



Mission Update

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Mission of Peace

A Maryknoll Sister Joins Other Christians in Peacemaking In Iraqi Kurdistan

*by Sr. Mary Ellen Manz, M.M.
Maryknoll Sisters*

After decades of missionary work in Tanzania and Kenya, Maryknoll Sister Rosemarie Milazzo feels called to a new mission: building peace with an ecumenical group called Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT). She now goes several months each year with committed Christians of other denominations and nationalities to live, pray and work with them as ambassadors of peace to some of the world's most troubled areas.

Sister Ro, as she prefers to be known, served most recently last fall with a Christian Peacemaker Team in northeastern Iraq, known as Iraqi Kurdistan. It is an autonomous entity with its own local government and parliament, struggling for peace among its residents and with its Middle Eastern neighbors. This was the missionary's fourth three-month assignment to Kurdistan, where she served with three other members of this team.

"I seem to understand what it means to be an international human rights worker more each day. I step into each day, sometimes shaky, but I trust that God who got me here walks with me," Sister Ro wrote from Iraqi Kurdistan, where one of her team's tasks was to encourage a fair Kurdistan election.

During the campaign before the election, the peacemaker team was invited to a meeting of one of the political parties vying for votes. One participant, a poet, called on the people to rejoice that their party had chosen a candle as its symbol and not a weapon of war. The poet said that flag bears the flame of a candle, a light to the people.

"They are setting an example of what is possible when non-violence is the path," says Sister Ro. "I listened and felt the hope among them as they looked at a future they believe can be a possibility."

She reported that although most of the people of Iraqi Kurdistan are Muslims, there is religious freedom. One evening, the team visited an old monastery in

(Continued on page 2)

All of us are called to offer others an explicit witness to the saving love of the Lord, who despite our imperfections offers us his closeness, his word and his strength, and give meaning to our lives.

- Pope Francis

Evangelii Gaudium, 121

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Sulaimani, where they met three monks and a Sister who had fled the persecution of Christians in neighboring Syria. All sat in prayerful meditation in a church lit by one candle for an hour and then celebrated the Eucharist together followed by more chanting and silent prayer. One of the monks played a piercing melody on his flute and Sister Ro says she felt “transported to an ancient prayer setting.”

“At Mass, one of the monks told us he heard that an ancient monastery in Syria had been bombed by the government there,” says Sister Ro. “Their own monastery in Syria is just 20 minutes from there, so they knew the place and monks well. We remembered all of them.”

The team also visited refugee camps in Iraq, where thousands of Syrians had come seeking asylum from their country’s civil war.

The 81-year-old missionary from Brooklyn, N.Y., says the Christian Peacemaker Team traveled from village to village conducting workshops on non-violence in a land where the people are still healing from years of war. One of the tasks the team undertook on this stay in Iraq was witnessing and documenting injustices such as how villagers are being displaced from their homes because of oil companies drilling on the villagers’ ancestral land. “This land is their life and their livelihood,” she says.

Many people in the countries where the Christian Peacemaker Teams go see the teams as a ray of hope and that in witnessing and documenting what they see, the teams show the people the world cares what happens to them, Sister Ro says. Several times on this trip Sister Ro and the team were asked to give sanctuary to women who were in imminent danger for their lives in a society that often oppresses women.

“All they want is safety for their children and themselves,” the Maryknoller says. One day when the team was in court, a young pregnant woman who had accused her husband of burning her recanted her accusation. She told the court she had been burned when she fell into the fire. Sister Ro’s translator said: “Either her family or her in-laws forced her to do this.” The woman returned to her seat and wept.

Another time a group working with women brought a woman to the CPT and asked the members to protect her. She would be killed by her villagers if they knew she was pregnant and unmarried. CPT gave her hospitality and the other organization was able to connect her with WADI, a German-Iraqi non-governmental organization that promotes human rights in Iraq and focuses on empowering women and assisting women in distress.

“The woman got to meet the women at WADI and they were able to work out a solution that would be...safe for her,” Sister Ro says. “There is a family that is happy to adopt the baby.”

During Sister Ro’s stay in Iraq, Amnesty International called on Christian Peacemaker Teams for assistance regarding a young man named Haji Hussein who they believe was being held in prison unjustly and had reportedly been tortured. Sister Ro went to visit and interview the young man in prison.

“This was a first for me; being frisked to get in to visit a prisoner is hard stuff,” Sister Ro says. “However, after the guards got to know me, they just waved me on saying, ‘Haji Hussein—Go!’ ” When she visited him, Hussein would speak of what he planned to do when he was released. “One of the things was, he would rush to the market, buy 100 birds and release them into the air to celebrate his freedom!” she says. Shortly after arriving back in the United States last November, Sister Ro had received the good news that Hussein has been released from prison.

“I am humbled by their courage and their struggle, and they challenge me again and again to realize the life of privilege I live,” Sister Ro says of the people she met in Iraqi Kurdistan. “We human beings are a fragile race. When we’re hurt and suffering, we need someone to listen to us.”

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Journeying as Missionary Disciples

Alisa Macksey

USCMA Vice-President

Programs Director, Christian Brothers Conference



Here in Washington, DC we are gripped with more snow than we have had in the last few years. Even though spring is just a few days off, it feels like winter doesn't want to let go. The weather leading into spring seems to echo our journey through the Season of Lent. Lent calls us to look away from ourselves and to draw closer to God. But there are times I ask myself, how do we come to know God?

This question reminds me of the words carved into the pulpit in St. Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin, Ireland:

- ◆ "How shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard?"
- ◆ "How shall they hear without a preacher?"
- ◆ "How shall they preach except they be sent?"
- ◆ "How beautiful the feet of those that preach the Gospel of Peace."



The community that built St. Patrick's asked questions that are as important today as they were in the days following Jesus' Resurrection and Ascension, namely, how can we preach the Gospel of Peace.



Pope Francis' Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*, states "every Christian is a missionary to the extent that he or she has encountered the love of God in Christ Jesus: we no longer say that we are "disciples" and "missionaries", but rather that we are always 'missionary disciples.'" (§ 120) When we speak of being disciples, we mean that we are followers of Jesus. By definition, a missionary is one who is sent to evangelize and spread the Good News. As Catholics, we are being sent by our leader, Jesus, so naturally we are "missionary disciples." By our baptism, we are all called to be missionaries, or as the community in Dublin put it, preachers of the "Gospel of Peace". We are challenged to spread the love of God in Jesus Christ through word, witness, and invitation.



As we celebrate the one year anniversary of Pope Francis' pontificate, this issue of the Mission Update highlights the various ways we are missionary disciples. In Rev. Steve Bevans' article, he states, "Today there is no Christian Center. Every church exists in a 'missionary situation.' Today there is only a missionary church." Being sent on mission no longer means that we must be sent to a foreign land, but that we are called to be missionary disciples wherever we may live and work. All of us are called to be missionaries to those we encounter every day.



As we reflect on what it means to be missionary disciples in our communities, the USCMA Board of Directors strives to spread the good news of the work of USCMA. In early April, the USCMA Board will gather and continue a visioning and strategic planning process begun last year for the future of USCMA. We will be looking at what societal needs USCMA can serve and how we can best promote missionary discipleship.

Along with the strategic planning process, there are also some transitions happening at USCMA. Along with the release of the 2014 Mission Survey and the new USCMA website, USCMA gives thanks for the service of Sr. Anne Louise von Hoene, MMS. After many years of service to the Association, Sr. Anne Louise will be stepping down from her position as accountant. USCMA is hiring for a new part-time accountant. You can find the job description on the USCMA website. If you know someone who might be interested, please pass it along.

May the seasons of Lent and Easter help each of us to embrace our identities as Missionary Disciples, and may Jesus live in our hearts forever.

Images of the pulpit of St. Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin, Ireland were taken by Stephen F. Scott. Used with permission.

Living Gospel Justice

by Rev. John R. Nuelle, M.S.
Executive Director



You will undoubtedly enjoy reading the “Periodic Paper” written by Fr. Stephen Bevans, SVD in this issue of **Mission Update** entitled *Mission, Vatican II, and Today’s Missionary Church*. Perhaps, like myself, you too will feel challenged when he states that “the 1971 Synod of Bishops made a direct link between preaching the gospel and working for justice.” It intrigued me enough to go back and reread that 1971 document *Justice in the World*, which in #36 states:

The Church has received from Christ the mission of preaching the Gospel message, which contains ... a subsequent demand for justice in the world ... She [the Church] **has a proper and specific responsibility which is identified with her mission of giving witness** before the world of the need for love and justice contained in the Gospel message, a witness to be carried out in Church institutions themselves and in the lives of Christians. (*emphasis is mine*)

So much in that document, written over 40 years ago, still remains pertinent today. How many issues, if they had been given adequate attention, effort and resources then, would no longer be burning matters for us today?

- * **The right of people to keep and protect their own identity**
- * **Their right to determine their own future and economic growth**
- * **The discriminatory attitudes toward immigration that lead people to be treated inhumanly**
- * **Violence against the right to life in all its forms**
- * **The abuse of natural resources**

And the list goes on. That short yet significant document can help to “awaken a critical sense, which will lead us to reflect on the society in which we live and on its values; it will make [us] ready to renounce these values when they cease to promote justice for all people.” (51)

The document ends with a challenge: “The examination of conscience which we have made together, regarding the Church’s involvement in action for justice, will remain ineffective if it is not given flesh in the life of our local Churches at all their levels.”(71) It is in that spirit that USCMA dedicates the annual Conference of 2014 to the question of justice – a justice based on the way the Pascal Mystery of Jesus incites us to be involved. Entitled **Gospel Justice: A Living Challenge for the Church in Mission**, the conference will address a call for action. As with each annual conference, it will entail support for a specific resolution, but also urge us to make a personal engagement to living a more just lifestyle. Come join us on October 24-26 in Alexandria, VA. (Go to www.uscatholicmission.org where our newly designed website will provide you with more information.)

Living Gospel justice is not a choice. It is an essential part of being a missionary. To use the final words of the introduction to the 1971 document *Justice in the World*, “Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel, or, in other words, of the Church’s mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation.” (6)

2014 Mission Survey Update

In February 2014, USCMA distributed the 2014 Mission Survey to the Mission-Sending Organizations in our database. The Mission Survey is a biennial survey that looks at the long-term international and cross-cultural mission activity of US missionaries (citizens by birth or naturalization) and includes all those Catholics who are sponsored by Catholic mission-sending agencies, even if they work for projects not sponsored by the Catholic Church. This survey is critical to USCMA's work in promoting the US Church's missionary activity and global relationships with (arch)dioceses and parishes around the world. For information regarding past Mission Surveys, please [visit the Mission Survey Page on our website](#).



If your organization did not receive a copy of the Mission Survey in the mail, we invite you to take part in this year's survey by [downloading and completing the Mission Survey Excel Workbook](#) found on the USCMA website. Please submit your survey responses to our office by **April 10, 2014**. If you have any questions, please contact Stephen Scott, USCMA's Associate Director at (202) 832-3112 or sscott@uscatholicmission.org.

MISSION UPDATE NOTICE: In an effort to hold our organization to the highest standards of global responsibility and to follow the desire of our members to become a more sustainable minded organization, this edition of the Mission Update will be the final one that will be published and mailed to all of our members and friends. USCMA's original deadline for this transition was delayed to ensure that the new website's design would make downloading the Mission Update easier for members and friends. Beginning with our **Summer 2014** Issue we will distribute the Mission Update via email. Most recent editions of the Mission Update can be found in the [Member Resources Portal](#) of the new USCMA website.

You will receive a letter from our office requesting you to update your email address and mailing preferences in the coming weeks. This letter will also include your login information for the Member Resources Portal and the Membership Directory. If you do not have an email address, or purposefully request a print copy, we will mail your copy to you each quarter. Thank you for your support as we move toward a more efficient use of USCMA resources, being better stewards of the environment, and decreasing our carbon footprint.

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Mission, Vatican II, and Today's Missionary Church

by Stephen Bevans, SVD

*NB: The following article is adapted from a longer article by Steve Bevans that appeared in the Catholic theological journal **Theological Studies** in June, 2013, entitled "Revisiting Mission at Vatican II: Theology and Practice for Today's Missionary Church." In editing the article for **Mission Update**, Steve has taken out the footnotes and updated it in light of **Evangelii Gaudium**.*

What does Vatican II say about Mission?

Where does the church engage in mission today? The answer to this question is rather ambiguous in the documents of Vatican II. This is the case both in regard to the idea of doing mission in general in documents like the Constitution on the Church (LG), the Constitution on the Liturgy (SC), the Council's great document on the Church and the Modern World (GS), and in the and in the document that addresses mission most specifically, the Decree on Missionary Activity, *Ad Gentes* (AG).

When the Council speaks of mission, one can ask, does it mean the basic task of the church wherever it finds itself? Or does it mean the work of "Christian," "sending" churches moving beyond borders and cultures? On the one hand we read that "the pilgrim Church is missionary by its very nature (AG 2)," that "the whole Church is missionary, and the work of evangelization is a basic duty of the People of God" (AG 35), that the church is a sacrament, a sign and instrument of unity in the world (LG 1), and—albeit in a more tentative way—that the church takes its existence from its mission to witness to and proclaim the Reign of God (LG 5). On the other hand, the Council distinguishes between missionary work as such and "pastoral activity exercised among the faithful," (AG 6). LG 16 speaks of the need of the church to painstakingly promote "missionary work," and the whole tenor of AG, especially after Chapter I, seems finally to refer to "foreign missions." The decree still seems to have in its imagination the white, "First World" missionary working in exotic lands and cultures. On the one hand, then, mission can be read as *constitutive* of the church; on the other it can be read as a very important, even indispensable, activity—but one of very many, carried out by women and men with a specific "missionary" vocation. The Council just is not clear.

Today and the Missionary Church

In today's world, however, a half-century later, the situation has changed. Today there is no Christian Center. Every church exists in a "missionary situation." Today there is only a missionary church. As the church expands rapidly in lands formerly considered "missionary," it is often without adequate personnel resources. As members of those formerly "missionary churches" migrate into lands where there exist what were formerly considered "sending churches," they are left without adequate pastoral care. As missionaries come from the "missionary churches" to care for those who have migrated there, or to evangelize their former evangelizers, a new kind of missionary had emerged. And as the church in the West finds itself in numerical decline, it recognizes a need to witness to and preach the gospel in new ways and with new urgency in pluralist and secularist societies. As Pope Francis has said trenchantly in *Evangelii Gaudium* (EG), "'Mere administration' can no longer be enough. Throughout the world, let us be 'permanently in a state of mission'" (EG 25). It is this missionary church that can revisit mission at Vatican II with great profit.

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Revisiting Mission: The Church Engaging in Prophetic Dialogue

Revisiting mission at Vatican II in the light of today's universal missionary situation will point to the fact that there is no more dichotomy between every church's missionary nature and its task of preaching the gospel in a way that requires dialogue, knowledge of and empathy for the concrete contexts in which women and men live, and skills of intercultural communication. The church is indeed "missionary by its very nature" (AG 2), requiring missionary practice for its very existence. Without mission it will cease to exist as a church—both literally and theologically. Mission today is lived out among people of varying cultures, and/or of the world's many religions, and/or people who do not believe or who have ceased to believe. Mission in every situation might well profit from the experience of traditional "cross-cultural" missionaries, for that is the situation in which every church today exists. What was originally meant, at Vatican II, for certain kinds of ministers in certain kinds of churches, now has relevance for *all* ministers and *all* churches. What has been seen as basically irrelevant for some churches, and so pushed to the side, is now amazingly relevant for all.

Revisiting Vatican II on mission urges the church to engage in mission in what Roger Schroeder and I, drawing on our own SVD mission theology, have called "prophetic dialogue." Such a stance anchors all mission in deep listening, respectful attitudes toward the world (business, art, science, culture, current trends) in which the church witnesses, reverence for the heritage of people's religions, readiness to learn from people's experiential wisdom, and sensitivity to those who do not or cannot believe. At the same time, however, as a result of such a dialogical posture, Christians humbly (still dialogue!) yet clearly and confidently witness and proclaim gospel—telling the marvelous story that "God is like Jesus," offering his perspectives on life and life's problems, embodying a future of human and cosmic harmony, demonstrating an alternative yet attractive way to live, denouncing any and all evil and injustice, and working toward a just society within and outside the church. Any kind of missionary practice, therefore, should always be tempered with what John XXIII called the "medicine of mercy."

Mission: Looking at the New Evangelization and Liturgy

In his recent book on the Council's teaching in regard to the motive of missionary work, Ralph Martin argues that—particularly in terms of contemporary Western society but applying this to *ad gentes* evangelization as well—"while there were many sound reasons to emphasize the positive in the Church's relations with the modern world, it has also become clear that an adjustment in her pastoral strategy is needed." For Martin, this new strategy—which is a return to a previous strategy—is to emphasize the sinfulness and corruption of women and men who do not believe in the gospel, very many of whom will most likely not be saved. Martin believes such a strategy reaffirms the urgency of mission, and will provide a more effective motive for mission than mere obedience to Christ's command and the enhancement of human and religious life. It is this strategy that he urges for the "New Evangelization."

Much of what Martin argues is well taken. There has been, perhaps, a reading of Vatican II on mission that has glossed over human sinfulness, minimized the danger of the possibility of losing salvation, minimized the help of Christian faith, Christian community, and Christian sacraments in achieving salvation, and offered what Martin calls (referring to Karl Rahner, Richard McBrien, and Francis Sullivan) a "salvation optimism" that quickly slides down a slippery slope to a facile universalism.

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Nevertheless, this does not seem enough to justify a reversal of Vatican II's basic dialogical stance toward the world and its basic pastoral strategy. Perhaps rather than reversing such a strategy, a revisiting of Vatican II's missionary practice should be a renewal of efforts to concretize at every turn a practice of prophetic witness and proclamation that is rooted not in severe condemnations but in the medicine of mercy. Thus revisiting Vatican II on mission will bring about a true "New Evangelization" in the Majority World, in an "Age of Migration," and in a world of the unchurched and secular unbelief.

In his great book *True Reform: Liturgy and Ecclesiology in Sacrosanctum Concilium*, Massimo Faggioli connects the Council's liturgical renewal to mission, as indeed the Council itself did. Any kind of renewal of evangelization efforts in today's world also needs to pay heed to the evangelizing power of the Liturgy and the challenge to cultural relevance proposed by SC 37. Ideally, a "New Evangelization" will make further efforts at liturgical inculturation not only in the countries of the Global North, but among migrant groups, contemporary Western congregations, youth, young adults, and other particular groups. But, even if, sadly, the liturgical movement has reached somewhat of an impasse in this regard with the abandonment of the conciliar principle of decisions being made at a more local level, liturgy as it is celebrated today presents all sorts of opportunities for more worthy celebrations, cultural adaptations within the parameters allowed, more beautiful and relevant music, more graceful presiding, prayers that reflect international and local concerns, greater lay participation, particularly by women, and better prepared, better informed, evangelically focused homilies. People are either attracted or repelled by liturgy. It is a missionary act.

GS 44 speaks about how "accommodated preaching" (we might say "inculturated" or "contextual" preaching) "ought to remain the law of all evangelization. This need not be confined to liturgical preaching or the homily. In a renewed practice of evangelization, *any* church communication needs to be attuned to the "signs of the times," the local culture, or broad cultural movements like contemporary movements in the United States toward social equality. It is not always a question of *agreeing* with what is going on, or with current cultural values, or social movements. However, a church that preaches the gospel needs to have a deep respect for the opinions of people of apparent good will, and needs to teach its own, perhaps countercultural position in ways that are clear and well-argued, that are based on scientific and philosophical truth, that are presented clearly and non-judgmentally. Truth, DH 1 says, "cannot impose itself except by virtue of its own truth, as it makes its entrance into the mind at once quietly and with power." Mission eschews all "unworthy techniques" of preaching the gospel (see AG 13); real prophecy, however strong, is not violent.

Silence as Dialogue: A Tool for Mission

And a missionary church should know when to keep silent. The Council's dialogical approach to mission is beautifully summed up in the intervention of the 2012 Synod on the New Evangelization of (now Cardinal) Luis Antonio Tagle, Archbishop of Manila. Tagle called for an evangelization in humility, respect, and silence, saying in respect to the third: "The Church must discover the power of silence. Confronted with the sorrows, doubts and uncertainties of people she cannot pretend to give easy solutions. In Jesus, silence becomes the way of attentive listening, compassion and prayer. It is the way to truth." Perhaps the church its official teachings and official pronouncements should indeed keep silent more than it does. Indeed, Pope Francis's insistence on the centrality of the Gospel of Joy and the importance of a hierarchy of truths is a clear step in this direction. A sense of humility and listening—essential to dialogue—might proclaim the gospel more clearly—"Who am I to judge?" the pope has said. This in itself is a prophetic stance! As AG 6 wisely counsels, "the appropriate actions and tools must be brought to bear on any given circumstance or situation." Perhaps, as the

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subtitle to Maryknoller John Sivalon's recent book suggests, the missionary church today might profit from "the gift of uncertainty."

Evangelizing Communities and Ecumenism

The Council, and especially AG 15, calls for the formation of Christian communities that are examples of the power of the gospel to transform lives. The evangelizing influence of such communities can hardly be exaggerated, because "people will always believe their eyes first." Communities in which Christians are seen to support one another, share deeply with one another, celebrate joyfully, challenge one another, console one another are truly what the great twentieth century missiologist Lesslie Newbigin called "a hermeneutic of the gospel." The formation of this kind of community should be a real priority for the leadership of the church, particularly at the parish and small community level. In his intervention at the 2012 Synod, Archbishop Socrates Villegas, Archbishop of Lingayen-Dagupan in the Philippines, suggested that the New Evangelization calls for new saints—and that we must be those saints. It is in the witness of true holiness, which is ultimately authentic, vibrant humanity, in individuals and pulsating in a community, that women and men will be attracted to ask the questions that can lead them to faith in Christ.

Something that has perhaps been lost in the years since the Council has been the close tie between mission and ecumenism. Along with "missionary activity among the nations," AG 6 mentions both pastoral work and "undertakings aimed at restoring unity among Christians" as "most closely connected with the missionary zeal of the Church." Pope Francis has lifted up such ecumenical dialogue in *Evangelii Gaudium* (see EG 244-46). As UR has said, the continuing divisions among Christians constitute a real scandal to people among whom Christians witness to and proclaim the gospel today. Doctrinal differences are real, and in many cases fundamental. However there still remain many ways in which Christians can work together, especially in the areas of theological education, action for social and ecological justice, reconciliation work. Praying together, as the Council recommended, is also a witness to a more profound unity than appears on the surface. There needs to be a new ecumenism for the renewed evangelization that revisiting Vatican II requires.

Vatican II, Mission, and Interreligious Dialogue

Often one of the most prophetic actions Christians can take is to continue the practice of dialogue, especially in the face of the many religious tensions—in Nigeria, for example, or India, France, or post-9/11 United States. As Hans Küng has constantly insisted, there can be no real peace without peace among the world's religions that is the fruit of interreligious dialogue. Whether it is the dialogue of life, the dialogue of common action, of theological exchange, or spiritual experience, dialogue is a sine qua non of mission today. Often this will not be easy; often, as has been the case in several places in the world, the price of dialogue is martyrdom. But openness and vulnerability are key aspects of mission that we discover when we visit Vatican II on mission, and key as well to a renewed vision of evangelization in the light of the Council. Austrian theologian Clemens Sedmak suggests that the church set up what he calls "intellectual base communities" in which "ethical issues (such as abortion, euthanasia, same sex marriage) can be discussed in a climate of friendship. There is as yet little real encounter between Church members and representatives of positions that cannot be reconciled with the Church." In a similar way, Similarly, Proposition 55 of the 2012 Synod Bishops suggests that various churches and institutions open a kind of "Courtyard of the Gentiles" "where believers and non-believers can dialogue about fundamental themes." A missionary church in dialogue could not only be a teaching church. It could be a learning church as well.

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Mission and the Work for Justice

Over and over again the Council reminds us in so many words that the joys, the hopes, the griefs, and the anxieties of humanity—“especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted” (GS 1; see also AG 12) are the same as those of Christians. If this was not clear enough, the 1971 Synod of Bishops made a direct link between preaching the gospel and working for justice. Although it hardly appears in Vatican II, today that justice needs to be extended to the entire cosmos in ecological commitment, moving beyond the rather strong anthropocentrism of the Council (e.g. GS 9, 33). More than ever today, the church needs to work for justice and transparency within its own boundaries. How the church’s leadership has treated women in some cases, how it has gone about its task of preserving the faith from error, and how it has treated victims of sexual abuse has greatly hindered Christian credibility in the world today. On the other hand, the brave acknowledgements of guilt that the church has made at Vatican II in terms of its partial blame for the lack of Christian unity (UR 3) or, perhaps obliquely, anti-Semitism (UR 5) and the humble apologies made during the Jubilee Year of the millennium have been powerful proclamations of how the gospel claims Christian life. A new, renewed evangelization can in no way be reduced to witnessing to and working for justice, but it surely is the condition of the possibility for the believability of a church that preaches and lives the gospel with the new ardor, new methods, and new expression that the New Evangelization calls for.

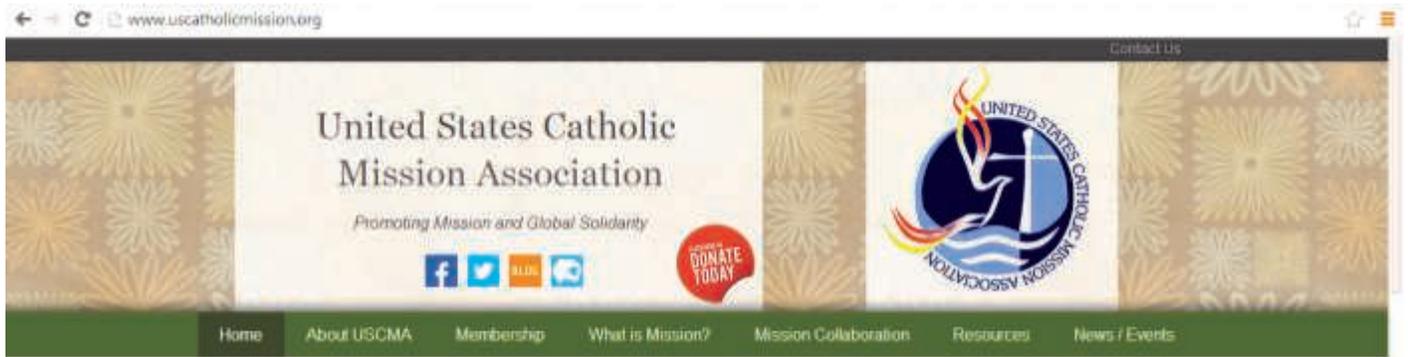
Revisiting mission at Vatican II, in its rather pervasive presence in the Council’s documents and in the decree dedicated to it specifically, will be a fruitful task, particularly in this time of seismic shifts in the world’s Christian population. Such a shift calls the church in every part of the world to realize its essential missionary nature in a way not completely clear at the Council itself. Nevertheless, the Council gives us in its missionary emphases and missionary document—to borrow the words of John Paul II—a “sure compass by which to take our bearings” in this extraordinary time of World Christianity, great migrations, and seemingly inevitable secularism and unbelief. That compass points in the direction of the church’s duty to witness to and preach the gospel not only because of Christ’s command, but especially because Christians are caught up in that overflowing fountain of the triune God’s love and mercy toward the world. At the same time, it calls the missionary church to preach and witness in a way that—in the words of Paul VI at the end of the Council— feels the need “to know, to approach, to understand, to penetrate, to serve . . . the surrounding society, and to comprehend it, almost to pursue it in its rapid and continuous change.” Fifty years after the Council, this is a reliable compass indeed.



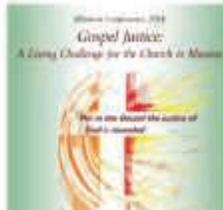
Stephen Bevans is a priest in the Society of the Divine Word (SVD) and serves as Louis J. Luzbetak, SVD Professor of Mission and Culture at Catholic Theological Union, Chicago. Missionary to the Philippines from 1972 until 1981, he received the STL from the Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome, in 1972 and the PhD from the University of Notre Dame in 1986. Among his publications are *Models of Contextual Theology* (Orbis, 2002), *An Introduction to Theology in Global Perspective* (Orbis, 2009), with Roger Schroeder, *Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today* (Orbis, 2004), and, with Jeffrey Gros, *Evangelization and Religious Freedom: Ad Gentes and Dignitatis Humanae* (Paulist, 2009). In 2013 he edited *A Century of Catholic Mission* (Regnum Books).

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Save the Date



The United States Catholic Mission Association is proud to announce that this year's Mission Conference, **Gospel Justice: A Living Challenge for the Church in Mission** will take place in Alexandria, Virginia from October 24 - 26, 2014.

For more information, [click here!](#)

[Click here to read the Press Release.](#)

USCMA Highlights

[2014 Mission Survey](#)

[Mission Conference 2014](#)

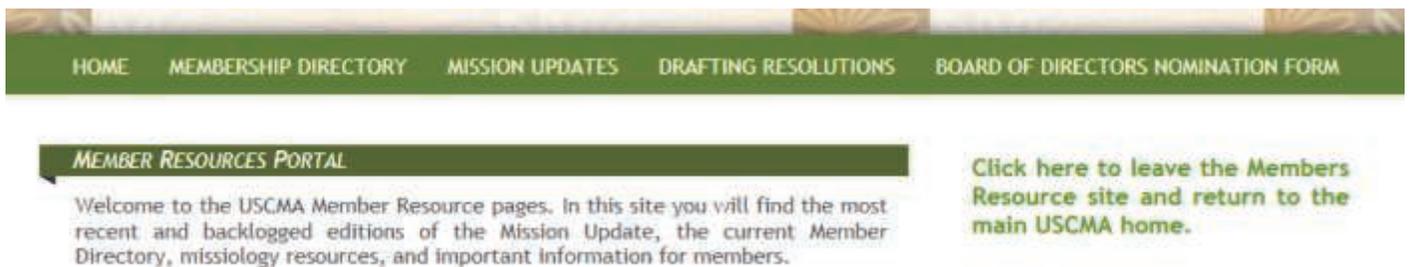
[USCMA Resolutions](#)

Calendar

On March 7, 2014, USCMA's new website went live. Encouraged by the success of the 2013 Mission Conference, **Social Media: A New Language For Mission**, the USCMA staff began working on the new website in collaboration with [eCatholic Websites](#). The new website is streamlined and includes several updated features:

- ✪ an improved calendar with events from USCMA and member organizations;
- ✪ an enlarged Member's section (see the Member Resources Portal information below);
- ✪ social media widgets;
- ✪ a new section on Mission Education;
- ✪ and a mobile friendly version for the missioner-on-the-go.

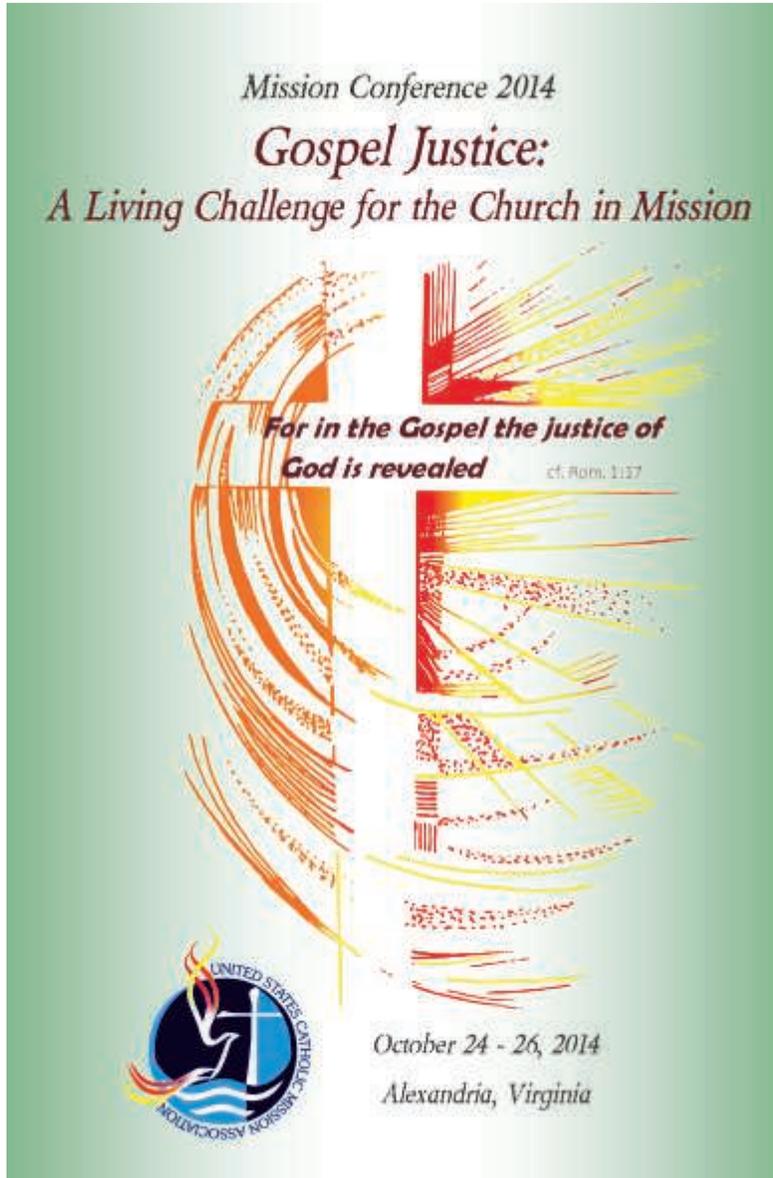
The Member Resources Portal pages are password protected!



USCMA will gradually release additional resources, especially in the Member Resources Portal, both for and from USCMA members. Members, please check your e-mail for more information on how to access the Member Resources Portal. If we do not have your email on file, we will mail you the information.

Mission Conference 2014

Gospel Justice: A Living Challenge for the Church in Mission



“Mission” has meant many things to people: a statement of purpose, an activity, a fruit (olive, grape, or fig), being sent to a far-away place, or even a cinema (*The Mission*). For the Baptized person, however, mission is a dynamic grace rooted in an encounter with Christ, a sharing of life in the Trinity, a communion in God’s loving design for humanity and indeed all of creation.

Similarly the concept of “Justice”, while central to every culture, is understood differently: law, fairness, judgment, condemnation for wrongdoing, moral rectitude, harmonious relationship. What does the Gospel tell us about it?

Each year USCMA hosts a conference to reflect on major aspects of the Church in mission. Many USCMA members and organizations live out the mission of the Church by striving for justice. During this year’s annual USCMA Conference missionaries will examine the question of how mission and justice are rooted in the Gospel, of how these concepts are interrelated, indeed even constitutive of each other. The theme, **Gospel Justice: A Living Challenge for the Church in Mission**, confronts all who call themselves Christian.



We invite you to join us at Mission Conference 2014 from October 24th to 26th in Alexandria, VA!

Stay tuned for more conference details and registration information.

Mission Conference 2014

Gospel Justice: A Living Challenge for the Church in Mission

Pope Francis has spoken about the importance of being missionary disciples and working for justice. During his homily on Pentecost Sunday in 2013, Pope Francis touched on how the Church is called out of itself to answer the call for justice every day:

It is the Paraclete Spirit, the "Comforter", who grants us the courage to take to the streets of the world, bringing the Gospel! The Holy Spirit makes us look to the horizon and drive us to the very outskirts of existence in order to proclaim life in Jesus Christ. Let us ask ourselves: do we tend to stay closed in on ourselves, on our group, or do we let the Holy Spirit open us to mission?

We are reminded that the Holy Spirit guides our actions and calls us to live our lives proclaiming the Gospel in word and deed to those in need. The Gospel calls us to live with our neighbors in harmony and to seek justice for all. But how do we respond to the call of the Holy Spirit?

Scriptures of all major world religions promote justice as a virtue and many organizations and individuals advocate for justice in a variety of ways. In Catholic Scriptures, justice is one of the "cardinal" virtues – an acquired, pivotal, moral virtue which disposes one to respect the rights of others and to establish harmonious human relationships which promote equity.

Mission Conference 2014 Keynote Speakers



Rev. Donald Senior, CP
President Emeritus,
Catholic Theological
Union



Marie Dennis
Co-President,
Pax Christi International



Very Rev. James Greenfield, OSFS
President,
Conference of Major
Superiors of Men

While recognizing that a considerable portion of our world understands, advocates for, and acts on justice issues in vastly different ways, the keynote addresses presented at this year's Mission Conference will look at justice through the lenses of Scripture, Catholic Social Teachings, and basic dispositions of our human hearts. Our Workshops and Dialogue Sessions will delve deeper into various aspects of Gospel Justice (Mission as a Prophetic Response to Jesus' call for Justice; Mission and Justice as the heart of the Church; Pope Francis' call for Justice and my Response; Peace Building through Conflict Transformation; The Role of Youth in Working for Justice; How our Understanding of Mission and Justice have Changed since Vatican II), and will examine how each of us is called to work for justice. With an artful combination of prayer, reflection, sharing, instruction, and camaraderie, USCMA Mission Conference 2014 promises to raise our spirits, lift up our hearts, and bring us joy as we glorify the God who confided a mission to us, his people: "Go, be my witnesses!"

Every Christian is a missionary to the extent that he or she has encountered the love of God in Christ Jesus: we no longer say that we are "disciples" and "missionaries", but rather that we are always "missionary disciples".

- Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 120

Celebrating Pope Francis' First Year: *A Missionary Journey*



[You can click on this link or go to the Vatican website to see the commemorative e-book celebrating the first anniversary of Pope Francis' Pontificate.](#)

FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF POPE FRANCIS' PONTIFICATE

Vatican City, 12 March 2014 (VIS) – Tomorrow, 13 March, will be the first anniversary of the election of Pope Francis to the See of St. Peter. These 365 days of his papacy have been characterized as a “time of mercy”, as described by the Pope himself. During these twelve months of intense activity, the Pope “from the end of the earth” who asks us to pray for him, has started out on a new way of working that, with a slow but sure pace, has drawn renewed attention to issues not only of an ecclesiastical nature. The “priest of the world”, as his special secretary Msgr. Alfred Xuereb calls him, “has not wasted a minute! He works tirelessly and, when he feels the need to take a moment's pause, he closes his eyes and does nothing: he simply sits and prays the Rosary”.

To commemorate this first anniversary, the director of the Holy See Press Office, Fr. Federico Lombardi, S.J., gave an interview with Vatican Radio in which he reflects on this year and its “great impulse to a journeying Church”.

“The most important aspect of this first year is without doubt the great attention, the great attraction of the people – I say the people, meaning not only practicing Catholics, but everyone in this world – the great attention for this Pope, for his message. It is something that I think and hope is very deeply rooted in the heart of the people, who have felt touched by a word of love, attention, mercy, closeness, proximity, in which through the man, the Pope, the love of God arrives”.

“The Church truly seems to be a journeying people. This is her most characteristic aspect: a sense of great dynamism. The Pope has given a great impulse and journeys with a Church that seeks God's will, that seeks her mission in today's world for the good of all, truly going out to the peripheries, to the ends of the world”, he continues, adding that there are “manifestations of attention, therefore, that come from places, from atypical organs of the press”, that “mean that his message reaches its target”.

Study Guide to the Aparecida Document



In his latest Papal Exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*, Pope Francis speaks about the importance of the Aparecida Document published by CELAM, of which Pope Francis was a member before his election. The Study Guide is in both English and Spanish (offered in a bilingual edition) and is perfect for group

discussions, parish trainings and further study into what it means to be a missionary. The **Study Guide for use with the Aparecida Document** is only \$10.00 plus shipping. To order your copy, contact our office staff at uscma@uscatholicmission.org or call us at (202) 832-3112.

Faces of Mission

is USCMA's bi-weekly blog series. **Faces of Mission** highlights our members and their sending organizations to share your stories among USCMA members and with the broader public. With your help we will be able to share stories representing the mission work that USCMA members do, have done, or support.

Share your story of mission with us today!

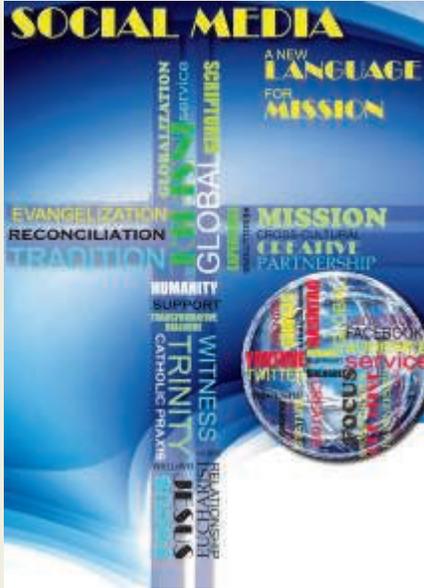
For more information or to share your story, contact: **Allison Kingery**

Associate Director of Operations
(202) 832-3112

akingery@uscatholicmission.org

Resources for Mission

Mission Conference 2013 Presentations



Order your copy today of the
2013 Mission Conference Presentations including:

- ◆ **Media in Mission**
by Cardinal Luis Tagle
- ◆ **Responses to Media in Mission**
by Teresita Gonzales
and Fr. Melanio Viuya, MJ
- ◆ **Our Story, THE Story, Our Shared Story**
by Sr. Kathy Schmittgens, SSND
- ◆ **Embracing a Future That's Already Here**
by Meredith Gould
- ◆ **Social Media: Laying the Foundations
for Fundraising** by Mark Etling

This DVD resource is available for **\$20.00** (shipping included). To order, please contact the USCMA staff at uscma@uscatholicmission.org or (202) 832-3112.

Additional Mission Conference Resources

Are you looking to learn more about what happened at previous USCMA Mission Conferences? We can help you out.

The USCMA office has DVDs of previous Mission Conferences. The DVDs contain Keynote presentations and Panel discussions. Here are some of the Mission Conference DVDs that we currently have available:

- 2012: Forging News Paths- Interreligious Dialogue**
- 2009: Behold, I Create a New Heaven and a New Earth... Seeing Mission with New Eyes**
- 2008: Mission: A Journey of Hope**
- 2007: "Are Not Our Hearts Burning?"**

We also have DVDs of the Keynotes from:
Mission Congress 2010
**God's Mission, Many Faces:
A Portrait of US Catholics in Mission**

To order, please email the USCMA staff
uscma@uscatholicmission.org.
All prices include USPS Media Mail shipping cost.

DVD Year	Member Price	Non-member Price
2012	\$15.00	\$17.50
2010	\$11.00	\$13.50
2009, 2008, 2007	\$ 8.00	\$12.50

Find out more information about the ways you can help to promote mission and global solidarity on our website:

<http://www.uscatholicmission.org>

Questions or do you have a mission related event? Send us the information and we will help to publicize!

uscma@uscatholicmission.org



Before sending out the Twelve to evangelize, Jesus, in his "missionary discourse" (cf. Mt 10), teaches them the paths of mission: poverty, meekness, acceptance of suffering and persecution, the desire for justice and peace, charity - in other words, the Beatitudes, lived out in the apostolic life (cf. Mt 5:1-12). By living the Beatitudes, the missionary experiences and shows concretely that the kingdom of God has already come, and that he has accepted it.

- Pope Bl. John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio* 91.

Image: Participants listening to Cardinal Tagle during Mission Conference 2013



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