



NEW PERSPECTIVES IN MISSION: THE CHALLENGE FOR NEW PARADIGMS

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Introduction

Each time a parish or a diocese celebrates a jubilee, a slot is usually set aside for the missionaries, the pioneers who brought the Good News of Jesus Christ to the area. In Zambia names like Livingstone, Bishop Motomoto (Joseph Dupont), Bishop Mazzieri, Fr Moreau, Malcom Moffat, Mabel Shaw, have become legends. Older generations of Christians recall them with nostalgia, reverence, admiration and gratitude. In towns like Lusaka, many Christians trace their origins to Chikuni, Chilonga, Chilubula, Lubwa, Lukulu, Kapatu, Lubwe, Mbereshi, Minga, Msoro, Mwami, to mention but a few.

Missionaries are often presented as figures of the past, of white skin, who travelled thousands of miles from Europe in order to convert pagans. They understood their mission as consisting in saving souls from eternal damnation, establishing the Church and bringing civilisation through social development. They were motivated by a missionary mandate found in the New Testament, for instance in the great commission of Matthew: “Go therefore, make disciples of all the nations; baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit...” (28:19-20). This order given to the disciples developed during many centuries in what is known as *missio ad gentes*, that is to say they were divinely sent to other peoples out there in obedience to the command of the Lord (cf. AG 1).

In this presentation, I will first lay the original foundation for mission. This will open the door to the paradigm shift theory as an overall key of interpretation for new mission perspectives. Then I will draw your attention to the change in Christian demographics which resulted in the majority of the disciples of Christ not living anymore in the northern hemisphere but in the southern part of the world. That will lead me to draw the first missiological consequence namely mission *inter gentes* or mission among the people and with the people.

Next, I shall acknowledge the advent of globalisation with its complexities as a mixed blessing and especially as a new missionary context, calling for appropriate missiological responses such as online and social media evangelisation.



Finally I shall move to other mission perspectives which are prompted by the challenges of the contemporary world to the Gospel including justice and peace, interreligious and cosmic reconciliation. These new missionary commitments are a result of “listening to what the Spirit is saying to the churches” (Rev. 2:7).

1. Theological foundation for mission

If one were to prepare a manual for a missionary in today’s world, the following missiological basics would have to be absolutely present:

The Christian mission has its ultimate *raison d’être* in a missionary God. It starts with the Triune God on mission, through Jesus Christ over all creation, humanity in particular. Jesus Christ, God’s Son and hand reaching out to humanity and the rest of creation in the Holy Spirit, is the very first and greatest evangelizer. The plenitude of the divine revelation is accomplished in the person of Jesus Christ who, in turn, sends out his disciples duly initiated to his spirit and action and entrusts to them the responsibility of the divine plan of salvation.¹

Mission refers to God’s own mission in which the Church participates and to which it points. The Church is missionary by nature (cf. AG 2, 4; LG 17). This principle has to be firmly established. Otherwise some individuals or groups, no matter how well intentioned and zealous they may be, may venture out in mission — then, as soon as the times change, or if they run out of steam, books like *The Missions on Trial*² might become best sellers. The Church, as a community born out of Jesus’ resurrection and gathered in his Spirit, receives a mandate from the Holy Trinity’s mission. The Church is missionary by grace, nature and vocation. Consequently, “one is missionary because he/she is Christian.”³ In this regard, John Paul II writes:

Reading the Acts of the Apostles helps us to realize that at the beginning of the Church, the mission *ad gentes*, while it had missionaries dedicated “for life” by a special vocation, was in fact considered the normal outcome of Christian living, to which every believer was committed through the witness of personal conduct and through explicit proclamation whenever and wherever possible (cf. RM 27).

At this point, let us make one observation: On the one hand, Jesus Christ is the same today as he was yesterday and as he will be forever (cf. Heb 13:8). On the other hand, the world,

¹ Cf. D. Atal Sa Angang, “La Mission: Une Lecture Scripturaire”, in *Revue Africaine des Sciences de la Mission*, Vol. 1, 1 (1994), 39 ; e.g., Mt. 28 :18 , Jn. 17:18; 20:21, Heb. 1:2.

² W. Bullmann, Orbis Books, New York, 1979.

³ Cf. J.-A. Barreda, “‘Missio ad Gentes’ nel Contesto del XXI Secolo in Memoria di Edimburgo 1910”, 173.



that is the beneficiary of mission, is constantly changing. This implies continuity of God's mission and discontinuity in Church missionary methodologies. South African missiologist J.D. Bosch elaborated on this point in his masterpiece, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*.⁴ He observed and identified paradigm changes at various turning points of the Christian missionary movement's twenty centuries.

The paradigm theory argues that science does not grow in small gradual steps but quick bursts that are like revolutions. These occur as a small group of people realises that something is fundamentally wrong with the paradigm that everyone in their field of science has accepted for a long time. People resist its challenges with deep emotional reactions, since those challenges threaten to destroy their entire world. A new theological paradigm does not necessarily cancel the old ones the way a new scientific paradigm does. Indeed no paradigm can cancel the importance of God's revelation through Israel and Christ.⁵

2. The Christian map changes: From North to South

Christianity was born in the northern hemisphere. For centuries it pitched its tent there. Then missionaries, at times along with other interests or else indeed motivated by the Gospel spirit, spread the Christian faith all over the four corners of the earth. But during the last quarter of the twentieth century, Christian demographics swung from north to south. Today, statistics about the followers of Jesus of Nazareth show that the situation has turned upside down: the majority of Christians now live in the southern hemisphere. Going by the figures, "In 1900 Europe was home to two-thirds of the world's Christian population; today, the figure is less than a quarter, and by 2025 it will be below 20 percent."⁶ In the same vein, well-travelled and informed Kenyan scholar John Mbiti observed that "the centers of church's universality [are] no longer in Geneva, Rome, Athens, Paris, London, New York, but Kinshasa, Buenos Aires, Addis Ababa and Manila."⁷ Reasons for this change include low birth rate, reduced Christian practice, globalisation and secularisation of the traditional Christian societies. This is a sign of the times. As we shall see further, it calls for a missiological shift, a change of paradigm which develops a new understanding of *ad gentes* by taking into account that every Church is both a receiving and sending community.

⁴ Orbis, New York, 1991.

⁵ Cf. S. Nussbaum, *A Reader's Guide to Transforming Mission*, Orbis Books, New York, 2005, 46–47.

⁶ P. Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2007, 2.

⁷ P. Jenkins, 2.



2.1 *Same wine, new skins*

The moving of the Christian majority from the north to the south has prompted two related developments. First, a new mission theology reconnecting with its ultimate origin in the Godhead, and reminding every local Church that it is both a mission territory as well as a missionary Church. That is to say, the Church is in a state of mission everywhere. It was within the context of this new understanding and actualising of the Church at the world level that Vatican II decided to make mission a unique determinant of its being: mission is the essence of the universal Church,⁸ from everywhere to everywhere. Mission is a duty for every baptized person (cf. LG 13, AG 2, EN 14). While the content of mission remains the gospel for every missionary, the format depends on one's spiritual gifts as stipulated in 1 Cor 12-14; Rm 12:4-8; Eph 4:4-16 and in the context.

Second, a mission ecclesiology which redefines the relationship between the local Churches for the good of all, a kind of "missionary commonwealth", or a basket wherein each one brings its gifts and is enriched by the gifts of others. This paradigm is envisioned by Congolese theologian L. Kabasele as an intercontinental give-and-take circle:

through the same rite of the celebration of the death and the resurrection of the "first born from among the dead", the peoples from the West will enter into communion through the gestures of the African feast. The peoples of Asia will be inspired by the canons and rules of the Western ritual organization. The peoples of America will taste the simplicity and the kenosis of the prayer under the shade of the baobabs. The scent of the incense and the splendour of the oriental icons will suggest motives to the Africans.⁹

The second African Synod observed a phenomenon which has been growing from strength to strength: "In Africa too, the Holy Spirit is constantly raising up men and women who, gathered in various associations, movements and communities, devote their lives to the spread of the Gospel of Jesus Christ" (AM 168). As a matter of fact, in 1993, Sunday Adelaja, a Nigerian Pentecostal missionary, planted the Embassy of God Church in the Ukraine. Unlike most similar churches in Western Europe, it is attended by thousands of mostly White members.¹⁰ Nine years later it became the largest congregation of its kind in Europe, with about twenty thousand members, plus about one hundred and fifty daughter congregations throughout the country and about two hundred in other countries from the

⁸ Cf. J.-A. Barreda, "'Missio ad Gentes' nel Contesto del XXI Secolo in Memoria di Edimburgo 1910", 174–176.

⁹ Cf. D. Mupaya Kapiten, "Mystère du Christ et Expérience Africaine : Rites et Histoire du Congo comme Témoignage de Vérité Chrétienne (Préface)", L'Harmattan, Paris 2007, 15.

¹⁰ G.T. Haar, *How God became African*, PENN, Philadelphia, 2009, 90.



USA to the United Arab Emirates.¹¹ Similar evidence of African participation in global mission has prompted the Dutch national and religion scholar Gerrie ter Haar to document the phenomenon in a book entitled *How God Became African: African Spirituality and Western Secular Thought*.¹²

2.2 From *ad gentes* to *inter gentes*

Given what unfolded in the world at large, there has to be a fundamental paradigm shift not only in mission or theology, but also in the experience and thinking of the whole world.¹³ New methodologies are needed if more people are to have access to the Word made flesh who volunteered to dwell among us (cf. Jn 1:14).

In such a scenario, *Missio Dei* or God's mission has to be a narrative right among the people. Yes, mission is what we are and do, not just *for* the world but *along with* the world. The orthodoxy and orthopraxis should find a new referral in the *missio inter gentes* among and with the people to make the Church and its mission convincing and credible. The current Church mission crisis is a credibility crisis. The best way to regain the lost ground is to return to the people. The fundamental option should be for the people and to be with the people as patterned in Jesus' Kingdom ministry. The Church needs a new skill and art to stay *inter gentes*.

What is demanded is a new imagination to be vulnerable amidst the people and a new creativity to embody the unpredictability and asymmetry of the present pluralistic context. The Church has to be more dialogical, inclusive and pluralistic in its identity and missionary existence.¹⁴ The missionary has to be open to all the manifestations of God, not only to those of the restricted circle for whom Jesus is the centre, but to the whole life and cosmic reality.¹⁵ He/she is first and foremost one who goes searching for all the divine words that the Word and the Spirit have sown in the whole of history and the entire universe. He/she may never presume that in a culture or a religion or indeed a spirituality God has never spoken or manifested himself. If religion has its original source in a self-manifestation to human beings, the principle of plurality will be made to rest primarily on the superabundant richness and diversity of God's self-manifestation to humankind. Migration has mixed all the religions: you find almost all major religions in every part of the world. That God spoke to humanity in many

¹¹ Cf. S. Nussbaum, 149.

¹² PENN, Philadelphia, 2009.

¹³ Cf. S. Nussbaum, 9.

¹⁴ A. Kalliah, "Being Missional *inter Gentes*" in *Missio inter Gentes: Challenges and Opportunities*, International Association of Catholic Missiologists, Nairobi, 15–21 July 2013, 1.

¹⁵ J. Paré, *Défis de la Mission du Troisième Millénaire*, Missionnaires de la Consolata, Montréal, 2002, 320.



and various ways before speaking through his Son (cf. Heb 1:1) is not accidental; nor is the plural character of God's self-manifestation merely a thing of the past. For the decisiveness of the Son's advent in the flesh in Jesus Christ does not cancel the universal presence and action of the Word and the Spirit. Religious pluralism in principle rests on the immensity of a God who is love.¹⁶ Obviously, the missionary has a basis in the Church; yet he/she does not refuse to walk with others. Indeed "catholic" implies interdependent and in relation with others.¹⁷

In the new paradigm, the missionary's objective is to foster dialogue among all religions and to take part in it. He/she promotes peaceful religious and secular existence, collaboration in projects of peace, justice. Dialogue is the new experience and the new challenge in the Church's mission, which is full of surprises because the agent of Christian mission is the Spirit which blows wherever and whenever it wills according to its logic which is beyond human logic. What is needed, while being engaged in *Missio Dei*, is a radical surrender to the rhyme and reason of the Spirit who reveals the Risen Lord in the dialogue of religions¹⁸ starting with the awareness that in our Christian nation Zambia, the religion of our ancestors shapes the worldview of the majority of Zambians. *Missio inter gentes* proposes a new kind of missionary activity that sees other religions not as rivals or enemies to Christianity that have to be overcome, but as potential allies, collaborating and working together against the real mutual enemies of all forms of evil, selfishness, exploitation, as well as the social, cultural and political structure that support them.

What does collaboration with people of good will look like? Unlike the contemporary religious pursuits of the Essenes, religion for Jesus was not a private path but an "experiment with love" in the secular space, especially at the margins. Jesus was crucified outside the gate and died as a *kaponya* (call boy) (cf. Jn 19:20)! After the resurrection he did not change his approach: You will see me in Galilee, that is among the people. His message to us is crystal clear: Get out of the sacristy and go to the hub of the world especially to Chibolya compound! Christian praxis is not an option out of this world of sin and corruption but it is a fundamental option for a life programme right in the very hub and web of this world embodying its brokenness and transforming it in a divinizing love.¹⁹ Although we are not of this world we have our feet on the ground (cf. Jn 15:19). Jesus' solidarity with the plight of humanity (cf. Phil 2:7) is to be primarily sought in the very matrix of human "groaning in travails" (cf. Rom 8:22). God's revelation is not outside but in the very heart of the world, its joys and hopes, its grief and anxieties (cf. GS 1). In this vein, even ten thousand words couldn't say as much as one image of Pope Francis' embrace of Vinicio Riva, a man

¹⁶ Cf. J. Dupuis, *Toward a Theology of Religious Pluralism*, Orbis Books, NY, 2001, 387.

¹⁷ Cf. J. Pare, 321–322, 327.

¹⁸ Cf. A. Kalliah, 6.

¹⁹ Cf. A. Kalliah, 3.



ravaged by a devastating disease, about God's love for humanity. That is a God people might actually want to believe in.²⁰ The self-understanding of the Church here is more of a pilgrim community among the pilgrims (DP 36).²¹ Certainly, mission remains a movement, not necessarily geographical but a movement for humanity which has to move to new horizons, new frontiers, including those created by globalisation.

3. Globalisation: A mixed blessing

While the so called third world was embracing the Christian faith and overtaking the so called developed world in numbers, a fully fledged globalisation strongly and irreversibly was making its impact on every aspect of life. Globalisation is first and foremost the presence of the entire world in our life. The products we use as well as in the information we receive, the way we view the outside world changes our familiar references, starting with the economy, then communication, travelling, politics, environment and worldview. In the global village, time and space have been reduced in dimensions never dreamt of before. This is possible mostly thanks to the revolution in communications technology. ICT is more and more becoming a layman's language. As a result, a new civilisation is developing, affecting every community all over the world, with both positive and negative consequences.

In Zambia, globalisation moved in earnest with British colonisation: Let us look for example at the socialisation process, education in particular. The parents, the extended family, the elders and the community as a whole used to, in synergy, play a prominent role. However, the modern school introduced its teaching system with little or no consultation with the community. The medium is a foreign language and the curriculum does not necessarily prioritize the community's values. The new means of communications (telephone), the mass media (print media and radio) and cosmopolitan towns have created a new culture and marginalised the role of traditional institutions. Today, you may hear people, especially the young, contesting the authority of what was once sacrosanct, playing it down, or dismissing it altogether as out of fashion and not appropriate for their generation *ni va ku dala* (things of old). The elders' usual comment is that *tabomfwa* (not well behaved)! In fact, cultural globalisation seeks to spread the so-called modern culture to underpin economic and political globalisation.²²

²⁰ <http://www.thetablet.co.uk/editors-desk/1/879/picture-worth-a-thousand-words> accessed on 23/11/2013.

²¹ As quoted in A. Kalliah, 5.

²² Cf. L. Stanislaus, "Globalisation and Inculturation", in *Sedos Bulletin*, 9/10 (2003), 167.



Although some isolated voices deny the fact that “there is nothing near to uniform global culture except in the most superficial sense of that term,”²³ hegemony and homogenisation are on the globalisation agenda, and the implications on culture can be anticipated: disappearance of diversity of cultures resulting in a cultural levelling. We are actually dealing with a materialistic culture in outlook: radical individualism and competition, personal autonomy and privatised morality in the name of science without a religious perspective and a common good, culminating in a secularized society despite or without a nominal belief in God.²⁴

The present scenario of globalisation demands such a conscious and focused presence of the missionary to post an evangelical message in the cyberspace. What we find in the globalised context is a radical shift from hierarchy to network. The present media, market, informatics and mobility bring about a new dispensation of a participative democracy in which all take part in occurrences of the world. The Church has to construct its identity in the “secular space” that the civil society provides, for greater credibility and appeal. Otherwise the influence of the organised faith will be weaned out from the collective consciousness.²⁵

3.1 Globalisation as a challenge

Whether one likes it or not, globalisation is among us. Now what happens to the community-focused, ancestor-connected and Christian people of Zambia? The likelihood of being carried along by the *tsunami* and its uniqueness being sacrificed on the altar of the globalisation hangs like the sword of Damocles! Unfortunately, this is a situation in which the people of Zambia are mostly consumers of products and programmes whose financial interests and ideological agenda take little or no account of the cultural and moral context of their “customers”. The end result could be an alienated nation constantly changing colours like a chameleon!

Is there a way out? Can the Church afford to sit in an ivory tower and indifferently watch such fate befalling us? The Church is duty-bound to be present in the new forums and areopagi to offer alternatives and evangelical proposals. Among others, it should encourage structural transformation and propose globalisation in and of solidarity for vulnerable people. An American theologian, L. Luzbetak, justifies the pertinence of the Church’s commitment on the side of cultures this way: “We are concerned about cultures so that the Church may be as perfect a channel of Grace as possible, as good, wise, and faithful a

²³ S.B. Bevans, R.P. Schroeder, *Constants in Contexts: A Theology of Mission for Today*, 390; cf. L. Stanislaus, “Globalisation and Inculturation”, 170.

²⁴ Cf. L. Stanislaus, “Globalisation and Inculturation”, 167–168.

²⁵ Cf. A. Kalliah, 7.



servant as is humanly possible.”²⁶ In this perspective, a new culture can emerge to serve the people, by making use of the changing times and ideologies positively.²⁷

3.2 Globalisation as an opportunity for evangelisation

The modern digitalised communication has deconstructed the hierarchical structures and has constructed an alternative network community through social media. According to one survey in the USA (2012), 67% of online adults use social networking sites.²⁸ The immense impact generated is unfathomable.²⁹ The so called Arab-Spring, that is the uprising of people for democracy in the Arab world, is a classical episode of how social media can become a veritable agency to bring about radical and revolutionary changes in the society through networking.³⁰ The new generation lives on the internet and a “mediocracy” is developing in the cyber world. Social media is transforming the representative democracies into participatory democracies.³¹

Globalisation has created a new world through the electronic media (radio, CD, DVD, television and especially social networking — cellphoning, emailing, messaging, Facebook, blogging, YouTube and Twitter ...) as a means of communicating on a daily routine, e.g., playing games, posting photos and videos online, reading the news like *Zambian Watchdog*, shopping, getting health information in the global village, the new and virtual communities.

Thus a new generation has been born and its name is digital natives, “dot.com generation”, “Generation Y”, or the “Millenials”. It is distinguished from the so called digital immigrants who were shaped and socialised by a pre-digital world and try to adapt to new developments in digital technology. Digital natives

are well known for being technologically adept, having grown up in a world that is marked by rapid digital and online growth. Many of them are able to multitask with ease, e.g. chatting away on cellphones and instant messaging on their computers while trying to read a book.³²

²⁶ L. Lutezbak, *The Church and Cultures: New Perspectives in Missiological Anthropology*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, NY, 1988, 397.

²⁷ Cf. A.G. Mroso, *The Church in Africa and the New Evangelisation: A Theologico-Pastoral Study of the Orientations of John Paul II*, 252.

²⁸ <http://www.pewresearch.org/data-trend/media-and-technology/social-networking-use/>

²⁹ Cf. A. Kalliah, 1.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² J.Y. Tan, “Ministry Meets Social Networking: Connecting with the Digital Natives”, in *Sedos Bulletin*, September/October 2013, 204.



They have not just changed numerically from those of the past, nor simply changed their slang, clothes, body adornments, or styles, as has happened between generations previously. Instead a real discontinuity has taken place so fundamentally that there is no going back. Further, it seems that the brains of digital adults have physically changed as a result of growing up in a world of constant exposure to digital media.³³

Because a good number of people, digital natives in particular, spend a substantial time online and in social networking communities, pastoral ministers may find themselves increasingly out of touch with little or no impact on their lives if they don't encounter them through social networking sites. They may be impersonal, yet the interactions and relationships can become their strength, affording the dot.com generation the opportunity to share their deepest secrets and struggles without the anxiety, shame, or embarrassment of face-to-face contact. On the other hand these encounters may encourage them to seek interaction in a face to face meeting. In any case

where else are we going to see the messy and chaotic lives of digital natives up close? Where are we going to bump into and interact with those digital natives who have stopped coming to church and would not return our phone calls or emails?³⁴

Cardinal Tagle of Manilla asks:

What are we doing so that so many people who have migrated from our Churches or who have never put their feet in there or who ignore the very existence the Gospel can drink water at the wells. Which the kind of water are they drinking?³⁵

Are we not keeping the light under the tub (cf. Mt 5:14-15)?

Recently in Zambia, a government official was complaining that people were reading wrong information on the country from private online publications because public media was not offering the correct information on public ones. Anticipating that social networking is not a challenge to be fought tooth and nail but rather a window of opportunities, the evangeliser had better note the emphasis on mutuality, solidarity and collaboration with the digital generation. In this new world, paternalism and hierarchy give way to mutuality, interdependence, empathy, solidarity and collaboration between ministers and digital natives. In today's globalised and interconnected world that is rooted in interdependence and solidarity, pastoral workers and digital citizens are both ministers and recipients of

³³ Cf. Prensky 2001b, as quoted in J.Y. Tan, 204.

³⁴ J.Y. Tan, 207.

³⁵ *Missio inter Gentes and New Evangelisation* (outline), International Association of Catholic Missiologists, Nairobi, 18 July 2013, 2.



ministry at the same time, engaging in mutual witness to promote the life giving Good News of Jesus Christ.³⁶ The expression “going viral” may not be in the average theological dictionary, but it represents the fact that there is a new stage on which the Gospel message of God’s unconditional love is being acted out: that of the social media. Recently, Pope Francis’ loving embrace of a man with extreme disfigurements to his face and body went viral almost instantly, which means that it was reproduced as an image with a message many millions of times all over the world. This was not the first time this Pope had supplied the social media with vivid material. In the new world of Twitter, YouTube and Facebook, the medium is indeed the message, just as the Canadian media guru Marshall McLuhan, himself a convert to Catholicism, prophesied.³⁷ In the final analysis this methodology is grounded in Jesus’ own method whereby he reaches out to the human person whichever situation he/she is in.

4. Towards a new evangelical order

Vatican II took place in the context of decolonisation/independence, cold war and the redefinition of relationships between nations. The Council’s theological reflection on the economic, social and political situation and the role the Church is called to play is echoed in one of its most important documents namely the *Church in the Modern World*. Liberation theology which was developed especially in Latin America in 1960s highlighted the social dimension of the gospel. From a pastoral angle, Bishop Helder Camara observed: “When I give food to the poor, they call me a saint. When I ask why they are poor, they call me a communist.”³⁸ Justice and peace issues came to the fore of the Church’s agenda and became one of the five subthemes of the first African Synod. The Second African Synod took them as the main theme. To drive the point home, one of the Synod Fathers, Bishop of Mpika then, T.G. Mpundu emphasized in an interview that justice and peace is not a hobby for a selected few, a very expensive one, but it is part and parcel of evangelisation.

Today the whole country is covered with a network of diocesan, parish and religious congregations’ Justice and Peace commissions urging us to do what is right (cf. Mi 6:8), to proclaim liberty to captives and to let the oppressed go free (cf. Lk 4:18-19), to look forward to a new heaven and a new earth in which justice dwells (cf. 2 Peter 3:13).

³⁶ J.Y. Tan, 209.

³⁷ Cf. <http://www.thetablet.co.uk/editors-desk/1/879/picture-worth-a-thousand-words> accessed on 23/11/2013.

³⁸ C. Helder, “The Gift: A Life that Marked the Course of the Church in Brazil”, *Editores Vozes*, 2000, 53.



The actuality of this mission perspective is underscored by the theme taken by the World Council of Churches (WCC) Assembly which has just taken place in Busan, South Korea, namely, “God of life lead us to peace and justice”. Social justice confronts privilege, economic justice confronts wealth, ecological justice confronts consumption, and political justice confronts power itself. As the ecumenical call to a just peace stated, to take the path of just peace is to enter a collective, dynamic yet grounded process of freeing human beings from fear and want, overcoming enmity, discrimination and oppression, and establishing conditions for just relationships that privilege the experience of the most vulnerable and respect the integrity of creation.³⁹

Together we believe in God, the Creator of all life. Therefore we acknowledge that every human being is made in the image and likeness of God and we seek to be good stewards of creation. In wondrously creating a world with more than enough natural riches to support countless generations of human beings and other living things, God makes manifest a vision for all people to live in the fullness of life and with dignity, regardless of class, gender, religion, race or ethnicity.⁴⁰ We recognize justice and peace as both promise and present – a hope for the future and a gift here and now.⁴¹

The Churches’ analysis of wealth and poverty has led to a strong critique of greed. Some Church institutions have now developed indicators to test how well individuals, corporations and nations are sharing God’s abundant gifts. The Monthly Basic Needs Basket produced by the Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection in Zambia is such a praiseworthy initiative. Establishing “economies of life” is one key to building peace in the marketplace. Economies of life promote careful use of resources, sustainable production and consumption, redistributive growth, workers’ rights, fair taxes, fair trade, and the universal provision of clean water, clean air and other common goods.⁴²

The credibility and relevance of the Church can be accomplished only through a new mission praxis of incorporation into the peoples’ movements of social justice and human rights and similar issues. Here a question arises: Amid serious economic challenges how do Christians provide a prophetic witness of justice, peace and reconciliation between divided peoples and nations?

³⁹ Cf. WCC, 10th Assembly, “Statement on the Way of Just Peace”, 1.

⁴⁰ Cf. WCC, “Statement on the Way of Just Peace”, 1.

⁴¹ Cf. WCC, “Statement on the Way of Just Peace”, 1.

⁴² Cf. WCC, “Statement on the Way of Just Peace”, 3.



5. Conflict management: Christ our reconciliation

As a country, we are preparing to celebrate next year, a golden jubilee of uninterrupted freedom and peace. This is exceptional in Africa and indeed in the world. However, this does not mean that we have reached paradise. Furthermore, “The peace of Christ is not the same as the tranquillity that comes about when there is absence of conflict, but understood as the presence of all those conditions that allow people to attain their full potential.”⁴³

Domestic violence is a hidden tragedy in societies everywhere including many of our homes. The just-ended sixteen days of gender activism have highlighted a number of issues which trouble our Christian conscience. A good number of individuals, families and communities live in tension, fuelled especially by practice, suspicions and accusations of witchcraft and Satanism. Why have they continued unabated more than a century after J.E. Stephenson, the founder and first DC of Mkushi announced the end of witchcraft as a dividend of the *pax Britannica*?

In the political arena, what has been unfolding in the last couple of years summons the Church to respond to its vocation of sentinel of peace. Why? A couple of concerns require serious attention. The first concern is the Barotseland issue: On two occasions the Zambia Episcopal Conference (ZEC) issued an ad hoc pastoral statement. First in the wake of the tragic events of the Western Province which culminated in violence, injuries and loss of lives. The bishops suggested that at the bottom of all the unrest in the Western Province is the perception that the province is marginalised in matters of development. Further they advised that the Barotseland question was simply a critique of how Zambia is socio-economically and politically governed. They emphasised the need for Government to work out an amicable solution towards a clearly spelt out strategy of addressing the issue and appealed for a spirit of soberness, inclusiveness and participation by all stakeholders.⁴⁴ On the second occasion, the Bishops reiterated the call to the current administration to work with all stakeholders towards creating a more conducive environment that would lead to the amicable resolution of all matters surrounding the Barotseland situation.⁴⁵

The second concern is the infighting that has affected some political parties. On a few occasions, violence was the order of the day: property was damaged, several people were injured and in a recent incident, one person was killed. What is most deplorable is that the

⁴³ J. Komakoma, “Social, Political and Economic Governance in the AMECEA Region: What is the Role of the Church?” A Paper Presented to the 16th AMECEA Plenary Study Session, 30 June 2008, 7.

⁴⁴ Cf. Zambia Episcopal Conference, *That they may have abundant life [Jn.10:10]*, Lusaka, 29 January 2012.

⁴⁵ Cf. Zambia Episcopal Conference, *Act justly and Walk humbly with your God*, Lusaka, 27 January 2013.



youth are being used by some forces for their selfish motives to settle their own leadership struggles.⁴⁶ If these tensions are kept under the carpet or are not diffused, they can become time bombs.

Thank God this is nothing compared with what is obtaining in some countries in and outside Africa. However these challenges are a wakeup call. Therefore, we should neither sleep on our laurels nor take national concord for granted. Christians should take the lead to preserve peace, mediate in conflict resolution and foster reconciliation. In this vein, calls have come from all walks of life including the parties involved, civil societies and churches for genuine intra and inter party dialogue to address the situation. Jesus brought public meaning to the religious teachings and practice to take on violence. He transformed the forces of evil into the sources of new life in the mystery of love. Jesus' logic of love and forgiveness finds an innovative political praxis of nonviolence.⁴⁷

Reconciliation is central in the mission of Christ with vertical and horizontal dimensions. The institution of the Eucharist preceding his death is presented in reconciliation terms: "Drink from this ...for this is my blood,...poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins" (Mt 26:28). God, through Christ, takes the initiative to reconcile human beings, enemies or sinners, to himself.⁴⁸ They become his friends (cf. 2 Co 5:18-19).

People thirst for forgiveness leading to reconciliation as an option for a renewed and Christ-like life. The Church leadership in Zambia rightly urges those forgiven and reconciled to be agents of reconciliation among couples, between parents and children, within families, between the hierarchy and ordinary faithful, among and between the clergy, the religious and the laity, the leaders and those they wish to serve.⁴⁹ The Church has a vital role to play in making reconciliation become a spirituality which energizes Christians in their daily living, their relationship with one another and with those who do not belong to their fold. In this way, they can become "the salt of the earth and the light of the world" (Mt 5:13-14). Reconciliation is a way of life that calls for true meekness and unconditional love for fellow human beings. It is the cost of discipleship.

The *insaka/indaba* or the African palaver methodology, craftly invented by our ancestors, is at hand to lay the ground for peaceful politics and social harmony, thus reconciling the sons

⁴⁶ Cf. *Sunday Post*, 10 November 2013, 4.

⁴⁷ A. Kalliath, "Being Missional Inter Gentes", a presentation given at the International Association of Catholic Missiologists' Conference, Nairobi, 2013, 4.

⁴⁸ Raymond E. Brown et al., *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, Geoffrey Chapman, New Jersey, 1990, 1398.

⁴⁹ J. Komakoma (ed.), *The Social Teaching of the Catholic Bishops and Other Christian Leaders in Zambia: Major Pastoral Letters and Statements 1953-2001*, Mission Press, Ndola, 2003, 418.



and daughters of our nation. It resembles St Matthew's three step approach: "If your brother does something wrong, go and have it out with him alone... take one or two brothers along with you...report to the community..." (18:15-17). Zambian wisdom has proved that *uwatwala pa nsaka tonaula* (he who brings a case to the council of elders is bound to get good advice). It pays to put the *mulandu* (case) on the table so that both parties and all the stakeholders can look at it and dispose themselves to forgive and reconcile. Mercy, forgiveness and reconciliation become shared public experiences.

In this reconciliation approach, priority is neither given to the prosecution nor to the defence, within a sophisticated legal system with monetary considerations, but to the mediation fostering the restoration of the broken relationships and the re-establishment of a holistic harmony. The focus is not so much on a "fair trial", resulting in the conviction that can lead to imprisonment with or without bail, as to mending community, social and cosmic relations. In order to be holistic, reconciliation embraces the entire universe: "In Christ God was reconciling the world to himself" (2 Co 5:19; see Rom 11:15; Col 1:20-22; Eph 2:11-19).

6. The care of creation

In the book of Genesis, we read that God saw all he had made was indeed very good (cf. Gen 1:31). However, because of the ignorance and the sinfulness of the human being, the air we breathe is contaminated. How shall we make it wholesome? Natural resources such as forests and minerals have been depleted and ravaged in a war of greed and unsustainable development drive. Hence we have erosion and desertification that are making arable land sterile and African climate hostile to human habitation. How shall we bring forgiveness and ecological reconciliation, the Second African Synod asks (cf. Proposition 22)?

Churches and parishes in many countries around the world are linking faith and ecology, studying environmental issues, monitoring carbon output, and joining in WCC-led advocacy for governments to cut emissions of green-house gases. 'Eco-congregations' and 'green Churches' are signs of hope. Churches join with peoples' movements and partners in civil society to challenge poverty, inequality and environmental degradation.⁵⁰ Regulatory structures must reconnect finance not only to economic production but also to human need and ecological sustainability.⁵¹ In this vein, the Seoul city government is collaborating with local Churches to help Korea's sprawling capital conserve energy and recycle waste. In the wake of the Fukushima disaster, Christians and Buddhists already united against nuclear

⁵⁰ Cf. WCC, "Statement on the Way of Just Peace", 3.

⁵¹ Cf. WCC, "Statement on the Way of Just Peace", 3.



weapons are now united against nuclear power plants as well. They are raising a prophetic call for a nuclear-free world.⁵² The recent Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines which has claimed more than five thousand lives will certainly raise higher the awareness to respect the environment. Natural catastrophes justify the concerns of the Churches over climate change and its adverse effects on the whole of creation and especially on vulnerable communities in many parts of the world; churches are called to join hands locally and globally to work together and to care for creation. Zambia's contribution to a sustainable environment includes phasing out some agricultural practices such as overuse of chemical fertiliser and pesticides which respectively impoverish the soil and poison drinking water. Alternatives are to be found to replace the *citemene* system as well as clearing the bush by burning each year. As a matter of fact, large amounts of carbon dioxide produced by these practices and some polluting industries deplete the ozone layer thus contributing to the global warming. In addition, campaigns such as 'keep Zambia clean' launched by the late President Mwanawasa some years back should be encouraged in order to improve on the environment especially in towns.

The care for God's precious gift of creation, the reform of lifestyles and the pursuit of ecological justice are key elements of just peace. Concerted ecumenical advocacy is needed so that governments, businesses and consumers protect the environment and preserve it for future generations.⁵³ Victims of climate change are the new face of the poor, the widow and the stranger that are especially loved and cared for by God (Deut. 10:17-18). When creation is threatened in this way, Churches are called to speak out and act as an expression of their commitment to life, justice and peace.⁵⁴

Concluding Remarks

While the so called mainstream churches bemoan the migration of many of their members especially of the young to other churches, or lapse into non-practice of their faith, is it not time for an examination of conscience to see if we are not too complacent, too comfortable with our methods, too Church-centred instead of Kingdom-centred? It is high time we went back to the ultimate reference of mission, that is, our missionary God. It is high time we took the opportunities offered by our contemporary world with its complexities, so as to knock at the doors so far closed to Christ so that the family of God may inclusively enjoy his fellowship (cf. Rev. 3:20). Mission in the twenty-first century shall be renewed by *missio*

⁵² Cf. WCC, "Statement on the Way of Just Peace", 2.

⁵³ Cf. WCC, "Statement on the Way of Just Peace", 3.

⁵⁴ WCC, "Minute on Climate Justice", 1.



inter gentes, or mission with and among peoples, religious pluralism, justice, peace, cosmic reconciliation and social media friendly evangelisation. Recently, on 18th October to be precise, the Zambia Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA), granted a TV license to the Zambia Episcopal Conference, thus paving the way for the establishment of a Catholic television station. It is a breakthrough which heralds a new dawn for evangelization, to implement the will of God, that all may be saved (1 Tm 2:4).

Abbreviations

AM: *Africae Munus*, Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortations of Benedict XVI on the Church in Africa and in Service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace, 2011.

AG: *Ad Gentes Divinitus*, Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity, 1965.

EN: *Evangelii Nuntiandii*, Evangelization in the Modern World, 1975.

GS: *Gaudium et Spes*, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, 1965.

LG: *Lumen Gentium*, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, 1964.