

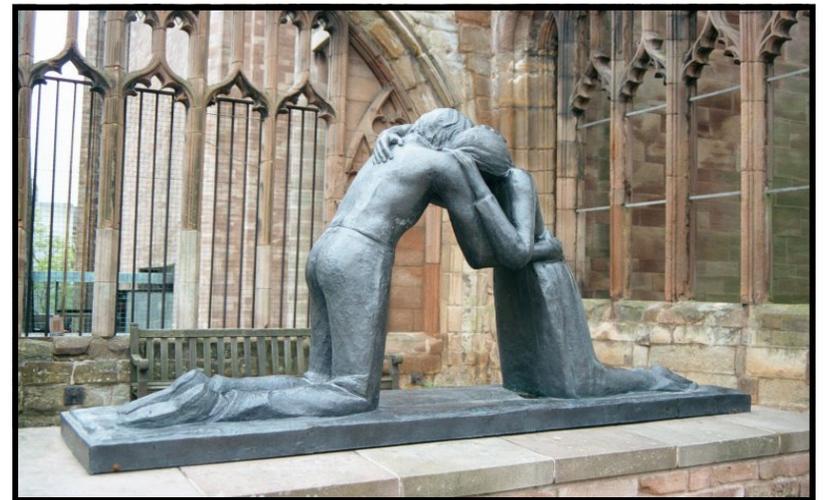
Third Wave Mission Movement

In his keynote address at the Maryknoll Centennial Theological Symposium in Chicago in October 2011, Fr. Robert Schreiter CPPS, described what he calls a "Third Wave of Mission." Schreiter referred to the 1st Wave as those missionaries who accompanied the early explorers into the Americas. The 2nd Wave he referred to as those missionaries from the early mission societies and religious orders who were so influential in growing the local churches in Africa and Latin America, as well as in Asia. Though this 2nd Wave continues strongly today, there is a 3rd Wave of mission being engaged in by thousands of Catholics and other Christians from a multitude of dioceses, parishes, schools and universities who have taken up the *Ad Gentes* challenge to engage in mission.

Therefore, as an element of mission, Reconciliation is about the healing of humanity, the pursuit of justice, and the telling of truth. It is about connecting together the shreds of broken lives and attending to wounds.

Questions for Reflection:

1. How can we, as agents of God's reconciliation, engage in the work of reconciliation in our mission work?
2. Why is it so important to understand that Reconciliation is more a *spirituality* than a *strategy*?



6. RECONCILIATION

- Though it is true that Reconciliation is one of the elements of mission, we need to be clear that reconciliation is the work of God, reconciling the world in Christ.
- Though God is the principal agent of Reconciliation, God uses us in this sacred work.
- Very often those who have so experienced God's reconciling love discern in that love not only how to come to terms with the terrible things that have happened to them, but also discover a vocation, a calling from God, to be the healers and reconcilers in the shattered world around them.
- We cannot take this ministry unto ourselves; it is something that comes to us through the reconciling experience of God's grace calling us to be a reconcilers and healers.
- We create ministry around people who support and extend the work of reconciliation. These communities of memory exhibit hospitality and truth-telling; they serve as a place of connection.
- A ministry of reconciliation also fosters communities of hope. The work of reconciliation is not only coming to terms with the past. It is also about coming to a new place from which a new society is constructed. . . A community of hope manifests its hope by looking to the future; to the building of a new and just society.

INTRODUCTION

Since the renewal of the Second Vatican Council, many things have changed with the Catholic Church. One of the most important changes has been the renewed understanding of the Church's fundamental identity as the People of God.

In the Decree on the Church's Missionary activity the Fathers of the Council declared that the church is missionary by her very nature.

In the 50 years since the Council much has been said to try to enunciate this mission. In an attempt to capture the all-embracing dynamic of mission in a one-line definition, one can say that mission is proclaiming, serving and witnessing to God's reign of love, salvation and justice.

Questions for Reflection:

1. What do you think is the significance of the Church declaring at Vatican II that "the Church by her very nature is missionary?"
2. In your own words, how would you define the mission of the Church?

1. WITNESS AND PROCLAMATION

Jesus' mission was one of both words and deeds. The words explain the deeds and the deeds explain the words.

Witness:

Pope Paul VI wrote that "the first means of evangelization is the witness of an authentically Christian life." He said that "modern women and men listen more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if they do listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses."

The Church's missionary witness is *personal* (most often the Christian witness by men and women in their ordinary lives). . . but also done in *common by the community* (loving one another, living inter-culturally, doing justice) . . . as well as via *church institutions* (like schools or hospitals).

Proclamation:

However, we must also explicitly proclaim Jesus and his vision of the reign of God; Pope John Paul II said this is "the permanent priority of mission." It had been said before that the task of evangelization would be empty without proclaiming "the name, the teaching, the life, the promises, the Kingdom and the mystery of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God." (Paul VI) . . . We can then say that proclamation is the act of communicating the gospel about Jesus and the gospel of Jesus.

Questions for Reflection:

1. How can we witness to the Gospel in our daily lives?
2. How do you share your experience of Jesus with others?
3. What do you think of David Bosch's statement?
"The deed without the word is dumb; the word without the deed is empty?"

- In the past, many missionaries have mistakenly tried to simply implant the Church as it was experienced in their homelands, seeing the culture of other peoples in a very negative light. . . However, other missionaries took a much more accommodating approach and a more positive attitude toward new cultures, e.g. St. Cyril and Methodius, St. Francis Xavier, Bartolomé de las Casas.
- In recent times missionaries have heard the teaching of the Church that they must not "*bring any pressure for the peoples to change their manners, customs, and uses - unless they are evidently contrary to religion and sound morals.*" They help all of us understand that Catholic Christianity, while it is to be universal and unified, does not imply uniformity in all areas and at all levels.
- Missioners must have a profound personal knowledge of and encounter with Jesus Christ in order to best articulate the gospel in time and place.
- Inculturating the gospel is not an easy endeavor. It requires an open heart, a love for the people, a commitment to embrace the cross, and an acceptance of the paschal mystery. It is indeed a defining characteristic of the mission of the church and well worth the undertaking.

Questions for Reflection:

1. What different expressions of faith have you noticed among other ethnic groups living in the United States?
2. In your mission experiences where have you experienced expressions of faith which have surprised and/or challenged you?

Forms of Dialogue

Dialogue of Life in which Christians live and rub shoulders with people of other faiths and ideologies. . . Dialogue of Social Action by which women and men work together for common issues of justice. . . Dialogue of Theological Exchange where experts probe one another's doctrines and practices, challenging and inspiring one another's sacred documents and authors. . . A significant form of dialogue is the Dialogue of Religious Experience where we engage in the sharing of our experience of the transcendent God and our modes and practices of spirituality.

Questions for Reflection:

1. Why would you think that interreligious dialogue is of the very nature of mission?
2. How do you see yourself engaging in some form of interreligious dialogue?

5. INCULTURATION

In speaking about the Church in Africa, Pope John Paul II said that *"inculturation is one of the greatest challenges for the church."*

A good definition of inculturation is *"the incarnation of Christian life and of the Christian message in a particular cultural context."* . . . Other definitions emphasize its goals, e.g. *"the rooting of Christianity in diverse cultures," "the transformation of cultures in light of the Gospel," or "the unique expression of the church present in every culture."*

2. LITURGY, PRAYER AND CONTEMPLATION

- Celebration of the Liturgy is an evangelizing act. It is both an *outside/in* and *inside/out* movement: we bring the voices and concerns of the neighborhood and world into the Liturgy - and we bring our experience of the Word of God and Communion to our world as we leave the Liturgy.
- The commitment to spread the gospel is not simply a matter of heroic work in cross-cultural situations; it is a matter of allowing the missionary task to shape Christian spirituality.
- We normally may not consider Liturgy, prayer and contemplation as acts of mission. However, they draw us to see and encounter the world and others more and more from God's viewpoint.
- Popular religiosity manifests a fundamental characteristic: the union of faith and life. In many 3rd world countries, devotion to the Virgin Mary is a high priority for the poor.
- Liturgy, prayer and contemplation are essential dimensions of mission. When focused on evangelization they bind the missionary disciples together and challenge them to align their lives with God's mission of love, salvation and justice.

Questions for Reflection:

1. How does what I do in mission impact my participation in prayer and Mass?
2. How do you experience the dismissal at Mass as sending you forth into mission?

3. PURSUIT OF JUSTICE. PEACE, AND INTEGRITY OF CREATION

The mission of God calls the church to pursue work for a just and peaceful world and to care for God's gift of creation.

Justice: The Catholic Bishops stated in their 1971 World Synod that *"unless the Christian message of love and justice shows its effectiveness through action in the cause of justice in the world, it will not gain credibility with the people of our times."*

. . . And Pope Francis echoed that truth saying: *"The measure of the greatness of a society is found in the way it treats those most in need, those who have nothing apart from their poverty."*

Justice is concrete action not abstract rhetoric. It includes charitable as well as prophetic actions, eg: working for fair immigration laws, campaigning for an abolition of the death penalty, promoting the sacredness of human life, and rejecting all forms of racism and sexism.

Integrity of Creation: To assure the integrity of creation, we are called to live simply - which goes way beyond how we live. It is more about the way we live, i.e. how we interact with the world around us.

Mission includes witnessing to the goodness of God's creation and joining the rest of humanity in caring for creation.

Peace: In recent years the devastation of war, combined with the threat of nuclear and chemical weapons, has cast a pall over the world.

The tragic stories and experiences of soldiers and civilians in many affected nations and the threat of terrorism make a search for peace a concern for all individuals and peoples.

Question for Reflection:

How does our participation in mission immersion programs empower us to engage in actions on behalf of justice? (e.g: working for fair immigration laws, campaigning for an abolition of the death penalty, promoting the sacredness of human life, and rejecting all forms of racism and sexism.)

4. INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

All Christian communities are called to practice dialogue because we live in a world of many, sometimes conflicting, religions. The only way to be in mission today is to respect other people's beliefs and collaborate with other faith traditions as well as with people who have no faith or who find church faith irrelevant.



Interreligious dialogue is not an extra; it is not a luxury which we can enter into if or when we want. Interreligious dialogue is of the very nature of the missionary work of the church.