

Evangelizing Mission in Biblical and Magisterial Teachings

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Abstract: *The researcher believes that Interreligious dialogue is a part of the mission of the Church. As a member of the Church, the researcher would like to reflect and deepen on mission from the perspective of interreligious dialogue. In this study, the researcher uses the historical method of research. The present work is fundamentally based on the teachings of the Church, especially Vatican II, Paul VI, John Paul II, and the Federation of Asian Bishops Conferences (FABC). The task of evangelizing in the Church will not be success. it is impossible to do without interreligious dialogue. The Church realizes that in the world there are various differences in culture, religion and also various other differences. This research aims to explore important messages from various Church documents related to the spirit of evangelization. The findings of this study are very useful for Church members to understand practical steps that can be taken to spread the good news to all nations. This study could be of help to the member of the Church who meet others people with various diversity. This situation awakening the member of the Church about the urgency of interreligious dialogue.*

Keywords: *evangelizing, interreligious dialogue, mission*

1. INTRODUCTION

We are standing at the threshold of a new age and a new millennium. These are bewildering, but fascinating times. Thus, we have to face a lot of challenges in which globalization is the biggest one. Nobody can delay the globalization because it is the strongest reality, a process of history, a phenomenon which affects all fields of realities or of human life such as religion, culture, economic ideology, politics and society. It opens new horizons and contributes a lot of abilities to solve basic humans need. It helps many countries to develop economically and to improve the living standard of their people. (Pilgrim, 1981, p. 35) This raises signs of hope of a better world for all. However, in spite of its positive elements, it also has negative consequences which are enduring. It tends to widen the gap between the rich and poor, the rich are becoming richer, and the poor are poorer (Grimes, 2017, p. 47).

It increases the problems of unemployment, migration, prostitution, economic inequality and the staggering foreign debts of the poorer countries. Ruether through her research emphasize that, globalization is a thick forest which is not men's living place, particularly for the poor and outcasts (Ruether, 2005, p. 113). Therefore, more and more, it makes people anxious, worried, and perplexed as how to reduce its negative effects.

These realities and their challenges have led the Church to recognize that she is the seed, sign, and instrument of the Kingdom and the sacrament of Jesus Christ. Door also presented about the effect of teaching Vatican on the 100 occasion a Vatican Social Teaching.

She underlined the mission of Jesus who were sent bring the good news to people. All the believer has duty to continue Jesus' ministry, which is to proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom of God. To proclaim the Good news to all people means that she needs to take seriously her demand for a "preferential option for the poor" (Dorr, 1983, p. 53). She does this not only by helping them to live with human dignity but also must defend and protect the poor from abuse and oppression. She has to become the Church of and for the poor. At the same time, the Church does not cease to remind all of her children to exert all their strength for evangelization.

The research objectives to understand the spirituality of evangelization from the perspective of the Biblical and Magisterium. It is important in order to prepare the members to Church to participate in the mission of the Church. Responding to the Church's call, all people try to find ways of doing mission in their living environments. Moreover, all the member of the Church is called to recover its prophetic dimension and to be an effective means of evangelization. As "sign of Christ" and "sign of the Kingdom", religious life has played a very important role in evangelization (Maynard, 1961). In certain ways, God prepared serenely for the religious life a mission plan which is necessary to bring the Good News to the societies in which people have not yet known Jesus Christ or heard the proclamation of the Gospel.

This research has a valuable purpose namely to find the original spirit of evangelization. This original spirit is very important as a guide for all members of the Church to be involved in realizing a Church that walks together and greets the spirit of evangelization. This research has recognizing and discovering that the true spirit of evangelization stems from the life and mission of Jesus. The New Testament view of evangelization is deeply rooted in Jesus' message that "the Kingdom of God is upon you." In Mark (1:14-15), we have a programmatic summary of Jesus' preaching: "The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the Gospel." These words clearly show the eschatological nature of Jesus' presence and ministry (Kroeger, 1994, p. 40).

Vatican II expresses Jesus' mission as a reconciling presence: "to establish peace or communion between sinful human beings and himself" (Kroeger, 1994, p. 30). Central to Jesus' mission is the mystery of the incarnation: "the Son of God walked the ways of a true incarnation that he might make men sharers in the divine nature" (Vatican II, 1965, no. 3). This research is significant in the theological areas to find the fresh ways to do mission with the relevant ways of doing mission or evangelizing.

2. METHOD

In this study, the researcher uses the historical method of research. To obtain the missionary spirit that inspires the mission in the Catholic Church, it is necessary to understand and deepen the basis of the Scriptures and the Magisterium. To obtain a comprehensive understanding of evangelization, the author will seriously deepen the basis of the Scriptures and the magisterium. The present work is fundamentally based on the teachings of the Church, especially Vatican II, Paul VI, John Paul II, and the Federation of Asian Bishops Conferences (FABC).

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The researcher presents the result and discussion both the biblical-theological foundations and the teachings of the Church as they relate to mission. The vision and instructions which very essential for the sketching of an evangelizing mission for indigenous people.

The Life and Mission of Jesus

Jesus as the First Evangelizer

God is the source and end of mission. Mission is rooted in the processes of the Trinity. God reveals himself, his plan, and his life through his only beloved Son, Jesus Christ, “The Father and I are One” (Jn 10:30), “whoever has seen me has seen the Father” (Jn 14:8), “No one comes to the Father, but by me” (Jn 14:6) (Kroeger, 1994, p. 80).

Jesus himself, the Good News of God (Mk 1:1), the first evangelizer, was sent to the world to do God’s will “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life” (Jn 3:16) (Pope Paul VI, 1993, no. 7). The kernel and center of Christ’s good news is salvation, a great gift of God which is liberation from everything that oppresses humanity, from sin and the evil one (Kroeger, 1994, p. 130). The Gospel of Luke presented the beauty of Jesus mission, “The Spirit of the Lord has been given to me, for he has anointed me. He sent me to bring the good news to the poor” (Lk 4:8).

Characteristics of Jesus' mission are healing (Mt 8: 1-34, 9:1-7, 18-34; Mk 1: 32-39), forgiving (Mt 5: 36-47, 9: 9-13, 18: 21-35; and, Lk 15, 1-7; 11- 32), accepting, and inviting people to show compassion. It was on the basis of this life witness that Jesus spoke (Fiorenza, 1993, p. 25).

Jesus and the Universal Mission

The synoptic Gospels as well as that of John are full of reminiscences of the universality of Jesus' mission. In the passage referred to as the "great commission" (Mt 28:19), Jesus tells his disciples: Go therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. And know that I am with you always, yes, to the end of time.

Jesus' Mission to All Israel

One of the most striking arguments often used to justify the mission of Jesus as being sent to the people of Israel is the expression "the God of Israel." Jesus did acknowledge that he was sent to the house of the lost sheep of Israel but he did not limit his salvific mission to only Israel. The attitude of Jesus of Nazareth reflected the same profound tendencies as the Old Testament: an account on the election of Israel and the eschatological gathering of the nations (Jn 11:50; cf. 12:20-26).

Jesus' mission is to all Israel. This is expressed, first, in his constantly being on the move throughout the entire Jewish land, as a wandering preacher and healer, without permanent ties to family, profession, or residence (J.Bosch, 1991, p. 26). The word of God had first to be pronounced in a concrete human condition and among the chosen people of Israel (Legrand, 1990, p. 44). The fact that he selects twelve disciples to be with him and that he sends them out into the Jewish land points in the same direction: their number refers back to the ancient composition of the people of Israel and their mission to the future messianic reign, when "all Israel" will be saved (J.Bosch, 1991, p. 26).

He must immerse and go to the crowd, the uninitiated, to the poor and the little, even to sinners; thus he ventured beyond the familiar circles of his personal religious life. He used prophetic accents and did prophetic deeds. He roused hearts, and the reign he proclaimed unsettled the established order (J.Bosch, 1991, p. 43).

From the above-mentioned discussion, we can draw a conclusion that Jesus' mission was for all people but first he had to start with the people of Israel since he was himself a Jew and had to carry out his mission in a particular context, that is, the Jewish context (Fiala, 2007, p. 39).

Jesus' Mission to all Peoples

Going from town to town, preaching to the poorest--and "frequently the most receptive--the joyful news of the fulfillment of the promises and of the Covenant offered by God is the mission for which Jesus declares that He is sent by the Father" (Pope Paul VI, 1993, nos. 7-8).

Jesus' mission is not limited to Israel only but He also proclaims the Gospel to the whole world. It was precisely in his having been sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel that Jesus was universalistic (Legrand, 1990, p. 62).

He wanted all peoples to hear his good news and to be healed: "to the other towns also I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God, because for this purpose I have been sent" (Lk 4:43) (Mt 10:35). More concretely, Jesus' mission embraces the poor and the rich, the oppressed and the oppressor, the sinner and the devout (J.Bosch, 1991, p. 28). The most significant link between Jesus of Nazareth and the worldwide mission of the early church was not an explicit universal missionary program launched by him. Before considering some key dimensions of Jesus' ministry, it is important to clarify this point (Senior & StuhlmueLLer, 1989, p. 142). After all, there are incidents in the Gospels where Jesus encounters Gentiles such as the Syro-Phoenician woman (Mk. 7:24-30) and the centurion (Mt. 8:5-13). And there are dramatic injunctions to proclaim the gospel to the whole world (Mt. 28:19 and Lk. 24:47).

Jesus symbolically presents the Kingdom as a banquet feast: "many will come from east and west and sit at table to attend the banquet" (Mt 8:11 and Lk 13:28-29). The banquet is open to all who are willing to respond to the invitation. This statement places the Gentiles on an equal footing with Israelites in the messianic age, so that they share fully in the joy of the kingdom (Senior & StuhlmueLLer, 1989, p. 153).

Jesus' mission is to redeem the world and to grant eternal life to those who put their faith in him (Jn 5:24; 20:30-31). On the other hand, at the very center of Jesus' mission is God's love for all humanity. (Senior & StuhlmueLLer, 1989, p. 216) This is manifested clearly in John's Gospel (Jn 17: 1-5). Addition to Jesus' last sign of universalism of his mission is that of his blood "poured out in behalf of many" (Mt 26:28; Mk14:24).

Moreover, Jesus' mission for all people continues in the world when he bequeathed the command, "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age" (Mt 28:19 and Mk 16:15). Jesus Christ himself is our way to the Father's house and is the way to each man (Jn 14:6) (R.Almario, 1992, p. 34).

The Kingdom Ministry of Jesus

According to the New Testament, the central theme of the Jesus' preaching was the Kingdom of God. Jesus himself came preaching the Kingdom and referred to it more than a hundred times. He did not hesitate to preach the Kingdom of God, and to bear witness to his

heavenly Father. It was revealed clearly in the way Jesus lived and related with people. Jesus gradually reveals the characteristics and demands of the Kingdom through his words, his actions and his own person (Górmez, 1997, p. 41).

Proclamation of the Kingdom of God

Jesus started his public life with the assertion: “the time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the Gospel.” (Mk 1, 15; Mt 4:17). He brings God's plan to fulfillment. The proclamation and establishment of God's Kingdom are the purpose of his mission: “I was sent for this purpose” (Lk 4:43).

In the Gospels, Jesus’ miracles and parables provide special help in understanding how the Kingdom is revealed in this world. The miracle signs point to the approaching kingdom and majestic character of the Messiah. These miracles address every human need: poverty, sickness, hunger, sin, demonic temptation, and the threat of death. Each of them proclaims that wherever and whenever in God’s name human needs and problems are being tackled and overcome, there God’s kingdom is shining through. Besides parables of the seed, the fishnet, the mustard seed, and the leaven also tell how the message about this Kingdom shall reach all nations and peoples (Mt 13; Lk 8; Mk 4) (Pilgrim, 1981, p. 125).

The Kingdom of God is a new world. It is on earth. In it, people will experience various life blessings. The Kingdom is a manifestation of God’s graciousness. It is an invitation to a celebration in which, the cripple, the poor, the outcast, and the sinners can share (Lk 14: 12-24). Pope John Paul II reflected in *Redemptoris Missio* that “The Kingdom of God is meant for all mankind, and all people are called to become members of it, but especially the poor, the victims of rejection and contempt” (Pope John Paul II, 1990, no. 14).

Besides, the Kingdom of God seeks to transform human values and relationships based on love, service, and forgiveness. (Kroeger, 1994, p. 144) The law of love must dominate all relations with one another and with God (Mt 22: 34-40; Lk 10: 25-28; Jn 3:16, 13: 34, and 15:12-13). Only the Kingdom therefore is absolute, and it makes everything else relative. The Lord will delight in describing in many ways the happiness of belonging to this Kingdom.

Finally, the Kingdom of God is the person of Christ himself; the good news is Christ. Kingdom in Jesus’ ministry and preaching is more than human, temporal liberation. Jesus’ words, deeds, healings and exorcisms go far beyond the temporal, earthly and social justice and freedom from political and cultural oppression. Jesus brings Kingdom of God and justice through his life, death, and resurrection (R.Almario, 1992, p. 85). The theme of the Kingdom of God is crucial to Jesus’ life, mission and death–resurrection. Today, especially from Vatican

II documents and *Evangelii Nuntiandi* we are rediscovering its meaning and importance in evangelization (Pope Paul VI, 1993, no. 37).

Proclamation of Liberating Salvation

In the Bible the salvation is used to refer to God's will, which seeks the highest possible good of the human person in God. The ministry of Jesus had a strong liberate content. "He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives... to set free the oppressed" (Lk 4:18-19). Jesus preached that liberty to people, and indeed set them free from a variety of bondages of sin (Jn8:1-11), of evil spirits (Lk 8:26-33), of sickness (Lk 8 22-24), of narrow and rigid interpretation of the law (Lk 11, 37-52), of social oppression (Lk 19:1-10). Through Jesus' ministry, Pope Paul asserted that, "Jesus is the sole mediator of salvation. As the kernel and center of His Good News" (Pope Paul VI, 1993, no. 9).

Jesus brings the good news and is the good news for those oppressed by suffering, marginalization, and despair. Jesus introduces a new hope in the midst of despair. The contact and the relationship with Jesus produce salvation, liberation and hope. All of this is begun during the life of Jesus and definitively accomplished by His death and resurrection. In Jesus of Nazareth, crucified and risen, man's acceptance of God's offer of himself is absolute and final and made irrevocable by his death and resurrection; hence, Jesus has become the unique pattern and source of salvation for all (FABC, 1997a, p. 79).

Jesus' Missionary Life: Expression of His Inner Life

The every missionary life of Jesus is the necessary expression of his inner Trinitarian life. Christ, being the Son, reveals the Father through his filial life, a life of love and fellowship with the Father, expressed in his earthly life of love, and invites men to share in that life through faith in him (Jn 20:31) (Scattolin, 2018, p. 50).

Jesus' missionary life was centered on the loving will of his Father. This loving will of his Father shapes his life, is the content of his life, and is the food on which he feeds (Jn 4:34). He had recourse to prayer and prayer enabled him to discern properly the will of his Father in all his missionary activities. Jesus did not carry out his mission only in words but in deeds as well.

In a concrete way, Jesus proclaimed his message by symbolic deeds as by word. The cleansing of the Temple, welcoming sinners and eating with them all go to show forth his inner life. He acted out of conviction and without any malaise. He did not pretend to be speaking of a God who is love in mere words. He demonstrated this love of God throughout his missionary

journeys (Pope John Paul II, 1990, no. 14). He went all around not to encounter the rich and powerful, the learned and the clever, but the weak and the humble (Lk 10:20). Thus Luke can say “what so many prophets and righteous would have wished to see and hear but could not, was now manifested to marginal population of Galilee” (Lk 10:23-24).

His preferential option for the poor is verified in what his witnesses can ‘hear’ for example, in the Beatitudes proclaimed to the poor, and in his attitude toward the poor, the blind, the lame, the impure, the sinners, in a word all those left out of account by the Palestinian society. Jesus overturned the geographical code in situating the center of his activity not in Judea but in Galilee, not in the Temple or synagogues but in fishing boats or town streets, an absolute reversal of the scale of values of contemporary society (Kaczor, 2008, p. 18).

In all these new trends and ways of carrying out his missionary activities, Jesus showed in a concrete way what was deep down his inner being. There can be no fidelity and commitment to the mission where interior disposition is lacking. Jesus combined the two so beautifully and effectively and that created a difference in his teaching and relationship with people. Hence they were spell-bound and said; we have never heard such a teaching before. He teaches with authority and all things obey him.

Church Documents on Mission

Papal Documents

The Second Vatican Council in its decree on the missionary activity of the Church, *Ad Gentes* (AD), places mission and evangelization at the center of the Church. This is also true in the succeeding church documents, such as *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (EN) of Pope Paul VI and *Ecclesia Asia* (EA) of Pope John Paul II. All of them are good documents, guiding members in the Church to do mission in the contemporary situation.

a. *Ad Gentes*

There are several ways of carrying out the one mission of the Church based on the different situations that present themselves. Mission *ad gentes* is one of such ways. The Council Fathers agreed that its decree on missionary activity should be grounded in the same Trinitarian theology as that of the document on the Church. Vatican II insists that: “the whole Church is missionary by her nature” (Vatican II, 1965, no. 2 and 33), for she receives her mission from God the Father and from the incarnational mission of the Son and from the love-cementing mission of the Holy Spirit. The Church derives her nature from these missions and thus becomes missionary (Vanchipurackal, 1981, p. 43). The Trinitarian foundation of the Church’s missionary nature can be understood not only in relation to its starting point, but also

in relation to its point of arrival, that is, its ultimate goal. In other words, the Blessed Trinity is not only the primordial source of the existence and missionary nature of the Church, but also constitutes the fulfillment of her mission” (Vadakumpadan, 1996, p. 55).

Mission, therefore, is understood fundamentally as rooted in the continual self-giving and self-revelation of God within the history of creation. The Church not only walks in love, but also glows with an apostolic spirit (Vatican II, 1965, no. 15). Since mission is at the center of the Church’s being, the whole Church is missionary. This means that “we are missionaries above all because of what we are as a Church whose innermost life is unity in love even before we become missionaries in word or deed” (Pope John Paul II, 1990, no. 23).

The task of proclaiming Jesus Christ to all people is enormous and seems to be out of proportion to the Church’s human resources. Nonetheless, there must never be a lessening of the impetus to preach the Gospel and to establish new Churches among those who do not yet know Christ. In trying to carry out this mission *ad gentes*, the Church faces a number of difficulties which seems insurmountable, for example, refusal by certain countries to allow missionaries to enter, cultural values, and above all, lack of fervor from within. (Fitzpatrick, 1933, p. 83) But at the same time, the Church knows for sure that this mission is not a human enterprise but that of God. This knowledge is what should spur her on to accomplish the desired goals set for her by the Lord Jesus Christ himself. In sum, without mission *ad gentes*, the Church’s very missionary dimension would be deprived of its essential meaning and of the very activity that exemplifies it.

b. *Evangelii Nuntiandi*

Evangelii Nuntiandi of Pope Paul VI is one of the most important ecclesial documents of the post Vatican II era. It presents a concise, inspiring, and programmatic challenge for the Church to enthusiastically engage in her God-given mission to preach the Gospel to the contemporary world, to living peoples, with their aspirations and anxieties, their cultures and religions, their hopes and conflicts.

In *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, Pope Paul VI emphasized the task of evangelization to which the Church has been given as her mission. This document presents Jesus as the first and greatest evangelizer. He proclaims first of all the Kingdom of God and salvation; therefore, only the Kingdom is absolute, and it makes everything else relative. Salvation is liberation from everything that oppresses man (Pope Paul VI, 1993, no. 8 and 9). The Church is born of the evangelizing activity of Jesus and sent by Him, is an evangelizer. She exists in order to evangelize, but she begins by being evangelized herself (Pope Paul VI, 1993, no. 14 and 15).

Paul VI affirmed that “Evangelization is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity. She exists in order to evangelize” (Pope Paul VI, 1993, no. 14).

The Church’s mission is to proclaim the Kingdom of God established on earth in Jesus Christ, through his life, death and resurrection, as God’s decisive and universal offer of salvation to the world. For this reason, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* was emphatic that “there is no true evangelization if the name, the teaching, the life, the promises, the Kingdom and the mysteries of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God are not proclaimed” (Pope Paul VI, 1993, no. 22).

When we look at our world today, we realize that there are different situations that need to be addressed by the Church’s missionary activity. First we have the situation “where peoples, groups and socio-cultural contexts in which Christ and his Gospel are not known, or which lack Christian communities sufficiently mature to be able to incarnate the faith in their own environment and proclaim it to other groups. This is mission *ad gentes* in the proper sense” (Paul VI, 1975, p. 15). In the second situation, we have vibrant communities with sense of commitment. The Church is able to carry out her activity of *pastoral care*. At the third level, we have communities that have lost a living sense of the faith, or even no longer consider themselves as members of the Church, and live a life far removed from Christ and his Gospel. What is needed here is a *new evangelization* or “*re-evangelization*” (Górmez, 1997, p. 76).

Missionary activity proper, namely the mission *ad gentes*, is directed to “peoples or groups who do not yet believe in Christ, who are far from Christ, in whom the Church has not yet taken root and whose culture have not yet been influenced by the Gospel.” The specific nature of the mission *ad gentes* consists in its being addressed to ‘non-Christians (Paul VI, 1975, p. 57).

Each and every one who has been evangelized is also called to become involved in the mission of the Church. Pope Paul VI said, “The person who has been evangelized goes on to evangelize others. Here lies the test of truth, the touchstone of evangelization: it is unthinkable that a person should accept the Word and give himself to the Kingdom without becoming a person who bears witness to it and proclaims it in his turn” (Pope Paul VI, 1993, no. 24).

Therefore we evangelize because we are surrounded by people who are hungering, thirsting, and literally dying for the good news. While they may not express their need in such direct fashion, many are undoubtedly wondering to themselves: Is anyone there? Does anyone care? Is there hope? Is there any sense and meaning to life? Is life possible? When we have the answer for their question, to withhold the Way, the Truth, and the Life is to violate the rights of others and to place ourselves in peril, as Pope Paul VI points out in *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (Pope Paul VI, 1993, no. 80).

Evangelization is first of all the witness of a life given totally to God and to all people in imitation of the Savior who, out of love for humanity made himself a servant. “In the work of salvation everything comes from sharing in the divine agape” (Pope Paul VI, 1993, no. 76).

The fact that there are many who still do not yet know the full manifestation of God’s love in Christ, impels us as St. Paul says (2 Cor 5:14) to be more conscious of the missionary mandate given us by Christ to continue preaching his gospel of salvation. Mission then is to all nations, irrespective of race, color, language and the like. Jesus’ mission knew no boundaries and so must our own mission be. Our mission will be effective if we live in intimacy with the Lord what we proclaim from the rooftops (Martinez, 2000, p. 128).

At the beginning of his ministry, in the synagogue at Nazareth, Jesus announces that the Spirit of the Lord has consecrated him to preach the Good News to the poor, to proclaim release to captives, to give sight to the blind, to set the oppressed free, to declare a year of favor from the Lord (Lk 4:16-19). Taking up the Lord’s mission as her own, the Church proclaims the Gospel to every man and woman, committing herself to their integral salvation (Pope Paul VI, 1993, no. 82).

The Church’s mission is not just limited to the future salvation of people but also the here and now. That is why the document insists very much on the alleviation of all suffering in any form, and particularly the poor. A mission that does not take into consideration the poor is destined to fail miserably (Kroeger, 1994, p. 43). Jesus’ preferential option for the poor must be the guiding principle for all missionary activities.

Finally, the document insists on the prophetic role of all who witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and its Good News. They are to become the voices of the voiceless. They are to speak the truth and to give life witness in their missionary activity. This surely will lead to martyrdom in certain cases but that is the reality of any true witnessing. Jesus paid the price of martyrdom for preaching the gospel of truth for all.

Ecclesia in Asia

In *Ecclesia in Asia*, John Paul II states: "The Church wants to offer the new life she has found in Jesus Christ to all the peoples of Asia as they search for the fullness of life, so that they can have the same fellowship with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ in the power of the Spirit. This faith in Jesus Christ is what inspires the Church's evangelizing work in Asia, often carried out in difficult and even dangerous circumstances" (John Paul II, 1999, no. 10). Reiterating what the Synod Fathers noted, the Pope wrote that proclaiming Jesus as the only

Saviour can present particular difficulties in their cultures, given that many Asian religions teach divine self-manifestations as mediating salvation.

Jesus Christ savior of the world is a gift to Asia. If God has been so good to Asia to the point of coming down among them and taking human form like one of them, then Asia has no choice but to share this wonderful and gratuitous gift of God with all nations. Sharing the Good News of God's presence in their midst is what it means to do mission.

In *Ecclesia in Asia* John Paul II affirms the necessity of the preferential love of the poor (in particular, the migrants, indigenous, and tribal people, women and children), the defense of human life, health care, and education, since they are often the victims of the worst forms of exploitation (John Paul II, 1999, no. 34).

The Church's unique contribution to the peoples of the continent is the proclamation of Jesus Christ, true God and true man, the one and only savior for all peoples. The Church cannot keep this precious light of faith under a bushel (Mt 5:15), for her mission is to share that light with everyone (John Paul II, 1999, no. 32).

Sharing this light with everyone calls for concrete action which will enable the flame of the faith to be kept burning always. This faith in Jesus Christ is what inspires the Church's evangelizing work in Asia often carried out in difficult and even dangerous circumstances. The Church's faith in Jesus Christ is a gift received and a gift to be shared; it is the greatest gift which the Church can offer to Asia. Sharing the truth of Jesus Christ with others is the solemn duty of all who have received the gift of faith (John Paul II, 1999, no. 35).

Mission in Asia cannot succeed well without dialogue. With its multiplicity of religions, there is need for inter religious dialogue as well as dialogue with cultures and with governments where there is no room for mission activities. In fact, dialogue is an essential part of the Church's mission "as it has its origin in the Father's loving dialogue of salvation with humanity through the Son in the power of the Holy Spirit" (Murphy, 1995, p. 32). *Ecclesia in Asia* affirms that: "Dialogue is a part of the work of evangelization because it is means of mutual knowledge, enrichment and communication of the saving message and life of Jesus Christ" (John Paul II, 1999, no. 31). Pope John Paul II also proposes that "in true dialogue, there is giving and receiving. In dialogue, the Church receives the religious cultural riches of the nations and in turn gives them the saving riches of Jesus Christ" (John Paul II, 1999, no. 55).

Mission therefore, must take into account the various challenging trends before it and present Christ and his message of salvation for all in such a way that it is not offensive to others. Proclamation of the gift of Jesus to Asia by Asians themselves as well as all who are called to be

sharers in this proclamation should not and must not become an obstacle to the hearers; otherwise, the proclamation will turn out to be a useless venture.

FABC Documents

Taipei Document

The Asian Bishops has underlined that the local Church of Asia has focused their attention on the approach of dialogical mission. Already during the first Plenary Assembly of the Asian Bishops, held in Taiwan in 1974, the primary focus of the task of evangelization was identified as “the building up of a truly local Church” for the local church is the realization and the refreshment of the Body of Christ in a given people, a given place and time. And FABC noted that the way to fulfill this task of proclamation of the Gospel in Asia is by way of dialogue. The Asian bishops affirm that “dialogue is intrinsic to the life of the Church, and the essential mode of all evangelization” (FABC, 1997b, p. 111).

In fact, dialogue is an essential part of the Church's mission "as it has its origin in the Father's loving dialogue of salvation with humanity through the Son in the power of the Holy Spirit" (John Paul II, 1999, no. 29). Likewise, dialogue should come within the Church and among members of the People of God, by ways of humble listening and loving exchange in order to become a voice of hope engendering dialogue with brothers and sisters in varied living environments. Mission without dialogue is not acceptable today because “through it the Church contributes to the revelation of the reign of God in human history” (Fitzpatrick, 1933, p. 41). Therefore the Church needs a triple dialogue: “Mission will mean a dialogue with Asia’s poor, with its local cultures, and with other religious traditions” (FABC, 1997b, p. 15).

Thus FABC propels firstly the local Church towards another interaction-dialogue with culture. She must “inculturate” by sinking deep roots among all peoples whose life and history she gladly makes her own. The local Church is a Church incarnate in a people, in a Church indigenous and inculturated. It is native, springing out of the local culture, with a reverence for ancient customs and traditions, speaking the local language, dressed in local clothing, expressing immortal truth in images which the common people understand and love. The Church roots deeply in life realities of the people. It seeks to share in whatever truly belongs to that people: its meaning and its values, its aspirations, its thoughts and its language, its songs, and its artistry, even its frailties and failing it assumes, so that they too may be healed (FABC, 1997b, pp. 9–12).

The need to incarnate the gospel in peoples’ culture is particularly urgent today.

Inculturation signifies “the intimate transformation of authentic cultural values through their

integration in Christianity and the insertion of Christianity in the various human cultures”. Inculturation enables the Church to be a more effective instrument of mission and to better express the mystery of Christ (Kroeger, 1994, p. 152). The aim of the church should be to ensure that the gospel is truly inculturated among cultures.

Jesus was a Jew and was deeply inserted in the culture of his people. The message he preached and the way he preached are deeply rooted in the religious traditions and culture of Israel. Hence, the mystery of Incarnation and the Paschal mystery are the theological foundation and model for the missionary activity of the local Churches.

Interreligious Dialogue

Ecclesia in Asia offers a new opportunity to rediscover the Church’s mission and to understand the spiritual aspiration of the different peoples in interreligious dialogue. That is interreligious dialogue? In order to understand it clearly, we can re-read the FABC documents. The Asian Bishops described the dialogue between Christianity and the other religious traditions: on dialogue we accept them as significant and positive elements in the economy of God’s design of salvation. In them we recognize and respect profound spiritual and ethical meanings and values (FABC, 1997b, p. 14).

Paul John II affirmed that “interreligious dialogue is part of the Church’s evangelization mission. Interreligious dialogue is understood as a method and means of mutual knowledge and enrichment” (Pope John Paul II, 1990, no. 55). Besides, Donal Dorr stated that “interreligious dialogue is one of the most powerfully effective ways in which Christians and other religious believers can open themselves to the influence of the Spirit of God” (Vanchipurackal, 1981, op. 119). In Asia, actually one of the biggest challenges is a dialogue with the great religious traditions of peoples. The great religious traditions can shed the light on the truths of the Gospel. They can help us understand the riches of our own faith. Hence, interreligious dialogue flows from the nature of the Church, a community in pilgrimage journeying with peoples of other faiths toward the Kingdom that is to come (FABC, 1997b, p. 23).

In dialogue with other religions the Church should recognize, accept, and respect profound spiritual and ethical meanings and values. She discovers the working of God in the other religions, the seeds of the word of God, seeds of contemplation, touch the expression and the reality of our peoples’ deepest selves, and find authentic ways of living and expressing our own Christian faith. On the other hand, interreligious dialogue encourages a friendly relation between believers in different religions. It helps to knock down, or at least to reduce, prejudices, exclusiveness and

intolerance (Fitzpatrick, 1933, p. 56). Those who take part in inter-religious dialogue are called to acknowledge that not only may they have much to learn in a positive sense from others but also that their own articulation of spirituality may be inadequate and even quite distorted in some respects. Through this dialogue we learn that our faith in Christ leads us to receive from these religious traditions what must be purified in them, healed and made whole, in the light of God's Word (FABC, 1997b, p. 87).

4. CONCLUSION

Evangelization will be lasting and fruitful if it does not travel the path of this three-fold on proclaim the good news. In fact, any approach which does not interact deeply with many peoples, cultures, and religions will remain foreign. The Church must continue its evangelizing mission by proclaiming Jesus as God's gift of salvation to all. The Church recognizes that her role is to follow Jesus' example of life and mission because the work of evangelization is the duty of whole people of God. The Church, throughout her teachings, has called her members to respond to the needs of times. Thus people are sent forth to preach the Gospel to those who have not yet heard and to make Christ present to the world. The Church recognized without doing evangelization, the Church It would only be partial, fragmentary, superficial, and ineffectual vision of the task of mission in contemporary.

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