

THESIS NO.22

Mission of the Church

In the context of the pluralism of religions and theology (LG 16; NA 1-2) the catholic church faces the dual task of remaining faithful to its belief in the uniqueness of Christ (RM 5-8; EA 10-14) and continue his mission while discerning God's salvific presence in the plurality of religions and cultures (EA 15). Consequently, the proclamation of the Good News in this pluralistic context demands both a renewed understanding of mission in the modern world and an integrated process of inter-religious dialogue, ecumenism and inculturation (AG 1-9; EA 24-31; EN 17-24) and work for justice, both for humans and the whole earth (EA 32-41).

WHAT IS RELIGION? The term religion is coming from the root word '*religio*'. The verbs of this noun are *Relegare* means to turn to constantly, *Relagari* means to bind oneself back, *religere* means to choose again. But it is not clear which of the three verbs the noun is most closely allied with. Religion is the conscious and effective recognition of an absolute (sacred/divine) reality, on which humanity is existentially dependent either in submission to it or in total/partial identification with it. Religion is not purely human aspiration to the divine, but also some sort of response to human aspiration on the part of the divine; a certain revelation is implied in the response. Religion is that movement in human, which continually attempts to come to terms with the cosmic under the inspiration of the divine. Thus, religion is a way of life, which make people realize their ultimate meaning in life. It is the institutionalized, external, social, expression of our faith in God. The core of any religion is the encounter with God that makes existence meaningful.

[Just for information. -- >

DIFFERENT APPROACHES: Mainly there are six approaches,

1. Sociology of Religion: It studies the interaction between society and the forms of interaction between them. 2. Anthropology of Religion: It studies religion (not as a religious phenomenon) but as a socio-cultural phenomenon. 3. Psychology of Religion: It studies the reaction of the human psyche, its response both collective and individual, to the sacred/divine; also the functions of the individual mind in religious contexts; and the impact of the social religious life on its participants. 4. Philosophy of Religion: It examines critically and systematically the truth value of religious experiences and expression in myths/symbols/rites; it discovers their meaning; lays their ontological foundation and rational justification in the light of the principles of being. 5. Theology of Religion: Being normative, it judges in the light of Christian faith the salvific value of other religions. 6. History of Religion: It just tries to understand their meaning; not normative and passes no value judgments.]

THE TASK OF CATHOLIC CHURCH IN THE CONTEXT OF RELIGIOUS PLURALISM AND PLURALITY OF CULTURES (faithful to its belief in the uniqueness of Christ and universal salvific plan of God). [cf: *Christian Faith* pp. 391-394]

THE UNDERSTANDING OF THE TERM PLURALISM: Because the word has become fashionable

it is important to distinguish between three expressions:

(a) The Recognition of the Fact of Plurality: This which today seems almost obvious has not always been the case. If there were only one concept of sanctifying grace, the other conceptions of grace would not be grace. They would only be imitations or deformations of it. If Christianity, for instance, were the only true religion the other so-called religions could not even be religions. They would be only pseudo-religions as false silver is not silver, but only apparently so. If there were only one true and authentic religion, there would be no plurality of religions.

The awareness of a legitimate plurality of religions belong to the *kairos* of our times. From one particular perspective one may like or dislike, accept or criticize a given religion, but this does not necessarily imply to deny the character of religion to it. As far as I can gather it is only in the Second Vatican Council that the plurality of religions is officially acknowledged in the Catholic Church. Before, either the other religions were taken as superstitions, with more or less truthful elements, or Christianity was believed to be, more than just a religion.

(b) The Tolerance of Diversity: To acknowledge that there is a plurality of religions does not entail that we have to agree with all of them, no, on the other hand, that we have to deny them the right to being religions. Tolerance is the proper attitude. Tolerance may be seen either as a lesser evil or as a mystical *patientia*, and redemption of the other. The expression 'pluralistic society' often used in political circles today means simply tolerance of diversity and respect for the rights of cultural and religious minorities.

(c) Pluralism: The two preceding notions are not yet proper pluralism. Pluralism implies (a) and (b), but goes a step further. Pluralism is more than a *de facto* recognition that there are different religious traditions and the acknowledgement that the only way of peaceful coexistence is mutual tolerance. Pluralism aims at a mutual understanding, but does not expect the end of the ongoing dialogue to be the final goal in which all divergences will be reduced to an homogeneous unity. Pluralism recognizes the fact that the human condition is not only contingent in face of a vertical mystery. It also recognizes the presence of that mystery even on the horizontal level of human affairs and in intellectual comprehension. The incomprehensible is not only above us; it is also at our side, in our neighbor. From a particular point of view, we shall never be able to understand another perspective, although we may recognize that there are several points of view incompatible among them. Pluralism arises with awareness of mutually incompatible and irreconcilable world views, religions, interpretations, philosophies, up to the point of not allowing for any super-system, religion, or "*Aufhebung*". We are confronted with our human limitations. *The ultimate insight of pluralism is the recognition that reality is no necessarily self transparent, totally intelligible. Monotheism is here at stake. The link which binds all of us together is not the logos but the pneuma, not understanding, but love, sympathy, karuna. Paradoxically, the 'link' is ontic and no necessarily ontological. [This is taken from the book "Religious Pluralism-An Indian Christian Perspective. Ed. Kuncheria Pathil CMI.PG.255-257]*

LG.16. DOGMATIC CONSTITUTION ON CHURCH.(NOV.21, 1964):

[Refer "Christian Faith" - pp. 391-392]

It mainly speaks of salvation of Non-Christians - those who have not yet received the gospel are related to the people of God in various ways (Ref. Rom.9/4-5; 11/28-29). The plan of salvation includes those who acknowledge the creator, in the first place amongst whom are the Muslims - profess to hold the faith of Abraham and together with us adore the one , merciful God, mankind's judge on the last day. It also says that those who seek God with a sincere heart, and, moved by grace, try in their actions to do his will as they know it through the dictates of their conscience also can achieve eternal salvation.

NA 1-2. NOSTRA AETATE: DECLARATION ON THE RELATION OF CHURCH TO NON-CHRISTIAN RELIGIONS. (OCT.28,1965): [Refer "Christian Faith" pp. 393-394] Here Church is more aware of her duty to foster unity and charity among individuals and even among the nations. For this she reflects at the outset on what human have in common and what tends to promote fellowship among them. For eg. common destiny viz. God, Common unsolved riddles of human existence eg. What is human? purpose and meaning of life, the question of suffering, true happiness, death, etc. And various religions tried to answer these questions. Thus, in Hinduism human explore the divine mystery and express it both in the limitless riches of myth and the accurately defined insights of Philosophy. They seek release from the trials of the present life by ascetical practices, profound meditation and recourse to God in confidence and love. Buddhism proposes a way of life by which man can, with confidence and trust, attain a state of life perfect liberation and reach supreme illumination either through their own efforts or by the aid of divine help. **NA 2** gives a positive description of the so-called "traditional religions", of Hinduism and of Buddhism; it explains the Church's attitude to these religions as one not merely of acceptance, but of respect and appreciation; it calls for dialogue and collaboration, whereby, while proclaiming Christ, Christians will share in the authentic values possessed by others.

The Catholic Church rejects nothing of what is true and holy in these religions. Yet she proclaims and is duty bound to proclaim without fail, Christ who is the way, the truth and the life (Jn. 14/6). In Him, in whom God reconciled all things to himself (2 Cor. 5/18-19), men find the fullness of their religious life.

The Church therefore, urges her sons/daughters to enter with prudence and charity into discussion and collaboration with members of other religions. She also reminds her sons and daughters to acknowledge and encourage the spiritual and moral truths found among Non-Christians, also their social life and culture.

UNIQUENESS OF CHRIST

Meaning of the term:- A person is unique by A. Difference and B. Self-identity. Self-identity means (a) One is oneself: Life, death and resurrection of Jesus gives him his self identity; (b) Self identity by significance: According to Schillebeckx, a person is unique when he becomes meaning to my life and others lives. I become unique person when I have significance for the others. Jesus is becoming and became a meaning to me and to others (for most of the people). So he is the unique person and a divine being. Uniqueness means universal meaningfulness.

Uniqueness of Jesus:- Jesus Christ is the fullness of divine revelation in a sense that maximum God could

reveal is revealed in Jesus Christ. This is a faith statement. Jesus is the unique media-for who reconciles the people of God (2 Cor. 5/17) and establishes relation-ship with Him. Salvation is brought about by the new covenant established by Jesus Christ (Mk.14/24; 1 Cor.11/25).

The personal fatherhood of God is revealed through the intimate relationship of Jesus to his Abba. In Jesus' person people could experience a God who is concerned about them. When Jesus takes the hand of the little girl, life flows into her body and he restores the family. Also in Jesus God acts in history and social life of his people (specialty of all Biblical religions) and take them to their fullness. When Jesus teaches he does not teach doctrine but openness, a new world to them. Eg. his teaching 'blessed are you poor, yours is the kingdom of God', gives a new dignity to the poor and makes them joyful and proud that God is with them.

IN SHORT THE UNIQUENESS OF JESUS: stands out in : 1. The radical following of the disciples and Jesus' asking them to follow him. 2. He is the one who forgive sin. 3. Jesus claims a unique relationship with God which is expressed in His Abba relationship (Mk. 14/36). 4. Jesus was totally aware that he is the agent to establish the kingdom of God. 5. Jesus was suffering God. 6. Through resurrection he is alive in us.

EA 10 - 14 While confessing the Church's faith in Jesus Christ as the only Saviour, the proclamation of Jesus Christ to Asia is considered an act of service to the people of Asia and a gift the Church can make to the peoples of Asia. Jesus is the highest gift that the Church can offer to the people of Asia. In this sense, mission is a privilege and duty of the Church.

Jesus Christ is the definitive "Word" about God and about man in the religious history of mankind. This is the basis of the uniqueness of his person as the Son of God and the Son of Man who alone can reveal God to us and the universality of his salvific message and "graces" for all peoples. **(14)** The basis of the revelatory uniqueness of Jesus Christ and salvific and mediational universality wholly depends on what has been accomplished in him, "as the definitive manifestation of the mystery of the Father's love for all, Jesus is indeed unique, and it is precisely this uniqueness of Christ gives him an absolute and universal significance, whereby, while belonging to history, he remains history's centre and goal." [EA 14,RM 6]

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Summary of the article by Kavunkal, (Jeevadhara May, 2000)->

{{{ According to EA - "Preaching of the saving death and resurrection of Christ (which makes Jesus the unique savior) must be the absolute priority **(2)**. This claim of uniqueness and denying the salvific value of other religions, makes Church's mission objectionable to the followers of other religion in Asia.

EA is aware how the proclamation of Jesus "as the only savior is fraught with philosophical, cultural and theological difficulties, especially in the context of asia's great religious with their cultural values and specific world views. **(20)** Still document presents these challenges as an ever greater incentive in striving to transmit the faith inherited from the Apostles **(10)**. For committed followers of Asian religious it amounts to outright arrogance and blind superiority.

MISSION OF JESUS: Jesus' was a ministry of compassion, love justice and other-centeredness (11). As a prophet he stood for the cause of down-trodden and marginalized people. But EA did not pay much heed to this aspect of the mission of Jesus (prophetic role), especially since it is very vital in the context of Asia. Upholding the humanity of poor and broken-hearted is the primary christian commitment in Asia. All wait to hear the prophetic voice of the Asian Church.

SALVATION MOTIVE: Based on the biblical revelation a Christian believes that the mystery of Jesus is the only mediation between God and humans. At the same time, based on the same revelation one cannot restrict that mediation, that salvation, to Christianity alone, for the mystery that is identified as Jesus in the Christian tradition is operative in all creation. (Jn 1:1-3, Col 1:14-20) and in all religions.

Why we speak in terms of "mystery"? Reason- (i) In spite of revelation in Jesus, on earth we can never fully grasp all the workings of the mystery.

(ii) "Mystery" will be more acceptable to the followers of other religions.

Mission in Asia: We must refrain from making claims of uniqueness in a religiously pluralistic context. The community's mission is the continuation of Jesus' ministry. The Church is called "to serve human beings by manifesting to them the love of God made present in Jesus Christ"(RM 2).

It does not make sense to say that values in other religions or intense yearnings for God are to be fulfilled in Jesus Christ or they are the result of the presence of the mystery of Jesus Christ. Such proclamations can only be damaging to the cause of mission in Asia.

We have to accept the fact that salvation is the work of God who makes it available to humans through His "vak" (word). The Church is obliged to continue Jesus' mission.

Our true Christian life must attract others to commit themselves fully to the Lord in the community. Such a mission takes place in the climate of good will and collaboration. It is not a frantic effort to save Jesus Christ from other saviours, by trumpeting truth about Jesus Christ. A sheer proclamation of uniqueness of Christ in the Asian context will turn out to be a religious competition which in the Asian context can only lead to fanaticism. The "new life in Jesus" is the quality of the lives of the Christians and not a claim made over the followers of other religions. Christian mission in Asia must become a love-affair and not a truth- affair.}}}

SOME ADDITIONAL REMARKS - Since "many Asian religions teach divine self-manifestation as mediating salvation, "many of the followers of the great and ancient religions have no difficulty in "accepting Jesus as a manifestation of the Divine or the Absolute, or as an `enlightened one.'" Their difficulty is to accept him as the one and only manifestation of the Divine. It is precisely this claim of uniqueness of Jesus Christ and the Church, denying the salvific value of other religions, which makes church's mission objectionable to the followers of other religions in Asia.

MY UNDERSTANDING OF UNIQUENESS OF JESUS IN THE CONTEXT OF RELIGIOUS PLURALISM AND PLURALITY OF CULTURES

Christ's uniqueness is not a problem with dogmas. Christ's uniqueness is shown only through my life; for me Jesus is the one worthy of my commitment; he brings meaning to my life. It is my personal, intimate experience and union with Jesus that transforming experience by which Jesus becomes unique for me; Jesus is the absolute meaning of my life. And this is not only my faith but my everyday experience too. He is unique for me.

Now Thinkers accept every religion as authentic way to God. Every religion is bringing an absolute point of view, but one point of view, since it is absolute then should be commitment, since it is one point of view, it demands openness. **Samuel Rayan** says, "Our faith experience of Jesus' uniqueness educates our hearts to a spiritual sensitivity capable of recognizing and respecting similar religious experiences of Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists etc." All religions are explicating the ineffable mystery of God. All the religions are historical and contingent and do not exhaust the mystery of God or fullness of revelation. Therefore, there should be more of dialogue and interaction and growing together towards the realization of truth. In short, it should be neither inclusivistic nor exclusivistic but pluralistic.

IMPLICATION OF THIS UNDERSTANDING IN THE CONTEXT (of plurality of cultures) FOR CHRISTIAN MISSION

Spiritually it will be very enriching. Because the Christian mission is not only preaching but also listening to the Lord, who speaks through His creation constantly. For, though Jesus is the fullness of divine revelation, he is not a*an end of revelation. God still continues to reveal himself and secondly, our appropriation too is not complete. Therefore, all the religions have a lot to give. I must be open to others to enrich my own faith and to enrich others with my faith and to share it with the others. Thus, this attitude will facilitate dialogue, which is a dire need for India today, we must be constantly aware that we (christians 2.5%) with various other religions people (who constitute 97%).

We too have to radiate this unconditional love of God to others in our life. We must also enter into personal communion with others after the model of Jesus Christ. We have to also identify ourselves with the poor and to accompany compassionately the suffering people which will make others recognize in us the Jesus who is alive.

EA 15 - [Discerning God's salvific presence in the plurality of religions and cultures]

Holy Spirit continually sows the seeds of truth among peoples, their religions, cultures and philosophies, to work against evil and to serve life.

Holy Spirit sustains people in their search for mutual understanding and acceptance. Therefore Holy Spirit is the prime agent of Church's dialogue with all peoples, cultures and religions.

The characteristic mark of the people of Asia is the thirst for fullness of life. People here have been in pursuit of that reality which alone can give humankind lasting peace and joy.

EA 29 - The dialogue on the part of the Church extends to all people "on the basis of religious yearnings is the Spirit who is present in a mysterious manner of these religions. Therefore both the Church and the other religions have a common foundation for dialogue in the presence of the same Spirit in both. The Synod was therefore right into see the Spirit of God as the prime agent of the Church's dialogue with all peoples. As seen in **EA 15**"The Spirit of the Lord has filled the world".

UNDERSTANDING OF MISSION, INTER-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE, ECUMENISM AND INCULTURATION IN A CROSS-CULTURAL CONTEXT.

(EN 14,15,17-24; AG 1-9; EA 24-31)

MISSION: (D'Sa) Mission means to hand down the experience of originary encounter. By mission we are not referring to the activity undertaken by missionaries. Mission has to do with preserving and cultivating the experience of the originary encounter with wholeness/fullness/full-fill-ment that is specific to a tradition. Mission means keeping alive and handing down an experience of and approach to a universe of faith, hope and love that is specific to one's tradition. In this sense mission is an important component of every tradition.

(Kavunkal) The mission of Jesus can be summed up as manifesting the Father (Jn. 17/6, 26), so must the mission of the disciples be:"As the Father has sent me so do I send you" (Jn. 20/21). This offers the key to the mission of the Church today. The Church the community of disciples, all who have shared the sonship of Christ through his spirit in baptism (Rom.8/15; Gal.4/6) has the singular mission of making known the Father. Jesus enables the disciples to call on God as their Father ,in contrast to the crowds, precisely became they have been chosen to continue this revelation (Jn.17/18).

This is true even today. The participation in the sonship of Christ through baptism is not a privilege but a mission. And this mission is precisely revealing God as the Father of all with all its implication.

Most people, whatever may be their religious affiliation, do believe in God, expressed in different forms. The Church's service is precisely revealing this God as a loving Father as the Father of all men and women, concerned about all His sons and daughters. It goes without saying, that the acceptance of as a loving Father of all implies the acceptance of equality and fraternity. The Church must challenge all people to make a decision for or against this Father and his will which can be summarized as "Justice - Love" [(Mt.5/17-20)cf. Hollenback D. 1981/82:489-493]

This means the mission of the Church is not always to bring salvation but to manifest the love of the Father, not always to win conversion to the Church as a necessary means of salvation, but also to help the realization of the broader Kingdom of God as it unfolds within history and which will be fully realized at the end of history. This also implies enabling the followers of other religions to be better followers of those religions.

EVAGELII NUNTIANTI, 8 DECEMBER, 1975 (EVANGELIZATION IN THE MODERN

WORLD - 14, 15)

It affirms that the essential mission of the Church is to evangelize all men. It is a task and mission which the great and fundamental changes of contemporary society make all the more urgent. Evangelization is the special grace and vocation of the Church. It is her essential function. The Church exists to preach the gospel, that is to preach and teach the word of God.

In No:15 she affirms that it is her right to preach the gospel. Church stands out as the sign of the new presence of Jesus. Here it affirms that the mission of the Church is evangelization.

According to EN, Mission of the Church is for the renewal of the humanity and for the transformation of the culture. This is realized in the following ways:-

(a) By preaching and teaching (b) By being the channel of the gift of grace (c) by reconciling sinners with God.

Split between the culture and gospel is the drama of our times.

*Gospel and evangelization can permeate any culture without becoming subject to any particular culture (20).

*Evangelization is to convert the heart of the individuals (transformation from within of individuals and cultures).

(About other religions)

*All religions are impregnated with seeds of truth.

*All religions have the quest for God.

*Other religions have the right to know the mystery of Christ.

However, EN insists on mission because "other religions do not succeed". In a subtle form Church, thus, tries to claim superiority over other religions.

AG - Ecclesiocentric approach. Mission is outside (Triumphalistic)

EN - speaks about Kingdom-centered approach. Elements of the Kingdom can be traced in all religions.

Mission is to serve the world and manifest the hidden presence of God which is in the world and transformation of the world by manifesting the love of God which is revealed in Jesus.

VATICAN II, AD GENTES DIVINITUS, 7 DECEMBER, 1965 - DECREE ON THE CHURCH'S MISSIONARY ACTIVITY (1-9; 11, 12)

This is a mission decree. Nos. 1-9 give the theological basis for mission.

no. 2 - The Church is by its very nature "missionary" since it has its origin in the mission or sending of the Son and the holy Spirit. The Son is sent as God in human flesh to effect peace and communion with God and genuine union among men and women. The Church continues this mission.

no. 4 - Mission of the Spirit. H. Spirit is the source of charisms in the Church, gathers the body of believers into communion, and at the same time inspires the hearts of the faithful with that "same spirit of mission which impelled Christ himself". The purpose of mission is to make participation in the saving mystery of Christ available to all men and women.

no. 6 - Definition -> "Mission is the activity of the Church whereby the heralds of Gospel are sent to non-Xtn areas to proclaim and to plant the Church."

no. 7 - It deals with the necessity of mission. Why mission? Because God wills the salvation of 'all'. Jesus is the only Saviour. Church is the body of Christ. All are to be incorporated into the Church, by baptism. God, in ways known to God alone can bring people to salvation. Church is the God intended means of salvation for all. As Christians we are obliged to work for the salvation of all people by proclamation.

no. 8 About Mission and human nature. Jesus Christ offers the fullest expression of human nature. Human nature is fully manifested in Jesus. By proclaiming Jesus Christ, Church is offering opportunity to all human beings to realize the fullest human nature. AG, here also addresses theme of inculturation. Christ and his Church transcend every nation and race "and so cannot be considered as strangers to anyone or in any place". Yet this non-exclusive gospel must become incarnate in particular places and cultures.

The gospel is to function as a leaven "in the interest of liberty and progress .. brotherhood, unity and peace". The sign of a maturing Church is that its people engage themselves, in collaboration with others, in the ordering of social and economic affairs.

no. 9 "Missionary activity is nothing else and nothing else than a manifestation or epiphany of God's will, and the fulfillment of that will in the world and world history." The basic comprehensive goal of mission is to promote and serve the unification and healing of a divided, wounded humanity. Jesus heals, ennobles and brings to perfection the other religions. Mission is the manifestation of the divine nature to all human beings. There is no participation in Jesus without participating in mission. (**AG is ecclesio-centric**).

ECCLESIA IN ASIA 24-31; 32-41

In EA "mission" stands for the wide variety of services, which the Church carries out all over Asia and in the world at large for the benefit of society in general, and of the human person in particular.

Some challenges

1. Concept of religions in Asia is cosmological rather than historical. As a result Asians are not so likely to be interested in a religion with historical roots.
2. Missioners also carry the burden of the legacy of colonialism and imperialism.
3. Search for Meaning - The Church is convinced that all peoples seek for the fullness of meaning and salvation and that they will find it only in Jesus. This is a theological expression. While the statement is true within the context of our Christian theological tradition, it does not describe the lived experience of millions of religious followers in Asia. Many, in fact, maintain strongly that they find fulfillment in their own religion. They are happy with their own personal religious experience. They do not feel the need to turn to another religious world for self-realization. This complicates the task of the missionary considerably and it is one of the reasons that the document maintains "only those with a mature and convinced Christian faith are qualified to engage in genuine inter-religious dialogue. Only Christians who are deeply immersed in the mystery of Christ and are happy in their faith community can without undue risk and with hope of positive fruit engage in interreligious dialogue." [EA 31]

Some responses**1. Missionary spirituality for asia**

Given the challenges mentioned above, what qualities should characterize the person in the complex task of bringing the word of God to Asia?

A missionary spirituality for accomplishing this task begins, continues and ends in love. The document clearly states that it is of nature of this love to exclude no one; it must be "an unfeigned love for all" (EA 34) It is a love that begins and ends by respecting "the integrity of the human person created in the image of God and endowed with a God-given dignity and inalienable human rights." (EA33). It is a love that shows a preferential option for the poor. It is love that recognizes "that, can not but embrace the immense multitudes of the hungry, the needy, the homeless, those without medical care, and, above all, without hope of a better future." (EA 34)

2. A witness of life

A genuine spirituality for Asia consists in the realization that there can be no true proclamation of the Gospel unless Christians offer the witness of lives in harmony with the message they preach. Missioners will be credible in their relations with the people and in the proclamation of the message, only if this love is manifested in living simply following the example of the poor Jesus. (cfr EA 34, 42)

The Gospel finds its power more forcefully in the witness of life than in the spoken word. The messenger is the message.

3. Appreciating Cultures and Traditions

A missionary spirituality for Asia demands a special attitude of respect for the Asian people's long and sacred history. It requires that the missionary be able to discern the presence of God within the country's long history, within the peoples, peoples, their traditions, their religions, and their culture. It demands that the missionary's understanding of culture go beyond ethnocentrism and its temptation to compare cultures with one's own with the implication that "ours" is better. It also demands a solid rooting in faith that does not capitulate to a certain popular, cultural relativism that puts all religions, all cultures on the same level.

Furthermore, a missionary spirituality for Asia is ever mindful that the Church has never given a mandate to bring a foreign culture or civilization to Asia. The mandate is to bring the Gospel that transcends all cultures. "In the process of encountering the world's different cultures [and religions], the Church not only transmits her truths and values and renews cultures from within, but she also takes from the various cultures the positive elements already found in them. This is the obligatory path for evangelizes in presenting the Christian faith and making it part of a people's cultural heritage".[EA 11]

A missionary spirituality for Asia also requires the ability and willingness to dialogue. "The followers of Christ must have the humble heart of their master, never proud and superior, as they meet their partners in dialogue." EA says, "Inter-religious relations are best developed in a context of openness to other believers, a willingness to listen and the desire to respect and understand others in their differences. For all this, love of others is indispensable" [EA 31].

4. Ways of proclamation

"The question is not whether the Church has something essential to say to the men and women of our time, but also she can say it clearly and convincingly". [EA 29] It means that the proclaimer must embody in himself the Gospel he proclaims. His ways of living, his criteria of judging, his scale of values, and his vision of the world must be consonant with the Good News he proclaims. Inculturation, inter-religious dialogue, ecumenism, integral human promotion etc. are ways of preaching the Gospel (cfr EA 21, 22, 29-30). Works of charity and human solidarity, care of the sick and defence of life, education, and care of the environment .. are concrete means to manifest the message of the Gospel.

Credibility of the proclaimer is an important thing, i.e. he should be one who embodies in his life what he proclaims [EA 23].

WORK FOR JUSTICE BOTH FOR HUMANS AND EARTH - > EA 32-41

no. 32 - The Church in Asia, with its multitude of poor and oppressed people, is called to live a communion of life which shows itself particularly in loving service to the poor and defenceless.

no. 34 - In seeking to promote human dignity, the Church shows a preferential love of the poor and the voiceless, because the Lord has identified with them in a special way (Mt 25:40).

(Here Pope also speaks about child-labour and exploitation of women as serious concerns of the Church in Asia. The Church in Asia would more visibly and effectively uphold women's dignity and freedom by encouraging their role in the Church's life.)

no. 38 (Peace making) - Given the appalling situation of conflict in so many parts of the world, the Church is called to be deeply involved in international and interreligious efforts to bring about peace, justice and reconciliation.

41 (Environment) - It is the duty of Christians and of all who look to God as the Creator to protect the environment by restoring a sense of reverence for the whole of God's creation. Man has to be a responsible administrator not a ruthless exploiter.

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INTER-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE: Man is dialogical by nature. Characterized by self-awareness he communicates himself to others through dialogue. Thus dialogue is not something novel to the human race. It is essential part of human nature. However the word dialogue has assumed new dimensions of meaning in recent days. This is especially so when the word is used in relation with the world-religions or world visions which in the contemporary world very often work as quasi religions. We are now living in a world of dialogue between religions and world-visions. Some sort of a dialogue was going on between religions from time immemorial. Any encounter of one religion with another religion calls for some kind of dialogue. But this need not be a dialogue that brings about any transformation in the partners. A real dialogue presupposes an attitude which is open to the other person, respectful towards him and even readiness to be changed by the graceful touch of his presence. This is what is new to the word dialogue today when it is applied in the context of religions.

(D'Sa) According to him dialogue means discovering the Truth of the other tradition. If mission is concerned about the truth of our originary encounter, dialogue is about the truth of the originary experience of the other traditions. It is not enough to be concerned about the truth of our own tradition. As related beings living in one and the same world we need to discover the originary experience of the other traditions.

Dialogue is an attempt to come to know and experience the values and attitudes, the belief-world, the expression of commitment and the community of believers that are the out come of and are shaped and formed by an originary experience other than our own. It is not a discussion. But there is the discussing aspect in order to clarify the different worlds of meaning.

(Kavunkal) Dialogue is an authentic way of living and witnessing in a pluralistic situation. It is an imperative of our faith, for, the Lord we confess, is not a tribal Lord of a few Christians, but of all faiths.

Dialogue, as Ariarajah has pointed out, is not an ambulance service, trouble shooting wherever violence or conflict erupts. It is not rather a public health service taking care that such conflicts do not arise. True, today dialogue is for reconciliation and peace, in addition to the creation of a community of heart and mind.

Only a dialogue which is founded on genuine Christian authenticity of life and mission as well as on love, respect and acceptance of the people of other faiths can serve as enrichment to both.

INCULTURATION: According to D'Sa inculturation refers to the change in a Tradition because of Interculturation. Inculturation refers to the changes that interculturation makes us aware in our encounter with other tradition.

It is good to know what is Interculturation- According to D'sa interculturation is Encounter and Symbiosis of cultures. The interface between mission and dialogue is interculturation. Mission and dialogue produce the phenomenon of interculturation. Interculturation is the product, of the symbiosis between cultures and religions. It is the process of discovering the interconnections between the different worlds of belief, commitment and communion. Interculturation is not levelling down the differences but a discovery of the ways in which differences can meet and interrelate.

RELIGION IS THE SOUL OF CULTURE: This statement should appear convincing if we take religion and culture in a wide way. Each culture, implicitly or explicitly, accepts an ultimate axiology based on a *myths of what does it mean really and specifically the humanum* - using a contemporary way of speaking, since each culture would formulate the very question differently. There is no culture without a set of ultimate values. And this is what constitutes the spine of religion.

Man creates cultures when it becomes conscious of itself, and of being an unfinished entity with the capacity of cultivating its own being - which is not limited to its ego, but encompasses also its surroundings, human, cosmic and divine. This awareness is at the very basis of religion. Each culture begins with, or at least develops, a vision of reality. The principle enlivening this vision is what we call religion. The core of culture is religious, even if, according some standards, one may like to call some cultures a-religious, which is again another form of being religious. The meeting of cultures, when it goes deep enough is always a

religious encounter. Ultimate values are at stake.

CULTURE IS THE BODY OF RELIGION: This does not subordinate culture to religion. There is no soul without a body. The body is the very expression of the soul. This expression is mainly language. For this reason this could be formulated saying that *culture gives religion its language*. It means religious language is a cultural language. In other words, no religion is culturally neutral, for the same reason that religion is not a disembodied entity.

Incarnation, resurrection, zen, nirvana, atman, Brahman and the like, they all may want to convey pure transcendental notions. Nevertheless all those notions are culturally coloured and have meaning, and even more specifically the meaning of the particular culture which has had the insight expressed in those words. We do not speak language, we speak *a* language. And that language is given to us by a culture - whatever the origins of language may be.

CULTURE AND RELIGION SHOW AN ADVAITIC RELATIONSHIP: We should neither confuse culture with religion, nor overlook their respective *ontonomies*. Religion and culture are not the 'same', (the 'same' what?) and yet there is no religion outside culture and no culture which does not embody a religious attitude.

There is no religion without language, and there is no language without culture.

A faith community cannot live outside of a culture. On the one side religion, ideology and the perception of values form the heart of any culture. When persons of one cultural background accepts another religion, certainly together with the religion many elements of the alien culture too are accepted. But slowly the converts, inheritors of their own culture question the foreign cultural elements, try to express their faith commitment and experience in their own patterns, symbols and ways. When the group intensely tries to live, worship, reflect, i.e., incarnate their faith experience in this new way, inculturation takes place. It is creative process and not mere borrowing, though often at the initial stages borrowing takes place. Today we know that inculturation is not merely the immersion of a community into the cultural riches of the place but also into the very religiosity of the people.

M 52-54 speaks about inculturation. Inculturation means the intimate transformation of authentic cultural values through their integration in Christianity and the insertion of Christianity in the various human cultures. Through inculturation the Church makes the Gospel incarnate in different cultures and at the same time introduces peoples, together with their cultures, into her own community. Inculturation is a slow journey, which accompanies the whole of missionary life..... 53 says that missionaries must immerse themselves in the cultural milieu of those to whom they are sent, moving beyond their own cultural limitations. Hence they must learn the language of the place in which they work, become familiar with the most important expressions of the local culture, and discover its values through direct experience.... 54 says like this, properly applied, inculturation must be guided by two principles: "compatibility with the Gospel and communion with the universal Church"....since culture is a human creation and is therefore marked by sin, it too needs to be "healed, ennobled and perfected"....

In effect, inculturation must involve the whole people of God, and not just a few experts, since the people reflect the authentic "sensus fidei" which must never be lost sight of. Inculturation needs to be guided and encouraged, but not forced, lest it gives rise to negative reactions among Christian

ECUME

Introduction: My intention is to analyze briefly the meaning of *ecumenism* or *the ecumenical movement*, its necessity, Catholic understanding of *ecumenism* or *the ecumenical movement*, and the aims of the Catholic *ecumenism* or *the ecumenical movement*.

The Meaning of *Ecumenism* or the *Ecumenical Movement*: Nowadays, *ecumenism* or *the ecumenical movement* is well known among the Christian folk. But as we see below, the original and present meanings of *ecumenism* or *the ecumenical movement* are not the same.

Etymological Meaning: The words *ecumenism* and *ecumenical* are derived from the Greek term *oikoumen_*. *Oikoumen_* comes from the noun "oikos", which means "house" or "dwelling" and the verb "oike_", which means "to live" or "to dwell". *Oikoumen_*, which is derived from the present passive participle of the verb, suggests the land in which people live or dwell and usually translated "the inhabited world". It must be noted that the original meaning of the term *oikoumen_* was political and geographical rather than religious.

Present Meaning: "The term "ecumenism", as we understand it today, is of rather recent origin". At present *ecumenism* means "the sum-total of the efforts that are being made for the reintegration of Christians into the unity of a single Church". Whereas, the term *ecumenical* is now used to denote the "efforts made by Christians of different denominations to understand each other in Christian charity and fellowship by mutual recognition, regard, joint-worship and co-operative action in evangelistic work and in various social service activities". As envisaged by the Second Vatican Council, "the term "ecumenical movement" indicates the initiatives and activities encouraged and organized, according to the various needs of the Church and as opportunities offer, to promote Christian unity" (*Unitatis Redintegratio*, 4).

Necessity of *Ecumenism* or the *Ecumenical Movement*

In this era, a vast majority of the Christians have great zeal for *ecumenism* or *the ecumenical movement*. Pointing out the valid reasons as follows, they assert that *ecumenism* or *the ecumenical movement* is necessary and has utmost importance in Christian living.

Jesus' Desire for the Complete Unity of his Followers: With reference to John 17:20-23, it has been often cited down the centuries, that Jesus has prayed for the oneness of the whole company of those who believe in him. This intense prayer of Jesus shows his desire for the complete unity of his followers. Since "Christ calls all his disciples to unity" and wishes that the complete unity of his followers would testify to the world that he was sent by God (Jn. 17:23), the unity of his followers is neither a mere beautiful ideal that is to be achieved in eschatology, nor a future hope, but it is to be realized in this world here and now. Moreover, "the union of all those who bear the name of Christ is ... the great desire of our Lord himself". Hence, *ecumenism* or *the ecumenical movement* which strives for the unity of the followers of Jesus is very vital.

The Holy Spirit impels the Christians for Ecumenical Activities: The Holy Spirit, who dwells in those who believe and pervades and rules over the entire Church, "who brings about wonderful communion of the faithful and joins them together so intimately in Christ ... is the principle of the Church's unity" (*Unitatis Redintegratio*, 2). As per the *Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches*, "ecumenical work is brought about by the grace of the Holy Spirit". The Holy Spirit who wants to unite men in "one flock" under "one shepherd" impels all the Christians to engage in ecumenical activities by fostering the endeavors for the restoration of unity among all Christians (*Unitatis Redintegratio*, 1). Consequently, those who are docile to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit, can never abstain from ecumenical activities.

The Divided Christian Communities Hinder the Preaching of the Gospel: As the Second Vatican Council has rightly pointed out, the divided Christian communities "scandalizes the world, and damages the most holy cause, the preaching of the Gospel to every creature" (*Unitatis Redintegratio*, 1). Nevertheless, the division of Christians stands as an obstacle for many people to embrace the Christian faith (*Ad Gentes Divinitus*, 6). It is obvious that "the Good News of reconciliation is preached by Christians who are divided among themselves weakens their witness". For Edward Yarnold, "the fundamental reason for seeking Christian Unity is the conviction that a divided Christianity makes not only the Church but Christ himself less credible". Therefore, genuine and authentic Christian life demands and necessitates *ecumenism* or the *ecumenical movement*.

Catholic Understanding of Ecumenism or the Ecumenical Movement

The modern ecumenical movement owes very much to the non-Catholic Churches for its origin. Hence, the Catholic Church was suspicious about the whole affair of the modern ecumenical movement and was hesitant to take part in it. Therefore, the ecumenical movement within the Catholic Church is comparatively new. "It is only since the convocation of the Second Vatican Council and the courageous speeches of Pope John XXIII that the ecumenical movement has been received with favour in the Catholic community". Hence it is very important to a student of ecumenism to know about the Catholic understanding of *ecumenism* or the *ecumenical movement* before and after the Second Vatican Council.

Before the Second Vatican Council: Basing on *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* and other documents from Rome, Cardinal Augustine Bea, in his works entitled "The Unity of Christians" and "Ecumenism in Focus", has depicted the Catholic understanding of *ecumenism* or the *ecumenical movement* before the Second Vatican Council. According to him, the Catholic understanding of *ecumenism* or the *ecumenical movement* can briefly be set out in three propositions:

The First: that essential unity already exists in the Catholic Church and is the unity which Christ willed and achieved in Peter and his successors, the bishops of Rome: unity of doctrine, sacraments and rule. The second: that there is further unity still to be achieved, the unity of the members unhappily separated from the Apostolic See. The third: that this unity of the separated members is not to be brought about by force but by the free acceptance of union with the Catholic Church.

The Popes' addresses, broadcasts, encyclicals, etc., on *ecumenism* or the *ecumenical movement* of the time, generally propagated the view that all those who had turned away from the Catholic Church for various reasons should return to the same, since they lack all those gifts and assistance which can only be enjoyed in the Catholic Church. Several times, the Catholic Church earnestly wished and invited the separated brethren to the 'one house of their father' and to union with the Apostolic See of Rome. In the view of the 'pre-Vatican' Catholic Church, the separated brethren, "though not in the full sense, ... are her sons and so she has a strict duty ... to do everything in her power to bring them back to her".

After the Second Vatican Council: With the Second Vatican Council there emerged a shift in the Catholic Church's understanding of *ecumenism* or the *ecumenical movement*. The traits of this shift are reflected in the post Conciliar writings of the Catholic authors. In "Diversity and Communion", Yves Congar writes: "Even if one could point out some hitches, we would have to say that the Catholic Church has ceased to see and above all to commend union purely in terms of 'return' or conversion to itself. It has learnt something; it has become converted to ecumenism". According to Congar, "no Christian church can any longer conceive of the unity of all Christian churches as the reduction of others to itself".

The concept of unity envisaged by the post Conciliar Catholic Church is that of unity without uniformity. As Cardinal Bea told, "unity ... must not be mistaken for uniformity". The "*Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism*" affirms that "the unity of the Church is realized in the midst of a rich diversity. This diversity in the Church is a dimension of its catholicity". It seems that even Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger is in line with the slogan "unity through diversity" proposed by Oscar Cullmann. In the words of Ratzinger: "Following the path indicated by Cullmann we should therefore first try to find unity through diversity. That means to accept what is fruitful in these divisions, to take the poison out of it and to receive precisely the positive element from this diversity - naturally in the hope that finally the division will cease to be a division at all and is merely a polarity without opposition".

At present we see a favorable attitude towards 'Spiritual Ecumenism' in the Catholic theological circles. 'Spiritual Ecumenism' has something to do at the level of conscience of everyone i.e., each individual must recognize his/her own faults, confess his/her sins and place himself/ herself in the hands of Jesus Christ before the Father. The present Holy Father calls this serious examination of conscience of each individual a "dialogue of conversion" and according to him, "we will find the strength needed to bring to a successful conclusion the long and arduous pilgrimage of ecumenism". Furthermore, we see that the proponents of 'Spiritual Ecumenism' insist on the need for actual and deeper spiritual fellowship that might be obtained through the methods of common prayer and worship, common life and mutual support in interconfessional communities, etc., as a prerequisite for the visible unity of the Churches.

The Aims of the Catholic Ecumenism or the Ecumenical Movement

It must be noticed that the "original unity of the one Church of Christ has suffered deep lacerations in the course of history. From the painful confrontation of this historical situation with the Gospel law of unity, the ecumenical movement arose". Therefore, it is obvious that the role of the ecumenical

movement is "to establish unity and intercommunion between the various Churches on a basis of the fundamental points of historic Christianity, with due respect for particularities which are regarded as God's gifts to them". Down the centuries, keeping the aim of restoring unity among all Christians, the Catholic Church was taking part in *ecumenism* or the *ecumenical movement* in her own distinctive ways. Here the proximate and ultimate aims of the Catholic *ecumenism* or the *ecumenical movement* are stated briefly.

The Proximate Aim: The proximate aim of the Catholic *ecumenism* or the *ecumenical movement* is "to assist our separated brethren in every possible way to sanctify themselves within the communities to which they belong. This she seeks to do by helping them to recognize, make use of and perfect the authentic Christian values and elements which they already possess" and to rediscover the elements, such as the full meaning of the Eucharist as the Sacrament of Christ's presence, and the one Sacrifice of the Cross, which they have lost, rejected, or neglected.

The Ultimate Aim: The ultimate aim of the Catholic *ecumenism* or the *ecumenical movement* is to attain "full visible communion of all Christians". As recorded by Cardinal Bea, in the words of Pope John Paul XXIII, "the visible unity is the communion of all believers in a *single* profession of faith, in the *same* practice of worship, in obedience to the *same* supreme authority". In his address on the mystery of the Church, Pope John Paul II told that "the Church's unity will not be expressed to the full until Christians make Christ's desire their own, accepting among His gifts of grace the authority He gave to His apostles, that authority which today is exercised by the bishops, their successors, in communion with the ministry of the Bishop of Rome, the successor of Peter".

Conclusion: The features of *ecumenism* or the *ecumenical movement* treated here are confined to the Christian understanding of the same. But it is to be admitted that those who are sincerely involved in ecumenical endeavors cannot bypass the growing urge for an 'ecumenical ecumenism'.

Ecumenical Ecumenism

Our age prides itself on its ecumenical spirit and has indeed risen above the clan mentality far enough to acknowledge the right of the other clans to exist. But these ecumenism generally remain very restricted, still far removed from an ecumenical ecumenism (ecumenical ecumenism does not mean cloudy universalism or indiscriminate syncretism; nor a narrow, crude particularism or barren, fanatical individualism. Instead It attempts a happy blending which I would make bold to call androgynous before calling it theandric of these two poles, the universal and the concrete, which set up the tension in every creature (p.4) that means more than the mere notion that people everywhere are human, or that my own views and judgements can be exported quite safely to other countries,. The great temptation for ecumenism is to extrapolated- to use a negative growth beyond the bounds of the native soil (p.2) (This is taken from the book "The Intrareligious Dialogue"- Raimundo Panikkar)

THE WIDER ECUMENISM (Francis D'sa) "Christianity and the Wider Ecumenism" Ed. Peter Rhan.p.125-127.

A major hurdle in the path of the Christian as well as the wider ecumenical enterprise is the fact that every tradition tends to make absolutistic and exclusivistic claims, without taking into serious consideration the unique claims of the other traditions. Because they neglect to reflect on the nature of human understanding and language, they are prone to interpret their Scriptures and traditions as if they were informative descriptive statements.

By now it should be obvious that no absolutistic claims can be upheld in the human realm. Even when linguistic expression tend to appear absolutistic there remains the further task of interpreting them, first from the context-which is usually proclamatory-and second, from the standpoint of the nature of language and understanding. Interpretation that is based on blind loyalty to one's traditions are taken in a context where the claims of all the religious traditions are taken seriously and the characteristics of human understanding and language are not ignored. If this is done, then it will be seen that the concept of relative uniqueness will fit in here very appropriately.

There is, however, a further point to be considered in this context. the differing claims to uniqueness have to be related. It is difficult to maintain these diverse claims if they are totally unrelated to each other. If relative uniqueness is to make sense in each case, there has to be some sort of organic interconnectedness between the claims. Such interconnection has to be seen both from the side of Meaningfulness as well as from the side of the religious traditions. In the final analysis all uniqueness is grounded in Ultimate Meaningfulness. Uniqueness is possible only if a religious tradition derives from ultimate Meaningfulness. Otherwise the validity of such a tradition cannot be upheld.

Given its common source of all the traditions, it follows that the different perspectives of the mountain of Meaningfulness must be organically interconnected. However varied and diverse the views of the mountain may be, they are still views of the same mountain. Or to change the metaphor, the different parts of the human body are organically interrelated not only because they together form one body but because the whole organism is animated by one and the same Spirit. Hence identity-in-difference, as the characteristic of all uniqueness, has to be the hermeneutic principle that discovers the interrelatedness of all traditions belonging to the same body and animated by the same Absolute Spirit.

Finally, the path that leads to the discovery of interrelatedness is a dual one: the study of the specific symbolism of each traditions as expressed in its rites and rituals, in its beliefs and doctrines *and the communication in sacris myths* of these traditions. Study should be such that it should lead to openness, openness to the Myth of the other traditions. It is only when we enter into the Myth of these traditions that we are able to understand, stand under the spell of these traditions. This need not, however, mean that the traditions have to give up their specific character. On the contrary, complementarity will highlight the specificity of each tradition.

In short, according to Francis D'sa an ecumenical attitude is the only sensible way of looking at religious pluralism, and this not from any strategic considerations. The one-sided view of the mountain of Meaningfulness that each tradition (rightly) proclaims has to be (equally rightly) complemented by the other

views of the mountain as proclaimed by the other traditions. Such complementarity will necessarily correct exaggerated claims made by the religious traditions. More importantly, traditions will realize not only what they do not have and where they need to be complemented, but also what they have always had in their tradition but have for one reason or another consistently overlooked.

THE REMAINING PART is (from Old Thesis) Just for information

ENCYCLICAL LETTER ECCLESIAM SUAM (1964): This is the first encyclical of Pope Paul VI which outlines the renewed attitude of the Church to the world of today. (70-83)

Religion of its very nature is a certain relationship between God and man. It finds its expression in prayer; and prayer is a dialogue. Revelation, too, that supernatural link which God has established with man, can likewise be looked upon as dialogue. In the Incarnation and in the Gospel it is God's Word that speaks to us..... Indeed, the whole history of man's salvation is one long, varied dialogue, which marvelously begins with God and which he prolongs with men in so many different ways.

God himself took the initiative in the dialogue of salvation. "He hath first loved us"(1 Jn 24/10). We, therefore, must be the first to ask for a dialogue with men, without waiting to be summoned to it by others.

The dialogue of salvation sprang from the goodness and the love of God. "God so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son" (Jn.3/16). Our inducement, therefore, to enter into this dialogue must be nothing other than a love, which is ardent and sincere.

The dialogue of salvation did not depend on the merits of those with whom it was initiated, nor on the results it would be likely to achieve. "They that are whole need not the physician"(Lk. 5/31). Neither, therefore, should we set limits to our dialogue or seek in it our own advantage. No physical pressure was brought on anyone to accept the dialogue of salvation; far from it. It was an appeal of love.

The dialogue of salvation was made accessible to all. It applied to everyone without distinction(cf. Col 3/11). Hence our dialogue too should be as universal as we can make it. That is to say, it must be catholic, made relevant to everyone, excluding only those who utterly reject or pretend to be willing to accept it.

Before it could be completely successful the dialogue of salvation had normally to begin in small things.....

From 78 - 85 speaks about kind of dialogue. It might content itself with conducting an inquiry into the evils current in secular society, condemning them publicly, and fighting a crusade against them. On the other hand. it might approach secular society with a view to exercising a preponderant influence over it, and subjecting it to a theocratic power; and so on.

It must be adapted to the intelligible of those to whom it is addressed, and it must take account of the circumstances..... Dialogue is a recognized method of the apostolate. It is way of making spiritual contact. it should, however, have the following characteristics:

1. Clarity: The dialogue demands that what is said should be intelligible.

2. Our dialogue must be accompanied by that *meekness* which Christ bade us learn from himself: "Learn of me, for I am meek and humble of heart" (Mt.11/29).
3. *Trust* is also necessary: Trust not only in the power of one's own words, but also in the good will of both parties to the dialogue. Hence dialogue promotes intimacy and friendship on both sides.
4. Finally, the *prudence* of a teacher who is most careful to make allowances for the psychological and circumstances of his hearer (Mt.7/6), particularly if he is a child, unprepared, suspicious or hostile.

In dialogue conducted with this kind of foresight, truth is wedded to charity and understanding to love.

**REDEMPTORIS MISSIO (7 DECEMBER 1990) ENCYCLICAL
LETTER OF POPE JOHN PAUL II - (52-57)**

Here 55-57 deals with dialogue and 52-54 deals with inculturation. So let us look into No: 55-57. Inter-religious dialogue is a part of the Church's evangelizing mission. Understood as a method and means of mutual knowledge and enrichment, dialogue is not in opposition to the mission ad gentes; it has special links with that mission and is one of its expression.... He does not fail to make himself present in many ways, not only to individuals but also to entire people through their spiritual riches, of which their religions are the main and essential expression, even when they contain "gaps, insufficiencies and errors... In the light of the economy of salvation, the Church sees no conflict between proclaiming Christ and engaging in inter-religious dialogue. Instead, she feels the need to link the two in the context of her mission ad gentes. These two elements must maintain both their intimate connection and their distinctiveness; therefore they should not be confused, manipulated or regarded as identical, as though they were interchangeable.

Dialogue should be conducted and implemented with conviction that the Church is the ordinary means of salvation and that she alone possesses the fullness of the means of salvation....

No:56. Through dialogue, the Church seeks to uncover the "seeds of Word", a ray of that truth which enlightens all men"; these are found in individuals and in the religious traditions of mankind. Dialogue is based on hope and love, and will bear fruit in the Spirit. Dialogue leads to inner purification and conversion which, if pursued with docility to the Holy Spirit, will be spiritually fruitful.

No:57.through the "dialogue life" believers of different religions bear witness before each other in daily life to their own human and spiritual values, and help each other to live according to those values in order to build a more just and fraternal society.....

Dialogue is a path towards the Kingdom and will certainly bear fruit, even if the times and seasons are known only to the Father (cf. Acts.1/7).

G 11 & 12 speak of the Christian witness. All Christians by the example of their lives and the witness of the word, wherever they live, have an obligation to manifest the new man which they put on in baptism, and to reveal the power of Holy Spirit by whom they were strengthened at confirmation, so that others, seeing their good works, might glorify the Father(cf. Mt. 5/16) and more perfectly perceive the true

meaning of human life and the universal solidarity of mankind. In order to bear witness to Christ, fruitfully, they should establish relationship of respect and love with those men, they should acknowledge themselves as members of the group in which they live, through the various undertakings and affairs of human life they should share in their social and cultural life. It also stresses that Christian charity is extended to all without distinction of race, social condition, or religion, and seeks neither gain or gratitude.

The disciples of Christ, being in close contact with men through their life and works, hope to offer them an authentic Christian witness and work for their salvation, even in those places where they cannot preach Christ in full.

(ES, UR, RM did not speak about mission).