

## PL on a Wholistic Approach to the Mission

Dear Fathers, Brothers and Sisters,

### Thy Kingdom Come!

We are called missionaries because we are entrusted with a mission and we have to be identified by our mission. By our life and ministry 'we continue the mission of Christ' and 'we continue the mission of the Church'. They are one and the same. The evangelist Luke succinctly and categorically presents it in chapter 4:18-19: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour". In simple words, it is proclamation of the Good News for the salvation of the people. It is the establishment of the Kingdom values - Love, Truth, Justice and Peace - among people. This shall be understood and implemented wholistically, from different perspectives.

The first and foremost duty of a missionary is accepting and taking forward the great command of Christ: "Love one another as I have loved you" (Jn. 13:34). Witnessing Christ in our daily life - becoming *alter Christus*. "No greater love than laying down one's life for the other (Jn. 15:13). Christ's love is - love of laying down one's life for the other, washing the feet of others (Jn. 13:5), walking an extra mile with others (Mt. 5:41), handing over tunic to one who asks for ... (Mt. 5:40), showing left cheek, when slapped on the right (Mt. 5:39) etc. Jesus taught us in nutshell that his disciples will be known by their love (Jn. 13:35). And that matters great in Christian witnessing.

The witness in life should lead a genuine Christian to mission of proclamation. Jesus greatly desired that his disciples/missionaries become evangelizers when he said: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age" (Mt. 28:19-20). Evangelization/proclamation of good news is the primary **task** of every missionary. He or she is called, appointed, and sent to accomplish this primary task (cf. Mk. 3:13-15). The papal encyclical *Evangelii Nunciandi* of Pope Paul VI categorically states: "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. Evangelizing 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" (# 14). Identity of a missionary is intertwined with his/her task of proclamation by word and deed.

The proclamation is embellished by our human relations and genuine rapport with the people, particularly those whom we serve on daily basis. Jesus' pedagogy of mission was: "He went around in villages and towns, proclaiming the good news and healing the sick and feeding the hungry" (Mt. 4:23). In our context, it is of paramount importance as most of our people are from villages and majority of our parishes/missions are located in villages. It is said: 'home

going priests, forms church coming people'. The people are attracted to faith in Christ and to the Church by our dealings and visits to them. The missionaries have to become the rays of God's presence amidst our people. A sense of amazement always encircled the listeners when Jesus spoke to them and when he was in their midst. A ray of divine presence was felt by the people around Jesus. His words contained wisdom and his actions communicated supernatural charisma; so they were amazed. See their comments: "They were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes" (Mk. 1:22).

What is required for hungry stomach is not necessarily the preaching but something to eat. Social up-liftment is part and parcel of Christian mission today. We live in a world where almost 50% of **the** people toil to earn for one square meal a day. In a world of technology and cybernetics, where the leaders are after grabbing wealth, supporting corporate world, advancing in land snatching of another country and warmongering, our mission is all the more important and aggravated. Our machinery to help the peoples' up-liftment to human dignity and destiny is of paramount importance and a priority in mission. Needless to say it is worth reflecting in the context of Chanda. We need yet to travel miles ahead. I gratefully acknowledge the LSSS, the diocesan social work wing and other Societies of different Congregations who are doing marvellous services in this regard. During 2018 Kerala Flood and Covid-19 pandemic we have done a marvellous task to alleviate the sufferings of the people. I do acknowledge also the regular social up-liftment programmes such as medical helps, tuberculosis and leprosy eradication drive, water shedding programmes for farmers etc. are but only a few examples to quote. Thanks to everyone involved in these activities.

One of the characteristic traits of Jesus' ministry on earth was his 'option for the poor' - a special concern for the sick, the weak, the marginalized, the ostracized and the abandoned. None from that category went empty handed from Jesus. He consoled them and comforted them. He literally lived: "Blessed are the poor, for theirs is the kingdom of God, Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted ... (Mt. 5:3-4). Everyone who came to Jesus with agony, anxiety, abandonment, etc. went home healed, happy and hopeful. A missionary has to follow the suit.

Mission is not restricted to just helping the needy but also empowering them to stand on one's own feet and to assist others in their needs. Drawing Church leaders from our community (lay and religious) is part of our mission. Vocation promotion to priesthood and religious life as well as raising lay leadership is also enshrined in our mission. When the present missionaries go behind the screen, it is the new generation of leaders who have to take the lead ahead. In other words it is also formation of new generation of the community of faithful. The mission has to be continued, for Christ has promised us that he shall be with us till the end of the age (Mt. 28:20).

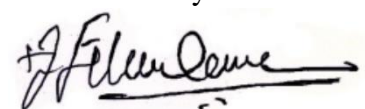
Self enhancement of missionary commitment plays an important role in making mission effective and fruitful. Every missionary should take adequate interest in ongoing formation. As everyone knows formation is never-ending. Every knowledge and every instance in life is part of formation. A room for improvement is a wide horizon open to all and to everyone. Avail every opportunity to make our commitment to Christ and the Church better, at each

moment of our life. Reading, reflection, retreats etc. assists us in ameliorating our missionary spirit, mission endeavours and human relations.

As missionaries we are also custodians of Church properties. By our appointment to a parish/institution we are primarily given charge of the 'care of souls' (CCEO, 281) but also that we have duty to take care of Church properties (CCEO, 1007). It includes preserving the buildings in good shape, doing renovations and repairs as required, proper use of station/institution vehicles, optimum use of our land (preferably natural-farming) etc. It is a grave responsibility as it is common property and we are given a temporary stewardship (CCEO, 1008/2). In the name of the Church and the people, we are appointed also as stewards to manage the properties - movable and immovable - attached to the Church/institution. We have a parable in the gospel wherein Jesus speaks about our responsibility to look after the property entrusted to the care of stewards (cf. Mt. 25:14-30). In one of the recent pastoral letters of major archbishop, he brings home to our attention the importance of farming our lands: "All the lands in the possession of individuals, institutions and parishes should be made available for farming. Not even a square inch of land should be left uncultivable. The people of God including the clergy should set apart some time daily for agricultural activities". It is our experience in our diocese that some lands in the **missions** are not cultivated - disinterestedness or ignorance may be the reason? **Lack of the care of the land ended in losing** our lands in some stations. In many stations people have encroached into our lands illegally and we have become silent spectators for fear or favour or sheer indifference? One reason for encroachment is our lack of care of the land and another is leaving it uncultivated for many years. This attitude is not at all justifiable and it is certainly dereliction of duty. We have divine bound duty to preserve and protect the properties of the Church/diocese and use it to the optimum for the good of the Church and **for** the people of God.

So **my** dear **co**-missionaries, the above mentioned nine points are but part of our missionary endeavours. In brief **they are**: i). Witness through life, the gospel values, ii). Proclamation of good news, iii). Family visits and village visits, iv). Social up-liftment, v). Concern for the sick, marginalized and the abandoned vi). Forming Church leaders for our community (lay and religious), vii). Building up new generation of the faithful, viii). Self enhancement of missionary commitment (ongoing formation), ix). Protecting and maintaining Church properties and its optimum use. In a comprehensive and wholistic approach to **the** mission, these become integral part of it, one leading to another or supporting one another **and** making it a whole. We cannot pretend ignorance and indifference! I invite everyone to be sincere, serious and sensible to respond to each situation positively and creatively. The holy mother Church has trained us to be missionaries expecting our full and complete co-operation. We resolve to do it hoping in the Lord and relying on God's providence. May God bless you all.

Yours devotedly in Christ



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