

A Missionary Spirituality for Our Times

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Abstract: Being aware that a Christian life is the only Gospel that people will read, a genuine Christian becomes the city built on a mountain that cannot be hidden. So a life in conformity with God's will is more significant than an empty proclamation of Christ or even performing of miracles in his name. Therefore, mission is not primarily an assignment to do something among others, but it is an imperative to live the Gospel, so that the very Christian life becomes a proclamation. It is a prophetic and contemplative way of life that becomes a consciousness raiser for people around us. It is an unrest, creating and transforming presence from within.

Keywords: Other-centred existence, human rights, cultural pluralism, prophetic spirituality, *nishkamakarma*, mission as presence.

I would like to begin this article with a note on the term 'spirituality.' 'Spirituality,' very popular today is not strictly speaking a biblical term. The nearest we have in the bible would be 'life in the Spirit' (Rom 8: 14; Gal 5:14). What we are referring to by spirituality, is the life-style shining through a person committed to the Gospel. It is the radiance of the Spirit (2 Cor 10: 6). In John's Gospel we are told how Jesus manifested God's glory (radiance) through his signs and discourses. In this article we shall point out some of the attitudes and ideals that shine through the life of a Christian today.

The life-style of the missionary depends largely on his/her understanding of mission itself. It could be said that many still cherish the hopes of the colonial missionaries, without realizing how colonial mission evolved out of a particular ideology consistent with the political, economic and social context, one that emerged from a role of power and superiority. Colonial mission was expansionistic,

harbouring hopes of conquering the whole world for Christ and bringing all the newly discovered peoples outside Europe into the one Church of Rome. Later when the Reformation churches got involved in mission, they too copied this aim and ideal in their own ways. In this paper an attempt is made to return to the New Testament understanding of mission, interpreted in the light of contemporary Christian experiences. Here a missionary does not belong to a separate species; rather, the very Christian self-perception is that of a missionary. After Willigen (1952) and the Vatican II (1962-65) the church is described as missionary by its very nature. Hence missionary spirituality is basically Christian spirituality.

The Sent-One

The very first characteristic of the Christian life today is that Christians must participate in Jesus' own consciousness of having been sent. Jesus does not appear on the scene as a volunteer to rescue the world. He has been sent by God his Father, the source of mission (Mk 12:1-12 and par). According to the Lukan Gospel, the inaugural message of Jesus is couched in the language of sending: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me. He has sent me to proclaim release to captives, to set at liberty the oppressed... (Lk 4:18). "I must proclaim the Kingdom of God to other cities too, for it is for that that I am sent" (Lk 4:43). Not only does Jesus acknowledge how he is sent by the Father but also views the Christian discipleship as the extension of his own sending. "He who receives you, receives me, and he who receives me receives the one who sent me" (Mt 10:40 and par).

In John's Gospel the very identity of Jesus is as the sent one. In fact in the fourth Gospel, Jesus describes himself as the sent-one about 46 times and refers to the Father as the one who sent him. His mission is a faithful discharging of the will of the Father who sent him, in radical dependence on the Father (Jn 6: 57; 5:19). Mission in the Gospels is the whole series of activities resulting from the sending of the Son by the Father.

Christian discipleship is the continuation of the sending of the Son by the Father in the Spirit. "As the Father has sent me so do I send you.... Receive the Holy Spirit" (Jn 20: 21-22). Sent-ness, thus,

characterizes Christian existence in the world. Christians do not exist for themselves but are sent into the world to be at its service. They have, hence, a pro-existence. The church does not exist for itself and for a purpose of its own-like self-expansion. Its sole aim is to carry out faithfully the plan God has for the world. Hence it spares no energy in searching diligently as to what type of service is demanded of it in each situation. In this sense the church's existence can be compared to that of the double faced Greek mythological God, Janius, one face turning to the past and the other to the future. The church constantly fixes its attention on God who sent it and at the same time busies itself in finding out what service it can render to the world to which it is sent. Evangelist Mark gave expression to this sentiment when he described discipleship as a call "to be with him and to be sent out" (3:14), "whom he was wanting to call (from all eternity)" (Mk 3:13).

Like the prophet Jeremiah, Christians are aware of how they are called from all eternity to be sent into the world (Jer 1: 5). This sense of verticality, i.e., it is God's initiative that makes mission possible and horizontality, i.e., the call is for a service to the world, permeates the letters of St. Paul. He begins most of his letters with this note (Rom 1:1; 1 Cor 1:1; Gal 1.1, etc.).

Not Primarily Geographical

Recently a teacher of Missiology in one of the theological centres in Kerala shared with me his struggle to create an interest in Mission studies among the students. The students argue that practically all of them will be working in the traditional parishes of the Syro-Malabar Church, which, according to them, are not typically missionary parishes. Mission, they are convinced, is outside the boundaries of Kerala.

Obviously, this is an anomalous situation since Vatican II has retrieved the basic missionary nature of the church. What causes intellectual confusion among these students? Though Vatican II has unmistakably spelt out that every Christian is a missionary, not infrequently do we come across Church documents presenting mission in geographical terms. Hence the Christians in Kerala are told, even as in many other parts of the world with a "traditional Christian

presence,” that true mission is outside the boundaries of Kerala though in Kerala itself Christians form less than 23% of the total population.

Though inter-cultural (not geographical) aspect is part of the understanding of mission in the New Testament, geography itself is not the defining element of mission. The Matthean mission text, 28: 19, demands the disciples to go into all cultures (*ethne*). Elsewhere they are sent as the Father sent Jesus (Jn 20: 21) or they are sent to be witnesses of the Gospel (Lk 24:48). Cross-cultural mission has significance always. However mission itself is the conviction that one is called by God to be sent as a witness to the Gospel. This witnessing is to be done wherever the Christian is. It is a matter of the quality of the Christian existence, not necessarily geography. A Christian is called to follow Jesus Christ in his mission. It is mission that makes one a Christian. The disintegration of colonialism, the bed-rock of a geographical understanding of mission, along with the onslaught of globalization, must liberate us from the tendency to hold on to certain contextual overtones such as the geographical understanding of mission and enable us to recapture the biblical view of mission.

Globalization with its mass movement and rapid communication has brought Christians in close contact with the followers of other religious traditions everywhere in the world. Hence a Christian should not hang on to the understanding of mission *ad Gentes* but must live the genuine sense of having been sent to witness to the Gospel irrespective of the locality. The geographical understanding of mission thrived when the missionary obligation was reserved to certain local churches, leaving others as members of the mission churches. Colonial mission gave rise to a very asymmetrical relationship, reducing those who received the Good News to dependent Christians without accepting them as equal partners in witnessing to the Good News. Mission was the exclusive duty of the Western home churches, while the churches in the colonies were seen as mere missions to be dependent on their Western counterparts. This situation has changed.

Other-Centred Existence

A necessary consequence of the realization that a Christian by nature is missionary, is that the Christian has to be oriented to the other, other persons, religions and cultures. When mission was seen as expansion, interest in other persons was only to the extent that these others could be made members of the church. This is no more the case for the church today.

In the Gospels we come across how Jesus was the constant manifestation of God's 'other-centredness.' By relativizing the laws considered to be immutable, such as the Sabbath laws and rules regarding purity-pollution, in terms of human beings, Jesus showed how the God whom he experienced as the intimate *Abba* was not immediately concerned about God's own self as much as about human beings and the rest of creation. For Jesus, human beings were more important than the laws: "the Sabbath is made for human beings, not human beings for the Sabbath," he declared (Mk 2:27). He mixed freely with all people, irrespective of their status, gender or moral rectitude. He deliberately exercised a preferential option for the excluded and the marginalized of society in his dealings and social intercourse. The other person, for Jesus, took the place of God. The way we treat the other is the externalization of the way we treat God (Mt 25: 31-46).

During his ministry Jesus made those human beings who were discredited in any way, the ill-treated and the excluded ones, the privileged ones. They would enjoy the fruits of the arrival of the Kingdom. The oft-repeated description of his many table fellowships is the anticipation and the projection of the Kingdom that he came to inaugurate.

Paradoxically, the other has become a problem for Christianity. How to account for the religious and culturally other, is an enduring problem for the church. Getting involved with the other is constitutive of the mission of the church in so far as Jesus' mission was the expression of the other-centredness of God. In our times this other-centredness must take into account the less privileged ones of the society. Relationship is another name for other centredness. It is relationship that defines God and it is relationship that characterizes

the church's mission. The missionary today is a relational person, one who builds bridges and not one who burns bridges. In contrast to the Old Testament understanding of holiness as separation, being set apart, for Jesus, holiness is relatedness.

As a bridge builder, a missionary today must be a pro-active person. To be pro-active means venturing into unfamiliar and unknown zones, which in turn may arouse curiosity or even suspicion. However, a missionary cannot afford to walk only the beaten track, but must also be a trailblazer and at home with the unknown. He/she is not a maintainer of the status quo, but ever taking the lead to build relationships, both at the individual levels as well as at the collective levels as with the followers of other religions and with other ecclesial communities. In all situations, like Moses, the missionary says, "I must go and see what this strange sight is" (Ex 3:3). Thus, the missionary today is ready to get involved so that he/she can promote relationships.

It is also a matter of taking responsibility for the neighbour so that the world is made into more Kingdom-like. The missionary realizes that the unjust situations that we come across are unnatural and something is to be done to change such situations after the *example of the Good Samaritan, who got involved with the person lying half dead on the roadside, to change that situation (Lk 10:29ff).

Such an open attitude will enable the Christian community not only to come to terms with the religious and the cultural other, leading to harmony, but will also rid the community of many fears and aloofness from the many movements. The Church, traditionally, has been afraid of movements like the workers movement, the youth movement, the women's movement, etc. A church that relies on the Spirit of the Lord need not be afraid of anything, but of fear itself. "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom" (Lk 12:32), is the promise of the Lord.

For the church the struggle is not with other persons, religions or cultures, but with any force that is an agent of darkness, lie, deceit and death. In other words, any power that is dehumanizing and alienating. In this struggle the church should seek the collaboration of any agency.

Struggle for the Human Rights

The opening words of Vatican II's Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*, places the church on the side of all who struggle for Justice and human rights in the world. "The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the people of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these too are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ. Indeed, nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts" (GS 1). These words serve as a window to an understanding of the church's identity and mission today. The church identifies itself with the rest of the world in its hopes and agonies, in its joys and sorrows, especially of the poor and of the alienated. The rest of the Document concentrates on the dignity of the human person describing the many ways in which the human person is deprived of his/her dignity in contemporary times. The church resolves to contribute in whatever way it can to rectify the situation as it seeks "to speak to all people in order to shed light on the mystery of the human person and to cooperate with all in finding the solution to the outstanding problems of our times" (GS 10).

Gaudium et Spes placed social justice at the heart of the church's vision. Underscoring the exalted dignity proper to the human person, the Council said: "Therefore, there must be made available to all humans everything necessary for leading a life truly human, such as food, clothing, shelter, the right to chose a state of life freely, and to found a family, the right to education and employment, to a good reputation, to respect, to appropriate information, to activity in accord with the upright norms of one's own conscience, to protection of privacy and the rightful freedom" (GS 26). In fact no other aspect of the church's service has influenced the modern world as much as its social teaching has done. This is the concrete way the Gospel has made itself felt in the contemporary world. In the spirit of the Synod of 1971 that qualified struggle for justice as an integral part of evangelization today, we can add that any genuine missionary spirituality today must share the concern for a just society. Evangelization is a service to the world, it is not steering people away from the world as something bad.

Prophetic Attitude

Contemporary mission spirituality must enable one to immerse oneself in a prophetic ministry to the world that is constantly changing. Though the roots of the prophetic life style go back to the bible, prophetism was substantially muzzled by years of indoctrination. We cannot anymore be satisfied with a conformism that was the tacitly accepted norm of the past. The amazing speed with which the world undergoes change does not permit us to seek shelter under a restorationistic spirituality, that was a characteristic mode of escapism. Missionary formation must equip Christians to be passionately innovative in the midst of change and chaos, but always transparent to the prophetic vocation flowing from the Gospels. Jesus' own self-perception stands in continuity with that of the Old Testament prophets (Mk 6:4; Lk 13:31). The temptations that Jesus withstood at the beginning of his ministry bring out how he discarded the values of his times such as power, prestige and possession in fulfilment of his prophetic ministry (Lk 4:1ff.).

As a prophet, Jesus lived constantly in touch with God his Father and with the realities of this world which he condemned in unmistakable terms when these were not consonant with God's will. More than any other prophet he was taken hold of by the hope for the fullness of freedom and love. On the banks of the Jordan he received a new mind and a new heart, a new faith and hope. From then on he saw things in a new perspective, in the light of God's reign. From then on his only concern was the full realization of this reign. "Set your heart on God's Kingdom and his justice before everything else, and all the rest will come to you as well" (Mt 6:33). As a prophet he spoke with authority, a fact mentioned 63 times in the Gospels.

A characteristic of the Old Testament prophets is their social consciousness. This social consciousness is constitutive of Jesus' ministry as well. His many table fellowships are prophetic deeds. His respect for the human person even to the extent of relativizing the Sabbath law and rules of ritual purity, his attitude to sinners and those marginalized, all speak of his social consciousness.

Every Christian inherits this prophetic spirit of the Lord in the Christian baptism. The world situation today, with the many forces

of marginalization, dehumanization, dispossession and the disenfranchisement of the poor, calls for a prophetic response. This requires of Christians to identify themselves with Jesus and his prophetic mission to the world, to collaborate with him to usher in God's reign in the world of our times, a world that is under strain and trauma due to the mad self-seeking and profit-oriented outlook. We must share Jesus' concern for the outcasts and those on the outer margins of society, his acceptance of the equality of women, and his disapproval of all sorts of social privileges and the economic stratification of society. His promotion of communion instead of domination, his vision of liberating all persons from oppressive values and systems, must be foundational for contemporary mission spirituality. Mission spirituality must be sensitive to the enormous gap between the Gospel and the world of our times. Intimacy with the Lord of the mission and his concern for the world must make us distance ourselves from the uncritical absorption of the values contrary to the spirit of the Gospel.

A basic ingredient of the prophetic spirituality is transparency. In an earlier age one could get away with what one said even if it did not conform to one's belief or behaviour. In an age revolutionized by information technology, this is hardly the case. Yet far too frequently, we come across statements addressed to the followers of other religions, which do not reflect exactly what is taught to Catholics; we come across statements and exhortations to the followers of other religious traditions stating that we are all fellow pilgrims with a common origin and a common destiny (NA 1). At the same time we tell the Catholics that we alone are the followers of the only true religion willed by God and that our mission is to bring people into the Catholic church enabling them to be saved.

A sort of stick and carrot policy, not infrequently adopted by official circles by marginalizing creative and prophetic persons at every level with the stigma of 'hererodoxy.' This effectively encourages double-faced persons who believe one thing and pay homage to ideas which are not in conformity with their convictions. Roles of power and prestige attract many persons to be conformists who are careful not to come in the way of the powers that silence any unwelcome criticism. This is creating a dangerous and disastrous situa-

tion. People externally admit what they reject internally. In other words there is lip service with internal disagreement. Many, in fact, may be draining away their God-given creative talents in their efforts to be conformists rather than directing these talents and energies to an apostolic service to the world. This sort of conformism has crept into Christian existence as a result of powerful structures. All this means that there is a lack of sincerity and transparency, promoted by the existing system. Can we acknowledge that when a person stands up for his/her convictions, he/she shows integrity, a love of truth, and therefore a commitment that is pleasing to God? Such a spirit will encourage a prophetic life-style in the church. At any cost transparency of life must be encouraged and maintained. It is a necessary condition for prophetic ministry.

Respect for Religious and Cultural Pluralism

One of the hope-inspiring achievements of Vatican II was the new spirit that it ushered in most aspects of the church's life and mission. Some of the most obvious of these are the reform of the liturgy, approach to the Word of God, Religious life, etc. As far as mission spirituality is concerned, by far the greatest change was the new attitude to the followers of other religions and openness to the cultures of the world.

Though the Council did not yet say explicitly that other religions have a salvific value, as did John Paul II in *Ecclesia in Asia 2*, the Council did affirm the real possibility of salvation for the followers of other religions (LG 16, GS 22) and upheld the common origin and common destiny of humankind. Though the Mission Decree *Ad Gentes* gave a rather exclusive understanding of mission, respecting the sentiments of the bishops from the so-called mission countries, by and large the Council's approach to humanity was an open one as reflected in many of its documents like *Gaudium et Spes*, promoting communion and collaboration.

Yet, from time to time we encounter tendencies that divide the world into two camps, i.e., the followers of the one true religion and the others, promoting a restorationist tendency, reiterating the Council of Florence's judgments about other religions and approach to mission. This restorationism is contrary to the spirit of genuine evan-

gelization of spreading God's love and uniting humankind. Though I have very little sympathy for the politically motivated Hindutva ideology, yet I believe that the 19th century mission and mission methods have contributed to the rise of Hindutva. Hence the same spirit of condemning the Hindutva ideology demands equally the condemnation of some of the mission methods of the past century. Thus mission spirituality today calls for a resistance to this type of restorationistic tendencies.

The identity of the community of the disciples is not primarily a religious identity but that of the followers of Jesus Christ in his life of love and service. Mission also should have this as its primary concern. It is not primarily a call to change one's religion, but a call to change one's attitude to our fellow humans in the spirit of love and service. Due to 2000 years of mutations and permutations, religious identity is also very much part of the Christian identity and thus religious change also may be implied in the mission of the church. In fact it has to occur for the sake of continuing the mission of Jesus Christ to the ends of time. But that should not be absolutized. Mission spirituality in our times demands a spirit of collaboration with the followers of other religious traditions, with the conviction that we are co-pilgrims with them sharing in all their liminalities. Vatican II and the Supreme Pontiffs since the Council have encouraged this spirituality. John Paul II has reminded the Indian bishops that Divine Providence has placed them in a context demanding that they do everything possible to encourage interreligious dialogue according to the teachings of the church (1986: 29).

Christianity in the past had difficulty in coming to terms with the cultural other as well. Rightly understood, no culture is an 'other' to Christianity, in so far as Christianity did not have a culture of its own, except, perhaps, the culture of love. Yet, the post-Constantinian church increasingly identified itself with the Mediterranean culture. Colonial mission was inextricably bound up with the colonial spirit of superiority which despised everything that was not European. However, the development of ethnology and cultural anthropology has enabled the church to come to grips with the cultures of peoples in different parts of the world. Today we are realizing how the Gospel has to enter every culture, make it its own and in the process

transform the culture from within. Evangelization is this process of inculturation (EN 18).

The modern world is a challenge to ethnocentricity and cultural imperialism. In this, Christian mission can serve as a bridge builder, mediating between worlds and cultures. Interculturality stands on the opposite front of cultural domination, colonialism and the unquestioned validity and superiority of any single culture. Advocating a single culture is contrary to the divine plan of pluralism and pluriformity manifested in nature.

Interculturality implies an openness to and a willingness to learn from other cultures, grounded in the admission of the limitedness of one's own tradition. It is not just a multi-culturalism that extols differences, admonishing the followers to be sticking to one's own cultural tradition. Interculturality advocates the creation of a new paradigm of coexistence within an inter-connected civilization. What is advocated is neither monoculturalism, nor tribalism of the many, but an inter-connected harmony of the many.

Exercising Christian Responsibility

One of the profoundest achievements of Vatican II was the retrieving of the original spirit of the church. Gerald Abruckle describes this retrieval in terms of the retrieval of the founding story of the church (1996: 66). A major expression of this is the restoring of responsibility at every level. The most important responsibility is the missionary one. With the assertion that the church is missionary by its very nature (AG 2), every Christian is called upon to exercise his/her mission. Though the church had its origin and purpose of existence in mission, eventually mission became facultative, an optional note, exercised by a select few professional missionaries, mostly religious. The Council rectified this situation and asserted in unmistakable terms how mission is the reason for the very existence of the church and that every member shares in this missionary obligation (AG 1).

Mission was the first of the restoration of the responsibility of every Christian. In other Decrees the Council speaks of different areas such as the laity, priests, religious, etc. All these are but the

emphasis of the responsibility laid on every form of Christian living. This calls for the readiness to shoulder responsibility in the church. The tendency there is to evade this responsibility seeking shelter under hierarchical responsibility, looking to clerical elders to supply detailed instructions. Vatican II reinstated the mature position of the laity who have to get involved creatively in the work of evangelization. Just as the early Christians did not wait for the blue print from the apostles to go ahead and form a Gentile Christian community at Antioch, so too today the ordinary Christians must have this ability to respond to the evangelistic situations creatively without always having to get instructions from the hierarchy. Naturally, this implies a corresponding readiness from the clerical elders to respect the genuine endeavours of the average Christians in so far as they contribute to the cause of the mission in different contexts even if they are different from the vision of the elders.

In this context one may defend even the need to allow responsible dissent as John Paul II upholds: “what would one say of the practice of combating or silencing those who do not share the same views?” (Abruckle: 65). In such instances the guiding principle should be to see if what is done is pastorally enriching and in accord with the Word of God.

A practical expression of this acknowledgement of the responsibility of all Christians would be that in a missionary context, women religious will not always have to seek the permission of the local pastor for all that they do, though they may not keep the Bishop of the place uninformed about the developments of their work.

A Mission of Presence

An essential dimension of missionary spirituality is the insistence on the quality of Christian presence as a form of evangelization. This derives from the very nature of evangelization that is serving humans by manifesting the divine love made present in Jesus Christ (*Redemptoris Missio* 2). Love is presence. The whole salvation history is the story of the divine presence in creation. The first human progenitors “heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day” (Gen 3:8). Even after the fall, God is present to them. Moses experiences the intimacy of the presence in

the tent of the meeting (Ex 33:7ff.); The Ark of the Covenant (Ex 25), the cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night (Ex 40: 38) are all symbols of the divine presence.

In the New Testament this divine presence becomes personalized in Jesus Christ who pitched his tent among humans (Jn 1: 14). He was God with us (Mt 1: 23). Through his ministry God becomes present to humans with a human face. We must not forget that the Christ event was in continuation with the divine presence in creation. We do not come across a radical discontinuity of this divine presence.

At the end of his earthly ministry the Lord sends his disciples to continue this mission of the divine presence (Jn 20: 21), with the promise that he himself will be present to them to the end of times (Mt 28: 20). According to Mark the very institution of discipleship insists on the contemplative quality of presence. Those called are to be with the Lord and thus present to him continuously, so that they can be sent out (Mk 3: 14). Evangelist John describes this presence through the image of the vine and the branches (Jn 15:1ff.). The community of the disciples has to be present to the Lord so that it can be present to the world. It is to be the salt, the light and leaven to the world (Mt 5: 13-13), all images of dynamic presence, but minority images as well. It is interesting to note that St. Paul, the greatest evangelizer of the Apostolic church, did not convert the whole Roman empire to Christianity but gave rise to Christian communities in the important cities of the empire into which life flew and from where life flowed out. In his letters he did not instruct these Christian Communities to be evangelizers but to live the Christian life faithfully. All these show the significance of the quality of the Christian life as a form of presence that would have an impact on the society at large.

Twelve centuries later, St. Francis of Assisi would send his first monks to Muslim countries with the instruction not to enter into any dispute with the people but to live their Christian faith and thus become a dynamic presence among the people (FIS, nd: 310). We must bear in mind that this happened at the height of the crusades.

Today, too, the community of the disciples is to be present in the different situations of society with its radical spirit of love and

service. It is a geographical presence in so far as it has to be present to different cultures (Mt 28: 19). It has to be present to different religions, to different socio-economic contexts, to different races, etc. Most of the time the only service that the community can render is through this dynamic presence. The community becomes the presence of God's other-centredness in a particular context. This presence is such that the onlookers would be forced to say that one's life would make no sense if God did not exist! This is what we have in the life of Mother Theresa and many others. The Christian becomes the eruption of God's presence in the world of today.

The Christian community is aware that it is the continuation of the Word that became flesh and dwelt among us (Jn 1:14). But it is the same Word that existed in the world from the beginning as the Pre-existent Word, creating and enlightening all. Such a spirituality is humble on the one hand, because it acknowledges the universality of the Mystery without exhausting it in the Christian tradition. But it is at the same time demanding responsibility in so far as the same Word became human for a specific purpose with which he has sent the disciples today. It is a responsibility of "going about doing good" (Act 10:38). This service to the divine Presence and to the world is the two edged-spirituality that a Christian is called to live. It is not a claim for any exclusiveness, nor even to any special reward (Mt 20:1ff.).

It is a presence of patience and powerlessness as well. It is a patient presence in so far as it is not overcome by anxieties of success and failure, but allows God to be God, to have God's own way of dealing, while we go on doing the good works (1Pt 2:12). Thus, there is a spirit of *nishkamakarma* in the Christian presence.

The missionary presence today is characterized by its powerlessness. The colonial mission operated from the position of power and superiority. It was typically triumphalistic. But the Christian presence today has nothing spectacular about it, nor the support of any sort of power, except the power of transparency to the divine, with a radical trust in the Lord who could not come down from the cross responding to the challenges of his enemies (Mt 27:42), but who was raised from the dead. "And of that we are all witnesses" (Act 2: 32).

The Christian is aware that in most cases today his/her life is the only Gospel that people will read. The Christian life itself is the proclamation of the Gospel. Through a life of transparency the Christian becomes the city built on a mountain that cannot be hidden (Mt 5:14). On the other hand a life in conformity with God's will is more significant than an empty proclamation of Christ or even performing of miracles in his name (Mt 7: 21-23). The life of the Christian is the letter of Christ (2Cor 3:2). Mission is not primarily an assignment to do something among others, but it is an imperative to live the Gospel, so that the very Christian life becomes a proclamation.

Concluding Remarks

Missionary spirituality today evolves from a renewed understanding of mission that is universal and has to do more with the quality of existence than frantic activity of any sort. It is a prophetic and contemplative way of life that becomes a consciousness raiser for people around us. It is an unrest creating and transforming presence from within. Such a life is more demanding though less romantic.

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