

MISSION TODAY

Contemporary Themes in Missiology

by

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I. AWARE WE ARE SENT

Exploring a Spirituality for Mission

Adequately capturing realities in the spiritual life always demands the use of dynamic, expansive language. For this reason, spirituality is frequently described in relational categories—between a disciple and the master, between a Christian and a personal God, between the servant-herald and the crucified-risen Lord. Such a relationship of intimacy is at the heart of biblical spirituality: “I will be your God and you shall be my people” (Ex 19:4-6; Lev 26:12; Deut 7:6-9; Jer 11:4; Jer 30:22); Christians are Jesus’ friends (Jn 15:15) and call their heavenly Father “Abba” (Rom 8:15; Gal 4:6).

Spirituality may also variously be described in terms of a growth process, an evolution toward maturity, a pilgrimage. Each descriptive category attempts to present an authentic, albeit partial, grasp of the human-divine dynamic operative in our lives. In this piece, “consciousness” or “awareness” forms the framework to enhance our insight into spirituality. And, this category naturally overflows with an apostolic or missionary dynamism!

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Consciousness: A Window into Spirituality

Consciousness may seem to be an elusive concept; yet, no one would deny the reality. An individual is in a conscious state when perceptual and cognitive faculties are functioning normally. One continuously synthesizes various stimuli from within and from without; ideally, the result is a healthy personal integration.

Notice that a whole panorama of constitutive elements are included within the framework of consciousness. Diverse aspects of conscious awareness derive from one's seeing, hearing, feeling, thinking, desiring, experiencing. Consciousness incorporates perceptions, emotions, observations, thoughts, aspirations, choices. It also includes an introspective awareness of the personal impact of all events and experience.

In light of this brief and rudimentary description of the phenomenon of human consciousness, one may begin to elaborate the relationship between consciousness and a spirituality of the apostolate. Our faith-life derives much profit from prayer, reflection, experience, service — all focused on raising our God-consciousness and expanding the horizons of our spiritual awareness. We want to use our eyes to see perceptively and our ears to hear attentively (Mk 8:18); we hope to gain deepened insight into our lives through faith's mirror (Jas 1:22-25).

In another vein, a look at the venerable Eastern traditions of many Asian nations reveals that the man of God or the God-conscious/God-focused person is essentially a seer, sage, or mystic. Such a person "sees" and experiences God; God is not an object of knowledge, but a subject of experience. To grow in holistic spirituality is concomitant with an experiential awareness and consciousness of God's presence and activity in all dimensions of one's life (Arguelles, 50-51).

The beautiful prayer in the *Upanishads*, one of the Hindu sacred books, expresses the aspiration and spiritual desire to come to this deeper conscious union with the divine. In Sanskrit and English it is:

Asato ma satgamaya
Tamaso ma jyotir gamaya
Mrutyu ma amrutam gamaya.

God, lead me from untruth to truth
Lead me from darkness to light
Lead me from death to immortality.

Thomas Merton, the Trappist monk and spiritual writer (1915-1968), has enabled countless people gain insights into their spirituality. Merton intimately links spirituality and prayer with the transformation of consciousness. He sees that a renewed conscious awareness underlies all spiritual growth; each Christian must cease to assert himself as the center of consciousness and discover God's presence as the deepest center of consciousness within him. Thus, as one's self-consciousness changes, the individual is transformed; one's self is no longer its own center; it is now centered on God.

It is important to note that for Merton no one will ever be capable of communion with God and others without this deep awakening, this transformation of consciousness. Such transformative growth, as explained by Merton, "consists in a double movement: man's entering into the deepest center of himself, and then, after passing through that center, going out of himself to God" (Higgins, 49).

In addition, Merton asserts that unless our spirituality/prayer "does something to awaken in us a consciousness of our union with God, of our complete dependence upon him for all our vital acts in the spiritual life, and of his constant loving presence in the depths of our souls, it has not achieved the full effect for which it is intended" (Merton-A, 67). Or again, Merton holds that in today's world: "What is required of Christians is that they develop a completely modern and contemporary *consciousness* in which their experience as men of our century is integrated with their experience as children of God redeemed by Christ" (Merton-B, 279).

The renowned Indian theologian, D. S. Amalorpavadass, has written eloquently on the role of consciousness/awareness in attaining spiritual integration and interiorization. He notes:

If wholeness is a state of being at which one should finally arrive in stages, awareness is the running thread and unifying force. Awareness needs to flow like a river, like a blood-stream. ... Awareness is also the core of spirituality and God-experience.

Awareness or consciousness should flow through the various actions of our life. One should maintain awareness in all that one does. It should serve as a running thread and connecting bond ... through the various activities of our day, and the different periods and stages of our life in an uninterrupted and continuous flow. This flow will make our whole life a continuous prayer and a state of contemplation (Amalorpavadass, 4, 24).

Brief glimpses at Scripture, Eastern traditions, a Trappist monk, and a contemporary theologian have shown that “consciousness” is a fruitful category to grasp the human-divine dynamic operative in the Christian life. Within this framework — which is foundational — a vibrant spirituality and a concomitant missionary dynamism can flourish. And, in a Marian spirit, Christians who are missionary will grow ever more conscious of the marvelous deeds that God is accomplishing in us, our neighbors, our society, our church and the entire world.

The Consciousness of Paul the Missionary

The New Testament describes the radical nature of Paul’s awareness of God’s active presence in his life. Though not naturally prone to humility, Paul admits that he was knocked to the ground (Acts 9:4) and that in Damascus “something like scales fell from his eyes” (Acts 9:18). His grace-filled conversion allowed him to perceive that he was the chosen instrument to bring Good News to the Gentiles and that he would accomplish his mission only with hardship and through suffering (Acts 9:15-16).

Paul’s consciousness of his apostolic calling was certainly at the basis of his extraordinary missionary journeys. Without a vivid perception and faith commitment, no one would willingly endure the challenges Paul faced (II Cor. 11:23-30). Such endurance under trial would be no more than absolute foolishness! Yet, Paul is never willing — even momentarily — to minimize his authority and commitment as an apostle; the introductory verses of many of his letters are clear evidence of this fact. Paul’s conversion was no superficial or passing phenomenon; it penetrated the core of his person and totally transformed his way of thinking and acting — his consciousness.

Further investigation into Pauline theology and spirituality reveals the depth of his convictions. Paul is absolutely certain that God has a wonderful, marvelous, loving plan of salvation for the entire world (note his frequent use of the words *mysterion* and *oikonomia*). His letter to the Ephesians convincingly — almost mystically — explains how “God has given us the wisdom to understand fully the mystery” (1:9), “the mysterious design which for ages was hidden in God” (3:9).

Pauline reflection on God’s loving plan of salvation (*mysterion*) synthesizes his belief that this design has been fully revealed in Christ the Savior and will be recapitulated in Christ at the end of time. This manifestation is focused on salvation, not condemnation or judgment, and is open to all peoples. It unfolds in stages: God, Jesus, Spirit, church, world; humanity’s response is faith or personal appropriation of the *mysterion* (Fitzmyer, 807-808).

A recent scholarly investigation (Plevnik, 477-478) has concluded that “any center of Pauline theology must therefore include *all* these components of the apostle’s gospel: his understanding of Christ and of God, his understanding of God’s salvific action through Christ, involving the Easter event and its implications, the present lordship, the future coming of Christ, and the appropriation of salvation. The center is thus not any *single* aspect of Christ, or of God’s action through Christ, but rather the whole and undivided richness and mystery of Christ and of the Father’s saving purpose through his Son” (*mysterion*). In brief, mystery could be a one-word synonym which captures the heart of the Christian message.

Paul is the missionary par excellence because he believed, lived, prayed, served, reflected, witnessed, preached and suffered so that God’s *mysterion* would be known, extended, loved and freely received. Obviously, Paul’s missionary consciousness had the “*mysterion*-encounter” as its central focus and driving force.

Paul’s self-awareness as an apostle was rooted in being chosen as a servant and minister of God’s loving plan of salvation (Rom 1:1-6; 1 Cor 4:1; 15:9-11; Eph 3:1-21; Col 1:24-29). It might be asserted that the *mysterion* engulfed and consumed Paul; his consciousness was so transformed that he could assert that Christ lived in him (Gal 2:20), that fellow-Christians could imitate him (1 Cor 4:16), that life or death no longer mattered (Rom 14:8), and that he gloried in giving his life for Christ (2 Tim 4:6). In a word, the *mysterion* is foundational to Paul’s missionary identity and consciousness!

Mission and Mysterion Consciousness

The Second Vatican Council in its decree on the missionary activity of the church places mission and evangelization at the center of the church — not allowing this task to float somewhere on the periphery: “The pilgrim church is missionary by her very nature” (AG, 2). Pope Paul VI continues in the same vein: “We wish to confirm once more that the task of evangelizing all peoples constitutes the essential mission of the church. ... Evangelizing is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the church, her deepest identity. She exists in order to evangelize ...” (EN, 14).

To evangelize: what meaning does this imperative have for the church? It is to be no less than the living proclamation of the *mysterion* — God’s loving design of universal salvation. As the community of Jesus’ disciples, the church realizes her “deepest identity” and “her very nature”

when she fulfills her mission of evangelization. She is to be always and everywhere “the universal sacrament of salvation” (LG, 48; AG, 1). For her, to live is to evangelize!

Phrased in contemporary language, the church accomplishes her “self-realization” or “self-actualization” through mission and evangelization. She is only authentic and true to herself when she is announcing and witnessing the *mysterion*. A non-missionary church is impossible; it is self-contradictory. Once again, the great missionary pope, Paul VI, writes that the church “is linked to evangelization in her most intimate being” (EN, 15); mission is not “an optional contribution for the church” (EN, 5).

In addition, the church’s missionary identity is not a late afterthought of the risen Jesus — though this outlook may seem true today of some Christians and local churches. Animation and rededication are necessary, because Christians “are faithful to the nature of the church to the degree that we love and sincerely promote her missionary activity” (EE, 2).

These few paragraphs may invite the comment that “I’ve heard it all before.” True, yet all of us often hear without hearing, see without seeing, and listen without comprehending (Mk 8:17-18). It is precisely at this juncture that the phenomenon of consciousness is poignantly relevant. Many Christians do not deny the missionary nature of the church, but their level of conscious awareness is weak or minimal. This fact is unfortunately true even of many full-time church personnel. The intention here is not to berate or castigate individuals; rather, it is a stark statement of the need for “consciousness-raising”; it is a call for Christians to expand and deepen their awareness; all urgently need “conscientization-into-mission.” In short, the entire church herself must experience a profound re-evangelization in order to become a truly evangelizing community!

Recall some of the key themes presented earlier on the centrality of consciousness in Christian life and spirituality. In a unique way they seem particularly relevant as the church struggles with her fundamental missionary identity. Is not this a central burning question in the church today: What has happened to her mission consciousness — where is its urgency and dynamism — where are the contemporary St. Pauls?

A rephrasing in mission terms of earlier quotes on consciousness from Amalorpavadass may prove enlightening: Church-as-mission is “the running thread and unifying force”; it “needs to flow like a river, like a blood-stream”; it is at “the core of spirituality and God-experience”; it “will make our whole life a continuous prayer and state of contemplation.”

Trinitarian Foundations for Mission Consciousness and Spirituality

In the very same breath that the Vatican Council spoke of the church's missionary identity, it also presented the foundational rationale of mission. In a word, the why? of church-as-mission is Trinitarian: "For it is from the mission of the Son and the mission of the Holy Spirit that she takes her origin, in accordance with the decree of God the Father" (AG, 2).

This mission vision — expressed in Trinitarian language — must not frighten or intimidate readers. Do not say: "I don't understand Trinitarian theology, so I can't grasp this"! While a bit difficult and challenging, this insight is also beautiful and rewarding. It transports us to the heart of mission; it flows from the core of our faith in the Trinity; it greatly enhances our mission-consciousness and spirituality.

The most inviting manner to appreciate mission — via the Trinity — is to remember that it is an eminently personal approach. The Father is a person, his son Jesus is a person, their gift of the Spirit is also a person. This is only a statement of a basic dogma of the faith. Grasping this immanence/closeness of the three persons appears far more fruitful than grappling with the incomprehensibility of the transcendent Trinity (Billy, 602-611).

Growth in consciousness-awareness-experience-encounter with each of the three persons richly broadens our vision of mission. It also manifests that mission theology and spirituality draw from the same wellspring. An appreciation of the roles of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit in mission produces an integrated missiology, incorporating "Abba"-theology, Christology, and Pneumatology. The result will certainly be a more holistic theology-spirituality of mission.

Finally, it is the firm conviction of this author that such an approach serves to relieve some current tensions and questions in mission. For example, debates centered on interreligious dialogue with the living faith traditions of the world can probably be better resolved more from a Pneumatological approach than from only a Christological viewpoint. Therefore, if mission theology-spirituality are an integrated endeavor, the deepened consciousness will provide insights to approach both theoretical and practical questions.

Our attention now turns to the unique roles of Father, Son, and Spirit in mission. The goal of this discussion is a heightened awareness of how each person of the Trinity sends and accompanies us into mission. Recall the title of this presentation which links mission and spirituality

with a consciousness of being sent.

The Role of the Father

The Father is presented in Scripture as the harvest master and vineyard owner (Mt 20:1-16; 21:33-43). Mission, therefore, originates with the Father; mission is God's project. The Father determines its parameters. Already this awareness places the church and her evangelizers in an auxiliary, servant role.

Vatican II clearly set aside triumphalistic ecclesiology as well as any simplistic church-kingdom identification. As servant of the kingdom or laborer in the vineyard, the church is to be "the kingdom of Christ now present in mystery" and "the initial budding forth of that kingdom" (LG, 3, 5). In addition, the Council, situating the church within the larger framework of God's design of salvation (*mysterion*), entitled its first chapter of the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church: "The Mystery of the Church." Within this context, the church and all missionaries must radically see themselves serving the *mysterion*, "according to the will of God the Father" (AG, 2).

Truly, the Father desires generous cooperators and humble workers for the harvest (Mt 20:1-16; Lk 10:1-11). He freely chooses them and they are to belong to him (Lk 6:13; Mk 3:13-16); Jn 15:15-16). These passages remind evangelizers that all mission is a sending (*missio/mittere*), originating in the Father; their vocation is God's gratuitous gift. Missioners do not send themselves; mission cannot be defined in legal terms; all must be according to the Father's gracious design. Affirming mission, therefore, as a gratuitous gift in the Father's gracious vision, emphasizes the centrality of grace. Thus, missioners understand, as the country priest in Bernanos' novel says on his deathbed, in all vocations "Grace is everywhere" (Bernanos, 233).

Trinitarian mission is always soteriological; its purpose is liberation and salvation. The Father has no other goal as Paul clearly reminded Timothy: he "wants all to be saved and come to know the truth" (1 Tim 2:4). Condemnation or rejection are inconsistent with the Father's design (Jn 3:16-17; Mt 18:14). The Father, overwhelmingly "rich in mercy" (Eph 2:4), extends his great love to everyone as the universalism of both Luke and Paul portray.

All evangelizers have experienced "the kindness and love of God" (Tit 3:4); it is out of their deep consciousness of the Father's personal graciousness that they journey to all places, peoples, and cultures. They are aware that they have received all as gift and they desire to give all with

the same generosity (Mt 10:8). Any missionary would relish being described as being “rich in mercy”!

The Father cannot be surpassed in his kindness and generosity (Jas 1:5; 1:17); his mercy is made concrete and visible when he sends Jesus his son. This is definitely a new mode of God’s presence with his people — it is love in personal form. This unfolding of the *mysterion* far surpasses previous manifestations of Yahweh’s presence to his people Israel (Heb 1:1-2). Missioners strive to be continuations of the love of God manifested personally in Jesus — and this approach brings transformation and deepened consciousness.

Our discussion of the Father’s role in mission carries us back to the heart of the Trinity. God is fundamentally love (1 Jn 4:8) and all manifestations flow from this identity. No less than the inner life of the Trinity is founded on the dynamism of divine love. Thus, the *mysterion* necessarily is a loving design since it arises “from that ‘fountain of love’ or charity (*fontalis amor*) within God the Father” (AG, 2).

It is imperative that missionaries and evangelizers become mystics like John the Evangelist (cf. 1 Jn 4:7-21); nothing less can explain the love of God for a fallen world and rebellious humanity. No other motivation is adequate to the missionary calling — of the entire church! Mother Teresa of Calcutta has named her congregation the Missionaries of Charity and she never tires of reminding her audiences that this is the fundamental vocation of all Christians. It sounds fantastic — but it is true: the love of the Trinity is personally poured into our hearts and it transforms all evangelizers into missionary messengers of God’s limitless love! Knowing our personal God as the font of love is the highest level of consciousness possible. Mission spirituality becomes a conscious centering on Trinitarian love. This is the solid missiology-become-spirituality promoted by Vatican II.

The Mission of the Son

Jesus declares openly that he has been sent by his loving Father; precisely, the phrase “the Father who sent me” occurs 46 times in the Gospel of John. And, a salvific thrust is evident in the missioning of Jesus by his Father. Vatican II expresses Jesus’ mission as a reconciling presence: “... to establish peace or communion between sinful human beings and Himself ... Jesus Christ was sent into the world as a real Mediator between God and men” (AG, 3). In Paul’s theology, mediation and reconciliation are vital elements of the *mysterion* (2 Cor 5:19; Col 1:13; Rom 5:1).

Jesus' continuing "Abba-experience" (Kavunkal, 9-15) — enabling him to faithfully accomplish his mission — has several dimensions: his coming or proceeding from the Father (noted above), his remaining with the Father (Jn 10:38; 16:32), and his eventual return to the Father (Jn 16:5; 7:33; 13:36). This means that Jesus fulfills his mission in light of a particular consciousness: continual intimacy with his Father. Luke tells us that before making such a decisive move in his ministry as the choice of the Twelve, Jesus "went out to the mountains to pray, spending the night in communion with God" (Lk 6:12). Mission in the Jesus mode has its source, continuation, and fulfillment in the "Abba-experience." This dimension in Jesus' pattern of living mission provides evangelizers an inviting model for their own mission consciousness.

In its holistic vision of God's design for salvation, the Council sees the church as continuing, developing, and unfolding "the mission of Christ Himself" (AG, 5). The apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (13-16, 59-60) and the pastoral statement on world mission of the United States Bishops *To the Ends of the Earth* (25-27) also confirm mission as an ecclesial act in fidelity to Jesus.

Contemporary evangelizers, cognizant of the Jesus-Church continuity, seek to live and witness as the community of Jesus' followers. They recall his promises (Mt 16:18; 28:20), but readily admit they are fragile "earthen vessels" (2 Cor 4:7). They faithfully accept that "Christ in His mission from the Father is the fountain and source of the whole apostolate of the Church" (AA, 4). A missionary's model is "*sentire cum-ecclesia*" (feel and think with the church), frankly admitting that one is "*simul justus et peccator*" (concomitantly both upright and sinful). Who among Jesus' followers does not need a deeper consciousness of these realities?

Central to the mission of Jesus is the mystery of the Incarnation: "the Son of God walked the ways of a true Incarnation that He might make men sharers in the divine nature" (AG, 3). This radical identification of our brother Jesus with us mortals (Heb 4:15) makes us rich out of his poverty (2 Cor. 8:9). He became a servant (Mk 10:45) and gave his life "as a ransom for the many — that is, for all" (AG, 3).

Consistently, Church Fathers of both East and West have held that "what was not taken up [assumed] by Christ was not healed" (Abbott, 587: note 9). Thus, when Jesus took to himself our entire humanity, he healed, renewed, and saved us. In brief, Incarnation is the fundamental pattern of all mission. Today evangelizers are deeply conscious of the ramifications of mission as incarnation. No missionary worthy of the name underestimates the importance of indigenization and inculturation; they

develop a spirituality of “depth identification,” becoming as vulnerable as Jesus was in his humanity. This same pattern is the model of growth and development of all local churches (AG, 22).

While it is certain that the mission of Jesus is initiated at the Incarnation, his baptism by John in the Jordan is an act of public commitment-consecration to mission. Jesus pursues his ministry; though it will encounter growing opposition and lead to the human disaster of Calvary, he will not betray his commitment.

Note that Matthew, Mark, and Luke all juxtapose Jesus’ baptism and the triple temptations in the wilderness. The tactic of Satan is to subvert Jesus with possessions, pride, and power; at the core, all Satan’s promises tantalize Jesus to renege on his dedication to mission. The more conscious that an evangelizer becomes of the struggle involved in mission-faithfulness, the closer he will be drawn to Jesus “who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.” The missionary will constantly and with confidence “approach the throne of grace to receive mercy and favor and to find help in time of need” (Heb 4:15-16).

Instructive for the church and her evangelizers is an appreciation of the continual action of the Spirit in the life of Jesus. The creed affirms that he was conceived “by the power of the Holy Spirit.” The same Spirit descends on Jesus at the moment of his baptism (Mt 3:17); he is led by the Spirit to the desert (Mt 4:1); he returns to Galilee in the power of the Spirit (Lk 4:14); he begins his preaching mission at Nazareth asserting that “the Spirit of the Lord is upon me” (Lk 4:18).

As Jesus was empowered by the Spirit, he sends forth his own disciples saying: “Receive the Holy Spirit” (Jn 20:22). Peter (Acts 4:8), Paul (Acts 9:17), and Stephen (Acts 6:5; 7:55), as well as those who listened to their preaching (Acts 10:44), were all filled with the Spirit. In fact, the entire nascent church brims with the Spirit’s presence (Acts 2:4) and thus, the community increases while it enjoys the consolation of the befriending Spirit (Acts 9:31). Jesus, his disciples, and likewise today’s evangelizers all are in mission through the marvelous action of the Spirit (Kroeger-A, 3-12).

Concretely in the practical order, Jesus carries out his mission through evangelization — proclaiming the Good News of the Kingdom. The first words that Mark places on Jesus’ lips are centered on this very theme (Mk 1:15). Luke also portrays Jesus’ mission as focused on glad tidings to the “little ones of this world” (Lk 4:18-19). As Paul VI has noted, this theme “sums up the whole mission of Jesus” (EN, 6). Jesus could not be impeded in his ministry: “I must announce the good news

of the reign of God, because that is why I was sent” (Lk 4:43).

Contemporary evangelizers, reflecting on the urgency and scope of Jesus’ kingdom proclamation, will find themselves imitating Jesus’ ministry as he lived it in silence, in action, in dialogue, in teaching, and in prayer. Yes, the Good News of the Kingdom for Jesus means an integral, holistic approach to evangelization — because all dimensions of the total gospel are expressions of his enduring love (Jn 13:1).

Jesus’ entire life, from the Incarnation to Pentecost, was a proclamation. All he said and did were a testimony to the Father’s loving design (Jn 3:31-35; 7:16; 8:38; 14:24). Jesus existed on nothing else; his “sustenance-food-meat” was to do the will and work of the one who sent him (Jn 4:34). In everything Jesus was faithful to the Father.

Reflective, insightful evangelizers interiorize the fidelity mind-set of Jesus (Phil 2:5); they also imitate St. Paul in his concern for faithful transmission of the message of Jesus preserved by the church (1 Cor 15:3, 11). In prayer and meditation missionaries re-focus themselves on Jesus and his kingdom — and often this demands setting aside personal opinions and ambitions. Mother Teresa of Calcutta notes that Jesus does not always call us to be successful, but he always invites us to be faithful.

This fidelity to Jesus and his message should not be interpreted in too narrow a sense. As announcers of Good News, we consciously interiorize Jesus’ gospel values; however, we seek to transmit them to humanity in all its cultural, social, religious, and politico-economic diversity. Certainly, this is a fantastic challenge; it is central to contemporary evangelization. Paul VI expressed it so wisely and so poignantly: “This fidelity both to a message whose servants we are and to the people to whom we must transmit it living and intact is the central axis of evangelization” (EN, 4).

Life-style — certainly a key focal-point in any vision of evangelization. For our contemporaries, who only willingly listen to witnesses (rather than theoreticians), the missionary’s authenticity and transparency are generally the first elements in evangelization; wordless witness is already a silent, powerful, and effective proclamation. It is an initial act of evangelization (EN, 21, 41).

Jesus himself adopted a particular, concrete life-style. His mind-set was of fidelity and obedience to his Father; his outward manner manifested the lived values of poverty, total dedication, persecution, apparent failure. The church and her evangelizers “must walk the same road which Christ walked: a road of poverty and obedience, of service and self-sacrifice to the death” (AG, 5).

Bluntly, there is no authentic Christian mission without the cross — and all its surprises, foolishness, and scandal (1 Cor 1:18-25). True mission is always signed by the Cross, and without it we cannot be Jesus' disciples. The evangelizer is always generous in bearing a personal share of the hardships which the gospel entails (2 Tim 1:8). Constantly, the Christian disciple is measuring his life and apostolate against the life-style of Jesus and the patterns of the gospel. Sustained prayerful reflection and an ever-deepening consciousness of one's personal relationship with the Trinity are the unique way of interiorizing the paradox of the cross — and the power of the resurrection.

An anonymous poet, speaking of the centrality of the Incarnation and Redemption in Christianity, noted that there are no definitions in God's dictionary for these terms. One must search for the meaning of Bethlehem and Calvary under another category. Their significance is to be found only when one reads how God defines Love!

Indeed, God's loving plan of salvation is a message of hope for all peoples. It is universal and should be preached/witnessed "to the ends of the earth" (Mt 28:18-19a; Mk 16:15; Lk 24:47). To spread this Universal Message demands great dedication and faith as seen in the practical advice that Paul gave to Timothy (2 Tim 4:1-5).

The evangelizer, conscious of his role in the actualization of the *mysterion*, will surrender enthusiastically to the invitation of Jesus: Come and follow me in my mission. This conscious surrender will open his eyes to perceive, not so much what his efforts are accomplishing, but how God-Father-Son-Spirit are working fruitfully in and through his life. With this vision, contemplation and action harmoniously blend and sustain one another; the evangelizer experiences living the *mysterion*. Eventually, all will be recapitulated in Christ and God will be all in all (1 Cor 15:24-28).

This lengthy section on the mission of Jesus can fittingly be concluded by recalling Paul's reminder to the Corinthians: "Look, I am telling you a mystery" (1 Cor 15:51). This same *mysterion*-awareness is central in the evangelizer's consciousness; energized by it, one readily accepts Paul's encouragement: "Be steadfast and persevering, my beloved brothers, fully engaged in the work of the Lord. You know that your toil is not in vain when it is done in the Lord" (1 Cor 15:58).

The Mission of the Holy Spirit

"Evangelization will never be possible without the action of the Holy Spirit ... the Holy Spirit is the principal agent of evangelization" (EN, 75). Clearer words cannot be found to describe the centrality of the Spirit's

action in the life of the church and her evangelizers. This activity has a continuity; it is present as the Spirit fills the life of Jesus, the church, missioner-apostles, the entire laity. Essential for all — and no one can claim a monopoly on the Spirit who “blows where he wills” (Jn 3:8).

Luke’s Gospel puts the action of the Spirit at the beginning (4:18) and end (24:49) of Jesus’ ministry; similarly, in the Acts of the Apostles (often popularly known as “the Gospel of the Holy Spirit”), Luke also places the Spirit’s action at the beginning of the church (1:8), throughout its early expansion, and within the final address of Paul (28:25). Mission continually demands the life-giving presence and action of the Spirit (Kroeger-B, 449-455).

Though generally weak in its appreciation of pneumatology, the church now lives in a time of rediscovery, especially in Vatican II, the 1974 Synod on Evangelization, and the 1986 encyclical *Dominum et Vivificantem* of John Paul II. All evangelizers need a similar growth in consciousness, affirming the Spirit’s accompaniment at every moment in mission. It is imperative that this consciousness focus on the personal presence of the Spirit — whom John Paul II calls “Person-love” and “Person-gift” (DV, 10, 22, 50).

Concomitant with accepting the Spirit as “the principal agent of evangelization,” missioners collaborate closely with him; they are “teammates” in the work of evangelization. This continual dialogue reveals the full truth of Jesus’ teaching and person (Jn 16:13-15). The insights perceived are uniquely apropos to the context and challenges emerging within the evangelizer’s apostolate. Progress in everything (e.g. indigenization of theology, liturgy, church organization; social justice ministry; international solidarity, etc.) depends upon an in-depth personal-communal discernment of the Spirit’s promptings. It is the Spirit who opens hearts and moves people. Apostolic fruitfulness does not depend on one’s own ingenuity or organizational ability — but upon the power of the Spirit (Lopez-Gay, 53-61).

St. Paul intimately knew the workings of Jesus and the Spirit in his life. A particularly revealing passage describes Paul’s experience in Asia Minor (Acts 16:6-10). Twice it is noted that they “had been prevented by the Holy Spirit,” that “the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them” to enter certain provinces. Modern-day Pauls also need a “theology of road-blocks,” because not all their plans and projects will meet acceptance or success. Evangelizers may dream that their cooperation with the Spirit will always produce glowing results; however, this would not be living in reality. Only the ongoing interpersonal dialogue between evangelizer and Spirit in reflective prayer will enlighten one to see the detours and road-

blocks as a form of the Spirit's guiding presence.

Such faith-consciousness provides the equilibrium missionaries need in facing a wide diversity of challenges; it gives insight on how to "let go and let God"; it aids the apostle in avoiding the traps of bitterness, cynicism, depression and contemporary burn-out. The Spirit will reveal how the cross of Jesus is a yoke that is easy and a burden that is light (Mt 11:28-30). Evangelizers will develop a spirituality of optimism, hope, and confidence — knowing that they can readily count on the strength of the Spirit.

This discussion of various aspects of the Spirit's role in mission should always be placed within the inclusive framework of the *mysterion* — that loving plan of God for humanity's salvation. Then, for example, with the awareness that mission is God's project, our frustrations and difficulties can be integrated into a faithful surrender to God's wisdom. This same inclusive view of the *mysterion* is essential to perceive the Spirit's role in interfaith or interreligious dialogue.

Evangelizers need to be cognizant of the church's own growth-inconscousness in recent years on the Spirit-religions dynamic (Kroeger-C). Vatican II spoke positively of the Spirit's diverse activity in the world (GS, 38); the 1974 Synod on Evangelization affirmed "the Holy Spirit's action which overflows the bounds of the Christian community" (EMW, 11). John Paul II in two encyclicals has spoken of the "effects of the Spirit of truth operating outside the visible confines of the Mystical Body" (RH, 6) and of the need to appreciate "the Holy Spirit's activity also outside the visible body of the Church" (DV, 53).

Perhaps it is not an overstatement to assert that "Spirit-consciousness" is uniquely necessary for all evangelizers — particularly in the Asian context. Only the Spirit can foster the awareness and sensitivity needed to approach the diversity of Asian peoples, cultures, and religions. Many peoples are in poverty and underdevelopment, requiring deep social transformation; the cultures should find authentic religious expression within gospel-inculturation; religions and their followers must be treasured because, as the Asian bishops have noted, "we accept them as significant and positive elements in the economy of God's design of salvation" (FABCI, 14).

In light of these realities, the missionary's daily communing with the Spirit will foster renewal and conversion (as an opening to a deeper God-consciousness). It will enhance one's vision to see the active presence of the Spirit in peoples, cultures, and religions — both within and beyond the Christian community. The Spirit will provide the sensitive balance

in both “bringing” God’s love and Kingdom values and in “discovering” their presence already operative. The Spirit’s diverse gifts (charisms) will generously be directed to their proper, fruitful employment. The apostle of Jesus is that person who is possessed by the Spirit — and is deeply conscious of it!

The evangelizer’s heightened awareness of the Spirit’s role in his life is not somehow only a narcissistic or individualistic awareness. It is to be fully integrated within the community, within the local church. Constantly there is openness and sensitivity to what the Spirit is saying to the churches and how they must “grow in missionary consciousness, fervor, commitment and zeal” (EN, 58).

In contemporary approaches to evangelization, this attention to the guiding Spirit within the local church is a crucial imperative. It has been noted that John the Evangelist in his book of Revelation specifically mentions the names and places of the seven churches; he concludes all his admonitions with exactly the same words: “Let him who has ears heed the Spirit’s word to the churches (Rev 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22). Thus, taking its cue from Johannine as well as Pauline ecclesiology and based on the insights of Vatican II (LG, 23; AG, 19-22), all current missiology-spirituality gives due consideration to the voice of local churches empowered through the Spirit.

The Asian bishops repeatedly affirm that the “primary focus of our task of evangelization then, at this time in our history, is the building up of a truly local church ... the local church is a church incarnate in a people ... this means concretely a church in continuous, humble and loving dialogue with the living traditions, the cultures, the religions ... (FABCI, 9, 12). A pivotal document of the universal church affirms the same stance: “Every local church is responsible for the totality of mission” (PD, 14)!

Evangelizers — indigenous and expatriate — in harmonious interaction with the local church are always conscious of the personal Spirit maintaining them in mission. What is the source of their optimism, courage, unity, patience, detachment-poverty — even martyrdom (Rom 15:18-19; Heb 2:3-4)? Who inspires them to bring forth enduring fruit and convincing witness (Jn 15:16; Gal 5:22-23)? Who “causes people to discern the signs of the times — signs willed by God” (EN, 75)? All these gifts surely have as their source “the love of God that has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us (Rom 5:5). To every evangelizer the Spirit is indeed “Person-love” and “Person-gift”!

Concluding Synthesis

The author of this piece remains totally cognizant that a contemplative-mystical thread spans this entire presentation; it has focused on “consciousness of the *mysterion*” as foundational to a spirituality of the apostolate. This emphasis, of course, is in harmony with the central missiological insight of Vatican II: the Trinitarian foundation of mission (AG, 2-4).

This perspective resonates well with what the Spirit is saying to all the churches — particularly in Asia. It is noteworthy that the First Plenary Assembly of the Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences — FABC I (Taipei, 1974) discussed “Evangelization and Modern Day Asia.” Significantly, the next Plenary Assembly — FABC II (Barrackpore-Calcutta, 1978), designed to be in harmonious continuity with the challenges of evangelization discussed in FABC I, focused on “Prayer — the Life of the Church in Asia.”

Evangelization and Prayer, Missiology and Spirituality: these are two coordinates of one integral process. All evangelizers seek to enhance their consciousness of the intimate personal activity of the triune God within their lives, attitudes, values, and activities. Thus, witness of life, faith-consciousness, and diverse forms of evangelization coalesce into an integrated unity.

Permit a brief return to the statement of FABC II on prayer and a spirituality for evangelization. The Asian bishops affirm the need for “conscious personal communion with God our Father, in Christ Jesus. It is the fruit of the Holy Spirit working in our hearts.” They note that “the spirituality characteristic of the religions of our continent stresses a deeper awareness of God and the whole self in recollection, silence and prayer, flowering in openness to others, in compassion, non-violence, generosity.” They sincerely desire “a genuine renewal and revitalization of these realities in our prayer-life” (FABC II, 14, 35, 20). This, in short, is the “Asian formula” for mission spirituality!

This presentation has been a long pilgrimage toward an holistic view of missiology-spirituality. The sign-posts on the road have indicated the need of awareness, Pauline theology, “*mysterion*-consciousness,” Trinitarian foundations, and the personal role of Father, Son, and Spirit in the lives of all evangelizers. The ground that has been traversed has included the two-fold journey of all missionaries: the inward journey of deepened consciousness or spirituality which overflows during the outward journey of all evangelizing endeavors.

And yet, much more needs to be explored — at another sitting. This

cursorily treatment of diverse yet complementary elements of mission spirituality plunges the reader into an acceptance of the fact that no eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him (1 Cor 2:9).

If I were tasked to summarize the core insight into mission and spirituality required by all evangelizers, I would readily and confidently respond by affirming: You and I all need a vibrant, conscious awareness that we are sent — by the love of the Father, the grace of Jesus, and the power of the Spirit. This insight fired St. Paul in both his theology and missionary activity — it will do no less for contemporary apostles. Missioners, following St. Therese of Lisieux the patroness of mission, are people conscious that they are on fire with the love of God; they know they have been sent to light a fire on the earth (Lk 12:49); how they wish the blaze were ignited!

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Church Documents:

- AA *Apostolicam Actuositatem* (Apostolate of the Laity)
- AG *Ad Gentes* (Missionary Activity)
- DM *Dives in Misericordia* (On the Mercy of God)
- DV *Dominum et Vivificantem* (On the Holy Spirit in the Life of the Church and the World)
- EE *To the Ends of the Earth* (Pastoral Statement on World Mission — U.S.A. Bishops — 1986)
- EMW *Evangelization of the Modern World* (Synod of Bishops' Declaration — October 25, 1974)
- EN *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (Evangelization in the Modern World — Paul VI — December 8, 1975)
- FABC I Both FABC I & II are available in Arévalo, C. (Editor). *For All the Peoples of Asia*, Vol. I. Manila, Philippines: International Congress on Mission Publications, 1984: FABC I, pp. 25-38; FABC II, pp. 49-66.
- FABC II
- GS *Gaudium et Spes* (The Church in the Modern World)
- LG *Lumen Gentium* (The Church)
- PD *Pentecost Document* — a popular term for the document: Vatican Secretariat for Non-Christians (Interreligious Dialogue), "The Attitude of the Church towards the Followers of Other Religions: Reflections and Orientations on Dialogue and Mission, *L'Osservatore Romano* (English) Vol. 17, No. 26 [840], (June 25, 1984), pp. 10-11.
- RH *Redemptor Hominis* (On the Mystery of Redemption and the Dignity of Man)

II. GOD'S UNIVERSAL RAINBOW COVENANT Relating Scripture with World Religions

The year 2000 is a decade away. Some startling statistics — fantastic figures — confront the Christian Church. One notes a few examples: *all* Christians together will be 34% of the world's population, numbering only twice as many as the total number of nonreligious/nonbelievers; there will be more Muslims than Roman Catholics on the globe when the third millennium arrives; well over one-half of humanity lives in Asia, which will remain less than 4% Christian (Barrett, 17). These realities impinge forcefully on Christian consciousness, and modern communications serve to highlight the vast pluriformity of peoples, cultures, religions and traditions.

How can contemporary theology and scriptural interpretation sensitively meet the world religions and peoples of these living faiths? Can Christians avoid prejudicial, antagonistic and exclusivist modes of thinking and expression? Is it possible to maintain a double fidelity to the biblical message and also to the peoples of diverse religions? How are bridges to be built between biblical theology and the world's living faith traditions?

Old Testament Interpretation and Universalism

Contemporary Old Testament interpretation remains receptive to a broad understanding of God's action within history and human events. This is based on the recognition of God's twofold intervention: [a] a universal commitment to all peoples; and [b] a particular commitment to the Israelites. If one explicitly focuses on Old Testament biblical universalism, many themes emerge showing God's global action: the goodness of creation, the universal providence of God, and the wisdom shared by all peoples. In addition, by concentrating on the covenant theme, specifically the universal covenant with Noah in the ninth chapter of Genesis, one can glean further insights toward reading Scripture with a sensitivity to the followers of other great world religions.

God's rainbow covenant with Noah is set within the first eleven chapters of Genesis, which describe primeval history, the origin of the world and the human race. These chapters form a type of preface to the entire Bible, giving it a universalistic orientation (Vogels-A, 33). In addition, they serve to demonstrate that even a prior to the revelation to Abraham, Yahweh is revealed as Lord of the entire universe (Mackenzie, 138). Also, the covenant with Noah is a concrete example of God's universal love.

Surprisingly, the Noachic covenant is portrayed as the oldest of all covenants (Van Imshoot, 794). It is promised in Genesis 6:18 and actualized in Genesis 9:17. It is contracted with Noah and his descendants: all people who will ever live. Evidently, its universal nature bespeaks God's commitment to all humanity's welfare and salvation. There is almost total agreement that this section is authored by the Pentateuchal Priestly writer (P). This theology, emerging from Israel's exilic period of contact with peoples of other religions, is often expressed through accounts about covenants. While emphasis on covenant is not exclusively found within P material, its presence does represent a key theological prism of the P tradition.

Covenant is an essential concept in any interpretation of Scripture. Its Hebrew word *berith* describes in various ways the relationship between God and humanity. One notes that in all of Genesis 1-11, there is a retrojected use of later covenant theology to describe the God-humanity bond which existed from the beginning of the world. In addition, it should be highlighted that in the promise of the covenant with Noah (Gen 6:18), as well as in its enactment (Gen 9, specifically verses 9, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17), the precise word *berith* is used (Young, 207). Since this covenant is with *all* of the descendants of Noah, Israel cannot claim the exclusive privilege of being a covenanted people with God!

Scope of the Covenant with Noah

Further exploration reveals significant characteristics of the rainbow covenant (Vogels-B, 29-31). It is an agreement which is universalistic/comprehensive in its breadth. It is not simply a pact between two individuals, God and Noah. God contracts with Noah and with all his descendants (9:9). Noah represents the second father of humanity, and he even receives the same injunction which God had given Adam: "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth" (Gen 1:28, 9:1). It was from Noah and his wife and their descendants that "the whole earth was peopled" (9:19). God continues this intimate relationship with all peoples, extending divine grace freely to the whole human race. The Noachic covenant is to be everlasting (9:16), established for "all future generations" (9:12). This is a covenant permanent in its validity at every point in history. It is not merely a past event, but an ever-present faith reality. In the view of the Priestly author, God irrevocably extends divine grace and promises so that future dealings with all peoples will redound to their welfare and blessing (Vawter, 134).

Clearly, this covenant flows from divine initiative. Emphasis is repeatedly laid on God's active role: this is "*my* covenant with you" (9:11); "the covenant *I* make between *me* and you" (9:12); "the covenant be-

tween *me* and you” (9:15); “the covenant *I* have made (9:17). Surprisingly, Noah promises nothing and no demands are placed upon him. Unconditionally, absolutely and totally, God covenants with all life and particularly with all of humankind.

The sign of authentication of this universal and everlasting covenant is the rainbow: “my bow in the clouds.” Verses 12, 13, and 17 all mention this sign of the covenant. As sign, it points beyond itself to God’s sovereign activity on behalf of all people. It affirms that humanity’s existence is blessed and will reach fulfillment in the loving plan of God. This bow is not a weapon of war (Vawter, 135-6). On the contrary, it is a sign of peace, a sign of God’s pledge that “never again will all life be cut off ... never again will there be a flood to destroy the earth” (9:11).

Finally, as a consequence of the Noachic covenant, one finds the List of Nations in Genesis 10. The rainbow covenant is effective, and the earth is again filled with a multitude of nations (Blauw, 19; Viviano, 50-1). All these peoples are born from the blessings of God, each people with its own country, culture, and destiny. Their unity and diversity realize God’s design inaugurated at creation and renewed after the flood. With remarkable creativity the Priestly author has enshrined this message in dignified covenant language: God is a sure hope for all peoples; God’s dependability and love are everlasting within the economy of salvation!

The Rainbow Covenant and World Religions

The most fundamental conclusion arising from an exploration of Genesis 9:1-17 affirms the universal saving action of God for all peoples. Indeed, this may be stating the obvious, but in the past this universal dimension of God’s salvific design has been underemphasized within biblical theology. Ordinarily, the Exodus from Egypt or perhaps the call of Abraham have been the point of departure in preaching and catechesis. Thus, it appeared as if God called only the people Israel. God became limited to being the tribal God of Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca, and Jacob and Rachel and Leah. Unwittingly, the fact that God’s revelation and grace are available for all peoples became clouded or under-emphasized. All other peoples, as well as their religions, were simply viewed as belonging to non-Judaeo-Christian traditions. By neglecting a full elaboration of Genesis 1-11, an appreciation of the dignity of other peoples and their ways of life was never adequately promoted. Refocused scriptural theology can contribute to the correction of a certain unfortunate and false ethnocentrism within Judaism and Christianity.

This challenge demands a balancing act, an integration of Israel’s election within God’s universal design. The Pentateuchal tradition itself

affirms both the universal and particular dimensions of God's saving design; the choice of Israel is not to be understood exclusively, but inclusively. On this point the book *God's Chosen Peoples* (Buhmann, 35) speaks eloquently on the mutual vocation of Israel and the nations:

... theological reflection ... makes it clear that Israel's election occurred only and solely in view of the peoples, the gentiles. In the concrete case of the one people, all peoples were chosen. ... Thus it was not because God had no care for other peoples that he chose Israel, but precisely *because* he cared for other peoples. Israel was not elected to a privilege but to a service: to reveal God's affection to all peoples.

An integrated reading of the Old Testament excludes any notion whatsoever of exclusive ethnic pride, superiority, or excessive nationalism. The election of Israel does not indicate any rejection of the nations. God's rainbow covenant establishes God's rule over all the nations on earth, Israel among them. It envisions mutuality, not false dichotomies such as Israel versus the nations, believers versus heathens, male versus female, colored versus white, North versus South (Bonino, 343).

Recall that this short piece bears the subtitle: "Relating Scripture with World Religions." Admittedly, one will search in vain for a full theology of other religious traditions either in the Old or New Testament Scriptures. What we found, however, are glimpses and orientations of a respectful attitude toward the followers of other living faiths. These elements, and the Noachic covenant is a prime example, can be used as biblical foundations for interreligious dialogue and human interaction (Rosano, 96). These same universalistic themes need emphasis by preachers and evangelizers, whether they be in a Christian, Muslim, Hindu, or Buddhist milieu; whether they live in the First, Second, or Third World. The human family needs continuous strengthening against forces which deny its unity and solidarity, forces such as war, racism, prejudice, exclusivistic nationalism, religious bigotry. The narrative of God's rainbow covenant with all humanity demands frequent retelling.

Finally, one might reflect upon an insight shared by most missionaries who have lengthy transcultural experience. They conclude that all peoples and nations perceive themselves as being a *chosen people*. Thus, there is the need that biblical faith be credibly proclaimed and lived so that all can link their own cultural and religious experience with the universal love that God has manifested in the Scriptures. Humankind in its ethnic diversity is inherently the beneficiary of the tenderness of God; all are covenanted people in that universal covenant the Lord has con-

cluded with Noah.

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III. AWAKENING TO THE SPIRIT

Linking Missiology and Pneumatology

In one brief paragraph, the historic Second Vatican Council comprehensively summarized the foundations of mission: "The pilgrim church is missionary by her very nature. For it is from the mission of the Son and the mission of the Holy Spirit that she takes her origin, in accordance with the decree of God the Father" (AG, 2). In a word, mission emanates from the Trinitarian nature of God; this places missionary activity at the center of the church's faith and life—no longer on its periphery.

In the quarter-century since the completion of Vatican II, mission theology has seen many developments of the Council's seminal concepts. Within this growth, there has been, among varied emphases, a deepened perception of the role of the Spirit as essential to a comprehensive theology of mission. Evangelization — its many approaches and emphases — seems naturally linked to a holistic pneumatology (theology of the Holy Spirit). Most dominant themes in contemporary missiology are clearly —

even essentially — linked with an adequate appreciation of the Holy Spirit as the principal agent of evangelization (EN, 75).

This panoramic presentation endeavors to present a capsulized description of some areas current within missiology — areas that link pneumatology and mission theology.

Mission today necessarily is understood within the new outlook and ecclesiology promoted by the event of Vatican II (1962-1965). What has emerged is a new vision of the church and her mission, a new openness to the modern world, and a spirit of *aggiornamento* and self-renewal; all have been the work of the Spirit. Thus, before mentioning specific themes of the Council, one seeks to appreciate Vatican II itself as a unique manifestation of the Spirit: “this most sacred Synod ... has been gathered in the Holy Spirit” (LG, 1); “the Council brings to mankind light kindled ... under the guidance of the Holy Spirit” (GS, 3). More recently, John Paul II asserted that “the teaching of this Council is essentially ‘pneumatological’; it is permeated by the truth about the Holy Spirit, as the soul of the church” (DV, 26). Briefly, the missiological development promoted by Vatican II is rooted in the Spirit’s action, manifested within the Council itself.

More specifically, the Council enabled the church to be open to the modern world, to seek new approaches and new forms of evangelization, to discern the Spirit’s presence within secular movements and events. Dialogue with the world is no longer something just useful for the church; it is necessary because the Spirit also speaks through the world. Secular reality manifests humanity’s legitimate desires and aspirations, mankind’s struggle for justice and human dignity; thus, mission demands that Christians see that the Spirit of God is present within these developments (“*Spiritus Dei ... huic evolutioni adest*” — GS, 26). Or again, the Spirit “is not only close to this world but present in it, and in a sense *immanent*, penetrating it and giving it life from within” (DV, 54). Mission requires an in-depth discernment of all the social, political, economic, cultural and religious signs of the times in today’s world (GS, 4).

This vision of the Spirit’s presence within the world is foundational to the development of an inductive method of theologizing or of doing critical pastoral-theological reflection. This method takes for granted that its subject matter is the *humanum* (humanity, human history and society, human progress, human dignity, the human family). Immediately, the oft-quoted principle of John Paul II springs to mind: “man is the primary route that the church must travel in fulfilling her mission: *he is the primary way for the church ... a way that, in a sense, is the basis of all the other ways that the church must walk*” (RH, 14; also: SD, p. 5; DV, 58, 67).

Approaching theology in this fashion means beginning with “what is going on in human society and the world,” with local cultural realities and values, with the traditions and aspirations of people. In short, the world and human reality “set the agenda” for this approach; yet tradition, scripture, the magisterium and social teaching are not excluded; they are essential to the method because they inform the pastoral-theological reflection process.

Mission today takes note of this inductive theological and pastoral method, because through it local theologies evolve under the Spirit’s guidance. These theologies (pneumatology itself!) develop from below as Christians prayerfully reflect in the light of revelation on events, movements, and realities of the local church. In this manner, the entire church is enriched with vibrant theologies as she listens to what the Spirit is saying to the churches (Rev 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22).

An appreciation of the Spirit focuses the missionary upon the Spirit’s activity both in and beyond the Christian community. Every dimension of mission must follow the Spirit’s lead and promptings.

Within the Christian community, the Spirit is known as a personal presence, as Person-love, as Person-gift (DV, 10, 22, 50). The Spirit is a personal companion to the missionary, giving the grace of a mission vocation and enabling one to discern and be capable of fulfilling the mission entrusted to him. The fruits of the Spirit (Gal, 5:22-23) — love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control — are the constant guides given the evangelizer for discerning authentic missionary activity.

The Holy Spirit, sent by Christ, keeps missionaries faithful to the life, teachings, and mission of Jesus himself. The Spirit is Counsellor, Intercessor, Advocate, and Comforter; the Spirit’s fourfold functions are teaching, accusing, comforting and consoling. In a word, the missionary would be paralyzed without the manifold and abiding presence of the Spirit.

The entire church is richly endowed by the Spirit with a variety of spiritual gifts (1 Cor 12:4-11). Each gift has a special function and enables Christians to mature together into a united, yet diverse, community. This fundamentally charismatic structure of the church is, in itself, a special gift. An evangelization process worthy of the name can best be promoted by evoking all the treasures of the Christian charismatic community. Only in this manner can a church, enriched with diverse gifts, hope to bear fruit in mission; varied charisms are given to meet all the unique demands made upon a church-in-mission.

An enthusiastic enumeration of the charisms found within the church must not lead to the supposition of a monopoly of the Spirit by the Christian community. From the time of Vatican II (GS, 38), there have been repeated admonitions for Christians to keep their horizons open to the Spirit's activity in the world. The bishops' declaration from the 1974 Synod on Evangelization affirmed "the Holy Spirit's action, which overflows the bounds of the Christian community" (EMW, 11). One can often see the "effects of the Spirit of truth operating outside the visible confines of the Mystical Body" (RH, 6). And, most recently, in his encyclical "On the Holy Spirit in the Life of the Church and the World," the Pope reiterated that the Second Vatican Council "reminds us of the Holy Spirit's activity also 'outside the visible body of the church'" (DV, 53).

Acceptance of the activity of the Spirit, "who distributes his charismatic gifts as he wills for the common good" (AG, 23), has clear ramifications for inculturation as well as for an approach to non-Christian religions.

In inculturating her program of evangelization, the church must "share in cultural and social life ..., be familiar with national and religious traditions, gladly and reverently laying bare the seeds of the Word that lie hidden in them ..., [and] illumine these treasures with the light of the gospel" (AG, 11). The church "must be acquainted with culture ..., heal and preserve it ..., permeate and transform it" (AG, 21). Enlightened by the Spirit, evangelizers accept that "Christian life can be accommodated to the genius and the dispositions of each culture" (AG, 22); additional references are: AG, 4; LG, 17; GS, 26, 38, 44. Missioners today are asked to accept this understanding of mission as the Spirit's lead in fostering the attitudes and approaches fundamental to the inculturation of the Gospel.

The church's openness to the followers of the great religious traditions/faiths draws guidance from discerning the Spirit "who blows where he wills." The church "rejects nothing that is true and holy in these religions. She looks with sincere respect upon those ways of conduct and life ... (because they) often reflect a ray of that truth which enlightens all men. ... (She acts) prudently and lovingly, through dialogue and collaboration with the followers of other religions ... (to) acknowledge, preserve, and promote the spiritual and moral goods found among these men" (NA, 2). This insight, acceptance, and active collaboration with other religious traditions (especially in Asia) repeatedly manifest the Spirit's abundant inspiration.

Note also the interrelationship between efforts toward inculturation and dialogical interaction with other religions, cultures, and world views. Only when the church is enriched through interfaith dialogue does she

have the sensitivity and awareness to truly inculturate/contextualize the Christian message. Missioners readily affirm the Spirit's role in guiding the church toward a more authentic inculturation as she travels the path of interreligious dialogue.

In interfaith dialogue, as well as in the inculturation process, the missionary, theologian, or Christian community and the Spirit act as partners. There is always collaboration among these agents; the Holy Spirit is the internal agent, guiding the efforts of the external agents of evangelization. The techniques and human efforts toward inculturation and dialogue are fruitful due to the discreet action of the Spirit; also, it is the Spirit alone (EN, 75) who changes people's hearts, minds and attitudes (*metanoia*) so that true inculturation and open dialogue can succeed.

In this entire process, the evangelizer comes to realize that the Spirit has actually preceded all human efforts. Yes, it is clear that "he visibly anticipates the apostles' action, just as he unceasingly accompanies and directs it in different ways" (AG, 4). The Spirit's presence has constantly been at work in the world — even before Christ was glorified (AG, 4; DV, 25), even back to the beginning of creation (DV, 53).

The "world-wide" action of the Spirit accomplishes another marvel: "The Holy Spirit gives to all men the possibility of coming into contact with the paschal mystery in the way that God alone knows" (GS, 22). This affirmation of Vatican II is recalled by John Paul II in his encyclical on the Holy Spirit (DV, 53), and he also uses the same passage to elucidate the meaning of the October 27, 1986, Assisi Day of Prayer, which brought together representatives of many of the world's religious groups (ADP, 4). The church enthusiastically continues her mission of promoting such new manifestations of the Spirit's unifying action in the world.

The involvement of Christians in promoting Kingdom-building movements in the world emerges from her trust that God's Spirit "with a marvelous providence directs the unfolding of time and renews the face of the earth" (GS, 26). This vision enables evangelizers to see the hand of God in today's social-political movements as they struggle for freedom, justice, love and peace. Such efforts in the secular arena are an invitation to the church to adopt new ways of mission, to encourage personal and social liberation, and to be more innovative in her forms of witness, service and dialogue. The Reign of God is readily promoted as the church collaborates with (but does not dominate) these developments.

Finally, two additional themes are noted because they show the mutual links between pneumatology and missiology. The inspiring em-

ergence of laity-in-mission is a sign of renewal; Vatican II has encouraged the church to appreciate “the unmistakable work of the Holy Spirit in making the laity today even more conscious of their own responsibility and inspiring them everywhere to serve Christ and the church” (AA, 1). In addition, the ecumenical dimension evident in approaches to evangelization today is best contextualized by witnessing the Spirit’s movement within all Christian ecclesial communities. The Catholic Church recognizes that the Christian churches “are joined with us in the Holy Spirit” (LG, 15) and that “the Spirit of Christ has not refrained from using them as means of salvation” (UR, 3). Ecumenical cooperation in mission is founded upon faith in the Spirit’s capacity to use the diversity of the many Christian ecclesial communities to advance Kingdom and Gospel values in human society.

Pneumatology and missiology have witnessed a mutual renewal in the twenty-five years since Vatican II. This growth has challenged the church and, in particular, it has enabled her to probe the foundations of mission. Evangelizers themselves have come to trustingly discern and follow the Spirit’s promptings; they now recognize more clearly that (as the sequence of Pentecost says): *sine tuo numine nihil est in homine*, that without the Spirit’s enlightenment nothing is within humanity, nothing is humanly possible. Mission theology, approaches, and techniques can never dispense with or underestimate the action of the befriending Spirit (GS, 3).

For the church to be vibrant and alive in mission, she must repeatedly be renewed and transformed by the Spirit. Her prayer unceasingly invokes the empowering Spirit (WSA, 295):

Glory to you, Holy Spirit!
You brooded over chaos ...
You inspired prophets and evangelists ...
You liberated the early church for mission ...
And still you brood over,
inspire and liberate us,
We praise you!

In simplicity and profundity, the church and her evangelizers pray with constantly renewed vigor: *Veni Creator Spiritus!*

ABBREVIATIONS

- AA — *Apostolicam Actuositatem* (Apostolate of the Laity)
- ADP — “Assisi Day of Prayer” (John Paul II: *Origins* 1-15-87, pp. 561-563)
- AG — *Ad Gentes* (Missionary Activity)
- DV — *Dominum et Vivificantem* (On the Holy Spirit in the Life of the Church and the World)
- EMW — *Evangelization of the Modern World* (1974 Synod of Bishops’ Declaration: October 25, 1974)
- EN — *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (Evangelization in the Modern World — Paul VI — December 8, 1975)
- GS — *Gaudium et Spes* (The Church in the Modern World)
- LG — *Lumen Gentium* (The Church)
- NA — *Nostra Aetate* (Non-Christians)
- RH — *Redemptor Hominis* (Mystery of Redemption and the Dignity of Man)
- SD — *Salvifici Doloris* (On the Christian Meaning of Human Suffering)
- UR — *Unitatis Redintegratio* (Ecumenism)
- WSA — “Worship at San Antonio” (The 1989 World Council of Churches’ World Conference on Mission and Evangelism, in: *International Review of Mission* 78 [1989], pp. 265-302)

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