NAMING THE CONVERSION WE SEEK*

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Christian missionaries and evangelizers seek the “conversion” of the people they encounter and with whom they share their lives. However, in light of recent Christian and Catholic missionary experience and theological development, it is necessary to “name” or identify the type of conversion that is desired. What is the vision and goal that motivates Christian missionaries to go forth to the nations, to the ends of the earth? How do missionaries authentically respect people’s freedom of conscience, their experience, their religions and cultures? And how, at the same time, do evangelizers remain people of integrity who are committed to propagating their Christian faith? Treating the topic of “conversion” demands a carefully nuanced, updated, and holistic missiology.

The theology of mission and conversion must be anchored in reality and is best approached in a concrete manner. Allow me to narrate the following experience that has helped shape my views of conversion and mission.

A Bangladeshi Beggar

During the Lenten season some few years ago, while I was a visiting professor in Dhaka, Bangladesh, I had a "graced moment," a "defining experience" in my missionary awareness and perspective. It has remained seared in my consciousness and has forced me to ask many foundational questions about mission and my own commitment. It involves a Bangladeshi beggar-woman.

I saw her on the road, in front of the large walled compound of a wealthy family dwelling. I could not clearly see her face, as she was several hundred feet ahead of me. Her tattered clothes covered a malnourished body; she was alone, although other beggars were walking ahead of her on the road. I was proceeding along the same path, leisurely taking a late afternoon walk.

Suddenly a luxury car approached with its horn blowing. The driver probably wanted the beggars to disperse and also wanted the gate of the compound opened by the servants. The woman appeared startled as the car turned sharply in front of her and the gate swung open. Within seconds two large dogs emerged from the compound and jumped at the woman, knocking her to the ground. She screamed and cried both from fear and the pain caused by the dogs nipping at her. I stood frozen, horrified at the sight.

A well-dressed madam promptly emerged from the chauffeur-driven car. She ordered the driver to bring the car into the compound; the dogs were called to return inside; the servants were commanded to close and lock the gate. And the beggar-woman? She was left alone on the ground—outside the gate (cf. Hebrews 13:12). I stood helpless, gazing at this appalling scene.

Only the other frightened beggars came to the aid of the woman. Only they showed mercy and compassion. I stood at a distance and wept at this scene of crucifixion. I admitted to being a guilty bystander. My fears and inadequacies had left me paralyzed. I had not one taka coin in my pocket to give; I could not offer one word of consolation in the Bengali language, which I did not speak; I did not
approach the woman for fear of misinterpretation that a foreign man would touch a Bengali woman in public in this strictly Islamic culture. I simply wept in solidarity. I wept long and hard. And, in succeeding years, I have frequently returned to that scene and prayed to God: “Do not let me forget that experience. Allow it to shape my life and mission-vision. Permit it to remain a ‘defining moment’ in understanding my mission vocation.”

Embracing a Broken World

This experience of the Bangladeshi beggar-woman has forced me to look closely at the large scale of suffering in the contemporary world. Often such human misery is reduced to cold statistics; still the numbers are staggering. It has been noted that

40,000 children under the age of five die every day due to lack of basic vaccines that prevent childhood diseases; each day 500 million people go hungry; over one billion people live in extreme poverty; 40 million people die yearly of malnutrition and hunger.... [T]he list of such concrete sufferings and their devastating consequences goes on.¹

My experience on the road in Dhaka, Bangladesh, with the beggar-woman no longer allows me to view people as statistical abstractions or faceless victims. All Christians, especially missionaries, are called to embrace the world’s suffering humanity. Christians must recognize “the existence of a crucified people” and strive to “take them down from the cross.”²

Suffering and the reality of a broken world are existentials of the human situation. No one escapes these common and universal realities; they are not borderline phenomena; they are at the center and

depths of human existence. "The reality of suffering is ever before our eyes and often in the body, soul and heart of each of us" (LR 1).

The suffering that is inherent in human experience impacts the situation of mission and missiology. The traditional dialogue partner of mission theology has been the unbeliever; today the unbeliever/non-Christian still remains the dialogue partner of the missionary; however, particular attention is focused on humanity's concrete experience of disaster, weakness, and suffering. Thus, human brokenness becomes a clear point of insertion for contemporary missiology. The Church in her mission is to embrace suffering humanity, just as Christ "pitched his tent among us" through the incarnation.

John Paul II has noted that suffering is that "universal theme that accompanies humanity at every point" (SD 2) of human existence. "The Church has to try to meet humanity in a special way on the path of his suffering" (SD 3). Missionary by nature, the Church must look squarely at the fundamental realities of the world today, allowing them to impinge upon us and disturb us in their naked reality. The Christian community must not join with those who fall into escapism and denial of the world's harsh realities.

**Human and Christian Perspectives**

Humanity has a common origin and unity in its creator; it also is meant to be united in solidarity as it faces life's vicissitudes and sufferings. This mystery of human unity in the cycles of life and death is affirmed by Christian tradition; it is also a common theme in all the world's great religious traditions.³

All human life has a paschal configuration; its pattern continually moves through death to renewed life. Life's paschal paradigm

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(universally shared by all people—although varying terminology may be used) sees people struggling to move through darkness to light, through captivity to freedom, through dryness to growth, through alienation to union, through suffering and brokenness to wholeness. Or again, life has an internal dynamic focused on the movement through death to life in all its dimensions: “from falsehood to truth, from apathy to responsibility, from margination to participation, from loneliness and isolation to universal communion, from sin to grace.”

Mission today finds its point of insertion in humanity’s experience of life and death realities. Paschal dimensions are characteristic of all life situations; they find an immediacy and poignancy in the reality of human brokenness and suffering.

Catholic theology asserts that the Spirit of God is present and active within the lives of all peoples—even in their experience of brokenness. God’s grace is always present and operative. The Second Vatican Council forcefully stated that, as Christian believers, “we must hold that the Holy Spirit offers to all the possibility of being made partners, in a way known to God, in the paschal mystery” (GS 22). This is the only quote that is used three times in the pope’s mission encyclical Redemptoris Missio (RM 6, 10, 28). In his writings, John Paul II uses the phrase repeatedly; it is probably one of his guiding missiological principles.

This text of Vatican II affirms the action of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of all people. Christians believe that “the Spirit of God is constantly at work in ways that pass human understanding” (WCC 446). The universal work of the Spirit serves to enlighten people’s experience of their paschal realities of dying and rising; life itself, including suffering, has the possibility of opening all peoples to experience God’s salvation through the paschal mystery.

Note that GS 22 “declares unambiguously that there is only one way which leads to everlasting salvation, a way which is valid for Christians as well as non-Christians, and that is: association with the

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paschal mystery." The redemptive grace of Christ is available for all who—in their own way and even without knowing it—obey the law of the paschal mystery and take it as a guiding norm for their consciences and lives. This astonishing assertion has important consequences regarding the approach to conversion that contemporary mission pursues.

The Christian faith is, at heart, a paschal faith. Thus, if all reality has a paschal paradigm and all life is shaped by rhythms of life through death, then Christian mission will continue to find elements of this very mystery hidden in the history and lives, cultures and religions of peoples of diverse faiths. These paschal elements will probably be most evident when seen through life’s limit situations of suffering and brokenness. Missioners are continually experiencing the unique ways that the Holy Spirit brings people into direct encounter with the paschal mystery and, yes, with God’s salvation in Christ.

The cross of Jesus is the paramount Christian symbol, because it reminds Christians of the centrality of the paschal mystery in their faith lives. Kosuke Koyama notes: “If Jesus Christ of the cross stands at the centre of Christian theology, the Christian Church, the body of Christ, must be called the Church of the cross.” All Church missionary activity will focus on the paschal nature of life, of faith, of salvation. Mission is always cruciform, always signed by the cross. Crux probat omnia.

St. Paul spoke of his missionary consciousness in writing to the Corinthian community: “For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified” (1 Cor 2:2). To Jews who demanded miracles and Greeks who searched for wisdom, Paul proclaimed a crucified Christ. This message was offensive to the Jews and nonsense to the Gentiles (cf. 1 Cor 1: 22-25). All the Synoptic

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gospels affirm that the cross is the only path whereby one follows Jesus (Matt 10:38, 16:24; Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23, 14:27). The cross is central to Jesus’ act of *kenosis* (Phil 2:5-11); it is pivotal in our salvation from sin (1 Pet 2:24).

Pope John Paul II has written: “The mission of the Savior reached its culmination in the paschal mystery” (EA 12). Thus, the cross is not an accident of Christian faith and mission. As David Bosch writes, the Gospel affirms that,

in the suffering Jesus, God embraces the suffering of the world for the sake of humanity.... Moreover, in Christ, God does not necessarily save us *from* suffering, but *in and through* it.... Christ suffers when we suffer. The pain people suffer is the pain of Christ himself.\(^7\)

Christians are called to live into the mystery of the cross, “to live into the image of Christ *on* the cross.”\(^8\) Christian missionary activity must not fail “to keep the cross at the center of salvation and the death of Jesus at the center of the cross.”\(^9\)

Roman Catholic missionary communities have a mission-sending ritual during which the new missionaries receive a large crucifix; a cord is attached so it can be worn around the neck. This missionary cross is “no mere ornament depicting Christianity in general. Rather, it is a vigorous commentary on what gives the gospel its universal appeal. Those who receive it possess not only a symbol of their mission, but a handbook on how to carry it out.”\(^10\) Missionaries who receive the cross in their mission-sending ceremony soon starkly realize that in their direct field experience there is “nothing attractive,


easy, secure, comfortable, convenient, strategically efficient, economical, or self-fulfilling about taking up a cross.”¹¹

Mission and Conversion as Imperatives

Having noted the reality of suffering in our broken world and having outlined the paschal nature of all reality and of the Christian faith in particular, it is important to state a Christian conviction: mission remains a necessary imperative in today’s world. I share the affirmation of David Bosch: “I wish to state unequivocally that I endorse the mission enterprise. I say this because I believe that the Christian faith... is intrinsically missionary, that the Church—as Vatican II put it—is ‘missionary by its very nature.’”¹²

“Mission and Evangelism: An Ecumenical Affirmation,” the document of the World Council of Churches, expresses it in this manner: “Christians owe the message of God’s salvation in Jesus Christ to every person and to every people” (WCC 445). John Paul II affirms “the urgency of missionary evangelization” because “it is the primary service which the Church can render to every individual and to all humanity in the modern world” (RM 2).

The Church is linked to mission and evangelization “in her most intimate being” (EN 15); mission is not “an optional contribution for the Church” (EN 5). Quoting Vatican II (AG 29), John Paul II reaffirms that missionary activity is “the greatest and holiest duty of the Church” (RM 63). The Church realizes her “deepest identity” and “her very nature” when she is in mission (EN 14). She is to be always and everywhere “the universal sacrament of salvation” (LG 48; AG 1). For her, to live is to be missionary!

The Church’s mission always bears a christological focus. Evangelii Nuntiandi, the apostolic exhortation of Paul VI, asserts that: “There

¹²Bosch, 590.
is no true evangelization if the name, the teaching, the life, the promises, the Kingdom and the mystery of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God, are not proclaimed" (EN 22; see EA 19). This means,

Evangelization will also always contain—as the foundation, center and at the same time summit of its dynamism—a clear proclamation that, in Jesus Christ, the Son of God made man, who died and rose from the dead, salvation is offered to all, as a gift of God's grace and mercy (EN 27).

A natural corollary of strongly affirming the Church's missionary nature is to affirm the pursuit of conversion through the Christian message she preaches and to which she gives witness. As Church, she "seeks to convert, solely through the divine power of the Message she proclaims" (EN 18). For some persons, conversion as an imperative in Christian mission has slowly gone out of favor. This is unfortunate, because conversion, properly understood, is part of mission. It has not been detrimental; it has had tremendously beneficial effects on converts. However, at the same time, it remains crucial to assess the motives, processes, and goals of all conversion; it is crucial to name the conversion process that Christians seek and promote.

**Naming Conversion**

An impressive body of literature exists on the conversion process; however, totally capturing the nuances and levels of the dynamics of conversion exceeds the scope of this presentation. Many authors use the foundational insights elaborated by Bernard Lonergan who has shown how conversion occurs on various levels. Other authors take a biblical-theological approach to conversion. Still others present the psycho-social perspective. Using selective insights from many sources, this presentation focuses on the missionary dimensions of conversion.

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Filled with Christian faith convictions, missionaries seek the conversion of people they encounter. Evangelizers desire that people will shift their horizons, perceive the world in a new way, experience a personal and social transformation. Conversion demands "a radical shift in a person's apprehensions and values, accompanied by a similar radical change in oneself, in one's relations with other persons, and in one's relations to God." Authentic conversion, in Lonergan's framework,

takes place on four levels related to the four levels of the act of understanding: affective (experience), intellectual (understanding), moral (judging), and religious (deciding). Like the act of under-


17Dulles, 176.
standing, these four conversions are interconnected and dynamically related. To be an integrated person requires a fourfold conversion.\textsuperscript{18}

Lonergan notes the all-encompassing nature of the conversion process; it is “a transformation of the subject and his world”; it is “a resultant change of course and direction”; it is “existential, intensely personal, utterly intimate.” Conversion “affects all of a man’s conscious and intentional operations. It directs his gaze, pervades his imagination, releases the symbols that penetrate to the depths of his psyche. It enriches his understanding, guides his judgments, reinforces his decisions.”\textsuperscript{19} Authentic conversion lays total claim to the individual; it “incorporates the totality of our life, because God’s love is concerned with that totality” (WCC 433). As Paul wrote to the Ephesians, conversion demands that “Your hearts and minds must be made completely new and you must put on the new self....” (Eph 4:23-24).

Such a total transformation is nothing less than the work of God’s grace and the action of the Holy Spirit. It is impossible to “conceive of authentic religious conversion apart from the gracious self-communication of God.”\textsuperscript{20} Missionaries repeatedly experience the fact that “the Holy Spirit is the principal agent of evangelization (EN 75; cf. RM 21, 30). Mission belongs to God; it is “God’s project.” Only in the power of the Spirit do mission and conversion progress and bear fruit.

True religious conversion under the action of the Spirit will mean “being grasped by ultimate concern. It is other-worldly falling in love. It is total and permanent self-surrender without conditions, qualifications, reservations.”\textsuperscript{21} Or, again, it is “unconditional falling in love.

\textsuperscript{18}Mueller, 16.
\textsuperscript{19}Lonergan, 130-31.
\textsuperscript{20}Dulles, 178.
\textsuperscript{21}Lonergan, 240.
It is a love of God with one's whole heart and mind and strength. It is the love of God without restrictions, conditions or reservations. It is moving from a this-worldly horizon to an other-worldly horizon.\textsuperscript{22} Religious conversion "sets up a new horizon in which the love of God will transvalue our values and the eyes of love will transform our knowing."\textsuperscript{23}

The center of this Spirit-inspired conversion and transformation is a loving God; all becomes focused on God's love poured out in the person of Jesus through the paschal mystery. It embraces "the mystery of salvation realized by God for all in Jesus Christ by the power of the Spirit" (DP 10), which is nothing other than the central mystery of Christian faith: the paschal mystery.

The paschal mystery becomes the integrating focus of all mission and conversion. It is foundational because all life has a paschal paradigm—as exemplified in the brokenness of the world in which we live. The "passion of humanity" ever present in wars, famine, oppression, poverty, sickness, hatred, and death is to be the ground in which the seeds of new life, hope, resurrection, and ultimately salvation germinate and bear fruit. This paschal nature of all life and experience (poignantly illustrated by my personal experience with the Bangladeshi beggar-woman) continually provides openings for a deep missionary encounter—and authentic conversion and transformation into the mystery of God's love.

Recall that illuminating Vatican II quote: "we must hold that the Holy Spirit offers to all the possibility of being made partners, in a way known to God, in the paschal mystery" (GS 22). Thus, every human person—without any exception (RH 14)—has an opportunity to encounter the saving paschal mystery that emerges in and from his or her own life, experience which itself has a paschal form. All life, all human experience, all salvation has a paschal character.

\textsuperscript{22}Cronin, 20.

\textsuperscript{23}Lonergan, 106.
This is a fundamental human, religious, and Christian insight. All is filled with “paschality.” Mission, conversion, and redemption follow this same paschal structure of life.

This is the basic conversion missionaries seek, the radical transformation desired and the total and permanent self-surrender demanded: unconditional falling in love with God, the transvaluation of human values; all is centered on a radical acceptance of the paschal nature of reality. It means embracing a broken world and a crucified humanity through the optic of the omnipresent paschal mystery. Christianity seeks a transforming conversion to the paschal view of life. This is the focus of all mission service rendered by the Church to humanity in today’s world.

Levels of Missionary Conversion

It has been stated earlier that this presentation focuses on the missionary dimensions of conversion. The experience of field missionaries reveals three interacting levels of conversion into the paschal mystery. The first conversion is centered on the person of the missionary. The second conversion is a call to all persons of faith and good will to embrace a paschal perspective in their lives and consciences. Finally, the third conversion takes the form of an invitation for people to freely join the paschal community of the Christian Church.

Conversion of the Missionary

Christian missionaries begin the conversion process in their own lives and attitudes. They seek to personalize the fact that in the words of John Paul II: “the Church’s vocation and missionary commitment spring from the central mystery of our faith: the paschal mystery” (WYD 2). They embrace the fact: “The paschal mystery of Christ’s cross and Resurrection stands at the center of the Good News that the apostles, and the Church following them, are to proclaim to the world.”24
Evangelizers accept that every missionary begins by entering a personal process of conversion (EN 15). It is true that “the call to conversion should begin with the repentance of those who do the calling, who issue the invitation” (WCC 434). Before crossing any borders of culture or religion to announce the paschal mystery, missionaries seek their own transformation into the same paschal mindset of Jesus (1 Cor 2:16; Phil 2:5). Their missionary outlook reflects attitudes of poverty, powerlessness, and vulnerability; they seek personal conversion “according to the image of the serving God in the serving Christ.”  

To the extent that any missionary embodies the suffering Messiah’s self-transcending way of the cross, that person achieves authentic paschal conversion.

It is only with a paschal attitude that the missionary can perceive reality correctly and insightfully. The converted missionary finds in the cross and resurrection of the suffering Messiah the strength and wisdom to address both suffering humanity as well as those who are rushing along the road of individualism, materialism, and consumerism. Paschality becomes the measuring rod for all missionary endeavors.

Conversion to a paschal mentality is a long, continuous, complex process of spiritual growth for every missionary. It demands hearing the Gospel repeatedly; it requires renunciation of sin. Conversion “is always a more gradual process than it might seem on the surface”; conversion is a continuous process demanded at every stage of the Christian life... for no believer has faith fully and securely in hand.”  

Christian life itself is an ongoing conversion, dynamically

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24Catechism of the Catholic Church· (Liguori, MO: Liguori Publications, 1994) 571.

25Navone, 33.


27Dulles, 177.
lived and developing; such an ongoing conversion (and not just a one-time conversion) "is the manner by which we live authentic lives."28 There is no other path to becoming a paschal-centered person ("paschal animal"29) and to adopting a "crucified mind" rather than a "crusading mind."30 The individual missionary, as well as the Church as a missionary community, requires continual conversion to paschality.

CONVERSION TO A PASCHAL WORLDVIEW

From the paschal perspective operative in the missionary’s own life, one arrives at a second moment of conversion in the missionary dynamic. Emerging from the common experience of life and death realities, Christian missionaries and all peoples of faith soon recognize the paschal commonalities of their shared existence. All peoples—whether Christian, Buddhist or Muslim—share the vicissitudes and challenges of existence in a broken world. All world religions and primal faith systems address with varying degrees of emphasis the mystery of suffering and evil, the reality of wounded humanity.31 It is precisely within this shared human existence and mystery that the Christian missionary announces paschal perspectives of life through death.

Through a dialogue of life experience, the missionary aims at "deepening the religious experience of all the people involved, at extending the awareness of God’s love and human sinfulness, and of motivating everyone involved to eliminate what hinders God’s love."32 The missionary is definitely inviting his or her dialogue partners to a

28Mueller, 16.


31Tesfai, 63-66.
deeper God-experience; this is a spiritual conversion, but not necessarily to Christianity.\textsuperscript{33}

Such a heart-to-heart encounter is a direct effect of the Holy Spirit's action in bringing peoples through their own life situations into a sharing of the paschal mystery. The grace of God is at work everywhere and the fundamental act of faith and conversion is within reach of every human being. The Holy Spirit continually penetrates the concrete lives and histories of people from within and offers them a real mutual participation in the paschal mystery. Yes, for the Christian it will certainly be explicitly christological. However, the identical experience, although often in an inchoate form, is continually available to all peoples—whatever their particular religious affiliation.\textsuperscript{34}

The missionary calls peoples of all faiths to be converted to this paschal perspective and a concomitant commitment to alleviate the ongoing passion of humankind and the suffering of "crucified peoples" in all times and places. The paschal paradigm "has the power to illumine the truth of the suffering that is omnipresent in creation and history as well as the truth of God in relation to suffering."\textsuperscript{35} At this juncture, it is important to note that the Christian missionary will often find his or her own explicit paschal faith enriched by the implicit paschal faith of his or her Muslim or Buddhist friend.

From a missionary perspective, this presentation has struggled to name the type of conversion sought through efforts of evangelization. It is valid to assert that exemplary missionaries who enable others to embrace a paschal perspective and a selfless servant re-


\textsuperscript{34}See Kroeger, \textit{Living Mission}, 58.

\textsuperscript{35}Ibid., 58.
sponse to their suffering neighbors have truly accomplished the task of conversion to Gospel values and perspectives. Yes, the Church has been accomplishing the goal of conversion in several parts of the world, even when, for example in Asia, the number of baptized Christians does not reach three percent.

Christian missionaries through selfless service of the sick, the poor, and victims of injustice have clearly announced the essence of Gospel faith; they have shown the Church to be a caring community of compassion;\textsuperscript{36} they have challenged people to be converted to the paschal mystery and to a deeper love and experience of God. They offer people a paschal perspective in the midst of suffering, challenging them not to become embittered or resentful toward life, people, or even toward God.

When questioned about the lack of conversions to Christianity in Hindu India, Mother Teresa replied:

Numbers have nothing to do with it. But the people are putting prayer into action by coming and serving the people. Everywhere people are helping. There may not be a big conversion like that, but we do not know what is happening in the soul.... If people become better Hindus, better Muslims, better Buddhists by our acts of love, then there is something else growing there. They come closer and closer to God. When they come closer, they have to choose.\textsuperscript{37}

**CONVERSION TO THE CHRISTIAN FAITH COMMUNITY**

All persons are called to conversion which is “the humble and penitent return of the heart to God in the desire to submit one’s life more generously to Him” (DM 37). In the course of this process, “the decision may be made to leave one’s previous spiritual or reli-

\textsuperscript{36}R. McCahill, “Conversion Is Not the Purpose, Building Trust Is,” *Asia Focus* 10:16 (1994) 8.

gious situation in order to direct oneself towards another” (DM 37). In this conversion process, freedom of conscience is sovereign; “no one must be constrained to act against his conscience, nor ought he to be impeded in acting according to his conscience, especially in religious matters” (DH 3).

Admittedly, mission also has explicit Christian conversion as its goal: “that non-Christians be freely converted to the Lord under the action of the Holy Spirit who opens their hearts so that they may adhere to Him” (AG 13). Christians nourish in their hearts the desire to share their full experience of the paschal mystery and faith in Christ with brothers and sisters of other religions. Missionaries sensitively aim at “guiding people to explicit knowledge of what God has done for all men and women in Jesus Christ, and at inviting them to become disciples of Jesus through becoming members of the Church” (DP 81).

One notes the triple dynamic of conversion operative in this missionary process: 1) the converted missionary centers his or her life on the paschal mystery; 2) the Christian missionary calls other people of faith to discover the paschal paradigm of life and to adopt paschal values in their lives, consciences, and service; 3) based on a free decision inspired by the Spirit, others are directly invited to join the community of the Christian Church, where they can fully practice their paschal-mystery-centered faith.

The paschal nature of life, faith, and redemption integrates the entire conversion process. Awareness of and participation in the paschal mystery often unfold in the lives of people in an evolutionary and progressive manner. The missionary finds the paschal mystery operative and recognizes conversion both outside and within the Church. Affirming the action of the Spirit beyond the borders of the Church “does not cancel the need for having a community of the disciples, the Church, that has experienced the all-inclusive love of the Father in Jesus and commits itself to continue his mission.”

This wide, inclusive view of mission and the workings of the Holy Spirit add further meaning to the reality of the missionary Church as the "universal sacrament of salvation" (LG 48; AG 1).

Additional Mission Corollaries

This presentation has strongly affirmed the validity of centering mission and conversion within the framework of the paschal mystery. It is a "paschal missiology" and challenges all missionaries to become "paschal evangelizers" in their own lives and through their approaches to the Church’s missionary activity. In the context of today's broken world, the enormous afflictions and sufferings of humanity, and the need to maintain eschatological hope, paschal missiology appears particularly insightful, necessary, and relevant.

In this concluding section of this presentation, other missiological themes and their intimate relationship to paschal mission approaches are noted. The insights flowing from a paschal-mystery-centered missiology are numerous; these "corollaries" are very briefly mentioned; their relationship to paschal mission perspectives is highlighted.

(1) Paschal mission emerges from the unity of all humanity in its sharing of the common paschal experience of rising through dying. All peoples face questions of suffering as well as the mystery and meaning of life.

(2) Paschal mission uses an inductive approach based on experience to understand the Church's call to mission. The Church is called to be active in "reading the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel" (GS 4); human suffering and brokenness constitute a missionary challenge today.

(3) Paschal mission strongly affirms the active presence of the Holy Spirit in the world, both in and beyond the boundaries of the Church. The Spirit is constantly directing people to a God-encounter through their sharing in the paschal mystery.
(4) Paschal mission embodies the virtue of Christian hope based on the firm belief in the resurrection. Eschatological hope, not suffering, is the integrating perspective of Christian missionaries; that hope continually breaks into the world through missionary witness and service.

(5) Paschal mission clearly allows missioners to be people of integrity. Their proclamation begins with their own paschal experiences and links them with people who share identical experiences. Mission is not something superimposed upon reality; mission emerges from the commonly shared realities of missioners and their dialogue partners of various faiths.

(6) Paschal mission demands a radical conversion of the missioner to the values of a crucified-risen Lord; mission begins only when personal transformation has been initiated. Only the converted missioner can authentically call others to conversion.

(7) Paschal mission requires the integration of contemplation into missionary praxis. No one can authentically address the "passion of humanity" without possessing a deep contemplative faith; one must live into the paschal mystery.

(8) Paschal mission emphasizes that the work of the missionary involves both listening and speaking. Listening for the Spirit's action within the hearts and lives of people is a prerequisite for speaking of God's paschal love and saving deeds.

(9) Paschal mission lays bare the sinfulness of today's world, which is so often enslaved to materialism, consumerism, individualism, greed, and pride. A paschal mentality challenges both personal and social sin; it demands true conversion.

(10) Paschal mission respects the free will and personal conscience of everyone; at the same time it is a call to conscience for generous people (Christians and non-Christians alike) to be committed to addressing the sufferings of humanity.

(11) Paschal mission easily enters into dialogue with the followers of other religions. All religious traditions face identical human
questions and mysteries. Dialogue enables peoples of faith to mutually explore and respond to questions of life and death.

(12) Paschal mission connects intimately with today’s challenges of peace, justice, development, and ecology. It invites all to live in solidarity with their neighbors and to be prepared to suffer and die so that others may live. Again, such a paschal lifestyle demands profound conversion.

(13) Paschal mission can be lived in all cultural contexts and situations. As a missionary approach, it easily finds an inculturated home among diverse peoples. Paschal mission is also clearly transcultural.

(14) Paschal mission aims to be a holistic approach to mission, integrating the personal and social, the human and divine, the material and spiritual. It is an incarnational approach to being in mission.

(15) Paschal mission emphasizes humble and self-effacing approaches to missionary activity; it consciously seeks to avoid any pitfalls of paternalism or colonialism. Missioners, believing in the beauty and truth of their message, seek to offer it with generosity, sincerity, and authenticity.

(16) Paschal mission is at heart a scripture-based missiology. It follows the teachings and example of Jesus who came “not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Matt 20:28).

(17) Paschal mission embodies an emphasis on witness and even a willingness to endure suffering, persecution, and martyrdom. Contemporary missionaries knowingly and willingly embrace vulnerability because, in Christ, God reveals himself precisely in weakness rather than in power.

(18) Paschal mission is at heart a soteriology. Following the paschal path in mission brings both missioner and people into a direct experience of salvation in Jesus Christ, who “bore our sins in his own body on the cross... through his wounds [we] have been healed” (1 Pet 2:24).
(19) Paschal mission integrates well with the sacramental dimension of the Church. All Christians are missionary by virtue of their baptism into Christ’s death and resurrection (Rom 6:3-4). The Eucharist is the paschal meal that celebrates the death and resurrection of the Lord until he comes (1 Cor 11:23-26); the Eucharist remains the “ongoing sacrament of mission” for Christians.

(20) Paschal mission transforms the individual missioner into an attractive and credible witness. Missioners of the caliber of a Mother Teresa manifest the transforming effects of the paschal mystery in their lives, and today’s world welcomes such authentic witnesses.

A Concluding Reflection

This presentation began with a narration of an encounter between a missionary and a Bangladeshi beggar-woman. That “defining experience” has produced much depth reflection on the nature of mission and conversion. This missionary remains filled with gratitude for that God-given experience of grace. More reflection needs to be given to the wealth of insights that can still emerge from viewing mission through the optic of the paschal mystery. And finally, relying on God’s grace, this missionary looks forward to meeting that Muslim Bangladeshi beggar-woman once again in the resurrected life with Christ the Lord in heaven. I am confident she will be there!
Abbreviations

AG  Ad Gentes (Missionary Activity: 7 December 1965)
DH  Dignitatis Humanae (Religious Liberty: 7 December 1965)
DM  Dialogue and Mission (10 June 1984)
DP  Dialogue and Proclamation (19 May 1991)
EA  Ecclesia in Asia (The Church in Asia: 6 November 1999)
EN  Evangelii Nuntiandi (Evangelization in the Modern World: 8 December 1975)
GS  Gaudium et Spes (The Church in the Modern World: 7 December 1965)
LG  Lumen Gentium (The Church: 21 November 1964)
LR  La Realta (Reality of Suffering: 27 April 1994)
RH  Redemptor Hominis (Mystery of Redemption and Human Dignity: 4 March 1979)
RM  Redemptoris Missio (On the Permanent Validity of the Church’s Missionary Mandate: 7 December 1990)
SD  Salvifici Dolores (On the Christian Meaning of Human Suffering: 11 February 1984)
WYD World Youth Days IX and X Message (21 November 1993)