

Mary Completing of the Missionary Message of Jesus

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The Holy Spirit gives the whole Church a missionary character. The Second Vatican Council reminds us that all Christians at their Baptism receive the dignity of God's children, as well as the vocation obliging them to participate in the missionary apostolate of the Church (RM 71).

Pope John Paul II introduces proclaiming of the Gospel as the message of hope and refers to the first proclaiming and the new proclaiming. He emphasizes that the revelation gives history its meaning as it proclaims Christ's mystery. *Evangelization* is the proclaiming of Jesus Christ and his Gospel to the world, to achieve the goal of redemption of man and to obtain eternal bliss on which we can already participate by a holy life. A good starting point and example of an effective understanding and realizing of evangelization the Pope sees in Mary, to whom one can turn with confidence and ask her for help in the understanding and realizing of this existential vocation. The ever changing history of the Church is accompanied with signs. Among them the Book of Revelations interposes a great sign, which took place in heaven and talks about a battle between a woman and a dragon. A woman, adorned with the sun and crying aloud in the pangs of childbirth (cf. Rv 12:1-2) symbolizes also the Church, the people of the New Covenant who are exposed to persecution, but always protected by God. The true winner is the child born of the woman. In this battle is the certainty that the dragon will be defeated (Rv 12:9). Christ-God who became man has prevailed over it – by his death and resurrection – and martyrs have also prevailed “by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony, even until the death” (Rv 12:11).

The John Paul's theological reflection upon these serious events often culminates in prayer to Mary, the Mother of Hope. The Gospel of hope, entrusted to the Church and accepted by it, demands daily proclamation and daily witness. That is the vocation owing to the Church at all times and in all places. It is her inmost identity. She is here to evangelize which means to proclaim and teach and to mediate the grace, to reconcile sinners with God, to commemorate Christ's sacrifice in Holy Mass, which is the celebration of the memory of his

death and glorious resurrection for the salvation of each person and all of humanity.

Keywords: evangelization, family, uncertainty of man, sin, redemption, Jesus Christ, Word of God, virtues, Mary

Introduction

It seems appropriate to start with the words of the XIIIth Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops (7th to the 28th of October 2012): "Leading the men and women of our time to Jesus, and to meet him, is a necessity that touches all the regions of the world, those of the old and those of the recent evangelization. Everywhere, indeed, we feel the need to revive the faith that runs risks to be eclipsed in cultural environment that hinders it to take roots in the mankind and the contemporary society."¹

The Church is the space offered by Christ in history where we can encounter him, because he entrusted to her his Word, the Baptism that makes us God's children, his Body and his Blood, the grace of forgiveness of sins, above all in the sacrament of Reconciliation, the experience of communion that reflects the very mystery of the Holy Trinity and the strength of the Spirit that generates charity towards all.²

On this path even nowadays the direction is shown by Mary, *the Star of the New Evangelization*³.

1. The Basis of Evangelization in the View of John Paul II

The main program of the pontificate of Pope John Paul II was the introduction of the Second Vatican Council into life, to help people to find and better understand the significant value: *eternal life, which is given by the belief in God*. Each person who is searching for the answer to the significant and existential questions in life, can learn much from the discoveries of the previous generations of people – mainly philosophers. However, nobody can give an entirely satisfying answer to the most significant question about the definite purpose of life. The answer for this insisting and continuous search is the Author of life, the Almighty and caring Father, who out of his love created man to his image and likeness (cf. Gn 2:26-27). By his pride and disobedience man lost his extranatural and supernatural gifts, his – until then clear

1 XIII Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops 7 – 28 October 2012, 2. A new evangelization.

2 Cf. XIII Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops 7 – 28 October 2012, 3. The personal encounter with Jesus Christ in the Church.

3 Cf. XIII Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops 7 – 28 October 2012, 14.

and perfectly knowledge – mind was dimmed, his strong will was weakened and after doing work, which became strenuous and hard, through his sins called upon himself death. But the infinitely loving and merciful God took care of the wounded and disoriented man, showed him a getaway and gave him a promise in the Proto-Evangelium (Gn 3:15) which is then fulfilled in Jesus Christ. He gives a testimony: "I am the light of the world; anyone who follows me, will not be walking in the dark, but will have the light of life." (Jn 8:12)⁴

The precursor of this light will be the "Bright Star of the Morning" which John Paul II with great esteem called *the Morning Star* and also *the Star of Evangelization*. This light of the world, this expression, enables the Holy Father to find a means to characterize the Mother of God in her providential role; because Virgin Mary is in her role *the Precursor of this Light as the Morning Star*. The next title he took from his predecessor Paul VI, from the *Apostolic Exhortation on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today's World, Evangelii nuntiandi*.⁵ In the announcing the end of the Marian year 1988 he introduced the Blessed Virgin Mary as the *Star of the New Evangelization* and *the Mother of All Nations*.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church presents the teaching of meeting God's promises: "But when the completion of the time came, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born a subject of the Law, to redeem the subjects of the Law, so that we could receive adoption as sons. (Ga 4:4-5)"⁶ Behold the Gospel, Good news about Jesus Christ, Son of God: God visited his people (cf. Lk 1:68). He fulfilled the promises which he gave to Abraham and his descendants (cf. Lk 1:55). He did it beyond all expectation: when he sent his Beloved Son (cf. Mk 1:11). The Scripture gives a historic testimony of it.

We believe and confess that Jesus of Nazareth, a Jew, born from the daughter of Israel in Bethlehem in the days of the King Herod the Great and emperor Augustus, by profession a carpenter, who died crucified in Jerusalem under Pontius Pilate during the reign of Tiberius, is the eternal Son of God, who became man; *that he had come from God (Jn 13:3) came down from heaven (Jn 3:13; 6:33) and has come in human nature (1 Jn 4:2), because the Word became flesh, he lived among us, and we saw his glory, the glory that he has from the Father as only Son of the Father, full of grace and truth ... from his fullness we have, all of us received – grace in return for grace (Jn 1:14; 1:16).*

Prompted by the grace of the Holy Spirit and drawn by the Father we believe and confess of Jesus: *You are the Christ, the Son of the living God (Mt 16:16)*. On the rock of this faith which Apostle Peter confessed, Christ built his Church (cf. Mt 16:18).⁷ To her the Pope entrusts evangelization.

4 Cf. JÁN PAVOL II.: Encyklika *Dives in misericordia*. Trnava : SSV, 1993, p. 86.

5 Cf. PAVOL VI: *Evangelii nuntiandi : Ohlasovanie evanjelia v dnešnom svete*. Zvolen : Združenie Jas, 1992, 82.

6 *Katechizmus Katolíckej cirkvi*. Trnava : SSV, 1998, p. 422-424.

7 Cf. St. Leo the Great: *Sermons*, 4,3: PL 54, 151.

Pope John Paul II. in his Apostolic Letter *Novo millennio adveniente*,⁸ in which he prepared an entry into the new millennium, presented a serious challenge coming from the baptized faith, calling upon the words of the pastoral constitution *Gaudium et Spes*: "The Church firmly believes that Christ, who died and was raised up for all, can through His Spirit offer man the light and the strength to measure up to his supreme destiny. Nor has any other name under the heaven been given to man by which it is fitting for him to be saved. She likewise holds that in her most benign Lord and Master can be found the key, the focal point and the goal of man, as well as of all human history. The Church also maintains that beneath all changes there are many realities which do not change and which have their ultimate foundation in Christ, Who is the same yesterday and today, yes and forever. Hence under the light of Christ, the image of the unseen God, the firstborn of every creature, the council wishes to speak to all men in order to shed light on the mystery of man and to cooperate in finding the solution to the outstanding problems of our time."⁹ "While I invite the faithful to raise to the Lord fervent prayers to obtain the light and assistance necessary for the preparation and celebration of the forthcoming Jubilee, I exhort my Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate and the ecclesial communities entrusted to them, to open their hearts to the promptings of the Spirit."¹⁰

1.1. Mary – Star of the Third Millennium

John Paul II in his vision puts a lot of hope and worry into his speech and under the protection of Mary, Mother of the Redeemer, which he calls the Star of the third millennium as a great source of spiritual renewal. "I entrust the cause of the whole Church to the maternal intercession of Mary, Mother of the Redeemer. She, the Mother of Fairest Love, will be the Star leading Christians on the way to the Great Jubilee of the Third Millennium safely guiding their steps towards the Lord. May the unassuming Young Woman of Nazareth, who two thousand years ago offered to the world the Incarnate Word, lead the men and women of the new millennium towards the One who is *the true light that enlightens every man* (Jn 1:9)."¹¹

8 This apostolic letter published in Vatican on the 10th of November 1994, calling for a long term preparation for the Jubilee year 2000.

9 *Gaudium et spes* : *Pastorálna konštitúcia*, no. 10. In: www.kbs.sk/?cid=1118410965

10 JÁN PAVOL II.: *Tertio millennio adveniente*, 59. Trnava : SSV, 1996.

11 *Tertio millennio adveniente*, 59.

1.2. Mary, *Star of Evangelization* and *Mother of All Nations*

Mary, Mother of Jesus, first believed in her Son and for her faith was called blessed (cf. Lk 1:45). Her life was the path and the pilgrimage of the faith in Christ, in which she was a forerunner of the apostles and still is a forerunner of the Church: "In the early Church and ever since Mary was and is the one who is *blessed because she believed*; she was the first one to believe. From the moment of the annunciation and conception, from the moment of his birth in the stable at Bethlehem, Mary followed Jesus step by step in her maternal pilgrimage of faith. She followed him during the years of his hidden life at Nazareth; she followed him also during the time after he left home, when he began *to do and to teach* (cf. Acts 1:1) in the midst of Israel. Above all she followed him during his tragic experience of Golgotha. Now, while Mary was with the apostles in the Upper Room in Jerusalem at the dawn of the Church, her faith born from the words of the annunciation, found its confirmation. The Angel had said to her then: *You will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great ... and he will reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there will be no end.* The later events on Calvary had shrouded that promise in darkness, yet even beneath the Cross Mary's faith did not fail. She still remained the one who, like Abraham, *in hope believed against hope* (Rom. 4:18). But it was only after the Resurrection that hope had shown its true face and the promise had begun to be transformed into reality. For Jesus, before returning to the Father, had said to the apostles: *Go, therefore, make disciples of all nations ... I am with you always; yes, to the end of the time* (cf. Mt 28:19-20). Thus spoke the One who by his Resurrection had revealed himself as the conqueror of death, as the one who possessed the kingdom of which, as the Angel said, *there will be no end.* Now, at the first dawn of the Church, at the beginning of the long journey through faith which began at the Pentecost in Jerusalem, Mary was with all those who were the seed of the *new Israel*. She was present among them as a unique witness to the mystery of Christ.¹² She was the fulfilment of the prophecies and promises made by patriarchs and prophets, but also the desires of countless crowds of generations of people of all times.

1.3. Mary, Model of the Missionary Submission

"The Church in its evangelization vocation and care takes her example and inspiration from Mary who first experienced evangelization (cf. Lk 1:26-38) and was the first evangelizer (cf. Lk 1:39-56). It was she who in faith accepted the Good News of salvation, expressing it in the words of the thanksgiving,

¹² JÁN PAVOL II.: *Redemptoris Mater*, 26-27. In: www.kbs.sk/?cid=1117278853

song and prophecy. It was she who gave all the people the best spiritual advice which they could ever receive: *Do whatever he tells you* (Jn 5:2)...¹³ The missionary command of Jesus Christ is a very serious mandate which is fulfilled within the Church only scantily, because until now only one third of humanity claims allegiance to Christ, the Savior. "Only if Christian faith is displayed in a concrete life style and way of life, it can have meaning for a person and they can try it. From it comes the need for evangelization to join in concrete coordinate of time and space, culture and history on the basis of which different nations mutually differ, while it shouldn't devalue its own novelty and uniqueness of its offer, it shouldn't let itself be *imprisoned* by some culture to the point that it would stay deformed"¹⁴

1.4. With Mary a New Missionary Advent is Being Prepared

"The Church wishes to renew and strengthen its missionary purpose in order to ensure greater effectiveness in proclaiming the Gospel to the people who haven't heard of him or haven't accepted him. I entrust that hope to Mary the one who prepared the first receiving of the Lord. May under her motherly guidance the entity of God's people be able to reach a higher and a more stimulating consciousness of its own responsibility for the spreading of God's Kingdom through the missionary work of evangelization."¹⁵

The Pope with great care encourages all believers to evangelization by following the first missionary, Jesus's Mother, the first and greatest evangelizer: "I am turning mainly to the shepherds of particular Churches, to the priests and coworkers and to all working together with them in pastoration. May your word, catechesis and own example serve to the bringing up of believers entrusted to your care in a true missionary spirit, *so as the members of Christ's body they could understand their responsibility for all people*."¹⁶ "Directed by you, may Christian communities give the expression of maturity and flexibility of faith and ecclesial community, opening oneself on every missions of the Church through prayer, awakening missionary vocations, showing solidarity and sharing the goods, not only spiritual but also material, with the neediest of this world. But foremost, let families be aware that they bring a deposit into the matters of the Church in a specific manner when they cultivate in their sons and daughters the missionary vocation."¹⁷

13 JAN PAWEŁ II: *O Matce Bożej* III. 1978 – 1998, p. 45–50. Orędzie na Światowy Dzień Misyjny, 22. 5. 1988. In: ORpol, 9, 1988, 6, p. 29.

14 CSONTOS, L.: Nová evanjelizácia ako nevyhnutnosť. In: *Viera a život*, XII, 2012, 3, p. 10.

15 JAN PAWEŁ II: *O Matce Bożej* III, p. 45–50.

16 Cf. *Ad gentes*, 21. In: *Dokumenty Druhého vatikánskeho koncilu II : Dekréty a deklarácie*. Trnava : SSV, 1993.

17 Cf. JÁN PAVOL II.: *Familiaris consortio : Apoštolská exhortácia*. Trnava : SSV, 1993, 54.

1.5. The Renewed Point of View of the Post-Conciliar Evangelization

The Second Vatican Council brought a new view of the missionary vocation (cf. Mt 28:18-20) derived from the two-thousand-year-old experience of the Church. It is presented and opened by the documents of the Council, papal encyclicals, post-synodal apostolic exhortations, apostolic letters, bulls, catechesis and speeches of the Popes. The new conditions and circumstances of life of the current civilization introduce as well an updated and adapted current style¹⁸ of life and of missionary role (cf. Mt 16:19-20). In addition to the current missionary activities the Council Fathers are now stressing that the entire Church is missionary. Inspired by the *Morning Star, Star radiating the light of evangelization*, we would like to analyze the words of life for the realization of this principal vocation (cf. Mt 28:19-20). We shall deal with two methods of the new evangelization. As our basis we will consider the first evangelization and later we will deal with the methods of the new evangelization.

2. The Basis of the First Evangelization in the Spirit of the Council

The Second Vatican Council is often characterized as a pastoral one or an evangelizing council. It was convoked and started on the Feast of the Motherhood of the Virgin Mary, to remind that at the beginning Virgin Mary was joined with the Apostles in prayer awaiting the sending of the Holy Spirit. (That was the solemn beginning of the evangelization, in the spirit of the vocation of Jesus Christ (cf. Ac 1:12; 2:1-12). At the start of the Jubilee Year 2000 the Pope proclaimed: "God the Father desired Mary's presence in the history of salvation. When he decided to send his Son into the world, he wanted him to come to us by being born of a woman (cf. Gal 4:4). Thus he wanted that this woman, who was the first to receive his Son, should give him to all humanity. Mary leads the mankind on the path to the Father as the mother who gives the Savior Son to all. At the same time she is the road that human beings must take in order to go to the Father through Christ in the Spirit (cf. Eph 2:18)."¹⁹

This reality was vividly experienced by John Paul II as a young priest, when reading the Treatise of *True Devotion to Mary*, he decided to consecrate himself to the Virgin Mary which gave a new meaning to his life. He himself confessed: "Reading the treatise of *True devotion to Mary* has marked a decisive turning point in my life. At first I had fear whether the Marian devotion

¹⁸ Aggiornamento of John XXIII.

¹⁹ Audience 12 January 2000. This truth was discovered and confirmed by individuals, as well as by entire generations during the centuries, by the statement: *Per Mariam ad Jesum*.

would not lead Christians away from the devotion to Christ and deny him his rightful place but when I read the treatise by Grignon of Montfort, I found out that that is wrong. Our inner relation with the Holy Mother is the result of our incorporation into the mystery of Christ.²⁰ Mary does bring us closer to Christ; she does lead us to him, provided that we live her mystery in Christ.”

His consecration to Virgin Mary strengthened him throughout his entire life until his election as Christ’s representative (Vicarii Christi). His Apostolic Motto was *Totus tuus ego sum, et omnia mea tua sunt, mi dulcissime Jesu, per Mariam, Matrem tuam sanctam* – I am all thine and all I have is thine, O dear Jesus, through Mary, Thy holy Mother. Virgin Mary was the inspirator and path of his life in the evangelization of the Church and the world during the Council as well as during its implementation into life.

2.1. Evangelization Enters the Hellenistic World

The kerygmatic announcement of the risen Christ is followed by catechesis which started in Jerusalem and through which the Church deepens the faith of neophytes about the coming of God’s kingdom. As the preaching dynamically spread beyond the borders of Asia to Europe, evangelization enters the Hellenistic world. It is a meeting with a new Culture. A new language is needed, but the Gospel cannot change. A new incarnation begins: logos and culture.

“In preaching the Gospel, Christianity first encountered Greek philosophy; but this does not mean at all that other approaches are precluded. Today, as the Gospel gradually comes into contact with cultural worlds which once lay beyond Christian influence, there are new tasks of inculturation, which mean that our generation faces problems not unlike those faced by the Church in the first centuries.”²¹

The beginning of the first evangelization occurred when St. Paul crossed the borders between Asia Minor and Europe. “As an understanding of Revelation, theology has always had to respond in different historical moments to the demands of different cultures, in order to mediate the content of faith to those cultures in a coherent and conceptually clear way. Today, too, theology faces a dual task. On the one hand, it must be increasingly committed to the task entrusted to it by the Second Vatican Council, the task of renewing its specific methods in order to serve evangelization more effectively. How can we fail to recall in this regard the words of Pope John XXIII at the opening of the Council? He said then: *In line with the keen expectation of those who sincerely love the Christian, Catholic and apostolic religion, this doctrine must be known more widely and deeply, and souls must be instructed and formed*

20 Cf. LICHNER, M.: „Svätý Augustín a Mária, Matka nášho Pána.“ In: *Viera a život*, r. 22, č. 4 (2012), s. 51–57. LICHNER, M.: „Tertullianova mariológia.“ In: *Teologický časopis*, r. 10, č. 2 (2012) s. 33–43.

21 JÁN PAVOL II.: Encyklika *Fides et ratio*, 72. Bratislava : Don Bosco, 1998.

in it more completely; and this certain and unchangeable doctrine, always to be faithfully respected, must be understood more profoundly and presented in a way which meets the needs of our time."²²

That is why synergy is necessary. "Philosophy moreover is the mirror which reflects the culture of a people. A philosophy which responds to the challenge of theology's demands and evolves in harmony with faith is part of that *evangelization of culture* which Paul VI proposed as one of the fundamental goals of evangelization."²³

2.2. Virgin Mary, the Harmony of Philosophy and Faith

Philosophy is the wisdom of the nations. Mary is the expression of God's wisdom. It is not possible to bypass the consonance between these two dimensions of evangelization. "For between the vocation of the Blessed Virgin and the vocation of true philosophy there is a deep harmony. Just as the Virgin was called to offer herself entirely as human being and as woman that God's Word might take flesh and come among us, so philosophy is called to offer its rational and critical resources that theology, as the understanding of faith, may be fruitful and creative. And just as in giving her assent to Gabriel's word, Mary lost nothing of her true humanity and freedom, so when philosophy heeds the summons of the Gospel's truth its autonomy is in no way impaired. Indeed, it is then that philosophy sees all its enquiries rise to their highest expression. This was a truth which the holy monks of Christian antiquity understood well when they called Mary *the table at which faith sits in thought*."²⁴ In her they saw a glowing image of true philosophy and they were convinced of the need to *philosophari in Maria*.

May Mary, Seat of Wisdom, be a sure haven for all who devote their lives to the search for wisdom. May their journey into wisdom, sure and final goal of all true knowing, be freed of every hindrance by the intercession of the one who, in giving birth to the Truth and treasuring it in her heart, has shared it forever with all the world.²⁵ Mary took to herself one nature – divine and gave him a new nature – human.

²² JÁN PAVOL II.: *Fides et ratio*, 92.

²³ JÁN PAVOL II.: *Fides et ratio*, 103.

²⁴ Cf. *Patrologiae cursus completus*. Paris : J.-P. Migne, 1857, p. 43, 493.

²⁵ Cf. JÁN PAVOL II.: *Fides et ratio*, 108.

2.3. Paul, Teacher of Philosophy and Apostle of Incarnate Wisdom

By his reason and self-examination a person can advance only up to a point, but he wants to go further. Alone he is helpless, but God, as a caring Father, comes to his assistance by revelation as was experienced by Saul in the appearance of Jesus, whose followers he was persecuting and taking to prison and death. There he was given a new dimension of life which, before the revelation of the risen Lord, he didn't know

The evangelizers can be inspired by the experience of St. Paul who established a dialogue with philosophical, cultural and religious values of his listeners (cf. Ac 14:13-17; 17:22-23). Similarly the general councils in formulating of their binding doctrines had to take for their use such linguistic, philosophic and cultural materials as were at their disposal; however, this material became the heritage of the universal Church when it was shown to be suitable for expressing the Christological teaching in an adequate and universal manner. It became a part of the heritage of faith which has to be always accepted and shared in the encounters with different cultures.²⁶ That is why the task of preaching Jesus in a way that would enable the nations of Asia to identify with him and at the same time stay faithful to such theological teachings of the Church as well as to their own Asian origin, represents a great challenge.

Introducing Jesus Christ as the only Savior demands the election of a certain type of education, which step by step introduces people to a full adoption of the mystery. Of course, the primary evangelization of Non-Christians and the following preaching to believers calls for different approaches. In the primary preaching, for example, the introduction of Jesus Christ should be presented as fulfilling the desire expressed in mythology and folklore of Asian nations. In general, there is a need to prioritize storytelling methods similar to the Asian cultural forms. In truth, the proclaiming of Jesus Christ can be done in a very effective manner through the retelling of his earthly life as the Gospel does it. Ontological knowledge which is needed in the presentation of Jesus and which must always assumed and commented can be enriched by perspectives of relation, history or even cosmology. As the Synod Fathers emphasized, the Church must be open to new and surprising ways, through which is possible to introduce Jesus today.

The Synod recommended for the following catechesis to pursue an evocative education, which uses stories, parables and symbols, characteristic for the Asian method of teaching. The example of Jesus himself shows clearly the value of personal contact, which demands from the missionary to take to heart the situation of the listener and offer him a preaching appropriate to his level of maturity through the appropriate forms and language. In this perspective the Synodal Fathers often underlined the need to evangelize in

²⁶ Cf. JOHN PAUL II.: *Fides et ratio*, 61.

a way that is consistent with the sensitivity of Asian nations, offering the image of Jesus, which are understandable for the Asian mentality and culture and at the same time are faithful to the Holy Scripture and to Tradition. These include, among others: Jesus Christ, the Teacher of Wisdom (Healer, Liberator, Spiritual Leader, Living Light, Compassionate Friend of the poor), Good Samaritan, Good Shepherd, Obedient Servant. It is possible to introduce Jesus as the incarnate Wisdom of God, whose grace brings to maturity the *seeds* of God's Wisdom already existing in life, in religion and in the nations of Asia. Amidst so much suffering that oppress the nations of Asia, Jesus can be better preached as a Savior who can give a meaning to those that suffer unutterable pain and misery.

"Faith itself is not a culture, but it cannot exist without being embodied into a culture. That refers to the reality that faith is from the viewpoint of its arrangement an incarnation."²⁷

Faith, that the Church offers as a gift to its sons and daughters in Asia, cannot be closed within the borders of understanding and expressing of any single human culture as it transcends all of them and in reality is a challenge for all cultures to raise to new heights understanding and expression. At the same time, however, the Synodal Fathers well understood the need of Local Churches in Asia to present the mystery of Christ to their nations by their own cultural criteria and ways of thinking. They also stressed that this type of inculturation of faith on this continent involves finding Jesus's Asian face and finding the means through which Asian cultures can include the universal redemptive power of Christ and his Church. In our days it is necessary to reach out again for a penetrating understanding of nations and their cultures as it was demonstrated by people like John of Montecorvino, Matthew Ricci or Robert de Nobili to mention a few.²⁸

The theology of proclaiming the Gospel which is given by John Paul II as well as his opinions in many other spheres, can be considered as a creative application of the Second Vatican Council and also of those of Pope Paul IV. The Church, of which Wojtyła speaks, is not just a cluster focused only on itself, its own structures and activities. The Church is always in the state of evangelization; its mission being the proclamation of the Good News to all nations and presenting to the people the healing love of Christ. The mission of the Gospel, concentrated on the person of Christ, should be preached in such a manner, that in no way the person and integrity of the listeners would be disrupted. Evangelization does not end with the first command of Christian truth but demands a full change in Christ of the individual people; not only a handful of specialists but also of all Christians. The most important factor of evangelization is the Holy Spirit.²⁹

27 CSONTOS, L.: Nová evanjelizácia ako nevyhnutnosť. In: *Viera a život*, XII, 2012, 3, p. 10.

28 Cf. JÁN PAVOL II.: *Ecclesia in Asia : Posynodálna apoštolská exhortácia*, 20. Trnava : SSV, 2000.

29 Cf. DULLES, A.: *Blask Wiary : Wizja teologiczna Jana Pawła II*, p. 100–107.

3. The New Evangelization

Pope Paul VI emphasized that evangelization is the delivery of joyful news, whose power penetrates from inside and creates a new humanity (Rv 21:5); at the same time he invites to zeal because a new humanity will not rise if there are no new people. That means that the goal of evangelization is to reach this inner change and, if needed, to express it in words. More correctly it could be said, that the "Church evangelizes when she tries to convert the individual and collective human conscience solely by force and the divine power of the message which it proclaims (cf. Ep 4:23-24; Col 3:9-10) and if they are even trying to change all the activity that these people have done, together with their life and the environment in which they live"³⁰. It requires the change not only of individual people but also the reassessment of criteria of values, hierarchy of goods, attitudes and habits of thoughts, motives of procedure and the lives of models.

Paul VI stressed the severity of these tasks, emphasized that the command to proclaim the Gospel to all people is the first and natural duty of the Church.³¹ This command and mission needs great and severe changes of modern society. The task of proclaiming the Gospel is the grace and the very own vocation of the Church and expresses its true nature. The Church is here to preach the Gospel, which means to announce and teach the Word of God.³² These ideas were presented and enforced already by K. Wojtyła during the Council.

The interest of K. Wojtyła in the question of evangelization was strongly displayed already during the meetings of the Second Vatican Council. There he made two interventions in the question of the lay apostolate.³³ Wojtyła, enthused by his philosophy of an *active personality*, claimed that all Christians are individually called to testify about Christ and the Gospel even when they do not belong to the Catholic Action or any similar organization. Faith in its nature demands it is accepted in an individual way and passed on to others. That is the anthropological principle on which John Paul II based his writings about the missionary role of the entire Church.

Already in the book *The Basis of Renewal* the Pope emphasizes the dynamic side of faith. In one chapter he considers the missionary zeal of the Church seeing it as an extension of the Divine mission of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, which created the Church and thanks to which the Church continues to exist (ZO, p. 174).

Wojtyła played an important role in the sessions of the Synod of 1974, which was devoted to evangelization. It could be said that a part of his propos-

30 PAVOL VI.: *Evangelii nuntiandi*, 18. Zvolen : Združenie Jas, 1992.

31 Declarationes Patrum Synodaliū, n. 4. In: *L'Osservatore Romano* 27. 10. 1974, p. 6.

32 Cf. PAUL VI.: *Evangelii nuntiandi*, 14.

33 Cf. *Acta Synodalia Concilii Vaticani Secundi*, III/4, 69-70 (speech from 8th of October, 1964); 788-789 (an intervention published by the press in the end of 1963). Vatican : Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1970-1978.

als was included in the apostolic exhortation *Evangelii nuntiandi* which was released in 1975 by Pope Paul VI. In the course of all his apostolic journeys John Paul II talked about the timeliness of this missionary service. In his speech to the bishops of Latin America in Port-au-Prince in Haiti (9th of March 1983) he called for the *initiation of the work of new evangelization – new in its zeal and in its methods and image*.³⁴ A similar call often appeared in the pronouncements of the Pope.³⁵

3.1. The New Evangelization – Reevangelization³⁶

The theme of evangelization was the topic of the assembly of the Episcopal Synod, ten years after the Second Vatican Council. Its fruit was the Apostolic Exhortation of Paul VI *Evangelii nuntiandi*³⁷ – inwardly very timely and valuable.

“John Paul II builds on the teaching of his predecessor about the evangelization of the modern world and introduces a new term the *New Evangelization*. The Pope introduces the new evangelization in a double perspective: in the spirit of the ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council and the context of the signs of times. He points to the same, but formally different missionary vocation of the Church and refers to the challenges of the modern world, both positive and negative.”³⁸

“The term *New Evangelization* was first time used by John Paul II during his first missionary journey to Poland, in the homily in Mohyla – Nova Huta. The Holy Father declared that *from the Cross of Nowa Huta began the new evangelization, the evangelization of the second Millennium*. During his apostolic missionary journeys to the continents of Latin America, Europe and Africa John Paul II more frequently talked about *a new evangelization* presenting by this term a new program of pastoral care of the Church.”³⁹ The fruit of these reflections upon the general strategy and general problems of the new evangelization on the Latin-American and African continent are summarized in the post-synodal exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa* and *Ecclesia in America*. A major influence on the formation of ideas for the new evangelization on the European continent was the fall of communism and the changes following the year 1989 which offered new opportunities for the new evangelization. The calling of a special Synod of Bishops of Europe in 1991 was to serve the purpose of mobilizing all forces for the new evangelization so the *old Christians could believe anew*. The statement of the Synod *to become the witnesses of*

34 Speech of the Holy Father John Paul II in the Assembly of the Conference of Bishops of Latin America (CELAM). In: *L'Osservatore Romano*, 4/1983, p. 28–30.

35 Cf. DULLES, A.: *Blask Wiary : Wizja teologiczna Jana Pavla II*, p. 99–100.

36 Cf. KYSELICA, J.: *Obnova farnosti cez neokatechumenát*. Trnava : Dobrá kniha, 1998, p. 24–29.

37 PAUL VI: *Evangelii nuntiandi*, 1– 82.

38 JAN PAWEŁ II: *Encyklopedia nauczania społecznego*. Radom : Polwen, 2005, p. 200.

39 JAN PAWEŁ II: *Encyklopedia nauczania społecznego*, p. 201.

Christ who has chosen us, marked the directions and methods of evangelizing work of the Church in Europe. To generalize the new evangelization was the task of the synods: continental, regional, sectional and diocesan. Their main theme was the new evangelization. John Paul II noted that *all these synods are also by themselves the new evangelization*.⁴⁰ For the deepening of these reflections on the new evangelization served the documents of the Church and mainly the encyclicals *Redemptoris missio* and *Veritatis splendor*, exhortations *Christifideles laici*, *Pastores dabo vobis*, *Vita consecrata* and *Ecclesia in Europa* and apostolic letters *Tertio millennio adveniente* and *Novo millennio ineunte*. The call for a new evangelization didn't mean that the old calls to the apostolate, missions or evangelization were obsolete. It is necessary to mention three significant types of evangelization, which do not result from the Church but from the circumstances.⁴¹

3.2. Need for a New Evangelization

In his excellent encyclical on the missionary work *Redemptoris missio* (1990) John Paul II, similarly as the Pope Paul VI, expresses his conviction that evangelization represents the "primary service which the Church can render to every individual and to all humanity"⁴². Missions renew the Church and strengthen faith and the Christian identity, giving Christian life its enthusiasm and meaning. "Faith strengthens when it is preached."⁴³ The Pope connects these urgent calls to missionary activity with the approach of the third millennium. At this occasion he said: "As she prepares to celebrate the Jubilee of the year 2000, the whole Church is even more committed to a new missionary Advent. We must increase our apostolic zeal to pass on to others the light and joy of the faith, and to this high ideal the whole People of God must be educated."⁴⁴ In the encyclical just as in other documents we find the promise

40 Cf. JOHN PAUL II: *Tertio millennio adveniente*, 21.

41 *Encyklopedia nauczania społecznego*, p. 201.

42 JOHN PAUL II: *Redemptoris missio*, 2.

43 John Paul II confirms it in the encyclical *Slavorum apostoli* 13: "At this point it is an unusual and admirable thing that the holy Brothers, working in such complex and precarious situations, did not seek to impose on the peoples assigned to their preaching either the undeniable superiority of the Greek language and Byzantine culture, or the customs and way of life of the more advanced society in which they had grown up and which necessarily remained familiar and dear to them. Inspired by the ideal of uniting in Christ the new believers, they adapted to the Slavonic language the rich and refined texts of the Byzantine liturgy and likewise adapted to the mentality and customs of the new peoples the subtle and complex elaborations of Greco-Roman law. In following this programme of harmony and peace, Cyril and Methodius were ever respectful of the obligations of their mission. They acknowledged the traditional prerogatives and ecclesiastical rights laid down by Conciliar Canons. Thus, though subjects of the Eastern Empire and believers subject to the Patriarchate of Constantinople, they considered it their duty to give an account of their missionary work to the Roman Pontiff. They likewise submitted to his judgment, in order to obtain his approval, the doctrine which they professed and taught, the liturgical books which they had written in the Slavonic language, and the methods which they were using in evangelizing those peoples." JOHN PAUL II: *Slavorum apostoli*. In: www.kbs.sk/?cid=1117278233

44 JOHN PAUL II: *Redemptoris missio*, 86.

of the coming of a “new spring for the Church and the Gospel”⁴⁵. The Pope is clearly concerned about the weakening missionary zeal in the last decades. The reasons for this phenomenon he sees partly in religious relativism, which leads to doubts or even throws away the truth of the only Christ’s mediation. Then every religion can be considered as the same, meaning, that they are at the same level. Aware of similar movements in the modern world, John Paul II reminds us that the Church received the mandate from Christ to proclaim the Gospel to all nations; which confirms the truth of the New Testament that the name Jesus Christ is the only name given to men by which we can be saved (cf. Ac 4:12).⁴⁶

With regard to different views as to the necessity of missionary service the Pope adds that the Gospel in no way restricts human freedom and doesn’t condemn anything that is precious in any culture and in other Non-Christian religions. The Church preaches its teachings but doesn’t inforce anything on anyone. As taught by the Second Vatican Council, the Church has cordial respect toward everything that is true and good in each religion.⁴⁷ But the Church safeguards and delivers the full teachings of Jesus Christ.

3.3. New Evangelization to the Saving of an Endangered Family

A change in the social, economic, political and ecclesial situation calls us to something new: to a new live through our common experiences of faith and preaching mediated by the new evangelization – “new through its zeal, its methods and its actions,” as John Paul II said.⁴⁸ „The *New Evangelization*, directed principally at those who, though baptized, have drifted away from the Church and live without reference to the Christian life ... to help these people encounter the Lord, who alone fills our existence with deep meaning and peace; and to favor the rediscovery of the faith, that source of grace which brings joy and hope to personal, family and social life.”⁴⁹

The evangelization – from its early stages and in the subsequent generations – used to have its natural place in the family. There the signs of faith have been transmitting into the lives of children and youths, the first truths were embedded; likewise the testimony about the fruits of love, upbringing to prayer in the daily life and in the context of care which each family devotes to the development of its descendants. At the same time a specific role was played by women – without diminishing the figure of the father and his re-

45 Cf. JOHN PAUL II: *Redemptoris missio*, 86.

46 Cf. JOHN PAUL II: *Redemptoris missio*, 5.

47 Cf. JOHN PAUL II: *Redemptoris missio*, 3.

48 Speech on the meeting of CELAM, Port-du-Prince, 9th of March 1983.

49 BENEDICT XVI: Homily during the Eucharistic celebration at the opening of the XIII Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on October 7, 2012 in Rome.

sponsibility. Despite geographic, cultural and social differences all bishops in the Synod have confirmed this basic role of the family in the transmission of faith. The new evangelization cannot be imagined without remembering the concrete responsibility of families in the proclaiming of the Gospel and without our aiding them in this educational role.

"The family, established by the marriage of a man and of a woman which makes them *one flesh* (Mt 19:6), open to life, is assaulted by crises everywhere. It is surrounded by models of life that penalize it and neglected by the politics of society of which it is the fundamental cell. Neither it is always respected and sustained in its tasks by ecclesial communities. It is precisely this, however, that impels us to say that we must particularly take care of the family and its mission in society and in the Church, developing specific paths of accompaniment before and after matrimony. We also want to express our gratitude to the many Christian couples and families who, through their witness, show the world an experience of communion and of service which is the seed of a more loving and peaceful society."⁵⁰

There are also such family situations, and situations of cohabitation in which the image of lifelong unity and love as God has entrusted us, is not respected. There are couples who live together without being in a sacramental marriage bond; many irregular family situations are created after the breakdown of the previous marriages: painful cases in which the upbringing of children to faith is threatened. To all these we want to say, that Lord's love doesn't abandon anybody and the Church, too, loves them; she is a hospitable home for all and they always remain her members, even if they cannot receive sacramental absolution and Eucharist. May Catholic communities be open to those who live in such situations and aid them on the path leading to the conversion and reconciliation.

Life in the family is the first place where the Gospel meets with daily life and where its ability to convert the basic conditions in the horizon of love is shown. For the testimony of the Church it is not less important to show that this temporary life in its fulfillment exceeds the limits of history and leads to an eternal unity with God.

This supernatural horizon of people's lives is testified, in the Church and in the world, by extraordinary witnesses who were called by God to a consecrated life. This life, by being lived in poverty, chastity and obedience, and being completely dedicated to the Lord, is a sign of the coming world, which makes all the goods of this world relative. We encourage them to endure in hope in situations which in these times of changes are often uneasy and we call upon them to act as witnesses and supporters of the new evangelization in various environments, where the charism of their institutions will take them.

50 XIII Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, October 2012, 3.

Mary's Star Irradiates the Desert

At the conclusion of the World Synod of Bishops, in the cooperation of the Office of Peter's successor, the Synod Fathers presented the timeless command which Jesus gave to his apostles: "Go, therefore, make disciples of all nations ... And look, I am with you always; yes, to the end of time." (Mt 28:19-20). The mission of the Church is not focused only on the geographic regions but it wants to reach even the most hidden folds of the heart of our contemporaries, to bring them to the meeting with the living Jesus, which is made present in our communities.

In gratitude) for the gifts which we have received from him we raise to him the prayer of praise: "My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord ... for the Almighty has done great things for me." (Lk 1:46;1:49) Mary's words are also our words: The Lord has done during the centuries truly great things for his Church in various parts of the world and we give praise to him with certainty that even in these time he will not stop looking at our poverty to show the power of his arm and help us on the way of the new evangelization. May Mary guides us on this road. Even when, according to Pope Benedict XVI, this path may seem a dessert, we know that we can overcome it, if we will have what is truly essential: the gift of the Spirit, Jesus as our guide, the truth of his word, the Eucharistic bread which feeds us, the brotherhood of the Church community and the fire of love. Water from the well makes the dessert flourish. And as in the nights on the desert the stars shine the brightest, so in heaven over our path shines Mary, the most radiant light, the Star of the new evangelization, to whom we entrust ourselves with confidence.⁵¹

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51 Cf. XIII Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops 7–28th of October 2012, no. 14.