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# TANGAZA COLLEGE

THE MISSION RENEWS THE CHURCH

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THIS IS A LONG ESSAY SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE  
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Signed: *Dariusz Szymborski*

**Dariusz Szymborski**

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## INTRODUCTION

*“For missionary activity renews the Church, revitalizes faith and Christian identity, and offers fresh enthusiasm and new incentive. Faith is strengthened when it is given to others.”*

John Paul II, *Redemptoris missio* 2

When I realise especially through prayer and a deepened reflection that we are the Church of Christ, the Church which is a gift, grace, and chance. We will easily realise also that we have to take care for the Church in order to make her more and more the community living for Christ and for others.

The expression given above enlightens us that to be the Church of Christ is also a task which must be fulfilled. A logical consequence of its acceptance will be a reflection over the mystery of the Church missions. Our task is to take care of the Church we belong to and make it a community of joy. We must discover the Christian enthusiasm in our spiritual life and enthusiasm in giving witness. Our task is the co-operation with the grace of the Holy Spirit who leads the Church and makes her always new and holy. Our task is to do that the Bride of Christ that is our Church be always beautiful and Christ could find her constant delight.

We live in a time when the Pastor of the Universal Church, John Paul II, points out to us the tasks of a new evangelization. He calls us to the renewal of the Spirit, what will allow us to show again to the world the unchangeable truth of the Gospel as the only truth about God and people.

The renewal which is always needed in the Church has one of its sources in its mission calls and task.

Our openness for those who are not aware of the greatness of the gift given to the human race, which is the Church, is finally turned towards ourselves, makes new our Christianity and strengthens us in faith which opens our hearts for sisters and brothers.

And it is why I chose this topic. I was born and grew up in Poland, I know the reality of Polish Church, but now I'm in Africa and I see many challenges, not only for myself but for the whole Universal Church.

In this paper I would like to present the brief history of Polish missionary activity, participation of Poles in the evangelization.

Polish Church is a part of the Global Church, a part of the mission which is the continuation of the mission of Christ, guided by the Holy Spirit. I will try to support this with the teaching of the Church and suggest some ideas that our mission would be effective, and may renew the Church.

## CHAPTER I

### MISSION ACTIVITY OF THE CHURCH IN POLAND

#### INTRODUCTION

It is not easy to choose the right criterion which would allow us to estimate pertinently the mission activity of the Church in Poland. The statistics worked out at the beginning of the present century are not sufficient and accurate. Here my attempt is to analyze precisely the acquisitions of particular congregation or the participation of the Poles in the evangelization of particular continents. I am going to look at some tendencies, which are noticeable in the mission activity in the Church in Poland.

#### 1.1 HISTORY OF POLISH MISSIONS IN THE 20th CENTURY

A long time before the First World War (1914-1918) the Polish Friars who belonged to the province of Austria, Germany, United State or Canada, led a missionary activity to Africa. Since 1884 the Polish Oblates of St. Francis Salesy had been evangelizing in Africa by the river Orange and the Trappists from the society of Marianhill in Natal (South Africa). The missionaries of the Holy Spirit proclaimed the Gospel in the East Africa. In 1890 the Pallotines began evangelizing in Cameroon, Salesians in Congo as well as in Natal. Since 1904 Polish missionaries from the congregation of the White Fathers have been working in Algeria. In 1910 the SVD began to work in Mozambique.<sup>1</sup>

After the First World War and the regaining of the independence by Poland began a new stage of engagement in the mission work of the universal Church. This was built on the previous experiences of the Poles who already worked as missionaries and animators of the missionary work in Poland as well. A great influence on the dynamism of the missionary

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<sup>1</sup> Andrzej Halemba, Nurt (Warszawa: Verbum, 1997), p.47.

movement between the First and the Second World Wars was remarkable. To those most famous belonged; Fr. Jan Beyzym the apostle of the lepers, Fr. Maximilian Ryllo, a missionary in Syria and Central Africa, Fr. Wladyslaw Zaleski the apostolic delegate to India.<sup>2</sup>

During that time the Poles contributed a good deal to the mission work of the Church. Very helpful were Cardinal Mieczyslaw Ledochowski, who was the prefect of the Congregation of Propagation the Faith and blessed Maria Teresa Ledochowska, the founder of the "Solidacia of St. Peter Klaver" who played a great role in the mission animation. The regain of the independence let the missionaries from Poland to lead missionary activity and animation on behalf of the polish Church and the on behalf of the Poles. A great stimulation to begin that broad missionary action was the initiative of Fr. Wojciech Turowski. He made a proposal to Cardinal August Hlond to vivify the missionary animation in Poland. The Primate of Poland gathered in 1927 in Poznan "International Academic Mission Congress" were the most prominent missiologies of that period.<sup>3</sup>

## 1.2 MAXIMILIAN KOLBE

The appearance of Maximilian Kolbe pushed the mission work in Poland further. Maximilian was born at Zdunska Wola on January 8, 1894. Zdunska Wola was a poor town, part of a complex of similarly small cities and towns whose economic center of gravity was the industrial city of Lodz. In 1907 Maximilian with his elder brother Francis went to Lwow to seminary High School which ran by Conventual Franciscans. September 4, 1910 before the altar of the Blessed Mother in the seminary chapel, Kolbe took the habit of St. Francis. He was to study philosophy and theology, but he spent only a year in Cracow, leaving in

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<sup>2</sup> Krzysztof Czermak, *Misje Odnawiaja Kosciol* (Tarnow: Biblios, 1995), p.58.

<sup>3</sup> Sebastian Karotempler, *Kosciol Misyjny* (Warszawa: Missio-Polonia, 1996), p.38.

October 1912 for Rome. Ordained to the priesthood, April 28, 1918; with degree in philosophy Pontifical Gregorian University; degree in sacred theology from this College. In Rome he developed his devotion to Mary, he was to lay the groundwork for a movement of historical significance, not only for Poland but for the entire world: the Militia Immaculate.

### 1.2.1 MAXIMILIAN AS PRIEST

In July 1919, Father Maximilian, an ordained priest returned to Cracow. He found a bleeding, devastated Poland, a free nation now, but with an empty treasury, an economy on the brink of ruin, her citizens involved in a desperate struggle to ward off what seemed like an impending catastrophe.<sup>4</sup>

Father Kolbe arrived weak and sickly and with little hope of being able to do much work. He was assigned to teach Church history at the Franciscan seminary in Cracow. In the seminary he started to develop the M.I.(Militia Of Mary Immaculate), and encouraged by the Bishop Sapieha of Cracow, and his provincial authorized the spread of M.I. movements. And he had started to publish a magazine, and decided that the name of this magazine would be: *Rycerz Niepokalanej (The Knight of the Immaculate)*. He began thinking seriously about a printing press. When he was looking for money, a fellow friar arrived from the United States, Father Lawrence Cyman and he got interested in this idea of a printing press. A printing press was soon established in Grodno, another part of Poland. Father Maximilian's cell became the editorial office.<sup>5</sup>

One thing that gave both the magazine and the M.I. a big boost was the publishing of some photographs showing the religious of Grodno working in the press room to produce the periodical. This was quite a revelation for some people, who always thought of friars as

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<sup>4</sup> Sergius C. Lorit, The last days of Maximilian Kolbe (Brooklyn: New City Press, 1982), p.72.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p.83.

solitary figures, each almost continually absorbed in his own prayers. And to many this seemed like the discovery of completely new, unheard of, thoroughly fascinating kind of religious life. Several of these wrote in, asking to be admitted to the Order as brothers, on condition that they could work with Father Kolbe. Thus the staff of the “*Knight*” kept increasing in numbers, and continued joyfully with their work. Fr. Alphonse, Maximilian’s brother was sent by the provincial. In the meantime few friaries died, Fr. Kolbe became sick, there was no money, no space in the house in Grodno, but Kolbe was still full of hope and trust.

### 1.2.2 CITY OF IMMACULATE

The October 1927 frosts were just beginning to scatter their chilly whiteness across the endless prairie lands of Prince Drucki Lubecki on the Teresin plots near Warsaw, when the tenant farmers who worked that vast feudal type state saw a strange sight.<sup>6</sup>

On November 21, 1927 the prince tenants realized they would have to enlarge their hearts and increase the number of food baskets, because on that day the advance unity was joined by the remainder of the M.I. staff. Now that the new friary was built, everyone had left Grodno in order to built Niepokalanow (*City of the Immaculate*). Here, near Warsaw, in the heart of native Poland, and just a stone’s throw from one of the country’s main railroad lines.

The succeeding years passed quickly, and with each new year Niepokalanow increased in numbers and in activity, new buildings sprang up. But in 1930 in the midst of all these, Fr. Kolbe had taken a leave of absence from Niepokalanow because he felt the call of

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<sup>6</sup> Bohdan Bejze, Swiety Maxymilian Wsrod Nas (Lodz: Wydawnictwo Lodzkie, 1994), p.61.

the Immaculate. She was asking him to journey halfway around the world and to found another “*City of the Immaculate*” in the land of the cherry blossoms.

### 1.2.3 MISSION TO JAPAN

It was April 24, 1930 when Nagasaki finally appeared on the horizon. His Excellency Bishop Hoyasaki the local ordinary allowed to open the house and to print the magazine *Mugenzai no Seibo no Kishi*. As the work of the Immaculate gained in favor from week to week, Fr. Max’s health grew poorer day by day. He was struck by a recurrent fever and violent migraines, and insomnia prevented him from finding relief even at night. But despite all this he kept steadily on course. “*When our work has really taken root here in Japan, then I want to go to India, and afterwards to the Arabs. I plan to publish the periodical in Turkish, Persian, Arabic, Hebrew. A billion readers! Half the world’s people*”<sup>7</sup> -he used to say.

Instead he was obliged to return to Poland, when instructions came to present himself before the provincial chapter. And after the chapter he got back to Nagasaki. Already in 1931 the magazine was the most widely distributed Catholic periodical then printed in a non-Christian country. And also in addition to the small group of Polish brothers, he now had an increasing number of Japanese.

### 1.2.4 RETURN TO POLAND

In May 1936 Fr. Kolbe returned to Poland to take part in the Provincial Chapter, and he was appointed guardian of Niepokalanow, whose population had increased by now to include more than 500 professed and nearly 200 aspirants.<sup>8</sup> During the following years,

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<sup>7</sup> Izydor Kozbial, “Maxymilian,” *Rycerz Niepokalanoci*, 605(10), 1996, p.397.

<sup>8</sup> Sergius, *op. cit.*, p. 121.

Niepokalanow's publishing operations continued to expand and diversify, reaching out to ever greater numbers of people. By the end of 1938, the "*Knight of the Immaculate*", the monthly that had been Niepokalanow's pioneer publication, had a circulation of 800,000 and had given birth to some very healthy children: "*Young Knight of the Immaculate*", "*Little Knight of the Immaculate*", "*Miles Immaculate*", a Latin quarterly for priests and religious of other countries, "*Militia Bulletin*", "*Mission Bulletin*", and also daily paper "*The Little Journal*".<sup>9</sup> On December 8, 1938 Niepokalanow's own radio transmitter went into operation, and soon Kolbe began taking preliminary steps to sign up the better Polish actors, with a view towards beginning full scale production of Christian films. He was also planning the construction of an airport, first link in a transportation chain that would connect future cities of the Immaculate in the various countries.

Then came September 1939, when death rained suddenly from the skies. Fr. Kolbe sent each friar off to his own family, and only he and some thirty five of those who had been with him from the very beginning remained. The Nazi troops were descended on Niepokalanow. Then on February 17, 1941 Fr. Kolbe was arrested and taken to Auschwitz where he offered his life instead of another prisoner through an act of love. He died on 14 of August 1943.<sup>10</sup>

### 1.3 AFTER THE SECOND WORLD WAR.

The break out of the world war made difficult the direct engagement of the Church in Poland in the missionary activity, even though particular mission groups still supported the

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<sup>9</sup> Ignacy Rejch, *Święty Naszych Czasów* (Niepokalanow: Wydawnictwo Ojcow Franciszkawow, 1990, p.77.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p.153.

missionaries. Only after the war the Communist government paralyzed for several years the missionary activity and made impossible for the clergy to leave for the missions.

There was not much changed also after the announcement of the encyclical letter, "*Fidei Donum*" on 21 April 1957 by Pope Pius XII because in the Polish dioceses there was a lack of priests, and the isolation from the world obtruded on by the Communist system made impossible to leave the country for missions. The law from the 4th of November 1949 about the duty of registration of the societies made all the societies of the religious character wound up.<sup>11</sup> For these reasons in those years 1945-1957 only 55 people left for the missions. But it was improved in the years 1958-1968 when the number of the missionaries leaving was increased. In the missions worked at that time 252 people. During the first years after the war all the departures were only for South America. The majority of the priests worked there among the Poles. Only in the sixties, Polish missionaries reached the other continents and undertook typical missionary activity. In Asia there was begun an evangelization in Indonesia, India, Oceania, New Guinea. In Africa in Tanzania, Ghana and Zambia. The biggest group of missionaries went to Indonesia. Development of the movement supporting missions took beginning only after the Vatican 2nd. In 1968 went for a mission first diocesan priest Fr. January Liberski from the diocese of Katowice, and the next Fr. Marian Bogatowski.

In 1968 in the mission areas worked 575 missionaries from Poland, they were in 44 countries on all of the continents.<sup>12</sup> Most of them were in South America. There they were taken care of the following countries; Brasil, Peru, Argentina, Chile, Paragua, Bolivia and Equator.

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<sup>11</sup> Waclaw Hryniewicz, "Nadzieja I Cierpliwosc," *Znak*, 493(6), 1996, p.40.

<sup>12</sup> Karotemplera. *op. cit.*, p. 99.

In the sixties for the missions were going only religious congregations. Unfortunately in the missionary activity not many congregations were engaged. It is important to mention that only 10 male and 4 female congregations send for the missions at least 10 people. Even taking into consideration the significant difficulties connected with the political situation it is necessary to say that the engagement of the Polish Church in the mission activity at the end of 1960s was not very impressive. To compare, in Holland the number of the Catholics was 3 millions, but 9000 missionaries.<sup>13</sup>

In 1970 was prepared a program to Polish conditions, it took a form of mission apostolate. There was taken into consideration the awaking of missionary awareness in the dioceses and material support. During 134 Plenary Session of Polish Episcopate in 1973, obligated the clergy to celebrate in all the churches divine services each month dedicated for the missions. There was no need to wait for the fruits for a long time. Very quickly the number of priests going for missions increased. The bishops emphasized that in the post Council period there is a necessity to take care and give to the missionary vocation a proper rank. For the missionary vocation is a sign of unity of the local Church with the universal Church and expression of the saving love of Christ himself. The bishops added also that in the present conditions Poland is able only to make a symbolic personal tribute for the missions from among the diocese clergy. And the number of the missionaries leaving for mission every year was increasing but it does not mean a bigger engagement of Poland in the missionary activity. There were noticed numerous returning of the missionaries, often after a short time on the mission. The number of Polish missionaries began to decrease. However, this situation has got some objective reasons. First of all many of the priests work among the Polish emigrations in different countries of Europe, North America and East Europe.

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<sup>13</sup> Karl Muller, *Teologia misji* (Warszawa: Missio-Polonia, 1989), p.40.

According to the instructions of "*Redemptoris missio*" they can not be called missionaries.<sup>14</sup> Although the help for the Poles on the emigrations and sister churches in the neighboring countries is our duty, it can not replace the engagement in the mission evangelization. Secondly, Poland has never possessed any colonies and therefore the Poles were not in the past so engaged in the patronage missions. Poland, similarly like the colonized countries had first to fight for independence in order to give help to the Churches in need. Lack of any connection with the colonialism still makes easier for Polish missionaries to proclaim the Gospel without any burden from the history.

Polish mission staff constitute mostly men from religious congregations. On the other side the female congregations their number began to increase . During the last 25 years the increase was almost twice. Generally we can say that 20 congregations have at least 10 missionaries. Most of them come from the SVD congregation (223), Salesians (103), and Franciscans (91).

Polish lay missionaries are just beginning their engagement in the area of missionary work of the Universal Church. Until now they had to solicit for the departure for missions and very often they had to cover all the expenses of the journeys by themselves. Presently we have 54 lay missionaries, whose task is not only to help in the development, but they are missionaries in the full sense, sent by their maternal local Church. For their preparation takes care the Missionary Formation Center, and the contracts with the bishops makes the Episcopate Commission for the missions. The departures of the nurses and doctors, and specialist preparations are helped and financially supported by the foundation *Redemptoris missio* from Poznan.

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<sup>14</sup> John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Missio* (1991), n.34.

## 1.4 TO LEAVE EVERYTHING.

The decision to go and work as a missionary had already been taken by Fr. Zbigniew Strzalkowski during his theological studies. His superiors had previously thought about the possibility of sending him to Southern America to finish his studies. Finally, he left for Peru 2 years after his ordination, having worked in the Minor Seminary in Legnica as a vice superior.

The 30th of November was for Fr. Zbigniew a day of “*leaving his nets*” in order to become “*fisher of people*”.<sup>15</sup> After having landed in Lima the capital city of Peru, he remained there for some days together with Fr. Michal who was to be his companion in the missionary work. Fr. Zbigniew very quickly noticed the sharp contrast between rich and poor in this country.

Peru is a country where more than 30% of its inhabitants live at an altitude of more than 3000m. 40% of the population consists of Indians among whom two Franciscan were sent to work. After some months of pastoral and linguistic preparations they received an appointment to a parish in the central part of Andes, in the village of Pariacoto. The village was at an altitude of 3600m and consisted of three thousand people. Some remote of the places in this parish could only be reached on foot or by horseback. The Indians living there have been waiting for a priest to live among them for a long time.

When they were told that two missionaries from Poland were going to live with them, the clapping in the Church lasted five minutes!

The time of Fr. Zbigniew arrival to Peru was a period of increasing activity of Sendero Luminoso. Since 1980 there had been 219 terrorist's attacks and over the years about 20 thousand people had been killed by them. That was a real danger for missionaries.

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<sup>15</sup> Adam Kurek, *Polska Misyjna* (Lodz: Kairos, 1992), p.110.

The Marx-Lenin ideology with a pro-China orientation of this group was aimed at the destruction of anybody who worked for peace and goodness and understood justice in a different way than they did.

#### 1.4.1 MARTYRS DEATH.

The armed terrorists arrived to Pariacoto in the 9th of August in the afternoon. Some of them arrived in trucks, while others came on foot. Some of them were knocking at the doors of selected house in order to apprehend people.

When Fr. Zbigniew was informed that the terrorists had arrived to the village, he said: *"We have nothing to hide. If they come, we will give testimony to the truth".*<sup>16</sup>

The information about the presence of terrorists in the village caused some anxiety to Fr. Zbigniew and Fr. Michal what was to be seen during the Mass celebrated by them, as usual in Pariacoto, at 7 PM.

After the Mass the people left church. Fathers, together with a Peruvian sister Berta wondered what to do. The children were afraid to go back home by themselves. Finally they decided that all the activities for that evening were to be carried on. Fr. Zbigniew dressed a wound of a small boy and Fr. Michal and Sister Berta started meeting with youth in two separate rooms. Sister Lucia, with a group of elder children decided to go back to the monastery.

After some time there was knocking at the door. The minutes passed but the knocking and the battering did not stop. Under the threats and insinuations one of the youths opened the door. At the threshold was a group of terrorists. When Fr. Zbigniew asked whether they were looking for him, they answered 'yes' and they asked for the others.

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<sup>16</sup> Tadeusz Chodzidlo, *Misje Katolickie* (Lublin: Kul, 1997), p.238.

They took them out of the building and put them into one of the trucks. Sister Berta did not want to leave the Fathers alone and so she jumped into the truck, too. On their way, the terrorists also took the chief of the village. After some time they changed into another car. Then, there was a 40 minutes parody of a court judgment. The terrorists started to reproach them that the Bible was being used to lead people astray that the religion they proclaimed is an opium for people and that through peaceful ways they won't gain anything and their work will only delay the day of revolt. The armed terrorists were explaining to them that everything can be attained by violence and fights. That was the only way to victory!

For a while the terrorists went away and one of them returned with a big tin filled with petrol. In that moment Fr. Zbigniew and Fr. Michal exchanged some words among themselves in Polish. Perhaps they said: "*We are going to die*" or "*They will kill us*". Maybe it has been their last confessions?<sup>17</sup>

The bandits pushed the Sister out of the truck. They passed through a wooden bridge and they put fire to it. To destroy it entirely they threw some grenades. That was an image of war - a lot of fire, the smell of powder, fire, explosions.

In the place where there was a chapel dedicated to Christ elevated on the Cross and where, centuries ago, at the beginning of evangelisation of Peru Saint Tutybius had celebrated the Eucharist, the bandits killed the missionaries and the chief of the village. All were killed with a gun of big caliber, having been tied up made to lie down with their faces touching the soil.

On the back of the dead body of Fr. Zbigniew they left a piece of paper. On it they wrote in Spanish: "*That is the way the favorites of imperialism die.*"<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Kurek, *op. cit.*, p.104.

<sup>18</sup> Czesław Białek, *Praca Polaków* (Kraków:Znak, 1998), p.67.

On the Sunday the 11th of August a funeral procession with the bodies of missionaries set out from Casma to Pariacoto. They stopped very often and they needed five times more time to pass the distance. The road was adorned with flowers, people made some gates out of flowers in which the dead missionaries entered through as triumphal arches. The entry to Pariacoto was a kind of a special triumph of love over hate, as well as good over the evil. There were crowds of Peruvians; roads were changed into flower carpets, people singing, children with their eyes full of tears- these are the images that cannot render the solemnity of that moment. The bodies of Fr. Zbigniew and Fr. Michal were put in the Church in Pariacoto. In faithful have been coming to these tombs to pray and they have received graces through the mediation of martyrs.

The Government of Peru, appreciating the activity of Fr. Zbigniew and Fr. Michal, on behalf of the people of Peru gave to these martyrs posthumously the highest order; "*El Sol del Peru*" (The Order of Sun).

The last thing they did before being kidnapped was the celebration of the Eucharist. The Gospel of that day was a kind of preparation for their martyrdom. It spoke about the seed that has to die in order to bring fruits.

We can ask ourselves whether this was a pure accident that after the killing of our missionaries the power of terrorism has lessened and its leader has been put in prison. We can ask ourselves why, during three years after the death of Fr. Zbigniew, already 5 priests from the diocese of Tarnow left for Peru?

Christ is the sign to whom people will contradict. It is an uncomfortable sign because it calls for the change of life. It happens through a strange 'weapon'- love, good, peace and truth. These virtues, even though so weak in the eyes of people, finally win victory as the Risen Christ did.

## CONCLUSION.

The Church in Poland has many vocations for mission work. The Mission Decree reminds us that these are not only the vocations for Poland, but for the whole Church, so for their local churches. The bishops are responsible for their local churches but also for other sister churches which are in need. To the Commission for Equal Disposal of Clergy in the world have come about 7000 petitions for priests.<sup>19</sup> It seems that the Church in Poland has an important task of sharing with other churches its richness of religious and priestly vocations. There remains a hope that the young generation of our clergy will give answer for this invitation to build the Church and our country will be seen as mission and missionary.

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<sup>19</sup> Jan Kubicki, Misyjna Formacja Kleryków (Warszawa: Missio-Polonia, 1996), p.71.

## CHAPTER II

### CALL FOR A RENEWAL OF THE MISSIONARY COMMITMENT

#### INTRODUCTION

The Church founded by Jesus Christ came to realize very early on that its mission was the same as that of his own and, like this involved breaking out of the barriers imposed by race and culture, language and religion, that it was universal in every sense of the term. Now, since the Christian mission is the continuation of the mission of Christ, then as such it has its origin in the heart of God himself, in his gracious decision to share his love, his life with other created beings, a decision he implemented in his work of creation and the history of salvation and which found its greatest expression and effectiveness in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The whole Bible is therefore a witness to this mission of God, this sending forth of his loving invitation to mankind to share his life, and man's response to that invitation.

#### 2.1 ROLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

The Acts of Apostles is called "*the Gospel of the Holy Spirit*".<sup>29</sup> The Holy Spirit holds a very important place in this book, he appears as the guide of the mission of the Church, acting through witnesses, through direct manifestations, at certain events, to move the direction of the Church, making of the community of believers a prophetic people.

Straight away, the account of Pentecost synthesises the triple action of the Spirit. Peter, immediately after this event through his speech, becomes a witness of the Resurrection of Christ (Acts 2:14-36). The Spirit manifests himself, through tongues of fire and the gift of

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<sup>29</sup> Claude Tassin, "The Spirit Guide of Mission in the Acts of the Apostles," *S.M.A. Bulletin*, 102, 1998, p.33.

tongues to all of Israel, "*Jews and Proselytes*" (2:11). Finally he establishes a prophetic people (2:17-18) into which one enters through baptism (2:38).

The Church at prayer (1:14) receives the Spirit and Peter explains what is the meaning of this event. The Spirit appears as the one who inspires the prophets. The Spirit anointed Jesus for a prophetic mission (Lk 7:16). It is this mission which the beneficiaries of Pentecost will continue.

The Ascension is the event whereby Jesus pours out the Spirit (Lk 24:49). It is the "*Spirit of Jesus*"<sup>21</sup> (Acts 16:7). The spirit does not replace Jesus but serves the mission which began in Galilee. The Risen Lord remains active.

According to Acts 1:8, the gift of the Spirit has as its objective the empowering of the witnesses of Christ. The account of the replacement of Judas follows two stages: a certain number were eyewitnesses to the actions of Jesus from the time of his baptism to the day of his ascension, and they would become witnesses of his resurrection (Acts 1:21-22). They had not yet become witnesses since the Holy Spirit had not yet come.

Luke invites us to rediscover the prophetic aspect of the work of the Holy Spirit. He invites us to listen to the witnesses, through whom the Spirit brings the Church towards new sociological horizons always new, in fidelity to the Easter message. The key moments where the Spirit is manifested in order to direct or redirect mission for today.

What sustains, directs and vitalizes the mission of the Church is none other than the Holy Spirit. The Spirit, as it were, replaces Jesus in the midst of the communities or, rather, the risen Christ is present to them in and through the Spirit.

The Spirit is the catalyst within the community, ever calling it forth to fulfil its vocation, giving it the necessary strength, courage and power to do so. He is the bond which

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<sup>21</sup> Wilfrid Harrington, *Spirit of the living God*, (Wilmington: Delaware, 1982), p.48.

unites the history of Jesus to the history of the community, the mission of Jesus to the mission of the community. That is why Pentecost rather than being the birthday of the Church is the proclamation of the mission of the Church - a mission which brings down the barriers and divisions within humanity, symbolized in the proclamation's transcending the multiplicity of languages (Acts 2:8).

Paul VI tells us in *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, that:

*"...he is the end and the goal of all evangelization. It is he alone who produces that new creation, that is, the new human nature towards which evangelization is striving through that unity in variety which evangelization must necessarily evoke in the Christian community. It is through the Holy Spirit that the Gospel is disseminated throughout the world as it is he alone who reveals the signs of the times - signs willed by God - which evangelization receives and elucidates in the life of men."*<sup>22</sup>

## 2.2 THE CHURCH IN POLAND FOR THE COMMON MISSION OF THE CHURCH

The title the "*Missions renew the Church*"<sup>23</sup> clearly indicates the relationship between what is common, universal and what is mine, what I should take care of so that it can bring some profits. Because if John Paul II teaches that "*Missions renew the Church*", it means that it is done not only on the universal level but also on the local, concrete level. This is the Church I belong within the borders of my country. The openness of the local Church on the question of mission is a care for the good of my country in which it happens I live.

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<sup>22</sup> Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (8 December 1975), n.75.

<sup>23</sup> John Paul II, *op. cit.* n.2.

## 2.2.1 CHRISTIAN PATRIOTISM

This truth was perfectly understood by the patroness of missionary co-operation in Poland: blessed Maria Teresa Ledochowska. It is good to remember what she was repeating to all Poles: *"The more a nation does for missions, the better it happens in its own country"*.<sup>24</sup> So, if the Church in our country can be open to the world living without Christ's Gospel, without giving any conditions, then, it contributes to the building of a better country, in which there is a need of spiritual renewal on many levels.

So, for a Christian a notion of patriotism understood as fulfilling only of needs of his compatriots does not exist. As a consequence of a non-Christian understanding of patriotism would be retaining of vocations within our country, not paying attention to needs of other churches that are our brothers. It would be a negation of *sensus Ecclesiae* expressed in the declaration of bishops participating in the Special Assembly for Europe in December 1991. They said: *"Also today in any region, the Church cannot close herself in herself even though she could have many difficulties and inner problems e.g. the decline of priestly and monastery vocation. It is necessary that the Church should remember the promise of Christ: "Give and it will be given to you"*<sup>25</sup>

The attitude of looking only at needs of own region or country would be the exact opposite of theology of *Redemptoris Missio* where the main motive is the fact of enriching through the gift of oneself in the spirit of communion. In this encyclical John Paul II reminds us that *"we have to give from our own poverty"*<sup>26</sup> and he addresses himself to every particular Church to *"overcome cultural and nationalistic barriers, avoiding all isolationism"*<sup>27</sup>.

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<sup>24</sup> Czermak, *op. Cit.*, p.137.

<sup>25</sup> Halemba, *op. Cit.*, p.29.

<sup>26</sup> John Paul, *op. Cit.*, n.64.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, n.. 39.

This appeal which is a remainder of the Church teaching, is addressed to the bishops and to the priests. The good answer to this appeal are the appeals of the bishop of Tarn to his priests on the Holy Thursday. Keeping in mind the numerous requests of the bishops from missionary countries and the difficulties they have to face in their churches he calls his priests to become increase the number of missionaries: *"We are open for their needs. I will understand all those who, even for some years, even as a kind of attempt, would like to exercise their priesthood in other realities. I hope that we won't be indifferent, concentrated only on our needs ; that we will be able to help our brothers who work in more difficult conditions, but they experience the liberty of children of God. It is to be found in their letters from Bolivia or Peru in which they write that they are happy of their missionary service, and how they are understood by their faithful longing for grace."*<sup>28</sup>

It sad to notice the attitudes of some closing themselves in their problems. The similar mechanism is to be noticed in the matter of material support- if we provide for all places of cult and build churches, when we fulfil our ambitions full of pride, then we will think about those who count - up to this moment without any result- on our Christian help.

The teaching of John Paul II contains in the sentences: *" Missions renew the Church"* and *"Faith is strengthened when it is given to others"*<sup>29</sup> indicates the need of taking care by each Church the responsibility for the spread of the Gospel up to the ends of the earth.

Are we going to follow the voice of the Pope? We who love him and declare our solidarity with him? We, lay and religious, we have to realise once more that no loses are connected to missions. Any! Neither spiritual nor material. Through our missionary

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<sup>28</sup> Stanislaw Tarnowski, "Powolanie na cale zycie," *Misje Dzisiaj*, 148(97), 1998, p.12.

<sup>29</sup> John Paul II, *op. Cit.*, n. 2.

engagement we are losing nothing. Just the contrary. The missionary engagement helps us to realise our inner goal- it renews our faith and authenticity of Christian life. They are, on their turn, the cornerstones of this huge building that we create and whose name is Fatherland.

The most evident example of the openness of our country on the Church is its gift of Pope himself. The Poles did not lose anything because he left our country. We can presume that if he did not seat on the Peter's throne we would not have been given this good bestowed on us; bestowed as a task. Let us make a good use out of it!

Maria Teresa Ledochowska considered her co-operation in the saving of souls as her the most precious gift given to her country. After her death in 1922 in the magazine "Echo z Afryki" the following commentary appeared: *"She was a great figure that made a lot for the Church and for the country; for the Church because she was a great proclaimer of the Kingdom of God on earth; for the country because she rooted in it very deeply the idea of missions and indicated that Poland is the very daughter of the Catholic Church. Through her activity of gaining Africa for Jesus she put herself in the row of our Apostles-Dabrowka and Queen Hedwige."*<sup>30</sup>

So if there is in us Christian patriotism, having nothing to do with nationalism and egoism, we know that the true service for our country and authentic care for its good, are expressed in the gesture of sharing of what we as a nation attained and what we dispose as a Christian nation when we are faced with the need of greatest help- help in the service of the Gospel.

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<sup>30</sup> Jozef Lach, *Moc i Piękno Wiary* (Warszawa: Drukarnia Narodowa, 1991), p.213.

## 2.3 MUTUAL EXCHANGE OF GIFTS

Being used to full and richly adorned churches we tend to think about ourselves that our Christianity is a better realisation of the following of Christ than what the other followers of this denomination do in other countries. However the quality of following of Jesus cannot be measured through the rich liturgy, nicely adorned churches or even a number of people confessing and communicating because of some feasts.

If missions are for us the question of faith -and they should be- we have to be aware that people with whom we share our faith have a lot to offer to us, a country of 1000 years of Christian tradition. Their simple faith -both in Church as in the daily life- their simple and poor life are for us a sign that should be very explicit. We should be aware that an example given by mother to her daughter, even though does not have it, moreover should be attracting. You need faith to realise that the true Church based on example of Jesus is easier to create during the celebration of the Eucharist in the African chapel made out of bamboo's than in the rich cathedral.<sup>31</sup>

Full of expression are the words of Fr Marek Czajkowski, from Gdansk diocese who worked in Cameron. In his book *"Droga do Dimako"* (Road to Dimako) he wrote:

*"Who could express his emotions after Mass in the village? (...) You need to be strong in faith in order to be able to locate this 'bush atmosphere' in the reality of the Church and world. Which categories use to think? How to reach in thoughts to this Polish self-reliance that here, too, there is this rich, Polish Christ; that here, too, there is this big Church; that here, too something very important takes place, where everything is so incredibly simplified? Only red soil, bamboo's, wandering dogs, these beloved black people, bend as a result of*

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<sup>31</sup> Czermak, *op. Cit.*, p. 99.

*work with machete, forests and this always sour smell of manioc. In the chapel mothers suckling their children with breasts so often dry and empty. They listen, sitting humbly ...*"<sup>32</sup>

Also Fr Miroslaw Gucwa working in the Central Africa Republic sees in the African Christianity examples to follow. In one of his letters he writes:

*"Expressions such as 'Tongana Nzapa a ye da' (If God allows) or 'Nzapa a ye azo kwe' (God loves all people) are more frequent used by these people than by Poles. A greeting 'Nzapa a bata moi' (God guards you) you can hear every time when you leave the village, even if somebody is not a Christian.*

*The Eucharist is at the centre of life of every believer. There are about 100 people for Mass every day in Bohong (let us not forget that the community consists of 800 faithful). Maybe you want to say that they are not in hurry to go to work, school or that a bus won't go without them. However it seems that Africans hurry and that is why the Mass is at 5.45am. They come to Church to get strength. They are more numerous during Sunday Mass. I will not forget my first Masses celebrated with the community either in Bimbo or Bohong. Joy and earnestness constitute such a Mass."*<sup>33</sup>

A new time for the Church in Poland was started by the first pilgrimage of John Paul II to his country. Missionary journeys of the Pope are sign and challenge also for Poland. If in missionary countries the Pope calls for the missionary spirit, how much this appeal should be heard by his compatriots!

On the 14 of June 1987, at the end of his second pilgrimage to Poland, when missionary crosses were given to almost 200 Polish missionaries, Holy Father said:

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<sup>32</sup> Marek Czaikowski, *Droga do Dimako* (Lodz: Kairos, 1993), p.81.

<sup>33</sup> Miroslaw Gucwa, "Apostol Nowego Swiata," *Z Pomoca*, 62(1), 1992, p.31.

*“Go, may the missionary zeal of Poland grow; it is a breath of living God, call coming from the Cross and Resurrection.”<sup>34</sup>*

These words are not only a wish for the Church in Poland, but also an indication that the gift of missionaries should incite missionary zeal in our hearts. This zeal cannot be awakened by an ordinary activity or human sensitivity - it is born out of supernatural impulse, which is the work of God.

In the letter written because of the Second National Missionary Congress Holy Father asked:

*“The Church in Poland, which God bestows with many priestly and religious vocations, should generously continue to be engaged in the mission among nations bringing to them 1000 years of experience, and to share this patrimony with others.”<sup>35</sup>*

Pope, talking in Rome to Polish Bishops in January 1993, called them and led by them churches to openness on the universal Church, far from any particularism, exclusivism and feeling of autosufficiency. John Paul said also that the faith of the Church in Poland is *“the richness which is needed by the universal Church.”<sup>36</sup>*

## 2.4 MISSIONS CAUSE - SIGN OF TIMES

To take this great task, and responsibility according to the Pope's words that *missions renew the Church* called all and especially shepherds of the Church in Poland cardinal Joseph Tomko, prefect of the Congregation of Faith, who on behalf of the Pope takes care for the missionary development of the Church. When in Poland in October 1994 because of *missions cause* (in the reason of mission to pagans) he said:

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<sup>34</sup> Tadeusz Gadacz, “Miłosc I Smierc,” *Znak*, 486(11), 1995, p.64.

<sup>35</sup> Stanisław Dziwisz, *Badz z nami w kazdy czas* (Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1995), p.30.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p.39.

*“I thank for all missionaries that Poland has given. But they can be much more numerous. The time for Poland has come! Mission cannot be restraint only to the needs of your Church, even if in this time these needs can be huge ... Poland should be open on the needs of other churches, on the needs of universal Church which counts all the time on help of priests.”<sup>37</sup>*

The visit of the prefect cardinal Joseph Tomko was a star on the missionary heaven of Poland, especially from this heaven the notion of *missions cause* seems to disappear in the work of the Second Plenary Synod in Poland. Unfortunately the goal of that visit was not mentioned and was not carry on by the Episcopal Conference and its commission dealing with missions. The host from Rome who on behalf of Holy Father takes care for the spread of the Gospel, came to Poland with the concrete matter of founding a special missionary seminary for which all bishops would be responsible. In this seminary not only Polish future missionary would study but also candidates from Tcheck and Slovakia.

All those who see in the Church in our country great missionary energies should not lose hope because this matter was not passed by the bishop of Tarnow, Bp Joseph Zycinski. We can hope that Poland will not be deprived of the possibility of being the base for the Church going into whole world; base for the missions *ad extra* and their animation.

## 2.5 BEAUTIFUL MOMENTS OF RECENT HISTORY

Can we go back to the tradition that testifies about history of our missionary co-operation?

The missionary engagement of the Polish Church in its general dimension is connected to the foundation of *Papieskie Dzieła Misyjne*, which after having been founded

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<sup>37</sup> Jan Zieja, *Zycje Ewangelia* (Paris: Editions du Dialogue, 1996), p.111.

in the West at the beginning of the XX century, reached to numerous countries of the world including Poland. The missionary during II Rzeczpospolita was very alive especially among students.

In 1927 International Missionary Congress took place in Poznan. One year later in Poland, *Papieskie Dzieło Rozkrzewienia Wiary (Papal Works For Propagation Of Faith)* was to be found there. In 1938 in the 10th anniversary of its existence, First National Missionary Congress was held also in Poznan. Second National Missionary Congress held in October 1992 in Jasna Gora referred to this first Congress. Local missionary congresses in dioceses, from their turn referred to the second one. Does it mean that our country becomes more missionary?

During the service inaugurating the first congress, bishop St. Okoniewski from Peplin said:

*"In our hearts we move to missionary fields to those for whom we work, for whom we pray. They need our help, we feel debtors before them. Joy and pride fill our hearts, because our country, recently risen as an independent country, is already among Christian nations that want to have their share in the proclamation of the Gospel. Since 10 years we, not as individuals but as a nation we picked up our cross, we went into world, we fulfilled God's commandment, we put into practice missionary patrimony of Christ. At the feet of this altar we give thanks to God for all that. We also ask for the light and strength to continue..."<sup>38</sup>*

On the same congress, Fr Kowalski recalling the difficult moments of our country after I World War said:

*"When after the world war the white eagle rose for a new flight, our children contributed through their enormous sacrifices to the foundation of a new crusade of prayer*

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<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 127.

*and missionary co-operation. It has been developing as a beautiful flower of moral rebirth of the country... The modern missionary movement revealed its vivacity and grandeur firstly in the increasing contribution of our country in prayer, and work of **Papieskie Dzieło Rozkrzewienia Wiary.**"*<sup>39</sup>

## 2.5.1 TIME OF POLISH CONSCIENCES

Some kind of fear is born after the visit of John Paul II in our country in May 1995. He was saying: " *The time of trial of Polish consciences is lasting*" He added immediately: " *You have to be strong in faith!*"<sup>40</sup> If he was talking to the atheists he would not have used the argument of faith!

Also cardinal Tomko was talking about the special time for the Church in Poland: " *Today is the time for Poland. These are big words that the Lord has chosen Poland for only to give Pope but also to send many missionaries. It is Poland - I say it with whole conviction- in this particular time, at the threshold of the III millennium, has to show "hic at nunc" its adult missionary consciousness.*"<sup>41</sup>

*Kairos* of the Polish Church, time for the mission is a sign of time that we cannot neglect and which we have to read. This hour it is the opening of classrooms for missiology in seminaries. This hour it is putting of the missions on the first place and its presence in the pastoral activities- as John Paul II reminds us. This hour it is a joy from every missionary vocation among lay and priests.

Is the Church in Poland, her pastors and faithful, able to open more their hearts on those who do not know yet the evangelical truth? The participants of the II National

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<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 132.

<sup>40</sup> Dziwisz, *op.cit.*, p. 62.

<sup>41</sup> Czermak, *op. Cit.*, p. 118.

Missionary Congress in 1992 addressed these so appealing words to all Catholics in our country: "*The whole Church in Poland for the salvation of the world.*"<sup>42</sup>

Today even though our country needs renewal, it does not find itself in worst situation that the one at the beginning of the century. Already at that time the pride, joy, readiness to sacrifice and disponibility permitted to help those who wait for the Gospel. We - the new young generation of Polish Christians - cannot forget about this pride, joy and readiness to sacrifice, and not only for the sake of the love of our country! It is up to us whether Christian Poland will renew itself to give new Beyzymow, Ledochowskich, Kozlowieckich and Zalewskich of our times who will make our country famous as a country where the highest good is the heaven, the place of meeting of all people.

The question that comes to our mind is justified: Are we going to be the base for the missions of the Church and can we afford it?

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<sup>42</sup> Halcmba, op. Cit., p. 28.

## CHAPTER III

### CALL TO A NEW WAY OF BEING MISSIONARY

#### INTRODUCTION

Our age is characterized by vast and fast changes which call for some new or renewed thinking. Today we face a religious situation which is extremely varied and changing. People are on the move, social and religious realities which were once clear and well defined, are today increasingly complex. Religious and social upheaval makes it difficult to apply in practice certain ecclesial distinctions and categories to which we have been accustomed.

A renewal in the missionary thrust of the Church invariably brings about a renewal in the faith and in the life of the Church. Missionary evangelization is the primary service which the Church can render to every individual and to all humanity. The Pope John Paul II in the encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* wants every baptized person, and all Catholic institutions, groups and movements, to renew their commitment to the universal mission of the Church; it is only through this commitment that they can be meaningful to the world and effectively respond to the needs of people.

We have to accept that efforts made by theologians and missionaries to redefine the old terminology in the light of these new situations and theological insights, have produced some good results, which ought not to be abandoned. The so-called return or repatriation of the missions into the Church's mission, the insertion of missiology into ecclesiology, and the integration of both areas into the Trinitarian plan of salvation, have given a fresh impetus to missionary activity itself, which is not considered a marginal task of the Church but situated at the centre of her life, as a fundamental commitment of the whole People of God. There is only one and undivided mission, having one origin and one final purpose. But within it there

are different tasks and kinds of activity. The fact that there is diversity of activities in the Church's one mission is not intrinsic to that mission, but arises from the variety of circumstances in which that mission is carried out.

### 3.1 THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH.

The mission of the Church today cannot be considered properly apart from the context in which it is accomplished. Some of the most important aspects of the context of the missionary churches would seem to be the poverty, famine and injustice that afflict the majority of people, the cultural alienation affecting the mainline churches, the political uncertainties and transformations taking place in most countries, the prevalence of wars with the resulting millions of refugees, and the situation of religious pluralism in which the Church is called to proclaim the gospel.

The proclamation of the Gospel of Christ is certainly a privileged expression of the Church's evangelizing mission, but not the only one. Many documents of the Magisterium not only confirm the use of some new terms which express new forms of the Church's missionary-pastoral activity and of her relations with the world, but they emphasize the importance and necessity of these forms for the integrity of the same evangelizing mission.

Church in Poland has an important task of sharing with other churches its richness of religious and priestly vocations and Polish Church is trying to do that. It is our pride to take part in the universal mission of the Church, this enriches and renews our Polish Church.

I feel that there are certain elements which could be considered common to all those who minister in a culture, in an environment, in situations which are different from the ones in which a person was born and grew up; the new place where missionaries are living, the people they share with and serve, the cultures of these people, their traditions, their symbols,

way of relationship; the struggle of the people, their hopes and concerns, their vision of life and death. Missionaries have to go beyond themselves, in order to understand and empathise with other personalities living in completely different situations. Missionaries have to break out of the barriers imposed by race, culture, language and religion. How missionaries renew the Church?. We know that the missions give new strength to the Church, when we give , share our faith, rethink it and pray over it, we become new people. Spiritual renewal on many levels takes place. We apply this to the concrete situation in the missionary field. What we need is openness to the new reality and missionary work will be more effective. Everything what is new, new challenges, commitments bring renewal, not only personal but for all community.

In the first and second chapter I wrote about the commitments of Polish Church to the missions. I gave examples of great Polish people; Maximilian Kolbe, Fr. Zbigniew, Maria Ledochowska. They put a big impact in the renewal of the Polish Church.

In this chapter I would like present some ideas which concern not only Polish Church but all universal Church of which we are a part. If we will put those ideas in to practice, the mission will become more effective and the Church will be filled with the new spirit.

### 3.2 THE CHURCH IN THE WORLD.

We know that people can be saved outside the Catholic Church, and Catholic evangelisers must respect the beliefs and religious commitment of all other Christians and the followers of other religions, what then is the mission of the Church? What is its role in the world ?.

A Christian is first of all a witness to Jesus Christ: "*You shall be my witnesses... to the end of the earth.*" To be a Christian is to have received the fullest revelation that God has given to the human race of who God is.

A Christian is one who has come to believe that Jesus Christ is truly God's Son, who has given humankind the good news that all men and women are called to be God's sons and daughters and that God loves each and every person with an unconditional love.

A Christian is called and commits himself or herself to witness to this good news and to Jesus Christ, its bearer, to all his or her fellow human beings.

To be a Christian is to share the mission of Jesus to proclaim this good news of the infinitely gracious, saving love of God for every single person to the end of the earth. And because human beings are all children of one loving Father, Christians are called to proclaim and bring about the communion of the whole human race.

The first response of Vatican II to the question: what is the role of the Church, what does it mean to be a Christian? Is found in the *Lumen gentium*: "*The church is a sacrament, that is, a sign, and an instrument of communion with God and of the unity of the whole human race.*"<sup>43</sup>

Christians living in communion with God and with one another in the church are a sign of what God desires and offers to every single person. In the church the vocation and destiny of the human race becomes visible to all, namely, intimate union with God, and unity and communion between all people and all peoples. This is to say that the church is a communion and is called to witness to communion and be an instrument of communion to the end of the earth.

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<sup>43</sup> Vatican II, *op. Cit.*, n. 1.

Pope Paul VI wrote: *"We wish to confirm once more that the task of evangelizing all people constitutes the essential mission of the church... Evangelizing is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the church, its deepest identity. It exists in order to evangelize..."*<sup>44</sup>

And Pope John Paul II insists: *"Proclamation is the permanent priority of mission... a clear proclamation that in Jesus Christ... salvation is offered to all people, as a gift of God's grace and mercy."*<sup>45</sup>

### 3.3 WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO EVANGELIZE?

Evangelization is usually taken to mean teaching, proclaiming the gospel. Paul VI agrees that this is one very important aspect or element, but evangelization is a more complex activity. It is *"to bring the good news of Jesus Christ into all areas of humanity, and through its impact to transform that humanity from within, making it new... The church evangelizes when it seeks to convert, solely through the divine power of the message which it proclaims, both the personal and collective consciences of people, the activities in which they engage, and the lives and concrete milieus which are theirs."*<sup>46</sup>

Evangelization, which is the mission of the church, seeks to bring about an interior change so that people will begin to live in a way worthy of their humanity. That way is the way that Jesus Christ showed all people. The Christian community must first be evangelized, converted to the way of Jesus, before it can become an evangelizing community. Recent church documents, as well as insisting that it is the whole community that is called to evangelize, help to understand the complex nature of evangelization. Paul VI expressed it this

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<sup>44</sup> Paul VI, *op. Cit.*, n. 43.

<sup>45</sup> John Paul II, *op. Cit.*, n. 44.

<sup>46</sup> Paul VI, *op. Cit.*, n. 21.

way: *“It is impossible to grasp the concept of evangelization unless one tries to keep in view all its essential elements.”*<sup>47</sup>

The following related and complementary elements of evangelization emerge as the most important from recent church reflection and teaching: evangelization through individual witness, evangelization through witness of the Christian community, evangelization through explicit proclamation of Jesus Christ, dialogue, inculturation of the faith, and commitment to justice.

### 3.3.1 EVANGELIZATION THROUGH INDIVIDUAL WITNESS

The witness of a Christian life is the primary, irreplaceable form of mission: *“Everyone in the church, striving to imitate the Divine Master, can and must bear this kind of witness; in many cases it is the only possible way of being a missionary.”*<sup>48</sup>

The Christian has been called to bear witness to Jesus Christ, the Way, the Truth and the Life for all humanity. What witness is a Christian called to give? Probably the most appealing and effective witness is that of concern for others in his or her daily life and surroundings, and especially for the poor, the weak and those who suffer. For the generosity and unselfishness underlying these attitudes is in marked contrast to human selfishness. It raises precise questions that lead to God and his kingdom. Paul VI reminded us that most people are tired of words and disillusioned by them:

*“Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses.”*<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, n. 23.

<sup>48</sup> Anthony Bellagamba, *Mission and Ministry in the Global Church* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis books, 1992), p.92.

<sup>49</sup> Paul VI, *op. Cit.*, n.41.

The life of every Christian should bear witness to a strong relationship with God and to its fruit in brotherly love. If Christians are concerned only with themselves, the church ceases to be a sign of salvation. In places where the church is a minority community in a plurireligious society, it is clear how important individual and community witness is as a means of evangelization.

### 3.3.2 EVANGELIZATION THROUGH THE WITNESS OF THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

The result of people accepting the message of Jesus is the formation of the community of his disciples. The community itself becomes an evangelizing community by the way it lives. A Christian community in which people of many tribes, nations and cultures live together in harmony is a witness to what it means to be a follower of Jesus Christ and to live by his message. Just by being a community of brothers and sisters, overcoming all tribal and class rivalries and divisions, it shows the power of the grace of Christ. Unfortunately not all Christian communities live this way, but they all are called to give witness to the power of the message and grace of Jesus to transform human lives. The followers of Jesus should not only live in fellowship and mutual support within; they are called by Christ never to be closed in themselves but to reach out to all those who are in any kind of need in their neighbourhood and to care for them, knowing that it is Christ himself they are caring for. Pope Paul VI shows us how a community that tries to live this way is truly an evangelizing community.

The witness of the way the Christian community lives is particularly important in situations where there are many Christian churches at work and in situations where there are many followers of other religions. The proclamation must first of all take the form of the

witness of Christ-like deeds. Through their lives Christians witness to the fact that they are disciples of Jesus Christ and to what that means in practice. Their way of living together, with other Christians and with those of other religions, will be their first witness to Christ and to his good news that each and every person is the dearly-loved child of God for whom Jesus died. They will try to live like Jesus Christ in the midst of their neighbours, with the same care and concern that Christ showed, respecting the religious faith of each one, building fellowship with them, and working with them for development and justice. This is the kind of effective evangelization which characterized the early Christian communities.

The words of Mahatma Gandhi should challenge us to live as true disciples of Jesus in the church: *“You want to convert our people. But if Christ has not been able to change the life of Christians, how can we believe that by becoming Christians, the life of our people will be any better?”*<sup>50</sup>

### 3.3.3 THE CONCEPT OF PROCLAMATION IN PRESENT ECCLESIAL USAGE.

The present ecclesial context, the use of this concept, is more limited and circumscribed. In a certain sense, proclamation has become a missionary concept *par excellence*, though it is not exclusive of specific missionary activity. In fact, it is commonly used also within the context of the new evangelization and of pastoral activity. It could be said that the concept of proclamation - also expressed with other words like preaching, announcing, evangelization - is a technical concept which refers to that activity of the Church by which she expresses herself explicitly and directly, as a Church that is missionary by her very nature. It is above all through the proclamation of the Gospel of Christ that the Church fulfils her missionary vocation and expresses her identity as *“a sign and instrument, that is,*

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<sup>50</sup> John Brennan, Christian Mission (Middlegreen: St. Paul Publications, 1990), p. 121. \_

*of communion with God and of unity among all men..., the universal sacrament of salvation”.*<sup>51</sup>

The main object or content of the Church’s missionary proclamation is expressed in different ways, but always with direct or indirect reference to Christ and his paschal mystery. It is “*to announce the good news of salvation*”<sup>52</sup>, “*the proclamation of the Lord’s death and resurrection*”<sup>53</sup>, “*the proclamation of the kingdom of God and of Christ*”, “*the proclamation of Christ and his Gospel*” , the proclamation of the mystery of Christ, and more concretely the proclamation whose subject is “*Christ who was crucified, died and is risen*”.<sup>54</sup>

In the totality of the Church’s activities, above all in specifically missionary activity or the mission *ad gentes*, this proclamation occupies a central position and as such is indispensable, necessary and irreplaceable. In the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, speaking of the necessity of a clear and unequivocal proclamation of the Lord Jesus, Paul VI says that “*there is no true evangelization if the name, the teaching, the life, the promises, the Kingdom and the mystery of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God are not proclaimed*”.

Though this proclamation (kerygma, preaching and catechesis) does not exhaust all evangelization but is only one aspect of it, yet it “*occupies such an important place in evangelization that it has often become synonymous with it*”. Specifying the content of proclamation the same Pope says: “*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’s grace and mercy*”.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium* (21 November 1964), n. 48.

<sup>52</sup> Vatican II, *Inter Mirifica* (4 December 1963), n. 3.

<sup>53</sup> Vatican II, *Presbyterorum Ordinis* (7 December 1965), n. 4.

<sup>54</sup> John Paul II, *op. Cit.*, n. 44.

<sup>55</sup> Paul VI, *op. Cit.*, n. 27.

John Paul II not only says that *“in the complex reality of mission, initial proclamation has a central and irreplaceable role”* and it is *“the permanent priority”*, but he also says that all other *“forms of missionary activity are directed to this proclamation, which reveals and gives access to the mystery hidden for ages and made known in Christ (cf. Eph 3:3-9; Col 1:25-29), the mystery which lies at the heart of the Church’s mission and life, as the hinge on which all evangelization turns”*.<sup>56</sup>

The church has received the mandate to proclaim the good news of Jesus and the good news about Jesus is the ends of the earth. God wishes that the fullest revelation he has ever given of himself and his intimate relationship with every single person in Jesus Christ through his gift of the Holy Spirit should be available to all peoples to the end of the time. He has given this mission to the community of Jesus, the church .

Jesus Christ himself is the good news of God’s love for humankind. The church teaches that a clear and unequivocal proclamation of Jesus Christ as Lord lies at the heart of evangelization and is its goal. Pope John Paul II, addressing the leaders of most of the world religions at Assisi in 1986, gave a lead: *“I would like now to express my feelings, as a brother and a friend, but also as a believer in Jesus Christ and in the catholic church, the first witness of faith in him... I profess here anew my conviction, shared by all Christians, that in Jesus Christ, as Saviour of all, true peace is to be found.”*<sup>57</sup>

The aim of such an explicit proclamation of Jesus Christ, it is clear from the context, was not to convert all these religious leaders to the Catholic Church. No! But, in the words of Paul VI, it was: *“...a clear proclamation that in Jesus Christ, the Son of God made man, who*

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<sup>56</sup> John Paul II, *op. Cit.*, n. 44.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 135.

*died and rose from the dead, salvation is offered to all as a gift of God's kindness and mercy.*"<sup>58</sup>

When people are searching for the deepest truth about their lives Christians must tell them about Jesus Christ, that he is the way, the truth and the life for peoples. And before all peoples Christians must confess that Jesus Christ is the meaning of their own lives. They must always be ready to confess him openly before all peoples.

Must the aim of the Catholic always be the conversion of others to the Catholic Church? The first thing to remember is that Christians do not convert anyone. It is God who converts, as Jesus reminded his disciples: "*No one can come to me unless he is drawn by the Father who sent me*"(John 6:44). A further point to remember appears in the document, *Dialogue and Proclamation*:

*"The Spirit of Christ is present and active among the hearers of the good news even before the church's missionary action comes into operation. They may in many cases have implicitly responded to God's offer of salvation in Jesus Christ, a sign of this being the sincere practice of their own religious traditions... Accordingly the church's proclamation must be both progressive and patient, keeping pace with those who hear the message, respecting their freedom and even their slowness to believe."*<sup>59</sup>

In this matter it is not possible to give a clear indication that will be applicable always and everywhere. While Christians should always want to share the good news of Jesus Christ that has brought salvation and joy to their own lives, what to do and how to do it in any given situation must always be a matter of discernment in the Spirit. The potential evangelisers must always be sensitive to the social, cultural, religious and political aspects of each

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<sup>58</sup> Paul VI, *op. Cit.*, n. 27.

<sup>59</sup> Adam Wolanin, "Dialogue and Proclamation," Correspondence Cours on Missionary Formation, 4, 1996.p.9.

situation, through which the Spirit of God is speaking, teaching and guiding. At the same time they should always be ready and eager to share with others the reasons why they find joy and hope in Jesus Christ. Remembering what God has already accomplished in other Christians and in those of other religions they have to search for the right way to share the good news that animates their own lives, never forgetting that every person has the right to hear the good news about the extraordinary love out his or her proper calling in life.

### 3.4 DIALOGUE IS BOTH THE NECESSARY FORM OF EVANGELIZATION AND AN INTEGRAL PART OF IT

Evangelization must always take place in the form of a dialogue, whether it be the ongoing evangelization within the church or the evangelization of those who are not Christians. Each new generation that receives faith within the church must find meaning in it for its own particular life situation, its questions and problems, which are not necessarily or even likely to be those of the preceding generation. Evangelization therefore cannot just be a handing on of the faith in the form of doctrines, commandments, practices, devotions. It must rather be a dialogue between the questions of the new generation and the message of Jesus Christ, in such a way that his message gives enlightenment, meaning and challenge to the lives of young people. Otherwise this message will remain a dead letter and it will not be surprising if they reject Christianity as their way of life or if they drift away. In imitation of God's own action, dialogue must also be the Catholic's way of relating with members of other Christian churches and other religions. That dialogue began with the creation itself. The church's commitment to dialogue is not an expedient in a difficult situation or a purely human activity; its commitment to dialogue is profoundly theological. Christians engage in dialogue because they see that God has always done so and that God continues to offer

salvation to all people through their various religions. In this dialogue they collaborate with the Holy Spirit who is universally present and active.

The documents of the church suggest various kinds of dialogue which are possible among members of the church and with those who belong to other churches or religions.

There is first what can be called a 'dialogue of life' where people strive to live in an open and neighbourly spirit, sharing their joys and sorrows, their problems and preoccupations. It is a question of positively seeking friendship with those of other faiths in an effort to remove the unnecessary barriers of fear and suspicion that often exist.

Secondly, there is a 'dialogue of action' in which Christians and others collaborate for integral development and liberation in their neighbourhood or country. It is a question of doing everything together which conscience does not prohibit. This opens a very wide area of collaboration for the good of all, which is also a way of removing false and unnecessary barriers between people.

Then there is the 'dialogue of religious experience'<sup>60</sup> where persons, rooted in their own religious traditions, share their spiritual experience, for instance with regard to prayer and contemplation, faith and the ways of searching for God, the ways that God is found in life, in relationships, and so on. Those who have tried this kind of dialogue find it very enriching. It is a revelation of how God is active in people whom perhaps formerly Catholics regarded with suspicion. Again barriers are broken down and new relationships grow up.

Finally, there is the 'dialogue of theological exchange' where specialists seek to deepen their understanding of their respective religious heritage's and to appreciate each others' spiritual values. This latter dialogue should be left to those truly well versed in their faith.

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<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

It is clear, then, that dialogue is not something reserved for specialists only. There are ways in which all Christians, because they share responsibility for the church's mission, are called to dialogue in some of the first three ways just indicated. Church as teacher speaks much today about the obligation of dialogue with those of other churches and other religions and encourages its practice. Within the Church itself, however, there is often a great failure to dialogue, for instance, between the Pope and the bishops, between bishops and their priests, between religious superiors and their members, between priests and people, between teachers and students in schools, between parents and their children. The first obligation to dialogue occurs where each one is and with those with whom one lives and works. Some fear that dialogue will diminish their authority. Those who engage in dialogue know very well how much it enhances their authority and permits it to be exercised in a climate of friendship and communion. In fact, there can be no communion without good communication; and if communion lies at the heart of the church's life and mission, so therefore does dialogue. In this area of communication and dialogue, church leaders at whatever level are called to conversion as members of the church if their teaching is to be credible and if they are to engage in their mission fruitfully.

### 3.5 INCULTURATION OF THE FAITH AND COMMITMENT TO JUSTICE ESSENTIAL TO EVANGELIZATION

Inculturation of the faith and action on behalf of justice are constitutive elements of evangelization. Evangelization has neglected inculturation in recent centuries, many African, Asian, American Christians tend to live in two worlds: the world of Christianity which they have put on, as it were from the outside, and their inner world where they are more at home and live their deeper inner life. Tensions can arise between these two 'selves' especially in

times of crisis, when traditional values often prevail over Christian ones. This is true everywhere at present since this is a time of rapid cultural change. Only when the local churches have immersed themselves fully in the life and culture of their people, challenging and purifying what is not compatible with the gospel, can a Christian community in each place be a true sign of salvation among the people.

In the earlier part of this century justice was not much linked with evangelization. It was Vatican II with its renewed theological anthropology and its understanding of the church's mission in and for the world that brought the question of justice into the sphere of the church's mission. It was the Synod of Bishops of 1971, however, which expressed for the first time and in the clearest way the relationship between justice, liberation and evangelization: *"Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us 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>61</sup>

This teaching has since been consistently developed by popes Paul VI and John Paul II and by many Episcopal conferences. It could probably not have been fully understood in an earlier age before the development of the resources of the world, resulting from the advances in science and technology in the 20th century, changed the demands of charity into the requirements of justice. Pope John Paul II points out that, because of the pressing poverty of many countries, *"...the unity of the human race is seriously compromised... before which the church, which is a sacrament or sign and instrument... of the unity of the whole human race, cannot remain indifferent."*<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Herve Carrier, Evangelizing the Culture of Modernity (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1993), p. 127.

<sup>62</sup> Cesare Bonivento, Going, Teach...: Commentary on the Apostolic Exhortation Catechesi Tradendae of John Paul II (Boston: Daughters of St. Paul, 1980), p. 277.

Therefore mission includes: being with the people, responding to their needs, with sensitiveness to the presence of God in cultures and other religious traditions, and witnessing to the values of the Kingdom through presence, solidarity, sharing the word. Mission will mean a dialogue with the poor, with its local cultures, and with other religious traditions.

## CONCLUSION

*“Go out to the whole world, proclaim the Gospel to all creation” (Mk 16,15).*

The nature of the Church is missionary and the aim of it is inner transformation and renewal of humanity.

The Church as a historical institution has to respond to the signs of the time, and modify its contingent existence and structures.

We are called to renewal: a renewal faithful to the church's divine essence, but also open to the new situations of the world. Christians in mission have to make special efforts to reflect on their own experiences in mission and to relate them to the rest of the church's members. People in mission welcome the challenge and help, and are looking forward to a new era of the church's mission, and renewed efforts by all Christians.

A renewal in the missionary thrust of the Church brings about a renewal in the faith and in the life of the Church.

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