



**ACTUAL SVD PERSPECTIVES ON GOD'S MISSION**

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### SOCIAL JUSTICE AND PASSION FOR MISSION

*The relationship between mission and social justice can be articulated in different ways. The author suggests understanding the practice of social justice as mission. Drawing on liberation theology and the Synod of Bishops in 1971 on Justice, the practice of justice is understood as essential for mission. Such an engagement implies passion, total joyful dedication even to the point of martyrdom, following the example of Jesus. Taking the Holy Spirit's action seriously, Christian social commitment transcends the limits of the church. Its motivation lies in Christians as they respond to God's love in gratitude.*

I am deeply grateful for the honor of addressing the members of the SVD (Societas Verbi Divini) and the SSpS (Congregatio Servarum Spiritus Sancti) at this Webinar entitled “Passion for Mission: Social Justice.” Mission is at the heart of both congregations. Mission defines your identity. Of course, the decisive question is what is meant by “mission.” Under this umbrella term are included various ministries and activities. The Divine Word Missionaries are said to be distinguished by four dimensions: “the Bible, Mission Animation, Communication, and Justice and Peace and Integrity of Creation.”<sup>1</sup> The Servants of the Holy Spirit's ministries are said to include “education, health, pastoral care, spiritual guidance, adult education, communication, catechetics, chaplaincy work, social work, administration, and interfaith dialogue.”<sup>2</sup> From these two statements, it is clear that social justice forms an integral part of your mission, whether it is phrased as “Justice and Peace and Integrity of Creation” for the SVD or “social work” for the

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<sup>1</sup> See [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Society\\_of\\_the\\_Divine\\_Word](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Society_of_the_Divine_Word) [accessed January 15, 2022].

<sup>2</sup> See <https://earthspot.org/geo/?search=Missionary> [accessed January 15, 2022].

SSpS. Thus, it would be redundant for me to spend time convincing you that social justice is part of your mission and Christian mission in general. Rather, I will focus on justice as a passion for mission.

In my presentation, I first speak of social justice as an essential and constitutive dimension of the Christian mission. Secondly, I reflect on how social justice is a way to express passion for mission. Thirdly, and last, with a nod to the SSpS, I reflect on the role of the Holy Spirit in enabling the ministry of social justice in the church as well as among non-Christians and unbelievers.

### *Social Justice as Christian Mission*

The relationship between social justice and the Christian mission is not always clear and settled, even among those who are engaged full-time in the ministry of social justice. Some juxtapose social justice and mission, doing them separately, considering social justice as secular and mission as sacred. This is often the case with ordained ministers, who consider preaching the Word, sacramental celebrations, and pastoral service as sacred activities, and social justice such as helping the poor as something adjunct and secondary and not essential to their priestly mission.

Others see social justice and Christian mission as alternative options, of which they should select one but not both, according to their abilities, status in the church, or social standing. This often occurs among the laity who work in non-church organizations, government agencies, or NGOs to defend human rights, promote peace and justice, and protect the environment and do not consider their work as Christian mission. Indeed, often they explicitly reject the moniker “Christian” when speaking of their work for fear that it might compromise the collaboration with their non-Christian and non-believing colleagues.

Still others see social justice as opposed to the Christian mission, which they see not as the solution but the problem for social justice, especially when they oppose certain church teachings and policies such as the prohibition of the use of condoms to prevent AIDS and of the means for birth control. The opposition to social justice is also found among devout and conservative Christians, not least in the U.S., who accept the sacramental ministry but reject the social teachings of the church and church-sponsored social justice. They argue that the church is strictly in the soul-saving business and must not meddle in politics, economy, and environmental protection. At best, church members should be reminded of the duty to practice charity and almsgiving

to the poor but church officials should desist from promoting “socialism” and “communism” by speaking of social evils such as systemic poverty, structural racism, and economic injustice.

In contrast to the three above understandings of the relationship between social justice and Christian mission—juxtaposition, alternative option, opposition—there is the fourth, which views social justice *as* Christian mission. This position, to which I subscribe, was promoted in the late nineteen-sixties by Latin American liberation theologies, most famously by the Peruvian theologian Gustavo Gutiérrez, for whom salvation is not simply the forgiveness of personal sins but necessarily includes the liberation of the society from all oppressive structures and urges the “preferential option for the poor.” This theology of liberation was adopted by the Consejo Episcopal Latinoamericano at its several meetings, beginning with Medellín in 1968. Later, liberation theology and its “preferential option for the poor” spread throughout the world, especially in Africa and Asia (with the Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences).<sup>3</sup> Of course, liberation theology was not without opposition, especially by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in its instruction *Libertatis Nuntius: On Certain Aspects of the Theology of Liberation* (1984), which condemns its use of Marxist analysis and its political hermeneutics of the Bible.<sup>4</sup>

Notwithstanding contrary opinions in some conservative quarters, today social justice is widely understood as essential to Christian mission. Rather than invoking multiple magisterial documents from Vatican II to Pope Francis, I focus on a document of less magisterial authority, being neither papal nor conciliar, but of immediate relevance to our theme, treating as it does directly the connection between social justice and evangelization. I refer to the document titled *Iustitia in mundo (Justice in the World)*, the concluding statement of the 1971 synod of bishops.<sup>5</sup> One of the most cited texts of this document is the last paragraph of the Introduction:

<sup>3</sup> On Catholic social doctrine, see Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, Città del Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticana 2004; David J. O’Brien/Thomas A. Shannon (eds.), *Catholic Social Thought: The Documentary Heritage*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books 1992; Kenneth R. Himes (ed.), *Modern Catholic Social Teaching: Commentaries & Interpretations*, Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press 2004.

<sup>4</sup> A more irenic assessment of liberation theology by the CDF was issued two years later, *Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation*, 1986.

<sup>5</sup> For the text *Justice in the World*, see [www.rcsocialjusticett.org/downloads/justiceintheworld.pdf](http://www.rcsocialjusticett.org/downloads/justiceintheworld.pdf). For an excellent commentary on this document, see

The uncertainty of history and the painful convergences in the ascending path of the human community direct us to sacred history; there God has revealed himself to us, and made known to us, as it is brought progressively to realization, his plan of liberation and salvation which is once and for all fulfilled in the Paschal Mystery of Christ. *Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appears to us a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel, or, in other words, of the Church's mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation.*<sup>6</sup>

This short paragraph, especially its last sentence, expresses, in a nutshell, the relationship between social justice and the Christian mission. However, it is not clear what the pivotal term *constitutive* means. The dictionary definition of “to constitute” is “to make up,” “form,” “compose.” To constitute something means to make it a reality, to pertain to its being, to make what it is. Used in a philosophical sense, it means to be the “essence” of something. Taken in this technical sense, the document seems to say that “action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world” is the *essence* of “the preaching of the Gospel” or “the Church’s mission.” Indeed, the German and Dutch translations of the original Italian text of the document do not use *constitutive* but *essential*.

However, after the synod, Bishop Ramon Torrella Cascante, who was its Special Secretary, argued that “constitutive” must not be translated as *essential* because *essential* implies that the mission of the church would be defective at its core if social justice is not achieved, whereas for him the essence of the church would remain intact even if social justice is not part of its activities. According to Torrella, social justice only adds to the *credibility* of the church’s mission and does not make up its essence. In other words, social justice adds to be the *bene esse* (well-being) of the church and not to its *esse* (being). Therefore, he suggests that it is more correct to translate “constitutive” as *integral* and to affirm that social justice is an integral dimension of the mission of the church, in the sense that social justice may accompany the Christian mission but strictly speaking, a true evangelization could take place without action for justice. Torrella’s basic reason for taking this position is that saying that social justice is an *essential* dimension of the Christian mission runs the risk of reducing the mission of the

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Kenneth Himes, “Commentary on *Iustitia in mundo* (*Justice in the World*) in *Modern Catholic Social Teaching*, 333-362.

<sup>6</sup> *Justice in the World*, no. 6. Italics added.

church to a temporal project and thus falls to the temptation of “horizontalism.”<sup>7</sup>

The three drafters of the document, the Jesuits Juan Alfaro and Philip Land and the Dominican Vincent Cosmao, who was the drafter of the Introduction and its now controversial last sentence, disputed Torella’s interpretation, arguing that *integral* weakens the force of *constitutive*.<sup>8</sup> They agreed that *constitutive* was not used as a technical philosophical term but rhetorically, to emphasize two points. First, social justice is not merely an ethical obligation derived from the Gospel, that is, a duty that must be fulfilled if one wants to become a disciple of Jesus. Second, social justice is an *indispensable* and therefore *essential* component of the church’s mission. As Ronald Hamel says, without the ministry of justice, “the Church would not be true to itself or to its vocation.”<sup>9</sup>

Today, a majority of Catholic theologians agree that social justice is a constitutive-essential-indispensable, and not simply integral dimension of the Christian mission and reject the juxtaposition, alternative option, and opposition interpretations of the relation between the two activities, even though it must be admitted that they are by no means rare, especially in conservative Christian circles and in totalitarian regimes that do not want the church to criticize their policies. If social justice is the Christian mission, can it be said that passion for social justice is passion for Christian mission? This is the question I intend to investigate next.

### ***Passion for Social Justice, Passion for Christian Mission***

The English term “passion” has a double meaning: first, a strong and barely controlled emotion such as explosive anger and intense sexual love, and second, suffering, often leading to martyrdom. It is in both these meanings that I suggest the term “passion” in “passion for justice” and “passion for Christian mission” is to be understood.

The first meaning of “passion” is ardent desire and deep commitment. For both of your congregations, such passion for social justice

<sup>7</sup> For Torella’s interpretation of *constitutive*, see K. Himes, “Commentary,” 353-354. Torella’s fear of the danger of “horizontalism” anticipates that of *Libertatis Nuntius: On Certain Aspects of the Theology of Liberation*.

<sup>8</sup> On J. Alfaro, P. Land, and V. Cosmao, see K. Himes, “Commentary,” 354-355.

<sup>9</sup> Ronald Hamel, Justice in the World, in: Judith A. Dwyer (ed.), *The New Catholic Dictionary of Catholic Social Thought*, Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press 1994, 496.

and mission is of course taken for granted. But *why* should Christians be passionate, or to use a colloquial expression, “mad,” about social justice and the Christian mission? I propose two answers, one Christological, the other ecclesiological.

Christologically, it must be admitted that the reality that Jesus brought to fulfillment in the world is not a reality detached from the world from whose shackles the souls are platonically delivered and ushered into an ethereal heaven. On the contrary, the kingdom/reign of God that Jesus preached is a reign of forgiveness and reconciliation, of justice and peace *in this world*, where humans achieve full flourishing. The gospels do not present Jesus’ preaching as his divine mission on the one hand and his healing the sick, feeding the hungry, exorcising the demons, and raising the dead as his social service on the other. Rather, he performed all his miracles of various types to show that the kingdom of God has broken in and through them here and now.

Luke 4:18-19, quoting Isaiah 61:1-2, describes Jesus’ ministry: bringing good news to the poor, proclaiming release to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind, liberating the oppressed, and proclaiming the year of the Lord’s favor. By today’s standards, all these activities of Jesus would be classified as social justice. Furthermore, in the parable of the judgment of the nations (Matt 25:31-46), people are saved or condemned on whether they feed the hungry, quench the thirsty, welcome the stranger, clothe the naked, and visit the prisoners, activities that are all considered as part of social justice, and to make sure we don’t miss it, Matthew tells the parable twice in the same words, the first time for those who practice these activities and the second for those who do not. In light of these texts, to be passionate about Christian mission is to be passionate about social justice, and to be passionate about social justice is to be passionate about the Christian mission.

Ecclesiologicaly, in recent times, the best exposition on passion for Christian mission and passion for social justice has arguably been given by Pope Francis. Time does not permit a comprehensive examination of the twin themes of Christian mission and social justice in all the major writings of Pope Francis, especially *The Joy of the Gospel* (*Evangelii Gaudium*; EG), *On Care for Our Common Home* (*Laudato Si*; LS), and *On Fraternity and Social Friendship* (*Fratelli Tutti*; FT).

I will consider only the apostolic exhortation *The Joy of the Gospel*, in which Francis deals at length with the mission of the church. With his celebrated image of evangelizers taking on the “smell of the sheep” and of the church as a “field hospital after battle,” Francis speaks of his dream of a “missionary option” in which the church is essentially a missionary community (EG 27). The church is a community that “goes



forth” (EG 24); its concern must not be self-preservation. In this context, Francis writes these powerful lines, with great passion:

Let us go forth, then, let us go forth to offer everyone the life of Jesus Christ.... I prefer a Church which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a Church which is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its security. I do not want a Church concerned with being at the center and then ends by being caught up in a web of obsessions and procedures.... More than by fear of going astray, my hope is that we will be moved by the fear of remaining shut up within structures which give us a false sense of security, within rules which make us harsh judges, within habits which make us safe, while at our door people are starving and Jesus does not tire of saying to us: “Give them something to eat” (Mk 6:37) (EG 49).

As for social justice, the pope devotes an entire chapter of his apostolic exhortation to the “social dimension of evangelization” (chapter 4, EG 176-258). He explicitly asserts that “our redemption has a social dimension because God, in Christ, redeems not only the individual person but also the social relations existing between humans.... From the heart of the Gospel, we see the profound connection between evangelization and human advancement, which must necessarily find expression and develop in every work of evangelization” (EG 178).

Francis affirms the special place of the poor in God’s people and wants “a Church which is poor and for the poor” (EG 198). With solidarity with the poor and the preferential option for the poor, Christians, the pope says, must “resolve the structural causes of poverty” (EG 202), which requires going beyond almsgiving and charitable works and practicing social justice in politics and the economy (EG 204-208). In addition to the poor, Francis mentions the “vulnerable of the earth” that include the homeless, the addicted, migrants, refugees, indigenous peoples, the elderly, women (“doubly poor”), the unborn, and the ecology itself (EG 209-216).

Finally, the pope speaks of missionary spirituality and urges the evangelizers to model themselves on Jesus: “Moved by his example, we want to enter fully into the fabric of society, sharing the lives of all, listening to their concerns, helping them materially and spiritually in their needs, rejoicing with those who rejoice, weeping with those who weep; arm in arm with others, we are committed to building a new world” (EG 169). Francis further says that mission is not what we do but what we are: “*I am a mission* on this earth; that is the reason why I am in this world. We have to regard ourselves as sealed, even

branded, by this mission of bringing light, blessing, enlivening, raising up, healing, and freeing” (EG 273). Nowhere in his description of social justice and the Christian mission has the pope distinguished, much less separated them as two different activities. On the contrary, he believes that social justice is an essential dimension of the Christian mission, which cannot be fulfilled without it.

The second meaning of “passion” is suffering and martyrdom. Not only preaching the Gospel but also, and perhaps especially social justice, has brought suffering and even death to Christians. Suffice to mention the names of a few victims of government-sponsored murders because of their commitment to and struggle for social justice: Archbishop Óscar Romero; Fr. Rutilio Grande and his four companions; the six Jesuits, their housekeeper, and her daughter at the Central American University; and the three American nuns (Ita Ford, Maura Clarke, and Dorothy Kazel) and the lay worker (Jean Donovan).

The “passion” is not of course limited to bishops, priests, and religious. Open Doors International, a non-denominational organization has recently issued an annual report in which it claims a record 360 million people worldwide were discriminated against or abused last year for being followers of Christ.<sup>10</sup> Christians should keep in mind Jesus’ warning: “See, I am sending you out like sheep into the midst of wolves; so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. Beware of them, for they will hand you over to councils and flog you in their synagogues, and you will be dragged before governors and kings because of me, as a testimony to them and the Gentiles” (Matt 10:16-18).

“Passion” for mission and social justice in the sense of ardent desire and deep commitment has its personal costs, and though we must avoid playing heroes by seeking martyrdom, “passion” as suffering and martyrdom is often unavoidable, and the examples of the cloud of witnesses who are killed for their faithfulness sustain our weaknesses and instill us with courage and perseverance with the thought that, in the famous phrase of the third-century African theologian Tertullian, “The blood of martyrs is the seed of Christians.”<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> <https://international.la-croix.com/news/religion/360-million-christians-persecuted-worldwide-last-year-says-ngo/15510> [accessed January 15, 2022].

<sup>11</sup> Tertullian’s actual phrase is: “Semen est sanguis Christianorum,” in: *Quinti Septimii Florentis Tertulliani Opera*, I: 50,13, Prebols: Turnhout 1954, 171. Soon this celebrated dictum became *sanguis martyrum semen Christianorum*.

***The Holy Spirit, the Power of Social Justice and  
the Christian Mission***

Here we must confront a conundrum. Passion for Christian mission and social justice, while highly recommended, seems to be dampened by the words of Jesus the Son of Man in the parable of the universal judgment (Matt 25:31-46). We are told that people are saved or condemned depending on whether they feed the hungry, quench the thirsty, welcome the stranger, clothe the naked, and visit the prisoners.

What is difficult to understand is Jesus' answer to the question by people on his right and on his left about when they saw Jesus and did or did not come to his rescue: "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me" (Matt 25:40). Who are these people who are being judged? Obviously, they are not only Christians. In fact, it is said that "all the nations" (*panta ta ethnē*) are gathered to be judged (Matt 25:32). This means that among those who perform these activities for Jesus, though not knowing it, there are non-Christian believers and non-believers. If these non-Christians and atheists are said by Jesus to be blessed by his Father and inherit the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world (Matt 25:34), then why should we do mission to them? Is our mission to them not redundant if they can perform these good deeds without explicit faith in Christ? If social justice *is* the Christian mission, how can non-Christian believers, for example, Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims, and even atheists be said to perform the Christian mission?

Before answering these questions, let's note the fact that the ultimate beneficiary of these activities of social justice is Jesus himself, whether those who perform them know it or not, which makes it impossible to consider these activities as simply secular. Even though these activities have nothing sacred in themselves, they must be regarded as properly belonging to the Christian mission itself because they are done for Jesus who identifies himself with the least, the last, and the lost.

To answer the question of whether the Christian mission is rendered redundant, I appeal to pneumatology and reflect on the role of the Holy Spirit outside Christianity.<sup>12</sup> I invoke Saint Irenaeus's image of God's "two hands." Irenaeus, a second-century bishop of Lyon,

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<sup>12</sup> For my extended reflection on the role of the Holy Spirit in activities outside Christianity, see Peter C. Phan, *The Joy of Religious Pluralism: A Personal Journey*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books 2017, 51-74.

France, was fighting against a group of Christians, known today as the Gnostics, who held that there are two Gods, the God of the Old Testament and the God of Jesus, the former the God of Law, the latter the God of Love. There are thus, the Gnostics contend, two covenants. Against them, and Marcion in particular, Irenaeus affirms that there is only one God, the Father, who has only one saving covenant for the whole of humanity. However, God the Father acts in the world with his “two hands,” his two agents, the Son and the Spirit. Irenaeus’s important point is that even though there are two agents (“hands”), Jesus and the Holy Spirit, who carry out the Father’s plan of salvation, they do not have a plan of salvation each, distinct from each other. Rather, they fulfill only one plan or economy of salvation, that of the Father. It is therefore not theologically correct to say that the Son has a plan of salvation and that the Holy Spirit has another, different from that of the Son.

However, it is important to note that the fact that there is only one divine economy of salvation does not entail that the two “hands”—the Son and the Holy Spirit—act in the same place, at the same time, in the same way, with the same people, and in total dependence on each other, without a certain “autonomy” and clear differences in their manners of acting in history.

The Christian faith professes that the one God exists in three distinct “persons,” Father, Son, and Spirit. I would argue that these personal differences entail that each divine Person can and does function in history differently and “autonomously,” though in communion with each other (*perichoresis*). Concretely, before the incarnation and even after the incarnation, in places and at times where the Jesus of history could not personally reach due to his historical limitations as a Jew living in the first century of the Common Era, and in places where he did not preach and was not known, the Holy Spirit can be and has been actively present. This “autonomous” action of the Spirit, which is not opposed to that of the Son but distinct and in a certain true sense, independent of it, allows us to fully recognize the work of the Spirit outside Jesus, before the incarnation of the Son, and even after it, and outside Christianity, especially in other religions, whose spiritual or salvific value and function can be affirmed in itself. There is, therefore, no need to reduce non-Christian religions to being simply “preparation” for (*praeparatio evangelica*), or “stepping stones” (*pierres d’attente*) to Christianity or to being “fulfilled” or “superseded” by it (the “fulfillment” theology of religion), thereby denying their integrity and otherness.

This pneumatology, which asserts the Holy Spirit’s activities outside of Christianity, allows us to affirm that non-Christians and even

atheists can perform activities of social justice that make them blessed by God the Father and inherit the kingdom prepared them from the foundation of the world (Matt 25:34), even though they do not know that they perform these activities for Jesus.

From the foregoing reflections, it may be argued that when we Christians do missions to non-Christians we are not entering a desert devoid of God's grace, namely, the Holy Spirit. They may not, and most often do not know, and some may refuse to acknowledge, that the beneficiary of their social justice is Jesus. Because of this unawareness, Christian mission to them is still necessary, not because without Christian mission they would be lost, but because Christian mission reveals to them the name of the person who benefits from their action of feeding the hungry, quenching the thirsty, welcoming the stranger, clothing the naked, and visiting the prisoners. Furthermore, Christian mission invites them through the hearing of God's word and the reception of baptism and other sacraments to be part of the community of those working for social justice, which will not be effectively done without their collaboration.

Finally, it may be asked: What is the difference between the activities of social justice done by Christians and those done by, let's say, the secular NGOs, non-Christians, and atheists if in the universal judgment they all enter the eternal kingdom of God? First, it must be said that there is no difference whatever in the structure, organization, and results of these activities. Take, for instance, the work for ecological integrity. Whether it is carried out by Pope Francis, Patriarch Bartholomew, Greta Thunberg, the United Nations Environment Program, Green Buddhists, or nonbelieving scientists, it has to follow the most accurate scientific data on global warming, set up the most efficient structures, adopt the most appropriate plans of action, and produce the best results. Further, there is no guarantee that Christians will be more blessed by God and more successful than their secular counterparts in this enterprise. Nor is it always true that Christians are more dedicated to the task than others.

The difference, I suggest, lies in the motivation and the model of the Christians. The motivation for Christians is to respond to God's gift of creation with love and gratitude by preserving its beauty and blessings for future generations. For them, to destroy the environment is to sin against no other than its Creator and the future generations whose rights to a healthy ecology will be violated beyond repair. The model of their attitude to and action for the environment is their Lord and Teacher Jesus whose faithful disciples they want to be. This motivation and model do not prevent Christians from collaborating with others in the work of environmental protection not only because they can-

not achieve their goal by themselves but also, more importantly, because they know the Spirit that empowers them is the same Spirit that dwells within and empowers the followers of other religions and non-believers to undertake the same task. Thus, their mission is carried out not only *for* others (*missio ad gentes*) but also *among* them (*missio inter gentes*) and *with* others (*missio in gentes*).<sup>13</sup>

To conclude, knowing that when doing social justice we are indeed fulfilling the Christian mission will impart to our work more ardent passion, greater courage, more patient persistence, and fuller joy.

#### ABSTRACTS

Die Beziehung zwischen Mission und sozialer Gerechtigkeit kann auf unterschiedliche Weise artikuliert werden. Der Autor schlägt vor, die Praxis der sozialen Gerechtigkeit *als* Mission zu verstehen. Unter Berufung auf die Befreiungstheologie und die Bischofssynode von 1971 über Gerechtigkeit wird die Praxis der Gerechtigkeit als wesentlich für die Mission verstanden. Ein solches Engagement impliziert Passion, als totale freudige Hingabe bis hin zum Martyrium, nach dem Beispiel Jesu. Nimmt man das Wirken des Heiligen Geistes ernst, geht das christliche soziale Engagement über die Grenzen der Kirche hinaus. Seine Motivation liegt in den Christen, die in Dankbarkeit auf die Liebe Gottes antworten.

La relación entre la misión y la justicia social puede articularse de forma diferente. El autor propone entender la práctica de la justicia social *como* misión. Basándose en la teología de la liberación y en el Sínodo de los Obispos de 1971 sobre la Justicia, la práctica de la justicia se entiende como esencial para la misión. Este compromiso implica pasión, como una entrega total y gozosa hasta el martirio, siguiendo el ejemplo de Jesús. Tomando en serio la acción del Espíritu Santo, el compromiso social cristiano trasciende los límites de la iglesia. Su motivación radica en los cristianos cuando responden al amor de Dios con gratitud.

Le lien entre mission et justice sociale peut être articulé de différentes manières. L'auteur suggère de comprendre la pratique de la justice sociale *comme* mission. S'appuyant sur la théologie de la libération et le synode des évêques sur la justice en 1971, la pratique de la justice est présentée comme essentielle pour la mission. Un tel engagement implique de la passion, un dévouement total et joyeux pouvant aller jusqu'au martyre, suivant l'exemple de Jésus. En prenant l'action du Saint Esprit au sérieux, l'engagement social chrétien transcende les limites de l'Église. Sa motivation repose chez les chrétiens qui répondent en gratitude à l'amour de Dieu.

<sup>13</sup> On these three concepts of mission, see Phan, *The Joy of Religious Pluralism*, 146-159.