

Among Ourselves

Reflections on Gaudium et Spes *(Pastoral Constitution on Church in the Modern World)*

The Challenge Today A New Way of Being Followers of Jesus in the Post-Modern World

JOY AND HOPE

Looking back 40 years after the promulgation of *Gaudium et Spes* (Joy and Hope), the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, we realise that this document was the very core and heart of the Second Vatican Council. It brought to the People of God and God's people in the Modern World a renewed vision of life. It offered a message of reconciliation to a world that had to face two World Wars and years of dehumanising colonisation. It was truly universal both in its content and to whom it was addressed. It was indeed a moment of joy since it presented a new sign of hope for the human family. From a Church that once closed itself from the world and looked upon it with fear and suspicion, the Council opened its heart and stretched out its hands in loving embrace of a world and humanity torn apart by sin and strife. The impetus of this reaching out

was to regain confidence that the message of Jesus had relevance for the Modern World. The Church cannot isolate herself from the world created by the Father; neither can it be insensitive to the Spirit of God alive in the world. The Church realised that it is "a kind of soul for the human family" and needs again to be inserted in the on-going re-creation of the world and thus participate fully in the very life of the Creator. What would the body of humanity be without its soul? What will humanity become when it forgets the inner soul and spirit that brings fullness of life? It became clear that this reinsertion into the vision and mission of the Father is the result of the immersion in the compassionate heart of Jesus. This was made possible by the rediscovery of our vocation as followers of Jesus. We had recovered our identity as the Church with a heart that beats as one with the whole of humanity. This was the joy and the hope with the birth of a Vision.

The modern mind fascinated with its intricate web of technology and science was slowly losing the inner experience of a God of Love. It was no longer the God of punishment and damnation but a God in conscious solidarity with the whole of creation. We were at the dawn of a new era of history, when God With Us was also a God who brought a loving and compassionate perspective of the Human Person and the Human Community. Our mission of evangelisation was clear and profound. It was about Being open to be touched by God's Love in order to reach out in Love to renew the face of the earth. The only credible exhibition of the face of God was to be the joy in our hearts and hope in our lives so that God's Kingdom becomes a reality of the here and now. This

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Kingdom discovered within, does not pass away but remains permanently to attain its fullness in the eternal life with God. This indeed was our joy of the inauguration of a new era for all people of goodwill. *Peace on Earth*, the promise of the divine message at the birth of the Saviour, seemed possible when Christians could see a new meaning in the very prayer of Jesus: “*Father May they All be One*”. It was indeed another moment of joy and hope that we celebrate when we recall the context in which it offered a new hope for humanity, founded on the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This was the joy and the hope that is promised to carry out our Mission in the World.

GRIEF AND ANGUISH

Having to face the realities of the world 40 years later, we in no way can deny the upsurge of new forms of heart-rending realities of Grief and Anguish (*Luctus et Angor*). With our minds and our hearts open to the mystery of the sacred and divine in the world, the followers of Jesus began to recognise the manifestations of the broken covenant with the Father. Our eyes were opened to see the permanent presence of the Divine Spirit in the hearts of all people of goodwill, especially those experiencing grief and anguish. Salvation was about the restoration of the initial vision of the Trinitarian God in total communion. The Incarnation was to bring the true meaning of love that Jesus celebrated each day of his life in doing the will of the Father. It became clear that the Church in the modern world cannot stand aloof and indifferent to the dramatic changes that are taking place around us. We are today fully aware that not only have the times have changed but we have been changed by the times. These changing times have produced new forms of a culture of death. Unwittingly the very heart of humanity and the soul of human persons made in the image and likeness of God have been enticed by powerful attractions that offer new forms of salvation, embellished in the form of materialism and consumerism.

Have not our minds been dulled and our hearts desensitised and overcome by subtle forms of secularisation? Why is that our consciences are no longer able to be like the sensors on our digital cell phones that pick up the vibration of the grief and anguish of so many people around us, who are longing to live in dignity as human persons. We meet them each day but it is obvious we walk by on the other side busy with the functional aspects of our lives not daring to enter into the new relationship with God that flows from solidarity with those in Grief and Anguish. We don't need social scientists and experts to tell us how our little worlds have changed over

the past 40 years, especially our inner worlds of fear and insecurity. Our minds and hearts are being re-moulded in the ways and norms of the “man-made” world. We are reminded by Jesus in Matthew: 13:13–15. “You will indeed listen, but never understand, and you will indeed look, but never perceive. For this people’s heart has grown dull, and their ears are hard of hearing, and they have shut their eyes; so that they might not look with their eyes, and listen with their ears, and understand with their heart and turn — and I would heal them.” The growing indifference in the modern world to the plight of the billions of new poor, as migrants, refugees, people with HIV/AIDS, the millions of women and children who are victims of wars, violence and terrorism is obvious. Their sufferings have become just another picture in the newspaper or another tragedy that we view on the daily television news.

It is in this seeming drama of adversity and agony when fully understood that will move those who believe in the Gospel of Jesus to pray with the Lord “Your Kingdom Come, Your Will Be Done”. We need to return to the source of renewal initiated by the Second Vatican Council and in the light of this to make a critical review of the living out of the Gospel of Jesus in the Post-modern World. This urgency prompts us as followers of Jesus to seek a new forms and expressions of solidarity with the Human Family. We want to continue to believe that we need to renew our confidence in the Jesus who lives in our hearts and in Jesus the Eternal Word of Life.

EMERGING POST-MATERIALISTIC SOCIETY

Since the beginning of Vatican II, a whole new generation has entered the modern world. The ways of the world have not just moved from the mechanical to the digital but we have become a global city unable to resist the forces that mould the lives of adults and young alike. The world has become global and has promoted rapid and homogenous changes ways of thinking, living and acting. But ironically, we have also become more individualistic and fragmented. We therefore have to ask ourselves, if the vision of the Council has become a reality today? And if not why? The reasons are obvious, the pace at which the world has moved has been faster than the pace at which the Church has been able to communicate fully the deep and profound insights of the Council. Secondly, we know that today the post-modern world does not need to teach people about life, they learn from the new metropolitan and mega-mall culture that they live in and this changed environment changes their lives. Today, people don't have to be taught about peace or sexual ethics. Young people, for example, just pick up

the contrary from the mass media and ways of the adult world. It just appeals to the inner yearning for self-identity and self-expression. They get entangled in a sophisticated world wide web of values, norms, lifestyles and behaviour. They seem to have little control over them neither do they have any alternative except narrow ethnic and religious affiliation that are seeking to win membership to their way of life and their ideology.

We know that the theological developments and spiritual insights inspired by the Second Vatican Council are truly radical and often stand in contrast to ways of the dominant world today. Our teachings have the intention of transforming inner being and our ways of acting and living, so that the Church can become the light and leaven for the transformation of the world. Is there a possibility that the central truth of the Council is still not understood, accepted and much less manifested in the lives of majority of the People of God?

May be it is possible that Asian nations and societies are totally taken up and fascinated with the marvels of the scientific and technological advances that have brought progress, modernisation and urbanisation. It has given rise to a new middle-class that mushroomed in many of our nations. We have sensibly come to the consensus of learning how to live unperturbed by its by-products of underdevelopment and poverty that will not be eradicated within the next few generations. We cannot deny the fact that the roots of modernity have their roots in the civilisational perspective of the Western European Civilisation. Accepting this paradigm would imply a certain logic and ethos that has to take the same trajectory: awaiting justice and peace as a result of the trickle-down of the wealth of nations and subsequent setting up of stable democratic nations, as was the 400 years history of the developed nations in Europe.

It has to be clear in our minds if *Gaudium et Spes* basically offers just a critique of modernity or was it an attempt to open a new path for humanity to look for a more holistic and integral vision of life? We are today governed and influenced by an intellectual culture that relies on the pre-eminence of science and knowledge. We have to make a judgement based on our understanding of the mega trends in the world today as to whether the vision of the Jesus of Asia truly opens the doors for us to forge a new civilisational dialogue. For many of us, the time seems proper to rediscover transcendental and sacred dimensions of life that have been overlooked by a materialistic and individualistic way of life. Many wonder if a Post-Materialistic Society is possible?

A VISION FOR THE FUTURE IN THE CONTEXT OF ASIA

At the invitation of the Council and the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences, the Church in Asia has drawn new insights from our faith encounters with the deep religiosity of the peoples of Asia. We want to believe that the on-going search for a new civilisational paradigm is possible, if we rediscover our Asian rootedness in the Gospel of Jesus. We can begin to more earnestly journey with the poor of Asia to confront the forces of secularistic individualism and materialism. Our Asian cultures offer communitarian forms of social enterprise and lives of simplicity and generosity. All these leading to the restoration of our inner spiritual identities and harmonious ethnic diversity. The highpoint of the teachings of Jesus as enunciated in the Sermon on the Mount, for many Asian peoples offers rich and incisive insights into life in the context of the modern world. His teaching and his very own witnessing to the meaning of the forgiveness of enemies, is not an idealistic utopia to be attained but a reality that can be altered by human persons. In the context of the devious and unjust forms of social relationships today, the Gospel of Reconciliation can be a catalyst.

Many may wonder why *Gaudium et Spes* begins with the reflections of Joy and Hope, Grief and Anguish. Of course these are not emotions like sadness or happiness, bored or tired. They seem to imply a deeper meaning hidden in the heart and soul of human persons. It is not just an idea, a feeling or even a reaction. It seems to be born out of a deep interiority and spirituality. This makes sense why so many people are becoming more and more indifferent to the pains and sufferings of others around them. When someone who is very dear to you passes away, you are not sad but you grieve, it touches your very soul and your being. In the same way, the joy of seeing someone restored with self-confidence does not make you just happy. You really are filled with joy with the other because you too have first experienced that same type of joy. You know full well that what gave you the inner joy in the first place was the recognition of the love that is credible in the other. We can therefore communicate this credible love because of our joyful encounters. It is this experience of a true inner joy from which flows hope and thus we share these by reaching out to others. In a world filled with more and more anger and aggression, we have gradually failed to experience joy and hope and it is for this reason that there seems to be growing apathy in the world today. We are uncomfortable with ourselves and busy ourselves with activities and our culture of

activism. Work does not bring joy but job satisfaction and a feeling that we have done something for someone. Joy of the inner being communicates the hidden dimension of love. It is the result of an inner encounter with one's own life experiences. It touches the contemplative dimension of life when one recognises the meaning of a spirituality of presence: God within Us, God with Us and God among Us.

LOVE AS THE ONLY WAY

Gaudium et Spes thus offers to be a new path for the Church to bring a new criteria for judging the degree of our sensitivity to God within us, in our suffering sisters and brothers and also in the workings of the whole world. Our belief that God so loved the World that God sends the Son convinces us that only when we experience this same love of the giving of the Son totally to the world that love will reach its apex because Experience of God finds Expression in Life. This is the deeper meaning of Incarnation: The Word made Flesh. . Thus it seems we cannot communicate joy and hope or remove grief and anguish without love in our hearts and in our very being. It is only our inner experience of the permanent presence of God within us that can restore our being in God. It is not about good works alone but our option to make the Kingdom of God real in our lives. This is the path to revive once again our sensitivity to the needs of others around us and in society. Today, many people of all Religious Faiths find it difficult to accept dehumanising poverty as a normal way of life and the use of violence and war to settle differences. Anger and violence reflects the most basic instincts of persons and communities, unable to face the deeper dimensions of life. It is our faith in the God of love that leads to recognition of the value in creation in others and in the world. We thus move from the trust in God, and not just in material things, in status and power to loving relationships with other human persons. Love of God, is thus a reasoned, intelligent and responsible path towards a contemplative life and integral spirituality. Through this path we live by the truths that seek the preservation of the sanctity of the Human Person and responsibility for the common good of the Human Community. This seems to be the new paradigm that will set in place a new revolution for entering into the mystery of our faith and inviting all peoples to move from life as a race to a new pilgrimage of the children of God.

This seems possible, if we in spite of the grief and anguish, want to search together the ultimate source of our joy and hope being true followers of Jesus. It is logical that only when we are ready to be one with the spirit of

Jesus that can truly be incarnated in the world in which we live. Unfortunately, we too have been subject to the changes that have affected the people of the modern world, unable to distinguish the thoughts and ways of the world from the thoughts and the ways of Jesus. Globalisation and Post-Modern ways of thinking and acting introduces subtle form of egoism and individualism seeking to find meaning in power and status rather than in service and relational communion. To be faithful to the Council and its teachings calls for a clearer articulation of the meaning of A New Way of Being the Followers of Jesus. We move with uneasiness and sometimes without hesitation into striving after the manifestations of the external and ephemeral ways of the world. We lack the courage to understand the inner dimensions and workings of the world outside but unconsciously feel comfortable when the ways of the world creep insidiously into the very sacred domain of the inner freedom and even identity. It is therefore obvious to all that there is a growing awareness of the ways in which we the followers of Jesus have been influenced more by the ethos and ways of the Post-Modern world that is market-driven and having a penchant for compulsive consumerism. When we are ready to contemplate the face of modernity we need a new courage and confidence. It is at historic moments like these that we need to recall the words of Jesus in order to look critically at the post-modern world in the light of the Gospel. We are indeed being challenged to take more seriously the words of Jesus "Be Not Afraid" so that we will begin the first step in the purification of our memories, when we look into our lives as followers of Christ and as the Church of Jesus Christ. We will thus dare to "Put Out into the Deep": into the depths our very being in and with Jesus, so that we can begin the process of renewal.

In the fast changing world, we have little time to stop and we have to catch up with the latest changes in the world. We believe that life is short and time is precious and we must therefore attain as much as possible and in order to attain concrete results. It is in this context of naïve activism based on reason and logic that we fail to see the eternal and the profound insights into life. Today the followers of Jesus are being challenged to return to a new contemplative interiority and spirituality of community that will prepare us to relive the Gospel of Jesus in the new millennium. Pope John Paul II in his Apostolic Exhortation *At the Beginning of the New Millennium* (NMI) invited us: "to examine ourselves on the reception given to the Council". He goes on to observe that we need to "point to the Council as the great grace bestowed on the Church in the twentieth century: there we find a sure compass by which to take our bearings in the century no beginning"

(NMI No: 57). Do we have the time to sit, to stop, to look at the compass and ask ourselves: Where are we going?

OUR WAY AHEAD IN THE POST-MODERN WORLD

Gaudium et Spes can indeed be the starting point for us as Church to make a renewed commitment to our mission of a new evangelisation. We need to be filled with a new ardour and energy, a message relevant to restore new meanings in life to the minds and hearts of post-modern men and women. We believe that this new evangelisation is the proclamation of the Good News of Jesus of the coming of the Kingdom, by being witnesses to the loving compassion of the Father for the whole Human Family. Forty years after the promise of the Council the world as we know it today has been plagued by one crisis after another. The world of the early 1960s has changed and we are now called to Re-read the Signs of the Times in the Post-Modern World.

One of the gravest errors, *Gaudium et Spes* pointed out is the artificial dichotomy between faith and life and between Word and Witness. One of the most serious threats today in the globalised post-modern world is the marginalisation of the Religious Faiths of people from the workings of society. Various forms of religious fundamentalism gnaw at the very heart of humanity. Our loud and unequivocal proclamation, has to be that a pietistic and a privatised spirituality have no place in a world under that attack by secularisation. The message of the Church that being with God; is being one with the Human family is indeed a powerful message to the Market Driven forces that have contributed significantly to the on-going rivalry and conflicts among ethnic groups and religions. Our vision of unity as our fundamental premise rejects the notion that we can be “Religious” without attempting to bring all peoples who believe in God and the Divine to work together for the building of a more just and humane world. This is possible when we begin to use the language of God and the language of love that the followers of Jesus are invited to communicate with in the Post-Modern World. This is the only language that is credible to other human persons. Devoid of this love that bonds people together hate, anger, wars and violence can readily and successfully be launched in the name of national development, human security and global governance for peace. Religion, many believe is about private devotions and acts of worship in the name of God. Our faith vision of *Gaudium et Spes* clearly shows that we are here as

Human Persons and even more as the followers of Jesus to take full responsibility for the well being of the Human family. Is this not a message of new evangelisation today? Is this not the essence of the proclamation of Kingdom of God, the loving Father of all of humanity? It has always been clear that our love for God cannot be divorced from our responsibility for the well being of the neighbour. Many are even made to believe that if it is difficult to change the world around us and that we need only to pray so that God will hear our prayers and change the world.

A NEW WAY OF BEING THE FOLLOWERS OF JESUS

Part Two of *Gaudium et Spes* traces the steps for the Church in the Modern World to bring the principles of reflection drawn from the Scriptures and from our tradition into the public life. The Laity are given the mandate to take a very special and unique responsibility for this endeavour. This seems possible when the People of God are introduced to the radical notion that Christians have to move from Knowing the Faith to Experience Faith as lived in the World. The principles of reflection that are offered in Part One will only be understood when we begin to reflect on each of the areas of concern that have been identified: Family, Socio-Economic Life, Culture, Political Life and Global Peace and the International Community. These principles have to be reflected and internalised in the context of each of our lives. The underlying assumption is that our faith is born out of our Incarnational Experience of Jesus. We have to enter and fully understand the world created by God but distorted by human beings. This reflective process allows us to once again allow the Divine to enter Human Life through our ordinary Human Experiences. We realise that “Knowing” about our faith and life is a dynamic structure that begins with the Realities of the “Knower” entering into a relationship with the all Knowing God. It is like the body, it cannot be fully grasped until we put together the sum of the parts so that from this will emerge a holistic and integral vision of life to live in mission in the world.

The Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conference in articulating its journey to the 21st Century, besides expressing their Vision of A New Way of Being in Asia also offered the Pastoral Spiral as a Methodology and Pedagogical Approach. This process of “Knowing God” in the Human Person is made up of three integral dimensions:

1. Exploring and Inquiring into the nature of our experiences in ourselves and in our lives with the aim of gaining understanding through insights into Life.

This is to enable us to discover the hidden principles of Life. When we move from the description of events and trends to the explanation of these, we begin to grow not just in knowledge but also God-awareness, self-awareness and other-awareness that will lead to a new consciousness of our thoughts, words, character, actions and our hearts. We see and see again and do not perceive because we have failed to find new insights into our lives. We are often afraid to ask questions because we are satisfied with description of events and narration of facts and figures. Why does poverty exist in our lands that have so much material resources? Why the increasing violence and Religious Fundamentalism? How does the process and mechanisms of globalisation work? Through understanding we understand the whole that is made up of the sum of the parts. It is holistic and coherent so that we are able to move to the level of decision-making.

2. It is this initial awareness that will lead us to identifying and determining Criteria for Judgement based on permanent Truths: We have to discern from our experiences and events around us if it is a Yes/No or Maybe. It has to lead to conversion in our ways of thinking and thus a transformation of the inner being so that life that is lived consciously also becomes a conscience that is alive to the decision-making processes in everyday personal life and in the workings of society. We need to decide if it is pure reason that moves us or some emotional experience or even prejudices and biases that have been accumulated over the years of our lives. This ability to determine our criteria for judgement are clearly articulated in *Gaudium et Spes* and for us the eternal values and norms based on fundamental truths of God.
3. We thus make a commitment and decision by formulating our directions and actions in life. Knowing is NOT complete until there is the closing of the gap between our Faith that informs us and our lives that express them in our very being.

It is therefore this process of interiority that is closely linked to our life of personal and communal prayer and the celebration of our Eucharistic life. It is linked to the primacy of grace that abides in us, waiting to be explored and accepted as the voice of the Spirit within us. We as followers of Jesus become the true subjects of the Father's Kingdom who will take complete responsibility to the mission of Jesus in the world as renewed Human Persons.

CONCLUSION

Incarnation for the salvation of the one Family of God begins with the human person - whole and entire, body and soul, heart and conscience, mind and will. The challenges of the Post-modern world are Human Insecurity, Threats to Peace, Violations of Human Rights and Culture of Death. The gradual and subtle negation of God's Plans is both a supreme dishonour to the Creator and the sign that the Kingdom is yet to come in all its dimensions. The eruption of the Ego amidst modern day materialism and hedonism distorts the image within us as followers of Christ. The Mystery of Faith can only be discovered in the depths of our Being and when we are ready to "Put Out into the Deep" in order to fully experience the Baptism of Jesus and thus the inner acknowledgement that We are God's beloved children. From this fundamental source flows our ability to respond as Jesus, who came to serve and not to be served and his followers must therefore not just observe and preserve what we see around us but make a commitment to be at the service of one another. This indeed is the pearl of great value and the only goal in life for the Christian.

Thus the path to the discovery of the Mystery of God in Human Experiences enables us to identify the basic imbalances in the Human Heart and thus the internal divisions and discord in society. Our truly missionary outreach to the world in need of salvation is also the same path to give glory to God in our life of prayer and our acts of worship. It is impossible to rely on a privatised and individualistic Spirituality to be engaged in the communitarian task of salvation of the world. Our common path is one towards a new Communitarian Spirituality that will enable us to link our inner personal encounters with God with those of others. The reason we come together is to remind ourselves that we are gathered in the name of God as sisters and brothers. Our common Trinitarian Faith leads us to both contemplate and appreciate the Divine Plan of God and to return to Jesus the Eternal Word to be the source of our new life in the Spirit of Jesus. It is thus from this Communion as the one Body of Christ that we celebrate our Joy and Hope born out of the wisdom of God. Our Communion is a gift and is only possible because of the primacy of grace and allows us to walk humbly with the Lord, love one another with the tenderness of the Mother and seeks to make visible the light of the Good News for all the nations and peoples.

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Reconciliation As A New Paradigm Of Mission

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The Emergence of Reconciliation in the Discussion of Mission

There have been references to, and echoes of, the theme reconciliation in the theological discussion of mission throughout the previous century, but it is only in the last decade and a half that it has emerged as an important way of talking about Christian mission. David Bosch's 1992 magisterial work, *Transforming Mission*, makes no mention of it. Stephan Bevans and Roger Schroeder's recent book, *Constants in Context* published in 2004, on the other hand, has multiple references to reconciliation. What has happened?

The experience of trying to come to terms with a violent past, the need to end hostility, and the slow work of reconstructing broken societies have pushed reconciliation into the limelight, especially bringing it to the attention of those concerned with the work of the Church. The fact that many recent conferences on mission have been taking up this theme, and that it figures in the title and preparatory documents of the Conference, indicates how far we have come.

In this presentation, I would like to explore how reconciliation might be seen as a paradigm or model of mission. I begin by looking at how the idea of reconciliation might be seen as revealing to us the heart of the Gospel. Then I will look at the understanding of reconciliation today, both as a process for engaging in mission, and as the goal of mission.

Reconciliation: The Heart of the Gospel

Although the word "reconciliation" does not occur as such in the Hebrew Scriptures, and only fourteen times in the New Testament, the Bible is full of stories of reconciliation, from the stories of Esau and Jacob, and Joseph and his brothers, to Jesus' parables, especially that of the Prodigal Son. These stories show the struggle that goes on in trying to achieve reconciliation. Many of them end before reconciliation is actually reached – something that mirrors much of our own experience.

It is the Apostle Paul especially who sets out the Christian understanding of reconciliation. For Paul, God is the author of reconciliation: about this he has no doubt. We but participate in what God is bringing about in our world. One can discern three processes of reconciliation

in which God is engaged. The first is God's reconciling a sinful humanity to God's own self. This is set forth especially in Paul's Letter to the Romans (5:1-11), where Paul describes the peace we now have with God, who has poured out love in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. We have been reconciled to God through the death of his Son, Jesus Christ. It is through Christ that we have now received reconciliation. This act of God's, reconciling us, rescuing us from our sins, is sometimes called vertical reconciliation. As such, it is the basis for all other forms of Christian reconciliation. It is also central to Paul's own experience of Christ, having been converted from his persecution of the Church to being made, "out of due time", an apostle of Jesus Christ.

The second kind of reconciliation of which Paul seeks is brought about between individual human beings and groups in society. The paramount example of this reconciliation is between Jews and Gentiles. Here the description of how this reconciliation is effected through the blood of Christ is presented in Ephesians 2:12-20: the Gentiles, without hope or promise, are made alive together in Christ, who has broken down the wall of hostility that divided them, and made them fellow citizens in the household of God. This second kind of reconciliation is sometimes called horizontal reconciliation.

The third kind of reconciliation situates God's work through Christ in the context of the whole of Creation. In the hymns beginning the Letters to the Ephesians and Colossians, God is seen as reconciling all things and all persons – whether in heaven or on earth – in Christ (Eph 1:10), making peace to reign throughout all Creation through the blood of Christ's Cross (Col 1:20). This kind of reconciliation is sometimes called cosmic reconciliation, and represents the fullness of God's plan for Creation, to be realized at the end of time.

Paul sees the Church participating in the reconciling work of God through a ministry of reconciliation, captures succinctly in Paul's presentation of this in II Corinthians 5:17-20:

"So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All of this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. So we

are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us. We entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God” (cf. NRSV).

It is the vertical reconciliation that makes the horizontal and cosmic dimensions possible. It is within this framework of vertical, horizontal, and cosmic reconciliation that we are to see Christian mission. That mission is rooted in the *missio dei*, the going forth of the Holy Trinity in the acts of creation, incarnation, redemption, and consummation. Through the Son, God has brought reconciliation to the world, overcoming sin, disobedience and the alienation we have wrought. Christ reunites us with God through his saving death, which God confirms in the Resurrection and the revelation of transfigured life. The Holy Spirit empowers the Church to participate in this ministry of the Son and the Spirit in reconciling the world. The Church itself is in need of constant reconciliation, but becomes the vehicle for God’s saving grace to a broken and disheartened world.

One might summarize this biblical understanding of reconciliation under five brief headings:

1. God is the author of all genuine reconciliation. We but participate in God’s reconciling work. We are, in Paul’s words, “ambassadors in the name of Christ” (II Cor 5:20).
2. God’s first concern in the reconciliation process is the healing of the victims. This grows out of two experiences: the God of the great prophets of the Hebrew Scriptures and the God of Jesus Christ cares especially about the poor and the oppressed. Second, so often the wrongdoers do not repent, and the healing of the victim cannot be held hostage by unrepentant wrongdoers.
3. In reconciliation, God makes of both victim and wrongdoer a “new Creation” (II Cor 5:17). This means two things. First of all, in profound wrongdoing it is impossible to go back to where we were before the wrongdoing took place; to do such would be to trivialize the gravity of what has been done. We can only go forward to a new place. Second, God wants both the healing of the victim and the repentance of the wrongdoer. Neither should be annihilated; both should be brought to a new place, a new Creation.
4. Christians find a way out of their suffering by placing it in the suffering, death and Resurrection of Christ. It is this patterning of our suffering in that of Christ that helps us escape its destructive power. It also engenders hope in us.
5. Reconciliation will only be complete when all things are brought together in Christ (Eph 1:10). Until that time we experience only partial reconciliation, but live in hope.

The Ministry of Reconciliation as Process

How does the Church participate in this reconciliation? What concrete forms does it take? Because of the wider interest in reconciliation in the world today – it is far from being only a Christian concern – the language of reconciliation is often unclear. At times it has been manipulated and distorted to serve other ends. As Christians we need to be as clear as we can about what we mean by reconciliation and how we go about the ministry of reconciliation.

Let me begin by saying that reconciliation is both a process and a goal. It is both an ongoing work in which we participate and a final point at which we hope to arrive. Let us first look at it as a process. I will focus here on the horizontal or social dimension of Reconciliation. The Church participates in the vertical dimension through its sacraments and in the cosmic dimension as well, both in its liturgy and its concern for all of Creation. These too constitute part of reconciliation as a model of mission. But because the thinking on the horizontal dimension is more recent and new to many, I will devote more time to it here.

Participation in the horizontal dimension of reconciliation is about participating in God’s healing of societies that have been wounded deeply and broken by oppression, injustice, discrimination, war, and wanton destruction. This healing begins with truth-telling, the breaking of the codes of silence that hide wrongdoing against the poor and vulnerable members of society. Truth-telling also means overcoming and correcting the lies and distortions that bring unearned shame on the innocent and isolate people from one another so as to exercise hegemony over society. Truth-telling as a practice in this sense must encompass four things: It must be a truth that resonates with my experience of events, it must be in language I can understand, it must conform to my understanding of truthfulness, and it must come from someone I can trust.

For a Christian, truth-telling is more than relating facts in a credible manner. It involves also God, who is the author of all truth. Truth in its Hebrew sense (*‘emet*) is part of the nature of God: it is reliable, it is enduring, it is steadfast, and it is faithful. It is truth-telling at this deep, theological level that is the basis for healing a broken society. What that means on a practical level is that the Church must endeavour to create safe, hospitable spaces where truth can be spoken and heard, where the silence can be broken, where pernicious lies can be laid bare and overcome.

With truth comes the pursuit of justice. To seek justice with no effort to establish the truth runs the risk of engaging in vengeance instead of true justice. The struggle for justice (and it is a struggle, wrongdoing does not give up easily) is many faceted. It involves punitive justice, that punishes wrongdoers in a lawful way to show that a renewed society

acknowledges the wrongdoing that has been done and will not tolerate it in the future. Second, it involves restorative justice which restores the dignity and the rights of the victim. Third, it requires distributive justice, since the unjust wresting of a person's goods makes healing and the creation of a just society nearly impossible. Finally, it requires structural justice, that is, the restructuring of the institutions and processes of society so that just action becomes part of the rebuilt society. Reallocating resources, equity in human rights, guaranteed access to health, shelter, food, education and employment are all part of creating a just society.

A third aspect of reconciliation as a process is the rebuilding of relationships. Without relations of equity and trust, a society quickly slides back into violence. Work on these relationships has to happen at many levels. For victims, it involves the healing of memories so that one does not remain beholden or hostage to the past. It is an overcoming of the toxin that memories of violence, oppression, and marginalization contain. It means repentance and conversion on the part of those who have done wrong, acknowledging the wrongdoing and taking steps to approach the victim in order to apologize and make reparation. It means making the difficult journey toward forgiveness. Here the process of rebuilding relationship is often short-circuited. Amnesty is given or impunity is bestowed on the wrongdoers even before the victims are allowed to speak. A shroud of forgetfulness and oblivion is drawn over the past. Forgiveness is not about forgetting the wrong done, but about coming to remember it in a different way – away that removes the toxin from the experience of the victim and creates the space for repentance and apology by the wrongdoer. Forgiveness means remembering the past, but remembering it in a way that makes a different kind of future possible for both victim and the wrongdoer.

Reconciliation as Goal

Truth-telling, struggling for justice, working toward forgiveness: these are the three central dimensions of the social process of reconciliation. In all the situations I know, they are never undertaken on a level playing field; the consequences of oppression, violence, and war are not predisposed to honesty, justice, and even the good intentions of all parties. Nor are the processes, for the most part, orderly. And they never seem to be complete. In fact, we usually experience them as truncated, prematurely foreclosed, hijacked by the powerful. What are we to do?

Thing brings me to the other understanding of reconciliation; namely, reconciliation as goal. Talk of reconciliation skips too easily from the end of overt violence to an imagined peace. It circumvents the messy and protracted process of truth-telling, seeking justice, working toward forgiveness. We expect peace to blossom and

flourish after long periods of war. We expect democracy to rise up, phoenix-like, from the ashes of dictatorship and authoritarian rule. But such is not the case. We can find ourselves acquiescing to half-measures, half-truths, compromised solutions.

It is important not to confuse reconciliation as process with reconciliation as goal. In order to follow the process, we must fix our eyes on the goal. For Christians, it is God who is working reconciliation; we are but agents in the process, participating in what God is doing. God is our strength; God is our hope. It is God who is bringing this about. Here we experience the difference between optimism and hope. Optimism is what grows out of the confidence in our own resources and capacities. It comes out of us. The enormity of wrong and sin that we face in protracted war and oppression far exceeds what we are able to accomplish. Hope, on the other hand, comes from God. It is God leading us forward, like he did Abraham and Sarah. We live in faith, the assurance of things hoped for (cf. Heb 11:1). With our eyes fixed on God and God's promises, we can maintain the strength of heart, of mind, and of will to continue our participation in what God is doing for the world.

The Church: A Community of Memory and of Hope

So where does this place the Church? Its participation in the *missio dei*, understood here as God's reconciling the world to Himself, is marked especially by three things. First, the ministry of reconciliation makes the Church a community of memory and, second, a community of hope. Its mission, in word and deed, of the message of reconciliation makes possible what is perhaps for many the most intense experience of God possible in our troubled, broken world.

The Church is first of all a community of memory. It does not engage in the forgetfulness urged by the powerful upon the vulnerable and poor – to forget their suffering, to erase from their memories what has been done to them, to act as though the wrongdoing never happened. The Church as a community of memory creates those safe havens where memories can be spoken of out loud, and begin in the difficult and long process of overcoming the rightful anger that, if left unacknowledged, can poison any possibilities for the future. In safe spaces, the trust that has been sundered, the dignity that has been denied and wrested away, has the chance of being reborn. A community of memory is concerned too about truthful memory, not the distorting lies that serve the interests of the wrongdoer at the cost of the wronged. A community of memory keeps the focus of memory as it pursues justice

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Missio Ad Gentes: An Asian Way Of Mission Today

Leo Kleden, SVD

0. A STORY: “From the Depth I Cry To You”.

It was early December 1997. I was invited to be a facilitator in a training session for human right activists in East Timor. There were 24 participants. During the first three days the interaction process was very difficult. There was too much feeling of anger, resentment suspicion and woundedness which blocked the process. So one of my colleagues asked if I could lead a prayer service and sharing where the participants could express their traumatic feelings. In the evening we gathered in a small chapel. All of us sat on the floor in a circle. In the middle we lit a candle. It was an Advent candle. We read the beautiful text of Isaiah 35 which announced the coming of the Lord to save his people. We also read Isaiah 65: 17-25 about the new heavens and new earth. Then I asked the participants to share. Several of them talked and we listened. Then a woman, a very thin woman, stood up, walked to the middle, sat beside the candle and told us a long story of suffering. Her name was Alexandrina. We called her Adina.

When she was about 6 years old her parents were arrested by the Indonesian soldiers. Since then she never saw them again. Some eyewitness said that they were shot in the forest. Adina was left behind with her elder brother who had joined the Fretelin freedom fighters struggling for the independence of East Timor. Some years later her brother was captured by the Indonesian soldiers. They tortured him, cut off his penis, and let him slowly die a horrible death. Adina wept bitterly over the death of her only brother, but she swore to herself to continue the struggle. When Adina was in senior high school, the military arrested her while giving food to a young man who came to the village. They accused her of being a collaborator of Fretelin. They tortured her until she was half conscious and raped her.

At this point Adina could not continue her story. Tears filled our eyes. There was a long silence in the chapel. I do not know how long, but it seemed like ages. Then Adina gathered all her strength, she looked at me and said in a faint voice: “Father, where is that salvation promised by the Lord?” Again there was silence. I could not answer her question. Tears flowed. Slowly I raised my eyes and saw a wooden cross on the wall. I saw it and understood the solidarity of the Crucified One, but I could not utter a single word. Adina needed my solidarity, not my word. For several years I have been living with her question.

1. INTRODUCTION

First of all I would like to thank the conveners for inviting me to speak about *missio ad gentes* from an Asian perspective. Let me say from the very beginning that I am not a missiologist by profession. I am a member of a missionary congregation

which is involved in missionary work and reflection. The conveners could have invited some well-known missiologist to give a better theological presentation. But they preferred instead to invite somebody else to give information and reflection about mission from a less known corner of the Church, from Indonesia. Let me start by clarifying some presuppositions implied in the title chosen for this presentation: “*Missio Ad Gentes: An Asian Way of Mission Today*”.

1.1. Mission

There are different paradigms used in speaking about mission. The model used in this presentation is the paradigm of the Reign of God. Mission is first of all “*missio Dei*”¹ God’s self-communication and saving act which stretches from creation to new creation. The mission of the Church is a participation in this saving act of the Triune God, namely in the love of the Father made known in Christ Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit². Since Vatican II we have become more aware that the Reign of God is a reality deeper and more extensive than the Church³. The Church’s mission is nothing else than giving witness to the Reign of God, to its universality and openness, which embraces all humanity i.e. all nations and cultures throughout the history. As a sacrament of salvation in God’s hand the Church can no longer claim that it monopolizes the whole truth and salvation as it once did. Once we acknowledge that the Reign of God is greater than the Church, then we become more open to recognize what God has done to different peoples, in various cultures and religions. The first act of mission is, therefore, listening with full respect to what God has done to others. This kind of awareness will certainly influence and transform our way of mission.

1.2. “Ad Gentes”

When we speak about “*missio ad gentes*” in our time, who are supposed to be the *gentes*, the addressees of Church’s mission today? At a certain period of history when the missionaries were urged by zeal and conviction that “*extra ecclesiam nulla salus*”, then *gentes* meant all those people who did not belong to the Church, who were supposed to live in the darkness of sin and incredulity and who were therefore destined to perdition. But our understanding of mission has radically changed. We realize that God’s saving act has been present and continuous to be present throughout history, in various cultures and religions of all peoples⁴.

Two things are implied in the proposition that the reality of God’s Reign is deeper and greater than the Church. On the one hand we believe that the Reign of God is actively present within the Church but is not identical with the Church. There are elements within the Church which are contrary to

the values of the Kingdom and therefore need purification and redemption. On the other hand we acknowledge that people of different faith communities, of different cultures and religions in one way or another have experienced the saving act of God. Of course they are also in need of full redemption and ultimate salvation.

Mission is no longer a one way traffic. We as Christians give witness to the Reign according to our faith-experience of God, but others too give witness to saving act of God in their midst. With regard to the Church can we still speak about her *missio ad gentes*? Yes, but with a significant qualification! *Gentes* are people who do not belong to Christian community but they are not outside of God's loving embrace. As we Christians give witness and proclaim the Reign of God to the *gentes*, they also tell us about their own faith-experience of God. Understood in this way *missio ad gentes* is at the same time *missio de gentibus*. The Hindus, the Buddhists, the Moslems, the Confucians, the followers of Tao, the adherents of cosmic religions, the humanists and others can share with us their faith-experience of God and the fundamental values of their life. Mission requires as its prerequisite our readiness to listen to others and a sincere openness to share our faith with them. In the ideal cases where people of different faith communities work together in our common struggle for justice, peace, solidarity, reconciliation, love (to name some values of God's Reign) in order to build a greater communion of the scattered children of God (Jn. 11:52), then *missio ad gentes* is *missio cum gentibus*.

1.3. Asia

Asia is a name for a pluralistic reality. It is home to nearly two third of the world's population with their different cultures, languages, customs, beliefs, traditions, social structures, political systems. It is impossible to characterize Asian peoples in general with the same cultural or social category. If, for instance, one describes Asian peoples using socio-cultural characteristics like "tolerance", "complementarity and harmony"⁵, another can easily contradict this statement by showing that the bloodiest ethnic and religious conflicts have been occurring all the time in different parts of Asia. The political panorama in Asia is also highly complex, ranging from democratic systems to military dictatorships, from secular models to theocratic governments. From the socioeconomic point of view we find in this continent a whole range of social classes with an enormous gap between the poorest of the poor to the richest of the rich.

Related to this social gap is the problem of population growth, urbanization, migration, the global market economy, malnutrition and hunger (to mention only a few). The reality of the poor in Asia remains a great challenge for humanity and a criticism to all our theology and ideology.

Asia is also the cradle of the world's major religions and spiritual traditions: Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Shintoism, Zoroastrianism, Jainism, Sikhism. Christianity in Asia is a

very tiny minority living among the people of other faith communities. With the exception of the Philippines, the Church in Asia is the Church in diaspora⁶. These small communities in diaspora have experienced many tensions, conflicts and persecutions, but they have also learned how to live peacefully with other faith communities, practicing a concrete "dialogue of life" with others for the common good of the whole society.

This sketchy picture should be enough to remind us that Asia is very pluralistic. And this pluralism is aggravated further by the contemporary post-modern condition, where, for some people at least: "Truth, humanitarianism, and justice now exist only in the plural. Therefore there is no longer a universal and definitively valid religion"⁷. This is a great challenge for mission in Asia and indeed for the mission of the whole Church.

Given such a pluralistic situation, it is more reasonable that I start from the mission experience of the Catholic Church in my own country as part of the Asian experience and then refer from time to time to some similar experiences in other Asian countries.

2. MISSION IN INDONESIA: A SHORT HISTORICAL NOTE⁸

When the Portuguese and Spanish sailors went to the East in the 15th and 16th century in search for spices, some Catholic missionaries came along with them.

The most famous of them is St. Francis Xavier who worked in India, Malaysia and Indonesia (in the Moluccas Islands) before sailing north to Japan. Portuguese missionaries established some Christian communities on the islands of Flores, Timor, and the Moluccas. In the early 17th century, however, Dutch colonialists took over the Indonesian archipelago from the Portuguese. They were Calvinists. And according to the reigning principle in Europe at that time, "*cuius regio, illius religio*", they banned Catholicism for about 200 years. Only Protestant missionaries were allowed to come in this period. After the declaration of religious freedom in Europe as one of the consequences of the French Revolution, Catholic missionaries were able to come again at the beginning of the 19th century. When they arrived on the island of Flores, they were astonished to discover that the Catholic faith was still alive. In a small town of Larantuka people continued to tell the stories from the Bible from generation to generation and they prayed the rosary in Portuguese. By telling biblical stories (with imaginative additions) and praying the rosary they managed to keep the Catholic faith alive.

In general, however, the Catholic communities in Indonesia were established only in the 20th C. So the Catholic Church in Indonesia is still very young. Of the 210 million people of Indonesia at this time the Catholics are about 3,5 %, Christians of various denominations 6,5 %, Islam 87 % (the biggest Moslem population in the world). The rest are Hindus (in Bali), Buddhists, and Confucianists.

From 1850 onwards many Catholic missionaries came from Europe, worked, and even dedicated their whole life for people in many islands of Indonesia. Their names remain

alive in the heart of the people. In 1978, however, the Indonesian government took a drastic measure to ban foreign missionaries.

Astonishingly, since then more and more young people, men and women, joined religious and missionary congregations. To give one example: In the missionary congregation of the SVD (*Societas Verbi Divini* = Society of The Divine Word), whose members are working in 62 countries, Indonesian members constitute about 22 %. Together with their confreres from India, Philippines, Japan, China, Vietnam and some other countries Asian SVD members constitute about 50 % of the entire congregation. There are many vocations for other religious congregations as well. So it is almost a paradoxical situation that from Asia where Christianity is a tiny minority come so many religious vocations. Besides these missionaries who belong to religious congregations there are also many lay missionaries who work as catechists, teachers, social workers, pastoral assistants and so on.

If we now compare the situation of European missionary pioneers who came to Indonesia and contemporary Asian missionaries who are sent to work in other countries, including in Europe and Americas, we can see a significant difference. In general terms we may say that European missionaries came to Indonesia from a position of superiority. First of all, political superiority: They came from a colonizing country to a colonized country. This fact alone gave them a certain powerful status and authority. This authority was further assured by a special commission by the highest Church hierarchy for "*plantatio ecclesiae*" in the colonized region. They also enjoyed protection and certain privileges granted to them by colonial government. This does not mean that they always supported or collaborated with the colonial government. On the contrary! In the case of Indonesia they often stood at the side of the local people, learned local languages and cultures, promoted education through schools, improved health care, and defended the rights of the indigenous people.

Secondly, cultural superiority. They came from a developed country to the so called underdeveloped country. And as children of their epoch they assumed that the Western model of modern civilization was the ideal model for humanity. For this reason they built schools, centers of training and education using the standard and curriculum of Europe. They were also financially supported by Christian communities in their home countries for many social projects.

Thirdly, religious superiority. The missionary pioneers from Europe knew very well that they were commissioned by the hierarchy in the name of the Lord in order to preach the Gospel, to baptize people and to make them members of the Church, and thus bring salvation to those who lived in the darkness of sin and unbelief. Inspired by the conviction that there was no salvation outside the Church, they dedicated their life to this missionary goal with vigor and militancy. Closely connected to this feeling of religious superiority was the monolithic model of theology in the Catholic Church, with the assumption that the truth of the Christian faith had been formulated once and for all in the dogmas of the Church.

The missionaries then knew exactly what they had to preach to others. They learned the local language and culture in order to convey the Christian doctrine which had been formulated. Due to this conviction of religious superiority they tended to disregard and sometimes even destroyed mythic-religious elements of the traditional religions.

Now the mission situation has changed. In the last 20 years the former mission countries like India, Philippines, Indonesia have become mission-sending countries, while Europe has come to be seen as a new mission continent as well.

Or to put it more exactly: The 'locus' of mission nowadays is understood no longer so much in terms of geographical territory as in terms of specific missionary situations which can be found anywhere, in all the continents⁹. Can we imagine what happens when missionaries from the small island of Flores in Indonesia, from Bohol in the Philippines, or from Tamilnadu in India are sent to work in Europe or the Americas? What kind of superiority do they have? Nothing. They seem to go empty handed. And the situation has become much more difficult for them because we are now living in a pluralistic world where the monolithic model of theology has been abandoned. The very fact that they are sent empty handed is their weakness and their strength at the same time. Did not Jesus send his first disciples empty handed? This new situation will characterize the Asian way of mission as will be explained later.

3. AN ASIAN WAY OF MISSION

During the 14th General Chapter of the Divine Word Missionaries in Nemi, Rome, 1994, a European confrere raised the following question to the capitulars from the Asia-Pacific Zone: "As the majority of our membership is shifting from Europe to Asia, how do you give an Asian face and an Asian spirit to our mission?" This was an important question and it remains very significant. On many occasions we have been reflecting, sharing, discussing about this. What I am going to present here is the result of this common process of reflection among our missionaries in the Asia-Pacific zone and further in the SVD General Chapter¹⁰.

3.1. Dialogue As The Way of Mission

Christianity in Asia in about 3 % of the whole population. If we take out the Philippines as an exceptional case then Christians are only about 1,2 %. This is really a very small minority scattered among billions of people of other religions and convictions. This experience of living as tiny groups in diaspora cannot but teach Christians in Asia how to live with others. Many a time there have been conflicts, tensions, persecutions. And yet each time Christians learn how to survive, how to interact and to live side by side with other faith communities. More than that, they have also positive experience of meeting many good people of other faith, people with spiritual wisdom and authentic religiosity. This kind of encounter teaches them something about dialogue in a very concrete way. Long before the Federation of Asian Bishops'

Conferences (FABC) began to speak officially about the threefold dialogue¹¹, people had already learned how to dialogue through their actions and life.

Dialogue presupposes two things. On the subjective level it presupposes that I respect the other person as a subject with autonomy and freedom as myself.

From this perspective dialogue is the basic attitude of respectful listening to others and of openness to communicate oneself to others. On the objective level it presupposes that every person and every human community has some valuable experience of the ultimate meaning of life which they can share with others. If I from my part am convinced that I can share my faith or my experience of the ultimate meaning of life in God with others, I must be prepared to listen to the others as well. The ultimate Truth is always greater than my own experience and knowledge, and no one, no institution, can claim to possess the whole truth.

Understood as basic attitude of being open to others, dialogue is the only viable way of mission. Two objections can be raised. (In fact these objections were already raised during an international meeting of missionaries). The first objection says that there is a priority of preaching the Good News. In other words, we have to proclaim the Gospel first and then dialogue. It seems to me that this objection tends to reduce the meaning of dialogue to discussion. If, as we said, dialogue is the basic attitude of being open to others, then dialogue does not contradict the proclamation of the Gospel at all. What is necessary is that we proclaim the Good News in a dialogical way, not primarily by words but by our life. As St. Francis of Assisi used to say: "Always preach, if necessary use words". If God respects human freedom in his act of salvation, how can we pretend to proclaim the Good News without respecting the others or without listening to their experience?

The second objection says: "You cannot dialogue with the oppressors". If this were true, what would be the alternative? Either you submit yourselves to the oppression (which is an immoral act) or you take arms to kill the oppressors, which means using violence against violence. I believe that we ought to dialogue even with the oppressors in order to break the circle of violence. In politics we have some shining examples of people like Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Aung San Suu Kyi, Nelson Mandela. Their lives have become a prophetic affirmation that only dialogue can transform the vicious circle of violence into a virtuous circle of justice, forgiveness, reconciliation and peace. Dialogue is another name for the Gospel message and appeal to love even your enemy.

The Christian attitude of dialogue in mission is more appropriately expressed in terms of "prophetic dialogue"¹². A prophet listens and proclaims the Word of God. In the proclamation of the Word, the prophet also criticizes injustice and evil elements in society which are contrary to the will of God, with the consequence that the prophet might undergo persecution and suffering. The same is true with dialogue in mission. What we are supposed to do is to listen, follow, witness and proclaim the Word of God. However, since we believe that God has spoken also to other peoples of other

cultures and religions, mission means first of all listening to the Word of God coming to me through others. I let myself be addressed, be enriched, criticized and purified from my ideological and idolatrous attitude in the encounter with others. On the other hand, as far as I understand and am inspired by the Word of God coming to me through Gospel within the Christian community, I share the richness of my faith-experience, I criticize the injustice and all evil elements in culture and society which enslave people, which are contrary to the will of God. At this point prophetic dialogue in mission has a risky side. It is possible that a missionary, like a prophet, has to undergo persecution and martyrdom because of his or her mission.

Who are the addresser and the addressee of mission dialogue? If the Church is missionary by its nature, then every Christian community is the addresser of mission. However, within the Christian communities there are people who in a very special way dedicate themselves to mission and therefore are called missionaries. These people are sent in the name of the Lord by the Christian communities and they in turn remind Christian communities of their missionary call. The missionaries are the addressers of mission par excellence. However, if mission is a dialogical process, then every addresser is at the same time an addressee and vice versa.

We need further to clarify the addressees or our partners in *missio ad gentes*.

For many years FABC has spoken about the threefold dialogue, namely dialogue with people of other cultures, with people of different religions and with the poor. Recently, however, the Divine Word Missionaries added another aspect and so speak of a "fourfold prophetic dialogue"¹³.

a). The first aspect is dialogue with faith seekers and people who have no faith community. In our contemporary world there are more and more people who do not belong to any faith community. In France, for instance, 47 % of the population describe themselves as a-religious or atheists; in Germany 38 %¹⁴. (I do not know the statistical data about the situation in Asia, but I presume that in Mainland China many people have been estranged from any faith community). In mission we reach out to all these people through our life and service, giving witness to the Reign of God's love. If they respond with interest, we welcome them to become members of our Christian communities and the followers of Jesus. We have to remember, however, that for missionaries from Asia working in Europe it is much more difficult to reach out to those new areligious people in the post-Christian era. These people may criticize the Church and challenge us to live our faith more authentically. We need to listen to them because, as Ricoeur has shown, even atheists can help to purify our faith if we take an appropriate attitude towards their criticism.¹⁵

b). Dialogue with the poor and marginalized.

In many parts of Asia Christians live among a great mass of very poor people.

Mission among the poor means being in solidarity with them, participating in their life and their struggle for a more

just and humane society. From their part the poor offer us an opportunity to undergo a radical conversion. As Pieris puts it: “The poor (the destitute, the dispossessed, the displaced and the discriminated) who form the bulk of Asian peoples, plus their specific brand of cosmic religiosity constitute a school where many Christian activists re-educate themselves in the art of speaking the language of God’s reign, which is the language of liberation which God speaks through Jesus. Neither the academic nor the pastoral magisterium is conversant with this evangelical idiom”.¹⁶

c). Dialogue with people of different cultures.

The main issue in the dialogue with people of different cultures is the inculturation of the Gospel and the evangelization of culture, which are two aspects of the same missionary dialogue. For many centuries in the Catholic Church the universality (catholicity) of the Church tended to be identified with the uniformity of doctrines (formulated in dogmas), of rites and laws. Only after the Vatican II has there been a great movement of inculturation in order to ‘incarnate’ the Gospel message into different languages and cultures. People now listen to the Gospel in their own language, they sing and dance and celebrate their life of faith according to their own culture. The inculturation of theology is more difficult. It is a long-term project. Only from the authentic praxis of faith can follow a local and original theological reflection because theology is nothing else but a critical reflection on our life of faith. How can we now envisage the relation between the particularity of the local Church and the catholicity of the universal Church? First of all, I assume that what we call “universal Church” is the *ecclesia ecclesiarum*, the communion of Christian communities in the Lord. I propose therefore to use the paradigm of art in order to better understand the relation between particularity and universality. In the case of art if somebody simply copies the work of another artist, he or she is not a real artist but an epigon. It is a paradoxical truth of art that the more unique and original a work of art is, the more universal value it has. I think the same thing can be said about the particularity and universality of the Church. The more authentic and original the life of faith in the local Churches, the more universal (catholic) value can it contribute to the communion of the Church. If, however, the local Church simply imitates what is done in Rome, then it is an imitation Church, not yet an authentic Church rooted in the local soil.

On the other hand, every culture contains the elements of alienation, the elements which enslave people and which do not promote the well-being of humanity. The message of the Gospel is, therefore, a prophetic criticism and spiritual contribution to the life of a particular culture so that culture may become the celebration of human life before God.

d). Dialogue with people of other religions.

All great religions teach about justice, peace, solidarity, compassion, love. And yet we have learned from history that there has been a lot of enmity, hatred, conflicts, and

wars among people of different religions. Many factors (social, political, racial etc) may play their role in provoking such conflicts. But from religious point of view, the main reason is because the adherents of religion tend to absolutize it as if it possesses the whole truth and salvation. If we acknowledge that the Reign of God is greater than any religion and that other people in one way or another have experienced the love of God, then we would be more open to dialogue and collaboration.

Inter-religious dialogue can take various forms which together may constitute a ‘virtuous circle’. The first form is dialogue of life where people of various religions live together in the same society with tolerance and respect for each other. Secondly, through dialogue of action they collaborate on some concrete projects such as helping the victims of natural disaster, promoting human rights, improving education for poor children and so on. Thirdly, people of different religions can also pray together and share their faith. To give one example: After the big riot in Jakarta, May 13-15, 1998, where 1190 people were killed, women activists of different religions (Islam, Christian, Hinduism, Buddhism) organized several prayer meetings where they openly denounced the act of violence and prayed together for justice, reconciliation and peace in a wounded nation. Finally there can be dialogue on the theological or doctrinal level. Here very often we have institutional obstacles. For this reason a group of Islamic, Christian, Hindu and Buddhist theologians in Indonesia formed a forum of interfaith dialogue, where each participant is supposed to speak from his or her own personal reflection without officially representing any institution.

Dialogue of life and action paves the way for theological dialogue. In its turn theological dialogue should enlighten and promote dialogue of life and action. Through creative inter-religious dialogue we may hope that people of various religious traditions can work together for a new spirituality which can inspire human beings in a post-modern world

3.2. Mission from the Position of Weakness

In comparison to the former missionaries from Europe, the Asian missionaries today seem to be sent empty handed. This fact is their weakness and should be their strength as well.

First of all, it is their weakness. Many of them come from a rural background with their cultural heritage in the pre-modern worldview. But very soon they enter into the modern world through education and schools. Now they are further confronted with the post-modern condition. They live in tensions between three worldviews which are not easy to harmonize. These missionaries need much more time than their predecessors not simply to learn another language and culture but also to orient themselves within the tensions and conflicts between those worldviews.

And what can they concretely do in their mission? We know that former missionaries preached the Gospel,

taught catechism, and baptized people; but they were also actively involved in education, health care, and in promoting social and economic development. All these were considered integral part of their mission. Today many of these jobs have been taken over by the state or secular institutions. When new missionaries are sent from Asia to Europe or America they cannot get involved in these fields. Even in teaching catechism or preaching many local people can do better than they.

From the religious perspective, former missionaries went to the countries where mythic-religious values were still predominant, whereas new missionaries are thrown into secularistic society. It is much more difficult to preach the Gospel in the post-Christian situation.

On the other hand, this kind of weakness can and should be the strength of the new missionaries. Here is a golden opportunity to follow the example of the first disciples of Jesus who were sent empty handed but who were inspired by the Spirit of the Crucified and Risen Lord. The empty handed approach is therefore possible if their heart is full of faith, with the willingness to serve others as the Lord Jesus. Through the Spirit of the Lord human weakness (in socio-political sense) is transformed into evangelical *kenosis*. This approach becomes efficacious and fruitful on two preconditions. First, it presupposes that the missionaries believe in the people to whom they are sent. If you have nothing in your hand, and if you do not have any kind of superiority, then you have to rely on the people to whom you are sent. Missionaries are expected to work not simply for the people (from a position of superiority), but to work with the people. Above all, this approach presupposes that missionaries believe in the One who calls and sends them. "I am with you always to the end of time" (Mt. 28:20).

3.3. Mission from a Contemplative Presence.

The rabbis in Israel, the Gurus in Hindu and Buddhist traditions, the spiritual leaders in the Islamic *pesantren* in Indonesia, do not teach their disciples like modern teachers or professors in the classroom. They attract their followers by their life before inspiring them with their wisdom. Actually this is what happened with Jesus and his disciples and later with the spiritual and religious movements in the history of the Church. Now if missionaries have nothing in their hands, then they have to carry out their mission from a contemplative presence. By contemplation we do not mean simply a method of prayer or meditation. Contemplation means living in intimate union with God. Since missionaries have to witness to the Reign and to proclaim the Word of God, they need first of all to experience the presence of God in their lives and listen to the Word addressed to them through the Bible and through others. Every authentic mission flows from contemplation, just as every poetic word is born out of silence. Mission without contemplation would be empty;

contemplation without mission would be lame and mute.

Mission and contemplation are two fundamental aspects of Christian life. Hence those who live in the contemplative orders are called to be missionaries in silence like Theresa of Lisieux. Whereas missionaries who are actively working with people have to practice a "*contemplatio in via*" like Theresa of Calcutta.

Although what has been said is valid for all Christians, its urgency is felt all the more by those who are carrying their mission from the position of weakness.

We may express the same thing by using other terminologies, like "passing over" and "communion". Christian life is rooted in the communion with the Triune God and with our brothers and sisters within our small communities.

Mission is passing-over to people of other cultures, other social classes, other religions and convictions in order to gather the scattered children of God into a greater and deeper communion.

3.4. Mission that needs a Narrative Theology

Until now in many countries in Asia moral and religious values are told in myths and stories. The revelation of God's Word in the Bible is also given in a narrative. Of course there are many literary genres in the Bible. But all the commandments, prohibitions, laws, prayers and others are comprehensible only within the narrative of God's salvation.

For many centuries theology in the Catholic Church in the West has been formulated in dogmatic theology, that is a critical and systematic formulation of faith according to a certain philosophical framework. The advantage of dogmatic theology is that the content of our faith is formulated in a clear and rational way. The disadvantage is that people tend to identify the Word of God with dogmatic contents and thereby reduce the inexhaustible richness of the Word to a certain formulation.

Contemporary hermeneutics and exegesis tell us that the Word of God in the Bible is much richer than any dogmatic content that can be drawn from the biblical text. Christian message is first of all not a doctrine but a narrative of God's saving act, be it in the Exodus or in the story of life, death, and resurrection of Christ. All doctrines are to be understood in relation to the narrative. But every narrative is open to a multiple interpretation. It is in the process of interpretation that a story is decontextualized and recontextualized again and again. The living Word of God is thus reincarnated every time a believing community reads the Bible, appropriates its meaning for itself and puts it into practice in everyday life.

Narrative is all the more important because, as Ricoeur and others have shown, the identity of a person and that of a human community is a narrative identity.¹⁷

Christians read the story of the Gospel and interpret

their lives in the light of the Gospel story, and then they weave the story of their life according to the model of the Gospel. Narrative has another advantage in comparison to dogmatic formulation. If dogmas tend to impose one theological framework on all and therefore is monolithic, narrative, on the contrary, tends to hold the creative tension between unity and plurality. The unity of the same story remains but every time it is understood in a different way, by a different people in a different context. I have started this presentation by telling the story of Adina. There is an endless number of stories of like this; the stories of the poor, the marginalized, and suffering people in Asia, Africa and else where. Missionaries have to listen to these stories, interpret them within the light of the Gospel narrative, and help transform human tragedy into the Good News of salvation.

4. LIBERATION AND COMMUNION IN THE REIGN OF GOD

The mission of the Church is a participation in the mission of God that goes from creation to new creation. God's saving act has always been present in history. We have experienced it already now and yet we are still hoping for its eschatological fulfillment, that is, the ultimate salvation in the Lord.

"Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, the first heaven and the first earth had disappeared now, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride dressed for her husband. Then I heard a loud voice call from the throne: 'Look, here God lives among human beings. He will make his home among them; they will be his people and he will be their God, God-with-them. He will wipe away all tears from their eyes; there will be no more death, and no more mourning or sadness or pain. The world of the past has gone'. The One sitting on the throne spoke: 'Look, I am making the whole creation new'. (Rv. 21: 1-5).

Is this only an illusion? An empty utopia? If there is no sign at all of its concrete realization, then the Reign of God would be an illusion, and Christianity an opium of people. The Bible, however, offers some signs for discernment. We read for example in Isaiah 65: 17-18a;19b-25.

For look, I am going to create new heavens and a new earth

and the past will not be remembered and will not come to mind.

Rather be joyful, be glad for ever at what I am creating...

No more will be the sound of weeping be heard there nor the sound of a shriek;

never again will there be an infant there who lives only a few days

nor an old man who does not run his full course;

for the youngest will die at a hundred,

and at a hundred the sinner will be accursed.

They will build houses and live in them,

they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit.

They will not build for others to live in,

or plant for others to eat;

for the days of my people will be like the days of a tree,

And my chosen ones will themselves use what they have made.

They will not toil in vain,

nor bear children destined to disaster,

for they are the race of Yahweh's blessed ones

and so are their offspring.

Thus, before they call I shall answer,

before they stop speaking

I shall have heard.

The wolf and the young lamb will feed together,

the lion will eat hay like the ox

and dust be the serpent's food.

No hurt, no harm will be done

on all my holy mountain"

Yahweh says.

This text shows how God's Reign has come in the signs of justice and peace (where children do not die, where the old are taken care of, where people build houses and live in them, they plant vineyards and eat their fruit; the wolf and lamb feed together...).

If I may decipher the signs of God's salvation within the signs of our time, then I would like to indicate two great signs, namely the process of liberation and of communion in various realms of human life.

4.1. The Process of Liberation

After the Second World War there was a great movement of liberation. Many colonized countries in Asia and Africa declared their independence and became free nations. But political independence is only one step in the struggle for greater liberation. In the socio-economic field we can find an emerging process of empowering the poor and the marginalized in the struggle for a more just and humane society. Culturally there is a parallel movement of recognizing the intrinsic value of each culture, thus liberating it from the oppression of other dominating cultures. In the realm of religion there is a similar movement of liberating religion from a rigid and closed institution in order to rediscover it as "a fire of life", as a fundamental inspiration. Within the Catholic Church since Vatican II we find a movement of liberating both lay and clerics. It is a liberation of the lay, men and women, in order to reassume their rights and responsibility as full members of the Church, as people of God. At the same time it is liberation of clerics

from the hierarchic-pyramidal structure in order to reassume their vocation to be servants of God's people following the example of Jesus. Various movements of women can be situated within this process of liberation.

It is within this great movement of liberation that we have to decipher the presence of God who has revealed himself in the Bible as the One who liberates his people from all kinds of slavery. If this is true, then mission would mean reaching out to people of other cultures, religions and convictions, joining hands with them in the struggle for greater freedom. But liberation for what? With this we pass to the second great process.

4.2. The Process of Communion

Our contemporary world is marked by globalization, a great process of transforming our world into a global village. But globalization often means domination of the powerful and the rich over those who are weak and poor. I prefer, therefore, to decipher God's saving act in a more positive sign which I call "communion". In politics we see how independent nations join the United Nations and other international associations, while acknowledging the Declaration of Human Rights as one important document of humanity.

Unfortunately in the socio-economic field we still have an enormous gap between rich and poor countries. Nevertheless, there is also a growing international awareness (among others through the network of NGO's) that if we let this gap widen and widen, we will end up in a catastrophe for all humanity. Through the ecological movement we have come to realize that we are all living in a very small planet called "Earth" where water, land, air, and all natural resources are limited. For this reason there has been more international collaboration for the preservation of the ecological system. There is also a greater communion in human knowledge, in scientific research, in all quest for truth and wisdom. Finally in religion we find a growing desire and increasing attempts for inter-religious dialogue and ecumenism, in spite of all contrary signs of fundamentalism and religious fanaticism.

In all these signs we may decipher the basic yearning of the human heart for communion and a sign of God's call to all of us. The Lord our God is a Triune God who calls us all into communion with him and with each other. Mission is reaching out to others beyond social, cultural, and religious boundaries for the sake of greater communion of all in the Lord.

Through both process of liberation and communion we discern the saving acts of God within our contemporary world. Liberation without communion tends to divide and scatter; communion without liberation tends to dominate and oppress. In concrete situations, however, these great signs should be deciphered and actualized more concretely in acts of solidarity, of defending the rights of marginalized,

of helping the victims, of resolving the conflicts, of healing the wounds, of reconciliation and so on. Missionaries are participants in all these, illuminating them with the light of the Gospel. They give witness that the Reign of God is actively present among us through all these signs and yet we are still hoping for its ultimate fulfillment when "God will be all in all" (1 Co 15:28).

"Look, I am doing something new", says the Lord, "now it emerges; can you not see it?" (Is 43:19).

¹ *Redemptoris Missio* (RM) no.12-20

² *Ad Gentes* 2

³ *Lumen Gentium* 5

⁴ RM 28-29

⁵ *Ecclesia In Asia* (Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation of John Paul II), 6

⁶ Mangunwijaya, *Gereja Diaspora* (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 1999).

⁷ Walter Kasper describes this post-modern condition in his paper for International Congress on Mission 2000 in Rome with the title: "The Unicity and Universality of Jesus Christ".

⁸ Muskens, *Sejarah Gereja Katolik Indonesia* 4 Vols (Jakarta: KWI, 1973).

⁹ *In Dialogue with the Word: Documents of the XV General Chapter SVD 2000* (Rome: SVD Publications, 2000), p.21

¹⁰ Fr. Antonio M. Pernia, Superior General of SVD, gave a contribution to this reflection in his paper

"Mission for the Twenty-First Century: An SVD Perspective", presented during a Seminar on Mission in Techny, December 7-8, 2000.

¹¹ Gaudencio B. Rosales and C.G. Arevalo (eds), *For All The Peoples of Asia: FABC Documents from 1970 to 1991* (Quezon City: Orbis Books and Claretian Publications, 1992), pp.22-23, 42-43, et passim. Franz-Josef Eilers (ed.), *For All The Peoples of Asia Vol.2: FABC Documents from 1992 to 1996* (Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 1997), pp. 143-182, 193-205.

¹² *In Dialogue with the Word*, p. 31.

¹³ *Ibid.* pp. 30-36.

¹⁴ Peter Huenermann gives this information in his paper presented during SEDOS Missionary Congress For The Jubilee Year, Rome, 3-8 April 2000, with the title "Evangelization of Europe?"

¹⁵ Paul Ricoeur, *The Conflict of Interpretations* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974), pp. 440-467

¹⁶ Aloysius Pieris, "An Asian Paradigm: Inter-religious Dialogue and Theology of Religions", *MONTH*, April 1993, p. 130.

¹⁷ Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative* Vol.3 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), pp. 244-249.

Crossing the Borders

A spirituality for Mission in Our Times from an Asian Perspective

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One of the most enduring images of the missionary in popular imagination is that of someone leaving his or her country for a foreign land to convert the heathens. Of course, today the concept of what constitutes a heathen has changed dramatically, just as that of conversion as the goal of mission. Even the borders which used to separate Christians from unbelievers and followers of other faiths have become so porous that they have ceased to be clear and helpful identity markers. Today there is no lack of Christians and non-Christians who claim double or triple religious belongings, and the tribes of religiously hyphenated people, both inside and outside of Christianity, are on a steady increase. While the concepts of paganism, conversion, and religious identity have undergone drastic changes in recent years, one aspect has nevertheless remained constant in the job description of the missionary, and that is, crossing or going over borders. Not only has this act of crossing retained its necessity, it has also become extremely complex, since the borders between the missionary's native country and the foreign lands have grown both porous and multiple. In times past when borders were mainly geographical, crossing might be hazardous and even deadly. Voyages from Lisbon, for instance, from which missionaries under the Portuguese padroado had to depart for distant parts of the globe took years, and not a few missionaries perished during the journey. But at least, the borders were visible, and one could be certain of having crossed them. Today, by contrast, crossing geographical boundaries has been made quick, easy and even comfortable thanks to air travel. But new boundaries have emerged which are invisible and porous, and as a result, one may not even be aware that there are boundaries at all and can easily make the mistake of assuming that everything is the same everywhere! Furthermore, borders have become so numerous and diverse that crossing them successfully requires a good deal of skills and efforts on the part of the missionary.

This predicament brings new challenges to Christian mission and calls for an appropriate spirituality. Coincidentally, there has been in recent years a strong interest among missionaries in spirituality. Summarizing the presentations and discussions at the mission congress

organized by SEDOS in 2000, Robert Schreiter notes: "As missionaries move into the third millennium, it is clear that the issue of spirituality has a high priority." This interest, he suggests, is rooted in the new awareness that Christian mission is primarily *missio Dei*.

In this contribution to a border-crossing mission spirituality I first describe the new borders that missionaries must cross today. Next, I delineate some of the dispositions and virtues that would help missionaries accomplish and maintain such crossing-over. Lastly, I will attempt to ground such border-crossing spirituality theologically in the mystery of the Incarnation itself.

New arenas of mission and new borders

Perhaps one helpful way to discern the new borders for contemporary mission is to begin with John Paul II's description of the three "situations", each with a corresponding activity of the church. The first situation consists of Christian communities with adequate and solid ecclesial structures, a fervent Christian life, and a commitment to mission. Here the church's activity is "pastoral care". The second situation consists of Christian communities, both ancient and young, in which the members have lost a living sense of faith, do not even consider themselves Christian, and live lives contrary to the Gospel. Here the church's activity is "new evangelization" or "re-evangelization". The third situation is made of peoples, groups, and socio-cultural contexts in which Christ and his Gospel are not known or in which there are no Christians mature enough to proclaim their faith to others. Here the church's activity is "mission ad gentes" or "missionary activity proper".

The Pope is aware that "the boundaries between pastoral care of the faithful, new evangelization, and specific missionary activity are not clearly definable" and that there is a "real and growing interdependence" among these three activities. Nevertheless, he maintains these distinctions in order to highlight the continuing necessity and even urgency of the mission ad gentes which has been on the wane and whose validity and relevance have been questioned.

What is of interest to us here is not the usefulness or

lack of it of the pope's distinction of the three situations with corresponding church's activities and the validity of his exclusive reservation of the terms "missionary activity proper" and "mission ad gentes" to the third situation. Rather it is the fact that having re-affirmed the necessity of the mission to non-Christians John Paul II goes on to describe the various arenas in which these non-Christians are encountered today and in which a threefold activity of this mission ad gentes is carried out, namely, "the work of proclaiming Christ and his Gospel, building up the local Church, and promoting the values of the kingdom". The Pope specifies that these non-Christian arenas include three distinct categories, and hence three possible kinds of border and border-crossing, namely, "peoples, groups, and socio-cultural contexts".

First, "peoples" here may be taken to refer to the followers of other religions as well as persons of no religious affiliation (atheists and agnostics). In the recent past most of these peoples used to live in the so-called mission territories, and John Paul II, who still upholds the criterion of geography, regards certain parts of the world, in particular Asia, urgently calling for the church's mission ad gentes. Today, however, due to frequent and extensive migrations from East to West, a growing number of non-Christians are settling in the Christianized West, especially in urban centers, where temples, pagodas, and mosques dot the landscape cheek-by-jowl with churches and synagogues. Even though the population of non-Christians in the West is still relatively small, their active and at times vocal presence makes religious pluralism, to which we will return below, a live and attractive option for many Christians. As a result, religious affiliations, which used to function as identity markers, have been blurred beyond recognition and the need for missionaries to be able to maintain religious identities and at the same time to negotiate conflicting religious claims has increased dramatically.

In terms of John Paul II's distinction of the three situations of the church's mission, it is increasingly a fact - uncomfortable to many Christians - that the presence of non-Christians even in the midst of both Christian communities with solid ecclesial structures and vibrant faith, and in communities which have lost their ancient Christian roots, poses serious challenges to the mission ad gentes, much more complex and numerous, than in countries where Christians still form a minority. To cross over to these non-Christians in the West requires a great deal of skills and efforts on the part of the missionary, since they are much more cognizant of the problems and even scandals in the Catholic Church (e.g., the recent clergy sex abuse and the bishops' misuse of funds and power) than their fellow believers in their native countries and are therefore less likely to "convert" to Christianity than if they had an idealistic picture of the church.

Secondly, as far as groups are concerned, John Paul II refers to "new worlds and new social phenomena" which are said to widen immeasurably the circle of concerns for mission ad gentes. Among groups that deserve the special attention of missionaries, the pope singles out four categories, namely, dwellers of megalopolises, youth, immigrants and refugees, and the poor, each of whom requires specialized forms of ministry. Urbanization creates big cities where a new humanity is emerging and where new models of development are taking shape, and poses a different set of challenges for missionaries, who used to carry out their work in isolated and underdeveloped regions. Youth, who in many countries make up more than half of the population, require associations, institutions, centers, and cultural and social activities that go far beyond ordinary means of evangelization and demand highly specialized skills not possessed by average missionaries. Immigrants and refugees, as has been pointed out above, not only raise the awareness of religious pluralism to an unprecedented level, but also create fresh opportunities for cultural and religious exchanges among them and Christian missionaries. Finally, the poor and the marginalized demand new forms of evangelization that restore them human dignity and freedom. Needless to say, these four groups create new and pluriform borders, not simply geographical but also social, economic, ethnic, and psychological, which missionaries have to be fully conscious of and marshal requisite skills to cross over.

Thirdly, with regard to socio-cultural contexts, John Paul II mentions "the modern equivalents of the Areopagus", namely, the worlds of communications and mass media, justice and peace, scientific research, international organizations, and religious revival. Needless to say, most if not all of these "worlds" were totally unknown to missionaries ad gentes of just a few decades past the great majority of whom labored in underdeveloped countries and for whom these worlds represented the exclusive concerns of the technologically advanced West. Even today, despite valiant efforts to adapt to a postindustrial society, to our Age of Information with a heavy emphasis on service economy and intellectual technology, many missionaries still find themselves incapable of crossing over into these unfamiliar worlds, physical or virtual, whose borders seem to extend everywhere and yet remain so elusive and forbidding.

Still, there is no escape from these worlds if one wants to carry out the mission ad gentes effectively, even when one retreats to the remotest corners of the globe. This is so because of two other widespread contemporary phenomena, namely, globalization and what has been called "post-modernity" both of which represent the most salient features of our times. Thanks to easy transportation and communication technologies, not only our world has become

a “global village” or better “global city” but there is also a heightened awareness of our interconnections and interdependencies in all areas of life. As a result of globalization which extends the effects of modernization to all parts of the globe and at the same time compresses both space and time, there emerges everywhere a popular, homogenizing, deterritorialized “global culture”. Of course, local cultures do not passively absorb globalization and its popular culture line, hook and sinker but react to it by rejecting it altogether, or by asserting their ethnic differences, or by returning to their pre-modern roots. Nevertheless, the overwhelming effect of globalization is the removal of boundaries and distinctions with a continuous flow of information, technologies, ideas, tastes, and values throughout the world. As a result, culture is no longer seen as a normative pattern of living characterized by boundedness, distinctiveness, coherence, and stability but much more as a fluid and unbounded social reality marked by openness, variability, inconsistency, and conflict. At the same time, because of globalization, today the symbols, ideas, rituals, institutions, artistic representations, and religious traditions of one culture are in constant contact and exchange with those of another resulting in greater “shared space” than before. In other words, while old borders have disappeared, new and numerous boundaries are constantly being drawn but are much less visible and identifiable than the old ones and thus make missionary crossing-over much more complicated.

The other phenomenon, more elusive but no less extensive and influential than globalization, goes under the slippery label of post-modernity. There have been extensive discussions of the historical parameters and nature of post-modernity, especially with reference to modernity and the Enlightenment, and it is not necessary to enter into such a debate here. Suffice it to note, along with Lawrence Cahoon, that according to some commentators, there are in contemporary social and cultural patterns a number of features pervasive, distinctive, and important enough to warrant the judgment that a new period of history has emerged, markedly different from modernity, and for lack of a better term, may be labeled postmodernity. Epistemologically, post-modernity is characterized by a deep skepticism about our ability to know objective truth, rejection of “universal and unchanging essences” and of fixed meanings in human artifacts and language, incredulity toward “metanarratives”, preference for local and particular stories, and celebration of diversity and multiplicity. From a theological standpoint, while postmodernism’s relativism and skepticism must be rejected, its critique of modernity and the Enlightenment is to be taken seriously, and consequently, some theologians have subjected fundamental concepts such as God, the self, truth, and verification to a new scrutiny and reformulation.

From the missiological perspective, the challenges posed by post-modernity are immense. One of the offsprings of postmodernism is religious pluralism, according to which the diversity of religions is not merely a fact but a normative stance which allows no particular religion to make claims to universality and absolute validity. Needless to say, understood in this way, religious pluralism strikes at the heart of Christology and soteriology, and calls into question the very legitimacy of Christian mission as understood and practiced in the past. The question is therefore whether missionaries *ad gentes* can still proclaim the Christian faith effectively and faithfully amidst the pluralistic view, widespread in popular culture and in academia, that the Christian faith is but one among many equally legitimate paths to God. How, in other words, can the borders among religions that religious pluralism have erased be rebuilt without being exclusivistic?

In sum, today the many borders missionaries *ad gentes* of old had to cross have disappeared but new ones have emerged, more numerous, porous, and even invisible, partly because of the new situations in which the church has to carry out its mission, partly because of new economic, social, cultural, and religious trends such as globalization, postmodernism, and religious pluralism. New peoples, new groups, and new contexts are addressees of evangelization. This fact was brought home by the participants of the SEDOS 2000 congress on the future of mission who mentioned five new contexts for mission today: globalization, religion-related violence, secularization, the mounting strength of Islam, and ecological destruction. Different are the borders and boundaries that missionaries now have to cross, but still there remains the act of crossing, which is more subtle, complex, and multiple. Is there a Christian way of living, a frame of mind, and a set of moral dispositions and virtues, in a word, a spirituality that facilitates and nurtures such crossing-over?

Border-crossing: a missionary way of life

My purpose here is not to speak of missionary spirituality in general which has been treated at length in recent times by a number of missiologists. John Paul II himself devotes the last chapter of his encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* to missionary spirituality and describes it as marked by three basic features: complete docility to the Holy Spirit, intimate communion with Christ the Evangelizer, and apostolic charity for the evangelized and for the church. Emphasizing the priority of spirituality for mission the pope says: “The renewed impulse to the mission *ad gentes* demands holy missionaries. It is not enough to update pastoral techniques, organize and coordinate ecclesial resources, or delve more deeply into the biblical and theological foundations of faith. What is needed is the

encouragement of a new 'ardor for holiness' among missionaries and throughout the Christian community, especially among those who work most closely with missionaries".

Assuming the three features enumerated by the pope as undisputed givens of a missionary spirituality, I would like to single out for reflection some attitudes and practices that appear most appropriate for missionaries in a globalized, postmodern, and religiously plural context, with multiple borders and unfamiliar situations. Robert Schreiter, in his assessment of the SEDOS congress on the future of mission referred to above, suggests that missionary spirituality in the future will have to develop along four trajectories: spirituality of presence, kenotic spirituality, reconciliation, and holistic anthropology. Taking my cue from the realities of Asia and from the various statements of the Federation of the Asian Bishops' Conferences and their institutes as well as from the Asian Synod and John Paul II's Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia*. I will elaborate on how these four features form part of a missionary spirituality envisaged as border-crossing spirituality.

Borders or boundaries seem to perform three distinct functions: as markers for one's individual and communal identity, as barriers to fence out other people different from oneself, and as frontiers from which to venture out into new horizons to expand one's knowledge and one's circle of relationships. Corresponding to this triple role of borders, a border-crossing spirituality must first of all help the missionary respect and promote the distinctive identity and "otherness" of those to be evangelized. On the one hand, these differences must not be erased under the pretext of a common human nature; on the other, they should not be absolutized in an ideology of ethnocentrism and nationalism. Such a border-crossing spirituality must also impel the missionary to dismantle the unjust fences that powerful interest groups put up to protect their privileges and to keep the marginalized out, denying them even a decent human life. Finally, it must assist the missionary in transcending differences of all kinds and opening up new frontiers in order to build a "civilization of love" which is not merely a confirmation of old identities but a forging of a new, common identity in which the worst of each group are overcome and the best are combined together to produce truly intercultural human beings, in the image of the Triune God.

Spirituality of Presence

To live in Asia is to constantly cross borders separating a dizzying variety of languages, races, ethnicities, cultures, and religions. In addition to these traditional boundaries, there are contemporary ones created by the process of globalization such as the growing gap between the rich

and the poor, religious fundamentalism, political and military conflicts among nations, and communal violence. In Asia, perhaps more than anywhere else on earth, missionaries are called to be present to these multiple realities and to be keenly aware of the borders which are necessary for self-identity but also create many forms of exclusion.

This presence of course goes beyond physical accessibility. It demands acceptance of pluralism not as a curse but as a blessing and an opportunity for mutual collaboration and enrichment. Furthermore, it requires an affective and effective solidarity with people on both sides of the borders, especially those who are marginalized and oppressed. To achieve affective solidarity with them, the FABC's Institute for Social Action recommends the method of "exposure" and "immersion", part of the four-stage "pastoral cycle", namely, exposure-immersion, social analysis, contemplation, and planning: "Exposure brought us closer to the stark reality of poverty, but immersion sought to experience reality from the perspective of the poor themselves. Exposure is like a doctor's visit for diagnosis; immersion is like the visit of a genuine friend entering into a dialogue-of-life".

Thus, a spirituality of presence includes genuine friendship with those living on the other side of the border and a dialogue-of-life with them. Indeed, this sharing of life is part of a new way of being church in Asia that involves a fourfold presence: "a. The dialogue of life, where people strive to live in an open and neighborly spirit, sharing their joys and sorrows, their human problems and preoccupations. b. The dialogue of action, in which Christians and others collaborate for the integral development and liberation of people. c. The dialogue of theological exchange, where specialists seek to deepen their understanding of their respective religious heritages, and to appreciate each other's spiritual values. d. The dialogue of religious experience, where persons, rooted in their own religious traditions, share their spiritual riches, for instance, with regard to prayer and contemplation, faith and ways of searching for God or the Absolute".

In Asia, this fourfold dialogue, by which the missionary is truly present to the people who are evangelized, must be carried out, according to the FABC, in three areas: with the Asians themselves, especially the poor and the indigenous peoples (integral development and liberation), with their religions (interreligious dialogue), and with their cultures (inculturation).

This spirituality of presence is all the more necessary and the mission work performed through it all the more effective in those parts of the world, especially in Asia, where an explicit proclamation of Jesus is forbidden and religious freedom is restricted or denied. This presence in the form of "the silent witness of life" is perhaps not always congenial to Western missionaries in whose training there

has been a strong emphasis on a verbal and explicit proclamation of Jesus as the only and universal savior and for whom anything falling short of this would be a failure in mission. Nevertheless, when this silent witness of life, rooted in the experience of God, is accompanied by a lifestyle characterized by “renunciation, detachment, humility, simplicity and silence” and by “the work of justice, charity and compassion”, it is perhaps most appropriate for Asia and forms the core of the spirituality of presence which is mission as “contemplative action and active contemplation”.

Since the spirituality of presence is essentially dialogue, it demands all the virtues that make dialogue successful. For this to occur, according to the FABC’s Institute of Interreligious Affairs, nothing less than a “spirituality of dialogue” is required, especially in situations of conflict and animosity: “In a situation of prejudice brought about by fundamentalism and religious revivalism, dialogue means an abiding and genuine search for goodness, beauty, and truth following the beckoning of the Spirit who leads us into all truth.... In an atmosphere of animosity brought about by the injustice and violation of human rights, dialogue means powerlessness and vulnerability. From a position of power, one can only negotiate about terms. From a position of weakness, one can truly communicate his or her trust in the other. Trust is most real when there looms the possibility of betrayal. To dialogue then means to open one’s heart and to speak one’s mind with courage and respect. But, as our experiences have shown, the Spirit has often used powerlessness and vulnerability to effect mutual forgiveness and reconciliation among individuals, families, and communities”. This spirituality of presence from the missionary’s position of powerlessness and vulnerability brings us to the next dimension of border-crossing spirituality, namely, kenotic spirituality.

Kenotic Spirituality

What is meant by kenotic spirituality is well explained by the same Institute of Interreligious Affairs: “To risk being wounded in the act of loving, to seek to understanding in a climate of misunderstanding - these are no burdens to bear. Dialogue demands a deep spirituality which enables man, as did Jesus Christ, to hang on to his faith in God’s love, even when everything seems to fall apart. Dialogue, finally, demands a total Christ-like self-emptying so that, led by the Spirit, we may be more effective instruments in building God’s kingdom”.

As is well known, much of Asia is suffering from the legacy of colonialism, widespread poverty, crushing foreign debts, lack of basic health care and adequate educational facilities, and ecological destruction. The missionary who comes from the First World and especially from the United States of America, which is now the sole superpower

wielding absolute military power and enormous wealth, and the Catholic Church itself, a powerful and rich institution both in the West and in Asia, are often perceived by Asians as having at their disposition unlimited resources to alleviate their pains and sufferings. Furthermore, from the religious point of view, the Catholic Church is often presented as possessing the fullness of truth and all the means of sanctification and as charged with the mission of sharing these divine gifts with others. As a consequence, the missionary is vested with unrealistic expectations, and is tempted to think that part of his or her mission is to meet them.

It is here that kenotic spirituality will play a key role. As Antonio M. Perna, the Filipino Superior General of the Society of the Divine Word, echoing the voice of the FABC, puts it: “Much of Asia, as we know, is characterized by the historical experience of colonization, a socio-economic condition of poverty, and a religious situation where Christianity is a minority. So, the Asian missionary cannot, or ought not, evangelize from a position of power or superiority. He or she must approach mission from a position of powerlessness and humility”. This means that the Good News is not something owned by the missionary but only given to his or her stewardship: “Thus, the Asian missionary will not, or ought not, share the faith as if he or she owned it, dictating thereby the terms by which it must be understood, lived and celebrated. His or her approach to mission will be to share the faith as a gift received from God through others, conscious of himself or herself as merely its steward or servant and never its owner or master”.

The necessity of this kenotic spirituality is even more pressing in the case of Asians going as missionaries to the First World, as happens frequently these days, when the First World imports Asian priests and religious to remedy its shortage of clergy. As Leo Kleden, an Indonesian member of the SVD, has shrewdly observed, these missionaries cannot expect to do what missionaries from the First World have done in Asia in terms of health care, education, and social development. Asian missionaries, originating mostly from their pre-modern culture and moving into the modern and post-modern cultures of the West, come literally “empty-handed”. But this situation need not be simply weakness but also strength, says Kleden: “This kind of weakness can and should be the strength of the new missionaries. Here is a golden opportunity to follow the example of the first disciples of Jesus who were sent empty handed but who were inspired by the Spirit of the Crucified and Risen Lord. The empty handed approach is therefore possible if their heart is full of faith, with the willingness to serve others as the Lord Jesus. Through the Spirit of the Lord human weakness (in the socio-political sense) is transformed into evangelical kenosis”.

In terms of evangelization, with kenotic spirituality missionaries cross over borders less with the attitude of givers than of receivers. They do not go into the mission lands with an advanced technology to modernize the underdeveloped, with a superior culture to civilize the barbarians, with a true religion to wipe out superstitions, with a set of revealed truths to teach the unenlightened. As Anthony Gittins has pointed out, they come primarily as strangers and as guests. As strangers, they will be perceived by the hosts as “foreign”, “abnormal”, “alien”, “odd”, “strange”. As guests, they must depend on the generosity and kindness of the hosts, respect and follow the rules and customs of the new environment, and may change the ways of life of the place only if asked or allowed. Furthermore, in many cases missionaries are not invited guests, they just invite themselves or even force their way into the hosts’ countries. This makes their condition of stranger and guest even more pronounced and precarious.

In light of these two existential predicaments of the missionary, Gittins suggests that part of the kenotic spirituality is for the missionary to “accept our marginal and ambiguous status. We are no longer - if we ever truly were - primary movers, but collaborators and assistants, servants”. He goes on to say: “To allow oneself to be a stranger is to allow oneself to be placed at the disposition of the God who calls. To embrace the status of a stranger is to empower other people and to dare to infuse some trust into a world where self-interest and suspicion seem to walk unimpeded. To choose to be a stranger is, it might be argued, to be a willing disciple of Jesus”. Kenotic spirituality also requires that as guest the missionary learn to be a gracious and grateful receiver, not only in matters of room and board, but above all in the areas of culture, moral behavior, and religious insights and practices. In this respect, perhaps the virtues that were extolled in the past as requisites of a successful missionary such as independence, self-reliance, risk-taking, and creativity might no longer be appropriate, at least during the phase of incorporation into the local community, and must be replaced by willingness to give up self-control, vulnerability, interdependence, deference, and conformity. Of course, as etiquette demands, the missionary as guest must also bring some gifts of his or her own, not to “repay” the host but to “return” the host’s graciousness. Consequently, the missionary must bear witness to Jesus Christ and present God’s gift of faith. But gifts are offered in gratitude and humility; they should never be imposed on the host.

Spirituality of Reconciliation and Harmony

It is a fact of life that borders do not serve simply to define and affirm identity. Good fence do not always good neighbors make. It all depends on who puts up the fence

and where and what for. It may happen that the neighbor, if he or she is the more powerful one, puts up the fence as a barrier to keep others out, places it beyond his or her properties, thus encroaching upon other people’s lands, or builds it up to protect the ill-gained wealth and unjust privileges she or he is enjoying. It is also the fact of life that not always are the guest and the host in friendly relations with each other, and hospitality turns into hostility. Then there arises the need for restoring harmony and peace-making.

Given the increase of violence not only among nations but also within nations, not only in secular society but also in the church since the end of communism in Eastern European countries in 1989, the need for reconciliation has grown more acute. Among contemporary missiologists Robert Schreiter has devoted a lot of attention to reconciliation. Schreiter warns that reconciliation must not be undertaken as “a hasty peace” by suppressing the memory of past violence, as an “alternative to liberation,” which is a pre-condition for reconciliation, and as a “managed process” to be conducted with technical rationality. Rather reconciliation must be seen as part of Christian mission (2 Cor. 5:18-19) based on the Christian redeeming narrative of violence (sin), death, cross, and blood in the life of Jesus of Nazareth.

Following José Comblin, Schreiter suggests that this reconciliation, which is initiated and brought about by God, is accomplished on three levels: “a christological level, in which Christ is the mediator through whom God reconciles the world to God’s self; an ecclesiological level, in which Christ reconciles Jew and Gentile; and a cosmic level, in which Christ reconciles all the powers in heaven and on earth”. To fulfill this ministry of reconciliation, missionaries, according to Schreiter, must develop a “spirituality of reconciliation”. This spirituality consists in cultivating an attitude of “listening and waiting”, of “attention and compassion”, and of “post-exilic existence”. By listening and waiting, one learns to retrieve the memory of suffering and violence and to wait patiently for God’s gift of peace and forgiveness; by attention and compassion, one enters into solidarity with those who suffer violence; and by post-exilic existence one begins to construct a new society with chastened optimism and hope.

Reconciliation as restoration of harmony is also a pervasive theme in Asian theologies as embodied in the FABC’s documents. There is no doubt that harmony is central to Asian cultures and religions. It is said to constitute “the intellectual and affective, religious and artistic, personal and social soul of both persons and institutions in Asia”. After expounding the concept of harmony as espoused by Asian philosophies, primal religions, and religious traditions (including Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Christianity, and Islam), the FABC’s Theological Advisory

Committee concludes: “It is clear there is an Asian approach to reality, an Asian understanding of reality that is profoundly organic, i.e., a world-view wherein the whole, the unity, is the sum-total of the web of relations, and interaction of the various parts with each other”.

Thus, harmony is not simply “the absence of strife” but lies in “acceptance of diversity and richness”. Nor is it merely a pragmatic strategy for successful living amidst differences. Fundamentally, it is an Asian spirituality involving all the four dimensions of human existence: the individual self, and his or her relationships with other human beings, the material universe, and God. This is clear from the teachings of various Asian religious traditions. The Hindu way is marked by a quest for a harmonious integration of the whole and the parts at all levels: individual, social, and cosmic. The cosmos is sustained by a harmonious order; society is held together by the order of dharma (law); and the individual achieves harmony by observing the cosmic order and society’s moral and religious code.

In Buddhism, harmony in the individual, which leads to liberation from suffering, is achieved by following the so-called Eightfold Path: right speech, action, and livelihood (morality), right effort, mindfulness and concentration (concentration), and right understanding and thought (wisdom). According to Zen Buddhism, harmony in the individual is the unity of body and mind in all the person’s activities and produces enlightenment and a deep sense of peace. Because of the unity between body and soul, physical practices such as proper sitting position, regulating the breath, and composing the mind are necessary conduits to spiritual enlightenment.

Harmony in the individual leads to harmony with other human beings, which, according to Confucius, include the family, the nation, and the world. According to the Chinese Sage, one cannot pacify the world without governing one’s nation well; one cannot govern one’s nation well without ordering one’s family rightly; and one cannot order one’s family rightly without achieving mastery over oneself. And self-mastery is achieved by living out five relationships correctly: between ruler and subject, between husband and wife, between parent and child, between elder sibling and younger sibling, and between friend and friend. Each of these five relationships implies a set of obligations and duties, and if one fulfills them rightly, one lives in harmony with oneself and with others.

Furthermore, because the human person is a microcosm reflecting the macrocosm, she or he must also be in harmony with nature or the cosmos. This harmony is particularly emphasized in Taoism. Chuang Tzu, the greatest Taoist after Lao Tzu, declares: “The cosmos and I were born together; all things and I are one”. In practical terms, cosmic harmony demands that humans maintain a healthy and sustainable ecosystem, avoid the pollution of the

environment, reduce the consumption of energy resources, and in general develop an attitude of reverence for, a contemplative posture toward, and a sense of oneness with the Earth and non-human creation.

Finally, harmony in oneself, harmony with one’s fellow human beings, and harmony with the cosmos are rooted in and strengthened by harmony with God. This harmony with the Divine is the fundamental teaching of Islam, an Arabic term meaning ‘surrender.’ To be in harmony with God, we must in all things submit to God’s holy will in mind, heart, and action. We must, to use a Confucian expression, learn to know and fulfill the mandate of Heaven.

When this view of harmony of Asian non-Christian religions is integrated with the Christian understanding of God’s reconciliation of the world to himself in Jesus and by the power of the Spirit, what emerges, in the view of the Theological Advisory Commission, is a new spirituality of harmony as a web of peaceful relationships, a new theology of harmony as communion, and a deeper commitment to harmony as reconciliation. The spirituality of harmony will shape human life as an unfolding of right relationships: “Starting from consciousness of the God-given harmony within oneself, one moves into harmonious relationship with one’s fellow humans; then one spreads out to be in harmony with nature and the wider universe. This unfolding and realization of right relationship within oneself, with the neighbors and the cosmos leads to the summit experience of harmony with God”. On the basis of this spirituality, a theology of harmony is developed, not as conclusions deduced from Christian texts but as a contextual reflection on the realities of conflict in Asia, in dialogue and collaboration with followers of other religions, and in solidarity with the victims of discrimination and violence. In this theology of harmony, there is an emphasis on ethics as “the ethic and aesthetic of right relationships in the original harmony”, on Christ as “the sacrament of the new harmony”, and on the church as “the sacrament of unity”. Finally, this new spirituality and theology of harmony call for an active commitment to peacemaking and reconciliation as individuals, as church, and in collaboration with others.

For the missionaries, this spirituality of reconciliation and harmony implies that in their border-crossing they be aware that borders as markers can be made to function as barriers, especially by those who have vested economic and political interests to maintain and protect. Here the role of prophecy is indispensable. The missionaries will be in solidarity with those who are marginalized and discriminated against by these borders/barriers and with courage denounce the injustices committed against them. Harmony, says the Theological Advisory Commission, “is neither a compromising with conflictual realities, nor a complacency about the existing order. Harmony demands

a transformative attitude and action, to bring about a change in contemporary society. This can be provided only by a prophetic spirituality which exercises charitable but courageous criticism of the situation”.

Another aspect of mission to which the spirituality of harmony applies is interreligious dialogue and the religious boundaries that have often been manipulated to pit one religious group against another. Religions, when seen as mutually complementary, should not be barriers separating people but must be seen as different paths leading to God. As Michael Amaladoss has pointed out, a new approach to religions is needed, in which all religions are seen as players and collaborators in humanity’s movement toward God’s kingdom: “In promoting the kingdom, then, our enemies are Satan and Mammon, not other religions”. This spirit of complementarity and harmony is strongly insisted upon by the Asian bishops at the Asian Synod when speaking of the Asian cultural and religious values as forming the basis of the Asianness of the church: “All of this indicates an innate spiritual insight and moral wisdom in the Asian soul, and it is the core around which a growing sense of ‘being Asian’ is built. This ‘being Asian’ is best discovered and affirmed not in confrontation and opposition, but in the spirit of complementarity and harmony. In this framework of complementarity and harmony, the Church can communicate the Gospel in a way which is faithful to her own Tradition and to the Asian soul”.

Holistic Spirituality

The last dimension of border-crossing spirituality, intimately connected with the spirituality of harmony and reconciliation, is holistic spirituality. Central to this spirituality is a holistic anthropology, which is already intimated above when harmony is said to embrace four dimensions: the self, fellow human beings, the cosmos, and God. Arguing for “a more cosmic and holistic anthropology” María Carmelita de Freitas suggests that it will make possible “a more integrated and open religious life, one with wider horizons, more in harmony with what is beautiful, simple, human, joyful, cheerful, with nature, and with everything”. Only in this way, de Freitas believes, can the evils of globalization with its “neo-liberal creed” of monetary and economic stability, its “ethics of efficiency,” its “Gospel of competition”, and its “logic of exclusion” be counteracted.

From our reflections on harmony above it is obvious that holistic spirituality is a central concern of not only various Asian religious traditions but also the FABC. The Fifth Plenary Assembly in 1990 insisted that a spirituality for the new millennium must “integrate every aspect of Christian life: liturgy, prayer, community living, solidarity with all and especially the poor, evangelization, catechesis, dialogue, social commitment, etc. There has to be no

dichotomy between faith and life, or between love and action ...”.

In holistic spirituality as part of border-crossing, boundaries cease to be barriers and become frontiers from which the missionary venture forth with people on both sides of the borders to create new realities out of their common assets. Among Hispanic/Latino theologians, Virgilio P. Elizondo has developed the concept of *mestizaje*, that is, a blending of two or more races, ethnicities, cultures, and religions into a “new race”, as the early Christians were called. In this new race, as Elizondo points out, “borders will not disappear, differences will not fade away, but they need not divide and keep peoples apart.... Rather than seeing them as the ultimate dividing line between you and me, between us and them, we can see borders as the privileged meeting places where different persons and peoples will come together to form a new and most inclusive humanity”.

The spirituality of missionary border-crossing which we have elaborated in terms of presence, kenosis, harmony, and holistic integration is well expressed by Anthony Bellagamba in his description of the identity of the missionaries as “persons of the present” and “persons of the beyond”. As “persons of the present”, missionaries must live in contact with the realities of the people they seek to evangelize: “The struggle of the people, their hopes and concerns, their vision of life, their experience of death, their cosmological theories, their methods of being community, their understanding of authority, their use of authority, their sexual drives, and their whole system of values are, or should be, of great interest to cross-cultural personnel”. As “persons of the beyond”, they must go beyond their own cultures, histories, values, mother tongues, native symbols, even their religions, not in the sense of rejecting them, but in the sense of “emptying” themselves of them in order to be guests and strangers among the people they evangelize and to receive and adopt as far as possible their hosts’ cultures and ways of life.

Jesus, the border-crosser

Border-crossing spirituality, a necessity for missionaries in a culture with multiple and porous boundaries created by globalization, post-modernity, and religious pluralism, is not simply a practical strategy for successful evangelization but is a theological imperative of Christian life as *imitatio Christi*. Christian evangelization in any period of history and in any culture worthy of the name must be modeled after the way Jesus proclaimed God’s kingdom to the people of his time. There are of course many different ways to represent Jesus’ life and ministry. For example, it is possible to explain the significance of Jesus by way of the various titles the New

Testament and Christian Tradition have attributed to him. Needless to say, no one title can ever exhaust the significance of Jesus' words and deeds and the multifaceted method of his ministry. For our present purposes it would be useful to explore Jesus' life and ministry in terms of border-crossing. In this way, the missionary spirituality that has been proposed here will seem to be rooted in the mystery of Christ the Border-Crosser himself. For reasons of space, I will limit our consideration to the Incarnation, some aspects of Jesus' ministry, and his death and resurrection.

The Incarnation as Border-Crossing

The mystery of the Word of God made flesh in Jesus can certainly be viewed as an act of border-crossing. Essentially, it is the culmination of that primordial border-crossing by which the Triune God steps out of himself and eternity and crosses into the other, namely, the world of space and time, which God brings into existence by this very act of crossing. In the Incarnation, the border that was crossed is not only that which separates the eternal and the temporal, the invisible and the visible, spirit and matter, but more specifically, the divine and the human, with the latter's reality of soul and body.

In this divine crossing over to the human, the border between the divine nature and the human nature of Jesus functions as the marker constituting the distinct identity of each. One is not transmuted into the other, nor is confused with it; rather, the two natures are to be acknowledged "without confusion, without change". As the Council of Chalcedon teaches: "The distinction between the natures was never abolished by their union, but rather the character proper to each of the two natures was preserved as they came together in one person (prosopon) and one hypostasis".

On the other hand, the same border is no longer a barrier preventing God and the human from joining together. Indeed, by crossing the divine-human border, the Logos transforms the barrier into a frontier and creates a new reality, Jesus of Nazareth, whose humanity the Logos assumes and makes it his own, so that, as the Council of Chalcedon teaches, his two natures - divine and human - are united with each other "without division, without separation". In this humanity the Logos now exists in a new way, not available to him before the Incarnation, and this historical mode of existence, in time and space, and above all, as we will see, in suffering and death, now belongs to God's eternal and trinitarian life itself.

Thus, in the Incarnation as border-crossing, the boundaries are preserved as identity markers but at the same time they are overcome as barriers and transformed into frontiers from which a totally new reality, a *mestizaje*, emerges: the divine and human reconciled and harmonized

with each other into one single reality. Like Jesus, missionaries are constantly challenged to cross all kinds of borders, and out of the best of each group of people these borders divide and separate, to create a new human family characterized by harmony and reconciliation.

Jesus' Ministry as Dwelling at the Margins

A border-crosser at the very roots of his being, Jesus performed his ministry of announcing and ushering in the kingdom of God always at the places where borders meet and hence at the margins of the two worlds separated by their borders. He was a "marginal Jew", to use the title of John Meier's multi-volume work on the historical Jesus. He crossed these borders back and forth repeatedly and freely, be they geographical, racial, sexual, social, economic, political, cultural, and religious. What is new about his message about the Kingdom of God, which is good news to some and scandal to others, is that for him it removes all borders, both natural and man-made, as barriers and is absolutely all-inclusive. Jews and non-Jews, men and women, the old and the young, the rich and the poor, the powerful and the weak, the healthy and the sick, the clean and the impure, the righteous and the sinners, and any other imaginable categories of peoples and groups, Jesus invited them all to enter into the house of his merciful and forgiving Father. Even in his "preferential option for the poor" Jesus did not abandon and exclude the rich and the powerful. These too are called to conversion and to live a just, all-inclusive life.

Standing between the two worlds, excluding neither but embracing both, Jesus was able to be fully inclusive of both. But this also means that he is the marginal person *par excellence*. People at the center of any society or group as a rule possess wealth, power, and influence. As the threefold temptation shows, Jesus, the border-crosser and the dweller at the margins, renounced precisely these three things. Because he was at the margins, in his teaching and miracle-working, Jesus creates a new and different center, the center constituted by the meeting of the borders of the many and diverse worlds, often in conflict with one another, each with its own center which relegates the "other" to the margins. It is at this margin-center that marginal people meet one another. In Jesus, the margin where he lived became the center of a new society without borders and barriers, reconciling all peoples, "Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female" (Ga 3:28). Strangers and guests as they are, missionaries are invited to become marginal people, to dwell at the margins of societies with marginal(ized) people, like Jesus, so as to be able to create with them new all-inclusive centers of reconciliation and harmony.

Dying “outside the city gate and outside the camp” (Heb 13:12-13)

Jesus’ violent death on the cross was a direct result of his border-crossing and ministry at the margins which posed a serious threat to the interests of those occupying the economic, political, and religious center. Even the form of his death, that is, by crucifixion, indicates that Jesus was an outcast, and he died, as the Letter to Hebrews says, “outside the city gate and outside the camp”. Symbolically, however, hung between heaven and earth, at the margins of both worlds, Jesus acted as the mediator and intercessor between God and humanity.

But even in death Jesus did not remain within the boundaries of what death means: failure, defeat, destruction. By his resurrection he crossed the borders of death into a new life, thus bringing hope where there was despair, victory where there was vanquishment, freedom where there was slavery, and life where there was death. In this way, the borders of death become frontiers to life in abundance. Like Jesus, missionaries have to live out the dynamics of death and resurrection, or to use the words of Philippians 2:6-11, of self-emptying and exaltation.

Samuel Escobar’s beautiful rendering of this Christological hymn, which portrays Jesus as the border-crosser par excellence and summarizes well the missionary border-crossing spirituality, serves as a fitting conclusion to our reflections:

Let there be in us the same feeling and mind that
was also in Christ Jesus,

Who in order to reach us crossed the border between
heaven and earth.

He crossed the border of poverty to be born in a stable
and live without knowing where he was going to
rest his head at night.

He crossed the border of marginalization to befriend
women and embrace publicans and Samaritans.

He crossed the border of spiritual power to free those
afflicted by legions of devils.

He crossed the border of social protest to sing truths to
the Pharisees, scribes, and traffickers of the temple.

He crossed the border of the cross and death to help us
all pass over to the other side.

Risen Lord, who therefore awaits us there, at every
border that we have to cross with his Gospel.

Source: http://www.sedos.org/english/phan_2.htm

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in all its dimensions – punitive, restorative, distributive, structural. Not to pursue and struggle for justice makes the truth-telling sound false and the safe spaces created barren. A community of memory is concerned too with the future of memory, that is, the prospects of forgiveness and what lies beyond. The difficult ministry of memory, if it may be called that, is possible because it is grounded in the memory of passion, death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ: the One who was without sin and was made to bear our sin, so that we might become and justice of God (cf. II Cor 5:21).

Living in the memory of what Christ has gone through – suffering and death, yet not forgotten and indeed raised up by God – is the source of our hope. Hope allows us to keep the vision of a reconciled world alive, not in some facile utopian fashion, but grounded in the memory of what God has done in Jesus Christ. Paul captures this well in another passage in the Second Letter to the Corinthians:

“But we hope this treasure in clay vessels, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and not to us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies” (cf. II Cor 4:7-10).

Reconciliation belongs to God; not to us. Despite all we go through, we do not lose heart, since we carry the death of Jesus Christ in our bodies, so that through us his life might be made visible. This is the vocation of the Church, its calling to the ministry of reconciliation, its proclamation of the death and Resurrection of Christ in the Church’s own body. So, God’s reconciling work can be made known to a broken world as he “entrusted to us the ministry of reconciliation” (II Cor 5:18) through our preaching. Mission, as our Orthodox brothers and sisters have so helpfully reminded us, is the liturgy after the liturgy. Our action is not just political action or action for justice (although it is also all of these). It is participation in something much larger than ourselves: the work of the Triune God in bringing about the healing of the world.

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