

THE REALITIES WHICH THE CONCEPT OF "MISSION" EXPRESSES AND THE THEOLOGICAL DISTINCTION BETWEEN MISSION AND MISSIONS

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The word and concept of "Mission" in the history of the Church has had many different meanings or ideas attached to it as well as the secular concept of mission. The word mission derives from the Latin verb *mittere*, meaning; "to send", "to let go", and "to dispatch."¹ Although the concept of missions is referenced in the Old Testament and all throughout the Psalms, we are first introduced to the word mission and its intended meaning by Jesus, when He explains in the Gospel of John, how the "Father has sent Him, and He also sends us." Even previous to Him, the evangelist speaks of St. John the Baptist: "There was a man sent from God, whose name was John."² These missions, where one is sent for a specific task and one with authority entrusts a mission to another, are the realities of the Gospel concept of Mission.



Since these Biblical times the Church has expanded much on both the meaning and the carrying out of missions. All of these documents have reinforced the missionary origin of the Church since it was the Father and the Son who sent, "His life-giving Spirit upon His disciples and through Him has established His Body which is the Church. . ."³ Being that the Church in Her very nature is in mission until there shall be a new heavens and a new earth, members of the Church are incorporated into that mission of the Blessed Trinity. Members are both summoned, and sent out to proclaim this universal sacrament of salvation. Therefore the realities that the concept of "mission" express certainly include missionary activity, but are not limited to simply missionary activity. Nor does reality of "mission" find its fulfillment solely in action; rather the reality of "mission" is stamped in its origin and very nature. Thus mission finds its reality in both its identity and the action of missions. In this way the concept of mission in the Church greatly resembles the likeness of the Blessed Trinity.

Now that we have established the concept of mission having its origin in the Blessed Trinity let us seek to seek the theological distinction between mission and missions. The mission of the Church is universal salvation for all men, and one way this mission is completed is through the missions, activities which adorn the Bride of Christ, the Church. As previously stated the Church in Her very nature has a salvific mission but how She lives out this identity and fulfills it is through the individual missions which bring the Good News to those who do not yet know Christ.

May we as members of the Church, in our daily lives, and particular missions seek to heed the missionary mandate of Christ, which was recently proclaimed by the Vicar of Christ, Pope Francis in Rio to the whole Church in this year of Faith. "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo I am with you always until the close of the age."⁴

¹ Anaeto, Dominic, Fr, PS 514, Mission and Evangelization, class notes, Lesson 1, Week 1, Definition of Mission.

² John 1:6

³ Lumen Gentium, 48

⁴ Matthew 29:19-20

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