

NEW EVANGELIZATION AND WORLD TRANSFORMATION

The Unique Role of Laity in Indian Society Today

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The resurrection of Jesus Christ was the inauguration of a new humanity and it has set a new goal for history. The Church is to realize this goal of history, the transformation of humankind and creation of new world, through her revitalized and integral evangelization. This involves building up a new civilization of peace, solidarity and harmony. Vatican II states:

Christ's redemptive work, while essentially concerned with the salvation of men, includes also the renewal of the whole temporal order. Hence the mission of the Church is not only to bring the message and grace of Christ to men but also to penetrate and perfect the temporal order with the spirit of the Gospel.¹

Pope Paul VI states: "The Church has the duty to proclaim the liberation of millions of human beings ..., the duty of assisting the birth of liberation, of giving witness to it, on ensuing that it is complete."² Pope John Paul II compliments: "Authentic human development must be rooted in an ever deeper evangelization."³

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¹Vatican II, the Decree, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, no. 5.

²Paul VI, The Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no. 31.

³John Paul II, Encyclical Letter, *Redemptoris Missio*, no. 58.

The *New-Evangelization*, a theme introduced by the late Pope John Paul II and a task project launched by the present Pope Benedict XVI,⁴ calls for an earnest and renewed effort for the transformation of the society and renewal of the temporal order. It is the laity who exercises a special and unique role in the evangelization in the midst of the world. Vatican II had already affirmed the unique position of laity in this field. It states:

In fulfilling this mission of the Church, the Christian laity exercises their apostolate both in the Church and in the world, in both the spiritual and the temporal orders. These orders, although distinct, are so connected in the singular plan of God that He Himself intends to raise up the whole world again in Christ and to make it a new creation, initially on earth and completely on the last day. In both orders the layman, being simultaneously a believer and a citizen, should be continuously led by the same Christian conscience.⁵

Pope Paul VI states: "Their own field of evangelizing activity is the vast and complicated world of politics, society and economics, but also the world of culture, of the sciences and the arts, of international life, of the mass media."⁶

1. The Church for *Lokasamgraha*

The kingdom of God is the core of Jesus' proclamation. Its values are love, freedom, fellowship, justice and equality. It projects a new vision of society. The Church has to work for this new society. She has the responsibility for the welfare of the whole world (*Loka Samgraha*).⁷ The Church has to promote the interconnectedness of the whole creation. The Good News encompasses all creation (Cf. Mk 16:15).

The Pastoral Constitution, *Gaudium et Spes* states:

The dynamism of the Church will not permit it to neglect anything that is of vital interest to life in the world, the unity of the human family, a just economic and political world-order, equal opportunity

⁴Cf. Preface of *Lineamenta*, Synod of Bishops, XIII Ordinary General Assembly, Trivandrum: Carmel International Publishing House, 2011, 8-9. Shortened to *Lineamenta*.

⁵ *Aposolicam Actuositatem*, no. 5.

⁶ *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no. 70.

⁷Cf. F.X. D'Sa, "Salt of the Earth, and Light of the World," in Rocha Rosario and K. Pandicattu, ed., *Dreams and Visions*, Pune, 2002, 111-112. The *Rigvedic* concept of *Satsng*h (assembly in friendship and good will) mentioned in *Rgveda* 10, 191. 2-4; and the *Bhagavat Gita* concept of *Dharmasamsthapana* (3, 20-25) are related to *Loka Samgraha*. Cf. I. Vempeny, "God's Kingdom vis-à-vis World Family," in Thomas D'Sa, ed., *The Church in India in the Emerging Third Millennium*, Bangalore: N.B.C.L.C., 2005, 678-679.

for native peoples as also for women all over the world, peace initiatives, crisis management, dialogue of cultures etc.⁸

Church, as the continuation of Christ, is the *Lumen Gentium*; hence, she is the agent of hope, peace and liberation in this world of hopelessness and oppression, of empowerment in the areas of fears and despair that shackle many in this modern world. Word of God is certainly a transforming dynamism. But it must be lived and witnessed in the society. Christians should manifest themselves as a catalyst of spiritual dynamism in this world of indifference. This community has to cooperate with other religions in imparting this spiritual outlook towards the world. Let Christian life go beyond the religiosity in the sanctuary and show its dynamism in the street and market place working for justice and peace. A genuine Christian world-view and an ecological spirituality are to be central to new-evangelization.⁹

2. Leadership of the Laity in the Society

The laity is the Church's dynamic presence in the world (Cf. Mt 13:38). The 'world' of Indian Christian is characterized by poverty, exploitation and marginalization.¹⁰ In the midst of this bleak reality the vitality of the laity should instil hope among all members of the society, a hope for a transformation of the present situation to a "new haven and new earth" (Rev 21:1). Since the precise vocation of the laity is in the temporal order they should be guided and prompted to work in areas such as politics, economy, trade unions, mass media and professional life.¹¹ According to Pope Paul VI, "This enables the Church to become a catalyst and corrective force working towards a just society, the kingdom of God on Earth."¹²

Discerning the signs of the times and responding to it in the context of their life-situation is an important task for the laity. K.T. Sebastian states: "If the laity can function as a corrective force, as a catalyst in various professions that will be the most splendid thing the Church can do for the country."¹³ If the laity, through their integrity of life,

⁸Vatican II, the pastoral Constitution, *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 63.

⁹Cf. I. Padinjarekuttu, "A Church in the World: Vision, Critique and Hope," in R. Rosario and K. Pandicattu, ed., *Dreams and Visions*, Pune, 2002, 14-15.

¹⁰Cf. S. Arulsamy, "Urgency of Promoting Lay Leadership in Emerging India," in Thomas D'Sa, ed., *The Church in India in the Emerging Third Millennium*, Bangalore: N.B.C.L.C., 2005, 386.

¹¹Cf. Vatican II, Dogmatic Constitution, *Lumen Gentium* No. 31. Cf. also S. Arulsamy, "Urgency of Promoting Lay Leadership," 386.

¹²*Evangelium Nunciandi*, no. 70.

¹³Cf. K.T. Sebastian, *The Era of Lay People*, Bombay, 1998, 71.

honesty in dealing and dedication in service, can work as leaven in the society it would make a tangible change in the world and pave the way for a new world order and the establishment of the 'kingdom of God' even outside the visible bond of the Church. In the present world scenario, it is the urgent and opportune time for the laity to involve in all issues of the society in a Christian way.

3. Promotion of Human Dignity

In the present consumerist and globalized world the human person is considered as a commodity and his/her dignity is much devalued as an object of pleasure or as a tool for gaining position, success or profit. So many factors in the present society have become a threat to the dignity of human persons. Vatican II and various papal documents have definitely condemned this trend and have defended the dignity, freedom and status of human persons, whoever they may be.¹⁴ In this context Church has a serious obligation to strive for protecting and defending the human dignity. Dignity is essentially related to freedom of the individual.¹⁵ As continuing the work of Jesus, Church has to work for the integral liberation and human dignity.¹⁶

In the present context in India, there is still the curse of caste system and the accursed gender discrimination.¹⁷ Hence a radical healing is required in Christian community to establish dignity of persons as Jesus has shown in his life and as Vatican II has taught. Only then the community can be an effective agent for the social transformation in the world.

4. Renewal of the Temporal Order

Men and women have an obligation to realize and appreciate the goodness and beauty of God reflected through human life and the array of creatures of this earth. Optimism about human life and esteem for the world order are a homage human beings can render to the creator. God placed human beings just in the middle of his creatures with a precept to constantly perfect, restore and renew it. It was the mission of Jesus to redeem and save the world from the

¹⁴Cf. *Lumen Gentium*, no. 28; *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 43; *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, no. 2.

¹⁵Cf. M. Alummoottil, "Vatican II, Priestly Ministry and Human Promotion," in *Aikya Sameeksha*, 4, 1 (March, 2007) 51.

¹⁶Cf. M. Alummoottil, Vatican II: "Priestly Ministry," 53.

¹⁷Most unfortunately the cast system is rampant even in the Christian community, where the universal brotherhood is proclaimed from the housetops and the sinfulness of caste discrimination is a fundamental dogma. There is also the evil of gender discrimination to great extent.

clutches of sin and a true follower of Jesus has to continue this mission in the world. This is a constant struggle because the influence of evil is still in humans and its repercussions are still in nature. This marring of nature has to be remedied (1Cor 15:28).¹⁸ John Paul II states: "But in particular the lay faithful are called to restore to creation all its original value."¹⁹ Lay people, individually and jointly should work for the restoration of the temporal order and make it increasingly perfect. Temporal order consists in, according to the Decree, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*,

The good things of life and the prosperity of the family, culture, economic matters, the arts and professions, the laws of the political community, international relations, and other matters of this kind, as well as their development and progress, not only aid in the attainment of man's ultimate goal but also possess their own intrinsic value.²⁰

People are tempted to place undue trust in scientific and technical achievements. This has led them to a worship of temporal idols and gradually to become slaves of them rather than being masters. This leads to the ruin of the dignity of the persons and even of the destruction of the nature. The growing consumerist attitude is heading towards a confused society. In this context the Christian faithful have a serious duty, as Vatican II suggests, "to take on themselves as their distinctive task this renewal of the temporal order. ... They should act in the domain in a direct way and in their own specific manner."²¹ Christians should be the prime agents of the renewal of social order. This is to be achieved by avoiding all contempt or belittling of the secular order, but really respecting its principles; because, these are part of God's design and so they are good and necessary (Cf. Gen 1:31). Vatican II states: "The laity must take up the renewal of the temporal order as their own special obligation. Led by the light of the Gospel and the mind of the Church and motivated by Christian charity, they must act directly and in a definite way in the temporal sphere."²²

5. Creation of Just Social Order

Every man and woman is a social being and so many social factors influence their peaceful co-existence in the big family of humans. The most important of these social factors is the social order based on

¹⁸Cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation, *Christifideles Laici*, no. 14.

¹⁹*Christifideles Laici*, no. 14.

²⁰*Apostolicam Actuositatem*, no.7.

²¹*Apostolicam Actuositatem*, no.7.

²²*Apostolicam Actuositatem*, no.7

justice. Pope Benedict XVI states: "The aim of a just social order is to guarantee to each person, according to the principle of subsidiarity, his share of the community's goods."²³ Establishment of a just social order is the fundamental role of the state. But as Christians we have to be aware of the social situations and must respond to the social environment in which we live.²⁴ Christians should raise a 'critical voice' in the social, political and economic spheres. If this critical voice comes officially from the Church it may evoke negative repercussions; but if it is heard from a joint effort of Christians and well-meaning people from the society it will have powerful force to control the state forcing it to fulfil its obligations.²⁵ The lay people in the Church have a special mission to work for the just ordering of the society by taking part in public life in a personal way. It is their direct apostolate. It is not an option. They have to cooperate with other citizens in the society in a unique way by witnessing to truth, justice and charity.²⁶

6. Charity and Just Social Order

There is a wide criticism against Church in India for encouraging her members to do charitable activities. Certain ideologies teach and propagate that charity will only perpetuate injustice in a context of oppression and exploitation.²⁷ The protagonists of Marxism declared that "poor need justice not charity."²⁸ Regarding this criticism Pope Benedict XVI says: "There is admittedly some truth to this argument, but also much that is mistaken."²⁹ Pope continues to argue that charity would be always necessary even in the most just society. There cannot be a social order where service of love can be totally eliminated as long as human nature remains the same. There will be suffering always where empathy and care would be necessary; there would be loneliness where concern and 'being with' would be indispensable and there would be situations of material needs where a sharing mind would be required. Any sublime welfare state would not be able to provide 'tender loving care' and personal concern which are most radically needed for humans with mind and spirit.

²³Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter, *Deus Caritas Est*, no. 28.

²⁴Cf. Thampu Valson, "Responsible Citizenship towards Social Transformation," in *Christian Mind Series*, II, 11 (January, 2006) 10.

²⁵Cf. A. Wilfred, "Asia and Social Teachings of the Church," in *Vidya Jyoyhi*, 71, 7 (2007) 495.

²⁶Cf. *Deus Caritas Est*, no. 29.

²⁷Cf. A. Kalliath, "Praxis of Caritas - Justice, An Asian Reading of *Deus Caritas Est*," *Word & Worship*, 39, 3 (2006) 200.

²⁸Cf. *Deus Caritas Est*, no. 26.

²⁹*Deus Caritas Est*, no. 26.

The basic needs of mind and spirit cannot be totally satisfied with any qualified bureaucracy, which is the operating mechanism of the political state. Only 'love' enkindled by faith can refresh the mind and care for the spirit which is far more important than pure material helps.³⁰

7. Politics and Lay Leadership

The secular order including power, authority and political system are part of God's design. It is the duty of the Christian to liven up and animate the whole system to make them consonant with God's design.³¹

7.1. State Governance and the Church's Involvement

Building a just social and civil society is an essential task of each individual. As a political prerogative, this cannot be the Church's direct responsibility. But the Church has an obligation to offer, through the cleansing of reason³² and through ethical formation, her own definite direction to identify the areas of social justice and realizing them politically. But the Church has no power over the state and she does not impose her belief-system and the life-style proper to her faith.³³ Yet the Church cannot close her eyes and keep away from fighting for justice.³⁴ Indian ethos is made up of a holistic view of life where religion and public life are so interlinked. Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of the Nation, once said "I can say without the slightest hesitation and yet in all humility, that those, who say that religion has nothing to do with politics, do not know what religion means."³⁵ As true justice cannot be achieved without sacrifice and service of love, there is the need of spiritual energy to energize and awaken people to fight for justice and here the role of the Church is conspicuous. She is called to bear witness to Christ by taking a prophetic stand against political and economic corruptions. She is to combat sins of every kind especially when they are institutional and social.³⁶

7.2. Political Leadership

Genuine political leadership can be exercised by Christians through participation and dialogue in the civil field. Their active involvement

³⁰*Deus Caritas Est*, no. 28.

³¹Cf. J. Puthenveetil, *Priesthood, the Baptized and the Ordained*, Vol. I (New Delhi, 2006) 102.

³²Cf. *Deus Caritas Est*, no. 28.

³³*Deus Caritas Est*, no. 28.

³⁴Cf. B. Gali, "Leadership of the Church in India Today" in Thomas D'Sa ed., *The Church in India in the Emerging Third Millennium*, Bangalore: N.B.C.L.C., 2005, 325-326.

³⁵M. Gandhi, *My Experiments with Truth*, Ahmedabad, 1948, 615. Cf. also, S. Arulsamy, "Urgency of Promoting Lay Leadership," 387.

³⁶Cf. B. Gali, "Leadership of the Church," 326.

in the civil society can transform even the democratic system; it can contribute much in the struggle for the dignity and rights of persons and communities. The lay faithful can give a definite contribution in this field by actively cooperating with other members of the society in a just and responsible way. John Paul II refers to it: "... the lay faithful are never to relinquish their participation in public life, that is, in the many different economic, social, legislative, administrative and cultural areas, which are intended to promote organically and institutionally the common good."³⁷

Pope Benedict XVI states that when Christians are engaged in the struggles in fighting social evils like, fundamentalism, terrorism, war, poverty and discrimination and also trying to safeguard human life from conception to natural death and for the promotion of the family and education, it is not for their personal achievement or to fulfil a mere religious obligation but for the good of the whole society and to fulfil the responsibility of citizen from a Christian perspective.³⁸ Their voice should echo in public especially in print and electronic media. Their value-based efforts may conscientise the public and empower them to fight against injustice.³⁹ These are really the expressions and realizations of the prophetic role due to every Christian.⁴⁰

7.3. Withdrawal Syndrome in Indian Politics

Church in India has made a yeoman service in education and health care and in al-round welfare of India but she has not made her presence felt in the political field and has made a culpable disregard in the political arena. She is not yet reckoned as a powerful force in the field of national politics.⁴¹ J. Gorantla & A. Thumma has the following view in this issue. "The reason for this may be minority complex, institutionalization, ghetto mentality, exclusivist culture and the fear of losing external aid."⁴² Recent atrocities and persecutions against Christians and minorities in India have proven without doubt that the absence of Christian political leadership costs much. This negligence adversely affected the struggles for human rights and minority rights. These developments stirred the Christian

³⁷*Christifidelis Laici*, no. 42.

³⁸Cf. Benedict XVI, "Church and State: Together for the Good of All," in *L'Osservatore Romano*, 50, (13 December, 2006) 5.

³⁹Cf. *Lineamenta*, no. 6.

⁴⁰Cf. A. Wilfred, "Asia and Social Teachings of the Church," 493.

⁴¹Cf. S. Arulsamy, "Urgency of Promoting Lay Leadership," 378.

⁴²J. Gorantla & A. Thumma, "Dalit Christians in the Third Millennium," in Thomas D'Sa, ed. *The Church in India in the Emerging Third Millennium*, Bangalore: N.B.C.L.C., 2005, 157.

leaders of different denominations to be more involved in elections held recently.

7.4. Conscientization and Empowerment

Political dimension of the apostolate of the Church is of great importance today in India. The political empowerment of Dalits and Christian communities is the need of the day. This consists in enlightenment, empowerment and mobilization. These should lead to “political awareness, political analysis and political action.”⁴³ Only the Church can infuse certain ‘kingdom values’ like love, justice, truth, service and peace to the political arena.⁴⁴ Pastors have to conscientize all Christians to preeminently behave as responsible citizens in all fields of social life. They should exercise the franchise responsibly and without fail and urge people for the same. All Christians are to be made aware of the power of politics today and of the political trends in the country. Honest lay people are to be encouraged and empowered to come to the political forefront and to hold on to principles of justice, peace and honesty even in the face of all odds and threats.⁴⁵ Now there is sufficient ambience for the laity to involve in democratic institutions like Village Panchayat, Block Panchayath and Jilla Panchayath.⁴⁶ Lay men and women, well formed in Christian values, should be prompted and supported by Church leadership to contest in elections at the above levels. Such people representatives can do a lot for the good of the society at grass-root level.

7.5. Electoral Participation

In the present political scenario in India the Church has serious responsibility to mould an effective political system to thwart the increasing vandalism in politics in all States in our country. Electoral politics is now controlled by money and muscle power. Political parties have turned up to be shrewd agencies of making money and power for themselves and their children. The politicians have no shame to buy votes and for horse-trading after the elections. Just rights of the weaker sections like women and minorities for their due seats in assembly and parliamentary elections are simply denied. The

⁴³Cf. J. Gorantla & A. Thumma, “Dalit Christians,” 158.

⁴⁴Cf. *Deus Caritas Est*, no. 28.

⁴⁵Cf. J. Gorantla & A. Thumma, “Dalit Christians,” 158.

⁴⁶Cf. S. Arulsamy, “Urgency of Promoting Lay Leadership,” 387. Village Panchayath, Block Panchayath and Jilla Panchayath are local governing bodies in villages, regions and districts respectively. They consist of Committees of members directly elected by the people.

Catholics in India should join with other Christians, other minorities, Dalits, Adivasis and other subalterns to build up strong pressure groups to bring about social justice and strengthen secular democracy, and if needed to be a powerful vote bank.⁴⁷

7.6. Apprehensions

In the Indian context, serious Christians have a genuine apprehension about active involvement in the present system of politics. It is because of the degradation of the value system in the political field. The power-politics, administrative corruption, manipulation in the electoral system and many other vices have crept into the core of the present-day political career in India; and unfortunately, they are branded as normal and necessary for political existence. The above mentioned negative factors remain as glaring threats for well-meaning civilians. These negative elements are, in fact, only prejudices because this situation is not beyond redemption. The above seamy side of politics actually stresses the urgency for active involvement of genuine Christians in Indian politics. In this context the words of John Paul II are very pertinent.

Charges of careerism, idolatry of power, egoism and corruption that are oftentimes directed at persons in government, parliaments, the ruling classes, or political parties, as well as the common opinion that participating in politics is an absolute moral danger, does not in the least justify either scepticism or an absence on the part of Christians in public life.⁴⁸

Fathers of the Vatican II extol and encourage all those who do meritorious service by dedicating themselves to the public good of the state and take up heavy tasks for the well being of the people.⁴⁹ Those involved in social reforms and political services are often victims of thorough criticism. But the spirit of sincere service and due competence and efficiency will wash away all criticisms and such services will be appreciated, accepted and acknowledged by all in the long run.⁵⁰

8. The Church and Environmental Concern

God created men and women as the crown of creation and he entrusted them with the care of the earth (Gen 2, 15). Human beings were vested with a serious obligation of protecting and developing

⁴⁷Cf. J. Gorantla & A. Thumma, "Dalit Christians," 159.

⁴⁸*Christifidelis Laici*, no. 42.

⁴⁹Cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 75.

⁵⁰Cf. *Christifidelis Laici*, no. 42.

the entire creation of God. This obligation is laid upon every individual till the end of nature.⁵¹ Pope John Paul II states: "Fulfilment of these obligations supposes openness to a spiritual and ethical perspective capable of overcoming selfish attitudes and lifestyles which lead to the depletion of natural resources."⁵² The dominion granted to human beings is not an absolute one.⁵³ There is no freedom to "use and misuse" or to dispose of things as one pleases.⁵⁴ There is a limitation imposed by the Creator symbolized by the prohibition "not to eat of the fruit of the tree" (Gen 2, 16-17). This indicates that in our relation to natural things we are bound both by biological laws and moral laws.⁵⁵

Today's consumerism is directly connected to eco-system. "In his desire to have and enjoy rather than to be and to grow, man consumes the resources of the earth and his own life in an excessive and disordered way."⁵⁶ As a consequence there is the senseless destruction of the natural environment in a disproportional way. Human persons, being too aware of his power to transform, even to 'create' the world, through his own design, presume that they can make arbitrary use of the earth. In this competitive and consumerist society this arbitrary use becomes a prey to a kind of craze and this goes beyond all proportion. Selfishness renders him deaf to the needs of the earth and the initial order of things God has settled with nature. This "ends up in provoking a rebellion on the part of nature."⁵⁷ Man has become aware of this imprudent exploitation of nature and the risk behind it. He has also become aware of the fact that he is going to be the first victim of the degradation of his ill-fated habitat.⁵⁸

In this precarious context every Christian has got a serious responsibility, certainly an apostolate, towards the environment to preserve the original beauty and order in nature. The urgency is much more than any time in the past; and Christians have far more responsibility than others because they only have the revealed concept of the integrity, purpose and the future destiny of nature. This responsibility is more on the lay Christians who are industrialists, business entrepreneurs, agriculturists and scientists

⁵¹Cf. *Lineamenta*, no. 21, 73.

⁵²John Paul II, The Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Ecclesia in America*, no. 25.

⁵³Cf. *Ecclesia in America*, no. 25. Cf. also CCC, 2415.

⁵⁴Cf. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter, *Evangelium Vitae*, no. 42.

⁵⁵*Evangelium Vitae*, no. 42.

⁵⁶John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Centissimus Annus*, no. 37.

⁵⁷*Centissimus Annus*, no. 37.

⁵⁸Paul VI, Apostolic Letter, *Octogesima Adveniens*, (May, 1971) no. 21.

than on the pastors. The international organizations like the U.N.O and the authorities of various countries have made stipulations and guidelines for the preservation of the ecosystem but they are by themselves not sufficient. John Paul II states: "Placing human well-being at the centre of concern for the environment is actually the surest way of safeguarding creation."⁵⁹

The issue of ecology is of special relevance to Christians of India. In the past few decades, consumerist attitude has been growing fast among a good number of people including the Christians especially in the South. Owing to the inflow of western funds a good number of comparatively poor families have become suddenly rich and this sudden jump in the financial strata pushed them towards lavish lifestyles like comfortable life, procuring luxurious consumable items, lavishly spending on expensive house buildings and grandiose celebrations.⁶⁰ This leads to a generalizing of a life-style imposing also upon the have-nots. The poor people are forced to follow this pattern. The rich in their craze for more wealth and the poor to cope up with the new life-style both want to make money by easy methods. This is leading to a cruel exploitation of natural resources⁶¹ immoral trafficking, use of pesticides, and exploitation of women and children. The wide practice of unnatural family planning methods, growing number of abortions and suicides even among the Christians are alarming and disturbing. Unless lay people are properly instructed and motivated towards the practice of true ecological values the evangelizing efforts of the Church in India would be counter-productive.

Conclusion

This land is characterized by its social evils like poverty, exploitation and caste and gender discrimination. Besides these there is a threatening situation of religious fundamentalism, terrorism and political instability. In spite of the Church's great achievements in educational and health-care services and consequent influences, the social morale is at low ebb. These make the Church reflect on the pastoral efficacy during the past two millennia.

⁵⁹John Paul II, World Day of Peace Message, Jan. 1, 1999, no.10. Cf. Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *The Social Agenda, A Collection of Magisterial Texts*, Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2000, 171-172.

⁶⁰Declaration of the Kerala Catholic Bishops' Council held at P.O.C Cochin from 7th December, 2009 as news-report in *Deepika* (daily, Kottayam edition) 340, 123 (13th December 2009) 1.

⁶¹There is popular uprising against the 'sand maphia' rock cuttings, soil cutting etc.

Pope John Paul II has remarked that the third millennium is the period of laity. The prime task of new-evangelization, proposed by the present Pope, Benedict XVI, is anchored on the apostolate of the lay faithful. It focuses in a special way on the transformation of the present world characterized by confusion, stress and loss of hope. Only the lay faithful, who are part and parcel of the society, can be the catalyst of this transformation. Hence the Church takes it her prime duty to empower the laity to be active evangelizers in the society where they move and work.

The multi-religious context of the Indian Church demands from every Christian and from every parish community a wider world-view and a new evangelical outlook. The Christian life as well as the pastoral ministry is not to be restricted to the spiritual exercises and social actions. It should envelop also the fond dreams of Jesus for the establishment of the "Kingdom of God" on this earth. The New Evangelization invites every Christian and community to realize the dreams of Christ. His designs can be realized only when the followers become creatively involved as 'light and salt' in the society they live.