Columban Mission Institute

The LANTERN SERIES

EVANGELISATION Witnessing Christ in the World

No. 11

Mission spirituality

'Mission' and 'Spirituality' are two words with which many people have at least a passing acquaintance. Most companies and businesses have a 'mission statement'. There is interest today in 'spirituality' in the broadest meaning of the word, though it is often reflected in a limited, self-centred way. A contemporary understanding of the spirituality of mission offers hope for the world.

"You will be my witnesses to the ends of the earth"
Acts 1:8

Mission in Myanmar

Myitkyina is the capital city of the Kachin State, at the extreme north of Myanmar (Burma). Life in Myanmar is oppressive under the military regime. The Catholic diocese of Myitkyina covers an area of 78,000 sq kms, stretching across high mountainous terrain and valleys. Villages lie deep in the mountains, road conditions are poor and paths through jungles are often the only access to many of these villages. There are 99,000 Catholics and only 44 priests but the Church in Myitkyina is active and vibrant due mainly to the faith and dedication of village catechists. They develop the prayer and faith life through teaching catechism, leading Sunday services, conducting funerals and prayer services. They prepare people for the sacraments which are administered when the priest visits throughout the year. Many of the catechists leave their homes and families to live in these remote villages for months and even years at a time.

Columban priest, the late Fr Bernard Way, set up the first catechist training school 50 years ago which today has a two year theology and scripture program. Before graduating the students have a one month exposure programme in different villages, after which time is given to reflect on their experiences. From this direct involvement with people at the grassroots, the catechists learn how to listen to the sufferings and joys of the people, and together find ways of meeting their needs.

Mission in Sydney

I've been involved with the Young Christian Workers Movement for the past six years. It has truly changed my life. If you asked me six years ago what my mission was, I would've given you a blank look. Now, I think I can give a somewhat decent answer.

I started in the YCW visiting asylum seekers detained at the Villawood Detention Centre. That initial action and my continual experience of review (the see-judge-act process) politicized me. I became a bit of a crusader. I took up various leadership positions within the movement, and eventually worked full time in it for three years.

Through this journey I came to learn about God; particularly through the people I met, made friends with and through the actions we took together as a community. These relationships and experiences began to clarify for me the conviction that all human beings are truly made in the likeness of God and that as co-creators with God our mission is to create the Kingdom of God here on Earth.

This I believe has solidified for me, what I know will be a life long passion for social justice and a real need to learn more about God and my religion.

Sharmila Falzon

Those who proclaim need to listen carefully to people's real questions

Roger Schroeder SVD

No one lights a lamp and hides it in a jar or puts it under a bed.

Luke 8:16

In the Christian context what does it mean to have a 'mission spirituality'? The parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10:29 – 37) offers a good insight.

The priest and the Levite, both the 'religious' of their day and the obvious ones to respond to the victim, pass by. What was the cause of their refusal to help? A narrow understanding of God? Of neighbour? Prejudice? Fear? A distorted sense of elitism? "It's not my concern!" Perhaps it was a combination of religious and cultural conditioning that caused them to be 'blind'. Jesus doesn't say.

The Samaritans were despised by the people of Jesus' time. So it comes as a shock to Jesus' hearers that this Samaritan is the only one in the story to see and respond to the suffering of a fellow human. Through his courage he demonstrates an understanding of and openness to God's action and spirit. He responds with generosity and without question to the needs of the other present before him. He, too, is conditioned by his culture and religious tradition, but with a depth of understanding of his tradition that enables him to transcend prejudice, conditioning and fear. What he does comes from his deep spirituality about God's love for all.

Mission is God's work of bringing about the Reign of God. The three persons of the Trinity are constantly creating, healing, reconciling, transforming and uniting the world. The Church's and our particular task is to seek, uncover and celebrate God's presence in the world. God is especially active wherever people are inspired at whatever level to strive creatively for justice, truth, peace, freedom and reconciliation between peoples, nations, religions and the environment. (Noel Connolly SSC)

A spirituality of mission is one that:

- is grounded in a personal relationship with Jesus
- witnesses and proclaims God's love for all
- is Eucharistic
- involves liturgy, prayer and contemplation
- is committed to justice, peace and the integrity of creation
- is open to interreligious dialogue
- is inculturated in the local community
- brings about reconciliation.

Meditation

"I am a link in a chain, a bond of connection between persons. God has not created me for nothing. I shall do good, I shall do God's work. I shall be an angel of peace, a preacher of truth in my own place, while not intending it."

John Henry Cardinal Newman

Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch.
Luke 5:4

What Can I Do?

Learn about a range of spiritualities from the Church's tradition as well as today.

Watch "Faces, the Mission of the Australian Church", a Catholic Mission visual resource featuring stories of six Australians. Use the study guide.
Contact Catholic Mission ph 02 9411 4611

Write to Catholic and other media about mission issues today.

"The lives of all those involved in any boundary crossing mission must be grounded in prayer"

Roger Schroeder SVD

Being a missionary is not what I do, but who I am

Timothy Radcliffe OP

Chat Points:

Discuss:

- What is mission for? To whom? By whom? With whom? How?
- Has the message got stale? Why?
- Why are people searching for spirituality in the East? In New Age?
- Where do you see the work of the Holy Spirit today?
- Is my spirituality self centred or reaching out, turned in or out?
- Why invite people to join the Church community?
- Why do people seem deaf to the Church message?

Learn More @

Mission and Spirituality News a monthly e-newsletter from Church Resources and the Broken Bay Institute with resources to encourage the development of the spirituality and ministry of faith communities.
www.churchresources.info/missionspirit/issue0803/index.php

Palms Australia, a volunteer sending organization. **www.palms.org.au**

SEDOS, a forum open to Institutes of Consecrated Life which commit themselves to deepening their understanding of global mission.
www.sedos.org

CMI
COLUMBAN MISSION INSTITUTE
Columban Mission: Global and Local

c/o Australian Catholic University Locked Bag 2002, Strathfield NSW 2135
Phone: (02) 9352 8021 Fax: (02) 9746 8033 Email: pej.cmi@columban.org.au
www.columban.org.au/cmi