

THE CHALLENGE OF MISSION FOR THE C.P.P.S.

Robert Schreiter, C.P.P.S.

Workshop for Recently Incorporated Members

July 11, 2005

The Place of Mission in a Society of Apostolic Life

The Missionaries of the Precious Blood as a Congregation is a Society of Apostolic Life. Such Societies are defined in Canon Law as having three essential components : mission, community, and spirituality. As our Moderator General has said again and again, these three components constitute the “pillars” upon which our life together is built. An essential part of our reflection in these days together is upon these three pillars, what they mean for us now, and how they orient us toward the future. Today we begin that reflection by looking at mission.

Among these three pillars of mission, community, and spirituality, mission has priority. It is mission that calls us together and then sends us out for the sake of the Church and the world. Community life and spirituality are important for us, and are essential dimensions of our lives. But these are intended, in the first instance, to serve our mission.

If mission is indeed the point where we begin our reflection on what it means to be part of the C.P.P.S., it is imperative that we understand what mission means in all of its various dimensions. How does the Church as a whole understand mission ? How has it been understood in our Congregation through the years ? How are we to envision mission today and in the near future ? These are vital questions for us as we probe our identity and our purpose. It is especially important for you, the newest members of the C.P.P.S. It is important as you grow and mature in your identities as C.P.P.S. priests and brothers. It is also important because you have entered the Congregation at a time of considerable change in the life of the C.P.P.S. The XVII General Assembly, held last year, defined those changes we are now experiencing in this way : first of all, there are changes in the demographic pattern of our Congregation, as Father Jerry Stack has already explained to us. We are experiencing rapid growth in our numbers in what is now called the Global South, and aging and decline in the Global North. This will redefine the face of the Congregation during your lifetime as Missionaries of the Precious Blood. Second, there is a greater international awareness among our members than there has ever been in the past. Some of the consequences of this new awareness are starting to make themselves apparent. Increasingly, many of our members think of themselves as part of an international community, rather than solely as members of this province or that vicariate or mission. A second consequence is that we notice more and more how

cultural and language differences mark our identities, thereby challenging us to respect those differences and to bridge them into a deeper sense of what unites us. Thirdly, these new sets of interconnections are leading to greater collaboration in our existing apostolates and commitments, and urging us into new collaborative undertakings. The General Assembly in 2004 urged the Moderator and his Council to think of new places of mission that would be staffed by international teams.

Your reflection on mission in these days, then, is important not only for yourselves individually, or for your province, vicariate or mission. It is important too for the future of the C.P.P.S., since you are the bearers of that future.

This presentation is intended to help get that reflection going. It is in three parts. The first part looks at the current understanding of mission in our Church today. This is an essential and necessary starting point. It will remind us of Church teaching on mission, and draw upon contemporary thinking about mission among missionaries throughout the Church today. This should help set the stage for the second and third parts.

The second part will examine what mission has meant in our Congregation, from the time of St. Gaspar, our Founder, to the present. It cannot be a full account of that history, of course. But it tries to give an idea of the breadth of understanding mission has had among our members in the 190 years of our history. It will offer a schema of understandings of mission that have had the most currency for us.

The third part takes up thinking about mission for today and tomorrow. There will be allusions to some of the new forms of mission already happening in the C.P.P.S. today, and some of the things under discussion. There will also be a summary of how mission in the near future has been talked about in recent gatherings of the C.P.P.S. such as this one. This is intended to send you into the discussion groups for today to talk and hear about mission in our Congregation today, and to dream a bit about what it might look like tomorrow.

Throughout I will make reference to Church documents and to C.P.P.S. documents that are accessible on the Generalate website at : mission-preciousblood.org. By going to those documents you can read further for yourselves what is already happening among members of our congregation.

The Church's Understanding of Mission Today

This first part, then, looks at the Church's understanding of mission. It begins by lifting up official Church teaching on mission, and then proceeds to how that is being developed today among Catholic missiologists and missionary congregations in the Church.

There are three key Church documents that shape current Catholic understanding of mission today. These are (1) The Second Vatican Council's Decree of Missionary Activity of 1965, known

as *Ad gentes* ; (2) Pope Paul VI's Apostolic Exhortation of 1975, entitled *Evangelii nuntiandi* ; and Pope John Paul II's 1990 Encyclical *Redemptoris missio*. I want to lift up a few of the most important ideas in each of them that have changed how we think about mission.

For much of the modern period, from the time of the so-called “voyages of discovery” of Europeans starting in the fifteenth century, mission meant leaving one's homeland to go out to lands where the Gospel had never been preached, so as to save souls and establish the Church. This is reflected in the first mission encyclical of the twentieth century, Pope Benedict XV's *Maximum illud* of 1919. He talks there of lifting people out of the darkness of sin and ignorance. There is much of that understanding of mission still part of the Church's understanding today. But *Ad gentes*, issued at the end of the Second Vatican Council, extended our understanding of mission in two important ways.

First of all, *Ad gentes* saw mission not as something that happens because missionaries go out to foreign lands. Mission actually begins in the very life of the Blessed Trinity. It is the Father's sending of the Son and the Holy Spirit into the world that is the first *missio*. Our mission is to participate in the sending of the Son and the Spirit. We help carry out that mission, by participating in what has come to be called the *missio Dei*. We do not convert, transform or liberate people ; it is God's grace that does so. We are God's instruments, God's ambassadors for mission. Consequently, mission is not just doing certain things like preaching and baptizing—although these are certainly parts of mission. Mission is first about discerning how God is already active among people all around us, naming that action, lifting it up, and cooperating in what God is doing.

The second big insight from *Ad gentes* is what all of this means for the Church. In this understanding, the Church does not *have* a mission ; rather the Church *is* mission. The Church exists only for the sake of God's mission. As a colleague of mine in Chicago puts it, “The Church does not have a mission ; instead, the mission has a Church.” This means that mission is not something certain specialists do in the Church. To be a member of the Church is to engage in God's mission.

Evangelii nuntiandi was the fruit of Pope Paul VI's reflection on the Bishops' Synod of Evangelization. Its great contribution to mission has been the understanding of evangelization that was expressed there. This document makes clear that evangelization is not simply verbally preaching the Gospel (although that is an essential part). Here are Pope Paul's own words about evangelization :

“...for the Church it is a question not only of preaching the Gospel in ever wider geographic areas or to ever greater numbers of people, but also of affecting and as it were upsetting, through the power of the Gospel, mankind's criteria of judgment, determining values, points of

interest, lines of thought, sources of inspiration and models of life, which are in contrast with the Word of God and the plan of salvation.” (par. 19)

The Gospel’s message, then, is about the very renewal of humanity. It is more than words spoken to minds and hearts ; it is also transformative of the very cultures that shape us and make us human. *Evangelii nuntiandi* helped Catholic see what the consequences of genuine evangelization are and what, therefore, constitute its very performance in concrete circumstances. It helped flesh out what the Mission of God in the world really looks like. This understanding of evangelization helped move the understanding of mission beyond proclamation to include themes like dialogue, inculturation, and the liberation of the poor.¹

Pope John Paul II took all of this the next step in his Encyclical *Redemptoris missio*, published in 1990, the 25th anniversary of *Ad gentes* and the 15th anniversary of *Evangelii nuntiandi*. There are two ideas in that Encyclical that have been especially important. One was his definition of three kinds of evangelization. These are : (1) evangelization of those who have never heard the Gospel (called “primary evangelization”), (2) evangelization of those who have heard the Gospel but no longer follow it and need to hear it again (called “the New Evangelization”), and (3) an evangelization that deepens the commitment of those who are already trying to follow the Gospel. Pope John Paul’s understanding of The New Evangelization became a hallmark of the rest of his papacy, and has been taken up also by his successor, Benedict XVI.

The second influential idea from this Encyclical has been “the new Areopagus.” The Areopagus was, of course, the place where St. Paul preached to the philosophers in Athens, recounted in Acts 17. The Pope says that we must seek out those new places where the Gospel must be preached. He speaks at length about the Areopagus of social communications, technology, and the media. Later, he himself came to embody this through the use of the Internet. But there are other such places as well. He mentions these : “commitment to peace, development and the liberation of peoples ; the rights of individuals and peoples, especially those of minorities ; the advancement of women and children ; safeguarding the created world.” (no. 38) We need to keep these places, these “New Areopagoi,” in mind as we think of C.P.P.S. mission for today and for tomorrow.²

In 2002 and 2003, SEDOS, a think tank for Catholic missionary orders, discussed what mission might look like in 2025. Granted, this is necessarily speculation. But I think it would be of interest for you because, God willing, you will all be active in mission at that date, twenty years from now. The results of their discussion yielded a list of things that might be classified as attitudes, actions,

¹ One can see how this was worked out by some one hundred representatives of missionary orders at the 1981 SEDOS conference in Rome. See Mary Motte and Joseph Lang (eds.), *Mission and Dialogue* (Maryknoll, NY : Orbis, 1982).

² There is a document on the Generalate website that explores the theological dimensions of this encyclical. It can be found in the document section under Mission at no. 37.

and tasks. Let me give them to you briefly. The attitudes that would be especially important for : authentic witness and contemplation. No message will be believed if the messenger does not seem to be living out the message himself. Our Normative Texts say the same thing (C23).

Contemplation may seem counterfactual for the active life of the missionary. But unless the missionary engages in contemplative prayer, he runs the risk of not discerning where God is acting in the world around him.

The actions of the missionary in 2025 that were most frequently mentioned by the SEDOS group were prophecy and dialogue. Prophecy is witnessing to the Gospel both “in season and out of season.” It is captured as a means of mission for many by Jesus’ preaching in the synagogue at Nazareth in Luke 4 : 14-21. Dialogue becomes a sign of Gospel presence in a polarized world, in a world where religions meet and sometimes clash.

The SEDOS group saw three tasks that would be essential to evangelization in the years ahead. The first is dealing with pluralism and diversity. As the world becomes more interconnected and societies more intercultural, we are all confronted with ever more diversity. How to live together in the midst of this is important for our survival. The second task is “the globalization of solidarity,” a phrase taken from John Paul II. Globalization is part of our experience today. It can be especially harmful for those who are left out or left behind in economic growth and technological advancement. Part of being a human community is leaving no one behind or excluded. The third task is working for healing and reconciliation in a world divided and badly damaged by war, poverty, discrimination, and damage to the environment.

One can see the SEDOS vision of 2025 as an attempt to live out the message of mission as it has been developing in the Church over the past forty years. It, together with a constant return to the teaching of the Church, serves us in the C.P.P.S. as a means of orientation toward the future.³

Mission and the C.P.P.S.

Let us turn now to the second part of this presentation, about what mission has meant concretely in the history of our Congregation. Certainly the fact that our Congregation is to be missionary goes back to our Founder, St. Gaspar. As a child, he wanted to become a foreign missionary. As a young priest, he worked especially with the marginalized in the Rome of his day : day laborers, those who were incarcerated, those who were homeless. In his maturity he was commissioned by Pope Pius VII to reinvigorate the Church in the Papal States by the preaching of popular missions throughout the territory. He frequently signed his name as : “Canon Gaspar del Bufalo, Apostolic Missionary.” The Congregation he founded was to be missionary ; it was not to emulate the diocesan nor the

³ For a more extensive treatment of current understanding of mission, see the first presentation of Fr. Michael McCabe given at the XVII General Assembly and to be found in its *Acta*.

religious clergy by taking on settled commitments such as parishes and schools. He lived at a time when there was a surplus of clergy. What the Church needed was not more institutions, but a renewal of Gospel commitment within those institutions.

As the Congregation grew and spread out after his death, it encountered situations St. Gaspar could not have foreseen. Even the parts of the Papal States which are now Italy have changed over the nearly two centuries since he was active. What kind of mission has Gaspar's Missionaries been engaged in ?

Our current Constitutions, in article C3, defines our mission in this way : "The Society dedicates itself to the service of the Church through the apostolic and missionary activity of the ministry of the Word." That is, admittedly, a very broad definition. How has this mission been engaged in, particularly in view of the Church's current understanding of mission ?

I would like to suggest that there have been five ways in which the C.P.P.S. has been engaged in the work of evangelization in the past, and in the present.⁴ In speaking of each of these five ways, I will make references to past and current situations. Needless to say, in talking about where the C.P.P.S. has been involved cannot be exhaustive ; these are meant as illustrations. Moreover, some of you may object to where and how I classify some of these examples. I hope you will take up those objections and other perspectives in the discussion time, both in the groups and in the plenary.

The first way is what Pope John Paul called *first* or *primary* evangelization. This is preaching the Gospel where it has not been heard before. For a long time in the Church's history, this was considered the premier form of mission. It has lost none of its importance, but we now see the picture more richly.

There were many missionary congregations begun in the nineteenth and early twentieth century precisely to do this first evangelization. A significant number of them are Societies of Apostolic Life like ourselves. One thinks of the PIME from Italy, or Maryknoll from the United States. If one looks across C.P.P.S. history, this has been a significant, though relatively small part of our total missionary activity. This motivated the Teutonic Province's going to Brazil in 1929. Certainly our work in Tanzania, and the mission *ad experimentum* in Guinea Bissau are examples of this. One might make something of the same case for India, although the gaining of converts there is an extremely delicate question. This has never been the sole form of evangelization for us, but always a possibility. An interesting example has been under discussion among some of our young members in the Teutonic Province. They are thinking about setting up a mission in the former East Germany, where less than five percent of the population has been evangelized. Fifty years of Communism

⁴ A similar account of what follows can be found in the April, 1999 issue of *The Cup of the New Covenant*.

eradicated Christian faith largely from that part of Europe. As has already been noted, St. Gaspar once imagined for himself this kind of missionary activity.

The second kind is *New Evangelization*, the revival of Christian faith where it once flourished but now has withered. This certainly was the central form of missionary activity for St. Gaspar himself. It has an honored place in our Congregation both past and present. The preaching of parish missions is still a priority for Italy and has been revived in the provinces of the United States. The giving of retreats, days of recollection, and other spiritual exercises is found in nearly all of the units of the Congregation. It is the central form of mission in Poland, and has central significance in the Teutonic Province, Italy, Croatia, and the Provinces of North America. If a certain kind of mission has been the C.P.P.S. hallmark, it has been this one of New Evangelization.

The third kind of mission is *establishing the Church*. This happens in immigration, where Catholics are present, but there is no organized Church. This kind of mission characterized the work of Father Francis de Sales Brunner, who brought the Missionaries to the United States in the nineteenth century to minister among German-speaking immigrants. There were no parishes nor access to the sacraments, and what was needed was the establishment of the Church. Somewhat later, the Italian Province sent Missionaries to care for Italian immigrants in the United States and Canada under somewhat similar circumstances. As a consequence, parochial ministry constitutes still about forty percent of the C.P.P.S. apostolate in the United States. All of the units of the C.P.P.S. worldwide staff parishes, albeit out of different motivations.

An ongoing debate has been about whether C.P.P.S. missionaries continue on in parish ministry after these parishes are well established and could be turned over to the diocesan Church. In the first half of the twentieth century there were often vigorous exchanges on this question between the American Province and the Italian Province. The picture is not so clear today. Now parishes are often prime places for (new) evangelization, and form the place from which evangelization takes place. An international symposium on the parish as site of evangelization was hosted for the C.P.P.S. by the Cincinnati Province in 2002. Our purpose here is not to try to settle this question, but to ask why and how some of our work might be missionary in today's world.

The fourth kind of mission might be called *responding to a local church in need*. This takes on various forms. For example, the American Province responded to Pope Pius XII's plea for help for the Church in Latin America by beginning work in Chile in 1947, and later in Peru in 1962. The move into education, found in many of our provinces and vicariates, grew out of a sense of need. In the latter half of the 1990's, those in secondary schools reflected on the missionary meaning of this in international C.P.P.S. symposia in Chile and Germany. A variety of chaplaincies in hospitals, prisons, state institutions, and the military have also been sites of ministry for many C.P.P.S.

members. This reaching out to the marginalized has clear analogues with the early work of St. Gaspar in Rome. The image of “going where others will not go” (restated so eloquently for us in Pope John Paul II’s Message to the XVII General Assembly) has clear resonances with Jesus’ citing of Isaiah 61 in Luke’s account of the synagogue incident in Nazareth. It fits too the “new areopagoi” John Paul II mentioned in *Redemptoris missio*.

The fifth and final form of mission has at times been the source of controversy at times. It might be called “spreading the C.P.P.S. charism.” These are instances where our Congregation has been established without a clear apostolate that is being called for in that geographic area. The suspicion of some has been that the real purpose was to harvest vocations. That charge has been raised when vocations to be priesthood have been abundant, but there is no apparent need for additional priestly presence by the C.P.P.S., and those C.P.P.S. going to this new location had no apparent apostolic plan or vision. The reason those give who go to found the Congregation in those places is that the country “needs” the C.P.P.S. charism. Controversies of this type led the Major Superiors of the Congregation to formulate policies in 1998 for the founding of missions. Criteria of a clear apostolic plan developed in coordination with the bishop of the diocese and sufficient numbers of members to sustain community life were no doubt in part motivated by concerns about moving as a missionary congregation into a territory with no clear missionary plan.

As in any controversy, there are two sides to the issue. Those who raised such concerns feared that the C.P.P.S. operating under such circumstances would lose its missionary character ; community life would replace mission as the central apostolate. This is certainly suitable for many kinds of Institutes of Consecrated Life, but is hard to justify for a Society of Apostolic Life. In such instances, the C.P.P.S. charism is not shared but rather—it is argued—changed for something else.

On the other hand, those who have advocated founding the C.P.P.S. in a territory in this way may be able to see something in the C.P.P.S. charism of ministry of the Word that others may be unable to see. Proponents on this side have seen their claims borne out as those foundations have indeed developed and grown in ways that can unmistakably lay claim to the vision of St. Gaspar. Thus, charges of not being sufficiently missionary were made against the early foundations in Guatemala and Poland. Few would make those same charges today as both these foundations have, I think, proven themselves to be very much in St. Gaspar’s missionary tradition.

The C.P.P.S. as a whole has been challenged recently by a variant on this idea of mission as “spreading the C.P.P.S. charism.” That case is the foundation *ad experimentum* in Colombia earlier in 2005. In this instance, a priest read a life of St. Gaspar, and asked to be admitted to the Congregation along with another priest, several seminarians, and a large group of lay associates. These are largely in the capital city of Bogata, but have also connections with an apostolic

prefecture that is the site of the ongoing violence of Colombia's civil war. St. Gaspar's missionary sense, and the spirituality of the Blood of Christ has motivated this group to seek to become part of our Congregation. As has already been reported, two C.P.P.S. Missionaries are now with the group in Bogata, and one of the priests has been with the Mission in Peru. Such situations should give us pause about foreclosing the sense of mission too quickly.

What does all of this say about our being missionary? It certainly shows that the complexity of mission within the C.P.P.S. mirrors the complexity to be found in the larger Church. If mission is not about just one thing—such as preaching to non-Christians—then we should not be surprised about this level of complexity in our own midst. Such complexity does raise a useful question, however: if mission is so complex and variegated in its forms, is there any pastoral activity that would *not* be considered missionary? This is a temptation that many critics have pointed to. If all the Church is about mission, is there anything that is not mission? I think this is a challenge that should be taken seriously.

Let me try a tentative response to this question, at least from my experience of our own Congregation. I would suggest there are three scenarios that, when they occur, should drive us to asking the question whether we are genuinely missionary in the sense of the C.P.P.S. tradition. You may not agree with this, but I present it as a way to think more deeply about this important question.

The first scenario is this: what we do in our apostolic setting is indistinguishable from what a diocesan priest or a diocesan institution would be doing. I use this comparison not to denigrate the work of diocesan priests or dioceses. In fact, our own Normative Texts urge us to work closely with the diocesan bishop and his clergy (C27). What I mean is this: our pastoral work should be more than a *cura animarum* or care of souls in the traditional sense. It was precisely these concerns that has motivated our men in parochial and educational apostolates to ask this very question about what is distinctive and missionary about their work at these sites.

A second scenario would be when the requisites of community life become more important or take priority over mission. Community life and the sanctification of our souls is of paramount importance. Community life and the life of holiness can be very intense. St. Gaspar's much quoted dictum from The Circular Letters about being Carthusians at home and workers in the fields recognizes this. But when community life is an end in itself, or trumps the needs of the apostolate, there is a problem. For that reason, perhaps, a directive of St. Vincent de Paul has always been important to me. He was, after all, one of the pioneer founders of a Society of Apostolic Life, the Congregation of the Mission. He said once that if someone is in chapel praying and the doorbell rings, he should leave the chapel to answer the door. The need of that person may be more

important at that moment than what I am doing in prayer. There will be debates here about proper balance and the like, but there cannot be debate about priority.

The third scenario is this : if my apostolate amounts to my waiting for people to come to me, rather than my going out to them, then I have ceased to be missionary in the sense of our Congregation. Again, this does not rule out a certain kind of availability of people knowing where to find me if they need me, for example, as a confessor or spiritual director. But if the entirety of what I do entails other people setting my agenda by my waiting for them to come to me, I think a missionary spirit has been lost and—worse perhaps—I have adopted a consumerist model for mission. In other words, I have something of value for others to consume, and they come to me to get it. This forecloses listening for what God is doing in the world around us and responding to where God is calling us.

You may or may not agree with my depiction of these three scenarios. But I believe that when we engage in becoming indistinguishable from the work of diocesan clergy, when the needs of our community life always take priority over mission, when we passively wait for others to come to us, we have lost the missionary spirit.

C.P.P.S. Mission—Today and into the Future

Let us turn now to the third and final section of this presentation. We have looked at the wider Church and its understanding of mission. Then we explored how mission has been understood in the C.P.P.S. up to the present time. We now stand poised to engage the question of where we might go in the coming years.

Within the C.P.P.S. the formation directors addressed this same question just two years ago, in 2003. At that time they saw us as a Congregation being called to address mission in three ways. The first was the challenge of evangelization in its various forms, especially first evangelization and the New Evangelization. The section was responding to the challenge of world poverty, one of the *Areopagoi* that John Paul II mentioned in *Redemptoris missio*. The third was addressing the effects of globalization. Singled out especially here were two areas : the new multicultural societies being created by immigration, with all the attendant tensions that accompany this phenomenon. The other area was the effects of neoliberal capitalism upon societies, especially upon the poor.

I would add another area that has received much attention in the last few years (and cited already by the XVI General Assembly in 1995) : the need for healing, reconciliation, and peacebuilding.⁵ Let me note some situations and some examples of how the C.P.P.S. sense of mission is growing in each of these areas.

⁵ On the latter, see my address in the document section of the Generalate website, “Reconciliation as a New Paradigm of Mission.”

Under evangelization, I have already noted the proposal of some of the young members of the Teutonic Province to go to the unevangelized areas of the former East Germany. One might add here the excursions of young members of the Italian Province into Albania, an unevangelized area as well. Under other forms of evangelization, one would note the work of two of our men from the Kansas City Province in Vietnam. I hope we will have an opportunity to hear more about that during this workshop. The challenges of a New Evangelization in the post-Communist situation in Poland poses new opportunities as well, as that country continues to face the transition from isolation and oppression to integration into the European Union. The first new Areopagus mentioned by John Paul II was in the area of social communications. The Tanzanian Vicariate has begun a radio station. The United States Provinces have revived the Mission Team for preaching parish missions, but this time as a team of men and women, clerical, religious, and lay. How we will work with and among lay men and women who want to associate themselves with our mission and spirituality is a key part of the New Evangelization. In Poland and Croatia, in the United States we find examples of this.

The challenge of facing poverty, that form of slow death (as it has been called), is before us throughout the Global South. The deterioration of Guatemalan society since the end of the civil conflict is one tragic example of how poverty dehumanizes. The struggle of people in Peru, Brazil, Tanzania and India represent other sites. How shall we witness to Christ among the poor? How do we find God moving among the poor? What of the people being left behind in the Global North as well, as factories close and working class people lose economic opportunity? How will we witness to justice and engage those who oppress the poor? How do we challenge the well-to-do among whom we work to seek justice for the poor?

The multicultural and international face that globalization is giving to world has likewise been finding expression in our Congregation. Already members of the Tanzanian Vicariate are working in Italy, Chile, and Guinea Bissau. In August of this year, three Missionaries from the Indian Vicariate are scheduled to begin work in Germany. New international efforts have been formed in Brazil, where men from Germany and Guatemala have joined those who have already worked for many years in that country. Indeed we now have members from four countries working there.

This multicultural and international face witnesses to how the world is changing around us. We give witness to that not only by showing that people from different parts of the world can work together and live together, but our members from the Global South are also giving witness to their confreres from the Global North. Will more such missionary endeavors come about in the next few years? That was the wish of the XVII General Assembly.

Working for peace and reconciliation is central to our mission and a profound expression of our spirituality. I think of the witness of our men in Peru during the violent years of the Shining Path

(Sendero Luminoso) movement. In Chicago, members of the Cincinnati Province have begun a Center for Reconciliation in a gang-infested neighborhood where Mexican American and African American youth are killing one another. Our men work with the youth and with the parents of the youth. They accompany the youth in the court system and in jail, and help give them a new start when they are released from prison. Another C.P.P.S. member working with them takes the message of reconciliation into parishes, and helps build teams of agents of reconciliation in those settings.

I report all of this to note how much our members are already doing around the world. The challenge to us here is : how can we build upon this ? What next steps should we take. As Father Barry noted in his introduction to this workshop, we want to work toward giving expression to your hopes and dreams for the future. That needs to begin with what we do in mission and how we do it. We need to hear from one another, from different parts of the Congregation and different parts of the world, to stimulate our hearts and minds. We need to listen to the presentations on different parts of the Congregation, which will be available in the evenings.

There are two discussion sessions for today, in which you will be working in language groups : one immediately following the break this morning, and one this afternoon from 3 :00 to 4 :00. This is your time to explore what mission means for you and in your part of the Congregation. I suggest that the question you explore in the morning session is this :

What are the kinds of mission we are engaging in in my part of the world today ?

You might wish to refer back to the five kinds of mission that I have presented here. In the afternoon, the questions is :

Where should we be going in mission, in my area and in the Congregation worldwide ?

At the plenary session at 4 :30 we will ask for brief reports from each of the discussion groups, and then explore further what this will mean for all us.

You are the future of the Congregation. This is your opportunity to both speak and listen. I look forward to your input to all the rest of us.