

Editorial



Dear Members and Readers,

The theme of the January-February issue of the SEDOS Bulletin is, “Mission in the Peripheries.”

The theme suggests that mission is not simply for those on

the peripheries but is being and working together with them on a mission, a mission to bring/spread the “Joy of the Gospel.”

It is not just about reaching the peripheries in the sense of meeting the flock that is lost and trying to bring it back by proclaiming the Good News of hope, happiness and peace. It means going further by participating in and experiencing the difficulties people go through and achieving the mission together. The mission is not from the outside but of being together. The fulfilment is in God’s hands.

The peripheries include the poor, the sinners, the exploited, the homeless, the hopeless and many others. We missionaries are called to be like Jesus “who even ate with sinners and tax collectors.”

Pope Francis reminds us that the Church is commissioned to “go forth”, but the fact is that it “stands still.” A good shepherd should know the smell of the sheep. He takes stock of his flock by observing the weakest in its midst.

“We know that God works through the weakest”. And this is the mystery that Pope Francis is showing us. Like St. Francis he knows that God walks on the periphery.

In his Address to the Convocation of Catholic Leaders, which coincided with the Feast-day of St. Junípero Serra — the great Franciscan, the spiritual Father of America’s first evangelization, Most Reverend José H. Gomez, Archbishop of Los Angeles, said, “St. Junípero was an immigrant and a missionary, a Spaniard

who came to this land from Spain by way of Mexico. His witness reminds us — and we should never forget this — that the mission to America was a continental mission from the beginning. It was a mission to make all the peoples of the Americas, North and South, into one family — into a new world of faith.”

He recalled Pope Francis’ homily at the Canonisation of St. Junípero saying, “He is a model for a Church that adores and worships Jesus Christ — the Church that answers his call to follow him. To leave security and comfort behind and go forth to the ‘peripheries’ of human experience,” (Convocation of Catholic Leaders: The Joy of the Gospel in America, Orlando, Florida, 3 July 2017). The peripheries were the theme of the short speech that the then-Cardinal Bergoglio gave at the meetings before the Conclave in 2013. “The Church is called to come out of herself and to go to the peripheries, not only geographically, but also to the existential peripheries: the mystery of sin, of pain, of injustice, of ignorance and indifference to religion, of intellectual currents, and of all misery.”

The peripheries, which are growing in the world today, are the new mission territory. We are reminded of our mission to the peripheries.

The sadness, the sorrow and all the suffering we see in our society is rooted in the loss of God, a loss of the transcendent sense of life. The answer is Jesus. The answer is conversion. We need to deepen our love of Christ and our commitment to His mission.

The final words that Jesus spoke to his disciples, he continues to speak to us today: “Go forth! Go out into all the world. Follow me and walk with me in the power of my Spirit. Bring all men and women to discover the love that you have found!”

The more we try to live like Jesus, the more we will be drawn to the peripheries, into serving others. The periphery is the place of encounter with Christ, and the place of mission.

René Stockman, FC, in his article, “Martyr or Crusader?” explains the two terms with regard to the faith. According to him the Martyrs, whose witness to Christ was non-violent, laid the foundation of the Church. Therefore, as Christians we retain the mission to proclaim the faith, by living radically and authentically ourselves according to the Gospel before anything else.

The article, “The Poor Embraced by God’s Plan for Justice and Compassion”, by Joseph Xavier, SJ, written in two parts, gives us the theological understanding of the option for the poor. We are called to care for the poor and marginalised in society. He says, “Jesus himself taught that helping the poor is a central aspect of following him. The early Christian communities were known for their practice of sharing their resources and caring for those in need. The Church continues to prioritise this concern even today.” According to him, the poor are not just objects of charity for the wealthy. He tries to re-examine the place of the poor in our contemporary Christian understanding.

The article, the “Involvement of Divine Word Missionaries in the Development of Health Services in Papua New Guinea” by Jerzy Kuzma, SVD, highlights the healing ministry of the Divine Word Missionaries in the peripheries of Papua New Guinea. The author writes, “The purpose of our missionary life is to bring fullness of life and God’s goodness to others, especially by caring for those in need. Since the beginning of the SVD mission in (Papua) New Guinea (PNG), serving the sick has been an integral part of the holistic approach to promote human development.”

In the article, “The Challenge of *Fratelli Tutti* to the Indian Context”, Jacob Kavunkal, SVD, reminds us that working for the mission in the peripheries is the mission of all humanity. Therefore, all must come together as *fratelli tutti*. According to him, “The vision of creating “a single human family” cannot be left to any one religion (FT, n. 8), but requires the cooperation of all, as fellow pilgrims.” Referring to the Indian context, he says, the “Church has to move away from any triumphalism and behaviour to become credible by cooperating with other religions as well as with the poor and marginalized and, thus, to decolonize the contours of its theology.”

The article, “Father Damien De Veuster (1840-1889), A Missionary in and of the Periphery”, by René Stockman, FC, gives us a concrete example of Father Damien’s life, who was a real missionary in peripheries. His missionary life among the peripheries is a witness for all of us. He lived as leper with the lepers enthusing new life into them.

In the last article, “Les Defis Missionnaires.... Dans Le Moments De Capitivité”, Enden, ICM, shares a real testimony of a missionary living in captivity. These days we come across many such incidents in various parts of the world where the missionaries are taken captives for the ransom of money as they are the easy targets. In spite of going through tremendous tortures and cruelty they find their solace in God, who protects and strengthens.

I am sure all these articles will inspire each one of us to become a courageous and daring missionary, who lives among peripheries and brings Good News to them.

Dr. John Paul Herman, SVD

