



**John Reilly s. j.**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

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FOREWORD .....	3
INTRODUCTION .....	5
I. THE MISSION OF JESUS CHRIST .....	13
II. THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH .....	25
III. THE MISSION OF THE LAITY .....	37
IV. THE IGNATIAN UNDERSTANDING OF MISSION .....	51
V. THE MISSION OF CHRISTIAN LIFE COMMUNITIES .....	63
CONCLUSION .....	73

## FOREWORD

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John Reilly S.J. is by no means unknown to the CLC's. The delegates to Rome '79 would remember well his exposition on the charism of the CLC's, and their Ignatian origin. The exchanges that his paper provoked, and his replies to the numerous questions addressed to him were clear signs that what he said - and his manner of saying it - 'resonated' with his listeners. He also drew our attention to a number of important issues. Quite a few of us regretted that he did not have the opportunity to say something more on other aspects of our CLC life; and so the idea came about to ask him to contribute a Progressio Supplement on "Mission in the CLC's" - which we are very happy to publish now.

These pages not only fulfill a need which has been widely felt, but also open up for us lines of development, in terms of what CLC is all about, in areas where we have been remiss. With the same competence and the same rigour that we appreciated so much at Rome '79, John Reilly has given us the background and context for CLC Mission today: he starts from the source of our mission, which is found in Jesus Christ; he moves on to the mission of the Church and considers the role of the laity in the Church of today; he gives an outline of the essentials in Ignatian spirituality, and finishes by asking some questions. He suggests some ways of taking up the questions he asks, but he refrains from giving any clear definition of Mission in the CLC's because "...it can be the task only of the Christian Life Communities themselves to find the *lay* way of living, or more probably the *lay* ways of living, their mission according to the Ignatian magis".

Reading these pages helps us deepen our awareness of

all that has been given to us in the renewal of the CLC's. The author underlines this. And in passing he touches on one or two aspects that have yet to be further developed - like the bond we have with Mary in "our missionary service to others". He recognises clearly, in our General Principles, the filial devotion that we have towards Mary, but he invites us - in the light of post-Conciliar developments - to find in a concrete and practical way, in the midst of our lay living, our particular relation with Her who was the first to bring Christ to the world.

Just like the exposition at the Assembly of Rome '79, this Supplement is written in the same spirit of dialogue between a Jesuit living the Ignatian charism as a religious and his "friends in the Lord" - lay people drawing their inspiration from the same source. Very gently John Reilly challenges us here to take a further step, while giving us solid matter for reflection to guide this next move - and always on the understanding that the lived experience of our CLC's will have the final word. These pages are filled with a profound sense of the Church and its mission, which not only enlarges our horizon to universal dimensions, but sheds new light on the option taken by our last Assembly, "actively to strive to become a world community at the service of one world" - to be servants of the Gospel, more and more.

We thank John Reilly for furnishing us with such a clear and solid base from which we can specify what is the CLC mission today; for, as he has delicately suggested, we are the only ones to do this.

PROGRESSIO

## INTRODUCTION

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Mission is always meant to be a service but it is not only a service. It implies something more. To forestall at the outset any tendency to reduce the mission of the Christian Life Communities merely to a service of people, it will be useful first of all to spend a little time to clarify what we mean by mission and its relation to service. Although every mission, at least in the Christian sense of the term, is at the same time intended to be a service of others, not every service that the CLC may be drawn to offer will necessarily be a missionary service.

The mission of the Christian Life Communities, like any aspect of Christian mission, is part of the broader and immense activity of bringing the Gospel into the world, what is now commonly called evangelization. We are fortunate that we now have at our disposal, since the Synod of Bishops in 1974, and the Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, Evangelization in the Modern World, of Pope Paul VI which followed it on December 8, 1975, a rich and beautiful presentation of what the Church presently understands concerning the meaning and practice of evangelization today. Early in this document Paul VI gave us a fundamental truth which provides the clue that enables us to compare and contrast correctly mission and service. He called it "the central axis of evangelization". This axis is a fidelity both to the Gospel whose servants we are and to the people to whom we communicate that Gospel living and whole (*Evang. Nunt.*

n. 4, cf. n. 3). It is a fidelity, therefore, which is at once driving us and drawing us, pushing us and pulling us. A missionary service must always respect this twofold fidelity. Without a fidelity to the living Gospel it ceases to be mission, without fidelity to people it ceases to be service.

### The Service of Faith

From the time of Ignatius Loyola in the mid-sixteenth century the Jesuits have always expressed their mission in the world as "the defence and propagation of the faith". In the sixteenth century when the Church was confronted with the clearly defined apostolic challenges of the Protestant Reformation in Europe, and of the new peoples east and west of Europe, which had not yet heard the Gospel proclaimed, such a formulation of mission made eminent sense. In the post-Vatican II situation of our century, however, the Jesuits have adopted a new expression. In the more pluralistic and less clearly defined situation of the world in the latter half of the twentieth century, they have opted for a less precise but potentially richer description of their mission as "the service of faith". The new formula invites serious consideration from the Christian Life Communities, the lay "friends in the Lord" of the Jesuits in their efforts to live the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius as a pedagogy of life.

The service of faith presupposes firstly authentic faith in the ones who serve. This means a radical submission in the manner of servants to a mysterious action greater than ourselves allowing it to take possession of us in the entirety of our persons, calling us and sending, or missioning, us towards others.

In the simplest terms, we may describe this missioning as a thrust or a push driving us towards others. This thrusting or sending aspect of the service of faith is primary and distinguishes it from any other service of others, where merely the needs of others draw forth our service. And when our faith becomes something more than a largely anonymous submission to an impersonal power greater than ourselves, and brings us to a sufficient awareness and experience of a vital and supremely personal relationship with a divine suprahuman person, as any kind of Christian faith certainly does, then the thrusting or sending aspect, inherent in the service of faith, uniquely

sets it apart from any other service of others prompted by a mandate or delegation from a merely human source.

While the primary element in the service of faith must always remain a welcoming acceptance of the living Gospel, as the divine source of faith itself, nevertheless, like any other genuine service, the service of faith necessarily involves a genuine sensitivity to the real needs of people in their concrete life situation. Without such a sensitivity and an awareness of people as they really are, any service that may be offered becomes in practice, at least a benevolent paternalism, subtly yet surely manifesting a careless disregard for the dignity of other persons. At worst, it becomes a tyrannical domination over the freedom of others under the pretence of knowing what is best for them, even though they themselves may feel no knowledge of this, nor of the supposed needs which their self-appointed benefactors claim to be serving. The service of faith, like any kind of service, must in some way be an attraction or a drawing towards persons in the real needs which they feel. In simple terms, the service of faith must not only be a push, but always a pull.

In the service of faith, the need felt by persons is the most profound of all needs even the most deeply personal needs, such as the need for recognition, the need for companionship, or the need for intimate love. The need for personal faith concerns the most deeply felt and mysterious of all human needs, the radical need to relate in a human manner to the mystery and source of our personal existence. It is only such a relationship that can give a satisfactory meaning and purpose to life and all human activity. In Christian terms, faith answers a human need implanted deep within every human heart to relate to God as Father, as the source of life already given and of life still to be given to us.

To serve faith in persons, when faith is already experienced by them and consciously felt by them as a need requiring constant nourishment and enlightenment, as it is in convinced and committed Christians, calls for sensitivity and tact. Faith concerns the most personal aspects of life. Where faith does not yet appear to exist within a person, or where there are indications that it may exist only in a tenuous or obscure fashion, in a largely unconscious or not fully committed submission to the divine mystery at the source of life, then an even greater sensi-

tivity and attention to persons and their felt needs is demanded. It is obvious that unless the need for a service is felt in some way by the one being served, a service ceases to be a service and becomes an imposition upon the one who is served. The service of faith must find a genuine entry, or an open door, as St. Paul called it (Col. 4:3), into the conscious needs of persons who have little or no apparent faith, if it is to remain a true service towards them.

Again, in simple terms, we may say that a service of faith, which is a pull towards persons without at the same time being a push towards them, ceases to be driven by faith in the Gospel (Rom. 1:16, cf. 1 Cor. 1:24), and so is no longer truly a mission. Also, from the other direction, a service of faith which is a push from the ideology of the one serving, but no pull from the one who is served, ceases to be a genuine service of any kind, much less a service of faith. We have to say that it is merely the ideology, rather than the faith, of the one serving that is at work here, whether it be a social, economic, cultural or even a theological ideology. Faith of its very nature always implies not only a humble submission to the living Gospel, which is the action of God himself, but also a genuine respect and sensitivity for others (Cf. 1 John 2:9, 4:8, 4:20).

#### A Movement across a Barrier

From what we have already considered about mission as the service of faith which is at once a push and a pull, or even apart from this, another essential aspect of mission is fairly obvious, but still needs to be underlined. Mission is movement, and movement across a barrier. In the great missionary activity of apostolic times and the early centuries of Christianity, and again in the renewed missionary activity of the Church, from the sixteenth century until our own times, thrusting out from Christian Europe into the newly discovered lands of Asia, Africa and the New World, the movement across geographical barriers into foreign lands was clear and dramatic. In the first half of the twentieth century, missionary activity was practically synonymous with leaving one's homeland and journeying to a foreign land. Yet we need to be careful not to limit all missionary activity to such movement into foreign lands. Such a care is especially necessary in our times, when we observe how such foreign missions are becoming less numerous, or at least radically changed in their character.



Many and complex factors in both the sending and receiving countries have contributed to this. These factors do not directly concern us here. What does concern us, however, is the new awareness in the Church of our times that missionary activity is not only a movement to foreign lands across immense geographical and physical barriers. The barriers can be more subtle, but no less effective. They can be cultural barriers, social barriers, economic barriers or ideological barriers between persons living in the same place, which prevent or limit human communication between individuals and communities. Consequently they inhibit the sharing of faith among persons and the movement of Christian life in the world from those groups or communities committed in faith to the Gospel towards those who do not yet believe.

The great barrier which the movement of mission must cross is, of course, the barrier of unbelief. Unbelief in its broadest terms is an unrealistic self-centredness which entails a stubborn refusal to submit willingly to the great mystery of life surrounding us. More specifically for us as Christians, unbelief is the absence of faith in the man Jesus as Lord and God. Still more specifically for us as Catholics, unbelief is the absence of faith in the mystery of the Church as People of God, Body of Christ and Temple of the Holy Spirit in the fullest sense of these metaphors. Clearly there is a certain hierarchy of faith of which the Church is more explicitly aware in our times (cf. *Lumen Gentium* of Vatican II, nn.13-17). Whatever the degree of unbelief on one side or of faith on the other side, the fundamental movement of mission will always be from persons living by faith to those who live without faith or with lesser faith. In the complexity of modern secular life a proper understanding of the basic movement of mission as the movement from faith to unbelief is important. The great barrier will always be the hardness and blindness of human hearts, both in those who already believe and in those who are yet to believe.

It is easy to be distracted by the less essential movements involved in mission and the less important barriers. These remain inseparable from the main movement of faith across the barrier of human resistance, but they are secondary. Language, culture, social customs, economic standards, morality and religion usually constitute the more important of these barriers. In recent centuries the movement of Christian missions has usually been from the more developed economy, culture, society, morality or

religion to the less developed. It is worth recalling that this was not always the case. In apostolic times and in the early centuries, the missionary movement of faith was from the less developed peoples on the fringe of the developed world towards the centres of culture, sophistication and development in Greece and the Roman Empire. The second half of the twentieth century in which we are now living may be witnessing the beginnings of a return to the more natural movement of mission in the first years of Christianity, a sharing of faith by the so-called less developed peoples with the so-called more developed peoples. Such a movement of faith is perhaps what we should expect from Christ's own teaching and the way he chose to live himself. There is a renewed awareness in the post-Vatican II Church that the whole Church is and always remains by its very nature missionary (cf. *Lumen Gentium* n.17, *Ad Gentes* n.35, *Evang. Nunt.* nn.13,14). Already this has begun to arouse a new sense of responsibility in many throughout the Church, who either as individuals or groups had never previously thought of themselves as missionary, at least in any direct sense. Such a widening of missionary responsibility within the Church may be heralding a new return to the primitive direction of missionary movement.

#### The Ignatian "Magis"

For those who share in the responsibility of the whole Church for the mission entrusted to men by Christ himself, according to the charism of Ignatius Loyola, mission will have a special additional quality, characteristic of its Ignatian origins. This quality can be summarized in the key Ignatian word *magis*. This latin word means "more" and is frequently found in itself, or in its equivalents, in the writings of Ignatius, especially in his Spiritual Exercises. Any consideration of the mission of Christian Life Communities cannot pass over the fundamental significance of this word. A mission that does not incorporate a constant striving for the *magis* cannot claim to be Ignatian. Throughout their history the Jesuits have tried to live this *magis* with creative initiative and courageous generosity in all their apostolic undertakings, either as individuals or as groups. They have, consciously or unconsciously, communicated to those who shared with them their apostolic labours. The early Sodalities of Our Lady naturally shared this ideal of the *magis*. Yet it is perhaps only now, after the Sodalities have been newly constituted as the Communities of Christian Life in 1967, that an invitation has been clearly

offered or a challenge decisively given to live the Ignatian *magis* in a fashion that is authentically lay.

It can be the task only of the Christian Life Communities themselves to find the lay way of living, or more probably the lay ways of living, their mission according to the Ignatian *magis*. They cannot be satisfied merely to live in some adapted form the religious understanding of the *magis* which the Jesuits have lived and developed, and still are developing, in their apostolic missions over the years. They have to find a genuine lay expression of the *magis* in their genuinely lay missions within the Church. Jesuits can assist, guide and share in this on the basis of their own experience as religious who live the Ignatian ideal of the *magis* both in their life and work. But Jesuits by the very fact of being Jesuits are religious and so no longer lay persons in the strict sense of the term. If Jesuits did try to determine ultimately the mission of the CLC, it would almost certainly be a distortion of a mission which, although Ignatian in the fullest sense, is meant to remain truly lay.

In fact, one now begins to find Jesuits who are looking to the newly constituted Christian Life Communities, and their intention to live the Ignatian ideal in a lay form, to find new insight, support and help to live the same Ignatian ideal in the religious form. New vigorous corporate expressions of Ignatian life in lay forms could hardly be anything else than an enrichment for the whole Ignatian family, lay or religious. And at the heart of the Ignatian way is mission and the continual effort for the *magis* in mission.

The ideal of *magis* for the mission of the Christian Life Communities must be installed at the very core of their Ignatian Pedagogy for life, derived from the experience of the Spiritual Exercises. The *magis* will mean continual efforts, undertaken both collectively as well as individually, to broaden the visions and deepen the insights of Christian Life Communities into the nature of their mission as a whole, and into the character and kinds of their more specific missions. The *magis* will also mean an unrelenting search for greater freedom and flexibility in their missions. In this way Christian Life Communities will grow in their effectiveness to bring the Gospel living and entire to the real needs of people. Both the living Gospel and the real needs of people are not only redu-

cible to theoretical principles or impersonal statistics. More basically, they are concrete realities, events, situations and, above all, persons who need to be constantly re-discovered and embraced. It is in this latter area of concrete life experience that the challenge of the missionary *magis* will most likely be more acutely felt by the Christian Life Communities as they try to understand and live their mission within the Church.

### Elements in the Mission of CLC

The mission of the Christian Life Communities is a way of sharing in the mission of Christ from within his Church by lay persons, who wish to form themselves as Christians according to Ignatian spirituality, based on the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius Loyola, and who therefore commit themselves to live these Spiritual Exercises as a pedagogy of life by becoming members of a Christian Life Community.

The five elements enumerated here provide the focal points around which we can group some reflections on the mission of the Christian Life Communities today. Beginning from what is more general and shared with others, we shall pass to what is more particular and specific to Christian Life Communities within the overall life and mission of the Church.

- 1) *The Mission of Jesus Christ*
- 2) *Sharing the Mission of Christ in his Church*
- 3) *Lay people in the Mission of the Church*
- 4) *The Ignatian Understanding of Mission*
- 5) *The Mission of Christian Life Communities*

Let us try to discover, as far as we are able, the deeper meaning of these great faith-realities which constitute the particular identity of Christian Life Communities in their specific way of responding to the Gospel - lay persons, who live according to Ignatian spirituality, and who consequently desire to express ever more effectively their response *with* others and *for* others in better forms of community suited to discern more clearly and more freely better and more fruitful paths of missionary service.

\* \* \*

## I - THE MISSION OF JESUS CHRIST

First of all, let us go back, or perhaps it would be more correct to say let us go within, to the deepest source of the truth about the mission of Christian Life Communities. This is the revelation which God once gave to man historically in the person of Jesus Christ and his mission, and which he continues to recall to us sacramentally and spiritually, by means of external, visible signs and the internal, hidden actions of his Holy Spirit, through every generation and place down to the present time.

### The Total Christ

The mission of Christ, like the person of Christ as the Word of God made flesh, is not to be limited to that unique period of history, two thousand years ago, when God walked among his own creation in the fallen nature of man. By the power of his resurrection Christ is always humanly present in his person and his mission in every generation of men, for those who have faith. Furthermore, by the same power of his resurrection Christ remains an event still hidden in the future for all those who by faith look forward to his final coming into the world at the Parousia, his glorious coming at the climax of the world.

Christ in his humanity, therefore, is not only a memory we find in history but also an experience in the present,

made possible through faith, and a hope for the future, which manifests the true reality or substance of our faith and, as it were, makes our faith visible to the world. A very early formula of Christian faith teaches with great simplicity this rich understanding of the total Christ, as one who has a real existence and meaning for mankind in all three dimensions of time, past, present and future. Jesus Christ is the same today, yesterday and forever (Heb. 13:8). To put the same belief more directly by a slight paraphrase we can say: Jesus Christ is always the same person, yesterday, today and tomorrow.

### Christ and the Gospels

Although an ordinary reading of the four Gospels in the New Testament may suggest that they are concerned only with the Jesus of history, as he once lived among men nearly two thousand years ago, a more thoughtful reading of them, especially if combined with some guidance to study them more fully, soon begins to reveal to the eyes of faith not only the features of the historical Jesus of the past but also, and even predominantly, the risen Christ, whom by faith we can experience in the present and by hope expect in the future.

The four Gospels, therefore, like the rest of the New Testament writings, are not simply historical writings recalling the memories of what Jesus said and did during his lifetime. The Gospels are also documents of faith, the faith of the first generations of Christians. They were written by believers for believers, by inspired authors within the first little Christian communities, formed in the towns and cities at the eastern end of the Mediterranean Sea in the first century. The authors of these Gospels wished to communicate not only a record of what Jesus said and did, but more significantly they wanted to share their newly found faith in the full meaning and mystery of what he said and did and, most of all, what he was in his own person.

Such a sharing would be impossible merely by reading the written words of a human author, no matter how gifted. A sharing in the full significance of Christ can happen only by a living contact with Christ himself, risen and alive (cf. Rom. 10:17). According to Christian belief, this living contact with the risen and living Christ is made possible by the Holy Spirit, given to believers in baptism and

in other signs given within the Church (cf. 1 Cor. 12:3). Tangible fruits in the present reveal the activity of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 3:17; Gal. 5:22-23). The sure hope felt for the future life and fulness of salvation manifest the gift of the Holy Spirit as the pledge and beginning of that future already within us (2 Cor. 1:22; Eph. 1:13-14).

In the Gospels, as well as in the Epistles and other writings of the New Testament, are to be found not only historical facts shared about Jesus but also living faith in Christ as risen and present in human experience, enriched by faith. This sharing of faith, skilfully interwoven with selected events and facts from the historical life of Jesus, is offered across the centuries to succeeding generations of Christians by the first Christian communities. To read the Gospels without faith, that is, without a real contact with the enlivening action of the Holy Spirit, is to miss their major content and thrust.

#### The Four Gospels

To understand better the mission of Jesus himself, which is not only at the source of all Christian mission in the centuries after him but also remains always the continuing core of Christian mission in every age, we naturally turn in the first place to the four Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Each of the four evangelists describes the mission of Jesus in his own characteristic way, and Paul gives us even another way. Far from contradicting one another, these five inspired authors of the New Testament by their variety of approach and by the different light in which they see Christ enrich our understanding of Jesus and his mission in the world. They present complementary views of the mission of Jesus Christ which must always remain a divine activity that surpasses any single human attempt, even an inspired one, to grasp in all its fulness the profound mystery of God working as a creature in his own creation.

Mark sees the mission of Christ as Good News, the real ly Good News, for which the world has been waiting and which it so desperately needs to know (Mark 1:1; 1:14-15). It is Mark alone of the four evangelists who actually calls his story of Jesus a Gospel, or Good News. It is the Gospel of the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God is a phrase which may not have much impact for us today when kings have largely disappeared from our world which seeks more democratic forms of government. Yet for the contemporaries of

Jesus the Kingdom of God was a phrase full of meaning. Not only did people then have daily experience of kings and emperors in their lives, but for many centuries the Kingdom of God was an important theme in the great prophets of Israel.

From the great early prophets of the eighth century down to the last of the Old Testament prophets in the fourth century, the Kingdom of God is an important theme. Isaiah and Micah in the eighth century preach it (Isa. 24:23; Mic. 2:13; 4:7). Then in the seventh century we have Jeremiah and Zephaniah (Jer. 3:17; 8:19; Zeph. 3:15). In the sixth century, the time of the Exile in Babylon, there is Ezekiel and the six Psalms of the Kingship of God generally believed to have been written at this time (Ezek. 20:33; Pss. 47; 93; 96; 97; 98; 99). Also in the sixth century we have Second Isaiah (Isa. 43:15; 52:7). In the fifth century there is the prophet Obadiah (Obad. 21), and finally in the fourth century there is Second Zechariah (Zech. 14:9).

Among the evangelists it is Matthew who gives the greatest emphasis to the Kingdom of God, which out of a Jewish reluctance to use directly the name of God he calls the Kingdom of Heaven (Matt. 3:1-2; 4:17; 4:23). Matthew describes the mission of Christ in terms of the Kingdom seen under various aspects. It is the central theme of his Gospel. Luke, on the other hand, sees the mission of Christ more in terms of the salvation he brings into the world especially to the poor and needy (Luke 2:11, 14; 3:18-19). For John the mission of Christ is essentially the communication of life, the full and real life, which he also calls "eternal", since it is God's own life that is being offered to men by Christ. This life can be received only through faith. That is why in John's Gospel the three key words are life, belief and signs through which Christ offers the true life to believers (John 3:16; 10:10; 20:31). Finally, in the letters of Paul we have still another view of the mission of Christ. For Paul, like Mark, Gospel is a word explicitly used. For Paul Christ came to reveal the Gospel as the revelation of the Mystery of God's Wisdom and Power (Rom. 1:16; 16:25-26; 1 Cor. 1:22-24; 2 Cor. 13:3; Col. 1:26-28; Eph. 1:9; 3:3, 16-19). Because Christ's mission was to reveal a mystery that was also a power, Paul understood the purpose of this mission as the redemption of men, or justification of men, as he more characteristically called it, leading to their final salvation in the future (Rom. 5:9-10; 8:24-25).



## The Gospel of Mark

Let us now look more closely at the mission of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark. At the very beginning he calls it the Gospel of Jesus as Christ and as Son of God (Mark 1:1). It has been often pointed out that the confession of Jesus as the Christ by Peter, the leader of his disciples, at Caesarea Philippi (8:29) and as the Son of God by the Roman centurion at Golgotha (15:39), constitute two climaxes in the Gospel of Mark. Matthew combines them in one single confession (Matt. 16:16). The first half of Mark's Gospel, therefore, ends with the recognition of Jesus as the Christ, or Messiah, by the inner circle of his disciples, when the outsiders failed to see this; the second half concludes with his recognition as the Son of God by a gentile centurion, when the glory of his divinity was least apparent to ordinary human vision.

Though Jesus may not immediately be recognised by all for what he is, the Christ and the Son of God, he is, nevertheless, both from the beginning. While the designation "Christ" points more to his mission in the world, the word "Son" describes more the nature of his person. He is to be the Christ for men as the Son of God.

(1) *Christ*. The title of Christ, or Messiah, means literally the one anointed with oil for a mission from God. In the Old Testament, kings were anointed (1 Sam. 10:1; 16:13), priests were anointed (Exod. 29:7; Lev. 16:32), and at least in a metaphorical sense prophets were also anointed (1 Kings 19:16, 19; Isa. 61:1). This physical anointing with oil was intended as a sign of a special task given them by God for the people of Israel. They were God's representatives among the people of Israel. In different ways they revealed God's plan for Israel and made his will present among them in a concrete and living manner. They were "Christs" of God, but "the Christ" of God was still to come.

When Jesus finally comes and is announced as *the* Christ, he is proclaimed as the one supremely sent by God in a unique and unrepeatable manner. He is *the* one sent, or, as we might say, *the* missionary from God to men. His task is one never given to man before, a task which could never be given to mere man, however exalted. He was to reveal the plan of God for men in its entirety so that all previous divine revelation to Israel was included and surpassed in him. In him also the will of God for men was made clear in a

definitive and final manner, not only by his words and actions, but even more concretely in every aspect of his personal existence. This was possible for Jesus only because he was at the same time the Son.

[2] *Son*. While the title of Christ expresses the task or mission given to Jesus among men, the second title of Mark, Son of God, expresses the personal identity of Jesus in himself. The uniqueness of the mission of Jesus as the Christ is founded in the uniqueness of his person as the Son of God. What is significant about the title of Son is that it expresses the divine identity of Jesus in terms of a relationship. This relationship is to God the Father. Jesus is called the Son because he takes his origin as a person from another, the Father, and also because he remains always in an attitude of welcome and acceptance towards the Father.

Two other basic biblical descriptions of Jesus, which are found in other parts of the New Testament, express this same relationship of receiving. Jesus is called the Word of God, re-echoing truthfully to men what the Father first conceives in the hidden depths of God's nature. Jesus is also seen as the perfect Image of the Father reflecting perfectly in human form what God is in his invisible mystery. Without wishing to convey any trace of inferiority in the Son towards the Father, as we observe in all human sonship, the biblical notions of Jesus as Word or as Image, like the biblical designation of Jesus as the Son, intend to emphasise the total relativity of Jesus towards the Father. This constitutes the inner mystery of his person. Jesus is totally turned towards the Father, drawing all that he is equally with the Father totally from the Father as gift.

[3] *Servant*. Though Mark announced his Gospel as the Gospel of Jesus, Son of God, the title which is the most frequently found on the lips of Jesus in his own preaching and teaching is paradoxically the Son of Man. By this it appears that Mark wished to underline not only the human character of the mission of Jesus but also his preference for a lowly service. Jesus appeared before men as the humble Servant of God. Such a gentle Servant of God was already foreshadowed in the Old Testament in the second part of the prophecy of Isaiah (Isa. 42:1-4; 49:1-6; 50:4-9; 52:13-53:12). By his attitude of total service towards others and his complete submission and readiness to accept faithfully all the consequences of his divine mission, no matter how terrible,

Jesus revealed his divine Sonship in human form as the humble service of others (Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:33; 10:45).

### Missionary Service

The service of Jesus in his missionary task is given to him by the Father. At the beginning of his Gospel Mark stresses the divine source of the mission of Jesus (1:9-11). Then he goes on to give in summary form the substance of the early preaching of Jesus. This important formula is a concise expression of the mission of Christ as envisaged by Mark in his Gospel. "The time has come and the kingdom of God is close at hand. Repent and believe the Gospel" (1:15). There are five elements in this mission of Jesus, as interpreted for us by Mark, and each of these calls for a brief consideration.

(1) *A Kairos*. The mission of Jesus comes not by chance but at a definite moment in history, chosen by God in his providence, with all the cultural and social characteristics of that particular time and place. This particular time, or *Kairos* as it is called in the Greek language, is not a chance event but a time chosen and willed by God for his intervention in history. At the root of the mission of Jesus is the unbelievable entrance of the Creator into his own creation. In his Gospel, John will describe it as the Word made flesh, but Mark sees it rather as the secular made sacred. God chose to use ordinary time to share what was beyond time. Particular human circumstances with all their limitations and imperfections, that appear to be a necessary consequence of anything particular, and with all the evil that inevitably occurs through their abuse, were taken by God to be the means of revealing definitively and sharing to the full his divine plan for the human race. The secular can communicate the sacred. Eternity can be touched in time. Such is the way God has surprised us in Christ.

(2) *Good News*. Gospel means good news. This is what Jesus brings the world in his mission. First, it is news. Second, it is good. The full impact of this should not be missed. What Jesus offers men is not a theory, not even a proposal or plan for the future. What he offers is a fact, the most startling of all facts. As any good journalist knows what makes news are facts and the persons involved in the facts. This is precisely what the mission of Jesus is. It calls our attention to a fact and the person behind that fact. It is, moreover, a fact that we could never have dis

covered through any other source. We needed to be told, and told by the Christ sent from God.

Secondly, it is news that is not bad, like so much of the information given in our daily newspapers, but it is good news. It is the supremely good news. The only other good news with which we could in any manner compare it would be life itself. When God created the world, and especially when he made man and woman, he saw that it was good. The goodness of life is a fact that we all can discover for ourselves. We all have a direct experience of how good it is to live. Only persons who have been deeply and repeatedly hurt at the core of their being lose their hope in the essential goodness of life. What Jesus brings to men is God's plan already in operation and already being executed for the extension of mankind's life beyond all imaginable limits. The mission of Jesus announced the continuation, or better, the second stage, of the plan which God had designed for all mankind when he created the universe. What could be better news for us?

(3) *Kingdom*. The characteristic term used by Jesus, at least at the beginning of his public life, to describe the substance of the Good News he announced was the Kingdom of God. The history of this phrase goes back to the early history of Israel, when God freed his people from slavery in Egypt. It was foreshadowed in the kingdom established under King David, foretold in various ways by Isaiah and other prophets and eagerly awaited in the centuries before the birth of Jesus when Israel was subjected to successive foreign rules, the Persians, the Greeks and finally the Romans.

It is significant that Mark, like Luke (3:3) but unlike Matthew (3:2), portrays John the Baptist as preaching repentance but reserves the proclamation of the Kingdom of God to Jesus alone (Mark 1:4). By this Mark has insinuated the uniqueness of the message of Jesus. Jesus did far more than repeat what others may have already said before him. He brought a new revelation and a new presence of God into the world.

The Kingdom of God announced by Jesus was the good news, the great fact he revealed to men. This fact is, first, the *action* of God for men, planned by him from the beginning but only now being shown to the world and realized in the mission of Christ. Only secondly, therefore, is the

Kingdom of God a place. It will be a place in the world only where the action of God, which Christ revealed, is recognized and received by men. This has already been realized in Jesus but will find its first beginning and seed in others in the Church which he founded. The Kingdom of God, therefore, is God's specific action directed towards all men in Christ before it is a recognizable place or visible institution of men in this world. It is this action of God, offered to every man and woman who ever lives, that is the great fact announced in the Good News brought by Jesus.

As the teaching of Jesus made clear, this action of God, his reign or his rule, was not to be a domination from outside, as one man ordinarily rules another. The Kingdom of God was a special kind of rule over man, an action that was peculiar to God alone as the creator and giver of life. It could enter man's life from within, consequently, not curtailing the life and freedom he already possessed but expanding it and elevating it to undreamt of heights. Other authors in the New Testament would describe this specific action of God upon man in other terms as the fulness of life for mankind, liberation, redemption, justification or salvation, given by sharing in the Holy Spirit of God in his glory in his love.

(4) *Conversion.* The announcement of the great fact of the Kingdom was the substance of the Gospel of Jesus. There was more, however, in his message. His hearers were challenged to repent. The English word "repentance" fails to capture the full meaning expressed in the Greek word "metanoia" which Mark used in this passage. *Meta-noia* literally means after- or other-mentality or way of thinking. It signifies not only sorrow for past sins, but a whole new way of looking at life. The hearers of Jesus, therefore, were challenged by him not only to repent, or turn from their past sins, but to change themselves completely and turn towards this Kingdom of God offered to them. A radical change of heart was demanded, if heart is taken as a symbol for the innermost core of man's person. Such a radical change of heart, or *metanoia*, was only possible to a person through the action of God, which Christ announced to be already there. By recognizing and welcoming this action of God revealed in Christ and responding to it with all one's heart, a person positively turned to God in a manner that called for a radically new way of living.

(5) *Faith*. The second challenge in the message of Christ to men is to believe. The response to the Kingdom, called *metanoia*, expressed in a desire for a radically new way of living, is also the beginning of what we call faith. In fact, it is not only the beginning but a necessary continuing constituent of faith authentically lived.

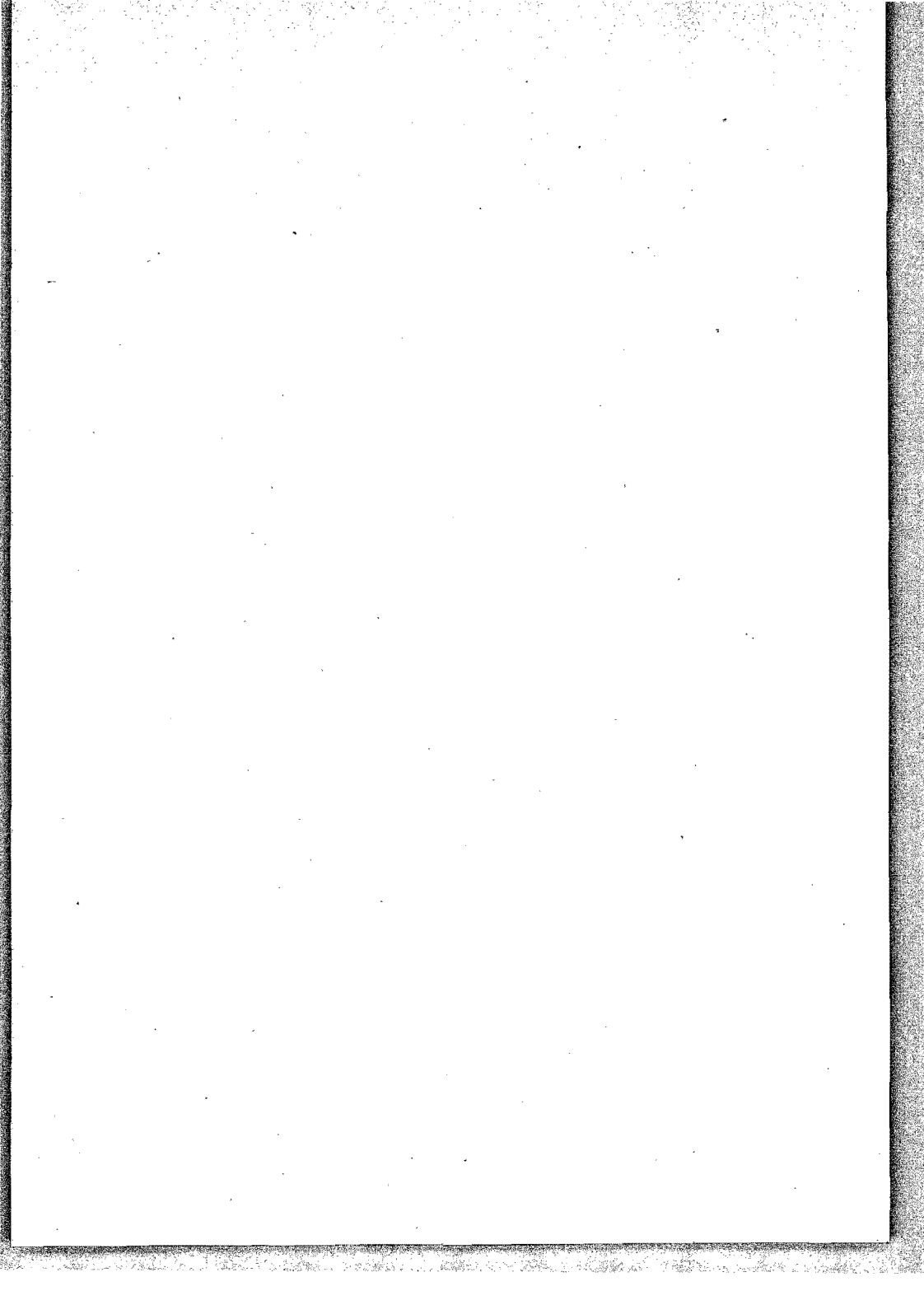
Faith, in its full biblical sense, is a response of the whole person to the action of God. It involves not only our head, in what we know by faith, but also our hands, in what we do by faith, and most of all our heart, in what we are as persons by faith. A more limited and more precise notion of faith, called theological faith, singles out one aspect of this biblical faith, knowledge of truth and of the authority of God revealing himself, as distinct from the other dispositions of hope, trust, love for God, and love for others, which are also essential parts of faith in the broad biblical sense.

Faith, understood as a continuing response of the whole person to God, is a simple movement of man towards God under the influence of his divine initiative. A full intellectual comprehension of faith, however, is complex and never wholly satisfies our minds. Faith, which is our human response, under the influence of divine grace, to the mystery of God revealing himself, will always share in some of that mystery.

The mission of Jesus, therefore, as presented by Mark, challenges us not only to give up all illusory egocentric attitudes but also to meet God in the total readiness and openness of sincere faith. In this way God enables us to discover his invisible action in the world as a mysterious reality that is at once theological, christological and sacramental.

It is theological, because it always remains in its source the action of God as the personal Father of every man and woman, which had been once and for all definitively revealed to the world in his Son, Jesus Christ. The hidden action of God is a christological reality, not only because it was first revealed in Christ's historical life, but also because it is infallibly continued for all time in the Church, instituted by Christ, and is constantly enlivened by the Holy Spirit which he sends. It is a sacramental reality, because, through an invisible reality, God's action is effected and is made visible through signs that are perceptible to us. By the power of Holy Spirit, the Church

in her whole reality becomes a kind of sacrament of Christ's continued presence and activity in the world, and this is further particularized and made clear by the message which the Church proclaims and the signs which it gives.





## II - THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

If the mission of Christ in his lifetime was to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom of his Father (Mark 1:15; Matt. 4:17; Luke 4:43; John 18:36-37), the mission of the Church from its first origins was to preach the Gospel of the crucified Christ as the Risen One and Lord (Acts 2:36; Rom. 10:9; 1 Cor. 1:23-24; Phil. 2:11). By preaching Christ the Church did not err nor distort or change the Gospel brought by Christ to the world. On the contrary, the first disciples after the resurrection of Jesus, and under the guidance of the newly given Holy Spirit, came to a fuller understanding of the teaching of Christ, as he himself had promised they would (John 7:39; 12:16; 14:26; 16:13-14). They were given a deeper understanding of the Gospel he brought to men, not only by his words, but much more by his actions, and most of all by what he was in his own person. It was God himself who revealed this new understanding to the disciples of Jesus (Matt. 11:25-27). The Gospel which the Church has preached from the beginning is the continuation of the Gospel first preached in the world by Christ. The General Principles of the CLC formulate the same truth even more profoundly, when they define the Church as the place "where Christ is here and now continuing his mission of salvation" (GP. 5).

### Deepest Identity of the Church

Mission is at the heart of the Church, for it constitutes the inner reality and task given to her by Christ. This is the clear teaching of the Second Vatican Council and has become a key theme in the ordinary teaching of the Church since then. Our present Pope John Paul II frequent

ly recalls the essentially missionary nature of the Church in the course of his many addresses in Rome and when he travels to other countries. He points to his own journeys to various places in the world as a concrete expression of the missionary identity of the Church. His words during a General Audience in St. Peter's Square on 21 May 1980, after his missionary journey to Africa, are typical.

*We owe this awareness to the Second Vatican Council, which showed to its deepest roots, the theological significance of the truth that the Church is continually in a state of mission. It cannot be otherwise, since there constantly remains in her the mission, that is, the apostolic mandate of Christ, the Son of God, and the invisible mission of the Holy Spirit, who is given by the Father to the Church and by means of the Church to men and to peoples thanks to the crucified and risen Christ...*

*The life of the Church is a mission in which, through the history of every man and, at the same time, through the history of nations and generations, the eternal mystery of God's love revealed in Christ is developed and realized.*

Pope John Paul II is here expressing in his own words an explicit teaching about the missionary nature of the Church in the Second Vatican Council. Two classical expressions of this, one in the Constitution on the Church (*Lumen Gentium*) and the other in the Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church (*Ad Gentes*) summarize this teaching.

*The Church, endowed with the gift of her founder and faithfully observing his precepts of charity, humility and self-denial, receives the mission of proclaiming and establishing among all peoples the kingdom of Christ and of God, and she is, on earth, the seed and the beginning of that kingdom. (LG. 5)*

*The mission of the Church is carried by means of that activity through which, in*

obedience to Christ's command, moved by the grace and love of the Holy Spirit, the Church makes itself fully present to all men and peoples in order to lead them to faith, freedom and the peace of Christ by the example of its life and teaching, by the sacraments and the other means of grace. (AG. 5)

The Apostolic Exhortation of Paul VI (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*) has given what is perhaps the most emphatic statement of this important truth about the essentially missionary nature of the Church. After quoting a sentence from the Declaration of the Synod Fathers at the 1974 Synod of Bishops, Paul VI expressed authoritatively in more detail the implications of their teaching.

*It is with joy and consolation that at the end of the great Assembly of 1974 we heard these illuminating words: "We wish to confirm once more that the task of evangelizing all people constitutes the essential mission of the Church". It is a task and mission which the vast and profound changes of present-day society make all the more urgent. Evangelization is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity. She exists in order to evangelize, that is to say in order to preach and teach, to be the channel of the gift of grace, to reconcile sinners with God, and to perpetuate Christ's sacrifice in the Mass, which is the memorial of his death and glorious resurrection,*

When the Second Vatican Council and the Popes speak of the Church, they are explicitly speaking of the whole Church. The command Christ gave to the Twelve to go out and bring the Gospel to all peoples is valid for all Christians though in different ways (*Ad Gentes* 5; *Evang. Nunt.* 13, 15c, 21; cf. 66-72).

#### Born from Mission for Mission

To conceive the Church as missionary in her very nature is to say that she is linked to the task of bringing the

Gospel of Christ to all men in her most intimate being and in her whole reality and activity. Everything the Church does must in some manner be an expression of her missionary thrust into the world of human absence and separation from God. Her fidelity to Christ must in some way be measured and evaluated in terms of her fidelity and fruitfulness in her missionary task. The Apostolic Exhortation of Paul VI has developed in some detail what this close link between the Church and her task of communicating the Gospel concretely means (*Evang. Nunt.* 15).

First of all, the Church was born from the mission of Jesus. It was in the efforts of Jesus and the Twelve to communicate the Gospel of the Kingdom of God to others that the Church came into existence. What had already begun to happen in a secret and obscure fashion during the historical life of Jesus came to completion at Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came upon the Apostles. Moved by their preaching, hundreds of people quickly gathered around the Apostles to form the first Church, the primitive Church, and the mother of all Churches, in Jerusalem (Act 2:41-42).

Born from the mission of Jesus, the Church is in turn sent by him as a sign of his new presence in the world. The sign, which the Church is, enlightens yet can be obscure. Because she has been sent by Christ and enlivened from within by his Spirit, the mission of the Church can properly be understood to prolong and continue his presence and his mission in the world. For this reason also, the Church would be contradicting her own nature, if she were to turn inwards upon herself. Even the intimate life of the Church, which consists in listening to the Word of God in faith and in living together fraternally in love, achieves its full meaning only when it becomes a witness provoking wonder and change of heart in others, and a proclamation to them of the Gospel.

Though the Church sent to continue the mission of Christ is sent to bring the Gospel to others, she begins by being transformed herself by the Gospel. As the community of faith, love and hope, she must listen unceasingly to the Gospel in which she believes, to the new commandment of love, by which she lives and to the reasons which the Gospel gives her for hoping. As part of the world, she will be tempted to worship the idols of the world and so will be in constant need of hearing afresh the Gospel by which she lives. To evangelize others with credibility, the Church

will always remain in constant need of being evangelized herself towards conversion and renewal. Without such a constantly renewed submission to Christ in his Gospel, the Church would quickly lose the freshness, vigour and strength needed in her to bring the Gospel to others.

The Church is a clearly defined place in the world where the Gospel, that Christ wishes to be proclaimed to all men, can be found. This means that Christ has not left his Gospel for the world only in the form of a written or even verbal message. If he had done only that, the Church would be only superficially linked with the Gospel and the mission initiated by Christ in the world. The Church would then be something like a pipe, through which the water of the Gospel flowed from Christ to men down through the centuries.

The Church is something more than this. The Gospel constitutes part of her living reality, both in her external institution and organization and in her internal constitution and life. It is impossible to draw a neat line through the Church separating on the one side the Gospel aspect of the Church coming from Christ, and on the other side the human additions to the Church coming from human ingenuity and devotion or from human fallibility and imperfection. The Church and the Gospel form a concrete living whole that cannot be dissected into its divine and human constituents so easily. The biblical comparisons of the Church as a building being constructed by God, a field in which Christ sows the seed, or a body into which God breathes his spirit, affirm a vital union between the Church and the Gospel. This does not exclude the possibility of the Gospel of salvation being also given to men outside the visible Church. It does, however, mean that the Church in her concrete and visible reality is the depositary, or natural matrix, of the Gospel in the world, since the death and resurrection of Christ. Consequently the very existence and reality of the Church depend on the Gospel of Christ continuing to operate within her.

Finally, although the Church is the place or depositary of the Gospel in the world, which she preserves as her living heritage, this Gospel is not meant to be kept hidden within her. It is meant to be communicated to others and shared with them. For this reason the Church herself sends out evangelizers to bring the Gospel to those who have not yet heard and accepted it. She puts on their lips the Gos

pel, which she has first carefully nurtured within them, not only as a thought in the mind but also a disposition of the heart and a whole way of living in the world. They are sent not to preach their own ideas or even their own selves, but a Gospel of which they can never be the absolute masters. Like the whole Church, those who are sent by the Church and given a mandate to preach the Gospel, always remain not masters but servants of the Gospel, which they must strive to pass to others with complete fidelity.

### Stages in the Mission of the Church

The mission of the Church, which consists in bringing the Gospel to men of all ages, has a twofold purpose. One of these purposes is individual, the other is collective. By communicating the Gospel the Church first seeks to bring about an interior change and personal conversion in individuals (Evang. Nunt. 18). A new world must begin with new persons. New persons can only be formed from the inside. It is in this sense that it may be truthfully said that the mission of the Church is to convert. This does not mean to indoctrinate or to enforce a minimum of external conformity. It means to facilitate and be the instrument of that radical turning to God and transformation of heart which only the Gospel, spoken directly and mysteriously to a person by Christ himself, can effect (Rom. 10:17). Conversion is the fruit of a living encounter with the living Gospel itself. This is none other than the living person of Christ.

The second purpose of the Church in her mission is the transformation from within of social structures and cultural values of communities and peoples (Evang. Nunt. 19-20). Ultimately, this will be done by persons living within those societies and cultures, who have been first interiorly changed by the Gospel. In this way the Gospel eventually becomes inculturated within the lives of the communities and whole peoples. Until the Gospel has penetrated into the corporate lives of people, it cannot be said to have been fully and personally appropriated by individual persons. It is in this sense that we can speak of the evangelization of cultures as well as the evangelization of persons. Though the Gospel can never be completely identified with any particular culture and will always remain in some way independent of cultures, nevertheless, the life which the Gospel proclaims is a new life for man in his concrete and social situation. Consequently, the building up of this life a-

mong men cannot avoid using elements of human cultures and social structures. These elements and structures have, in their turn to be regenerated by an encounter with the Gospel, and this cannot occur unless the Gospel is openly proclaimed and openly professed by individuals and communities.

The twofold purpose of the mission of the Church, the interior transformation of persons and the inculturation of the Gospel into their corporate life, is achieved by stages. Already in the New Testament St. Paul mentions a series of steps or stages in the communication of the Gospel by the Church to people. Though he lists them in a reverse order, St. Paul envisages six broad steps (Rom. 10:13-15). These stages are:

- 1) mission from Christ,
- 2) proclamation of Christ,
- 3) hearing about Christ,
- 4) believing in Christ,
- 5) calling upon Christ,
- 6) salvation from Christ.

In the Apostolic Exhortation of Paul VI on Evangelization in the Modern World (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*) three major stages are described in the mission of the Church.

(1) *Stage One.* This stage might be called the proclamation stage. It is a stage when the seeds of faith are being sown (*Evang. Nunt.* 21-22). Within this stage, there is, firstly, the silent proclamation of the Gospel, or the wordless witness, given by Christians to those among whom they live their ordinary lives. This is already an initial act of evangelization. It would be well, therefore, to cease calling this silent witness to the Gospel a form of pre-evangelization. The Gospel can be effectively communicated by such a silent witness of Christian living. Such an initial act of sharing the Gospel can be directed towards many different kinds of people: people to whom Christ has never been proclaimed, people who are baptized but do not practise, or people who are sincerely seeking someone whom they cannot name.

Secondly, within this stage, we have the explicit preaching of the Gospel, when the witness of life is also proclaimed by the word of life. As explicit proclamation of the Gospel means a clear and unequivocal preaching of Jesus as the Lord of all. In addition to the proclamation of his

universal Lordship, such an explicit preaching of the Gospel must contain also the life and teaching of Jesus and the mystery of his life, death and resurrection.

Thirdly, this first stage of sowing the seeds of faith in people's hearts is concluded by some form of catechumenate leading to the reception of the sacrament of Baptism. This completes the first major stage in communicating the Gospel. This initial proclamation of the Gospel, and a first adherence by the one who hears it, occupies such an important place in the mission of the Church that it has often been used as a synonym for the whole mission of the Church. However, this is only the first stage and constitutes only one aspect of the mission of the Church to bring the Gospel to men.

(2) *Stage Two.* The proclamation of the Gospel reaches its full reality only when it is heard, welcomed and arouses a genuine adherence in the one who receives it. In a sense, we could say that the Gospel is not being fully proclaimed until it is heard by someone and received. This full acceptance and assimilation of the Gospel begins with Baptism, the first of the Church's signs or sacraments, by which she incorporates new members to herself. This is the beginning of the second major stage in the mission of the Church (*Evang. Nunt.* 23). In the sacrament of Baptism the one who has welcomed the Gospel is joined mystically but really to the person of Christ in his death and resurrection, and is at the same time concretely incorporated by a visible entry into the community of believers.

After Baptism, which is a sign of transformation, the new Christian begins to share in the other signs of the Church. There is especially the sign of Penance, by which he renews and restores his radical conversion to God. Above all, however, there is the Eucharist, the greatest of all the signs in the Church by which the life within a Christian is nourished and strengthened and grows. This second stage of the mission of the Church could be called the sacramental stage.

(3) *Stage Three.* The final stage in the mission of the Church is the apostolic stage. In this stage the individuals of communities which have been evangelized go on to bring the Gospel to others. This stage has been called "the touchstone of evangelization" (*Evang. Nunt.* 24). The apostolic initiative of the individuals and groups who have



committed themselves to the Gospel and been baptized is the ultimate test of the effectiveness of the mission of the Church. The Gospel has fully penetrated only where persons have become apostolically active, and agents themselves in the missionary service of the Church. This is the supreme expression of the love of God, which the Gospel pours into our hearts through the action of the Holy Spirit given us (Rom. 5:5b). To bring the Gospel to another is the highest expression of that love for our neighbor which the New Testament teaches is inseparable from true faith in the Gospel of Christ (John 13:35; Gal. 5:6b; James 2:17). The true disciple of the Gospel is the apostle of the Gospel.

### Levels of Faith

One important aspect in the mission of the Church which is frequently overlooked by many is the variety in which an adherence to God through faith can exist among different people. This variety in faith includes not only differences in faith among individuals, on account of the special personal qualities that give to each person a certain uniqueness. It also includes more generic differences in faith, which are not the same as those caused by the necessarily intimate and personal nature of faith. Taking into consideration these more generic variations, we may profitably distinguish within human experience four main kinds of faith. All these kinds will, of course, involve in some manner a personal response to God's personal initiative towards men.

[1] *Secular Faith.* This somewhat paradoxical expression might be employed to describe a sincere attitude of openness to the whole mystery of life, where life is understood to be something greater than and distinct from one's own individual control over it. A person with such a faith readily acknowledges the centre of his life and personal existence to be outside his control and in some way other to himself. His submission to this "other" and his ready acceptance of this situation, when coupled with a hopeful and sincerely felt optimism about life and the future, manifests a kind of basic faith. An accompanying openness and acceptance towards others confirms the presence of such a basic faith in a person. Love for others always remains the ultimate test of faith (John 13:34-35).

An individual with this basic kind of faith responds

hopefully to life, as something given to him and something fundamentally good. Since many people who manifest in themselves signs of this kind of faith often appear to be without any religion or any explicit recognition of the sacred, this fundamental level of faith may be legitimately described as "secular faith".

(2) *Religious Faith.* When people come to recognize that life is not merely some blind impersonal force in the world, but is something with a personal source and centre, to whom they can relate personally in mutual knowledge and freedom, the primitive disposition of openness towards the "other", found in basic, or secular, faith, becomes more precisely defined. A personal divinity is now acknowledged as the source of mankind's life and destiny, by whatever particular name that personal source may be known. There are many such names in existence among the peoples of the world: Vishnu, Shiva, Yahweh, Allah, Father, etc. Religious faith exists, therefore, whenever people believe in a personal God, that is, a God whom they can know and who can be known in a personal manner. This personal manner of relating to the divine gives rise to religion, in which people freely submit to God, as distinct from superstition, in which they attempt to control and manipulate God.

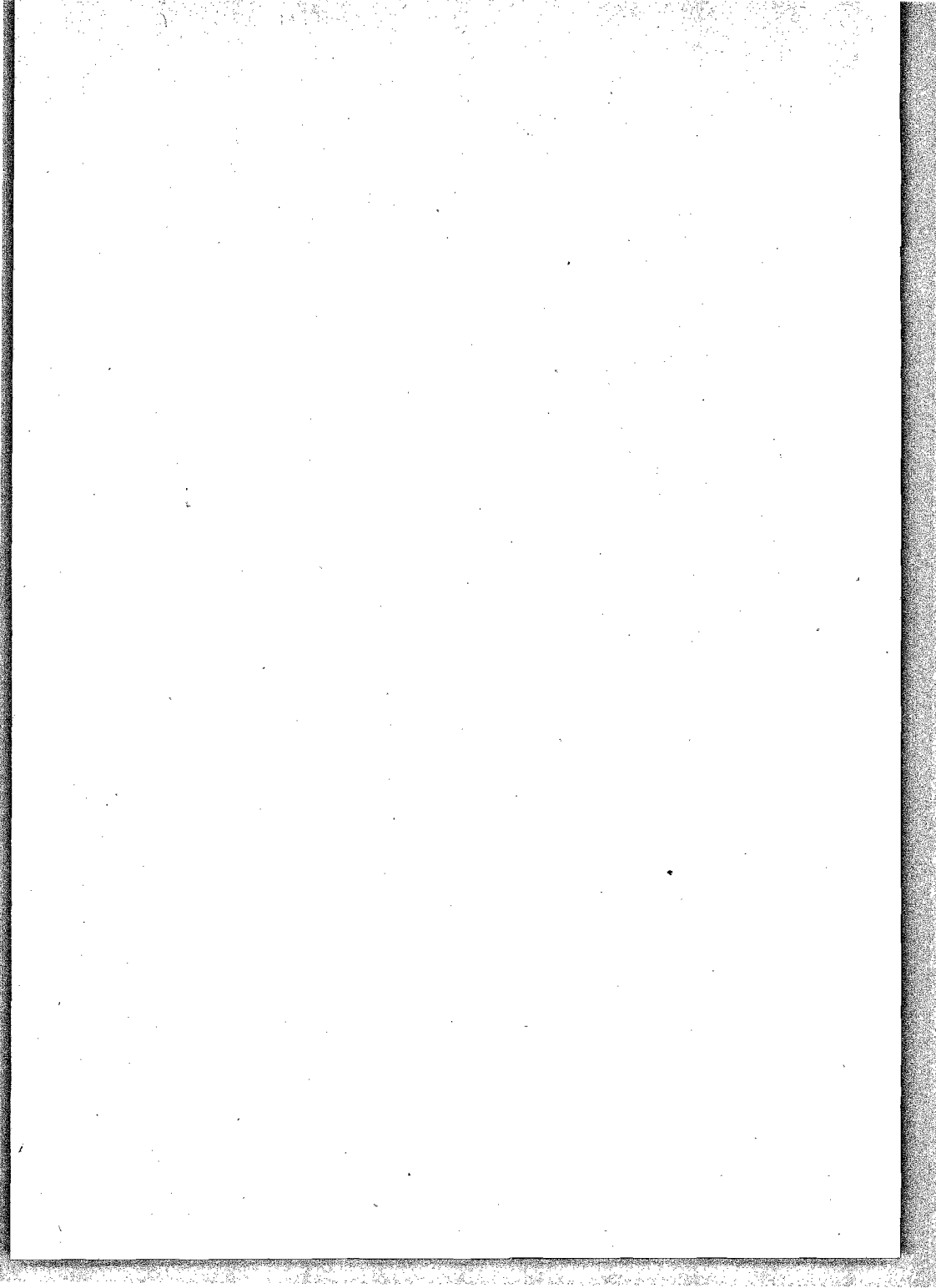
(3) *Christian Faith.* The third level of faith is religious faith, but religious faith of a special kind. In Christian faith a person believes not only that God is personal, but also that he has freely chosen to enter history and appear within his own creation as a creature, in the man Jesus Christ. Outrageous and blasphemous as this often appears to many people who are not Christians - and one must live for some time with non-Christians to appreciate the sincerity of their sentiments - nevertheless, this is the truth asserted in Christian faith. Christian faith holds that the mighty Lord of the Cosmos actually walked this earth as a man during a certain period of history.

(4) *Catholic Faith.* Catholic faith, the faith held in the Roman Catholic Church, in the Eastern Orthodox Churches, in certain parts of the Anglican Church and elsewhere, is the faith that claims to be the authentic and full Christian faith willed by Christ for mankind. In such a level of faith people believe in an institutional and visible association of men and women called the Church. They believe in the Church not merely as the body founded by Christ and the place in which, along with many others, people manifest

their belief in Christ. They also believe in the Church itself as an object and goal of faith. This is possible, of course, only insofar as Christ himself in his risen Lordship can be truly present and really active within the human visible structures and actions of the Church. This is precisely what Catholics believe happens in the true Church of Christ, through the divine presence and action of the Holy Spirit.

This fourth level of faith involves a sacramental view of the Church, which accepts that the mystery of the divine reality can be really signified and active in and through a visible human reality. Such a view of the Church is, of course, part of the explicit teaching of the Second Vatican Council. The Church is described as the universal sacrament of salvation (*Lumen Gentium* 9,48). She is this sacrament of salvation for all mankind because she is a sign and instrument of the union and unity given by Christ - union with God by faith, and unity with one another by love (*Lumen Gentium* 1).

From the point of view of Catholic truth, these four kinds of faith also constitute four levels of faith in an ascending order of objective value. Such a point of view, however, should not be interpreted too rigidly. We should not exclude the possibility that an objectively lower level of faith might exist concretely within a particular individual as a subjectively higher response to God. This would mean for such a person a closer union with God than may exist for individuals at an objectively higher level of faith. One cannot be too categorical when discussing the way God enters into the personal lives of individuals.



### III - THE MISSION OF THE LAITY

The Second Vatican Council was, above all, a council about the Church. It presented what was for many a radically new view of the nature of the Church. Yet the Council was, in fact, doing no more than to restore with a fresh clarity the primitive and traditional view of the Church. This traditional view had to a considerable degree been obscured for many in the Catholic Church during the centuries of defensive reaction to European Protestantism, which began with the Counter-Reformation by Catholics of the sixteenth century.

The sixteenth century Protestants, in general, emphasized the Gospel of Christ as an invisible reality received by individuals through personal faith in God. In doing this, they could obviously point to St. Paul who in his Letter to the Romans had done the same (Rom. 1:16-5:11). Yet, unlike St. Paul, they not only left in the background other aspects, but positively denied that the Gospel of Christ was anything more. The equally essential *visible* reality of the Gospel was discarded as a distortion of the Gospel and merely a succession of human accretions. Yet, until the time of the Reformation in the sixteenth century, this visible and historical aspect had been traditionally accepted by the Church as part of the reality of the Gospel given to the Church by Christ, and willed by him. It is understandable how the reaction of Catholics, in defending the visible and historical aspects of the Gospel given by Christ to his Church, would tend to emphasize the things denied by the Reformers and thereby lose a clear appreciation of the truth they were affirming and underlining.

Right up till the time of the Second Vatican Council,

held from 1962-1965, the standard teaching on the nature of the Church among Catholics followed substantially the perspective of counter-reformation guides like the Jesuit St. Robert Bellarmine who lived from 1542-1621. In that perspective the Church was envisaged primarily as a visible society in the world with the powers given to its priestly leaders to teach, to sanctify and to govern the faithful. Such a view of the Church tended inevitably to be static rather than dynamic, seeing the Church as a social state rather than a mission to men. Most Catholics instructed in their faith before the Vatican Council would have been taught this understanding of the Church.

In such a view of the Church, there is hardly any scope for understanding the Church as essentially outward moving and missionary, since it is portrayed in a static manner, as a social state, rather than in a dynamic way, as a missionary thrust of the Gospel into areas of unbelief. Moreover, and this is more to our discussion at this point, this static view of the Church also reduced lay persons in the Church to passive receivers of the powers to teach, to sanctify and to govern exercised for them by the hierarchy. Christian life, for Catholics, was to be found primarily at the altar or in the cloister. Those who lived a secular life in the world, doing the ordinary things that ordinary people do, were considered, at least implicitly, to be living a diminished form of Christian life, a kind of second-class response to the Gospel.

In these less defensive times since the Vatican Council, when a more Christlike attitude of appreciation and acceptance is growing among all Christians in the ecumenical climate, we Catholics should be ready to acknowledge joyfully and thankfully the truth in the Gospel which the Reformers of the sixteenth century rediscovered with such enthusiasm. For Protestants, the glory of the Reformation was that it restored to ordinary secular life, lived by lay persons, the holiness and fulness of the Gospel that had formerly been held as the special possession of the hierarchy or kept hidden in the cloisters of monks and nuns. The Reformation sought to restore the dignity and Christian value to the various activities of secular life which were rightfully theirs as fruits of the Gospel of Christ.

Catholics in our time do not wish to forsake the Gospel truths which they have maintained intact for so long.

They have no wish to deny the essentially visible and corporate aspect of the Gospel as it is lived in the Church by Catholics. Nor are they prepared to forsake the essential truth that Christ intended leaders for his Church, not only in the first generation but in all generations of Christians. Catholics believe that Christ wanted these leaders to have power directly from him to serve their Christian brethren by teaching them, by sanctifying them and by leading them as visible expressions of his own personal presence in the Church at all time. Nor do Catholics wish to see denigrated the powerful witness to the radical nature of the Gospel in people's lives and the essential mystery of the Gospel, which religious men and women, vowed to lifelong chastity, poverty and obedience, offer in the Church to the world.

Yet, Catholics should be the first to admit that in the post-Vatican situation they are beginning to re-possess as their own truth the insight of the Reformers into the essential role of the laity in the mission of the Church. This is doing no more than to make one's own again an important aspect of the teaching of the Second Vatican Council on the nature of the Church. This is not to pass from a kind of clericalism into a kind of laicism. Rather, it is to perceive correctly the essential but differing roles of priests, religious and lay persons within the life of the Church.

### The Contemporary Teaching of the Church

The contemporary teaching of the Church on the role of the laity in the mission of the Church is found basically in the documents of the Second Vatican Council. The two primary statements of this are two chapters in the Constitution on the Church (*Lumen Gentium*), the Second Chapter on the People of God and the Fourth Chapter on the Laity (LG 9-17, 30-38). Then there is the special Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People (*Apostolicam Actuositatem*) which takes up in more specific detail the role of the Laity in the mission of the Church. Finally, there is the Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium et Spes*), the document which, though it is not the most fundamental or the most important document of the Vatican Council, is universally regarded as the document which most typically captured the spirit of the Second Vatican Council. It has been called "the portrait" of Vatican II. In its First Part, the first chapters, which

deal with Human Dignity, Brotherhood, and Secular Activity respectively, call for special attention from lay persons (GS. 12-39). In the Second part, there are five chapters which treat successively five major areas of life where lay persons individually and collectively are constantly challenged and faced with critical decisions; Marriage, Culture, Economic and Social Life, Politics and World Peace (GS 47-90). Key elements in this authoritative teaching were reaffirmed in the Apostolic Exhortation of Paul VI, *Evangelization in the Modern World (Evangelii Nuntiandi)*.

In the many references of Pope John Paul II to the role of the laity in the mission of the Church, in his frequent addresses and writings, we have ample confirmation both of the truth of this basic teaching on the role of the laity in the mission of the Church, and of its importance today. A few examples of his teaching reveals his fidelity to the doctrine of the Second Vatican Council, and at the same time summarizes much of that teaching for us.

*After the fashion of leaven they are called to work for the sanctification of the world from within, beginning with their own families. (To a group of Indian Bishops, 31 May 1979).*

*Every lay Christian is therefore an extraordinary work of God's grace and is called to the heights of holiness. Some times, lay men and women do not seem to appreciate to the full the dignity and the vocation that is theirs as lay people. No, there is no such thing as an "ordinary layman", for all of you have been called to conversion through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. (To Lay People in a Homily at Mass in Limerick, Ireland, 1 October 1979).*

*The great forces which shape the world - politics, the mass media, science, technology, culture, education, industry and work - are precisely the areas where lay people are specially competent to exercise their mission. (Message for World Communications Day, 18 May 1980).*



*You, the laity, pursuing a vocation of holiness and love, have a particular responsibility for the consecration of the world. Through you the Gospel must reach all levels of society. (Nairobi, Kenya, 6 May 1980).*

*If the testimony which is expected of the layman is that of secularity, action in temporal affairs, then the testimony connatural to religious life in general, and to every religious in particular is that of the Beatitudes, lived in everyday life. (To Religious Men in Sao Paolo, Brazil, 3 July 1980).*

*The layman is, by definition, a disciple and follower of Christ, a man of the Church present and active at the heart of the world, to manage temporal realities and ordain them to the Kingdom of God. (To the Bishops of Brazil, 10 July 1980).*

In this last-mentioned address given to the Bishops of Brazil during his visit there, John Paul II went on to list six items in particular which the laity should expect to find in the priestly service given to them by their pastors. They have a right to expect from their pastors

- 1) nourishment for their faith,
- 2) certainty with regard to the teachings of Christ and of the Church,
- 3) spiritual support for their lives,
- 4) firm guidance for their role as Christians in the world,
- 5) "legitimate amount of freedom for their commitment in temporal affairs",
- 6) "help and encouragement to be laity without the risk of clericalization; and they likewise expect their pastors to be fully such without risks of laicization".

Earlier, just a few months after his election as Pope, during his first missionary journey to Mexico, John Paul II had stressed the characteristic role of the laity in the mission of the Church. He did this towards the end of his important address to the Bishops of Latin America, gathered in Conference at Puebla. Pope John Paul II, again follow

ing the doctrine of Vatican II, emphasized the prior role of the laity over that of priests and religious in the promotion of justice and in the implementation of the Church's social doctrine. The passage is worth quoting in full.

*Particular care must be given to forming a social conscience at all levels and in all sectors. When injustices grow worse and the distance between rich and poor increases distressingly, the social doctrine, in a form which is creative and open to the broad fields of the Church's presence, must be a valuable instrument for formation and action. This holds good particularly for the laity: "it is to the laity, though not exclusively to them, that secular duties and activity properly belong" (GS.43). It is necessary to avoid supplanting the laity and to study seriously just when certain forms of supplying for them retain their reason for existence. Is it not the laity who are called, by reason of their vocation in the Church, to make their contribution in the political and economic dimensions, and to be effectively present in the safeguarding and advancement of human rights?*

### Kingdom and Church

The Second Vatican Council considered the Church, firstly, as the mystery of God, shared in the threefold relation of Father, Son and Spirit, entering into the world. The Church is seen, first of all, in the perspective of this mystery, which is the entry of God into the world not only as the Creator of all but now as the Saviour of all. By this mystery is to be effected the union of all men to God and the unity of all men among themselves. This mystery, begun in the person of Jesus, is continued in the Church. For this reason, the Word made flesh is a kind of fundamental "sacrament" of the mystery of God in the world. So also, the Church through her union with Christ, as her once and for all founder and her continually present and active Head, is likewise a kind of "sacrament" of the hid-

den mystery of Christ, that is, a sign and instrument of salvation for all men, in the sense of a personal union with God and a fraternal unity among themselves.

This mystery, which is identical with the visible mission of Christ from the Father into the world, and which is continued, by Christ's express will and the internal infusion of the Holy Spirit, in the visible mission of the Church, is also Kingdom of God as Jesus proclaimed it in his own lifetime. This Kingdom is not identical with the Church, though the two cannot be separated. The Council envisaged the Kingdom as a reality that was more extensive than the Church in space and time. A proper grasp of this truth is important for a balanced understanding of the role of the laity in the mission of the Church.

The Vatican Council gave specific teaching on this relation between the Church and the Kingdom of God (LG.5-6). The Kingdom of God was revealed in the person of Christ himself, not only by his words and deeds but by his very person in the world. By his proclamation of the Kingdom he began the Church. This Church is not to be totally identified with the Kingdom, but is, on earth, the seed and beginning of that Kingdom. The Church is given the mission by Christ to proclaim and establish the Kingdom among all peoples. While she slowly grows to maturity, the Church must continually look into the future for the completion of that Kingdom. The Kingdom has become completely identified with a human reality only in the person of Christ in his risen and glorified state.

Because the Church is inseparable from Christ, her living Head, the Church is inseparable from the Kingdom. This necessary union between the crucified and risen Christ, in whom the Kingdom of God is now completed, and the Church on earth, in whom the Kingdom is slowly growing to maturity, is concretely taught by the Council in the biblical comparisons which it employs. The Church is like a sheepfold of which Christ is the gateway (John 10:1-10). The Church is a vineyard, tended by God (Matt. 21:33-43). The Church is a cultivated field, tilled by God, or a building being constructed by him (1 Cor. 3:9). The Church is the Bride of Christ (Eph. 5:26; Rev. 21:2, 9).

The Kingdom, then, which is the saving action of God offered to men, is God's *action* before it is a human *place* in the world where this action is welcomed and received by faith. This is of great significance for the laity of the

Church. Their proper sphere of activity is the secular and human realities, so many of which have not yet submitted to the Kingdom and been enriched by this saving action of God. By their familiarity with the many visible signs of the Kingdom which are given in the Church, lay persons can grow continually in their sensitivity to the more subtle manifestations of the Kingdom in the secular world (GS. 38-39, 45). At some times it will be the action of the Kingdom as a first invitation to people, at other times it will be a presence already welcomed and active in persons. Such a readiness and skill in discerning these more subtle signs of the Kingdom in the secular world are essential factors in the missionary role of the laity.

### People of God

In the Second Chapter of the Constitution on the Church (*Lumen Gentium*), the Vatican Council proposes afresh for Catholics another basic perspective of the Church (LG. 9-17). We have just considered the view of the Church as the sacrament of the mystery, given in the First Chapter. In the Third Chapter, there is the more familiar view, at least for Catholics in recent times up to Vatican II, of the Church as a visible society organized in a hierarchical manner. In these three chapters, therefore, the Second Vatican Council has provided three major perspectives of the reality of the Church which complement and enrich one another.

Because of their relation to Christ, Christians become the people of God. Since Christ is the Messiah of God, they will also share in his anointing with the Holy Spirit and become the Messianic People sharing his mission, "a most sure seed of unity, hope and salvation for the whole human race" (LG. 9). The origin of our English word "lay" was the Greek word "laos". This word signified the holy people of God in the New Covenant of Christ, who were no longer holy merely by the election of the Old Covenant, as Israel was. The "laos" were the holy people of Christ, made holy by him through the three great sacraments of the new life which Christ gives to his disciples. There is the sacrament of water, which signifies the first giving of the living union with Christ in his dying and rising. There is the sacrament of oil, which signifies that the life already given is strengthened and beautified by the full infusion of the Holy Spirit. There is the sacrament of bread, which signifies the ongoing nourishment and growth

of that living union with Christ in a Christian. Our English word "lay" today has come to have exactly the opposite meaning of the original Christian use of this word. A "lay" person today is the uninitiated one, who lacks qualifications and skills in some area of professional competence. In the Church, it had come to mean merely one who was not a cleric, nor a religious. We need to recapture the original positive use of this word.

### Lay Mission

Firstly, lay persons in the Church, like clerics and religious are by their state directly ordered to holiness and heavenly things. This has been brought about sacramentally, through the three great sacraments which initiate the Christian life in persons: Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist. Though lay persons possess only a limited function in effecting the means to life in Christ, which the Church has been given by Christ, they possess the fulness of the Christian life itself. Along with the whole Church, they share in the essential messianic functions and powers of Christ as Priest (LG. 10-11, and 34), Prophet (LG. 12, and 35), and King (LG. 13, and 36). The Vatican Council on this point quoted the beautiful lines of St. Augustine, written more than fifteen hundred years ago.

*When I am frightened by what I am for you, then I am consoled by what I am with you. For you I am the bishop, with you I am a Christian. The first is a function, the second a grace; the first a danger, the second salvation (LC.32).*

Secondly, lay persons in the Church are the ones whose proper role is the concern for the inwardness of the ordinary things of this world (LG.30-31). If God remains the primary cause of all things, he has planted in all created things a secondary kind of power to cause things. It is the proper role of the laity to look for the truth of this secondary causality in the things of this world. It is proper to the task of lay persons to show a care for the secularity of things. All of these things come from God originally and are meant to be directed back to him ultimately. A religious or a cleric might be pardoned a certain insensitivity to the value of secular things. Religious are concerned primarily with the mystery of God as the source and goal of all things; clerics are concerned in the first place to employ the means

of salvation which Christ left to his Church. A lay person, however, is the specialist in the secular. If the priests act in the person of Christ, the Christian laity are the soul of the world (LG. 37-38).

The mission, therefore, which is proper to lay persons in the Church, is firstly to be the witnesses and living instruments of the saving life of Christ at all times, and, secondly, to be the special ones in the Church who show a particular care for the secular, called to become part of the Kingdom. Besides this twofold mission, there are also two other current roles of lay people in the mission of the Church (LG. 33)

Frequently, lay people of the Church are called in various ways to a more direct form of cooperation in the apostolate of the hierarchy. This form of lay apostolate was common in the years before Vatican II in the various forms of Catholic Action. Such forms of the lay apostolate are, of course, still valid and vigorous in different parts of the Church. Pius XII at one time expressly declared that the Marian Congregations were genuine forms of Catholic Action. However, this kind of lay involvement in the mission of the Church requires always a special mandate from the hierarchy, since it touches the means of salvation which derive from the special powers of the specifically priestly service in the Church.

Finally, lay people can be appointed by the hierarchy to offices in the Church or to liturgical functions, which are not strictly proper to lay persons but are occasioned by some special spiritual need or by a lack of suitably ordained ministers. Extraordinary ministers for Holy Communion might be an example of this. What is important to remember in these functions, however, is that lay persons are assisting the ordained leaders of the Church in something that is not their strictly proper role but generously accepted on account of the needs of the Church.

The mission of the Church exists at all of the various levels on which the Church lives her life and mission. There is the highest level of the universal Church over which the Pope presides. Then there is the area covered by a national or regional Conference of Bishops. There is the diocese over which the bishop presides. There is the parish, or Church which normally gathers with the priest for the celebration of the Eucharist. The basic unit in the

Church is the family, which can become "a domestic Church", in the language of Vatican II and in the teaching of the Church since then (LG. 11; *Evang. Nunt.* 71). Between the family and the parish, there are various expressions of the Church in different groups and communities. These are formed for various purposes, such as prayer, charitable work, social involvement, religious instruction, etc. It will be normally in the Church expressing herself at the sub-parochial and family levels that lay persons are most likely to be active within the Church.

#### Lay, Religious and Clerical Missions

Lastly, let us attempt to sketch with some temerity a possible way of comparing and contrasting the different roles of Clergy, Religious and Lay People in the mission of the Church. Lay persons, together with religious men and women who solemnly commit themselves to live the Gospel in a radical way, belong to the life of the Church. This is always the fruit of grace brought about by the action of the Holy Spirit who is sent by Christ. Lay persons constitute the Church as men's fellowship or community with God and with one another. In this sense they are the Church.

Yet lay persons are not born into the Church. They have to be made into Church. This is done through the sacraments. The Church, then, in some way makes her members. The means to make the Church were given by Christ, and these means constitute the other aspect of the Church which precedes the community and fellowship of members. These means are only for the sake of the Church as a community, to build, strengthen, repair and foster the growth of its members. The totality of these means were instituted by Christ and form what is usually called the visible or hierarchical structure of the Church. Only certain members of the Church are appointed by Christ to exercise these means for building the Church and forming fellowship with Christ, by acting in the person of Christ. This is the role of the clerics, or ordained members, in the Church. Initially lay persons themselves, they always retain their fundamental Christian layness, as we saw St. Augustine teach. Yet they are appointed to a service of the Church, in which they are empowered to act in the name of Christ teaching, sanctifying and leading his Church. By this function, they differ essentially from the other members of the Church, for they now represent Christ in the Church not only as a new life in the world but also as a new means to cause this

life in the world. It is good for all to remember that the Church was Mary before it was Peter. The Gospel was a silent presence in Mary before it was a proclamation on the lips of Peter.

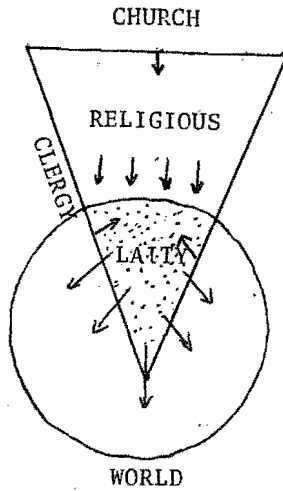
The role of clerics is, then, primarily a service of the Church. This means it is inwardly oriented toward building the life and mission of the Church from within, through the means of grace. Some clerics may be secular, some religious, but they all possess as priests the primary task of service for the community. Lay persons, on the other hand, primarily represent the life of the Church. This is a life meant to be shared with every man and woman in the world. Also by the secular nature of their vocation, lay persons are in constant contact with ordinary people in the world. Lay persons, therefore, are the natural missionaries of the Church, who carry her Christ-life in their own persons into every possible human situation and experience.

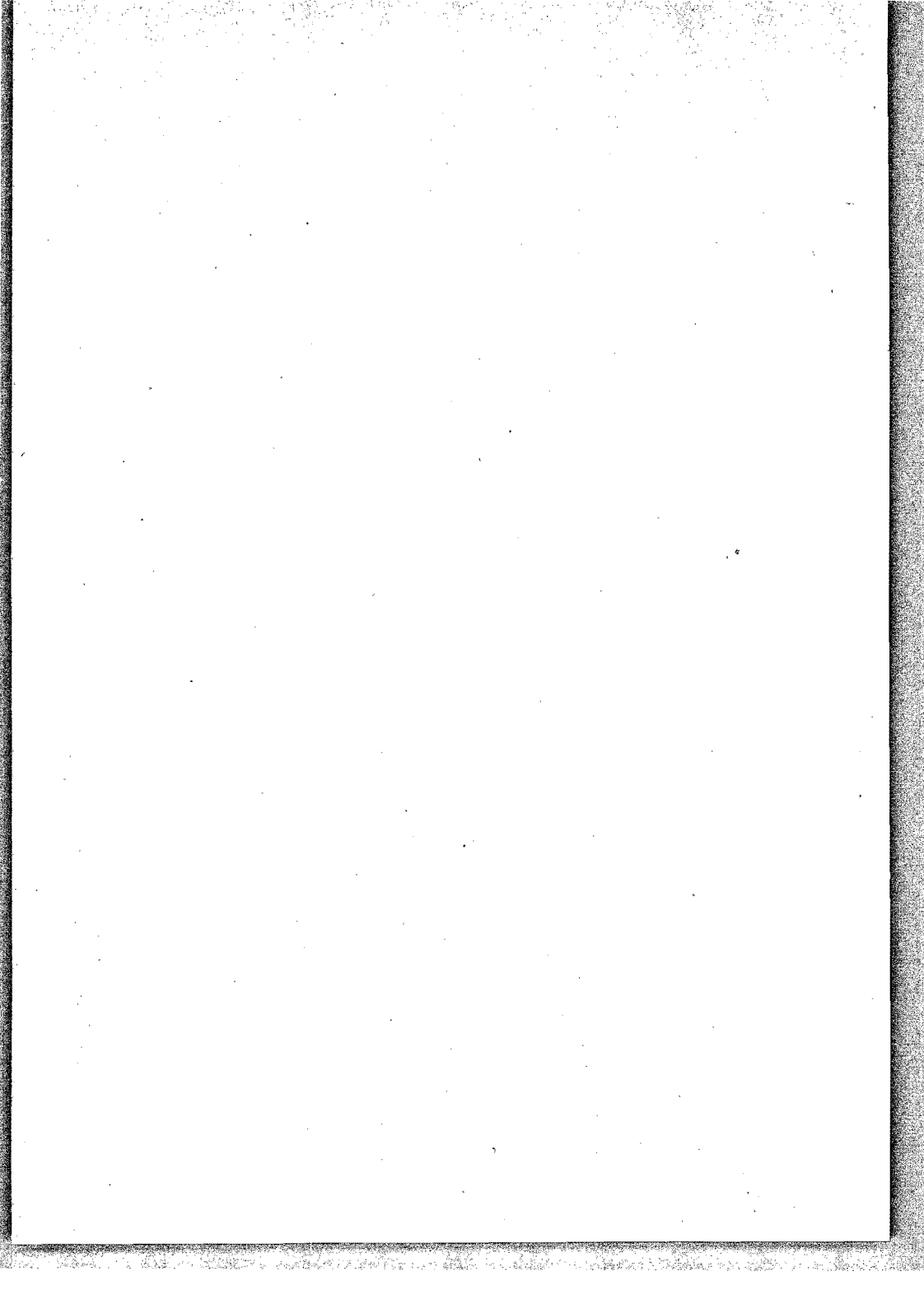
The religious, who profess to live the Gospel by radical commitments to chastity, poverty and obedience, also live the Christ-life of the Church in their own persons. Their concern, however, is to live this life in its completeness, not only as it is partially on earth but also as it is yet to be revealed in heaven. This is what is called, theologically, the eschatological aspect of the Christian life. Religious, then, as they live the Christian life, have their primary concern for what is not yet in this world, but is still to be revealed. They live radically by the hope of the Gospel. If lay persons look primarily to the earthly, or secular, aspect of the Christ-life, religious look primarily to the heavenly, or sacred, aspect of the Christ-life. Yet it is the one Christ-life, and so there can be no real conflict between them, but rather an enriching complementarity.

By way of concluding this section and at the risk of over-simplification, we could schematically represent the Church as an inverted triangle thrusting into the secular world, represented by a circle. The laity would be the shaded portion which is common to the triangle and the circle, and they are moving continually into the rest of the circle. Religious could be placed in the unshaded part of the triangle, and their movement is primarily downward into the rest of the Church. The priests, as priests, are represented by the three sides of the triangle. Their concern is the



structure of the Church, the means by which she lives; and so their movement should be mainly inwards towards the service of the community.





#### IV - THE IGNATIAN UNDERSTANDING OF MISSION

Ignatius is the man of the *magis*. This is the key to understand him and his ideals. By this we mean not merely the natural disposition or ambition of Ignatius, which of itself could be simply an expression of an overweening human pride. The *magis* in Ignatius was a grace, the fruit of his becoming totally possessed by Christ and filled with the sentiments and the fervour of his heart. It was a gift constantly given to him, never his own possession. When Ignatius asked others to pray for the *magis* in the greater knowledge, the greater love and the greater service of Christ, he always presupposed in a person a strong natural disposition and desire for something more in life. What he asked them to seek in prayer, however, was a grace. It was the grace which flowed directly from the heart of Christ into their own, filling them with a thirst for the *magis*, which Christ as man had been the first to feel.

##### Magis and Mission

The *magis* of Ignatius and his constant orientation towards apostolic service are expressed in all the facets of his life, his spirituality, his ideal of community and his understanding of mission.

(1) *Spirituality*. Spirituality for Ignatius meant not an ascetical effort to escape from the body and material things into a world of the so-called spirit. This was part of the Gnostic ideal in the early Church and a heresy Christians in all ages have constantly been tempted to adopt. Spirituality for Ignatius, as it has always been in the mainstream of Christian tradition since biblical times, meant a way

of responding to the Holy Spirit of God and making one's own the holiness which is the gift only God can give to men. In simple terms, a spirituality is a way of responding to the Gospel. It is a way of living the Gospel. This is done not only with our soul but with our whole person, soul and body.

Ignatius first lived his spirituality, in his own relationship with God before he shared it in the Church as his charism or gift for others. Ignatius sought to know Christ and to respond to his Holy Spirit by an ever-increasing familiarity with him in everything he did. Ignatius was not a monk, although early in his life he had felt strongly drawn to the monastic way of life and the seclusion which it offered for a life totally given to God. He had discovered a different way of growing spiritually. He sought to respond to Christ and be filled by his Spirit, not by living apart from men in a cloister or in a hermitage, but by living close to men, among men, in the ordinary circumstances of their lives.

The characteristic Ignatian form of prayer, therefore, is not prolonged prayer in seclusion, even though he may have done a lot of this himself and may have asked it of those he directed in the spiritual life. The characteristic prayer of Ignatius was what he called "Contemplation and Action" or, as he called it also, "Finding God in All Things". This is not the fruit of spiritual schizophrenia, in which we keep one eye on God, as it were, and one eye on earthly things. Nor is it the fruit merely of psychological persistence. It is the grace of experiencing the faith and love of the Gospel in a special manner, the Ignatian manner. The contemplative in action is one who in his love and concern for the service of others can remain totally submissive and committed to God in Christ, even when he is not fully conscious of this. It is something like the feeling people have when they are doing something for another person whom they love very much.

(2) *Community*. Like Ignatian spirituality, the Ignatian ideal of community is also closely linked with action. In his pre-Jesuit days in Paris, where he spent seven years studying theology at the university, and later in Venice and Rome after his ordination as a priest, Ignatius found many friends. He formed many warm, personal friendships with people, especially with those to whom he had shared his own kind of spirituality by directing them through the Spiritual Exercises. In particular, among these, he referred to

his "nine friends in the Lord".

With him, all of these, while still lay persons, had vowed poverty and chastity before God and agreed together to go to the Holy Land, where they could work and live for Christ and eventually die there. When this proved impossible, because of the political situation of the time, they offered themselves to Pope Paul III in Rome for work anywhere. Only then did they begin to think of forming themselves into some type of more stable and permanent community, which gave the Church eventually the first Jesuits. These "friends in the Lord" from the beginning of their relationship, even when it had no definite structure, until they became the Society of Jesus, saw themselves as "a community for dispersion", as they later called themselves. Their companionship and community life together were ready to experience periods of long absence from one another in their work for others, trusting that they would be held together by spiritual bonds and by their affection for one another.

They also formed together a discerning community, seeking together to find the *magis* in the more urgent, the more universal and the more fruitful apostolic works. The famous community discernment, or "Deliberation", of these companions at Rome in 1539, which led them to a decision to form themselves into a new kind of religious order in the Church, was spread over several months. During the day they would go about their work in Rome, and at night they would meet and discern together.

(3) *Mission*. It should never be said that Ignatius considered spirituality and community purely in terms of means to the apostolate. In his eyes they were clearly values in themselves. Nevertheless, they were always seen by him in the perspective of a missionary service to spread the Gospel to others. Sharing in Christ's mission to bring the Gospel of God's love for men into the whole world was the characteristic Ignatian ideal. He had communicated this to his first companions in his pre-Jesuit days, when they lived together for many years as a community of deeply committed lay persons. Later, when the new Society of Jesus was born, he wrote firmly into its First Rule or "Formula" this primary perspective of mission.

The Ignatian saying that is perhaps best known, and considered to be characteristic of him, is an expression of the *magis* in mission. *Ad Maiorem Dei Gloriam*, For the

Greater Glory of God is a missionary ideal for Ignatius. Glory, for him, is a strong word and in his mind was closely associated with the word service. Glory, the revelation of God's powerful action, which called forth praise from men, was given to God by the apostolic service of bringing his Gospel into the lives of others, either as a first belief or as a deepened belief. In much of the writing of Ignatius, the glory of God and the service of men, by bringing them the Gospel, are practically synonyms for the same concrete reality. The Gospel service of others was the glory of God.

There are two sets of Ignatian Rules for Discernment in his Spiritual Exercises, together with what are, in reality, a third set of rules for discernment, Rules for Feeling with the Church. The former are meant mainly for use within the Spiritual Exercises, at a time of prolonged community discernment by a group, or in periods of personal prayer, when an important decision or choice is to be made. Those sets of rules help to ensure that the decision is made according to Gospel values and is not motivated only by self-interest or expediency. The third set of rules, which are also really rules for making right decisions and choices, are meant for use outside the Spiritual Exercises or prolonged periods of formal prayer. They are ideally suited as handy reference points for the busy apostle, when he seeks to discern the will of Christ and Gospel values in concrete situations of the one's apostolate or mission.

For Ignatius, the discernment of the concrete mind of the contemporary Church was just as necessary as the discernment of the interior movements of the spirits or sentiments in the hearts of men. Ignatius was authentically Catholic and fully traditional in the way in which he understood the mission of the Church or his own more personal missions from Christ. He was firmly convinced of the composite nature of the mission which Christ transmitted to his Church from the beginning. Ignatius knew "how the Son first sent the apostles to preach in poverty and how afterwards the Holy Spirit confirmed this by giving them his Spirit and the gift of tongues, and so how, with the Father and the Son sending the Holy Spirit, all three persons confirmed that mission" (*Mon. Ignat. Const.* 90-91). Ignatius, in his characteristically involved and laboured way of writing, here makes clear how the internal and mystical mission of Christ to his Church must always be taken in the context of the external and historical mission he gave to her.

This balanced appreciation in Ignatius of the composite nature of the mission of the Church, at once a visible mandate externally and a mystical missioning from within, made him extraordinarily significant and effective in the Church of the sixteenth century, when it was confronted by a Protestant reductionism throughout northern Europe. He becomes equally significant in our own contemporary Church, when a polarization has developed within her, among Catholics themselves in their efforts to bring the Gospel truth to others. The whole attitude of Ignatius towards mission reminds us to day that we cannot indulge in a kind of Catholic reductionism. This happens when we reduce our mission *either* to fidelity in external and visible factors in the Church *or* to a fidelity towards the internal promptings of the heart, individually or collectively discerned. We must take into account both aspects of the mission of Christ continued in his Church, if we are to experience it integrally.

### Pedagogy of Life

The Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius Loyola form the base and beginning of a Christian Life Community, and an authentic experience of these Exercises is the major prerequisite for entry into a Community. The CLC has grown to realize how much the Exercises outside the time of retreat also provide a way of life. They furnish "a pedagogy of life". They make available constantly means for deepening spiritual insight and intensifying faith, a way of discerning more perceptively together as a Gospel community of friends, and a powerful motivation for more generous and apostolically more fruitful involvement in the mission of the Church in the world. They become a pedagogy of life, therefore, for CLC spirituality, community and mission.

It has become more evident that the Spiritual Exercises are not simply a once in a lifetime event. They are also a journey which a group must travel to become a community as CLC. They set in motion a growth process which individuals must continue to experience in their everyday lives, after they have completed the Exercises. They provoke apostolic action not as something added to the experience of the Spiritual Exercises but as their natural continuation, within one's own relationship to Christ and with the on-going support and mutual encouragement of their Community. Their CLC community discerns with them, so that apostolic action will not be merely "action taken" but "discerned service" for others. (See *article of José*

Gsell, *Progressio*, March 1979).

Mission in the Spiritual Exercises

The experience of the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius is, basically, one very effective and proven way of personally experiencing the Gospel of Christ. To experience the Gospel means, in very simple terms, a personal experience of God's love, by faith in him and by our love for others. These two human dispositions, divinely given through grace, faith in God and love for men, were recognized from the beginning of Christianity as central to the Gospel experience (1 Thess. 3:6; 5:8; 2 Thess. 1:3; John 13:35; 1 John 3:23). They also seem to be identical with the two great commandments which Christ himself gave to his disciples (Matt. 22:36-40).

During the last General Assembly at Rome in 1979, a brief description of the Spiritual Exercises was shared with you in which the likely growth in the personal faith of the retreatant was followed through seven different stages, according to the plan of Ignatius. This gradual development of one's personal faith in God, revealing himself through the Gospel of Christ, was suggested to be one helpful way of understanding and analysing the Spiritual Exercises as the source of an authentically Ignatian Spirituality.

Here, we might attempt, again very briefly and schematically, a similar analysis of the Exercises to discover a genuinely Ignatian understanding of Christian Mission. A description of the same seven stages in the Exercises, this time not in terms of developing faith but in terms of developing love for others in the heart of the retreatant, might prove a helpful method of coming quickly and simply to the Ignatian understanding of mission.

(1) *Love from God*. In the initial stage of an Ignatian retreat, which is technically called the Principle or Foundation, the retreatant is confronted with the mystery of God planning in Christ the destiny of mankind and the whole world. This for the retreatant can be of a first awakening to the reality of God's love in the world. As a person opens to the mystery of this love, he is touched by it. It begins to enlighten his mind and stir his heart. The retreatant comes to realize, or at least, to a deeper realization that the life he possesses originates in love, an im



mense personal love creating the world for men and preparing their vocation. In this love is the beginning and source of all mission.

(2) *Healing Love.* In the next stage of the retreat, which is the beginning of what Ignatius technically calls the First Week, the retreatant discovers the personal inadequacy and emptiness of his life without the healing love of God. He can do nothing really for his own development or the development of others. Filled with a sense of his own helplessness, there is no panic or despair. His sense of personal neediness has come to him in and through the deeper realization of the nature of the divine love which touches him. Any lack of fulfilment has its roots in his self-centred efforts to live as if there were no such divine love being offered to him. The new realization of his own lack of value and nothingness, in his isolation from God, makes him want to cling more closely to this ever-present source of his own life and fulfilment. The need for God's love is now felt more fully and more concretely in the heart of the retreatant. His desire for this healing love begins to grow dramatically. His desire for closer involvement with this divine love becomes urgent, as already this love begins to work its healing effects in his heart.

(3) *Forgiving Love.* After the experience of the nearness of healing love and its first healing touches, the retreatant moves into the consideration of God's mercy and forgiveness. His experience of a radical change of heart (*Metanoia*) is the effect, often deeply felt and dramatic, of this merciful forgiveness by God. By the light and power which floods the human heart, through a forgiveness that is divine and definitive, the retreatant begins to turn with all his heart to the source of this mercy and love. This is God's own heart. The retreatant will normally begin to feel strong desires for the future, to find the only source and centre of his life in this love, so gentle and accommodating yet so strong and challenging. He begins also to look with more attention and love upon the image of the Crucified. His living now becomes responding, as he opens more and more in gratitude to the source of his new living. Unlimited response to unlimited love does not appear altogether impossible. A new kind of experience of love is growing in his heart. Forgiveness enables God's love to become also, and to be felt as, our love for others.

(4) *Visible Love.* The retreatant continues to explore this

new love kindled within him, even as this love continues to grow in his heart. He comes to realize that it was only through the cross of Christ that God's forgiving love could reach him in this real way. Now, as the retreatant moves in to the second major stage of the Spiritual Exercises, which Ignatius called the Second Week, he looks more fixedly upon Christ. Who is he? What did he do? What is he doing? What does he ask?

The personal concern and human love of God, made man in Christ, is considered more deeply. Above all, the retreatant begins to understand that Christ calls him. He wishes to associate him as one of his disciples and apostles with his task and mission in the world, and to have him serve in simplicity and lowliness. The love of God is now perceived more concretely as the concrete person and mission of Christ coming among men. A total offering to Christ, for which he asks, will be identically a generous readiness and availability to share in his mission to men. Mission to others is understood now not only as something rooted in God's love for men. It is something really and concretely continued in the world, in and through Christ's mission, and through the activity of the disciples whom he calls and sends out as apostles to share in his mission from the Father.

(5) *Concretely Revealed.* God's love in Christ is not only an invitation to mission. It is also a concrete program and approach towards mission. Christ calls his disciples and apostles in all ages to a particular way of entering into his mission. It is the way he himself walked during his own life time. It is the way of poverty, with its consequent weakness to control and manipulate others by force or coercion. It is also a way of hiddenness, disregard, and even scorn and insult. It is a way, finally, of total humility and dependence, firstly, on his Father through faith and, secondly, on all those around him through love. The mission of Christ is concretely and personally appropriated by the retreatant in the central key Ignatian meditations of the Exercises. These spell out the actual way one concretely shares in the mission of Christ.

The Two Standards show the values which must be adopted by a person who accepts to go Christ's way. The Three Classes are a test of one's sincerity and readiness to make such a commitment to Christ's mission and his way. Finally, the Three Degrees of Humility test the affective quality of

our love for Christ and his mission, Ignatius desires that the retreatant will become totally involved in Christ and his mission on all three levels: understanding, freedom and affection.

(6) *Way of the Cross.* Ignatius devotes the whole of the third major stage of the Spiritual Exercises to the Passion. His insistence that the whole of the Passion of Christ should be covered, no matter how short the retreat may be, underlines the importance which he attaches to the experience by faith of the mystery of the Cross. This mission of Christ involved him directly in the Cross. No one who shares the mission of Christ can expect to escape the Cross. In the meditations on the Passion, the retreatant experiences something of the terrible power of divine love to stir opposition and resentment in sinful hearts. Terrible yet not terrifying, for the suffering in which the retreatant is asked to share is the suffering of Christ, a brother, the man like us in all things.

A surrender to the passion of Christ, as part of his missionary way, will never have the same isolation and loneliness which it had for Christ himself. As the redeemer and first-born of our race, he bore his passion alone. For Christ, his passion and death on the cross was the inevitable climax of his lonely, personal mission to bring God's love into a world that was sinful and selfish. As long as the world remains sinful, and the heart of man locked in his own self-sufficiency or self-seeking, all those after Christ, who respond to his call and generously share in his mission to bring the Gospel to men, must be prepared for the path of suffering which Christ walked. But they will never walk that path alone.

(7) *Way of the Spirit.* Suffering was not the end of Christ's mission. His work did not end with his death. Rather, his death was the real beginning of his mission. In the final stage of the Ignatian Exercises, the retreatant is asked to contemplate the great central mystery of the resurrection of Jesus. The core of the Gospel is not death but life. It is not bad news, but good news. What men did to Christ in his death was bad news, but what God did for Christ in his death transformed it into part of the Good News. In the resurrection God gave to man for the first time the fulness of the new life, which God had desired to give mankind from the beginning. Only in Jesus had God found a man who would freely allow God to give him that gift. It was Christ's free

welcome of this gift that had led him through the passion to the cross.

The interior gift of the dynamic Spirit was given to Christ in its fulness at the resurrection. When he began to share this gift of the Spirit with his disciples, Christ constituted the final movement in the realization of God's love in the world, and the climactic stage of the Exercises. Divine love has now become human love completely, in the risen Christ. What has been achieved in the one man, Jesus, is now made possible and available to all other men. It is only the interior gift of the Holy Spirit from Christ, which makes complete the sharing of the disciples and apostles of Christ in his mission from the Father. Without the gift of Holy Spirit, Christ's invitation to share in his mission would be nothing more than an invitation to imitate him. No matter how dedicated such an imitation might be, it could never become the real thing, the actual mission of Christ himself continued in the world.

Just as God was, in Christ, loving and saving the world, so now Christ, in his disciples, continues to love and redeem mankind. The one who lived as a man, and died shamefully as a man on the cross, now lives gloriously as a man in the fulness of the gift of the Holy Spirit, and from his glory in heaven he can share in this Spirit with the rest of us as the pledge of a similar future glory for us. It is by docility to this Holy Spirit of Christ that the love and freedom, which he first brought into the world, can be experienced by all men. This love and this freedom are not only a promise or a message on the lips of teachers. They are also things concretely felt in the hearts of witnesses (Rom. 10:9; 2 Cor. 3:17; Gal. 5:22-23).

The structure of the Ignatian Exercises makes it clear that this sharing in divine love by men and women, and in the freedom it brings, through the gift of the Holy Spirit of the risen Lord, constitutes the core reality of the mission of Christ. This mission is continued and prolonged in the world by his disciples and apostles. For this reason, the Ignatian Contemplation on love, the final prayer of the Exercises, could, it seems, be also described as a Contemplation on Mission.

#### Love and Mission

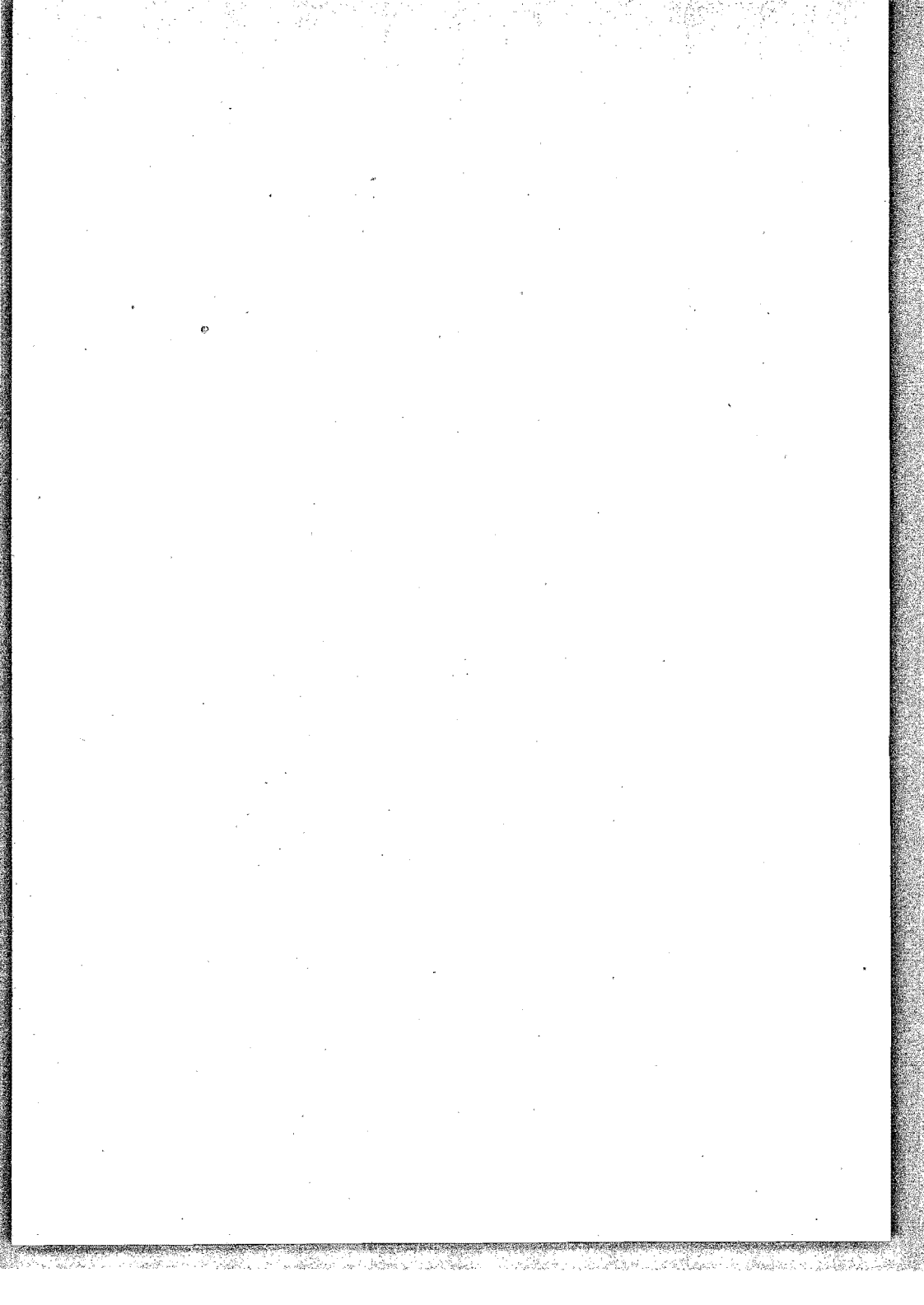
From this short analysis of the Spiritual Exercises

of Ignatius Loyola, considered as seven stages in the typically Ignatian development of a retreatant's faith in Christ, we have been able also to discern a corresponding development of the love of God in the heart of the retreatant. This love from God, always new and creative in its source, progressively enters the heart of the sincere believer. It then continues within him, in a human manner, its creative and redeeming movement onwards towards others.

Through faith, the love of God, without ceasing to be God's love for us, can become also our human love for others. In its highest expression, our human love for our neighbor becomes the missionary service of sharing the Gospel-life with him. Constantly moved interiorly by the love of God towards love and service for others, we move increasingly upwards to the full Gospel-life already present in mystery in the Church, and *outwards* with increasing fruitfulness in sharing the Gospel of salvation with all whom we meet around us.

The *Vince teipsum*, "Conquer yourself", of the Exercises (n.21) must always be understood within the wider and deeper perspective of Ignatius: the untiringly creative initiative of God's love. When this love touches and stirs human hearts and is welcomed there by faith, it creates our love for the neighbor. Furthermore, it continues to remain, as it were, the core of that love, while it is gradually formed into the missionary thrust of the People of God, Christ's Church, bringing his Gospel to all the world. Self-conquest, for Ignatius, was no stoic form of self-mastery which could be achieved through asceticism and will-power alone. It involved a self-emptying in faith, possible only to those who have begun to penetrate the great mystery of the Gospel, God's love for us all in Christ.

Mission, in the authentically Ignatian sense, is fundamentally the creative love of God given to the world in Christ. As the Word of God made flesh, Christ came to share this love from God with all mankind, in and through the gift of the Holy Spirit. The direction or line of love is from God, through God made human in Christ, to those who offer themselves totally to him by faith for his mission, and from them to every man and woman of all time. This line of love is also the line of mission.



## V - THE MISSION OF CHRISTIAN LIFE COMMUNITIES

The Preamble of the new General Principles of the Christian Life Communities insist that these Principles are always to be interpreted by the Spirit of the Gospel and the interior law of love (GP. 2). A right understanding of the mission of the CLC, therefore, would not be possible without first situating it within the light of the Gospel and the love of God which the Gospel proclaims.

The Gospel was first proclaimed by Christ, the greatest of all evangelizers, who was in his own person the ultimate expression of the Gospel which he proclaimed in his words and deeds. It is to Christ, then, that we first looked in our search for a proper understanding of the mission of the Christian Life Communities. Since Christ has now moved from this earth into the mystery and glory of his risen life, we had to look also at the Church. The Church, as the fundamental sacrament of Christ's presence and activity, remains always the contemporary sign and instrument of Christ's mission in the world. Because the CLC is for lay persons, it was necessary to have some basic understanding of the role of the laity in the mission of the contemporary Church. Finally, since the CLC is for lay persons who desire to live the Gospel in the Ignatian way, we tried to discover something of the Ignatian understanding of mission, especially from the Spiritual Exercises.

In the light of all this, let us now try more directly to understand the special character of the mission of the Christian Life Communities in the Church of our contemporary world. In our efforts to determine more specifically the contemporary missionary character of the CLC, it is important to remain sensitive to the signs of the times in

herent in the history, especially the recent history, of the CLC. Since the establishment in 1953 of a World Federation of what were then called the Sodalities of Our Lady, the role of General Assemblies at the international level have become increasingly significant. The earlier Assemblies were concerned with the renewal and adaptation to modern times of the lay form of Ignatian life in the Church. This concern was greatly intensified after the Second Vatican Council. The Assemblies were then occupied with the creation and general acceptance of the new General Principles of 1967, which took the radical step of altering the name from Sodalities of Our Lady to Communities of the Christian Life, or Christian Life Communities.

The last three General Assemblies have made very significant contributions to the authentic understanding of Ignatian mission in its lay form. The sixth General Assembly of the World Federation at Augsburg in 1973, while affirming the CLC as "a community at the service of the liberation of all men", insisted on the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius Loyola as the "priority of priorities" for the CLC. The Assembly at Manila in 1976 defined the vocation of CLC in the Church to be "Poor with Christ for a Better Service". The eighth General Assembly at Rome in 1979 made a definite option to work deliberately "Towards a World Community at the Service of One World".

#### Community for Service

CLC spirituality is the characteristically lay expression of the Ignatian way of responding to God's love and of committing oneself entirely to Christ and his mission. On the other hand, CLC mission is the lay form of the Ignatian way of giving oneself to others by a service which is primarily concerned with bringing to people the Gospel. Yet both this spirituality and this mission are offered, are formed, and are exercised within the CLC community.

It is, therefore, in the kind of community which the CLC generates that the characteristically CLC spirituality and missionary service become actual, or practical realities. Community in the CLC has to become the visible sign or expression both of spirituality, which is primarily an interior reality of the heart, and of mission, which is primarily a service to be performed for others in the future. Community, for the CLC, is the immediate and visible reality of the CLC. Community is like the "sacrament" of the CLC. In this sense, community is the key to the CLC,



since it gives, in the practical order, entry into both its spiritual and missionary dimensions.

The way a Christian Life Community operates, then, is of the highest importance for its mission, and will to a large degree, determine this mission. At this point, we can perceive at once the missionary significance of the decision taken at the last Assembly in Rome to work towards a world community for the CLC, which would be bound more closely than the present world federation of Christian Life Communities currently is. Such a deeper expression of CLC community at the international level will surely facilitate a missionary service that will be more universal and so more effective. It should also facilitate greater flexibility among individual Christian Life Communities, more creativity and increased availability for mission.

The number of members in a community will have missionary significance. So also will the kind of members sought for the community: of similar ages or of differing ages, of the same sex or mixed, of similar intellectual standards or widely differing, of similar professional occupation or differing. All these factors are already determining the quality of the missionary service which a particular community will be likely to offer. As a community builds itself, invites new members, and seeks ways to deepen its own formation, the missionary perspective must be kept in mind at all times. Whether the community may be conscious of it or not, the quality of a CLC community is already determining the quality and kind of mission which it can undertake. This will hold true for any corporate mission the community may undertake, but it will be true also for the missions which members will perform as individuals, with the encouragement and discernment of the community.

Likewise, the place where a particular community chooses to meet, the normal length of their meetings, and the frequency with which they meet together as a community, these things will have consequences for the mission of the group. The things done at meetings, the activities scheduled, the amount of structure, or lack of it, used at the meetings of a community, are already determining to a high degree the kind of missionary service that is likely to be chosen as well as its apostolic effectiveness. For the sake of missionary fruitfulness alone, quite apart from other reasons, the style and structure of a CLC community should be often reflected upon explicitly and prayerfully discerned, both personally by the individual members, and corporately

by the community as a whole. Community for the CLC must always be an agent towards mission, never an end in itself.

The primitive CLC community may be considered to consist of Ignatius and his "friends in the Lord" in his pre-Jesuit years. At that time, they were not religious, but lay persons who had all been through the Spiritual Exercises. They were seeking together better ways of serving the Lord. Gradually their identity as a group developed. As they became more aware of who they were and what they wanted to be, certain features in their community emerged more clearly. What had drawn them together in the first place were the great personal love for Christ felt by each of them, which had grown from the experience of the Spiritual Exercises, and the great desires which each felt to bring Christ into the lives of others.

Six elements may be singled out in this early community of the "friends of the Lord". They were an *ecclesial* community, devoted not only to the Gospel, but to the Gospel as it was concretely lived in the Church governed by the Pope and the other pastors. They were a *dispersed* community, which did not live together and was happy to live physically separated from one another for the sake of their missions. They were a *discerning* community, helping and assisting one another to find a better service of the Lord suited to each one's character and opportunities. They were an *obedient* community, which sought the will of Christ through others, especially those holding authority in the Church or State. Later, of course, when they chose to form themselves into a religious body, they made vows of obedience, which implicated them in a life of obedience, not only in regard to their apostolic missions but also in the many details of their daily life together. They were a *poor* community, and they often had to beg not only money but bread for one another. Finally, they were a *Marian* community, in which, both in the personal lives of each member and in the corporate life of the community as a whole, Mary was placed naturally and spontaneously beside Christ. She was inseparable from both their spiritual and missionary relation to Our Lord. The missionary implications of these six elements are obvious enough.

### Missionary Layness

What is the essential quality in missionary action that is lay? Ordained priests in the Church are sacramentally sent by Christ to minister to his brethren, to be

signs of his own person, teaching, sanctifying and leading his disciples through them. Religious, by the vows they make publicly in the Church, are committed to give a witness to the Gospel in a radical form, by living a positive life of faith, love and hope, through the apparently negative gestures of life-long celibacy, poverty and obedience. It cannot be satisfactory simply to say that the task of lay persons in the Church is neither the service of priests nor the witness of religious.

In this matter, the new General Principles of the CLC give a strong indication of the direction in which we must look to find the lay aspect of the mission of the Church, as it is understood by Christian Life Communities. In fact, this strong indication is so obvious in the General Principles that its importance and significance may easily be overlooked.

As Father Louis Paulussen, S.J. has so clearly pointed out, the new General Principles are not linear in their exposition of the nature of the CLC. On the contrary, they are circular. The three Parts of the General Principles are to be understood as three expanding and concentric explanations of the nature of the CLC, around the central core explanation of the Preamble. (*Progressio Supplement 14*, June 1979, p. 44). The Preamble and First Part, then, contain the more basic explanation of the CLC.

A close inspection of the two principles in the Preamble and the six principles of Part One reveals one aspect that constantly recurs. There are explicit references to the actual context of concrete circumstances and secular situations in every one of the first eight principles, except the last. It is useful to quote them together in order to feel their full impact.

God's gift is "always conditioned by the circumstances of each situation". The members of the CLC want to give themselves more generously to God by loving and serving "in the world of today" (GP. 1). The interior law of love, by which the CLC tries to live, "expresses itself anew in each situation of daily life". It also respects "the uniqueness of each personal vocation". It seeks answers for "the needs of our time" (GP. 2).

The CLC seeks to serve the Church and the world "in every area of life: family, professional, civic, ecclesial,

etc." Members are to be prepared and formed for apostolic service, "especially in their daily environment". CLC communities are especially for those "concerned with temporal affairs". Their response is to Christ calling "from within the world in which we live" (GP. 3). The spirituality of the CLC is especially linked with "the revelation of God's will through the needs of our times". It also disposes persons to "whatever God wishes in each concrete situation of our daily existence", and it prepares them "for seeking and finding God in all things" (GP. 4). The Church is to be understood as the place where Christ is "here and now continuing his mission of salvation". In the CLC, persons must be particularly sensitive to "the signs of the times", in order to be able to meet Christ "in all men and all situations". They are to be concerned for "the problems and progress of mankind", alive "to the situations in which the Church finds itself today", and ready for "concrete personal collaboration" in building the Kingdom of God (GP. 5). The CLC commitment must always be "to a particular, freely chosen community", as "a concrete experience of unity in love and action", and must include in some manner "the ecclesial communities of which we are part (parish, diocese)" (GP. 6). It is "the temporal order" that has first claim on CLC missionary efforts towards renewal and sanctification. The practice of the "Revision of Life" is to be applied "even to the most humble realities of daily life." The structures of society demand the discernment of a CLC community, and it should give attention to removing "differences between rich and poor within the Church" (GP. 7).

All of this indicates a strong emphasis on the *lived* quality of life and on the *immediate* experiences of the various fluctuating situations and changing events of life, which are the stuff of ordinary human living. This is necessarily part of the secular kind of life, in which lay persons of the Church are involved during the major part of their lives. The religious and, to a large extent, the clerics also of the Church live their lives in a controlled environment. There, either the total atmosphere of life, or the service generally being performed, is directly derived from or related to the Gospel and its values. Lay persons, on the other hand, do not have such direct control over their lives, nor do their lives usually have such clear and evident links with the Gospel and religious values. They have to submit to the conditions of life as they find them. They must do the work they are called to, either by their own interests or by necessity, to support themselves and their families.

For lay persons, religion has to be an interior attitude and a customary mode of behavior. Otherwise, it is pushed to the periphery of their lives at best or, at worst, is left aside altogether. If lay persons try to live the Gospel like religious or like priests, they will necessarily have to neglect their duties in life and responsibilities towards others. Moreover, such attempts would be more likely to produce a kind of superficial or artificial series of religious activities, unconnected with the main affairs of their life, rather than genuine Gospel living. Also, by comparison with religious or priests, they would normally appear as second-class in their "religious" or "holy" attempts to live the Gospel.

Certainly there needs to be "religious" and "holy" times in the lives of all Christians, when the holiness, inherent to all Christians, is expressed externally and in a corporate fashion, especially in welcoming and responding to the sacramental actions of Christ. Without such external assistance and mutual support, consistent Gospel living would be extremely difficult. The normal way, however, in which lay persons of the Church are meant to live the Gospel is the "lay" way and the "secular" way, rather than the "religious" or "sacred" way. In fact, the lay way should be recognized as the genuine religion of the Gospel.

In the religion of Christ, it is the person who is holy. Things, places and times are only holy because of their relation with holy persons. The lay person, by his very layness, can witness to this truth of the Gospel, the holiness of a person possible in any situation of life. Likewise, sacred things are ultimately for secular things, to make life holy, as Christ is holy and all those are holy who share his life. Lay persons, then, by their very layness and secularity, can witness, in their own persons and habitual ways of living, to what the Gospel is all about. This places lay persons in the forefront of the mission of the Church, to bring the Gospel into the actual lives of people.

#### Marian Mission

The only principle in the Preamble and First Part of the General Principles, that makes no mention of concrete circumstances or actual secular situations, is the eighth principle. This is the special principle which deals with the role of Mary for the CLC. This is very significant. Perhaps there is still an unresolved ambiguity for the Christian Life Communities in the way they have formulated their

relation to the Virgin Mary in this eighth principle. Has devotion to Mary, in practice, remained peripheral in the CLC? In a contemporary teaching of the Church on Mary, the Apostolic Exhortation on Devotion to Mary (*Marialis Cultus*), published in 1974, Pope Paul VI situated Mary expressly within the concrete realities and secular situations of modern life. The eighth principle may have failed to do this for the CLC.

Goodwill towards Mary and fidelity to her, inherited from the long tradition of the Sodalities of Our Lady are evident here. But is there evidence of a practical and contemporary love for her? A love which gives her a truly central place in the actual life of the CLC, and especially in CLC mission within the secular world? Of all the first eight principles, this eighth one appears as the most theological, but the least lay. There may be a challenge here for the CLC, which has still to be faced.

The central importance of a close personal union with Mary, in the personal lives of all members of a community, and also their filial love for her, is one of the key factors binding them to one another within a community. This is clearly stated in the General Principles (GP. 8 and 6). She is, furthermore, expressly proposed as the image of their collaboration in the mission of Christ. Likewise, she is the model for their total offering to God by her own surrender, or *fiat*, made at the beginning of the Incarnation and continued throughout her whole life (GP. 8).

Mary is the natural model for anyone who strives to live a truly Ignatian Spirituality in the Church. In her person she summarized all that Ignatius tried to be in his own life: close to Christ herself in an intimacy nowhere else repeated, she was fruitful in her activity of bringing Christ to the world, in the manner that was uniquely hers. The Second Vatican Council expressly mentioned the missionary aspect of Mary's life and activity. "In her life the Virgin has been a model of that motherly love with which all who join in the Church's apostolic mission for the regeneration of mankind should be animated" (LG.65). In both aspects of a missionary fidelity, fidelity to the integrity of the Gospel and fidelity to the penetration of the Gospel, Mary stands as the model. She is the model for priests and religious, whose prior concern is for the integrity of the Gospel, and also for lay persons, whose prior concern would naturally be for the penetration of the Gospel into the secular world.

It is for the Communities of Christian Life to discover for themselves the actual way in which Mary is concretely and closely linked to them. She is linked to them not only in the personal spiritual surrender of each to Christ and in the community life which is shared together, but also in their missionary service for others. To this purpose, the liturgy of the Church and her traditional theology, viewed within the perspective of the intense personal devotion of Ignatius to Mary, are a solid basis from which the search can proceed. A brief consideration of the place of Mary in the present liturgy of the Church may provide some pointers towards a better assimilation of Mary into the mission of the CLC.

1) *Immaculate Conception.* This liturgical solemnity, celebrated each year on December 8th, is the first of the three great solemnities now allotted to Mary in the liturgy of the universal Church. Since the Annunciation is now celebrated liturgically in the Church as a feast of Our Lord, the feast of the Immaculate Conception of Mary may justifiably be taken as the special feast of Mary's interior life, her spirituality, if you like. She is the woman of "total offering", expressed by her  *fiat*, her surrender to God's plan (Luke 1:26, 29, 34, 38). Mary, by a unique grace from God, is, in her whole person, a total response to the mystery of God working in her. She is, in the first place, *the faithful Virgin.*

2) *Assumption.* In the second great solemnity of Mary in the liturgy of the Church, celebrated on August 15th each year, we honor Mary as one specially glorified by Christ, by sharing fully in his resurrection. The Assumption may be regarded as the feast of Mary's full sharing in the life of Christ, the feast of the intimate love between the Lord and the one closest to him during his lifetime. Close not merely physically but in faith and love. It is the feast which is the crowning of Mary's continued relation with Christ throughout her life. She is the woman of "full sharing" with others. She formed with him the first Christian community, of which we are given brief glimpses in the narratives of the New Testament, at the wedding in Cana (John 2:1) and in the upper room at Jerusalem (Acts 1:14). St. Athanasius wrote, in the fourth century, that Mary was our sister. The Assumption reveals her as *the loving Bride of Christ.*

3) *Mother.* On January 1st, at the beginning of each year, the Church celebrates the third great liturgical Solemnity

of Mary. Mary is the Mother. She is the Mother of Christ. Therefore, she must also be in some manner the Mother of the Church, as the Popes, since Vatican II, have delighted to call her. She is, at the same time, the first member of the Church, as the Vatican Council taught (GS. 53). From the cross Christ desired her to care for his disciples, and also to be cared for by them (John 19:25-27). She was filled with the Holy Spirit, so that she was in a unique way, because of her sinlessness, the woman of the Spirit. She was, then, the woman of "greater service". She was supremely missionary, one sent, both by an external mandate and by the internal impulse of the Holy Spirit. The interior quality of her motherhood is discretely revealed in Luke's Nativity narrative (Luke 2:7, 19, 35, 48, 50, 51). The missionary caring and concern of her motherhood is revealed by her sensitivity for others in the Visitation narrative (Luke 1:39-56). She remains at all times *the fruitful Mother*, ever more fruitful in bringing Christ to birth in the hearts of men and women down the ages.



## C O N C L U S I O N

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This has been a brief sketch of some of the important elements which constitute the contemporary mission of the Christian Life Communities, and its roots. These roots are found in the Ignatian view of mission, in the role of lay persons in the Church today, in the whole mission of the Church in the world, and in the deepest source of all mission, the mission of Jesus himself from the Father.

Such a sketch has necessarily been somewhat theoretical and of a provisional or preliminary nature. It has been written by someone who has read about these Communities of Christian Life, who was even invited by them to speak at their last General Assembly, but who is not a member of one of their communities, nor has he been practically connected with them in any immediate way. Likewise, it has been written by someone who is certainly committed to Ignatian spirituality and has tried to live faithfully for many years the Ignatian ideal of mission, but who has done this as a religious and a priest of the Society of Jesus, not as a lay person. Whatever has been written, therefore, must be submitted to the practical test of life in the communities and there rediscovered from within the circumstances of specific life situations of different persons to be relevant Ignatian truth in a lay form, or not.

By way of a conclusion, it may be helpful to bring together some of the different aspects of our considerations on the mission of the CLC today, by facing directly some concrete questions. These are questions, it seems, which are being asked in many of the Communities of Christian Life at the present time. The answers given are not meant to be magisterial or definitive, but the answers of an Ignatian religious and priest respectfully offered for the further consideration of Ignatian lay persons.

- (1) *What is the role of discernment in our communities? Is it primarily directed to mission?*

In the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius we may say that there are two kinds of norms given to help persons make a discernment. There are, firstly, the two sets of Rules for Discernment of Movements of the Heart, and, secondly, the Rules for Feeling with the Church. The first kind of norms are meant to help the individual to find God and his will, without the impediments and obstructions coming from one's own selfishness and from other more subtle deceptions. The second kind are concerned more directly with external life and the practical circumstances of apostolic action.

Therefore, it seems legitimate to conclude that there are two kinds of Ignatian discernment. One is concerned primarily with the personal spiritual life of the individual. The other is directed primarily towards apostolic effectiveness in our mission. In both cases, this would hold whether the discernment is done privately by individuals, as the first kind usually would be, or collectively by a community, as the second kind usually would be more effectively performed.

- (2) *What does mission mean for a CLC member, if he/she is married, has a profession, is about to choose a profession?*

Keeping in mind the essentially secular character of the mission of lay persons, one would have to say that the primary mission for a lay person will normally be situated within one's major occupation in life.

This occupation can be the building of a relationship or of a family, in marriage. It can be a professional service, or work for others, demanding various degrees of skill. We should normally expect the primary mission for

a CLC member to be found within the area of his major occupation in time, energy and attention, and not apart from it in some artificially created space in his life. Occasionally, he will need such deliberately created space, for reflection, prayer, and discernment, but his mission should be discovered with his ordinary human and secular involvements. This might be called the "principle of secularity" for all lay mission.

In a similar fashion, if a person is about to make a major choice affecting one's future life in a significant way, for that time at least, while the choice is being made, this process of choosing should be the primary mission field for such a person. Is such a choice likely to help or hinder one's own personal response to the Gospel, and the spread of the Gospel into the lives of others? When an important decision about one's future is made with a full awareness of its probable implications for the spread of the Gospel, it becomes a missionary choice. To make a choice with such an awareness is a form of the lay mission.

(3) *Who gives the "mission"?*

All mission is originally from God revealing his will and plan in Christ. Christ communicates with the world, from within the mystery of his risen and human life, through signs. These signs are the sacred signs within the Church, of which the sacraments form the principal kind, and also the secular signs offered within the ordinary, and sometimes extraordinary events of the world, which are commonly known as "the signs of the times". Whether the signs are sacred or secular, their meaning is accessible only by faith in Christ. Without faith in Christ, we can never grasp what the sign really says and does.

More immediately, then, mission is given to persons through the concrete signs of Christ's will. Within the Church, the will of a community gathered in Christ's name, can be a sign of a mission from Christ. A Christian Life Community would surely be such a community. However, Christ has not left his Church without a special sign of his own visible presence as a person, in the form of pastors sacramentally ordained. Their will, expressed or hinted, is always an important factor for mission in the Ignatian tradition, even when it is not intended to bind. Outside the Church, in the secular world, the signs will be less clearly designated and more obscure in meaning. A greater sen-

sitivity in faith is generally needed to discern accurately the secular signs of Christ's will.

It is not so much a question of obligation and what one is obliged to do. Such responsibilities are usually clear, and binding on all. The particular mission given to a CLC member, or community, will normally be discerned only by faith. Those with deeper faith will see a mission from Christ more readily and more clearly. Such members are particularly valuable in a community when it is trying to discern a mission.

(4) How directly should "mission" express things like solidarity with the poor? Promotion of Justice? Liberation of the whole man and of all men? Building a world community?

These are questions that occupy the Church in many different parts of the world in our times. There is no quick or easy answer, since concrete and diverse situations are involved. As Pope Juan Paul often reminds the whole Church, fidelity to Christ is a twofold concern, rooted in the Gospel, a concern for the truth of the Gospel and a concern for the practice of the Gospel by caring for people, especially the deprived and the suffering. The former concern is for the *integrity* of the Gospel, as a divine light given to the mind, the latter concern is for the *penetration* of the Gospel, as a movement of love towards one's neighbor, especially if he be in need. The Church as a whole at all levels, international, diocesan, parochial or domestic, has to maintain a balance, but different classes within the Church must pursue their own role.

In the four things mentioned in the question, it may be said that the needs are primarily and immediately material needs, human needs or secular needs. Ultimately, of course, they involve spiritual needs also. Since they appear immediately as needs in the secular sphere, they will generally affect more directly the lay persons of the Church. They call for action from them, before involving directly priests and religious, whose primary task in the Church is the sacred. Priests and religious are meant to be signs of the Gospel in a clear and public way. This is more difficult to do when one is closely involved in the ambiguity of secular affairs.

Lay persons of the Church can be involved in the am-

biguity of political, economic and cultural affairs without any fear of compromising their way of witnessing to the Gospel. It would seem, then, that the mission of the CLC, as a form of lay mission, should be of its nature directly involved in the kind of things mentioned in the questions.

It is their responsibility in the Church, not that of the religious and priests, to bring the Gospel into the hurley-burley and ambiguity of all kinds of secular realities.

(5) *Is there a community "mission" or only personal "missions"?*

The great variety of secular situations and circumstances in which different members of a community live and work suggests at once a certain priority in the CLC for the personal "missions" of the individual members. Yet, it should always be kept in mind that it is a question of missions, and not merely undertakings or services rendered. For missions, something more than personal initiative and goodwill are necessary. One has to be sent. The sending is ultimately from Christ, but some concrete sign and visible intermediary for this is required. In the CLC, the community has a significant role to play even for the personal missions of individual members. It not only helps in the discerning process towards new personal missions but also can support, help to adapt, improve and coordinate personal missions already functioning. In this way the community already has a mission within the personal missions of each member of the community.

The main thrust of the question, however, still remains. Does the community itself in the CLC have its own corporate mission, in which all the members have a role? Clearly it is not absolutely necessary. In many cases, because of the nature of a particular community, a corporate mission for a community as a whole may not be desirable, or even practical. Since the Ignatian ideal for mission, however, is the more universal service, it would seem that it would be in conformity with the CLC mission to accept a corporate mission as a community, whenever it can, especially where there is need for it, or when it is directly requested by a competent authority. In such missions frequent discernment will be necessary to ensure that a community mission does not become a kind of pious or religious escape from the primarily secular form of Gospel mission in the CLC, or that, on the other hand, it does not curtail signi

ificantly the more natural and immediate personal missions of the individual members of a community, within their own normal environments of life and work.

