Desacralizing the Christian Proclamation
in the Global City

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Abstract: The paper aims to argue that the Christian message is not totally lost and discarded despite the increasing resistance of an increasing percentage of peoples who turned away from the religious language in the way they deal with their day-to-day life. The paper then proposes that the proclamation of the Christian message may take a 'desacralized' form for it to sound relevant to the daily concerns of the people. The desacralized proclamation of the Christian message has to focus on the talk about human values where the community of persons of different religious affiliations – whose members share resources, skills and strengths – may come together and talk about their common concerns. Together, they would confront the same challenges and commonly respond to the impending calamities. In the process, there will develop an atmosphere of trust and open communication of private lives and practices, including religious ones. It is most likely that the religious-others would inquire about Christian beliefs and rituals. This is the moment to heighten our proclamation and bring it to a higher level in which we could discuss the specificity of Christian Catholic values. The initiative must come from them and must be viewed as God's grace at work, as the Holy Spirit infusing the religious-others with the *lumen fidei*. The initiative cannot come from us who proclaim. Otherwise, all our actions, while living in community with them, might be construed as part of a proselytizing scheme.

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The Present Society: The World Becoming a Global City

Rapid urbanization is a global phenomenon especially among developing countries. This phenomenon is characterized by a twofold movement that results in the development of large urban centers now popularly called mega-cities. On the one hand, there is a brisk in-migration of rural folks to the cities in order to look for greener pastures. They usually form a group of non-formal settlers and build an urban poor settlement. Carter, citing Eyre, observes that the urban poor settlement undergoes a stage of development from an initial state of insecurity and lack of organization to gradual achievement of a feeling of performance. This is accompanied by the improvement of dwellings and the gradual establishment of small businesses so that eventually the settlement becomes part of the city.[1]

Metro Manila, for example, grew from an approximately 5 million inhabitants in 1975 to 7.95 million in 1990. In 2015, the population has swollen to 12.8 million making it the world's most densely populated city with 42,857 people per square kilometer. Mumbai is a far second with a density of 23,000/sq.km. while Paris is third with 20,150/sq. km. (Philippine Statistics Authority – Manila Statistics and census data) (world population review.com/world cities/manila-population/).[2] It is generally acknowledged that the increase in the population density of Metro Manila is attributed to a sustained in-migration of people from the rest of the country, specifically the rural areas.[3]

The phenomenon of in-migration that predominantly contributes to the rapid growth of urban centers is observed not only in Manila but also in many cities of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Williams observes that people flock to the cities "because of both negative push factors and more positive pull factors" (Donald C. Williams, Global Urban Growth, Sta. Barbara, California: Clio Press, 2012, p. 6). This means that there are unfavorable circumstances in the countryside, mostly brought about by poverty, that push people to move to the cities which "serve as centers for diverse cultural activities and social interaction, as vital engines of economic production and consumption, as promoters of technological advancement, and as seats of administration and government."[4]

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[1] Harold Carter, *The Study of Urban Geography* (4th ed.) 1995, as cited in the 1995 *Philippine Yearbook*, p. 354.

[2] Philippine Statistics Authority – Manila Statistics and census data (world population review.com/world cities/manila-population).

[3] 1995 Philippine Yearbook, p. 206.

[4] ibid., p. 2.

To accommodate the sudden rush of population, the city has to expand vertically and horizontally. High rise buildings which used to be clustered only in the district of Makati, for example, can now be seen mushrooming in the different districts of Metro Manila in the Philippines. Moreover, in a horizontal expansion, the urban center has spread to the nearby provinces of Bulacan in the north of Luzon, and in Cavite and Laguna in the south which combine to a whooping total population of 21.3 million. This expansion has generated what we now call a mega-city.

With the facility of transportation and communication, it is inevitable that cities and mega-cities would connect with one another and create inter-city networking. They would link with one another "at regional, national, and global scales, forming a hierarchy of interconnected functions"[5] thus resulting in what some writers describe as an 'explosion' of the city.[6]

On the other hand, the 'physical neighborhood' of people engendered by the formation of mega-cities, bolstered by 'emotional connection' due to cultural, economic, mutual-aid, and political exchanges is largely complemented by 'technological proximity' through the internet and the proliferation of social media thereby creating what we call nowadays as a 'global city.'

The world is very much connected. News, even fake news, can spread in a minute. The tremors of political conflict ignited by incendiary statements from political leaders can easily be felt in the four corners of the world through the internet. Anger, mob rule, and mass action can be instigated through Facebook and Twitter. The so called 'Arab Spring' occurred because of the population's technological proximity. The earth has entered the worldwide web and the global city came to be.

Living with the Non-Christians in the Global City

The coming to be of the global city brought about by physical neighborhood, emotional connection, and technological proximity has a significant impact on the interaction among peoples of different religious affiliations. The growth of the global city has also resulted into a greater consciousness of Religious Pluralism. There are 2 billion Christians, 1.3 billion Muslims, 900 million Hindus, 360 million Buddhists, and 14 million Jews. There are also 800 million secularists, agnostics, and atheists with no religious affiliation.[7] All these people are brought nearer to one another through the global city.

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[5] Ibid. p. 4.
[6] Mark Gottdiener and Ray Hutchison, *The New Urban Sociology* (second ed.), Boston, McGraw Hill, 2000, p. 4.
[7] See http://www.adherents.com accessed 5 May 2014.

In Manila, a mosque was built in an urban center where Catholics and Buddhists live nearby. They, too, can be awakened by the early morning incantation projected from the mosque through a loudspeaker. A mammoth procession of a revered Catholic image of the Black Nazarene yearly passes through an area where there are Muslim and Buddhist dwellers. Icons, pictures of religious images, and pious Christian sayings are being posted through Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram and anybody can view and, read them, and get affected for better or worse.

A series of caricatures of the Prophet Mohammed by a French satire magazine, Charlie Hebdo, which for many Muslims was a blasphemy, provoked a violent attack on the magazine headquarters and killed twelve people. A hashtag 'Je suis Charlie' spread like wildfire in a very short time and sparked a massive rally in Paris and in many cities throughout the world in support for freedom of expression, and in protest against the violence that threatens to eradicate the Western value which is powerfully expressed in Voltaire's "I do not agree with what you say but I will fight to the death your right to say it." This turn of events simply tells us that there is now a tension between the French and the Muslims especially within France. Considering that the Muslims in France are second or third generation Muslims who were born and raised there, the situation is really complicated. It is a breeding ground for conflict and suspicion that can lead to violence. What makes matters worse is that many people in the world identified with and rallied behind the hashtag 'Je suis Charlie' while there were also some who stood by the Muslims who espoused the opposite hashtag 'Je ne suis pas Charlie.' Thus, conflict, doubts, suspicion, and threats of violence have also become global.

Indeed, in the global city, the believers of other religions have become a neighbor to Christians even if they live thousands of miles away. It is, therefore, inevitable, that even whispers about a neighbor's belief and discreet comments about his or her religious practices can be heard and can even generate certain reactions. They can engender suspicion, conflict, and even violence. The same is true with the proclamation of one's religious beliefs and the display of one's devotional practices. This leads us to ask, "How should we proclaim the Christian message to the non-Christian neighbors in a global city?"

Proclaiming the Christian Message to Non-Christians in a Global City

We can begin this discourse on the proclamation of the Christian message to the non-Christians by the recognition of our task to proclaim the truth that we have found in Christ. Such truth is a light that must not remain hidden under a bed or in a

bushel basket. When we proclaim it, we are exercising our obedience to truth. Pope Paul VI, in his address to the faithful in a general audience in Rome in January 20, 1965, succinctly remarked:

> They (Catholics) must realize that ours is not a-priori dogmatism, it is not spiritual imperialism, Nor is it formal legalism; rather it is total obedience to total truth, which comes from Christ. The fullness of faith is not a treasure to be jealously hoarded, but one quick to be shared, which Makes us happier the prompter we are to share it with others, recognizing that it is not ours, but Is thus of everyone.[8]

Paul VI, however, clearly indicated that our proclamation cannot take the form of dogmatism in that we proclaim the Christian message through a set of propositions that must be assented to by the non-Christians if they want to be freed from error. Neither can it be with the attitude of spiritual imperialism in that we make the non-Christians feel that they are inferior and that ours is a holier way of life which they should emulate if they want to be holy and be saved. Likewise, our proclamation should not be in the mode of formal legalism in which we display our lives as a canine obedience to a set of laws which we have formulated on the presumption that they are based on God's own laws.[9]

Instead of dogmatism, spiritual imperialism, and formal legalism, Paul VI enjoins Catholics to proclaim the Christian message "through the gradual exposition of our teaching through respect, esteem, and charity toward the interlocutors."[10] (Ibid.).

From the foregoing words of Paul VI, we can note that respect and esteem for the religious-others is a sine-qua-non for interreligious encounter. The reason for this is that the Pope sees the value of the religions to which they adhere. This positive estimation of other religions is drawn by the Pope from the teachings of Vatican II, which has just concluded (Dec. 8, 1965) when he delivered this address:

> The Catholic Church rejects nothing of what is true and holy in these religions. She has a high regard for the manner of life and conduct, the precepts and doctrines which, although differing in many ways from her own teachings, nevertheless often reflect a ray of that truth which enlightens all men. Yet she proclaims and is in duty bound to proclaim without fail, Christ who is the way, the truth, and the life (Jn. 1:6). In him, whom God reconciled all things to himself (2Cor. 5:18-19), men find the fullness of their religious life.[11]

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[8] Francesco Gioia (ed.), *Interreligious Dialogue, The Official Teaching of the Catholic Church* (1963-1995), no. 215, p. 135.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid.

[11] *Nostra Aetate*, n. 2.

Nevertheless, while we accord the adherents of other religions the respect that is due to them on account of the goodness and holiness found in their religions, we, as a Church, must not turn our backs on our tremendous missionary work that needs to be done. As Dignitatis Humanae says:

> There are two billion people – and their number is increasing day by day – who have never, or barely, heard the Gospel message; they constitute large and distinct groups united by enduring cultural ties, ancient religious traditions, and strong racial relationships . . . If the Church is to be in a position to offer all men the mystery of salvation and the life brought by God, then it must implant itself among all these groups in the same way that Christ by his incarnation committed himself to the social and cultural circumstances of the men among whom he lived.[12]

The question that should haunt every Christian who lives in the global city (and that means "all" Christians today!) is how do we proclaim the Christian message to the non-Christians of our times as a fulfillment of our missionary duty while, at the same time, according them the respect that is due to them?

First of all, what has to be made clear is the content of our proclamation. What should we proclaim? What did Christ proclaim by his words and deeds? It is widely held by biblical scholars and theologians nowadays that the main proclamation of Jesus Christ is the Kingdom of God. For example, John Fullenbach, SVD writes,

> Against the colorful background of opinions and expectations concerning the final intervention of God in the history of his people, Jesus presented his message of the Kingdom of God as having arrived with him . . . It was definitely unusual to make it the "center" of one's proclamation. This indicates that Jesus must have done this purposely and that it emerged from his own genius. It is, therefore, important to look very closely at Jesus' proclamation of the Kingdom and to become aware of the uniqueness which message of the Kingdom contains over the use of the term in the vocabulary of his time.[13]

The view that the Kingdom of God is central to Jesus' preaching is reiterated by Joseph Ratzinger in his book, *Eschatology: Death and Eternal Life*:

> From the New Testament, the phrase "Kingdom of God," *basileia tou theou*, or "Kingdom of Heaven," *basileia tou ouranon*, is the true Leitmotiv of Jesus' preaching. Looking at the statistics makes it plain. There are in all 122 occurrences of the word in the New Testament, 99 being in the three Synoptic Gospels, and 90 on the lips of Jesus himself. This in itself makes it clear that the phrase has a fundamental importance in the tradition stemming from Jesus.[14]

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[12] *Dignitatis Humanae,* n. 10.

[13] Fullenbach, *The Kingdom of God, the Heart of Jesus' Message for Us Today,* Divine Word Publications, Mla, 1989, p. 29.

[14] Ratzinger, J., *Eschatology Death and Eternal Life*, D. Waldstein (trans), Catholic University of America Press. Washington D.C., 1988, pp. 24-25.

Ratzinger describes the Kingdom of God as 'God's rule, his living power over the world.' Citing the eminent Scripture scholar, Joachim Jeremias, Ratzinger interprets the proposition 'The Kingdom of God is at hand' as 'God is close.' Then he further elaborated his description by saying that "First and foremost, Jesus is speaking not of a heavenly reality but of something God is doing and will do in the future here on earth."[15]

Deepening his understanding of the Kingdom of God as spelled out in the Gospels, Ratzinger says that the fundamental categories of Jesus' proclamation is grace and repentance. This means that "Jesus is opposed to any form of righteousness, whether political or ethical, that tries to achieve the Kingdom by its own volition." He contrasts such self-made righteousness with a redemption which is pure gift, something gratuitously received. However, we must also maintain that the Kingdom of God does find expression in ethical categories.[16]

Finally, Ratzinger caps his interpretation of the Kingdom of God by saying that Jesus himself through his actions, words, and sufferings, is the Kingdom of God:

> In his Spirit-filled activity, smashing the demonic enslavement of man, the Kingdom of God becomes reality, God taking the government of this world into his own hands. Let us remember that God's Kingdom is an event not a sphere. Jesus' actions, words, and sufferings break the power of that alienation which lies so heavily on human life. In liberating people, they establish God's Kingdom since through him God acts in the world.[17]

What in concrete can we make out of Ratzinger's theological ruminations? First of all, we can say that through the actions of Jesus Christ and his Spirit, grace was poured forth into the world. This grace works in every man in such a way that it brings about repentance which means that from his self-will, from his enslavement to sin and selfishness, man responds to God's grace, reforms his thoughts, feelings, and actions, then lives and acts according to God's injunctions. By this, man puts himself under the rule or the governance of God. Now this rule, this governance has also ethical expressions in the way man relates with others, including the non-Christians. That is the reason why the most important commandment after loving God above all things is for man to love his neighbor as he loves himself. This is Christian charity, and its ultimate effect is communion – with God and neighbor.

Christian charity towards the neighbor has concrete expressions in man's daily life. Foremost among them is justice, sharing, understanding, and forgiveness which brings about peace, abundance, and joy in the human community. If one looks

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[15] Ibid., p. 26.
[16] Ibid., p. 31.
[17] Ibid.

at these expressions of Christian charity and its effects to the human community, one can say that these are deeply human values that are welcomed and shared by peoples of all religions and cultures. If a Christian espouses these values and promotes them to the non-Christians, he is, in fact acting in the person of Christ and bringing the Christian message to others without mentioning the name of Christ, that is, without the need to declare that he is a baptized Christian. Through the Christian promoting these human values, "God acts in the world."

Desacralizing the Christian Proclamation Through the Promotion of Human Values

Harvey Cox, in his book, *The Secular City* (1965), views creation as a disenchantment of nature. The Hebraic view of creation destroys the pre-secular belief that man lives in an enchanted forest where glens and groves swarm with spirits, where the sacred commingle with the profane, where god and man are both part of nature.

> That is why the Hebrew view of creation signals such a marked departure. It separates nature from God and distinguishes man from nature. This is the beginning of the disenchantment process. True, the Hebrews freely borrowed the material of the Creation story from their mythologically oriented neighbors of the ancient Near East. The themes and motifs are in no sense original. But what the Hebrews did with those myths, how they modified them, is the important thing to notice. Whereas in the Babylonian accounts, the sun, the moon and stars are semidivine beings, partaking the divinity of the gods themselves their religious status is totally rejected by the Hebrews. In Genesis, the sun and moon become creations of Yahweh, hung in the sky to light the world for man; they are neither gods nor semidivine beings. The stars have no control over man's life. They too are made by Yahweh. None of the heavenly bodies can claim any right to religious awe or worship.[18]

If Cox considers creation as the disenchantment of nature, Exodus is, for him, a desacralization of politics. In the Exodus event, one can trace the biblical roots of the debunking of the identification of the political with the religious order which is characteristic of the pre-secular society where one rules by divine right. This debunking opened the way to socio-political change. In Cox's words,

> In tracing the desacralization of politics to its biblical roots, the Exodus must be the focal point of study. For the Hebrews, Yahweh had spoken decisively not in a natural phenomenon, such as a thunderclap or an earthquake, but through a historical event, the deliverance from Egypt. It is particularly significant that this was an event of social change, a massive act of what we might today call 'civil

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[18] H. Cox, *The Secular City. Secularization and Urbanization in Theological Perspective,* New York, 1968, p. 22.

disobedience.' It was an act of insurrection against a duly constituted monarch, a pharaoh whose relationship to the sun-god constituted his claim to political sovereignty. There had no doubt been similar escapes before, but the Exodus of the Hebrew became more than a minor event. It became the central event around which the Hebrew organized their whole perception of reality. As such, it symbolized the deliverance of man out of sacral- political order and into history and social change, out of religiously legitimated monarchs and into a world where political leadership would be based on power gained by the capacity to accomplish specific objectives.[19]

Cox's notion of the disenchantment of nature through faith in creation and the desacralization of politics in the Exodus reveals the essence of the 'sacred' that is repudiated by his thought. It is not the One, transcendent God who has a hand in worldly events, whose overriding will exerts a powerful influence in the unfolding of history. Faith in creation, on the one hand, discards a 'sacred' that dwells even in the most insignificant stone, that inhabits in natural objects such as the sun and the stars. The Exodus, on the other hand, rejects a god that is so identified with a political system to the extent that it opens to the possibility of a totalitarian government or an oppressive religious system perpetrated in the name of the divine.

Our idea of the 'desacralization of the proclamation of the Christian message' takes the model of Cox's 'disenchantment of nature' and 'desacralization of politics.' Just as the disenchantment of nature and the desacralization of politics are not a denial of the divine and the sacred, so the desacralization of the proclamation of the Christian message is neither a denial of Christ nor of the divine and the sacred. It simply means that when we are dealing with the non-Christians, there is no need to insist that Jesus Christ is the Messiah, the Holy One of God. It is sufficient that we manifest to the non-Christians what Jesus Christ revealed to us about the Father – his overriding will to restore man's communion with God and its concomitant effect of communion among human beings. Jesus Christ did not want to preach himself. When he healed people, he did not want them to proclaim his name. When John's disciples asked Jesus, "Are you the one we are to expect, or should we wait for another?," Jesus answered, "Go back and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind see again, the lame walk, the lepers are made clean, the deaf hear, the dead are raised to life, and the poor are given the good news." (Lk 7:18-22) Jesus' reply to the disciples of John was not pointing to himself but to the effect of his presence among people. In other words, for Christian proclamation, it is sufficient that we manifest our desire to acknowledge and worship the One God and to forge a loving and caring relationship with the non-Christians. By so doing, we are bringing the Christian message to them without necessarily naming Christ. If they respond positively and reciprocate

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[19] Ibid., p. 26.

our love with love, our peace with their own peace, and our joy with their joy, they shall have become Christians in deed and in life without receiving the sacrament of baptism. As such, they have become veritable members of a communion which can be subsumed in our concept of the universal Church. Vatican II has recognized the possibility of salvation and the inclusion even of the non-Christians in the catholic unity. LG no 13 states that "all men are called to this catholic unity which prefigures and promotes universal peace. And in different ways to it belong, or are related: the Catholic faithful, others who believe in Christ, and finally all mankind, called by God's grace to salvation." LG no. 16 says that "Those who through no fault of their own, do not know the Gospel of Christ or his Church, but who nevertheless 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 – those too may achieve eternal salvation."

If through our communion with the non-Christians, the blind see and the lame walk, the hungry are fed and the good news of salvation is preached to the poor, then Christ is in our midst. In such a manner, the Kingdom of God is already taking place. The effects of Christ's message are palpably present.

Related to the discourse on the possibility of salvation for the non-Christians and their inclusion in the catholic unity is the article of Prof. De Graeve of the Catholic University of Louvain in Belgium. The article was entitled "Eleven Theses Toward a Christian Theology of Interreligious Encounter" (Louvain Studies, 1979, pp. 315-325). Relevant to our topic are theses 3,4,5, and 6 of the article.

In thesis no. 3, De Graeve enjoins us to refrain from harshly judging other religions and to keep in mind that saintliness is the exception not only among non-Christians but Christians as well. He proposes the concept of 'implicit Christians' to refer to non-Christians who, in their lives, are like Christ although Christ is anonymous to them inasmuch as they adhere to other religions. This implies that in God's self-expression, a wealth of varieties rather than uniformity is created.

Thesis no. 4 views Jesus Christ, the Son of Man, as a 'corporate personality' incorporating within himself general salvation for all humankind. In this notion, one can trace the salvation of the non-Christians as rooted in Christ himself.

The distinction between Christ-ianity (Christ pronounced with a long 'i') and Christianity is the subject of thesis no. 5. In a kind of fulfillment theology, Christ-ianity is considered as the summit of Christianity and all non-Christian religions. This implies that Christianity has not yet arrived at its fulfillment. It needs to continue to grow so that it can become like Christ. As such Christianity cannot be considered

as a fulfillment of other religions because it needs fulfillment as much as the other religions.

Very closely related to the previous thesis, Thesis no. 6 expounds on the Christ-ness proper to every religion. Every religion is on a journey towards that Christ-ness proper to each of them. With this view, one can develop an incarnational theology of non-Christian religions. In other words, 'Christ-ianity' does not exist in the abstract but becomes flesh and blood in the religion and culture in which it is implanted, takes root, and flourishes.

From the foregoing theses expounded by Prof. De Graeve, a question naturally arises: How do we determine the Christ-ness proper to every religion? The answer to this very important question brings us back to a lawyer's question to Jesus: "Teacher, which commandment of the law is the greatest?"

Jesus' answer was as simple as it was all-embracing. "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and the most important of the commandments. The second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself."[20] Jesus' response embraces all aspects of human life – thoughts, feelings, words, actions – that must be imbued with charity towards God, neighbor, and self.

Our charity towards God is a deeply personal response to God's multifarious expressions of love experienced by each man or woman. Such personal response can be manifested through prayers and rituals which can be shared by a family or community that finds meaning in the common expressions of charity towards God. As a deeply personal and individual response, it can be shared but it should never be imposed on others who might find meaning in other expressions of charity towards God. This gives rise to different religions which should, in effect, be considered as belonging to the private sphere. This is the reason why in his instructions on prayer, Jesus enjoins us to retire to the privacy of our rooms rather than display our prayerfulness in the marketplaces for everyone to see.

Charity to the neighbor is something else. It involves reciprocity among human beings. It has something to do with sharing land, water, air, and sky. It needs the giving and receiving of respect, knowledge, information, and resources for survival and a worthwhile human existence. It is in this sphere of charity to the neighbor that we should share common values such as justice, peace, sharing, understanding, forgiveness, and the like. These are the values that can be nurtured and appreciated in any religion and culture. These are the values that Christ promoted in his preaching of

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[20] Mt. 22:36-39.

the Kingdom of God. When we share these values in our human interaction with the non-Christians, we bring Christ to them. Consequently, when these values flourish among us human beings of differing cultures and religions, we all became Christians in deed and in life.

It is in this regard that we espouse the desacralization of Christian Proclamation. It is not a denial of the sacral or divine origin and inspiration of our proclamation of charity to the neighbor. On the contrary, our proclamation is out of obedience to the Christian injunction. However, our proclamation should begin from the common values that we share with the non-Christians. They are a shared human experience that can form a peaceful, loving community among peoples of varied religious affiliations. They are the values that can transform us to become Christians without naming it as such, and to form a Christian community out of all of us. The basis of these shared human values is what the Fathers of the Church call the Logos Spermatikos, seeds of the Word that are manifested as rays of light and truth found in different religions. In this regard, one can say that the human values inspired by the teachings of Christ for us Christians are, in adherents of other religions, also deeply Christian in that they emanate from the Logos.

However, in the proclamation of these human values to the non-Christians, there is no need to name them as Christian. It is sufficient that they live these human values which are also deeply Christian values within the context of their particular culture and religion. In other words, by living these values, the non-Christians are moving towards the Christ-ianity proper to their religion.

Desacralized Proclamation and the Christian's Missionary Mandate

With the foregoing discourse on desacralizing the proclamation of the Christian message, a question inevitably arises: What happens to the Christian mandate to go to all the world baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit? The answer is, it is not totally lost or discarded.

In the promotion of human values, there will arise as a consequence, a community of persons of different religious affiliations whose members share resources, skills, and strengths. Together, they would confront the same challenges and commonly respond to the impending calamities. In the process, there will develop an atmosphere of trust and the open communication of private lives and practices, including religious ones. It is most likely that the non-Christians would inquire about Christian beliefs and rituals. This is the moment to heighten our proclamation and bring it to a higher level in which we could discuss the specificity of Christian Catholic values. The initiative must come from them and must be viewed

as God's grace at work, as the Holy Spirit infusing the non-Christians with the lumen fidei. The initiative cannot come from us who proclaim. Otherwise, all our actions, while living in community with them, might be construed as part of a proselytizing scheme.

However, in order for this heightened proclamation to be effective and to bear fruit, there is a need for us Catholic Christians to christianize our individual selves and our baptized Christian communities. Many times, it happens that while we are baptized as Christians, we behave as unbaptized individuals and as abhorrent Christian communities. We should ensure that while we educate ourselves on our dogmas and liturgical practices, we should also nurture in our midst the human, but deeply Christian values. Without this nurturance, that is, when we are steeped in selfishness, destroying one another to further our personal interests, when we are murderous and corrupt, and have no concern for the less privileged among ourselves, who would be attracted to join our Catholic Christian churches? By not nurturing these human and deeply Christian values among ourselves as Christians, we lose the authority to go to all the world and to baptize. For how could we hope to baptize others and make them Christians if we are not Christian ourselves?

In the Acts of the Apostles. These human values are never separated from the teachings and the liturgical rituals. It is in the harmony of teachings, rituals and human values that attracted a great number of people to the first Christian community:

> Now, all the believers lived together and shared all their belongings. They would sell their property, and all they had and distribute the proceeds to others, according to their need. Each day they met together in the temple area; they broke bread in their homes; they shared their food with great joy and simplicity of heart; they praised God and won the people's favor. and every day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.[21] **PS**

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[21] Acts 2:44-47.

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