



Mission

Christians need a new understanding of mission in today's world.

*“Mission is God’s work of bringing about the Reign of God. The three Persons of the Trinity are constantly creating, healing, reconciling, transforming and uniting the world. The mission of the Spirit comes to its fullest expression in Jesus and looks for consummation beyond human history. Caught up in God’s mission, the Church is missionary by nature. Its particular task is to seek, uncover and celebrate God’s presence in the world. God is especially active wherever people are inspired to strive creatively for justice, truth, peace, freedom and reconciliation between peoples, nations, religions and the environment”.*¹

God is full of surprises. Our task is to play our part in God’s work. Some people are sent to other countries and their mission remains as valid as ever. The special call of the Society of St Columban is to cross boundaries of language, culture and faith to bring the Gospel to all. Their special charism is: to live and preach the Gospel within other cultures, to be with the poor and the oppressed in their struggle for the freedom Christ wants for all, to work for the integrity of creation, to bring Christians and non-Christians together in dialogue and to promote communication and understanding between Churches of various cultures.

The mission of most is closer to home. In the family, in the workplace, in schools, in community activities, all Christians can help to bring the Good News to the world in which they live. A Christian community is never meant to be closed in upon itself. “The Church is the only society in the world which exists for the sake of those who are not members of it”.² We are encouraged to look beyond our immediate concerns and reach out to others. We are encouraged to be open to see and hear God in surprising places and people.

The task of proclaiming the Gospel can at times appear to be a losing battle but the Spirit is at work. In those societies where people have lost sight of God, a return to a sense of the sacred is an important part of the ‘new evangelisation’ called for by Pope John Paul II.

Catholic Social Teaching Principle:

Interconnectedness, Interdependence and Solidarity: All people are members of the one human family; all are created in the image of God. People everywhere, along with the planet we share, are linked together by a common destiny which calls us to stand with each other and with Earth in radical solidarity for the good of all.

‘Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation.’ Mark 16:15

Christians have an extraordinary treasure to offer in the Good News of the Gospel. One doorway to offering our gift to the world and cooperating in God’s mission is to bring our faith and the culture of our society into dialogue.

The light of Jesus transforms the darkness which is in the world and brings joy and hope to people.

This issue completes the series of The Gospel of Life.

¹ Columban Mission Institute.

² William Temple as quoted by Bosch D. “Transforming Mission” Harmat Publishing House, 375.

I do not believe in people telling others of their faith, especially with a view to conversion. Faith does not admit of telling. But when it is lived it becomes self-propagating.
Mohandas K. Gandhi

PARABLE REFLECTION

The Growing Seed Mark 4:26-29

**‘The Kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground, and would sleep and rise, day and night, and the seed would sprout and grow...’
Mark 4: 26-27**

The mission of the Church in the world is to scatter the word of God in all corners of creation. Some are called to do this work in far away places but all are called to do it in the homes or offices, schools or factories of their local neighbourhoods. The proclamation of Christian faith is best achieved through witness and action. It is in living our faith that we scatter the seed. It is the providence of God which causes the seed to take root and grow, and brings the harvest to fruition. How do you help scatter the seed of the Kingdom?

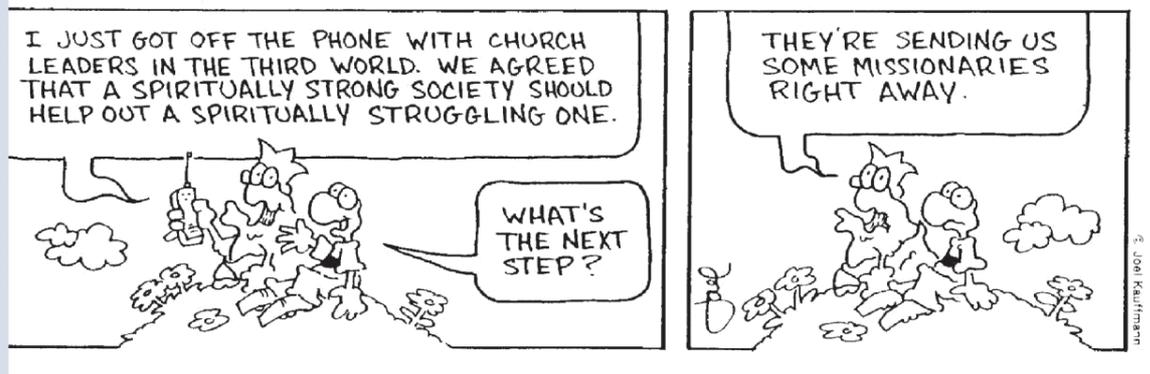
Go to the people, live with them, learn from them, love them. Start with what they know. Build with what they have. But with the best leaders, when the work is done, the task accomplished, the people will say: “We have done this ourselves.”

Lao Tse 700 BC

Earth Charter Principle 13:

Strengthen democratic institutions at all levels and provide transparency and accountability in governance, inclusive participation in decision making, and access to justice.

Pontius' Puddle



"Modern people listen more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if they do listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses."

Evangelii Nuntiandi 41, Pope Paul VI, 1975.

FACTFILE

The Changing Church, the Changing World. World Religion Populations

- Globally today there are 2 billion Christians with the highest concentration in Europe with 560 million. By 2025, there will be 2.65 billion Christians with the highest concentrations in Africa (633 million) and Latin America (640 million).
- By 2050, there will be 3 billion Christians and only 1/5 will be non-Hispanic whites.
- Kinshasa, Buenos Aires and Manila will be important Christian centres.
- Catholics in Oceania in 2000 were 0.75% of the world's total. By 2025, they will be only 0.008% of the total.
- In 2025 of a total population of almost 8 billion people, there will be 1.85 billion Muslims, 1.07 billion Hindus, 450 million Buddhists, and 158 million atheists.
- Christianity in China is growing. There are an estimated 12 million Catholics in China.

Worldwide expansion of cities:

- By 2025 there will be 650 megacities of over 1 million.
- There will be 3000 million urban poor and 1,600 million urban slum dwellers.

The Society of St Columban currently has 537 priests, 43 seminarians, 66 lay missionaries and 200 Columban sisters cooperating in God's mission in the world.

'At the end of every Mass, when the celebrant takes leave of the assembly with the words "Go, the Mass is ended", all should feel they are sent as "Missionaries of the Eucharist" to carry to every environment the great gift received. In fact anyone who encounters Christ in the Eucharist cannot fail to proclaim through his or her life the merciful love of the Redeemer.'

Pope John Paul II, World Mission Sunday Statement, 2004, #2.

FOR DISCUSSION

1. Using the Fact File, discuss the changing face of the Church and of the world. By 2025 where will the majority of Christians be? Who will be the face of Christianity to the world? What will be the implications for mission?
2. What are the emerging entry points of mission in Australia today? What are the challenges, what are the hopes? Who or what in our society needs to be evangelized?
3. Identify the ways in which our local or wider Christian community gives witness to hope. What are the surprising places or people where you may not imagine God is.
4. What do you know of the persecution of the Church in China? How can the Australian Church be in solidarity with the Church in China and in other nations where Christianity is the minority religion?

"Proclaim the Gospel constantly and, if necessary, use words."
St Francis of Assisi

FOR ACTION

- Contact your local Commission for Ecumenism and Inter-faith Relations.
- Find out what opportunities exist locally to dialogue with people of other religious faiths on common issues or topics like peace, justice or ecology.
- Find ways to get together to share each other's beliefs.
- Become involved in a local or global organization which gives witness to hope.
- Learn more about the Church in China and the role played by Columbans in China.
- Subscribe to China Exchange, the newsletter of the Columban Centre for Promoting Communion with the Church in China.
- Contact the Columban Mission Institute (see details below).

USEFUL WEBSITES:

- www.columban.org.au
St Columban's Mission Society
- www.catholicmission.org.au
Catholic Mission
- www.palms.org.au
PALMS – a Catholic lay volunteer organisation
- www.hsstudy.org.hk
Tripod, a Publication on Christianity in China
- www.affinity.org.au
Affinity Intercultural Foundation