

## Mission: Our Continuing Journey

Upon receiving the attractive volume, *New Trends in Mission: The Emerging Future* (2022), several impressions immediately crossed my mind. I saw it as an “encyclopedia,” a “compendium,” a “sourcebook,” a “thesaurus” of current thought on the vast topic of missionary evangelization. In addition, I immediately recalled the 1991 volume *Trends in Mission: Toward the Third Millennium*, also jointly published by SEDOS and Orbis Books. Both the 1991 and 2022 volumes were jointly edited by the then Director of SEDOS (W. Jenkinson and P. Baekelmans) along with a sister companion (H. O’Sullivan and M-H. Robert).

These few foregoing facts already attest to the high quality and vast panorama of the material available in this current volume. Readers are alerted that this book review unfolds in two sections. First, a contemporary overview of mission theology is offered. Secondly, specific aspects about the book are presented, noting significant details about the authors and topics. All-in-all, readers will discover a vast smorgasbord of mission theology and praxis, containing numerous delicacies!

### Insights from Pope Paul VI.

Another recollection spontaneously sprang to mind: the masterful 1975 apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (EN) by Saint Pope Paul VI (1963-1978), canonized on October 14, 2018. He will always be remembered as a modern missionary pope, taking the name “Paul,” and making missionary journeys to all continents. His “Vatican II centered” understanding of missionary evangelization reflects a comprehensive and inclusive view, respecting the fullness and complexity of contemporary mission.

Paul VI strongly insists upon integrating and balancing all facets of evangelization. “Any partial and fragmentary definition which attempts to render the reality of evangelization in all its richness, complexity and dynamism does so only at the risk of impoverishing it and even distorting it” (EN 17). “Evangelization, as we have said, is a

complex process made up of varied elements; they are complementary and mutually enriching” (EN 24). The missionary Church needs “to relate these elements rather than to place them in opposition one to the other, in order to reach a full understanding of the Church’s evangelizing activity” (EN 24).

In the six decades of the Vatican II era (1962-2022), a comprehensive vision of missionary evangelization has become widely accepted in the Church; it is diversely termed “integral” / “holistic” and coupled with “evangelization” / “liberation” / “salvation.” We wholeheartedly agree with the broad and inclusive manner in which Paul VI speaks: “evangelizing means bringing the Good News into all the strata of humanity” (EN 18)! Friends, these perspectives prepare us for the rich treasures found in *New Trends in Mission*.

### Pope Francis’ Contribution.

Another interesting fact is that *Evangelii Nuntiandi* is the most quoted document in Pope Francis’ 2013 apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (*The Joy of the Gospel*); it is quoted on thirteen different occasions. One finds that Pope Francis, beginning early in his pontificate (now in its tenth year: 2013-2023), regularly quotes and praises EN. In 2013 Francis said that EN includes words that “are as timely as if they had been written yesterday” (May 17); he called EN “a very full text that has lost nothing of its timeliness” (June 13). As Francis described evangelization, he asserted that EN was “that basic point of reference which remains relevant” (July 27). The pope went even so far (June 22) as to describe EN as “to my mind the greatest pastoral document that has ever been written to this day.” Undoubtedly, EN is the fertile soil from which Francis drew much as he authored his *Evangelii Gaudium*.

Furthermore, on June 16, 2014 when he opened the pastoral convention for the Diocese of Rome, Pope Francis, in reference to EN, stated: “Still to this day it is the most important post-

Conciliar pastoral document, which hasn't been surpassed. We should always go back to it."

The apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* is a great source of inspiration. Theologians have noted that it was the work of Saint Paul VI, flowing from his own hand. After the 1974 Synod on evangelization, the delegate-bishops could not decide whether they should do an exhortation or not. Finally, the *relator* (it was Saint John Paul II) took all the papers and just handed them to the Pope, as if to say: "You handle this, brother!" Paul VI read them all and, with that patience of his, began to write. Indeed, EN is truly a missionary testament of the great Paul VI! It—coupled with Pope Francis' *Evangelii Gaudium*—is a wealth of resources for all dimensions of Church life.

### **Describing Missionary Evangelization.**

Evangelization, for many Catholics, is a generally unfamiliar and relatively new term; only recently has it been gaining wider currency. The Second Vatican Council as well as recent popes have placed evangelization at the center of the Church's identity and mission. One key goal of this presentation is to use the rich content of *New Trends in Mission* to focus on the understanding of evangelization in all of its rich, complex, multi-faceted, and interrelated dimensions. In a word, this extended book review explores evangelization viewed holistically and integrally.

The word "evangelization" does not occur in the New Testament; however, *euaggelion* meaning "gospel" or "good news" occurs 72 times, 54 of which are in the Pauline corpus. It has a wide range of meanings: the whole Christian message (Mk 1:1); the good news of Jesus (2 Cor 4:4); it is for all (Mk 13:10; 16:15); it is a revelation of God (Gal 1:11-12) which is to be believed (Mk 1:15) and proclaimed (1 Cor 9:14, 16, 18). One must risk all for the gospel (Mk 8:35; Rom 1:16), serve it (Rom 1:1; 15:16), defend it (Phil 1:7, 16). *Euaggelion* is the good news of truth (Gal 2:5, 14), of hope (Col 1:23), of peace (Eph 6:15), of immortality (2 Tim 1:10), of the risen Christ (1 Cor 15:1ff; 2 Tim 2:8), and of salvation (Eph 1:13).

Vatican II speaks of evangelization in varied contexts: it is especially the bishops' task to promote evangelization by the faithful (CD 6); it is associated with the mission of the laity (AA 2,

6, 20, 26; LG 35); priests are to learn the methods of evangelization (PO 19); the Eucharist is the source and summit of all evangelization (PO 5). The Decree on Mission (AG) is replete with references: "the specific purpose of missionary activity is evangelization and the planting of the Church" (6); "the Church has the obligation and the sacred right to evangelize" (7); catechists have an important task to evangelize (17), as do the laity (21); the call to evangelize arises from a charism of the Spirit (23); various roles are fulfilled by missionary institutes (27), *Propaganda Fidei* (29), the people of God (35, 36), bishops and priests (38), religious institutes (40), and young Churches (LG 17).

Following upon the solid foundations in Sacred Scripture and in the documents of Vatican II, the pivotal contributions of Popes Paul VI (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*) and Francis (*Evangelii Gaudium*) have located evangelization on "center-stage" in describing the Church's contemporary mission. With this rich background, we now move to explore the broad panorama of resources found in *New Trends in Mission: The Emerging Future*.

### **Overview and Organization.**

*New Trends in Mission* is encyclopedic; the total number of printed pages exceeds 400. The material is presented in three major sections:

I. "Evangelization and Mission"; II. "Ways of Doing Mission"; and, III. "New Trends in Mission." Each section opens with an overview introduction to the content of the section and the specific articles; these brief, informative pieces are presented by Michael McCabe, SMA (I), Susan K. Wood, SCL (II), and Bryan Lobo, SJ (III). In broad terms, one may assert that each section addresses a specific dimension of contemporary mission: I. The foundations and the "why" of mission; II. The "ways-when-where" of mission engagement; and, III. The "practical-contextual" implementation of missionary evangelization.

In addition to the three major sections of this volume already noted, one finds additional treasures. Pope Francis has provided an "Opening Message" to the participants of the October 2021 SEDOS symposium. An "Inaugural Address" by Luis Antonio Cardinal Tagle of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples contains important questions and observations; Tagle noted the significance of opening the symposium on October 11, the opening day of Vatican II in

1962 as well as the feast day of Saint Pope John XXIII.

One also finds a “Preface” to the volume by Tesfaye T. Gebresilasie, MCCJ, and Mary T. Barron, OLA. Peter Baekelmans, CICM, in his “Introduction,” provides a splendid road-map to the rich materials contained in this “mission encyclopedia.” Two additional contributions are included in the final pages of the book: the “Conclusion” authored by Marie-Hélène Robert, OLA and the “Appendix,” which is a summary of the 2021 SEDOS Mission Symposium, composed by the redaction committee for the event. This review now moves to a presentation of the contents of the three thematic sections of *New Trends in Mission: The Emerging Future*.

### **PART ONE: Evangelization and Mission.**

This 82-page section contains six items by various authors. **Michael McCabe, SMA**, provides an introduction to this part of the book. He contextualizes the Church’s missionary initiatives within the mission theology emerging from Vatican II which asserts that “the pilgrim Church is essentially missionary.” **Rekha M. Chennattu, RA**, explores the “why” of mission by focusing on the biblical trends in mission for our changing times. She takes us through a biblical journey of God’s mission, Israel’s role, the Prophets, Jesus, Paul, and the Church’s mission today viewed through biblical insights and challenges.

**Joseph S. Palakeel, MST**, focuses on the “what” of mission, seeking to refine our comprehension of mission. He admits that our understanding of mission is constantly being renewed and refined; his rich insights are well documented—in over 100 footnotes! **Stephen B. Bevans, SVD**, entitles his presentation: “Theological Evolution in Mission: A Theology of Mission.” Bevans centers his contribution within four perspectives; mission is validly viewed as “the Completion of Creation,” as “a Single but Complex Activity,” as “Discipleship,” and as “Prophetic Dialogue.”

**Paul Béré, SJ**, gifts us with “Pope Francis and Mission: A Call to Hear the Crying Existential Peripheries.” He notes that “Pope Francis’ call to become a missionary disciple community looks backward and forward” and adequately highlights this assertion throughout his presentation. The final piece in this first section is by **Aloysius**

**Pieris, SJ**, entitled “The Role of Missionary Religious Institutes: A Strange Species of Christians?” Pieris asserts that charismatic leadership in mission needs the following characteristics: “itinerant, trans-local, frontier, charismatic, pioneering, and witnessing to the Marian character of the Church.”

Already in this “Part One” of *New Trends in Mission*, one senses the vast panorama of mission experience contained in this volume. For example, the pieces found here are authored by contributors from Ireland, India, USA, Burkina Faso, and Sri Lanka. These women and men, in turn, have been missioned in numerous countries on various continents. This same rich panorama continues in all subsequent sections of *New Trends*. Hopefully, these brief bits of data will further attract readers to appreciate the many varied treasures contained between the covers of this book!

### **PART TWO: Ways of Doing Mission.**

This second section is the shortest of the three-fold division of *New Trends* (66 pages). In her introduction, **Susan K. Wood, SCL**, presents “the where, who, what, and how of mission,” giving a thumbnail sketch of these four foundational themes. **Alfred Maravilla, SDB**, discusses “The ‘When’ of Mission: Rediscovering ‘Initial Proclamation’ in Evangelization.” He notes that it was Pope Paul VI who first used the term “initial proclamation” in a pontifical document (EN 51-53). This multi-faceted presentation promotes “the rediscovery of the relevance of initial proclamation.”

The authors, **Ida Colombo, CMS**, **Hélène I. Kamkô, CMS**, and **Maria T. Ratti, CMS**, together present “The ‘Who’ of Mission: We are Mission.” These three Comboni Missionary Sisters describe their joys, hopes, experiences, challenges, dreams, as well as the beauty of witnessing together “with a great deal of synodal creativity.” **Anthony Arinwale, OP**, gifts us with “The ‘Where’ of Mission: Fifty Years of *Ad Gentes* in Africa.” He concretizes his insights by presenting four proposals for a more fruitful mission. **Pudota R. John, SJ**, describes “The ‘How’ of Mission: Going ‘Outside the Gates’ for the Kingdom’s Sake.” His presentation draws on his own personal experience as well as insights from the FABC (Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences).

### **PART THREE: New Trends in Mission.**

This third section is the largest one, occupying over 200 pages, fully one-half of the entire volume. Here one finds twenty thematic or topical presentations on diverse concrete initiatives in contemporary missionary evangelization. In his introduction, **Bryan Lobo, SJ**, asserts that “the phrase *new trends in mission* is another way of verbalizing how mission is moving and life-giving.” He also acknowledges that “new trends in mission always begin with questions that are not easy to answer.”

In “Secularization: Mission in a Secular Age,” **Daniel P. Huang, SJ**, describes and analyzes the contemporary phenomenon of secularization; he challenges Christians committed to mission to address this phenomenon with “much more analysis, discernment, and creative thinking.” **Carmen E. Bando, SSPS**, draws upon her own experience of movement as well as her religious formation to speak on “Mission with Migrants: The Roots of ‘People on the Move.’” She notes how both faith and daily life share the “two intrinsic elements of *roots* and *movement*.”

Two Franciscan Sisters of the Poor, **Marvi Delrivo, SFP**, and **Licia Mazzia, SFP**, seek to address mission with those on the margins of society in their presentation “Mission among the Poor: ‘You Always Have the Poor with You’ (Mk 14:7).” They emphasize that the preferential option for the poor has been “passionately relaunched by Pope Francis from the very first days of his pontificate.” **Anne B. Faye, CIC**, presents “Reconciliation: The New Face of Evangelization in Africa.” She sees that working for reconciliation “is an act of hope” through which “Christians look to the future” that opens “with and in God for all human beings.”

**Mary T. Barron, OLA**, addresses the topic of “Mission and Women: ‘Her-Story’ of Mission,” noting that the topic can only be considered within the “wider church context” and that it “conjures up different scenarios, possibilities, contexts and situations.” **James H. Kroeger, MM**, explores the broad area of “Peacebuilding: Peace Promotion as Integral to Evangelization.” The presentation is made in five interrelated sections: Church Teaching, Scriptural Insights, Saints of Peace, Four Foundational Principles, and various Strategies and Programs.

“Interreligious Dialogue: Interreligious Dialogue in the Context of Mission” by **Maria De Giorgi, MMX**, traces the evolution of dialogue in the Church’s awareness and practice. She believes that in the vision and practice of dialogue the Church is still only “at the beginning of a journey.” **John Mallare, CICM**, in “Islam: A Mission of Mercy” sets his focus on “the theme of mercy in relation to doing mission, particularly in an Islamic context.” He believes that in dialogue, “we need to start from the things that are similar and familiar to both parties,” and that “both Christianity and Islam present to us the image of a merciful God.”

**Gerard Hall, SM**, explores the subject of “Eastern Religions: Trusting Christianity’s ‘Incarnational’ Thrust.” He uses the term “Eastern Religions” to refer to the “non-Abrahamic religions of East Asia.” The author admits that “deep dialogue with the Eastern traditions ... is challenging from a multitude of viewpoints.” The topic of “Indigenous Religions: Religious Congregations and Indigenous Australians” is presented by **Robyn Reynolds, OLSH**. She affirms that engagement with Aboriginal Christians today means “being respectfully present in solidarity” with “the nation’s First Peoples, namely, the Indigenous Australians.”

In his presentation “African Traditional Religion: Working Together to Promote the Culture of Life,” **Bede Ukwuije, CSSp**, observes that these are the traditions “in which most Africans were born and bred.” They still “determine the existential choices of many Africans” and thus dialogue with them is “more relevant than ever.” **Marie-Hélène Robert, OLA**, uses her contribution “Ecumenism: Mission and the Search for Unity” to explore and promote “evangelization and common witness together.” Boldly, she asserts that “an evangelization that rejects common witness produces scandal and does not bear lasting fruit.”

“Interculturality: Culture and the Experience of God” by **Tim Norton, SVD**, employs a creative methodology to communicate his insights about spirituality and interculturality. He narrates original insights by providing a “dialogue” with six individuals, followed by his personal reflection on the exchanges. Listening to the



“spiritual experiences of others” is in itself “*interculturality at work.*” **Monique Tarabeh, RGS**, addresses the topic of “Media and Mission: Staying Connected,” drawing on her years of experience as congregational communications coordinator. Her piece affirms the vision of Pope Francis that communication has “the power to build bridges, to enable encounter and inclusion, and thus to enrich society.”

**Agnes Lanfermann, MMS**, enlightens us with her reflections on “Medical Mission: Mission as Healing.” She describes “the evolution in medical mission that took place in many congregations,” using her own congregation as a concrete example, and providing insights from Medical Mission Sisters and Associates in East Asia, Europe, Latin America, and North America. Exploring “Education: The Transforming Role of Education,” **Maria A. Pereira, FMM**, believes that the Church “must make education a mission to empower, enable, and elevate the masses in order to educate human beings to be capable of upholding life and the rights of all.”

In his presentation “Missionary Parishes: Growing as a Missionary Parish,” **Lazar T. Stanislaus, SVD**, reaffirms that “parish ministry is one of the powerful means of building and engaging a Christian community.” Yet, it is imperative that parishes must be transformed into *missionary parishes*; Lazar enumerates several creative approaches to achieve this rejuvenation. **Oliver Aquilina, SDC**, enlightens us through his presentation, “Laity in Mission: The Laity: More than a Lending Hand.” This piece traces the steady growth of the laity’s involvement in mission in the Vatican II era, noting that they are definitely included when the Church affirms that “beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news.”

Together **Teresa Gómez** and **Nestor Anaya, FSC**, address the topic of “Youth in Mission: Believing in Young People.” Drawing on their lived experience in various countries and on World Youth Day events, they affirm that today “the church recognizes the importance of the *encounter and participation of young people*” for promoting “a missionary spirit in faith and joy.” “Integrity of Creation: Our Work Is Loving the World” is the title of the presentation by **Ilia Delio, OSF**. This Franciscan sister notes that “our

planet has been in peril for the last several decades” due various environmental problems. Drawing on several authors (e.g. Pope Francis and T. de Chardin), Delio asserts that “through the energies of love we participate with nature in shaping the earth’s future.”

**Conclusion.** Our lengthy journey through *New Trends in Mission: The Emerging Future* has been completed; it covered 38 presentations by over 40 contributors. Yes, it has been an extended journey, but also a fulfilling and renewing pilgrimage. As illustrated by these materials, it is an understatement to assert that missionary evangelization is “a complex process made up of varied elements” that are “complementary and mutually enriching” (EN 24). This “mission encyclopedia” deserves to be on the shelves of every theological library, seminary, and convent, as well as in the bibliography of all courses of ecclesiology and mission. Friends, consider obtaining an individual copy for your personal use and enrichment—truly a wise investment! We extend our sincere gratitude to everyone who had a hand in bringing this project to fruition! In the words addressed to Saint Augustine, I say: “*Tolle, lege.*” Take and read! You will be richly rewarded; your missionary spirit will be strengthened. Indeed, “*Tolle, lege*”!

