

Becoming Living Manifestations of God

Introduction

One of the underlying themes of the Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, is revelation. "To speak from the heart means that our hearts must not just be on fire, but also enlightened by the fullness of revelation..." (EG 144) Again Pope Francis says, "Jesus wants evangelizers who proclaim the Good News not only with words but above all by a life transfigured by God's presence" (EG 259).

The Unevangelized or Pre-Evangelized

Beginning with the unevangelized or pre-evangelized, natural revelation is already present in the universe. It is possible to know God with certainty from created things by the light of human reason. (DV 3; Denzinger, 1785) In this post-modern secularized era in which we live, there is an urgency that God's Word be proclaimed so that it may be brought to conscious and reflective awareness. This is the meaning of revelation for the Church and its mission.

Role of Religious in the Church's Mission

How specifically do religious fit into this schema? Vatican II clearly stated:

Religious should carefully consider that through them, to believers and non-believers alike, the Church truly wishes to give an increasingly clearer revelation of Christ. Through them Christ should be shown contemplating on the mountain, announcing God's kingdom to the multitude, healing the sick and the maimed, turning sinners to wholesome fruit, blessing children, doing good to all, and always obeying the will of the Father.... (LG 46)

Challenged to be revealers and mediators of Christ, religious act as a bridge between believers and non-believers sharing the joy of the Gospel with all whom they encounter, if not explicitly in word, certainly in action and life-style.

Baptized into trinitarian life, religious as members of the Church, missionary disciples of Christ, are charged with the task of evangelization. They are called to be dynamically involved in faithfully receiving or mediating the revelatory Word of God both for themselves and for others. As pilgrims on their way to God, they are continually engaged in on-going conversion while offering the Word of Life, the Gospel of Christ to peoples of different cultures.

For it is imperative to evangelize cultures so as to inculturate the Gospel because God's grace becomes flesh in the cultures of those who receive it. God speaks the Divine Word through the human community in communion with all of creation. Through the incarnation of the Son of God, the possibilities of human nature were revealed. The more fully a human being is transformed by God, the more luminous he or she becomes and the more deeply God is incarnated. Thus the Word becomes flesh in the one who receives it.

In this way we advance toward God, as God's kingdom comes among us, making us one and holy in the mystery of the Trinity. This is an exhortation which encourages men and women religious to become missionaries in the joy of the Risen Christ. Accepting the great challenges of our time and struggling against injustices while being continually nourished by the Word of God, liturgy and prayer, religious act as true witnesses to the Presence of God to those around them, to those they live and work with and to those they serve. Becoming living revelations of God in the midst of everyday life, women and men religious mirror the incarnated Word of God to a world hungering for a taste of the divine.

Discussion Questions:

1. When you hear God's Word proclaimed, do you reflect on how it touches your own life calling you to greater transformation into Christ?

2. What might you do to reveal and mediate Christ to your community, the people you work for or with each day?
3. Does the joy of your life impact the way you evangelize those around you?

Margaret Patricia Brady, OSB
pcbrady@shaw.ca