

A Missionary and Evangelising Church

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Foundations-1

- The God who *‘addresses humankind as friends and moves among them, in order to invite and receive them into (God’s) own company’* [Vatican II, “Constitution on Divine Revelation,” article 2]
- God’s mission in Jesus is to give life: to heal and reconcile; it embraces past, present, and future
- The church is a community of ‘receivers’ formed by the grace of the Holy Spirit: we are to reflect God’s mission

Foundations-2

- Neither 'mission' nor 'evangelisation' are simply extras to life of church, but can be names for WHOLE of Christian life
- Recognition that what we have received is what God desires for everyone: need to 'sniff out' God's grace at work in the world
- Christian faith is never 'disembodied': it is inseparable from relationship with self, others, 'the world', and all creation

Definition

[Mission is] the good news of God's love,
incarnated in the witness of a community,
for the sake of the world.

- David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, 519

Obstacles: History

- link between missionaries and colonialization; disrespect for cultures/religions
- link between evangelising and fundamentalism and— conflicts with contemporary values
- ‘Ikeaisation’ of the church: everyone has to be the same

Obstacles: Attitudes

- Implied superiority: we have what others don't
- Implied uncritical 'perfection'
- 'Enoughness' of modern world: irrelevance of message
- Church's own life—scandal, division, 'out-of-touch'
- Concern to bolster numbers in face of decline
- Uncertainty about what to do: impossible to begin
- Fear of failure

Orientations

- Grace is present before we arrive: the world is never less than God's world
- Grace is a gift for everyone—ourselves included
- Responding to grace as a life-long activity: this saves us from sense of perfection/superiority
- We are not the saviours: remembering this means we avoid fixation on 'results' of our efforts

Focal Points for Mission-1

- Recognition that primary HUMAN issues—justice, peace, and future of the planet—are venues for being people of faith, hope, and love
- What do we need to LEARN in order to live as Christians in the world?: requires attentiveness to Spirit, in the world as well as in specifically Christian sources
- Developing capacity for DIALOGUE and COLLABORATION
- Acting LOCALLY, with awareness of relationship to larger issues

Focal Points for Mission-2

- Nurturing the gifts we have already received—as individuals and communities
- Not true that nobody can act till everybody acts
- Seeking partnerships with existing social groups/projects
- Seeing opportunities, not simply difficulties

Focal Points for Mission-3

- Attention to our own conversion as communities and individuals—link to RCIA
- ‘Success’ /reputation is not ultimate criterion: being attentive to others and responding as needed
- Questioning our communal witness:
 - ❖ Why would someone join us?
 - ❖ What sustains someone who joins us?
 - ❖ Does liturgy/faith-formation nurture action?
 - ❖ ‘Parish-bulletin test’

Vision

- An evangelising community is filled with joy
...Evangelisation with joy becomes beauty in the liturgy,
as part of our daily concern to spread goodness
The Church evangelises and is herself evangelised
through the beauty of the liturgy, which is both a
celebration of the task of evangelisation and the source
of her renewed self-giving.
- Pope Francis, *The Joy of the Gospel* (2013), article 24