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*A Mission
to Discover
until the
End of Life*



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Follow Us!



“Lord, now you let your servant depart in peace according to your word.” (Luke 2:29)

Living a mission at the end of life

Timothy Scott, csa

For those who pray Compline, the above verse is a familiar one. It begins the *Nunc Dimittis*; aged Simeon’s prayer as he takes the Christ-child in his arms in the Temple. In St. Luke’s account, the elderly are all marked by their fidelity to the Covenant: Elizabeth and Zechariah, Simeon and Anna.

Such fidelity is no simple acknowledgement of a contract concluded long ago; rather, it expresses how God continues to be faithful in the present. Simeon had been promised that before his death, he would see the Anointed One. God who was faithful to him fulfills the promise and rewards Simeon’s covenant faithfulness.

The Elderly Have Something Valuable to Teach Us

Our western culture remains preoccupied with youthfulness. There is a vast industry to stave off the effects of aging and persuade us that our value is linked to appearing younger than in fact we are.

Like many traditional cultures, peoples in Biblical times had a different understanding of aging. At Jesus’ presentation in the Temple, the elderly are reminders of God’s fidelity and honoured for their wisdom and grace. They are engaged in a great mission at the turning point of salvation history.

There are other people in the Gospel who no doubt have reached a certain age, and whom Jesus singles out: the widow of Nain whose son Jesus brings back to life; the woman with a hemorrhage who is healed by her touch of his garment; the poor widow who contributes all that she has to the Temple treasury.

As men of repute, I imagine that Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus were not young men, they who took the body of Jesus for burial. These women and men have an important place in the life and death of Jesus and as such have something valuable to teach us.

Seeing through the Gift of Wisdom

In the *Nunc Dimittis*, Simeon calls Jesus “light for the Gentiles” and “glory for Israel”. For Christians and Jews alike, light is the most basic of divine images as well as God’s first creation in Genesis. In the New Testament, it is perhaps the most apt metaphor for Jesus himself, the “true light” in John’s prologue (1:9).

One of the realities associated with aging is often a loss of vision. Faced with the weakening of our capacity to see, “Christ as light” illuminates our hearts and minds to see beyond the merely physical. I think we need to recover a sense of how the elderly religious see through the gift of wisdom and how their mission includes sharing that gift with those who are younger. Their wisdom is a blessing for the Church and a key impetus for its mission.

Faith Gives Way to Sight

At the end of this journey of faith, our merciful God draws elderly religious into the fullness of His life. Though perhaps marked by suffering, these final weeks are a moment of grace for themselves and for their communities. Strengthened by the prayers of their sisters and brothers and nourished spiritually for that final journey, they can depart in peace.

For the believer, faith gives way to sight. As we prepare for our own departure in peace, we pray that we too may see God, face to face. ■



From Fragility to Circular Vulnerability

Jean-Marc Barreau, PhD

At the end of 2017, I published my fourth book, with the title: *Soins Palliatifs. Accompagner pour vivre!*¹ Although the critics were unanimously favourable, some were nonetheless surprised that its content addresses the question of the end of earthly life not from a theological viewpoint, but rather from one that is exclusively anthropological.²

To be honest, I appreciated the criticism. In my opinion, it underlined the difficulty that our Church encounters with the “concrete ... historical man”³ perspective, as Saint John Paul II was already telling us in his first encyclical, *Redemptor Hominis* (RH, 1979, see no. 13). In this short article, I will only respond to that issue with reference to the following question: “Doesn’t the fragility inherent at the end of life necessitate that any accompaniment process be subject to a requirement in which the starting point is human kind, that is, the ‘concrete’ experience of man?”

As a health care worker (attendant, companion or guide) in palliative care,⁴ I like to talk about the “magnifying glass syndrome.” This term is a way of popularizing the fact that everything that is experienced at the end of life is potentially present in our societies, in our families, in our joint living together. Potentially present in the life of the companion and the health professional!

The Fragility of Our Relationship to Finitude

And without wishing to risk listing a litany of the different types of fragility, it seems obvious to me that among all these fragilities there is one that emerges above the others, to the point that we can recognize it as the fragility that cuts across all the others. It is the question of the vertigo of human beings in their relationship to their own end: finitude. Some respond with denial, others with anger, if not flight. Faced with the reality of their death, nearly everyone responds with some form of vertiginous spiritual suffering!⁵

The relationship to finitude therefore constitutes a cross-cutting spiritual suffering. It emerges and roots itself in the psycho-spiritual reality of an aging body. Year after year, this body deteriorates until it becomes the broadcaster for an end that is announced, but not yet truly absorbed.

Henceforth, the accompaniment consists of making that cross-cutting fragility, as well as each of its corollaries—loss of vital forces, loss of autonomy (physical, psychological, relational)—become not a place of guilt and tension, but rather a place of opening up. This is the challenge of accompaniment. Allowing the patient to accept such fragility visited, so that accompanied, it becomes transformed into vulnerability.

¹ Barreau, Jean-Marc, *Soins Palliatifs. Accompagner pour vivre!* [Palliative Care: Accompanying to Live!] Paris, Médiaspaul, 2017, 282 pages.

² I mean a philosophical anthropology.

³ We use the word “man” in its generic sense, without attributing any type of discrimination.

⁴ For the past five years, since the opening of palliative care at the Marie-Clara Hospital in Montreal, each week I accompany its patients who are near the end of their life on earth, 36 to date.

⁵ In my book, I propose a classification of spiritual suffering. See *Soins palliatifs. Accompagner...*, p. 11-166.

From Fragility to Vulnerability

In this mutation, fragility is the necessary material in order for the accompaniment process to “tip” the accompanied person into a vulnerability of growth. Herein lies the dignity of the person being accompanied! On the one hand, fragility becomes vulnerability because “brought forth” by the individual to their guide. On the other hand, fragility becoming vulnerability is, simultaneously “carried” by the accompanier. Therein lies the dignity of the guide!

And it is indeed, because the “offering” made to the guide transports the latter to his own fragility that the accompaniment process comes together around two vulnerabilities face-to-face with one another: the vulnerabilities of two humanities in desire for growth. This encounter of vulnerabilities prepares the fertile ground for a common quest for meaning that had been previously paralyzed by the fear of “unveiling” oneself to the other, from “I” to “you.”

If it were necessary to illustrate this essential reality of accompaniment, we would refer the reader to the image of the gardener who plunges his two hands into the humus of the earth to deposit in the earth a seed of life. This gives rise to two further images; two hands: that of the guided and that of the guide and the image of life: that of the seed fertilized by two vulnerabilities. This is what I refer to as circular vulnerability.

Towards a Common Quest for Meaning

When I talk about “circular vulnerability,”⁶ I do not induce the fact that the guide is forced to deliver his own fragilities to the guided (we would then have naught but a poor caricature of accompaniment). When I speak of this magnificent circular vulnerability, I insist on the “truth of life,” on the fact that circular vulnerability leads us to a common quest for meaning. That is why moral judgement in the accompaniment process is so terrible, it stifles the search for truth, hence the quest for life...

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 47-52.



To truly understand the successive impacts of acts of circular vulnerability, I invite you to take a look at the heartbreaking story of Victoria and Joseph in my book,⁷ in which we see circular vulnerability overcoming those walls of resentment accumulated over so many decades.

The “Concrete Poor”

Whit Pope Francis’ strong and insistent exhortation to the universal Church to go out on the paths of its “peripheries,”⁸ isn’t the Pastor calling upon each of us to become passionately aware, like an outstretched hand, of one’s own fragility?

Do not the “concrete poor,”⁹ the people who are so often marginalized in our Christian and religious communities, have a prophetic mission to remind us of the burdensome reality of our existence as vulnerable men and women? Is this not a reality in which any accompaniment is nevertheless rooted? It is from this mix of our human fragilities, collected respectfully as a core foundation, that the good wine, the nectar of vulnerability of living life will come to fruition.

Would not this be a question of philosophical anthropology, lined with a question of Christian mysticism? ■

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⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 80-84.

⁸ Jean-Marc Barreau, *François et la miséricorde* [Francis and Mercy], Paris, Médiaspaul, 2015, p. 73-75.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

Prophetic Response to Medically Assisted Death

Nuala Kenny, SC, OC, MD, FRCP (C)

Throughout salvation history prophets have been called forth to confront particular situations contrary to the reign of a loving and merciful God.¹ Today, the legalization of medically assisted death cries out for prophetic response. Religious, who are called to a 'prophetic lifeform', are often deeply embedded in the healing ministry of Jesus in care for the sick, suffering and dying.² By the nature of this work, they are called to respond to the challenge of a *good death*.

Christians envisioned the good death of Saint Joseph, a "righteous man" who lived in fidelity to God's call. Christians also envision him cared for by his beloved Mary and Jesus in a scene of both sadness and deep trust in the faithfulness of God.

In medieval times, when death came suddenly to most, Christians prepared for a *good death* through the *ars moriendi*.³ This "art of dying" depended upon two cultural features: shared faith in the life, salvific suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus as the ultimate sign of God's love for us, and the centrality of families and community in care for the sick and dying.

¹ Bruggemann, Walter, (2001). *The Prophetic Imagination*. Second edition, Fortress Press, Minneapolis.

² Schneiders, Sandra M. (2011). *Prophets in Their Own Country: Women Religious Bearing Witness to the Gospel in a Troubled Church*. Orbis Books, Maryknoll, NY.

³ O'Connor, M.C. (1966). *The Art of Dying Well: The Development of the Ars Moriendi*. New York: AMS Press.



Development of Palliative Care

These simpler past-times seemed far from our experience of seemingly death-defying, medical advances.⁴ Palliative care, provided in hospices, hospitals, homes and communities, were developed to support the dying where death was considered a failure and technology dominated care.⁵

The aspects that both patients and families describe of a *good death* today, include pain and symptom management, respectful communication, opportunities to achieve their personal and spiritual 'bucket list' of farewells, reconciliation, and giving and receiving expressions of love, gratitude and forgiveness.⁶

New Context

Our pluralist and secular culture is very different from the past: one religious world-view is no longer shared; health care is professionalized; individual rights, choice and control are primary values; and there is widespread belief in technology to cure all our ills.

⁴ Dugdale, Lydia S. (2015). *Dying in the Twenty-First Century: Toward a New Ethical Framework for the Art of Dying Well*. Cambridge, MA & London, UK: MIT Press.

⁵ Byock, I. (2013). *The Best Care Possible*. New York, NY: Avery.

⁶ Steinhauser, K.E.et.al. (2000). *Factors considered important at the end of life by patients, family, physicians, and other care providers*. JAMA, 284(19), 2476-2482.

In this context, on a *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* challenge in February 6, 2015, the Supreme Court of Canada struck down Criminal Code prohibitions against medically assisted death for competent adults who have a grievous and irremediable medical condition (including an illness, disease or disability) that causes enduring suffering which is intolerable to them.⁷

The decision was not confined to terminal illness or dying and assured protection of the vulnerable and of conscience. By June 2016, Bill C-14 regulating Medical Aid in Dying (MAID) came into effect in Canada. It has been rapidly normalized as *the good death* and cries out for rediscovering the art of dying in our time.⁸

Prophetic Resistance

The media has filled us with vivid images of persons dying in intractable pain requesting medically assisted death. Yet modern medicine can do much to relieve pain and other serious symptoms.

In fact, persons rarely request medically assisted death for pain but for psychological distress, uncertainty about future care needs, the desire to control death, fear of dependence, feelings of loss of dignity, fear of abandonment, guilt at being a burden to others and loss of meaning.⁹ These are issues of deep human suffering. Because there is no prescription to eliminate suffering, a controlled, technically produced death becomes the ‘treatment’.¹⁰

We are called to prophetic resistance to this medicalization of human suffering and to find in Jesus’ experience a source of meaning and strength for decisions in illness and dying. There is an urgent need to recognize that medically assisted death is the rejection of the Paschal Mystery, the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.¹¹

⁷ Carter v. Canada (Attorney General), 2015 Supreme Court of Canada.

⁸ Kenny, N., (2017). *Rediscovering the Art of Dying: How Jesus’ Experience and Our Stories Reveal a New Vision of Compassionate Care*. Toronto, ON: Novalis.

⁹ Emanuel E., et al., (2000). *Attitudes and Desires Related to Euthanasia and Physician Assisted Suicide Among Terminally Ill Patients and Their Caregivers*, JAMA 284: 2460-2468; Ganzini, et al., (2008). *Why Oregon Patients Request Assisted Death: Family Members Views*. Journal of General Internal Medicine, 23:154-157.

¹⁰ Cassell, E., (1991). *The Nature of Suffering and the Goals of Medicine*. NY: Oxford University Press.

¹¹ Rolheiser, R. (2015). *The Passion and the Cross*. Toronto, ON: Novalis.



Jesus’ suffering is real, life giving and redemptive. We do not seek suffering and have a duty to relieve it where possible but we believe that through our pain and suffering, we can share in the redemptive work of Christ.

Conscience Protection

We must also resist the failure of conscience protection for practitioners who object to medically assisted death. Conscience is not about competing rights but developing moral insight and courage without which protection of those most vulnerable to medically assisted death is compromised.

Competence, rights and choice are valorized today but there is failure to recognize how they are affected adversely by inherent vulnerability, environments of care and perpetuation of vulnerability in public policies and professional practices.¹²

Prophetic Witnessing

Prophetic resistance demands prophetic witness. We must advocate for palliative care. We must accept that an evangelizing community “... embraces human life, touching the suffering flesh of Christ in others.” (Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 2013, no. 24). We must also renew our baptismal call of care and accompaniment in response the suffering in our midst: the acutely and chronically ill, the disabled, elderly, the isolated and lonely, the dying and the bereaved along with their families and caregivers.

Resurrection hope brings us the courage to be prophets of care and justice for our Redeemer lives! ■

¹² Matthews, S., Tobin, B., (2016). *Human vulnerability in medical contexts*. Theoretical Medicine and Bioethics 31:1.

A Mission to Discover

Bertrand Roy, PMÉ

In January 2016, the bishops of Quebec published a facilitation tool entitled *The Missionary Shift of Christian Communities*. Inspired by Pope Francis's Apostolic Exhortation *The Joy of the Gospel*, this text invites the Christian

communities to undergo an "evangelical review of life in order to implement concretely the missionary shift."¹

At a pastoral formation meeting to which I was invited, a participant alluded to this famous missionary shift [*tournant* in French] with a sense of humour that conveyed what I took to be a good measure of exasperation. "This is not the first *tournant* [shift] we've had to make. In the end, we risk

going around in circles. Instead of missionary *tournant*, we should talk about the missionary torment!" This satirical comment was followed by applause, which was quite an introduction to my intervention on the subject!

What Mission?

Without using this particular expression, Pope Francis evokes the missionary shift by hoping the communities will devote the necessary effort to "advancing along the path of a pastoral and missionary conversion which cannot leave things as they presently are. ... Pastoral ministry in a missionary context seeks to abandon the complacent attitude that says: 'We have always done it this way.' I invite everyone to be bold and creative."²

No doubt, it is necessary to be bold and creative for an ecclesial renewal in service of the Gospel, including the life of religious communities. But what must appear? What must continue? What could disappear? Multiplying initiatives while further dividing dwindling resources—now that would be a real pastoral torment!

What mission? A certain image of the mission remains firmly anchored in the ecclesial imagination: mission as recruitment, propaganda or the admirable heroism of a few. While it may be necessary to abandon the comfortable criterion of the status quo, it is not a question of returning to an outdated missionary criterion. To move from a stance of a pastoral maintenance to a stance of pastoral mission requires a profound transformation of the whole life of the Church.

Putting Down Deeper Roots and Turning-Away from the Centre

This great disruption involves the Church "putting down deeper roots into its very foundations" and a "radical turning-away from the centre." For the Church, it is a matter of "going out from its own world (its programs, its organization, its rules, its language) and from its self-referential system, to living less centered on itself in order to find its true center, which lies in what God does, as well as in the humanity to whom the Church is sent."³

¹ Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium, The Joy of the Gospel: An Apostolic Exhortation of the Holy Father Francis*, Vatican Press, 2013; Council on Communities and Ministries, Assembly of Catholic Bishops of Quebec (AECQ), *The Missionary Shift of Christian Communities*, 2016, p. 30.

² *The Joy of the Gospel*, n°s 25 and 33.

³ *The Missionary Shift of Christian Communities*, p. 10 to 12.



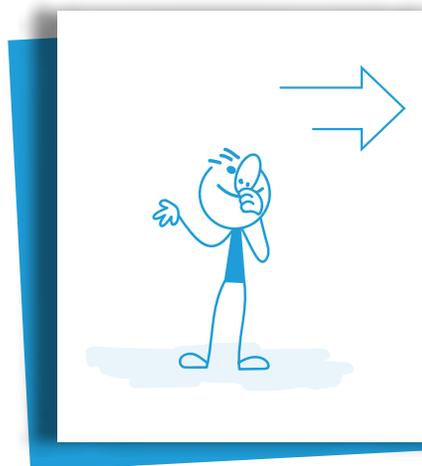
In that respect, the true missionary turning point is the one made by the Second Vatican Council in labouing “to decipher authentic signs of God’s presence and purpose in the happenings, needs and desires ... of our age.”⁴ In the light of the Gospel and in dialogue with the world of its time, the Church discovers the love of God already working at the heart of the human endeavour. God visits his people (see Lk 1:68).

At the same time, the Church is discovering its own identity as a believing community. In the words of the former Archbishop of Algiers commenting on the Vatican II decree on the missionary activity of the Church: “The heart of the mission is located in this spiritual place in which, professing the love of God manifested in Jesus Christ, the Church commits herself and commits others to live their true human vocation by entering into the order of love.”⁵

An Experience of the Joy of the Gospel

In the perspective of this commitment of the Church at the heart of a mission that precedes and exceeds it, the missionary shift does not consist of asking ourselves what we must do. Rather, it is to seek what God is doing today and how He invites us—we and so many others of good will—to collaborate in His work in the world. The missionary “outreach” required by this attentive love for the events and requests of our time is a challenge for our consecrated life.

What is the contribution of consecrated life to the pastoral and missionary conversion of the Church? Should not this contribution be the testimony about an experience of the joy of the Gospel, which, by facilitating the missionary shift, avoids becoming a torment?



Here are three aspects to explore along those lines:

1. The Movement of the Mission

The movement of the mission in which the Church finds her identity is not primarily geographical or organizational, but of the order of free love. “You received without charge, give without charge” (Mt 10:8). The manifestation of the Spirit of

Pentecost mobilizes the Church for a mission that “goes on and in the course of history unfolds the mission of Christ Himself, who was sent to preach the Gospel to the poor.”⁶

In this movement of the mission, consecrated life is not a particular function among others, but a gift from the Spirit to the whole Church. It is the gift of seeing, judging and acting in the footsteps of Christ according to one aspect of the Gospel, which belongs to the entire community of the baptized and inspires a radical commitment of a few.

At the heart of the many decisions demanded by the missionary shift, consecrated life is called upon to testify about this experience of the free gift of God. This source of freedom and joy must always be present in places of evangelical discernment.

“If monastic life, religious life, consecrated life are given to the Church, it is to constitute an instance of discernment in the service of the people of God. Their reason for being is not to be seen or imitated but rather, through their ways of life, to show and tell about the ever-renewed freshness of the Gospel. Received by the Spirit, (this vocation) can only be but unpredictable, unhinged by conventionalism, always innovative.”⁷

⁴ Vatican II, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes*, 11.1.

⁵ Tessier, Henri, *La mission de l'Église*, Desclée de Brouwer éditions, 1985, p. 215.

⁶ Vatican II, Decree *Ad Gentes* on the Mission Activity of the Church, no. 5.

⁷ Lécivain, Philippe « Une histoire ouverte. Moines, religieux et consacrés », in *Christus*, n° 210, avril 2006, p. 169.



2. The Sign of the Mission

The sign, which is at issue here, is the one that indicates the presence of God, that is to say, his mission at work in the world. That sign is the Christ Jesus, risen in the power of his Spirit. The privileged places where this sign is being recognized and announced by the Church are the multiple faces of human poverty where the hope of the Beatitudes is being lived.

In the diversity of its gospel-inspired commitments, consecrated life displays a prophetic sensitivity for identifying current places where the sign of the mission can be found. Such sensitivity is essential for steering an authentic missionary shift. Among those current places of revelation are immigration, exclusion for ethnic or religious reasons, disregard for human rights, especially for children, the sick, and the elderly.

In a world where there will be more and more fragile people, living with illnesses, handicaps and mental weaknesses, Jean Vanier sees a new sign for Christians and asks: “How can we guide Christian men and women towards the weak of our time, not only to heal and evangelize them, but to meet them and be evangelized by them, to receive from them the Gospel that we need today? ... Do we not need new types of monasteries, monasteries of love where the weak are welcomed and reveal a new presence of Jesus?”⁸

This sensitivity to the presence of Jesus showing the human face of God joins two pastoral categories, which according to Pope Francis, have their roots in the newness of the Gospel: “closeness and encounter, two ways through which God himself is revealed in history culminating in the Incarnation.”⁹

3. The Style of the Mission

In a pluralistic society, closeness and encounter in a spirit of service make possible a hospitality that dispels fear. That is the style of the mission, a third



avenue to explore in order to appreciate the gift of consecrated life to the missionary Church. By creating spaces for reciprocal listening and testimony, hospitality offered and received is the environment conducive to dialogue.

As mission style, dialogue is all the more necessary because the missionary shift involves “outreach” to people from other cultures, beliefs and convictions. In that respect, the international and intercultural experience of religious communities can offer a precious gift to the Church at a time when it is welcoming the surprises of God. Who is this Visitor who comes to visit his people and who is waiting at the turning point, at the shift? ■

⁸ Vanier, Jean, *Les signes des temps à la lumière de Vatican II*, Albin Michel, 2012, p. 134-135.

⁹ See Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Consecrated Life, Circular Letter *Rejoice!*, 2014, n° 10.



Humanization and Evangelization

Marie-Marcelle Desmarais, CND

Yes, humanization is necessary for the person to love each and every other person truly and fully and to give the Gospel of Jesus its full place in their heart. In my mission, I have had the privilege of engaging with people facing difficult challenges, in countries where violence often has the last word. In these countries, there are people experiencing all kinds of suffering and they are constantly being called upon to rise above their painful experiences.

I have often returned to the same countries ten, twenty times. Whether in Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Haiti, Peru, Honduras, the Middle East, in nearly 40 countries on all continents, I have seen some common threads in people's experiences. These common threads reminded me of the wounds of my people. The common thread was that people were often not ready in their psychological development to meet the challenges of the Gospel.

Approaching the Other without Fear

An in-depth work of humanization makes it possible to look at and treat the person as a human being, beyond differences in colour, social class, gender, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, religious and political ideas, and cultural behaviour—in short beyond all those differences that divide.

Making the decision to approach the unknown person in order to get to know him or her—to avoid being caught up by mistrust, fear or misinterpretations—is a process of humanization. Who can deny that this learning, tailored to humanization, is an essential way of preparing the earth for evangelization?

The First Learning Ground

During the first year of life, the human life force of love is being prepared. Experience with the caregiver is the first learning ground. While the child is one and two years old, the family becomes the place of learning. Moreover, no family is perfect. Our parents did what they could with what they had and who they were, with their own history, with their strengths, their weaknesses and their vulnerabilities. It is at this early age of one and two years old that the customs, the ways of doing or not doing, of saying or not saying are transmitted.

Happy are the children whose parents have an openness that does not nourish prejudices, but which teaches the children to approach people different from them without fear. Happy is the child whose parents are not slaves of the law, but whose wisdom and mobility allow the child to learn to approach the stranger without fear.

Once adults, we do not remember those laws learned in the family. We do not remember how we learned these customs, these instructions, and these prohibitions. Everything is buried in what is “unconscious” in us; the fact remains, however, that convictions have taken root.

The child has recorded that ‘this’ group of people is bad and we should be wary of ‘them’, that another group is the one that will save us from that which we have to protect ourselves. That is how divisions and wars take root. Children who have become adults believe what they have heard in the early years of their lives without remembering how it happened.

What comes from their family and their culture will remain in their representation of what is good, what is the best! The way that the neighbour does things may be seen as unfitting. If the parents have shown great universal openness, the child will inherit that openness without borders. But how many children will never have these experiences of humanization that allow them to learn to love broadly, without exclusion?

The Call to True Love

A priority that is laid out in the Gospel of Jesus of Nazareth, the Saviour of all and for all time, is the call to true love. Love the other as yourself... Give him your tunic... She comes from Samaria, welcome her! He is wounded, no matter what group he is from, heal him.

Jesus never stops trying to open up his compatriots to the human person. He is focused not on laws or practices, but on the person. And every time, he takes care of the person. He never stops being the Good Shepherd who watches over his sheep. He came to help people discover who God is: He came to make God visible. And when He will leave us his Spirit, it will be to enable us to continue his mission, a mission of love.

Yet, love is not born magically in the person. Some conditions are needed to learn to love. These conditions are built throughout the first years of human life, because human development has its own logic.

Three Forms of Love

In a process of integral humanization, developing the strength of love makes it possible to learn to look at the 'other' as a person, to want his or her good and to be capable of sometimes choosing the good of the other person over the good of the self. Self-love allows one to give oneself the physical and psychological means to live these excesses in love and peace.

In humanization, there are three forms of love. **Reciprocal love** is the love that makes one able to trust the other and receive the trust of the other. Without trust, this love cannot be built. It is this love that builds a relationship for a couple, a community, a friendship, a fraternity.

Caring love cannot be lived unless it is freely given. It is the love that gives without waiting for a return, for an answer. This love is often that of parents who love in truth, the love of educators who want the good of the young

people for whom they are responsible. In religious life, it is the love that allows the birth and growth of psychological maternity or paternity. The people consecrated to God are called to this maternity or paternity.

And there is **love in its form of universality, a love denoting wisdom!** Deciding to live this love requires a clear choice and it commits one until death. Opening oneself up to each person by deciding to look at him or her as a person, to treat him or her as a person, and to do so no matter what the difference is and above all beyond any differences that would make one want to exclude him or her. Universal love is recognized by this sign... No exclusion! It is the love that calls upon us to recognize the walls inside ourselves and to tear them down by building bridges that unite. This love is a force that demands constant decisions.

It is to this universal love that Jesus calls us. Is it not this form of love that is found in the Holy Family who receives the shepherds and the Magi, people so different in their social class? It is the love that led Jesus to call Zacchaeus to come down from his tree, to choose Matthew the tax collector to become an apostle. It is this love that made him so generous to the adulterous woman, to the lepers, to the deaf and mute people of his time. It is this love that enabled Jesus to see through human dramas and perceive what was really at the heart of the 'issue'. It is the love that led him to the Cross. It is because of this love that He opened the way to the Good Thief.

Become the "Leaders"

This love requires courage because it can lead to death. We see Paul clearly place himself before the consequences of this love. But throughout the history of Salvation, in the experiences of the Old and New Testaments, in the experiences recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, we see people who cannot manage to love. How sad it is to live all your life without learning to love, especially when we have chosen a religion that is love.

Will those responsible for evangelization be called upon to become "leaders" in this close encounter between humanization and evangelization? ■

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THE CRC AT A GLANCE

Mission Statement

Established in 1954, the Canadian Religious Conference (CRC) is an association that brings together 250 leaders of Catholic congregations of religious men and women in Canada.

“The CRC is both a voice for and a service to leaders of religious institutes and societies of apostolic life. Our mission is to encourage our members to live fully their vocation in following Christ. We support them in their prophetic witness to justice and peace within society and the Church. The CRC looks for innovative ways of interpreting faith and life so as to embrace the new vision of the universe.”

Mission statement adopted in 2010

Theological Commission of the CRC

The Theological Commission was established by the Administrative Council of the CRC in September 1999 to deepen the meaning of consecrated life according to a theological approach that integrates the contributions made by human and social sciences. The Theological Commission proposes future directions that will inform consecrated life in a creative and prophetic way while taking into account the various charisms of the congregations.

CRC Publications

Published three times a year, the *CRC Bulletin* presents reflections on different aspects of consecrated life in relation to the orientations and objectives of the Canadian Religious Conference.

Issued monthly, the *CRC Newsletter* (formerly *Le Lien CRC Link*) provides information on the commitments and activities of the CRC, on the life of religious congregations, on the life of the Church and on community groups involved in social justice.

