



The Cup of the New Covenant

MISSIONARIES OF THE PRECIOUS BLOOD
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A COMMON LANGUAGE FOR MISSION

by Fr. Francesco Bartoloni, C.P.P.S.

In the first resolution of the *Final Document* of the General Assembly of 2004, the participants asked that:

The Moderator General and the General Council in consultation with the Major Superiors develop a plan for “mission” which would include:

- 1) A process for arriving at a common theology of mission.
- 2) A plan for the congregation where we should next expend our missionary efforts and develop a concrete plan.

This same request was proposed again at the 2007 General Assembly. It is thus part of the task and commitment of this General Administration to carry out this request and to seek the participation of

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Fr. Stephen Bevans during one of his presentations

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INTRODUCTION

This paper will summarize the church’s official teaching in the Roman Magisterium on the theology and conduct of its evangelizing mission. Rather than summarize each document, I will rather present the several aspects of each document that present new aspects to the Magisterium’s teaching on mission.

It might be helpful to read or refer to the major documents I am reflecting on here. They are all available in Latin, English, Spanish, German and Italian on the Vatican Website (vatican.va).

AD GENTES (1965)

Ad Gentes, Vatican II’s Decree on Missionary Activity is a document that almost didn’t get written. Before the

Council began the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith under the leadership of Cardinal Gregorio Agagianian was given the task to draft a document on the church’s mission, but the result was more a summary and some revision of Canon Law as it applied to the missions rather than a theological reflection on the basis and conduct of mission. This first draft never got to the Council floor. It was a casualty of the virtual revolt of many bishops at the council against, in the famous words of Bishop Emil de Smedt of Bruges, Belgium, the “hierarchical, clerical and juridical” tone of the drafts that had been presented at the first session. A second draft was made, but it too was sidelined because of a ruling that called for many

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of the schemata to be reduced to a number of propositions. When the fifteen or so propositions were presented on the Council floor, however, they were virtually shouted down by the bishops, who called for a “full schema” that was theologically grounded. Under the leadership of SVD Superior General Johannes Schütte and with the main authorship of theologians of the caliber of Yves Congar, Joseph Ratzinger and Karl Rahner, a draft of the present document was presented at the last session and, after a number of last minute revisions, was unanimously approved by the Council Fathers on the last day of the Council.

Ad Gentes, if not the “magna charta” of mission as it was described by Fr. Schütte, is nevertheless a remarkable document. I will focus here on only a few of its many important teachings, but these few are where the document has contributed most to the Magisterium’s teaching on mission in the last half century.

THE CHURCH ROOTED IN THE MISSIO DEI

The first aspect of *Ad Gentes*’ teaching that I would like to highlight is in paragraph two. Here the text speaks of the ultimate foundation for the church’s missionary activity: its participation in the mission of the Son and the Holy Spirit. Such participation through Baptism in the very life of the Trinity, therefore, makes the church “missionary by its very nature.” Here is this most important text in full: “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.”

This is a radical statement on several accounts. First, it emphasizes the fact that mission is not just *one* thing the church does. It is rather constitutive of its very being. To be a Christian, in

other words, is to be caught up in the very life of God, which is a life of reaching out and saving presence in the world. The entire church is missionary. Mission is not just something that specialists – missionaries – do. It is something that all Christians are called to. Mission, ultimately, is not something done because of a command, even the “great commission” of Mt 28:19-20. Mission is, in its deepest identity, a privilege and a grace.

A second rather radical implication of AG 2 follows from the first. This is that mission has now been defined not as a *territorial* concept, but as a basic attitude of the church wherever it is. Crossing boundaries, moving beyond itself is at the center of the church’s identity. While pastoral care is certainly central as well to the church’s life, it must not eclipse the church’s reaching out, making a difference in the world around it. Mission, then, is not about going places, but serving people—down the street or across oceans, in other cultures or one’s own.

TOWARDS INCULTURATION

Christians are called to be real participants in the cultural and political life of the nations in which they live, and are called to be people of “sincere and patient dialogue” in order to discover the treasures that God has so generously lavished on the world’s cultures. But, as papal documents had pointed out even before this one, Christians are to integrate such treasures into Christian expression with a critical sense. Still, the document is completely positive, calling for cultures to be “furbished” by setting them free to be fully what they are – which will happen as they come under the rule of Christ and of God.

EVANGELII NUNTIANDI (1975)

Paul VI’s apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* was written at a time when the very idea of mission was being seriously questioned. If, as

the document (*Ad Gentes*) on the church had taught, women and men could be saved outside the church and without any explicit faith in Christ (see *Lumen Gentium* (LG) 16), and if every church does mission in the context in which it exists, why should missionaries be sent abroad to convert people to Christ? If cultures are already good and holy, why should missionaries disturb them with western ideas and western religious forms? It was in this context that Paul VI convoked the 1974 Synod of Bishops with the theme “Evangelization in the Modern World.” It was from the deliberations of the Synod and Paul VI’s careful listening to the bishops of the Two Thirds World that Paul developed his ideas for his apostolic exhortation.

THE CHURCH’S MISSION CONTINUES THE MISSION OF JESUS

The first significant teaching of EN comes in the very first chapter. Like AG, the apostolic exhortation will emphasize the essential missionary nature of the church. Unlike the Council document, however, he does not begin with the grand doctrine of the Trinity. Instead, the pope begins with Jesus’ mission of preaching and witnessing to the Reign of God. Jesus both *taught* about God’s Reign in parables and words of wisdom, and *demonstrated* its reality by his works of healing and exorcism (EN 11-12), and those who accepted his message as good news formed “a community which is in its turn evangelizing” (EN 13). This is why “evangelizing is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity. She exists in order to evangelize...”

This section of EN is very rich and very dense. Let me highlight three things Paul VI insists on in talking about the fact that the church “is linked to evangelization in her very being (EN 15).

First, the pope insists that the church needs to be evangelized itself before it takes on the task of evangelization. It must constantly listen to the Word of God; it must constantly be on the road of conversion (EN15).

Second, Paul VI insists on the strong link between Jesus’ witness to the

“Mission, then, is not about going places, but serving people – down the street or across oceans, in other cultures or one’s own.”



Salzburg, Austria provided a beautiful location for the Mission Workshop

Reign of God and the church. There is real continuity between Jesus' mission and the mission of the church, "the normal, desired, most immediate and most visible fruit" (EN15) of Jesus' work.

Third, the fact that the church is so essentially missionary means that *everyone* in the church is called to participate in the church's mission: "the work of each individual member is important for the whole" (EN 15). Like AG, EN does not want to reduce missionary work to only certain people in the church – members of missionary congregations or the hierarchy. This is a call especially to lay involvement in mission.

EVANGELIZATION A MULTI-FACETED REALITY

One of the most important teachings of the apostolic exhortation is the expansion of the church's understanding of mission to include a variety of activities other than direct proclamation of the gospel, working for conver-

sion and planting the church. There had been a tendency in the past to reduce evangelization to direct proclamation of Christ to those who do not yet know him. However, the pope emphasizes that while preaching Christ is important – indeed, there is no evangelization at all if this does not happen (EN 22) – there are several other "essential elements." First, there is the witness of a vibrant Christian community, without which the church can have no credibility. Second, the pope stresses the importance of the evangelization of cultures, "not in a purely decorative way, as it were, by applying a thin veneer, but in a vital way, in depth and right to their very roots" (EN 20).

EVANGELIZATION AND LIBERATION

Evangelization includes a commitment to full human development and especially to social justice. Only four years before, the Synod of Bishops spoke about working for justice as a "consti-

tutive dimension of the preaching of the gospel," and Paul VI includes this in his expanded vision of evangelization (see EN 29).

EN's teaching on liberation and evangelization is quite balanced, and there are two things in which it insists. First, evangelization is not to be *reduced* to political or economic well being. The spiritual dimension of the gospel is actually the source of humanity's deepest liberation. Second, violence is never to be sanctioned, because it knows that "violence always provokes violence and irresistibly engenders new forms of oppression and enslavement which are often harder to bear than those from which they claimed to bring freedom" (EN 37).

REDEMPTORIS MISSIO (1990)

Although it was not officially published until January, 1991, Pope John Paul's encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* is dated December 7, 1990, on the eve of the twenty-fifth anniversary of AG and the fifteenth anniversary of EN.

Redemptoris Missio is the closest the Roman Magisterium has ever gotten to articulating a comprehensive and systematic reflection on mission, and while it may not be quite as inspiring as EN, it represents a major step forward in the church's official teaching on what has come to be called its "evangelizing mission." I will focus on three important aspects of RM's teaching: its Christocentric focus, its expansion of the understanding of mission, and its inclusion of interreligious dialogue as constitutive of the church's mission.

CHRISTOCENTRIC FOCUS

While the pope holds fast to the church's traditional teaching, clearly articulated at Vatican II, that people have the possibility to be saved out-

"Evangelization includes a commitment to full human development and especially to social justice."

side of explicit faith in Christ (see RM 10), his position also reflects the Council's teaching that, nevertheless, all grace comes through Christ, and Christ alone.

The pope's insistence on the centrality of Christ runs through every section of RM, and is definitely the major theological theme of the encyclical. The first chapter deals with this teaching directly, emphasizing the fact that explicit faith in Christ is what gives women and men the fullness of life.

Chapter II reflects on the centrality of the Reign of God in Jesus ministry, and says clearly that the church is not an end in itself – perhaps the clearest statement of this fact in a magisterial document up to this time (see RM 18). Chapter III is on the Holy Spirit, and again, while the Spirit is understood as the "principal agent of evangelization," the pope insists that the Spirit is the Spirit of Jesus, and not some vague, general form of God's presence (see RM 29).

EXPANDING THE IDEA OF MISSION

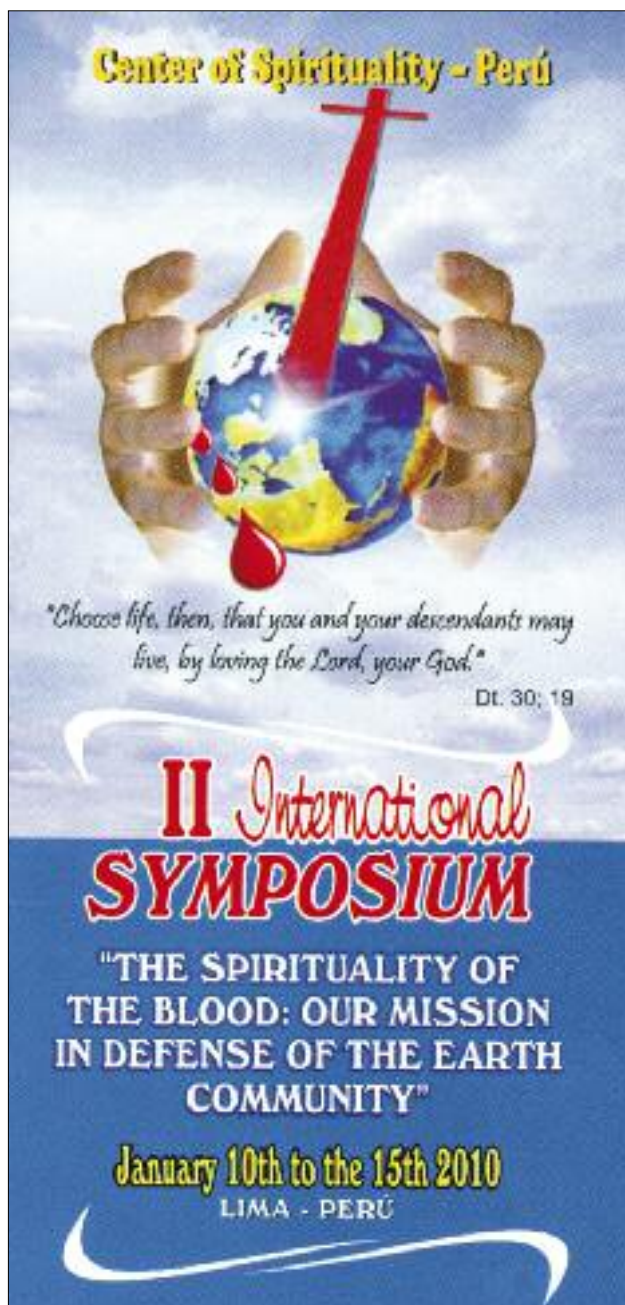
There are two ways in which John Paul expands the notion of mission in the encyclical. The first way is to distinguish three "situations" of the church's missionary activity. The second is to speak of

mission as a "single but complex reality," composed of several elements.

The first "situation" of the church's missionary activity is mission *ad gentes*, or the direct witnessing and proclamation of Christ in situations where he is not known (RM 33). This is mission, the pope says, in the proper sense of the word. However, the pope also speaks about pastoral work among the established churches and what he had been calling the "new evangelization" in churches "where entire groups of the baptized have lost a living sense of the faith, or even no longer consider themselves members of the Church, and live a life far removed from Christ and his Gospel" (RM 33). Even though mission *ad gentes* does retain its validity as mission in the proper sense, the pope expands the notion to include particular areas like the rapidly growing urban areas of the world, particularly those in Asia, Africa and Latin America. He also points to the world's youth, which in many countries make up half the population, and to large numbers of the world's migrants and the conditions of poverty which often makes migration necessary (RM 37).

The encyclical expands the idea of mission even further, or perhaps to align it with the expanded areas mentioned in paragraph 37. John Paul acknowledges that mission is a multifaceted reality. In Chapter V, the pope writes about mission as witness, as explicit proclamation of the name of Christ and of the gospel, as the task of forming new communities, as inculturation, interreligious dialogue, working for development, and as works of charity.

In sum, one gets the distinct impression that mission is understood in the encyclical in a way that embraces the entire life of the church. It confirms AG's contention that the church is indeed "missionary by its very nature,"



or EN's statement that evangelization is the church's "deepest identity."

INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

We have already mentioned that inter-religious dialogue is included in the encyclical as part of its expanded understanding of mission. It will be important, however, to single this aspect out, both because it is something that is relatively new in the church's teaching on mission because in later years the idea of interreligious dialogue might seem to be called into question.

While EN does not really deal with the question of interreligious dialogue, it does speak of the respect that Christians have for other religions. Nine years later, in 1984, the Pontifical Council for Dialogue did issue an important statement entitled "Mission and Dialogue" in which dialogue was seen as integral to the church's evangelization efforts. This is the first time, however, that the activity of interreligious dialogue appears as part of mission in a papal encyclical. "Inter-religious dialogue,"

"(John Paul II) writes about mission as witness, as explicit proclamation of the name of Christ and of the gospel, as the task of forming new communities, as inculturation, interreligious dialogue, working for development, and as works of charity."

the pope writes, "is part of the church's evangelizing mission" (RM 55).

The pope insists that dialogue with other faiths is perfectly consistent with the church's obligation to proclaim Christ as universal savior to all peoples. While the aim of dialogue is to discover in other religions that ray of truth that enlightens all peoples (see NA 2), each dialogue partner needs to be a person of full conviction in her or his faith. Even though Christians are called to dialogue, they must always keep in mind the uniqueness of Christ and that "the Church is the ordinary means of salvation and that she alone possesses the fullness of the means of salvation" (RM 55).

Nevertheless, the pope says, dialogue is not some kind of tactic for eventual conversion (RM 56).

It is born out of respect for the other religions, and is done out of a sincere desire to get to know and to learn from other religious ways. Even when dialogue is difficult – say, in some Muslim areas – Christians should be open to it, despite its difficulties and despite its risks (RM 57).

Dialogue, finally, is not something just for experts or official religious leaders. The pope notes that dialogue is the task of every Christian, and he especially encourages the laity to engage in it (RM 57). ♦



Participants listen attentively to one of the presentations

Six Elements of Mission in Contemporary Missiology

by Stephen Bevans, SVD

[This article is a section of a larger presentation: *Themes and Questions in Missiology Today*.]

As I have pointed out in the paper on church teaching on mission, the 1971 Synod of Bishops, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* in 1975, and *Redemptoris Missio* of 1990 widened the notion of mission to include working for justice, inculturation, and interreligious dialogue. A 1984 document from the Secretariat for non-Christians spoke of five elements of mission, namely (1) presence and witness, (2) development and liberation, (3) liturgical life, prayer and contemplation, (4) interreligious dialogue, and (5) proclamation and catechesis.¹ Andrew Kirk insisted on ecological commitment and peace-making as an integral part of mission, and Robert Schreiter has written significantly about reconciliation as essential to understanding mission today. In an effort to synthesize these elements and several others proposed by a number of authors, Eleanor Doidge and I proposed six elements of mission in an essay we wrote in 2000. These are the six elements on which I will reflect here.

WITNESS AND PROCLAMATION

The interconnectedness of Christian witness and explicit proclamation of the gospel is perhaps expressed most clearly in the charge attributed to St. Francis of Assisi: "Preach always; if necessary use words." As Pope Paul VI wrote in *EN*, "the first means of evangelization is the witness of an authentically Christian life" (41); and the document *DP* insists that proclamation "is the summit and center of evangelization" (10). Witness and proclamation go together.

The church's missionary witness is of at least four kinds. At a first level, there is the witness of individual Christians: famous Christians like Albert Schweitzer or Mother Teresa, or ordinary Christian parents, teachers, factory workers. Secondly, there is the witness of the Christian community – its vitality, its inviting nature, its

prophetic or countercultural stance on particular issues. Third, we can speak of the church's institutional witness in its schools, hospitals, social service agencies and orphanages. Finally, there is the "common witness" of Christians of different traditions living and working together, and engaging in continuing dialogue.

John Paul II spoke of proclamation – the explicit proclamation of the Lordship of Jesus and of his vision of the Reign of God – as "the permanent priority of mission" (RM 44). Nevertheless, this prophetic proclamation needs to be done dialogically, taking account of the situation of those to whom the good news is addressed. It

can never be done apart from witness, for no matter how eloquent our verbal testimony, people will always believe their eyes first. Moreover, proclamation is always to be given as an invitation, respecting the freedom of the hearers. "*The church proposes*," insisted John Paul II, "*she imposes nothing*" (RM 39).

LITURGY, PRAYER, AND CONTEMPLATION

Celebration of the liturgy is an evangelizing act on several levels. It is always the evangelization of the Christian faithful who day after day, week after week, make up the liturgical assembly, forming them more perfectly into Christ's body in the world and calling each individually to more



CPPS in Mission: The Vicariate of India sponsors an orphanage in KGF

authentic Christian life. But, since there are always visitors in the congregation who may be non-believers or the unchurched, the worthy and vital celebration of the liturgy in Eucharist, Baptism, marriages and funerals can be moments when the gospel proclaimed and celebrated may find particular resonance in those who are seeking more depth in life, or may even be able to break through indifference or resistance.

In 1927, Pope Pius XI declared Francis Xavier and Thérèse of Lisieux patrons of the church's missionary activity. The Jesuit Francis Xavier was no surprise; his exploits on behalf of the gospel in India and Japan make him one of the greatest missionaries of all times. But naming Thérèse was a bit unusual. After all, she was a strictly cloistered Carmelite nun and never left her convent in France. Nevertheless, her autobiography, published a few years after her death, revealed her to be a woman on fire for the gospel, whose heart was always beyond her convent walls, calling all humanity to faith in Christ. Her life of prayer was so intense, so universal, so missionary, that she could very justly be named patroness of the missions. The pope's action in 1927 points to the truth that commitment to the spread of the gospel is not simply a matter of heroic work in cross-cultural situations; it is a matter of allowing the missionary task to shape Christian spirituality. Prayer and contemplation is seeing and feeling with the missionary God, aligning one's needs and wants with the saving activity of God's missionary presence in the world.

JUSTICE, PEACE, AND THE INTEGRITY OF CREATION

"Action on behalf of justice ...fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel ...;"² "if you want peace, work for justice;"³ "we discern two types of injustice: socio-economic-political injustice ...and environmental injustice;"⁴ "...the responsibility of the church towards the earth is a crucial part of the church's mission."⁵ Commitment to justice, peace and integrity of creation is a seamless garment. All are constitutive of the church's missionary task.

"Prayer and contemplation is seeing and feeling with the missionary God, aligning one's needs and wants with the saving activity of God's missionary presence in the world."

Commitment to the poor and marginalized of the world takes shape in the first place as the church acts as a voice for the victims of injustice on the one hand and a goad to the consciences of the rich on the other. People like Oscar Romero and Desmond Tutu, and documents like the U. S. Bishops' peace and economics pastorals and the Kairos Document in South Africa are shining examples of this justice ministry. Secondly, the church needs to work to help those who suffer injustice find their *own* voice. The goal of justice ministry is to help the poor and the marginalized find their own subjectivity and hope. Third, the commitment to justice inevitably means committing oneself to a life of practice that is in solidarity with the victims of this world, through simple lifestyle, through political stances, through a constant siding with the poor and oppressed and their causes. Finally, as the 1971 Synod of Bishops puts it, a church committed to justice must be just itself: "everyone who ventures to speak about justice must first be just in their eyes."

In 1981, Pope John Paul II visited Hiroshima, the site for the first hostile use of the atomic bomb in 1945. "From now on," he said, "it is only through a conscious choice and through a deliberate policy that humanity can survive." The mission of the church, contemporary missiologists insist, involves making sure that governments and other groups keep making that "conscious choice" and follow that "deliberate policy" towards peace. In a similar way, the church's commitment to justice cannot but be concerned for personal and institutional witness of simplicity of life, and for support of legislation and movements that promote the integrity of creation and the care of the earth. Repentance, wrote Canadian novelist Rudy Wiebe, is not "feeling bad," but "*thinking different*." The Kingdom call to "repent and believe" takes on a

whole new dimension in the light of today's consciousness of creation's fragility and humanity's vocation to stewardship. This area is one of the "cutting edge" areas of missiology today.

INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

Dialogue is the norm and necessary manner of every form of Christian mission. This general norm for doing mission, however, has particular relevance as Christians encounter people of other faiths or people who have no faith at all. Mission is carried out "in Christ's way," reflective of the dialogical nature of God's trinitarian self. Dialogue is based on the conviction that "the Spirit of God is constantly at work in ways that pass human understanding and in places that to us are least expected."⁶

There is, first, the *dialogue of life*, in which Christians live and rub shoulders with people of other faiths and ideologies. In this way people get to know one another, respect each other, learn from each other, and reduce the tensions that exist among people who may have radically different world-views. Second, we speak of the *dialogue of social action*, by which women and men of differing faith commitments work together for common issues of human life. Working together for fairer immigration laws, for the abolition of the death penalty, for the sacredness of human life, against racism and sexism are ways that committed people can learn to live with one another and be inspired by the social doctrines of the various religious and secular tradition. Third, there is the *dialogue of theological exchange*. While this may be the area for experts, as they probe one another's doctrines and practices, challenging and inspiring one another, it can also take place among ordinary Christians as they read one another's sacred documents and cherished authors. Finally, there is the *dialogue of*

religious experience. While there always will remain differences of content and method, this is an area where many traditions seem to converge in major ways. While perhaps people of differing faiths may not be able to pray *together*, they can, as Pope John Paul II did at Assisi in 1986 and 2002, come together to pray in their own ways.

INCULTURATION

Throughout the history of the church there have been many prophetic Christians who have practiced in some way what we call today "inculturation." But while we can argue that the church has always practiced inculturation to some degree, today there is an understanding that it is not just something for a few women and men who live dangerously "on the edge." Rather, inculturation is acknowledged today as an integral part of communicating the gospel, if the gospel is truly to be communicated. "You may, and you must, have an African Christianity," proclaimed Paul VI in 1969. "Contextualization ... is not simply nice," writes Evangelical missiologist David Hesselgrave. "It is a necessity."

The central place of inculturation in today's missiology is something that has only emerged as theology and spirituality began to recognize the essential role of experience in any kind of human living. Traditionally, theology was conceived as reflection-in-faith on Scripture and Tradition. There was one theology, always and everywhere valid. As theology began to acknowledge the anthropological turn that has so marked western modern consciousness, the role of experience in theology became more and more influential. It was not, however, that experience was just *added* to the traditional sources; the anthropological turn revealed the fact that Scripture and Tradition themselves were highly influenced by the experiences of women and men at particular times, places and cultural contexts. And so experience has taken on a normative value that it did not have in times past. The theology of the West, we now recognize, was itself a limited, contextual product of a particular set of experiences. Every time and every culture has its validity, and needs to reflect on faith on its own terms, and needs to use its own lens to interpret Scripture, past doctrinal formulations, ethical

practices, and liturgical customs. Today, that Christian faith needs to engage a context authentically is simply accepted as a missiological imperative.

RECONCILIATION

In a world of increasing violence, tensions between religions, terrorist threats, globalization and displacement of peoples, the church's witness to and proclamation of the possibility of reconciliation may constitute a new way of conceiving the content of the

in the midst of so much violence and tragedy, the church needs to develop communities of honesty, compassion and acceptance. Ministers of reconciliation need to hone their skills of contemplative attention and listening. Ways might be found to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation in a manner that better ritualizes God's reconciling action.

CONCLUSION

The area of missiology is an exciting field to read or study today. Because

"To facilitate the recognition of God's gracious working in the midst of so much violence and tragedy, the church needs to develop communities of honesty, compassion and acceptance."

church's missionary task. Missiology today recognizes that reconciliation needs to take place on a number of different levels. There is, first, the *personal* level of healing between spouses, between victims and their torturers or oppressors, among victims of natural calamities such as earthquakes or tsunamis. There is reconciliation between members of oppressed cultures like Australian Aborigines, North American First Nations, Latin American indigenous peoples and those who have oppressed and marginalized them for centuries. A third level of reconciliation might be called *political*. One may think of the reconciliation called for after years of Apartheid in South Africa, or by years of forced disappearances and massacres as in Argentina or Guatemala.

Reconciliation, insists Robert Schreiter, involves much more of a *spirituality* than a *strategy*. In the first place, reconciliation is the work of God, a work of grace. It is offered first and foremost by the victims of injustice and violence. The church's task is not to develop strategies for this to take place, but to witness in its life and proclaim its fearless hope that God's grace *does* heal, and that, through the reconciling work of Jesus Christ, the barriers of hostility can be broken down, and those who are divided can be made one. For "it is he who is our peace" (Eph 2:14). To facilitate the recognition of God's gracious working

of our globalized and globalizing world – teeming with people on the move, experiencing a renaissance of the world's religions, brimming over with multicultural societies, threatened by violence and terrorism – theology and ministry are recognizing that they need to be thoroughly missiological. Mission is not something that special people do in exotic lands. It is not something that is far away. Mission is rather the daily reality of the church today. Missiology has become the daily reality of a theology and a ministry that seeks to serve the church in a credible way in today's church. ♦

¹ Secretariat for Non-Christians, "The Attitude of the Church toward the Followers of Other Religions (Reflections and Orientations on Dialogue and Mission)," *Bulletin Secretariatus pro non Christianis*, 56, 2.

² 1971 Synod of Bishops, "Justice in the World," in David J. O'Brien and Thomas A. Shannon, eds., *Catholic Social Thought: The Documentary Heritage* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books), 289.

³ Paul VI, "Message for World Day of Peace," *Origins*, 1, 29 (January 6, 1972): 490-491.

⁴ Leonardo Boff, "Social Ecology: Poverty and Misery," in David G. Hallman, ed., *Ecotheology: Voices from the South and North* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1994): 235-237.

⁵ Frederick R. Wilson, ed., *The San Antonio Report: Your Will Be Done, Mission in Christ's Way* (Geneva, WCC Publications, 1990).

⁶ World Council of Churches, "Ecumenical Affirmation: Mission and Evangelism," in Scherer and Bevans, eds., 43.

TOWARDS A MISSION SPIRITUALITY

INTRODUCTION: THE NOTION OF SPIRITUALITY

This paper will focus on the development of a “mission spirituality.” As I understand spirituality, I would conceive of it as (1) a kind of “framework” or “set” of values, symbols, doctrines, attitudes and practices which (2) persons or a community attempt to make their own (3) in order to be able to cope with a particular situation, to grow in the love of God and self transcendence, and/or to accomplish a particular task in life or in the world. A spirituality, in other words, is like a reservoir from which a person or a community can draw to motivate action, to keep on track, to bolster commitment, to avoid discouragement when times get rough. It is a way, in still other words, of tapping into the infinite, life-giving, refreshing and empowering presence of God’s Spirit, so that people’s or a community’s life can be lived in grace, gratitude and growth.

MISSION SPIRITUALITY

In this essay I will attempt to sketch a framework of *mission* spirituality. This will be a spirituality for women and men who want to grow and thrive in their identity as people who consciously participate in the mission of the triune God, particularly insofar as such participation involves moving beyond their own zones of security in terms of culture, social status, language and location.

Our template will have six sections corresponding to six questions: (1) What Scripture passage(s) anchor(s) one’s mission spirituality? (2) Who are (is) one’s hero(es)/heroine(s) as one engages in mission? (3) What are the assets and liabilities of one’s own cul-

by Stephen Bevans, SVD

ture as one crosses over to another culture or context? (4) What is one’s basic theological perspective as one ministers in a missionary situation? (5) What is one’s experience as a missionary? And (6) what are some practices in which one might engage to deepen and develop one’s life in mission? The meaning of each one of these questions will be explained, followed by a number of possible ways they might be answered. Again, the point is not to offer a complete mission spirituality here, but to engage the reader in constructing or articulating her or his own.¹

I. SCRIPTURAL FOUNDATIONS

Every spirituality needs to be rooted in Scripture, and mission spirituality is no exception. One needs to ask the question, therefore, what passage(s), books, or themes of Scripture are those that ground one’s missionary life.

There is no “normative” passage of Scripture for a mission spirituality. One reason for this, as I’ve said, is the changing context of one’s missionary service. Another reason is that the *entire* body of Scripture – Old and New Testaments, but especially the New – is the result of Israel’s and the church’s reflection on the mission in which they have been called to engage. There may also be passages, however, that can provide basic guidance, inspiration and direction to one’s work of crossing a culture, struggling with a language, being accepted by a people, bonding with the people among whom one works. Paul’s passionate statement that he had become a slave to all so that he could win more of them to

Christ – indeed, that he had become “all things to all people,” so that he might “by all means save some” (see 1Cor 9:19-23) might serve as the anchor and beacon for missionaries in a very different culture from their own.

II. MISSIONARY HEROES/HEROINES

A second element of a mission spirituality, I believe, is a rootedness in those women and men who have gone before us, set amazing examples, set standards, have helped us see our own humanness as we struggle and celebrate our participation in God’s mission. Perhaps our heroes / heroines are the founders of our own missionary congregation: Gaspar del Bufalo, in your case as Missionaries of the Precious Blood; Arnold Janssen in my own as a Divine Word Missionary. Perhaps it could be missionaries who are also heroes and heroines from our own culture: an Oscar Romero from Latin America, an Alessandro Valignano from Italy, a Lorenzo Ruiz from the Philippines, a Samuel Ajajyi Crowther from Nigeria. Or perhaps our models for mission are senior members of our congregation with whom we have worked.

III. CULTURAL ASSETS AND LIABILITIES

We are all unique individuals, with individual strengths and weaknesses, and the development and cultivation of a mission spirituality is to bolster and harness those strengths and, if possible, blunt those weaknesses. But we are more than individuals. We are people of a particular time and generation. We are shaped by our families and by our social class and education. And we are formed and deformed by the culture in which we find our identity.

Knowing who we are as cultural beings – as Italians, as Germans, as Polish, as U. S. Americans, as Chileans, as Indians – is very important. Each of us brings a good amount of cultural baggage to mission, and we need to be aware of how that baggage can sustain us or be a real liability in our cross-cultural ministry. It is important to understand and believe that *every* culture is both good and bad in itself, and that

“A spirituality is like a reservoir from which a person or a community can draw to motivate action, to keep on track, to bolster commitment, to avoid discouragement when times get rough.”

every culture offers opportunities and impediments for growth in another culture or situation. No culture is all good. No culture is all bad.

As a U. S. American, for example, I bring a confidence to my ministry that is supported by a Yankee “can do” attitude. I bring a sense of equality of all peoples that can help me build a strong sense of participation among the people where I work. I can easily work for a strong, well-educated laity. As a member of an affluent, powerful nation I have a confidence in myself and in my worldview, and a confidence in the capacities of others. But such confidence and surety can border on the arrogant. My sense of equality and participation might trample on people’s sensitivities about distinct, important and even sacred roles in a particular society. My affluence can allow me to live in a way that actually separates me from the people among whom I minister. I speak with a frankness that my countrymen admire, but which often can be insulting to the men and women who are my hosts.

So part of my spirituality is to recognize who I am as a cultural being and make sure that my identity does not get in the way of God’s work. I can never slough off that identity, but I can temper it quite a bit, and use its positive aspects for good.

IV. THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

Every Christian is a theologian. We may not recognize that fact. We may deny that we think theologically – that we operate pastorally rather than theologically. But that very denial is already a kind of theology in itself. Our theology may be highly developed and articulated, or it may not be, but when we understand that the basic dynamic of theologizing is simply part of faith, we see how inescapable it is.

Cuban American church historian Justo L. González speaks about three

“Any mission spirituality needs to be rooted in Scripture, in the Christian Tradition, and in human experience.”

basic types of theology which can shape the way we look at the world and do ministry.² González speaks first of “Type A” theology which has its source in the North African Roman lawyer Tertullian in the third century, and emphasizes order and, to a certain extent, law. God is the lawgiver; human sin is disobedience; Jesus came to bring the new law and to mend the gap between humanity and God by his obedience unto death. “Type B” theology goes back to Origen, the great scholar of Alexandria in Egypt. Steeped in Platonic philosophy, the focus of this type of theology is the mind’s search for the truth, experimenting, even risking, using every rational and cultural means possible. In this type, God is the One, the contemplation of whom humanity failed to sustain and so needs to work its way back to; Jesus is the visible form of God, who helps us toward the goal of contemplation. “Type C” theology has its model in the Syrian bishop and pastor Irenaeus, exile and missionary to the frontiers of the Roman Empire in Lyons in Gaul (today’s France). This is a pastoral theology, rooted in experience. For Irenaeus, God is the great Shepherd, who fondly cares for his sheep. God did not make the world perfect, as Tertullian conceived of creation; nor did human souls exist before creation in rapt contemplation of the Godhead, only to be distracted and fall into bodiliness. Rather, humanity was created imperfect but eminently perfectible, and Jesus shows us the way to achieve our full identity as made in God’s image and likeness. Each type certainly implies a distinct spirituality: Type A might emphasize a spirituality of strict discipline; Type B might con-

ceive spirituality as a journey in dialogue with the world’s many cultures; Type C might conceive spirituality in terms of a relationship that needs to be cultivated. My own sense is that Christians today still fall within one of these types, and this does indeed affect and form their spirituality – in this case, how they cope with cultural difference, with struggle and failure, with poverty or affluence.

As our theology becomes more and more conscious and explicit, it can become more and more consistent and self-critical. This is why the development of a mission spirituality is so closely connected with the articulation and critique of one’s “operative theology.”

V. MISSION EXPERIENCES

Once again, a spirituality is never developed in the abstract. Spirituality is always rooted in concrete circumstances, and concrete experiences. If a missionary is struggling with learning a language, for example, his struggle will precipitate a certain kind of prayer (abandonment, for patience), a certain kind of asceticism (study, humility in seeming like a child, risking sounding awkward, being corrected), the importance of certain Scripture passages (e.g. Mk 10:13-16, about becoming a little child; Jn 3:3 about being born again), the significance of certain missionaries from tradition (Cyril and Methodius and their important translation of the Bible, Matteo Ricci in China). If a missionary has been threatened with violence or death, or has experienced failure, or has after a long time been finally accepted by the people, all of these experiences will shape one’s spiritual life.

It will be important for missionaries to share their experiences so as to be able to be aware of and articulate them better. Such effort doesn’t need to stop when a missionary returns home. In fact, it is crucial that her or his experiences be told, and be appreciated. The search for such a support group and

“So part of my spirituality is to recognize who I am as a cultural being and make sure that my identity does not get in the way of God’s work.”

regular attendance at its meetings will be another way of cultivating a mission spirituality.

VI. PRACTICES

Finally, although we have already spoken about them above, a mission spirituality is cultivated by commitment to certain basic practices. Contemporary theology has rediscovered the importance of frequently repeated actions, actions which create habits.³ As we commit ourselves to particular times and forms of prayer, to ascetical practices, to regular forms of behavior, we are shaped by them in overt and quite subtle ways.

Any kind of spirituality involves the practice of regular prayer. That goes without saying. A mission spirituality, however, would make sure that the content of that prayer is one that reaches out to all the world. It is also a prayer that constantly calls to mind the people whom are served, with all their cultural richness. It will be a prayer of *kenosis* or self-emptying. It will be a prayer that, where appropriate, will use the forms and content of the other faiths among whom missionaries work.

A mission spirituality will practice a simplicity of life, in solidarity with the poor of the world. This may be a real challenge to those of us from more affluent countries, but it is essential.

The spirituality that we are reflecting on here might practice two kinds of asceticism. One would be a kind of “asceticism of risk.” By this I do not mean putting oneself in undue danger, courting violence or death for no good reason. This may be necessary, certainly (I think of missionaries like Dorothy Stang in Brazil), but this is not what I mean here. I mean rather a practice of choosing to be stretched in everyday matters – in terms of language, perhaps, or in terms of pastoral assignments, the kind of things one reads. My experience is that often in cross-cultural situations we opt to spend time with our own cultural or language groups, in our presbyteries and convents, eating familiar food. This “asceticism of risk” would be an option to move beyond our comfort zones – perhaps not all the time, but certainly some of the time.

A second kind of ascetical practice would be in the area of learning to listen rather than to talk. This is hard work. So often missionaries occupy a position of power and prestige. From this position, however, they often talk too much and too soon. A common saying in the Philippines where I worked as a missionary years ago was that the new missionary should not say anything for at least six months to a year. Then he might venture a humble opinion once in a while. But the main thing is to listen, to observe. To learn to really hear what is being said – so often “between the lines” – to learn to really see what is going on in an unfamiliar context – this is a major exercise in self denial. But it will pay large dividends in the future.

CONCLUSION

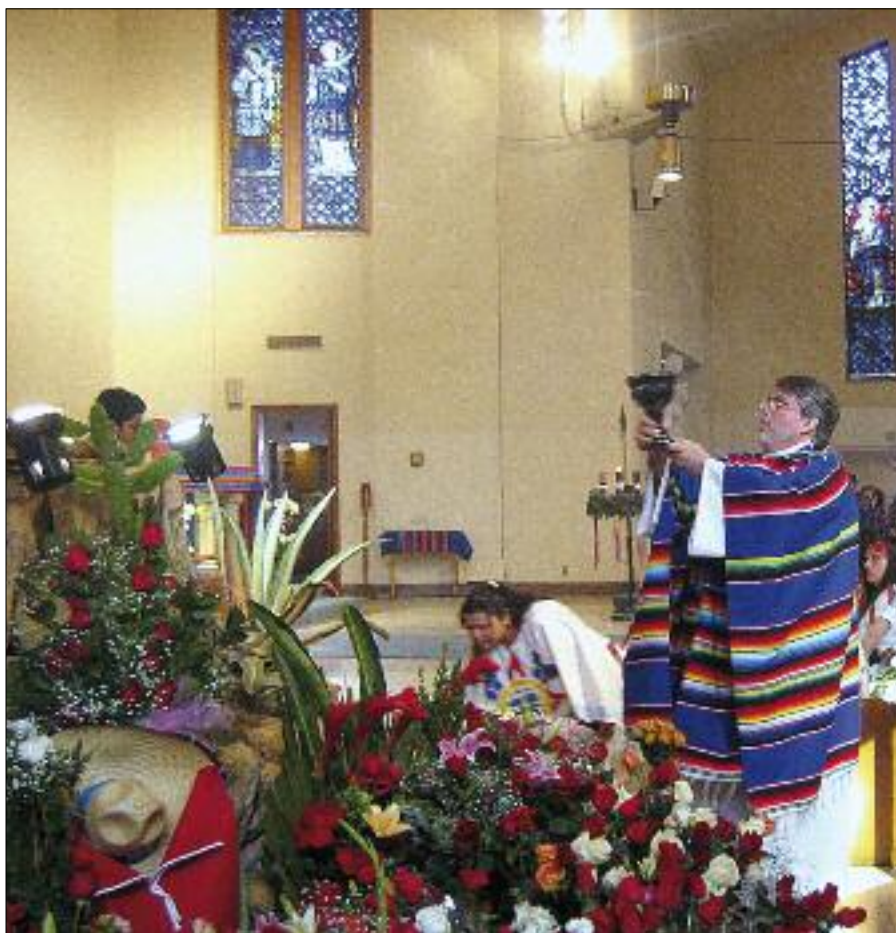
What I have tried to do in these reflections is to lay out a template within which men and women in various stages of missionary service – preparation, newly-arrived, veteran workers, those who have returned home or who are retired – can cultivate a spirituality that can sustain them, challenge them, console them, deepen them.

Like spirituality in general, there is not one that works for everyone. And yet, any mission spirituality needs to be rooted in Scripture, in the Christian Tradition, and in human experience. As one works to discover how Scripture can inspire, how Tradition can challenge and anchor, and how human experience can continuously challenge, one will develop a mission spirituality suited for one’s particular situation, and therefore conforming to the mind of Christ. ♦

¹ I am highly indebted to my friend and confrere Larry Nemer, SVD for the development of this paper. It was in conversation with him that the ideas in it have taken shape, even though, of course, I am responsible for its concrete development. Larry referred to the groundbreaking work on mission spirituality by Michael C. Reilly entitled *Spirituality for Mission: Historical, Theological and Cultural Factors for a Present-Day Missionary Spirituality* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1978).

² Justo L. González, *Christian Thought Revisited: Three Types of Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999).

³ See, for example, Miroslav Volf and Dorothy C. Bass, eds., *Practicing Theology: Beliefs and Practices in Christian Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002).



CPPS in Mission: Fr. Steve Dos Santos celebrates the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe at St. Agnes parish in Los Angeles, CA

TOWARDS A PRECIOUS BLOOD SPIRITUALITY OF MISSION

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

In light of the reflections of Steve Bevens in his article entitled "Towards a Mission Spirituality," I would like to preface my paper by stating that I share his understanding of "spirituality." It is "like a reservoir from which a person or a community can draw to motivate action, to keep on track, to bolster commitment, to avoid discouragement when times get rough." To speak of spirituality is not to speak about a part of life but rather about the whole of one's life.

I found Bevan's article to be very enlightening and it helped me enormously to understand in a more systematic way what has been going on in my own life over the past thirty years. It helped to categorize and to put names to my own spiritual journey as a Missionary of the Precious Blood. What I share here does not pretend to be more than that: namely, how I have come to understand mission in light of a Precious Blood Spirituality. Thus the importance of the word "towards" in the title of my presentation. I do not pretend that mine is THE Precious Blood Spirituality of Mission, but merely one person's discovery based on my life experience. However, I do believe that you will discover elements in this particular expression which might help you to put into words your own spirituality of mission in light of our charism.

DISCOVERING THE SCRIPTURAL UNDERPINNINGS

As a congregation we are all indebted to one of our members for our current understanding of Precious Blood Spirituality. In the early 1980's, Fr. Robert Schreiter came to Chile to give

by Barry Fischer, C.P.P.S.

a series of reflections at an intercongregational workshop on Precious Blood Spirituality. It was for that workshop that Fr. Bob gave the presentations which would later form the core of his timely book, *In Water and In Blood*. Bob masterfully sketched for us the Scriptural underpinnings of a spirituality of the blood of Christ. Each chapter began with one of the pertinent scripture passages which he would then break open for us by relating them to the cultural, social, and political situation in which we were immersed in Latin America at the time. He proposed as well the symbols of *covenant, cross, and cup*, which have come to be for the CPPS central images through which we express our spirituality and live our mission.

In later years, Fr. Bob would continue to enrich our reflections by deepening our understanding of *reconciliation* and its central place in the mission of the Church in our globalized world.

MAKING CONNECTIONS: THE CRY AND THE CALL OF THE BLOOD

A further step in my journey came when I read the Encyclical Letter of John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, published in 1995. I was captivated by his use of the term, "cry of the blood" and his description of God's response in the blood-shedding of His Son, Jesus. His description seems to capture the ambiguous quality of blood and holds in a healthy tension the two aspects of death and life.

The starting point for understanding this terminology comes from Scripture itself.

And Yahweh said, 'I have seen the miserable state of my people in Egypt. I have heard their appeal to be free of their slave-drivers. Yes, I am well aware of their sufferings. I mean to deliver them out of the hands of the Egyptians and bring them up out of that land to a land rich and broad, a land where milk and honey flow.' (Exodus 3, 7-8)

In this context, namely, of the suffering plight of the enslaved people in Egypt who cried out for liberation, came the compassionate response of God who would free his people.

In his encyclical the Holy Father spends a great deal of time reflecting on Chapter 4 of the Book of Genesis in which we read the story of how Cain kills his brother Abel, shedding his blood upon the ground. That blood cries to heaven for vengeance.

The Pope describes how the blood of Abel "continues to cry out from generations and generations in ever new and different ways" (# 10) from the earth. And he goes on to mention different ways in which this blood is shed, all of which comprise what is sometimes called "a culture of death." The blood of so many innocent ones today is a continuation of Christ's Passion being lived out in today's world. Their blood continues to cry out, awaiting a response.

The Pope then speaks of the Precious Blood as God's response to the cry of Abel's blood (Hebrews 12,24), as the source of perfect redemption and the gift of new life (*Evangelium Vitae*, # 25). Jesus is the Messiah who came to defend and to rescue the poor and the downtrodden; He is savior, redeemer, advocate for his brothers and sisters in need. He made their cause His own and gave His life in their defense. (cfr. Leviticus 25).

An essential aspect of mission is to make the blood of today's victims heard and to respond in compassionate solidarity. He pleads in # 10: "*make the cry of your brothers and sisters*

"It is a spirituality for mission deeply rooted in Scripture and which responds to the great quests of men and women today."

heard!'. And he calls upon all Christians and peoples of good will to proclaim the *Gospel of Life (Evangelium Vitae, # 82-84)*.

I soon discovered that to speak in terms of "the cry and the call of the blood" is a very concrete way of bringing the reflections on our spirituality down to earth, helping us to connect easily to our life's experiences. It has become a way to focus on our identity. A missionary spirituality is by nature an incarnational one. It is a way of discovering mission and our specific contribution to the universal Church as peoples marked by the blood of Christ.

As a society of apostolic life in the Church we are expected to enrich and to contribute to the mission of the Church from our particular identity as Missionaries of the Precious Blood. Could this not become a way of focusing on our identity and on our mission; a way which crosses over the boundaries of culture and language; a way of understanding ourselves in whatever apostolate or ministry in which we are engaged?

For in whatever society we are living the "cry of the blood" can be heard. The circumstances may be different from one place to another and in one culture or another, but wherever we find ourselves, and in whatever ministry we are involved in, the cry of the blood rises up from the very earth we walk. As we look at the world around us, we ask ourselves: Where do we hear the cry of the blood? Where is life being threatened and needs to be defended and promoted in our diverse cultures and contexts?

The understanding of our mission begins in hearing that cry and in making the voice of the blood heard in today's society which would much rather ignore it or wish it away. For to hear the "cry of the blood" is unsettling. It disturbs our peace and challenges our comfort and securities. Just

as the cry of the blood of Abel moved God to compassion and intervention to liberate humankind from all that oppresses, so too are we called to take a stance. Ultimately, the cry of the blood of Abel is what led to the shedding of Christ's blood in response. And so we who hear the cry of the blood, are also called to respond to that cry with the blood of Christ, a blood which speaks of covenant, of cross, and of reconciliation.

As Missionaries of the Precious Blood, we see the "red threads" running through everything. Just as God was moved to compassion when he heard the cry of His people in Egypt, so too we, as Missionaries, are called to mission when we hear the cry and recognize Abel's blood shed today. In every "cry" lies a "call" to mission. I have discovered over the years that as we identify the cry in whatever situation we are in or in whatever apostolate we have undertaken, we discover in that cry a call to mission. In other words, there is an intimate connection between living our Precious Blood spirituality and our ministry. Let me offer a few examples.

LIVING PRECIOUS BLOOD SPIRITUALITY IN MISSION

We speak today of the marginalization that many peoples of the world suffer due to the effects of economic globalization. Individualism runs wild; broken relationships in marriages leading to a divorce rate of 50% in some countries; broken relationships in communities and between nations can be seen wherever we look and at times lead to war. Hours spent before the computer surfing the net seeking anonymous relationships poses the danger that a person no longer relates, or relates less, to real people who surround them. Many people suffer loneliness due to their physical or mental limitations, because of their age, or they are isolated because of their beliefs. To hear their cry of loneliness we can dis-

UPCOMING EVENTS

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cover our call to live the spirituality of the blood of Christ which speaks of covenant, of relationships, of community building.

The blood of reconciliation, in turn, speaks to so many different situations in our lives, in society, and in our communities. Murders, acts of violence, the ravages of war, poverty, exploitations of persons for sex, sexual abuse and pedophilia, conflicts of varied sorts, our earth exploited and ravaged because of personal or corporate greed, over-indulgence, short-sightedness and lack of concern for the needs of others and the future of our planet, countries divided and polarized over politics, church communities split over different beliefs and ways of understanding our Christian commitment. All of this and many other situations speak of broken relationships and blood spilt. In that cry which rises from the earth, we hear the call of the blood of reconciliation. We discover our call to mission.

The fear of the "other," as one who is different than I, one who thinks differently or holds different religious beliefs, or one who has a different sexual orientation, theological beliefs or pastoral praxis, often can give rise to a tendency to exclude and to marginalize. And in extreme cases even to eliminate physically the "other" who threatens to invade my safe space. This might be expressed in neo-Nazi groups or in political parties who want to limit the number of "foreigners" coming into their countries. It might be expressed through building a wall between Mexico and the United States in order to keep people out. Or it can be expressed by non-welcoming attitudes when we gather at the Euchar-

"As we identify the cry in whatever situation we are in or in whatever apostolate we have undertaken, we discover in that cry a call to mission."

istic table to share Christ's body and blood. There is a cry to be heard here, sometimes from within our own religious communities or in our parishes. In their cry is our call to commitment as we strive to live and witness to a spirituality of the blood which speaks of inclusion and welcoming. Jesus outstretched his arms on the cross and shed His blood so as to embrace all of humankind in God's love. *"When he is raised above the earth, he will draw all peoples to himself."* His heart was opened with the soldier's lance and from it flowed water and blood. In that heart all peoples can find a safe place to be in God's love. We are called by the blood of Christ to create welcoming communities wherein all can find a home, a safe place.

The spirituality of the Precious Blood which speaks of life, of reconciliation and covenant, is of course especially suited to the task and responds to the great challenges facing us in our globalized world. Our response to the cry of the blood is the response given in Jesus Christ, namely, His Precious Blood shed so that all would have the fullness of life. For it is from the resources of our spirituality of the blood of Christ that we respond to the cry of the blood. Our response must flow from the blood of Christ.

There is a very close connection between our spirituality of the blood of Christ and our call to mission. In fact, I would say that the spirituality of the blood of Christ offers us precisely that: a spirituality of mission. It is a spirituality for mission deeply rooted in Scripture and which responds to the great quests of men and women today as I tried to indicate briefly above. We both discover our call to mission through our spirituality as well as we are nourished by that very spirituality so that we are able to live our mission.

The spirituality of the blood of Christ is a missionary spirituality. It constantly calls us to leave behind our comfort zones to journey into the rugged pathways of others lives. The cry and the call of the Blood invite us to journey into the heart of the Paschal Mystery which lies at the core of Christian life and of the spirituality of the blood of Christ. It calls us, as Pope John Paul II said to us when he addressed us in General Assembly, "to go where others don't want to go." Maybe we don't



The Moderator General preaches in the chapel of the International Center of Spirituality

want to go either. There is a sort of messiness in a spirituality of the blood. Sometimes we'd rather not go down that road. The cry might call us to venture into foreign territory; into previously uncharted areas; into cultures and subcultures alien to us. To be willing to respond to the cry and the call of the blood, we must be flexible and willing to be led "along the road marked by blood." To go it alone is not easy. Together we can support and encourage one another.

To live this missionary spirituality, we will be called to live the attitude of *kenosis* (Phil. 2.5), of emptying ourselves in order to walk in solidarity and compassion with the other. We need to let go of our prejudices, recognize our own veiled or not so veiled racisms, to leave behind a sense of cultural superiority, in order to learn, to be enriched, and to be evangelized by those with whom we journey. First we must be willing to receive their gifts, if we are ever able to share ours. With Paul, we seek to be "all things to all people." To live a spirituality of *kenosis* is to become vulnerable.

In all that I have shared in this reflection it is clear that we are called to living in a permanent attitude of conversion, constantly cutting away and leaving behind, shedding excess baggage in poverty and simplicity, and keeping spiritually fit, so as follow in the missionary feet of our Redeemer. To be persons of covenant, of reconciliation, of affirmation of the dignity and worth of others, persons of hospitality and welcoming, persons of hope in the midst of suffering, requires constant personal conversion and growth so that we are witnessing to what we ourselves have and are experiencing. The very spirituality we profess and which calls us to mission, is also our best resource to prepare us for that mission.

It is through living our mission in and through the spirituality of the blood of Christ that we will make our specific contribution to the construction of a new world order, that New Jerusalem, more human and more just and one that reflects more faithfully God's dream for humankind, as revealed in Jesus, and made possible through the blood of the Lamb. ♦

all the members in this project and process.

In the light of this, the General Curia wanted to organize a workshop on mission, coordinated by Fr. William Nordenbrock, the General Councilor whose special role is animation in the area of mission. The participation of all of the Directors of the units of the Congregation was sought and the Directors were asked to invite members who would be suitable animators on the theme of mission in their units.

Mission is a theme fundamental to understanding the Church. The Second Vatican Council affirmed that the entire Church is missionary. From this affirmation and the rediscovery of the identity of the Church and her role in the struggles of peoples arose an ongoing project and an ever more intense process for understanding the nature of mission and how it contributes to Christ's command to spread the gospel. The final and more demanding question that produced and continues to produce many responses is that of evangelization: why evangelization and how to incarnate evangelization in the story, culture, self-understanding and progress of peoples.

As Missionaries of the Precious Blood, these very important questions are ours as well. Our very title destines us for mission. Every ministry that we engage in is carried out in the missionary spirit, in the missionary dimension, and in the missionary reality. Ours is a life of evangelization: this places us within the same process in the Church. At the same time, however, what is happening in the Church is also taking place among us: what is the Mission for the Missionaries of the Precious Blood? There are a variety of responses, and all of them arise not so much from a conceptual understanding of the word "mission," but from the practical reality of our various ministries. We offer diverse responses

because we think about our missionary activity, ministry, and experience in different ways.

The workshop on mission aimed at initiating within the Congregation, if we are to reach our goal, the formation of a process to bring us to a single language and theology of mission, which would not only be accepted by the members of the Congregation but also to lead to a concrete plan for directing our energies and missionary commitments. At this point of the process this is an ideal, because there is no common language and theology of mission within the Church itself and above all because we must get used to thinking that "common" is not synonymous with "uniform." Thus to create a common language and a common theology is not the same as imposing uniformity in our style of life. For this reason, developing a concrete plan within the Congregation to direct our missionary commitment does not mean that our Missionaries should all be the same. On the contrary, we cannot bind prophecy in chains.

We can do some things, however. Most recently, we can point to the example of the spirituality of the Blood of Christ. Today we can say that the entire Congregation, and I would say, every member of the Precious Blood family, speaks a common language and employs a theology accept-

ed by all when dealing with the meaning of the Blood of Christ. This was certainly not the case fifteen or even fewer years ago. What we have done for understanding the spirituality of the Blood of Christ, which for all of us now is the source of our mission, we can accomplish with the creation of a common language and theology of mission.

The principal presenter of the workshop was Fr. Stephen Bevens, SVD, a leading expert in the field of missiology. In this edition of *The Cup of the New Covenant* we are publishing selections from his conferences. The first is an overview of the Church's teaching on mission. The second treats the present-day concept of mission, in which he develops six elements that can guide us to understanding mission. The third article treats the spirituality of mission. Fr. Bevens was with us for the entire workshop and accompanied us through his participation and reflections during the group discussions. Fr. Barry Fischer spoke to us on the theme of mission in the spirituality of the Blood of Christ. These presentations are very interesting and I invite you to read them attentively and with openness to their message.

Fr. Bevens also gave a talk on the history of mission in the Church which is not included here. Then Fr. Emanuele Lupi, our General Archivist, gave an enlightening talk on the history of mission in the C.P.P.S. Both these talks in their entirety are posted on our Generalate website and are worth reading.

I would like to share a personal reflection with all of you. The history of the Church is also the history of

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The full texts of the author's presentations are available in English and Spanish on our website at:

<http://www.mission-preciousblood.org>

"To create a common language and a common theology is not the same as imposing uniformity in our style of life."

mission. The understanding of the Church is also the understanding of mission. As one who has lived the greater part of his life carrying out what has come to be called historically the “mission *ad gentes*,” I find myself reflecting on the idea of the historicity of mission, that historicity out of which is born the need for inculturation. To evangelize, first of all, requires that one be evangelized: the word of God calls the one who preaches that word to conversion. Mission is not for the Church but for the Reign of God. Evangelization is not only directed toward persons but also to their culture and from this the fruit of evangelization is the integral liberation of the person. It is the Spirit who is the true agent and animator of mission. In mission, interreligious dialogue with traditional religions and with other Christian churches is essential; dialogue aimed at genuine understanding and not simply at conversion to the gospel.

“There can be no announcing of the gospel that is true and convincing without the lived witness, exemplary and genuine, of living what is being proclaimed.”

A proven method for mission is witness. There can be no announcing of the gospel that is true and convincing without the lived witness, exemplary and genuine, of living what is being proclaimed. Sometimes I ask myself how I, in my present service as Moderator General of the Congregation, can be a missionary. In terms of the six elements for contemporary mission that Fr. Bevens speaks of in the second article, as I fulfill my ministry as Moderator General, I am most engaged at the second element, that of universal and missionary prayer. The task of mission is not only that of the heroic proclamation of the gospel in intercultural situations. The task is

also that of allowing the missionary commitment to form a Christian spirituality. In this way the life of my confreres in the field of the apostolate becomes the aim of my prayer. Their proclamation of the word of God and of his Reign becomes the force which leads my prayer to be precisely universal and missionary.

In inviting you to read the articles of this edition of *The Cup* I also invite you to reflect how we might live with a missionary sense of our life and our ministry now and in the future. The aim of creating a common language and theology for mission involves all of us and brings us to share in that mystery of the covenant which is the project of God’s love for the other, which is the root of every genuine mission. Announcing the gospel for the building up of the Reign of God, realized in the many ministries we carry out in diverse fields of work, remains always the center of our commitment and of the mission of the church. ♦

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