

Editorial

MISSION AND EVANGELIZATION

Mission is integral to Christian existence. "The pilgrim Church is missionary by her very nature."¹ From its very inception, the Church has considered evangelization its basic mission: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations..." (Mt 28:19). However, this very command has been understood, interpreted and put into practice differently in different times. The demands of the mission and its implications have undergone drastic changes from time to time. The present era is not an exception to this. The Church's understanding of the "mission command" and its approaches to evangelization have been crucial in its relationships with other religions and cultures.

While reflecting on "Mission and Evangelization", we would like to invite your attention to two important occurrences, which have prompted us to select this theme. First, the Syro-Malabar Church has declared 2011-2012 as the Mission Year to commemorate the Golden Jubilee of the inception of the Chanda Mission. Second, the universal Church is in the proximate preparation for the XIII General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops (7-28 Oct, 2012) on "The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith."

John Poovatholil, a veteran missionary, describes the origin and development of the Chanda diocese, a story of effective evangelization in our times. He succeeds to situate the Chanda mission in the context of the developments in missiology.

Archbishop Thomas Menampampil, presenting an overview of the history of evangelization in Asia, invites us to understand the needs of the people, to respond to their yearnings and aspirations, and thus to become icons of God's love for the people. Asia does not declare the death of God, but there is a lingering thirst for God; it is a God-

¹ Second Vatican Council, *Ad Gentes*, no. 2.

hungry world; this is the opportune moment of evangelization and new evangelization – this optimistic note runs through Archbishop Menampampil’s scholarly analysis of “Gospel in Asia.” In his article, “Mission, Missionaries, Missiologies,” Isaac Padinjarekuttu examines the case for Christian mission in the religiously pluralistic and globalized world, its possible forms and its relevance today. He critically analyses some concepts and theories which were prominent in missionary praxis through the centuries. According to him, the success of Christian mission in the past was due to the ability to communicate with the other and argues that dialogue is the only means of evangelization in a pluralistic world.

Answering the question, “How did the early Christians speak of Jesus in their evangelism?,” mainly based on the Acts of the Apostles, Christoph W. Stenschke shows how evangelisation today can learn from the early Church’s presentation of Jesus. Paulachan Kochappilly points out the need of rediscovering joy, energy and enthusiasm in evangelization and mission, upholding the love for the culture of the land, the love for the faith in Christ, and the love for liturgical worship. Drawing inspiration from the tradition and liturgical celebration of St Thomas Christians, he underlines that joy in Christ is the key to evangelization. Pointing out that evangelization has been framed within globalization from the very start, Rose B. Calabretta underscores that both evangelization and globalization require a real and universal starting-point. For her, it is the innate dignity of every human person, based on the Biblical truth that every person is created in the image of God. Thus, according to her, the starting point of globalization and evangelization is mystical anthropology, as elucidated by the Spanish thinker Fernando Rielo.

Theodore Mascarehnas attempts to apply the concept of “Evangelization of cultures” to the mission of the Church today. This has to take into consideration the cultures in their entirety as well as their plurality, in their present form as well as their structure as patrimonies and in the reality of their constant evolution. He argues that the Gospel has the power to form, transform and purify Cultures, and hence Evangelization of Cultures is a duty of the Church. The richness of Subhash Anand’s article “Faith Formation in a Multi-Religious Context,” lies not only in the theoretical basis that he has built for an interreligious formation and a critical appraisal of the current attitudes and approaches, but also in the constructive suggestions for concrete and practical applications. Pauline Chakkalalal argues that in a multi-religious and pluri-cultural society like India, dialogue and partnership are integral dimensions

of evangelisation. She invites the Church to follow the path of Jesus who acknowledged and appreciated the faith found in others. In his article, Jojo M. Fung calls for the need of “crossing over”, that is, crossing over the Church’s own borders to encounter the cultural and religious other, which is the most challenging way forward for evangelization. Moreover, he finds the awakening of the liberative power of the poor as integral to this “crossing over”. Julian Saldanha says that it is well known that the life and teaching of Christ have exerted an enormous influence on Hindus in India. As an example, in his article “A Hindu Encounters Christ,” he presents Mangesh Padgaonkar, a well-known Marathi writer, who has recently published his own Marathi translation of the four Gospels, prefaced with his insightful reflections (in Marathi) on each of the Gospels.

“New Evangelization and World Transformation” by Cyriac Padapurackal focuses on the role of the laity in new evangelization. He emphasizes that the multi-religious context of the Indian Church demands a wider world view and a new evangelical outlook.

The evangelizing mission of the Church continues, taking new forms, learning from history and responding to new contexts and challenges. We believe that our mission is to work for the reign of God where God is the Father of all and everyone is a child of God, and hence everyone belongs to the same family. Dialogue that respects the identity and uniqueness of the other, and shares the compassionate love of the Father, revealed in Jesus, is the evangelizing mission that we need to take forward.

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