of his country on earth rather than of his fatherland in heaven, and be excessively concerned with increasing the power and the glory of his own nation above all other nations.[113]

The document also exhorted the laity to enter the apostolic field and give their active cooperation to the ecclesiastical hierarchy so as to enable their bishops and their clergy to carry out their tasks more easily and with greater efficacy.[114] It is not enough to increase in number alone but what is important is that the converts are firm in their faith and determination and become a new man to be able to produce wholesome spiritual fruits[115] by living out the Gospel values. It is also necessary that her work of salvation be carried out equally by all[116] to the farthest end of the world.

Conclusion

The missionary undertakings of the Church defines her very nature. "The pilgrim Church is missionary by her very nature, since it is from the mission of the Son and the mission of the Holy Spirit that she draws her origin, in accordance with the decree of God the

111 Cf. *PP*, n. 19.
112 Cf. *PP*, n. 26.
113 Cf. *PP*, n. 24.
114 Cf. *PP*, n. 28.
115 Cf. *PP*, n. 29.
116 *PP*, n. 28.

Father."[117] Mission is at the heart of the Church's life and so every baptised Christian is called to collaborate with its mission. The Church remains committed to the command of Jesus (Cf. Mk 16:15) and makes every effort to revitalize her life through her creative undertakings, bringing the Good News to all people.

[117] *Ad Gentes*, n.2



"Many are the plans in a person's heart, but it is the LORD's purpose that prevails." (Prov. 19:21)

I remain thankful to God for giving me life and blessing me with parents who nurtured my faith. Having offered my life to God, I trust in His grace and love. I believe that God's purpose prevails in my life. Today, I see the opportunities that I received to grow in Catholic faith and my vocation to religious life as God's preferential love for me. The upbringing I had in the village where I was born and my early education in a Catholic surrounding laid the foundation of my life. I still remember attending the Holy Mass and '*Jingkyrkhu*' (Benediction) on Sundays and special occasions, which gave me the most sublime moment of worshiping the Lord before the Holy Eucharist.

Faith lead us to understand that some of the greatest blessings in this world come from God's power working in us. He takes delight in us as we correspond to His graces and blessings and we become His channels of blessings to those around us. Since early years, I had a natural liking to join the religious life and I kept praying to God until I received the grace.

My experience during 2001- 2004 at Nonghyllam, a place located at West Khasi Hills district of Meghalaya, bordering Garo Hills and Bangladesh remains still vivid in my mind. My appointment to that place was done immediately after the Juniorate programme of ten months at Hatigaon, Guwahati. I was still in the initial years of my religious life and was given the apostolate of missionary evangelization. Though at first it gave me a lot of anxieties and

worries, I was able to experience the power of God working in my life. The life in the new mission gave me many wonderful chances to discover the power of God in the Word of God and Eucharist. Being with the people taught me many lessons. Though inexperienced in preaching ministry, I gathered courage and strength from the Lord in prayer. I took the chance to preach the Word of God to people in the villages I visited. Activities during the village tour comprised of family visits, catechetical instruction, prayer and proclamation of the Word. We carried Blessed Sacrament wherever we went and His presence instilled in us faith, confidence and courage. Believing in the living presence of God in the Blessed Sacrament, we thought of drawing people to God by organising prayer and worship sessions before the Blessed Sacrament on all the possible days in the evenings. I took the chance to speak to the people after the adoration and prayers. I did not know how to speak, but asked the Lord in the Eucharist to speak through me. I also asked the assistance of our Blessed Mother to be at my side and guide me. The Lord made me His instrument to make known His compassionate, healing love. There were several instances of miracles, which the Lord worked through us in the lives of people. A number of them experienced power of the living God and they were cured from sicknesses.

Once, in a village in Shallang Parish, the wife of the village headman (a pegan) was on her sick bed for three years. When we, Sr. Maria Goretti Marak and me visited her, in feeble voice she whispered, "If I get alright I will become a Christian, leaving the pegan gods." While listening to her, I made a silent prayer within me that she may receive the grace to know Jesus and accept Him as the true Saviour. Just like Jacob demanded the Angel not to leave him unless he give him the blessing (Gen 32: 27), I too remained persistent with my prayer for her healing and conversion. Indeed, the Lord answered my prayer. On the following morning, there were already signs of improvements and she began to

experience relief. In a month's time, she was fully recovered that she herself came to meet us. Seeing her, I exclaimed and praised God's name.

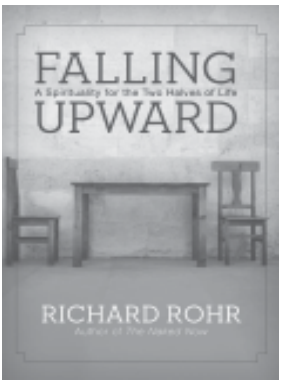
While engaging in the parish mission at Mawkhar, Shillong, I had several opportunities to listen to married couples and young people. In the silence of my heart, I entrusted each of them to our Blessed Mother who guided me to became a catholic and a religious. On one occasion, a lady who was found pregnant was told by her doctor that the child she conceived is abnormal and advised her to abort it. She came to meet me and explained to me the matter. After listening to her, I led her to the Chapel and prayed along with her. I surrendered her to the Eucharistic Lord and asked the intercession of Mother Mary. My faith in the Lord gave me hope and I thanked Him in anticipation for extending His healing power over her. I assured her of my prayer and advised her to keep trusting in the Lord and praying to Him. The power of God did miracle in her life that she had a normal delivery and the child was in perfect health. The experience she had filled her with unspeakable joy that it strengthened her faith and that of others.

In one village, because of the misunderstanding among themselves the church was closed. Sr. Aidahun Suting and I went there during our village tour. We were prepared to stay on with the people there, catechising and instructing them. Just like the programmes we had in other places, we decided to have adoration to the Blessed Sacrament in their church after visiting the families. The news was communicated to people and invited the participation of all. There weren't many to take part in the adoration, but we kept our hope in the Lord and prayed for all people. Gradually, within a year, the situation began to change and people started to come back to the church. Once again, there was fervour and enthusiasm among the members of the church and everyone found joy in worshiping the Lord in unison.

The journeys that we undertook to reach different villages were at times tiresome and they were even threatened by the wild animals and insurgency groups. We had to travel long distances on foot, facing dreaded, blood sucking leeches and other creatures. In fear and trembling we walked through to reach the mission stations. In all moments, the constant presence of the Eucharistic Lord gave us consolation and ease. Though some of the journeys we made were tiresome and troublesome, at reaching the village and meeting the people filled us with joy and contentment.

Sr. Justina Kalwing MSMHC





Richard Rohr in *Falling Upward* gives direction to a fresh understanding about the journey of life. This 199 page book proposes a spirituality for life that enables in exploring the mysteries of life, especially the timeless wisdom lies behind human frailty and sufferings. Speaking about the two halves of life, Rohr enumerates the task of each. From the experiences of the past years, he realises that most people continue to remain in the first half of life, establishing their personal identity, home, relationships, friends, community, security and building a platform for life. They focus on accomplishing great things in life and take pride in their achievement. They fail to understand that the joy they receive from those are actually fleeting. They build up their own comfort zones and tend to get attached to it, hopping to live on forever. The shift from the first half of life to the second happens when one moves out of the familiar to the unfamiliar. This shift takes place only with such happenings that may be marked as tormenting or ruining. In this regard, Richard considers losing, failing, falling, sin and the suffering that comes from those experiences as necessary and even good part of the human journey.

In his view, those who have fallen, failed, or "gone down" are the only ones who understand "up." It is natural for anyone to think of the second half of life as largely about getting old, dealing with health issues, and letting go of life, but this book orients the opposite.

According to Rohr, what looks like falling down can largely be experienced as "falling upward." This reflection points out the richness one gains at the loss. He tells that failures, disappointments and breakdowns in life are the stepping stones to the spiritual joys that build the second half of life. It's the second half of life that offers a new perspective of life, opening up the means to the grasp of a fuller self.

Speaking about the shadow self, which is often not revealed, Rohr tells, "It takes effort and life-long practice to look for, find, and embrace what we dismiss and what we disdain." He underlines the importance of facing our own contradictions, and making friends with our own mistakes and failings as they bring greater depth and meaning in life.

The second half of life is further elucidated in the final chapter to give an overall understanding of the goal in life. Richard expounds, "Most of us tend to think of the second half of life as largely about getting old, dealing with health issues and letting go of our physical life, but the whole thesis of this book is exactly the opposite. What looks like falling can largely be experienced as falling upward and onward into a broader and deeper world, where the soul has found its fullness, is finally connected to the whole, and lives inside the Big Picture."

The author of the book, Richard Rohr is a Franciscan priest and author of several books. Acclaimed as one of the most popular spirituality authors and speakers in the world, he is an ecumenical teacher bearing witness to the universal awakening within Christian mysticism and the Perennial Tradition. He is the founder of the Center for Action and Contemplation (CAC) in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Sr. Shiji James MSMHC