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THE MISSION-VISION OF JOHN PAUL II IN *REDEMPTORIS MISSIO*

James H. Kroeger, M.M.

2019 marks the commemoration of a significant mission document of the Church—it is the 100th anniversary of Pope Benedict XV's *Maximum Illud*, the first mission encyclical of the modern era. The Church also recalls that it is the 60th anniversary of St. John XXIII's 1959 announcement of the Second Vatican Council, which gave us the mission decree *Ad Gentes*. The renewal of missionary evangelization continued with St. Paul VI's *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (EN; 1975) and St. John Paul II's *Redemptoris Missio* (RM; 1990), two documents that have had a pivotal effect on the "mission consciousness" of the contemporary Church. Finally, Pope Francis made another significant contribution in more recent times with his masterpiece *Evangelii Gaudium*, issued on November 24, 2013, the feast of Christ the King.

This modest reflection, which focuses on a mission document written by one of the three "saint-popes" (John XXIII, Paul VI, and John Paul II) of the Vatican II era, will attempt to capture the highlights of *Redemptoris Missio*, which was authored by John Paul II (canonized April 27, 2014). It will be a medium-length presentation—although the original document in the text issued by the Vatican runs to 153 pages—and will seek to manifest the enduring importance of RM for the Church's commitment to missionary evangelization in the contemporary world.

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Introduction of the Author. When he was elected pope on October 16, 1978, Karol Jósef Wojtyla took the name John Paul II. Under his leadership, the papal ministry focused on evangelization and global mission as he traveled to numerous countries, strengthened local Christian communities, encountered followers of other religions, spoke on the social teachings of the Church, canonized saints, honored blesseds, and met with youth and government leaders. The contributions of this 264th pope of the Catholic Church, whose pontificate extended for over 26 years (1978-2005), are remarkable indeed.

When John Paul II died on April 2, 2005, the fact sheet from Reuters News noted some remarkable statistics about his pontificate. He traveled a total of 775,231 miles around the world, or 3.24 times the distance from the earth to the moon. He read aloud more than 20,000 addresses before audiences in the millions, and issued more than 100 major documents as pope, including 14 encyclicals, 45 apostolic letters, 14 apostolic exhortations, and 11 apostolic constitutions. John Paul II also beatified 1,338 people and canonized 482 saints, more than all of his predecessors in the last four centuries combined.

John Paul II asserted that the Second Vatican Council set the direction for his papacy. He noted in 2000 that the

> Second Vatican Ecumenical Council has been a gift of the Spirit to his Church. For this reason it remains a fundamental event, not only for understanding the Church's history at this end of the century, but first and foremost for exploring the abiding presence of the risen Christ beside his Bride in … world events.

In 2002, the fortieth anniversary of the beginning of the Council, he observed:

> I had the grace of participating in that event and in my heart I hold valuable and unforgettable memories.… The Council documents … have not lost their value nor their brilliance.… In the Council we have received a sure compass to guide us on the path of the century that is beginning.

The dates of John Paul II's beatification (May 1, 2011) and canonization (April 27, 2014) were marked by the feast of the

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Divine Mercy. He had a deep commitment to this devotion as it was propagated by Sr. Faustina Kowalska, a fellow Pole. One can also note its intimate link with mission, for is not missionary evangelization all about proclaiming God's abundant love, compassion, and mercy? Mission is grounded in being so filled with God's loving mercy that one wishes to proclaim it to the world. Mission makes God's merciful love present and contagious.

One of the major emphases of John Paul II was, without a doubt, his focus on the renewal of the Church in her missionary identity and commitment. When his mission encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* (Mission of the Redeemer) was published on December 7, 1990 (on the 25th anniversary of *Ad Gentes* [AG], the mission document of Vatican II), Cardinal Daneels of Brussels wrote: "This document best exemplifies who this pope is; it is the fruit of his mission in every continent. There is nothing better to define his pontificate than to say: he is a missionary pope."

St. John Paul II did everything in his power to renew mission, asserting that mission is at the heart of the Church: "the Church here on earth is missionary by her very nature" (AG 2). He was deeply convinced that "missionary activity renews the Church, revitalizes faith and Christian identity, and offers fresh enthusiasm and new incentive. *Faith is strengthened when it is given to others!"* (RM 2).

Although one could add more to the "statistics" of John Paul II that were noted earlier in this essay, these already have a much deeper significance: they reflect his extraordinary commitment to mission. He used *every opportunity* to spread the message and person of Jesus; indeed, "JP2" was an extraordinary apostle of Jesus Christ! This presentation thus turns to sketching a synthetic overview of *Redemptoris Missio*, St. John Paul II's mission encyclical written to commemorate the 25th anniversary of Vatican II's *Ad Gentes* (1965-1990).

Gift of a Mission Encyclical. John Paul II's eighth encyclical, *Redemptoris Missio* was issued on December 7, 1990 in the thirteenth year of his pontificate. In RM, the pope sounds an urgent clarion call to all Church sectors to renew their enthusiasm and commitment to

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the evangelization of the world. Composed of eight chapters plus an introduction (1-3) and conclusion (92), RM has a "doctrinal" section (4-30) and a "pastoral" section (31-91) which treat the "why" and "how," respectively, of contemporary missionary evangelization.

John Paul II begins by stating his conviction about "the *urgency of missionary activity*, a subject to which [he is] devoting the present Encyclical" (1). The pope asserts that "missionary activity specifically directed *ad gentes* [to the nations] appears to be waning," and that this fact "must arouse concern among all who believe in Christ." Why? Because "in the Church's history, missionary drive has always been a sign of vitality, just as its lessening is a sign of a crisis of faith" (2).

The pope thus urges a "fresh impulse to missionary activity," the deepening of the "commitment of the particular Churches," and the harnessing of "all of the Church's energies [for] a new evangelization" (2-3). The focus of John Paul II, in a word, is direct and clear: "I wish to invite the Church to *renew her missionary commitment"* (2). All are invited to participate: "*Peoples everywhere, open the doors to Christ!"* (3).

Vision of Evangelization. What view of evangelization emerges from a comprehensive analysis of RM? The document speaks repeatedly of mission, evangelization, and salvation in a holistic fashion: "Jesus came to bring integral salvation, one which embraces the whole person" (11); "evangelical witness … is directed towards integral human development" (42); "action on behalf of integral development and liberation … is most urgently needed" (58).

As affirmed repeatedly in the encyclical (20, 41-60), integral evangelization reflects current missiological thought as well as recent magisterial teaching. Paul VI clearly encouraged Catholics to view evangelization holistically in EN, and speaks in the second chapter of the complexity of the evangelizing action and of its various complementary and mutually enriching elements. RM echoes this vision: "Mission is a single but complex reality, and it develops in a variety of ways" (41). It "is one and undivided, having one origin and one final purpose; but within it, there are different tasks and kinds of activity" (31). Such is the understanding of evangelization that the pope consistently promotes throughout RM.

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Foundational Mission Theology. The years following the Second Vatican Council were a golden opportunity to explore, debate, renew, and clarify the Church's mission, and it is true that the Council "has already borne much fruit in the realm of missionary activity.… Above all, there is a new awareness that *missionary activity is a matter for all Christians"* (2). John Paul II, however, discerned a need to reaffirm diverse aspects of the Catholic Church's foundational theology of Christian mission and evangelization. RM thus clearly affirms the foundations of mission theology as well as the centrality and urgency of mission in the life of the Church.

At least one third of the encyclical (three chapters out of eight) deals with theological questions. Chapter One includes core elements of the dogmatic theology of revelation and faith, Christology and soteriology, and ecclesiology and missiology. Chapter Two focuses on biblical theology, particularly the Kingdom of God. Chapter Three, to the delight of missiologists, is completely devoted to pneumatology, examining the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church and her evangelizing mission.

The following are key emphases in the opening chapter: **(a)** All mission is centered in God's wonderful, generous, and loving plan of salvation (*mysterion*), made known through Jesus and accepted in faith; Jesus is the "definitive self-revelation of God" and "the fundamental reason why the Church is missionary by her very nature" (5). **(b)** While affirming the universality of salvation with the Scriptures (1 Tim. 2:4), "the Church believes that God has established Christ as the one mediator and that it has been established as the universal sacrament of salvation" (9). **(c)** The Pope unhesitatingly reaffirms these fundamentals of Church teaching, noting that "*mission is an issue of faith"* (11).

The biblical theme of the Kingdom (*basileia*) is the integrating leitmotif of the second chapter. Preaching the Kingdom and promoting its values are the evangelizing tasks of the Church, which is "effectively and concretely at the service of the Kingdom" (20). The encyclical, moreover, offers clarity on and interpretation of other dimensions of Kingdom theology: that the Kingdom of God and the Christ-event are

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complementary proclamations (16); that the Kingdom necessarily has a transcendent horizon (17); that the Kingdom "cannot be detached either from Christ or from the Church" (18); and that theocentrism and ecclesiocentrism demand a nuanced critique that is consistent with Church teaching (17-18).

The theology of the Holy Spirit (pneumatology) is currently of particular interest to missiologists and missionaries alike. "The Holy Spirit is indeed the principal agent of the whole of the Church's mission of evangelization. The Holy Spirit's action is preeminent in mission *ad gentes"* (21). This centrality of the Spirit is emphasized because the Spirit's "presence and activity affect not only individuals but also society and history, peoples, cultures and religions" (28). Ask any missionary, in fact, and you will receive eloquent personal testimony that the presence and power of the Spirit is active in peoples, cultures, and religions, renewing the face of the earth! The acts of today's apostles continuously write the Gospel of the Holy Spirit!

Transmitting the Urgency of Mission. The English subtitle of *Redemptoris Missio* is "On the Permanent Validity of the Church's Missionary Mandate." Mission is thus, always and everywhere, essential; it is "not considered a marginal task for the Church but is situated at the center of her life, as a fundamental commitment of the whole People of God" (32). Mission is "the greatest and holiest duty of the Church" (63). As such, the following affirmations of the pope resonate throughout the work: "I have chosen to travel to the ends of the earth in order to show this missionary concern" (1); "mission *ad gentes* is still in its infancy" (40); "I see the dawning of a new missionary age" (92).

Yet while no one seeks to minimize the pope's assertions concerning the centrality and urgency of missionary evangelization, it is valid to ask questions about strategies for implementation. Words of exhortation must give way to programs of concrete actualization. In the considered judgment of this author, the encyclical as such is strong on the *why* of mission but is only moderately successful with regard to the *how*. Mission animation—the *how* of mission—requires continued discussion indeed. It is best accomplished locally, within the

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local Church, although one can highlight some creative suggestions found within RM.

That the Christian family is a key and irreplaceable force in evangelization (42) is an insight that is consistent with the teaching of Vatican II, which termed the family the "domestic church" (*Lumen Gentium* [LG] 11). Promoting Christian family life should redound to mission awareness and animation. Indeed, while material and financial donations are gratefully accepted, families are challenged to offer "a special contribution to the missionary cause of the Church by fostering missionary vocations among their sons and daughters" (80).

The pope saint also challenges Christians: do you wish to promote mission? True disciples are urged to "carry out a sincere review of their lives regarding their solidarity with the poor" (60). We as followers of Jesus "should reassess our own way of living" (81) and "fight hunger by changing [our] lifestyle" (59). "We cannot preach conversion unless we ourselves are converted anew every day" (47).

The role of missionary institutes and societies is crucial in worldwide evangelization. Missionaries themselves should continue their "radical and total self-giving," initiate "new and bold endeavors," and "not allow themselves to be daunted by doubts, misunderstanding, rejection or persecution" (66). Diocesan seminarians and priests "must have the mind and heart of missionaries" (67), and the Church must seek to expand the spheres "in which lay people are present and active as missionaries" (72). Missionary dynamism should become contagious!

The involvement of the youth is also essential to mission and evangelization. They should be offered opportunities to visit overseas missions as well as meet and offer hospitality to non-Christians and migrants within their own country (82). The idealism of youth—their rejection of violence and war as well as of racism and closed nationalism, desire for freedom and justice, and affirmation of the dignity and role of women (86)—is a potential resource. The vision of Charles de Foucauld as a "universal brother" can also fire the imagination of the youth (89) and serve as a path toward missionary commitment.

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Additional Major Emphases. In composing a popular overview of a papal encyclical, one faces the challenge of providing a balanced presentation. This writer thus sees several other major emphases on evangelization within *Redemptoris Missio;* he devotes a paragraph to each theme (indicated in italics).

Local Churches around the world are the central actors in mission today. All evangelization is accomplished harmoniously and necessarily in, with, and through the local Church, which is responsible for the totality of mission. This is a sea change in the dynamics of mission, and both local Churches and missionaries alike must explore the ramifications of this new reality. Many leads are found in the encyclical (26, 30, 39, 48-52, 62-64, 71, 83-85, 92).

Authentic evangelization is a *freely-offered gift*, not an external imposition that violates human dignity and freedom. Witnessing and proclaiming Christ are not at odds with the dignity of human beings as persons or their freedom of conscience (7-8). Rather than restrict freedom, genuine mission seeks to advance it. RM is clear: "*The Church proposes; she imposes nothing*" (39).

The Church needs *missionary vocations*. Individuals who receive the permanent, life-long vocation to foreign, transcultural mission are her treasured resource. Their vocation is necessary for the Church (32); it is a unique calling (27, 65), the model of the Church's missionary commitment (66), and is to be assiduously cultivated (79, 84), particularly by mission institutes themselves (65-66).

The encyclical looks positively upon *interreligious dialogue*, devoting several sections to its comprehensive presentation (55-57). Interfaith dialogue "is part of the Church's evangelizing mission … [it] is not in opposition to the mission *ad gentes* … [and] *does not dispense from evangelization*." Indeed, this section (55) speaks of God's call to all peoples and God's presence to them "of which their religions are the main and essential expression." The Church's reverence for the followers of other faiths and religions is clearly affirmed as such by the encyclical.

Women receive the pope's praise and gratitude in RM for their outstanding contribution to evangelization: "I extend a special word

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of appreciation to the missionary religious sisters" (70). "How can we forget the important role played by women" (71)? "It is necessary to recognize—and it is a title of honor—that some Churches owe their origins to the activity of lay men and women missionaries" (71).

The process of *inculturation* and its relationship to mission receive extensive treatment (25, 52-54, 76). Authentic evangelization involves the Church in the inculturation process, an "intimate transformation of authentic cultural values through their integration in Christianity and the insertion of Christianity in the various human cultures" (52). This task is never finished, and it encounters new challenges today especially in large cities "where new customs and styles of living arise together with new forms of culture and communication" (37). Mission and inculturation demand fresh initiatives and creativity in the complex age of the megalopolis!

The entire final chapter of *Redemptoris Missio* treats of *missionary spirituality* (87-91). Four elements characterize Jesus's disciples-turned-missionaries: the missionary is to be led by the Spirit, live the mystery of Christ who himself was sent, love the Church and humanity as Jesus did, and desire the holiness of saints. Mission spirituality, in a word, is "a journey towards holiness" (90) while the success of renewing the urgency of the Church's missionary impulse "demands holy missionaries" (90).

Precious Details—Not to be Lost. In a work as long as RM, one expects to find several details that demand further reflection. This synthesis presentation takes note of five additional themes (indicated in italics) and their importance for evangelization.

The *personalist philosophy* and orientation of John Paul II is manifest throughout the work. The person is always central in evangelization and in all mission apostolates: in working for justice (42), fostering interreligious dialogue (55-57), and promoting development. The human person "is the principal agent of development, not money or technology" (58). The missionary, in uniquely personalist terms, is described as "a person of the Beatitudes" (91), and it is personal love that is always "*the driving force of mission"* (60).

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The encyclical profusely expresses the *Church's gratitude* to its missionaries (2, 57, 60, 70). Her theologians also provide an important service for the cause of evangelization (36), and are called to promote the study of world religions and the science of missiology (83). There is a need as well for the Church to renew her commitment to ecumenism within mission (50).

Looking at today's world from the viewpoint of evangelization, the document distinguishes *three* demographics: peoples of other faiths, Christians requiring pastoral care, and the so-called "post-Christians"; all require unique approaches (32-34). In terms of geography, moreover, the pope emphasizes the missionary demands within Asia (37, 55, 91).

Significant and surprising is the fact that *one unique quote* appears verbatim no less than three times in the text (6, 10, 28): "we are obliged to hold that the Holy Spirit offers everyone the possibility of sharing in the Paschal Mystery in a manner known to God." One certainly cannot take to be mistaken the pope's assertion that God's loving plan of salvation includes each and every person!

Evangelization as "*God's work*" (24) is clearly affirmed; it is based "not on human abilities but on the power of the Risen Lord" (23). Missionaries are conscious that they owe their faith and vocations "not to their own merits but to Christ's special grace" (11). They must believe that "it is not we who are the principal agents of the Church's mission, but Jesus Christ and his Spirit" (36). Indeed, a missioner's faith journey "proceeds along *the path* already trodden by the Virgin Mary" (92).

Paul VI wrote fifteen years earlier (1975) that the modern person "listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if [she or he] does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses" (EN 41). This passage is recalled in *Redemptoris Missio* (42), and it must remain a central focus if the Church wishes to respond "with generosity and holiness to the calls and challenges of our time" (92).

Integral Evangelization: A Synthetic Overview. This essay has consciously limited itself to one pivotal document on mission and evangelization. John Paul II's *Redemptoris Missio* is a microcosm for understanding missionary evangelization; the pope without a doubt

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gifted the Church with a rich understanding of the theology and praxis of missionary evangelization during his lengthy pontificate. However, can the discussion be taken further?

Much enlightenment can be drawn from two documents issued by the Secretariat for Non-Christians (founded in 1964 by Paul VI and renamed in 1988 as the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue). On Pentecost Sunday in 1984, the Secretariat promulgated the document entitled "The Attitude of the Church toward the Followers of Other Religions: Reflections and Orientations on Dialogue and Mission" (DM). Hidden in this little-known work on the interrelationship between dialogue and mission is a pivotal statement. The source affirms that mission and evangelization are understood "in the consciousness of the Church as a single but complex and articulated reality" (13).

The Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, in conjunction with the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, then presented the document "Dialogue and Proclamation: Reflections and Orientations on Interreligious Dialogue and the Proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ" (DP) on Pentecost Sunday in 1991. There, once again, the evangelizing mission of the Church is understood as a "single but complex and articulated reality" (2).

These two documents (DM and DP) emphasize the unity and integral nature of evangelization while affirming at the same time that evangelization necessarily comprises many dimensions, that it is a complex reality. They assert, in addition, that this multi-faceted concept can be explained, articulated, and elaborated.

Identifying Various Elements of Integral Evangelization. Despite their lengthy and complex titles, these two documents just mentioned have added considerable clarity to a Catholic understanding of missionary evangelization. This results from the fact that specific "principal elements" are named—mission and evangelization are composed of: **(a)** personal presence and witness of life; **(b)** commitment to social development and human liberation; **(c)** interreligious or interfaith dialogue; **(d)** explicit Gospel proclamation and catechesis;

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and **(e)** liturgical life, prayer, and contemplation (cf. DM 13 and DP 2). The one evangelizing mission of the Church is, in a word, comprised of several component elements that form an integral whole. This is holistic evangelization; this is—in compact expression—the wide view of evangelization promoted by John Paul II in RM.

This five-point vision has served the Church well over the past decades. It expresses the thought of John Paul II in *Redemptoris Missio* (and in DM and DP) in a manner that ordinary Catholics can readily grasp and appreciate without at the same time doing violence to the richness and complexity of missionary evangelization. Surely one can easily perceive that the thought expressed in RM is adequately captured in this five-point schema. Employing it, in turn, enables smooth maneuvering through lengthy papal documents. Indeed, viewing evangelization through its various essential dimensions results in clarity, insight, and proper integration. This, without a doubt, is the current Catholic vision of evangelization!

Further Discussion of the Five Elements. Additional insight into the integral nature of evangelization is attained by relating these five principal elements of evangelization specifically with the mission documents of recent popes: John Paul II's *Redemptoris Missio*, Paul VI's *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, and Francis's *Evangelii Gaudium* (EG). Such an exercise illustrates the integral nature of the Church's task of evangelization as captured by Paul VI when he described evangelization as "bringing the Good News into all strata of humanity" (EN 18), a holistic insight which John Paul II undoubtedly affirms.

Christian presence and witness of life form the "initial act of evangelization" (EN 21). Day-to-day activities, various duties in the community, living together and promoting harmony, and doing so as individuals of integrity—all these are to be a basic "faith-witness" that demonstrates how Christian living is shaped by Christian faith and values. Through this wordless witness, "Christians stir up irresistible questions in the hearts of those who see how they live" (EN 21). People today desire and respect authentic witnesses (cf. RM 11, 42; EN 41; EG 14, 20, 119-121, 149-151). Mother Teresa of Calcutta (canonized on September 4, 2016), for instance, who is known for her loving

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and selfless care of the poorest of the poor, is a venerated "icon" of Christian presence, life, and service (*Ecclesia in Asia* 7).

Harmonious living as good neighbors based on faith convictions should issue naturally from a mutual *commitment to social development and human liberation* and the genuine service of humanity. This means serving the most unfortunate on the peripheries of society, witnessing to justice, and defending the integrity of creation. All dimensions of social concern are included here, ranging from peace-building, education, and health services to promoting family life and good government. Areas of social development or human promotion are vast fields indeed for the Church's evangelizing mission (cf. RM 58-60; EN 18-19, 29-33; EG 50-109, 181-185, 197-216).

Many of these evangelizing activities are necessarily inserted into specific contexts, and they naturally assume an interreligious dimension particularly in the Asian reality. Similar to most places in the world of today, the Church in Asia accomplishes her mission within pluralistic and diverse cultures. She enters into *interreligious* or *interfaith dialogue*, cooperating with the followers of the great religious traditions. Such dialogue takes many forms—there are the dialogues of daily life, deeds of service, religious experts, and faith experience as well as of other forms and approaches. John Paul II, moreover, asserts that "interreligious dialogue is a part of the Church's evangelizing mission" (RM 55). It emerges from one's faith convictions. Indeed, dialogue with religions and cultures is the truly appropriate Christian response in contemporary circumstances (cf. RM 52-54, 55-57; EN 20, 53; EG 115-118, 238-243, 250-254).

In mission and evangelization today, there is the role of *explicit Gospel proclamation and catechesis*. This dimension of evangelization involves preaching, catechesis on Christian life, and teaching and transmitting the content of the faith; in a word, it means "telling the Jesus story" and passing on the beautiful truths of the Christian faith. When the Holy Spirit opens the door and when the time is opportune, Christians do tell the Jesus story, giving explicit witness and testimony to the faith. Others are thus invited, in freedom of conscience, to follow and know Jesus. Christians themselves, moreover, are also further

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instructed in their faith through various forms of proclamation. Such is the process by which the Christian faith is communicated to the next generation of believers (cf. RM 44-51; EN 22, 27, 42; EG 3, 12, 24, 110-111, 246).

Finally, integral-holistic evangelization will necessarily include *liturgical life*, *prayer*, *and contemplation*. No one can be engaged effectively in the Church's mission without a strong faith- and prayer-life. Spreading the fire of the Gospel will be accomplished only by those already burning with an experience of the Lord, and so evangelization needs holy women and men who are themselves on fire with the love of Christ. In a word, holiness is an irreplaceable condition for evangelizers. The "God-experience" in prayer and contemplation, in sacramental and liturgical life, will illumine and transform all other dimensions of evangelization (cf. RM 46-49, 87-92; EN 23, 43-44, 47; EG 47, 173, 259-288).

It is obvious that these five "principal elements" of an integral understanding of evangelization complement and reinforce each other. Paul VI, in speaking of the complexity of the Church's evangelizing action, gave a timely admonition: "Any partial and fragmentary definition which attempts to render the reality of evangelization in all its richness, complexity and dynamism does so only at the risk of impoverishing it and even of distorting it" (EN 17; see also EG 176). He continued by saying that it "is impossible to grasp the concept of evangelization unless one tries to keep in view all its essential elements" (EN 17). Popes John Paul II and Francis continually emphasize the "integral meaning of the mission of evangelization" (EG 176) in a similar vein.

This holistic view therefore sets aside an older concept of the Church's mission. No longer are the elements of social justice, interfaith dialogue, peace-building, education and health care, life-witness, etc. simply "preparatory" or "first steps" toward evangelization (*praeparatio evangelica*). All five "principal elements" are now constitutive of an integral understanding. Popes Paul VI, John Paul II, and Francis have expanded the horizons of evangelization; the more restrictive view,

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which held that only explicit Gospel proclamation and sacramental life constituted mission, has clearly been superseded.

One also finds a renewed emphasis, concomitant with this expanded vision of evangelization, on the missionary nature of the *entire Church* (cf. AG 2; RM 61-76; EN 14, 59; EG 14, 20, 119-121). This means that every baptized member of the Church, be they lay, ordained, or religious, is an evangelizer. Indeed, the laity often found it difficult to appreciate how they were to be evangelizers back when evangelization used to be linked more exclusively with explicit Gospel proclamation and sacramental life. Today, Catholic evangelization engages the entire Church (from top to bottom, and especially all members of various local Churches), all states of life (lay, religious, ordained, married, single), and all apostolic activities as well as various forms of witness (the five principal elements). Yes, the totality of Christian missionary evangelization incorporates all these aspects.

Conclusion. This essay has presented an overview of John Paul II's *Redemptoris Missio* and highlighted its key insights. It has also elucidated a panoramic overview of a Catholic vision of evangelization. Yet after many words have been written, after various definitions and categories have been clarified, and after one more presentation has been completed, Catholic Christians must step back and radically affirm: *All mission and evangelization is God's project. The Holy Spirit is always the principal agent of evangelization.* For evangelizers, missionaries, priests, catechists, religious, and lay alike, mission necessarily means trying to find out what God wills and what God is doing. The authentic evangelizer then bends her or his will to God's will, joyfully surrenders to God's loving plan, and expends all efforts and energy to become a worthy instrument that enables God's design to unfold. Evangelization, at heart and center, is "*an issue of faith*, an accurate indicator of our faith in Christ and his love for us" (RM 11). For Christians, for all local Churches, to live is to evangelize!

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Selected *Redemptoris Missio* Bibliography

This brief bibliography of commentaries related to St. John Paul II's mission encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* limits itself to twenty-five pivotal authors. Thus, while it includes many significant sources, this bibliography does not claim to be an exhaustive presentation of the literature that is available on this important missionary document.

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