

**BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL DIMENSIONS FOR MISSIONARY COOPERATION**

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Missionary cooperation has been present since the inception of the Church; it is part of our sacred tradition and history. "The Church exists in order to evangelize."<sup>1</sup> This spreading of the good news is at the core of the identity of the Church and therefore to be a member of the Church one seeks to further Her mission. Missionary cooperation is the natural desire to share the good news of Christ with others and to support this important mission by the means available to you. "Missionary cooperation is the aid of the ecclesial community for ad gentes missionary activity, with prayers, sacrifices, vocations and material aid"<sup>2</sup> Not all are called to leave mother and father and go to a foreign land to do proclaim the truths of the Church but all are called to support this mission through prayer, sacrifices, and monetary gift; as well as be missionaries in the place that the Lord has them.



The theological dimension of missionary cooperation is better understood in the context of the sacrament of baptism and with a correct understanding of the Church and Her role in salvation. As Fr. Barron states, "It is not the case that a person first accesses salvation and subsequently enters into a voluntary society. Rather, the church is the life-force of Jesus Christ, the indispensable place where full encounter with him is alone possible."<sup>3</sup> As baptized Christians we are made members of not only the family of God but of the Mystical Body of Christ, the Church. "The church is that body, that organism, that field of force, in which the faith is concretely practiced. And that is why we cannot truly enter into Christ without entering, simultaneously, into the embodied activities that characterize the church."<sup>4</sup> As parts of the body, we are responsible for the well-being of the whole body, and therefore we are required to contribute to Her growth. Missionary cooperation "has been defined as the assumption of responsibilities for the spreading of the Gospel, with every baptized person assuming his own specific role in missionary work amongst the people."<sup>5</sup> Therefore no matter the role the Lord has given an individual in the body of the Church, each member is equally responsible for missions and the support of missions.

These responsibilities for the body are outlined for the believer throughout sacred scripture. Christ's commands us, that we are to abide in Him and that apart from Him we can do nothing. (cf. Jn 15). Therefore if we are not connected to the vine we will not accomplish anything, and we will spiritually perish. Again Christ, when instructing the Disciples about mission tells them that the laborer deserves his wage (Mt 10:10). This statement shows the importance of the work of missions and the need to support them. Then we have the witness of St. Paul on his mission endeavors, sometimes he supported himself through tent-making and other times when his mission was too consuming he relied on the support of the community of believers. St. Paul learned how to survive whether he was rich or poor, but in either circumstance he entrusted himself and those to whom he ministered to the Lord. "And my God will supply ever need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus" (Phil 4:19).

Let us acknowledge our responsibility as members of the Body of Christ the Church, recognizing our identity as missionaries and the reliance of other missionaries on our prayers, sacrifices and offerings for the fruits of the Lord's work.

<sup>1</sup> Pope Paul VI, Evangelization of the Modern World, Evangelii Nuntiandi, Dec. 8 1975, 14

<sup>2</sup> Fr. Dominic Anaeto, Lesson Summaries, "Week Twelve: Missionary Cooperation" Aug. 26, 2013

<sup>3</sup> Barron, Robert, Fr, The Core of Evangelization: We Depend on Each Other, Published in Catholic New World, and at wordonfire.org, May, 2, 2006

<sup>4</sup> Barron, Robert, Fr, at wordonfire.org, May, 2, 2006.

<sup>5</sup> Fr. Dominic Anaeto, Lesson Summaries, "Week Twelve: Missionary Cooperation" Aug. 26, 2013

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