

The Renewed Integral Evangelization envisioned by the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines

By

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The Church exists in order to evangelize. But what does evangelization mean in the Philippine context? Part III of the *Acts and Decrees of the Second Plenary of the Philippines (20 January - 17 February 1991)* answers this question and thus fleshes out more fully the vision of the Church contained in Part II: *Envisioning a Church Renewed*, where the Church is described as “a communion in a state of mission.”

SUBSTANTIVE CONTENTS

This third part is divided into two main sections: (1) *Announcing a Message of Salvation*, and (2) *Announcing a Message of Liberation*. The first section, *Announcing a Message of Salvation*, is a comprehensive view of evangelization. After stating the necessity of *conversion* for renewed evangelization, the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines (PCP-II) points to a *renewed catechesis* as the first element of renewed evangelization for believers.

Four characteristics of a renewed catechesis are highlighted: (a) It must be Christ-centered leading the catechized into an intimacy with Christ; (b) rooted in the scriptural Word of God with the Bible as the primary catechetical book; (c) authentically Filipino in its transmission and mode of assimilation, and (d) systematic, that is, presenting the whole of the Good News from the Bible and Tradition according to the teaching of the Church,

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highlighting the basics of Christian belief and practice, and including the social doctrine of the Church.

The second element of a renewed evangelization is a renewed *social apostolate*, which is seen as a constitutive dimension of evangelization.

The third element is a renewed worship. The aspects that the PCP-II highlights in this area are the following:

(a) All life is worship. Worship is not only a department of life separable from the others but is a dimension of all human life.

(b) Renewal of prayer life. Prayer is the explicit opening of our minds and hearts to God in order to be able to do his deeds with power, for a genuine prayer life can bring healing and transformation to the nation.

(c) Renewal of popular piety, which must lead to the liturgy, be vitally related to life, and serve the cause of full human development, justice, peace and the integrity of creation, as well as have the courage to correct what leads to the fanaticism or maintains people infantile in their faith.

(d) Liturgical renewal, so that the participation of the faithful in liturgical celebrations may be informed, active, full and communitarian.

Among the vital areas of liturgical renewal, the following are singled out: Pre-sacramental catechesis, the renewal of the sacrament of Penance, and the Sunday celebration of the Eucharist.

The concluding paragraph reminds us that "Liturgical renewal should restore the appreciation of the Eucharist as the source and summit of the whole Christian life."

The document then points out a pastorally very important consideration: the inter-relatedness of the various renewals. No genuine renewal in one area can happen in isolation from renewal in the other two areas.

After speaking of the intertwined elements of evangelization, the document moves on to describe the characteristics of renewed evangelization. Four are initially enumerated, namely, the clarity of its goals, the methods, new fervor, and new expressions.

(a) The *goals* of renewed evangelization are threefold:

1. The formation of Catholics in an integrated spirituality best described as "a...spirituality that unites faith in the Lord with justice and charity to His brothers and sisters and joins together a hope for the world to come with an intense commitment to transform the world; a spirituality that seeks the salvation of the total spirituality that seeks the salvation of the total human person while keeping in mind the primacy of his/her spiritual needs; a spirituality that seeks for change not only in interior attitudes but in

ecclesial and societal structures; a spirituality that witnesses through action to the faith he/she professes; a spirituality finally, that dynamically inter-relates communion and mission in the Church's life." (p.37)

2. The building up of the Church as a fully participative community of disciples. In the summary words of PCP-II: "... a people made one with the unity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, a community of Christ's disciples, a visible mystery of communion and mission, and the sacrament, in Christ, of universal salvation both signifying and serving the union of persons with God, and the unity of all humankind. A true people of God in the Philippines, this Church must be a fully participating community of faith rooted in Christ and immersed in the life of the Filipino people, a servant Church in solidarity with Filipino concerns. (pp. 37-38)

3. The transformation of society. The vision to be pursued is spelled out latter (p.48).

(b) The *method* is new: Witness (living Gospel-inspired lives and telling good news of God's gracious dealings with us) has priority over the [necessary] teaching of doctrine. The approach is participative: those who are evangelized take an active part in their evangelization. The team approach is used, necessitating the collaboration of diverse persons and groups.

(c) *Fervor* must be renewed, a fervor like that of the saints, rooted in deep faith and filled with love. A fervor which is the Spirit's gift but finds support in the brethren, and is drawn from contact with the Lord in prayer and in the Eucharist, a fervor that translates itself in faithful, creative, persevering and visible commitment. This kind of commitment is both a gift and the response to the challenge to accept the task of evangelization as a grace and summons.

(d) *New expressions* are needed. These will include the abundant use of the media of social communications, and the use of symbols and languages that reach the minds and touch the hearts of the people of today.

The discussion on new expressions leads to the very vast and necessary subject of inculturation which "is the intimate transformation of authentic cultural values through their integration in Christianity and the integration of Christianity in the various human cultures." (*Redemptoris Missio*, 52). Both the Gospel and the Church will have to find appropriate expressions in our culture, while they purify and enrich our culture by their insertions into it. "It (the Church) has to become Filipino to the Filipinos just as St. Paul was a Jew to the Jews and as one outside the Law to those who are outside the Law precisely for the sake of the Gospel and for the salvation of people" (p.40).

But one of the most significant characteristics of renewed evangelization is the emphatic recognition of the role of the Holy Spirit in evangelization whose activity initiates, permeates, and renders fruitful our evangelizing work. We are told that: "As a necessity renewed evangelization

will demand truly spiritual persons and communities who will attune themselves to the promptings and movements of the Spirit of God and, under the guidance of the Church's shepherds, boldly carry out His directions" (p. 42).

Several items come under Special Concerns: (1) *Ecumenism* - the need to urge Catholics to work for unity; (2) *Fundamentalists* and the *Iglesia ni Kristo* - the need to equip the faithful so that they can defend their faith; (3) *Masonry* - the thorniest issue: in the end, *Quaesitum Est*, the November 26, 1983 statement of the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith was accepted as the normative statement for the subject; (4) *Prisoners* - It is appropriate that the first section should end with a note of concern for a group for whom the Church should show preferential love — prisoners— through advocacy for better conditions, more humane treatment and rehabilitation.

The second section, "*Announcing a Message of Liberation*," deals with human liberation in the temporal order. Temporal liberation is an integral part of evangelization, though evangelization must not be reduced to temporal liberation.

The Church is a potent (even if flawed) resource for human integral development. Question: Can the Church mobilize its spiritual, social and cultural capital on our contemporary problems so that this only Christian nation in Asia may finally be truly a light to the nations, a city built on a mountain?

To be such a city needs envisioning. The document provides us with the needed vision. Our citizens must be *maka-tao*, *maka-bayan* and *maka-Diyos*. And the Philippines that needs to be created by us is:

"... a free nation
 where human dignity and solidarity
 are respected and promoted;
 where moral principles prevail in socio-
 economic life and structures;
 where justice, love and solidarity are the
 inner driving force of development.

We shall have to build a sovereign nation:
 where every tribe and faith is respected;
 where diverse tongues and traditions work
 together for the good of all;
 where membership is a call
 to participation and involvement
 and leadership a summon to generous service.

Ours will have to be a people:
 in harmony with one another
 through unity in diversity;
 in harmony with creation,
 and in harmony with God.

Ours shall be a civilization of life and love." (p.48)

Our present situation stands in stark contrast to this vision. While the Church has done much to help individuals, much remains to be done on the macro-level. How can we, as a community of the Lord's disciples act in order to be a leaven for social transformation?

The most basic response can only come from our spirituality.

First, we must acknowledge our personal sins and the structures of sin in our society. This should lead to conversion and social transformation.

Conversion is only the beginning of a life-long task — the following of Jesus-in-mission, an imitation characterized by a love for Jesus, a love for all persons, but preferentially of the poor, a spirituality of seeking first the Kingdom. This spirituality "... is a hunger and the thirst for justice and conviction that simplicity and poverty of spirit, unto the total emptying of self for God and the needy is a requirement of the Cross."

It is a spirituality that shares Good News joy in the midst of deprivation, hope in situation of cynicism and pessimism, a faith that is fully aware of the enduring presence of God-with-us and of the ultimate victory of goodness over evil.

It is a spirituality that listens to and heeds God's Word, discerns and follows the Spirit in the Scriptures, in the Church and in history, in the voices of the voiceless and powerless and finds in the Eucharist not only its full nourishment but also its total prayerful communion with the Lord of salvation and liberation. It urges one to care for the earth as God's gift. (pp.51-52).

This spirituality demands the formation of a social conscience, which is tragically lacking in many Filipinos. So that conscience may effectively be formed, the knowledge and interiorization of the social teachings of the Church is necessary.

In the light of our situation, the following truths of the Church's social teaching stand out as urgent and necessary: Integral Development based on Human Dignity and Solidarity; Universal Purpose of Earthly Goods and Private Property; Social Justice and Love; Peace and Active Non-Violence; Love and Preference for the Poor; the Value of Human Work; the Integrity of Creation; and the Empowerment of People.

The document tackles next a very relevant issue, the relationship of the Church to the political community. Two less general questions are dealt with: the role assigned by the Church to the clergy and laity in political activity, and the freedom issue, that is, when may an individual's exercise of religious belief be curtailed?

The Council posits mutual autonomy and cooperation between the Church and the political community; urges the lay faithful to participate in

political activity, even partisan politics. The clergy have the right to enunciate moral principles regarding the political order. But the distinction of roles between the clergy and laity is secondary to the need for politics to be exercised always in the light of the faith of the Gospel. Clergy and laity need to collaborate to achieve this when circumstances call for it.

The Council emphatically urges the lay faithful to participate actively and lead in the renewing of politics in accordance with the values of the Gospel. The following truths are presented as guides to political participation: the basic standard for participation is the pursuit of the common good; participation should be characterized by a defense and promotion of justice; participation should be inspired and guided by the spirit of service; participation should be imbued with a love of preference for the poor; people empowerment should be both process and goal of political activity.

The thorny problem of religious freedom is also dealt with. The religious freedom referred to is the freedom from coercion in the exercise of one's religion (or the freedom not to have any religion) when the just requirements of public order are observed. While pointing out the need for the Church to teach clearly and firmly what it believes is the truth, and while requiring its members to form their consciences accordingly, the reminder is given that the human person is bound to follow his or her conscience faithfully and must not be forced to act contrary to it.

A discussion on faith and ideologies follows. Ideologies as such are not rejected. But it is faith-values which must serve as the criteria for judging ideologies, and not vice-versa. Both Marxist socialism and liberal capitalism are flawed. While the Church offers no third ideology, its social teachings point to the direction of alternatives.

Again, the concluding portion of this section is entitled *Special Concerns*, and lists the following: tribal Filipinos; children and youth; women; peasants; the urban poor; fisherfolk, and the disabled.

The preferential option for the poor must be exercised in their regard. Concern for them will bring us closer to the vision for our nation, and to the fuller realization of the Kingdom of Jesus.

CRITIQUE

There are some very important points worth noting for their pastoral importance:

1. The PCP-II insists repeatedly on the necessity of Conversion as the first fruit of the evangelizing process. "Unless a person turns away from sin and turns to God, undergoes a change of mind and heart, and decides to follow Christ, no evangelization will bear fruit." (p.32). The targeted holistic, integrated spirituality begins with a conversion to the Lord (p.37). "At the

beginning of this journey is an encounter with Jesus who calls us to confront our sinfulness and the sinfulness of the social systems we have built..."(p.49). "The acknowledgment of sinfulness as the root cause of our social problems must perforce lead to conversion and social transformation" (p.50).

But given the importance of conversion in the whole process of personal and societal transformation it is surprising that the process of conversion and the means to help bring it about is so little discussed in the document. This is a lack that must be remedied.

It has to be emphasized that conversion is a change not only of mind but also of the will and of behavior, and that the reality of Christ has to be experienced if we are to own the task of helping build the Kingdom.

2. The unity of the renewal process is emphasized. Catechesis, the social apostolate and worship must be renewed together. The renewal of one is inextricably linked with the renewal of the other two. This should serve to relativize and to unite the various apostolates so that workers in one apostolate will not belittle the other apostolates but rather seek collaboration with them.

Faithfully linking the renewal of catechesis and the social apostolate inevitably leads to involvement by the catechized in effecting change — an informed and formed person confronted with scandalous misery does not stop at pity or shock, but acts to remove or diminish misery.

Is the Church (laity, clergy and religious) ready to embrace the poor with all their miseries and needs? Ready in attitude and resources? the answer to this question will show whether the linking of the different apostolates is really doable today.

3. The goal of evangelization is adequately set forth. This goal has three aspects: (a) the *personal* aspect — an integrated spirituality; (b) the *communitarian* aspect — the building up of a Church of communion which is fully participatory and serves as a sacrament of salvation; (c) the *missionary* aspect — the transformation of society towards the conciliar vision (p.48). This should help give depth and breadth to evangelization.

4. The characteristics of renewed evangelization are quite amply described. The description serves as a guideline to the "how" of evangelization today.

5. There is a correct emphasis on the formation aspect of all renewal. Hence, catechesis, the formation of conscience and formation in spirituality are indicated as priorities.

6. The primary place of the Bible in the whole of the Christian life is rightly stressed, and Bible reading by all the faithful is urged. This will have ecumenical repercussions.

The following can be expected from this stress on the Bible and its reading by all the faithful: (a) More people will lead Bible-based lives, and will consequently be thinking biblically, and hence, differently from many Church leaders who are not very familiar with the Bible; (b) There will be a growth in spirituality from the encounter with the Lord speaking in the Scriptures; (c) Many of the lay faithful will be attracted to become Ministers of the word. (Are our priests ready to instruct them?)

Some undesirable results may also follow, namely, (a) Many of the people indulge in their own interpretation of the Scriptures without regard for Church teaching; (b) Tension and even division within the Catholic communities may arise as a result of divergent interpretations or application of the biblical word; (c) Should no one competently guide Catholics who have fallen in love with the Bible, they may be drawn away from the Church by non-Catholic evangelists.

Bishops and priests should prepare for all these results.

7. While there is a repeated centering of the whole evangelizing process in Christ, the role of the Holy Spirit in evangelization is highlighted. This opens the way to seeing evangelization as a Trinitarian reality like the Church itself, helps prevent a stifling legalism and an exclusive reliance on institutions, and inspires creative boldness.

8. The unity of evangelization with temporal liberation is asserted without however equating the two. Temporal liberation as an integral part, even a constitutive dimension of evangelization without exhausting the latter's meaning. This is a point the majority of Filipino Catholics still have to assimilate. It seems that the liberation instincts of Filipinos are very poor. An ambience has to be developed to evoke these.

In the Philippine setting, temporal liberation is of very great urgency, and its realization is demanded by our preferential option for the poor. No wonder the section on evangelization as temporal liberation is the longest sub-section in the whole document.

9. It is re-assuring to see emphasized that the task of temporal liberation needs to be permeated by a spirituality. It is spirituality which should motivate and guide the work of temporal liberation.

10. There is a successful effort to focus on the priority requirements of temporal liberation. This is done in the listing of the truths from the social teaching of the Church that need urgent emphasis and of those truths that should govern the participation of the Catholics in politics.

It seems that the portions of Part III which have found the greatest resonance are those that deal with integrated spirituality, and the Church and the political community. The election period saw many Catholics working for the reform of the Philippine politics, and doing so as a faith-commitment.

We can speak here of a genuine quantum leap in spirituality among a vast number of lay people. The different groups like PPC-RV, NASSA-Care, CIMPEL, MAHAL '92, etc. that worked for the voters' education and honest elections are outstanding examples of this new consciousness. And their actuation also showed that many Catholics have learned when they should follow their pastors, and when they can differ from the political choices of these pastors. It seems the lay people know very well that the same faith can lead to different concrete political choices.

However, two things still need to be done: First, the bishops and priests themselves need to reflect on the extent and limits of their competence in matters political. Second, a big number of the laity and many from the practitioners of mass media, need to be informed about the competence of their pastors to speak on the moral aspects of politics. Many people in the print media show a lamentable ignorance of Catholic teaching as contained in the sections on the Church and Political Community.

PASTORAL IMPLICATIONS

The main lines of the action to be done for a renewed integral evangelization are contained in the decrees recognized by Rome. What is important now is to put into practice these decrees in a programmed way according to agreed upon priorities. Dioceses, parishes and religious and lay communities should set priorities and work out a program for the implementation of the conciliar decrees. I consider Arts. 1 §2, 11, 13, 17, 20 §3, 21 §4, 22 §1, and 36 as especially directional decrees which must guide the work of integral evangelization.

In the implementation of the PCP-II Decrees much will be asked of the bishops and priests. They will have to convince by careful explanation and persuade by the power of their example.

I wish to point out especially three imperatives of PCP-II:

First, A continuing pastoral imperative will be how to put our faithful in direct prayerful contact with the Bible so that they will in fact approach their personal and social life situations with minds and hearts imbued with the Word of God.

Second, The work of discovering or creating inculturated expressions of faith in catechesis, theology in worship is only at its very early stage. Encouragement ought to be given to this endeavor. Here we need a sensitivity to our own culture, boldness, imagination and creativity.

Third, We must continue to promote an integrated spirituality as understood by PCP-II and keep on emphasizing the social dimensions of everything in the Christian faith. We should not rest until it is taken for granted that the work for justice, peace and the integrity of creation is a task

of the Church, and until our faithful see that the striving for a more just and peaceful society where there are no poor or where the poor are few should be a Christian commitment.

In general, it can be said that while Part III of the PCP-II document is strong in the delineation on goals, values and requisite attitudes, it has not gone in any detailed way into the "how" of attaining these goals or practicing these values and attitudes. For example, how do you go about the necessary process of inculturation? How do you develop a spirituality of social transformation in yourself or in a community? How do you go about making sure it is faith which judges ideology, and not vice-versa? How do you promote the knowledge and practice of the social teachings of the Church? How do you go about the process of discernment?

Such questions will have to be answered if we are to put the decrees of PCP-II into motion. I want to mention two especially important items. First, it seems that the document while emphasizing the need for the formation of a social conscience, has not pointed out and described the process of moral reasoning that is necessary to arrive at correct decisions. The document speaks of discernment, which is a different thing and follows a dynamic different from moral reasoning. Moral education has to provide the knowledge of this process of moral reasoning for arriving at correct moral decision.

Second, now is the time to engage in a "more systematic reflection in relation to the truth we hold in a situation of religious pluralism." We need how to formulate "pastoral guidelines that would help Catholics in government service deal with issues that involve religious freedom" (p.66). The discussion of this matter in the present PCP-II document is too vague and imprecise at present to be helpful in forming conscientious moral decisions.

The work of a new evangelization is a never-ending task. An in the Philippines, the task is massive and the means at hand seemingly disproportionate to the magnitude of the task. But deliberate and decisive steps in post-PCP-II period will inspire the ever-growing participation of the Catholic faithful in the task that belongs to God first of all and, by His grace, to us all. □