

Community Engagement as a Concrete Expression of Doing Mission

Melanio Leal, M.A.
San Beda College

“Mercy is the very foundation of the Church’s Life ¹”

A. INTRODUCTION:

On the second anniversary of his election on March 13, 2015, Pope Francis called symbolically the attention of the entire global Roman Catholic Church to take up his papacy’s central message of compassion and pardon.² He called attention to the danger this contemporary world faces in the widespread lacking of mercy and compassion. He writes, “Perhaps we have long since forgotten how to show and live the way of mercy.”³ The contemporary world manifests a tendency to be composed of many and diverse independent groupings that are not interested in a framework and vision for the solidarity of humanity. In this setting and milieu the relevance of the Church is in question. He encourages the church to proclaim God’s mercy and compassion and extends it everywhere. He writes:

“The church feels the urgent need to proclaim God’s mercy. Her life is authentic and credible only when she becomes a convincing herald of mercy. She knows that her primary task, especially at a moment full of great hopes and signs of contradiction, is to introduce everyone to the great mercy by contemplating the face of Christ. The Church is

¹Pope Francis, Encyclical Letter *Misericordiae Vultus*: Bull of Indiction of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy (Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2015), 13.

The Holy Year commenced on 8 December 2015, feast of the Immaculate Conception, and will conclude on 20 November 2016, the solemnity of Christ the King. The Pope made three (3) Invitations: First, to receive personally the mercy of God by having a good confession; second, to extend our mercy to those who have sinned against us; third, to become missionaries of mercy throughout the world. (cf. The Pope’s Calendar 2016 Jubilee of Mercy).

See also: Pope Francis first apostolic exhortation, “The Joy of the Gospel” (November 24, 2013), Pope Francis reiterated: “The Church must be a place of mercy freely given, where everyone can feel welcomed, loved, forgiven and encouraged to live the good life of the Gospel”. (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 114).

²Joshua J. McElwee “Holy Year of Mercy”, National Catholic Reporter (<http://ncronline.org>) March 13, 2015.

³Pope Francis, *Misericordiae Vultus*: Bull of Indiction of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy,

called above all to be a credible witness to mercy, professing it and living it as the core of the revelation of Jesus Christ”⁴.

The church is called to follow the examples of Jesus that he comes in search of sinners, of the lost sheep, to heal the sick, to free prisoners and many others. These examples have revealed the face of God, a father who is “rich in mercy.”⁵

To respond to the call of the Holy Pope, this article will focus on the second style of doing theology, the walking theology⁶ as laid down by Gerald O’Collins. Following this walking theology in doing mission, the church then is called to do mission in order to concretely abide by the challenge of the Holy Father. It is not sufficient for the church to utter simply the word mercy; it is necessary to do the truth (John 3:21). Especially today, the church is judged more by its deeds than by its words.⁷ Therefore, the culture of mercy must be seen in the practice of the entire life of the church.⁸

Let us now try to ponder on the meaning of mission by which the church as people of God is called upon. It is in doing mission that one can concretely apply the virtue of mercy and compassion.

B. MISSION:

Up Until the sixteenth century, the word mission was used to refer to the sending of the Son by the Father and of the Holy Spirit by the Father and the Son. The Jesuits were the first to use it in the sense of spreading the Christian faith among non- Christians, including Protestants. Later, mission meant “propagation of the

⁴Pope Francis, Encyclical Letter *Misericordiae Vultus*, 32. Emphasis added.

⁵See: Thomas Rosica, “True Meaning and Significance of the Jubilee of Mercy”. Salt + Light Blog. Retrieved 16 February 2016, from <http://saltandlighttv.org/blog/fr-thomas-rosica/true-meaning-and-significance-of-the-jubilee-of-mercy>.

⁶G. O’Collins presents the Theological Styles and Methods or Ways for doing theology. The first style is sitting theology. This is academic in nature and in the universities. It is theoretical, doctrinal and dogmatic. Its sources are the scriptures and church documents. The second style is walking theology. It is theology in motion. This is a lived experience and is the practical way of doing theology. It calls for the promotion of the common good and justice. It is praxis oriented and geared for the application of one’s faith. The context of doing theology here is in the life situation of the poor, deprived, oppressed, exploited and marginalized. One can draw inspiration from Jesus, Himself who had solidarity with the poor, the least, the last and the lost in the society. Finally, the third style is kneeling theology. It is contemplative and focuses on prayer and worship. One can witness to God revealed and reflected in liturgical celebrations. See: Gerald O’ Collins, S.J. *Rethinking Fundamental Theology: Toward a New Fundamental Theology*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 322-341. Emphasis added.

⁷See: Cardinal Walter Kasper. *Mercy: The Essence of the Gospel and the Key to Christian Life*, trans. William Madges (Quezon City: Claretian Communications Foundation, Inc., 2015),166.

⁸*Ibid.*, 167.

faith” (Propaganda Fidei), “expansion of the church”, “planting the church”, and “going to foreign countries” as mission fields and mission frontiers.

The decolonization process after the Second World War created a new situation for expatriate missionaries. The realization that the world could no longer be divided into “Christian” and “non-Christian” regions, and that we are living in a religiously pluralist world contributed to a rethinking of the concept of mission. New socio-economic realities also fostered a new way of thinking about mission. In short, the changing world context was challenging the traditional missionary thinking and approach.

In this contemporary crisis of mission, David Bosch, an outstanding missiologist⁹ came up with an excellent book in which he outlines a new model of doing mission.¹⁰ In this paper, the writer will briefly present just a few various elements out of the 13 emerging ecumenical missionary paradigm as proposed by David Bosch.¹¹ These selected elements, in his opinion, are of great relevance for doing mission in the Philippines. The writer stresses that in discussing a specific element all the other elements are always present in the background. Hence, the “emphasis throughout should therefore be on the wholeness and indivisibility of the paradigm, rather on its separated ingredients.¹² As we focus on one element, all the other elements will also be present.

1. MISSION AS THE CHURCH-WITH-OTHERS

The Old Code of Canon Law stipulates that mission work is the

⁹A missiologist is a specialist who studies and is trained in the science of missions. (cf. www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2013/june/what-is-missiologist.html) He is a practitioner of Missiology. Missiology’s primary task is the study of mission of the Triune God, and within that of the mission of Jesus, the apostles, the church(es), and mission-sending bodies. This means that missiology is the study of God’s mission everywhere-in all six continents, “from everywhere to everywhere”-certainly no longer concentrated on sending from the West. (For thorough reading, please see: James A. Scherer, “Missiology as a Discipline and What it Includes,” *New Directions in Mission and Evangelization 2: Theological Foundations*. Eds. James A. Scherer and Stephen B. Bevans (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1994), 173-187.

¹⁰David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1992; 4th printing).

¹¹In chapter 12 of his book, *Transforming Mission*, he discusses thirteen elements of the emerging ecumenical missionary paradigm. They are the following: 1. Mission as the Church-With-Others, 2. Mission as *missio Dei* 3. Mission as Mediating Salvation, 4. Mission as the Quest for Justice, 5. Mission as Evangelism, 6. Mission as contextualization, 7. Mission as Liberation, 8. Mission as Inculturation, 9. Mission as Common Witness, 10. Mission as Ministry by the Whole People of God, 11. Mission as Witness to the People of Other Living Faiths, 12. Mission as Theology and 13. Mission as Action in Hope. (cf. Cf: David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, 368-510.

¹²*Ibid.*, 368.

propagation of the faith or the conversion of pagans is reserved exclusively to the Pope. His agents for this task are the missionary orders and congregations.

In this old understanding of mission the church was not seen as to be missionary by nature. Gradually, however, the relationship between church and mission was perceived in a new way.

1.1. Shifts in Missionary Thinking

The real breakthrough in respect to mission occurred in *Lumen Gentium* (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church), which dissociates itself from traditional ecclesiology.¹³ The church is now described as the mystery of God's presence in the world. The church is seen as a sign and instrument of community with God and unity among people. The church presents itself humbly and does not define itself in legal categories or as an elite of exalted souls, but as a servant community.

1.2. The Church is Missionary by Its Very Nature

In the emerging ecclesiology, the church is seen as essentially missionary (AG 2). The biblical model behind this conviction is found in 1 Pt 2:9:

*But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.*¹⁴

In this text, "the church is not the sender but the one sent. Its mission, (its "being sent") is not secondary to its being; the church exists in being sent and building up itself for the sake of its mission."¹⁵ Missionary work is the church at work! It is a duty pertaining to the whole church (AG 23). God is a missionary God, a God reaching out to humankind. Hence, God's people are to

¹³Ecclesiology usually now refers to the Theological study of the Christian Church cf. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ecclesiology>. Greek word is *Eklessia* meaning "an assembly". For a thorough reading on Ecclesiology see "Church" cf. Joseph A. Komonchak, Mary Collins and Dermot A. Lane, eds., *The New Dictionary of Theology* (Pasay City: Daughters of St. Paul Publications, 1991), 185-201.

¹⁴The scripture reference and quotation is taken from *The Holy Bible: The New Revised Standard Version – Catholic Edition* (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson, Inc 1993).

¹⁵Bosch, 372.

be a missionary people. "It has become impossible to talk about the church without at the same time talking about mission."¹⁶ The church is essentially missionary and mission is essentially ecclesial because church and mission belong together from the beginning. Then, "a church without mission or a mission without the church are both contradictions."¹⁷

The missionary dimension of every local church manifests itself when all its members are equipped for their calling in society and the world, and engage in missionary activities promoting God's reign in this world.

1.3. Rediscovering the Local Church

"The church-in-mission is, primarily, the local church everywhere in the world."¹⁸ However, for many centuries local churches did not exist, neither in Europe nor elsewhere. There were only affiliates of the universal church. The "mission churches" had to resemble the church in Rome in almost every detail. There were missions, daughter churches, apostolic vicariates, but not autonomous dioceses.

"The rediscovery of the local church as the primary agent of mission has led to a fundamentally new interpretation of the purpose and role of missionaries and mission agencies."¹⁹ Foreign missionary orders and societies could no longer dictate how missionary work ought to be undertaken in the Third World. Everywhere there are missionary situations and the distinction between sending and receiving churches is becoming pointless. The local churches everywhere need each other.

This does not mean that missionaries are no longer needed. Bosch observes that,

In the midst of these new circumstances and relationships there is still room for and need of individual missionaries, but only insofar as all recognize that their task is one that pertains to the whole church (cf. AG 26) and insofar as missionaries appreciate that they are sent as ambassadors of one local church to another local church

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Ibid. Bosch quotes here Carl E. Braaten. *The Flaming Center* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), 55.

¹⁸Ibid., 378.

¹⁹Ibid., 380.

*(where such a local church already exists), as witness of solidarity and partnership, and as expressions of mutual encounter, exchange and enrichment.*²⁰

1. 4. The Church with Others

Instead of adopting the phrase “the church for others”, it would be more appropriate to use the phrase “the church with others”²¹ There is the danger of domination when we apply the former. In doing mission, Christians must not try to see themselves as the guardian of others. The church (the community of believers, the people of God) must see humankind as a dialogue partner in doing mission. The church must not be holding up itself as a model to be emulated, rather, it must join the rest of humankind to proclaim the love, mercy, and compassion of God. “Its members are not proclaiming “Come to us!”, but “Let us follow Him!”²²

1.5. Community Engagement as Church-with-Others

Working with people of other faiths is simply an unavoidable condition of doing mission in our present times. Working side by side with non-Christians, however, can be an uncomfortable experience. In the course of the give and take of daily dialogue, Christians can be challenged by the words and deeds of non-Christian friends and colleagues.

The community involvement of San Beda College which is the Social Enterprise for Economic Development (SEED) program conducted in Bauko, Mt. Province is a very good example of the Church-with-others. This program aims to involve both local and international students not only from Catholic but also Christian and Moslem schools from different countries.²³ Moreover, this is a good response to the call of the Holy Pope in this Year of Mercy because the program aims to develop real-time business plans in view of boosting progress in poor villages.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Ibid., 375.

²²Ibid., 376.

²³Cf; Joel C. Filamor, “San Beda sends delegates to SEED in Malaysia,” *The Bedan Today: A Destiny of Honor, Service and Excellence* vol XIV (May-December, 1978): 29.

2. MISSION AS *missio DEI*²⁴

During the past centuries, mission was understood in many different ways. It was perceived as the propagation of faith, the expansion of the church, going to foreign countries as mission fields and mission frontiers. Sometimes, mission had a soteriological²⁵ focus, and concentrated on saving individuals from eternal damnation. At times, it was understood primarily in cultural terms “as introducing people from the East and the south to the blessings and privileges of the Christian West”.²⁶

After the first world war, missiologist began to realize that mission is primarily a divine initiative. In 1932, Karl Barth was one of the theologians to see mission as an activity of God Himself.²⁷

The understanding of mission as *missio Dei* is endorsed in some documents of the Second Vatican Council.

[1] *Ad Gentes (AG)*

After having stated that the church “is by its very nature missionary since according to the plan of the Father, it has its origin in the mission of the Son and Holy Spirit,” (AG 2) the Decree on the Church’s Missionary Activity defines missionary activity as “nothing less, and nothing more, than the manifestation of God’s plan, its epiphany and realization in the world and history” (AG 9).

[2] *Gaudium et Spes (GS)*

In the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, the Council Fathers affirmed that God is at work through the Spirit to promote the common good. GS 26 states:

²⁴*missio Dei* is a Latin Christian theological term that can be translated as the “mission of the God,” or the “sending of God.” (cf. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Missio_Dei).

The acknowledged concerns with *missio Dei* also meant that reference to the concept went through a hiatus until it was given concise description by David Bosch. According to Bosch, “mission is not primarily an activity of the church, but an attribute of God” (cf. David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, 389-390).

²⁵Soteriology is the study of religious doctrines of salvation. Salvation theory occupies a place of special significance in many religions. In the academic field of religious studies, soteriology is understood by scholars as representing a key theme in a number of different religions and is often studied in a comparative context; that is, comparing various ideas about what salvation is and how it is obtained. (cf. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soteriology)

²⁶Bosch, 434.

²⁷*Ibid.*, 389.

The Spirit of God, Who, with wondrous providence, directs the course of Time and renews the face of the earth, assists at this development. The ferment of the Gospel has aroused and continues to arouse in the hearts of men [and women] an unquenchable thirst for human dignity.

Now “mission is not primarily an activity of the church, but an attribute of God. God is a missionary God... It is not the church that has a mission of salvation to fulfill in the world; it is the mission of the Son and the Spirit through the Father that includes the church.”²⁸ Mission is thereby understood as a movement from God to the world, and the church must be seen as an instrument for that mission.²⁹ J. Moltmann wants us to understand this. He writes:

*What we have to learn [...] is not the church has a mission, but the very reverse: that the mission of Christ creates its own church. Mission does not come from the church; it is from mission and in the light of mission that the church has to be understood.*³⁰

The church exists for mission, not vice versa. “To participate in mission is to participate in the movement of God’s love towards people, since God is a fountain of sending love.”³¹

“For the *missiones ecclesiae* (the missionary activities of the church) the *missio Dei* has important consequences. “Mission”, singular remains primary; “missions”, in the plural, constitutes a derivative.”³² This made Stephen Neill boldly proclaim, “The age of missions ended. The age of mission began.”³³ It follows that we have to distinguish between mission and missions. As Bosch explains:

We cannot without ado claim that what we do is identical to the missio Dei; our missionary activities are only authentic insofar as they reflect participation in the mission of God. “The church stands in the service of God’s turning to the world” [...]. The primary purpose of the missiones ecclesiae can therefore not simply be the planting

²⁸Ibid., 390.

²⁹Jürgen Moltmann, known primarily as a theologian of hope writes, “It is not the church that has a mission of salvation to fulfill in the world; it is the mission of the Son and the Spirit through the Father that includes the church.” (cf: Jürgen Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit: A Contribution to Messianic Ecclesiology*, London: SCM Press, 1977), 64.

³⁰Ibid., 10.

³¹Ibid.

³²Bosch., 391.

³³Stephen Neill, *A History of Christian Missions*, rev. Owen Chadwick (London: Penguin Books, 1990; reprinted second edition), 477.

of churches or the saving of souls; rather, it has to be service to the missio Dei, [...], pointing to God, holding up the God-child before the eyes of the world in a ceaseless celebration of the Feast of Epiphany. In its mission, the church witnesses to the fullness of the promise of God's reign and participates in the ongoing struggle between the reign and the powers of darkness and evil.³⁴

God is concerned for the whole world. Hence, this should be the scope of the missio Dei. It affects all people in all aspects of their existence. God's turning to the world takes place in ordinary human history, and not exclusively in and through the church. The missio Dei is God's activity, which embraces the church and the world. God is indeed a missionary God.

"[T]he missio Dei notion has helped to articulate the conviction that neither the church nor any other human agent can ever be considered the author or bearer of mission. Mission is, primarily and ultimately, the work of the Triune God, Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, for the sake of the world."³⁵ In this missionary ministry the church is privileged to participate. "Mission has its origin in the heart of God. God is a fountain of sending love . . . There is mission because God loves people."³⁶

2.1. Community Engagement with missio Dei

Christ is always present in each and everyone that we encounter. It is our duty as good Christians and as brothers and sisters in Christ to help those in need. Helping the last, lost and least in our society will help them realize that God will never give up on them and help them to always have hope in life.

The mission of the College of Law-Legal Aid Bureau (LAB) of San Beda College in strengthening Legal Aid Clinics across the country in order to give free legal services for the protection of the poor and refugees and stateless persons is a very inspiring endeavor.³⁷ They have extended to three (3) satellite offices in Quiapo, San Beda College-Manila campus and Pandacan in order

³⁴Bosch, 391.

³⁵Bosch, 392.

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Cf; James Loreto C. Piscos, "The Bedan Community Engagement Programs Toward a Holistic-Driven Paradigm," *The Bedan Today: A Destiny of Honor, Service and Excellence* vol XIV (May-December, 1978): 35.

to mentor for various schools.³⁸

3. MISSION AS MINISTRY BY THE WHOLE PEOPLE OF GOD

3.1. Introduction

In the second half of the twentieth century a very important change took place in the history of the church. Ministry was no longer the monopoly of the ordained clergy.

Jesus, himself a lay person, “broke with the entire Jewish tradition when he chose his disciples not from among the priestly class, but from among fisherfolk, tax collectors, and the like.”³⁹ The first disciples were all lay persons. In the course of time, due to all sorts of influences and developments, the church consisted of two clearly distinct categories of people: the clergy and the laity. It may be of interest to note the ambiguity of the word “laity”. Sean Fagan clarifies:

There is no definition of it either in Vatican II documents or in the Code of Canon Law. Insofar as it comes from laos, “people”, all members of the church are laity, the People of God. But when the code speaks of “lay members” it means “non-clerics”. Therefore, in principle, it includes non-clerical religious, Sisters and Brothers. There are “lay” religious. Plain laity are therefore defined by a double negative, non-clerical, non religious. Is it any wonder that our laity feel second-class?⁴⁰

The laity have always contributed a lot to Catholic Missions. However, their contribution was rather auxiliary and controlled by the clergy. After World War II the church discovered again that apostolic involvement was a responsibility of the entire church. Vatican II clearly stated the role of the laity in the church, particularly in respect to its missionary task.

³⁸ibid.

³⁹Bosch, 467.

⁴⁰Sean Fagan, “The Vocation and Mission of the Laity,” in Trends in Mission: Toward the 3rd Millenium: Essays in Celebration of Twenty-Five Years of SEDOS, eds. William Jenkinson and Helene O’Sullivan (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1991), 337.

3.1.1. Vatican II and the Apostolate of the Laity⁴¹

Lumen Gentium 33 (Dogmatic constitution of the Church) states: “The apostolate of the laity is a sharing in the salvific mission of the church. Through Baptism and Confirmation all are appointed to this apostolate by the Lord himself.” And it adds that the laity have “the exalted duty of working for the greater spread of the divine plan of salvation to all people of every epoch and all over the earth.”

Ad Gentes 28 urges every member of the church to “collaborate in the work of the Gospel, each according to his opportunity, ability, charism and ministry.” The document even states categorically (AG21), “[t]he Church is not truly established and does not fully live, nor is it a perfect sign of Christ unless there is genuine laity existing and working alongside the hierarchy.”

Apostolicam Actuositatem (Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People) describes the laity preeminently in terms of the church’s mission, having the “right and duty to be apostles” (par.3).

Vatican II still speaks of lay persons as “auxiliaries” of the “sacred ministries”. The participation of the faithful in decision-making is still weak. Bosch observes:

The watertight division between the “teaching” church and the “learning” church (the ecclesia docens and the ecclesia discens), between the active mediating of grace and the passive receiving of grace, is too deep-seated to be expunged without some ado.⁴²

An unmistakable shift is taking place. It is the community of the faithful that is the primary bearer of mission and not the ordained ministry alone. Bosch writes:

Mission does not proceed primarily from the pope, nor from the missionary order, society or synod, but from a community gathered around the word and the sacraments and sent in the world. Therefore the ordained leadership’s role cannot possibly be the all-determining factor; it is only one part of the community’s total life.⁴³

All Christians have to face the missionary implications of

⁴¹In this section, the quotes from Lumen Gentium and Ad Gentes are taken from Bosch.

⁴²Bosch, 471-472.

⁴³Ibid., 472.

their faith. All Christians must face the question “Why not be a missionary?” because to be a Christian is to be a member of missionary community and to become a participant in the activity of a missionary God.

All Christians, whether they be lay, cleric or religious, whether they be male or female have the same basic mission to continue the mission of Jesus Christ on earth. The community of disciples Jesus brought into existence included a number of women. Church historians state that in the early church, women were full-fledged disciples, and equal missionaries, prophets, church leaders, and apostles in the broad sense of the term.

3.1.2. Involvement of the Laity in the Missionary Ministry

It took quite some time before the church realized

that Christ, who had turned upside down the hallowed forms of ministry of the Jewish establishment of his time, might perhaps also challenge the established “theology of ministry” of the Christian church [...]. But, as always, Christ is not intent on destroying, but in fulfilling. This applies also to the ordained ministry. Nothing will be gained by abolishing it.⁴⁴

Ordained ministry cannot be abolished. The priesthood of the ordained ministry is at the service of the priesthood of the whole church. Together with the rest of God’s people the clergy are the church, sent into the world. If the church is missionary it follows that the church has to reflect seriously on how the “laity” could be engaged in doing mission.

3.2. Community Engagement as Ministry by the Whole People of God

Through community involvement, we are taught that everyone has a mission and responsibility to participate in making the world a better place.

One very noble project of San Beda College led by the San Beda Institutional Community Involvement Center (ICIC) is the health, environment, advocacy, literacy and spirituality (HEALS)

⁴⁴Ibid., 473.

program. This is participated by the College of Arts Sciences (CAS) both professors and students. Concretely, the CAS has Business Clinic programs. They conduct seminars on business processes and on product making of processed vegetable products such as potato chips and carrot jam.

Moreover, the San Beda College Benedictine Educational Foundation Inc. (SBCBEFI) through the San Beda Institutional Community Involvement Center (ICIC) funded and helped in the establishment of the Mushroom Growing in Pactil, Bauko, Mt. Province. This project is a big help to the local farmers and vegetable growers of the village.⁴⁵

C. CONCLUSION:

The researcher has presented only some important elements of the emerging ecumenical missionary paradigm of David Bosch which he thinks, are very relevant for doing mission in our Filipino context.

The transformation of missions, as envisioned by Bosch and others, also calls for a transformation of missionaries.⁴⁶ The emerging ecumenical paradigm requires of missionaries an inner capacity to meet the complex demands of mission in an increasingly complex world. Many missionaries are not equipped cognitively and emotionally to meet the actual demands of the postmodern missionary paradigm. The postmodern world requires far more of missionaries than the modern world ever did.

Bosch's postmodern ecumenical missionary paradigm is an ongoing reminder of the imperatives of Christian mission as we live in the 21st century. This should guide and lead Christians in their missionary endeavors. This should also be an eye-opener for them that doing mission is a continuous process to meet the challenges of the contemporary world.

Very often in the past the church proclaimed itself as the guardian of others. The church determined what was best for the converts and the rest of humanity. The church is now defined as

⁴⁵Cf; James Loreto C. Piscos, "The Bedan Community Engagement Programs Toward a Holistic-Driven Paradigm," *The Bedan Today: A Destiny of Honor, Service and Excellence* vol XIV (May-December, 1978): 33-34.

⁴⁶Margaret E. Guider, "Transforming Missionaries: Implications of the Ecumenical Paradigm", in *Mission in Bold Humility: David Bosch's Work Considered*, eds. Willem Saayman and Klippiess Kritzing (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1996), 151-161.

the community of believers, the people of God. Mission is the duty of the whole church everywhere. Gone are the days when mission was confined to specific geographical location. Mission is now everywhere. Doing mission is now being church with others. The church considers itself as a partner rather than as an entity to be emulated, and the church journeys with the rest of humankind to a better future.

Up to Vatican II, mission was at the service of the church. This was the old understanding of mission. The main concern of the church was the salvation of souls and the planting of churches which were replicas of the Western church. The focus was the expansion of the universal church. Bosch's stresses that mission is an attribute of God. God is a missionary God.⁴⁷ There is mission because of God. He loves the world and shows concern, mercy and compassion for His people. The church is not the author nor the bearer of mission but God Himself. 'Mission is primarily and ultimately, the work of the Triune God, Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier, for the sake of the world.'⁴⁸ All missionary activities of the church and the people are only participation in God's mission. Pope John Paul II affirms that the Holy Spirit is "the principal agent of mission."⁴⁹ The Holy Spirit is said "to direct the mission of the church", to make "the whole church missionary", and to be present and active in every time and place."⁵⁰

Mission is ministry by the whole people of God. All Christians should be a member of missionary community and must participate in the missionary activity of a missionary God. All, Christians, whether they be lay, cleric or religious, whether they be male or female have the same basic mission to continue the mission of Jesus Christ on earth to be merciful just like the Father. Just as Jesus has chosen lay men and women to be his missionary partners, so too must the hierarchical church include the whole community in its missionary ministry. Doing mission must be a ministry of all God's people together with the clergy. All Christians should be compassionate and merciful towards others, especially now that we are celebrating the Year of Mercy. Pope Francis' declaration made a huge impact for the whole church so that everybody will be reminded to be kind,

⁴⁷Bosch, 390.

⁴⁸Bosch, 392.

⁴⁹John Paul II. *Redemptoris Missio*: Encyclical Letter of the Supreme Pontiff John Paul II on the Permanent Validity of Church's Missionary Mandate (Pasay City: St. Paul Publications, 1991), 37.

⁵⁰Peter C. Phan, "Proclamation of the Reign of God as Mission of the Church: What for, to Whom, by Whom, with Whom and How?" *Sedos Bulletin* Vol. 33, No. 11 (November 2001): 306.

merciful, compassionate and understanding.

As Blessed Mother Saint Teresa of Calcutta says, “A sacrifice to be real must cost, must hurt, and must empty ourselves. The fruit of silence is prayer, the fruit of prayer is faith, the fruit of faith is love, the fruit of love is service, the fruit of service is peace”.⁵¹

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⁵¹Blessed Mother Saint Teresa of Calcutta, Roman Catholic Nun of Charity and Love.

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