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**TITLE: THE CHRISTIAN MYSTERIES - CREATION,
TRINITY, INCARNATION, PASCHAL MYSTERY
AND REDEMPTION - A FOUNDATION OF
MISSION**

AUTHOR: TORRES, CASIMIRO, IMC

TUTOR: REV. FR. PIERLI, FRANCESCO, MCCJ

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Signed Carman L. H. Turner

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INTRODUCTION

In this paper I would like to focus on the relationship existing between the Christian Mysteries of Creation, Trinity, Incarnation, Paschal Mystery and Redemption, and the Mission.

Christian Mysteries have got their origin in God. They belong to the same universal plan of salvation that God offered to the humanity through his only son in the power of the Holy Spirit. Though each one of these mysteries has got its own specificities, they have a common goal; to lead humanity to enter in communion of love with the Triune God. Indeed each one can be fully understood in the light of the others. Even though human person, being limited cannot grasp these mysteries in their fullness.

I will try to explain and show how these mysteries are related to the mission. How they are the source and foundation of mission. How they bestow on mission its significance and value.

In the first chapter, I deal with the mystery of creation as God's action and its relation to man. He has got some roles and duties to fulfill in order to preserve God's creation and bring it to fulfillment. The Church being the steward of God's mission on earth has to continue God's plan in creation.

In the second chapter, I focus on the Blessed Trinity and the Divine missions of the Son and the Holy Spirit. Then I shall link this Trinitarian mission to the mission of the Church; and how Church's mission has her origin and goal in the Blessed Trinity

In chapter three, I present the Christological mysteries; Incarnation, Paschal Mystery and Redemption as foundation of mission. I will explain how the mission of the Church is rooted in the Christological mysteries and the implications they have for the Church's mission.

CHAPTER I

CREATION AS FOUNDATION OF MISSION

The mission of the Church is to continue God's plan of Salvation. Then creation play an important role since: "Creation is the very foundation "of all God's saving" plans the beginning of the history of salvation that culminates in Christ" (CCC 280).

Creation totally belongs to God and depends on God because it was fashioned by God, out of nothing. As creation has its origin in God, it can reveal no one but God. On the other hand, creation being made by God out of nothing, the only imprint that it carries is the imprint of the creator. Here we see already creation as the beginning of divinization. Creation, though in an imperfect way mirrors its creator. It carries already the goodness and beauty of its creator.

Indeed still in many cultures creation stands as the first and the most important messenger of God. Hence we can find already good ground for the Church's mission. Creation as foundation of God's Salvation, as starting point of revelation and as divinization; it must indeed be a motivation and integral part of the Church's mission.

As the Church has the duty to proclaim all the good things that God has done for us through revelation and history of salvation, she cannot ignore the gift of creation. This impels her to praise and thank God for such a beautiful gift. On the other hand, is also part of her mission to keep it and preserve it according to the will of the creator.

God as creator, is a God that looks after his creation, He protects his creatures because He loves them. It is this love for his creatures that impels him to be among them and reveal himself to them.

Creation is a gradual process which includes the creation of man and the Sabbath rest. All what God created was good, but when He created man He saw that his creation

was very good. God created man as a special being regarding to all other creatures. God gave him power over all other creatures. This power however has to be used in responsible freedom. In the sense that man has the responsibility to keep and take care of the whole of God's creation. Making use of it in the right way; however, God is always in control of his creation. As all God's actions, the act of creation is an act of love because God is the fullness of love.

Man was created in the image and likeness of God. This creation of man as God's image and likeness enabled him to have a personal relationship with God. Man stands in special relationship with God. This relationship is specific to man alone and no other creature enjoys such an intimate union with his/her Creator.

Creation was already oriented and planned in view of Christ's event. In creation God was already foreseeing the coming of Jesus into the world. Therefore, creation cooperate in Christ's salvific mission. Creation was much more united to Jesus than just receiving him in Incarnation. In fact St. Paul tells us that "In him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, all things were created through him and for Him. He is before all things and in him all things hold together" (Col. 1:16-17).

As we see Christ's participation and relation to creation was much more than awaited future coming. Christ himself was in the very beginning at the centre of all creation. All things were created through him for him and in him and he holds all things together. *Indeed he took an active part in the act of creation. He is the origin and the goal* of creation, as well as its sustainer. Ultimately creation is work of the Blessed Trinity (CCC 292). The whole of creation is also called to participate and enjoy God's glory (Rom 8:19-21).

The Church's mission must be open to creation. Christ himself, in whom all things hold together, entrusted to the Church the sustenance of the new creation that he inaugurated in his person. Hence creation must be an integral part of the mission of the Church.

The Church must be aware of dangers against creation and its destruction. By her very nature she is called upon to cooperate and work for the integrity of creation.

The integrity of creation can be understood only in its relation: a) to God the Creator; b) to Jesus Christ the architect, owner and sustainer of creation; c) to man himself, who is its free-tenant; d) to creation itself and the inter-dependence of its elements.

Creation being a God's action is good and manifests its creator. God Himself acknowledges to goodness of the whole of creation, not only part of it: "And God saw everything that He had made, and behold, it was very good" (Gn. 1: 31). On the other hand, it is the whole of creation that belongs to Christ. The whole creation has its origin and leads to Him. Man, though having some power over creation, has not an absolute power. It is a relative one. Man himself, being a creature is part of creation and cannot be above his creator. Therefore, man has to respect the actions and will of his creator. The harmony of creation itself is linked to the inter-dependence of its elements. The destruction of some elements affect the whole creation. Hence it affects creation in its multi-relational form; to God, to Christ and to man.

We are facing in today's world many environmental threats and crises: pollution, devastation of forest, no control in industrialization and others¹.

The Church cannot remain indifferent to the problems affecting creation as a whole. By her very vocation and nature, she is impelled to denounce all the evil affecting creation. On the other hand she is requested to do her best in order to promote justice, peace and harmony throughout the world. The Church herself in the past few decades has become much more aware of her importance and the role she has to play in the up building of better world. In order to be true witness and faithful to her mission, she cannot be merely a passive spectator; instead she must take active role in the development and improvement of people's life in all dimensions.

¹ Przewozny, Bernard "Integrity of Creation: A Missionary Imperative". In: Jenkinson, W. and O'Sullivan, H., ed., *Trends in Mission*, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1993, p. 240-241.

To testify Church's awareness of her mission in today's reality, we read in one of her documents: "The joys and hopes, the grieves and anguishes of the men of all time, special of those who are poor and afflicted in any way, are the joys and hopes the grieves and anguishes of the followers of Christ as well" (GS. 1). It is within this context that the Church feels she has got the right, and even the duty to sensitize the people for all situations of injustice and operation, that instead of promoting and developing human person, they dehumanize the human condition. In the present time the Church is no longer a body in herself separated and even protected from the world. She is not a world within the world, but she is in the world and working for the world. The role of the Church is indeed to proclaim universal brotherhood begun in creation and fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Hence she is called to point out world structures, powers, and ideologies that oppress and dominate others. The Church herself stands at the side of the poor, powerless, and minorities; in promoting and defending their rights, and claim the need for structural transformations in order to achieve the common good and true development. Therefore, the Church cannot accept or compromise with situations of injustice, oppression and violence; which disrupt and break the harmony and goodness of creation.

The Church acknowledges her active role as she manifests in the Synod of Bishops of 1971: "Action on behalf of justice and participation on the transformation of the world fully appear to us as constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel, or, in other words, of the Church mission for the redemption of human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation".

In the Christian message it is essential the recognition of the dignity of the human person, as image and likeness of God. This understanding is fundamental in the Church's vision of man's relationship with one another and his relationship with God. One affects the other and vice versa. This understanding impels the Church be on the side of the poor, oppressed, marginalized and 'useless ones' in order to be truthful and faithful to her mission. As an alternative to all situations of broken injustice she has to offer the utopia of the Gospel and Christ Himself who is the fountain of all justice and love.

Lastly I would like to mention that the Church has got indeed a difficult mission spearheading the bringing about of all those conditions that favour the achievement of the right relationships between human person and himself, between himself and God, between himself and neighbour and himself and the environment.

It is the duty of the Church, through the local communities in their own circumstances and place of living, to implement and foster all the above conditions in order that humans may reach their best possible development as human persons inter-related with one another. Only in this way she is able to make visible among the peoples the New Creation inaugurated by Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER II

TRINITY AS FOUNDATION OF MISSION

2.1. The Divine Missions of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit

It is through the divine missions of the Son of God and the Holy Spirit, sent by God the Father that God reveals himself to humanity as a Triune God. Living in communion of love among themselves. This divine mission of Christ, sent by God the Father, and the Holy Spirit sent by the Father and the Son have the origin in the communion of overwhelming love that exist among the three persons of the Trinity; Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This is the so called Trinitarian mystery. These overwhelming and universal love was from the very first moment of creation - in itself an act of love - and through the history of salvation communicate to human kind. Eventually this gradual communication of God's love throughout human history reached its climax and highest manifestation in the event of Jesus Christ. He is the ultimate revelation and manifestation of God's infinite love in its purest form. The Spirit is the one who enables us to perceive and receive this love; to live it and to witness the same love to all people.

The Triune God is the source of all revelation and salvation; and the second person of the Trinity, the Son Jesus Christ is the culmination and actualization of these "Universal salvific will of God that extends to all peoples".²

Christ himself, brings all God's promises to fulfillment. God who had been revealing himself in many and various ways, spoke to us by his only Son (Heb. 1:1). Jesus Christ is the ultimate and perfect revelation of God. A revelation to humanity in human language, coming one among us and with us in every thing but sin. God manifests

² Karotempré, Sebastian, *"Christological and Soteriological Foundations of Mission"*. In: Karotempré, S., ed., *Following Christ in Mission*, Nairobi: Pauline Publications-Africa, 1995, p. 61.

himself to man not from outside but from within mankind. God save man by becoming himself man in the Son.

God himself is the one who freely takes the initiative and accomplishes man's redemption in his Son Jesus Christ and the giving of the Holy Spirit.

Christ's mission was an off centreed mission. In other words, it was centreed in the Father and His Kingdom. Jesus being sent by the Father clearly focused his mission on the Father and his Kingdom. He was totally dependent and at the service of God the Father. All his life and ministry intended to reveal God to people and at the same time to bring people closer to God.

Jesus being sent by God the Father, is witness to the Father. The Father by sending Jesus is the source and goal of Jesus' mission, the one whom Jesus proclaims and is the centre of Christ's message. Ultimately Jesus' mission has its origin in the communion of life and love with the Father in the Spirit.

Jesus accomplishes his mission till the very end paying the ultimate price with his death on the cross. In his own person, Jesus Christ is able to fulfill and give an answer to all human problems, deep desires and expectations. Christ answers to all human questions regarding human life and destiny and bringing it to fulfillment. Though fulfilled they are not yet accomplish because God require man active participation and not merely passive expectation. Each one of us therefore, has got a role to play. The mission of Jesus was always hand in hand with the mission of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit always accompanied Jesus throughout his mission on earth. They are two persons, but their action is inseparable. Their missions were not merely complementary, but belonged to the oneness and wholeness of the Father's mission. "Between the mission of Christ and that of the Holy Spirit, there is a very close connection, of origin, content and finality, since both come from the same source, God-the-Father's *Amore Fontalis*, they are realized according to the same saving plan and tend to the same final end which is to make new sharers in the Divine Life".³ In other words, it is a Trinitarian mission.

³ Wolanin, Adam, *"The Mission of Jesus Christ"*. In: A.A.V.V., *Mission for the Third Millennium*, Rome: Pontifical Missionary Union, 1993, p. 87.

Jesus Christ, from the very beginning of his ministry, understood that he would need people to continue his mission; the mission which had been prepared from the very first moment of creation by his Father and fulfilled in his humanity. Hence, he called the disciples, instructed and taught them during his public ministry. He prepared them so that they could carry on his mission after everything had been accomplished in his death and resurrection. Jesus not only prepared them but once he had fulfilled everything, he sent them the Holy Spirit to strengthen them and bring to light everything that Christ had told them. The Holy Spirit is the ever-active agent in Christ's followers, that makes possible and visible Christ's mission in every time and place. He is the one that changes and turns the lives of the apostles upside-down; and he enables them to preach and witness Christ without fear. The Spirit transformed the lives of the apostles in such a radical way that not even during Jesus' life-time and ministry they had such a transformation. This Spirit is now available to all Christ's disciples and no longer limited to one person, as it was during Jesus' public ministry.

The mission of the Church, cannot in any way be separated from the divine missions. They are all part of the one and same plan of salvation. As God-the-Father sends the Son, and God-the-Father and God-the-Son send the Holy Spirit; the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit send the Church into the world. The Church therefore, by God's free will is called to participate in the divine mission of the Trinity.

2.2. The Church's Mission as the Mission of the Trinity

The missionary vocation of the Church indeed her very nature spring from the mission of Christ himself whom was sent by the Father. As we have seen before, was Christ entrusted his mission to his disciples. He sent them to be his witnesses to the whole world and to continue spreading the good news of the Kingdom.) Hence the mission of the Church is not only closely linked to Christ's mission, but it is the prolongation, in space and time, of that same mission. This is what constitutes the essence of the Church and her only reason to exist.

All those who adhere to Christ and follow him are called upon to carry out this mission which Christ Himself entrusted to the first Christian Church: "As the Father has sent me, even so I send you" (Jn. 20: 21). This is Christ's command to the Church and to all Christians of every time and place. Therefore this mission is not merely a human initiative, but Christ's own initiative, ultimately rooted in God's own initiative: "As thou didst send me into the world so I have sent them into the world" (Jn. 17:18). All Christians are called to continue Christ's mission in the world. They have the responsibility to be witnesses of God's Kingdom that was brought to us, to all peoples. They have the authority given by Christ himself, to preach and to instruct the people in order to be prepared for the final coming, in glory, of Christ. Nevertheless Christ knew quite well that this would not be an easy task for Christians; hence He promised to be with them and also send them the Holy Spirit (Paraclete, Advocate), to guide, to protect them, to strengthen and to encourage them. So, we can say that "Christ is now at work in the hearts of men through the energy of his Spirit. Christians are led by the Holy Spirit in their journey to the Kingdom of the Father."⁴ In this way Christ's event becomes a continuous and living reality present amongst us.

Jesus' disciples of all times cannot but follow their master's foot steps. The Church and all the followers of Christ have got a twofold dimension task; a) to stand before the people on behalf of God and on the other hand b) to bring the people closer to God. Thus the ultimate purpose of mission is to enable people to share and participate in the communion and love which exist between the Father and Son in the Holy Spirit. As God's love is a universal one, it is offered to all and everyone - male and female, rich and poor, slave and freeman - is called to participate and enjoy that same love. Therefore, Christian mission is ever permanent, valid and actual. John Paul II notes in his encyclical letter *Redemptoris Missio* that there is an ever increasing number of people in the world who do not know or are not yet aware of God's ultimate manifestation of love, for humanity, in Jesus Christ. Then it is obvious Christian mission is ever valid and actual (RM 3)

⁴ Karotemprel, *Op. Cit.*, p. 56.

By virtue and nature of their vocation, as followers of Christ, Christians have great responsibility in continuing spreading the Good News of salvation brought by Jesus Christ, to all peoples. All peoples are called to celebrate and participate in God's love and life.

It is God himself who "freely wills to communicate the glory of his blessed life" (CCC 257). This is our destiny, "the ultimate end of the whole divine economy is the entry of God's creature into the perfect unity of the Blessed Trinity. But even now we are called to be a dwelling place for the most Blessed Trinity" (CCC 260).

In Christ's event salvation is already offered to all peoples. Christians have to represent and render Christ present in the world, because Christ himself entrusted to them his own mission. The mission which Christ entrusted to his disciples and all those who followed them, can be identified as the realization in our time of the event of Christ. Through the mission Christ's event becomes ever present and active in us and among us.

Though Christ accomplished his mission alone, he today entrusts that same mission to the Church and all his followers. Therefore, they have the responsibility of working together each one with his own task, in the total enterprise according to the charisms that the Holy Spirit bestows on each one of them. To rend Christ's mission efficient and credible to the world the Christians must keep in touch with the teachings of the master, must promote and foster the values of the Kingdom as Jesus did; taking into *consideration the reality and situation of the people whom they are called to serve.*

One of the greatest challenges that the mission offers is the ability of putting oneself in the place of the people where he/she is sent. Christ stands as the greatest example to imitate, since he being God, was able to put himself in man's place. Becoming one like us in everything but sin.

True Christian missionaries must not only be witness to the Son in the Holy Spirit; but the two persons of the Blessed Trinity are the protagonists of the mission, while we Christians are merely instruments at their service. It is a condition 'sine qua non' for all Christ's disciples to be open to the Spirit who is at work in each and everyone. The Spirit

is the one who enables the envoy of Christ to convey the message and the receiver to accept it as well. It is the Spirit who reveals, guides, transforms and renews the mission accomplished by Jesus Christ. This same Spirit accompanied Jesus throughout his mission. Christ himself promises his disciples the Paraclete sent by God the Father in his name, to remind them of all that Jesus had taught them (Jn 14:25-26). Since then the Spirit has been ever active in Christ's disciples; He is the power and energy of the mission. He is the one who brings the missionary activity to fulfillment. Thus the ongoing mission entrusted by Christ to his disciples of every time and place, has as its ultimate source and foundation, the Blessed Trinity, centred in the Trinity and directed to the Trinity.

Nevertheless Trinity, revealed to us in the economy of salvation and more particular in the event of Christ; by ways known to God alone, is also present in a mysterious way among all people. Hence all Christians are called to discern and to acknowledge the values which are present in every culture, tradition and religion in the world, as a gift from God. These should not be reasons of embarrassment in one's mission; instead they should be means at one's disposal, given by God, in order to convey Christ's message in a better and more effective way, and at the same time reaching the heart of the listener. This is not an easy task, one must be open to other cultures and values in order to unveil Christ's hidden presence in those cultures and traditions and religions.

The salvific mission of God through the Son in the Spirit, is offered to all peoples, therefore, it must be proclaimed and witnessed to the ends of the earth. This implies one's self - emptiness and being for others; as the example of Christ who "though he was in a form of God, did not count equality to God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men" (Phil. 2: 6-7). Eventually it might culminate in one's own death for the sake of Christ and his mission. The mission of the disciple must therefore be off-centred. It must be centred in Christ and his mission in order to be credible and fruitful before the others. As Bosch says that our missionary

activities are all authentic in so far as they reflect participation in the mission of God.⁵ Namely, *Missio Dei*.

In an ever changing world we run the risk to consider the Church and the mission no longer valuable and out of fashion. Then, as we Christians are people for others, we may have the tendency to simplify, radicalize or horizontalize too much Christ's mission and our mission in order to reach others, that we secularize. Mission then loose its essence, meaning, validity and goal. We therefore "need to establish the missionary nature of the Church in the divine mission from which mission springs".⁶

As last analysis, I would like to mention that the Church and all missionary agents should have a clear understanding - though not easy - of the very nature of the mission. Christian mission is rooted in the divine missions of the Son and the Holy Spirit. These divine missions originate from the Father as a result of a communion overwhelming love among the three person of trinity. Thus all Christ's disciples should have in mind that ultimate mission has as its source and end, the Blessed Trinity.

As the divine and universal mission of the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit is one; so is the mission of the universal Church, as a communion of local Churches, by its very nature is also one. Just as the mission of the Triune God is by its very essence and nature divine; the mission of the Church being the prolongation of that Trinitarian mission, in space and time, as also divine character. **This Trinitarian divine character confers to the Church's mission a uniqueness and absoluteness not present in other religions;** at the same time gives to Church's mission a permanent-valid character. The mission of the Church is the on-going mission of the Trinity, prepared from the very beginning by God and is carried on by the Church till the end of time, when all will be one in Christ. Hence the mission of the Church cannot be limited or reduced to an horizontal dimension or diminished of her divine. It would loose its primary purpose and identity (RM 11).

⁵ cf. Bosch, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 372-377

⁶ Wolanin, Adam, "*Trinitarian Foundation of Mission*". In: Karotemprel, S. *Following Christ in Mission*, p. 40.

While carrying on her divine mission, the Church should never lose sight of her origin and identity when confronted with other realities and visions of the world. The Church must be ready to face, confront and present to other realities what she really has and is. On the other hand not ignoring and despising all good values present in other realities. The Church should be able to integrate and to foster those values, even using them as the means available to her to proclaim her message. Since the mission of the Church is rooted in the Trinity; hence, this mission should have the following focus: a) in the trinity and its mission; b) is concerned with the whole cosmos; c) her goal is to proclaim God's Kingdom.⁷

Divine mission does not mean mission outside the world. The divine mission of the Church is in fact in the world and for the world; only within it can the Church carry out her mission, being open and ready to face the challenges present by the world.

⁷ Amaladoss, Michael, "*The Challenges of Mission Today*". In: Jenkinson, W. And O'Sullivan, H, *Trends in Mission*, p. 365.

CHAPTER III

THE CHRISTOLOGICAL MYSTERIES - INCARNATION, PASCHAL MYSTERY AND REDEMPTION - AS FOUNDATION OF MISSION

3.1. Incarnation

The event of Jesus, the second person of the Trinity, becoming man is called the mystery of incarnation. Sometimes we might wonder and ask ourselves: was there really need for God to become man in His Son? Did He need to low himself down all that much? Probably most people would think He did not need. Nevertheless, God Himself freely has chosen to do so. This was not a moment of inspiration nor a momentaneous bright decision that lead God to take such a step. The event of incarnation had been prepared from the very beginning of creation. Furthermore, as God's ways are not man's way, He will continue surprising us to the extent that God the Son decides to lay down His life for us all.

For the time being let limit ourselves to event of incarnation; what mean to us, its implications on us and our response to it.

Becoming man Jesus reveals God to man in a human way. This is in fact the most simple and practical way, no other could be more familiar to man.

God in His love for humanity and the desire to save all human beings takes a decisive and last step by sending His only Son in our midst. By becoming man, Jesus saves man from within man Himself. Jesus not only saves man, but also reveals man to himself, his origin and his end; glorifies and takes man to God's presence.

In the incarnate Son of God, the fullness and perfection of God and the fullness and perfection of man came together in a unique and perfect way; as the Catechism of the Catholic Faith puts it "Christ's human nature belongs, as his own, to the divine person of the Son of God who assumed it". (CCC 470)

Jesus Christ is the only one mediator between God and man; only through Jesus Christ can man reach God, as only through Jesus Christ God came to man in the fullest possible way. He being the eternal Son of the living God enters in human history through the virgin Mary and comes to save all of us. His salvific mission is an universal one. Though he is born, lives and accomplish his mission in the particular culture and context of life; his mission is universal one that transcends all culture and people. That is why his incarnation affects all cultures and all peoples of all ages. In the incarnation of the Son of God all culture and peoples should be able to find their fulfillment and realization.

Incarnation is therefore, one of the Christian pillars for the missionary activities of the Church. Incarnation itself is a missionary action of God towards man. It is the mission par excellence or the supreme mission of Christ. Hence, incarnation remains always a point of reference for the Church and all Christian agents of mission, the best model of communicating the message.

Nowadays we often hear series of fashionable words in the mission field such as: inculturation, dialogue, proclamation, evangelization, witnessing and so on. We know very well that there are various ways and models of implementing the reality of those terms in the missionary field; but I still believe that the very event of Christ becoming man, being one with us and among us, still stands as the primary and most basic model we should look at. Jesus Christ by being divine was able to become man, to bring the Good News of Salvation in a human way and to proclaim God's Kingdom in a language accessible to all. Through his incarnation He was able to assume all human conditions necessary to fulfill his mission, in order to rescue humanity.

Incarnation is not limited to Jesus' birth at Bethlehem, it includes all his life among us, his preaching, teachings, miracles, healing, his presence among the poor and

the despised of the society. In one word, all his being and activity is incarnation. He comes to fulfill the mission entrusted to him by the Father from time immemorial. He is the first missionary of the Father and come to bring the Good News of Salvation to all. Jesus not only brings the Good News, He is the Good News. Messenger and message are one in Jesus Christ. In Jesus the will of God is revealed to us and comes to perfection. In the incarnation the fullness of revelation is manifested in a unique manner in Jesus Christ; through his life and ministry God is revealed as Love. In the incarnation of his Son God makes the perfect, universal and everlasting covenant with humanity. It is no longer the old covenant between God and man; whereby God is on one side and humans on the other, but "is the union of God with humanity in one person".⁸

Jesus Christ is the perfect and true mediator between God and man and the Savior of all; only through Him and in Him can we be saved, "no one comes to the Father but by Me" (Jn 14:6). His mediation is not limited to his human nature and existence, all are called to participate share in it and benefit from it. Jesus by His very nature and mission is a man for others and open to all; hence his mediation is also open and available to all. Since Christ's mediation has got universal salvific significance all people are called to share and participate in it; therefore the Church and all Christ's disciples have got an important role to play in order to make all people aware of Christ's mediation. Christ himself prepared the first community to cooperate with him in his on-going work of mediation.

The very event of the eternal Son of God entering in human history, gives Christianity a peculiar and unique place in the world among other religions. Christianity is not just one among all religions of the world. No other religion has ever claimed, as Christianity does, that God in the second person of the trinity has become one with us and among us in every thing except sin. It might be a scandal or offense to other religions: after all God could never become man, they might say. Nevertheless is the teaching of the Church and the belief of all Christians that Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of the living God is true God and true man and no other name exists above Jesus' name. The incarnation of the Son of God in the historical person of Jesus of Nazareth was the way that God chose to

⁸ Osthathios, Geevarghese Mar, "Mission and Uniqueness of Jesus Christ". In: *Mission Studies*, Vol. XII-I, 23, 1995, pp. 79-94.

reveal Himself to us and to save us this nothing more than God's infinite love and concern for humanity. In the incarnation God chose us how precious we are to Him because we become sons in the Son we share in the sonship of Jesus. In Jesus of Nazareth we become also co-heirs of God's kingdom. As we can see Jesus is not one among many other saviours, His mission as saviour is unique and universal. He is the only one savior of all, the only one able to reveal God to man and to lead man to God (RM 5).

Though the Church recognizes Jesus as the only universal savior of all she does not despise or neglect the value of other religions. Instead she is the first one to acknowledge their importance, and even to integrate those values which are present in those religions and lead to a deeper understanding of Christ's mystery; who is the only one mediator from whom and in whom other forms of mediation acquire meaning and value (RM 5). Jesus is the only universal savior and there is no other besides him; nevertheless this does not exclude means, persons, doctrines and rites which can favor, prepare and predispose to the salvation that God accomplishes through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit.

Jesus Christ assumes human nature in its totality and integrity, not merely partial. In the historical Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God is full human and full divine. Therefore he saves the human person as a whole, in one's integrity and not simply one's spiritual or religious dimensions. Hence Mission deals with all dimensions of human life and transforms the life of the person from within - as Jesus did by becoming man - in Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. Mission can not be solely a presentation of *intellectual knowledge of simply information about God and what he has done for us* through the Son in the Spirit. This kind of mission would be reduced to a transmission of academic knowledge without having really direct influence and integration in people's life-style.

In order to achieve its goal and be faithful to Christ, it has to be personalized and integrated in the whole life style of the people; it has to touch them and transform them, and eventually bringing them to Christ.

Jesus own life-style, his ministry, his deeds, teachings and values should be for the mission of the Church, the first model to follow. Jesus of Nazareth certainly was primarily

a man for God, his Father; all his mission was to reveal the Father and his love for us, to make present his Kingdom and its values among us. In the same way he was a man for others; always concerned with the good and welfare of all peoples. Always promoted love, peace, justice, harmony, forgiveness; that is to say, he fostered brotherhood and love among all. At the same time, Jesus pointed out and fought against the evils that were deeply rooted in the society, breaking those values that Jesus fearlessly promoted. The Church, in order to be faithful to her mission entrusted by Jesus Christ, has in today's world to follow the example of her founder, promoting God's Kingdom and its values and at the same time, fighting against injustices and other evils that are destroying humanity.

Mission is deeply rooted in the mystery of incarnation. The first and greatest missionary journey of Jesus from the Father to humanity is an invitation and provocation, in the positive sense of the word, for those committed to carry on Christ's mission. In his incarnation Jesus inaugurated the mission in visible and effective way. Today his followers are invited to continue carrying on his mission.

Mission is deeply rooted in the mystery of Incarnation. The first and greatest missionary journey of Jesus from the Father to humanity is an invitation and a provocation, in the positive sense of the word to all those committed to Christ.

In his Incarnation, Jesus inaugurated the mission in a visible and effective way. Today, his followers are invited to continue carrying out his mission.

3.2. Paschal Mystery and Redemption

The Paschal Mystery is the culmination of the Redemptive mission of Christ. In his suffering and death, he offered himself totally and completely to the Father on our behalf. Through his death and resurrection, he accomplished man's redemption. As we see, "the person of Jesus Christ, his death and resurrection are decisive for the salvation of all, whatever maybe the way that salvation is mediated and appropriated by different

persons. Hence, there can be no Christian mission without the proclamation of Jesus Christ".⁹

Jesus Christ is no one else but the Jesus of History. We cannot separate the Jesus of History and the Christ of Faith. Jesus Christ is the glorified Lord present or transcendent to all human history and cultures; is no longer limited to a particular period of history within a specific culture. Therefore, the historical Jesus is the trans-historical Christ.¹⁰

The apostolic community was the first one to acknowledge the indissoluble bond that unites the Jesus of History and the Christ of Faith. The object of their faith is not Jesus without Christ, or Christ without Jesus; instead, is Jesus the Christ (cf. Acts 2:36). The event of Christ's death and resurrection and the sending of the Spirit brings to fulfillment the uniqueness of revelation-salvation. This revelation-salvation that starts from the very first moment of Creation, having its final stage in the event of Christ, particularly with his death and resurrection. And all this is nothing else than God's manifestation of love for us. Through his death and resurrection, Christ frees man from sin bringing God's pardon to all. Christ breaks all chains that prevented man from having full and perfect relationship with God, with oneself and with one another.

Jesus Christ went still further. After his resurrection, he communicated man the gift of his Spirit; therefore, man was taken to the dignity of son in the Son. Hence, through the Spirit, we call God "Abba Father" (Gal. 4:6).

Jesus Christ conquered for us God's salvation which we were unable to attain by our own human efforts, since our human nature had fallen into sin. By virtue of Jesus' death and resurrection, salvation is available to all people, even to those whom do not know or are not aware of his salvific mission.

All men and all women who reach salvation take part, even if in different ways, in the same mystery of salvation in Jesus Christ through his Spirit. The mystery of salvation, reaches no-Christians, by ways known by God alone,

⁹ Karotemprer, *Op. Cit.*, p. 50.

¹⁰ La Civiltà Cattolica, Vol. I, 3473, 1995, p. 426.

through the invisible action of the Spirit of Christ. It is through practicing what is good in their own religions, traditions, and following their consciences that members of other religions respond positively to God's offering and receive salvation in Jesus Christ, even if they do not recognize him as their Lord.¹¹

In the Risen Lord, Salvation is accessible to all, even those who are not explicit members of the Church. On the other hand, it does not diminish the urgency of Church's mission.

All Christians, baptized in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, are called to carry out their mission according to their abilities, their situations of life; but above all, according to the gifts or charisms that each one has received from the Holy Spirit.

Jesus himself after accomplishing his mission on earth, and before returning to the Father, commissioned his disciples by saying: "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit; teaching them to observe all what I have commanded to you; and lo, I am with you always to the close of the ages." (Mt. 28:19-20)

Christ mandate is primarily rooted in his own mission and all that he had accomplished for us through his death and resurrection. This consciousness of the *missionary mandate given by Christ to his disciples, grew gradually in the minds of the disciples*. In fact, St. Paul who had not been Jesus' disciple during his earthly ministry, was the first one who really grasped Christ's commandment.

The Church firmly believes in Christ as the universal Redeemer-Savior from whom she received her missionary vocation, and who is the origin and goal of Church's mission. This mission is a gift to the Church and at the same time a duty that she has to accomplish in faithfulness to her sender. Though in Christ, by virtue of his very nature,

¹¹ Ibid., Op. Cit., p. 431.

messenger and message were identified in the same person; in the Church, it does not happen in the same degree and intensity.

It is obvious that the mission of the Church must be centred in Christ. It is Christ that the Church must proclaim and bring to all peoples; so that, they may fully and consciously participate in Christ's redemptive mission. In order to be efficient in her mission, the Church has got to follow her Master's footsteps. He gave the example by his life, preaching and most of all by his suffering and death on the Cross. Thus, the Church must also be ready to face difficulties, sufferings, for the sake of the Gospel. Jesus Christ did for our own sake.

The Church and all Christians must promote the values of the Kingdom brought about to us by Christ himself, values that are signs of God's presence among us.

The mission of the Church has to lead the people to open their hearts to Christ's love; so that, Christ himself may come and make his home in them and transform them.

The success or not of Church's mission will depend on her deep communion with Christ. It cannot be a mission in Church's ways; instead, it must be a mission in Christ's way:

- a) deeply anchored in God, the source of all mission, who is by nature love;
- b) to follow Jesus' words and deeds.¹²

therefore, becoming a second Christ in our Christian way of living.

In the life of Jesus, who emptied himself, the Church is also invited to this kenosis so that she may be open:

- a) to the Spirit of Christ, who is the protagonist in the heart of the mission;
- b) to all people whom she is called to serve.

¹² Muller, Karl, "*Mission in Christ's way*". In: **Reprints**, Eldoret: Gaba Publications, 1987, p. 367.

Christ himself indeed more than any other being, emptied himself becoming one for others and one for all, reaching his extreme point of kenosis on the cross. And it was on the cross that he gave salvation and redeemed us.

One, must therefore, enter deeply in the mystery of the suffering and death of Jesus Christ. When we talk about dialogue, inculturation and ecumenism in mission; kenosis is a key instrument to make this aspects possible and successful in the mission's field. The Church's mission to bring people to Christ, whom she believes to be the key to our destiny, must be opened to the world, to the different realities that the people are living in. The Church, must be humble enough to acknowledge also the values prevailing in the different realities of the world, and that God is also present in those realities, though not in the same definitive way as he is present in the Church through Christ in the Holy Spirit.

Nevertheless, the Church, while recognizing the gifts and values present in other cultures and religions, must always uphold the uniqueness and absoluteness in the plan of salvation. Christ himself chose the Church to be the instrument of salvation par excellence, in the world. It is through the Church, that Christ continues to be present among us. He himself promised to be with her till the ends of time.

Christ himself left also visual means and signs which are carried out by the Church and to ensure and to make Christ's presence among us real and effective. These signs are called sacraments. These sacraments are a real, effective and powerful means whereby God shares his own life and love with the people. He is a living God among us. He is a God who shares our life in all its dimensions, becoming with us and among us in his only Son, Jesus Christ.

By his redemption, Jesus Christ reveals to us that God is not just one who gives and rewards according to what we deserve; instead, he is a God who loves and understands us, just as we are, in all our humanity with all our difficulties and limitations, struggles and accomplishments. Hence, Christians, by their nature, are invited to share this same love and experience of God with others.

It might really seem that the mission which Christ, after accomplishing our redemption, entrusted to the apostles and therefore to the Church, is a difficult task. Indeed it is! After all, also his mission was not easy, and he fulfilled it alone. Nevertheless, he left to us his Spirit who is always present in the Church and in all Christians helping them living an authentic mission in the Spirit of God.

In the Church and through her mission, Christ's redemptive mysteries become living events and saving events which, by the active power of the Spirit working in the Church, liberate man and bring man to God's Kingdom. Christ himself still left another helper to fulfill that mission: the community. The mission that the Redeemer left to the apostles and the Church is not to be accomplished on one's own initiative. It is a mission to be carried on and accomplished by the community of believers; whereby each one has his/her own role to play but for the common good; one's role is to be understood and integrated in the wider spectrum of the community's role. That is why when an individual goes to fulfill his/her missionary vocation to foreign lands, he/she goes as a representative and on behalf of the sending community. It is the community who sends and supports all missionary agents to witness Christ's mission to all people. This applies to each and every community, "for as living communities of the one Church of Jesus Christ, every local Church must be a sending Church, and every local Church must be also a receiving Church."¹³

In Christ's mission as well as in Church's mission man is never forced to take any decision of acceptance or denial regarding to the good news presented to him. Jesus himself never forced anyone to accept him as the messiah, son of God who came to redeem us. So does the Church. Instead the very nature of the mission, as a free gift from God, requires of man a complete and conscious act of freedom. Though no one is forced. All are requested to take a stand for or against the good news of salvation brought about by Christ in the Spirit; and carried by the Church through Christ's spirit.

¹³ Amaladoss, *Op. Cit.*, p. 387.

We have to recognize the importance of the Church, in continuing the mission entrusted to her by Christ himself, in the spreading of the Gospel to all peoples. It is the duty of every Christian to put into practice the testimony which everyone received from Christ, Scriptures and the apostles. This testimony has to be practiced first of all among Christians themselves. Christians are called to live according to Christ's way of life and foster his values among all members of the Christian family and all peoples as well.

Christianity is not a motive of superiority over others but a duty and a responsibility we have to accomplish in faithfulness towards Christ and towards other people. Christianity above all is a life to be lived. We Christians received Christ's message not to adapt it to our own interest and desire, or to enclose it in a box in order not to be damaged or contaminated by impurities that can come from outsiders; instead we are called to expose it into the market place, to share it with others so that they may also be touched in a positive sense by Christianity.

The Church is called to read the signs of the times and to be courageous enough to take new initiatives, to implement and foster others and be always faithful to them; even to be ready to accept trials, sufferings and death if it is necessary, for Christ's sake and his glory. By doing this, the Church is faithful to Christ's mission and ultimately to God's mission. Hence the importance of being always linked to Christ himself through his spirit and through the others.

Jesus Christ through his death and resurrection redeemed us and inaugurated for us the Kingdom of God in its totality. We are all invited to enter in. Resurrection is for us the final confirmation that salvation through Jesus of Nazareth is not limited by space and time, but it will be universal, open to all people and radically definitive. While in the incarnation we have Jesus as one for all; in his death and resurrection we have Christ as once and for all. In the resurrection the door of eternal life and communion with God are open to us. This is the climax of Christ's mission and his accomplishments on our behalf. Thus the Church's mission must bring hope and salvation to all, rooted in Christ's salvific mission.

As we have been seeing the Church's mission is not only closely linked to Christ's mystery but they are part of the one and same universal plan of Salvation. Christ's mystery is not only the basis for Church's mission but it forms its content and goal as well.

CONCLUSION

The Christian mysteries, Creation, Trinity, Incarnation, Paschal Mystery and Redemption revealed to us in the history of salvation and more definitively in the event of Christ, confer to humanity a new understanding of human life, death, man's origin and end. These mysteries give an answer to man's deepest questions about himself. At the same time they bestow on man a degree of dignity that he would probably never dream about.

Nevertheless they are nothing else and nothing less than God's infinite love for man and his willingness to save all humanity. More still, to make humanity partaker in his own life of communion and love. This mystery of salvation was from time immemorial in the Father, and have been accomplished by the eternal son of God, who became man in the historical person of Jesus of Nazareth, and in the Spirit.

These mysteries are the foundation and goal of Church's mission. They are at the same time the source of mission's very nature and origin. Therefore, mission is no longer self centred, instead is centred on the triune God, and the salvation and liberation of mankind and creation.

The Church is merely an instrument in the hands of her Craftsman, who uses her in order to continue carrying out his divine plan of salvation. God himself in His free will, entrusted this price-less gifts to the Church, through Christ in order to be witnessed and proclaimed to the ends of the earth. The Church and all her pastoral/missionary agents must be aware of the necessity of following and imitating Christ himself, who showed by his life, deeds and actions to be a man for others. This linking of the Church to Christ shapes her spirituality and understanding of her mission. A mission which is ultimately centred on God the Father, who sent the Son and the Spirit. Thus the Church has the duty to carry on this plan of universal salvation in service and faithfulness to Christ. The understanding of the Church's mission rooted in the Trinitarian mission leads the Church to proclaim the Kingdom of God and its values, as Jesus did.

The task of the Church is to translate God's communion of love into the reality of people's lives. This leads the people to experience God's communion of love in their own daily lives. Hence mission becomes not something parallel or complementary instead becomes an integral part of one's own life. Thus this gives rise to the formation of missionary groups and communities with missionary thrust.

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