

Missio Dei in Practice

Seventy years ago, at the Willingen Mission Conference in 1952, mission was described in a manner that soon after became known by the keyword “*missio Dei*”. This view was received also by the Catholic Church and expressed prominently in the Vatican II document on Mission, *Ad gentes*. Later on, in the Catholic discourse, other key perspectives were favoured.

The Divine Word Missionaries (SVD) returned to the “*missio Dei*” view in their General Chapter in 2000 and formulated the consequence as the “prophetic dialogue” of doing mission. Since that time, the perspective of “*missio Dei*” has returned strongly as a key concept for understanding mission. Thus, as an example, at the SEDOS Mission Symposium of October 2021, virtually every speaker acknowledged in different expressions the fact that mission belongs to God and starts with God.

Nevertheless, for the Divine Word Missionaries, the basic perspective of “*missio Dei*” has been somewhat eclipsed by the practical consequences of it, in the emphasis on the prophetic dialogue which has received much attention in research and theological exposition. The more fundamental view of “*missio Dei*” still requires further reflection which should lead to more daring missionary attitudes and commitments beyond the constraints of ecclesiocentric perspectives and inner-church related activities of the missionaries.

Our proposal

The SVD runs several academic institutions in the German Province: The Anthropos Institute (initiated 1931/2), the Missiological Institute (started in 1962), and since 1972, also Monumenta Serica. This coincidence with the 70-year commemoration of the Willingen Conference invites to a renewed reflection on what “*missio Dei*” implies in actual practical terms for the missionary engagement, first of all for the Divine Word Missionaries, but also for other groups and agents.

We have published a special issue of the journal *Verbum SVD*, dedicated to a review of the historical process since Willingen and the resonance the concept has received particularly within the SVD. This issue might serve as the presentation of the *status quaestionis* regarding “*missio Dei*”.

In November 2022, we shall meet for a workshop to discuss further what it means in practice to share in God’s mission, as Divine Word Missionaries or as other actors in church and society.