

*Antonio M. Pernia SVD**

THE STATE OF MISSION TODAY

The concept of mission has undergone several major changes over the last 50 years, since the time of Vatican Council II. A “paradigm shift” shows the change from a Church-centered perspective to Missio Dei, putting God in the center. This has important consequences for the subjects and actors in mission. The “situational shift” refers to the context of mission: From a one-way sense of mission to peoples in the global south to a perspective of realizing mission in different situations and as an answer to challenges. The second part of the article formulates several of the consequences in the field of multiculturalism, interreligious dialogue and evangelization.

First of all, I would like to thank the organizers of the DWST [Divine Word Seminary in Tagaytay, Philippines] Semi-Centennial Celebration Committee for the invitation to speak at this symposium on the topic of the “State of Mission Today.” It is a privilege for me to do so today, on the occasion of the Grand Alumni Homecoming, organized as the culmination of the year-long celebration of DWST’s golden jubilee. Thank you all—present and former students, professors, formators and staff of the Divine Word Seminary in Tagaytay—for coming and making these two days a joyous celebration of the 50 years of existence of our dear Alma Mater.

And now to the topic assigned to me in this symposium. I would like to divide this talk on “The State of Mission Today” in two parts. In Part One, I would like to speak about the shifts in mission today, and then in Part Two, I would like to draw out some of the implications of these shifts for mission today.

* Born in Bohol, Philippines, in 1949. Ordination 1975. Holds a doctorate degree in Theology from the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome and a Master’s degree in Philosophy from the Divine Word Seminary in Tagaytay, Philippines. Taught philosophy and theology at the Divine Word Seminary in Tagaytay and at the Regional Major Seminary in Davao, Philippines. Was Provincial Superior of the Philippines Southern Province (1993-94) and Vice-Superior General of the Society of the Divine Word (1994-2000). From 2000 to 2012 he was the Superior General of the SVD.

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1. *Two Shifts in Mission Today*

In speaking about “The State of Mission Today,” one cannot overlook the important changes that have taken place in our understanding and in our practice of mission over the recent past. Of the many such changes, I wish to single out two important ones, namely, the shift in the concept of mission and the shift in the situation of mission today. Thus, (1) a “Paradigm Shift” and (2) a “Situational Shift.”

1.1. *The Paradigm Shift: From Missio Ecclesiae to Missio Dei*

Theologians of mission today speak of a paradigm shift in mission theology. There are various ways of describing this shift of mission paradigm. Some say it is a shift from a “Church-centered” to a “Kingdom-centered” understanding of mission.¹ Others say it is a move from a “conquest-mode” to a “dialogue-mode” of mission.² However way it is described, this shift of mission paradigm entails a change of our understanding of the origin of mission, the goal of mission, and the mode of mission.

1.1.1. The Origin of Mission

The most basic change in the understanding of mission concerns the question of the origin of mission, namely, that the origin or source of mission is not the Church but the Triune God himself. This idea comes from Vatican II itself. As we know, Vatican II’s document on the missionary activity of the Church, *Ad Gentes*, traces the origin of the mission of the Church to the sending by the Father of the Son and the Holy Spirit in order to bring about God’s universal plan of salvation (AG 1-2, 9). This idea has come to be known as “the Trinitarian origin of Mission.”

This idea of Vatican II parallels the notion of *Missio Dei* in Protestant theology, by which mission is understood as derived from the very nature of God.³ Mission is not primarily an activity of the

¹ For instance, Michael Amaladoss, *New Images of Mission: Promotio Iustitiae* 94 (2007/1) 21-22; Id., *New Faces of Mission: UISG Bulletin* 99 (1995) 21-33.

² For instance, Edmund Chia, *Mission, Dialogue and Missionary Congregations: SEDOS Bulletin* 34 (2002) 52-53.

³ Cf. David Bosch, *Transforming Mission. A Paradigm Shift in Theology of Mission*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books 1991, 389-393. As a modern missiological concept, *Missio Dei* can be traced back to the work of Karl Barth in the 1930s. It was first introduced at the International Missionary Conference (IMC) at Willingen in 1952 by K. Hartenstein, director of the Basel Mission.

Church, but an attribute of God. As Triune God, God is a missionary God, and mission is seen as a movement from God to the world. The Church is viewed as an instrument for this mission. Thus, there is Church because there is mission, and not vice versa. Or, it is not the Church of Christ that has a mission, but the mission of Christ which has a Church.⁴

The theology behind all this is the vision of the Triune God as communion and communication, interaction and dialogue, between Father, Son and Holy Spirit. And this inner communication or dialogue overflows into—or better, embraces—creation and history. Mission, then, is the Triune God's ongoing dialogue with the world and with humanity, a dialogue that invites and draws humanity into full communion with the Divine community. Thus, there is mission not because it is mandated by the Church, but because God is a Triune God. Thus, Mission, before being about what the Church does, is about who God is.

1.1.2. The Goal of Mission

The second change in the understanding of mission flows from the first, namely, that the goal of mission is not the Church, but God's universal plan of salvation. The Trinitarian understanding of mission enlarges the scope of mission. Its goal is no longer just the extension of the visible Church in those places where it is not yet present, but the realization of God's mission or God's salvific plan as such. This salvific plan is universal and embraces the whole human race and, indeed, all of creation.

St. Paul speaks of it as uniting all things in heaven and on earth in Christ (Eph 1:10) or as reconciling all things in Christ (Col 1:20). The Book of Revelation speaks of the emergence of a new heaven and

However, the idea, *Missio Dei*, did not gain prominence in missiological thinking until the 1990s, perhaps because of a certain passivity with which it became associated in some circles—that is, if mission is God's work then perhaps it is best left to God, without our interference. Indeed some saw in it a tendency to exclude the involvement of the Church in mission. However, in the 1990s it was increasingly seen as an important expression of mission spirituality—that is, that those involved in mission must be conformed to the mission and ministry of Jesus. Cf. also Theo Sundermeier, *Theology of Mission*, in: Karl Müller et al. (eds.), *Dictionary of Mission: Theology, History, Perspectives*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books 1998, 434.

⁴ Cf. Adrian Hastings, *Mission*, in: *Encyclopedia of Theology: A Concise Sacramentum Mundi*, New York: Crossroad 1975, 967-969. Cf. also Stephen Bevans and Roger Schroeder, *Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books 2004, 8.

a new earth (Rev 21:1-4). Jesus proclaims it as the good news of the coming of the “Kingdom of God.” The image of the Kingdom of God in Jesus’ preaching is his vision of God’s plan for a world of justice, freedom, fellowship and love, requiring both personal conversion and social transformation.

The biblical text that brings this out most clearly is Lk 4:16-30 which narrates Jesus’ programmatic discourse in the synagogue of Nazareth at the start of his public ministry. Applying to himself and to his ministry the prophecy of Isaiah (Isa 61:1f), Jesus outlines the features of his ministry: “bringing the good news to the poor, liberty to captives, sight to the blind, freedom to the oppressed.” The aim and purpose of proclaiming the good news is liberation. This chapter of Luke ends with Jesus telling the people: “To the other towns also I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God, because for this purpose I have been sent” (Lk 4:43). For some missiologists, this text of Luke has, for all practical purposes, replaced Matthew’s “Great Commission” (Mt 28:16-30) as the key text for understanding not only Jesus’ mission but also that of the Church.⁵

1.1.3. The Mode of Mission

The third change in the understanding of mission concerns the mode of mission or the way of doing mission. During the era of colonization mission was carried out in the so-called “conquest mode.” In those days, missionaries often came on “the coat-tails of the colonizers.”⁶ Friars and colonizers stood side by side each other—the one with cross and the other with sword in hand—to evangelize the natives, but also to subdue them to foreign rule. This way of doing mission operated out of medieval theology where the Church believed herself to be the one and only bastion of truth. Other religions were regarded as in error at best and demonic at worst. And the Church saw it as her moral obligation to conquer, dominate and replace these religions.

Seeing mission as *Missio Dei* acknowledges that God has been in dialogue with all peoples from the beginning. Other religious and cultural traditions, therefore, contain “seeds of the Word” (AG 11) or “rays of the Truth” (NA 2). They are not entirely evil or totally in error. Thus Vatican II introduced the theme of dialogue. Dialogue, of

⁵ Cf. Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 84.

⁶ This was the era of the marriage between church and state, when the missionary work of the Church was undertaken under the patronage of kings and emperors, e.g., the *Patronato Real*.

course, presupposes a certain respect and regard for the partner-in-dialogue. For no one engages in dialogue with another who is regarded as unworthy or inferior. Thus, documents of Vatican II state that the Church rejects nothing that is true and holy in other religions, and urge Catholics to enter with prudence and charity into discussion and collaboration with members of other religions.⁷

Post-conciliar documents underline this idea even more strongly. For instance, a 1984 document of the Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue⁸ states that dialogue is “the norm and necessary manner of every form as well as of every aspect of Christian mission.” In other words, dialogue is no longer simply an option that we are at liberty to do or not do. Dialogue is now a missiological imperative. Other post-conciliar documents say the same thing, like Pope Paul VI’s first encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam* (e.g. 72) and Pope John Paul II’s mission encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* (e.g. 57).

1.2. *The Situational Shift: From Missio Ad Gentes to Missio Inter Gentes*

The second shift refers to the situation of mission. This can be expressed as a shift from Mission understood exclusively as *Missio Ad Gentes* to Mission understood also as *Missio Inter Gentes*.

Since the time of the early Church, a clear distinction and demarcation existed between the “gentes” (*ethne*) and the “populus Dei” (*laos tou theou*)—that is, the distinction between the chosen people of God and the nations, or the Jews and the gentiles, the circumcised and the uncircumcised, the believers and pagans. In fact, this distinction became the basis of the division of labor between Peter and Paul. “... they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter to the circumcised, for the one who worked in Peter for an apostolate to the circumcised worked also in me for the Gentiles” (Gal 2:7-8).

Along with this distinction was the other distinction between the center of faith and the periphery of unbelief, or the distinction between “inside” and “outside.” In the early Church, the center of faith was Jerusalem and the surrounding nations the periphery of unbelief. In much of the history of the Church, Christian Europe was the center of faith and the rest of the world was the periphery of unbelief. In the context of this dual distinction, “*missio ad gentes*” was neces-

⁷ For instance, *Nostra Aetate* 2, *Ad Gentes* 11, 12.

⁸ Cf. Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue, *The Attitude of the Church towards the Followers of Other Religions*, 1984.

sarily “*missio ad extra*.” Mission was “going out” to the “pagan nations.” Mission was a one-way movement from Christian Europe to the pagan world. Thus, the expressions “mission sending” (or “missionary sending”) countries and “mission receiving” (or “missionary receiving”) countries. Or, the expressions “missionary Church” and “mission Churches.”

1.2.1. Changed Circumstances

Two recent developments have changed this situation radically—one in the Church and the other in the world.

(1) Missionaries from the South

The first development is the emergence of missionaries originating from the south of the world. Europe is no longer the sole or even the primary source of missionaries. This has to do with the drastic drop of religious and priestly vocations in Europe and North America. So, we are now witnessing the phenomenon of missionaries originating from the south—from Asia, Africa, and Latin America. This, in turn, has to do with the growth of vocations and the maturity of what formerly were called “mission churches” or the Churches of the so-called “mission receiving” countries. This is not only a question of what sometimes is called “reverse mission”—that is, missionaries from the former mission territories going as missionaries to Europe or North America. For missionaries from the south also go as missionaries to Asia, Africa and Latin America. Thus, we speak today not only of a “south-to-north” but also of a “south-to-south” mission, in contrast to the earlier situation where mission was largely a “north-to-south” phenomenon.

An indication of this is the Society of the Divine Word. As we all know, in the SVD today, there are some 800 Asian missionaries working outside of their home countries in Europe, the US, Latin America, Africa and other parts of Asia. Indeed, the SVD Asia-Pacific (ASPAC) zone has now become a primary source of missionaries in the SVD. In recent years more than two thirds of those receiving first assignments in the Society have come from ASPAC. Of these, about 53% received first assignments outside their home countries. Similarly, but on a smaller scale, we have around 50 African SVD missionaries working outside Africa, and about the same number of Latin American SVD missionaries working outside Latin America. This

would mean close to a thousand missionaries from the south only from one missionary congregation.⁹

(2) Multiculturality

The other development is the growing multiculturalism of many of the cities and countries of the world. Due to the phenomenon of “people on the move” (whether because of international migration or the refugee situation), societies are becoming more and more multicultural. At the turn of the millennium, it was estimated that there were 150 million international migrants worldwide (this is, one out of 50 persons).¹⁰ Similarly, it was estimated that there were 50 million refugees or forced migrants (that is, one out of 120 persons).¹¹ It is said that today, after the first decade of the new millennium, the number of people on the move has increased by almost 45%, which means a total of around 280 million people on the move.

While migration is an age-old phenomenon, the global nature of migration in our age is what gives it a particular prominence. More people today choose or are forced to migrate than ever before, and they are travelling to an increasing number of countries. International migrants come from all over the world and travel to all parts of the world. As a result, people from different cultures not only are in much closer contact today, oftentimes they are forced to live alongside each other. Many of the world’s cities today are inhabited by widely diverse cultural groups. And often the diversity of cultures also means a diversity of religions. This massive movement of people is radically changing the face of our cities.

1.2.2. *Missio Inter Gentes*

It follows from what has just been said that today *missio ad gentes* can no longer be identified exclusively with *missio ad extra*. For the “*gentes*” are no longer only those who are out there, those who are outside. The “*gentes*” are also here among us and around us. It may be the family that lives next door, the person I sit beside in the bus,

⁹ Cf. also Rose Nkechi Uchem, *Shifting Perceptions of Mission: SEDOS Bulletin* 41 (2009) 261-270.

¹⁰ Cf. IOM (International Organization for Migration), “Global Migration Trends: An Era of International Migration,” Geneva: IOM Publications, <http://www.iom.int>

¹¹ Cf. Michael Blume, “Il Fenomeno Globale Dell’immigrazione,” Città del Vaticano: Pontificio Consiglio della Pastorale dei Migranti e degli Itineranti, 29 maggio 2000.

the young man who comes to fix my television, the lady in the market I buy vegetables from.

Today, more and more, *missio ad gentes* needs to be understood as also *missio inter gentes*.¹²

And when seen not as a replacement of but as a complement to *missio ad gentes*, *missio inter gentes* can enrich our understanding of mission today. Three nuances of *missio INTER gentes* can be of particular help in enlarging our concept of mission today:

(1) Mission as Dialogue WITH People

While “ad gentes” underlines the necessity of proclamation, “inter gentes” stresses the indispensability of dialogue in mission. While the direct proclamation of the Gospel remains a permanent requirement in mission, dialogue has also become a missiological imperative. As mentioned earlier, the 1984 document of the Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue states that “Dialogue is the norm and necessary manner of every form as well as of every aspect of Christian mission.” In other words, dialogue is no longer simply an option that we are at liberty to do or not do. It is now an imperative in mission. Pope John Paul II in *Redemptoris Missio* put it in the following way: “Each member of the faithful and all Christian communities are called to practice dialogue, although not always to the same degree or in the same way” (RM 57).

(2) Mission as Encounter BETWEEN Peoples

While “ad gentes” brings out the idea of a specialized group of persons (missionaries, religious, priests) being sent on mission to other

¹² It should be said, however, that while *missio inter gentes* is a distinct possibility in our home countries, this does not eliminate the necessity of *missio ad gentes ad extra*. Indeed, the traditional “mission territories” continue to need the witness of cross-cultural missionaries “from abroad.” In fact, *missio ad extra* is essential if *missio inter gentes* at home is to become a serious commitment. First, *missio ad extra* provides the missionary the experience of being a minority in a foreign land. This usually allows the missionary to see how mission needs to be dialogue *inter gentes* and not just proclamation *ad gentes*. This will also make the missionary realize why humility, powerlessness, respect and solidarity are required in mission. Second, *missio ad extra* also allows the missionary to be exposed to the original cultures and religions of the migrants who come to our countries. This will give the missionary an opportunity to study and truly understand the cultures and religions of these people. Such an experience will eventually benefit *missio inter gentes* at home.

peoples, “inter gentes” evokes the notion of mission taking place in the encounter between entire communities or groups of people. One can think, for instance, of the dialogue of life between the members of one Catholic parish and those of a local Muslim community, or the students of a Catholic school and those of a non-Christian school. One can also think of the witness given by Catholic migrants in a Muslim country in the Middle East, or the witness of Catholic migrant domestic helpers in the homes in secularized Europe. As Church documents never tire of repeating, mission is not just a prerogative of specialized individuals in the Church but the duty of the entire People of God.

(3) Mission as Finding a Home AMONG the People

While “ad gentes” stresses the cross-cultural nature of mission and evokes the picture of the missionary being sent to another people, “inter gentes” underlines the fact that the missionary is sent in order to settle in and find a new home among the people. One’s mission is meant not just as a temporary work place but as a permanent home among a new people. This is part of the whole purpose of inculturation and cultural adaptation. This is part of the logic of the incarnation. Just as the Divine Word pitched his tent among us, so also the missionary is expected to pitch his or her tent among the people he or she is sent to. This is exemplified in the life of many of our earlier missionaries. An example is our first SVD missionary to China, St. Joseph Freinademetz, who strove to become a “Chinese among the Chinese.” Only when one succeeds in transforming oneself to become one with the people, will the missionary be able to transform the people to become followers of the Gospel of Jesus.

Thus, *Missio INTER Gentes* enlarges our understanding of mission—mission as dialogue WITH people, mission as encounter BETWEEN peoples, and mission as finding a home AMONG the people.

2. Implications for Mission Today

Let me now move to the second part of this talk, namely, the implications for mission today of the above-mentioned “Paradigm Shift” and “Situational Shift.”

2.1. The Task of Promoting a Multicultural Church

The first implication, which flows from the second shift, i.e., the “situational shift” described above, is that mission today needs to

address the challenges of an increasingly multicultural world. This entails missionary activities like the ministry to migrants, refugees and other displaced people. Other related ministries are urban ministry (since most migrants and refugees are found in the cities), ministry among women (since women make up the bulk of migrants and often have to carry the heaviest consequences of migration), inter-faith and ecumenical dialogue (since migration brings together not only people of different cultures but also people of different religions).

But all of these ministries which are related to a multicultural world need to be seen in the context of the larger vision of mission as promoting a truly multicultural Church. A truly multicultural Church is one which is characterized by three things, namely, (1) the Church as a home for people of different cultures, (2) the Church as an instrument of intercultural dialogue, and (3) the Church as a sign of the all-inclusiveness of the Kingdom of God.

2.1.1. Home for People of Different Cultures

A multicultural Church will be seen by strangers and foreigners not just as a more tolerant but also a more welcoming Church. And for the Church to be more welcoming, three elements are essential,¹³ namely, that it be a Church that fosters the recognition of other cultures (i.e., allows the culture of migrants, strangers or foreigners to be visible in the community), encourages respect for cultural difference (i.e., avoids any attempt to level off cultural differences by subsuming the minority cultures into the dominant culture), and promotes a healthy interaction between cultures (i.e., seeks to create a climate whereby each culture allows itself to be transformed or enriched by the other). With these characteristics, a multicultural Church will be a community where people of various cultures will feel they belong.

2.1.2. Instrument of Intercultural Dialogue

A truly multicultural Church, however, cannot limit itself to just caring for those who belong to its community, i.e., strangers and foreigners who are Christians or Catholics. A truly multicultural Church must also look beyond itself and minister to non-Christian migrants, refugees and displaced people by being an instrument of intercultural dialogue in the larger society. It must work towards creating in the larger human community the conditions whereby the

¹³ Cf. Robert Schreiter, *Ministry for a Multicultural Church*, <http://www.se-dos.org>, Articles in English.

three elements mentioned above can be realized, i.e., recognition of other cultures, respect for cultural difference, and healthy interaction between cultures. This will mean promoting genuine dialogue among people of various cultures.

2.1.3. Sign of the All-inclusiveness of God's Kingdom

A Church that fosters genuine interculturality within itself (“ad intra”) and promotes intercultural dialogue outside itself (“ad extra”) will be a truly credible sign of the all-inclusiveness of the Kingdom of God. It will be a witness to the universality and openness to diversity of God's Kingdom. Such a witness is especially needed in the age of globalization. For globalization tends on the one hand to exclude and marginalize the poor and the weak and on the other hand to create a uniformity which eliminates all differences.¹⁴ A multicultural Church will be a proclamation that the Kingdom includes everyone and excludes no one, and that in it there are no strangers or foreigners but only brothers and sisters. It will be an image of a universal gathering of all peoples about which the prophet Isaiah speaks: “Thus says the Lord: ‘I am coming to gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come and shall see my glory’” (Isa 66:18).

2.2. *The Conversions Required in Mission Today*

The second implication, which flows from the first shift, i.e., the “paradigm shift” described above, is that the notion of *Missio Dei* entails some fundamental conversions in our way of doing mission today. For me, four such conversions are required, namely, (1) from activism to contemplation, (2) from individualism to collaboration, (3) from superiority to humility, and (4) from only evangelizing to also being evangelized.

2.2.1. From Activism to Contemplation

The first conversion is from activism to contemplation. Very often we are very “Pelagian”¹⁵ in our way of doing mission. We act as if mission depends more on our efforts than on God's grace. And so we

¹⁴ Cf. SVD, XV General Chapter Statement, in: *In Dialogue with the Word*, No. 1, Sept. 2000, nos. 48-51.

¹⁵ I refer here to the famous controversy in Church history between St. Augustine who emphasized the primacy of “grace” and Pelagius who, in contrast, emphasized the primacy of “human effort” in the human being's relationship with God.

frequently fall into the danger of “activism”—that is, the danger of thinking that the best way to do mission is to become effective in what we do. And so we work and work and work, and give our attention almost exclusively to the effectivity of what we do, and no longer have the time to also pay attention to the quality of our lives and the credibility of our personal witness. This is the danger of behaving as if all that counts is what we do and thus neglecting to care for who we are.

Seeing mission as *Missio Dei* makes us realize that our participation in mission is fundamentally an encounter with mystery – the mystery of the Triune God who calls all of humanity to share in his life and glory, the mystery of God’s salvific plan for the world, the mystery of the presence and action of Christ and the Spirit in the world. Thus, the very first challenge in mission is to seek out, discern and strengthen the presence of Christ and the action of the Spirit in the world. But it will be impossible to discern if we do not approach mission in contemplation. For to contemplate is precisely to look, to listen, to learn, to discern, to respond, to collaborate.

The missionary, then, evangelizes not primarily by doing things for the people but by being with them and enabling them to do things themselves. The missionary’s mission method will be marked not by frenetic activity but by contemplative presence among God’s people. The missionary will not be tempted to explain away the mystery of God, but rather try to lead people into this very mystery through signs and symbols in respectful dialogue. He or she will give priority to *being missionary over doing missionary things*.

Thus, one expectation of missionaries today is the development of a contemplative spirit in mission. We need to abandon the idea that contemplation is the opposite of mission. We need, rather, to promote the idea that contemplation is a constitutive dimension of mission. In fact, experts tell us that contemplation entails not just an “ascending moment” of prayer, meditation, adoration but also a “descending moment” of gazing at the world with the eyes of God. The ascending moment of learning to gaze at God leads to the descending moment of learning how to gaze at the world with the eyes of God. For it is only from the wider perspective of God’s world that we see how much the world is in need of redemption, liberation and salvation. Only from the wider perspective of God’s world do we see how much the world suffers, how many are the people who hunger, how often children die an untimely death. Only from this perspective do we see how much the world needs mission.

How different would our world be if we all learned to see the world with the eyes of God. Under the gaze of God’s eyes, enemies would

become friends, separating walls would become open doors, strangers would become brothers or sisters, borders would become bridges, diversity would lead not to differences but to unity. Indeed, only if people learn to see the world with God's eyes would our mission truly bear fruit.

2.2.2. From Individualism to Collaboration

A second conversion is from individualism to collaboration and teamwork. Often we think that we are the only ones called to mission—whether in the sense of the individual or in the sense of one's congregation. "Rugged individualism" has long been a description of our early missionaries. This description came along with the notion of the missionary as a "bush missionary" who single-handedly tried to create a Christian community in the midst of a hostile environment.

Indeed, very often, we do our work, and do it well, but it is our work and no one else's. Another missionary is only a nuisance or a hindrance to our work. This can apply to the individual—e.g., I do not need any other confrere, no assistant, no companion. But this can also apply to our congregation—e.g., we do our work well when we do it by ourselves. We do not need other missionaries. Let them find some other work. We have our own work and we have no need of collaborators.

Seeing mission as *Missio Dei* makes us realize that our call to mission is really a call to share in God's mission, which implies a call to collaborate with God, first of all, and with all others who are similarly called by God. *Missio Dei* implies that mission is larger than what each individual or each congregation can do. It is even larger than what all of us together can do. Collaboration, then, is not just a strategy for mission. We collaborate not just because we want to be more effective in mission. Collaboration, in fact, is an essential characteristic of mission. Collaboration is a statement about the nature of mission. By collaborating we are saying that mission is God's in the first place and that the primary agent of mission is God's Spirit.

Thus, another expectation of missionaries today is the promotion of a collaborative attitude in mission.

2.2.3. From Superiority to Humility

A third conversion is from superiority to humility. I was once talking with an African colleague who decried the fact that missionaries in the past preached the gospel as if they owned the faith, dictating thereby the terms by which it must be understood (doctrine/dogma),

lived (morals/ethics) and celebrated (liturgy/worship). Coming largely from Christian Europe, many missionaries indeed acted as if the gospel was “theirs”—that is, as if it was part and parcel of their European heritage and of their European identity. Coming, likewise, from what was assumed to be a “higher” culture and from economically developed and technologically advanced countries, missionaries in the past often evangelized from a position of power and superiority. And apparently, this assumed superiority—religious, cultural, economic and technological—gave them the right to impose the Christian gospel on peoples who were considered “culturally primitive,” “religiously pagan,” “economically poor” and “technologically backward.”

Seeing mission as *Missio Dei* makes us realize that the Christian gospel is not the possession of any one people of a particular culture, but that it is meant for all peoples and cultures, and for all times and generations. The missionary is never the “owner” or “master” of the gospel, but only its “steward” and “servant.” Today, then, the missionary is called to preach the gospel not as if he or she owned it, dictating thereby the terms by which it must be understood, lived and celebrated. The approach of the missionary today must 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.

Mission, as we mentioned earlier, is entering into the Triune God’s ongoing dialogue with peoples. But in doing so, the missionary should be careful not to interpose himself/herself as an intermediary in this ongoing dialogue, but should rather promote it. He/she should guard against imposing his or her own agenda, but should rather discover God’s agenda in this ongoing dialogue. The missionary, therefore, will respect the freedom of God who is present and active among the people, and respect as well the freedom of the people who are responding in their own way and at their own pace. The missionary will walk with the people and respect the pace of the people’s walking. As a person of dialogue, the missionary will be one who facilitates rather than blocks the ongoing dialogue between God and God’s people.

This entails that today the missionary is called to evangelize from a position of powerlessness, lowliness and humility.¹⁶ He or she will not seek power—economic, cultural, technological, or even media

¹⁶ In his first letter, Peter says that Christians should “always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks ... for a reason for your hope,” but that they should do so with “gentleness and reverence” (1 Pet 3:15-16). Likewise, in his book *Transforming Mission*, David Bosch speaks of doing mission in “bold humility.”

power. The only power he or she will need is the power of the Word and of the Spirit. And that power is the power of love, which is manifested in self-giving. The ultimate reason for humility in mission is that mission is God's and not ours. Put differently, the Kingdom of God is an eschatological reality. And, even if we are called and sent to work for it, we do not know how, when and in what form God's Kingdom will emerge in the world. Thus, another expectation of missionaries today is the development of the spirit of humility and powerlessness in mission.

2.2.4. From only evangelizing to also being evangelized

A fourth conversion is from only evangelizing to also being evangelized. In the past, mission was thought of as a one-directional activity. Evangelization was like a one-way street, where everything was done by the missionary for the people. The missionary was the evangelizer, the people the evangelized. The missionary was the bearer of good news, the people the recipient of the gospel. The missionary was the subject, the people the object. The missionary was the preacher who proclaimed the truth, the people the ones who needed conversion.

Seeing mission as *Missio Dei* which entails dialogue changes our view of mission. It corrects the notion of mission as a one-way street which puts the emphasis almost entirely on the great work done by missionaries and the great gift brought by them, with little attention paid to the recipients of this gift. Dialogue underlines the fact that the Spirit is at work in the people being evangelized as well as in the evangelizers, and that mission is a two-way exchange of gifts between missionaries and the people with whom they work.

Consequently, missionaries must be ready to give and receive, to evangelize and be evangelized, to speak and to listen. They must be prepared to change and be changed, to form and be formed, to invite to conversion and be converted.

Thus, a fourth expectation of missionaries today is the promotion of the openness to being evangelized. We need to abandon the idea that mission entails only the task of evangelizing the people. We need to correct the assumption that evangelization is only for the people and not for the missionaries. We need to promote the idea that mission necessarily entails also our own ongoing evangelization as missionaries. As St. Joseph Freinademetz, our first SVD missionary to China, used to say: "The greatest task of the missionary is the transformation of one's inner self." We can expect the people to be convert-

ed to the Gospel and become disciples of Jesus only if we ourselves are ready to be converted and become truly one with the people.

3. Conclusion

I would like to conclude by saying that today is an exciting time for mission. A new mission paradigm calls for missionaries to be more contemplative, collaborative, humble and open to being evangelized themselves. A new mission situation suggests the need to promote a Church which is more inclusive and truly multicultural.

Our times are made even more exciting by the charismatic leadership of Pope Francis as Universal Pastor of the Church. He dreams, he says, of a missionary Church, more outward-looking rather than inward-looking, more concerned with affairs *ad extra* rather than with issues *ad intra* (cf. EG 27-28), ready to be “bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its own security” (EG 49).

And it is a mission that involves all of us together. For the basis of mission is the Joy of the Gospel, a joy which is a missionary joy, and a joy which excludes no one, for it is a joy for all people (cf. EG 20-23). Thus, the Pope says, “all of us are asked to obey his call to go forth from our own comfort zone in order to reach all the ‘peripheries’ in need of the light of the Gospel” (EG 20).

Today, then, as we celebrate the 50th anniversary of this mission seminary, the Divine Word Seminary of Tagaytay, allow me to join Pope Francis in inviting you all to join in Mission and to embark on this adventure of joy, the “Joy of the Gospel.”

ABSTRACTS

Der Missionsbegriff hat sich über die letzten fünf Jahrzehnte seit dem II. Vatikanischen Konzil mehrmals stark verändert. Ein „Paradigmenwechsel“ bezieht sich auf den Wechsel von einer kirchenzentrierten Perspektive zur *Missio Dei*, die Gott selbst in den Mittelpunkt stellt. Daraus ergeben sich wichtige Folgen für die Subjekte und die Handelnden der Mission. Ein „Situationswechsel“ fand im Kontext der Mission statt: Von der Mission als Einbahnstraße zu Völkern im Süden zur Mission entsprechend verschiedenen Situationen und als Antwort auf aktuelle Herausforderungen. Der zweite Teil des Artikels formuliert einige Folgerungen auf dem Gebiet der Multikulturalität, des interreligiösen Dialogs und der Evangelisierung.

El concepto de la misión ha pasado por varios cambios mayores a lo largo de los últimos 50 años desde el tiempo del Concilio Vaticano II. Un “cambio de paradigma” muestra el cambio de una perspectiva de misión centrada en

la iglesia a otra entendida como *missio Dei* que parte de Dios como el centro. De ahí resultan importantes consecuencias para los sujetos y protagonistas de la misión. El “cambio en la situación” de la misión se refiere al contexto de la misión: De una misión de una vía hacia los pueblos en el sur del mundo a una perspectiva de realizar la misión en diferentes situaciones y como respuestas a desafíos. La segunda parte del artículo formula varias consecuencias en el campo de la multiculturalidad, del diálogo interreligioso y de la evangelización.

Le concept de mission a subi plusieurs changements majeurs ces 50 dernières années, depuis le concile Vatican II. Un « changement de paradigme » montre le passage d'une perspective ecclésiocentrée à la *Missio Dei*, qui met Dieu au centre. Cela a des conséquences importantes pour les sujets et les acteurs de la mission. Le « changement situationnel » a trait au contexte de la mission : d'une perspective à sens unique de la mission vers les peuples du Sud globalisé à une perspective qui porte la mission dans les différentes situations et comme une réponse à des défis. La seconde partie de l'article formule plusieurs des conséquences dans le champ de la multiculturalité, du dialogue interreligieux et de l'évangélisation.