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EDITORIAL

The Second Vatican Council made of Missiology a fundamental theology and the central nucleus of its Mission theology. Indeed Mission became the guiding star in the constellation of the 16 Documents of the Council (cf. Paolo Suess, SEDOS Workshop in 2012).

"The pilgrim Church is missionary by her very nature, since it is from the mission of the Son and the mission of the Holy Spirit that she draws her origin, in accordance with the decree of God the Father" (AG, n. 2,1)

As the Church is getting ready to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the closing of Vatican II in 2015, the **Catholic University of Cochabamba**, Bolivia, is requesting that the statute of Missiology be enhanced. The article: *"Notes for a New Missiology in a Transdisciplinary Perspective"* is the fruit of the collaboration of several Latino-American theologians and missiologists, who have been updating the concept of Missiology.

Missiology, like the other sciences, is in a process of reconsidering its epistemological statute. Robert Schreiter, the North American theologian, sees "missiology as a field of study about the progress of the world Church, whose source is located in a variety of disciplines, as much theological as socio-humanist". Missiology has to present itself as an academic discipline, as simultaneously self-critical in theological and ecclesial terms, and as a bridge with other disciplines so as to make a new global Christianity credible in its diverse expressions, in both academic and practical terms. In recent years it has been said that contextual mission questions *missiological reflection* in its univocal, monocultural and unidisciplinary way of approaching reality, inviting it to open itself to an *interdisciplinary perspective*, that is, missiology ought to creatively welcome the plurality of scientific methods. Thus, it could really let the rich practical experience and methodologies of other disciplines contribute to it. Ultimately it is about a process of seeking a transdisciplinary missiology.

Vatican II heralded the Ecclesiology of Communion as a new breath of the Spirit blowing within the Church. Local Churches assumed their responsibilities and committed themselves to finding "New Ways of Being Church" so as to implement the vision of Vatican II. Pope John XXIII's prophetic injunction at the conclusion of the Debate on the Liturgy during the First Session of Vatican II is still relevant:

"It is perfectly natural that new times and new circumstances should suggest different forms and methods for transmitting externally the one and same doctrine and of clothing it in a new dress. Yet the living substance is always the purity of the evangelical and apostolic truth, in perfect conformity with the teaching of Holy Church, who often applies to herself the maxim: 'Only one art, but a thousand forms'" (Xavier RYNNE, Vatican Council II. Edition published in 1999 by Orbis Books, Maryknoll; p. 71).

The globalized world, laden with new challenges and new contexts, is calling for significant and unprecedented creative initiatives. In response the Local Churches have undertaken to set up Pastoral Centers across the five continents. Prof. Paul **Steffen**, SVD, who takes a keen interest in these developments, wishes to share with SEDOS Readers the results of his research. In *"The Asian Integral Pastoral Approach – a New Way of Being Church in Asia. A Contextualized and Concrete Model for the Evangelizing Mission of the Church"*, he evaluates the positive contribution of these Pastoral Centers.

In the following article: *"Los agentes de la misión"*, Marco Antonio **de la Rosa Ruiz Esparza** strives to single out the agents of evangelization. He deals with: the Trinitarian origin of mission; the role of Christ the One sent by the Father; and how Christians are called and sent out to continue Christ's mission. He drew his inspiration from two important documents: *Ad Gentes* and *Redemptoris Missio*.

We conclude this issue by bringing you the following wonderful story told by Sr Showrillu **Vatti**, FMM, originally from India, and is working in Canada. In her article, *"Mon experience missionnaire au Canada"* she remembers the past in a very joy-filled way. This throws light on the challenges of the theme of our upcoming SEDOS Seminar. Sr Showrillu has been journeying from surprise to surprise which makes the joy of being missionary today. She has been helping refugees in similar circumstances to obtain legal status and become part of local life.

The role of Lay Associates in spreading the Good News in concrete and creative ways is bearing fruit as expressed in the article on: *"Jésus passait"*. Sr Fernande **Rivard**, SASV, explains the programme of Bible study for a group of enthusiastic lay Inuits in "Churchill-Baie d'Hudson Diocese". The FMM Associates enjoy seeing how other lay people are willing to deepen their understanding of the Word of God and so allow it to transform their lives.

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SEDOS Executive Directress

Notes For a New Missiology in a Trans-disciplinary Perspective

Contribution of the SUKÁ¹ Group from Cochabamba, Bolivia, to the Fifth Conference of the International Association of Catholic Missiologists (IACM), "Missio Inter Gentes: Challenges and Opportunities". Nairobi, 15-21 July 2013.

Missiology, or theological discipline in constant critical self-comprehension about its motive for existing, living and presenting itself to the world as a proposal for meaning for all human creatures beyond its own personal "world", like other sciences, is in a process of reconsidering its epistemological statute. As a "frontier" or *avant-garde* discipline, that is to say, one that is constituted by dialogue in mutual interaction and learning, a discipline that listens and critically incorporates the methodological quests and the contributions of other "academic" disciplines without discrimination, whether from the human sciences, social sciences or "hard" sciences. In this journey, missiology is called to assume the complex, the "trans" (trans-disciplinary, trans-cultural, the transitory...), atonality, "c[h]aosmos" (Gilles Deleuze), reciprocity and balance (the Andean world) ... whether in its traditional internal theological task (understood in the area of Christian theological specialisations), or in its new theological task, open and in critical and creative dialogue with other scientific disciplines. Hence the necessity to advance towards a trans-disciplinary missiology.



The following are points towards a *new* missiology, a missiology in the process of transformation, which retrieves and assumes the challenges of society and of Christianity in its varied expressions (including the Catholic Church), with the aim of contributing to its theoretical-practical reformulation (concept and life): passing to a missiology more in tune with the deep existential search, with "the joys and hopes" (*Gaudium et Spes*, n. 1) of men and women of the twenty-first century, and in this way be able to share the fullness of life that Jesus gives us (cf. *Jn* 20:31).

It is about a missiology that in its academic and existential task should emphasise certain Biblical-theological intuitions and express itself in concrete characteristics.

1. Old and new scenarios of cultural expressions that question mission-life today

The preparatory document – called *Lineamenta* – of the recent Thirteenth Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops (7-28 October 2012), dedicated to the theme: "New Evangelisation For the Transmission of Christian faith", indicated the urgency for Christianity to "read and decipher the new scenarios which in recent decades have arisen within human history, so as to inhabit them and transform them into places of witness and proclamation of the Gospel".²

The document mentions six concrete scenarios: 1) cultural transformation, especially due to secularisation and globalisation; 2) the phenomenon of migration; 3) the mass media and digital culture; 4) economic imbalances, with the consequent damage to Creation; 5) scientific and technological investigation; 6) politics.

In the light of these scenarios, spheres or *Aeropagus* (cf. *Redemptoris Missio*, n. 37), already indicated not only by theological reflection but also in official documents, for example the Fifth Conference of Latin American and Caribbean Bishops in Aparecida, Brazil (cf. *DA*, n. 44), believers are called to live a new mission (new evangelisation, according to the Synod) with audacity and firmness, in a permanent process of encounter and interrelation:

[...] mission is no longer a north-south or east-west movement, as it is necessary to disengage ourselves from geographical confines. Today mission is to be found on all five continents. We ourselves need to get to know the sectors and fields that are unconnected to faith, either because they never met faith or because they have distanced themselves from it. [...] Mission needs to] have the energy to *propose the*

God question in all those processes of encounter, mixing and reconstruction of the social fibre, which are underway in each of our local contexts.³



In line with Latin America, mission is authentic (Christian) life itself, which is expressed in tune and in solidarity with the poorest and those most excluded (young people, women, migrants, native peoples, people of African descent...). These subjects must be present, visible and active in the Christian communities. Each one will contribute to the gestation and "construction of a new model for being Church",⁴ socially more dynamic and committed to the marginalised, culturally inclusive and pluralistic, prophetically persecuted and subject to martyrdom, fulfilling a task that is still incomplete: the capacity to bear witness within our communities to the "adequate style" of Jesus, which is expressed in living the authentic human values – and therefore Gospel values – of listening,

humility, reconciliation.... Regarding style, the Aparecida Document expresses it clearly:

The strength of this proclamation of life will be fruitful if we do it with adequate style, with the Master's attitudes, always having the Eucharist as source and summit of all missionary activity. We invoke the Holy Spirit so as to be able to bear witness to a closeness that implies an affective listening, humility, solidarity, compassion, dialogue, reconciliation, commitment to social justice and the capacity to share, as Jesus did. He continues to convoke, invite and incessantly offer a dignified and full life for everyone. We, in Latin America and the Caribbean, are now his disciples, called "to put out into the deep" for an abundant catch. It is about moving out of our isolated consciousness and launching ourselves with courage and trust (*parresía*) into what is the mission of the whole Church (DA, n. 363).

This new mission will be possible if the agent and protagonist in the life of each believer and in each community is the Holy Spirit, Lord and Giver of life (*cf. Redemptoris Missio*, n. 21). John's Gospel refers to the Spirit as another Paraclete (Jn 14:16), who is presented in the charism of love:

¹² In all truth I tell you, whoever believes in me will perform even greater works, because I am going to the Father. ¹³ Whatever you ask in my name I will do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴ If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it. ¹⁵ If you love me you will keep my commandments. ¹⁶ I shall ask the Father, and he will give you another Paraclete to be with you forever, ¹⁷ the Spirit of truth whom the world can never accept since it neither sees nor knows him; but you know him, because he is with you, he is in you. ¹⁸ I shall not leave you orphans; I shall come to you. ¹⁹ In a short time the world will no longer see me; but you will see that I live and you also will live. ²⁰ On that day you will know that I am in my Father and you in me and I in you. ²¹ Whoever holds to my commandments and keeps them is the one who loves me; and whoever loves me will be loved by my Father, and I shall love him and reveal myself to him (Jn 14:12-21).

This Spirit comes from God and has its origin in Jesus' love for his disciples, who in turn are called to bear witness to the Spirit for the world:

¹² This is my commandment: love one another as I have loved you. ¹³ No one can have greater love than to lay down his life for his friends. ¹⁴ You are my friends, if you do what I command you. ¹⁵ I shall no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know the master's business; I call you friends, because I have made known to you everything I have learnt from my Father. ¹⁶ You did not choose me, no, I chose you; and I commissioned you to go out and to bear fruit, fruit that will last; so that the Father will give you anything you ask him in my name. ¹⁷ My command to you is to love one another (Jn 15:12-17).

In this way John's Gospel proposes a mission open to new scenarios, having as a reference the humble encounter of Jesus with his disciples, whom he calls friends, thus eliminating any power relation that could exist among them. Another important aspect of John's proposal is that Jesus chooses his friends: his disciples are those who reap the harvest of the Father's sending of Jesus' Spirit into the world. In this perspective, the protagonist of mission is no longer the missionary; on the contrary, mission is Uni-Trinitarian, with the Holy Spirit as the protagonist.

Therefore whoever believes in Jesus (disciple) has the task of adopting a humble attitude of listening and learning with regard to emerging subjects (new generations, migrants, the marginalised, social and existential poor, indigenous peoples, people of African descent...) who live in the new scenarios that are in constant transformation.

2. From a traditional missiology (mono-disciplinary) to a missiology in process trans-disciplinary

According to the traditional post-Conciliar approach, missiology is considered to be "the science of mission", with mission understood, in line with *Ad Gentes*, nn. 2, 6, as *Missio Dei* and, in the plural, as the missionary action of the Church (generally the Catholic Church). In other words, missiology has the task of elaborating a *systematic* theology of mission, making firm its biblical-theological foundations, scopes, dimensions, levels, expressions.... In this regard Karl Müller refers to missiology as: "the systematic study of the Church's evangelising action and the means it uses to carry this out", as it is about "a scientific study of the missionary situation, where the Church's scientific discipline and the missionary charism enrich each other mutually".⁵ Or, as another author puts it, it is "that branch of theology which goes deeper into God's revelation, which is the origin of the missionary command, and its intimate relation with the Church, with different methodological focuses – but always from the starting point of theology".⁶



According to Juan Gorski, a researcher at the Latin American Institute of Missiology of the Theology Faculty of Cochabamba, "missiology is that discipline that accompanies, analyses and orients the Church's missionary activity, as distinct from pastoral attention to those who are already evangelised, members of mature ecclesial communities and fervent in Christian faith and life".⁷

These approaches highlight the pluralistic character of academic methods and their relation to the polyvalent reality in which the Christian presence unfolds. However, they demonstrate a perspective that is centred in Christian theology, towards which all other disciplines must conflate. Moreover, this centrality is often reduced to the ecclesial sphere (generally Catholic), from which to contemplate, to structure or to systematise the Christian missionary reality. We could say that it is about an open mono-disciplinary missiology, which takes other academic reflections into account, but these do not necessarily affect or change that particular perspective on Christian mission.

In recent years it has been said that contextual mission questions *missiological reflection*, its univocal, monocultural and uni-disciplinary way of approaching reality, and invites it to open itself to an *interdisciplinary perspective*, that is, missiology ought to welcome the plurality of scientific methods creatively. The North American theologian Robert Schreiter has asked: What type of discipline should missiology be? He insists on seeing it more as "a field of study about the source of progress of the world Church which is located in a variety of disciplines",⁸ as much theological as socio-humanist. That is to say, if theology traditionally found its support in philosophy, in what measure is it capable of *renewing* itself today in dialogue with disciplines like sociology, cultural anthropology, pedagogy, psychology... without losing its own identity? What *orientations* should the *content* of a *missiology of the future* include? This tension or quest for balance between a determined theological inheritance, certainly valid, and the new methodological demands arising at the present moment, represents one of the most urgent challenges facing the missiological task.

In an epoch of intercultural and interreligious encounter, missiology will play a significant role in the future as an academic discipline, if it can present itself simultaneously as self-critical in theological and ecclesial terms, and as a bridge with other disciplines so as to make a new global

Christianity credible in its diverse expressions, in both academic and practical terms.⁹ The current new scenarios and the progress of the human, social and "hard" sciences challenge missiology to incorporate these and to reconsider its rationale, not just so as to assume an inclusive position,

but also because of being *avant-garde* with multiple frontiers. Thus, it could really let itself be influenced by the wealth of experience and methodologies of other disciplines. Ultimately it is about a process of seeking a trans-disciplinary missiology.

This frontier thinking could already be seen in biblical times. John's Gospel, different to other movements that had arisen in that epoch, like Hellenism, Mysticism and Gnosticism, among others,¹⁰ presents a proposal which is not based on a given theory about life, but rather on life itself in the light of the fulfilment of Jesus' command: "love one another as I have loved you" (Jn 15:12). The big challenge which John's community posed was precisely that of offering a lifestyle that was able to bear witness to its following of Jesus, without half measures.

a. Missiology as a trans-disciplinary art: a daily process of learning

The prefix "trans" comes from the Latin "*trans*" ("through, beyond"), which, in current Spanish, usually has three closely related meanings: a) "beyond", "on the other side of", "on the opposite side", as in the following nouns, adjectives or verbs: transnational, trans-Atlantic, to transport, to move; b) "through", as in: transduction, translucent, to transmit, trans-Atlantic, transparent; c) change or disruption, as in the verbs: to transform, to transfer, to transliterate, to transplant, to disrupt.¹¹

In general the terms denote, on the one hand, a *movement or initial process* with the aim of attaining an objective or *final situation* different from the first, by means of diverse paths, styles and mediations. It is a dynamic process, complex, open, not in any way linear, but rather subject to fluctuations and contradictions; it implies a continual process of daily learning, for which a lot of listening and openness is needed, as much to one's own interiority as to external voices or noises. On the other hand, the prefix "trans" acquires consistency, density and foundation, and at the same time creative improvement, in its deep rapport with the multiple realities expressed by the various verbs and nouns. In summary, "trans" expresses complex movement, traditional density and the creative improvement of the different realities that exist, which define and condition both mission in its diverse contexts and missiological reflection.

Among other concretions or particularisations of what is "trans", with its three characteristics, we can appreciate with greater clarity the transpersonal of the concrete process that every human person assumes with him or herself. In the same way in the trans-relational and the trans-cultural, which are some of the central features of common living in every human group, called to live the present moment with meaning and intensity. At the same time, in the very process of theoretical, existential and practical self-understanding of personal and communitarian life, an integrating, proposing, multiple, open, critical-reflexive position is needed, which can be termed trans-disciplinary. These transpersonal, trans-relational and trans-disciplinary concretions are sustained and founded, paradoxically, in the *transitory*,¹² which acquires solidity and ultimate foundation in the divine Three in One Mystery, which in the Incarnation takes on all human-cosmic limitations and uncertainty in order to give it full and definitive meaning.

In the more reflexive academic or "scientific" field today, it is about overcoming those dichotomies (reason and experience; theory and practice; spirit and material; science and art ...) and classifications (exact and experimental sciences; empirical and speculative sciences; human and social sciences ...) proper to a certain way of doing theology, with the aim of aspiring to a more relational, integrating and harmonious vision of mutual learning. Evidently, such reflection also needs to be in tune with the aspirations and search of men and women of good will, especially those restless groups – such as ecclesial subjects – that generate, build, recover and live socio-cultural, political, economic and religious tendencies with a critical spirit, which are not always respectful of full human life in the personal, relational and environmental areas.

Presupposing what has already been said, it is necessary to speak of *trans-disciplinarity*, a concept that is understood as "integrated forms of investigation" which treat, and take on, in a serious, deep and broad manner "the problematic ensembles" of a given *reality* considered complex, transitory, bio-diverse.... This methodological perspective or, better still, *attitude*, welcomes various scientific perceptions towards approaching reality. Therefore it is urgent to relate in an ever more self-critical, deep and appropriate way to those perceptions of reality that were once seen as antagonistic: abstract knowledge and specific cases, theory and practice, the whole

and the part, academic reflection and living narratives. This interrelation will help overcome, for example, the opposition between "basic knowledge" and "applied knowledge" in order to focus on "the framework of dynamic structurings and heterogenic and transitory groupings".¹³

From this a particular style of academic investigation arises "which can only emerge if the participation of experts interacts in the form of open discussion and dialogue, accepting every perspective as of equal importance and relating the different perspectives among themselves".¹⁴ Effectively, the social and human sciences, and even the "hard" sciences like physics, mathematics and biology, are constantly rereading their own readings, standpoints or methodological approaches to reality in their own spheres. In traditional terms, the various disciplines are reconsidering not only their "object" or field of study, which includes greater listening and methodological integration with other disciplines, but they are also gradually reconfiguring the very "epistemological statute" (or rules) in the perspective of greater interrelation and mutual learning. In other words, these sciences seem to be assuming more and more a trans-disciplinary perspective.

This valid method of scientific investigation also applies to theology or missiology, like their Latin American counterparts which always seek to tune into, critically reflect and allow themselves to be questioned by, *the total reality* of their own surroundings. Whoever does missiology needs a mental and ethical attitude open to a true and profound *encounter*, which recognises its own limits and opens itself to other valid methods, always seeking the truth, transcending any personal effort or achievement.

A *new* missiology implies assuming a trans-disciplinary character, whether in its method or expression, as well as in its foundation or epistemological statute. That is to say, not only as a moment in a process, but as its very rationale, which in definitive represents an academic *attitude* to life. Theological reflection or missiology has to return to its Patristic origins of mutual implication and relation between pastoral praxis (life narrated), theoretical foundations (systematic reflection) and prophetic-mystagogical experience (encounter with Mystery).¹⁵ It means seeking with imagination and creativity a deeper vital understanding of the Mystery of God, Three in One.

Below we shall indicate some characteristics of this missiological task in the trans-disciplinary process, some of whose features emerged on questioning the other disciplines, especially complex thinking and cosmological physics,¹⁶ and they are reflected in the Biblical and theological sources.

b. The universe in space and time: the principle of interrelated movement

We shall first approach the category "universe", aware of the dangers involved in using "uni", as it can conceal closed postures of pseudo-dogmatic appropriation, not only in the field of theology and missiology, but above all in the so-called "new or hard" sciences, which formulate the question in the light of the reshaping of their own "academic" statute.

In this context, the Cartesian dimensions, assumed from the certainties of knowledge, were converted into laws or norms and sustained in a position of transcendental appropriation, and led to the quest for the *uni* in the theological appropriation of all that is denied by anthropocentric certainty, which today is called into question. Nevertheless, if we return to the academic statute, we find some interesting questions and insights from a *pluri* proposal, which would lead us to speak of a *pluriverse*, that is, assume what is uni-versal as pluri-versal. In other words, it concerns a new viewpoint, or other ways of seeing and speaking, which opens to the u-chronic and the utopic, and that is built on faith and life standpoints. It is about assuming the *pluri* as a new key with which to approach and question static postures.

Therefore an urgent challenge is to assume the quality of *dynamism* as a continual presence in the universe, that is, as the possibility of generating reflection, dialogue and celebration. This dynamic posture implies a profound contemplative attitude for Missiology, which opens itself beyond the apparently academic of the old or the new sciences, which precisely in this quest for their epistemic statute often fall once again into a static posture. This return to the static, from a theological viewpoint, means to fall into *new forms of idolatry*. In other words, Missiology must always be a science in motion and with movement.

To consider a Missiology in motion opens us not only to other peoples and cultures in the anthropological sense, for example the so-called aboriginal cultures, but also to newly emerging cultures. Moreover, it is urgent that we discover the hermeneutic contribution of the different sciences, which will allow us to take the epistemic leap from the "pluri" to the "trans". This is important, as it permits us to interrelate proposals and postures in the light of the nomadic, allowing us to accompany the presence/absence of the unknown God, which is expressed in new forms of participation in space and time, both old and new.

We can identify three important axes of reflection and inflection with regard to the new forms of nomadism of today:

- a) Living beings constantly build new niches or renew vital spaces, in a continual process of *autopoiesis* and heterodoxies, using both tradition and innovation, which are key aspects for the maintenance, support, construction and de-construction of various cultures.
- b) The sciences are in movement and searching, and they need to open themselves to the multi, the pluri and the trans as basic instruments of nearness and distance in mission. No one academic subject can attribute to itself the possession of the one and only truth.
- c) The certainty of uncertainty makes us constantly seek and discover the seeds of the Kingdom and its fruits, which have often undergone a series of mutations and are perceived through the continual exercise of contemplation-action.

From the biblical New Testament viewpoint, John's Church met not only the new cosmopolitan world of Asia Minor, where religious beliefs and various cults were swarming, but it also sought to study its form of life and understand and translate its message in new ways, inserting itself in history and in the world in which it was called to live. Naturally, this ever new quest was not exempt from danger and difficulty.¹⁷

Effectively, the world of John's Gospel was made up of Galileans, Jews, Greeks, people from Transjordan and Samaria. Each one of these groups had its own culture and views about the world and about God, like for example the Zelots, the Essenes, marginalised groups (cf. Jn 15:3,14-20), with whom Jesus related on the basis of friendship¹⁸. This Gospel is constructed (and expresses itself) in a narrative way about a pluralistic and diverse community.

In the same Gospel Jesus deconstructs scenarios with his attitude towards real people, people who are mainly marginalised, like the Samaritan woman (cf. Jn 4), the sick man in Bethesda (cf. Jn 5), the woman caught in adultery (cf. Jn 8), the man born blind (cf. Jn 9), Mary of Bethany (cf. Jn 12), and Mary of Magdala and Thomas (cf. Jn 20) who make a personal journey in order to recognise the Risen Jesus. Mary's partial blindness and Thomas' search for evidence help both of them to meet Jesus personally, without fearing rejection. In both cases they can contemplate the Risen Jesus, and later give a living witness of faith to him in their lives and daily actions.

c. Missiology in the Face of an Uncertain Reality: doubt as an attitude of faith

In the Second Testament, one of the people John's community presents within the scope of uncertainty is without doubt Thomas (cf. Jn 20:19-31). For a long time this disciple represented a negative figure, that of doubt. He was seen as the person who was not capable of believing in the witness of the other disciples. More recently there has been a rereading of Thomas' personality, as someone who can inspire a missiological attitude critical of reality.

It is important to remember that we do not have concrete data about the authorship and date of the redaction of John's Gospel. It seems that the author did not directly know the Synoptic Gospels, but was familiar with the synoptic or a pre-synoptic tradition.¹⁹ In the light of a reading of the text it may be appreciated that the author (or authors) had knowledge of Hebrew culture, of the Hellenic world and of the Septuagint.²⁰

The redaction of this Gospel is dated to the first²¹ or second²² century. There are various theories as to where it was written, from western Asia, the north of Syria and Egypt, to Palestine.²³ In general the lack of these concrete data is disconcerting; leaving it open to the possibility of thinking that this Gospel was nomadic and that various Johannine communities, or those that followed their charism, contributed to its redaction.

The Gospel of John is a confessional narrative about Jesus of Nazareth, not a theological treatise; precisely for this reason, its theology (= discourse about God) is subsumed to Christology (discourse about Christ), as with the story of Jesus the question of who is God is posed anew, the one shown in and through the flesh of Jesus, his Word (*Lógos*) and his Son.²⁴

One of the aims of the Fourth Gospel is to comfort Christians in their faith (cf. Jn 20:31). In this way it becomes, according to Ernst, a book of faith.²⁵ Bearing this in mind, among the disciples Thomas' interesting figure appears, who asks for proof of one of Christianity's messages, Jesus' Resurrection.

Remembering what was said in Tagaytay, the Philippines, Jesus appears before Thomas with the same features with which he had presented himself to the other disciples, that is so there is no distinction between them. He respects Thomas' position and even uses the verb "*pepísteukas*" in

their dialogue: "You believe because you can see me (*pepísteukas*). Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe".²⁶ "These two phrases are centred in «to believe», and they specify two ways of reaching faith: that of Thomas, and that of future disciples".²⁷ This phrase is not an interrogative, and thus can be interpreted as Jesus' congratulations to Thomas for having believed.²⁸ "Effectively, against the tradition that says that faith is not-seeing, «to see» in John is not opposed to «to believe», but rather leads to it; this is what Jesus had promised....".²⁹

Thomas is "committed and generous, but pragmatic and direct, someone who doesn't conform to what others affirm, if he himself doesn't confirm it; he only asks for a bit more of what others have had: to verify that the One who Appeared is the One who was Crucified".³⁰ Thomas' attitude may reflect the current situation of some Christians who wish to remain faithful to their faith and have doubts, not so much about their own path in life, but rather about their active participation in deep knowledge of God. New urban spaces are adult, diverse and pluralistic, and they wish to understand the Word of God and the Institution that has been administering it and continues to do so.

Because of Thomas's uncertainty he was the only one who could have touched the Risen Jesus.³¹ The Fourth Gospel remains silent on this point, but it does clarify that Thomas could recognise Jesus in the light of the personal encounter that he had with him. Precisely from this moment Thomas is qualified for mission. As distinct from the Synoptics, in John's Gospel Jesus does not send the disciples on mission until after the Resurrection.³² This aspect has Trinitarian implications, which we will see in the following point.

Another distinctive personality in this Gospel is Mary of Magdala (cf. Jn 20), who represents the new Johannine community.³³ In the Synoptics she sees the Risen Jesus with a group of other women (cf. Mt 28; Mk 16; Lk 24), while in John's Gospel she is alone,³⁴ her testimony is unique and merits "the title of 'apostle of the Apostles' that the Fathers of the Church gave her"³⁵.

The Gospel states that it was very early in the morning when Mary went to the tomb (cf. Jn 20:1).³⁶ It was neither day nor night, as when Jesus met Nicodemus (cf. Jn 3:2) or when Judas took and ate the piece of bread before leaving the Cenacle to betray Jesus (cf. Jn 13:30). At first she does not recognise the Risen One,³⁷ as his appearance is unfamiliar to her. She recognises him when Jesus calls her by her name, "Mary". She turned round then and said to him in Hebrew, 'Rabboní' - which means 'Master' (Jn 20:16). Once again the central element is the personal encounter with the Risen Jesus that qualifies her to be the first messenger of the Resurrection.

The first word that Jesus says to Mary is "Woman, why are you weeping?" (Jn 20:13). As we have said, this Gospel places marginalised people as the protagonists of Jesus' dialogues and encounters, in this case a woman who is alone and who cannot recognise him. Thus the Gospel presents us with a Johannine community that is learning to see by day and take on its missionary responsibility in the light of what it is, humble, simple yet creative and brave, which in spite of its marginal condition is able to spread the Good News. Having to let go of Jesus, this community is called to take the steps that will lead it to the "other Paraclete" which is the Holy Spirit. In 15:18-27 Jesus had already prepared his disciples for the time of persecution that would come because of him, at the same time encouraging it to follow this way of fraternal love as a sign of belonging to Jesus, the Son of God.

"She is not only the first to see the Risen Christ and the apostle of the Apostles, but also the bearer of *the* message of new creation (cf. 1 Jn 3:1-2). Jesus entrusted it to her, even though he was very conscious that the testimony of women did not count for much in Jewish culture".³⁸ In his encounter with the Samaritan woman (cf. Jn 4) we can see how he broke the moulds that relegated people to the margins. He restores their dignity, trusting them with the Word and making them his messengers. Only in chapter 20 does the Risen One send his disciples, and in the last chapter (21) he entrusts Peter with his flock. Some consider that this text is a later addition.

Therefore mission is translated into being "disciples of Jesus [...] called to bear witness to his risen life, breaking the barriers of sin and division in our hearts and communities".³⁹ Jesus' denominative "disciples" reminds us of the humble and learning attitude that is needed in the plan of proclaiming the Word that became a human being. Do we maintain these human and humanising roots in the work of mission? With what presuppositions do we forge spaces of encounter to dialogue with the other, with someone who is different, with someone who is marginalised? The Gospel proposes an open frontier attitude that can negotiate different languages and forms of communication with the world. According to Pronzato, we cannot understand the

Johannine community with rigid ideas about God and the world.⁴⁰ However this should not prevent us from taking a determined faith position. For although John is radical, he is not a fanatic.⁴¹

d. *Missiology as Reciprocity and Complementarity: an itinerant and nomadic style*

The first chapter of John's Gospel presents us with the Word who is itinerant and nomadic:

¹ In the beginning was the Word; the Word was with God and the Word was God. ¹⁴ The Word became flesh, he lived among us, and we saw his glory, the glory that he has from the Father as the only Son of the Father, full of grace and truth. ³² And John declared, «I saw the Spirit come down on him like a dove from heaven and rest on him. ³³ I did not know him myself, but he who sent me to baptise with water had said to me, 'The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and rest is the One who is to baptise with the Holy Spirit'. ³⁴ I have seen and I testify that he is the Chosen One of God (Jn 1:1,14,32-34).

In these verses we can observe the process of complementarity of the persons who form the Trinity, which is based in God the Father sending his only begotten Son, Jesus, who in turn is full of the Spirit, whom he will send to his disciples after his Resurrection. This Trinitarian aspect connotes a path of humility, given that the only ones sent are Jesus and the Spirit. The only thing that his followers do is to gather those fruits of the Spirit in the world.⁴²

The first verse of John's Prologue makes reference to the unity that exists between the Word and God, that is to say the unity of the Father with the Son. This unity goes back to the beginning of time. Therefore this Trinitarian unity does not have its origin when the Word becomes incarnate in the world. Both Father and Son have always been coexisting and creating. There is no separation between the God and the first Covenant and the God of the renewal of the Covenant. This aspect is important because the Johannine community is composed of Jewish-Christians, who knew the First Testament well. This knowledge is required also of those who read the Fourth Gospel, because unless they do the text is reduced to symbols and a spiritualist reading, thus going against the purpose of the Gospel, which is to recognise that "Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing this you may have life through his name" (Jn 21:31). This unity of God with the Son should promote life, and this is exactly what Jesus does, he lives his humanity fully. John presents us with "a concrete Jesus, a Jew (4:9), who reacts violently to the abuses in the Temple (2:13-17), who gets tired (4:6), who flees (6:15), who is obliged to hide (8:59; 12:36b), who lives like someone persecuted (11:54-57), who has friends (11:5; cf. 2:1), who weeps (11:35,38), who gets anxious (12:27) and thirsty (4:7; cf. 19:28)".⁴³

A key aspect of the Gospel is friendship, which emphasises the unity of Jesus with the Father and with his own:

¹² This is my commandment: love one another, as I have loved you. ¹³ No one can have greater love than to lay down his life for his friends. ¹⁴ You are my friends, if you do what I command you. ¹⁵ I shall no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know the master's business; I call you friends, because I have made known to you everything I have learnt from my Father (Jn 15:12-15).

One of the theological lines that John's Gospel pursues is precisely that all that the Son receives from the Father passes to those who welcome Jesus in their lives.

Jesus offers gifts to those who receive them. The verses 12-13 [of Jn 1] carefully describe the new birth of those who receive (that is, who believe in) the Word. They receive "power to become children of God". The word that we translate by "children" designates blood relation. Believers are children of God and siblings among themselves in the same way as children of human fathers and mothers. Concretely, this capacitating power is the Holy Spirit, the principle of new birth in God (cf. 3:3-8; 7:37-39).⁴⁴

Jesus as the Word Incarnate pitched his tent, his dwelling, in the midst of humanity, taking it on in all its dimensions, except sin.

Verse 14 alludes to God's glory, which will be contemplated in the light of God's humanity, and not by means of God's divinity. This human proposal of meeting with God's glory is a novelty for a Hellenistic world, where the form of perception is dualist. In this way the Johannine community does not propose another theory about the divine, but rather a concrete form: daily life. The challenge is precisely to make visible that the Word pitched his tent in the world. Rhetoric is no longer the means to share the following of Jesus, recognised as the Christ, but rather life itself which wants to let itself be touched and guided by this Incarnate Word.

Verse 32 relates how John the Baptist sees the Spirit of God who comes down from heaven and rests on Jesus. Once again we see this movement of God so as to be present in the world. God chooses Jesus, who in turn chooses his disciples (cf. Jn 15:16) and those to whom he will give the gift of the Holy Spirit (cf. Jn 20:22). The Johannine community understands baptism as a new creation, as being born again (cf. Jn 3:3,7), in the light of this personal encounter with God by means of his Word who becomes incarnate and is vivified by his Spirit.

Just as the Son comes from the Father, so too the Spirit has its origin in him: ²⁶ "When the Paraclete comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who issues from the Father, he will be my witness. ²⁷ And you too will be witnesses, because you have been with me from the beginning" (Jn 15:26-27; cf. 8:42; 14:16; 15:26; 16:27-30; 17:8). This Spirit is also sent by Jesus himself (cf. Jn 15:26; 16:7), who in turn will remain for ever with the disciples (cf. Jn 14:16-17). *"His mission will be to teach them everything that Christ couldn't say to them and, in the same way Christ will not speak 'on his own account', limiting himself to transmitting that which he has heard from the Father, 16:12-15".*⁴⁵ This complementarity within the Trinitarian aspect emphasises the care of those who will be sent to gather the fruit of God's Spirit. They are not the protagonists of mission, but servants of the Word who became flesh and dwelt among us.

How and in what manner do we intend to go about the New Evangelisation? We remember that John's Gospel is not proselyte; it is self-critical and encourages the living of Christ's love in the community, and that this living bear witness to the world of being Jesus' disciples (cf. Jn 13:35).⁴⁶ According to Bartolomé, John prefers to use the words:

(to love, truth, to generate, to know, to bear witness, to believe, to remain, to hate, to keep, commandment, life, cosmos); [... he avoids] (to evangelise, to receive, to preach, to exhort, apostle, scribe, power, hope, announcement, gospel, parable, faith, wisdom) [...]. The members of the community recognise each other as friends (3 Jn 15; cf. Jn 11:11; 15:14-15), children (13:33; 1 Jn 2:1, 12, 28; 3:7, 18; 4:4; 5:21), [of God] (1:12; 11:52; 1 Jn 3:1, 2, 10; 5:2; 1 Jn 1:4,13; 3 Jn 4) or brothers (20:17; 21:23, 3 Jn 3, 45, 10)⁴⁷.

Observing this vocabulary, the challenge for the Johannine community is to give a living testimony, not spoken, which is much more difficult because life itself becomes the tent where the Word will dwell. In the light of being a tent and itinerant, a new Trinitarian proposal of mission begins, as we have already said, based on life itself, undertaken from a humble yet innovative attitude. In this way the purpose of the Gospel will have been fulfilled, to promote life and life in abundance.

e. Missiology as Contemplation of the Cosmos-Mystery: the principle of harmony

The [W]orld's wildfire, leaves but ash: In a flash, at a trumpet blast, I am all at once what Christ is, since he was what I am [...].⁴⁸

i. The ecological paradigm

Cosmologies are rooted in scientific, religious and/or philosophical principles and are concerned with the origins of the universe. A given cosmology forms our perceptions of reality, giving us a common world view that permeates all areas and gives meaning to our lives. A cosmology gives rise to a paradigm, which has been defined by Thomas Kuhn in terms of a particular vision of reality rooted in a set of shared ideas, values, perceptions and practices, which forms the basis for the organisation of a community.⁴⁹ In the case of a scientific community, a paradigm determines the methodology of scientific investigation, the type of questions that can be posed and the type of explanation to be sought. The paradigm functions as a framework within which experimental data can be interpreted. The change from the Newtownian paradigm to that of quantum physics has been truly revolutionary,⁵⁰ and forms the basis for the unfolding of the ecological paradigm.

The advent of the Illustration meant the loss of a functional cosmology in Europe, with the consequence that the universe, seen as something that happened by chance, without shape or purpose, became a hostile and meaningless place for industrialised societies. The tendency has been to fill this emptiness with a logic of consumerism, deaf to the sounds of Nature and to the cries of the poor. In the face of exploitation, domination, oppression and its consequences, we need a new vision of the universe that can inspire, impell and sustain us towards the grand transformations that are urgently needed for the survival of complex and diverse life forms,⁵¹ for the promotion of respect for human dignity, of solidarity, justice and peace.

In the light of contemporary science, an emerging new cosmology admits a beginning, a form and even a purpose to the cosmos. The perspective of the "big bang" indicates the fundamental unity of the cosmos, as everything proceeds from the same source and all particles are somehow interrelated. The delicate balance between the tendencies towards expansion and contraction, mediated by the extremely finely calibrated force of gravity, suggests that the cosmos has not arisen by chance. It exists in a dynamic process of unfolding, an evolution towards ever more complex forms of life and even of consciousness, which is only possible through the inherent capacity for relationship among created things, the dynamic force towards communion. The process of evolution of the cosmos makes it acquire an ever greater capacity for communion, which in turn opens up to new relationships and creates further degrees of union. Relationship permits combinations and the emergence of new and diverse life forms, and beings tend to progress towards forming more complex units. Among the diverse organisms that inhabit our planet Earth, cooperation and symbiosis are of greater importance for flourishing than competition and the survival of the fittest.⁵²

Ecological consciousness makes us more aware of the interconnection and interdependence of all living organisms. Natural life is constituted by networks of reciprocal relationships, at the levels of biochemistry, cells, organisms, habitats, human society and the very universe. These relationships take place both *ad intra* and *ad extra*, for example among chromosomes at the intracellular level, and between one cell and another. Ecological consciousness challenges us to open ourselves to the dynamic and evolutionary magnitudes of the universe, to the multiple connections that unfold within it whether in macro or micro proportions, and to our place within this whole scale of things.

The ecological paradigm is revealed by the complexity of the organisation of biological and social life, and it is through this paradigm that we can organise our thought and knowledge in terms of interdisciplinary systems. The Modern paradigm, moulded by the world-view of Newtonian physics, has dominated the Western world-view. It is marked by instrumental reason, the idea of unlimited progress, laws of cause and effect, and analytical methods that separate the components of a given reality, reaching deductions through the accumulation of evidence. In contrast, the ecological paradigm is holistic as it approaches the wholeness of a given reality and not its parts. The parts are in the whole and the whole is entirely in the parts. The whole is more than the sum of the parts, and the parts cannot be separated from the whole⁵³.

The ecological paradigm sustains epistemologies that embrace narrative, myths, images, metaphors, symbols, trans-disciplinarity and inter-culturality. It also sustains philosophical and theological perceptions that see the person as a "being in relation", and being as "becoming" and "communion".⁵⁴

ii. *The cosmos: the fruit of chance or teleology?*

Albert Einstein's cosmic theory of relativity and Werner Heisenberg's uncertainty principle at the level of quantum physics have been important twentieth century landmarks in dethroning Newtonian determinism. More recently genetic determinism has been subjected to revision, because for all the brilliance of neo-Darwinism, it cannot account for many aspects of new characteristics and adaptations that occur in living organisms. Genetic determinism is also subject to doubt from the theory of morphic resonance, which postulates that "morphic fields", non-material areas of influence that constitute latent organisational tendencies, guide the development of living beings.⁵⁵

In "closed systems", for example the universe considered as a whole, the law of entropy prevails, that is the inherent tendency towards disorder and disintegration, towards a chaos which augments over time. On the contrary "open systems", for example the living human body, receive energy from outside through food, in the process exporting entropy in organic waste. Open systems are characterised by complex structures and self-organisation, which emerge spontaneously through contingencies of Nature.⁵⁶

Contingency refers to what happens but does not necessarily have to happen. One viewpoint is that the universe, the ecosystems and their evolution, are the result of chance. For some people chance is totally random and without meaning; for others, apparently random contingencies happen within a plan and an orientation towards a goal. If this goal is considered as God, teleology does not have to contradict randomness, as God can act through chance. In the Jewish-Christian perspective, God is experienced as acting within *history* through various contingencies, for

example the Exodus.⁵⁷ This history, understood and lived as salvation history, progresses linearly like an "arrow" through time until it reaches its consummation or, in cosmological terms, until reaching what Teilhard de Chardin calls its Christic Omega point.⁵⁸ An Omega point for the universe suggests that there is also an Alpha point, an absolute beginning at God's initiative (cf. Rev 22:13).

iii. *A reading from a faith perspective: Creation according to Genesis 1*

The Christian doctrine of Creation exists in a certain tension between opening itself to incorporate the fruits of religious and philosophical investigation about the cosmos that offer a universal interpretation for the existence of our world, and the special experience of God's saving action in and through the particular history of the People of Israel.⁵⁹

The ordered account of the first chapter of Genesis reveals the aetiological intention of the priestly author, not in cosmogenic terms as such but rather in the light of faith in YHWH Creator. The intention is to show that the same God who led the people out of slavery in Egypt, and accompanied them in their tough experience of exile, is the Creator of the world.

The first verses of this account admit various translations, offering a richness of interpretation.⁶⁰ "In [or at] the beginning God created heaven and earth" "En el (o al) principio creó Dios el cielo y la tierra"⁶¹ (Gen 1:1) functions as a heading that introduces and synthesises the rest of the priestly narrative of creation. It does not refer to a creation that took place before that of the seven days, from the appearance of light onwards. Rather it is an announcement that "it is God who has called into being the *totality* of all that now exists, that is, heaven and earth"⁶².

Genesis 1 describes the creation of the world ("heaven and earth") in terms of the ordering of the chaos of a hostile and desert earth, in darkness, and of the waters that are a cipher for confusion. The chaos in itself was not created by God. The mythical vision of the priestly authors could not conceive of an absolute "nothing" that contrasts with God's creation that marks the beginning of time. Rather they see the creative act as the action of bringing about order, harmony and beauty, as the "transformation of chaos into cosmos".⁶³ "God's breath is already over the chaos and in the creative act it is changed into voice, into the word of God that banishes chaos".⁶⁴ This word of God which becomes action overcomes that which was "pre-created" "pre-creado".⁶⁵ God has power over the chaos and over the cosmos, which God orders in the service of life.⁶⁶

"In the beginning when God created heaven and earth [...] the earth was an unformed and chaotic mass [...] God said: 'Let there be light'"⁶⁷ (Gen 1:1-3) is a translation that suggests a creative *process* and its dynamic unfolding. Both time and space are God's creatures. The universe that emerges by the creative word is not reduced to its temporal beginning, as the creative divine will and action both found and sustain "the total spatial-temporal existence of our universe from its beginning point to its final instant".⁶⁸ The "ontological" dependence of the world with regard to God's creative will that sustains it exists simultaneously with its autonomy and self-evolution, the first being the condition of possibility for the second. "The *creatio continua* is the consequence of God's unconditional *fidelity*",⁶⁹ even when humanity's response is sinful.

"As the beginning God created heaven and earth"⁷⁰ (Gen 1:1) is a translation that points towards a "beginning" that *qualifies* everything that follows, the beginning of salvation history and not just a temporal beginning. The universe has not been created randomly, but from the Trinitarian God's freedom and love, that orients it towards the goal of "full communion between the Creator and creation in the Reign of God",⁷¹ beyond the inherent possibilities in created reality. This is what we understand by "salvation". It has to do with "a new gift of God to this creation: an authentic 'new creation'".⁷² This novelty will be attained inasmuch as there is free human cooperation with God's plan, and in turn will include the whole of creation (cf. Rom 8:19-22). Creation is always on the move, it journeys towards its own fullness, even though there will be steps backwards when a grateful and generous response to God's gift and call is lacking.

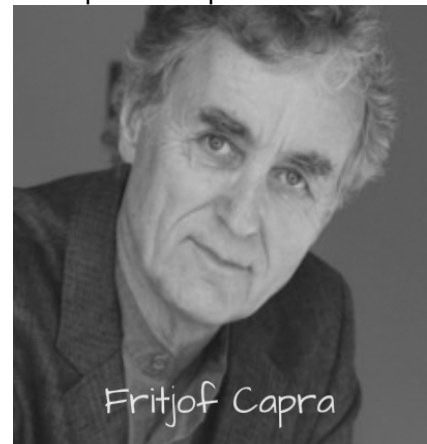
iv. *The Trinity: communion that overflows in Creation and History*

The early Christian communities experienced the revelation of the Trinity as the communion of the Father, Son and Spirit. They experienced the Father as present and active in creation and in history; they recognised in Jesus of Nazareth the Son Incarnate; they discovered the Spirit at work in their lives and communities, moving them to acknowledge the fatherhood of God and the Son's saving actions that continue to unfold in our history. Without falling into tritheism, they intuited one God of love, who communicates and shares life in fullness. One God in Three Persons who are eternally interrelated in a free and spontaneous dynamic of *perichoresis*, mutually giving and receiving, that creates and sustains inclusion and communion.⁷³

God is not the solitariness of one, but rather the communion of three divine persons. This intratrinitarian communion is inherently expansive as it is oriented towards sharing itself with what

is different from itself, at the level of the finite and temporal. Created reality is this "other" that is different and is freely invited to be included in this communion in companionship. The world was created from nothing by the Father, through the Son and in the Spirit. Each of the divine persons contributes a specific quality to created reality, so there is difference, great variety, and at the same time an orientation towards convergence and communion. This dynamic of unity in diversity reflects the inner life of the Trinity. All beings are images and likenesses of the Trinity, revealing something of each divine energy, in varying degrees: paternity and maternity, fraternity and sorority, spirituality of love and union.⁷⁴

The cosmos and all of human life and history are structured in and through the Trinity. Although sinful actions and structures make it more difficult to perceive the signs of the Trinity, in faith we receive strength and creativity to persevere, resist sin and transform the world.⁷⁵



Fritjof Capra affirms what we have already seen, that modern physics can no longer limit itself to an explanation of matter in terms of elemental particles, indeed it cannot elude acknowledging that the universe is a web of interrelated events. No one natural phenomenon can be explained without the others. He sees this as a reflection of Trinitarian *perichoresis* within creation.⁷⁶ Communion is the basis for Trinitarian *perichoresis*, which expresses the presence of each divine Person in the other two in intimacy, distinction and freedom. Each Person "exists" in terms of its relationship with the others.⁷⁷ All beings bear witness to this *perichoresis* in an ontological sense, because to be is to be in communion. "In a Trinitarian theology of creation, *all* creatures participate in the life of Trinitarian Communion, and their differentiated relationships with each other are already a limited creaturely reflection of this divine Communion".⁷⁸

The logic of interacting relationships is the fundamental logic of cosmogenesis and of the ecological paradigm. God is relationship and communion; everything in the cosmos lives in relationship, everything is in communion with everything everywhere and at every moment. Everything that comes into being is a sacrament of the Trinity.⁷⁹

Denis Edwards acknowledges our relationship with all creatures as we share in common with them God's creative action in the beginning, God's continuous creation and the destiny given us towards "new creation". At the same time he speaks of our specific human dignity and responsibility: created in the image and likeness of God, we are called to a graced relationship with the Trinity, and to be collaborators in God's continuous creation.⁸⁰

Relationality and the tendency towards union that characterise created reality, along with the strong anthropic principle that acknowledges the very fine balance in the biosphere which permits biological life, are sustained by the Trinitarian relationship and communion. "In the world-view that I am proposing, continuous creation can be understood as created being-in-relation springing from the divine Communion understood as Persons-in-Relation".⁸¹ Cosmic life is effectively a participation in Trinitarian life:

Divine transcenden[ce] and divine immanence in creation are understood not as polar opposites but as presupposing each other.... It is precisely when God is understood as transcendent that God can be thought of as immanent in creatures in a way that is not possible for a finite created being. It is because God is wholly other that God can be *interior intimo meo*. In this form of all-things-in-God, then, the infinite ontological distinction between God and creature is maintained. It is precisely this distinction that enables God to be understood as radically *interior* to creation.⁸²

The question of God's immanence and transcendence with regard to creation has been the subject of oscillating viewpoints through the centuries. The perspective of pantheism limits itself to divine immanence, God-in-the-world, seeing God and creation as effectively of the same nature. The viewpoint of deism considers only divine transcendence, God-above-the-world, God as the divine architect who subsequently withdraws from creation and lets it develop according to its own inherent laws. Only a Trinitarian concept of God permits us to maintain in harmony both the essential difference between God and the world and the mutual relationship between them, the autonomy of creation and its absolute dependence on God. God creates freely out of love, offering a space for the finite world to exist, precisely because God is love that concedes space within God's

self to the otherness between God as "Father" and God as "Son", in the unifying and differentiating "Spirit of God". Thus we speak of pan-en-theism, God-above-and-in-the-world.⁸³

Taking up Karl Rahner's concept of self-transcendence, Edwards describes evolutionary change in terms of the potentiation of the creature towards an active self-transcendence, rather than passively receiving a new development from God. The creature is potentiated to go beyond his or herself in order to become something more, something new. This potential is intrinsic to created reality and comes from God. More specifically, it is a work of the Holy Spirit, present from the first moment of creation and united with the Son and the Father.⁸⁴ The Holy Spirit, who enables us to participate in Jesus' resurrected life and who is given to us in a special way at Pentecost, is immanent in the cosmos and inhabits creatures, labouring to continually perfect and transform the work of creation, leading us into ever more abundant life, new creation (cf. Ez 37:1-14; Jn 3:5-6; 2 Cor 5:17) and communion with the Trinity⁸⁵ and with each other.

These ideas are already to be found in St. Irenaeus, who sees that the human person is called to be more than what he or she already is, and contains the seeds of his or her own self-transcendence. What he or she can become is revealed in Christ.⁸⁶



God is at the same time One and Three, and not One first and Three later. Otherness is thus of the very essence of their unity, and it is the condition for their mutual relationship and communion. We are invited to configure our lives to the image of the Incarnate Son, who shows us his kenotic style of living in communion with the other. But interpersonal communion does not arise spontaneously as we tend to fear the other, feeling their difference to be a threat to us. We see difference as division. Therefore we project our own selves onto the other and try to absorb him or her to ourselves, or we build barriers to protect ourselves from the other. The Eucharist, at the heart of the Church, both affirms and sanctifies difference, which is a source of communion and not division.⁸⁷

Otherness is an ontological issue and not merely ethical, because it is at the heart of God's creative action and reflects Trinitarian life. The ecological crisis is another expression of our difficulty in dealing with otherness.⁸⁸ In order to overcome it, we are invited to live in mutual relationship and communion at ever deeper levels, with other human beings and with all living beings.⁸⁹ In order to overcome the economic and cultural crisis that promotes consumerism and competition and fragments families and communities, and in order to overcome the generalised crisis of faith, we need to promote diversity, relationships and community.

v. The recapitulation of all things in Christ

Cosmological predictions about the future of the universe indicate death, while theological predictions point towards the fullness of life. The universe can be saved by the Risen Christ from the annihilation to which the evolutionary process propels it, and be raised in him to a new phase of life. Christ's Resurrection is not merely an indication of what will happen at the end times, but rather the dynamic beginning of a transformation that began on Easter morning and continues to unfold. The Father's recapitulation of all things in Christ (cf. Eph 1:10) and Christ's hidden transforming action in history are made present in the Eucharist, in the transformation of the bread and wine into his Risen Body and Blood. By our communion with his body and blood, we are invited to be active participants in Christ's action and divine life.⁹⁰

In the Christian narrative, the event which came not at the beginning but rather "in the fullness of time" (Gal 4:4), the Incarnate Son, is at the head and at the heart of history. He gives new light and meaning to what came before. Jesus is the New Adam who "recapitulates" the First Adam; Easter is the New Creation which gives meaning to the first creation.⁹¹ It is no longer the past that commands the unfolding of history. The principal and decisive cause is in the future, and it already produces effects in the present and in the past. That which comes from the ultimate horizon infuses new life, novelty, and makes history move forwards. Past events are integrated in a greater future project. The future can overcome, redeem and reconfigure the past. Space and time are dimensions that fuse in the Easter Christ event⁹². "The truth of history seems paradoxical: it is determined by its end, while its end is part of its unfolding"⁹³.

Life as we know it moves forward linearly, although buffeted by the vicissitudes of the transitory. Recapitulation gathers up that which is transitory in order to give it a new impulse and bring it to another dimension, renewing our concept of history. Eph 1:10 takes up the terms “when the times had run their course” and “everything in the heavens and everything on earth” as a framework with which to speak of “the recapitulation of all things in Christ”, where all of created reality is gathered together, assumed, and put under Christ’s sovereignty. Recapitulation is holistic and embraces everything. “In him were created all things” (Col 1:16) becomes “Christ is all and in all” (Col 3:11).



St. Irenaeus emphasises the unity of salvation history and how Christ brings all things to fullness. God saves us *in* history, recapitulating everything in God’s self, that is to say God renews and recreates everything in order to lead all things into the celestial Kingdom. Our salvation comes through the Incarnation, which St. Irenaeus understands dynamically and in terms of the close link between Christ and us. It is the whole process that goes from Jesus’ conception to his resurrection. We are in process towards communion with God, the vision of God, possession of the Spirit, becoming sons and daughters of God, immortality, and full realisation of the image and likeness of God. Jesus’ life recapitulates all of history and is the compendium of salvation⁹⁴.

For Teilhard de Chardin Christ is the mediator between God and the world, who give impulse to “cosmic convergence” and “Christic emergence”. Christ is the cardinal point in which all the lines of the universe converge. The successive great stages of “cosmogenesis”, “biogenesis” and “noogenesis” (that is, the appearance of human consciousness) continue to journey towards the goal of “Christogenesis”, shown in a more altruist and unifying consciousness, in a process attracted and stimulated by Christ⁹⁵. In this process of Christogenesis by means of the interiorisation of consciousness, maximum “individualisation” comes about, better described as “personalisation”, and at the same time “socialisation”, the living of a communitarian dimension. This process will be completed in the Parousia:

Then the risen Christ will be manifested before the whole universe as the great “integrating force” of the whole of creation; only in him does all created reality, from the material to the animate to each concrete person in all his or her social expressions, find that form of unity which – even with all unification – also maintains all individual differences in all their complexity. And this will be possible because this process towards unity, the unification of creation, takes place in the framework of love that freely gives itself, of the *communio* of the Trinity.

Entonces, Cristo resucitado se manifestará ante todo el universo como la gran “fuerza de integración” de la creación entera; sólo en él encuentra todo lo creado, desde la materia, pasando por la vida, hasta cada hombre concreto, con todas sus manifestaciones sociales, aquella forma de unidad que – aun con toda su unificación – preserva también todas las diferencias individuales con su total complejidad. Y esto sería posible porque este proceso hacia la unidad y la unificación de la creación acontece en el marco del amor que se da libremente, de la *communio* del Dios trino⁹⁶.

vi. Consequences of an eco-Trinitarian consciousness for missiology

Our brief consideration of some landmarks in the history of scientific investigation has shown that a paradigm imposes methodological constraints that both reflect and reinforce a particular world view. Like any other scientific discipline, missiology is not merely limited to its contents, as the vehicle for their presentation reveals the presuppositions and interests of those who present it. For example, the conquest of Latin America was justified by many in order to evangelise and even “humanise” its peoples, seen to be “barbaric” and “inferior”. It took figures like Antonio de Montesinos and Bartolomé de las Casas to prophetically denounce the multiple infringements of human rights and abuses of power that marked the conquest, and to announce the radical Good News of Jesus Christ that values everyone as sons and daughters of God. Missiology cannot pretend to be neutral about its choice of method.

We have seen at some length that ecological consciousness heightens the connectedness of all created reality, in a reflection of intra-Trinitarian life. Missiology receives the challenge to open itself to an epistemology that is both interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary, not just as a response to the “sign of the times” that is the generalised tendency among other scientific disciplines towards greater interchange and collaboration, but as an expression of basic Christian and ecclesial identity, which is rooted in the Trinity. Without losing this essential identity, in a creative

tension received certainties are exposed to renewal and the possibility of reformulation, and ever new questions arise. Such interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary enterprises need to be self-critical, constantly questioning themselves about their presuppositions, listening to the voices of "otherness" from diverse sources, asking themselves whose interests are being served, and so on, seeking ever greater degrees of authenticity.

Cosmologies need narratives to express their meaning. We have seen that the Biblical myth of creation in the first verses of Genesis effectively constitutes the beginnings of that which subsequently unfolds as salvation history. By being attentive to the narrative elements that underpin other academic disciplines and other world views, as well as to the stories of ordinary people, especially the poor and the marginalised, missiology can incarnate the treasure of salvation history in Gospel attitudes like solidarity and the quest for social justice. In this way missiology can facilitate a dialogue of meanings in the rapidly evolving contexts that characterise our contemporary world, bearing witness to Jesus in deeds more than in words.

We are pilgrims on a journey towards the "Omega point", the recapitulation of everything in the cosmic Christ. The Spirit encourages our steps, even if often we cannot see our way. We move tentatively in the midst of the transitory and the provisional, trusting in the Trinity in whom we believe. It is the Spirit who brings novelty, who recreates our reality and our very selves, in the measure in which we allow and collaborate with this action. The Spirit points us towards the other as a source of enrichment for us, as a dialogue partner with whom to engage, open to learning something new and to share our own treasure. Together we seek, we walk, we contemplate the cosmos-Mystery and the lights that we receive for how to live.

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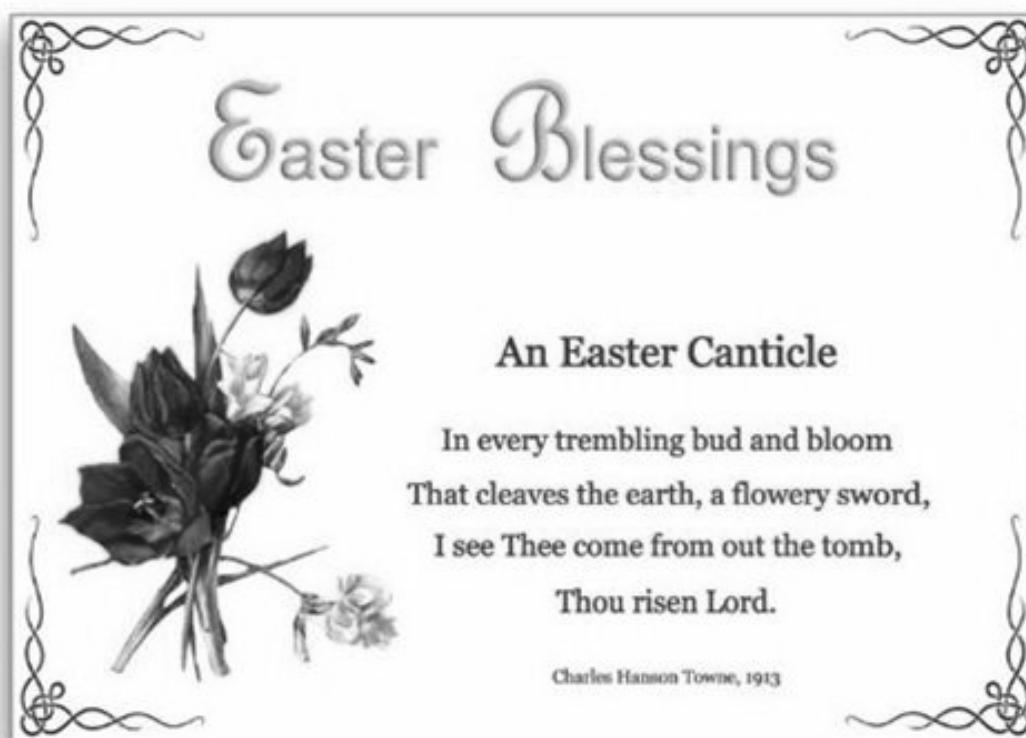
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The Asian Integral Pastoral Approach
- A New Way of Being Church in Asia -
A contextualized and Concrete Model for the Evangelizing
Mission of the Church



The Church has always attempted to give appropriate answers to the challenges of the time, by adapting to the mentality of the people(s) and their culture(s) and specifically to the concrete situation of people in order to fulfill her basic task, namely, the proclamation of the Good News to all humankind. To achieve this goal the Church has continually to analyze her pastoral methods and service. Is she still using appropriate and effective means to reach her goal? Is her language still capable of furthering her fundamental task which is to evangelize? Is she still addressing the human person of this particular time and society appropriately? The rapidly changing world always demands an up-dated approach in order to reach out to people in their changed context and situation. This is what the Council Fathers had in mind. Therefore, half a century later their pastoral vision is still a valid orientation for our time.

The Documents of the Second Vatican Council have helped the Church to open herself to the changing world and to reach out and serve humanity. By being faithful to the Spirit of the Council the Church is able to rediscover and renew her evangelizing mission in today's world.¹

The actual situation calls for a rethinking of the mission by the Church to determine the Church's priorities within the renewed pastoral project. How does one define the mission of the Church in the world today in adequate terms? How and where does one situate the various actions and activities of the Church in order to envisage a holistic picture of the mission of the Church? What pastoral plan must the Church assume in order to overcome the present crisis of credibility and to be fruitful in its evangelising mission?

I shall present here some pastoral movements in various parts of the world and more specifically the development of pastoral renewal in the Asian Church. This paper does not intend to be an exhaustive treatment, but focuses on the missionary dynamics of those renewal programmes in the Local Churches of Asia.

Mission oriented pastoral theology must try to answer two fundamental requirements of our time:

- How to translate the Second Vatican Council's vision of the Church into lifestyle and action
- How can we evangelize Christians and their neighbours and be evangelized at the same time.

I would agree that the Second Vatican Council is rightfully characterized as ecumenical and pastoral. The ecclesial assembly not only included participants from around the globe but it was able to talk to the representatives of the Local Churches on all the continents whose rich experiences were welcomed by the Council, as can be noted in its final, official Church documents.

The Church has found a new self-understanding that allows her to build a new relationship with the world, cultures and various human traditions. The new "communio" [the ecclesiology of Vatican II] has borne much fruit in the last decades and helped the Church to renew her mission and self-realization in the world. A new understanding of pastoral theology and pastoral ministry in the Church has opened the door to a new era of mission. The missionary work of the Church is no longer considered as one asset among others, but as the central activity of the Church.

"The pilgrim Church is missionary by her very nature. For it is from the mission of the Son and the mission of the Holy Spirit that she takes her origin, in accordance with the decree of God the Father" (Ad Gentes, n. 2, [Walter M. Abbott, SJ]).

The development of missiology and pastoral theology after the Council shows that we can no longer have Pastoral Theology (Practical Theology) on the one hand and missiology and missionary practice on the other, as two almost independent disciplines. The pre-Vatican concept separated pastoral ministry from missionary work as two independent realities, the first performed in the so-called Christian countries and the second in the non-Christian countries.

The renewed ecclesiology allows us to see the common ground of the Church's one mission with its different dimensions as carried out in different situations. The great gift of the Council was mainly the new understanding of pastoral ministry with a missionary perspective which is rooted in the Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation of all Christians. The Council thus initiated the process to overcome the dichotomy between clergy and laity by giving more importance to the Local Church when the Council speaks of God's people as a temple of the Holy Spirit. That process paved the way to recognizing the Christian community as the subject of pastoral care. The local Church recognizes her responsibility for all the missionary work of the Church.

Mission is no longer understood as work done exclusively overseas, but as the task of the Church on all the continents, among all peoples and people of every social background. Simultaneously the acceptance of missionary challenges on all the continents enlarged the understanding and spectrum of what pastoral ministry was all about. This ecclesiological movement paved the way for a more holistic understanding of all that the Church is called to do in the mission she has received from her Founder, Jesus Christ. Missionary work and pastoral ministry are but two aspects of the one mission of the Church. Pastoral ministry is called to be aware of and to live its missionary dimension.

The Pontiffs Paul VI and John Paul II taught us the importance of the evangelizing mission of the Church *ad intra* for all her members and *ad extra* for all humankind beyond the borders of the Church.

The tremendous contribution pastoral (practical) theology has made in recent decades is outstanding. Wherever pastoral theology is done, whether in faculties of theology at universities, major seminaries, and pastoral institutes or in diocesan headquarters, it is done in order to help the Church to perform her salvific mission to humankind in the most efficient way for today. Only if the Church reaches out to the people on the margins of human society can she fulfil the mission the Lord has given her.

It is here that we see the strong impact of the pastoral centres and institutes, which have the great advantage of being closer to the pastoral reality and therefore know better the real challenges to the mission of the Church in places where Christians live and act as members of their respective Christian communities. Pastoral theology developed as never before in the post-Vatican II period. The pastoral worker will benefit from such reflections in his ministry of communicating the Gospel to the people in his specific socio-cultural context,² through ongoing contact with pastoral-theological research.



Africa's two outstanding pastoral institutes: *AMECEA Gaba Pastoral Institute*, in Eldoret, Kenya, and the *Lumko Pastoral Institute* of the Episcopal Conferences in South Africa³ represent two contextualized and inculturated places of ministry formation which have inspired local Churches worldwide.

The so-called Lumko approach was developed by Msgr. Fritz Lobinger and Msgr. Oswald Hirmer with the whole staff of Lumko. From 1986 Fr.

Anselm Prior, OFM, and from 2001 Fr. Gabriel Afagbegee, SVD, served as directors of Lumko in order to promote the Lumko approach.

The Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC)

The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) for the first time gave Asian Bishops the opportunity to get to know each other beyond national and cultural borders. In 1970 the Bishops of Asia met for the first time on Asian soil.

The seeds of the FABC were planted in November 1970 when Pope Paul VI met with 180 Bishops of Asia in Manila. His initiative prompted 11 of those bishops to meet the following year in Hong Kong, to begin putting together a structure that would connect all the Catholic Bishops in Asia with one another.⁴

Pope Paul VI explained in a broadcast, on *Radio Veritas* in Manila, to "all the people of Asia", "that his intentions were primarily pastoral and went beyond the boundaries of the Church".⁵ The Holy See approved the FABC Statutes *ad experimentum* in 1972. For Thomas Fox, the Manila meeting indicated a new maturity in the thinking of Asian Church leaders. For the Indian theologian Felix Wilfred the gathering "marked the beginning of a new consciousness of the many traditional links that united the various peoples" of Asia which are, in spite of many differences, bound together "by a spiritual affinity and sharing of common moral and religious values".⁶



The FABC webpage describes its purpose and goal in the following way:

The Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) is a voluntary association of episcopal conferences in South, Southeast, East and Central Asia, established with the approval of the Holy See. Its purpose is to foster among its members solidarity and co-responsibility for the welfare of Church and society in Asia, and to promote and defend whatever is for the greater good.⁷

Meanwhile the FABC membership has grown from the original eleven Episcopal Conferences in East, Southeast and South Asia to nineteen members today, including one in Central Asia. Nine other Church jurisdictions across the continent that have no Bishops' Conference belong to the FABC as associate members.⁸ In 2012 the FABC's 40th anniversary, the Tenth Plenary Assembly of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC), took place for the first time in Vietnam. Pope Paul VI's initiative to empower the Catholic Bishops of Asia to work together was, during the past four decades, the fruitful beginning of a new way of being Church in Asia. All the documents of the FABC General Assemblies and the specific FABC offices are available up to 2006 in four volumes under the title *For all the People of Asia*.⁹ The Indonesian-based mission theologian John Prior, SVD, comments on the rich material the FABC Documents contain:

Here you will find the FABC's ongoing thinking on creating a culture of peace in the midst of violence, considerations on questions of migration, on the impact of rapidly changing global communications. Here is profound thought on the Asian faces of Christ and on authentic Christian witness. Two new Offices have been mulling over concerns regarding consecrated life and clergy formation. There is no need for any church to struggle on its own "like a frog under a coconut shell". Whatever the local issue, these Asia-wide reflections will add depth and breadth to both diocesan pastoral programmes and theological education. We are fast becoming a Church-in-mission that is truly Asian.¹⁰

A new way of Being Church

The Author, missiologist and pastoral theologian, wrote in 2010: "The programmatic slogan 'A new way of Being Church' carries the great pastoral and missionary vision of Vatican II. It expresses as well the growing awareness and concern of the Churches of those continents to discover and build up a more contextualized pastoral approach that would



take into consideration the cultures, religious and human aspirations and needs of the people(s) in the local Churches of those continents".¹¹

The Vietnamese-American theologian Peter C. Phan reflects on the issue of *A New Way of Being Church*.

This new way of being Church in Asia requires a different ecclesiology, one that decenters the Church in the sense that it makes the center of Christian life and worship not the Church but the Reign of God. This sort of Copernican revolution in ecclesiology sees the goal and purpose of the mission of the Church not to be the geographical and institutional expansion of the Church (the *plantatio ecclesiae*), but to be a transparent sign of, and effective instrument for, the saving presence of the Reign of God, the reign of justice, peace, and life, of which the Church is a seed.¹²

Archbishop Orlando B. Quevedo, OMI, one of the earliest promoters of Small Christian Communities in Asia, is convinced, that:

The FABC vision of "A New Way of Being Church in Asia" includes a vision of becoming an inculturated Church, a servant-Church and a participatory Church.¹³

For him, "it is in Basic Ecclesial Communities and among indigenous peoples that the inculturation of pastoral leadership and governance is commonly found".¹⁴

"Journeying Together Toward the Third Millennium" – the *Asian Pastoral Constitution*

The Fifth Plenary Assembly of the FABC took place in 1990 in Bandung, Indonesia, with the motto "Journeying Together Towards the Third Millennium".

The Final Document of this Fifth Plenary Assembly of the FABC, dated 27 July 1990, is often called the *Asian Pastoral Constitution*, since its importance for the Asian Churches has been similar to that of *Gaudium et Spes* for the worldwide Catholic Church. In this document the bishops give us a differentiated analysis of the socio-cultural, political, economic and religious situation in which the people of Asia have to live their Christian faith. They do not hesitate to mention the social evils they experience in Asia like massive poverty, the exploitation of women, the over-exploitation of natural resources, the lack of perspective for the young generation. In the same document the Asian Bishops declared: "In the face of the massive problems engendered by social change and in the face of massive poverty, we can discern, however, many signs of hope".¹⁵

The Asian Bishops listed among the positive signs: a new awareness of solidarity, more people fighting for human rights, democratization and interreligious and ecumenical dialogue: "Dialogue between religious traditions, the ecological movement, and aspects of the women's movement offer hope for a more holistic spirituality".¹⁶

Regarding mission, the Asian Bishops declared:

Mission in Asia will also seek through dialogue to serve the cause of unity of the peoples of Asia marked by such a diversity of beliefs, cultures and socio-political structures. In an Asia marked by diversity and torn by conflicts, the Church must in a special way be a sacrament – a visible sign and instrument of unity and harmony.¹⁷

In section 7, "Living in the Spirit: Pastoral Responses", it explains what it terms: "Our Process". Our reflection on the Asian situation in the light of our mission of evangelization has led us to realize the enduring validity of a process of: (a) *dialoguing* with the realities of Asia from within; (b) *discerning* the movement of God's Spirit in Asia; and (c) *translating into deeds* what the Spirit bids us to accomplish. This process has to be the general approach for our total response as Church in Asia.¹⁸

Regarding the need to reform pastoral formation the document favours a more inculturated approach: The imperative of re-envisioning and re-planning formation processes, with particular attention being given to cultural values and structural factors.

The Bandung Assembly has a chapter on "A New Way of Being Church in Asia in the 1990s". Its ecclesiology is based on the ecclesiology of communion of Vatican II, but this ecclesiology is creatively adapted and developed for the Churches of Asia.

Here the Asian Bishops firmly declare that the "Fifth Assembly envisions alternative ways of being Church in the Asia of the 1990s. But these new ways have some common aspects:

- 1) The Church in Asia will have to be a communion of communities, where laity, religious and clergy recognize and accept each other as sisters and brothers. They are called together by the Word of God which ... leads them to form small Christian communities.
- 2) It is a participatory Church where the gifts that the Spirit gives to all the faithful – lay, religious, and clergy alike – are recognized and activated, so that the Church may be built up and its mission realized.
- 3) [They] build up the hearts of people, it is a Church that faithfully and lovingly witnesses to the Risen Lord Jesus and reaches out to people of other faiths and persuasions in a dialogue of life towards the integral liberation of all.
- 4) It is a leaven of transformation in this world and serves as a prophetic sign daring to point beyond this world to the ineffable Kingdom that is yet fully to come.¹⁹

Forty years of FABC pastoral and theological work

The latest General Assembly of the FABC took place in December 2012 in Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam. In their Final Document "FABC at Forty Years – Responding to the Challenges of Asia – A New Evangelization", the Asian Bishops summarize the pastoral vision, orientation, praxis and theology they have developed over forty years:

We thank the Lord for a challenging vision of Church in Asia. This vision of Church has been the overall objective of the pastoral reflection, discernment, prayer, and pastoral action of the FABC through the years. We envision a Church that is:

- truly Asian, in triple dialogue with the religions, cultures and peoples of Asia, especially the poor;
- a humble servant of the peoples of Asia, accompanying them to the Kingdom of God;
- a credible herald of the Gospel, a disciple-community sent on a mission of integral evangelization to tell the story of Jesus to Asians in season and out of season;
- in herself the bearer of the Asian face of Jesus, the God who became Man, who was compassionate, loving, forgiving, self-sacrificing; a teacher, servant, healer, prophet, life-giver, ennobler of the poor;
- a communion of communities, reflecting the Trinitarian communion;
- a participatory Church of renewed servant-leaders, of prophetic Religious and empowered laity;
- a *Church of the Poor* where the sick and the needy are at home;
- a *Church of the Youth* where they find solidarity in their struggle for authentic life;
- a *Church in solidarity with the whole of creation*.²⁰

The Asian Integral Pastoral Approach (AsIPA)

AsIPA was developed after the Fifth General Assembly of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences in 1990 in Bandung, Indonesia. Concrete efforts started in 1991. The Asian Bishops favoured a vision of the Church along the lines of Vatican II: as "People of God", and a "Pilgrim Church", and this has developed to become a Church of Communion; being aware that communion and mission are intrinsically connected to one another. As Gerard Kelly puts it, these "interpenetrate and mutually imply each other, to the point that communion represents both the source and the fruit of mission. Communion gives rise to mission and mission is accomplished in communion".²¹

The Asian Bishops clearly favour: "A PARTICIPATORY CHURCH ... a Communion of Communities ..." (cf. FABC, art. 8).²²

The Asian authors recognize the fundamental value of each person in the AsIPA approach by explaining: "The participatory method believes that "Everybody is Somebody", that every person is gifted and capable of building up the Church, that every person has something to contribute to the learning process. Moreover, instead of having lectures or experts, the team of facilitators handle the sessions. Their task is to help the participants become aware that each of them has something to contribute to the group, to enable them to share in the learning process and to motivate them to discover the truth by themselves and to decide to do something about their situation".²³

The first Courses, both international and national courses, were called "Lumko Courses", using the materials and methodology of the Lumko Institute in South Africa. In November 1993 a group of facilitators reflected on the results of the Lumko Courses they had given in various Asian countries under the heading: "Towards Becoming a Participatory Church" and "In the Asian context: the people, their culture, their needs ... as we move towards the vision".²⁴

They recognized that the Course should be contextualized in order to be fruitful for the people of Asia. In that meeting the name AsIPA – Asian Integral Pastoral Approach was coined.²⁵

Through integral and contextualized formation, AsIPA aims at discovering a new way of being Church that is participatory and a communion of Small Christian Communities (SCCs). In *neighbourhood communities* an integral and contextual formation is given. During the formation process the members discover and understand by moving in this new direction what it means to be Church in a new way as a participative communion in Small Christian communities (SCC).²⁶

The understanding of AsIPA according to the FABC Office of Laity

The FABC Office of Laity Desk for AsIPA points out that "AsIPA is the achievement of a long process: As the importance of the role of the laity became more accepted, the local Churches also realized that there was a corresponding need for lay formation, so that lay people could play their rightful role in the Church. In some early attempts at lay formation, the emphasis was on an academic approach which led to the realization that a different model of formation was needed: A model that would incorporate the principles of adult education, respect for the experience of the participants and be open to the real situation and needs of the local community.

The meaning of AsIPA (Asian Integral Pastoral Approach)

AsIPA is *Asian* because it seeks to implement the vision articulated by the Asian Bishops and to face the realities of the Asian peoples that challenge the Church in Asia: our pluralism, the existence of the great Asian religions, the vast number of young people and their vitality, massive poverty, the women's movement, the ecological movement, etc.

It is *Integral* in that it seeks to achieve a balance between the "spiritual" and the "social", between the individual and the community, between the hierarchical leadership and the co-responsibility of the laity. It is therefore integral in both its approach and its content.

It is *Pastoral* in that its goal is to implement the vision of the new way of being Church, and particularly to train lay people to carry out their mission in the Church and in the world. It thereby constitutes a demand that priests be trained to encourage the co-responsibility of the laity and to work in teams. This requires a new style of leadership.

The *AsIPA Approach* is a process of realizing the vision of a Participatory Church, addressed to the entire People of God. It is a pastoral process that is "Christ- and community-centered", in which the participants search for and experience a "New Way of Being Church".²⁷

The understanding of AsIPA according to the Singapore Pastoral Institute

Wendy Louis, the former director of the Singapore Pastoral Institute, highlights the AsIPA vision in other words:²⁸

1. Asian — because we would like to be very much a part of the local culture and the Gospel should take on the expression of the local people and be a part of their own way of living. Sometimes we are thought of as a foreign church. This will be proved untrue if we are rooted in the daily lives of very ordinary people.
2. Integral — because it is about bringing together all the various aspects of our parish life into community and mission in and with Christ. It is about weaving together our faith with our daily choices and actions. It is about trying to bring together the different generations and various families into our small Christian communities.
3. Pastoral — because it is about caring for all who live with and around us, regardless of their race or religion. The approach is about making it possible for everyone to participate according to their gifts in the work of bringing about the Reign of God. Pastoral because the work of all God's people is the same as that of their Shepherd.
4. Approach — the tools used to build up the community must be such that they enable participation, build up confidence, skills in the various ministries as well as always addressing the question: "Why are we doing this?". The theological background to all we do is made available through simple texts and Scripture. Scripture is the presence of the Risen Christ in our midst and that is the main way Scripture is used in the programmes of AsIPA.

For Wendy Louis “there are no ‘experts’ and receivers in this approach. All have something to offer and all have access to the same information and search together. Discovering our common mission that arises out of our common vision is the work of the people in our small communities. Just telling and expecting results is the opposite of this approach”.²⁹

The Indian Way: From AsIPA to DIIPA

DIIPA is the abbreviation of *Developing Indian Integral Pastoral Approach*. The DIIPA vision goes back to the Lumko Small Christian Communities training programmes which became well known in Indian dioceses in the 1990s. Since 1995 Bishop Oswald Hirmer and Fr. Thomas Vijay, SAC, have held several workshops on AsIPA in various dioceses of India. In September 2001 some animators of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) introduced the Indian name “DIIPA” and adapted the programme to the Indian situations and needs.³⁰

DIIPA wants to recognize the Indian socio-cultural and religious context and the particular situations people are living in. Indeed, DIIPA is also a way to build up, contextualize and inculturate the Christian Message and community into India’s many cultures and societies. DIIPA programmes received wide acceptance and some of the DIIPA material has been translated into twelve Indian languages. For Fr. Thomas Vijay each initial of DIIPA has a special Theological, Pastoral and Spiritual connotation.

Developing: reminds us and the pastoral workers in India that no pastoral programme is final. The Spirit is always present and active in the community, renewing, challenging and transforming it continuously and helping it to respond in the Kingdom way to the changing situations and needs of the people in different places and times.

Indian: places the Asian Bishops’ vision in the Indian situation and seeks to empower the people of India to respond to this vision together, as a people from within their life context. In this way they make this vision their own and accept the responsibility for realizing it in their life.

Integral: means we seek the integral growth of the whole person and of the whole community, integrating body and soul, secular and sacred, theory and practice, faith and life and building the clergy and laity into one body.

Pastoral: the pastoral concern is to enable our people to re-dream the dream of Jesus in their life context and respond to it together in their neighbourhood. In this way they become instruments for God to reveal the Indian face of Jesus to the people of India.

Approach: DIIPA is an approach, one way to serve the Kingdom plan of God, but a very effective and biblical way. This approach has certain characteristics:

- **It is Christ-centred** since it emphasizes Gospel sharing as the way and means through which the community is led to experience the Risen Lord in their lives and to discern God’s will for them in their life situations and to respond to it decisively and positively.
- **It is community centred** since all the members of the community are called to contribute actively to the community building process.
- **It is mission oriented** since it helps the whole community to become aware that through Baptism and Confirmation they have all accepted the responsibility to continue the mission of Jesus in their respective places in a concrete way. All have the duty to participate actively in the building-up of the Body of Christ and to witness to the Gospel in their own place and time.
- **It is Non-dominating Leadership.** In the future Church, as the Asian Bishops said, the pastoral experts and leaders will not be dominating leaders, but servants and animators of the community. Jesus and the community are the focal point since they will work together to evangelize the neighbourhood, to make the Kingdom of God present there.³¹

AsIPA as a formation model

The Church must have formation as her pastoral priority if she wants to move towards the vision of a participative Church and a Church of communion which creates spiritual links between all her members (lay, religious, clergy).

Most pastoral ministry is lived out on the parish or diocesan level, therefore the formal and non-formal formation of the laity is also the task of those pastoral levels. The parish as a communion of communities has the task of transforming the so-called outstations and all parts of the parish into Small Christian Communities.³² The FABC Office of the Laity and the Office of Human Promotion wanted to develop further the model of integral formation and promote “A New Way of Being Church in the 1990s” as the Fifth Plenary Assembly of the FABC had wished. The commission declared finally: We have identified the core elements that are necessary for an integral formation

and these include the need for promoting “Word-centered” Communities involving a communitarian and participatory formation that gives emphasis to “experimental learning” rather than “one way teaching”.³³

The new Pastoral Units which have been established in many dioceses in Europe are not automatically a solution to the faithful’s need to participate actively in the mission of the Church. They bear in themselves the danger of suffocating all community life in order to offer the faithful relatively efficient services with a smaller number of clergy, instead of promoting a participative community life of all the faithful.³⁴

Church as a communion of communities

Because the Church is a communion, there must be participation and co-responsibility at all of her levels.³⁵

After Vatican II the Church wanted to implement the ecclesiological vision of communion. The movement of *Small Christian Communities* is perhaps the most significant expression of this movement with its potential to include all the members of the Christian Community in the Church’s mission. “Evangelizing is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity. She exists in order to evangelize”, as Paul VI put it in *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (n. 14).

The community dimension of her vocation is developed further by Pope Paul VI: “For the Christian community is never closed in upon itself. The intimate life of this community — the life of listening to the Word and the apostles’ teaching, charity lived in a fraternal way, the sharing of bread — this intimate life only acquires its full meaning when it becomes a witness, when it evokes admiration and conversion, and when it becomes the preaching and proclamation of the Good News. Thus it is the whole Church that receives the mission to evangelize, and the work of each individual member is important for the whole” (*ibid.*, n. 15).

The Lumko, AsIPA and DIIPA Approaches just aimed at putting the prophetic vision of Paul VI into practice.³⁶ In this pastoral approach “each individual member is important for the whole” and co-responsible for the mission of the Church. The weekly Bible sharing as it is practiced in the SCCs guarantee access to the life-giving fountain of Christian faith that is the Word of God in its ecclesial tradition.³⁷

The Bishops’ Institute for Laity of the FABC recently declared: The emergence of SCCs has directly facilitated a new awakening in thousands of laity who are inspired and motivated to serve communities. Seeing the renewal SCCs brought to the Church the Asian Synod Fathers affirmed that the “SCCs/basic ecclesial communities are an effective way to promote communion and participation in parishes and dioceses” (*Ecclesia in Asia*, n. 25). SCCs make the Asian face of Jesus visible and through their loving service become the seed for a new society based on love (*cf. Redemptoris Missio*, n. 51).³⁸

Evangelii Nuntiandi offers us important criteria for revising our pastoral methods and for making the Christian message we have to transmit understandable to the people of our time. “The conditions of the society in which we live oblige all of us therefore to revise methods, to seek by every means to study how we can bring the Christian message to modern man” (n. 3). Therefore Paul VI sees that “it is absolutely necessary for us to take into account a heritage of faith that the Church has the duty of preserving in its untouchable purity, and of presenting it to the people of our time, in a way that is as understandable and persuasive as possible” (n. 3).

Finally, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* meaningfully describes the challenge the work of evangelization represents for all Church ministers, when it says: “This fidelity both to a message whose servants we are and to the people to whom we must transmit it living and intact is the central axis of evangelization” (n. 4).

Notes:

¹ Alberich E. – J. Vallabaraj: *Communicating a faith that transforms. A Handbook of fundamental Catechesis*, Bangalore 2004, 33.

² “Difatti, nei Seminari la formazione pastorale è tutta incentrata sullo studio della teologia.... La teologia *non punta direttamente all’evangelizzazione e alla catechesi*, né cerca in primo luogo la conversione.... La stessa sollecitudine per la

coerenza e intelligibilità della fede anima le tante iniziative di formazione teologica, anche non universitaria, che sono sorte dappertutto, specialmente dopo il Concilio. Sono iniziative rivolte prevalentemente ai laici, ma possono anche venire utilizzate nella formazione permanente del clero.... Bisogna però notare che queste formazioni si mettano prevalentemente sul versante del sapere, lasciando spesso nell'ombra l'essere e il *saper-fare*, che sono dimensioni essenziali di ogni lavoro propriamente catechetico", in: E. Alberich – A. Benz, *Forme e modelli di catechesi con gli adulti. Esperienze e riflessioni in prospettiva internazionale*, Leumann (To) 1995, 212-213.

³ Paul B. Steffen, *Places and Models for Formation and Ministry. Pastoral Institutes in Africa and Asia*, in "Verbum SVD" 51:4 (2010) 423-438; *id.*, *L'inizio dell'idea degli istituti culturali e pastorali*, in "Verbum SVD" 52:4 (2011) 287-307.

⁴ <http://www.fabc.org/10th%20plenary%20assembly/Documents/FABC%20History.pdf> (03-03-2014)

⁵ Thomas C. Fox, *Pentecost in Asia. A New Way of Being Church*, Maryknoll, New York 2002, 17. – "For their part, the Asian Bishops had chosen as the theme for their gathering the Pope's Encyclical *Populorum Progressio*. It was a remarkable moment, providing a rich new opportunity for a blending of visions. Never before had the Asian Bishops gathered on Asian soil to exchange their experience and deliberate on common matters facing them", *ibid.*, 17.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁷ <http://www.fabc.org/> (03-01-2014).

⁸ Cf. Fox, *Pentecost in Asia...*, *op. cit.*

⁹ See: Rosales, G. - Arevalo, C.G. (Eds.). *For All the Peoples of Asia, FABC Documents from 1970-1991*, vol. 1., Manila 1997; Eilers, Franz-Josef (Ed.). *For All the Peoples of Asia, FABC Documents from 1992-1996*, vol. 2., Manila 1997; Eilers, F.-J. (Ed.). *For All the Peoples of Asia, FABC Documents from 1997 to 2001*, vol. 3., Manila 2002; Eilers, F.-J. (Ed.). *For All the Peoples of Asia, FABC Documents from 2002 to 2006*, vol. 4., Manila 2007.

¹⁰ http://www.fabc.org/pub_p1.html (03-01-2014)

¹¹ P. Steffen, *Places and Models for Formation and Ministry: Verbum* 51:4 (2010) 436.

¹² Peter Phan, *In Our Tongues. Perspectives from Asia on Mission and Inculturation*, New York 2003, 14-17, here 14.

¹³ Orlando B. Quevedo, OMI, *Inculturating Church Leadership and Governance*, in: Mario S. Dias (ed.), *Rooting Faith in Asia. Source Book for Inculturation*, Quezon City – Bangalore 2005, 341-346, here 342-343. – He elaborates on the issue further: "Vatican II renewal brought in a new organizational culture within the Church. As a result, two organizational cultures are in tension. The old emphasizes institution, hierarchy and the power of the ordained minister in the Church. The emergent organizational culture more insistently emphasizes the notions of People of God, communion, participation, and co-responsibility. The old organizational culture with its corresponding non-participatory style of leadership and governance still prevails in many dioceses and parishes in Asia. A participatory leadership paradigm is beginning to take hold in many places, but it largely depends on personal interests, inclinations and skills", *ibid.*, p. 342.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 343 – "In these BEC clusters of families, family orientation, face-to-face interaction, co-responsibility, participation, transparency and accountability are most palpably demonstrated. With pastors guiding the process, due respect is given to the fundamental authoritative, not authoritarian, role that Bishops and priests have in the community by ordination. The participatory ethos in a Church of Communion is systematically developed. Leadership and governance empower people for the common good. It is transformational in view of the Kingdom of justice, truth, peace and love", *ibid.*, 346.

¹⁵ 2.3 Hope at the Crossroads, in: *Journeying Together Toward the Third Millennium*, in: Rosales, G. - Arevalo, C.G. (eds.). *For All the Peoples of Asia, FABC Documents from 1970-1991*, vol. 1, Manila 1997, 277.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 2.34, 278.

¹⁷ 4.0 The mode of Mission, in: *ibid.*, 282.

¹⁸ 7.0 Living the Spirit: Pastoral Responses, in: *ibid.*, 284.

¹⁹ A New Way of Being Church in Asia in the 1990s, in: *Journeying Together Toward the Third Millennium. Statement of the Fifth Plenary Assembly*, Bandung, Indonesia, 27 July 1990, in: Rosales, G. - Arevalo, C.G. (Eds.). *For All the Peoples of Asia, FABC Documents from 1970-1991*, vol. 1. Manila: Claretian Publications, 1997, 287-288

²⁰ A Vision of Church in Asia, in: FABC Papers 138: *FABC at Forty Years: Responding to the Challenges of Asia*, X FABC Plenary Assembly 10 – 16 December, 2012, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, 9-10.

²¹ Gerald Kelly, *Communion and Mission: The Idea of Church in Christifidelis Laici*, p. 291. – The Australian theologian Richard Lennan is convinced that: "Properly understood, communion ecclesiologies promote the engagement of every baptised person in shaping the Church in ways that respond to the initiative of the Holy Spirit. Such a Church must not only be constructed from the gifts and wisdom of all the baptised, but also be open, in all its dimensions, including, therefore, its structures and agencies, to that conversion which is inseparable from faithful reception of the Spirit", in: R. Lennan, *Communion Ecclesiology: Foundation, Critique, and Affirmations: Pacifica* 20 (February 2007) 35.

²² E. Vaz – C. Mateo – V. Saldanha, *Adult Formation Towards a Participatory Church – The Asian Integral Pastoral Approach (AsIPA)*, in: *Colloquium on Church in Asia in the 21st Century*, Office of Human Development – FABC, Manila [1998], 315-316, here 316.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ See www.fabc.org/ol/asipa_desk and FABC-Papers http://www.fabc.org/offices/csec/ocsec_fabc_papers.html (15-01-2014)

²⁶ "Through integral and contextualized formation, discover a new way of being Church that is participatory and a communion of Small Christian Communities (SCCs)" – Cf. E. Vaz – C. Mateo – V. Saldanha, *Adult Formation Towards a Participatory Church – The Asian Integral Pastoral Approach (AsIPA)*, in: *Colloquium on Church in Asia in the 21st Century*, FABC Office of Human Development – FABC, Manila 1998, 315-334.

²⁷ <http://www.fabc.org/offices/olaity/asipa.html> (03-01-2014)

²⁸ *Asian Integral Pastoral Approach Towards a New Way of Being Church*. Compiled by Wendy Louis, January 3, 2006. In: <http://www.catholicspi.org/images/FAQs%20on%20AsIPA%20for%20web.pdf> (21-01-2014)

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Thomas Vijay, SAC, *Theological Foundations of DIIPA Vision for Small Christian Communities*, in: Thomas Vijay (ed.), *SCCs are Ministering Communities*, Pallottine Animation Centre, Nagpur 2013, p. 145.

³¹ *Ibid.* 146-147.

³² The outstation system helped to serve the Christians living far away from the main station of the parish, but it remained deficient to the pastoral needs of the people. Cf. Patrick Kalilombe, *From Outstation to Small Christian Communities*, Spearhead 82 – 83, Gaba Publications, Eldoret, Kenya 1984. – M.-F. Perrin Jassy, a cultural anthropologist found in her

research that the outstations system caused the loss of many Catholics to the African Independent Churches because it did not give sufficient opportunity to participate actively in the mission of the parish or outstation. To feel part of a group always needs affirmation through an active role in the group and being recognized by a group is always easier if the group is small. See M.-F. Perrin Jassy, *Basic community in the African churches*, Maryknoll, Orbis Books, 1993; J.P. Vandenakker, *Small Christian communities and the parish*, Kansas City, 1994.

³³ Asian Integral Pastoral Approach Towards a New Way of Being Church in Asia (AsIPA). Report of the Consultation on Integral Formation, Malaysia, 3 November 1993, in: F.J. Eilers (ed.), *For All the Peoples of Asia, FABC Documents from 1992-1996*, vol. 2. Manila 1997, p 108.

³⁴ Cf. Anselm Prior, OFM: *Towards a Community Church. The Way Ahead for Today's Parish*, No. 28T in the series Training for Community Ministries, Second revised edition, Lumko Institute, Delmenville, South Africa 1997.

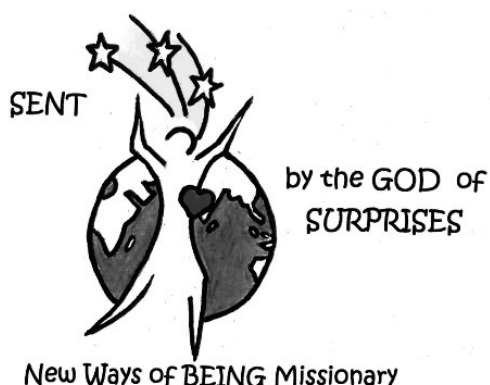
³⁵ The Final Report of the 1985 Extraordinary Synod, C. The Church as Communion, No. 6; cf. Walter Kasper, *Il futuro dalla forza del Concilio. Sinodo straordinario dei vescovi 1985. Documenti e comment*, Brescia 1986. – Kasper explains the ecclesiology of communion more profoundly: "According to the Council, the mystery of the Church means that in the Spirit we have access through Christ to the Father, so that in this way we may share in the divine nature. The communion of the Church is prefigured, made possible and sustained by the communion of the Trinity. Ultimately... it is participation in the Trinitarian communion itself. The Church is, as it were, the icon of the Trinitarian fellowship of Father, Son and Holy Spirit", in: Walter Kasper, *Theology & Church*, Norwich 1989, p. 152.

³⁶ Fritz Lobinger, *Understanding ministries in SCCs in the perspective of Ecclesiology*, in: Thomas Vijay (ed.), *SCCs are Ministering Communities*, Pallottine Animation Centre, Nagpur 2013, 1-12.

³⁷ Thomas Vijay, *Today this Scripture has been fulfilled (Lk 4:21). A Deeper Understanding of Gospel Sharing From my Involvement in Animating Gospel Sharing Groups*, Pallottine Animation Centre, PAC Publications: Nagpur 2013.

³⁸ *Final Statement of BILA I on SCCs*, Oct. 18-23 2010, Organized by AsIPA Desk, Office of Laity & Family of FABC, p. 2. In: <http://www.fabc.org/offices/offices/olaity/docs/BILA%20I%20on%20SCCs%20Final%20Statement.pdf> (04-01-2014).

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Centro "Ad Gentes" Nemi (Roma)

Sent by the God of surprises, New ways of being Missionaries"

Marco Antonio de la Rosa Ruiz Esparza

Los agentes de la misión

ABSTRACT: Este artículo hace una muy relevante aportación sobre cuáles son los agentes que posibilitan la acción misionera. Comenzando por la necesaria elucidación de su origen trinitario, se pasa a caracterizar con más detalle el papel de Cristo en ella a la luz de documentos como *Ad Gentes* y *Redemptoris Missio*. Una puntual exposición por la que se comprende que si bien la misión cristiana constituye la continuación de la misión de Cristo, parte de más atrás, "de la noche del misterio trinitario".

PALABRAS CLAVE: Misión, Trinidad, actividad misionera, espiritualidad misionera, empobrecimiento misionero, Juan Pablo II, *Ad Gentes*, *Redemptoris Missio*, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, *Ecclesia in Asia*, encíclicas, exhortaciones apostólicas.

1. Origen trinitario de la Misión (AG, 1965)

a) Dios Padre: origen de la misión

Designio que dimana del "amor fontal" de la caridad del Padre. Es el designio universal de Dios en pro de la salvación. Decretó entrar en la historia de la humanidad de un modo nuevo y definitivo, enviando a su Hijo en nuestra carne para arrancar por su medio a los hombres del poder de las tinieblas y de Satanás (cfr. Col 1,13; Hch 10, 38), y en Él reconciliar consigo al mundo (cfr. 2 Cor 5, 19). A Él, por quien hizo el mundo, lo constituyó heredero de todo a fin de instaurarlo todo en Él (cfr. Ef 1,10), (AG, 3).

b) Misión del Hijo

Cristo Jesús fue enviado al mundo como verdadero mediador entre Dios y los hombres. Por ser Dios quien habita en Él corporalmente toda la plenitud de la divinidad (cfr. Col 2, 9), según la naturaleza humana, nuevo Adán, lleno de gracia y de verdad (cfr. Jn 1,14), es constituido cabeza de la humanidad renovada. Así, pues, el Hijo de Dios siguió los caminos de la Encarnación verdadera: para hacer a los hombres partícipes de la naturaleza divina. De sí mismo afirmó Cristo a quien el Padre santificó y envió al mundo (cfr. Jn 10,36). "El Espíritu del Señor está sobre mí, porque me ungió, y me envió a evangelizar a los pobres, a sanar a los contritos de corazón, a predicar a los cautivos la libertad y a los ciegos la recuperación de la vista (Lc 4,18). Mas lo que el Señor ha predicado una vez o lo que en Él se ha obrado para la salvación del género humano hay que proclamarlo y difundirlo hasta los confines de la tierra (cfr. Hch 1, 8), comenzando por Jerusalén (cfr. Lc 29, 47), de suerte que lo que ha efectuado una vez para la salvación de todos, consiga su efecto en la sucesión de los tiempos. (AG, 3).



c) Misión del Espíritu

Y para conseguir esto envió al Espíritu Santo de parte del Padre, para que realizara interiormente su obra salvífica e impulsara, a la Iglesia hacia su propia dilatación. Sin duda, el Espíritu Santo obraba ya en el mundo antes de la glorificación de Cristo. Sin embargo, descendió sobre los discípulos el día de Pentecostés, para permanecer con ellos eternamente (cfr. Jn 14,16); la Iglesia se manifestó públicamente delante de la multitud, empezó la difusión del Evangelio entre las gentes por la predicación, y por fin quedó prefigurada la unión de los pueblos en la catolicidad de la fe por la Iglesia de la Nueva Alianza, que en todas las lenguas se expresa, las entiende y abraza en la caridad y supera de esta forma la dispersión de Babel. Fue en Pentecostés cuando empezaron "los hechos de los Apóstoles", como había sido concebido Cristo al venir el Espíritu Santo sobre la Virgen María, y Cristo había sido impulsado a la obra de su ministerio, bajando el mismo Espíritu Santo sobre Él mientras oraba. Mas el mismo Señor Jesús, antes de entregar libremente su vida por el mundo, ordenó de tal suerte el ministerio apostólico y prometió el Espíritu Santo que había de enviar, que ambos quedaron asociados en la realización de la obra de la salud en todas partes y para siempre. El

Espíritu Santo "unifica en la comunión y en el servicio y provee de diversos dones jerárquicos y carismáticos", a toda la Iglesia a través de los tiempos, vivificando las instituciones eclesíásticas como alma de ellas e infundiendo en los corazones de los fieles el mismo impulso de misión que había llevado el mismo Cristo. Alguna vez, también, se anticipa visiblemente a la acción apostólica, lo mismo que la acompaña y dirige incesantemente de varios modos.

d) la Iglesia enviada por Cristo

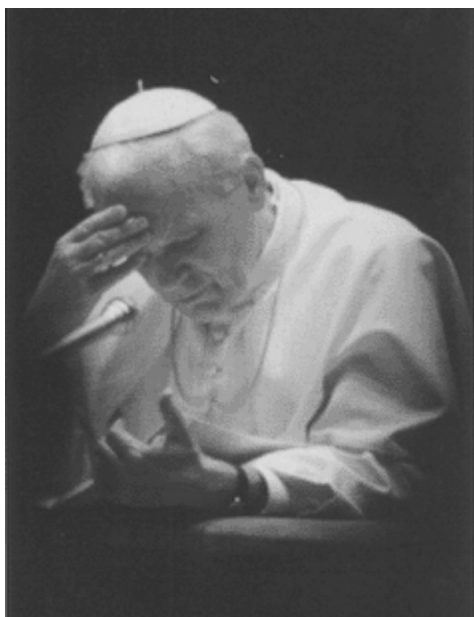
El Señor Jesús, ya desde el principio "llamó a sí a los que Él quiso, y designó a doce para que lo acompañaran y para enviarlos a predicar" (Mc 3,13; *cfr.* Mt 10,1-42). Fundó su Iglesia como sacramento de salvación y envió a los Apóstoles a todo el mundo, como Él había sido enviado por el Padre (*cfr.* Jn 20, 21), ordenándoles: "Id, pues, enseñad a todas las gentes, bautizándolas en el nombre del Padre y del Hijo y del Espíritu Santo: enseñándoles a observar todo cuanto yo os he mandado (Mt 28,19-20).

La misión, pues, de la Iglesia se realiza mediante la actividad por la cual, obediente al mandato de Cristo y movida por la candad del Espíritu Santo, se hace plena y actualmente presente a todos los hombres y pueblos para conducirlos a la fe, la libertad y a la paz de Cristo, por el ejemplo de vida y de la predicación, por los sacramentos y demás medios de la gracia, de forma que se les descubra el camino libre y seguro para la plena participación del misterio de Cristo (AG, 5).

e) Actividad misionera

El fin propio de la actividad misional es la evangelización e implantación de la Iglesia en los pueblos o grupos en que todavía no ha arraigado.

El medio principal de esta implantación es la predicación del Evangelio de Jesucristo, para cuyo anuncio envió el Señor a sus discípulos a todo el mundo, para que los hombres regenerados se congreguen por el Bautismo que como Cuerpo del Verbo Encarnado se nutre y vive de la palabra de Dios y del pan eucarístico (AG, 6).



2. La Encíclica *Redemptoris Missio* resalta el significado de Cristo en la Misión. (Juan Pablo II, 1990.12.07)

a) Sobre la permanente validez del Mandato Misionero

El Concilio Vaticano II ha querido renovar la vida y la actividad de la Iglesia según las necesidades del mundo contemporáneo; ha subrayado su "índole misionera", basándola dinámicamente en la misma *misión trinitaria*. El impulso misionero pertenece, pues, a la naturaleza íntima de la vida cristiana e inspira también el ecumenismo: "Que todos sean uno ... para que el mundo crea que Tú me has enviado" (Jn 17, 21) (RMi,1).

Actualmente se está afianzando una nueva conciencia: *la misión atañe a todos los cristianos*.

A 25 años de la clausura del Concilio y de la publicación del Decreto sobre la Actividad Misionera *Ad Gentes*, y a los 15 de la Exhortación apostólica *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, del Papa Pablo VI, Juan Pablo II, en 1990, nos invita a un *renovado compromiso misionero*.

La finalidad interna de la Encíclica *Redemptoris Missio* es "la renovación de la fe y de la vida cristiana. En efecto, la misión renueva la Iglesia, refuerza la fe y la identidad cristiana, da nuevo entusiasmo y nuevas motivaciones. ¡La fe se fortalece dándola! La nueva evangelización de los pueblos cristianos hallará inspiración y apoyo en el compromiso por la misión universal (RMi, 2).

Juan Pablo II nos dice: "Dios abre a la Iglesia horizontes de una humanidad más preparada para la siembra evangélica. Preveo que ha llegado el momento de dedicar todas las fuerzas eclesiales a la nueva evangelización y a la misión *ad gentes*. Ningún creyente en Cristo, ninguna institución de la Iglesia puede eludir este deber supremo: anunciar a Cristo a todos los pueblos" (RM, 3).

b) Cristo es el único mediador entre Dios y los hombres

"Porque hay un solo Dios, y también un solo mediador entre Dios y los hombres, Cristo Jesús, hombre también, que se entregó a sí mismo como rescate por todos..." (1 Tim 2,5-7; cfr. He 4,14-16). Los hombres, pues, no pueden entrar en comunión con Dios, sino es por medio de Cristo y bajo la acción del Espíritu. (RMI, 5).

c) El Espíritu Santo, protagonista de la Misión

"En el momento culminante de la misión mesiánica de Jesús, el Espíritu Santo se hace presente en el misterio pascual con toda su subjetividad divina, como el que debe continuar la obra salvífica, basada en el sacrificio de la cruz. Sin duda esta obra es encomendada por Jesús a los hombres: a los Apóstoles y a la Iglesia. Sin embargo, en estos hombres y por medio de ellos, el Espíritu Santo sigue siendo el protagonista trascendente de la realización de esta obra en el espíritu del hombre y en la historia del mundo" (RMI, 21).

c)1. El Espíritu guía a la misión

La misión de la Iglesia, al igual que la de Jesús, es obra de Dios o, como dice a menudo Lucas, obra del Espíritu. Después de la resurrección y ascensión de Jesús, los Apóstoles viven una profunda experiencia que los transforma: Pentecostés. La venida del Espíritu Santo los convierte en *testigos o profetas* (cfr. Hch 1, 8; 2,17-18), infundiéndoles una serena audacia que les impulsa a transmitir a los demás su experiencia de Jesús y la esperanza que los anima. El Espíritu les da la capacidad de testimoniar a Jesús con "toda libertad". Pablo y Bernabé se sienten empujados por el Espíritu hacia los paganos (cfr. Hch 13,46-48) (RMI 24).

c)2. El Espíritu hace más misionera a toda la Iglesia

Los Hechos indican que la misión, dirigida primero a Israel y luego a las gentes, se desarrolla a muchos niveles. Ante todo, exige el grupo de los Doce que como un único grupo guiado por Pedro, proclama la Buena Nueva.

Está luego la comunidad de creyentes que, con su modo de vivir y actuar, da testimonio del Señor y convierte a los paganos (cfr. Hch 2, 46-47).

Están también los enviados especiales, destinados a anunciar el Evangelio. Y así, la comunidad cristiana de Antioquía envía sus miembros a misionar: después de haber ayunado, rezado y celebrado la Eucaristía, esta comunidad percibe que el Espíritu Santo ha elegido a Pablo y Bernabé para ser enviados (cfr. Hch 13, 1-4). En sus orígenes, por tanto, la misión es considerada como un compromiso comunitario y una responsabilidad de la Iglesia Local, que tiene necesidad precisamente de "misioneros" para lanzarse hacia nuevas fronteras. Junto con aquellos enviados había otros, que atestiguaban espontáneamente la novedad que había transformado sus vidas y luego, ponían en conexión las comunidades en formación con la Iglesia apostólica.

La lectura de los Hechos nos hace entender que el comienzo de la Iglesia, la misión *ad gentes*, aun contando ya con misioneros "de por vida", entregados a ella por una vocación especial, de hecho era considerada como un fruto normal de la vida cristiana, un compromiso para todo creyente mediante el testimonio personal y el anuncio explícito, cuando era posible (RMI, 27).

c)3. El Espíritu está presente operante en todo tiempo y lugar

El Espíritu se manifiesta de modo particular en la Iglesia y en sus miembros. Sin embargo, su presencia y acción son universales; sin límite alguno ni de espacio ni de tiempo. El Concilio Vaticano II recuerda la acción del Espíritu en el corazón del hombre, mediante las "semillas de la Palabra", incluso en las iniciativas religiosas, en los esfuerzos de la actividad humana encaminados a la verdad, al bien y a Dios.

El Espíritu ofrece al hombre "su luz y su fuerza ... a fin de que pueda responder a su máxima vocación"; mediante el Espíritu "el hombre llega por su fe a contemplar y saborear el misterio del plan divino"; más aún, "debemos creer que el Espíritu Santo ofrece a todos la posibilidad de que en la forma que sólo Dios conoce, se asocien a este misterio pascual". En todo caso, la Iglesia "sabe también que el hombre, atraído sin cesar por el Espíritu de Dios, nunca jamás será del todo indiferente, ante el problema religioso" y "siempre deseará... saber, al menos confusamente, el sentido de su vida, de su acción y de su muerte". El Espíritu, pues, está en el origen mismo de la pregunta existencial y religiosa del hombre, la cual surge no sólo de situaciones contingentes, la presencia y la actividad del Espíritu no afectan únicamente, a los individuos, sino también a la sociedad, a la historia, a los pueblos, a las culturas y a las

religiones. En efecto, el Espíritu se halla en el origen de los nobles ideales y de las iniciativas de bien de la humanidad en camino; "con admirable providencia guía el curso de los tiempos y renueva la faz de la tierra". Cristo resucitado "obra ya por la virtud de su Espíritu en el corazón del hombre, no sólo despertando el anhelo del siglo futuro, sino también por eso mismo, alentando, purificando y corroborando los generosos propósitos con que la familia humana intenta hacer más llevadera su vida y someter la tierra a este fin". Es también el Espíritu quien esparce "las semillas de la Palabra" presentes en los ritos y culturas y los prepara para su madurez en Cristo" (RMI, 28).

Así el Espíritu que "sopla donde quiere" (Jn 3, 8) y "obraba ya en el mundo aun antes de que Cristo fuera glorificado" (Sab 1, 7), nos lleva a abrir más nuestra mirada para considerar su acción presente en todo tiempo y lugar.

Este Espíritu es el mismo que se ha hecho presente en la encarnación, en la vida, muerte y resurrección de Jesús y que actúa en la Iglesia. No es, por consiguiente, algo alternativo a Cristo, ni viene a llenar una especie de vacío, como a veces se da por hipótesis que exista entre Cristo y el Logos. Todo lo que el Espíritu obra en los hombres y en la historia de los pueblos, así como en las culturas y religiones tiene un papel de preparación evangélica, y no puede menos de referirse a Cristo Verbo encarnado por obra del Espíritu, "para que, hombre perfecto, salvara a todos y recapitulara todas las cosas".

La acción universal del Espíritu no hay que separarla de la peculiar acción que despliega en el Cuerpo de Cristo que es la Iglesia. En efecto, es siempre el Espíritu quien actúa, ya sea cuando vivifica la Iglesia y la impulsa a anunciar a Cristo, ya sea cuando siembra y desarrolla su dones en todos los hombres y pueblos, guiando a la Iglesia a descubrirlos, promoverlos a recibirlos mediante el diálogo. Toda clase de presencia del Espíritu ha de ser acogida con estima y gratitud; pero el discerniría compete a la Iglesia, a la cual Cristo ha dado su Espíritu para guiarla hasta la verdad completa (cfr. Jn 16, 13) (RMI, 29).

La actividad misionera específica o misión *ad gentes* tiene como destinatarios "a los pueblos o grupos humanos que todavía no creen en Cristo", a los que están alejados de Cristo", entre los cuales la Iglesia "no ha arraigado todavía" y cuya cultura no ha sido influenciada aún por el Evangelio., La peculiaridad de esta misión *ad gentes* está en el hecho de que se dirige a los "no cristianos". Por tanto, hay que evitar que esta "responsabilidad más específicamente misionera que Jesús ha confiado y diariamente vuelve a confiar a su Iglesia; se vuelve una flaca realidad dentro de la misión global del Pueblo de Dios y, consiguientemente, descuidada u olvidada (RMI, 34).

d) La primera forma de evangelización es el testimonio

El hombre contemporáneo cree más a los testigos que a los maestros; cree más en experiencia que en la doctrina, en la vida y los hechos que en las teorías. El testimonio de vida cristiana es la primera e insustituible forma de la misión: Cristo, de cuya misión somos continuadores, es el "Testigo" por excelencia (Ap 1, 5; 3,14) y el modelo del testimonio cristiano. La primera forma de testimonio es *la vida del misionero, la de la familia cristiana y de la comunidad eclesial*, que hace visible un nuevo modo de comportarse. El misionero que, aun con todos los límites y defectos humanos, vive con sencillez según el modelo de Cristo, es un signo de Dios y de las realidades trascendentales. Pero todos en la Iglesia, esforzándose por imitar al divino Maestro, pueden y deben dar este testimonio, que en muchos casos es el único modo posible de ser misioneros (RMI, 42).

La Iglesia y los misioneros deben dar también testimonio de humildad, ante todo en sí mismos, para corregir en los propios comportamientos lo que es antievangélico y desfigura el rostro de Cristo (RMI, 43).

Se trata, pues, de una "vocación especial" que tiene como modelo la de los Apóstoles: se manifiesta en el compromiso total al servicio de la evangelización; se trata de una entrega que abarca a toda la persona y toda la vida del misionero, exigiendo de él una donación sin límites de fuerzas y tiempo (RMI, 65).

La vocación especial de los misioneros *ad vitam* conserva toda su validez: representa el paradigma del compromiso misionero de la Iglesia que siempre necesita donaciones radicales y totales, impulsos nuevos y valientes. Que los misioneros y misioneras que han consagrado toda la vida para dar testimonio del Resucitado entre las gentes, no se dejen atemorizar por

dudas, incomprensiones, rechazos, persecuciones. Que aviven la gracia de su carisma específico y emprendan de nuevo con valentía su camino, prefiriendo los lugares más humildes y difíciles (*RMi*, 66).

3. Comparación de las Encíclicas *Ad Gentes* y *Redemptoris Missio*

3.1 Origen y meta de la misión

El Concilio se remontó al amor fontal de Dios, al plan salvífico universal para descubrir el manantial de la misión. Y desde esa visión original, totalizante, desde esa invasión de amor desbordante presentó la irrupción del Verbo en nuestra historia "para que en Él fueran reinstauradas todas las cosas" (*AG*, 3). Jesucristo, su persona y su obra toda, se insertan como punto culminante en esa corriente de amor que todo lo abraza.

Esta presentación conciliar se salía de los cauces comunes anteriores al Concilio y se exponía a malentendidos. El puesto único, singular de Cristo en el plan salvífico, ¿no podía oscurecerse o relativizarse? Si en este plan globalizante de Dios pueden encontrar algún sentido las diversas religiones y realidades humanas, ¿no perderán relevancia los valores del Evangelio? Si la conciencia personal es tan sagrada, ¿no resulta más difícil predicar la conversión a los que de buena fe siguen caminos distintos del camino cristiano? Todos estos temores encontraron dolorosos cumplimientos, y Pablo VI y Juan Pablo II después, sufrieron sus consecuencias. Esto explicaría que la Encíclica misional de Juan Pablo II, la *Redemptoris Missio*, silencie casi el origen trinitario de la misión y vaya derecho a resaltar el significado de Cristo para, desde Cristo, Salvador único, explicar lo que es el hombre, lo que es la comunidad humana y la misión que la Iglesia ha recibido en su servicio.

Pero también esta manera de explicar la misión cristiana tiene sus peligros y, por cierto, unos peligros nada imaginarios. Esa centralidad de Cristo en la historia de la salvación, tan clara en los postulados de la teología cristiana, ha cegado a muchos cristianos y misioneros sin dejarles ver los tesoros de sabiduría y belleza que Dios ha derramado en otras culturas y religiones. A menudo ha alimentado en ellos una actitud negativa, incluso ofensiva, y un espíritu de superioridad que les ha incapacitado para realizar su misión con el espíritu de Jesús. Sólo cuando hemos empezado a vivir realmente en una sociedad pluralista podemos darnos cuenta de los traumas y desconfianzas que esas actitudes han engendrado entre los seguidores entre los seguidores de otras religiones.

Esta misma situación de pluralismo en la que hemos entrado sin posibilidad de retorno, esta solidaridad y fraternidad a la que la historia salvífica nos empuja, están indicándonos que, por difícil que sea articular los dones de Dios a todos los hombres con la fe en "Cristo único mediador", es preferible entrar en el silencio ("porque es de noche" -San Juan de la Cruz-) y renunciar a explicarlo todo ("sólo Dios conoce los caminos por los que el Espíritu Santo ofrece a todos los hombres la posibilidad de asociarse al misterio pascual": *GS*, 22; *RMi*, 6), antes de recortar y empequeñecer la anchura y profundidad de la "fonte do mana y corre" (*id*) la vida de Dios en la historia humana.

La historia de la misión no nace ni se agota en el acontecimiento del Verbo hecho carne. Desde siempre el Padre está enviando al Hijo y ambos a su Espíritu; actúa en cada corazón y en cada aventura humana empujándola a su fin. Algo tienen que ver con ese toque suave todas las iniciativas de los hombres, religiosos o no, en busca de la justicia, el amor y la paz. Incluso después de Cristo, el Espíritu sigue superando barreras de razas, culturas y religiones (*RMi*). Si esta visión se pierde, si se estrecha el alcance de su origen, vuelven enseguida los antiguos duendes que tanto han oscurecido el evangelio de Jesús. Sin ocultar ni empañar un ápice la gozosa fe cristiana en el papel culminante de Cristo en la historia salvadora, gocémonos igualmente en la anchura que nos depara la contemplación de su origen trinitario, y librémonos de una vez de visiones que la empequeñecen.¹

Y junto con el alfa u origen, importa también contemplar el omega o meta final de la misión cristiana si queremos entender debidamente su orientación y su relación con las realidades a las que se dirige.

También en este punto asoma el peligro de un estrechamiento de miras alrededor, sobre todo, de un enfoque que, desde el Concilio, parecía estar ya superado: la práctica *cripto-identificación* del Reino de Dios con la Iglesia. No es el único peligro en torno al tema del Reino

de Dios, como lo resalta la preocupación de Juan Pablo II al dedicarle un capítulo entero de su encíclica misional, pero es quizá el de más peligrosas consecuencias para la misión cristiana. Veámoslo.

Durante siglos hubo en la teología un lamentable olvido del tema central del mensaje de Jesús: el Reino de Dios. Era la Iglesia la que acaparaba la atención, una Iglesia que salía de las manos de Jesús sin relación aparente con el Reino. Fue el Concilio el que enseñó una íntima relación entre el misterio de la Iglesia y el Reino de Dios: ni se identifican ni se pueden separar. Pero en las convulsas aguas post-conciliares aparece en algunos la tendencia extrema de entender el Reino de tal manera que la Iglesia quedaba como de sobra, mientras algunos movimientos liberadores eran vistos como casi concreción histórica del Reino; y en el pluralismo religioso actual, al resaltar al Reino como un foco de luz inagotable, ronda el peligro de relegar al olvido o no saber qué hacer con esta otra realidad inseparable del Reino que es la Iglesia.

En reacción, de tal manera se quiere a veces estrechar la relación Reino-Iglesia que viene a negarse en la práctica todo acceso al Reino que no pase por la Iglesia. "O dicho de otra manera: en vez de contemplar a la Iglesia desde su relación con el misterio del Reino, esta tendencia quiere explicar el Reino de Dios en referencia a la Iglesia y hacer al fin de cuentas que la Iglesia sea el Reino".²

Las consecuencias para la misión cristiana son perniciosas, porque implícita en esta cuestión de la relación Iglesia-Reino está la cuestión de la relación Iglesia-Mundo, Iglesia-Religiones, etc. Donde hay una cripto-identificación entre la Iglesia y el Reino, las realidades del mundo se vuelven periféricas, pierden sentido y relevancia. Y al revés, cuando el futuro del Reino se juega no sólo en la Iglesia sino también en la arena de la vida de los hombres, se nos ponen delante, con todo su peso, las realidades vivas de pecado, de injusticia, de opresión y marginación de tantas gentes y pueblos, como también los logros de convivencia y solidaridad que los hombres van gestando.

Es pues necesario mantener en equilibrio la correcta relación entre el Reino de Dios y la Iglesia. Lo mismo que no es cosa de identificar a la Iglesia con Cristo (por más que sea su cuerpo y su esposa), tampoco hay que identificar con el Reino por más que sea su sacramento, del cual ha de entender la Iglesia su naturaleza y su misión. En esta perspectiva, el mundo en que vivimos es tomando en serio, evidencia su contraste o sintonía con el ideal del Reino de Dios, y ahí la Iglesia, signo del Reino y a su servicio, ha de orientar su misión con arreglo a esos contrastes y sintonías. Si en el mensaje de Jesús sobre el reino, los pobres y su futuro ocupan un lugar central, la misión habrá de reservarles sus preferencias. Basta constatar cómo los pobres a los que Cristo atribuyó el Reino y llamó bienaventurados no han ocupado el lugar de privilegio que Cristo les asignó para curarnos de identificar a la Iglesia con el Reino.

Algo parecido sucede a la misión en su relación con las realidades culturales y el pluralismo religioso que la humanidad vive desde siempre. Una cripto-identificación entre la Iglesia y el Reino nos impediría entender debidamente esa riqueza y ese pluralismo en los planes de Dios y no nos dejaría captar el verdadero sentido del diálogo. Cuando, más que el horizonte final del Reino de Dios y su designio universal de salvación, lo que resaltamos es la Iglesia como sacramento de esa salvación, necesariamente queda herido el sentido de la misión cristiana. Sin darnos cuenta, será la expansión de la Iglesia lo que más vayamos buscando en la misión.

En esta tensión Iglesia-Reino, hay voces que ponen en guardia contra la tentación de separar. Tan necesario parece estar alerta contra la tentación de confundir. La Iglesia no es el Reino. Su gloria está en ser su signo y en peregrinar confiada y humildemente, en diálogo con todos los demás caminantes, hacia el Reino que le desborda.

3.2 La misión: misión de Cristo, misión de su Espíritu

La misión cristiana es continuación de la misión de Cristo. Sí, pero ya hemos visto que arranca de lejos, de la noche del misterio trinitario. Como la eclesiología queda chata si hacemos nacer a la Iglesia como por encanto de las manos de Jesús olvidando su entronque con el Reino, así también la cristología (y en ella, la misión cristiana) pierde vuelo si la desvinculamos de su "prehistoria", es decir, si desconectamos a Cristo del Logos, y a su Espíritu del "*ruah*" de Dios, activo ya en el misterio de la creación. Nuestra fe confiesa que el Verbo se encarnó por obra del Espíritu Santo, y por obra de ese mismo Espíritu fue llevado

Desde las riberas en que la misión se vive, más como diálogo, se alzan voces a favor de subrayar la pneumatología que alentó el Concilio, orientada a la escatología y de que no se la conciba en función de la cristología (menos aún de la eclesiología), sino que la preceda y la acompañe. Las antiguas liturgias sirias y palestinas que, antes de bautizar, conferían el Espíritu mediante el sacramento de la confirmación/son un signo de este tipo de cristología pneumatológica que nos ofrece un amplio marco para enfocar bien la misión que hoy se juega dentro del pluralismo de nuestro mundo.

[illegible]

Una misión que proclamara la fe cristiana completa y correctamente, y que no estuviera inspirada y dinamizada por el amor, fácilmente se volvería agresiva, prepotente y destructora. No es ésa la misión cristiana. A la misión cristiana la mueve el amor, tal como se ha manifestado en Cristo, un amor marcado por su universalismo, por romper fronteras, y por su preferencia por los pobres y pequeños. Entre sus paradigmas más elocuentes está el Buen Samaritano, o el Jesús que pasó haciendo el bien, o el que comió con los marginados, o el que se hizo compañero de viaje de los abatidos discípulos del camino de Emaús. Ni en las cartas de Pablo (en las que el "*ágape*" cristiano parece concentrarse en la práctica en el círculo de los "prójimos" y "hermanos" cristianos) ni en las grandes expansiones misioneras modernas se reflexionó mucho sobre el amor en toda su universalidad, también hacia aquellos que no pertenecen a nuestro círculo étnico, cultural o religioso. Hoy nos urge asimilar del otro, con todas sus consecuencias, sin despojarle de lo, que él considera ser su porción más inalienable, sus convicciones íntimas.

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corresponde plenamente a la visión y práctica de Jesús, y hemos de atrevernos a vivirlo a fondo cada día ahora, sobre todo, que la convivencia en pluralismo nos está desafiando. Así, nuestra misión será en verdad proclamación del evangelio del Reino, es decir, de la Buena Noticia del amor de Dios. Así, la misión-diálogo no deberá ser tanto una fe que encuentra otras fes y trata de explicarse cuanto una expresión de amor que trata de reinterpretar su auténtica universalidad, con base en tomar en serio la fe del otro, sin lo cual no cabe amor verdadero y maduro.

Para renovar el sentido de la misión, para no reaccionar ante sus problemas con escapatorias, para no caer en miedos y reduccionismos, nada mejor que volver los ojos y corazón a toda la anchura y profundidad que nos abre el ideal del Reino de Dios y contemplarlo brotar y desarrollarse, por la fuerza del Espíritu, desde el amor fontal del Padre y gustar cómo se hace realidad en la persona de Jesús, el Cristo. Esta apertura a las maravillas que Dios sigue hoy realizando para que el Reino llegue a su plenitud nos cura de miopías y nos empuja a una gozosa misión.

3.3 la misión cristiana: sus tareas "misioneras"

Todo lo dicho hasta aquí sobre el origen y la meta de la misión, sobre el Espíritu y el Verbo hecho hombre explica y estimula la misión entera de la Iglesia. Pero en esta misión hay muchas tareas y, por dificultoso que sea precisar sus límites, es claro que algunas de esas tareas adquieren características peculiares que configuran una actividad típica y fundamental de la Iglesia: la así llamada "actividad misionera", dirigida a las gentes que no conocen a Cristo o también a comunidades de Bautizados sin la fuerza suficiente para vivir e irradiar su fe. De esta actividad misionera, de esta misión cristiana queremos ahora explicitar su contenido, describiendo las tareas en que hoy anda metida y las reflexiones que se hace sobre ellas.

La misión cristiana es anuncio, *proclamación* de Jesucristo, de su Evangelio. Esta afirmación tradicional es también plenamente actual y gozosa para todo corazón cristiano. Las diferencias surgen sólo alrededor del modo de proclamación: ¿Con qué signos? ¿Con qué palabras? ¿Con qué obras? ¿Con qué silencios? ¿Con qué testimonios? Cada Iglesia local, con arreglo a los diversos contextos, ha de discernir las respuestas más adecuadas y los ámbitos nuevos o viejos que esperan la Buena Nueva.

Otra urgencia de la misión actual gira en torno a la espiritualidad misionera. La mirada contemplativa al Reino y al misterio de la misión de Dios en la historia debería librarnos de ansiedades y agresividades y habilitarnos para no instrumentalizar en provecho propio las tareas misioneras. Ahora que, por un lado y otro, se oyen voces que descalifican al misionero como intruso, paternalista o egoísta; es buen momento para autoexaminarse y acercarse más al estilo del Crucificado, para desde una misión humilde y servidora, ser generadores de gozo, evangelio y esperanza. Porque una misión que se abre paso desde arriba, que se pone del lado de los más pequeños para desde ahí ofrecer a todos el Evangelio de Jesús, generará por fuerza esperanza.

No es misión todo lo que lleva ese letrero. Hay que aplicarse a discernir. Una de las tentaciones más corrientes consiste en entrar en las tareas de la misión con demasiada poca preparación, olvidando que cada cosa requiere su tiempo, un tiempo que depende del reloj de Dios ("llegó la hora": Mc 1,14) y también de nuestra responsabilidad³.

Hay que recordar que la transmisión del evangelio no es obra puramente humana. Nadie conoce al Hijo si no es conducido por el Padre hasta él. Los evangelios resaltan que no es la carne y la sangre la que revela al Hijo. Los Hechos de los Apóstoles presentan el desarrollo de la evangelización como obra conjunta de la predicación de los apóstoles y la acción del Espíritu Santo, lo que hace que cada uno de los oyentes escuche la proclamación del Evangelio en su propia lengua. Repetidas veces se hace alusión al Espíritu que abre los corazones de los oyentes para que crean en la Palabra que se les anuncia (Hch 16,14), les hace desear la llegada de los heraldos del Evangelio (Hch 10, 5) y confirma sus palabras con signos y portentos. También Jesús había dicho a sus discípulos que el Espíritu Santo les daría una sabiduría irresistible para dar testimonio de Él ante los hombres. Todo esto está en la base de la experiencia, humanamente inexplicable, de tantos misioneros que encuentran en sus oyentes una misteriosa acogida a sus palabras. El Espíritu ya presente en sus corazones los hace sintonizar con la palabra que se proclama y reconocer en ella el cumplimiento de sus aspiraciones y anhelos. El pie ha encontrado el zapato que le cuadra. La iluminación interior del que cree, don del Espíritu, está en la base de la comprensión del Evangelio, condición primera para que pueda darse una nueva expresión socio-cultural del mismo en medio de otro

pueblo, y esto sucede a pesar de las deficiencias y limitaciones del evangelizador. No es la sabiduría de éste o de los oyentes la que opera el prodigio, sino la voluntad del Padre de revelarse a los humildes y sencillos que mantienen sus corazones abiertos a su acción.

Pero hay un elemento importante que no podemos olvidar: la comunidad, la Iglesia. *La proclamación de la Buena Nueva es una llamada a formar parte de una comunidad de creyentes, de seguidores de Jesús.* El encuentro con Cristo no se efectúa de un modo directo y a histórico. Se hace mediante una comunidad histórica que lo anuncia y hace presente: mediante la Iglesia, Cuerpo de Cristo, que prolonga históricamente su encarnación en lo humano y lo hace accesible a nuestra naturaleza corpórea, y continúa su proceso de encarnación en pueblos de culturas diversas.

Como comunidad humana, la Iglesia expresa, celebra y vive el misterio de Cristo en unos módulos culturales concretos y específicos. No podría ser de otra manera. La mayor profundidad de comprensión que la Iglesia, guiada por el Espíritu hacia la verdad completa, ha ido acumulando en su peregrinar está también expresada en unos módulos culturales específicos y contingentes, aunque sus contenidos tengan una validez permanente y universal.

Al proclamar el Evangelio, la Iglesia se proclama a sí misma como lugar de encuentro con Cristo: la Iglesia es parte integrante del mensaje que se anuncia: no una Iglesia etérea y ahistórica, sino la Iglesia concreta e histórica marcada culturalmente por ritos, instituciones, modos de vida, etc. concretos. Al menos inicialmente, la Iglesia que evangeliza un pueblo tiene un carácter extranjero. Ésta es una tensión ineludible de la Iglesia: su concreción histórica y su misión universal. Este rostro inicialmente extranjero de la Iglesia evidencia y significa la alteridad del Reino de Dios que viene de fuera, como don y gracia, y no como evolución rectilínea y autosuficiente de la propia cultura de un pueblo. Cristo mismo acentuaría este aspecto también para los judíos: sus palabras no son suyas, sino "del que lo ha enviado; Él viene de fuera, o mejor, de arriba, mientras los judíos son de abajo. La Iglesia, el misionero, es signo del carácter extranjero, totalmente otro, de Dios, que irrumpe en nuestras vidas por Gracia, como don, alterando nuestros esquemas y proyectos."⁴

4. Exhortación Apostólica post-sinodal *Ecclesia in Asia* de Juan Pablo II (12 nov. 1999)

4.1 Jesucristo, el hombre-Dios que salva

Las Escrituras atestiguan que Jesús vivió una vida auténticamente humana. Ese Jesús que proclamamos como único Salvador caminó por la tierra como hombre-Dios, con una perfecta



naturaleza humana. Constantemente en oración, vivió en íntima relación con Dios, al que se dirigía llamándolo *Abba*, "Padre", desconcertando a cuantos lo escuchaban (*cfr.* Jn 8,34-59).

Enfermos, lisiados, ciegos, sordos y mudos recibieron de Él la curación y el perdón. Eligió como sus compañeros y

colaboradores más íntimos a un insólito grupo, en el que había pescadores y recaudadores, zelotas y personas inexpertas en la Ley; había incluso algunas mujeres. Así se creó una nueva familia, bajo el acogedor y sorprendente amor de Padre. Jesús predicaba con sencillez, usando ejemplos tomados de la vida ordinaria para hablar del amor de Dios y de su reino; multitudes reconocían que hablaba con autoridad. (EA, 11). * Continúa la visión de "*Redemptoris Missio*".

4.2 La persona y la misión del Hijo de Dios

La fe que hemos recibido afirma que Jesucristo reveló y realizó el plan del Padre de salvar al mundo y a la humanidad entera en virtud de "lo que Él es" y de "lo que hacen en razón de lo que Él es". "Lo que Él es" y "lo que hace" sólo cobran su pleno significado cuando se sitúan dentro del misterio de Dios uno y trino (EA, 12).

4.3 La unicidad y la universalidad de la salvación en Jesús

Desde el primer instante del tiempo hasta el último, Jesús es el único Mediador universal. También para cuantos no profesan explícitamente la fe en Él como Salvador, la salvación llega a través de Él como gracia, mediante la comunicación del Espíritu Santo (EA, 14).

4.4 El Espíritu de Dios en la creación y en la historia

Si es verdad que el significado salvífico de Jesucristo sólo se puede comprender en el marco de su revelación del plan de salvación de la Trinidad, de ahí se sigue que el Espíritu Santo pertenece intrínsecamente al misterio de Jesús y de la salvación que Él nos ha traído. Siguiendo el itinerario del concilio Vaticano II, los padres del Sínodo prestaron atención a la acción múltiple y variada del Espíritu Santo, que siembra constantemente semillas de verdad entre todos los pueblos y en sus religiones, culturas y filosofías (EA, 15).

4.5 El Espíritu Santo y la encarnación del Verbo

Bajo la guía del Espíritu Santo, la historia de la salvación se va desarrollando en el escenario del mundo, e incluso del cosmos, de acuerdo con el plan eterno del Padre. La encarnación del Hijo de Dios es la obra suprema del Espíritu Santo. La presencia universal del Espíritu Santo es inseparable de la salvación universal en Jesús (EA, 16).

4.6 El Espíritu Santo y el Cuerpo de Cristo

También es Él quien hace posible que la Iglesia continúe la misión de Jesús, dando en primer lugar testimonio de Cristo y realizando así lo que Él mismo había prometido antes de su muerte y resurrección, es decir, que enviaría al Espíritu a los discípulos *para que dieran testimonio de Él* (cfr. Jn 15, 26-27). El Espíritu Santo recuerda a la Iglesia que no existe para sí misma, sino para servir a Cristo y a la salvación del mundo en todo lo que es y hace. En la actual economía de la salvación, la actividad del Espíritu Santo en la creación, en la historia y en la Iglesia forma parte del plan eterno de la Trinidad con respecto a todo lo que existe (EA, 17).

4.7 El Espíritu Santo y la misión de la Iglesia en Asia

El Espíritu Santo que actuaba en Asia en tiempos de los patriarcas y los profetas y, de modo más poderoso, en la época de Jesús y de la Iglesia primitiva, ahora actúa sobre los cristianos de Asia, fortaleciendo su testimonio de fe entre los pueblos, las culturas y las religiones del continente (EA, 18).

4.8 Una Iglesia que testimonia

El concilio Vaticano II enseñó claramente que toda la Iglesia es misionera y que la labor de evangelización corresponde a todo el pueblo de Dios. Es evidente que no puede haber auténtico anuncio del Evangelio si los cristianos no dan al mismo tiempo testimonio de una vida acorde con el mensaje que predicán: "La primera forma de testimonio es la vida misma del misionero, la de la familia cristiana y de la comunidad eclesial, que hace visible un nuevo modo de comportarse [...] Todos en la Iglesia, esforzándose por imitar al divino Maestro, pueden y deben dar este testimonio, que en muchos casos es el único modo posible de ser misioneros" (EA, 42).

5. El agente que más nos concierne: el misionero - su espiritualidad

La espiritualidad misionera se presenta en la *Redemptoris Missio* como el fundamento de la actividad misionera, porque ésta "exige una espiritualidad específica que concierne particularmente a quienes Dios ha llamado a ser misioneros" (RMi, 87). Cuando se habla de espiritualidad misionera, el punto de referencia es Jesucristo, misionero del Padre, que ha venido para llevar a cumplimiento el plan de salvación para toda la humanidad. Si bien la espiritualidad cristiana posee en sí una dimensión misionera, la espiritualidad misionera, en sentido específico, consiste en vivir el misterio de Cristo "enviado" a evangelizar. (RMi, 88). También cuando se habla de espiritualidad misionera se piensa en primer lugar en los miembros de este último grupo que "de por vida están entregados a una vocación especial" (RMi, 27).

Condiciones de una espiritualidad misionera

5.1 Docilidad al Espíritu Santo

La docilidad al Espíritu Santo es la primera característica de la espiritualidad misionera. Los Apóstoles llenos del Espíritu Santo fueron guiados por Él en la elección de los lugares y de los pueblos a evangelizar (cfr. RMi, 24). La misión es el fruto "del impulso dinámico del mismo Espíritu" (RM, 23), que invita al misionero a convertirse a Jesús y a dejarse transformar por el Espíritu (cfr. RMi, 24). Sólo entonces se puede invitar a los demás a hacer lo mismo. Si el Espíritu Santo es el "sujeto protagonista trascendente" de la misión cristiana (RMi, 24), el misionero es aquel que es dócil al Espíritu que siempre "invita a estar atentos a los diversos

carismas misioneros y a las diversas condiciones ambientales y humanas" (RMI, 23) y preserva la unidad fundamental de la misión de proclamar a Jesucristo.

5.2 En la espiritualidad de la encarnación

Compartir la condición humana del pueblo al que es enviado el misionero es un proceso sin fin. Es un éxodo continuo de sí mismo hacia la renuncia, el fracaso y la incompreensión en el cumplimiento de la misión a ejemplo de Jesucristo. El verdadero misionero no es el que tiene encuentros exóticos con extranjeros como si de un turista se tratara. Quien verdaderamente se encarna entre su gente debe estar dispuesto a morir por ellos. El misionero es aquel que es enviado por Dios: "el hombre debe responder a la llamada de Dios de tal modo que, sin entregarse a la carne y a la sangre, se consagre totalmente a la obra del evangelio" (AG, 24).⁵ La misión exige la pobreza como condición y estilo de vida. No cualquier forma de pobreza - sabemos que la pobreza evangélica puede expresarse de muchas formas-, sino la "pobreza misionera". La pobreza misionera va más allá de las exigencias habituales de la pobreza en la evangelización, caracterizadas por la inserción entre los pobres, el estilo austero de vida y la opción solidaria por la causa de los oprimidos. Pero hay además un empobrecimiento misionero inherente a su éxodo "en tierra extraña". Este empobrecimiento como actitud y como estilo de vida está exigido por el éxodo eclesial y el éxodo cultural.

El éxodo cultural: la misión es abandonar la propia cultura, con la simbología e interpretación cristiana que ella conlleva, para insertarse en otra cultura. No sólo para adaptarse a ella (dentro de lo posible), sino para aportar en su evangelización mediante la reinterpretación cristiana de esa cultura. De ahí la exigencia de un "empobrecimiento cultural" para el misionero, no en el sentido de que haya que despojarse de los valores de su cultura de origen, sino en el sentido que haya que despojarse de los condicionamientos de su cultura que le impiden percibir la presencia del Espíritu y los caminos propios del Evangelio en la cultura "extraña" a la cual fue a servir.

La pobreza misionera, como toda otra forma de pobreza evangélica, es un riesgo en la esperanza. Es un salto al vacío apoyado en la fe de la Iglesia. El éxodo misionero da miedo. Como, dio miedo a los misioneros-profetas del Dios de Israel, arrojados por su Señor en tierras de exilio para mantener ahí viva la fe en la promesa. La pobreza en la misión es aceptar las crisis de inseguridad y del "nacer de nuevo" de tantas maneras, sin perder la identidad cristiana. El empobrecimiento misionero requiere mucha madurez. No está hecho para cristianos adolescentes, o en busca de evasiones o de compensaciones publicitarias.⁶

5.3 Oración y contemplación

Primeramente el misionero debe ser un contemplativo: capaz de transmitir no sólo ideas, discursos y análisis, sino sobre todo su experiencia personal de Jesucristo y de los valores de su reino. En el corazón de las masas alejadas, frecuentemente el testimonio contemplativo de un cristiano es la única cisura por la que se va comunicando la luz del Evangelio. Cuanto más nos adentramos en la periferia del cristianismo, en "tierra extraña", más debemos mantenernos unidos a las fuentes contemplativas de la Iglesia. Muchos misioneros generosos naufragaron o perdieron su identidad cristiana por olvidar esto.

In contemplative prayer, the ultimate goal is to empty one's self and be in God's presence.

Alguien definió al misionero como "*aquel que actúa como si viera al invisible*". Aquel que es capaz de seguir adelante, más allá de cualquier dificultad, cualquier frustración, cualquier decepción, porque tiene la fuerza del que actúa como si viera a Dios a causa de su experiencia cristiana. Ésta es la fuente de la esperanza misionera. Por eso cuando hablamos del espíritu de la misión, no podemos evitar el problema de la experiencia de fe del misionero. Pues solamente la fe y la contemplación nos ponen cara a cara con el Dios invisible.

El misionero es el que se entrega a la edificación de un reino que va mucho más allá de lo que él es o lo que él hace. Ser consecuente con esta experiencia de la fe es hacer de la contemplación un estilo en la acción. El estilo de acción contemplativo está marcado por la esperanza. Está marcado por la serenidad, ante la colosal tarea misionera que nos sobrepasa. Pues en la perspectiva de la fe, la misión es hacer lo que Dios quiere y al ritmo que Dios

quiere, y no todo lo que nosotros pensamos que habría que hacer. La primera actitud es fuente de esperanza; la segunda, de desaliento y frustración.

La misión es una llamada, una "vocación", por la cual Dios nos envía "a los otros" (Gal 1,15). La llamada misionera es una proyección hacia los demás, un dinamismo para ir siempre "más allá de la frontera". Este dinamismo se agota si no se nutre continuamente de la experiencia contemplativa. El envío misionero no es una condición jurídica, sino el resultado dinámico de un encuentro con el Cristo viviente.⁷

La oración y la contemplación son fundamentales para la espiritualidad misionera, por el hecho de que la misión cristiana no depende de los recursos humanos, (cfr. *RMi*, 91). El contenido, la orientación y las circunstancias externas de su oración se ven condicionadas por su actividad misionera. Es en la oración donde el misionero discierne y encuentra respuestas a los problemas personales y misioneros.

La proclamación misionera es el resultado de la experiencia de Dios en Jesucristo, que se ha sentido, aprendido y experimentado (cfr. 1 Jn 1,1-5). La disponibilidad al diálogo antes que la confrontación, el rechazo de la ambición y las rivalidades, la cooperación cultural y económica, el compromiso por la justicia en el trabajo misionero son resultado de la conversión y la oración.

Jesús orante es el modelo del misionero en oración. Su ministerio durante la vida pública se basa fundamentalmente en su oración diaria al Padre. Jesús nunca sustituyó la oración por la actividad. La *Redemptoris Missio* recalca este punto: "El futuro de la misión depende en gran parte de la contemplación. El misionero, si no es contemplativo, no puede anunciar a Cristo de modo creíble" (*RMi*, 91).⁸

5.4 Celo Pastoral

La espiritualidad misionera exige una forma específica de apostolado y de ministerio. El corazón del apostolado misionero es el celo pastoral. A imitación de Cristo, el celo pastoral toma diversas formas como "atención, ternura, compasión, acogida, disponibilidad, interés por los problemas de la gente" (*RMi*, 89). El Papa Pablo VI lo llamó en la *Evangelii Nuntiandi*: "fervor del Espíritu... un entusiasmo interior que nadie ni nada puede apagar" (*EN*, 80). Los grandes misioneros de la historia de la Iglesia antepusieron el celo pastoral a toda otra consideración, incluso a la vida. El celo pastoral es el camino del misionero hacia Dios y su prójimo. Como dice *Pastores Dabo Vobis*: "La esencia de la caridad pastoral es la donación de sí mismo a los demás por el que imitamos a Cristo en su donación y servicio. La caridad pastoral determina la manera en la que el misionero piensa, actúa y se relaciona con los demás" (*PDV*, 23).

El celo pastoral lleva al misionero a vencer cualquier apego a las personas y cosas, barreras y divisiones de raza, casta o ideología y le convierte en un sacramento viviente del amor de Dios a todos, especialmente a los pobres (cfr. *RMi*, 88; *AG*, 24).⁹

La misión requiere confianza en sí misma. Dicho de otra manera: el misionero debe creer y tener confianza en el Espíritu que anima a la Iglesia y en la eficacia, a menudo oscura y misteriosa, de la evangelización y de los medios propios de la acción misionera. "Yo los escogí para que vayan y tengan fruto y su fruto permanezca" (Jn 15, 16).

La tragedia de muchos es que no creen en la eficacia propia e irreductible de la evangelización, especialmente de cara a "los otros". Esta desconfianza sustituye el dinamismo misionero por el trabajo sólo con los practicantes, más fácil y consolador. O por los proyectos materiales. O por la eficacia, aparentemente más visible e inmediata, de las racionalidades humanas o de la política. La situación actual del desánimo misionero se debe en buena parte a estas tentaciones. Cuando la misión se separa de la perspectiva de Jesús de su redención y de su reino, se puede equiparar con cualquier ideal o empresa humana válida, incluyendo sus fines y modos de eficacia. Pero la misión, que incluye necesariamente los criterios de la eficacia humana, los trasciende siempre, debido a su objetivo radical: la conversión a Jesús y al amor fraterno, la superación del pecado y la experiencia de Dios Padre. Estos objetivos y liberaciones radicales implican la acción del don y de la gracia de Dios sobre su pueblo, y la inserción en la oración y en el sacrificio de Jesús ("Esta clase de demonios sólo se expulsan por la oración y el sacrificio" Mc 9,29).

Hombre de fe en el dinamismo de su misión y en la fuerza de su mensaje, el misionero cree en la eficacia misteriosamente liberadora de la cruz de cada día, y en la eficacia de su presencia y entrega personal en medio del pueblo o en medio de la incredulidad. Cree en el valor de la santidad y de la entrega por sí mismos. Cree en la fuerza cualitativa de la misión y de la presencia cristiana: aunque sean minorías los que traspasan la frontera de sus Iglesias para ir a "los otros", al corazón de las masas, su significado eclesial es incalculable; es el "pequeño resto" que representa a toda la Iglesia y que actúa en su nombre, significando la venida del reino de Dios entre "los otros".

Esta confianza en la misión y en la venida del reino, "contra toda esperanza", genera la paciencia histórica y la mansedumbre cristiana en las contradicciones y fracasos de la misión.

La raíz última de esta actitud, que nos identifica con Cristo misionero "manso y humilde de corazón", es la pobreza de espíritu según las bienaventuranzas. La pobreza radical de espíritu no sólo coloca consciente y activamente nuestra misión entre las manos de Dios, sino que también nos lleva a seguir las actitudes de Cristo en la misión, que porque era pobre y dependiente ante el Padre, y pobre entre sus hermanos los hombres, "no rompía la caña trizada ni la mecha humeante", ni "gritaba y discutía en las plazas" (Mt 11, 29; 12, 18 *sqq*).

La confianza en la obra del Espíritu de Cristo en la misión se traduce por el respeto a cada persona, por la no imposición, por el reconocimiento de la verdad y del bien en donde se encuentren, por la humildad y el desasimiento personal. Este estilo evangélico en la misión forma parte del testimonio cristiano que la hace creíble y aceptable, aunque a través de la paciencia y de la cruz.

5.5 El espíritu de lo itinerante y de lo provisorio

La "espiritualidad misionera" exige el espíritu de lo itinerante y de lo provisorio. De esto ya hemos hablado más atrás: por su misma naturaleza la misión es éxodo; es dinámica, móvil. Cuando ha asegurado su objetivo esencial, no se atrinchera en una comunidad establecida o en el trabajo con los ya convertidos, sino que inicia un nuevo éxodo; va siempre "más allá", buscando lo que todavía es más alejado, más pobre y más necesitado del evangelio.

Esto quiere decir (respetando siempre las situaciones pastorales y las vocaciones personales) que el misionero debe mantener una actitud espiritual coherente con esa exigencia. La actitud de promover los ministerios y los liderazgos locales, para hacerse sustituir lo antes posible. Por lo tanto la actitud de no "hacer carrera", actitud necesaria para la libertad profunda de todo evangelizador (la "carrera eclesiástica", la cuestión de los "puestos" y promociones es la servidumbre más sutil del ministerio apostólico) es esencial al misionero para mantener su actitud de *provisionariedad* y para responder a la llamada de "ir más allá" cuando ésta se haga sentir.

El misionero está en tensión entre su arraigo y compromiso con una comunidad local, y su disponibilidad para *itinerar* y desarraigarse llegado el momento. La síntesis de ambas actitudes, realizadas en toda su seriedad, y sin sacrificar la una por la otra, requiere una mística particular, que es el don de la vocación misionera. Esta espiritualidad de la itinerancia, como cualquier otra mística cristiana, tiene también por modelo y única referencia el seguimiento de Jesús, en su condición de evangelizador itinerante y de apóstol incansable entre los judíos de su tiempo.

Esta actitud de éxodo y de itinerancia, para que sea "católica" y para que sea enriquecedora del propio misionero y de la comunidad que él ha ido a ayudar, requiere tener raíces en la experiencia cristiana del misionero, y requiere que éste lleve consigo las riquezas de su Iglesia de origen. La inserción en otra Iglesia y cultura no debe ser al precio de vaciar al misionero del mensaje y del aporte particular que su propia Iglesia está ofreciendo a la catolicidad, en este momento de la historia.¹⁰

5.6 El camino hacia las bienaventuranzas cristianas

Toda espiritualidad cristiana posee una manera específica de llegar a Dios, a la madurez humana y a la santidad cristiana. Para el misionero, el compromiso total le conduce a la madurez humana y a la santidad.

Aunque es cierto que existen muchos otros caminos hacia Dios y la santidad cristiana, para el misionero consiste en el total compromiso con la misión, como dice la *Redemptoris Missio*: La espiritualidad misionera de la Iglesia es un verdadero camino hacia la santidad.

El renovado impulso hacia la misión *ad gentes* exige misioneros santos. No basta renovar los métodos pastorales, ni organizar y coordinar mejor las fuerzas eclesiales, ni explorar con mayor agudeza los fundamentos bíblicos y teológicos de la fe: es necesario suscitar un nuevo "anhelo de santidad" entre los misioneros y en toda la comunidad cristiana, particularmente entre aquellos que son los colaboradores más íntimos de los misioneros. (RMI, 90).

Por su parte, los misioneros reflexionen sobre el deber de ser santos, que el don de la vocación les pide, renovando constantemente su espíritu y actualizando también su formación doctrinal y pastoral. El misionero ha de ser un "contemplativo en acción". Él halla respuesta a los problemas a la luz de la Palabra de Dios y con la oración personal y comunitaria. El contacto con los representantes de las tradiciones espirituales no cristianas, en particular, las de Asia, me ha corroborado que *el futuro de la misión depende en gran parte de la contemplación. El misionero, si no es contemplativo, no puede anunciar a Cristo de modo creíble. El misionero es un testigo de la experiencia de Dios y debe poder decir como los Apóstoles: "Lo que contemplamos... acerca de la Palabra de vida..., os lo anunciamos"* (1 Jn 1,1-3). (RMI, 91).¹¹

End Notes

¹ J. NEUER, "Mission in Ad Gentes and in Redemptoris Missio", in: "Vidyajyoti", 56 (1992), pp. 228-241 *apud* J.A. Izco, "La misión hoy. A vueltas con la misión cristiana: balance y perspectivas", *Misiones Extranjeras*, 140 (mar.-abr. 1994), p. 133 nota 34, Madrid.

² F. WILFRED, "Once Again... Church and Kingdom", in: Vidyajyoti, 57 (1993), p. 10. (EN ESTE PUNTO Y EN LA PARTE SIGUIENTE SOBRE "LA MISIÓN DE CRISTO Y LA MISIÓN DEL ESPÍRITU", ME LIMITO APENAS A RESUMIR ESTE ARTÍCULO DE WILFRED, PP. 6-25). Citado por J.A. Izco, *ibid.*, nota 35.

³ Izco, *ibid.*, pp. 131-143.

⁴ J. PLANELL ALMERICH, "Notas sobre inculturación", *Misiones Extranjeras*, 104 (mar.-abr. 1988), pp. 140-141, Madrid.

⁵ N. CONTRAN, "La espiritualidad misionera", in: S. Karotemprel (dir.), *Seguir a Cristo en la Misión*, Estella: Ed. Verbo Divino, 1998, pp. 121-125.

⁶ S. GALILEA, *El camino de la espiritualidad*, Bogotá: Ed. Paulinas, 1990, pp. 217-218.

⁷ GAULEA, *ibid.*, pp. 215-216.

⁸ CONTRAN, *op. cit.* p. 125.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 125-126.

¹⁰ GALILEA, *op. cit.*, pp. 219-220.

¹¹ CONTRAN, *op. cit.*, pp. 127-128.

Ref.: VOCES (Diálogo Misionero Contemporáneo) Año 19/No.37/2012, pp. 25-52.

Sr. Showrillu Vatti, FMM (Winnipeg, Canada)

Mon expérience missionnaire au Canada

Je suis arrivée de l'Inde au Canada le 7 août 1987. C'était tout nouveau pour moi. De nature je suis intravertie, calme et tranquille. Quelques sœurs ont pensé que je ne survivrais pas ici. La première année a été un véritable défi. J'ai dû réapprendre plusieurs choses dont certaines étaient complètement nouvelles pour moi. Par exemple le jour de notre arrivée, notre provinciale nous a introduites à la chapelle et nous avons prié, remerciant Dieu pour la cadeau que nous étions. Quand nous allons prier, normalement nous couvrons notre tête avec le sari que nous portons. Je l'ai fait automatiquement. Les sœurs ont cru que j'avais froid elles ont donc fermé les fenêtres. C'était gentil de leur part. Une fois, je marchais et je vis écrit de l'autre côté de la rue «Coin wash». J'ai pensé que c'était une drôle d'idée de laver les pièces de monnaie. Plus tard j'ai appris qu'on met des pièces de monnaie pour faire fonctionner la machine à laver le linge.



En 1988 j'ai pris quelques cours à l'Université St. Paul à Ottawa. L'adaptation m'a coûté énormément et je pleurais tout le temps. Le professeur m'a dit de retourner en Inde. J'ai beaucoup réfléchi et prié, demandant au Seigneur de m'indiquer le chemin. Je me rendis à la salle à manger. À ce moment là, je ne pleurais pas. J'étais seule et une dame vint s'asseoir de l'autre côté de la table. Elle me dit: «Pourquoi pleurez-vous le soleil couchant; il y a de brillantes étoiles qui nous donnent la lumière». Comme elle n'était pas étudiante, je lui demandai pourquoi elle était venue ici. Elle me dit: «Quelque chose m'a poussée à venir ici». Immédiatement j'ai pensé qu'elle était l'Ange envoyé par Dieu pour me consoler. Après cela j'étais très bien. Les couleurs d'automne et les flocons de neige m'ont étonnée.

Le 17 avril 1988, j'ai été engagée à Ottawa par une agence privée «Centre d'immigration Catholique». J'y ai passé 22 fécondes années. La mission principale de ce centre est d'aider les Immigrants et les Réfugiés à s'intégrer dans la vie à Ottawa. Il y a différents départements. Un d'eux est la «Maison Thérèse Dallaire» (Maison d'accueil), avec facilité de résidence temporaire pour les réfugiés du gouvernement. La maison a commencé le 17 novembre 1988. Deux groupes de réfugiés vinrent. L'un était aidé par le gouvernement fédéral et l'autre groupe est arrivé par lui-même.

Quand une personne devient-elle réfugiée? Selon la définition des Nations Unies, c'est «toute personne qui, en raison d'une crainte fondée des persécutions, à cause de la race, de la religion, de la nationalité ou d'opinion politique, ne veut pas retourner dans son pays et est appelée réfugiée».

Groupe 1; Programme d'Assistance au rétablissement (RAP) Ce groupe est parrainé par le Gouvernement Fédéral du Canada qui, pendant un an, paie les dépenses financières. Ils viennent légalement au Canada.

Groupe 2; «Demandeurs de protection de réfugié» La plupart de ces réfugiés arrivent sans document et rien du tout. Ils arrivent illégalement par des groupes organisés qui les amènent avec de faux passeports. Ces gens ont tout vendu ce qu'ils avaient: maison, troupeau, bijoux pour pouvoir payer leur voyage. Ils prennent le risque de venir ici. Ils ne savent pas s'ils seront acceptés ou non.

J'étais en charge du second groupe. Je devais suivre le procédé d'immigration pour légaliser leur cas; chercher les documents nécessaires, les aider à les remplir et soumettre

l'application à la date prévue au Bureau de l'immigration. Je prenais des rendez-vous avec les avocats, les médecins spécialisés, les habits de seconde main etc. Selon leurs besoins je les référais à différentes agences pour des services de conseiller car quelques uns trouvent l'adaptation très difficile. Je travaillais aussi comme assistante, entrant toutes les informations des clients des deux groupes dans l'ordinateur.

L'évangile de Mt 25,40 m'inspirait: «Vraiment je vous le dis, comme vous l'avez fait pour le plus petit des miens, c'est à moi que vous l'avez fait». Notre fondatrice, Marie de la Passion et saint



***«Puisons dans la confiance à la fidélité de Dieu,
l'énergie de lutter contre la culture du provisoire,
plaie de la société contemporaine»
Pape François »***

François m'ont aussi guidée, eux qui ont toujours trouvé des moyens pour aider les pauvres dans leur besoins.

Je travaille dans la joie, la compassion pour les autres, d'un amour tendre de charité.

J'essaie de comprendre leur situation, d'être patiente, écoutant leurs histoires, passant du temps avec eux alors qu'ils sont traumatisés. Quand ils revivent leur passé, ils expriment la crainte, la méfiance. En ces moments je reste près d'eux pour les reconforter et les rassurer. La plupart du temps je gagne leur confiance en étant transparente, simple et amicale.

J'ai acquis beaucoup d'expérience avec eux et j'ai élargi mes connaissances. Je leur dis que Dieu a été bon et qu'il les a aidés à venir dans un endroit sécuritaire. En venant au Canada, ils ont fait un bon choix.

J'ai beaucoup aimé mon travail. Ce qui me fait le plus grand plaisir c'est quand ils ont quitté notre abri et qu'ils reviennent me voir ou qu'ils me téléphonent pour me dire qu'ils ont trouvé un travail ou qu'ils ont été acceptés par le gouvernement comme résidents permanents. Mes services sont très appréciés. Je suis heureuse de travailler et de les connaître personnellement.

Fernande Rivard, SASV Et Jésus passait ...

«Jésus passait à travers villes et villages, proclamant la Bonne Nouvelle du règne de Dieu. Les Douze l'accompagnaient, ainsi que des femmes» Luc 8,1-3

Cette page d'Évangile, que la liturgie nous offrait le 20 septembre dernier, s'actualise pour nous présentement. Jésus passe encore à travers villes et villages.... Il vient chez nous, à Arviat.... Il s'y arrête et invite des gens à l'accompagner, à marcher à sa suite, à proclamer la Bonne Nouvelle du règne de Dieu. Comme à des disciples fidèles, il leur confie des ministères au sein de leur communauté, les confirme dans leur appel à travailler comme leaders et à être des témoins de Son amour.

En réponse à cette invitation, une dizaine de personnes s'engagent à donner plus de deux heures par jour à l'étude de la Bible. C'est au Centre de Mikilaaq que nous les retrouvons en soirée, du lundi au vendredi, fidèles au rendez-vous, après des journées de travail bien remplies, ainsi qu'en après-midi, les samedis. En effet, ce bâtiment a été transformé en un lieu diocésain de formation, de ressourcement et de rencontre grâce à la grande générosité et au dévouement inlassable de Monique et Réal Leclerc qui ont travaillé en collaboration avec sœur Simone Bastien, supérieure provinciale des FMM, et sœur Dorica Sever, FMM, à l'élaboration et à la mise sur pied de ce projet.

Les étudiants et étudiantes engagés dans cette étape ont déjà complété la première partie du programme «Builders of the New Earth» élaboré par le père Patrick McCorkell, SJ, et adapté aux besoins des laïcs Inuits du diocèse «Churchill-Hudson Bay» par sœur Dorica Sever animatrice du programme avec madame Raymonde Pelletier et sœur Fernande Rivard.

Alors que nous vivons cette deuxième session de formation, nous constatons avec émerveillement le chemin qu'ont parcouru depuis l'an dernier les participants et les participantes et l'élan qui les dynamise encore. Ils portent toujours au cœur un grand désir d'approfondir la Parole en la méditant, en la priant et en la partageant avec le groupe. La joie ressentie en découvrant comment cette Parole s'incarne au quotidien dans leur famille, dans leur milieu de travail et dans leur paroisse, est évidente.

Animateur de la première semaine, le père Patrick McCorkell, SJ, a proposé une démarche de prière toute simple à partir de textes



bibliques et de la collection artistique de monsieur Maurice Gaudreault de Fauquier, petit village du nord de l'Ontario, qui illustre la vie de «Celui qu'on appelle Jésus». On écoute le récit d'une scène de l'Évangile, on l'accueille dans son cœur, on la médite à partir d'images, pour pouvoir ensuite la redonner à d'autres par le témoignage d'une vie au service du Royaume. Cet enseignement, qui prend la forme d'une retraite, aide les participants et participantes à entrer graduellement dans un climat d'ouverture, d'intériorisation et d'accueil. Puisque nos gens se sentent bien dans cette démarche, nous l'adoptons pour la session.

Les samedis, c'est avec le DVD «Faith Lessons on the Promised Land» que nous abordons nos cours. Grâce à cet outil pédagogique, nous visitons des lieux où de grands événements de l'histoire du peuple de Dieu se sont déroulés et qui nous aident à comprendre comment Dieu a été présent à son peuple et ne l'a jamais abandonné malgré ses écarts, ses fautes et ses infidélités. Le guide qui accompagne le visuel permet d'approfondir le contenu et nous laisse toujours avec une ou deux questions en lien avec le texte, questions qui nous rejoignent et nous interpellent au cœur de notre vécu.

Pour la dernière étape, nous utilisons le document, «The Bible and You», rédigé en anglais et en inuktitut; un document qui permet un survol de toute la Bible: ce qu'elle est; ses grandes divisions; quand elle a été écrite et par qui; pourquoi la lire, etc. On y trouve aussi un bref résumé de chaque livre qu'elle contient, ce qui nous aide à mieux saisir encore comment s'est développé le grand projet d'amour de Dieu pour l'humanité; comment Dieu a cheminé avec son peuple, Lui qui l'a accompagné et s'est fait connaître en entrant dans son histoire, tout particulièrement par l'incarnation de son Fils, Jésus.

Pour amener les participants et participantes à faire un pas de plus, un élément nouveau est introduit dans cette dernière étape de la session.

Fidel Ramirez, un bénévole très généreux de New Mexico, initie le groupe à la prière de consentement (*Centering Prayer*), une prière silencieuse qui prépare à la prière de contemplation. La méthode permet de développer une relation avec Dieu au-delà des mots, des pensées, et des sentiments. Cette forme de prière est une réponse à l'invitation du Christ: «Pour toi, quand tu veux prier, entre dans ta chambre la plus retirée, ferme la porte et prie ton Père qui est là dans le secret» (Mt. 6,6). Ici encore, les personnes accueillent bien cette méthode dont nous faisons l'expérience pour une dizaine de minutes au début de chaque rencontre.

À mesure que la session avance, nous constatons que les gens sont plus ouverts entre eux, qu'ils partagent plus spontanément autour de la Parole de Dieu qui les touche et les rejoint dans leur vie quotidienne. Pour garder vivant cet élan qui les habite, on envisage déjà la mise sur pied de projets possibles qui assureraient un suivi à la formation et qui permettraient aux personnes de grandir dans

Oui, Jésus passe encore à travers villes et villages ... et nous le voyons à l'œuvre chez nous!

leur foi tout en s'habilitant encore davantage dans l'exercice de leur ministère comme leaders au sein de leur paroisse et de leur communauté. Un merci reconnaissant à Mgr Reynald Rouleau pour le grand intérêt et l'appui constant qu'il a accordés à ce projet! La troisième et dernière session du programme, «Practices in Ministry» est prévue pour 2014 et c'est avec notre nouvel évêque, Mgr Anthony Krótki, que nous en ferons la planification.



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and
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