

A MISSION STATEMENT FOR A MISSION CHURCH

“Without a vision the people perish.” (Proverbs 29.18) Without mission the Church perishes. The Church is the people of God, entrusted with the mission to “make disciples of all nations” (Mt.28:19) or in the words of the evangelist Mark: “go into the whole world and proclaim the good news to all creation.” (Mk: 16:15) The Church then should be a community of disciples of Jesus Christ proclaiming and manifesting the good news about the kingdom of God present and growing in our midst. (Mt. 13:24-43)

The Church carries out this mission by exercising a threefold witness of Kerygma (proclamation), Diaconia (Service), and Koinonia (communion) In English the triad of “word, work, and life,” might better capture these three dimensions of evangelization. In addition, some would add “martyria” and “leiturgia” (witness and worship) to this list. I submit that these important aspects of Christian life and ministry are contained in the first three fundamental elements of mission.

Proclamation without service and communion lacks credibility. For the Word of God must be shown to be a living and active word transforming human hearts, societies and cultures. At the same time, service and communion without proclamation would be false to the great commission which includes “teaching them to carry out all that I commanded you.(Matt. 28:20)

In order to carry out this threefold ministry of proclaiming and manifesting the Good News in our world, the baptized have been equipped with special charisms. Not all will have the same ministry or the same gifts, but each and every Christian has truly been gifted for the building up of the body of Christ. (1 Peter 4:10; Rom. 12:6)

For over a quarter of a century, pope John Paul II exemplified the kerygmatic ministry. Deacons, since their revival after Vatican II, have called the whole church to live out the mystery of Christ as Servant-Healer in our world. In addition, many communities lay and

religious—beginning with the family as “domestic church”—witness to the communal dimension of Church and mission. We do this “so that the world may believe” as John’s gospel put it. (17:21)

In fact and in law the whole Church and every Christian is missionary. (Ad Gentes #23, Canons 211, 225) As the Council Fathers stated: “the Church on earth is by its nature missionary since, according to the plan of the Father, it has its origins in the mission of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” (Ad Gentes #2, Lumen Gentium #1)

Today, every place, country and culture is now mission territory. The Gospel must still be preached to “every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation, (Rev. 5:9) as well as to every class and strata of society. It must permeate every structure of society.

In this missionary effort the laity have a crucial and indispensable role. For only the laity exist in sufficient numbers, and are inserted in all areas of human life and society. Only the laity have the opportunity to bring the Gospel where it needs to be heard.

In many settings, such as the workplace, and the neighbourhood, the laity are often challenged to give an account of their faith and belief system. Even in the so called “foreign missions,” which today are often closed to clerics and religious, lay people may still have access and opportunities because of business, social, and cultural contacts.

Because of this witness (chiefly diaconal and communal) people will be moved to call us “to give an account of the Hope that is in us.” (1 Peter 3:15) This response, St. Peter explains, is evoked by the “good deeds of Christians,” and by a beautiful “way of life.” (2:12)

Faced with this challenging and intimidating mission Jesus has promised to be with us “until the end of the age.” (Mt. 28:20b) He has also promised to work with us “confirming the word by the signs that accompany it.” (Mk: 16:20)

In this short article, formulated as a mission statement for a mission Church, I have tried to initiate and stimulate a reflection on the nature of mission. May the Spirit of Jesus inspire us to live for, and out of, this biblical vision. Nothing less will succeed, anything less will fail.

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