

Editorial

Six Decades of *Missio Dei* - A Continuing Evolution



Dear Members and Readers,

Sixty years after Vatican II's *Ad Gentes*, the understanding of "mission" has evolved significantly.

Previously viewed as the Church's work to spread the Gospel, it is

now seen as *Missio Dei* (God's mission), with the Church participating in God's ongoing work of creation, salvation, and reconciliation.

This shift broadened mission to include justice, peace, and care for creation, recognizing God's presence in all cultures. Key implications include: God's initiative, requiring the Church's humility; mission's Trinitarian roots in God's love; encouragement of inter-cultural dialogue; and the affirmation of all Church members' role in mission.

Despite challenges and resistance to moving from a Church-centric view, ongoing theological discussions seek to balance God's universal salvific will with Gospel proclamation.

Fr. Alcaide's article, "*Missio Dei* as drawing hope through education and mercy," examines *Missio Dei*'s difficult situation in the ongoing war in Sudan which has had a negative impact on education and healthcare. It shows how the Comboni College of Science and Technology (CCST), guided by the understanding that mission is God's work, has adapted to the crisis. Since their campus was destroyed, CCST moved to online learning, relocated, prioritized healthcare by opening a hospice for palliative care, and worked with people of different faiths to provide care. Their focus before the war on a well-balanced mission that included education

and talking with people of other religions, allowed them to respond effectively to the crisis. The article argues that CCST's work implements *Missio Dei* by focusing on God's initiative, serving those most in need, and bringing about positive change. Their actions have earned them greater respect in the community and offered hope during the conflict.

In his article, "*Missio Dei* as Dialogue: Inspired by Religions," Fr. Joe Antonydoss argues that *Missio Dei* naturally involves dialogue, because God himself, as Trinity, is self-revealing and sends people out. Therefore, mission requires listening and dialogue to understand God's presence in different cultures and religions, as we join in that work with respect. The Vatican II documents like *Nostra Aetate* and *Ad Gentes* stress this openness. God communicates through love in Christ and the Spirit, making dialogue a normal part of mission, which involves both listening to others while sharing our own faith. Biblical agreements and Jesus' interaction support this idea. God's universal plan invites all of humanity to dialogue and togetherness, impelled by love to build peace and justice. Thus, *Missio Dei* requires respectful, open dialogue with other religions, and commitment to peace and justice.

Bro. Stockman's article, "Care for The Sick as A *Missio Dei*," reflects on caring for the sick as an expression of *Missio Dei*, seeing it as following the example of Jesus Christ, the ultimate healer. He emphasizes healing the whole person's needs – physical, emotional, and spiritual – just as Jesus did. While acknowledging that human care has its limits, the article highlights the importance of accompanying the sick, showing mercy, and balancing action with prayer, following Jesus' model. Reaching out to those who are marginalized and addressing the influence of evil are also important. Drawing on the writings

of St. Augustine, Jesus is presented as both the doctor and the medicine. The article calls for humility, realistic expectations in caregiving, and open communication. Ultimately, caring for the sick with compassion and prayer is a real way of showing *Missio Dei*, reflecting God's love and the healing presence of Christ.

Fr. Lazar's article, "150 YEARS – The Growth of SVD Mission and the Future," reflects on the 150-year development of the Society of the Divine Word's (SVD) mission within the framework of *Missio Dei*. It emphasizes that the SVD's journey is based on God's grace, with the Society acting as a tool in His mission. Key aspects include sharing the Gospel, adapting to local cultures, and promoting the full development of people. The SVD is focusing increasingly on dialogue and understanding different cultures to find God's presence within them. The article calls for speaking out against injustice, showing deep compassion like Jesus, and finding creative ways to follow Jesus in response to today's global challenges. The SVD's history shows a continuous effort to participate in *Missio Dei* through its capacity to adapt, to dialogue, offer advocacy, and compassion, encouraging new ideas and cultural transformation as the way forward.

The Statement from the recent SVD International Conference on *Missio Dei* in Rome, entitled "*Missio Dei* in Today's World," reaffirmed that God is actively present and that the Church's role is to reflect God's love and mercy. It highlighted a mission that involves many aspects: healing the wounds of the vulnerable and of creation, humbly engaging with the modern world by embracing diversity and acknowledging past wrongdoing, learning from cultures through respectful dialogue, and being inspired by the "rays of light" in other religions through open interaction. This means a renewed commitment to mission, to ongoing education, standing in solidarity with others and offering healing. In addition to deeply understanding and living the Gospel in intercultural communities, prioritizing adaptation to cultures, and embracing cooperation. The Conference concluded with a commitment to discovering and following God's mission today through encounter, listening, thoughtful reflection, and speaking out

prophetically, striving to be faithful, creative followers of Jesus in mission.

Joseph Nhat's article, "Application of Ecological Theological Reflection Based on the Biblical Passage in Colossians 1:15-20," argues that caring for the environment is central to *Missio Dei*, drawing from the passage in Colossians 1:15-20 about Christ's eminent role in creation. Christ as creator and the one who holds all things together includes all of creation, making the restoration of the environment a key part of mission. The idea of "deep incarnation" highlights how connected we are to all life, demanding a comprehensive approach. Christ's victory over evil includes overcoming the destruction of the environment. The article calls for an "ecological conversion" rooted in Christ, a way of understanding reconciliation that includes nature, and education about the environment to train "environmental peacemakers." It advocates for an "ecological spirituality of accompaniment" with a vision of a renewed creation in the future. Mission must engage with ecological systems, creating "ecological spaces of encounter" for spiritual reconnection and working together on environmental issues, emphasizing that caring for ecology is a core part of the Church's mission.

The 60 years since Vatican II's *Ad Gentes* have seen a profound shift to *Missio Dei*, a God-centered view that has broadened mission, emphasized divine initiative and the Trinity, encouraged intercultural dialogue, and affirmed the role of all Church members. Despite challenges, this has enriched the Church's approach, fostering a more complete, conversational, and globally aware mission. The current edition highlights various critical situations and the need for openness to the Spirit in implementing God's mission, featuring an article on "Honoring Pope Francis, Welcoming Pope Leo XIV" by Fr. James H. Kroeger, M.M., to offer valuable insights.

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