

# **PROCLAIMING THE GOSPEL OF WHOLENESS**

**The Perennial Relevance of  
*Evangelii Nuntiandi***



**Jerome Vallabaraj SDB**  
**Sahayadas Fernando SDB**

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**Kristu Jyoti Publications  
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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Pope Francis' spontaneous appreciation and esteem for Paul VI's Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* clearly transpires in several of his discourses. He has eulogized this document in superlatives as: "to my mind the greatest pastoral document that has ever been written to this day".<sup>1</sup> Addressing the Bishops of Brazil on Saturday 28, July 2013 at the Archbishop's House, during his apostolic journey to Rio de Janeiro on the occasion of the XXVIII World Youth Day, Pope Francis acknowledged once again that *Evangelii Nuntiandi* is "that basic point of reference which remains relevant".<sup>2</sup> Addressing the members of the 13<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Council of the General Secretary of the Synod of Bishops, he reaffirmed that *Evangelii Nuntiandi* was "a very full text that has lost nothing of its timeliness".<sup>3</sup> He has further made several references to *Evangelii Nuntiandi* in his own Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*. It all goes to show that theologians and experts in the field of Evangelization generally concur that this document has remained very relevant and poses a response to the challenges faced by the Church even today.

It is in the context of these and other similar declarations, that this modest volume intends to commemorate by bringing to the fore the rich legacy of *Evangelii Nuntiandi* on the occasion of the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its promulgation, and also to celebrate the Bicentenary of the Birth of St. John Bosco (1815-2015), "Evangelizer of Youth".

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<sup>1</sup>Pope Francis, Address to Participants in the Pilgrimage from the Diocese of Brescia, Vatican Basilica, Saturday, 22 June 2013, in [https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2013/june/documents/papa-francesco\\_20130622\\_pellegrinaggio-diocesi-brescia.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2013/june/documents/papa-francesco_20130622_pellegrinaggio-diocesi-brescia.html) (accessed on 24 August 2015).

<sup>2</sup>Pope Francis, Address to Bishops of Brazil on the occasion of the XXVIII World Youth Day on 28 July 2013, in [https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2013/july/documents/papa-francesco\\_20130727\\_gmg-episcopato-brasile.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2013/july/documents/papa-francesco_20130727_gmg-episcopato-brasile.html) (accessed on 24 August 2015).

<sup>3</sup>Pope Francis, Address to Members of the 13<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Council of the General Secretary of the Synod of Bishops, Consistory Hall, Thursday 13 June 2013 in [https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2013/june/documents/papa-francesco\\_20130613\\_xiii-consiglio-sinodo-vescovi.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2013/june/documents/papa-francesco_20130613_xiii-consiglio-sinodo-vescovi.html) (accessed on 24 August 2015).

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The prophetic insights of Pope Paul VI in *Evangelii Nuntiandi* written way back in 1975 remain significantly accurate and relevant even today, as we face the challenges of being and becoming authentic disciples in a community of disciples in a world characterized by rampant secularism, materialism, individualism and atheistic scientism.

The challenge of Evangelization always involves “Proclaiming the Gospel of Wholeness” which, at the same time, becomes the Good News of Salvation, Proclamation of the Inception of the Kingdom of God in Jesus Christ, Revelation of the ‘mystery’ hidden in God, Celebration of the Paschal Event of Christ, Supreme Revelation of God and of God’s Design in History concerning the World and the World Community.

It is our wish and hope that this little volume signal and constitute a wake-up call to all disciples of Jesus Christ to become conscious of the fact that “Evangelizing is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the Church and constitutes her deepest identity. She exists in order to evangelize” (EN 2).

**Jerome Vallabaraj sdb**

**Sahayadas Fernando sdb**

8<sup>th</sup> September 2015  
Feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary

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## ABBREVIATIONS

|      |  |
|------|--|
| AAS  | <i>Acta Apostolicae Sedis</i>                          |
| CA   | <i>Centesimus Annus</i>                                |
| CCC  | <i>Catechism of the Catholic Church</i>                |
| CSDC | <i>Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church</i> |
| CV   | <i>Caritas in Veritate</i>                             |
| DCE  | <i>Deus Caritas Est</i>                                |
| EG   | <i>Evangelii Gaudium</i>                               |
| EN   | <i>Evangelii Nuntiandi</i>                             |
| FC   | <i>Familiaris Consortio</i>                            |
| GDC  | <i>General Directory for Catechesis</i>                |
| GS   | <i>Gaudium et Spes</i>                                 |
| HV   | <i>Humanae Vitae</i>                                   |
| JW   | <i>Justice in the World</i>                            |
| LEV  | <i>Libreria Editrice Vaticana</i>                      |
| LC   | <i>Libertatis Conscientia</i>                          |
| LE   | <i>Laborem Exercens</i>                                |
| LF   | <i>Lumen Fidei</i>                                     |
| LG   | <i>Lumen Gentium</i>                                   |
| MM   | <i>Mater et Magistra</i>                               |
| OA   | <i>Octogesima Adveniens</i>                            |
| OP   | <i>Optatam Totius</i>                                  |
| PP   | <i>Populorum Progressio</i>                            |
| PT   | <i>Pacem in Terris</i>                                 |
| QA   | <i>Quadragesimo Anno</i>                               |
| RM   | <i>Redemptoris Missio</i>                              |
| RN   | <i>Rerum Novarum</i>                                   |
| SRS  | <i>Sollicitudo Rei Socialis</i>                        |
| TDNT | <i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i>     |

## INTRODUCTION

“I have come so that they may have life and have it to the full” (*Jn* 10:10). During His short public ministry, Jesus lived the profound truth behind His declaration. He spoke of a Father who loves, forgives and cares for all, especially the lost and the least in society. Everyone who listened to Him with an open heart experienced the grandeur as well as the closeness of God. He cured the sick, the lame, the blind and the lepers and made them live their life to the full. The religious stigma attached to their physical and psychological ailments fell apart. Out of compassion, He fed the hungry who followed him earnestly, day in and day out. Seeing His miraculous power and authority over their own religious leaders, they wanted to make Him king of Israel. They saw in Jesus of Nazareth someone more than a well-trained Rabbi they had hitherto seen. In brief, those who approached Him with simplicity of heart went back with the feeling of having touched the eternal spring of wholeness. Their encounter with Jesus gave them a new life, a feeling of being born again. As a culmination of this holistic ministry, Jesus offered His very self on the Cross and the Father raised Him up on the third day, freeing him from the clutches of death. Thus the Paschal Mystery of Jesus Christ has become the source and summit of every Christian’s life and activity. In it one can find all that the human heart longs for.

After fulfilling the Father’s will, He passed on to His disciples the mission of proclaiming life. “Go out to the whole world; proclaim the gospel to all creation” (*Mk* 16:15). It was not merely a question of ‘informing’ others about what had happened to Him from Galilee to Jerusalem. The Church has interpreted the departing command of the Risen Lord literally and has joyfully proclaimed the Good News of Jesus Christ as the Gospel of wholeness in the last two millennia. The proclamation was not limited to passing on a set of doctrines and religious truths. It was indeed sharing the Good News that Christ Himself was, is and will ever be – the fullness of life. In Christ our hearts find all that we long for, the answer to human queries, the light that illumines unfathomable mysteries. Practically, this proclamation has penetrated all the corners of the earth. At times, under the influence of misplaced enthusiasm, the methods used may not have been fully evangelical. Purified of such historically misplaced fervour, the proclamation of the Gospel has transformed the lives of millions of people across the globe. The continuation of Jesus’ mission by the Church cannot but be a

proclamation of life in its fullness, both here on earth and in view of eternity. The earthly and eternal discussions must be knit together in every evangelization endeavour.

In our own times, the joy of sharing this Good News received a renewed fillip from the Second Vatican Council through the Decree *Ad Gentes*. Ten years after its promulgation, Pope Paul VI issued the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*<sup>1</sup> and expounded in greater detail the meaning and importance of proclaiming the Gospel of Wholeness in a way intelligible to the technological world. After reading this precious “meditation” on Evangelization, one cannot but admire the perennial value of his initiative. This little volume intends to commemorate the legacy of *Evangelii Nuntiandi* on its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary to highlight the holistic nature of evangelization. Proclaiming the Gospel of Christ does not aim at the mere numerical augment of the members of the Church. It aims at enlightening every nook and corner of the multifaceted human existence. It should enliven both the preacher and the hearer of the Gospel. The urgency of proclaiming is felt all the more today in a technological world where human beings are increasingly becoming one-dimensional under the logic of the here and now. There are many aspects of life, both personal and social, that need to be touched and transformed by the Gospel of wholeness.

In a world torn apart by atrocities committed in the name of race, civilization, caste and creed, we need to reaffirm that the Gospel of Christ is a permanent spring of unity. Human life is under threat – not so much from natural calamities or extra-terrestrial intrusions, but from its own isolated focus on self. Traditionally the religious vision of reality strengthened human beings to face unpredictable threats from nature and unknown enemies. Spirituality empowered them to withstand pain and suffering. Devotional practices consoled them by raising their consciousness to the divine realm. In short, religion made humans aware of the transitory nature of existence and the permanence of joy in a life lived according to certain religious doctrines and precepts. Today, religion itself seems to have become the source of suffering. Human life has become the primary target of aggressive religious affirmation. The foundational ground, on which its meaning has been hitherto upheld, has suddenly become illusory.

It is in this context that the Gospel of Jesus Christ must be proclaimed with renewed vigour. The purpose of Evangelization is not merely to make the doctrines and beliefs of the Christian faith known to the increasingly secularised world.

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<sup>1</sup>Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*. Apostolic Exhortation (8 December 1975) in *AAS* 68 (1976) 5-76. Henceforth cited as *EN* with the article number.

As Benedict XVI has clearly pointed out, there is something more fundamental and precious than what meets the eye: “Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction.”<sup>2</sup> The Gospel of Jesus Christ is life-affirming in its historical as well as eternal aspect. It touches and transforms every aspect of human existence both for what regards individuals and members of a community.

This fundamental message is developed here in five chapters. Chapter 1 offers a concise but significant excursus on the development, significance and importance of the term ‘Evangelization’. It analyses the evolution of the meaning of this concept from the biblical times until *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, along with the nuanced implication of each phase of its historical development. Chapter 2 provides a synthesis of the meaning of Evangelization as enunciated by Pope Paul VI in *Evangelii Nuntiandi*. It enables the contemporary generation to have a glimpse into the Church’s vision of Evangelization in the years immediately after the Second Vatican Council and its legacy for the generations to come. Chapter 3 outlines various theological perspectives on the complex concept of Evangelization. It argues that its meaning and connotation historically evolves, even while its central truths remain unchanged. Chapter 4 explores the much-discussed relation between Evangelization and liberation. It demonstrates how even liberation from socio-economic and political obstacles forms an integral part of proclaiming the Gospel. Finally, Chapter 5 offers the pastoral challenges that ensue from Evangelization for two realities that have gained prominence in the current year, namely, the Family and the Consecrated Life.

At the heart of all discussion, the necessity to proclaim the Gospel remains unchallenged, even though its method, extension and strategies are influenced by the signs of the times. The dawn of the technological era in particular has radically changed the way people perceive religion. Each religion feeds its adherents with abundance of information in attractive ways. Thanks to Internet-based communication technologies, there is no dearth of explanation for any religious doctrine or tradition. In other words, there is a general impression that technology has the answer to everything. Often technology has come to occupy the place traditionally held by religion. In extreme cases, technology projects religion as the cause of enmity, conflict and death.

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<sup>2</sup>Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*. Encyclical Letter on Christian Love (25 December 2005) in *AAS* 98 (2006) 217-252, no. 1.

This commemorative volume is particularly meaningful because of the Bicentenary of the birth of St. John Bosco (1815-2015). This “Father and Teacher of Youth”, as John Paul II had called him, was indeed an Apostle of the Young. He was sent by the Father to bring the Gospel of wholeness to the poor and abandoned youth. Through his personal contact and writings, he evangelised them in a way that touched their hearts and transformed their lives. After many years of direct experience, he even formulated a method of education suitable to young people, which he called “Preventive System”<sup>3</sup> – one that is based on Reason, Religion and Loving-Kindness. For him, education and evangelization were two sides of the same coin. Rather, he evangelised them through education, and educated them through evangelization. The Bicentenary Celebration is not merely a “family” event of the Salesian Congregation or the Salesian Family. The whole Church celebrates his birth and wants to keep alive the education-evangelization legacy Don Bosco has left behind, as the Letter of Pope Francis to the Salesian Family attests:

The memory of St. John Bosco is alive in the Church. [...] He is remembered in the Church as a holy educator and pastor of the young who opened the way of holiness for young people, offered a method of education that is at the same time a spirituality, and received from the Holy Spirit a charism for modern times. [...] Don Bosco teaches us first of all to not stand idly by, but to put ourselves in the vanguard by *offering young people an integral educational experience* which, firmly based on the religious dimension, affects the mind, the emotions and the whole person, always considered as someone created and loved by God. [...] By working for the moral, civil and cultural education of youth, Don Bosco worked for the good of people and civil society, following his particular view of man that combines happiness, study and prayer, or to put it another way, work, religion and virtue. [...] In short, Don Bosco lived with a great passion for the salvation of the young, appearing as a credible witness of Jesus Christ and an outstanding herald of his Gospel, in profound communion with the Church, and in particular, with the Pope. [...] The Salesian is an educator who, in the midst of his many relationships and commitments, *always lets the first proclamation resound*, the good news that directly or indirectly can never

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<sup>3</sup>John Bosco, *The Preventive System in the Education of the Young*, in *Constitutions and Regulations of the Society of the St. Francis de Sales* (Bengaluru: Kristu Jyoti Publications 2009<sup>3</sup>), 248-255; See also the Bicentenary commemorative volume that contains brief reflections on 200 sayings of St John Bosco on Preventive System, Education of the Young and the Educator, in Sahayadas Fernando and Jesu Pudumai Doss (eds.), *With Gentleness and Love: Don Bosco and Education of the Young* (Chennai: Don Bosco Publications, 2015).

be absent: "Jesus Christ loves you; he gave his life to save you, and now he is living at your side every day to enlighten, strengthen and free you".<sup>4</sup>

By revisiting the chief ideas contained in *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, we hope to strengthen in a special way the silenced voices that loudly bear witness to the Gospel of wholeness in various parts of the world.

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<sup>4</sup>See Letter of Pope Francis to Reverend Fr. Ángel Fernández Artime, Rector Major of the Salesians of Don Bosco, entitled "Like Don Bosco, with the Young and for the Young," written on 24 June 2015, on the Bicentenary of the Birth of St. John Bosco, available at <http://www.sdb.org/en/don-bosco-en/1053-db-and-pope-francesco/1597-the-holy-father-pope-francis-to-rector-major-fr-angel-fernandez-artime-24-june-2016> (accessed on 20 August 2015).

## CHAPTER 1

### EVANGELIZATION: A CONCISE EXCURSUS FROM SCRIPTURE TILL *EVANGELII NUNTIANDI*

Clarity regarding the biblical and theological foundations, as also the dimensions and nuances of the term 'Evangelization' is fundamental for the Church to articulate her own existence and understand her commitment to be at the service of the Reign of God in and for the world today. With this intent, we shall venture on a brief Scriptural excursus to understand the development, significance and the importance of this concept for today's context.

#### 1. Biblical Terminology

"The mystery of divine life that the Church brings to all peoples and in which it wants them to participate must be proclaimed".<sup>1</sup> In contemporary language, proclaiming or announcing signifies communicating the news of something that has happened or that will take place. These verbs are used when the news has a certain relevance or importance for the recipient so that it promotes joy or sadness or evoke some longings or fears, etc. The Bible too contains several such expressions and we shall examine their significance in this section.

#### *Significance of Higgîd and Bissar in the Hebrew Bible*

The word *Higgîd* frequently used in the Hebrew Bible has one of the following connotations: 'to place before', 'to show', 'to notify', 'to make known', 'to refer', etc., drawing the reader to move on to its more formal significance such as to teach, to manifest, to reveal, to announce, to proclaim, to tell, to foretell, to declare, to celebrate, to exalt, etc. Because of the diversity of the contexts and events in the History of Salvation, this term *higgîd* underwent a certain semantic evolution. We shall briefly highlight some of these semantic transitions.

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<sup>1</sup>Conference of Catholic Bishops of India, *Fostering the Faith of a Pilgrim People* - National Catechetical Directory (Bangalore: CCBI Centre, 2015) 84.

The primary meaning of the term, amply documented in the Book of Genesis and in the Historical Books, is that of 'indicating, referring, informing or transmitting news' (cf. *Gen* 14:13; 24:28; 26:32; 41:24; *Judg* 9:42; 14:9; 16:15; *1Sam* 8:9; 9:6; 19:7; etc.). Within this generic use, one also comes across a meaning of a *juridical* nature when one "does not speak up" (*Lev* 5:1) or of *declaration* of contagious disease (cf. *Lev* 14:35; *Prov* 29:24) and that of *injunction* as regards one's legal duties in a particular situation (*1Sam* 8:9; *Deut* 17:4; 17:9; 10:11).

The task of informing or transmitting on the part of another acquires a new significance when it is exercised in relationship to Yahweh's messages to His people. Thus in *Exodus* 4:28 we read: "Moses told Aaron all the words of the Lord with which he had sent him and all the signs with which he had charged him". Such an activity of referring or transmitting is carried out especially with regard to the Covenant and implies also the task of referring to the Lord the words of the people. In these contexts, the term *higgîd* takes on a significance similar to that of a *prophet*. Thus *higgîd* appears to designate the action of a prophet who communicates something in the name of God (cf. *1Sam* 3:13, 15; *2Sam* 7:11; *1Kings* 14:3; *2Kings* 4:27; *Isa* 21:10; *Jer* 4:5; 5:20; 9:11, etc.). Such actions of informing or transmitting can be understood also in the above-stated juridical nature of 'denunciation' of a context contrary to the will of Yahweh or His righteousness (cf. *Jer* 5:20-21; *Isa* 58:1). Furthermore, *higgîd* can also indicate the conduct or the behaviour that God expects of His people (cf. *Mic* 6:8; *Jer* 9:11).

On some important occasions, God Himself, without the mediation of prophets, transmits or informs or declares. For example "He declared to you his covenant" (*Deut* 4:13) or again "Moreover the Lord declares to you that the Lord will make you a house" (*2Sam* 7: 11); "I am the Lord, that is my name; my glory I give to no other, nor my praise to idols. See the former things have come to pass, and new things I now declare; before they spring forth, I tell you of them" (*Isa* 42:8-9). Such self-declarations of Yahweh demand of His people full trust in Him, especially with regard to future events. "I am God, and there is no one like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, 'My purpose shall stand and I will fulfil my intention'" (*Isa* 41:9-10). Rightly, *Sirach* 43:18-19 affirms: "For the Most High knows all that may be known; he sees from of old the things that are to come. He discloses what has been and what is to be and he reveals the traces of hidden things".

Various events in the history of the chosen people facilitated the acknowledgement of some extraordinary actions of compassion and grace on the part of Yahweh; the contemplation of these amazing signs of providence



manifested themselves in various acclamations that came to be expressed publicly especially during their cultic moments in the forms of praise and thanksgiving. Thus the verb *higgîd* came to be associated also with the sphere of proclamation of the marvellous events and signs made in front of the people of Israel either in the temple or to other nations that surrounded them. Such proclamations included also the awe-inspiring event of the Exodus (cf. *Ex* 13:8; *Deut* 26:3). Such proclamation of the divine marvels can be explicitly seen in the Psalms. "It is good to give thanks to the Lord, to sing praises to your name, O Most High; to declare your steadfast love in the morning, and your faithfulness by night" (*Ps* 92:1-2). Phrases such as 'to give thanks' or 'to sing praises' that are used often in the Psalms, show clearly the cultic use of the verb to proclaim or to announce.

Thus it becomes evident that this single verb *higgîd* has an extraordinary diversity of applications, starting from a simple transmission of news to the cosmic proclamation of the greatness of Yahweh. Such a diversity of usage, on one hand, complicates the process of translation, while on the other hand, it enables one to understand the unity of biblical revelation and its insertion in the daily experience of its people.<sup>2</sup>

The root of the verb *higgîd* is also associated with the verb *bissar* which signifies 'to announce the good news' and often the attribute *thoba* is added only to strengthen the already designated meaning. It further acquires a religious significance wherein it makes reference to the isolated acts of Yahweh (cf. 1 *Sam* 31:9; *Ps* 40:10 and *Ps* 68:11). Its real Messianic meaning becomes more evident in Deutero-Isaiah (cf. *Deut* 32:8ff; *Isa* 24:21; *Jer* 46:25) which refers to the great victory or the kingly rule of Yahweh and to the dawn of the new era having a universal and eschatological character. The announcement of the Good News ranges from inclusion of victories over the enemies (cf. 2*Sam* 18:19) to cultic proclamation of the victorious works performed by Yahweh: "The Lord gives the command; great is the company of those who bore the good tidings" (*Ps* 68:11) or to the proclamation of the salvation in future that God will carry out in favour of Sion (cf. *Isa* 40:9; 52:7; 60:6; 61:1).<sup>3</sup> The substantive *besôrâh* of the verb *bissar* signifies 'good announcement' or 'happy news'.

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<sup>2</sup>Cf. Carlo Martini, "Il vocabolario dell'annuncio nell'antico e nel nuovo testamento", in Mariasusai Dhavamony (ed.), *Evangelisation* (Roma: Università Gregoriana, 1975) 1-6.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Mathew Vellanickal, "Biblical Theology of Evangelization", in Mariasusai Dhavamony (ed.), *Evangelization and Dialogue, and Development: Selected Papers of the International Theological Conference, Nagpur* (Roma: Università Gregoriana, 1972) 41; also Martini, "Il vocabolario".

## *Septuagint Translation of Higgîd*

The verb *higgîd* is generally translated in the Greek Septuagint version either as *anangellô* or *apangellô*. *Anangellô* indicates the action of an individual who brings with oneself news to be transmitted on return from another place;<sup>4</sup> *apangellô*, instead, indicates the transmission of news on the part of someone or from some place or proclamation of something in the present or of the future.<sup>5</sup> In the secular world of the Greeks, these two verbs are often considered as synonymous. Instead within the religious contexts, the translators seem to prefer *anangellô* as seen in the Psalms and in the book of Isaiah. There are, moreover, a few cases wherein *higgîd* is also translated as ‘sing praises’ (cf. *Ps* 75:8) or ‘to reveal’ or ‘to tell’ (cf. *Gen* 41:25; *Josh* 2:20; *Ruth* 3:16). Further the other verbs comparable to *higgîd* are ‘*amar*, *dibber* (to say), *sipper* (to number, to enumerate, to narrate, to tell) and *hōdîa* (to give news).

There are still other terms which have their root in *higgîd*<sup>6</sup> such as:

- ἀγγελία (*angelia*) i.e., ‘message’ or ‘good news’ which is a terminology of daily life;<sup>7</sup> the linguistic history confirms and extends the already prevalent meaning of “announcement or proclamation no less than command or order. The word can signify the act of declaring (and specifically rhetorical art) no less than what is declared, though the latter is more frequent”.<sup>8</sup>
- διαγγέλλω (*diangello*) i.e. ‘proclaim far and wide’ or ‘give notice of’;<sup>9</sup> This “word is used ... for an important military announcement ... and a solemn “proclamation” of the emperor”;<sup>10</sup>
- ἐξαγγέλλω (*exangello*) i.e., to ‘proclaim, report’ when one intends to message or good news has the characteristics of being extensive, exhaustive

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<sup>4</sup>Cf. William Arndt and Wilbur Gingrich (eds.), *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, A translation and adaptation of Walter Bauer, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957) 50. Henceforth *Greek-English Lexicon*.

<sup>5</sup>Cf. *Greek-English Lexicon*, 78.

<sup>6</sup>Cf. Martini, “Il vocabolario”, 10-11.

<sup>7</sup>Cf. *Greek-English Lexicon*, 7.

<sup>8</sup>Julius Schniewind, “ἀγγελία” in Gerhard Kittel (ed.), *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Translated by Bromiley Geoffrey, (Grand Rapids Michigan: WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1965), vol. 1, 59-60. Henceforth TDNT.

<sup>9</sup>Cf. *Greek-English Lexicon*, 181.

<sup>10</sup>Schniewind, “διαγγέλλω”, in TDNT, vol. 1, 67.

and universal;<sup>11</sup> “We see its secular use in tragedy, the *ἐξαγγέλλω* being a messenger who proclaims abroad ... what is concealed from the gaze of the spectators. The particular meaning of imparting something unknown or declaring something concealed”.<sup>12</sup>

- *καταγγέλλω* (*katangellō*): «In the secular field the word can be used of official reports or the process of cognition. It can signify ‘maintaining’ or “pronouncing” something about oneself».<sup>13</sup> Used religiously in the Septuagint, it refers to public solemn proclamation of the works of God following the extraordinary manifestations of Yahweh and is found only on 3 occasions;<sup>14</sup>
- *εὐαγγελίου* (*euangelion*), *εὐαγγέλια* (*euangelia*) and *εὐαγγελιζέσθαι* (*euangelizesthai*) are inter-related expressions signifying ‘bring or announcing the good news’<sup>15</sup> and are also related to the Hebrew terminologies of *bissar* and *besorah*.

In brief, one can observe that the Greek root *αγγελ* (*angel*) can be traced back to the Hebrew term *higgîd* and also contains similar meanings.

### ***The Greek Root αγγελ (angel) in the New Testament***

A systematic analysis of the New Testament highlights the fact that the frequency of the verbs *anangellō* and *apangellō*, used extensively in the Old Testament, are reduced substantially and the other verb *katangellō*, found sparsely in the Old Testament, acquires greater occurrence.

In the Synoptic Gospels, the verb *anangellō* does not find a place. Instead, the verb *apangellō* appears under various forms of translation and in diverse use. Matthew, Mark and Luke use the verb in the meaning of ‘to refer to, to transmit a news’. Matthew and Mark utilize this verb in those parts that are more specific to their Gospels. Mark uses the verb also to indicate the public announcement of a benefit received (*Mk* 5:19). Mark further uses the term as synonymous to

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<sup>11</sup>Cf. *Greek-English Lexicon*, 270.

<sup>12</sup>Schniewind, “ἐξαγγέλλω”, in *TDNT*, vol. 1, 69.

<sup>13</sup>Schniewind, “ἐξαγγέλλω”, in *TDNT*, vol.1, 70.

<sup>14</sup>Cf. *Greek-English Lexicon*, 410; also see Martini, *Il vocabolario*, 11.

<sup>15</sup>Cf. *Greek-English Lexicon*, 318.

κηρύσσω (khèrýssò) as in chapter 5 verse 20<sup>16</sup> and to herald the works done with divine help (cf. *Mk* 6:30). This verb in the Resurrection narratives acquires a greater significance. Therefore one can assume that the application of this verb *apangellō* in the New Testament is in continuity with the Old Testament.

Many of the occurrences of *apangellō* in the Acts of the Apostles refer to simple information or transmission of news. As we see in *Acts* 12: 17, Luke uses the term *diēgēsato* to narrate “how the Lord had brought him out of the prison” and utilizes *apangellein* to refer to the action of telling “this to James and to the believers”. The only passage where *apangellō* is attributed to God can be found in *Acts* 17:30. Therefore one can assume that Lucan use of the term *apangellō* does not indicate the proclamation of the Divine works but rather the announcement of the action of the intermediaries like that of Paul who obeys the divine voice (*Acts* 26:14-19).

Lucan Gospel narratives seem to avoid *anangellō* but use the term at least five times in the Acts of the Apostles (*Acts* 14:27; 15:4; 20:20 and 27; 19:18). Thus Luke seems to have understood the special relevance of this term and uses it, above all, in religious contexts only, which manifests the marvels that God had done. From an analysis of Lucan writings, it seems evident that he makes a distinction between the two verbs. While *apangellō* has the function of referring and transmitting, *anangellō* is used specifically in the sacred sphere to announce the action of God.

In the writings of John, one comes across the verb *anangellō* five times with meanings that highlight the announcement made through the mouth of God or prophets or to reveal the future, etc. and *apangellō* once. Besides these two verbs, John also uses the term *angelia* (ἀγγελία) to indicate that the received message has been transmitted or solemn announcement has been made to reveal the mystery and *angellō* (ἀγγελλω) in 20:18 with similar meaning as *apangellō*.

### ***Going Beyond the Greek Root ἀγγελ (angel) in the New Testament***

The New Testament, although containing the terminology utilized in the Old Testament, goes not only beyond the Old Testament meanings, but also elaborates new vocabulary in the proclamation of the Christian revelation and message. While continuity between the Old and New Testaments with regard to “proclamation or announcement” can be observed, the New Testament, taking on

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<sup>16</sup>It signifies “announce, make known by a herald ... of proclamation that is religious in nature ... of the proclamation or preaching of the older prophets ... of the proclamation of contemporary preachers”. See, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 432.

the characteristics of revelation and transcendence also distances itself from the Old Testament and evolves new terminologies that are apt for the Good News revealed.<sup>17</sup>

In the New Testament, among the composite verbs with the root *angel* (αγγελ), one also finds at least 12 times the substantive *eu/angel/iou* (εὐ/αγγέλ/ιου) in the writings of Matthew and Mark. In Matthew, these two instances (Mt 4:23; 9:35) synthesize the object of Jesus' preaching and the other two occasions refer to the sayings of Jesus regarding the future. Instead, Mark's writings begin (Mk 1:1) with this term and Mk 1:14 is similar to Mt 4:23. On the other six occasions (Mk 1:35; 8:35; 13:10; 13:10; 14:9; and 16:15) the word is placed on the mouth of Jesus. In the Gospels of Luke and John we do not come across this substantive, while in the rest of the New Testament Paul uses it at least 60 times, and we find 2 occurrences in the Acts of the Apostles (15:7 and 20:24).

On the other hand, the term *euangelizomai* (εὐαγγελίζομαι) can be seen once in Matthew (11:5) and ten times in Luke (three times [4:18 and 43; 7:22] in the words of Jesus; twice [1:19 and 2:10] in the angelic annunciations; four times [3:18; 8:1; 9:6 and 20:1] in the descriptions of the Jesus' or John the Baptist's activity). In the rest of the New Testament, this verb is rather frequent (15 times in the Acts, 22 times in the writings of Paul, 3 times in the writing of Peter and once in the book of Revelation). It is interesting to note that this form is not found in Johannine writings. "The omission of εὐαγγελίζομαι is probably in keeping with the whole character of John's Gospel. The dramatic, dynamic proclamation of the time of salvation as this takes place by εὐαγγελίζεσθαι does not fit the realised eschatology of the Gospel. In εὐαγγελίζομαι the Messianic Secret is kept. John's Gospel reflects the calm fulfilment".<sup>18</sup> In addition, the substantive form 'evangelization' is not found in the New Testament writings.

The term *kērýssein* (κηρύσσειν) does not appear to be a strict equivalent to 'preaching'. In the New Testament, this term "does not mean the delivery of a learned and edifying or hortatory discourse in well-chosen words and a pleasant voice. It is the declaration of an event. Its true sense is 'to proclaim'".<sup>19</sup> The proclamation of the Jesus event "is more than historical instruction concerning the words and acts of Jesus. Stories about Jesus, however edifying, are of themselves empty (1Cor 15:14). If they are not understood in the light of faith in the risen Lord, they are simply stories of things that happened in the past and more or less

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<sup>17</sup>Cf. Martini, "Il vocabolario", 1-19.

<sup>18</sup>Gerhard Friedrich, "εὐαγγελίζομαι in the NT", in TDNT, vol. 2, 717.

<sup>19</sup>Gerhard Friedrich, "κηρύσσειν in the New Testament", in TDNT, vol. 3, 703.

valueless for the present. The reality of the resurrection constitutes the fullness of the early Christian *kerygma*. This is a fact which cannot be apprehended like other historical events. It has to be continually proclaimed afresh. It is not a human dogma which we are to teach to others. It is salvation history which must be preached, and the preaching of salvation history is itself an event of salvation. What is at work in this word is not just content of what is proclaimed; it is God Himself”.<sup>20</sup>

***A Kèryssein (κηρύσσειν) that includes Martyria (μαρτυρία)***

It is essential to remember that the non-biblical Greek understanding of the concept *martyz* (μάρτυ) i.e., in the sense of witness to ascertainable facts and also in that of witness to truths which foresees both making known and confessing of convictions) was also found in the New Testament although Old Testament never linked proclamation to witness.<sup>21</sup> But the “development of the distinctive use is the result of their application to the Content of Gospel proclamation and to the circumstances in which this took place”.<sup>22</sup> The distribution of the combination of this term in the various books of the New Testament is worth noting:

- The term *mártyz* (μάρτυς) appears 4 (5) in the Synoptics, 0 in John, 13 times in the Acts, 9 times in Paul, 2 in Letter to the Hebrews, 1 in the letter of Peter and 5 times in the Book of Revelation.
- The word *martyein* (μαρτυεῖν) appears 2 (3) in the Synoptics, 33 in John, 11 times in the Acts, 8 times each in Paul and the Letter to the Hebrews, 10 times in the Letters of John and 4 times in the Book of Revelation.
- The expression *martyria* (μαρτυρία) is found 4 times in the Synoptics, 14 times in John, 1 in the Acts, 2 in Paul, 7 times in the Letters of John and 9 times in the Book of Revelation.
- The phase *martyrion* (μαρτυριον) is seen 9 times in the Synoptics, 0 times in John, 2 in the Acts, 6 times in Paul, once each in the Letter to the Hebrews, Letter of James and in the Book of Revelation.

“A striking feature is that we find μαρτυρεῖν 47 times in the Johannine writings, μαρτυρία 30 times, and μάρτυς and μαρτυριον not at all in the Gospel. A strong proportion of the instances of μάρτυς and μαρτυριον is in Acts. This

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<sup>20</sup>Friedrich, “κηρύσσειν in the New Testament”, in TDNT, vol. 3, 711.

<sup>21</sup>Luke K., *The Biblical Idea of Marturia (Witness)*, in Mariasusai Dhavamony (ed.), *Evangelization, Dialogue and Development*, 60.

<sup>22</sup>Hermann Strathmann, “μάρτυς in the New Testament”, in TDNT, vol. 4, 489.

statistical finding seems to be external, but it is not, since it is connected with the development of the distinctively Christian use of the terms”.<sup>23</sup>

Μάρτυρ or witness “is someone who says: ‘I know this is true’... witnesses must give an account of their own personal experiences... the real witness is not of words but of deeds ... A witness had to be ready to become a martyr. To be a witness means to be loyal whatever the cost”.<sup>24</sup>

At issue, therefore, are not doctrines, myths or speculation but facts “that which took place in the clear light of history at a specific time and place, facts which can be established and on which one can rely. Hence one must speak of witnesses. Nor are these witnesses in general. *They are those who are qualified to be witnesses because they themselves lived through the events*”.<sup>25</sup> Thus Jesus Himself, in two of the five references found in the Book of Revelations, is designated as μάρτυρ (Rev 1:5 and 3:14) since Jesus, the incarnate Logos is “the light” which is the light of life for those who believe in Him and He has come from heaven and when He speaks of God He bears witness to what he has seen and heard and He is the truth.

The term *martyria* (μαρτυρία) in Johannine writings is dominated by specific sense of the evangelistic witness to Christ’s nature and significance which aims at faith. John, in many of his passages, reserves this term only for those who prove the final seriousness of their witness by suffering death. “These are faithful witnesses, and only faithful witnesses are witness in the full sense, true witnesses”.<sup>26</sup>

### ***Corollaries from the Above Discussion***

One can assume that in the New Testament, the concept of the ‘reward for good news’ seems to be totally absent while the terms ‘good news’ and ‘to proclaim the good news’ are reserved exclusively to the religious realms with their meanings having a reciprocal significance on each other. Further, the nuances of the above terminology briefly examined<sup>27</sup> overlap and support each other and enlarge the

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<sup>23</sup>Stratmann, “μάρτυρ”, 489.

<sup>24</sup>William Barclay, *The Acts of the Apostles - The Daily Study Bible Series* (Edinburg Scotland: The Saint Andrew Press, 1976), vol. 7, 13.

<sup>25</sup>Stratmann, “μάρτυρ”, 492. Emphasis added.

<sup>26</sup>Stratmann, “μάρτυρ”, 495.

<sup>27</sup>For more detailed study of these terms see Friedrich, in TDNT, vol. 2, 707-737; Stratmann, in TDNT, vol. 4, 474-514; René Latourelle, “Evangelisation et Témoignage”, in Mariasusai Dhavamony (ed.), *Evangelisation*, 77-109; Luke K., *The Biblical Idea of Marturia (Witness)*, 55-64.

significance of these terms in such a way that any univocal, reductive, lob-sided and exclusive attribution of meaning risks the danger of undermining the richness of these expressions in Church.<sup>28</sup>

The highlight of this reciprocal influence is evident in the following conclusions:

*Proclamation of the Good News is Rooted in Mystery:* Founded on the Trinitarian mystery of God's love for human beings, the Christian community's mission is nothing else and nothing less than the continuation of God's salvific plan manifested and realized in Jesus Christ, the very first and the greatest announcer of God's love and mercy.

*The "Good News" is Jesus Christ:* Jesus' disciples and apostles understood His life and His mission and more especially His death, resurrection and ascension (*Acts* 1:1) as the "Good News". Many passages attest to this fact: "And every day in the temple and at home they did not cease to teach and proclaim Jesus as the Messiah" (*Acts* 5:42) or again «We bring you the good news that what God promised to our ancestors He has fulfilled for us, their children, by raising Jesus» (*Acts* 13:32-33). Paul also expresses this thought in many of his writings (for example *1Cor* 9:12 and *2Cor* 2:12).<sup>29</sup>

*The "Good News" is what Jesus Christ preached:* Jesus presents Himself in *Lk* 4: 18-19 as the realization of the mission of consolation and liberation predicted earlier. Therefore the preaching of Jesus is the fullness of salvation proclaimed. Hence the "Good News" is the joyful proclamation of the definitive intervention on the part of God. Therefore "Good News" indicates and reassumes both the content (*Mk* 1:15) and the person of Christ (*Mk* 8:35; 13:10).

*Euangelion (εὐαγγέλιον) and euangelizesthai (εὐαγγελίζεσθαι) as constitutive aspect of the Salvific Plan:* It is in Jesus Christ and His "Good News" one finds the way to salvation (cf. *Acts* 16:17). It is God who opens the mouth of the one who proclaims the Good News of salvation (cf. *Eph* 6:19).<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>In this chapter, unless specified, the expression "Proclamation of the Good News" includes all the meanings and their nuances discussed above.

<sup>29</sup>Cf. Martini, "Il vocabolario", 18.

<sup>30</sup>Cf. Carlo Ghidelli, "L'evangelizzazione negli scritti del nuovo testamento" in Facoltà Teologica dell'Italia Settentrionale, *Evangelizzazione e promozione umana* (Brescia: La Scuola, 1976) 35-39.



- *The Proclamation of the Good News as a Characteristic Element of Eschatological Times:* The person of Jesus in His uniqueness and individuality is also presented in the New Testament as the Word and as the Prophet and who proclaims the Reign of God that is to be fulfilled in the course of history until the end of times.<sup>31</sup>
- *The Proclamation of the Good News as the constitutive element of the Apostolic community:* The whole of the New Testament is the fruit of the reflection of the early Christian community on the fundamental event of Jesus and His proclamation of the Good News.<sup>32</sup>
- *The Proclamation of the Good News as the object-mission-service of the Apostolic community:* The Apostolic community owed its existence primarily to Jesus Christ and its primary goal was that of proclaiming Jesus Christ and being at the service of this Good News.<sup>33</sup>
- *The Proclamation of the Good News demands witness to Jesus Christ' life and resurrection and necessitates following his teachings:* Witnessing brings forth the life of communion between the Father and the Son who sent the Spirit as their witness and unites all disciples of Jesus in communion and love and in this way the Christian community becomes a sacrament of unity by which the whole universe will one day obtain its unity under Christ's Lordship.
- *The Proclamation of the Good News is for all:* Jesus' activity was never restricted to Jewish boundaries. His works and message became a witness among the gentiles and thus salvation came within the direct reach of all peoples.<sup>34</sup>

## 2. Proclamation of the Good News through the Catechumenate

During the public ministry of Jesus, the followers of Jesus were seen as an "alternative society".<sup>35</sup> After the Death, Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus and with the receiving of the Holy Spirit, the perception of the community of disciples

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<sup>31</sup>Cf. Ghidelli, "L'evangelizzazione", 40-48.

<sup>32</sup>Cf. Ghidelli, "L'evangelizzazione", 48-55.

<sup>33</sup>Cf. Ghidelli, "L'evangelizzazione", 55-59.

<sup>34</sup>Cf. Vellanickal, *Biblical Theology*, 42-42.

<sup>35</sup>Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church* (New York: Image Books/Doubleday, Expanded edition, 2002) 199.

underwent a further shift and was looked upon as a “contrast society”.<sup>36</sup> During this period, the followers of Jesus, while being fully aware of the command to announce and proclaim the Good News of salvation and the Kingdom of God, were also conscious of their responsibility to “follow up the initial reception of the *kerygma* with a structured, supervised, extended formation period and initiation into the fullness of the mysteries of Christ. The Catechumenate was one of the first institutions the Church structured”.<sup>37</sup>

The Catechumenal journey distinguished four periods with three major liturgical rites which marked the passage of catechumens from one period to another.

The nature of the first period can be described as the time of First Proclamation and Pre-catechumenate, wherein the sympathisers or inquirers were brought to initial conversion by enabling them to reflect on their deepest aspirations, by endeavouring to discover Christ as the Way, the Truth and the Life and by experiencing a relationship with God in Jesus Christ and with the Church. As such, this period can be called as the period of “Awakening the Faith”.<sup>38</sup>

The nature of the second period can be specified as the period of “Education of Faith”.<sup>39</sup> During the second period, all catechumens were given catechetical instructions, were exposed to Christian life, participated in liturgical rites and were introduced to the apostolic life of the community of disciples. This period of the Catechumenate was guided by the four principles of Christian education characteristic of the period. “Christian education must become more experiential and less instructional... Christian education involves the entire Christian community... Personal and communal prayer experiences play a vital role in Christian education... Implementation of the Rites of Transition in the course of the Catechumenate period is indispensable”.<sup>40</sup> This period concludes with the Rite of Election or inscription of names which enabled the catechumens to be called “the Elect” and be admitted to the Sacraments of Initiation.

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<sup>36</sup>Dulles, *Models of the Church*, 203.

<sup>37</sup>Michel Dujarier, *A History of the Catechumenate – The First Six Centuries*, translated from French by Haasl E., (New York: Sadlier, 1979) 5.

<sup>38</sup>Michel Dujarier, *The Rites of Christian Initiation – Historical and Pastoral Reflections*, translated by Hart K., (New York: Sadlier, 1979) 25.

<sup>39</sup>Dujarier, *The Rites of Christian Initiation*, 26.

<sup>40</sup>Dujarier, *The Rites of Christian Initiation*, 27-28.

The nature of the third period can be characterized as “Consecration of Faith”.<sup>41</sup> It was a time of purification and enlightenment or the time of Baptismal Retreat of the Elect. This period consisted of three Scrutinies. The term ‘Scrutiny’ often tends to be misunderstood. The Scrutinies had a two-fold purpose: revealing anything weak, defective, or sinful in the hearts of the elect, so that it may be healed; and revealing what is upright, strong, and holy, so that it may be strengthened in Christ, who is the way, the truth, and the life for the chosen ones. The purpose of the Scrutinies was mainly spiritual. They were intended to purify the minds and hearts of the catechumens, to strengthen them against temptation, to purify their intentions, and to make firm their decision, so that they remained more closely united with Christ and made progress in their efforts to love God more deeply. To underscore the importance of these goals, the Scrutinies were celebrated during the Lenten period, which was also the period of purification for the entire Christian Community. The three Scrutinies were also celebrated successively so that the candidates may “progress in the understanding of sin and in the desire for salvation”. This period concluded with the reception of the Sacraments of Initiation during the Easter Vigil.

The fourth period was a time of post-Baptismal Catechesis, or *mystagogia* and can be called the “Deepening of Faith”.<sup>42</sup> This period extended throughout the whole of the Easter season, wherein the neophytes were invited to deepen their life in Christ, their sacramental experience and the experience of the Church. During this period, the neophytes were led to a profound sense of mystery of salvation, into which they have been initiated, and in which they are called to continue till the end of their life. The community and the neophytes move forward together, meditating on the Gospel, sharing in the Eucharist, and performing works of charity. In this way they understand the Paschal Mystery more fully and bring it into their lives more and more. Hence, the realization of a more profound experience of the Paschal Mystery, both at the intellectual and lived levels, becomes the fundamental and lifelong goal of the neophytes.

In each of the four periods, instruction on symbols, Scripture, prayers, doctrinal and moral issues, community and their relationship to daily living were interwoven.

The community of disciples, accepting the Good News, became its own best missionary. It grew naturally from within. It attracted people by its very essence. Every Christian proclaimed the Good News by recounting the story of his/her

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<sup>41</sup>Dujarier, *The Rites of Christian Initiation*, 22.

<sup>42</sup>Dujarier, *The Rites of Christian Initiation*, 22.

conversion. “It is remarkable fact that after the days of the apostles no names of great missionaries are mentioned till the opening of the Middle Ages ... There were no missionary societies, no missionary institutions, no organized efforts in the ante-Nicene age; and yet in less than 300 years from the death of St. John the whole population of the Roman empire which then represented the civilized world was nominally Christianized”.<sup>43</sup>

### **3. Constantine’s ‘Proclamation’ leading to Institutionalization of the Church**

Proclamation of the Good News and history of the world go together. One cannot separate Church history from the day-to-day life and situations of its faithful believers. Often certain pivotal events or individuals change the course of history. The Christian community, externally facing a violent persecution from Roman government and internally caught up with the Arian heresy which denied Christ’s divinity, found in Emperor Constantine’s reign (306-337 CE) a patron for its faith in Jesus Christ. Constantine’s legacy consisted in Christianity’s transformation from being a “private”, an “alternative” or a “contrast” society into a “public” Church that encompassed the whole of society. He also laid the foundation for what can be termed as the “doctrine of *symphonia*”<sup>44</sup> which affirms the ideal of political and religious leaders working in harmony to realize God’s will here on earth.

With the gaining of social and legal acceptance, the practice of the Catechumenate within the Church slowly lost its pre-eminence and was relegated to monasteries, convents and seminaries, since the Church in an almost fully Christianized environment was able to count on society and its institutions to proclaim, to convey and to pass on the Good News to its people. Instruction in ritual and custom virtually replaced the Catechumenal journey. It was no longer necessary to proclaim the Good News since they were legally Christians often either because their family elders received Baptism or their leaders embraced Christianity.

During the fourth and fifth centuries, despite the “Constantinian Shift”,<sup>45</sup> the Church witnessed great evangelistic efforts and missionary work, for example,

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<sup>43</sup>Philip Schaff, “A Brief Account of Evangelism in the Early Church (100-300 A.D)”, in [www.bsmi.org/download/stories/ WitnessingPhilipSchaff.pdf](http://www.bsmi.org/download/stories/WitnessingPhilipSchaff.pdf) (accessed on 29 April 2015).

<sup>44</sup>Stanley Harakas, *Living the Faith: The Praxis of Eastern Orthodox Ethics* (Minneapolis: Light and Life Publishing Company, 1993) 260.

<sup>45</sup>Rodney Clapp, *A Peculiar People* (Westmont Illinois: Inter Varsity Press, 1996) 25.

the birth of the Ethiopian Church and Christianity in Nubia as the result of Coptic missionary work. During this period, there were also some of the great Fathers of the Church (like St. Cyril of Jerusalem, St. Ambrose of Milan, and St. Augustine in North Africa) who did a great evangelistic work and left behind a wealth of catechumenal teachings. Also, this period witnessed the great efforts of the Church in defending its faith against the heresies. Christianity will not forget the life-long struggle of St. Athanasius, St. Cyril of Alexandria and others against heresies.

However, this period also witnessed the entry of the powers of the world into the Church. Politics found its way into the Church. In many instances, the Church matters were politicized between the emperors, queens, and some bishops. Sad to say, some Church leaders worked for personal aggrandisement, glory, and personal leadership in the Church, rather than seek the glory of God and the proclamation of the Good News.

“Founded in the Near East, Christianity for its first thousand years was stronger in Asia and North Africa than in Europe, and only after about 1400 did Europe (and Europeanized North America) decisively become the Christian heartland”.<sup>46</sup>

#### **4. A Narrowing of the Significance of the Phrase ‘Proclamation of the Good News’**

If the proclamation of the Good News during the first millennium flowed from both the Church’s missionary impulse and a sense of the Universal Church as a communion of Local Churches, the Church’s ecclesiological self-understanding shifted dramatically at the beginning of the second millennium.

The proclamation of the Good News within the local Christian communities gradually atrophied and more hierarchical and structured forms were being established within the Universal Church. A fundamentally pyramidal paradigm of the Universal Church left little room for a genuine diversity in ways of proclaiming the Good News within the Local Churches. Furthermore, there was the tendency to distinguish between those who could ‘teach’ and those who had to ‘obey’. The theological and sacramental underpinnings of the Church were replaced to a large extent by Canon Law, and the Church’s relationship to the

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<sup>46</sup>Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002) 15. See also Richard Gaillardetz, *Ecclesiology for a Global Church – A People Called and Sent* (New York: Orbis Books, 2008) 39-42.

world at large was determined predominantly by insistence of the necessity of emergence of Christendom, the complex symbiotic relationship between Church and empire that was sustained by a relatively common medieval culture.<sup>47</sup>

In the so-called 'Age of Discovery' (16-19 centuries),<sup>48</sup> the Church, under the impact of European colonialism through military conquest, spoke more in terms of 'missions' rather than 'proclamation of the Good News'. Missions signified "Church-extension-territories carried out by countries of Christendom in the non-Christian world where Christianity had not yet been firmly rooted".<sup>49</sup> *Padroado* (or *Patronatus*) was a system established by the Church through which the Pope granted to the royalty of Spain and Portugal the principal responsibility for the establishing of the Church among the peoples they encountered in their conquest. The primary concern of the missionary endeavours was the quantitative expansion of the Church by way of the *plantatio ecclesiae*.

During the remarkable era of the Counter-Reformation, Pope Gregory XV with the publication of *Inscrutabili Divinae Providentiae* constituted the "Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith" (*Propaganda Fide*), renamed in 1982 by Pope John Paul II as: "The Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples".<sup>50</sup> From its very inception, this Congregation had the objective of spreading the light of the Gospel in every part of the world.<sup>51</sup> Further, the task of this Congregation included "promotion and the formation of the clergy and of local hierarchies, encouraging the new *missionary institutes*, and providing material assistance for the *missionary activity* of the Church".<sup>52</sup> The phenomenal growth of the Church in many parts of the world in the 19<sup>th</sup> century can be attributed to this Congregation under whose care and guidance were established also other Pontifical Mission Societies: The Society for the Propagation of the Faith (founded by Pauline Jaricot, France, 1822), The Pontifical Society of the Missionary Childhood or Holy Childhood (founded by De Forbin Janson, France, 1843), The Society of Saint Peter the Apostle (founded by Madame Bigard at

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<sup>47</sup>Cf. Jenkins, *The Next Christendom*, 42-43.

<sup>48</sup>Jenkins, *The Next Christendom*, 43.

<sup>49</sup>John De Romus, "Evangelization in the Contemporary Roman Catholic Thought", *Indian Journal of Theology* 43/1&2 (2001)8.

<sup>50</sup>Cf. John Paul II, *Pastor Bonus*, Apostolic Constitution promulgated on June 1988, in [http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost\\_constitutions/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_apc\\_19880628\\_pastor-bonus.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_constitutions/documents/hf_jp-ii_apc_19880628_pastor-bonus.html) (accessed on 30 April 2015).

<sup>51</sup>Cf. Peter Guilday, "The Sacred Congregation de Propaganda Fide (1622-1922)", *The Catholic Historical Review*, 6 (1921) 4, 478-480.

<sup>52</sup>[http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cevang/documents/rc\\_con\\_cevang\\_20100524\\_profile\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cevang/documents/rc_con_cevang_20100524_profile_en.html) (accessed on 30 April 2015). Emphasis added.

Caen, France 1889), and The Pontifical Missionary Union (founded by Manna P., Italy, 1916).<sup>53</sup>

The crisis which attended the Proclamation of the Good News had its roots also in the Counter Reformation, which came to an understanding whereby “the terms gospel and evangelical were taken over by Protestants and became suspect to Catholic ears. Catholics put the accent not so much on announcement as on teaching, not so much on the message of salvation as on the moral law, the Church and sacraments”.<sup>54</sup> However, in response to the Protestant Reformation, the Council of Trent declared that the Gospel was the source of all saving truth and moral discipline and was to be preached to every person.<sup>55</sup>

In the centuries that followed, the Catholic Church was hesitant to speak about the Gospel and the Scripture since the Protestants had appropriated these expressions. “The Catholic Church was content to be known as the Church of tradition, law, priesthood, and sacraments rather than the Church of the word of God”.<sup>56</sup> The Good News found in the Sacred Scriptures was replaced with the ‘catechism texts’ as a compendium of Christian doctrines and as a privileged instrument of proclamation of the Good News.<sup>57</sup> It is often said that, while the Protestants carried “the Bible”, the Catholics carried the “Catechism book” as the source and sign of one’s faith in the Proclamation of the Good News.

## 5. Some Challengers of the *Plantatio Ecclesiae* Paradigm

The commitment to the Proclamation of the Good News, despite the general ‘*plantatio ecclesiae*’ paradigm then in vogue, was, however, not totally extinguished even during this period. We name a few (Bartolomé de Las Casas, Roberto de Nobili, Matteo Ricci, Alexandre de Rhodes, etc.)<sup>58</sup> to highlight the survival of the spirit of Proclamation of the Good News and the attempts to evidence the need for respect and greater sensitivity to the cultures in the Proclamation of the Good News. The following excerpt from a particular document from the Vatican addressed to two bishops of the dioceses in China

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<sup>53</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup>Avery Dulles, *Evangelization for the Third Millennium* (New York: Paulist Press, 2009) 2.

<sup>55</sup>Cf. Josef Neuner and Jacques Dupuis (eds.), *The Christian Faith in the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church* (Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, 1996) 210.

<sup>56</sup>Dulles, *Evangelization for the Third Millennium*, 2.

<sup>57</sup>Emilio Alberich and Jerome Vallabaraj, *Communicating a Faith That Transforms – A Handbook of Fundamental Catechetics* (Bangalore: Kristu Jyoti Publications, 2004) 57-58.

<sup>58</sup>For more details, see also Gaillardetz, *Ecclesiology for a Global Church*, 42-47.

also demonstrates cultural sensitivity in the mission practices: “Do not attempt in any way, and do not on any pretext persuade these people to change their rites, habits and customs, unless they are openly opposed to religion and good morals. For what could be more absurd than to bring France, Spain, Italy or any other European country to China? It is not your country but the faith you must bring, that faith which does not reject or belittle the rites and customs of any nation as long as these rites are not evil, but rather desires that they be preserved in their integrity and fostered”.<sup>59</sup>

Further, towards the beginning of the Twentieth Century, Pope Benedict XV in his Apostolic Letter *Maximum Illud* (1919) affirms the need for missionary work since there are still a billion people to whom the Proclamation of the Good News had not been done; and in doing so one needs to ensure that there was no confusion between the message of the Gospel and nationalism, or no danger that the Gospel be confused with the religion of a colonial power.<sup>60</sup> Or again Pope Pius XI in the encyclical *Rerum Ecclesiae* (1926) manifests his determination to “to leave nothing undone which might, by means of apostolic preachers, extend farther and farther the light of the Gospel and make easy for heathen nations the way unto salvation”.<sup>61</sup> Pius XII in his encyclical *Evangelii Praecones* in no. 22 continues to reaffirm the object of missionary activity “as all know, is to bring the light of the Gospel to new races and to form new Christians”.<sup>62</sup>

At the level of theological thinking there were two distinguished schools of Missiology. The Muenster School’s approach, identified with the work of J. Schmidlin, was Christocentric and personal, placing its emphasis on the Gospel, conversion and the salvation of souls. The alternate school, associated with the missiologists P. Charles and A. Seumois accentuated the ecclesiocentric

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<sup>59</sup>Josef Neuner and Jacques Dupuis (eds.), *The Christian Faith in the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church* (New York: Alba House, 1982) 309-310.

<sup>60</sup>Cf. Benedict XV, *Maximum Illud*, Apostolic Letter on the Activities carried out by the Missionaries in the World (30 November 1919), in [http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xv/it/apost\\_letters/documents/hf\\_ben-xv\\_apl\\_19191130\\_maximum-illud.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xv/it/apost_letters/documents/hf_ben-xv_apl_19191130_maximum-illud.html) (accessed on 30 April 2015).

<sup>61</sup>Pius XI, *Rerum Ecclesiae*, Encyclical on Catholic Mission, 28 February 1926, in [http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_p-xi\\_enc\\_28021926\\_rerum-ecclesiae.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_28021926_rerum-ecclesiae.html), (accessed on 30 April 2015).

<sup>62</sup>Pius XII, *Evangelii Praecones*, Encyclical on the Promotion of Catholic Missions, 2 June 1951 in [http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_p-xii\\_enc\\_02061951\\_evangelii-raecones.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xii_enc_02061951_evangelii-raecones.html) (accessed on 30 April 2015).



and territorial thrust involved in the implantation of the Church with certain sensitivities to cultural differences.<sup>63</sup>

## 6. The Evangelical Shift in Christian Churches

The rediscovery of the word 'Evangelization' is attributed to Alexander Duff<sup>64</sup> by Robert Speer in the Ecumenical and Missionary Conference of New York in 1900. In the Proceedings of the Union Missionary Convention held in New York, May 4 and 5 1854, according to Speer, Duff affirmed that "the chief means of divine appointment for the evangelisation of the world are the faithful teaching and preaching of the pure Gospel of salvation".<sup>65</sup> Furthermore, Robert Speer declares that "the aim of mission is the evangelization of the world, or to preach the Gospel to the world... to make Jesus Christ known to the world".<sup>66</sup> Subsequently, John Mott, preferring the expression 'evangelism', affirms that evangelism means "to give every person an adequate opportunity to know Christ as personal Saviour and Lord".<sup>67</sup>

Evangelism and Evangelization appear to be synonymous since the *Concise Dictionary of the Christian World's Mission* explains "*Euaggelion* in Greek means the word spoken rather than written i.e., it is a proclamation of the Good News. Evangelism or Evangelization is, therefore, the exact term for the proclamation of the Gospel to those who are not familiar with it".<sup>68</sup>

In Catholic circles, P. Liégé pointed out that the term Evangelization was significant in contemporary pastoral ministry and is of recent origin.<sup>69</sup> "A cursory glance at the *Catholic Periodical and Literature Index* shows an absence of the

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<sup>63</sup>Cf. William Mcconville, "Mission" in Joseph A. Komonchak *et al.* (eds.), *The New Dictionary of Theology*, (Bangalore: Theological Publication in India, 1999) 665.

<sup>64</sup>Domenico Grasso, "Evangelizzazione. Senso di un termine" in Dhavamony (ed.), *Evangelizzazione* (Roma: Università Gregoriana, 1975), 21. See also Paul Vadakumpadan, *Evangelisation Today* (Shillong: Vendrame Missiological Institute, 1989) 8.

<sup>65</sup>*Ecumenical Missionary Conference*, New York, 1900. Report of the Ecumenical Conference of Foreign Mission held at Carnegie Hall and Neighbouring Churches, April 21 to May 1, New York, London 1900, vol. 1, 76, as cited in Grasso, *Evangelizzazione*, 21, footnote 1.

<sup>66</sup>*Ecumenical Missionary Conference*, 76.

<sup>67</sup>*Ecumenical Missionary Conference*, 95.

<sup>68</sup>Stephen C. Neill, Gerard H. Anderson and John Goodwin (eds.), *Concise Dictionary of the Christian World's Mission* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1971) 199.

<sup>69</sup>Cf. Paul Liégé, "Évangélisation", in Gerard Jacquemet (ed.), *Catholicisme, Hier, Aujourd'hui, Demain* (Paris: Faculté de Théologie de l'Institut catholique de Lille, 1956), vol. IV, 755.

term in 1967-1968 edition, its appearance in 1969-1970 and its frequent use by 1973-1974 edition".<sup>70</sup>

## **7. From Missions to Missionary Pursuit: Evangelization**

The Catholic Church has, of course, a long history of announcing, proclaiming and witnessing the Good News. The terminology of Evangelization came into Catholic use more or less towards the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, partly through the influence of Protestant theologians like Karl Barth.<sup>71</sup>

The Catholic environment, especially in Western Europe, was slowly losing its momentum and many pastoral theologians and religious educators were convinced that the optimum remedy to reclaim the Catholic atmosphere was a Kerygmatic Approach, i.e., a confident proclamation of the content of apostolic preaching which centred on the historical facts about Jesus' life and ministry, especially His suffering and death, burial and resurrection and ascension for understanding the meaning of Jesus. It was believed that such a proclamation would call upon the hearers to believe in God's act in Christ and repent and believe in Jesus Christ as the saviour and redeemer of the world. The Kerygmatic Movement was critical of the abstract, scholastic articulation of the catechism and proposed a more active and evangelical presentation of the Good News in the light of the apostolic *Kerygma*. It insisted on the Christocentric focus based on the history of salvation with the biblical and liturgical dimensions of the message.

John XXIII, the charismatic Pope who convoked the Second Vatican Council under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, was exposed to the new Kerygmatic theology which was spreading in Europe. In the Apostolic Constitution *Humanae Salutis*, that officially convoked the Council, Pope John XXIII expressed his hope, that the Council would "bring the modern world into contact with the vivifying and perennial energies of the gospel".<sup>72</sup>

"Building on the Kerygmatic theology of the preceding decade, the Second Vatican Council made use of evangelical terminology. A comparison with Vatican Council I, which reflected the nineteenth-century mentality, is instructive.

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<sup>70</sup>Philip Knights and Andrea Murray, *Evangelisation in England and Wales. A Report to the Catholic Bishops* (London: Catholic Communications Service, 2002) 29.

<sup>71</sup>Cf. Avery Dulles, *The Church and Society – The Laurence J. McGinley Lectures 1988-2007* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008) 88.

<sup>72</sup>John XXIII, *Humanae Salutis*, Apostolic Constitution (25 December 1961), in Walter M. Abbott (ed.), *The Documents of Vatican II*, (New York: American Press, 1966), 703.

Vatican I used the term ‘gospel’ (*evangelium*) only once, and then only to mean one of the four Gospels. It never used the terms “evangelize” or ‘evangelization’.”<sup>73</sup>

The expression ‘Evangelization’, in contrast, is found 30 times in six Vatican Council documents.<sup>74</sup> Twice each in *Lumen Gentium*, the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, and *Gaudium et Spes*, the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World; in the document *Ad Gentes*, the Decree on the Mission Activity of the Church, one finds the term 19 times; in *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, the Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests, the word is found twice; in *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, the Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity, the word is found 4 times and once in *Christus Dominus*, the Decree Concerning the Pastoral Office of Bishops in the Church.

Heeding the apostolic directives expressed by Pope John XXIII in his opening speech to the Council,<sup>75</sup> the Council Fathers interpreted the universal mission of the Church mandated by Jesus Christ in terms of Evangelization and its various nuances.

Examining the term “Evangelization” in the Conciliar documents, one can distinguish a triple meaning:

- *Missionary Preaching to People who have not heard of Jesus Christ*: after clarifying the significance of the term ‘mission’, the document *Ad Gentes*<sup>76</sup> goes on to affirm that “the proper purpose of this missionary activity is evangelization, and the planting of the Church among those peoples and groups where it has not yet taken root” (6) and again “the evangelization of groups of peoples who perhaps for special reasons have not yet accepted the Gospel message, or who have thus far resisted it” (27).
- *The Entire Ministry of the Word: Lumen Gentium*<sup>77</sup> affirms that “this evangelization, that is, this *announcing of Christ* by a living testimony as well as by the *spoken word*, takes on a specific quality and a special

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<sup>73</sup>Dulles, *Church and Society*, 88.

<sup>74</sup>The word search was carried on these documents found in [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/index\\_it.htm](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/index_it.htm) (accessed on 28 April 2015).

<sup>75</sup>John XXIII, “Opening Speech to the Council”, in Walter M. Abbott (ed.), *The Documents of Vatican II*, 709-719; see especially 716.

<sup>76</sup>Second Vatican Council, *Ad Gentes*. Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church (7 December 1965), in *AAS* 58 (1966) 947-990.

<sup>77</sup>Vatican Council II. *Lumen Gentium*. Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (21 November 1964) in *AAS* 57 (1965) 5-67.

force in that it is carried out in the ordinary surroundings of the world” (35); or again in no. 17 states that the Church “continues unceasingly to send *heralds of the Gospel* until such time as the Infant Churches are fully established”.

- *All the Missionary Activities of the Church: Ad Gentes* declares that “every disciple of Christ has the obligation to do his part in spreading the faith” (6); or again “since the whole Church is missionary, and the work of evangelization is a basic duty of the People of God, this sacred Synod summons all to a deep interior renewal” (35). In this sense, evangelization is everything that promotes, organizes or collaborates with the action of the Church to spread the Gospel to all people who do not still know about it.<sup>78</sup>

Evangelization, in a certain sense, embraces all the tasks of the Church that are directed to announcing and testifying the Gospel of the Reign of God, proclaimed and realized by Jesus Christ. Thus one can say that, in the ecclesial consciousness, evangelization means announcement and witness of the Gospel given by the Church in the world through all that it says, does and is.

## **8. Evangelization in Regional Documents after the Second Vatican Council**

At the end of this concise summary on the development and significance of the term evangelization as Proclamation of the Good News with all its nuances described above, we shall close this chapter by citing two extracts from two regional documents.

The final statement of the First Plenary Assembly of the Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences dealing with the theme of Evangelization in Modern Day Asia affirmed the following on 27 April 1974:

“To preach the Gospel in Asia today we must make the message and life of Christ truly incarnate in the minds and lives of our peoples. The primary focus of our task of evangelization then, at this time in our history, is the building up of a truly local church... Evangelization is the carrying out of the Church’s duty of proclaiming by word and witness the Gospel of the Lord. Within this context we have spoken of these tasks which are of particularly crucial importance ...

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<sup>78</sup>For detailed discussion see, John De Romus, “Evangelization in the Contemporary Roman Catholic Thought”, *Indian Journal of Theology* 43/1&2 (2001), 10-12; Grasso, *Evangelizzazione*, 21-47.

Indigenization renders the local church truly present within the life and cultures of our peoples. Through it, all their human reality is assumed into the life of the Body of Christ, so that all of it may be purified and healed, perfected and fulfilled. Through the second task, the Asian religions are brought into living dialogue with the Gospel, so that the seeds of the Word in them may come to full flower and fruitfulness within the life of our peoples. Finally, through the preaching of the good news to the poor (Lk 4: 18), Christ's renewing life and the power of His paschal mystery is inserted into our peoples' search for human development, for justice, brotherhood and peace".<sup>79</sup>

The Declaration of the *International Theological Conference on Evangelization and Dialogue in India*, held at Nagpur in 1971 in connection with the Centenary Year of St. Thomas the Apostle affirms the following:

"The mission of the Church in India, therefore, has to be realised through evangelisation. By evangelisation we mean the imparting of the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ, through which men are enabled to share in the Spirit of Christ, who renews and reconciles them with God. This the Church accomplishes not only through proclamation (*Mk* 16:15ff) but also through a life of Christian witnessing (*Lk* 24:47-48); *Acts* 1:8) by which it tries to show that the communication of the message of Christ is not simply verbal, but the witness of the whole life lived in the Spirit and radiating the divine agape in the fellowship of a community. As such it is a dynamic agent within the world and the historical expression of how the new humanity being gathered up, liberated and re-created in Christ through the Spirit... Evangelization, therefore, cannot be reduced to a matter of church organization; it has to remain a charismatic activity of the Church... Evangelization is thus expression of the Christian fellowship which communicates to others what has been entrusted to the Church to share with all men".<sup>80</sup>

Striving to proclaim the Gospel to all people demands fulfilment two other exhortations on the part of the Christian communities and their disciples: to "Be reconciled to God" (2 *Cor* 5:20) and to "put on the new self" (*Eph* 4:24). In other words, to proclaim the Good News to others, the Christian community itself must be constantly renewed and revitalized, for the Gospel message needs to be heard

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<sup>79</sup>Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences, "Evangelization in Modern Day Asia. Statement and Recommendations of the First Plenary Assembly, Taipei, Taiwan, 27 April 1974", in Gaudencio Rosales and Catalino Arevalo (eds.), *For All The Peoples of Asia. Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences-Documents from 1970 to 1991* (Quezon City, Philippines: Claretian Publications, 1997) 14 and 16.

<sup>80</sup>Dhavamony (ed.), *Evangelization, Dialogue and Development*, 5-6.

anew in the many circumstances of life. Without this ongoing evangelization, the Good News of Jesus Christ becomes lifeless; ministries become mere professions; Christian community structures and organizations will tend to become ossified. Hence, proclamation of the Good News of Jesus Christ to the Christian communities becomes an urgent need, if the Christian communities want to retain their freshness, vigour, and strength in order to proclaim the Gospel.

## CHAPTER 2

### ***EVANGELII NUNTIANDI: A SYNTHESIS***

In order to appreciate the ideas contained in *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, we need to recall briefly the basic content contained therein. For the benefit of the present generation, which reads this epoch-making Apostolic Exhortation on Evangelization after 40 years, we present in this chapter the context of its formulation, its general structure and the principal ideas outlined in it.

#### **1. Background to *Evangelii Nuntiandi***

The significance of the Apostolic Exhortation on Evangelization in the contemporary world can be comprehended by underlining the historical contexts that were closely related to it.

First, it was issued on 8 December 1975, on the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, who watched over with her prayer the beginning of evangelization prompted by the Holy Spirit on the morning of Pentecost (*EN* 82). However, the date chosen for its promulgation has great historical significance. It marks the tenth anniversary of the official closing of an event that gave a new impetus to the identity, life and mission of the Church in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, namely, the Second Vatican Council. Particularly, it commemorates the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the conciliar Decree *Ad Gentes*, which gave a renewed vision and vigour to the proclamation of the Good News in the post-Conciliar era.

Moreover, Pope Paul VI promulgated *Evangelii Nuntiandi* one year after the Third General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops (1974), which dealt with the theme of Evangelization. At the end of their discussion, the Synod Fathers asked the Pastor of the Universal Church to formulate their thoughts and proposals into an authoritative document that could give the necessary guidelines to pursue the fundamental mission of the Church, namely, to proclaim Christ to the ends of

the world. Finally, it marked also the end of the Jubilee Year of 1975 that was dedicated to the theme of “Renewal and Reconciliation”.<sup>1</sup>

## **2. General Structure of the Document**

The 82 articles that make up the Apostolic Exhortation do not contain any structural division or any indicative subtitles. Based on the logical arrangement of ideas within the document, we propose the following structure that enables us to construe its general vision.

- Introduction: Context and Historical Significance (arts. 1-5)
- Evangelization: The Witness of Jesus of Nazareth (arts. 6-12)
- Evangelization: The Vocation, Identity, and Mission of the Church (arts. 13-16)
- Essential Elements of Evangelization (arts. 17-24)
- The Content of Evangelization (arts. 25-39)
- The Ways and Means of Evangelization (arts. 40-48)
- Those who are to be Evangelised (arts. 49-58)
- The Protagonists of Evangelization (arts. 59-73)
- Required Attitudes on the part of the Evangelisers (arts. 74-80)
- Conclusion (arts. 81-82)

## **3. Summary of the Ideas in the Document**

Without any pretension of providing a detailed synthesis of the document, we recall here its principal ideas, especially as a preparation for the extended discussions on it in other chapters in this volume.

On a preliminary note, it points out the nature of the document, namely, a “meditation” on Evangelization (*EN* 5). It does not claim to be a dogmatic constitution but a systematic theological reflection on the meaning, content and method of proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ to the contemporary world. Such an epistemological choice is rooted in the fact that the Church has already given in *Ad Gentes* the normative direction to be pursued in the post-conciliar era vis-à-vis Evangelization.

### ***Foundation of Evangelization***

The duty incumbent on every Christian to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ is founded in the command of the Risen Lord: “Go into the whole world

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<sup>1</sup>Paul VI inaugurated the Jubilee Year of the Redemption on the night of Christmas in 1974 and concluded it on the night of Christmas the following year.



and proclaim the gospel to every creature. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved; whoever does not believe will be condemned” (*Mk* 16:15-16). It is essentially a message concerned with the salvation of people, and not merely a campaign for the increase of religious adherents. Jesus Himself gave a personal witness to the importance of Evangelization: “I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God, because for this purpose I have been sent” (*Lk* 4:43). He proclaimed the Kingdom of *God*, and everything else was relative. It was a proclamation of universal salvation, which included liberation from every kind of oppression, above all from sin and the Evil one. Principally, he evangelised through untiring preaching and through innumerable signs, but he himself was the Good News. Among all, the poor and the humble were the privileged hearers of this Good News (*EN* 6-12).

Continuing the proclamation of the Good News, in obedience to the command of Jesus Christ, is the essential mission of the Church. It is the vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity. In fact the Church is born of the evangelizing activity of Jesus and the Twelve Apostles. Moreover, the Church has been sent to evangelise and thereby continue the mission on earth. The Church has received the precious living heritage of the Good News, not to keep it hidden but to communicate it with complete fidelity. She must send out evangelisers to bring this salvific message to every corner of the globe. However, in order to evangelise the world with credibility, she must begin by evangelising herself through constant conversion and renewal. Thus there is a profound link between Christ, the Church and evangelization (*EN* 13-16).

### ***Meaning of Evangelization***

In order to grasp the concept of Evangelization, one must keep in mind its essential elements. To evangelise means, “bringing the Good News into all the strata of humanity, and through its influence transforming humanity from within and making it new” (*EN* 18). More precisely, it calls for illumining the criteria of judgement, values, thought-patterns, sources of inspiration and models of life (*EN* 19). Now, the concrete lives of people are closely related to their cultures. Hence, to evangelise humanity means to permeate their cultures with the Gospel, without identifying with any of them and without ignoring any good element found in them (*EN* 20).

Such a proclamation of the Gospel must take place, first, through *witness* of the Christians amidst other peoples. Their exemplary life is a silent but powerful and effective way of bringing the Good News to all those who promote whatever

is noble and good. Sooner or later, however, this proclamation by witness of life must lead to proclamation by the *word* of life – kerygma, preaching or catechesis – which is an important aspect of evangelization. The proclamation reaches its full development only when it is listened to, accepted and assimilated, and finally it arouses a genuine adherence to the Good News concretely by a visible entry into a community of believers. However, the real test of evangelization is seen when the evangelised goes on in turn to evangelize others through *witness* and *word* (EN 21-24).

### ***Content of Evangelization***

With regard to the content, to evangelise means, first of all, to bear witness to “a God revealed by Jesus Christ, in the Holy Spirit, to bear witness that in His Son God has loved the world – that in His Incarnate Word He has given being to all things and has called men to eternal life” (EN 26). The foundation, center and summit of Evangelization consists, therefore, in the proclamation of God’s gift of salvation to all in Jesus Christ, the Son of God made man, who died and rose from the dead. In addition to God’s love and salvation, evangelization includes preaching of the mystery of evil and of the active search for good. It comprises also a search for God in prayer and a communion with the visible sign of the encounter with God, which is the Church of Jesus Christ. Such a communion is lived and celebrated through the sacramental and liturgical life of the community of believers (EN 27-28).

The salvation proclaimed in the dynamic process of Evangelization is transcendent and eschatological, which will find its fullness only in eternity. Nevertheless, it begins already in this life (EN 27). Therefore, Evangelization must take into consideration the unceasing interplay between the Gospel and the concrete life at the personal and social levels. More precisely, Evangelization includes the proclamation of liberation from everything that oppresses the people and condemns them to remain on the margin of life (EN 29-30).

There is in fact a profound three-fold link between proclamation of the Good News and human advancement through development and liberation. At the *anthropological* level, the human person to be evangelised is not an abstract being but one who is subject to social and economic questions of the day. Secondly, at the *theological* level, the plan of creation cannot be dissociated from the plan of redemption, which calls for combating situations of injustice and for restoring justice. Thirdly, the link is eminently *evangelical*, that is of charity, because it is not possible to proclaim the new commandment of love, without promoting in

justice and in peace the true, authentic advancement of the human person and the human society (EN 31).

Going further into the discussion on Evangelization and human promotion, the document outlines the right relation between evangelization and liberation. On the one hand, the Church's mission cannot be restricted only to the religious field, dissociating from human temporal predicaments. Hence the Church considers it important to build up structures which are more human, more just and more respectful of fundamental human rights. Among them, the Church underlines the necessity of ensuring religious liberty. On the other hand, while being committed to liberation, the Church cannot diverge from the religious finality of Evangelization. The liberation that the Church proclaims cannot be reduced to temporal projects of a socio-economic, political, and cultural nature. The primacy of her spiritual vocation cannot replace the proclamation of the Kingdom of God by the proclamation of any form of human liberation. Her concept of liberation is rooted in the vision of the human person in all aspects, including the transcendent dimension. The Church's commitment to human liberation will be incomplete without proclaiming salvation in Jesus Christ. In short, to proclaim the Good News implies working towards an integral human liberation, without ever identifying the latter with the former (EN 32-39).

Furthermore, working for such a liberation does not justify the use of violence. The Church rejects the violent means to achieve liberation because violence always provokes violence and engenders new forms of oppression and enslavement. Violence is not in accord with the Gospel. Hence violent changes of structures are judged to be deceitful, ineffective and contrary to the dignity of the human person. Instead, the Church invites the Christian liberators to commit themselves to the tasks of human liberation with the inspiration of faith, the motivation of fraternal love, and the insights of the Catholic social teachings (EN 37-38).

### ***Suitable Means of Evangelization***

Among various effective means available, the Church considers the *witness* of an authentically Christian life as the first means of proclaiming the Good News. It is by her faithful witness to the Lord Jesus that the Church would primarily evangelise the world (EN 41). At this juncture, the document recalls a paradigmatic affirmation: "Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than

to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses.”<sup>2</sup> Secondly, the Church would evangelise through the verbal proclamation of the Gospel. Among the many forms of direct preaching, the use of *homily* at various liturgical moments occupies a special place (EN 42-43).

Another suitable means of evangelization consists in the appropriate and systematic *catechetical instruction* of children, youth and adults, in the Church, in the schools, and in Christian homes (EN 44). To these the Church adds also the efficient use of modern means of *social communication* for the first proclamation, catechesis and the further deepening of faith (EN 45).

In addition to the above-mentioned collective means, the Church promotes also the *person-to-person* way of proclaiming the Gospel, through the sharing of personal experience of faith to another person, the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and the pastoral dialogue with a person (EN 46). Such an education in faith can take place also through the celebration of various *Sacraments* (EN 47). Finally, Evangelization can take place through the prudent promotion of *popular religiosity* or popular piety, purified of superstitions and sectarian mentality (EN 48).

### ***People to be Evangelised***

After having outlined the ‘what’ and ‘how’ of Evangelization, the document goes on to enlist the people to whom the proclamation of the Gospel must be addressed. Obviously, it must be proclaimed to all, as it has been in the history of the Church from the apostolic times (EN 49-50). However, the document enumerates the various groups of people to whom the Good News must be proclaimed.

To begin with, it must be preached to those who do not know Jesus Christ and His Gospel. This could be done through infinite range of means available today, such as, explicit preaching, art, the scientific approach, philosophical research, the legitimate recourse to the sentiments of the human heart, etc. (EN 51). The First Proclamation is addressed especially to children and to those who have never heard the Good News. It should reach also those who are baptised but live in a dechristianized situation, those who have only an imperfect knowledge of the foundation of Christian faith, and the intellectuals who desire to know Jesus Christ more profoundly (EN 52).

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<sup>2</sup>Pope Paul VI, “Address to the Members of the *Consilium de Laicis*” (2 October 1974), in *AAS* 66 (1974) 568.

Such a First Proclamation is also addressed to the immense multitude of those who belong to religions other than Christianity. The Church respects and esteems all the spiritual elements and desires found in these believers and in their religious texts. Impregnated with innumerable “seeds of the Word”, they constitute a true “preparation for the Gospel”. Yet the Church must proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ to them also, because they have the right to know the riches of the mystery of Christ. In dealing with complex and delicate questions that might arise in this context, one must have recourse to the Christian Tradition and the Church’s magisterium (*EN 53*).

Furthermore, Evangelization must include also the Christians who have been in contact with the Gospel for generations. Their faith must be continuously strengthened as they are exposed to secularism, even to militant atheism, and to various trials and threats. It should include also the Christians who are not in full communion with the Catholic Church, so that the unity willed by Christ might be achieved (*EN 54*).

At this juncture, the document recalls two spheres that necessitate a particular attention of the Church’s duty of Evangelization: those who do not believe in God (pragmatically, theoretically and militantly) and those who have been baptised but are entirely indifferent to the Christian faith or do not live it. Thus, aware of her duty to preach salvation to all, the Church must discover effective means to bring the Gospel to those who resist it through atheistic secularism and religious indifference (*EN 55-57*).

Finally, the list of beneficiaries of the Church’s Evangelization concludes with a long discussion on the “Small Communities”. Formed at the lowest strata of social and ecclesial organisations for diverse purposes, such communities are, at the same time, both a place of Evangelization and the protagonists of Evangelization. Nevertheless, in order to avoid certain possible limits and risks related to such organisations, the document delineates the conditions under which they could be promoted by the Local Church (*EN 58*).

### ***Agents of Evangelization***

The Pope then deals with the question ‘Who has the mission of evangelizing’? Obviously, the entire Church is sent to bring the Good News of salvation to the whole world (*EN 59*). From this emerges the need to emphasize two convictions. First, Evangelization is an ecclesial act. Every act of Evangelization is profoundly linked to the Church’s Evangelization, both at the institutional level and in the order of grace. Anyone who evangelises, does so in union with the mission of

the Church and in her name. Second, as a consequence, no individual evangeliser can claim to be the absolute master of the evangelising action. Far from it, he or she evangelises in communion with the Church and her pastors (*EN 60*).

The Universal Church is, in practice, incarnate in the Particular Churches, with their own varieties of cultural, social, and human terrains. Hence, the document portrays succinctly the right relation between the Universal Church and the Particular Churches vis-à-vis evangelization. On the one hand, an effective proclamation of the Good News calls for making use of local languages, signs and symbols. It means being sensitive to diverse anthropological and cultural expressions of the Christian faith in the Particular Churches. It must be done however without the slightest betrayal of its essential truth, without impairing or mutilating the content of Christian faith. Moreover, it must be carried out with a sense of profound openness towards the Universal Church. Such a 'transposition' has to be done with the discernment, seriousness, respect and competence. Any attempt to cut off the communion between the Particular Churches and the Universal Church will only lead to the danger of withering isolationism and the danger of losing one's freedom by falling prey to forces of slavery and exploitation. On the contrary, the more a Particular Church is capable of translating the treasure of faith into the legitimate variety of expressions, the more will it also be truly evangelising. In the context, it is important to reiterate the role of Peter's Successor as a visible, living and dynamic principle of the unity between the Churches and thus of the universality of the one Church (*EN 61-65*).

### ***Diversified Tasks of Evangelization***

Even though the whole Church is called and sent out to proclaim the Gospel, yet one must recognise the diversity of people involved in the task of evangelising the world. First, the Lord entrusted this task to His Apostles, who in turn passed it on to their successors (*EN 66*). It is then entrusted to the Pope who has merited the primacy of the apostolate as the Successor of Peter, by virtue of the full, supreme and universal power that Christ has given to His Vicar for the pastoral government of the Church (*EN 67*).

As successors of the apostles, the bishops too exercise the task of teaching the revealed truth, in union with the Successor of Peter. Associated with the bishops in the ministry of Evangelization are the priests and the deacons. It is the purpose of evangelization that gives a vital unity to the manifold activities and functions carried out by the pastors (*EN 68*).

The Consecrated Life of Religious men and women too is a privileged means of effective Evangelization. Their total availability to God, the Church and the brethren, through the vows of obedience, chastity and poverty, is a great witness to the proclamation of the Gospel. Of particular importance is their missionary activities carried out in various parts of the world in union with the Local Church, characterised by originality, generosity, and a sense of sacrifice. (EN 69).

The Laity play a special role in the task of Evangelization. Living in the midst of the world, they are to illumine the affairs of the world – especially in the field of politics, society and economics – with the light of the Gospel (EN 70). Along this line, the document envisions the Christian family, the ‘domestic Church’, as a place where the Gospel is transmitted and from which the Gospel radiates. In other words, every member in the Christian family is evangelised and is called to evangelise other families in the neighbourhood (EN 71).

One cannot overlook here the contribution of the youth, in particular. On the one hand, the Church must “offer them with zeal and intelligence the Gospel ideal as something to be known and lived”. On the other hand, they must become the apostles of other youth through appropriate training in faith and prayer (EN 72). Finally, the evangelising task is entrusted to the non- Lay ministers who work in close collaboration with their pastors in carrying out various apostolic activities in the community, especially through the ministry of the Word, catechism, prayer, etc. With adequate formation, such generous and willing Laity can make significant contribution to Evangelization (EN 73).

### ***Interior Attitudes Required for Evangelization***

After enumerating the diversified roles of the followers of Christ in the task of Evangelization, the document goes on to enlist the proper *interior attitudes* the evangelisers must possess for an active and fruitful proclamation of the Good News.

First among them is the recognition that the Holy Spirit is the principal agent of Evangelization. The Spirit was actively present in the life and mission of Jesus of Nazareth. Again, it was after the coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost that the Apostles began to preach courageously the Gospel. The Spirit continues to inspire, guide, and act even today in every evangeliser in the Church. Hence the primary inner attitude of the evangeliser is to pray without ceasing to the Holy Spirit, with faith and fervour (EN 75).

Secondly, an efficacious Evangelization calls for true holiness of life on the part of all the members of the Church. This spiritual witness to the Gospel is to be manifested in the simplicity of life, the spirit of prayer, charity towards all, obedience and humility, detachment and self-sacrifice (EN 76). Added to this witness of life is the unity among the followers of Christ. The division among Christians is a serious impediment to the proclamation of the Gospel. Hence all the Faithful must make concerted efforts to promote and to preserve communion among Christian brethren (EN 77).

While aiming at such a common witness to Christ, the evangelisers should not forget that the Gospel entrusted to the Church is also the word of truth: truth about God, about the human person, and about the world. As heralds and servants of this truth, the evangelisers are expected to manifest a reverence for truth and are called to preserve, defend and communicate it, without betraying or hiding it, even at the cost of personal renunciation and suffering (EN 78).

Another interior attitude that is required of the evangeliser is an ever-increasing love for those who are being evangelised. The following are the 'signs' of such love: concern to give the truth and to bring people into unity; devotion to the proclamation of the Gospel without reservation or turning back; respect for the religious and spiritual situation of those who are evangelised; concern and sensitivity to those who are weak in faith; and effort to transmit truths that are anchored in the Word of God and not doubts and uncertainties (EN 79). Finally, the truth of the Gospel must be proclaimed with an unquenched fervour, overcoming all the obstacles present in today's society. This must be done with profound respect for the religious liberty of people. The document exhorts: "The respectful presentation of Christ and His kingdom is more than the evangeliser's right; it is his duty" (EN 80).

### ***Conclusion***

Having echoed the voice of the Synod Fathers, the Pope entrusts the task of Evangelization to the hands and the heart of the Immaculate Blessed Virgin Mary, imploring her to be the Star of the Evangelization of the Church (EN 81-82).

## **4. The Reception of *Evangelii Nuntiandi***

How did the post-Conciliar Church around the globe receive *Evangelii Nuntiandi*? On its twentieth anniversary, Avery Dulles' rapid review on its impact reveals that after the initial rather slow reception, it indeed occupied the



theological discussion for a few years to come.<sup>3</sup> Some considered the Apostolic Exhortation of Paul VI to be in continuity with the renewal initiated by Pope John XXIII to proclaim the Gospel in a way intelligible to the contemporary world. It was also in conformity with the deepest longing and vision of the Council as articulated especially in *Gaudium et Spes*, namely, to be an enlivening leaven in the world. In a way, with this Exhortation, Paul VI complemented the exclusively social document *Populorum Progressio*. Both were timely responses to the challenges faced by the Church and society in the post-conciliar epoch.

Many have critically compared it with the Conciliar document *Ad Gentes* and highlighted the “development” in its teachings, especially by bringing the missionary activity into the heart of Church’s identity and life. For a few others, it went beyond the conciliar decree by dealing with certain crucial issues that were not discussed in detail in *Ad Gentes* and by responding to new developments in the world and in the Church. To that extent, its vision of Evangelization is judged to be more holistic than that of *Ad Gentes*.<sup>4</sup>

The same document has been reviewed also from other perspectives. For example, according to Seamus Murphy, from the perspective of culture, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* has provoked a serious “re-evaluation” of the conciliar vision.<sup>5</sup> Joseph Gevaert has analysed its impact from the perspectives of Catechetics and Missiology, even as he has offered an enriching bibliographical note on its reception in the first 25 years.<sup>6</sup> In his review of the document, on its thirtieth anniversary, Stephen Bevans finds it prophetic and points out a few issues that need to be included in it with a view to responding to contemporary sensibilities.<sup>7</sup> In short, this meditation on Evangelization continues to draw the attention not only of theologians but the whole People of God who want to know more and more on their duty to proclaim the Gospel.

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<sup>3</sup>For a succinct but informative account of both the eulogies as well as severe criticism of *EN* in the first twenty years, see Avery Dulles, “La recezione in occidente della *Evangelii Nuntiandi*”, *La Civiltà Cattolica* I (1996) 28-39.

<sup>4</sup>For a detailed critical analysis of *Evangelii Nuntiandi* and its impact, see Robert Schreiter, “*Evangelii Nuntiandi*”, in *The New Dictionary of Catholic Social Thought*, ed. Judith A. Dwyer (Collegeville [MN]: Liturgical Press, 1994) 353-363.

<sup>5</sup>Seamus Murphy analyses the impact of *Evangelii Nuntiandi* on the question of culture and evangelization, especially in the Western world characterized by pluralism and secularism. See, Seamus Murphy, “*Evangelii Nuntiandi* Twenty Years after: Culture, Pluralism, and Secularism,” *Milltown Studies* 37 (1996) 82-107.

<sup>6</sup>Joseph Gevaert, “L’*Evangelii Nuntiandi* di Paolo VI, 25 anni dopo”, *Itinerarium* 8 (2000) 16: 125-145.

<sup>7</sup>Stephen Bevans, “Witness to the Gospel in Modern Australia: Celebrating Thirty Years of *Evangelii Nuntiandi*”, *Australian Journal of Theology* 6 (February 2006) 1-22.

## CHAPTER 3

### REAFFIRMING THE EVANGELIZING MISSION: A MULTI-PERSPECTIVAL ELUCIDATION

The understanding of Evangelization in the Catholic Church is extremely complex, and one which is subject to historical changes. Its realization in “concrete form is determined not merely by the dogmatically definable nature of the Church herself, or by its own theological nature, which belongs to the ‘*jus divinum*’ of the Church, but also by the concrete forms which the Church has assumed under historical influences”.<sup>1</sup> One cannot deny the constant and active interconnection between the theological essence of Evangelization which endures, and the Church wherein other basic factors and influences of history and society play their part in articulating its form in the concrete.

#### 1. Initial Point of Departure

It is true that, even from the point of view of its theological nature, Evangelization is an extremely nuanced reality and hence one needs to guard against an overly simplified approach in which one attempts to deduce the richness of this reality merely by a process of logical deduction. Furthermore, with a view to determining the theological nature of Evangelization, one also needs to raise the question as to where the initial point of departure lies.

Both from the point of view of the concrete contemporary understanding of the concept of Evangelization, and also on theological grounds, there seem to be disadvantages in merely taking the *command of Jesus* as one’s initial starting-point for defining the nature of Evangelization. One can also perceive the disadvantage in seeking to define the nature of Evangelizer on the basis of the concept of ‘mediator’ since in Scripture the concept of ‘mediator’ is applied only to Jesus Christ. Further, if one takes as the «starting-point, the nature of the

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<sup>1</sup>Karl Rahner, “The Point of Departure in Theology for Determining the Nature of the Priestly Office”, in Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations* XII (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1971) 31.

Church as a sacrament of God's utterance of Himself to the world as accepted in faith, hope and love».<sup>2</sup> Then one comes across the difficulty involved in a holistic understanding, justification and distribution of the various functions carried out within the Christian community. In addition, if the Church fulfils her own nature as the sacrament of God's utterance to the world in the Word, then Evangelization "does not imply merely the communication of some reality which exists in total independence of the actual doctrinal process of communicating it".<sup>3</sup> If this Word has the force of an event, an exhibitivite and effective character, then this Word becomes both an *anamnesis* and a *prognosis* which spring from a single unique mission and witness of Jesus Christ: "I must proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom of God" (*Lk* 4:43) and "That is what I was sent to do" (*Lk* 4:43).

Therefore the initial point of departure for any understanding of Evangelization ought to begin from Christ the First Evangelizer since "Jesus himself, the Good News of God was the very first and the greatest evangelizer" (*EN* 7). As the first and greatest evangelizer, "Christ first of all proclaims a kingdom, the Kingdom of God; and this is so important that, by comparison, everything becomes 'the rest' which is given in addition. 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 (a paradoxical happiness which is made up of things that the world rejects), the demands of the Kingdom and its Magna Charta, the heralds of the Kingdom, its mysteries, its children, the vigilance and fidelity demanded of whoever awaits its definitive coming" (*EN* 8). Jesus Christ accomplished this proclamation of the Kingdom through the untiring preaching and with evangelical signs. His untiring teaching and preaching were new and with authority and "there has never been anybody who has spoken like him" (*Jn* 7:46). He also carried out this proclamation by innumerable signs and miracles and "more especially by his death, by his resurrection and by sending of the Spirit of Truth" (*EN* 12).

Jesus Christ entrusted the continuation of this proclamation of the Kingdom to those who accepted it in faith and were willing to seek together and share with others that faith in Him and in His Good News. "Those who have received the Good News and who have been gathered by it into the community of salvation can and must communicate and spread it" (*EN* 13). Responding to Christ's invitation is always a grace and a gift and implies becoming Disciple-Apostles for the Kingdom of God in a community, the Church. Hence we affirm: "Evangelizing

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<sup>2</sup>Karl Rahner, *The Point of Departure*, 34.

<sup>3</sup>Karl Rahner, *The Point of Departure*, 35.

is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity. She exists in order to evangelize, that is to say in order to preach and teach, to be the channel of the gift of grace, to reconcile sinners with God, and to perpetuate Christ's sacrifice in the Mass, which is the memorial of his death and glorious Resurrection" (EN 14).

## **2. Evangelization in a Relational Perspective**

To exist is to be connected, to be related. Human beings are wired to connect. The neural system of human beings is so designed as to make humans enter into relationship with others. Jesus, the First Evangelizer, in His way of preaching and acting showed clearly that God is not just one person but a Trinity of Three unique but inseparably united Persons. In the Trinitarian mystery, the theologians speak of "Subsistent Relations" which, put simply, says: «the Father cannot be Father without the Son and the Son cannot be the Son without the Father; similarly the Holy Spirit who is the Bond of Love between the Father and the Son cannot be the Holy Spirit without the Father and the Son; the Father and the Son also cannot be without the Holy Spirit».<sup>4</sup> Therefore, the Son came into this world to take all human beings back to the Father and complete the love circle broken by the sin of human being. The Holy Spirit is also constantly doing the same. He tries to take all human beings in His own mysterious ways back to the Father in and through the Son. What Jesus did externally, namely, taking on the human nature and speaking with His human mouth, working with His human hands and tangibly and visibly inviting all to enter the Kingdom of God, the Spirit does internally in the minds and hearts of people. Therefore "to evangelize is first of all to bear witness, in a simple and direct way, to God, revealed by Jesus Christ, in the Holy Spirit; to bear witness that in His Son God has loved the world – that in his Incarnate Word he has given being to all things and has called men to eternal life" (EN 26).

Jesus, the First Evangelizer, began to preach the coming of the Kingdom of God. Captivated by His teachings, deeds and message, many became His disciples. The demoralizing experience of the tragic death of Jesus, the Messiah, and the totally new experience of the Resurrection and Pentecost, made the disciples of Jesus into a closely knit community that proclaimed Jesus as 'the Lord'. This community was known as '*ekklesia*', the assembly of the People of God, the Church. This community of Jesus' disciples was marked by a great sense

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<sup>4</sup>Joseph Francis, "The Christian Understanding of the Three Persons of the Trinity as Relations", in Jose Kuttianimattathil (ed.), *Relating We Journey – An Interdisciplinary Exploration* (Bangalore: Kristu Jyoti Publications, 2012) 40.

of mission, namely, to bear witness to the neighbours their faith-experience in Jesus Christ, strengthened by community prayer and the Breaking of the Bread. Therefore “the task of evangelizing all people constitutes the essential mission of the Church” (EN 14) and “the Church is born of the evangelizing activity of Jesus and the Twelve” (EN 15).

This Christian community is never closed in upon itself. It has both the vertical and horizontal dimensions that are closely interrelated and that cannot be separated. The vertical dimension, spoken of in the content of *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (cf. 26-27; 34) highlights the sharing in the life of God in and through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. While articles 28-31; 35; 37 of the same document, speaking about hope, life human development etc., emphasize the horizontal dimension which is the intimate fellowship or relationship with one another in the Church and in the world. “On the one hand, our horizontal fellowship is based on the vertical relationship with God. On the other hand, our vertical relationship with God takes place through the sacramentality of the horizontal in and through the Church. Though our vertical relationship is logically prior, historically and humanly the horizontal is first through which we are vertically related to God. Love of God and love of neighbour cannot be separated». <sup>5</sup> This intimate life relationship «only acquires its full meaning when it becomes a witness, when it evokes admiration and conversion and when it becomes preaching and proclamation of the Good News” (EN 15).

The evangelizing action of the Community of Disciples is at the centre and is the *raison d'être* of its calling and existence. The task of the Community of Disciples is to bring “the Good News into all the strata of humanity, and through its influence transforming humanity from within and making it new” (EN 18). Evangelization “must develop its ‘totality’ and completely incorporate its intrinsic bipolarity: witness and proclamation, word and sacrament, interior change and social transformation” (GDC<sup>6</sup> 46; see also EN 24). Evangelization, as “Systems Thinking”<sup>7</sup> invites the Community of Disciples to be sent out on a mission as messianic people in the midst of the world, i.e., “universal sacrament of salvation” (LG 48). Thus, the Community of Disciples is “on earth, the seed and the beginning of that Kingdom” (LG 5). Evangelization is the focal and

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<sup>5</sup>Joseph Francis, “The Christian Understanding”, 91.

<sup>6</sup>Congregation for the Clergy, *General Directory for Catechesis* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1997), 46.

<sup>7</sup>Systems Thinking is the ability for seeing wholes. It is a framework for seeing interrelationships rather than individual or isolated things.

fundamental point around which Jesus built the Church and called her “to think like him, to act like him and to love like him” (*GDC* 116).

### 3. A Holistic Process-Oriented Evangelization

“Evangelization, as we have said, is a *complex process*<sup>8</sup> made up of varied elements” (*EN* 24). In a complex world, Evangelization is called upon to advance persons towards fullness of life in the Kingdom perspective proclaimed and witnessed by Jesus Christ and to encourage them to perceive the relatedness and interconnections that are present within and around their world.

A *Process-Oriented* Evangelization accepts the view that reality is ever changing and becoming, and God, through Jesus Christ, is the source of creative growth and openness to progress and development. The impact of the past continues in the present but does not have power over or direct the options for the future. Freedom pertains to the essence of reality which does not operate like a machine. “Decisions do have consequences yet the future is always open... Reality is social, that is, it is internally related, rather than composed of fundamental building blocks”.<sup>9</sup> The central motivational foundation is God in Jesus Christ, who “emphasizes not power over, but empowerment of others, not coercive force, but loving relationship, not authoritative control but the authority of one who lived in unity with God’s will”;<sup>10</sup> and who thus proclaimed and manifested the Kingdom of God as “‘already begun’, as ‘coming now’, and as ‘not yet’ fulfilled. It has already been initiated definitively in Jesus Christ, in that he is God’s irrevocable promise of commitment to its final victory; it is ‘coming now’ as people do God’s will; and it is ‘not yet’ in that its completion will be radically new at the end time”<sup>11</sup> which is a process.

The guiding principles that inform such a process are: God through Jesus Christ is involved in the life of persons; growth and development are an ongoing activity of the persons, in the context of a God who accompanies; the essence of this growth and development is freedom and creativity, which are ongoing activities and not a once for all event; and with the assistance of the Holy Spirit, each person accepts responsibility and proclaims his/her experience of being a human person as both ‘a gift received and a gift to be shared’.

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<sup>8</sup>Emphasis added.

<sup>9</sup>Helen Goggin, “Process Theology and Religious Education”, in Randolph Miller (ed.), *Theologies of Religious Education* (Alabama: Religious Education Press, 1995) 127.

<sup>10</sup>Goggin, “Process Theology and Religious Education”, 129-130.

<sup>11</sup>Thomas Groome, *Sharing Faith – A Comprehensive Approach to Religious Education and Pastoral Ministry* (New York: Harper San Francisco, 1991) 16.

The qualifier 'holistic' reflects the concern for wholeness and a desire for integration. It attempts to understand the relatedness, the connections among the various elements that are included in the concept of Evangelization. Evangelization in a holistic understanding respects the psychosomatic or body-spirit unity of the person. It recognizes the bond that connects the human growth of the person with the spiritual growth. Given the fact that the body and the spirit are closely interrelated and united, the human expressions of the person can often convey also the personal concerns and feelings more effectively and vice versa. Evangelization in a holistic perspective highlights the struggle for personal wholeness as an integral part of life and initiates persons to view growth as a lifelong effort to integrate the diverse aspects that constitute the self. To regard Evangelization as holistic is to emphasise that the pursuit of the spiritual is in no way an obstacle to healthy human development; and that those who promote the spiritual growth of persons are not exempt from promoting the human development. In contrast to a dualistic 'either-or' mentality that sees the various elements as irreconcilable, Evangelization in a holistic understanding stresses the complementariness of each the elements involved in it.

Evangelization, undoubtedly, involves a *complex* process which demands, therefore, the fostering of greater interdependency that any single elements can manage. Complexity often undermines the confidence and responsibility of the evangelizer. The antidote consists in promoting a holistic thinking which enables the evangelizer to perceive the 'structures' that underline complex process and to discern the high and the low. There are two types of complexity. Detail complexity involves the mixing of many variables and ingredients. Detail complexity draws the attention of the evangelizer to the fact that "doing the obvious thing does not produce the obvious, desired outcome",<sup>12</sup> and "cause and effect are not close in time and space and obvious interventions do not produce expected outcomes".<sup>13</sup> Instead, "when the same action has dramatically different effects in the short run and the long, there is dynamic complexity. When an action has one set of consequences locally and a very different set of consequences in another part of the system, there is dynamic complexity. When obvious interventions produce non-obvious consequences, there is dynamic complexity".<sup>14</sup> The essence of Evangelization in a holistic perspective lies in a shift of mind. It consists in seeing interrelationship and interdependence, rather than mere snapshots.

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<sup>12</sup>Peter Senge, *The Fifth Discipline – The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization* (London: Century Business, 1990) 71.

<sup>13</sup>Peter Senge, *The Fifth Discipline*, 364.

<sup>14</sup>Peter Senge, *The Fifth Discipline*, 71 (Emphasis added).

“Evangelization, as we have said, is a complex process made up of varied elements: the renewal of humanity, witness, explicit proclamation, inner adherence, entry into the community, acceptance of signs, apostolic initiative. *These elements may appear to be contradictory, indeed mutually exclusive. In fact they are complementary and mutually enriching. Each one must always be seen in relationship with the others*”<sup>15</sup> (EN 24). Thus the above statement offered by *Evangelii Nuntiandi* in number 24, understood from the relational, holistic and complex process-oriented perspectives, can be fully justified.

#### 4. Evangelization as Shared Praxis

The word ‘praxis’ in contemporary philosophical, theological and educational literature, is liberally used but it is hard to define because of its complexity. The English word *practice*, when used with its common meaning, is understood as ‘putting theory into practice’ and tends to dichotomize between theory and practice.<sup>16</sup> To understand praxis requires a shift in one’s mind-set that does not dichotomize between theory and practice. The term praxis must be seen as twin movements of the same activity that is united dialectically.

Any attempt to understand the term ‘praxis’ needs to begin with Aristotle, while taking into account the further development offered by Hegel, Marx and Habermas.<sup>17</sup> “To capture its meaning adequately might well require a whole sentence, such as: Praxis is *purposeful, intentional, and reflectively chosen ethical action*”.<sup>18</sup> Or again, the contemporary notion of praxis usually “refers to purposeful human activity that holds in dialectical unity both theory and practice, critical reflection and historical engagement”.<sup>19</sup> To put it simply, praxis can be understood as *reflective action*, i.e., a practice that is

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<sup>15</sup>Emphasis added.

<sup>16</sup>In management and leadership sectors, authors like Wenger, McDermott, Snyder W. M. etc., prefer, elucidate and justify the term “practice” in its deep and significant meanings. Given the Catholic context, we prefer to use the term praxis in order to eliminate any connotation of a skill or a technique or ritual practices or activities.

<sup>17</sup>It is not our intention to enter into detailed elucidation of various authors’ ideas on praxis. A concise elucidation of the ideas of these authors can be found in Chapter Eight of, Thomas Groome, *Christian Religious Education – Sharing our Story and Vision* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1980).

<sup>18</sup>Groome, *Christian Religious Education*, 154.

<sup>19</sup>Groome, *Christian Religious Education*, 136.



enlightened by theoretical reflection, or conversely, a theoretical reflection that is enlightened by practice.

Thus on the one hand, *Evangelization as a practice* ought to be enlightened by an authentic study of Jesus Christ, the First Evangelizer both at the individual level and at the level of Community of Disciples; the Church to whom He entrusted the mission of proclamation of the Kingdom of God. On the other hand, *Evangelization as authentic reflection* on the Person of Jesus Christ and on the Kingdom of God proclaimed by the Church needs also to be enlightened by actual practice.

Evangelization as praxis is marked by three characteristics that need to be pedagogically engaged: *active*, *reflective* and *creative* features. They overlap and unite as one in the existential life of the evangelizer.

- The *active* characteristic of Evangelization as praxis includes all the corporeal, mental and volitional activities by which the evangelizer intentionally realizes him/herself as agent-subject in relationship<sup>20</sup> who are entrusted with the mission of proclamation of Jesus and His Kingdom and its values in place and in time.
- The *reflective* aspect of Evangelization as praxis is critical reflection on one's own and Christian community's historical actions. Such critical reflection engages the evangelizers in analytical and social *remembering*, critical and social *reasoning*, creative and social *imagining* regarding one's present evangelizing action. This reflective aspect can be identified as "theoretical" in that it enables evangelizers to express and comprehend in dialogue with others the consciousness that emerges from their evangelizing mission in the world. This reflective facet as "theoretical" also keeps in mind the practical understanding and wisdom that have emerged from the faith life of the Christian communities over time.
- The *creative* pervades both the active and reflective action; the active includes producing as well as doing, and critical reflection includes creative

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<sup>20</sup>In consonance with Thomas Groome, I use the term *subject* to signify the intrinsic value of persons qua persons, a meaning heightened when we think of subject in contrast to object ... I preface it with *agent* to emphasize the originating and historically responsible dimension of human 'subjectivity'; "*agent* subjects" are to be consciously aware, reflective, discerning and responsible people... I use agent subjects in relationship to indicate that the authentic 'being' of people is always realized "in relationship" with others in time and place». Groome, *Sharing Faith*, 8-9.

and social imagination. “Human creativity is present within both action and reflection and also mediates between them as people imagine what is yet to be done and made”.<sup>21</sup> These creative aspects in Evangelization as praxis, without doubt, needs to keep in mind the ethical (Kingdom values) aspects and ensure that these values are put into practice while evangelizing.

The word *shared* indicates that the approach in Evangelization is one of mutual partnership, active participation and dialogue with oneself, with others, with God and with Christian Story and Tradition. The rationale for a process of partnership, participation and dialogue can be found in *Evangelii Nuntiandi* itself: “Evangelizing means bringing the Good News into all the strata of humanity and through its influence transforming from within and making it new” (EN 18). Or again “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 judgement, 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” (EN 19).

## **5. Evangelization and Hermeneutics**

The term “Evangelization” never had an unequivocal and unambiguous meaning. As seen in the first chapter, one encounters a variety of meanings assigned to the verb “to evangelize”. *Evangelii Nuntiandi* itself also affirms that “any partial and fragmentary definition which attempts to render the reality of evangelization in all its richness, complexity and dynamism does so only at the risk of impoverishing it and even of distorting it. It is impossible to grasp the concept of evangelization unless one tries to keep in view all its essential elements” (EN 17). To keep in view all the essential elements of evangelization and the ability highlight its right meaning in the context necessitate a basic knowledge and mastery in the enterprise of hermeneutics.<sup>22</sup>

Hermeneutics is a branch of philosophy that investigates the process of interpretation and understanding. “Hermeneutics is concerned with seeking meaning, truth and consensus through dialogue, although some versions question

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<sup>21</sup>Groome, *Sharing Faith*, 138.

<sup>22</sup>My intention here is to present the four major streams, each of which has its particular relevance for the understanding of the concept of Evangelization.

whether this can ever be attained”.<sup>23</sup> It deals with interactions with the social and political context; the texts and the culture can have something different to offer when they are considered from another perspective or when they are applied to other circumstances.

Ricoeur, attempting to relate hermeneutics (interpretation) with phenomenology (description of the society), gave special attention to the idea of a narrative interpretation of identity.<sup>24</sup> Further, he differentiated between a ‘Hermeneutics of Trust’ and a ‘Hermeneutics of Suspicion’. A ‘Hermeneutics of Trust’ involves the basic truth in the texts and in the language and an interpretation that can recover and restore the original meaning. Instead the ‘Hermeneutic of Suspicion’ calls into doubt a great amount of cultural consciousness as being faulty, implying that the duty of hermeneutics is to unmask the false consciousness and expose the ideologies in culture, in the organisations and among the people.<sup>25</sup> The Principle of Deconstruction, a derivation from such a ‘Hermeneutics of Suspicion’, is important also and, in extreme cases, it brings to doubt both consciousness and the language.

Gallagher, analyzing the various types or approaches to hermeneutics, has identified four major streams, each of which has its particular relevance for Evangelization.<sup>26</sup> We shall take up here the central ideas for our consideration.

Based on the 19th century work by Dilthey and Schleiermacher, Gallagher calls the first approach “Conservative Hermeneutics”, wherein the focus of interpretation is to reproduce the meaning and intentions of the authors and to overcome the limitations set by the historical context of the interpreter. Such an approach is based on a hermeneutics of trust that meaning can be recovered. Therefore the task in the understanding of Evangelization may be considered as the reproduction of cultural meanings and as interpretation of normative meanings of authoritative texts such as Scripture, Tradition and Magisterial Teachings, etc.

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<sup>23</sup>Marisa Crawford and Graham Rossiter, *Reasons for Living – Education and Young People’s Search for Meaning, Identity and Spirituality. A Handbook* (Victoria Australia: ACER Press, 2006) 57.

<sup>24</sup>Cf. Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, 3 volumes, translated by K. McLaughlin and D. Pellauer (Chicago: University Press of Chicago, 1984-1988).

<sup>25</sup>Paul Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

<sup>26</sup>Cf. Shaun Gallagher, *Hermeneutics and Education* (Albany [NY]: State University of New York, 1992).

The second approach “Moderate Hermeneutics”, exemplified in the writings of Gadamer and Ricoeur, proposes that fully objective interpretations are impossible due the influences of socio-historical and personal contexts; interpretation, therefore, is an active dialogical process, a ‘fusion of horizons’ and a creative communication between the text and the interpreter. Hence, truth can be interpreted but it is not absolute. The task in the understanding of Evangelization in this approach consists in enabling the evangelizer and the evangelized to participate in the construction of meaning from texts and culture, by acknowledging that inter-subjectivity is a more realistic aim rather than trying to achieve absolute truth and objectivity. Hence, Evangelization has to promote the active role of evangelized in the construction of meaning, imaginations and aesthetic experiences.

The third approach “Radical Hermeneutics”, influenced by Nietzsche and Heidegger, presumes that the original meaning in texts is unattainable; even the texts can raise questions about their meaning since language becomes the medium to express truth. This approach emphasizes the necessity of deconstruction and the need to question the authenticity in all interpretations. Such an approach leads to a sceptical and nihilistic attitude about truth claims. The task in the understanding of Evangelization calls to clarify its stand on a radical view, questioning whether there can be any authenticity as regards meaning, identity, authorship and objectivity; to confront a type of agnosticism of meaning by which all meaning is interpreted as relative, contingent and contextual; to verify the risks involved in taking hermeneutics of suspicion to a high level of distrust of institutional meanings; to deal with problems regarding the nature and evangelizing role of traditional cultural meaning; and finally, to challenge the trends to make the construction of meanings a privatized, personal task that is relative and contextual.

The fourth approach “Critical Hermeneutics”, typified by the work of Habermas, focuses on hermeneutics influenced by the social and political agenda of critical theory which is concerned with challenging the interpretation method and its results that are marginalizing, and with promoting emancipation. Such an approach tends to affirm that what passes for truth is usually distorted by ideology and hence needs purification to arrive at an undistorted consensus. The task in the understanding of evangelization consists in highlighting the need for the interpretation of ideological and hegemonic influences on thinking and behaviour; promoting a hermeneutics of suspicion, not presuming good-

willed, ideology free institutional or cultural meaning; and promoting the critical interpretation of culture with an emancipator and social justice orientation.<sup>27</sup>

Reproduction, authority, and conversation; objectivity, distortion and transformation; these are issues that both Hermeneutics and Evangelization must deal with. If Evangelization involves understanding and interpretation; if formal evangelizing practice is guided by the use of texts and commentary, reading and writing; if linguistic understanding and communication are essential to evangelizing institutions; if evangelizing experience is a temporal process involving fixed expressions of life and the transmission or critique of traditions; if in effect, evangelization is partly a human enterprise, then Hermeneutics, which claims all of these as its subject matter, holds out the promise of providing deeper understanding of the evangelizing process.<sup>28</sup>

In the tedious work of analysing and intervening for the promotion of Evangelization as shared praxis, Hermeneutics offers itself as a tool of prime order for knowing and for orientation: not all by itself, but in combination with semiotics, with the goal of de-codifying the signs and the words in the process towards proclamation of the Kingdom for fullness of life; with rhetoric, to look into the reasonableness of an evangelizing action; and all the more with aesthetics and religious wisdom, to receive the stimuli and the horizons of values of evangelizing praxis with respect to the actual existential condition.

## **6. Hermeneutical Consequence: Models of Evangelization**

Evangelization involves proclaiming Jesus Christ and His Kingdom in words and deeds. This proclamation in words and deeds by the Church is realized in different ways and at various times and places through various hermeneutical approaches “so that through the Church the wisdom of God in its rich variety might now be made known” (*Eph* 3:10). Already in the New Testament one can perceive the diversity in the proclamation of the Good News. Proclamation of the Good News carried out by Paul is certainly different from that practised by the community of John or Matthew. The proclamation of the Kingdom accomplished by Peter in a Jewish environment is vastly different from the proclamation undertaken by Paul in a Jewish-Greek environment.

“The reality of evangelization in all its richness, complexity and dynamism” (*EN* 17) fosters different types and models of Evangelization as a consequence

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<sup>27</sup>Cf. Gallagher, *Hermeneutics and Education*, 9-11.

<sup>28</sup>Gallagher, *Hermeneutics and Education*, 24.

of diverse methods of interpretation. I shall briefly highlight the models of Evangelization proposed by three prominent authors.

***Models of Evangelization proposed by Enzo Bianchi***

Enzo Bianchi offers seven models, based on the various functions, of Evangelization. I shall merely name these models and present some relevant numbers from *Evangelii Nuntiandi* as supportive statements.<sup>29</sup> They are:

- *Evangelization as Witness* emphasises that “the Gospel must be proclaimed by witness... Such a witness is already a silent proclamation of the Good News and a very powerful and effective one... All Christians are called to this witness, and in this way they can be real evangelizers” (EN 21).
- *Evangelization as Proclamation of Kerygma* insists that “the verbal proclamation of a message, is indeed always indispensable” (EN 42). “Evangelization will also always contain – as the foundation, centre and at the same time summit of its dynamism – a clear proclamation that, in Jesus Christ, the Son of God made man, who died and rose from the dead, salvation is offered to all men, as a gift of God’ grace and mercy” (EN 27).
- *Evangelization as Transformation of Society* “means bringing the Good News into all the strata of humanity and through its influence transforming humanity from within and making it new” (EN 18). “Between evangelization and human advancement – development and liberation – there are in fact profound links... We ourselves have taken care to point this out, by recalling that it is impossible to accept that in evangelization one could or should ignore the importance of the problems so much discussed today, concerning justice, liberation, development and peace in the world” (EN 31).
- *Evangelization as Socio-Ethical Commitment* affirms that “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... which are in contrast with the Word of God and the plan of salvation” (EN 19). “In this same

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<sup>29</sup>For more details, see Enzo Bianchi, “Modelli di Evangelizzazione”, in Enzo Franchini and Olivero Cattano (eds.), *Nuova Evangelizzazione* (Bologna: Edizioni Dehoniane, 1990) 29-35.

modern world, on the other hand, and this is a paradox, one cannot deny the existence of real stepping-stones to Christianity, and of evangelical values at least in the form of a sense of emptiness or nostalgia” (EN 55).

- *Evangelization as Dialogue with the World* highlights that “while the Church is proclaiming the Kingdom of God and building it up, she is establishing herself in the midst of the world as the sign and instrument of this Kingdom which is and which is to come” (EN 59).
- *Evangelization as Renewed Proclamation to a Dechristianized World* emphasises the need of proclaiming the Good News to “innumerable people who have been baptized but who live quite outside Christian life” (EN 52).
- *Evangelization as New Pentecost* underlines the need for First Proclamation to those who are far off. “To reveal Jesus Christ and his Gospel to those who do not know them has been, ever since the morning of Pentecost, the fundamental program which the Church has taken on as received from her founder” (EN 51).

### ***Models of Evangelization according to Pat Collins***

Pat Collins, while addressing models of spirituality, proposed three models of Evangelization based on the conceptual nature human beings. These models keep in mind the pedagogical criteria. The summary version is given below.

- *Didactic/Sacramental* Evangelisation is head-oriented and aims at *orthodoxy*, i.e. right doctrine, by means of catechetical instruction, reception of the sacraments and the witness of a holy life.
- *Kerygmatic/Charismatic* Evangelisation is heart-oriented and aims at *orthokardia*, i.e. right experience, by means of inspired preaching, verbal testimony and witness, together with deeds of power such as healings and miracles.
- *Political/Developmental* Evangelisation is hands-oriented and aims at *orthopraxis*, i.e. right action, by means of solidarity with the poor and oppressed, action for justice, human development, healing and ecology.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>30</sup>Pat Collins, *Spirituality for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century – Christian Living in a Secular Age* (Dublin: The Columba Press, 1999) 35. For more detailed discussion on this see Pat Collins, “Models of Evangelization”, *Doctrine and Life* 48 (Jan 1988) 1, 31-41 or Pat Collins, “Models of Faith and Evangelization” in *Colloque* 36 (Autumn 1997) 422-437.

The Didactic/Sacramental Model is fundamentally an essentialist in an existential culture and hence is not well adapted to the needs of the time. Instead the Kerygmatic/Charismatic and the Political/Developmental models are both pragmatic and experiential in orientation and hence are more attuned to the modern mind set.

### ***Styles of Evangelization according to Avery Dulles***

Avery Dulles, reflecting on the different dimensions or styles of Evangelization – the “models”, offers us six forms of Evangelization. Dulles, while using his own titles, definitions and examples, acknowledges the great contribution made to his reflections by Father Timothy E. Byerley’s doctoral thesis at Fordham University. I shall only mention these models.<sup>31</sup>

- *Personal Witness*: This model shows the strength of witness through the good example of a life totally dedicated to Christ. “The first means of evangelization is the witness of an authentically Christian life, given over to God in communion that nothing should destroy and at the same time given to one’s neighbour with limitless zeal” (EN 41). St. Stephen’s martyrdom is the preeminent form of personal witness. “But witness more often takes place in less dramatic ways. One thinks in this connection of St. Francis of Assisi, who is said to have told his companions: “preach the gospel every day, and if necessary use words”.<sup>32</sup>
- *Proclamation by Word*: The second model, the Petrine model, points to the preaching of the Word i.e., the verbal testimony in its various forms such as initial proclamation, catechesis, apologetics and the like, and has its origin in St. Peter’s first sermon on the day of Pentecost. “Even the finest witness will prove ineffective in the long run if it is not explained, justified ... and made explicit by a clear and unequivocal proclamation of the Lord Jesus” (EN 22). Paul becomes the paramount example of this model together with others like St. Dominic, founder of the Order of Preachers and St. Francis Xavier.
- *Worship*: The Jerusalem model describes the evangelizing power of the sacred worship and is discerned in the first Christian liturgical celebration in Jerusalem described in *Acts* 2:42-47. “In the celebration of the liturgy ...

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<sup>31</sup>For more details, see Avery Dulles, *Evangelization for the Third Millennium* (New York: Paulist Press, 2009) 90-100; see Timothy Byerley, *The Great Commission* (New York: Paulist Press, 2008).

<sup>32</sup>Dulles, *Evangelization for the Third Millennium*, 92-93.



the first Christians readily expressed their deep faith” (EN 61). Although worship is basically an activity of the believing community, the intensity and sincerity of the Church’s relationship with God in Jesus Christ was and is admired by people of other faiths. Further, participation in the liturgy enables the believers to become heralds and bearers of the Gospel message when they return to their daily occupation in the midst of others.

- *Community*: Confronted by the anonymity of the secularised and fast moving technological world, people search for interpersonal community. Among the various signs performed by Jesus “there is the one to which he attaches great importance: the humble and the poor are evangelized, become his disciples and gather together “in his name” in the great community of those who believe in him” (EN 12; cf. EN 23). Small Communities evangelize “not so much by going out and recruiting new members as by exercising a force of attraction that makes people want to come in”.<sup>33</sup>
- *Inculturation*: The Areopagus model involves the inculturation of the Good News in the fabric of society, and looks to St. Paul’s address to the Athenians in the Areopagus as its prototype (cf. *Acts* 17: 16-34). “What matters is to evangelize man’s culture and cultures ... in the wide and rich sense which these terms have in *Gaudium et Spes*, always taking the person as one’s starting point and always coming back to the relationships of people among themselves with God” (EN 20).
- *Works of Charity*: The Loaves and Fish model, in the words of Byerley, calls attention to the evangelizing effects of Christian charity or social apostolate reflected in the corporeal and spiritual works of mercy performed by the Church. Evangelization implies transformation of humanity from within and making it new (cf. EN 18-19). “Evangelization in its full amplitude includes the doctrine of human rights, the promotion of the common good, and everything that can help to build a civilization of love”.<sup>34</sup>

All said and done, approaches to Evangelization are not necessarily determined on the basis of logic alone. We live in a fast-changing world wherein the centre of gravity is shifting from the experience of religious authority to the authority of religious experience. Given the fact that “People today put more trust in ... experience than in doctrine” (RM 42), the choice of the right approach to Evangelization can be determined first foremost by trust in God as a result of

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<sup>33</sup>Dulles, *Evangelization for the Third Millennium*, 96.

<sup>34</sup>Dulles, *Evangelization for the Third Millennium*, 99.

experiencing God in Jesus Christ's compassionate love; only then comes faith as assent to the truths revealed by God in Jesus Christ; finally faith as trust and assent necessarily manifest themselves in action, which has a reciprocal effect on the way people trust God and give assent to his truth.

## 7. Reconfirming the Evangelizing Mission of the Church

Vatican II in *Lumen Gentium* number 48 envisaged the Church as the «universal sacrament of salvation». This meaningful expression reassumes Vatican II's ecclesiology and expresses its foundational dynamism characterised by its three movements: *Convocation – Communion – Mission*. The Church is primarily a convocation, that is, “*ekklesia*” (reunion of the called); it is essentially manifested in communion; it is sent out on a mission as redeemed messianic people in the midst of the world. Convocation, Communion and Mission are dynamic continuous movements, like the systole and diastole, of a Church that bring in, in order to open out, gathers together in order to feel continuously re-launched into the world and discovers itself in order to lose itself in the humble witness of the Reign of God in Jesus Christ, of which it is the first fruit and source.

### *Evangelizing Task and the Goal of the Church*

The first element that underlines an essential characteristic of the Church is that *it does not exist for itself*, but exists to be at the *service of the Reign of God*, the divine plan which overcomes every limitation of the ecclesial action. The divine plan, with its diverse expressions as the universal plan of salvation, the building up the Body of Christ, the unity of humankind, the messianic peace, the fullness of life, etc., is the grandiose design that God in Christ and through the Holy Spirit realises in history for humanity. It is the divine plan of integral promotion and liberation of humankind, reconciled and in love, realising the values that all persons desire and value: “A Kingdom of truth and life, a kingdom of holiness and grace, a Kingdom of justice, love and peace”.<sup>35</sup> The coming of the Reign of God, “the utopia of the human heart”<sup>36</sup> constitutes the supreme yearning and final goal of every action of the Church.

As “universal sacrament of salvation” (LG 48), sacrament of the Reign, the Church is not totally identified with the Reign of God, but “constitutes here on earth the seed and the beginning of the Reign of God” ( LG 48; RM 18-20). It is

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<sup>35</sup>From the Preface of Christ the King as found in the Roman Missal.

<sup>36</sup>Leonardo Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator – a Critical Christology for our Time* (Maryknoll [NY]: Orbis Books 1979) 57.

“a sacrament or as a sign and instrument both of a very closely knit union with God and of the unity of the whole human race” (LG 1). It is a “sign”, therefore an announcement and germinal presence of the grandiose project of God for humanity that we call “God’s Reign”. The Church constitutes a providential, historical mediation, not by closing within itself its borders for the realization of this project, but as “messianic people” who give witness and proclaim to the world the advent and the promise of the Reign and at the same time bringing forth the first fruits of such a Reign. K. Rahner states that the Church “is the sacrament of the salvation for a world, which in effect means that in its greater part it is saved by the grace of God beyond the institutional aspect of the church”.<sup>37</sup>

Thus the first and fundamental indication is that the ecclesial praxis does not have as its goal the Church itself or its self-preservation or affirmation in the world, but envisages itself in terms of a plan that transcends and determines its meaning: *the spreading and augmenting of the Reign of God and its values in history*. It is here that the Christian community finds the ultimate meaning of its own efforts, that is, to ensure the advance of the values of the Reign: communion with God and with humans, fraternity, liberty, peace, happiness and life.

“In the world and for the world”: Such a perspective presupposes a renewed vision of the relationship between the Church and the world. The world (the history of humanity) ought not to be thought of either in opposition to or as inimical to the plan of God’s Reign, nor simply as the place to bring about salvation proclaimed, but as the true place for the *realization of the Reign* in the measure in which it affirms the inspirations of the Spirit. The Church, as part of the world and at its service, declares itself as “the servant of humanity”<sup>38</sup> and “goes forward together with humanity and experiences the same earthly lot which the world does. She serves as a leaven and as a kind of soul for human society as it is to be renewed in Christ and transformed into God’s family” (GS 40).

Such a perspective also calls for a renewal of motivations for the mission of Evangelization understood in its holistic sense. There has been a weakening of such motivations so essential to persevere in this demanding task. The Church evangelizes, “first of all, from a deep sense of gratitude to God, the Father ‘who has blessed us in Christ...’ and sent the Spirit into our hearts so that we may

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<sup>37</sup>Karl Rahner, *The Shape of the Church to Come* (New York: The Seabury Press 1974) 77.

<sup>38</sup>Paul VI, *Concluding Discourse of the Second Vatican Council*, 7 December 1965. <http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Paul06/p6closin.htm> (accessed on 10 July 2015).

share in God's own life... Mission is above all else an overflow of this life from grateful hearts transformed by the grace of God... Mission is also a *mandate*... The one who sends us is Jesus... He sends us on a mission which is part of the epiphany of God's plan to bring all things together under Christ as head... We evangelize also because we believe in the Lord Jesus... The Christian vocation is, by its very nature, a vocation to the apostolate... We evangelize also because we have been incorporated by baptism into the Church which is missionary by its very nature because it is the result of the mission of the Son and of the Holy Spirit... Finally, we evangelize because the Gospel is leaven for liberation and for the transformation of society".<sup>39</sup>

### *Evangelizing Signs*

The task of the Church to be at the service of the Reign of God cannot be reduced to a mere collaboration with persons of goodwill in the common effort towards the transformation of humanity. The Church, conscious of being the custodian of the «mystery» revealed by God in Christ, has the specific mission of illuminating, guiding and stimulating the history of humankind in such a way as to endorse, both in a formal and conscious way, the realization of the Reign of God here and now in this world. Thus the Church becomes a sacrament ("sacrament of the Reign") through its fundamental signs.

Keeping in mind the triple role of Christ – priest, prophet and king, the ecclesial signs or functions within the Church have been classified under the triple ministry of liturgical, prophetic and kingly. But such a division neither finds a credible foundation, nor lends itself to an adequate, realistic articulation of ecclesial actions. A quadruple division of the sacramental function of the Church inasmuch as it is the sign and instrument of the Reign of God seems to be more appropriate.<sup>40</sup> The ideal of the Reign is made present in the world in the four fundamental signs or forms of ecclesial visibility:

- as Reign of God *realized* in love and service of persons (sign of *diakonia*);
- as Reign of God *lived* in fraternity and in communion (sign of *koinonia*);

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<sup>39</sup>Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences, "Journeying Together Toward the Third Millennium". Statement of the Fifth Plenary Assembly, 27 July 1990, Bandung Indonesia, in Gaudencio Rosales and Catalino Arevalo (eds.), *For All Peoples of Asia: Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences Documents from 1970-1991* (Quezon Manila: Claretian Publications, 1997) 280-281.

<sup>40</sup>For a brief discussion on this, see footnotes 14 and 15 in Emilo Alberich and Jerome Vallabaraj, *Communicating a Faith That Transforms*, 39.

- as Reign of God *proclaimed* in the salvific announcement of the Gospel (sign of *martyria*);
- as Reign of God *celebrated* in the celebrative and liberating rites of the Christian celebrations (sign of *leitourgia*).

In this way, the Church wishes to be in the world the mediator par excellence for *service, fellowship, proclamation* and *celebration* in analogy with the four fundamental anthropological categories of *action, relationship, thought* and *celebration*. These as “signs” or “functions” or “mediations” are the four expressions or forms or manifestation of being in the world as “sacrament” of the Reign of God.

- *Diakonia*: The sign of *diakonia* with its evangelical potentials and multiplicity of expressions (love, charity, promotion, liberation, solidarity) responds to a profound human demand for an alternative to the logic of abuse and egoism that poisons the life of humans. The Christian community, with dedication and commitment, is called to bear witness to a new manner of love and service so as to make credible the Gospel proclamation of love and the Reign of love.
- *Koinonia*. The sign of *koinonia* (communion, fellowship, reconciliation, unity) is a response to the yearning for fellowship and peace present in all humans of all times. It manifests a new mode of life shared and lived together which aims at the possibility of living collectively as reconciled integrated persons, welcoming all with respect, freedom and uniqueness. In a world torn apart by division, discrimination and egoism, Christians are invited to give evidence to the utopia of the Reign of fellowship and union, with due respect to individual’s liberty, comprehension, esteem and sincere love.
- *Martyria*. The sign of *martyria* or prophetic function (first proclamation, catechesis, preaching, and theological reflection) becomes the indication of a Word that liberates and offers the *key for interpretation* of the life and history in the world. Faced with the demand for meaning and living with the experience of evil that leads so many individuals to fatalism and desperation, Christians are called to become bearers of hope “adversaries of absurdity, prophets of meaning”<sup>41</sup> through the proclamation of Jesus of

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<sup>41</sup>Cf. Paul Ricoeur, “I compiti della comunità ecclesiale nel mondo moderno”, in Raymond Aubert *et al.* (eds.), *Teologia del rinnovamento* (Assisi: Cittadella 1969) 166.

Nazareth who reveals the love of the Father and inaugurated the advent of the Reign.

- *Leitourgia*. The sign of *leitourgia*, in its diverse moments (Eucharist, Sacraments, worship, devotions and prayers) becomes the ensemble of rites, symbols and celebrative moments of Christian experience as proclamation and gift of salvation. It responds to the profoundly deep-rooted need of humans to celebrate, to accept and express life as a rite and gift of salvation. Confronted with the limitations of rationality and the lack of meaning, the Christian community is called to create a space where life and history, liberated from its vagueness, is celebrated and exalted as a project and the place for the realization of the Reign. Through the Eucharist, sacraments, feasts and the various commemorations that are entwined in the experience of faith, Christians ought to announce and celebrate with joy and gratitude the liberating fullness of life manifested in Christ.

These “evangelising signs” manifest the mission of the Church in the world. The Church becomes the bearer of these four great gifts that become signs and first fruits of the plan of God; a new genre of universal love, a new form of fellowship, message and witness filled with life and hope, a collection of transparent and expressive rites of life towards fullness. Through these signs, the Church accomplishes its mission in history and offers its specific and irreplaceable contribution for the realization of the Reign of God.

For a better appreciation and a precise understanding of the ecclesial signs, the following specific claims are further elucidated:

- The four ecclesial functions ought not to be separated as independent realities since each sign participates to a greater or less extent in the nature of the other three signs. In fact, these four signs are so intimately linked together, that no one function guarantees authenticity and exactitude if isolated from the context of the other three.
- It is not possible to establish a hierarchy or order of importance among these four distinct ecclesial signs or functions. If the connection with the ideal of Reign becomes the evaluating criterion, one could say that the signs of *diakonia* and *koinonia* merit primacy, given the fact that they express directly the fundamental values of the plan of God, love and communion. As signs, these two already hold in a pre-eminent manner the signified reality “*res sacramenti*” while the prophetic ministry of the Word (*martyria*) and *leitourgia* are more susceptible to falsification and

degeneration into mere rhetoric, empty words and ritualism. Thus the Church fulfils its evangelising mission in the world *more by what it does and is than by what it says and celebrates*.

More than distinguishing the categories within the evangelising signs, it is essential to affirm the profound relationship and complementariness that unites them. These ecclesial signs or functions constitute an organic unity, a sign of the holistic nature of the Christian ecclesial experience. The harmonious presence of these four signs becomes the criterion for the discernment of the Christian and ecclesial authenticity in evangelizing mission.

### ***Evangelizing Process***

The evangelising task of the Church is realised concretely in certain stages and environments that promote the dynamism of its activity. They are the different moments of the “process of evangelization”. “The process of evangelization, consequently, is structured in stages or ‘essential moments’: missionary activity directed towards non-believers and those who live in religious indifference; initial catechetical activity for those who choose the Gospel and for those who need to complete or modify their initiation; pastoral activity directed toward the Christian faithful of mature faith in the bosom of the Christian community” (GDC 49).

Thus there is a gradation which becomes complete with the additional stage of “presence and action in the world”, and these describe the ideal dynamism of the ecclesial evangelizing action in its concrete historical realization.

- ***Missionary Action:*** It is the first step in the process of Evangelization that is directed towards non-believers or those indifferent to religion. This takes on different forms: presence, service, dialogue, witness, leading to explicit announcing of the Gospel: “[Evangelization] is urged by charity, impregnating and transforming the whole temporal order, appropriating and renewing all cultures; bears witness amongst peoples of the new way of being and living which characterizes Christians; proclaims explicitly the Gospel, through “first proclamation” calling to conversion” (GDC 48).
- ***Catechumenal Action:*** It comprises all those actions directed to all those who wish to be Christians or to those who want to take up again the path of following Christ through the rites of initiation: reception, accompaniment, catechesis, rites and sacraments of initiation, mystagogy. The catechumenal action is an essential function that expresses the motherliness of the Church (Cf. GDC 48).

- *Pastoral Action*: It is the known environment of action *ad intra* of the Christian community wherein the traditional functions are exercised: cult, celebrations, sacraments, preaching, catechesis, community life, service of charity, etc.
- *Presence and Action in the World*: This, oft neglected stage, merits particular attention. It is the realization of the ecclesial action towards varied forms of gospel witness in the society: human promotion, social and political action, educative and cultural action, promotion of peace, ecological engagement. They are environments where the Christians through their presence are called to move beyond their own Christian environment to be at the service of the Reign of God in the world.

### ***Evangelizing Agents***

This last level concerns the institutional aspect of the ecclesial actions and singles out the requirements of agents, structures and organizations, etc. that are necessary for the fulfilment of the mission of the Church, as for example, the formation of the clergy and pastoral agents, the promotion of vocations, the organization of the diocese, the collegial organs, the institutional regulations, etc. These are realities that are indispensable for the exercise of the ecclesial praxis that highlight in a remarkable manner the global impact of the work of the Church.

It is important to underline that this fourth institutional level is basically of relative and functional importance. Outside this fundamental reference, as history has shown, certain aspects of the Church have tended to become a counter witness to Evangelization.

## **8. Evangelizing Mission, Centred on and Nurtured by the Eucharist**

Vatican II, in various documents, speaks about the constitutive elements of Evangelization and emphasises repeatedly their essential connection with the Eucharist (cf. *LG* 28; *AG* 39). The Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests, *Presbyterorum Ordinis* affirms: “The most blessed Eucharist contains the Church’s entire spiritual wealth ... The Eucharist shows itself to be the source and apex of the whole proclamation of the Gospel. The other sacraments, as well as every ministry of the Church and every work of apostolate, are lined with the Holy Eucharist and are directed toward it” (*PO* 5). John Paul II in his encyclical *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* on the Eucharist in its relationship to the Church in number 22 reaffirms that: “The Church’s mission stands in continuity with the



mission of Christ: 'As the Father has sent me, even so I send you' (*Jn* 20:21). From the perpetuation of the sacrifice of the Cross and her communion with the body and blood of Christ in the Eucharist, the Church draws the spiritual power needed to carry out her mission. The Eucharist thus appears as both *the source* and *the summit* of all evangelization, since its goal is the communion of mankind with Christ and in him with the Father and the Holy Spirit". Therefore Evangelization can be realized only in communities that remain united in hearing the same Word and sharing in the Breaking of the Bread, which are "memorial, actuation and prophecy" of the same mystery of salvation proclaimed by Jesus Christ.

### ***Eucharist, Summit and Source of Evangelization***

The Eucharist, as the central sacrament of Evangelization, is also the centre of the Church and of the whole Christian life. Since the Eucharist is the living presence of Christ who is at the heart of the Church, it is also the centre on which are concentrated all the aspects and endeavours of the evangelizing mission leading to the fullness of life which the Church has received from Christ.

The Eucharist embraces the whole evangelizing life of the Christian: its centre, and significance, its motivation and energy towards renewal. The Eucharist is the environment wherein both the evangelized and the evangelizers meet; it is the occasion of renewal of involvement in Evangelization by listening to the Word of God and participating in the Breaking of the Bread.

While the Eucharist is the centre of Evangelization, it is predominantly concerned with the community worship through acceptance of signs. Eucharistic expression of Evangelization is "mystagogical", that is, transmitted through the words and signs used in the liturgical action by the gathered community. Hence, Evangelization understood in an integral and full way implies three moments: the time "before", "during" and "after" the Eucharistic celebration.

- *Evangelization before the Eucharist requires Catechesis:* Since Catechesis constitutes an important moment within the process of Evangelization liturgical catechesis employs all means to promote authentic Evangelization before the Eucharist. "The Eucharist is "Evangelization" even before it is celebrated in the following respects: its central content illumines the very act of Evangelization; it determines the horizon and means of evangelization; it demands an explanation of the process and meaning of Evangelization prior to its undertaking; it implies an appropriately timed

pedagogy to prepare those who are about to be initiated and introduced to participate in it".<sup>42</sup>

- *Evangelization during the Eucharist is a Celebration:* Genuine participation in the Eucharist provides a rich source for evangelizing because of its structure and dynamic, its meaning and content, its transforming power and life. The community expresses and learns the significance of welcome and the sense of reconciliation, community and communion through the Introductory Rites. In the Liturgy of the Word, the Community, by listening to God who calls, enlightens, converts and renews its faith proclaims the wonderful deeds of God throughout the history of salvation which becomes a reality related to one's life today.
- *Evangelization after the Eucharist calls for Commitment:* Authentic participation in the Eucharist makes certain the permanent importance of continual Evangelization. "The renewal of the Lord's covenant with humanity in the Eucharist attracts and sets aflame the faithful with the impelling love and Christ" (*Sacrosanctum Concilium* 10). The Eucharist, not only invites the Christians to celebrate but it also urges them to lead a life that is Eucharistic by performing works of charity and justice, by witnessing in the world and among their contemporaries the love of God manifested in and through Jesus Christ.

### ***Evangelizing Contents Offered in the Eucharist***

The Eucharist also presents "the essential content, the living substance, which cannot be modified or ignored without seriously diluting the nature of evangelization itself" (*EN* 25). I shall merely mention a few of these elements for the purpose of completion.

*The Mystery of the Trinity Manifested in the Eucharist:* Evangelization as witness given to the Father's love and offering the message of salvation in Jesus Christ (cf. *EN* 26-27) are evident in the Eucharist since Eucharist also becomes a living witness to the mystery of the Trinity and its economy of salvation. "The Church, especially in the great Eucharistic Prayer, gives thanks together with Christ to the Father in the Holy Spirit for all the blessings which he bestows on humanity in creation and especially in the Paschal Mystery, and it prays to him for the coming of the Kingdom" (*Sacrosanctum Concilium* 10).

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<sup>42</sup>Paul Poupard, *Eucharist, the Heart of Evangelization* (Quebec: Éditions Paulines, 1992) 32.

*Eucharist and Mission:* Evangelization is centred on the Kingdom of God (cf. *EN* 34). Eucharist renews the faith and commitment of the baptized “who like the disciples of Emmaus, recognize the Lord and his mission after having listened to the word and shared the breaking of the Bread; they go forth joyously to announce that Jesus Christ is living so that all can join them in proclaiming”.<sup>43</sup> In the Eucharist this mission to proclaim the Kingdom of God in Jesus Christ is renewed and Christians are officially sent out to fulfil this mission.

*Eucharist and Conversion:* In line with Evangelization which necessarily involves conversion (cf. *EN* 36), Eucharist requires, celebrates, realizes and effectively fosters reconciliation while promoting a lifelong commitment to reconciliation.

*Eucharist and Paschal Liberation:* Evangelization as a message of liberation (cf. *EN* 30) becomes evident when one recalls that the Eucharist is indeed the memorial of the paschal liberation. Eucharistic celebration of the Paschal Mystery includes the three aspects of sacramental representation and anticipation: memorial-presence-prophecy. The commitment and involvement in liberation, inferred in the Eucharist, is a realization and pledge of evangelization of life (cf. *EN* 31, 33).

*Eucharist and Sign of Hope:* If evangelization “includes the preaching of hope in the promises made by God in the new covenant in Jesus Christ, the preaching of God’s love for us and of our love for God; the preaching of brotherly love for all men – the capacity of giving and forgiving, of self-denial, of helping one’s brother and sister” (*EN* 28), the Eucharist celebrates and offers hope to all who participate in it and promotes the sacrificial aspect of every human life.

“She (Church) exists in order to evangelize, that is to say in order to preach and teach, to be the channel of the gift of grace, to reconcile sinners with God, and to perpetuate Christ’s sacrifice in the Mass, which is the memorial of his death and glorious Resurrection” (*EN* 14). Therefore there exists an intimate connection between Christ, the First Evangelizer, the Evangelizing Church and the Eucharist as a sign both of the unfolding and the fulfilment of evangelization and also of an enduring task to be completed. The zeal for Evangelizing Mission ought to “spring from true holiness of life, and, as the Second Vatican Council suggests, preaching must in turn make the preacher grow in holiness, which is nourished by prayer and above all by love for the Eucharist” (*EN* 76).

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<sup>43</sup>Poupard, *Eucharist, the Heart of Evangelization*, 48.

## CHAPTER 4

### EVANGELIZATION AND THE LIBERATING SOCIAL MISSION OF THE CHURCH

One of the key themes that had provoked much discussion at the publication of *Evangelii Nuntiandi*<sup>1</sup> (*EN*) was the relation between Evangelization and liberation. In a few paragraphs, Paul VI wanted to show the intrinsic unity as well as the necessary distinction between the proclamation of the Gospel and commitment to human promotion in the socio-economic and political spheres. It is fundamentally a *theological* question, for it deals with the meaning and import of “salvation” brought by Christ. Does Evangelization merely mean proclaiming the Gospel in view of increasing the number of Christians and preparing them for eternal salvation? Are all the “social activities” of the Church merely acts of compassion and charity, which are secondary to her primary task of proclaiming the Good News?

The answer to these questions necessitates a critical re-look into the theological basis for the social mission of the Church. Is the liberating social mission of the Church intrinsically related to her primary duty of Evangelization? What type of relation exists and/or should exist between the proclamation of the Gospel and the Christian commitment to liberate the human person from every sort of bondage?

This chapter discusses how Paul VI expounds the relation between Evangelization and liberation or human promotion. Such a discussion *per se* is not in any way unique or original to *Evangelii Nuntiandi*. Historically considered, its theological foundation should necessarily be traced back to the Second Vatican Council and its immediate impact in the Church. Therefore, we begin by contextualising *EN* within the events that preceded its publication. Then we

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<sup>1</sup>Unless indicated otherwise, all the documents of the Church used in this chapter are from: David J. O'Brien and Thomas A. Shannon, (eds.), *Catholic Social Thought: The Documentary Heritage*, expanded ed. (Maryknoll [NY]: Orbis Books, 2010).

analyse carefully how Paul VI has envisioned liberation within his “meditation on Evangelization” (EN 5). In order to highlight further its importance, we shall examine the prevalence of this relation in the Church after its publication. Now, the theme of liberation or human promotion is central to Catholic Social Teaching. Hence, for our analysis, we shall examine how this relation envisaged by Paul VI had been discussed in the successive social documents of the Church.

## 1. Tracing the Roots of Social Dimension of Evangelization

In order to appraise the discussion on Evangelization and liberation in *EN*, we must situate it within at least three important moments that immediately preceded it: *Gaudium et Spes*,<sup>2</sup> *Justice in the World*,<sup>3</sup> and Liberation Theology.

### *Evangelization and Liberation: Ecclesiological Foundation in Gaudium et Spes*

Any meaningful theological discussion in our epoch must begin with the Second Vatican Council, irrespective of the diverse interpretations that continue to ferment the theological debates.<sup>4</sup> As Despina Prassas puts it, “Perhaps the greatest legacy of the Second Vatican Council is that there is a legacy.”<sup>5</sup> It has reinvigorated various aspects of Christian life, worship, organization and mission. Among the 16 conciliar documents, the theological and moral reflections contained in *Gaudium et Spes* have launched the normative roadmap for the Church’s social mission in the world. The process of its formulation in the course of the Council was truly tumultuous, but its promulgation evinces the theological conviction that there is an intrinsic relationship between Evangelization and the social mission of the Church.

We shall now highlight some of the major insights in *Gaudium et Spes* which opened up a new way of comprehending the Church’s evangelizing mission in the social sector. The much-quoted opening statement sets the tone of the whole document and indicates the renewed social image of the Church: “The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these too are the joys and hopes, the griefs

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<sup>2</sup>Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*. Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Contemporary World (7 December 1965) in *AAS* 58 (1966) 1025-1115.

<sup>3</sup>Synod of Bishops, *Justice in the World* (30 November 1971) in *AAS* 63 (1971) 923-942.

<sup>4</sup>For an excellent account of the divergent reception of the Second Vatican Council, see Massimo Faggioli, *Vatican II: The Battle for Meaning* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2012).

<sup>5</sup>Despina D. Prassas, “The Legacy of the Second Vatican Council: An Orthodox Perspective”, *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 48, no. 2 (2013) 166.

and anxieties of the followers of Christ” (GS 1). It is not merely an expression of sentimental solidarity or a sociological programme, but manifestation of a theological confession on the universal salvation offered by the Father, in Christ, through the Holy Spirit: “United in Christ, they are led by the Holy Spirit in their journey to the kingdom of their Father and they have welcomed the news of salvation which is meant for every man. That is why this community realizes that it is truly and intimately linked with mankind and its history” (GS 1).

The Church’s involvement in the socio-economic and political development of the world finds its ultimate reason in God’s plan of salvation that includes the whole human reality. More particularly, the Church’s social commitment is a continuation of the saving mission of Christ, the Incarnate Son of God, who came to redeem the world from the clutches of evil, to transform it in accordance with the Father’s salvific design, and to make it reach its fulfilment (GS 2 and 3). Through the Church, Christ continues to animate, purify, and strengthen the noble longings of the human person so as to render the earthly life more human and to achieve the final goal (GS 38). In other words, it is in the light of Christ that the Church becomes aware of the ultimate meaning of engaging in dialogue with the world and of solving its urgent problems (GS 10).

This consciousness of social commitment as a continuation of Christ’s mission as His Bride<sup>6</sup> and as an imitation of His service to the world<sup>7</sup> revealed in the conciliar reflections a “shift” from an *ecclesiocentric* to *Christocentric* view of the Church’s identity and mission.<sup>8</sup> At the same time, it gave a new ecclesiological basis to the social mission of the Church, as Richard McBrien attests:

The mission of the Church, to be sure, includes essentially, but not exclusively, the preaching of the gospel and the celebration of the sacraments. Until Vatican II, however, the so-called social apostolate (which encompassed all of the Church’s pastoral activities in service to individuals in their physical and economic needs, but which also included the reform of unjust political and economic structures, demanded by the virtue of social justice) was generally subsumed under the heading of ‘pre-evangelization,’ that is, ecclesial activities that were considered a necessary precondition for the effective implementation

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<sup>6</sup>Cf. T. Howland Sanks, “The Social Mission of the Church: Its Changing Contexts”, *Louvain Studies* 25, no. (2000)34.

<sup>7</sup>Cf. Justin Rigali, *Reliving Vatican II: It’s all about Jesus Christ* (Chicago [IL]: Liturgy Training Publications, 2006), 33.

<sup>8</sup>Cf. Timothy G. McCarthy, *The Catholic Tradition: The Church in the Twentieth Century*, 2<sup>nd</sup> rev. ed. (Chicago [IL]: Loyola Press, 1998) 89.

of its essential missionary responsibilities of word and sacrament, but not an integral part of that mission.<sup>9</sup>

The Pastoral Constitution emphasizes that the Church exists *in* the world, lives and acts with it, undergoes the same earthly lot as the world, and goes forward “together with humanity” (GS 40). The expression “in” in the title reiterates that the Church is standing neither opposite to nor facing the world, but is present in it;<sup>10</sup> it is “woven into the very fabric of the world”.<sup>11</sup> In this way, the conciliar Church has “transformed the implicit assumption into a theological conceptualization that integrated the social mission with the rest of ecclesiology”.<sup>12</sup> In *Gaudium et Spes*, the social dimension of Christian faith has taken, so to say, a “decisive ecclesiological turn”.<sup>13</sup>

At the level of praxis, this new theological vision instilled extraordinary stimulus for the social commitment of Christians across the world. It has provided an “ecclesiological legitimation”<sup>14</sup> for an active participation of Christians in the transformation of the world, particularly through direct organization and governance of the society at all levels. Furthermore, it explicitly reminds us that the Christian commitment to transform the earthly life is integral to the realisation of the Kingdom of God:

Therefore, while we are warned that it profits a man nothing if he gain the whole world and lose himself, the expectation of a new earth must not weaken but rather stimulate our concern for cultivating this one. For here grows the body of a new human family, a body which even now is able to give some

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<sup>9</sup>Cf. Richard P. McBrien, *The Church: The Evolution of Catholicism* (New York: HarperOne, 2008) 169.

<sup>10</sup>Cf. Charles Moeller, “Preface and Introductory Statement”, in *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II. Vol. 5: Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*, ed. Herbert Vorgrimler (New York: Crossroad, 1989) 81.

<sup>11</sup>M. Basil Pennington, *Vatican II: We’ve Only Just Begun* (New York: Crossroad, 1994) 110.

<sup>12</sup>Kenneth R. Himes, “Vatican II and Contemporary Politics”, in *The Catholic Church and the Nation-State: Comparative Perspectives*, ed. Paul C. Manuel, Lawrence C. Reardon, and Clyde Wilcox (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2006) 23.

<sup>13</sup>Richard P. McBrien, “An Ecclesiological Analysis of Catholic Social Teachings”, in *Catholic Social Thought and the New World Order: Building on One Hundred Years*, (eds.) Oliver F. Williams and John W. Houch (Notre Dame [IN]: University of Notre Dame Press, 1993) 157.

<sup>14</sup>On how *Gaudium et Spes* influenced the Catholic Church’s social commitment in the world, see, J. Bryan Hehir, “Church-State and Church-World: The Ecclesiological Implications”, *The Catholic Theological Society of America: Proceedings* 41, no. (1986).

kind of foreshadowing of the new age. Hence, while earthly progress must be carefully distinguished from the growth of Christ's Kingdom, to the extent that the former can contribute to the better ordering of human society, it is of vital concern to the Kingdom of God. (GS 39)

The Council goes even to the extent of "condemning" the error of separating Christian faith from the responsibility for building the human society:

This Council exhorts Christians, as citizens of two cities, to strive to discharge their earthly duties conscientiously and in response to the Gospel spirit. [...] Therefore, let there be no false opposition between professional and social activities on the one part, and religious life on the other. The Christian who neglects his temporal duties neglects his duties toward his neighbour and even God, and jeopardizes his eternal salvation. [...] In the exercise of all their earthly activities, they can thereby gather their humane, domestic, professional, social, and technical enterprises into one vital synthesis with religious values, under whose supreme direction all things are harmonized unto God's glory (GS 43).<sup>15</sup>

Even while reiterating the fundamentally "religious" mission of the Church, it expounds its social implication:

Christ, to be sure, gave his Church no proper mission in the political, economic, or social order. The purpose which he set before her is a religious one. But out of this religious mission itself come a function, a light, and an energy which can serve to structure and consolidate the human community according to the divine law. As a matter of fact, when circumstances of time and place create the need, she can and indeed should initiate activities on behalf of all men. This is particularly true of activities designed for the needy, such as the works of mercy and similar undertakings (GS 42).

For *Gaudium et Spes*, "preaching" the Good News meant instilling the world with the light of the Gospel. That is why the Conciliar fathers have included in the second part of the pastoral constitution some of the "urgent issues" that tormented the Conciliar times which needed appropriate theological and moral reflections. Ignoring such a commitment was perceived to have salvific consequences (GS 43), as pointed out earlier. It is this theological vision that gave birth to a new understanding of the mission of the Church, as well-captured in the judgement: "A socially active church is not a distraction from gospel ministry; it is an

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<sup>15</sup>For similar insights see, *Gaudium et Spes*, 39 and 57.



essential component of that ministry”.<sup>16</sup> As Richard McCormack would put it, “She does not civilize in order to evangelize (a kind of *removens prohibens*). She civilizes because that is an essential aspect of evangelizing. It is the most concrete and effective, indeed, indispensable way of communicating to human beings their real worth – that is, the good news. Proclamation of the gospel is by inner necessity concern for those to whom the gospel is proclaimed.”<sup>17</sup>

The above discussion demonstrates that the relation between Evangelisation and liberation envisioned in *EN* was in continuity and conformity with the renewed commitment of the conciliar Church to bring the Gospel to the socio-economic and political realities. Literally it paved the way for actualisation of such a relation.

### *Landmark Initiatives of Paul VI*

Before we move on to the second influential factor, we must note in passing the initial impact of *Gaudium et Spes* on some of the landmark initiatives of Pope Paul VI. Two years after the closing of the Council, Paul VI issued the social encyclical *Populorum Progressio*.<sup>18</sup> Under the inspiration of *Gaudium et Spes*, in the introductory articles, he pointed out the Church’s “close attention” to those who are suffering from the ravages of hunger, misery, endemic diseases and ignorance, and reaffirmed the duty of the Church: “Following on the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council a renewed consciousness of the demands of the Gospel makes it her duty to put herself at the service of all, to help them grasp their serious problem in all its dimensions, and to convince them that solidarity in action at this turning point in human history is a matter of urgency” (*PP* 1).

He even set up a Pontifical Commission “Justice and Peace” at the level of the Universal Church to promote in knowledge and in practice Christian commitment to the socio-economic development of poorer peoples across the globe (*PP* 5), in response to the request made by the Council (*GS* 90). Further on, he showed the relation between the Church’s missionary mandate and human progress in these words: “True to the teaching and example of her divine Founder, who cited the preaching of the Gospel to the poor as a sign of his mission, the Church has

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<sup>16</sup>Joseph Bernardin, “The Impact of Vatican II: Church in the Modern World”, *Origins*, 17 October 1985, 308.

<sup>17</sup>Richard A. McCormack, *The Critical Calling: Reflections on Moral Dilemmas Since Vatican II* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2006) 12-14.

<sup>18</sup>Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio*. Encyclical Letter on Development of Peoples (26 March 1967) in *AAS* 59 (1967) 257-299.

never failed to foster the human progress of the nations to which she brings faith in Christ" (PP 12). Lastly, he also instituted the World Day of Peace on the first day of the civil year. The Message issued on this occasion, which his successors continue even today, forms a part of the Catholic social teaching on peace.

For Paul VI, catering to the growth of the whole human person and the development of the whole humanity was a sign of Gospel's presence in the world. In other words, he perceived an *integral relationship* between Evangelization and liberation.

### ***Liberation Theology and Evangelization***

The impetus given by *Gaudium et Spes* and Paul VI with regard to the social mission of the Church directly influenced the emergence of Liberation Theology in Latin America and, gradually, also in the other continents. As in the case of the Second Vatican Council, there exist many conflicting interpretations of Liberation Theology. Nevertheless, one can conclusively affirm that Liberation Theology has changed the traditional perception of Evangelization. It has imprinted the conviction that the preaching of the Good News must liberate people also from systemic socio-economic and political oppressions.

As Gustavo Gutierrez has pointed out, it is fundamentally a *theological* reflection born of the experience of shared efforts to eliminate the prevailing unjust and oppressive situation and to build a freer and more humane society. To do so, Liberation Theology reconsiders the great themes of the Christian life from the perspective of *liberation*. He justifies the choice of the term 'liberation', because it is more exact and all-embracing than 'development'. From the perspective of faith, liberation in Christ is a total gift and forms a single salvific process. In brief, theologically considered, liberation is about the very meaning of Christianity and about the Church's mission on earth.<sup>19</sup>

The intimate relation between liberation of the oppressed and Evangelization, as envisaged in Liberation Theology, has enriched the Catholic Social Teaching with another fundamental social principle, namely, the Principle of Option for

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<sup>19</sup>See the introduction to the original edition: Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation*, rev. ed. (Maryknoll [NY]: Orbis Books, 2007) xiii-xv.

the Poor.<sup>20</sup> In the soil of its theological formulation, it meant redesigning the relationship between the Church and the poor: asking the former to take a clear stand in favour of the latter and to avoid collusion with oppressive regimes. At a larger level, it has become one of the permanent parameters to evaluate the concern for the poor and powerless in the society and in the Church.<sup>21</sup> For Christians, such an option has expounded even more convincingly the political dimension of the faith. In the inspiring words of Blessed Archbishop Romero:

The political dimension of the faith is nothing other than the Church's response to the demands made upon it by the de facto socio-political world in which it exists. What we have discovered is that this demand is a fundamental one for the faith, and that the Church cannot ignore it. [...] I am talking about an authentic option for the poor, of becoming incarnate in their world, of proclaiming the good news to them, of giving them hope, of encouraging them to engage in a liberating praxis, of defending their cause and of sharing their fate. [...] The church's option for the poor explains the political dimension of the faith in its fundamentals and in its basic outline. Because the Church has opted for the truly poor, not for the fictitiously poor, because it has opted for those who really are oppressed and repressed, the church lives in a political world, and it fulfils itself as church also through politics. It cannot be otherwise if the Church, like Jesus, is to turn itself toward the poor.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>For Donal Dorr's critical analysis of the "option for the poor" in the social documents of the Roman Catholic Church, see Donal Dorr, *Option for the Poor: A Hundred Years of Vatican Social Teaching*, rev. ed. (Maryknoll [NY]: Orbis, 1992); Donal Dorr, "Preferential Option for the Poor," in *The New Dictionary of Catholic Social Thought*, (ed.) Judith A. Dwyer (Collegeville [MN]: Liturgical Press, 1994) 755-759; Donal Dorr, "Option for the Poor Re-visited," in *Catholic Social Thought: Twilight or Renaissance?*, ed. Jonathan S. Boswell, Francis P. McHugh, and Johan Verstraeten, BETL, no. 157 (Leuven: Leuven University Press and Uitgeverij Peeters, 2000) 249-262. See also, Daniel G. Groody, (ed.) *The Option for the Poor in Christian Theology* (Notre Dame [IN]: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007); José M. Vigil, "Option for the Poor is an Option for Justice; It is not Preferential: A New Theological-Systematic Framework for the Option for the Poor", *East Asian Pastoral Review* 42, no. 4 (2005) 321-335.

<sup>21</sup>For the analysis of the "option for the poor" in the social documents of the Roman Catholic Church, see Donal Dorr, *Option for the Poor and for the Earth: Catholic Social Teaching* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2012).

<sup>22</sup>The citation is from the Address entitled, "The Political Dimension of the Faith from the Perspective of the Option for the Poor," delivered by Archbishop Oscar Romero on the occasion of the conferral of a Doctorate Honoris Causa, by the University of Louvain, Belgium, on 2<sup>nd</sup> February 1980. See, Oscar Romero, *Voice of the Voiceless: The Four Pastoral Letters and Other Statements*, trans., Michael J. Walsh (1985) 182-183.

Even many years after the initial burst, not only the Catholic Social Teaching<sup>23</sup> but a vast gamut of Christian reflections – Christian theology,<sup>24</sup> Christian witness,<sup>25</sup> biblical studies,<sup>26</sup> etc., – continue to be re-examined from the perspective of such an option. The following judgement represents those who acknowledge the contribution of Liberation theologians to the Scripture-based theological reflections on social injustices in today's world: "They continue to offer one of the most fruitful, challenging and prophetic perspectives to Christians as they struggle to promote social justice".<sup>27</sup>

Thus Liberation Theology has sketched out a *liberative relationship* between Evangelization and social mission of the Church.

### ***Justice and Evangelization: The Perspective of Justice in the World***

The third decisive stimulus on Evangelization-liberation vision came from the brief but explosive document issued by the Synod of Bishops entitled, "Justice in the World". The new vision of the Church's social mission in the world from *Gaudium et Spes*, the necessity of integral development for peace in the world envisaged in *Populorum Progressio*, and the prophetic Option for the Poor of Liberation Theology paved the way also for the Synod of Bishops to reflect on systemic injustice in the world and the Church's response to it.

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<sup>23</sup>See for instance, the well-known examination of Catholic social documents of the Church from the perspective of the poor: Dorr, *Option for the Poor: A Hundred Years of Vatican Social Teaching*. His updated scrutiny includes also the Option for the earth. See, Dorr, *Option for the Poor and for the Earth: Catholic Social Teaching*.

<sup>24</sup>Daniel Groody brings together, for example, critical reflections on various theological disciplines in their relation to the concept of Option for the Poor. See, Groody, (ed.) *The Option for the Poor in Christian Theology*.

<sup>25</sup>Bryant Myers argues how the central concern for the poor in Christian ministry could lead to transformational development of the society. See, Bryant L. Myers, *Walking with the Poor: Principles and Practices of Transformational Development*, rev.ed. ed. (Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, 2011).

<sup>26</sup>Bruce W. Longenecker appeals for a rethink on the traditional interpretation of Paul's (lack of) concern for the poor. See, Bruce W. Longenecker, *Remember the Poor: Paul, Poverty, and the Greco-Roman World* (Grand Rapids [MI] and Cambridge, UK: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010). For reflections on the social obligations of the wealthy Christians towards the needs of the poor in the teachings and practices of early Christian communities, see Susan Holman, (ed.) *Wealth and Poverty in Early Church and Society* (Grand Rapids [MI]: Baker Academic, 2008).

<sup>27</sup>Michael P. Hornsby-Smith, *An Introduction to Catholic Social Thought* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006) 52.

Right at the introductory section of the final document, the Bishops expressed the constitutive relation between the Church's vocation to proclaim the Good News and her commitment to justice in the world: "Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel, or, in other words, of the Church's mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation".<sup>28</sup> According to Ronald Hamel, by employing the term "constitutive", the Synod has underscored "the centrality and indispensability of the work of justice in the preaching and living out of the gospel and in the church's mission. Without it, the church would not be true to itself or to its vocation".<sup>29</sup>

Moreover, inspired by the revelation of God in the Old Testament as "liberator of the oppressed and the defender of the poor" and in the New Testament in Jesus Christ who proclaimed "the intervention of God's justice on behalf of the needy and the oppressed," they reiterated that the credibility of the Christian message of love and justice depended on its realisation in the cause of justice in the world.<sup>30</sup> Consequently, they saw that it was incumbent on the Church to proclaim a liberating justice in the world:

The Church has received from Christ the mission of preaching the Gospel message, which contains a call to man to turn away from sin to the love of the Father, universal brotherhood, and a consequent demand for justice in the world. This is the reason why the Church has the right, indeed the duty, to proclaim justice on the social, national, and international level, and to denounce instances of injustice, when the fundamental rights of man and his very salvation demand it. The Church, indeed, is not alone responsible for justice in the world; however, she has a proper and specific responsibility which is identified with her mission of giving witness before the world of the need for love and justice contained in the Gospel message, a witness to be carried out in Church institutions themselves and in the lives of Christians.<sup>31</sup>

Further on, along with other concrete measures to eliminate injustice, the Synod pointed out the necessity of education for justice through day-to-day liturgical celebrations: "The liturgy of the word, catechesis, and the celebration

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<sup>28</sup>See the end of the introductory part of *Justice in the World*, in O'Brien and Shannon, eds., *Catholic Social Thought: The Documentary Heritage*, 310.

<sup>29</sup>Ronald Hamel, "Justice in the World", in *The New Dictionary of Catholic Social Thought*, Judith A. Dwyer (ed.) (Collegeville [MN]: Liturgical Press, 1994) 496.

<sup>30</sup>Cf. O'Brien and Shannon, (eds.), *Catholic Social Thought: The Documentary Heritage*, 310-311.

<sup>31</sup>*Ibid.*, 311.

of the sacraments have the power to help us to discover the teaching of the prophets, the Lord, and the apostles on the subject of justice”.<sup>32</sup> Finally, going beyond a paternalistic vision, the document ended with the Church’s appeal to the protagonist participation of the poor in their liberation: “At the same time as it proclaims the Gospel of the Lord, its Redeemer and Saviour, the Church calls on all, especially the poor, the oppressed and the afflicted, to cooperate with God to bring about liberation from every sin and to build a world which will reach the fullness of creation only when it becomes the work of man for man”.<sup>33</sup>

Amidst “mixed” reactions to this path-breaking synod document,<sup>34</sup> what impresses us for our discussion here is its unambiguous theological conviction on the inseparable relationship between preaching the Good News and the liberation of the poor and oppressed from unjust socio-economic and political structures. Every authentic form of commitment that contributes to human welfare is considered as a credible way of bringing the Gospel into the lives of oppressed humanity. Through this Synod, the Catholic Church has reiterated, in the judgement of A. Roxas, that “there is a great difficulty in convincing mankind to accept the truth of a loving God who is the Father of all men, when a great number of them are chained to the shackles of oppression”.<sup>35</sup>

Moreover, this little document has breathed energetic justice perspectives into the development of Catholic Social Teaching in the post-Vatican II era.<sup>36</sup> Among the various contributions, J. Sniegock highlights the following: “heightened attention to a critical, structural analysis of injustice, emphasis on the centrality of justice in the Christian faith and in the institutional life of the Church, greater stress on ecological issues, and affirmation of the need for grassroots social

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<sup>32</sup>*Ibid.*, 314.

<sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*, 318.

<sup>34</sup>For various reactions to this epoch-making document, see Kenneth R. Himes, “Commentary on *Justitia in mundo* (Justice in the World)”, in *Modern Catholic Social Teaching: Commentaries and Interpretations*, ed. Kenneth R. Himes (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2005) 333-362.

<sup>35</sup>Antonia Emma R. Roxas, “Justice in the World”, in *Encyclopedia of Catholic Social Thought, Social Science, and Social Policy*, (eds.) Michael L. Coulter et al. (Lanham [MD] and Plymouth, UK: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2007) 590.

<sup>36</sup>See, for instance, the critical analysis of Johan Verstraeten, “Justice Subordinated to Love?: The Changing Agenda of Catholic Social Teaching Since *Populorum Progressio*”, in *Responsibility, God and Society: Theological Ethics in Dialogue*, (eds.) Johan De Tavernier et al. (Leuven, Paris and Dudley, MA: Peeters, 2008) 389-405.

movements that are actively committed to the cause of social justice”.<sup>37</sup> It has also provoked serious theological reflections on justice and faith,<sup>38</sup> justice and spirituality,<sup>39</sup> justice and holiness,<sup>40</sup> etc. In other words, this document has instilled a *justice perspective* in the post-conciliar discussion on the relation between evangelization and liberation.

## 2. Evangelization and Liberation in *Evangelii Nuntiandi*

In the light of these rapid and stimulating developments, we shall now examine what *EN* itself says on the theme at hand. Paul VI acknowledges that the Church’s evangelizing mission is a continuation of the Good News preached by Jesus Christ, the “first and the greatest evangelizer” (*EN* 7). It is from Christ that the Church learns the meaning, content and modes of Evangelization in every epoch. For Christ, the kernel and center of His Good News is *salvation*, which is undoubtedly God’s gift, “which is liberation from everything that oppresses people, particularly liberation from sin and the Evil One” (*EN* 9), a gift of His grace and mercy (*EN* 27). But, what does ‘salvation’ mean? What are its constitutive elements?

Initially, the document replies in unambiguous terms that it is “liberation from everything that oppresses man but which is above all liberation from sin and the Evil One” (*EN* 9). In fact, Christ carried out His proclamation both by way of preaching (*EN* 11) and by innumerable “signs” for the sick, the needy, the hungry and the deceased. Among all these signs, He attached great importance to evangelization of the humble and the poor (*EN* 12).

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<sup>37</sup>John Sniegocki, *Catholic Social Teaching and Economic Globalization: The Quest for Alternatives* (Milwaukee [WI]: Marquette University Press, 2009) 138-139.

<sup>38</sup>Cf. Walter J. Burghardt, “Spirituality and Justice”, in *Ethics and Spirituality*, Charles E. Curran and Lisa A. Fullam, (eds.) *Readings in Moral Theology*, 17 (New York and Mahwah [NJ]: Paulist Press, 2014) 183-205; Philomena Cullen, Bernard Hoose, and Gerard Mannion, *Catholic Social Justice: Theological and Practical Explorations* (New York: T & T Clark, 2007); Fred Kammer, *Doing Faithjustice: An Introduction to Catholic Social Thought*, rev. ed. (Mahwah [NJ]: Paulist Press, 2004); Thomas Massaro, *Living Justice: Catholic Social Teaching in Action* (Lanham [MD]: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2008).

<sup>39</sup>Cf. Daniel G. Groody, *Globalization, Spirituality, and Justice: Navigating the Path to Peace* (Maryknoll [NY]: Orbis Books, 2007); Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice, *Windows on Social Spirituality* (Dublin: The Columba Press, 2003); Thomas Punnapadam, *Justice as Spirituality* (Bangalore: Kristu Jyoti Publications, 1991); Margaret Scott, *The Eucharist and Social Justice* (New York and Mahwah [NJ]: Paulist Press, 2009).

<sup>40</sup>Cf. Brandon Vogt, *Saints and Social Justice: A Guide to Changing the World* (Huntington [IN]: Our Sunday Visitor, 2014).

The document clarifies further that it is not an “immanent salvation,” one that caters to material needs, conceived within the framework of temporal existence and even completely identified with desires, hopes, affairs and struggles of this world. It is rather “a salvation which exceeds all these limits in order to reach fulfilment in a communion with the one and only divine Absolute ... which indeed has its beginning in this life but which is fulfilled in eternity” (EN 27). The salvation that the Church proclaims is transcendent and eschatological in nature, because it deals with “man’s profound and definitive calling” (EN 28). Of course it deals with things here on earth, but goes beyond the visible and transient reality in time and history (EN 28).

Soon after clarifying the eschatological nature of salvation, the Pope proceeds to elucidate its relation to “liberation.” In doing so, he wants to remove the ambiguity that surrounds the word “liberation” (EN 38). To this end, he begins with a general preliminary affirmation: “evangelization would not be complete if it did not take account of the unceasing interplay of the Gospel and of man’s concrete life, both personal and social” (EN 29). The Pope could not have said better or clearer about liberation as a constitutive element of the “religious” mission of proclaiming the Gospel. Without any reference to the day-to-day life struggles of people, the task of evangelizing would remain *incomplete*. He goes on to articulate the specific areas that must hear the liberative message: the family, the social life, the international community promotion of justice, peace and development (EN 29).

His liberative horizon gets even more extensive as he enlists the ills from which the society must be liberated: famine, chronic disease, illiteracy, poverty, injustices in international relations in commercial exchanges, and economic and cultural neo-colonialism. In response, he reiterates a series of duties that are incumbent on the Church: the duty to proclaim the liberation of humanity from the ills mentioned above, the duty to assist the emergence of such a liberation, the duty to give witness to it, and the duty to ensure that it is complete. To crown it all, he affirms, “This is not foreign to evangelisation” (EN 30).

Naturally, such a significant affirmation requires an unwavering foundation. In fact, he points out three-fold “profound links” between evangelization and human advancement. First, there is a link at the *anthropological* level, that is, Evangelization deals with the human person who is subject to social and economic questions. Secondly, the redemption realised in Christ touches the concrete life-situations where injustice must be combatted and justice must be restored. Hence, at this *theological* level, the plan of creation cannot be disassociated from



the plan of redemption. Thirdly, at the *evangelical* level, the proclamation of the commandment of love requires promotion of authentic advancement of the human person in justice and in peace (EN 31).

After demonstrating theologically the profound link between Evangelization and human promotion, the Pope returns to clarify further possible misunderstanding in this regard. He reiterates that the Church's mission cannot be reduced to a temporal project, a man-centred goal, or to mere material well-being. The activities of the Church cannot be perceived to be initiatives of the political or social order. When her religious and spiritual preoccupations are neglected, then the Church will lose her fundamental meaning. Her message of liberation would lose its originality and would easily fall prey to monopolization and manipulation of ideological systems and political parties. If the religious axis does not guide the mission of the Church, then her very reason for existence would be lost (EN 32). In other words, the reason for the Church's commitment to liberation cannot be confined to economic, political, social or cultural spheres. It is truly human-centred: "it must envisage the whole man, in all his aspects, right up to and including his openness to the absolute, even the divine Absolute" (EN 33).

On the other hand, the document confirms that the Church's mission cannot be restricted to the religious field, dissociating herself completely from the temporal problems that beset humanity. Nevertheless, it reaffirms the primacy of her spiritual vocation – unwilling to replace the proclamation of the Kingdom of God with the proclamation of human liberation. In other words, just as Evangelization would be incomplete without a message of liberation, the human liberation too would be incomplete without proclaiming salvation in Jesus Christ (EN 34).

Put differently, human liberation and salvation in Jesus Christ are closely linked, but are not identified. It is so because not every notion of liberation is consistent and compatible with the evangelical vision of the human person, of things and of events. Moreover, the coming of the Kingdom of God cannot be equated with establishing liberation, well-being or development. No temporal liberation can pretend to reach its ideal, unless its profound motives are found in establishing justice in charity, its zeal is guided by a truly spiritual dimension, and its final goal is salvation and happiness in God (EN 35).

Similarly, as a concrete expression of liberation, the Church recognises the importance of building up structures that are more respectful of the person and are less oppressive and enslaving. At the same time, she is conscious of the possibility that even the best structures could become inhuman without the conversion of

the human heart and of outlook (*EN 36*). The external societal transformation must go hand in hand with an internal personal conversion of heart.

Such a transformation cannot however be carried out by inhuman and unchristian means, such as violence. The Church rejects violent means for two principal reasons. First, at the human level, violence always provokes violence. Once it is let loose, the force of arms becomes uncontrollable and causes indiscriminate loss of lives. Contrary to the desired objective of liberation, violence irresistibly engenders new forms of oppression and enslavement. Instead of advancing social uplifting, it can delay the fulfilment of lawful aspirations. Sudden or violent structural changes are indeed deceitful, ineffective, and are contrary to the dignity of the people. Secondly, at the evangelical level, violence is contrary to the Christian spirit and is not in accord with the Gospel (*EN 37*).

Having rejected violence, the Church proposes certain evangelical means to achieve liberation. Among them the most important one consists in encouraging Christians to work for liberation. These Christian liberators will be inspired by faith, motivated by fraternal love, and guided by the Catholic Social Teaching that would have to be translated into forms of action, participation and commitment. Moreover, such a Christian participation will always be inserted within the larger and ultimate perspective, namely, the universal plan of salvation (*EN 38*).

In addition to the creation of just structures, the Christian concept of liberation includes the necessity of ensuring fundamental human rights. Among them, the right to religious freedom occupies a prime place (*EN 39*). On their part, the Christians must exercise their right to proclaim Christ with total respect for the freedom of the hearer, without coercion, or dishonourable or unworthy pressure (*EN 80*).

Elsewhere in the document, Paul VI relates Evangelization to human life and activities. For example, he states that Evangelization does not consist only of the preaching and teaching of a doctrine. It must touch human life and give a new meaning to it through its evangelical perspectives (*EN 47*). For the Church, evangelizing means transforming from within every strata of humanity and converting all the activities in which the people are involved and the lives and concrete milieu in which they live (*EN 18*). Again, in the list of those who are responsible for the task of Evangelization, there is an explicit reference to lay people who are called upon to proclaim the Gospel in the world of politics, society, economics, culture, family, etc. (*EN 70*).

One cannot fail to observe here Paul VI's measured judgement on how Evangelization and liberation (human promotion) are related to each other. According to Robert Schreiter, there is a sense of hesitation, even an ambivalence, in it. On the one hand, it is convinced that liberation from injustice and oppression is consonant with the Gospel. Nevertheless, it is not very comfortable with inserting such a concept into traditional Christian language of 'salvation'. The causes of such discomfort are by now well-known and thoroughly discussed: diversity of the meaning attributed to the term 'liberation'; lack of clarity about the anthropology that sustains liberation theology; the risk of diminishing the role of individual sin and the need for conversion; the possibility of obscuring fundamental notions of spiritual salvation; the use of violence as a legitimate means for achieving liberation, etc.<sup>41</sup> All said and done, it acknowledged that liberation was a legitimate approach to Evangelization.

G. Biancardi too makes a similar evaluation. First, Paul VI avoids any *confusion* between Evangelization and human promotion. At the same time, he avoids any *disassociation* between these two tasks of the Church, taking care to avoid any exclusion of human promotion from the proclamation of the Gospel. Finally, he avoids *reducing* Evangelization to mere human promotion. Put positively, EN describes the relation between these two in terms of *distinction*, *integration* and *subordination* of human promotion to the salvation announced through Evangelization.<sup>42</sup>

The complexity of the issue is due to the fact it presupposes a host of theological discussions: the relation between the Church and the world; the meaning of *mission* for the Church; the distinction between the so-called profane and the religious; the psychological understanding of the human person; the practical consequences of a truly incarnational Church etc. After clarifying all these presuppositions, he concludes that development of human society is not an indirect form or preparation for evangelization, but a genuine way of Evangelization and a direct form of fulfilling the Church's mission.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup>Cf. Robert Schreiter, "Evangelii Nuntiandi", in *The New Dictionary of Catholic Social Thought*, Judith A. Dwyer (ed.) (Collegeville [MN]: Liturgical Press, 1994) 362.

<sup>42</sup>Cf. Giuseppe Biancardi, "Educazione tra evangelizzazione e promozione umana. Da *Gravissimum educationis* a *Evangelii nuntiandi*", in *Evangelizzazione e educazione*, (eds.) Andrea Bozzolo and Roberto Carelli (Roma: LAS, 2011) 51-53 [19-53].

<sup>43</sup>These are elaborated in: D.S. Amalorapavadass, *Theology of Development* (Bangalore: National Biblical, Catechetical and Liturgical Centre, 1979).

To conclude, one can agree with Donal Dorr that *EN* has made a significant contribution toward a better understanding of the issue of liberation and the Church's role in it, despite the elements of incompleteness in the way Paul VI has treated it. Indeed the word 'liberation' has gained a 'real theological respectability'.<sup>44</sup>

### **3. Evangelization and Human Promotion after *Evangelii Nuntiandi***

The intrinsic relationship between Evangelization and liberation outlined in *EN* began to permeate increasingly the Social Teachings of the Church of the successors of Paul VI.

#### ***John Paul II on Human Promotion and Evangelization***

The long pontificate of John Paul II has seen numerous pronouncements on Evangelization, particularly on "New Evangelization." As mentioned earlier, we shall focus our attention on what his social encyclicals affirm on the relation between Evangelization and human promotion.

#### ***Evangelization and Human Work (Laborem Exercens)***<sup>45</sup>

In the social encyclical on human work, Pope John Paul II affirms that work is a fundamental dimension of human existence within the original design of the Creator (*LE* 4). As a "Subject of the work" (*LE* 6), the whole human person – body and spirit – is involved in it. It is to the whole person that the evangelical message of salvation is also addressed (*LE* 24). Hence, he envisages a specific task for the Church also in the field of work:

The Church considers it her duty to speak out on work from the viewpoint of its human value and of the moral order to which it belongs, and she sees this as one of her important tasks within the service that she renders to the evangelical message as a whole. At the same time she sees it as her particular duty *to form a spirituality of work* which will help all people to come closer, through work, to God, the Creator and Redeemer, to participate in his salvific plan for man and the world and to deepen their friendship with Christ in their lives by accepting, through faith, a living participation in his threefold mission as Priest, Prophet and King, as the Second Vatican Council so eloquently teaches (*LE* 24).

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<sup>44</sup>See, Dorr, *Option for the Poor and for the Earth: Catholic Social Teaching*, 220-236.

<sup>45</sup>John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens*. Encyclical Letter on Human Work (14 September 1981) in *AAS* 73 (1981) 577-647.

### *Evangelization and Social Concern (Sollicitudo Rei Socialis)*<sup>46</sup>

In *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, which commemorates the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *Populorum Progressio*, too, John Paul II begins by pointing out the holistic development of the human person as the primary motive of Church's continued interest in the social sphere: "The social concern of the Church, directed towards an authentic development of man and society which would respect and promote all the dimensions of the human person, has always expressed itself in the most varied ways" (SRS 1). This is the underlying reason behind the Church's active role in leading people to respond to be "responsible builders of earthly society" (SRS 1).

He goes on to defend Paul VI's thoughts on the legitimacy and necessity of the Church to speak of authentic development of peoples, as an application of the Word of God to social life and activities: "when the Church concerns herself with the 'development of peoples,' she cannot be accused of going outside her own specific field of competence and, still less, outside the mandate received from the Lord" (SRS 8). Furthermore, he inserts the theme of development within the original design of the Creator and denounces that any attempt to renounce the difficult yet noble task of ameliorating the socio-economic condition of the people would be a betrayal of the will of God the Creator (SRS 30). In the light of faith in Christ the Redeemer, the Church is obliged by her vocation to concern herself with issues of development, misery and suffering (SRS 31).

In harmony with one of the fundamental perspectives of Liberation Theology, John Paul II affirms: "By virtue of her own evangelical duty the Church feels called to take her stand beside the poor, to discern the justice of their requests, and to help satisfy them, without losing sight of the good of groups in the context of the common good" (SRS 39). Even more emphatically, he points out that the Church extends her religious mission to the socio-economic and political fields and has something unique to say about the various aspects of authentic human development: "In doing so the Church fulfils her mission to *evangelize*, for she offers her *first* contribution to the solution of the urgent problem of development when she proclaims the truth about Christ, about herself and about man, applying this truth to a concrete situation" (SRS 41). A little later, he reiterates: "The teaching and spreading of her social doctrine are part of the Church's evangelizing mission. [...] The condemnation of evils and injustices is also part of that ministry

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<sup>46</sup>John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*. Encyclical Letter on Social Concern (30 December 1987) in *AAS* 80 (1988) 513-586.

of Evangelization in the social field which is an aspect of the Church's prophetic role" (SRS 41).

### *Evangelization and the Social Question (Centesimus Annus)*

In his third social encyclical *Centesimus Annus*,<sup>47</sup> John Paul II revisits the development of Catholic Social Teaching from the time of *Rerum Novarum*. Here too he underlines the responsibility of Christian Pastors to analyse the current events in order to discern the new requirements of Evangelization, even if passing definitive judgements on them does not fall *per se* within the specific domain of the Magisterium (CA 3). Very inspiring too is his endorsement of Leo XIII's intervention in the socio-economic and political field against the established practices and perspectives of his time. And the fundamental motivation for doing so lies in the intrinsic relation between Evangelization and human promotion in the society:

In effect, to teach and to spread her social doctrine pertains to the Church's evangelizing mission and is an essential part of the Christian message, since this doctrine points out the direct consequences of that message in the life of society and situates daily work and struggles for justice in the context of bearing witness to Christ the Saviour. Today, at a distance of a hundred years, the validity of this approach affords me the opportunity to contribute to the development of Christian social doctrine. The 'new evangelization', which the modern world urgently needs and which I have emphasized many times, must include among its essential elements a proclamation of the Church's social doctrine (CA 5).

It follows then that the Catholic Social Teaching, which aims at promoting human welfare in the social sector, is an instrument of Evangelization:

Thus the Church's *social teaching* is itself a valid *instrument of Evangelization*. As such, it proclaims God and his mystery of salvation in Christ to every human being, and for that very reason reveals man to himself. In this light, and only in this light, does it concern itself with everything else: the human rights of the individual, and in particular of the 'working class', the family and education, the duties of the State, the ordering of national and international society, economic life, culture, war and peace, and respect for life from the moment of conception until death (CA 54).

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<sup>47</sup>John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*. Encyclical Letter on the Hundredth Anniversary of *Rerum Novarum* (1 May 1991) in *AAS* 83 (1991) 793-867.

While announcing the Kingdom of God, the Church is called to illumine also the temporal realities with the light of the Gospel (CA 25). It is her religious and transcendent mission to offer and communicate the life of God to the human person through the sacraments. However, this proclamation of God's love and salvation should pervade the whole human person (CA 55). The Church's particular attention to the poor, too, should not be seen as a social theory, but as an integral part of the Gospel's social message. The words of Jesus "as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me" (Mt 25:40) were not a pious wish but a concrete life commitment. And the credibility of the Church's social message does not lie in its internal logic and consistency but in the witness of actions it generates in view of a preferential option for the poor (CA 57).

### *Instruction on Liberation and Evangelization*

To the above-mentioned encyclicals, we must add the two Instructions issued by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, during the pontificate of John Paul II. The first one, *Libertatis Nuntius*,<sup>48</sup> was a brief 'note' on Liberation Theology or Liberation Theologies. It warned against certain undesirable aspects of the growing theological current.

The second one, which was issued two years later, *Libertatis Conscientia*<sup>49</sup> (LC), has a more systematic treatment on the Christian vision of liberation. For this reason, we shall make here a brief reference to the latter. The fourth chapter of this document, entitled "The Liberating Mission of the Church" (nos. 61-70), contains significant passages on the relationship between Evangelization and human promotion. It reiterates the Conciliar position that the Church's essential mission is a mission of Evangelization and salvation. Since this mission involves teaching the way to enter the Kingdom of God, which includes the whole moral order, and notably to the justice which must regulate human relations. This is considered as "part of the preaching of the Gospel" (LC 63). The following paragraph, which bears the title "Evangelization and the promotion of justice", offers a synthesis of this relation:

Therefore, when the Church speaks about the promotion of justice in human societies, or when she urges the faithful laity to work in this sphere according to their own vocation, she is not going beyond her mission. She is however concerned that this mission should not be absorbed by preoccupations concerning

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<sup>48</sup>Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Libertatis Nuntius*. Instruction on Certain Aspects of the 'Theology of Liberation' (6 August 1984) in AAS 76 (1984) 876-909.

<sup>49</sup>Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Libertatis Conscientia*. Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation (22 March 1986) in AAS 79 (1987) 554-599.

the temporal order or reduced to such preoccupations. Hence she takes great care to maintain clearly and firmly both the unity and the distinction between evangelization and human promotion: unity, because she seeks the good of the whole person; distinction, because these two tasks enter, in different ways, into her mission (LC 64).

What is to be underlined here is the nuanced position in terms of *unity* as well as *distinction* between the Church's mission of Evangelization and her commitment to human promotion. This would become the official teaching of the Church in the years to come. The document then goes on to articulate with a few examples how this delicate balance is maintained. It affirms that the Church continues to remain faithful to her mission even as she undertakes many social commitments such as the following: healing human misery and raising human dignity; promoting and strengthening justice and peace, condemning various forms of deviation, slavery and oppression; opposing atheistic forms of social organizations; and denouncing the use of inhuman and unchristian theories or methods to fight poverty and oppression (LC 65).

### *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*

The *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (CSDC)<sup>50</sup> was formulated at the explicit request of John Paul II.<sup>51</sup> He wanted it to show in clear terms the relation between new evangelization and Catholic social teachings. In this "approved synthesis of Catholic social doctrine,"<sup>52</sup> the entire Chapter 2 (CSDC 60-104) is dedicated to the theme of Catholic Social Doctrine and the Church's mission. The opening section of this Chapter contains also a sub-section entitled "Social Doctrine, Evangelization and Human Promotion" (CSDC 66-68). It conceives the Church's social mission within God's eternal plan of love and salvation and then affirms: "As minister of salvation, the Church is not in the abstract nor in a merely spiritual dimension, but in the context of the history and of the world in which man lives" (CSDC 60). And so, the Church proclaims the Gospel and makes it present in the complex network of social relations, which are not outside or foreign to the message and economy of salvation (CSDC 62).

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<sup>50</sup>Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (Vatican City: LEV, 2004).

<sup>51</sup>John Paul II, *Ecclesia in America*. Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation (22 January 1999), in *AAS* 91 (1999) 789-790, n. 54.

<sup>52</sup>Cf. Renato R. Martino, "Statement on New Social Justice Compendium", *Origins*, 4 November 2004, 329.



The document explicates further this relation thus: “Evangelizing the social sector, then, means infusing into the human heart the power of meaning and freedom found in the Gospel, in order to promote a society befitting mankind because it befits Christ: it means building a city of man that is more human because it is in greater conformity with the Kingdom of God” (CSDC 63). To ward of any doubt with regard to such a mission, it reiterates: “*With her social doctrine not only does the Church not stray from her mission but she is rigorously faithful to it.* The redemption wrought by Christ and entrusted to the saving mission of the Church is certainly of the supernatural order. This dimension is not a delimitation of salvation but rather an *integral* expression of it” (CSDC 64).

Such a perception of the Church’s mission paves the way for showing the necessity of relating the Church’s social doctrine, evangelization and human promotion. Recalling EN 29, the *Compendium* affirms: “*The Church’s social doctrine is an integral part of her evangelizing ministry.* Nothing that concerns the community of men and women – situations and problems regarding justice, freedom, development, relations between peoples, peace – is foreign to evangelization, and Evangelization would be incomplete if it did not take into account the mutual demands continually made by the Gospel and by the concrete, personal and social life of man” (CSDC 66). Then it describes Paul VI’s vision of the three-fold link between evangelization and human promotion (EN 31) at the anthropological, theological, and evangelical levels (CSDC 66). The Church’s active involvement in the daily struggle for justice is not a marginal interest or an activity that is tacked on to the spiritual mission of the Church. It is rather at the very heart of the Church’s ministry of service (CSDC 67). In fact, it perceives it as the Church’s “*right to proclaim the Gospel in the context of society,* to make the liberating word of the Gospel resound in the complex worlds of production, labour, business, finance, trade, politics, law, culture, social communications, where men and women live (CSDC 70).

These brief but recurring references to the relation between Evangelization and human promotion albeit through Catholic Social Teaching reiterate the central message of John Paul II’s pontificate, namely Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of man, is the centre of the universe and of history.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>53</sup>See the opening statement of his first encyclical: John Paul II, *Redemptor Hominis*. Encyclical Letter, 4 March 1979, n. 1 in AAS 71 (1979) 257-324.

## ***Benedict XVI on Evangelization and the Truth of Human Development***

Already in the opening line of *Caritas in Veritate*, Benedict XVI states that charity in truth is the primary driving force that sustains the authentic development of every human person and of all humanity and energizes people for courageous and generous involvement in the field of justice and peace (CV 1). It is charity that sustains micro-relationships such as friendship, family or any group and gives real substance to macro-relationships such as social, economic and political ones (CV 2).

While commemorating *Populorum Progressio* on its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary, he reiterates that without the interplay between the Gospel and human life in society, Evangelization would be incomplete. He also recognizes the profound link between Evangelization and human development and liberation. Bearing witness to Christ's charity, through works of justice, peace and development, is part and parcel of the Church's evangelical mission (CV 15). The basis of this insight lies in the fact Jesus Christ loves humanity and is concerned with the whole person. Pursuing further this theological path, he reaffirms Paul VI's vision that human progress is first and foremost a vocation, and according to the original design of God, each one is called upon to develop and fulfil it during the earthly pilgrimage. This is what justifies the Roman Pontiff's intervention in socio-economic and political matters (CV 16). Particularly, he emphasizes the necessity of the Gospel for any integral development.

In promoting development, the Christian faith does not rely on privilege or positions of power, nor even on the merits of Christians [...], but only on Christ, to whom every authentic vocation to integral human development must be directed. The Gospel is fundamental for development, because in the Gospel, Christ, "in the very revelation of the mystery of the Father and of his love, fully reveals humanity to itself". [...] Precisely because God gives a resounding "yes" to man, man cannot fail to open himself to the divine vocation to pursue his own development. The truth of development consists in its completeness: if it does not involve the whole man and every man, it is not true development (CV 18).

One must admit that Benedict XVI's profound theological insight on Evangelization and human promotion is emphatically expressed in his first encyclical *Deus Caritas Est*. In the second part of the encyclical, he perceives the Church's care for the human welfare as a manifestation of Trinitarian love. The Church that seeks Evangelization of the human person through Word and Sacrament, seeks to promote also the human person in various arenas of life and

activity. He calls such an activity a “service of charity” (DCE 19). Moreover, according to him, such a service of charity is “as essential to her as the ministry of the sacraments and preaching of the Gospel” (DCE 22). In fact this “ministry of charity” is not “a kind of welfare activity which could equally well be left to others, but is a part of her nature, an indispensable expression of her very being” (DCE 25).

However, when it comes to practical application, he also clarifies the extent to which the Church can get involved in the socio-political arena:

The just ordering of society and the State is a central responsibility of politics. [...] Building a just social and civil order, wherein each person receives what is his or her due, is an essential task which every generation must take up anew. As a political task, this cannot be the Church’s immediate responsibility. Yet, since it is also a most important human responsibility, the Church is duty-bound to offer, through the purification of reason and through ethical formation, her own specific contribution towards understanding the requirements of justice and achieving them politically. The Church cannot and must not take upon herself the political battle to bring about the most just society possible. She cannot and must not replace the State. Yet at the same time she cannot and must not remain on the sidelines in the fight for justice (DCE 28).

Thus, he shows the inseparable relation between proclaiming the Word of God, celebrating the sacraments and being engaged in the ministry of charity because they express the deepest nature of the Church (DCE 25). At the same time, he is also convinced of the unique way in which the Church manifests the social dimension of Evangelization.<sup>54</sup> There is, in the judgement of Tracey Rowland, a consistent Christian humanism in all his reflections.<sup>55</sup>

### ***Pope Francis on the Social Dimension of Evangelization***

Even though *Evangelii Gaudium*<sup>56</sup> is not a social document, what Pope Francis says about Evangelization here has a direct bearing on the theme at hand. In fact, he dedicates the entire Chapter 4 (EG 176-258) to the “social dimension” of Evangelization. In his own words, “The *kerygma* has a clear social content: at

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<sup>54</sup>The concise volume of M. Toso can be of some help in understanding this: Mario Toso, *Nuova evangelizzazione del sociale. Benedetto XVI e Francesco* (Città del Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2014).

<sup>55</sup>Cf. Tracey Rowland, “Always Christ at the Centre”, *The Tablet*, 16 February 2013, 10-11.

<sup>56</sup>Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*. Apostolic Exhortation on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today’s World (24 November 2013) in *AAS* 105 (2013) 1019-1137.

the very heart of the Gospel is life in community and engagement with others. The content of the first proclamation has an immediate moral implication centred on charity” (EG 177). If the social dimension of proclaiming the Gospel is not properly brought out, “there is a constant risk of distorting the authentic and integral meaning of the mission of evangelization” (EG 176).

He elaborates on the link between Evangelization and human promotion by relating the confession of faith in the Holy Trinity with its social commitment. To believe in the universal love of the Father means to realise the infinite dignity He confers on all. The redemption of Jesus affects not only the individual person but pervades also the social relations that exist between human beings. The Holy Spirit, who is at work in everyone individually, seeks to penetrate every human situation and wants to liberate them from all social bonds. Thus we observe a profound connection between evangelization and human advancement at the heart of the Gospel (EG 178).

An attentive reading of the Holy Scripture reveals that “the Gospel is not merely about our personal relationship with God” or about a personal gesture of charity to individuals in need, but about “loving God who reigns in our world” (EG 180). Hence Christian preaching and life should have an impact on society, making it a place for universal fraternity, justice, peace and dignity (EG 180). The Risen Lord gave the mandate to “go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation” (Mk 16:15). Here “the creation” refers to every aspect of human life and encompasses all dimensions of human existence – at the personal as well as community levels. In other words, nothing human is alien to the mission of proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ (EG 181). “An authentic faith,” to quote his words, “which is never comfortable or completely personal, always involves a deep desire to change the world, to transmit values, to leave this earth somehow better than we found it” (EG 183). It follows then that the Church’s task of Evangelization implies and demands the integral promotion that would lead to the happiness of God’s children in this world, even as they march towards the perfect fulfilment in eternity (EG 182).

Such a necessity of evangelizing the social sector is seen in the great issues which “shape the future of humanity”, namely, the inclusion of the poor in society (EG 186-216), peace (EG 217-237) and social dialogue (EG 238-258). Let us recall here briefly only the Church’s concern for the poor and the vulnerable and her mission of proclaiming the Gospel.

To begin with, the basis of Church's concern for the integral development of the society's most neglected members lies in the imitation of Christ, who became poor and was always close to the poor and the outcast (EG 186). His humble earthly origin, public ministry and social relationship reveal that God's heart has a special place for the poor (EG 197, 209). God calls every individual Christian and community to be His instrument for the liberation and promotion of the poor, by being docile and attentive to their cry (EG 187). The Church should respond to this cry by working towards elimination of the structural causes of poverty and by promoting the integral development of the poor (EG 187).

The Church's option for the poor too is primarily a theological category, and not merely a cultural, sociological, political or philosophical one. To evangelize means to acknowledge the saving power in the lives of the poor and to put them at the centre of Church's life and activities (EG 198). Without such a preferential option for the poor, Evangelization "risks being misunderstood or submerged by the ocean of words which daily engulfs us in today's society of mass communications" (EG 199).

One cannot but note that this Apostolic Exhortation has reinvigorated the concern for maintain the right relationship between proclamation of the Gospel and commitment to human promotion.

### ***Conclusion***

Despite all the debates *Evangelii Nuntiandi* has evoked, one can conclusively say that Evangelization includes commitment to human liberation or whatever contributes to human promotion. The light of the Gospel must not only *illumine* all aspects of human life and activities but should also *liberate* whatever hinders from obtaining authentic human welfare. Through the Incarnate Word, God has saved world. Every obstacle to earthly realisation of this redemption must be overcome. In other words, it has deepened the consciousness that Christian faith has by its very nature a social dimension.

Notwithstanding the theological discussions along these lines, we cannot marginalise the practical impact of *Evangelii Nuntiandi* even today in various parts of the world. It continues to serve as an evangelical criterion for socio-political commitments in the economically poor countries. In multi-religious societies, where Christians are a negligible minority, at times it creates certain suspicion of proselytism. After clarifying any such non-evangelical method, the Christians continue to work for the Reign of God, through what Benedict XVI called "the service of charity" (DCE19). In the traditionally Christian but now

secularised societies, the fundamental social principles enshrined in Catholic Social Teaching serve as an inspiration for the choices in the social realm. Hence, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* deserves a worthy commemoration and at the same time necessitates an *aggiornamento* for our globalised and technological era.

## CHAPTER 5

### PASTORAL CHALLENGES OF *EVANGELII NUNTIANDI* FOR TODAY

Even forty years later, the major insights of Paul VI enshrined in *Evangelii Nuntiandi* continue to inspire and stimulate the Church's mission of preaching the Gospel of Life in today's world. The document issues a clarion call to every Christian for renewing their joyous commitment of sharing the Good News. However, we discuss in this final chapter the implications of *Evangelii Nuntiandi* for two groups of people who are at the centre of Church's concern and reflection in the years 2014 and 2015, namely, the Family and the Religious. Right from the beginning of his pontificate, Pope Francis has repeatedly spoken on these two themes, giving the impression that the family and the consecrated life are the chief founts of the much-needed renewal of the Church in the contemporary world.

#### 1. Pastoral Challenges of an Evangelized<sup>1</sup>-Evangelizing Family<sup>2</sup>

The profound sense of the sacred and the rich spiritual resources have sustained the hope, the aspiration and the dream of the Catholic families towards life in fullness as promised by Jesus Christ. Even in the midst of seemingly unsurmountable hardships and adversities, the Catholic families endeavour to live this hope with vibrant, even exuberant, joy. Contemporary society, during the past few decades, has witnessed the impact of the rapid cultural, scientific and technological developments which are taking place, alongside economic and political developments. At the very core of this socio-political economic-

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<sup>1</sup>The expression "evangelized", in no way, intends to emphasise that the community, be it the Church or the family, is *totally and fully evangelized*. Rather it intends to highlight the fact that the community, responding to the invitation of Jesus Christ to become His Communities of Disciples (inner adherence), have accepted and share the faith and «gather together in Jesus' name in order to seek together the Kingdom, build it up and live it» (EN 13) and hence *are journeying* towards the fullness of that Kingdom in Jesus Christ.

<sup>2</sup>A part of this chapter has already been published in "Prabodhana – An Academic Journal from PallotineTheologate", VIII (2015), 76-95.

technical ferment is the Family, both the cellular recipient of these up-and-coming cultures, as well as the initiator, for good or for bad, of influential cultural forces. Even today, without any hesitation, many refer to the Family as the first basic cell and community within a society, as a point of reference for social, political, economic and religion-based ideal relationships.

Vatican II in the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*, already in 1965, warned Christian families that the economic, social, psychological and civil climate is liable to have a severely disturbing effect on family life. In the contemporary scenario, there is much debate about the Family: it is studied and analysed; it is appreciated and despised; it is loved and idealized, depending on the perspective assumed by the individual. The Family today has become a central point of reference that integrates all its anthropological elements: life, love, sexuality, education, future, freedom, choices, politics, etc.

In this part, after stating briefly the identity and indicators of an evangelized family, that evangelizes, we shall attempt to highlight some of the more salient challenges facing Catholic families.

### ***A Family, that is Evangelized, Evangelizes***

“Among the fundamental tasks of the Christian family is its ecclesial task: the family is placed at the service of the building up of the Kingdom of God in history by participating in the life and mission of the Church” (*FC* 49).<sup>3</sup> Therefore, the Family, more than being a mere “object” of pastoral-catechetical ministry, has a unique relationship with the ecclesial mission and the community (cf. *EA* 46).<sup>4</sup>

### ***The Ecclesial Identity of an Evangelized-Evangelizing Family***

Family, as the most fundamental community in the Church, must be taken seriously as an ecclesial reality. The Sacrament of Matrimony celebrated between baptised persons (male and female) is understood as a Family. It is a gift of God and “a community of faith, hope and charity” (*CCC* 2204);<sup>5</sup> furthermore it “is

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<sup>3</sup>John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, Apostolic Exhortation on the on the Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World (22 November 1981), in [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_paul\\_ii/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_exh\\_19811122\\_familiaris-consortio\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_19811122_familiaris-consortio_en.html) (accessed on 6 January 2015).

<sup>4</sup>John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Asia*, Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on Jesus Christ the Saviour and His Mission of Love and Service in Asia: “That they may have Life and have it abundantly” (*Jn* 10:10), (6 November 1999), (Vatican City: Libreria Vaticana, 1999).

<sup>5</sup>*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Typical Edition (Vatican City: Libreria Vaticana, 1997).



a communion of persons, a sign and image of the communion of the Father and the Son in the Holy Spirit” (CCC 2205). “At different moments in the Church’s history, and also in the Second Vatican Council, the Family has been given the well-deserved name of “domestic Church”. This means that there should be present in every Christian family the various aspects of the entire Church” (EN 71). In fact, “the Christian family constitutes a specific revelation and realization of ecclesial communion and for this reason too it can and should be called ‘domestic Church’” (FC 21).

Consequently, the Family is present and functions as a fundamental component of the wider ecclesial communities such as the parochial or diocesan and of the universal ecclesial community, the Catholic Church.

“Evangelizing is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity. She exists in order to evangelize” (EN 14). Evangelization involves announcement and witness of the Gospel given by the Church in the world through all that the Church *says, does and is*.<sup>6</sup> The Family as “domestic Church” can be considered a “Church in miniature” (FC 49); and is called upon “to take part actively and responsibly in the mission of the Church in a way that is original and specific, by placing itself, in what it is and what it does as an “intimate community of life and love,” at the service of the Church and of society” (FC 50). Such an active and responsible participation in the mission of the Church implies that, like the Church, the family too exists to be at the service of Reign of God, the divine plan. Such a divine plan, with its manifold expressions as the universal plan of salvation, the building up the Body of Christ, the unity of humankind, the messianic peace, the fullness of life, etc., is the grandiose design that the Father through Christ and in the Spirit realises in history for humankind. The coming of the Reign of God, “this utopia, the longing of all peoples”<sup>7</sup> constitutes, as it does for the Church, the supreme yearning and final goal of every family.

“The Christian family also builds up the Kingdom of God in history through the everyday realities that concern and distinguish its state of life. It is thus in the love between husband and wife and between the members of the family... that the Christian family’s participation” (FC 50) in the evangelizing mission finds its expression and realization.

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<sup>6</sup>Emilio Alberich and Jerome Vallabaraj, *Communicating a Faith that Transforms*, 70.

<sup>7</sup>Leonard Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator – a Critical Christology for Our Times* (Maryknoll [NY]: Orbis Books, 1978) 52.

Conscious of their participation in the mission of the Church, all members in the family “evangelize and are evangelized” (EN 71).

### *Indicators of an Evangelized-Evangelizing Family*

The Catholic Family, understood as “domestic Church”, participates in all the different aspects, functions and ministries of the life of the entire Church. Such an understanding would involve also a catechetical consciousness, since “all ecclesial actions possess a catechetical aspect of dimension”.<sup>8</sup>

Such a catechetical consciousness within the family implies the following:

*The Family is nourished by the Word of God and the Eucharist:* The Family becomes an important locus for accepting, listening and living the Word of God “By proclaiming the word of God, the Church reveals to the Christian family its true identity, what it is and should be according to the Lord’s plan” (FC 49). The Family becomes an evangelizing community to the extent to which it accepts the Word of God and matures in faith (cf. FC 52). “As a sharer in the life and mission of the Church ... the Christian family fulfils its prophetic role by welcoming and announcing the word of God: it thus becomes more and more each day a believing and evangelizing community” (FC 51). Rootedness in the Word of God invites all family members to live and share their Faith embodied in Sacred Scripture, Catholic Tradition and the teachings of the Magisterium of the Church, among themselves, and in the broader social reality.

The Christian Family, grounded in the sacrament of Baptism of the spouses, finds its highest expression in the Eucharist. “In this (Eucharistic) sacrifice of the New and Eternal Covenant, Christian spouses encounter the source from which their own marriage covenant flows, is interiorly structured and continuously renewed” (FC 57). The Eucharist, for the Family, is a foundation of charity, becomes the soul its communion and its mission and the source of its missionary and apostolic dynamism (cf. FC 57).

*The Family as a Locus for the Realization of the Reign of God through Prophetic Witness (Martyria):* One of the most precious and urgent dimensions of the mission of the Christian couples is to bear witness to the inestimable value of the indissolubility and fidelity of marriage (cf. FC 20). “Insofar as it is a ‘small-scale Church’, the Christian family is called upon, like the ‘large-scale Church’, to be a sign of unity for the world and in this way to exercise its prophetic role by bearing witness to the Kingdom and peace of Christ, towards which the

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<sup>8</sup>Alberich and Vallabaraj, *Communicating a Faith that Transforms*, 70.

whole world is journeying” (FC 48). “Particularly today, the Christian family has a special vocation to witness to the paschal covenant of Christ by constantly radiating the joy of love and the certainty of the hope for which it must give an account: ‘The Christian family loudly proclaims both the present virtues of the Kingdom of God and the hope of a blessed life to come’” (FC 52). Prophetic witness requires that the ethos of the home (environment, lifestyle, priorities, relationships, gender roles, modes of discipline and accountability) be permeated by the Word that liberates and offers the key to interpretation of life and history in accordance with the values and perspectives of Christian faith.

*The Family as a Locus for the Realization of the Reign of God through Worship and Celebration (Leitourgia):* “Christian marriage, like the other sacraments... is in itself a liturgical action glorifying God in Jesus Christ and in the Church” (FC 56). Because the celebration of the Sacrament of Matrimony is itself proclamation of the Word of God, it ought to become also profession of faith of the couples with the Church and within the family (cf. FC 51). As preparation for the Liturgy celebrated in the Christian community, and as its continuance in the home, the Christian family makes use of private prayer, which presents a great variety of forms (cf. FC 61). “By reason of their dignity and mission, Christian parents have the specific responsibility of educating their children in prayer, introducing them to gradual discovery of the mystery of God and to personal dialogue with Him” (FC 60). Worship and celebration in the Family invites all members to integrate shared prayer, symbols and social rituals into its pattern of daily life. The Christian Family is encouraged to develop or to rediscover its home liturgy to symbolise and celebrate, nurture and sustain the faith of its members.

*The Family as a Locus for the Realization of the Reign of God through Love and Communion (Koinonia):* The Family, which is founded and given life by love, is a communion of persons. “Without love the family is not a community of persons and, in the same way, without love the family cannot live, grow and perfect itself as a community of persons” (FC 18). Conjugal love manifests its fullness of conjugal communion. Through conjugal love the spouses participate in and are called to live the very charity of Christ. Such conjugal love gives them the grace and strength to put into practice the demands of love which forgives and redeems. Conjugal love “aims at a deeply personal unity, the unity that, beyond union in one flesh, leads to forming one heart and soul; ... it is open to fertility” (FC 13). Authentic conjugal love presupposes and requires that there exists a profound reciprocal respect for each other. Conjugal love “is enlarged and enriched by all those fruits of moral, spiritual and supernatural life which the

father and mother are called to hand on to their children, and through the children to the Church and to the world” (FC 28).

*The Family as a Locus for the Realization of the Reign of God through Service, Charity and Commitment to the Transformation of the Society (Diakonia):* The integral promotion of the Family and the transformation of the society pertain to the essential mission of the Church that is “diaconal”. It is an exigency that affects all the fundamental tasks and final objectives of pastoral action, that is to say, the very mission of the Reign of God. “Whether it (Church) aids the world or whether it benefits from it, the Church has but one sole purpose – that the kingdom of God may come and the salvation of the human race may be accomplished” (GS 45). “Fruitful married love expresses itself in serving life in many ways. Of these ways, begetting and educating children are the most immediate, specific and irreplaceable” (FC 41). The Family’s vital and organic link with society is founded and nourished continuously through its role of service to life. “It is from the family that citizens come to birth and it is within the family that they find the first school of the social virtues that are the animating principle of the existence and development of society itself” (FC 42). Hence families are encouraged to devote themselves to manifold social activities, also because public authorities’ welfare organizations are not in a position to reach everyone. Further, the social and political roles are included in the diaconal mission in which “Christian couples share by virtue of the sacrament of marriage, and they receive both a command which they cannot ignore and a grace which sustains and stimulates them” (FC 47).

### ***Challenges faced by Catholic Families Today***

The first element that underlines an essential characteristic of the Church, therefore also of the Catholic Family, is that it does not exist for itself, but exists to be at the service of the Reign of God *in the world and for the world*. “God’s plan for marriage and the family touches men and women in the concreteness of their daily existence in *specific social and cultural* situations” (FC 4). While highlighting some of the major challenges faced by the family from Socio-Cultural Milieux, Socio-Economic Political Perspectives, Progress in Techno-Scientific and Social Communications, Psycho-Sexual Spheres, Catholic Faith and Individual Temperament and Character, I shall also indicate the guidelines that the Church has offered to help families to confront these challenges.

### *Challenges arising from Socio-Cultural Milieux*

Today, no other social institution has begun to falter like the family. The very concept of Family is perceived in a *so-called plurality* of forms or models or notions. The Social Communications Media do not always present the so-called *nuclear family* (father-mother-sons-daughters) or the *joint family* system, as the normal and ideal institution in a society. On the other hand, both the nuclear and the joint family seem to become increasingly more fragile as they are invaded and threatened by the excessive liberty advocated by the current culture. In the name of freedom and choice, other forms of so-called families are proposed that clamour for the same recognition and dignity like the nuclear or joint family institutions. Within and besides these two configurations there are also other compositions that can be classified under four major categories.

Considering the conditions of the modern families, one can accept the vast majority as *nuclear families*; within this category there are *double income* families where both husband and wife work and earn an income; families where one partner *lives at a distance* on account of work; families where either the wife or husband is the *home-carer* and looks after the children, while the other becomes the breadwinner. Furthermore, there are the so-called *single parent* homes where the children are brought up by either the father or mother alone due to particular circumstances such as the death of a partner or the separation or divorce. Then, there are *married couples without children*, either by choice or because due to some inherent conditions that do not permit them to have children. Furthermore, there are the so-called *free union* families where one of the parents is not legally married to the other and the children of both partners live together. Finally, there are the so-called *same-sex families* where both the partners belong to the same gender and want to be recognized as families.

The post-modern world, characterized by pluralism, democracy, religious freedom, consumerism, mobility and increasing access to news, entertainment, etc., accepts and validates manifold belief systems, multiple realities, identities and worldviews which, often are either not coherent among themselves or may also be contradictory to each other. Whether people and families in India are aware of the concept of post-modernity or not, India has become postmodern.<sup>9</sup> In this scenario, the danger is that values such as the sacredness, stability and ethics of family are giving way to and are leading to a sense of fragmentation, chaos and disunity in the families. Such situations lead the society and the families

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<sup>9</sup>Cf. Doshi S. L., *Postmodern Perspective on Indian Family* (New Delhi: Rawat Publication, 2008).

to become more and more depersonalized and dehumanized wherein solidarity gives way to excessive concern for efficiency and thus tend to induce or promote a “culture of death”.<sup>10</sup>

### *Challenges arising from Socio-Economic Political Perspectives*

The first major challenge confronting a great majority of the Indian families is the concrete situation of overwhelming poverty. In such a situation, the young people find it difficult to even think of marriage and of starting a family. The so-called economic globalization has not helped to diminish such a situation but rather seems to have aggravated the situation of the poor and poor countries. The outcome of such globalization is more evident in at least three areas:

- As economic liberalization and deregulation gain momentum, the *rural families* are unable to be competitive; they are often deprived of government safeguards or safety nets to shield their products from unfair competition. Further, Genetically Modified Organisms are becoming increasingly widespread, making rural families dependent on technology that are most often beyond their understanding and financial reach.
- Globalization has also increased an exodus of the poor families from rural areas to urban settings in search of work and livelihood. The rapid growth of slums in urban areas attests to this fact. Poverty conditions of the urban poor families are even harsher in terms of habitat, family living conditions, family space and privacy, safe drinking water, sanitation and hygiene, etc. These conditions often induce criminality, abuse in family and family break-up.
- In the light of the economic situation of poor families, many leave their families behind to look for jobs that often are not on par with their knowledge and skills. Even when their remuneration is higher, there are enormous risks such as the stability of the family, proper education and maturation of their children who are deprived of the presence, the guidance and love of both parents at their most formative and impressionable age.

“The worship of the ancient golden calf (cf. *Ex* 32:1-35) has returned in a new and ruthless guise in the idolatry of money and the dictatorship of an impersonal economy lacking a truly human purpose... man is reduced to one of his needs

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<sup>10</sup>John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, Encyclical on the Value and Inviolability of Human Life (25 March 1995), no. 12, in [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_paul\\_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_enc\\_25031995\\_evangelium-vitae\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25031995_evangelium-vitae_en.html) (accessed on 7 January 2015).

alone: consumption” (EG 55).<sup>11</sup> In a *consumerist* society individuals and families are valued not for they are but for what they possess. Such an economy promotes a cut-throat competition, greediness and accumulation of money and wealth through any means as signs of progress and power.

In a consumerist society, *public ethics* and *morality* have “come to be viewed with a certain scornful derision” (EG 57), since they make money and power relative and foster families and societies that are not ready to condemn the manipulation and debasement of the person.

*Globalization* can be broadly defined as “the movement toward greater interaction, integration and interdependence among people and organization across the national borders”.<sup>12</sup> As a historical social process, globalization transforms and promotes social relations and transaction, while generating transcontinental or interregional networks of interaction and the exercise of power. If families are to benefit from globalizing trends, they are called to evaluate the driving forces from the perspective of global education which fosters an appreciation of unity and connectedness of life, breaking down cultural barriers through dialogue and mutual understanding and empowering families to live a more contributive lives eschewing from excessive competition and autonomy.

“The ideal of mutual support and development between the family and society is often very seriously in conflict with the reality of their separation and even opposition” (FC 46). *Social* and *political institutions*, far from putting themselves at the service of the family, attack it violently in its values and fundamental requirements. “Thus the family, which in God’s plan is the basic cell of society and a subject of rights and duties before the State or any other community, finds itself the victim of society, of the delays and slowness with which it acts, and even of its blatant injustice” (FC 46).

#### *Challenges arising from Progress in Techno-Scientific and Social Communication*

Catholic families, in general, are conscious of the possible constructive as well as the destructive impact of the modern Techno-Scientific and Social Communication progress.

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<sup>11</sup>Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, Apostolic Exhortation on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today’s World, 26<sup>th</sup> November 2013, (Mumbai: St. Paul’s Publication, 2013).

<sup>12</sup>Dennis Rondinelli and Shabbir Cheema, “Reinventing Government for the Twenty-First Century: An Introduction”, in Dennis Rondinelli and Shabbir Cheema (eds.), *Reinventing Government for the Twenty-First Century: State Capacity in a Globalizing Society* (Bloomfield CT: Kumarian Press, 2003)2.

“Scientific and technical progress, which contemporary man is continually expanding in his dominion over nature, not only offers the hope of creating a new and better humanity, but also causes ever greater anxiety regarding the future” (FC 30). In the name of scientific and technical progress life is devalued; the advantages of scientific progress are made available only to the rich and elite; human dignity and justice are endangered; violence is applied in favour of contraception, sterilization, abortion; the sole concern of the families, imprisoned by a consumer mentality, seek material goods to the detriment of integral and spiritual growth.

Social Communications or the Mass Media occupy an important space in the life of every family. “The means of social communication offer people access to literature, drama, music and art otherwise unavailable to them and so promote human development in respect to knowledge and wisdom and beauty. We speak not only of presentations of classic works and the fruits of scholarship, but also of wholesome popular entertainment and useful information that draw families together, help people solve everyday problem, raise the spirits of the sick, shut-ins, and the elderly, and relieve the tedium of life”.<sup>13</sup> However, as with techno-scientific progress in general, in the communication technology too, one realizes that “the very blessings and necessities of technology harbour the threat of turning into curses”.<sup>14</sup> It is not too rare that the mass media presents a distorted picture of family and of values closely related to upholding the family life. “These same media also have the capacity to do grave harm to families by presenting an inadequate or even deformed outlook on life, on the family, on religion and on morality”.<sup>15</sup> Frequently, the media claims to embody reality, but actually it only tends to legitimize or enforce warped models of personal, family

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<sup>13</sup>Pontifical Council for Social Communications, *Ethics in Communication*, in <http://www.pccs.va/index.php/en/documents/documents-du-pccs/item/326-2000-ethics-in-communications> (accessed on 16 January 2015)9.

<sup>14</sup>Hans Jonas, “Technology as a Subject for Ethics”, *Social Research* 49 (1982) 897. For an elaborate explanation of Hans Jonas’ views on technology, see Sahayadas Fernando, *Ethics of Modern Technology: An Introduction to Hans Jonas’ Ethics of Responsibility* (Chennai: Arumbu Publications, 2009).

<sup>15</sup>Cf. Pontifical Council for Social Communications, *The Media and the Family: A Risk and a Richness*, 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2004, in [http://www.pccs.it/gmcs/documenti/html/eng/gmcs/38\\_gmcs\\_eng.htm](http://www.pccs.it/gmcs/documenti/html/eng/gmcs/38_gmcs_eng.htm) (accessed on 13 January 2015)3.



or social life.<sup>16</sup> Similarly, the mass media can create a ‘public opinion’ that is in genuine opposition to the well-being of family.<sup>17</sup>

### *Challenges arising in the Psycho-Sexual Sphere*

Vatican II in *Gaudium et Spes* articles 12 and 22 affirms marriage as «communion of (two) persons». John Paul II, elaborating his theology of the body, maintains that the communion of male and female is natural and valid marriage and for Catholics such communion takes place through the Sacrament of Marriage. Further he argues that masculinity and femininity are recognized as “two different ‘incarnations’” of a single human being or human body.<sup>18</sup> Communion is understood as the “existence of the person ‘for’ the person”.<sup>19</sup> The vast majority of Indian families are patriarchal and such a system tends to focus more on gender (masculinity or femininity) rather than on persons. Such a system often perpetuates more the role-functions wherein the women are considered as objects of desire, incapable of taking responsibility or to take up the role of decision-making, etc. In addition, the complementary nature of male and female remains more often in words, but not lived in day-to-day life.

Many events in families seem to affirm that “the *man* is at the centre of the family and the woman his partner ensures continuity... In a patriarchal society a woman is basically a regenerative-sexual being. [...] It is the *man’s* family she is committed to multiply when getting married. Everything is grouped around *man*”.<sup>20</sup> Such a mentality tends to generate meaninglessness in the female; promotes suicidal tendencies; encourages violence on women, sexual abuse and rape, etc.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>Cf. Pontifical Council for Social Communications, *The Media: At the Crossroads between Self-Promotion and Service*, in [http://www.pccs.it/gmcs/documenti/html/eng/gmcs/42\\_gmcs\\_eng.htm](http://www.pccs.it/gmcs/documenti/html/eng/gmcs/42_gmcs_eng.htm) (accessed on 13 January 2015) 3.

<sup>17</sup>Cf. Pontifical Council for Social Communications, *Social Communications and the Christian Formation of Public Opinion*, in [http://www.pccs.it/gmcs/documenti/html/eng/gmcs/20\\_gmcs\\_eng.htm](http://www.pccs.it/gmcs/documenti/html/eng/gmcs/20_gmcs_eng.htm) (accessed on 13 January 2015) 2.

<sup>18</sup>John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body* (Boston: Pauline books and Media, 2006) 157.

<sup>19</sup>John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them*, 163.

<sup>20</sup>James Sanders, “The Family in the Bible”, *Biblical Theology Bulletin: A Journal of Bible and Theology* 32 (2002) 118. Emphasis added.

<sup>21</sup>Cf. Emmanuel Maddhichetty, “Families: Are They Gender-Oriented or Person-Oriented?”, in Sahayadas Fernando and Jesu Pudumai Doss (eds.), *Youth and Family in Today’s India* (Chennai: Don Bosco Publications, 2014) 109-121.

In a male-dominated society, the woman who bears a girl-child is cursed and often victimized by the husband and his family. Notwithstanding the affirmation of the dignity of human life, one still finds female foeticide and female infanticide on the rise in different parts of India. To add insult to injury, the unwanted girl-child is often sold and trafficked into prostitution and forced servitude.<sup>22</sup>

### *Challenges emanating from Catholic Teachings*

The Catholic Church teaches that “marriage is a Christian vocation” (CCC 1603) involving a call from God and a response from two people who promise to build, with the help of divine grace, a lifelong, intimate, and sacramental partnership of love and life. “The gift of the sacrament (of marriage) is at the same time a vocation and commandment for the Christian spouses, that they may remain faithful to each other forever, beyond every trial and difficulty, in generous obedience to the holy will of the Lord: “What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder”” (FC 20). Unfortunately, this aspect of Christian vocation, as of acceptance and response to God’s call, is not highlighted and insisted upon when couples approach the Sacrament of Matrimony. Often it becomes a ceremony, a rite, a feast, etc.

If love is the fundamental and innate vocation of every human being (cf. FC 11), then the Family has also “the mission to guard, reveal and communicate love” (FC 17). Paul VI in his encyclical *Humanae Vitae* enumerates the four characteristic features and the exigencies of married love. “This (married) love is above all fully human, a compound of sense and spirit... It is a love which is total... Married love is also faithful and exclusive of all other, and this until death... Finally, this love is fecund” (HV 9).<sup>23</sup> Such a teaching constitutes a challenge to married couples and those who prepare for marriage. Further, those who are responsible for such a preparation are called to insist upon the harmonious development of physical, affective, spiritual and supernatural aspects of married conjugal love and to foster *education to love* and the *correct understanding and meaning of sex*.

“Joys and sorrows, hopes and disappointments, births and birthday celebrations, wedding anniversaries of the parents, departures, separations and homecomings,

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<sup>22</sup>Society for the Protection of the Girl Child, *An Overview of Gendercide and Daughter Abuse in India*, available at [https://files.itslearning.com/data/1265/6476/society\\_for\\_the\\_protection\\_of\\_the\\_girl\\_child\\_situation\\_overview.pdf](https://files.itslearning.com/data/1265/6476/society_for_the_protection_of_the_girl_child_situation_overview.pdf) (accessed on 13 January 2015).

<sup>23</sup>Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae*, Encyclical on the Regulation of Birth (25 July 1968), in [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/paul\\_vi/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_p-vi\\_enc\\_25071968\\_humanae-vitae\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_25071968_humanae-vitae_en.html) (accessed on 16 January 2015).

important and far-reaching decisions, the death of those who are dear, etc.-all of these mark God's loving intervention in the family's history" (*FC* 59). These special moments and other day-to-day events need to find their summit in the *sacramental principle* and *sensitivity*, which affirms that God is present to humankind and we respond to God's grace through ordinary and everyday of life in the world. Developing such a sacramental sensitivity is a great challenge for the married couple and the family who live in a culture of frenetic pace within a milieu constantly bombarded by a multitude of voices, all shrieking and vying for attention and patronage.

Because of affirmations such as "catechesis is an essentially ecclesial act" (*GDC* 78) and "the Christian Community is the origin, locus and goal of catechesis" (*GDC* 254), many Christian families are not fully aware of the relevance and role of faith education within the Family. Awareness that the Family is "the first setting in which faith enlightens the human city" (*LF* 52)<sup>24</sup> and becomes "an environment or means of growth in faith" and "parents are the primary educators in the faith" (*GDC* 255) challenges the Christian community to ensure adequate pastoral ministry to the families.

### *Challenges arising from Individual Temperament and Character*

Within the family and between the married couples themselves there are signs that indicate a disturbing degradation of some fundamental values such as an erroneous theoretical and practical concept of the independence of the spouses in relation to each other, serious misconceptions regarding the relationship of authority between parents and children; the concrete difficulties that the family itself experiences in the transmission of values, etc. "At the root of these negative phenomena there frequently lies a corruption of the idea and the experience of freedom, conceived not as a capacity for realizing the truth of God's plan for marriage and the family, but as an autonomous power of self-affirmation, often against others, for one's own selfish well-being" (*FC* 6). In today's world, where certain *erroneous concepts* concerning the *human being*, *freedom* and *love* are being diffused, the Catholic families are challenged to present and live anew the truth about the family institution, as God has desired it since creation.

"The family constitutes, much more than a mere juridical, social and economic unit, a community of love and solidarity, which is uniquely suited to *teach and*

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<sup>24</sup>Francis, *Lumen Fidei*, Encyclical on Faith (29 June 2013), in [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco\\_20130629\\_enciclica-lumen-fidei.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20130629_enciclica-lumen-fidei.html) (accessed on 16 January 2015).

*transmit* cultural, ethical, social, spiritual and religious values, essential for the development and well-being of its own members and of society”.<sup>25</sup> Many Christian families tend to equate education with schooling and thus pass on the educative role of the family to academic institutions. The Christian families today are challenged to acknowledge that they are the first and foremost educators of their children (cf. *FC* 36) and to recuperate the educative role of the family and pay heed to John Paul II’s counsel: “The right and duty of parents to give education is essential, since it is connected with the transmission of human life” (*FC* 36). Such an education involves cultural education, education in human sexuality, education to justice and peace and introducing and accompanying the young to the knowledge of Ultimate Reality.

In the light of the above challenges, it would have been ideal to offer concrete lines of action; but such concrete proposals, apart from failing to take into consideration the socio-cultural reality of the family and remaining only as a theoretical construe, will above all fall short of underscoring the fact that Catholic Faith is a way of living, communicating and transforming one’s life founded on Jesus Christ and his Church. Hence we prefer to encourage the reader to reflect on the concrete proposals keeping in mind his/her context or milieu.

### **Conclusion**

The watchword “Family, Become what you are” (*FC* 17) manifests not only its identity, what is, but also its mission, namely what it can and should do in keeping with the will of God the Creator and Redeemer. Such an adage invites each family to realize “within itself a summons that cannot be ignored, and that specifies both its dignity and its responsibility” (*FC* 17). John Paul II, in his Letter to the Families in 1994, illustrated the centrality of the family in the Church by affirming: “*The Family is the way of the Church* - Among these many paths, the family is the first and the most important. It is a path common to all, yet one which is particular, unique and unrepeatable, just as every individual is unrepeatable; it is a path from which man cannot withdraw. Indeed, a person normally comes into the world within a family, and can be said to owe to the family the very fact of his existence as an individual” (Gr S 2).<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>Holy See, *Charter of the Rights of the Family*, 1983, Preamble E, in [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/pontifical\\_councils/family/documents/rc\\_pc\\_family\\_doc\\_19831022\\_family-rights\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/family/documents/rc_pc_family_doc_19831022_family-rights_en.html) (accessed on 14 January 2015). Emphasis added.

<sup>26</sup>John Paul II, *Gratissimam Sane*, Letter to the Families – 1994 Year of the Family (2 February 1994), in [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_paul\\_ii/letters/documents/hf\\_jp-ii LET\\_02021994\\_families\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/letters/documents/hf_jp-ii LET_02021994_families_en.html) (accessed on 16 January 2015). Emphasis added.

Engaging families to foster Catholic Faith language in the midst of many pastoral challenges involves the complex practice of empowerment. Such a mission and vocation may seem awe-inspiring and idealistic, but the pursuit of it will surely call not to give in to discouragement. It is said that discouragement is the most diabolical of all temptations. Discouragement convinces the families that they are alone, adrift and on their own as they face life and future within the family. Turning back to those early Apostolic and Post-Apostolic communities, we need to take note of three fundamental facts, which can sustain every Catholic Family at this juncture. First, the families were faithful to what they received from the Apostles. Second, they knew the importance of their own witness in the Family. Finally, they took up the challenge of handing on the Faith to their own and to others with a deep faith that generations following them would be gifted with the Spirit to respond to the perennial truth of the Gospel and be able to make it their own for their time and for generations to come.

## **2. Pastoral Challenges of Evangelization and Consecrated Life**

On 21 November 2014 – Feast of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary – Pope Francis issued an Apostolic Letter to mark 2015 as the Year of Consecrated Life. Officially, it would begin on 30 November 2014, the First Sunday of Advent, and conclude with the Feast of the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple on 2 February 2016. The Successor of Peter chose this theme to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of two documents of Vatican II: the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, which deals with Religious in its sixth chapter and *Perfectae Caritatis*, the Decree on the Renewal of Religious Life. Together these conciliar documents have laid down a map for the *aggiornamento* of Consecrated Life in the post-Conciliar years, giving thereby a renewed impetus to their task of Evangelization.

In fact, to the question: ‘Who has the mission of the Church?’ the answer of *Evangelii Nuntiandi* includes a specific role for the Religious. They have an important role to play in the Church’s all-important task of Evangelization because of what they *are* and what they *do*. Even though the Second Vatican Council had issued a separate Decree on Religious Life, it chose to dedicate a separate chapter (nos. 43-47) to it within *Lumen Gentium* to underline their shared as well as specific identity and role within the salvific mission of the Church. We shall recall here briefly, first, their vocation and mission and their close relationship to the evangelizing task of the Church. Secondly, we shall point out, as in the case of family life, some of the pressing challenges that Religious Life is facing in today’s world in this regard.

### ***Evangelization and Consecrated Life: Proclamation by what they are!***

Every baptized person has the responsibility to proclaim Christ, the Way, the Truth and the Life. In a special way, however, such a duty falls on the Religious because of their free consent to follow Christ more radically. Through the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity and obedience, they dedicate themselves totally to God, love Him beyond all things, and assume unconditionally the duty of implanting and strengthening the Kingdom of Christ (LG 43-44). The Second Vatican Council has reiterated this existential identity of the consecrated people in the opening lines of the Decree, *Perfectae Caritatis*: “the pursuit of perfect charity through the evangelical counsels draws its origin from the doctrine and example of the Divine Master and reveals itself as a splendid sign of the heavenly kingdom”.<sup>27</sup>

Pope Paul VI reiterates that the consecrated people “embody the Church in her desire to give herself completely to the radical demands of the beatitudes” (EN 69). Moreover, at the deepest level of their being, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* reaffirms that the religious are “caught up in the dynamism of the Church’s life, which is thirsty for the divine Absolute and called to holiness. It is to this holiness that they bear witness” (EN 69). The freedom from earthly care that these counsels facilitate enables them to manifest the presence of heavenly goods possessed here on earth, to bear witness to the fact of a new and eternal life that the redemption of Christ has acquired, and to foretell the future resurrection and the glory of the heavenly kingdom (LG 44).

Speaking of the importance of bearing witness vis-à-vis Evangelization, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* affirms: “As such they have a special importance in the context of the witness which, as we have said, is of prime importance in evangelization. At the same time as being a challenge to the world and to the Church herself, this silent witness of poverty and abnegation, of purity and sincerity, of self-sacrifice in obedience, can become an eloquent witness capable of touching also non-Christians who have good will and are sensitive to certain values” (EN 69). In other words, the life of consecrated people is, in itself, a proclamation of Jesus Christ and his Kingdom. The presence of consecrated men and women both in the Church and in the society is in itself a “visible sign” of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, as John Paul II portrays it:

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<sup>27</sup>Second Vatican Council, *Perfectae Caritatis*. Decree on the Adaptation and Renewal of Religious Life (28 October 1965) no. 1, in AAS 58 (1966) 702-712.

The Consecrated Life, deeply rooted in the example and teaching of Christ the Lord, is a gift of God the Father to his Church through the Holy Spirit. By the profession of the evangelical counsels *the characteristic features of Jesus* — the chaste, poor and obedient one — *are made constantly “visible” in the midst of the world* and the eyes of the faithful are directed towards the mystery of the Kingdom of God already at work in history, even as it awaits its full realization in heaven.<sup>28</sup>

Their life bears witness to the true value of historical existence as well as to the ultimate purpose of human life on earth. They do so not on special occasions to make any impression on others, but proclaim the Gospel in their daily routine: “In their finite humanity, on the margins, in their everyday struggles, consecrated men and women live out their fidelity, giving a reason for the joy that lives in them. So they become splendid witnesses, effective proclaimers, companions and neighbours for the women and men with whom they share a common history and who want to find their Father’s house in the Church”.<sup>29</sup>

### ***Evangelization and the Consecrated Life: Proclamation by what they do!***

As the Religious proclaim Christ by what they are, they do so even more visibly through what they do. In fact they distinguish their presence in the Church by their apostolic works in various areas of ecclesial, social and cultural life. It is true historically that renunciation of the world even in its spatial dimension was the characteristic of Religious Life. However, it never abandoned every possible way to express their love of God through love of neighbour. During the course of its evolution, various charitable activities began to give a specific identity to their option to follow Christ. Thanks to the specific gift of the Holy Spirit bestowed on each Religious Founder/Foundress, each form of consecrated life continues to manifest God’s closeness to humanity. Their attentive listening to the mysterious movement of the Holy Spirit enables dynamic responses to the needs of human society at every epoch. Within the multiple apostolic activities of the Church,

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<sup>28</sup>John Paul II, *Vita Consecrata*. Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on the Consecrated Life and Its Mission in the Church and in the World (25 March 1996), no. 1, in AAS 88 (1996) 377-487, available at [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/ccsclife/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_exh\\_25031996\\_vita-consecrata\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccsclife/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_25031996_vita-consecrata_en.html) (accessed on 18 August 2015).

<sup>29</sup>Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, *Rejoice! A Letter to Consecrated Men and Women. A Message from the Teachings of Pope Francis* (2 February 2014) no. 1.

the attention to the poor has always been their hallmark.<sup>30</sup> Even today, without their selfless commitment to the marginalized of the society, many will be still living in sub-human conditions.

No wonder appreciating the creativity and generosity of the Religious in sharing the apostolic mission of the Church, Pope Paul VI states:

“Thanks to their consecration they are eminently willing and free to leave everything and to go and proclaim the Gospel even to the ends of the earth. They are enterprising and their apostolate is often marked by an originality, by a genius that demands admiration. They are generous: often they are found at the outposts of the mission, and they take the greatest of risks for their health and their very lives. Truly the Church owes them much” (*EN* 69).

Pope John Paul II has reiterated even more emphatically the contribution of the Religious to the universal mission of the Church:

Consecrated persons are called to be a leaven of communion at the service of the mission of the universal Church by the very fact that the manifold charisms of their respective Institutes are granted by the Holy Spirit for the good of the entire Mystical Body, whose up building they must serve (cf. *1 Cor* 12:4-11). [...] The history of spirituality amply illustrates this bond and shows its providential function both in safeguarding the specific identity of the consecrated life and in advancing the missionary expansion of the Gospel. The vigorous spread of the Gospel message, the firm rooting of the Church in so many areas of the world, and the Christian springtime which the young Churches are experiencing today, would be unthinkable — as the Synod Fathers observed — without the contribution of numerous Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life. Down the centuries they have maintained strong bonds of communion with the Successors of Peter, who found in them a generous readiness to devote themselves to the Church’s missionary activity with an availability which, when necessary, went as far as heroism.<sup>31</sup>

What is the deepest motivation behind this missionary impulse? Certainly, it is not proselytism or sympathy for their socio-economic degraded life-conditions, or a matter of rendering a psychological service. The primary reason is nothing but an imitation of Christ. Through their apostolic and missionary works, the

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<sup>30</sup>For an account of the Church’s attention to the poor down the centuries, especially in its social documents, see Sahayadas Fernando, *The Church in the World: The Reception of Gaudium et Spes in the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (Bengaluru: Theological Publications in India, 2015) 287-323.

<sup>31</sup>John Paul II, *Vita Consecrata*, no. 47.



Religious continue to do what Jesus of Nazareth did in his own times. The closeness of Jesus to the needs of people, especially through his healing miracles, was an announcement of the presence of Kingdom of God. It revealed a God who hears the cry of the people and see their misery and want them to enjoy fullness of life.

The Second Vatican Council has perceived the diverse forms of Consecrated Life in terms of a profound relation to Christ and His ministry: "The Church portrays Christ in contemplation on the mountain, in His proclamation of the kingdom of God to the multitudes, in His healing of the sick and maimed, in His work of converting sinners to a better life, in His solicitude for youth and His goodness to all men, always obedient to the will of the Father who sent Him" (LG 46). From an ecclesial perspective, the Religious manifest by their existence and apostolate what the Church is and is called to do. Hence, the same Council has expressed it as a solidarity of the Church with the humanity: "The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these too are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ" (GS 1).

Pope Paul VI has described their apostolic activities as "a sign of total availability to God, the Church and the brethren" (EN 69). According to Pope John Paul II, the Religious are called to incarnate the Good News, that is, to take on "Jesus' way of living and acting as the Incarnate Word in relation to the Father and in relation to the brothers and sisters".<sup>32</sup> In our own times, Pope Francis has repeatedly expressed the Church's closeness to the people through the analogy of "shepherds living with the odour of the sheep".<sup>33</sup> Consecrated men and women in particular have the mission of bringing to people of our time the consolation of God and to bear witness to God's mercy.<sup>34</sup> In short, the various apostolic works that the Religious carry out day in and day out are nothing but a way of bringing the Gospel of Life to existential spheres of human life.

### ***Challenges facing Religious Life Today***

Today, Religious Life is at the crossroads of unprecedented changes and

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<sup>32</sup>John Paul II, *Vita Consecrata*, no. 22.

<sup>33</sup>See Pope Francis's homily of the Chrism Mass of 28 March 2013 in [https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2013/documents/papa-francesco\\_20130328\\_messa-crismale.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2013/documents/papa-francesco_20130328_messa-crismale.html) (accessed on 5 August 2015).

<sup>34</sup>See the interactions of Pope Francis with the Seminarians and Novices on 6 July 2013, in [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2013/july/documents/papa-francesco\\_20130706\\_incontro-seminaristi.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2013/july/documents/papa-francesco_20130706_incontro-seminaristi.html) (accessed on 19 August 2015).

hence has to face unforeseen challenges. We highlight here a few of them that are directly related to the theme of evangelization. The fortieth anniversary of *Evangelii Nuntiandi* offers another opportunity to revisit, renew and relaunch the role of the Religious in proclaiming the Good News to today's world.

### *Challenge arising from Religious Identity*

First among the challenges that the Religious Life faces today is directly related to the fundamental identity of the Religious him/herself. Who are the Religious? Serious doubts arise on their uniqueness, given the fact that practically diocesan priests and devout laity also follow Christ "radically". Every Christian proclaims the Kingdom of God in a unique way, according to each one's status of life. What distinguishes the Religious from the rest of the members of the Church? Among the Consecrated too one could observe a sort of "overlapping of charisms", if one goes by the similarity of apostolic works in today's societies.

The present crisis is an invitation to reaffirm that the Religious are essentially called, consecrated and commissioned by God. This is what they *are* irrespective of the manifold concrete manifestations of their identity and apostolate. It is by being so that they proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ. Once this is forgotten or marginalised, no noble initiative can restore the true meaning of religious life.

The response to this challenge is found in the first of the three "aims" of the Year of the Consecrated Life that Pope Francis has outlined, namely, to "look to the past with gratitude" and draw necessary clarity and strength for today. It is an invitation to recount the hand of God at the origin of each religious congregation and to cherish the original gift of the Holy Spirit to each founder or foundress.

Recounting our history is essential for preserving our identity, for strengthening our unity as a family and our common sense of belonging. More than an exercise in archaeology or the cultivation of mere nostalgia, it calls for following in the footsteps of past generations in order to grasp the high ideals, and the vision and values which inspired them, beginning with the founders and foundresses and the first communities. In this way we come to see how the charism has been lived over the years, the creativity it has sparked, the difficulties it encountered and the concrete ways those difficulties were surmounted. We may also encounter cases of inconsistency, the result of human weakness and even at times a neglect of some essential aspects of the charism. Yet everything proves instructive and,

taken as a whole, acts as a summons to conversion. To tell our story is to praise God and to thank him for all his gifts.<sup>35</sup>

### *Challenge arising from the Nature of Apostolic Works*

Another challenge that affects Religious life today comes from the (ir)relevance of most of the activities connected to a specific charism. Traditionally, the Church identified each religious congregation with a special charism of the Founder or Foundress and a specific set of ministries or apostolic works. Apart from the monastic and contemplative forms of consecrated life, the “active” Religious played an invaluable role in the field of education, health services, youth animation through groups and movements, etc. These activities were indeed seen as *apostolic works* through which they proclaimed Christ’s love and compassion.

Today, a democratic Welfare State is occupying that space, intending to eliminate paternalistic dependence on the Religious or the Church as a whole. The conventional charity approach seems to have been substituted by justice-cum-rights approach to human needs. Consequently, in economically advanced societies, the Religious are unable to render any distinct service. This in fact is judged to be one of the visible causes for the gradual decrease in the number of new candidates to religious life. Most of the convents and seminaries in the West have become museums or have been converted into hospitality centres. When there is nothing challenging that is visible, the stimulus to join the Religious Life is indeed at its lowest ebb. How to regain the prime place of the Religious in a well-organized Welfare state? Has the religious charism suddenly become irrelevant in the contemporary society?

The response to this challenge comes, firstly, from the right perception of the nature and role of the elected governments. No political organization can fully respond to all the needs of people, especially the poor and the marginalized. On the necessity of Christian charity in every society, Pope Benedict XVI has explicitly expressed thus:

Love—*caritas*—will always prove necessary, even in the most just society. There is no ordering of the State so just that it can eliminate the need for a service of love. Whoever wants to eliminate love is preparing to eliminate man as such. There will always be suffering which cries out for consolation and help. There will always be loneliness. There will always be situations of material

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<sup>35</sup>Pope Francis, *Apostolic Letter to all Consecrated People on the Occasion of the Year of Consecrated Life* (21 November 2014), Part I, no. 1.

need where help in the form of concrete love of neighbor is indispensable. The State which would provide everything, absorbing everything into itself, would ultimately become a mere bureaucracy incapable of guaranteeing the very thing which the suffering person—every person—needs: namely, loving personal concern (CV 28).

In addition, the Religious need to re-emphasize the distinct nature of their apostolic activities, which essentially flow from their call and consecration. Explicitly or in appropriate ways, each of their undertakings should be proclaimed as a manifestation of Christian charity. Without this underlying assumption, they run the risk of becoming professionals and experts in various fields, but not apostles. When a religious activity does not proclaim Christ to the poor and the needy, it only contributes to, what Pope Francis repeatedly warns against, the spiritual worldliness.

The second “aim” for the Year of the Consecrated Life offers additional impetus to respond to the present predicament, namely, *to live the present with passion*. A grateful remembrance of the past should lead us to listen attentively to the bidding of the Holy Spirit today. An attentive listening to the Holy Spirit will make the Religious passionate about the Gospel as the absolute rule and Jesus Christ as the ideal. Such a realization will provoke questions like: “Are our ministries, our works and our presence consonant with what the Spirit asked of our founders and foundresses? Are they suitable for carrying out today, in society and the Church, those same ministries and works? Do we have the same passion for our people, are we close to them to the point of sharing in their joys and sorrows, thus truly understanding their needs and helping to respond to them?”<sup>36</sup>

It is opportune to recall here the encouraging words of John Paul II:

The various difficulties stemming from the decline in personnel and apostolates *must in no way lead to a loss of confidence in the evangelical vitality of the consecrated life*, which will always be present and active in the Church. While individual Institutes have no claim to permanence, the consecrated life itself will continue to sustain among the faithful the response of love towards God and neighbour. Thus it is necessary to distinguish the *historical destiny* of a specific Institute or form of consecrated life from the *ecclesial mission* of the consecrated life as such. The former is affected by changing circumstances; the latter is destined to perdure. This is true of both the contemplative and apostolic forms of consecrated life. [...] New situations of difficulty are therefore to

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<sup>36</sup>Pope Francis, *Apostolic Letter to all Consecrated People*, Part I, no. 2.

be faced with the serenity of those who know that what is required of each individual is *not success, but commitment to faithfulness*.<sup>37</sup>

### *Challenges arising from Religious Pluralism and Religious Fundamentalism*

The third set of challenges arise from the ever-expanding religious pluralism and religious fundamentalism in a globalized world. Until now, the Religious proclaimed with conviction the uniqueness and universality of Christian faith. Their missionary explorations even to the most inaccessible parts of the world were sustained by the indispensability and urgency of bringing Christ's salvific message. Today, people consider Christianity as just one among many religions in the world. The modern technology of communication continues to modify the traditional visions of religion and religiosity. In multi-religious societies, the presumed authenticity and undeclared superiority of Christian faith is judged to be arrogance or at times even as ignorance. How to proclaim Christ as the Unique and Universal Saviour in a pluralist society?

Moreover, we cannot ignore the most disturbing phenomenon of our times, namely, religious fundamentalism. Religious persecution is *per se* nothing new to Christianity. Right from its inception, Christians have always faced hatred and horror because of their unflinching fidelity to Jesus Christ. Unlike in the past, the violence perpetrated in the name of God and religion has become more visible and more disquieting. In many parts of the world, the Religious cannot any more express freely their faith. In many isolated "mission territories", the Religious continue to bear the most cruel brunt of religious fanaticism – often to the extent of brutal killing. How to proclaim the Gospel of Life when killing is proclaimed as an act of fidelity to God?

Entering into enriching dialogue with other religions seems to be the only evangelical way-out of the predicament. This can be done without ending up in syncretism or relativism. One does not necessarily give up or compromise one's faith by respecting, acknowledging or appreciating evangelical truths in other religions. Religious who are working in multi-religious societies have much to contribute in bringing the Good News of Christ to all by adopting a dialogical approach in all their endeavours. When the Religious cannot explicitly and openly preach the Gospel, they can proclaim the Gospel of life through manifold activities of human promotion.

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<sup>37</sup>John Paul II, *Vita Consecrata*, no. 63.

All this indicates the necessity of, as Pope Francis outlines in his third “aim” for the Year of the Consecrated Life, embracing the future with hope. The virtue of hope is the fruit of unwavering faith in the Lord of history who continues to comfort us: “Be not afraid... for I am with you” (*Jer* 1:8). Going beyond the logic of numbers and efficiency, hope invites us to be conscious of the fact that the Holy Spirit spurs us on and He can still do great things with us as He did once with the great Founders and Foundresses.<sup>38</sup>

Consecrated men and women have much to contribute to the proclamation of the Gospel of wholeness in today’s world. When consecrated life is lived authentically and faithfully, the question of relevance can never disturb their firm commitment to God and God’s people. The Religious are a proclamation of the Gospel of wholeness.

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<sup>38</sup> Pope Francis, *Apostolic Letter to all Consecrated People*, Part I, no. 3.

## CONCLUSION

Any existential insertion into the life of today gives one the uncomfortable realization that Postmodernism and Postmodernity are to be perceived, not primarily as theories or abstractions, but more as the air one breathes. People's search for meaning and the values by which they live, their expectations for the future are all in some way determined (or at least situated) by the postmodern trends. *Radical Postmodernism* tends to highlight the more 'deconstructive' or even disparaging and detrimental elements in life today; while *Reconstructive Postmodernism* attempts "to re-elaborate and re-appropriate modernist categories (such as reason, freedom, equity, rights, self-determination) on less absolutistic grounds."<sup>1</sup>

A dynamic understanding of the milieu of Postmodernity is "at the same time diminishing and enlivening Christian faith communities today."<sup>2</sup> Immersed in such a world of cultural Postmodernity, one can also find within Christian community two major groups of spiritual seekers. The *Reluctant Postmodernists*, pushed on by the complexities and ambiguities of contemporary life "slowly, incrementally, and sometimes grudgingly move beyond overarching, inclusive and foundational framework of meaning and value to accept the specificity, contingency and limitation of all knowing."<sup>3</sup> The identifiable form of the other group, the *Wholehearted Postmodernists*, is marked often by: a religious eclecticism, a gathering together of spiritual resources from various faith traditions; an openness to faith experimentation in liturgy, prayer and Christian practices since they sense a lack of the social power, and attempts to circumvent religious traditions and institutional structures.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Robert Kegan, *In Over our Heads: The Mental Demands of Modern Life* (Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1994), 324.

<sup>2</sup>Harold Daly Horell, "Cultural Postmodernity and Christian Faith Formation" Thomas Groome and Harold Daly Horell (eds.), *Horizons and Hopes: The Future of Religious Education* (New York: Paulist Press, 2003), 92. 81-107.

<sup>3</sup>Horell, "Cultural Postmodernity and Christian Faith Formation", 92.

<sup>4</sup>Horell, "Cultural Postmodernity and Christian Faith Formation", 94-96.

The *perennial relevance* of the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* becomes all the clearer within such cultural situations. “The Kingdom which the Gospel proclaims is lived by men who are profoundly linked to and situated by culture, and the building up of the Kingdom cannot avoid borrowing the elements of human culture or cultures. Though transcending cultures, the Gospel and Evangelization are not necessarily incompatible with them; rather they are capable of ‘permeating them all without becoming subject to any one of them’” (EN 20).

In the complex economic, political, socio-cultural and multi-faith context of today, it is imperative that one also acknowledge the silent inner-search that goes on within each person. The present condition is perceived as one of poverty, oppression or of non-freedom. Some search for health, others search for wealth, still others search for peace and happiness. Such a search is normally initiated with the desire to *liberate oneself* from all that enslaves the person, be it in the economic, social, political, moral or spiritual sphere. But ‘liberation’ and even ‘integral liberation’ more often than not emphasizes only one aspect and tends to embody a negative perspective, a ‘liberation from’. Others search for ‘wholeness’ which calls for integration and completion of what is divided or multiple or partial. The concept of “Wholeness” evokes images that are more attractive and assume greater significance and meaning in a multi-faith and multi-cultural context.

An authentic *Proclamation of the Gospel*, therefore, will seek to promote *Wholeness* by highlighting the positive and the seeking-dimensions in order to make a significant contribution to contemporary discussion about the meaning and value of human and Christian life. Such a Proclamation will seek to counter in some way “all those separations of self from society, or reason from feeling, or science from religion, or man from woman, or theology from spirituality, or individual depth from embracing the struggles of history”.<sup>5</sup>

Postmodernity “does not so much reject atheism as assume it ..., preferring a dismissiveness about the very question of transcendence”<sup>6</sup> and “believes that exorcism of all fear of the sacred is the true path to knowledge”.<sup>7</sup> *Proclaiming the Gospel of Wholeness*, instead, becomes always a call to radical conversion and an invitation to cultivate intimate communion with Jesus Christ

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<sup>5</sup>Michael, P. Gallagher, *Clashing Symbols: An Introduction to Faith and Culture* (London: Darton Longman Todd, 2003) 112.

<sup>6</sup>Gallagher, *Clashing Symbols*, 102-103.

<sup>7</sup>Ronald Rolheiser, *The Shattered Lantern: Rediscovering God's Presence in Everyday Life* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1994), 45.



(cf. GDC 80). Confronted with the superficial texture of Postmodern life, *Proclaiming the Gospel of Wholeness* invites the Christian community to realize more dramatically and to propose more insistently that the Gospel Way of Wholeness is a radically different 'Way', and hence becomes a call towards an authentic discipleship in communities of disciples.

"The 'modern' paradigm of rationality which is being unmasked as an emperor with no clothes"<sup>8</sup> by Postmodernity calls for an authentic Proclamation of the Gospel that transcends the merely rational, since Christian faith, insisting rightly on its reasonableness, includes also the affective and behavioural dimensions. Christian faith, nurtured and realized by authentic *Proclamation of the Gospel of Wholeness*, is rightly retrieving also an appreciation of its roots in salvation history and in ecology, while accepting the mystery dimension which does not seek excessive clarity in words and concepts.

In the deadening rhythms of today's modern life and accelerated cultural changes brought about by Postmodernity, people are aware of two human zones they can trust: individual emotion and the feeling of love. Unfortunately these precious areas also risk the danger of trivialization if they are not contested by a *Proclamation of the Gospel of Wholeness* that fosters critical reflection and evaluation of postmodern practices which too easily combine and mix doctrines and practices from other religious traditions. Such critical reflections, based on Gospel values, ought to be recognized as an ongoing faith formation that promotes individuals to relate Christian faith to the complexities and ambiguities of ever-changing world.

"The paradox of 'lonely crowd' is still a reality".<sup>9</sup> From the perspective of Postmodernity, knowledge is socially constructed and therefore everyone is encouraged to become aware of the ways one's life and especially one's individual sense of self are not unified or built around a central core. An authentic Proclamation of the Gospel of Wholeness, to counter such social fragmentation promoted by Postmodernity both within and beyond, needs to refocus on the centrality of Christian community and on its mission.

For the vast majority of Christians today "the Second Vatican Council and the shift from a classical to modern worldview seem like ancient history".<sup>10</sup> Therefore Christian communities need to re-emphasize more on the centrality

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<sup>8</sup>Gallagher, *Clashing Symbols*, 100.

<sup>9</sup>Gallagher, *Clashing Symbols*, 167.

<sup>10</sup>Horell, "Cultural Postmodernity and Christian Faith Formation", 98.

of the Proclamation of Gospel, rather than a mere reliance and presentation of an already well-formulated Christian meta-narrative (overarching and inclusive frameworks of meaning and value).

“I am spiritual but not religious” is a common postmodern refrain. In making such statements, the individuals express a desire for a deeper relationship with God and affirm the transcendent dimension of their lives while distancing from institutional structures that are seen as manipulative, authoritarian and oppressive. An authentic Proclamation of the Gospel of Wholeness, while promoting a personal spirituality needs to emphasise that a personal spirituality “disconnected from a faith community can too easily become a privatized or small-group expression of faith that is forgetful of collective wisdom of Christian traditions or neglectful of the Christian mission to welcome and work to bring about the fuller realization of the values of God’s reign, God’s peace and justice, within the world”.<sup>11</sup>

“The currents of cultural Postmodernity have made the waters of morality murkier”.<sup>12</sup> While Modern Philosophy emphasised questions of morality and freedom, at times in an exaggerated manner, Postmodernity tends to propose moral values as illusory. Such a situation calls on Proclamation of the Gospel of Wholeness to foster a greater sense of personal moral responsibility while being attentive to the dynamics of social power that can lead to renewed sense of social morality.

Well aware that for a considerable period of time, Evangelization was regarded solely as the First Proclamation of the Gospel in the so-called ‘mission territories’ or to people of other faiths, today, in the light of renewed awareness, demands and guidelines, its significance has been re-emphasized. Evangelization embraces all the tasks of the Church that are directed to proclaiming and witnessing the Gospel of Wholeness. This does not imply that Evangelization happens in an automatic manner, as if the ordinary life of the Church carried out in any manner whatsoever, were sufficient to be considered as Evangelization. It demands a profound re-conversion of the Christian presence since mere action of the Church does not evangelize. Evangelization “only acquires its full meaning when it becomes a witness, when it evokes admiration and conversion, and when it becomes the preaching and proclamation of the Good News” (EN 15).

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<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, 102.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, 103.

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