

objective of missionary action is to arrive at a communion of persons with God and with one another.

The dynamism of a communion of life leads to charity, to solidarity, to encountering and listening to the other, to missionary cooperation, to ecumenical, interreligious and social dialogue, to working on what unites us, in this way promoting reconciliation and universal communion. "Let there be unity in what is necessary; freedom in what is unsettled, and charity in any case" (GS, 92).

Communion is one of the most important objectives of mission; and at the same time one of the most effective means of witnessing for evangelisation: "so that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, let them also be one, so that the world may believe that you have sent me" (Jn 17:21). The Church in communion (Koinonia) becomes a sign and an instrument of union with God and of the unity of the whole human race (cf. GS 92).

"Our commitment does not consist exclusively in activities or programmes of promotion and assistance; what the Holy Spirit mobilizes is not an unruly activism, but above all an attentiveness which considers the other "in a certain sense as one with ourselves". This loving attentiveness is the beginning of a true concern for their person which inspires me effectively to seek their good. This entails appreciating the poor in their goodness, in their experience of life, in their culture, and in their ways of living the faith. True love is always contemplative, and permits us to serve the other not out of necessity or vanity, but rather because he or she is beautiful above and beyond mere appearances?" (EG 199).

Love for our brothers and sisters is authentic, it commits us to act in order that Jesus be loved and "known" (cfr. OOCC I).

Foreign missions were always a concern for Saint Vincent Pallotti; it could be said that it was the beginning of the UAC, its reason for existing and its goal.

1. What do I do individually and as in community in order to help overseas ("ad gentes") missionary activity?
2. We find ourselves in a constantly changing culture. What do I do to promote dialogue in the concrete reality, with the many challenges of means of communication which lead to a cultural, religious, social and individualistic indifference?
3. In what way, as UAC, can we collaborate for peace, in a world which continually promotes violence?

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Apostles for Today

Prayer and Reflection - June 2017

DIALOGUE IN MISSION

In order to speak of dialogue in mission, it is necessary to consider several aspects of the missionary process. The first is dialogue with ourselves and with God: the two being inseparable. The second, connected with the first, is dialogue with culture, with the people who live that same culture and its implications. The third is the aspect of interreligious dialogue; consequently some writings of Pallotti and of Pope Francis on charity in the process of dialogue itself.

Every mission is born of a passion for Jesus which is translated into a desire to serve Him in serving others. Mission, above all, is *being* where God wants us and *doing* what he asks of us. In this sense we can say that mission is a long journey towards the heart of God who takes full care of our life and leads us in his ways.

Mission is to set off, to journey, to leave everything, to go out of ourselves, to open ourselves and allow ourselves to be led, to allow the Heart of God to lead us to greater service. This requires of the missionary maturity, constant dialogue with oneself, in order to understand the process. It demands an intense review of oneself in a new reality, in order to discover the new Creator God and grow in the spiritual life.

The true missionary walks with the Lord, speaks with Him, works with Him, perceives Him independently of his or her own activity.

Being a missionary means allowing "the life of our Lord Jesus Christ to be my life". It means opening myself without fear to the action of the Spirit and my very life becoming a living proclamation of transfiguration in Christ, alive and risen. The human being is essentially "sent", that is, someone who has received a mission. Transformation in Jesus Christ leads necessarily to participation in his redemptive mission.

A second aspect of fundamental importance is knowing that the missionary is a guest, a stranger who makes his or her dwelling in another's home. This requires the capacity to constantly give and receive. One moves as a pilgrim and lives permanently as a stranger, bearing witness to impermanence and to the continual search for an abiding dwelling place. The missionary is invited to carry only one tunic, that is, to be clothed in Christ. He or she is someone who seeks a treasure hidden among peoples and cultures, who at the same time bears the treasure of God's compassion, in a process of mutual help and of seeking the Absolute.

Being a guest means living a situation of dependence; one's home is that of another, it is a sacred home, holy ground on which it is necessary to "remove one's sandals" in order to enter into a new culture. And in this situation, new relationships are established and spaces made available are occupied.

Mission moves us, disturbs us, takes away our structures and pushes us to go beyond where we are and who we are. It allows us to overcome the habit which leads us to close ourselves within our own identity and prevents us from recognising the gift of otherness. Faith in the Trinity and living mission as a fundamental attitude, manifests the joy of knowing ourselves to be in communion with God and with others, allowing us to celebrate the feast of love with others, especially with the poor and the excluded (cf. Paleari, Giorgio, *Espiritualidade e Missão* (Spirituality and Mission), pp. 61-62. Paulinas, 2005).

The first attitude which accompanies the missionary is silence and listening in the face of mystery, because that land is sacred. It is the land of the revelation of God which at the same time gives rise to both anxiety and joy over what is new. One seeks to know the people, their customs, their histories and their difficulties. Mission is the place of revelation of one's identity.

Dialogue and contact with people deepens the possibility of plumbing the most intimate depths of one's being, of uncovering the roots, of living a profound experience of God. The missionary is always a disciple in search of the treasure and of the face of God.

The missionary is one who is always learning with the Other and with others and, at the same time, the teacher who shares the gift received from God. Teaching and learning at the same time. Advising and receiving advice. Sharing what he or she knows and sharing the other's knowledge. Recognising that every person is worthy of his or her commitment (cf. EG 274).

Learning from each other consists in gathering the gifts which the Spirit has given through them. Dialogue implies giving and receiving, speaking and listening, teaching and learning. It is the word in the gestation phase, the word which becomes flesh in the dwelling of the life of every person. Sharing what overflows from the heart, of the experience of God. Discovering the seed of the Word: "to embrace the mysterious wisdom which God wishes to share with us through them" (EG. 198).

Dialogue with culture implies hearing the cry, paying attention to the fragilities, recognising the suffering Christ and caring for the dignity of the person. It is taking upon oneself human sufferings, anxieties and limitations. It is being in solidarity with the poor and excluded and at the same time committing ourselves to their cause, becoming a prophetic voice when necessary.

The missionary is one who is profoundly committed against injustice and contributes to the development of projects for redeeming human lives. Who lives out the ideal of the Kingdom in closeness and solidarity, with a personal, silent

compassion, in hope that the world will be transformed and become more fraternal, always pointing towards a kingdom of justice and fraternity for all.

Like Pallotti we can say that: *"We are all called to observe the precept of charity since all are, according to the reality of creation, true images of love in essence. This is why God has ordained that all be concerned for their neighbour, just as God himself is (cf. OCCC IV, 132, 310, 451).*

Before being an activity, dialogue is an encounter and a Christian imperative. It is profoundly rooted in the Trinitarian mystery, in a God who is love and communion. As St. Augustine said: His mission has its origin in love, is sustained by love and communicates love, thereby creating communion.

Love of God becomes love of neighbour. "Caritas Christi urget nos" – is the soul of our apostolate. Love must be lived in such a way that it fulfils the mandate of Christ when he invites us to love as He has loved (cf. OCCC I, 8).

In addition to a dialogue with him- or herself, with God and with the culture encountered as a stranger and pilgrim, the missionary comes into contact with peoples of other confessions; this requires a clear religious identity, and a firm conviction that God desires the salvation of all (cf. I Tm 2:4); that His grace goes beyond the visible limits of the Church; and that Jesus Christ is the only Saviour of all humanity, the Church being the place in which are found the fulness of the means of salvation. Dialogue is always associated with the proclamation; both are connected by the desire to clearly know who we are encountering.

The missionary is a person of compassion, of solidarity, capable of seeing what is different not as a threat but with respect. Salvation is always a great gift of God, offered to all, according to the Lord's own criteria and methods. Therefore, openness to other religions and the respect which ought to accompany our drawing closer, requires a constant openness to the action of the Holy Spirit (cf. Rm 8:29).

In religious experience, dialogue is achieved when people of different confessions communicate their own path towards God; when peace is sought in a common effort to build unity and overcome conflicts; when there are theological exchanges, in which the adherents of the various religions reflect and compare the data of their own faiths. The experience of listening to and communicating with the other can be said to transform the missionary, because from this is born the deep desire to search for unity in God and to respect diversity profoundly.

Interreligious dialogue is sustained and enlivened through a spirituality based on a living faith in a creator God who is Father of all humanity; in a convinced and open hope that does not look for immediate results and in an effective and dialoguing love as a free gift of God.

The missionary both lives on and goes beyond frontiers, with a spirituality rooted in universality which finds its space in an openness beyond frontiers. The principal