

**FORMATION IN VIEW OF EVANGELIZATION:
A Call to Contemplation, Compassion, and Celebration**

Paulachan Kochappilly

Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram, Bangalore, India

ABSTRACT

God promised Abraham land, progeny, and His presence. But his descendants are now rapidly becoming landless, childless, and godless. This situation makes new evangelisation or re-evangelisation of his descendants the need of the hour. Contemplation, compassion, and celebration are constituent components of Christian life. In the Church, consecrated religious life, being considered as a sign of the Kingdom of God to come, a consistent advancement in these three components is all the more important. The contemplation of the Mystery of Christ will help one to conform to Christ and carry out his mission according to His will. Compassion is the highest level of love coupled with forgiveness. Celebration is the foundation, focus, and force of community life. The consecrated religious in the Church are known for their celebration. The proper and fitting celebration of the Mystery of the Eucharist can be path-breaking and path-finding for genuine transformation, for celebration leads people to commitment and to the consolidation of the community.

Introduction

Jesus told his disciples, "I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete" (Jn 15:11). The sharing of Jesus reveals joy as the essence of evangelisation. Joy is the beginning, the middle, and the end of evangelisation.

Happiness pervaded and permeated the ministry of Jesus. The voice came from heaven announcing, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased" (Mk 1:11). It is the epiphany of Jesus in the river Jordan, as the current of ever-flowing joy and contentment. The voice from heaven summarises the consciousness that Jesus had of His identity. This enthusiasm moved Jesus to proclaim, "See, I have come to do your will" (Heb 10:9). At the close of the Beatitudes, Jesus sums up the spirit of the life of his disciples and the essence of evangelisation, "Rejoice and be glad" (Mt 5:12). Joy is the melody and the rhythm of the music of evangelisation. Saint Paul takes up the basic trait of Christian joy and exhorts, "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice" (Phil 4:4). In the same vein of joy, Saint John in his first letter, emphasises, "We are writing these things so that our joy may be complete" (1Jn 1:4). John Paul II reiterates the importance of sharing joy, "All who believe in Christ should feel, as an integral part of their faith, an apostolic concern to pass on to others its light and joy" (*Redemptoris Missio* = RM 40). In short, *sharing joy and for the fullness of joy* is the very core of evangelization. Joy should be the alpha and omega of all our missionary enterprise.

The work of evangelization is mandatory for every disciple of Jesus. Jesus commanded his disciples, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Mt 28:19). According to the Marcan account, Jesus commissions the disciples, "Go into all the world and proclaim the good news" (Mk 16:15). Preaching the gospel of Christ, therefore, is not optional but obligatory for the disciples. For Christians, it is an existential privilege and challenge to be an ambassador of Christ to the world. This mission of the disciples is hinted at during the time of their appointment, where we read "to be with him and to be sent out to proclaim the message" (Mk 3:14). In essence, *to be a Christian is to be sent out to proclaim the gospel of Christ*. Greater the communion with Jesus, stronger is the commitment for Christ. This dynamics is expressed in the liturgical celebration of the Eucharist. The Eucharist is the sacrament of communion. It also invites the participants to commitment. This is made explicit all through the celebration of

the Eucharist, and especially at the time of the dismissal of the assembly when the deacon announces, "Go in peace to love and serve the Lord." Is this not a reminder of the command of Jesus to go and proclaim the gospel? In his apostolic letter, *Mane Nobiscum Domine* (MND), John Paul II observes, "The dismissal at the end of each Mass is a *charge* given to Christians, inviting them to work for the spread of the gospel and the imbuing of society with Christian values" (MND, 24). In fact, every celebration of the Eucharistic Mystery is an invitation to experience the Lord intimately and to engage in the Eucharistic mission of the Lord.

This is further elucidated by the fourth *g'hantha* prayer of the Syro Malabar Qurbana. "Grant us your peace and tranquility all the days of our lives. Let all the people on earth know that you alone are the true God, the Father, and that you sent your beloved Son Jesus Christ. May all the people know that Christ, our Lord and God, in His life-giving gospel, came and taught us the way of purity and sanctity . . ." (*Qurbana*, 56). Again the emphasis is on the evangelizing mission of Christians, emerging in the context of the Eucharistic celebration, the source, centre, and summit of Christian life.

In order to understand the concept of *new evangelization* we need only to turn to *Redemptoris Missio*, the encyclical letter of John Paul II, promulgated on 7 December 1990. Taking into account the world scene, the document distinguishes three situations for carrying out the one and same mission of the Church. They are: 1) the mission *ad gentes*; 2) the mission *actio Ecclesiae*; and 3) the mission *nova evangelizatio*. New evangelization is envisaged in the context, "particularly in countries with ancient Christian roots, and occasionally in the younger Churches as well, where entire groups of the baptized have lost a living sense of the faith, or even no longer consider themselves members of the Church, and live a life far removed from Christ and his gospel. In this case what is needed is a 'new evangelization' or a 're-evangelization'" (RM 33). It is an urgent matter to be addressed, for the situation the encyclical highlights is becoming true in many traditional Christian centres of our motherland as well. Whenever I reflect on the ancient Christian centres of our country, I am inclined to think that the promise of God made to Abraham has become futile. The three blessings Yahweh promised to Abraham were land, people,

and the presence of God. In accordance with the promise, our ancestors occupied the 'promised land', they had numerous children, and they encountered God and experienced Him in their daily life. But due to commoditisation, commercialisation and cutthroat competition, the sense of sacredness, solidarity, and subjectivity are being slowly evaporated even in Christian communities. Sadly these age-old Christian centres are rapidly becoming landless, childless, and godless.

In addition, houses are turning into homeless shelters, churches are turning into business centres, religious congregations are turning into welfare societies. An overall shallowness, emptiness, and rootlessness has become the trend of our times. This is all the more true in the case of priestly ministry in the Church. The sense of mystery is often found missing. The meaning of suffering is ruled out. The business mentality flourishes. The culture of prayer, the culture of study, and the culture of work are fast disappearing. Bonds are broken. Promises go unfulfilled. Laxity, laziness, and liberal views have become dominant in our culture. These general trends and tendencies find inroads into Christian life as well. All the same, there are movements opposing these phenomena. *Redemptoris Missio* acknowledges the different directions visible in our society, "While on the one hand people seem to be pursuing material prosperity and to be sinking ever deeper into consumerism and materialism, on the other hand we are witnessing a desperate search for meaning, the need for an inner life, and a desire to learn new forms and methods of meditation and prayer" (RM 38). It is a sign of hope and opens up the scope for evangelisation. And new evangelisation or re-evangelisation emerges as the need of the hour. In the process of both evangelisation and new evangelisation, "*The Church proposes; she imposes nothing*. She respects individuals and cultures, and she honours the sanctuary of conscience" (RM 39).

In our effort to go for the new evangelisation, we should reflect on the words of John Paul II, "Without the mission *ad gentes*, the Church's very missionary dimension would be deprived of its essential meaning and of the very activity that exemplifies it" (RM 34). There is no doubt in the mind of the Church regarding the necessity to preach the Gospel and to establish new churches among people, for this is the first task of the Church. The mission

ad gentes and *new evangelisation* are not contradictory to each other, but complementary in character. *Redemptoris Missio* emphasises the importance of these missions of the Church, “Hence missionary activity *ad intra* is a credible sign and a stimulus for missionary activity *ad extra*, and vice versa” (RM 34).

The Magisterium teaches, “Even before activity, mission means witness and way of life that shines out to others” (RM 26), and is the starting point of evangelisation regardless of the situation. According to *Redemptoris Missio*, the first form of evangelisation is witness (RM 42). The first form of witness means “*the very life of the missionary, of the Christian family, and of the ecclesial community, which reveal a new way of living*” (RM 42). Evangelisation, especially new evangelisation, therefore, is to be seen as an invitation to experience the Mystery of Christ and to express it in the existential context of one’s living. In this sense, *evangelisation is primarily and fundamentally the way of life of Christians*. The way of life of Christians is visible, accessible, and credible in the celebration of the Eucharistic Mystery. *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (SC) succinctly presents the privileged moment of the Sacred Liturgy, “The divine sacrifice of the Eucharist, is the outstanding means whereby the faithful may express in their lives, and manifest to others, the mystery of Christ and the real nature of the true Church” (SC 2). The evangelising mission is not a personal activity, but ecclesial. It is a mission of the Redeemer carried out in the world as the members of the Mystical Body of Christ. The encyclical *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* emphatically reiterates the fundamental relationship between the Eucharist and the Church, “Eucharist builds the Church and the Church makes the Eucharist” (EE 26). The new evangelisation or re-evangelisation, to be meaningful and fruitful, is to be undertaken in the context of the Mystery of Christ progressively remembered, represented, and relived in the celebration of the Eucharistic Mystery and which is manifested in the Mystical Body of Christ. This is the frame in which I would like to reflect on the ways of the new evangelisation, precisely because religious and priests in the Church have a special significance in the celebration of the Eucharist and in carrying out the task of new evangelisation, as they were, are, and will be the pioneers, champions, and stalwarts of mission *ad gentes*. In this discussion I shall limit myself to three

interrelated ways of fulfilling our task of new evangelisation, namely, Contemplation of the Mystery of Christ (1), Compassion of the Person of Christ (2), and Celebration of the Mystery of the Eucharist.

1. Contemplation of the Mystery of Christ

Contemplation is the hallmark of religious life. All have to be contemplative in their life. In the Church, consecrated religious are considered as a sign of the Kingdom of God to come. Consecrated people have to reflect on and radiate the real and ideal life of the Mystical Body of Christ. By their very nature, convents and monasteries are houses of wonder, work, and worship. Religious and spiritual experience is the treasure and the forte of these houses of consecrated persons. They, as a result of their contemplation of the Mystery, should be agents of transformation and their houses great centres of formation of faith. The world is in need of contemplation to safeguard a sense of the sacred, to foster a sacramental view of the world, and to collaborate in the work of evangelisation. The current trend of the West turning to the East for religious experience is a strong signal of the deep-seated desire in everyone to be in union with God through contemplation.

A successful mission of evangelisation takes place with the contemplation of the mystery of Christ. It is in contemplating the face and voice of Christ that a Christian is challenged, converted, and committed to the work of God revealed in Christ through the work of the Spirit. Jesus was privileged to contemplate the image of God, the Father, from the moment of his baptism in the river Jordan. He treasured this Abba-consciousness throughout his life to the moment of his death on the cross. Though there were a number of temptations and tribulations in the life of Jesus, he did not disregard God his Father, but instead he encountered the image of God intensely and intimately. Jesus was thoroughly faithful to the mission entrusted to him by God. There was no distraction or deviation from his evangelising mission, for Jesus contemplated God the Father – saw and heard and touched Him – always and everywhere. The constant contemplation of God was the secret of Jesus’ successful mission. His experience of being “seated in the bosom of God” is a meaningful expression of the

intimate communion Jesus enjoyed through an unceasing contemplation of the Divine countenance.

Jesus is our ideal and model in the mission of evangelisation. In addition, Christians are commissioned to continue the mission of Jesus in fulfilling the divine dream for the world, the essence of evangelisation, including that of the new evangelisation. Regarding the content of evangelisation, the Church teaches definitively, "The kingdom of God is not a concept, a doctrine, or a program subject to free interpretation, but it is before all else a person with the face and name of Jesus of Nazareth, the image of the invisible God" (RM 18). It is, therefore, of paramount importance to contemplate the Mystery of Christ in order to anchor one's vision and mission. As you see, so you act. The way you see Christ, so is the way you commit. The deeper the contemplation, the greater will be the communion and commitment. The contemplation of the Mystery of Christ will help one to conform to Christ and carry out his mission according to His will. John Paul II underlines the importance of the celebration of the Eucharist in reference to the work of evangelisation, "The encounter with Christ, constantly intensified and deepened in the Eucharist, issues in the Church and in every Christian an *urgent summons to testimony and evangelisation*" (MND 24).

The Love of God

The mission of the Redeemer is rooted in the love of God for the world, "For 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). Every act of God is an act of love, "for God is love" (1Jn 4:8). Jesus, the beloved Son of God the Father, is an epiphany of the Divine love. Hence "though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave" (Phil 2:6). Jesus takes up the mission of redemption lovingly and enthusiastically, though costly. Exemplifying the love of God for humanity, Jesus washed the feet of his disciples and "set an example" (Jn 13:15) for us to follow, though a scandalous example for all times. The death of Jesus on the Cross is the supreme manifestation of his love for the world, for in his own words, "No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's

friends" (*Jn 15:13*). It is this love of God which is celebrated in the Eucharistic sacrifice.

The importance of seeing the face of Jesus Christ and hearing his voice is to be encouraged. It is in the encounter with Jesus people are drawn to his person and mission. This encounter with Jesus is accelerated in the context of the celebration of the Eucharist. Priests are specially anointed and appointed to engage in the encounter with Christ and to learn the lessons of love of God, as the Mystery of Christ unfolds during the celebration of the Eucharistic Mystery. This is marvellously depicted in the episode of the disciples going to Emmaus (*Lk 24:13-35*). Interestingly and importantly, it was at the moment of 'taking bread, blessing, and breaking it, and giving it' to the disciples that "their eyes were opened, and they recognised him" (*Lk 24:31*). This revelation took place at the request of the disciples, "Stay with us Lord" (*Lk 24:29*). Every celebration of the Eucharist is an opportunity given to the faithful by the Lord to be in his company and to contemplate the love of God closely, personally, and in the ecclesial community. The Eucharistic assembly recounts the great acts of love of Jesus Christ one by one, "To make us share in your divine life, you assumed our human nature, restored us from our fallen state, and brought us from death to life eternal. Forgiving our debts you sanctified us sinners, enlightened our minds, defeated our enemies, and glorified our frail nature by your immense grace" (*Qurbana*, 54). The celebration of the Eucharistic Mystery helps us to contemplate the love of God and to be in communion with God so that we may fittingly fulfil the new commandment of the Lord and the evangelising mission entrusted to us, "...love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (*Jn 13:34-35*). Evangelisation commences, continues and culminates in the love of God. The Mystery of God's love, from creation to new creation, through the Incarnation, is progressively and picturesquely celebrated in the Eucharistic Mystery. A contemplation of the Mystery of Christ as retold and relived through the Mystery of the Eucharist in the Mystical Body of Christ will enlighten, enrich, and empower people to reconciliation - the goal of evangelisation.

The Life of God

God is the source and sustainer of life. Contemplation on the life of God, in which all creation including human beings partake, brings people back on track. In addition, life is understood as the fundamental good, without which we cannot even imagine thinking, talking, and walking. A religious priest who celebrates the Mystery of the Eucharist cannot stop wondering at the truth, goodness, and beauty of life flowing from the divine source. Admiring the life principle in the universe, the celebrant contemplates and communicates, "For, in your great kindness you created the world and everything in it, and showed humanity your immense mercy" (*Qurbana*, 50).

Jesus revealed to us the mystery of the life of God. In the parable of the vine and branches, Jesus teaches the secret of life, "I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing" (*Jn* 15:5). This is mysticism. This is contemplation. This is communion. It is in abiding or indwelling in God that we have life in its fullness. Jesus "the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep" (*Jn* 10:11). He "came that they may have life, and have it abundantly" (*Jn* 10:10). This life of God, flowing from the mountain, is gloriously shown on the cross of Christ. The parable of the grain of wheat, "unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit" (*Jn* 12:24), finds its true illustration on the cross, the key to life, the way of life. Jesus who revealed himself "the way, the truth, and the life" (*Jn* 14:6), becomes the true way to life, which is commemorated and celebrated in the Mystery of the Eucharist.

The faithful are invited to partake in eternal life through Holy Communion, which is a testimony to the mutual indwelling and abiding presence. It is a symbolism of the mystical marital union of the bride and groom, "O heavenly Groom! You prepared the cup of your most precious Blood for the guests at your banquet" (*Qurbana*, 68). As the vine and the branches and Christ and the Church relationships (see *Eph* 5: 21ff) are symbols of life emerging in the context of connectivity, so are mutual giving and indwelling signs of the life of God in us. This is the Mystery of Christ celebrated in the Eucharist, which gives life in abundance to all the

members of the Mystical Body of Christ, the Church. A religious priest celebrating the Eucharistic Mystery is initiated into the experience of the life of God and is expected to witness to it in the living context of everyday life.

The Light of God

It is in the light of God we can discern and decide on crucial matters. "Let there be light" (*Gen* 1:3) is the first recorded word uttered by the Lord God. Jesus revealed, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life" (*Jn* 8:12). He taught that everyone is the light of the world, "You are the light of the world" (*Mt* 5:14). Light dispels darkness and assures safety and security in life. The Spirit of Christ dispels the darkness and directs the steps of people "into all the truth" (*Jn* 16:13). The Word of God enlightens the mind and heart to follow the way of life, "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (*Pss* 119:105). Light removes the cloud of confusion and leads us to truth, which sets us free. Where there is light, there is freedom - freedom of choice. Light helps us to discern goodness, truth and beauty, in order to celebrate the fullness of life.

In the celebration of the Eucharist, there is the epiphany of the love and life of God. We have to be happy to be in the light of the Lord - the Spirit of the Lord - whom we receive in and through the new dispensation accomplished in Christ and perpetuated in the Church through the working of the Spirit, at the command of the Master. The celebrant of the Mystery of the Eucharist in preparation to the proclamation of the Gospel says, "O Christ Our Lord! Enlighten us in your laws, inflame our minds with your knowledge, and sanctify our souls with your truth so that we may be faithful to your words and obedient to your commandments" (*Qurbana*, 33). A priest praying this prayer cannot be blind to the demands of life and deaf to the promptings of the Spirit for our times. A person pure in heart or purified by the Spirit can see the Lord, a blessing immeasurable to a mortal, promised by Jesus. The light or the word or the Spirit of the Lord purifies our heart so that we may see things in proper perspective and gather courage and strength to bring about a civilisation of love, a culture of life, and a culture of light. The teaching of the Church throws light on our

path and guides our steps. In our work of evangelisation, the teaching of the Church is consistent and clear, “the Church ‘is not an end unto herself, but rather is fervently concerned to be completely of Christ, in Christ and for Christ, as well as completely of men, among men and for men’” (RM 19).

In the final analysis, evangelisation or the new evangelisation is, indeed, *to support and promote the culture of love, the culture of life, and the culture of light, because these realities of life symbolise the Mystery of the Holy Trinity*. This is the essence of the doxology taken from 2 Corinthians 12:13 and used in the Liturgy of the Eucharist, “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, now, always, and forever” (*Qurbana*, 49). Conversion is the need of our times – conversion to God who is love, life, and light. Conversion of heart is impossible without the gift and grace of God, “Conversion is a gift of God, a work of the Blessed Trinity” (RM 46). John Paul II rightly observes, “We cannot preach conversion unless we ourselves are converted anew every day” (RM 47). It is in this context that the celebration of the Eucharistic Mystery assumes a prominent and permanent place in the life of the Church, especially for the ministers of the Mystery of the Eucharist.

2. Compassion of the Person of Christ

It is a result of the many opportunities, offered and taken, to contemplate the Mystery of Christ that the members of religious congregations imbibe the nature of the Lord our God. According to the Gospels, the nature of God is compassion, for Jesus exhorted, “Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful” (*Lk* 6:36). Jesus illustrates the compassion of God clearly, “for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous” (*Mt* 5:45). The saying of Jesus is noteworthy here, “I have come to call not the righteous but sinners” (*Mk* 2:17). Jesus was compassionate to all. Compassion is the highest level of love coupled with forgiveness. This is the essence of the liturgical celebration of the Eucharist. The celebrant makes an earnest prayer, “Look upon us, pardon us, and show us compassion, according to your nature” (*Qurbana*, 28). This should be the disposition of the minister of every sacrament in the

Church, “Lord, you who seek out the lost and gather up the scattered, have chosen this humble servant for priestly ministry in your Church... Grant me the grace to administer this sacrament in a worthy manner, Lord of all, forever” (*Sacraments*, 42). The very name of the Holy Eucharist in the mother tongue of the Saint Thomas Christian is *Divyakarunyam* “the divine compassion”.

It is the compassion of Christ tangible in religious priests, which, to my mind, invites people to turn to God. The often quoted prayer of Jesus on the cross captures our attention, “Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing” (*Lk* 24:34) to pour out compassion on all who are in need of it. In my opinion, the act of compassion is a genuine step in the right direction in the new evangelisation, in restoring hope and regaining peace on earth.

Creation of God

Creation and everything in it is a gift of God. Human beings are placed in the world “to till it and keep it” (*Gen* 1:15). They are the servants of the Lord or stewards of the garden owned by God. Everything belongs to God, the Lord of all. Everyone has a right to a decent and dignified life, to enjoy the fruit of the earth and the work of human hands. Being the image of God, human beings have to exercise their authority over creation. Our mastery over creation is to be practised through self-mastery, which is exemplified by Christ on the tree of the Cross. It is not right to exploit and destroy the natural resources unnecessarily and unreasonably. Plundering natural resources for the greed of a few is indefensible. An approach of respect, reverence, and friendliness towards everything in the universe needs to be cultivated. In other words, our approach to creation should be one of compassion, care, and companionship.

The liturgy of the Eucharist consistently confirms the foundation of the universe, “You alone are the true Father! All Fatherhood in heaven and on earth comes from you” (*Qurbana*, 51). The land and everything of it is considered a blessing. Therefore, the liturgical assembly implores, “For temperate climate, plentiful harvest, prosperous year, and the wellbeing of the whole world, we pray to you” (*Qurbana*, 35). Always the congregation sings “The heaven and earth are full of your glory” (*Qurbana*, 16). While liturgy is the

celebration of heaven on earth, it presents a very balanced Christian world view before the assembly to live in harmony. The prayer at the preparation of the bread is a significant appeal to foster a compassionate approach to earth. "Blessed are you, Lord, God of all creation. Through your goodness we have this bread to offer, which earth has given and human hands have made. It will become for us the bread of life" (*Sunday Missal*, 20).

In an age of exploitation and devastation of natural resources and bio-diversity, it is the duty of Christians to preach the good news to the whole creation (see *Mk 16:15*). Whatever we do to the earth, we do not hesitate to do to God and our fellow beings. Therefore, a compassionate approach to Mother Nature is of great importance, for, according to Saint Ephrem, we have two books on God's revelation: the Book of Nature and the Book of Scripture. Our attitude to nature will be reflected in our attitude to all other realities. Hence, it is necessary to develop a sense of compassion and concern towards nature, rooted in the nature of God revealed through Jesus.

People of God

On our way to new evangelisation or re-evangelisation, people should be taken seriously and compassionately. The attitudes and approaches of Jesus towards the multitude should be explored and expressed adequately. He was compassionate to all, especially to the marginalised and poor of the society. Jesus was anointed "to bring the good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery to of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free" (*Lk 4:18*). This is his missionary manifesto. His compassion overflows. This does not mean that Jesus was compromising with evil or sin. He showed compassion to the woman caught in adultery, but corrected her saying, "From now on do not sin again" (*Jn 8:11*). It is a clear sign of the pastoral approach every priest in the Church should appropriate for a successful new evangelisation.

As part of our new evangelisation, we should challenge the injustices perpetuated in the society. We should be in the forefront in fighting for human dignity and decent living. The missionaries should address the atrocities against women, orphans, and strangers in our circles. Imitating Jesus the Good Shepherd, we

need to walk the way to find the lost, the least, and the last. Through the culture of the Gospel, missionaries should commit themselves to the transformation of evil structures and institutions in the given culture. All these will promote the cause of new evangelisation and re-evangelisation.

Presence of God

The presence of God was one of the three blessings promised to Abraham, others being the land and people, which are discussed above. Evangelisation is to make the presence of God accessible, credible, and tangible to the whole creation. Every stage of revelation, for that matter, is evangelisation. Jesus Christ, through the mystery of the Incarnation, made this presence near to all who came in contact with him. People recognised, respected, and responded to the glorious presence of God's Son, "full of grace and truth" (Jn 1:14). Being the Son of God the Father, Jesus said plainly and boldly, "If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me. But if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, so that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father" (Jn 10:38). In the priestly prayer Jesus presents the truth of his existence, "All mine are yours, and yours are mine" (Jn 17:10). Again Jesus makes God present through his nearness, "The Father is in me and I am in the Father" (Jn 10:38). The whole task of evangelisation is to make the presence of God experiential to the people of our times. There is a craving for it in the hearts of our people. All the missionaries, in general, and priests, in particular, have to make this presence a reality.

The faithful and meaningful celebration of the Eucharistic Mystery is a privileged moment and event to bring people to the presence of God, which can change the heart of the participants. When the people experience God's presence in liturgy and life, they are moved to acknowledge their sinfulness and thirst for holiness. The prayer of the priest at the time of the *Sanctus* brings repentance. "Woe to me! I am dismayed! For, my lips are unclean. And I live in the midst of people with unclean lips. My eyes have seen the King, the almighty Lord. How awe inspiring is this place where today I have seen the Lord face to face! This is none other than the house of God. Clean us who are unclean and sanctify our lips" (*Qurbana*,

52). Again raising his hands, the celebrant acknowledges, “Bless us, O Lord! May your mercy draw us near to these glorious, sacred, live-giving, and divine mysteries, though truly we are unworthy” (*Qurbana*, 61). The priest considers himself an “unworthy servant” (*Qurbana*, 55) of the Lord our God. This is the basic disposition one should foster in the work for new evangelisation. The experience of being unworthy servants can open the door to Christ and win the hearts of people back to him.

3. Celebration of the Mystery of the Eucharist

Celebration is the foundation, force, and focus of evangelisation, including the new evangelisation. The consecrated religious in the Church are known for their celebration, for they have the time to dedicate their life to the service of God and people. “Let there be praise, honour, thanksgiving, and worship to you, to your only begotten Son, and to the Holy Spirit. Now, always, and forever” (*Qurbana*, 65). This is and should be fully true of religious communities in the Church. The meaningful and beautiful celebration of the Mystery of Christ in the Eucharist attracts people to Christ. This is the age of celebration. Through the celebration of the Mystery of the Eucharist, all can experience and express their faith in Christ and belong to the Church, the Mystical Body of Christ. So in the work of new evangelisation, the proper and fitting celebration of the Mystery of the Eucharist can be path-breaking and path-finding for genuine transformation, for celebration leads people to commitment and to the consolidation of the community. As you celebrate, so you live. This is very true of our Eucharistic celebration and of everyday Christian living.

Joy of God

Joy is the key to evangelisation. The mission of Jesus was to usher in joy in the hearts of the people. God is joy. This is the reason Jesus shared everything emphasising joy. He wanted to complete the joy of the listeners. God’s revelation was a matter of joy, whether in the case of creation, redemption, or new creation. Jesus’ prayer was for joy, “But now I am coming to you, and I speak these things in the world so that they may have my joy made complete in themselves” (*Jn* 17:13). Saint Paul makes it abundantly clear when he exhorts, “Rejoice in the Lord always, again I will say, Rejoice” (*Phil* 4:4). Joy is the motivating factor in

evangelisation. Nothing can substitute for it. Therefore, in the work of new evangelisation, there should be a rediscovery of joy in the Lord in our ministry.

It is important to bear in mind the message of the angels at the birth of Jesus, "Do not be afraid; for see - I am bringing you good news of great joy to all the people" (*Lk 2:10*). This is the note we need to play to bring people to God and to glorify the Lord. The angelic hymn sung in the liturgy of the Eucharist creates an atmosphere of joy to receive the good news of the Lord. It is of paramount importance to emphasize joy, the key to evangelisation, to be faithful and free in the Lord.

Peace on Earth

Peace is the goal of evangelisation. The salutation of Jesus was invariably "Peace be with you" (*Jn 20:19*). The angels at the Nativity of Jesus sang the song of peace, "on earth peace" (*Lk 2:14*). Evangelisation is to establish peace and prosperity in the world. It is to bring forth wellbeing. It is to help everyone and everything to flourish according to the divine design. It is to enforce the justice and grace of God. It is to lead the world to *poornodaya*, full flourishing. Time and again the assembly of the liturgy is greeted with the Lord's words of salutation, "Peace be with you" (*Qurbana*, 34). Many a times the Deacon announces, "Let us pray. Peace be with us" (*Qurbana*, 16). Through all these utterances and salutations, the assembly is reminded of the great task to establish peace on earth, of which the world is badly in need. The priest makes the following prayer, "Bring peace and harmony to the world, especially to the holy Catholic Church. Preserve the Church and the nation in harmony. Banish wars from the face of the earth. Scatter the warmongers from our midst. Grant that we may lead a humble and God-fearing life in peace and tranquillity. Let there be glory, not for us Lord, but for your holy name" (*Qurbana*, 58). The spirit of the liturgy is setting the tone and tempo for our works of evangelisation. Again the exchange of peace in the liturgical celebration is of great significance in working for justice and peace. Reconciliation is the essence of evangelisation. This is strengthened by the celebration of the Eucharist. Thus, the liturgy of the Eucharist becomes the school of Christian life.

Hope to Human Beings

Hope is the touchstone of evangelisation. Jesus bequeathed to us hope – hope in life and in a life to come. The cosmic and eschatological vision of the Christian vision must be kept alive in order to be faithful messengers of Christ in establishing the Kingdom of God, which Jesus through his life and ministry has already inaugurated on earth. It is the responsibility of the evangelisers to expand the Kingdom throughout the ages and to help the faithful experience it.

In this age of increasing suicide and depression, there is a great challenge and immense chance to proclaim the Good News of the Lord, which can help people cope with the stress and difficulties in life. We need to present Jesus Christ to the world – the Immanuel – God-with-us. The assurance of Jesus, “And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age” should keep the evangelisers enthusiastic in building hope against hope. We should be able to say with Saint Paul, “For if I preach the gospel, that gives me no ground for boasting. For necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel” (1Cor 9:16). A person experiencing joy in the risen Lord will be able to overcome any adverse situation in life and surrender totally to the Lord of all, “O Lord, you are truth the one who raises our bodies. You are the Saviour of our souls, and the preserver of our lives. We are bound always to thank, adore, and glorify you, the Lord of all” (*Qurbana*, 26).

The celebration of the Eucharist fills the hearts and minds of the participants with the joy and enthusiasm to carry on the work of evangelisation. Responding to the experience in the Eucharistic Mystery the participants are helped to commit themselves to the evangelising mission and to eagerly wait for the dawn of the *eschaton*, “May the eyes, which have beheld your great mercy, also behold your blessed Second Coming” (*Qurbana*, 70). The celebration of the Mystery inspires the faithful to walk the true way of life.

Conclusion

Evangelisation is a right and duty of every Christian, for it involves the sharing of joy of being born anew in Christ and committed to the Lord through the guidance of the Holy Spirit who accompanies the Church, the Mystical Body of Christ.

Without a doubt, the new evangelisation is a great challenge before the Church. But it is also a great privilege and an opportunity for preaching the joyful good news of the Lord. Indeed there are different ways and means of undertaking the task of the new evangelisation. The religious and priests who are called to be evangelizers by being the light and the salt of the earth can achieve this only through advancing in the contemplation of the mystery of Christ, through showing the compassion of the person of Christ, and through the celebration of the Eucharistic Mystery, all of which, in a special way, are central to the person and mission of the religious and priests. The idea behind this reflection was to address the essential and contextual concerns of religious life. The consecrated religious congregations, to be relevant for our times, have to undergo a radical revision of certain fundamental dispositions and orientations. In other words, religious communities should return to their roots in order to bear fruit. It seems today's religious communities have time for all things, but not for the fundamental and constitutive factors, in the absence of which our life and testimony become a counter witness. Contemplation, compassion, and celebration are constituent components of Christian life. A radical consecration to these components is what is expected of a religious in the Church. In a religious priest these become all the more important, for he, as an unworthy servant, has *to be contemplative, compassionate, and celebrative – an epiphany of the Lord – so that others may be drawn to Christ and to the Church joyfully, fully, and fruitfully.* The angelic hymn at the nativity of Jesus, “Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace and good hope for men” (Lk 2:14 and *Qurbana*, 13) is an appropriate hymn of the new evangelisation, for it opens up the wider horizon for *the glorification of God, the establishment of peace on earth, and hope to human beings, which is the essence of all missionary enterprise, including the new evangelisation for our times.*