

## **ART AND CELEBRATION OF FAITH**

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### **Introduction: Importance of Artistic Creativity**

The experience and the expression of faith in the history of the Church have always been seeking embodiment in different cultural forms. Culture is a specifically human good which is at the disposal of the Spirit who proceeds in history manifesting in myriads of forms the marvels of the divine mystery. Culture reveals, realizes and celebrates the Spirit. As all spiritual experiences, the experience of faith has to culminate in celebration. Hence culture has been a concern of the Church in the proclamation of faith from the earliest centuries onwards. In today's world, as the Church encounters new cultures, an increased awareness of the cultural reality challenges the tasks of faith – proclamation, witness and celebration.

Celebration of faith in different cultures, in different times and in different places has to maintain an unbroken continuity, while responding to the newness of the diverse contexts. The firm conviction underlying the Church's encounter with the world cultures is that it is the same universal human spirit that is active in all cultures of all times. Hence the final goal of "inculturation" is communion and the way to reach this goal is seeking and discovering the strands of the spirit underlying them.

Art is one of the luminous expressions of culture and it is an effective medium through which the human spirit expresses, realizes and communicates itself. The history of art is, therefore, said to be the history of the spirit, both human and divine. Hence the language of art is the language of the spirit. The significance of art is to be seen

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primarily in the very activity of art itself, which is of a creative nature. The products of art derive their meaning from the inspiration and the creative involvement of the artist or the community which generates and owns that particular tradition of art.

It is necessary to overcome a reductionist tendency which limits the value of art to the value of its products, their functional value. In the limited understanding, artworks, even in the religious context, are not more than means of mass communication, illustration and decoration. Only when art is practiced to celebrate faith with the community's creative participation, its theological significance comes to light.

### **Functional View of Art**

The functional view of art has a long history of practice in the Church. Pope Gregory the Great's oft quoted statement on the educative role of art comes from the seventh century: "Painting can do for the illiterate what writing does for those who can read." He makes this comment in a private letter referring to the less descriptive kind of popular image-signs found in the sixth century funerary paintings or decorations of small baptisteries or various articles designed for religious purposes on which religious subjects were represented.<sup>1</sup> Later in the middle ages when big cathedrals were built the image language became more and more descriptive and illustrative. The paintings on the walls and ceilings of medieval churches were considered as Bible for the poor and the illiterate. The ordinary people of the time, who could neither read nor write, benefitted from the language of images. The teachings of the Bible were communicated to them visually through pictorial depictions. Thus art served as an effective catechetical tool in the Church. According to St. Thomas of Aquinas, the greatest theologian of the time, the sacred images in the churches serve a three-fold purpose: 1) for the instruction of the uneducated; 2) for illustrating and remembering the mystery of the incarnation and 3) for awakening the passion of devotion, which is kindled more effectively by viewing rather than by hearing.<sup>2</sup>

Even today this approach to art is quite common. Biblical characters, events and narrations are represented in different art forms like music, dance, drama, painting and sculpture. Such artworks are valued for the content they represent and communicate in a

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<sup>1</sup>A. Grabar, *Christian Iconography: A Study of Its Origins*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980, 93.

<sup>2</sup>*The New Encyclopaedia Britannica, Macropaedia Volume 4*, s.v. "Christianity," Chicago: Helen Hemingway Benton, 1973-1974, 503.

convincing manner. They can inspire the audience, educate and enlighten them depending on the actuality of the theme and the effectiveness of its presentation. Nowadays when we speak of the role of art in evangelization we consider art as a substitute for verbal communication, where art's role is primarily "illustration" of biblical or saintly characters, events, narrations or ideas.

### **Art for Subjective Realization**

In this discussion we concern ourselves with a more serious approach to art and its implication in the celebration of faith than the usual objective and functional approach in which art has only an "instrumental" function. We would see art not objectively from the point of view *artworks* produced for some purposes, but from the point of view the subjects namely, artists, patrons and spectators who make, appreciate and enjoy art for their fulfilment as human beings. In other words, our attention is on the significance of the process of a creative activity and the psychological and spiritual changes that are effected in the persons who participate in it, rather than on the products of that activity and their use.

When we speak of art and the values of art today we need to make a distinction between traditional religious art and secular art. Originally there was no such distinction in art; art was always considered to be sacred and the practice of art a ritual performance. Art became secular in the West after the Renaissance in the fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries while in the East art retained its traditional and religious characteristics to a great extent. Secular art neglected the subjective and spiritual aspects of creativity for the sake of aesthetic (perceptual) and material interests in artworks. But the modern and contemporary tendencies in art show some new thought-provoking developments revealing the underlying spirit and the permanent values of art.

If we look at the developments in art in the secular world, we can find a transition from objective considerations to subjective concerns. In the history of art the period of Romanticism in the 19<sup>th</sup> century is an important turning point in this direction. Romanticism brought about a shift of emphasis in the concept and practice of art from the objective considerations of meaning, perfection and beauty of artworks to the subjective experiences of the artist, his feelings and emotions, his psychology, in making things. Till that time the only acknowledged type of art was imitative and representational in which the artists either tried to copy the natural objects of beauty or tried to represent the ideal models in concrete forms. Thus we have a long history of imitative or representational art. The whole attention

was focussed on the works of the artist rather than on the artist himself.

The Romantic Movement began to take interest in art in terms of the subject, namely the person of the artist, probing into the spiritual, perceptual and psychological questions related to artistic creativity and the process of making artworks. What is happening in the artist when he/she does creative works? Attention to the dynamics of the creative mind opened the way to different experiments like Impressionism, Expressionism, Abstract Art, Cubism, Dadaism, etc., exploring new possibilities in art.

### **Contemporary Art: Transition from Objects to Relationships**

What we find strikingly interesting in these experiments is the transformation of "image" effected by the way of using colours, materials and lines. In modern and contemporary artworks image undergoes different changes like abstraction, distortion and disintegration. In many artworks the image even disappears altogether. The value of art in such works is then not in the "imaginal" content that can be directly perceived and recognized. They are valued for their concerns which go beyond their "imaginal" definitions.

If we look at the modern and contemporary art scene we find different experiments in style, content, form and procedure. The drastic and revolutionary changes in the concept of art and its practice ushered in by Romanticism and the influences of developments in science and technology have apparently shattered all the prevailing concepts, definitions and norms of art practice. They reflect a sort of restlessness in the artist to go beyond materiality while working with matter. There are attempts to set the goals of artistic operation beyond the production of artworks. In this respect modern and contemporary art are rediscovering certain values of the traditional and religious milieu of art.

We perceive in these developments a return and a re-appropriation of the age-old, traditional values of human creativity and art. These values have deep roots in the matrix of religious experience and in the insatiable human yearning for the Infinite. They have found their powerful expressions in the religious culture and traditions of the world such as worship, rituals, folklore and hymns. The most important characteristics shared by the world of contemporary art and the milieu of ancient traditional art are experiences of subjectivity, participation and existential interrelatedness of realities in the world.

### Theological Significance of Art

Paul Tillich, reflecting on modern and contemporary artworks, considers that even artworks which are apparently secular and which do not directly deal with religious themes can be religious in intent and nature.<sup>3</sup> Here he makes a distinction between religion in the broader sense and religion in the narrower sense.<sup>4</sup> In the broader sense religion is ultimately concerned about one's own being, about one's self and one's world, about its meaning and its estrangement and its finitude. Tillich finds the religious significance of art in its relation to the "ultimate reality" which goes beyond the narrower sense of religion. It is evident in the style of art rather than in the subject matter. Tillich characterizes the religious style as prophetic; it reminds us of the prophets' concern about the plight of human existence and God's involvement in it, as we see in the prophetic tradition of the Old Testament.

Till recently our theology with its penchant for conceptual clarity and scientific exactness could not admit the theological potential of art. Theology entertained an objective and superficial understanding of art, in which art served the purposes of decoration and illustration. But deep down in the Church's consciousness there is a different understanding of art. Vatican II has already rediscovered and recognized the power of art as a theological language. According to the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes* "the knowledge of God can be better revealed and the preaching of the Gospel can become clearer to the mind" by the work of the artists.<sup>5</sup> Fr. Marie Dominique Chenu has rightly observed that the history of theology, in order to be complete, must consider works of art as genuine "sources" of theology.<sup>6</sup>

### Art and Worship

Deeper roots of art are found in the liturgy of the Church. The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium* speaks about the artists' noble ministry as their works reflect in some way the infinite beauty of God and raise people's minds to him.<sup>7</sup> If the significance of art is understood properly it won't be an exaggeration to say that in liturgy art attains its highest expression and its fullest

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<sup>3</sup>Cf. Paul Tillich, "Art and Ultimate Reality" in *Art, Creativity, and the Sacred*, ed. Diane Apostolos-Cappadona, New York: Crossroad, 1985, 219-235; Cf. also Doug Adams, "Theological Expressions Through Visual Art Forms," *ibid.*, 311-318.

<sup>4</sup>In the narrower sense religion is constituted by a set of symbols, ritual actions, doctrinal formulations and divine beings.

<sup>5</sup>Cf. Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 62.

<sup>6</sup>M.-D Chenu, *La teologia nel XII secolo*, Milan: Jaca Books, 1992, 9.

<sup>7</sup>Cf. Vatican II, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 112

meaning. Art enjoys there an autonomy, which it nowhere else has. In liturgy the Church's worship becomes art and the Church's art becomes worship. The Orthodox theologian Christos Yannaras writes how art expresses the reality of ecclesial communion in worship:

We understand this when we look at the organic identification of art with worship in the context of the eucharist. The worship of the Church is art: it is the work of a *communal* use of material reality, building and shaping the earth's material so as to render it capable of serving life, that existential fullness of life which is communion and relationship. And the Church's art is worship; it is not merely decorative, but manifests and highlights the "rational" potentialities of matter, the harmony of praise formed by the "words" or inner principles of created things when they are serving the eucharistic event of communion. The "true life" of the eucharist operates and is celebrated within the given realities of nature.<sup>8</sup>

The liturgical time and the liturgical space and their articulation through architecture, painting and music are essential elements for the operation of the Eucharist as bread and wine. They mediate between our experience of salvation and the function of eating and drinking. Thus art belongs to the very nature of the worshipping act; its role is not considered marginal and merely decorative. This can be verified easily in the worship of oriental Christian traditions.

How can we explain the "artistic" nature of worship? What the Church achieves or realizes in liturgical worship is the union of spirit and matter. The mystery of the eucharistic bread and wine is expressive of this union. Along with the eucharistic elements the entire world, the material reality is transfigured and its "rational" potentialities are actualised "artistically" in hymns, praises and images, so that it can participate in the universal communion and celebration. Christian worship underlines the fact that our relationship with God is not merely intellectual; it is not moral in the legalistic sense. It is characteristically "artistic," since it involves the use of matter, the world.

### **Art and Proclamation of the Good News**

The Church's activity of evangelization has to take its promptings from the dynamics of worship<sup>9</sup> because evangelical witness and proclamation follow worship as its effect and consequence, as an exuberant overflow of the Spirit, characterized by joy in fellowship. True worship is "unitive," "communitive" and "communicative." It

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<sup>8</sup>Christos Yannaras, *The Freedom of Morality*, trans. Elizabeth Briere, NY: Vladimir Seminary Press, 1996, 232.

<sup>9</sup>Cf. Paulachan Kochappilly, *Evangelization as Celebration*, Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2002, 39-45.

effects the union of the divine and the human, the spiritual and the material; it leads to fellowship, participation and communion in the world and it culminates in the joyful proclamation of the Good News.

The “unitive” aspect of Christian worship is found in the presence and the action of Christ who in himself unites the human realities with the divine. Liturgy actualizes the Christ-event as a tangible experience. The “communitive” aspect of worship is visible in the formation of the ecclesial community that participates in the Christ-event and experiences fellowship in celebration. Celebration is a comprehensive experience of remembrance, reintegration and communion. The “communicative” aspect of worship consists in the authentic “outflow” of the enthusiasm of the celebrating ecclesial community expressed in praise, proclamation and witness of life in service.<sup>10</sup>

St. John writes in his first letter how the spiritual-physical experience leads to fellowship and evangelical witness: “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life – the life was made manifest, and we saw it, and testify to it, and proclaim to you the eternal life which was made manifest to us – that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you may have fellowship with us and our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. And we are writing this that our joy may be complete” (1Jn 1:1-4). As it is evident from the letter of John, the authenticity of proclamation consists in bearing witness to an intense experience which is spiritual and at the same time tangible. Such an immediate experience is possible only in the context of celebration and worship.

A reductive understanding of evangelical witness can be the result of the elimination of the “artistic” from proclamation and ministry in mission. A legal and juridical and “textual” approach to worship, ignoring its creative, artistic and “contextual” aspects may also jeopardize its effectiveness of communication. We cannot think of an “artless” mission because artless mission lacks enthusiasm as well as its “transmission,” and “outflow” through tangible expressions. Mission needs images which remind, celebrate and witness the experiences of union, communion and communication.

### **Image as a Theological Term**

The work of the artist is to create images using the medium of matter. What is the nature of image in art? In the history of art we find a

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<sup>10</sup>Dominic Jala, *Liturgy and Mission*, Roma: C.L.V. – Edizioni Liturgiche, 1987, 333-338.

number of experiments in which the concept of image has undergone revolutionary changes. Every new experiment has compelled us to revise and reformulate our previous understanding. Thus in the classical art we find depictions of natural or ideal forms which are easily recognizable, while in modern and contemporary art we find the absence of recognizable images. In visual arts abstraction, distortion, dissolution and even disappearance of images is a common feature in today's art and it obviously challenges our perceptual sensibility when some artworks are shown to us. It is easy to identify familiar images in the works of artists like Michelangelo and Grünewald, but not in the works of Kandinsky and Rothko whose works are abstract and "imageless". The conceptual artists of today claim that they do not give any value to the end products of artistic operation, but the operation itself.

The challenge in the "dynamic" concept of image is that it is to be grasped not as an object but as an action. This awareness is evident in the contemporary attempts of artists to return to the elementary modes of matter and methods of artistic operation. From this point of view the emerging notion of image in contemporary art coincides with the traditional concept of religious images.

In traditional religious art even anthropomorphic images are not expected to function in the biological sense; they are made according to ideal proportions and hence need not be optically plausible. Ananda Coomaraswamy, an expert in traditional art and culture writes: "The parts of the icon are not organically related, for it is not contemplated that they should function biologically, but ideally related, being the required component parts of a given type of activity stated in terms of a visible and tangible medium. This does not mean that the various parts are not related, or that the whole is not a unity, but that the relation is mental rather than functional."<sup>11</sup> Thus even an anthropomorphic image is a *yantra*, that is, geometrical representation of deity or a *mantra*, that is, auditory representation of a deity. It appeals to the mind rather than to the senses. Hence it is meant for the contemplative perception of the devotees who pursue the path of self-integration and self-realization.

### **Image and Contemplative Reintegration**

The human need for conversion, recollection and integration presupposes an existential human situation of inversion, dispersion and disintegration, which are evident in the experience of existential

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<sup>11</sup>Ananda Coomaraswamy, *The Transformation of Nature in Art*, New York: Dover Publications, 29.



polarities. This human condition is explained in terms of Fall, Original Sin, *Maya*, *Avidya*, Desire etc. In religious traditions images stand for self-integration and self-realization of the devotees through a process of recollection of what is dispersed and forgotten or resurrection and correction of what is inverted or fallen. Images function as “reminders” of the “original” harmony, unity and integrity to the consciousness of the devotees and help them to transcend “duality” or existential polarity. This “original” experience of realizing one’s true self is basis of one’s authenticity, originality and creativity. Consequently, the process of human self-realization with all its implications is bound up with the process of “image-making.”

The dynamic concept of image can be related to the “image of God” mentioned in the creation accounts of the Book of Genesis. According to biblical scholars God’s image can be known only in action, in which his power and glory are manifested.<sup>12</sup> An “objectified” and “static” image is nothing but an idol. Hence the true image of God is to be seen in God’s great deeds of creation and salvation in history. It is the shining forth of the glory of God in the cosmos which manifests in conditioned space-time as intelligible order, harmony and rhythmic revolutions and resonances.

Cosmos is a field throbbing with creative energy revealing new forms and new configurations of matter in view of an ever fuller manifestation of God’s image in Jesus Christ. St. Paul sees this as the groaning of creation with the agonising pain of childbirth (Rom 8:22). The Pauline vision of a dynamic universe geared to the final glorification of the Christ-Image is developed by the Fathers, especially Irenaeus in his theory of recapitulation.<sup>13</sup>

### **Image as Space for Celebration**

The notion of image in art today has evolved from representations of similitude to subjective experience of space-time realized in objective configurations of relationships. The purpose of art in this sense is to create a new space-time of experience in the spectators. Artworks function not merely as museum objects to be looked upon and appreciated, but as “energy fields” in which the spectators participate.

Attempts to induce space-time experience through colour effects are found in the works of contemporary artists like Barnett Newman and

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<sup>12</sup> Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1-11, A Commentary*, trans. John J. Seullion, Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1984, 155.

<sup>13</sup> See D. Unger, “Christ’s Role in the Universe according to St. Irenaeus,” *Franciscan Studies* 26 (1945) 3-20.

Mark Rothko.<sup>14</sup> These artists manage to deprive the painting of its concrete, objective character. Communicating signs and symbols are entirely excluded. The reality of secular and transcendental experience merges into a third quality – a painted image. What they strive for is to make the experience of the painter coincide with the experience of the viewer.

Reflection outside the painting would be replaced by direct participation within the painting's own space. And the painting would contain no references to anything that had gone before. It would be its own, self-contained message. Instead of working with the remainders of space, they would work with the entire space.<sup>15</sup>

Experiments related to participated spatial experience are done by contemporary artists in "land art," "installations," "happenings" and so on.

Space, which is inseparable from time, becomes a meaningful subjective experience when we perceive it as a dynamic reality. It is a field of energy or *mandala* where the world of matter is manifested in interrelatedness. It is a creative space for communion and celebration. In traditional cultures and religions there are practices of creating sacred space-time awareness through ritual performances, music, drum beats and community dance movements. They are occasions of renewal and reintegration for the community. Thus the sacred space stands for participation, remembrance, communion and celebration, which renew, recreate and re-found the community. Spiritual communities cannot be raised legally and institutionally. They can be formed and sustained only in a space of celebration which is created by art.

### **Image as Medium of Divine Revelation and Human Realization**

The notion of image implies also the idea of revelation. Revelation is the act of making truth present here and now, making it historical. Hence image is understood as the "incarnation" or the embodiment of truth, by which it is effectively present and accessible in the world. As truth is revealed in matter, it becomes an image. God's mode of self-communication in creation and salvation is "imaginal" by its very nature. God is said to have created the first human beings according to his own "image" and placed them in the midst of his creatures whereby he communicated himself, his power and his wisdom. Here image stands for the revelatory act of God in the entire universe of which human beings are at the centre or at the summit. In

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<sup>14</sup>Cf. Ingo F. Walther ed., *Art of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century: vol. 1, Painting* by Karl Ruhrberg, Köln: Taschen, 2005, 289-292.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 290.

salvation God reveals himself through his Son Jesus Christ who thus becomes the “central point of reference for an understanding of the enigma of human existence, the created world and God himself.”<sup>16</sup> He is the “perfect image” of the invisible Father on whose face the Father’s glory is reflected.

This prime epiphany of “God who is Mystery” is both an encouragement and a challenge to Christians, also at the level of artistic creativity. From it has come a flowering of beauty which has drawn its sap precisely from the mystery of Incarnation. In becoming man, the Son of God has introduced into human history *all the evangelical wealth of the true and the good*, and with this he has also unveiled a *new dimension of beauty*, of which the Gospel message is filled to the brim.<sup>17</sup>

About the transfiguring and liberating beauty of the Risen Lord Macarius the Great speaks in the following words: “The soul which has been fully illumined by the unspeakable beauty of the glory shining on the countenance of Christ overflows with the Holy Spirit... it is all eye, all light, all countenance.”<sup>18</sup>

Image is the most appropriate medium for communication because it is a material-spiritual entity and unites in itself both material and spiritual realms. As a result of its dual nature it is effectively spiritual and meaningfully material. Truth, in order to make its revelation effective, must assume matter and incarnate in tangible forms. It is through a process of contextualization that truth becomes efficient to be present and relevant. The revelation of truth is at the same time the transformation of matter, in which matter receives new contents and significances. We perceive the lustre of truth in the transfiguration of matter. The enlightenment of truth in the image is, thus, coincident with the experience of beauty.

Creation of images as the means of communication is precisely the task of art. From the revelatory nature of image it follows that every image by its nature is communicative and every communication is necessarily “artistic.” The truth communicated “artistically” is not logical and conceptual but experiential and perceptual. Artistic images are, therefore, effective witnesses of truth perceived, celebrated and realized.

Here the words of Pope John Paul II are noteworthy. In his *Letter to Artists* the Holy Father highlighted the Church’s need for art in the following words:

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<sup>16</sup>John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Fides et Ratio*, September 14, 1998, 80, AAS 91 (1999) 67.

<sup>17</sup>John Paul II, *Letter of His Holiness Pope John Paul II to Artists* (April 4, 1999) 5.

<sup>18</sup> Macarius the Great, *Homily 1,2; Patrologia Graeca* 34, 451; Cf. John Paul II, *Letter of His Holiness Pope John Paul II to Artists* (April 4, 1999) 6.

In order to communicate the message entrusted to her by Christ, the Church needs art. Art must make perceptible, and as far as possible attractive, the world of the spirit, of the invisible, of God.... The Church has need especially of those who can do this on the literary and figurative level, using the endless possibilities of images and their symbolic force. Christ himself made extensive use of images in his preaching, fully in keeping with his willingness to become, in the Incarnation, the icon of the unseen God.<sup>19</sup>

### **Art and the Church's Encounter with Cultures**

The progressive movement of the Church towards an ever-growing and universal realization of the Kingdom of God is essentially a creative process which involves transformation both inwardly and outwardly. Hence the Church's encounter with cultures should not be limited to a kind of superficial adaptation and incorporation of some external cultural elements. Being endowed with a creative mission, the Church has to confront the world with a fine sensitivity to the diversity and variety of the world cultures, traditions, religions and patterns of social life. The effort to transform the world is a creative endeavour in the sense that the Church has to participate in the process and get transformed through greater realizations in each particular socio-cultural encounter. It implies the effectiveness of the Church in the world as the sign and sacrament of the Kingdom of God.

Since the transformation of the world envisaged by Christain creativity is not merely a physical transformation through material productivity and development, it must be directed towards the evolution of consciousness and self-realization of the Church through meaningful self-expressions.<sup>20</sup> Art and symbolism play an important role in this process of self-awareness, self-affirmation and self-actualization of the Church in the world. They are powerful instruments in the hands of the Spirit by which the path of Tradition is laid from the dawn of history till the last moments of its consummation. We can trace the deepest levels of human consciousness in the artistic and symbolic traditions of every culture. Unless and until Christian faith finds expression in the artistic and symbolic language of the culture of a people, it cannot claim to have entered the consciousness of the people with a transforming effect in their lives.

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<sup>19</sup>John Paul II, *Letter of His Holiness Pope John Paul II to Artists* (April 4, 1999) 12.

<sup>20</sup>S. Elavathingal, *Inculturation and Christian Art – An Indian Perspective*, Rome: Urbanian University Press, 1990, 313.

The role of theology is to make the word of God uttered in history increasingly clearer to every passing generation as humanity moves to the future. God has spoken to the world not only through audible words but also through visible images. Taking the cue from the method of divine communication, theology has to develop its language not only for verbal and conceptual understanding and communication, but also for an “imaginal” and visual experience and realization. It is at the level of the artistic and symbolic language that human consciousness touches its core and experiences its inner depth where there is an unfailing openness to mystery and a boundless desire for truth. Deep down in every culture there is an impulse towards a fulfilment and hence every culture has an intrinsic capacity to receive divine Revelation.<sup>21</sup> While encountering the cultures the Church has to be led by this positive and optimistic view of all cultures which in one way or other are flames of the Spirit.

### Conclusion

In the foregoing exposition our attempt was to analyse the intrinsic values of art which are manifested and grasped primarily in artistic action and secondarily in artworks. From this understanding of art emerges a notion of image which is characteristically dynamic. Image is not an objective, static entity but a field of energy. It locates a *mandala*, a field of creative energy, a meeting point of spirit and matter where matter is transfigured to become meaningful and spirit is embodied to become perceptible. The presence of the image is experienced not in its objective isolation but in the inter-relatedness of reality in its milieu of conditioned space-time. Thus image is an occasion for participation, communion and celebration. Image is revelatory. It mediates between spirit and matter, meaning and expression. It is an authentic witness of truth capable of communicating truth attractively and effectively.

These “imaginal” values of art are expressed in the act of worship. Worship effects the experiences of union, communion and communication expressing them through material means. Hence the act of worship is essentially “artistic.” The purpose of worship is to build up an ecclesial community which is capable of celebrating, witnessing and proclaiming its experience. Thus the evangelizing mission is organically related to communal worship and celebration as an outflow of the enthusiasm generated by the Spirit. Art is, then, not merely a means for evangelization through Christian witness and proclamation, but its dynamics and method. Only in the artistic sense can evangelization become authentic, contextual and celebrative.

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<sup>21</sup>See John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, 71.