

MISSION UPDATE

United States Catholic Mission Association

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The State of Climate Change Today

By Sr. Joan Brown, osf

Weeks and months speed along without comprehensive climate change action in the United States and collectively among nations on the planet. This past summer, the effects of climate change faced us in undeniable ways. Nineteen countries set records in high temperatures, Russia experienced vast fires and announced no grain exports due to drought, flooding in Pakistan and China resulted in displacement and death of millions of people and the break off of another large glacier piece in Greenland spoke to scientists and observers of a rapidly changing earth climate.

In January Pope Benedict expressed grave concerns that international meetings in Copenhagen had not resulted in an agreement and action. The theme of his January 1, World Day of Peace message argued that climate change and natural catastrophes threaten people's rights to life, food, health and ultimately peace.

At a gathering of ambassadors later in January he said, "I trust that in the course of this year ... it will be possible to reach an agreement for effectively dealing with this question." While he did not name countries who acted as stumbling blocks, he spoke of the victims of climate change as the island nations at risk of rising seas and Africa, where the battle for natural resources, increased desertification and over-exploitation of land has resulted in wars.

He noted that the same "self-centered and materialistic" way of thinking that sparked the worldwide financial meltdown was also endangering creation. To combat it will require a new way of thinking and a new lifestyle – and an acknowledgment that the question is a moral one, he said.

"The protection of creation is not principally a response to an aesthetic need, but much more to a moral need, inasmuch as nature expresses a plan of love and truth which is prior to us and which comes from God," he said.

We have moved from the conversation about the possibility of global warming around our dinner tables to the real effects of climate change. Even the term global warming has changed to reflect the reality that we are experiencing enormous alterations of weather patterns that have for the most part been predictable for farmers and fisher people for centuries. Now we face temperature fluctuations outside of historical records, too little or too much rain and snow, increased lightning strikes over land resulting in more fires, drought as new constant reality in places such as Australia and a general volatility of storms and warmer or colder temperatures. These are not predictions for the future. These are realities we are living now, with brothers and sisters in the Southern Hemisphere being affected the most.

As a Franciscan Sister, working with Catholics and people of various faith traditions to care for creation

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We pray:
That by opening our hearts to love we may put an end to the wars and conflicts which continue to bloody our world.

Pope Benedict XVI

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From the Executive Director

Fr. Michael Montoya, MJ

Anticipation and excitement! These feelings sum up the experience here at the USCMA Office as we prepare the last details for the Mission Congress 2010 to be held on October 28-31, 2010 in Albuquerque, New Mexico. I hope you are making plans to join us in this historic event. If you have not yet registered, there is still time. You can go to the Congress website at www.missioncongress.org. And if you are already registered, please feel free to invite others.

The Mission Congress happens only every five years in the country. It is a collaborative work among 8 national mission agencies that form the Catholic Mission Forum. USCMA is the convener of the group.

We have received registrations from Guatemala, Dominican Republic and as far as Australia. We also have the confirmation of 17 bishops who will be in attendance.

Aside from the 3 keynotes and 15 workshops, the participants will be treated to an event which we call SEE, HEAR and INTERACT with the Native Americans. The Cathedral Basilica of St. Francis of Assisi in Santa Fe will be the venue for one of our liturgies. This Congress will really be an event to remember!

This is not all the excitement here at USCMA. We have been in the process of developing a new logo for our Association. You will find the new logo and its explanation in this Mission Update. We went through more than 70 renditions and 3 artists. We think that we have finally captured who we are and what we believe in as US Catholic missionaries.

We are also happy to tell you that we have a newly designed website. Please take some time to visit us at www.uscatholicmission.org. We hope you like this new look. We also simplified the menu button to be able to navigate easily to the different parts of our website. We believe that this is a more dynamic site. We will be updating this more regularly to include more photos and videos. And for those of you with facebook account, don't forget to friend us. We hope to update this account regularly, as well as, our blog. You can see read and comment by going to <http://www.uscma-dc.blogspot.com/>

And finally, after a long search, we have hired a new Administrative Assistant. He is Stephen Scott. Stephen is a graduate of the Catholic University of America with a degree in Classical Civilization and minor in History and Religious Studies. He is currently enrolled in the Master's Program at the Washington theological Union. So next time you call our office or e mail us a message, please welcome Stephen to our Association.

Meanwhile, I hope that summer has been good to you and that the fall season be truly a gift and blessing.

Let us together pray for the success of the Mission Congress 2010!

From the Board President

TERESITA GONZALEZ DELA MAZA

I am writing this from the northwest of Haiti. In the last few days, I have met countless American missionaries working here in Haiti. There are religious sisters, priests, students, and other lay missionaries in longer term mission assignments or short term mission engagements. I am struck by the diversity among them. Some are descendants of European immigrants, while others are themselves immigrants to the US, whose journeys led them to discover a passion for mission and a global Catholic identity. I am amazed at the enormous dedication they have and the different ways in which they are serving the Lord here in Haiti and throughout the world. We are, as a nation, enriched by their service and yet, we rarely get to see and truly appreciate its scope.

This is why we are so excited about the upcoming Mission Congress 2010 in Albuquerque, New Mexico. The schedule is providing us a unique opportunity to reflect in the company of many missionaries from throughout the United States, that serve in varying capacities here at home and almost everywhere in the world. We are pleased that so many of you have responded to the Mission Reflection Tool. Thank you for doing so much to

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Cont'd from p. 1. *The State of Climate Change Today*

and wake up to the implications of climate change, I find myself waking up at night. I awake to the faces and voices of sisters and brothers I met at the UN Climate Conference of Parties in December 2009. The story and face of one strong Bangladeshi woman continues to reverberate within in me at the 3 am hour when sleep eludes me.

"I am a single mother of four living in a small village of 25,000 people. My husband was a farmer of rice, vegetables and fruit. Fifteen years ago salinization came to our land and we lost the trees and everything. My husband had to go into the forest to collect honey to sell. One day he did not return because he was eaten by a tiger. I lost everything and my husband's family put me on the street. I was homeless, husbandless and with children.

My parents came to my rescue and built me a mud home but I could not grow crops because of the salinity of the soil and the hotter summers and winters with less rain. I started working as domestic help carrying firewood, water and getting fish.

Six months ago cyclone Ila came and took everything. We were eating lunch when our house was flooded. I grabbed onto the roof and floated until I lost consciousness. When I awoke I was in a hospital. The whole area is under water. I thankfully found my family but there was not food, we lost everything.

We used to think God was punishing us and now I know it is human made. I come speaking justice, seeking compensation. I want my life back. My village is now under water. We want our life back. We don't know how to live."

My sister is still trying to figure out how to live with dramatic changes, even as I write these words. I, as a Franciscan and person of faith am trying to figure out how I am to live and "Act Justly, Love Tenderly and Walk Humbly with God". Climate change is not a scientific debate or a business plan of profit and loss, it is a series of stories, and faces of mothers and fathers and children trying to learn how to live on a new planet. Author, Bill McKibben aptly addresses this new reality in his book *Earth: Making a Life on a Tough New Planet*. The Earth we have known. The Earth, a creation of God has already changed irreversibly.

Citizens and people of faith need to reflect upon the moral and ethical dimensions of climate change that require prayer, action and advocacy. This invitation, which is an invitation out of the gospel to care for our brothers and sisters and from Genesis to care for creation is not the responsibility of a few individuals, but a call to communities of people. Just as a movement engaging many people of faith finally brought change in the civil rights concerns in the 1960's, perhaps a movement of clear sighted and engaged people of faith is required in this day to face what many consider the greatest moral and ethical challenge of human history.

Those of us living in the richer countries are most responsible because our lifestyles create the largest emissions of carbon emissions from fossil fuels that are responsible for climate change. Those most affected by our actions are the economically poor and most vulnerable in interior areas of Africa, island nations and low lying coastal areas. †

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Mission Congress 2010, "God's Mission, Many Faces: A Portrait of US Catholics in Mission" will explore the reality, challenges and possibilities for action in light of climate change. Look for the workshop with Dan Misleh, Director of the Catholic Climate Action Coalition, Sr. Joan Brown, osf. We look forward to sharing how we might move forward for the concern of life, justice, peace and integrity of creation.

Want to learn more about climate change issues and how you can do more? Visit these websites!

Catholic Climate Change Coalition---www.catholicclimatecovenant.org

Interfaith Power and Light---www.interfaithpowerandlight.org

World Watch Institute---www.worldwatch.org

Oxfam---www.oxfamamerica.org/campaigns/climate-change

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change---www.ipcc.ch

World View of Global Warming: Photographic Documentation---

www.worldviewofglobalwarming.org

Union of Concerned Scientists---www.ucsusa.org



World Mission Sunday Message

Excerpt from Pope Benedict XVI

Building Ecclesial Communion is the Key to the Mission

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The month of **October**, with the celebration of **World Mission Sunday**, offers diocesan and parish communities, Institutes of Consecrated Life, Ecclesial Movements, and the entire People of God, an occasion for renewing their commitment to proclaim the Gospel and give pastoral activity a greater missionary character. This annual event invites us to live out the liturgical, catechetical, charitable, and cultural means by which Jesus Christ calls us to the table of His Word and the Eucharist, to delight in the gift of His Presence, to form us in His school, and to live united to Him, Our Master and Lord, with ever greater awareness. He Himself tells us: "He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him" (Jn 14:21). It is only from this encounter with the Love of God that transforms our existence, that we can live in communion with Him and among ourselves and offer our brethren a credible testimony, giving reason for our hope (cf. 1 Pet 3:15). A mature faith, capable of entrusting itself completely to God in a filial manner, nourished by prayer, meditation on the Word of God, and study of the truths of the faith, is the condition necessary for promoting a new humanism, founded on Jesus' Gospel.

Also, in **October**, many countries resume their various church activities following the summer vacations. The Church invites us to learn from Mary, through the recitation of the Holy Rosary, how to contemplate the Father's loving plan for all men and to love them as He does. Is this not, as well, the meaning of the mission? The Father, in fact, calls us to be beloved sons in His Son, the Beloved, and to see ourselves as brothers in Him, the Gift of Salvation for a humanity that is divided by discord and sin and Revealer of the true face of that God who "so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life" (Jn 3:16).

"We wish to see Jesus" (Jn 12:21) is the request made to the Apostle Philip in the Gospel of John by some Greeks, who have come to Jerusalem for the Passover pilgrimage. This resounds in our hearts as well in this month of October, which reminds us that the commitment and task of proclaiming the Gospel belongs to the entire Church, "missionary by her very nature" (Ad Gentes, 2), and calls us to become advocates of a newness of life, formed by authentic relationships, in communities founded on the Gospel. In a multi-ethnic society that experiences increasing forms of solitude and alarming indifference, Christians should learn to offer signs of hope and become universal brothers, cultivating the great ideals that transform history and, without false illusions or unnecessary fears, work to make the planet a home for all peoples.

Therefore, I renew my invitation to prayer and, in spite of the economic difficulties, to fraternal, concrete aid in support of the younger Churches. Such signs of love and solidarity, whose distribution is overseen in the valuable service of the Pontifical Mission Societies, to whom I express my gratitude, will go towards the support of priests, seminarians, and catechists in the most far off missionary lands and will become a source of encouragement for the young ecclesial communities.

In concluding this annual message for **World Mission Sunday**, I wish to express my affectionate acknowledgement of all missionaries, who offer their testimony to the Kingdom of God in the most far off and difficult places, often at the cost of their own lives. It is to them, who are at the forefront in announcing the Gospel, that every believer lends his friendship, closeness, and support. May God, who "loves a cheerful giver" (2 Cor 9:7), fill them with spiritual fervor and profound joy.

Cont'd from p.2: Board President engage your own communities in spiritual preparation for our journey together at the Mission Congress. We are looking forward to the energy and joy that is always the company of dedicated missionaries. Don't forget to spread the word as there is still time to register to join us!

These last few months have been very busy for us. There are many new things to share with all of you! The staff has been working very hard on the Mission Congress, including our newest member, Stephen who has recently joined the team as administrative assistant. We are happy to welcome him to the staff and look forward to all that he will add to the many activities of the USCMA.

One major activity we have been working on is a major update to our website. These changes will allow us to promote the missionary activity of the Church and better communicate our mission as an association to reach out to missionaries on an international, national and local level. We are very excited for this updated new look and user-friendly format.

The last few weeks have given us all an opportunity to lend our voice to major issues that concern us as missionaries. Wherever there is poverty and oppression we are alerted to the cries of the Lord on the cross. We hope that you have already received the proposed resolutions for this year's congress. As we prepare for our membership meeting, we are united as one strong voice promoting global solidarity and justice in our midst.

I urge all the facebook users to visit our facebook page, which is another way to connect with others and learn about action alerts of issues of concern for missionaries. I also enjoyed keeping in touch with folks that I have been blessed to meet over the years at USCMA gatherings. It is one more tool available to all of us to discover the diversity of missionary work among us here in the U.S.

With every passing day, we grow together and find new ways to love and serve the Lord! God bless you all. See you in Albuquerque!

May your Thanksgiving Celebrations be truly blessed! The USCMA Board and Staff thank you for your continued support!!!



Catholic teaching on climate change embraces the principles of prudence, poverty and the common good. These three principles form the foundation of our work.

1. Prudence

"Prudence does not mean failing to accept responsibilities and postponing decisions; it means being committed to making joint decisions after pondering responsibly the road to be taken, decisions aimed at strengthening that covenant between human beings and the environment, which should mirror the creative love of God, from whom we come and towards whom we are journeying." —Pope Benedict XVI, World Day of Peace Message, December 2007

2. Poverty

"The environment is God's gift to everyone, and in our use of it we have a responsibility towards the poor, towards future generations and towards humanity as a whole." Caritas in Veritate, No. 48

3. The Common Good

"The ecological problem must be dealt with not only because of the chilling prospects of environmental degradation on the horizon; the real motivation must be the quest for authentic world-wide solidarity inspired by the values of charity, justice and the common good." 2010 World Day of Peace Message

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Go Green

Mission as Action in Hope: A theological reflection on our commitment to the promotion of justice, peace and the integrity of creation (JPIC) in our world today

P. Michael McCabe, SMA

P. Michael McCabe served as a member of the General Council of the Society of African Missions, SMA, from 1989-1995 and from 2001-2006. He was President of the Executive Committee of the Africa/Europe Faith and Justice Network (AEFJN) from 2002-2004. He is the author of several articles in the areas of Mission Theology, Interreligious-Dialogue and JPIC commitment. He is currently teaching courses in Mission Theology at Tangaza College, Nairobi, and resides at SMA House of Studies, Nairobi. P. Michael McCabe gave the following address to JPIC Commission, USG/UISG, Rome, May 2009. It has been reprinted from the UISG Bulletin, Number 141, 2009.

"Your kingdom come; your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

Introduction:

The promotion of social and ecological justice, reconciliation and peace forms an integral dimension of the mission of the Church- a mission grounded in and giving concrete expression to the hope we proclaim every time we say in the Our Father: "Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." This hope is a distinctive and unique hope forged in the crucible of the Judeo-Christian experience of God's active engagement in human history, a hope shaped by and patterned upon the Paschal Mystery, the passage of Jesus from life, through death, to new life. Christian mission flows from and gives concrete expression to this hope. It is, in the words of David Bosch, "action in hope."¹ It is the means by which the future for which we hope is brought into a transforming relationship with the present in which we live. It is "God's bridge to a world which has not yet come home to the place prepared for it."²

Our commitment to justice, peace and the integrity of creation (jpic) is not a humanist political agenda. It is not an expression of some foolish utopian dream of a better world made by human hands. It is, rather, an essential and integral dimension of Christian mission, giving concrete witness to this ultimate hope of the kingdom of God. This is the central argument of this essay which is divided into two parts. The first part will focus on the genesis and nature of Christian hope; the second part will show how this hope shapes our understanding of mission, underpinning our commitment to peace and reconciliation, to social and ecological justice.

First Part

The Genesis and Nature of Christian Hope Christian Hope Eclipsed

Christianity entered the world of history as an eschatological faith,³ a faith that offered a sure and universal hope, and hence a faith and a hope to be proclaimed to all humanity. A dominant and defining characteristic of the life and mission of the early Church was this eschatological thrust. The first Christians situated and interpreted their experience of Christ within the framework of Israel's historical eschatology. In the coming of Jesus and in raising him from the dead, God's eschatological act had already been inaugurated, but it had not yet been completed. Jesus' resurrection and ascension into glory signified the beginning, the first fruits, of a fulfillment still to come- a fulfillment of which the gift of the Spirit was the pledge. Only another future intervention by God would wipe out all the contradictions on the present. Moreover, the early Christian Church believed that this final intervention (*the Parousia*) was imminent.

With the delay in the advent of the *Parousia*, and under the impact of Greek philosophy, this eschatological perspective of early Christianity was pushed aside, played down, or radically re-interpreted. The Christian

message was transformed from the proclamation of God's imminent historical reign to the proclamation of the only true and universal religion of humankind. Faith in God's promises yet to be fulfilled was replaced by faith in an already consummated eternal kingdom. Christ's resurrection came to be viewed as a completed event. The early Church's expectation of "a new heaven and a new earth" was forgotten or ignored.

The eclipse of historical eschatology manifested itself in other ways as well. The early Church's distinction between the present age and the age to come was revised into a distinction between time and eternity. Christians now focused their expectations on a heaven beyond this world, rather than on God's involvement in history: instead of looking forward to the future they looked up to eternity. Attention shifted from the historical Jesus to the pre-existent Logos, and the message of Christ became spiritualized. It became a message about saving one's soul from the world rather than transforming oneself and the world by love.

Furthermore, in regard to the practice of the faith, the accent shifted from giving witness to the future God was going to bring about to doing good deeds in order to earn heaven. We might summarize these developments in the following words of David Bosch, "The expectation of a 'new heaven and a new earth' was spiritualized away. Emphasis was laid instead on the spiritual journey of the individual believer and on a *post-mortem* afterlife rather than on a future resurrection from the dead. The Church was increasingly identified with the kingdom of God; it became the dispenser of the sacraments and the place where, through the sacraments, souls were won for Christ."⁴ With this development the understanding of mission was altered. Mission became the extension of the Church as it existed rather than the proclamation of a new creation patterned on the resurrection of Christ and of which the Church is called to be the sacramental sign. Unfortunately, traces of this distortion of Christian hope and of the understanding of mission have been characteristic of Christian theology until recently, and perhaps lie behind the continuing hesitancy we note in our commitment to the jpic agenda.

Christian Hope Recovered

One of the striking characteristics of twentieth century theology has been the recovery of the eschatological, hopeful perspective of early Christianity, first in Protestant, and later in Catholic theology. No theologian has done more to rehabilitate Christian hope than the great German Protestant theologian Jürgen Moltmann. In his best known work, *Theology of Hope*, published in 1964, he wrote, "From first to last, and not merely as an epilogue, Christianity is hope, forward looking and forward-moving, and therefore also revolutionizing and transforming the present."⁵ Moltmann took issue with a tradition that had so spiritualized the Christian hope as to render it of little or no earthly use and underlined the socio-political relevance of this hope. Carl Braaten, too, has underlined the critical importance of eschatology, stating that "it cannot be isolated from other themes of faith and dealt with in a treatise on the last things.

Instead, it determines the horizon of all Christian understanding and is thematically structural for all the contents of faith and action.⁶

One of the great changes brought about by the Second Vatican Council was the recovery of this hopeful, eschatological horizon within which the Christian message took on a new, powerful and integrated meaning. The *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*, broadened our understanding of the Church's mission, highlighting its economic, social and political dimensions. This vision was further developed by Catholic theologians like Johannes Metz, Edward Schillebeeckx, and the Liberation Theologians. Unfortunately it has lost ground in more recent times and needs to be reaffirmed, for it is a vision with a long and sure pedigree as I will try to show in the following pages, grounded in the biblical concept of God and his relation to the world.

The Experience of Israel

From its foundation, Israel's experience was one of hope, a hope grounded in the belief that YHWH, the God of Israel, had entered its history and was leading it towards a definite future. The Israelites' experience of God was thus, in Moltmann's striking phrase "harnessed between memory and hope."⁷ The Israelites recounted and interpreted past revelations of God as anticipations of a reality yet to be, as promises of a future to be disclosed. In Moltmann's pithy phrase, they spoke of God historically and of history eschatologically.⁸ The God of the Israelites is characteristically the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, the God of Moses and the prophets, above all, the God of the Exodus. The Exodus was understood, not as a mythical event, but as an historical event which pointed beyond itself to a greater future.

The naming of God in relation to that event is particularly significant. YHWH appears to Moses in the form of a burning bush and commissions him to lead his people out of slavery in Egypt. Moses asks God to identify himself by name, so he can tell the people who it is that is sending him. God replies:

'I AM WHO I AM...Say this to the people of Israel: "I AM has sent me to you."...This is my name forever and thus I am to be remembered throughout the generations' (Ex. 3:14-15).

In this text, the word translated 'I AM' consists of four Hebrew letters YHWH which represents some form of the Hebrew verb 'to be'. The exact form is not known. For most biblical scholars, the meaning of YHWH is best expressed in the statement "I am the one who will be there with you...in the way I will be there," thus linking God name and identity with future events yet to unfold. Thus, Old Testament discourse on God gives prominence to the future "as the mode of God's existence with us."⁹ Like his kingdom, God is coming, and it is "only as the coming one, as future, is he already present. He is present in the way in which his future in promise and hope empowers the present."¹⁰ Moreover, it is precisely in this way of being present that God is experienced by the Israelites as a liberating God, a God of hope.

Keeping Hope Alive: the Rose of the Prophets

Throughout its history, Israel received many promises from God. Some were fulfilled, others left behind, and still others were reinterpreted and expanded through partial fulfillment. For example, the Exodus event, as remembered, recounted and celebrated, became a pledge of an even greater hope. This process of refinement and reinterpretation can be seen especially in the prophets, who draw attention especially to the ethical implications of Israel's hope. Tapping into the rich reservoir of hope, expectation and longing associated with the covenant, they pointed out that these hopes could never be realized as long as Israel failed to

conform to God's will as expressed in the covenant. They also deplored the narrowing of Israel's hopes and expectations to the sectional interests of the ruling classes, while the poor, the orphan, and the widow went needy.

And yet, however harsh the criticisms and condemnations of the prophets are, condemnation is not their last word. The bottom line of all the great prophets is that, even though the Israelites may have abandoned God, He will never abandon them. He will intervene once more to establish his rule of peace, justice and love. He will make a new covenant, written this time not on tablets of stone, but deep within their hearts. This hope for the definitive establishment of God's rule of peace and love is associated with the coming of the Messiah.

Israel's messianic hope is movingly expressed in Isaiah. For Isaiah, the Messiah will be a wise, holy and peaceful King "who will judge the poor with justice and decide in favour of the land's afflicted" (Is. 11:1-10). He will put an end to conflict and bring lasting peace. With his coming, warring factions will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks (Is. 2:4) and the lamb and the lion shall lie down together. The word that Isaiah uses for peace is "shalom," and it has a much richer meaning than we normally give to the term "peace". It signifies not merely the absence of war or violence, but the full presence of harmony and integrity, both for the individual person and for society. It embraces all the dimensions of life, personal and social, national and international. It means more than political security. It comprises justice, peace, the integrity of creation and their interdependence- all gifts of God. For Isaiah there is no peace worthy of the name without justice (Is. 9:7), and the peace which the Messiah shall establish among people will be accompanied by the rejoicing and flowering of the desert and the dry land (Is. 35:1-2). Eventually this messianic hope came to be identified with Jesus and his Kingdom Mission.

In his best-selling book, *Jesus of Nazareth*, Pope Benedict argues that Isaiah's vision of a healed and peaceful world, in which warring groups "will beat their swords into plowshares" (Isaiah 2:4; Micah 4:3), is an outdated aspect of the Jewish Messianic ideal, falsified by the facts of history. Jesus, says Benedict, did not bring "world peace, universal prosperity, and a better world." Instead what he brought to the nations of the earth was "the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the true God."¹¹ However, the vision of the Isaiah and the mission of Jesus should not be opposed. In Jesus we see, as N. T. Wright puts it, "the biblical portrait of YHWH come to life: the loving God, rolling up his sleeves (Is 52:10) to do in person the job that no one else could do, the creator God giving new life; the God who works *through* his created world, and supremely through his human creatures; the faithful God dwelling in the midst of his people; the stern and tender God relentlessly opposed to all that destroys or distorts the good creation, and especially human beings, but recklessly loving all those in need and distress."¹² This is abundantly clear when we focus on the mission of Jesus.

The Kingdom Mission of Jesus

Jesus conducted his mission against the background of Jewish restoration eschatology. He took its key symbol of the kingdom of God, and made it central to his message and ministry. The Synoptic Gospels introduce Jesus' public ministry with the concise phrase: "The time is fulfilled. The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent. Believe the Good News" (Mk 1:14-15; Mt, 4:17; Lk 4:43). The kingdom was so obviously central to Jesus' life and ministry that Karl Rahner could observe: "Jesus preached the Kingdom not himself." In his teaching Jesus appears as the representative (cf. Lk 17:20-21), the revealer (cf. Mk 4:11-12; Mt 11:25-26), the champion (cf. Mk 3:27), the initiator (cf. Mt 11:12), the instrument (cf. Mt 12:28), the mediator (cf. Mk 2:18-19), and the bearer (cf. Mt 11:5) of the kingdom of God.

Yet, Jesus never defined exactly what he meant by the kingdom of God, a concept we find nowhere in the Old Testament.¹³ Indeed, it is clear that he counted on his audience to be familiar with the symbol at least in its conventional meanings. As John Bright observed: For all his repeated mention of the Kingdom of God, Jesus never once paused to define it. Nor did any hearer ever interrupt him to ask "Master

what do these words 'Kingdom of God,' which you use so often, mean?" On the contrary Jesus used the term as if assured it would be understood, and indeed it was. The Kingdom of God lay within the vocabulary of every Jew. It was something they understood and longed for desperately.¹⁴

At the time of Jesus the kingdom of God, had become a kind of overarching metaphor for a variety of hopes and expectations, ranging from the liberation of Israel from Roman rule (nationalist-political expectation) to the destruction of the present age and the emergence of a new heaven a new earth (apocalyptic-expectation). By his life and death, his preaching and symbolic actions (activities such as table-fellowship with tax collectors and sinners, healings and exorcisms, forgiveness of sinners), he gave a new shape to this familiar symbol. As Sean Freyne points out, Jesus' life and ministry not only affirmed Israel's hope but reinterpreted it. In the first place, Jesus speaks of the kingdom of God as a hope for the present, and not just for the distant future, and secondly he purifies it of "aspects such as domination, majesty, power, conquest, destruction of enemies" and puts in their place values such as peace, justice, meekness, single-mindedness.¹⁵

Jesus speaks of the Kingdom, not as a distant dream, but as a hope that is being realized as he speaks and acts. In the words of John Fuellenbach: "Jesus declares that what Isaiah had promised as God's final messianic future is now at work. Reconciliation and deliverance are not distant songs of a utopian future far removed from present reality. The promise is invading the world now in every relationship and circumstance of our lives."¹⁶ Jesus' way of establishing the kingdom of God was in stark contrast to the often violent pursuit of specific political objectives by contemporary Jewish groups – groups who laid claim to the hopes of Israel as the legitimization of their activities. His life-style have clear witness to a new way, a different way. He abandoned the security of house, family, and possessions for the insecure life of an itinerant preacher. The life-style he chose was thus a protest against the prevailing value-systems in the Palestine of his day: the naked greed and opulence of Herod and his court; and the view of the temple-based aristocracy that material possessions were signs of divine blessings. Greed and acquisitiveness were totally inappropriate in light of a God who cared for the smallest and most insignificant of his creatures.

Jesus' Revolution

As manifested in Jesus' words and deeds, the kingdom of God meant good news for the poor, healing for the sick, and liberation for the enslaved and oppressed. He inaugurated his mission by citing one of the Jubilee texts from the Prophet Isaiah:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he has anointed me to bring good news to the afflicted. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives, sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim a year of favour from the Lord (Lk 4:18-19).

Jesus' evangelical practice represented an absolute reversal of the scale of values of Palestinian theocratic society. The afflictions of the poor, then as now, were in large measure caused by repression, discrimination and exploitation by the rich and powerful, the upholders of the *status quo*. In his ministry Jesus turned deliberately to those who have been pushed aside: to the sick who were segregated on cultic grounds; to tax-collectors who were excluded on political and religious grounds; and to prostitutes and public sinners who were excluded on moral grounds.¹⁷ In his compassionate outreach to outcasts, Jesus concretely embodied God's kingly rule as good news for them; God's rule signaled the end of their misery and the introduction of a new order of social relationships based on the principle of inclusion. No one is excluded from the love of God "who causes his sun to rise on bad as well as good, and sends down his rain to fall on the upright and the wicked alike" (Mt. 5:45)

What amazes one again and again is the inclusiveness of Jesus' Kingdom mission. It embraces both poor and rich, the oppressed and oppressor, both the sinners and the devout.¹⁸ His mission is one of dissolving alienation and breaking down walls of hostility, of crossing boundaries. It is a summons to think beyond the narrow limits of greed and fear, to cross national cultural and social boundaries and build authentic human community in the light of God's ultimate rule of the universe.

While Jesus' Kingdom message and ministry repudiated the way of violence, it nevertheless envisaged a radical change in the existing social and political order, Jesus' words and actions represented a consistent challenge to the attitudes, practices and structures that tended arbitrarily to restrict or exclude potential members of the Israelite community.¹⁹ Some theologians have argued that Jesus had no social or political agenda, that he did not wish to make the world a better place. The well known biblical scholar, N.T. Wright, reaches a different conclusion. Jesus, he points out, clearly had a political agenda. In the Judaism of his day religion and politics were inseparable. As his contemporaries would have expected, he wanted to bring God's kingly rule to bear on the present world. In the "Our Father" he taught his disciples to pray: "Thy kingdom come. They will be done on earth as it is in heaven".

According to Wright, Jesus' words, works and prayers all had immense social and political implications. He was not proclaiming a private or personal reign of God's spirit in the souls of individuals. He was launching a revolutionary movement which would turn Israel and the world up-side-down. He wanted to establish God's reign of justice, peace, truth and love in Israel and (through Israel) among all nations on earth. What he rejected were the ways in which his contemporaries envisaged God's rule being established. He rejected the politics of violent revolution, of easy compromise, and of narrow nationalism and chose instead the path of redemptive suffering. His way would be to turn the other cheek, to walk the second mile and to take up the cross. He would defeat evil by letting evil do its worst to him, by suffering evil in love and forgiving his enemies.²⁰ Here we come to the profound paradox at the heart of Christian hope and Christian mission. It has little or nothing to do with human optimism or any form of utopian thinking. It is ultimately a paschal hope, a hope against hope, a hope fashioned in the midst of violence and death.

From Kingdom Hope to Paschal Hope

Jesus' kingdom message did not meet with universal acceptance. It met with fear, suspicion, hostility and rejection on the part of the Jewish political and religious leaders of his time. Finally, it led him to Calvary where he prayed for forgiveness for those whose fear had led them to destroy him. If the Cross can be said to represent Jesus' supreme witness to God's kingly rule, it is his resurrection from the dead which is the foundation and guarantee of its victory over the power of evil, and the ultimate symbol of Christian hope. The disciples of Jesus met him again on Easter Sunday morning and caught a glimpse of a new world where the promise of the kingdom would be realized. The world as they knew it was passing away and a new creation was about to be born. All the relevance and urgency of the early Church's mission was derived from this paschal hope. Which was now not simply the hope of Jesus but hope in Jesus and in his victory over sin and death. The proclaimer of the kingdom has become the one proclaimed; the messenger had become the message.

The Christian hope, then, is hope for the kingdom of God, but this hope must not be identified with secular hopes for a better world. It is a hope fashioned from the crucible of the paschal mystery, the mystery of Jesus' passage from death to new life. It is vitally important never to separate the resurrection of Jesus from his death on the cross. To ignore or play down the passion and death of Jesus is inevitably to end up with a superficial understanding of the central event of our salvation and to misrepresent the nature of Christian hope.

The true meaning of the resurrection is not grasped until we come to terms with the revelation of God's face in the death of Jesus on the Cross.

Jesus lived and died to show us the Father and inaugurate the Father's loving rule on earth. It is relatively easy to see the face of a compassionate and loving Father in the public ministry of Jesus, in his words and deeds. It is altogether more difficult to see the Father's face in the horrific death of Jesus. But the Father was involved in the death of Jesus. In his suffering and death Jesus was supremely the revealer of the Father. It was the Father in him who was drawing him to this end, and it was the Father's loving face that was ultimately revealed in this dramatic display of logic of love in a sinful world. On the cross, Jesus represents the utter vulnerability of a God whose only power is love entering a world whose strength is hate. Thus on Calvary, as Noel Dermot O Donoghue has so well said "we are at the place of the tears of God, not of his triumph and vindicating anger. The loving Father cannot escape from his unloving and destructive children; he is imprisoned by his love as surely as they are imprisoned by their hate."²¹

In the cross of Christ, we are confronted by a God made weak and helpless (at least in the common sense understanding of these terms) by the very intensity and relentlessness of his/her love for us. In the words of Dorothea Sölle: "God allows himself to be edged out of the world and on to the cross. God is weak and powerless in the world, and that is exactly the way, the only way, in which he can be with us and help us."²²

But how does a suffering God, a weak God, heal and redeem us? The answer to this question is perhaps more likely to be gleaned from the intuitive perceptions of a loving heart than by the rational deductions of a logical mind. Nevertheless, a mind that is in tune with a loving heart may come to some appreciation of the strange logic of the cross. Here I offer a few thoughts which may serve to illumine this logic. The vulnerable God revealed in the cross of Christ throws into bold relief the basic sin of human beings, which is essentially a loss of heart. As Moltmann puts it, "survival of the fittest is our eschatology."²³ The world in which we live is a competitive world, which, in the main, rewards toughness and the will to succeed. To succeed in the world we have to subjugate the more sensitive and compassionate side of our nature to the inflexible canons of progress, profit and success, we become hardened against our fellow-creatures. Our heroes and heroines are the go-getters, and the grabbers with the beautiful smiles and the armoured hearts, who overcome all obstacles in their relentless quest for success. We have created a society that rewards ruthlessness and the ability of prevail at all costs. Such a society regards the meek, the weak and all who fall behind in one way or another as failures.

In our sinful consorting with the God of success, we quickly become apathetic (unfeeling) men and women of action, capable, because of our lack of heart, of bringing a great deal of unnecessary suffering into the lives of others. Somehow, we need to be brought to realize the suffering we cause to others (and indeed the damage we do to ourselves), and made to feel compunction. It is, as Moltmann points out, when we are confronted and challenged by the revelation of the cross – the culminating point of God's love affair with us – that we are brought to see, at one and the same time, the frightening heartlessness of our relentless pursuit of success and the awesome pathos of God's vulnerable love for his/her fallen children. It would seem that the toughness and apathy of a sinful humanity find their only antidote in a love which does not hide its vulnerability, but rather bears its fragile flame to the bitter end.

While the cross reveals the strange logic of divine love at work in a

sinful world, it is the resurrection that reveals the victory of that love. The power to transform us into compassionate men and women, capable of becoming partakers in the drama of divine pathos, comes from the resurrection of Christ. The resurrection shows the suffering of our compassionate God to be, in truth, divine power made perfect inhuman weakness. The resurrection is the basis of Christian hope because it reveals the victory of a love which decisively turns its back on success, and pursues to the last its utterly vulnerable course of identification with those whom society casts aside as failures.

Summary

I have traced the genesis of Christian hope from its beginning in the hope of Israel through various stages of development and transformation to its climax in the paschal mystery of Christ. It is a hope grounded in the experience of a loving and compassionate God who chooses to become engaged in the drama of human history and who is pre-eminently a God of the future, God who comes to rule the earth. It is a hope, not for a distant and unreachable future, but for a future that is breaking into the present and that involves a radical transformation of the world as we know it. It is a hope for "a new heaven and a new earth," that summons us to active engagement on behalf of the poor and oppressed for the creation of a more just and loving society on earth. It is a hope which is shaped not only by the life and ministry of Jesus, but especially by the paschal mystery, and by that peculiar logic of the divine confrontation with sin and evil disclosed in that mystery. It is therefore not only a hope that is compatible with suffering but which is found in its supreme form in the heart of suffering. Finally, it is a total hope because it is based ultimately on the resurrection of Christ, on his decisive victory over sin and evil and is therefore sure and unconquerable.

Second Part

Mission in the Light of Christian Hope

In the first part of this paper, I dealt almost exclusively with the genesis and nature of Christian hope. In this part, my focus will be principally on the theme of mission, but mission interpreted from the perspective of Christian hope. Up to relatively recent times, mission, in the Catholic Church at least, tended to be ecclesiocentric. Mission meant the extension of the Church as it was known to the ends of the earth rather than the transformation of the Church and the world in the light of the Christian hope of a new earth and a new heaven. However, this was not always the case. The early Christian mission, especially that of St. Paul was, as we shall see, inspired and directed by Christian hope.

Erecting signs of God's New World

In Paul's vision, mission and the hope of God's kingdom are intimately linked. Mission paves the way and prepares humanity for the final stage of God's reign, when not only humanity but all creation will be liberated and transformed on the model of Christ's resurrection. For Paul, mission means announcing the Lordship of Christ over all reality and inviting people to respond to it. It means the proclamation of a new state of affairs that God has initiated in Christ, a state of affairs that concerns the nations and all of creation and that climaxes in the celebration of God's final glory. But proclamation is not enough. God's final victorious reign offers no justification for ethical passivity. Mission invites and sustains an active participation in God's plan for the liberation of humanity in the here and now. In Paul's theology of mission, as Bosch points out, Christians are challenged to combat "the oppressive powers of the structures of sin and death, which in our world cry out for God's world of justice and peace...by being agitators for God's incoming reign; they must erect, in the here and now and in the teeth of those structures, signs of God's new world."²⁴

Viewing mission in the light of God's reign demands that the scope of the church's mission become more comprehensive than has traditionally been the

case. Service of God's reign provides missionaries with a theological framework which makes commitment to justice, peace, reconciliation and the integrity of creation essential and integral dimensions of the Church's mission, rather than preliminary or secondary elements. In the words of Carl Braaten, mission viewed from the perspective of God's reign will "mean something more than saving souls and planting churches; it will mean something more than emergency relief and charitable works. Mission will assume the role of advocacy, tracking down causes of global injustice and violence... If faith is radical dependence on God, mission is total interdependence among people, overcoming all idolatry in the one case, and all systems of domination, oppression, and exploitation of the many by the few on the other."²⁵ Mission in the horizon of the Kingdom combines, in the words of Braaten, "both the passion of the evangelicals for the uniqueness of the Christian message and the vision of the ecumenists for the universality of its scope."²⁶ It brings together evangelization and humanization, Gospel and social concern, faith and political action, religious worship and secular work.²⁷

Continuing the Mission of Christ

Our mission today is, as N. T. Wright puts it, to build on the foundation established by Jesus, not simply to repeat what he did. What God did in Jesus, the Messiah, was unique, climactic and decisive, and hence unrepeatable. Wright uses a striking image to capture the relationship between us and Jesus. "We are", he says, "like musicians called to play and sing the unique and once-only-written musical score. We don't have to write it again, but we have to play it."²⁸ We are called, not so much to imitate Christ but to live by his Spirit and reflect his light to the world, so that God's will may be done on earth as it is in heaven.

All mission in Christ's name is dedicated towards the integral transformation of this world in which we live. As we have already seen, there was nothing escapist or private about the message and ministry of Jesus. He lived and died and rose again in order to establish God's kingdom on earth, and our task is to continue that work. The words of Jesus to Pilate in John 18:36, often mistranslated as: "My kingdom is not of this world" have sometimes been used to support the view that God's kingdom is not concerned with this present world. However Jesus did not say these words. What he said was "My kingdom is not from this world". This means that his kingdom did not state with this world. It started from God, but it is meant for this world. As disciples of Jesus, our task is to announce in word and deed that God's Kingdom has indeed come and, in the power of the Spirit, to act boldly to shape our world in accordance with that Kingdom. However, the way we act in the world, and for the sake of the world, must be the way of Jesus – the way of the cross.

Obedying the Logic of the Cross

Centered on the following of Christ and the embodiment of Christian values, our mission constitutes a deliberately chosen and lived witness of contradiction to the unjust *status quo*, and of opposition to those who seek to uphold it because they benefit from it. It is also equally opposed to those tough minded utopians prepared to resort to any means to topple the 'powers that be' and usher in the Kingdom.

As a continuation of Christ's mission, our mission is fuelled by a love which incarnates itself in action for justice, and by a concern for justice which will settle for nothing less than a civilization of love. Thus, it will avoid, on the one hand, an inept moralism which would reduce Christian love to mere sentimentality, and, on the other hand, a fanatical concern for the righting of wrongs that can so easily degenerate into a loveless pragmatism, blind to any standard other than sheer political success.

Our mission, directed towards the kingdom of God and shaped by the paschal mystery, will be concerned with the conversion of individuals to the mind and heart of Christ, but it will not confine itself to this activity. It will also confront, challenge and seek to change those institutionalized forms of greed and selfishness, which we often refer to today as 'sinful structures.' However, as paschal missionaries, we are not naïve about the inevitable ambiguity of all ethico-political commitments. We realize that the voices of liberating grace and sinful self-assertion are co-mingled in all such commitments, and that a profound spiritual discernment is required if we are to distinguish between God's liberating plans for us and our own selfish interests. The soil of such discernment is prayer. Prayer need not be a retreat from the real world and its problems. If it is genuine listening to God, it will lead to a deep and enduring commitment to the world – a commitment that truly transforms the world because it obeys the logic of the cross rather than the logic of Marx or Adam Smith.

In the Light of our Ultimate Future in God

The kingdom of God is ultimately not something we can finally establish on earth. As Karl Rahner has said, the kingdom of God for which Christians hope is the absolute future which is God himself. "God himself ... wills to be the infinite future of humanity, infinitely transcending all that human beings could ever plan or fashion for themselves."²⁹ This orientation to God as our absolute future challenges us to adopt a critical stance towards the historically given state of any society. "Such a critical stance", says Rahner, "can be radical, patient and courageous; it implies neither a conservative glorification of the present situation, underpinned by ideology, nor a destructive impatience which seeks violent means to force a new world into existence by sacrificing the men of today."³⁰

Thus, the affirmation of God as our absolute future, far from undermining the value of our socio-political commitments within history and our efforts to transform the world, provides a perspective which can guarantee their enduring significance and true value. This it does in three ways: first, by offering a framework of meaning profound enough to do justice to the world; second, by functioning as a critical perspective which de-absolutises all human achievements of justice; third, by providing a positive incentive to human beings in their efforts to transform human life in history. Since God is our absolute future and the ultimate horizon of human freedom, no historical achievement, however great, is unsurpassable or beyond criticism. At the same time, precisely because we have an absolute future in God, all our efforts to transform human life within history have enduring value. This view of the relationship between the absolute future (God) for which Christians hope and human efforts to transform the world seems to me to find an echo in the following statements from Vatican II's *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*:

Far from diminishing our concern to develop this earth, the expectation of a new earth should spur us on, for it is here that the body of a new human family grows, foreshadowing in some way the age which is to come. That is why, although we must be careful to distinguish earthly progress clearly from the increase of the kingdom of Christ, such progress is of vital concern to the kingdom of God, insofar as it can contribute to the better ordering of human society.

When we have spread on earth the fruits of our nature and our enterprise – human dignity, sisterly and brotherly communion, and freedom – according to the command of the Lord and in his Spirit, we will find them once again, cleansed this time from the stain of sin, illuminated and transfigured, when Christ presents to his Father an eternal and universal kingdom 'of truth and life, a kingdom of holiness and grace, a kingdom of justice, love and peace'.

Here on earth the kingdom is mysteriously present; when the Lord comes it will enter its perfection (no. 39).

Furthermore, God is bringing about this transformed world now, far beyond the frontiers of the Church. Our task is to get in tune with what God is doing. We have to discern and nourish such seeds of the Kingdom by putting our resources and energies there. In discerning and nourishing these seeds of the Kingdom, contemplative prayer and presence will have to balance active social and political involvement.

Through the Power of Suffering Love

John Fuellenbach reminds us that the words 'success' and 'optimism' are not part of our tool kit as witnesses, signs, and instruments of God's kingdom: "Our faith tells us that it is hope against hope that keeps us going and gives us the necessary courage and even the audacity to believe that the kingdom will win."³¹ Jürgen Moltmann expresses this profound conviction of our faith in these words: "Where people suffer because they love, God suffers in them and they suffer in God... Where God suffers the death of Jesus and thereby demonstrates the power of his love, these people also find the power to remain in love despite pain and death, becoming neither bitter nor superficial."³² The way of suffering love, then, is profoundly hope filled. For its hope is grounded in the experience of God's power made perfect in the utter vulnerability of compassionate loving, releasing men and women from apathy and despair to live new purposeful lives – lives that are compassionate, joyful and free.

Conclusion

In spite of all that has been and is being done by the Church, and especially religious and missionary congregations and institutes, to promote social and ecological justice in our world today, the tide of human suffering continues to rise, inducing in us a sense of helplessness. Regional conflicts reap a cruel harvest of death and destruction in many countries. Hundreds of thousands are killed in acts of wanton violence. Millions are rendered homeless or displaced. The gap between the rich and poor continues to widen. Basic human rights are suppressed at the whim of dictators. Global arming and the exploitation of nature are endangering human existence on this earth and depriving future generations of their rightful inheritance. Dark and demonic forces seem bent on spoiling the achievements of many years of local effort and missionary endeavor.

Furthermore, a particularly dangerous form of Christianity is sweeping through the developing world today. It preaches that God has decreed the sufferings of the poor, that this world is not our concern, that Christian morality should be restricted to personal and private matters, and that politics is not the business of the Church. In practice this form of Christianity supports the present unjust status quo and is being financed and promoted by foreign interests and local elites who benefit from the present system.

In such a context we might wonder if anything we can do will make a difference. Our deepest Christian resources of faith, hope and love provide the answer. The God of Jesus Christ is an ever faithful God, who is to be found even at the heart of human destruction and failure. Human beings are never abandoned by God. In Christ, God has taken unto himself the sufferings of the world and embrace both victims and victimizers. The God who is always with us, continuing to transform death into life and chaos into new creation, calls us to become his co-workers in the re-creation of the world.

As members of religious and missionary institutes who strive to witness

to the total Gospel of Christ who liberates and unifies, we must extend and deepen our commitment to social and ecological justice. We must be artisans of hope for the suffering and marginalized in the world: a practical and effective hope that combines faith and justice, that challenges that unjust *status quo* and identifies with the poor and oppressed in society; a hope that finds expression in concerted programs of action for the creation of an alternative future and struggles for the structural changes required if such an alternative future is to emerge.

1. *Transforming Mission*, Orbis, NY, 1991, p. 498.
2. Carl E. Braaten, *The Flaming Centre*, Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1977, p. 43
3. Cf. Carl Braaten, *The Flaming Center*, p. 39
4. *Transforming Mission*, p. 141
5. *Theology of Hope*, SCM Press, London, 1967, p. 16.
6. *The Flaming Center*, p. 39.
7. Jürgen Moltmann, *The Experiment Hope*, SCM Press, London, 1975, p. 47.
8. *Ibid.* p. 46.
9. *Ibid.* p. 50.
10. *The Experiment Hope*, p. 50
11. *Jesus of Nazareth*, Doubleday, New York, 2007, p. 44
12. *The Challenge of Jesus*, SPCK, London, 2000, p. 90.
13. J.P. Meier points out that "the kingdom of God" is not a concept, but a symbol. It "does not have a definition but tells a story... a story that stretches from the first page of the bible to the last." Cf. *A Marginal Jew*, Vol. 2, Doubleday, New York, 1994, p. 241.
14. *The Kingdom of God: The Biblical Concept and its Meaning for the Church*, Abingdon Press, Nashville, 1953, 17-18.
15. Sean Freyne, "Jesus Christ: Witness and Embodiment of the Hopes of Israel" in *Christian Resources of Hope*, ed., Maureen Junker-Kenny, Columbia Press, Dublin, 1995, p. 15.
16. *The Kingdom of God: The Central Message of Jesus*, Orbis, New York, 1995, pp. 81-82.
17. Cf. A. Nolan, *Jesus Before Christianity*, Orbis, New York, 1989, pp. 21-25.
18. D. Senior & C. Sthmueller, *The Biblical Foundations of Mission*, Orbis, New York, p. 148-149.
19. *Ibid.*, p.147.
20. Cf. N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, SPCK, London, 1996, pp. 564-565; cf. also, *the Challenge of Jesus*, SPCK, London, 2000, p. 71.
21. *Heaven in Ordinarie*, T & T Clark, Edinburgh, 1996, p. 146.
22. *Christ the Representative*, SCM Press, London, 1970, p. 150.
23. *The Experiment Hope*, p. 71.
24. *Transforming Mission*, p. 176.
25. *The Flaming Centre*, p. 89
26. *The Flaming Centre*, p. 87
27. *The Flaming Centre*, p. 91
28. *The Challenge of Jesus*, p. 140
29. *Theological Investigations*, Darton. Longman & Todd, London, vol. 12, 1975, p. 239.
30. *Theological Investigations*, Darton. Longman & Todd, London, vol. 16, 1979, p. 242.
31. "Be Compassionate!" in *Religious Life Review*, November/December 2008, p. 360. 368.
32. *The Experiment Hope*, p. 80.

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Oblates Focus General Chapter on Conversion

ROME, SEPT. 7, 2010 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- The Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate are beginning their 35th general chapter in Rome, with plans to focus this meeting on conversion. A statement from the Oblates on Monday noted, "Our chapter theme is, surprisingly, not mission but conversion." And it went on to explain that "[c]entered on the person of Jesus Christ, we commit ourselves to a profound personal and communal conversion for the sake of our Oblate mission." Superior General Father Wilhelm Steckling will be ending his 12-year tenure. In his report to the chapter members, he observed that "in the congregation, there appears to be an emerging consensus about our identity as missionary Oblates. It has taken years to reclaim this identity, but now most of us agree on a model." Nevertheless, Father Steckling reported, though basic principles have been agreed upon, "they had not yet become full reality. The one missing element was a change of heart."

"Intellectually and theoretically we may often be clear about concepts and ideals, models and action paths, but the heart is not fully engaged," he affirmed. "We realized that our whole life style as missionaries had to change so that we could live together more harmoniously, be more consistent in prayer and reflection, and then cross the borders to wit-



All across our country, Catholics are taking the St. Francis Pledge to Care for Creation and the Poor and joining the Catholic Climate Covenant. The St. Francis Pledge is a promise and a commitment by Catholic individuals, families, parishes, organizations and institutions to live our faith by protecting God's Creation and advocating on behalf of people in poverty who face the harshest impacts of global climate change. To join the Covenant, you commit to act on each of the five elements of the St. Francis Pledge.

<http://catholicclimatecovenant.org/the-st-francis-pledge/>

ness to Jesus Christ to the poorest and most abandoned in more creative ways." The Missionary Oblates were founded in 1816 by St. Eugene De Mazenod. There are some 4,500 Oblates who work in 70 countries.

Congregation of Holy Cross Elects

Fr. Richard Warner, CSC, as New Superior General

Notre Dame, IN - Rev. Richard Warner, CSC, has been elected Superior General of the Congregation of Holy Cross at its General Chapter meeting on July 16 in Rome. Fr. Warner will leave his position as Director of Campus Ministry at the University of Notre Dame to assume leadership of Holy Cross and its work around the world from its headquarters in Rome. Fr. Warner will replace Fr. Hugh Cleary, CSC, who has served as Superior General for twelve years, the maximum term allowable by the constitutions of the Congregation.

As Superior General, Warner will oversee the international mission and operations of the Roman Catholic religious community founded in France in 1837 by Blessed Basil Moreau, CSC. Holy Cross currently has an educational, pastoral, and missionary presence in sixteen countries on five continents, including Chile, East Africa, Mexico, and the United States.

Fr. Warner has been Director of Campus Ministry at the University of Notre Dame for twenty-one years. For much of that time, he also served in a dual role as Counselor to former president, Fr. Edward Malloy, CSC.

Bishops Respond to Anti-Muslim Prejudice

Interfaith leaders met September 7 in Washington D.C. to denounce categorically derision, misinformation and outright bigotry being directed against America's Muslim community. All acts of intolerance aimed at a religious community should find no place in our world, let alone in our nation which is founded on the principle of religious freedom.

As Catholics bishops, we are also heartened by the statement from the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (September 8, 2010) condemning the planned burning of the Qu'ran in Gainesville, Florida to mark the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. We make the words of the Holy See our own: "These deplorable acts of violence, in fact, cannot be counteracted by an outrageous and grave gesture against a book considered sacred by a religious community."†



MISSION CONGRESS 2010

*God's Mission, Many Faces
A Portrait of US Catholics in Mission*

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KEYNOTES

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A Portrait of U.S. Catholics in Mission

REV. GARY RIEBE ESTRELLA, SVD, PhD

President of the Academy of Catholic Hispanic Theologians in the U.S. (ACHTUS)

**Turned Upside Down: Learnings and Challenges
(A Missioner's Journey in Southern Africa)**

SR. JANICE MCLAUGHLIN, MM

President of Maryknoll Sisters

Continental Mission in Light of Aparecida

CARDINAL OSCAR RODRIGUEZ MARADIAGA

Archbishop of Tegucigalpa, Honduras, President of Caritas International and former President of Consejo Episcopal Latino Americano (CELAM)

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New Faces, New Opportunities, New Challenges

Dr. Kim Smolik, PhD

Rev. Clarence Williams, CPPS, PhD

DIALOGUE SESSIONS/WORKSHOPS

Mission USA: The Many Faces of Mission – Bishops Gerry Kicanas and Michael Warfel, facilitated by David Suley (USCCB)

Educating for God's Mission: An Assessment of the Effectiveness of Immigration and International Programs for U.S. Catholic Undergraduates : Dr. Thomas Kelly, Creighton University Associate Professor of Systematic Theology

Formation of Volunteers for Mission – Domestic & International Perspectives: Kelly Gibbons (JVC); Janice England (Lay Mission Helpers Assoc)

Immigration Issues in Mission: People, Policy, and Practical Response: Ann Marie Gibbons (USCCB-CLINIC)

Parishes and Dioceses in Mission: Mutual Partnership in a Global Context: Dr. Michael Gable, Rosanne Fischer and Michael Haas

Global Trends that Impact Ad Gentes Mission: Sr. Madge Karecki, SSJ-TOSF, DTh (Chicago Mission Office) & Rev. Linh Hoang, OFM, PhD(Sienna College)

Mission in Other Traditions: Catholics and Muslims in Dialogue – Dr. Scott Alexander, PhD (Chair of Department of Intercultural Studies and Ministry and Director of Catholic-Muslim Study Program, CTU)

Mission as Shared Spirituality: Learning from the Native American Experience: Mike Valdo (Acoma), Josie Montoya (Sandia) and Rev. Michael Fitzpatrick, SJ (Missioner to the Native Americans): Sr. Kateri Mitchell (Director of Tekakwitha Conference) - Facilitator

I, too, have a mission... to the U.S.! – International missionaries serving in the U.S.: Sr. Joanna Okereke - Nigerian (USCCB), Mr. Symeon Rendall Yee, MDiv – Fijian (multicultural parishes – Los Angeles, California), Rev. Archie Tacay, CICM, Filipino, Hispanic Ministry

Bringing Order to the Mission: Funding, Governance and Accountability – Michael Brough (National Leadership Roundtable on Church Management)

Earth: A Special Partner in Mission (ecological perspectives): Dan Misleh (Catholic Coalition on Climate Change) and Sr. Joan Brown, OSF

Ecumenical Perspectives on Mission: Blessings and Challenges of Working Together Panel Rev. Rafael Malpica Padilla (Exec. Dir. Evangelical Lutheran Church in America Global Mission); Arli Klassen (Exec. Dir. Mennonite Central Committee); Sr. Mary Motte, FMM (Director, Mission Resource Center)

With Christ in Mission: Mission Identity and Call (the baptized, the vowed, the ordained) – Alisa Macksey (Exec. Dir. Of LaSallian Volunteers) and Br. Dennis Lee, FSC (Auxiliary Visitor for the District of Eastern North America)

Called to be Missionaries to One Another in a Culturally Diverse Faith Community -- Alejandro Aguilera Titus (USCCB)

Stewardship in Mission -- Dr. Carolyn Young (Exec. Dir of the Koch Foundation)

SEE, HEAR and INTERACT WITH THE NATIVE AMERICAN COMMUNITIES

Participants will have the opportunity to learn from the Native Americans—their history and culture. There will be presentations and interaction with Native American people.



The new logo of the USCMA emphasizes our Baptismal Call to Mission

Water symbolizes the waters of baptism that calls us all to participate in God's mission

The **Dove** symbolizes the Holy Spirit that moves us all to mission. The dove also is a symbol of peace and reconciliation, which is sorely needed in our mission contexts.

Fire coming out of the Spirit: symbolizes the passion for mission that is in the heart of a missionary.

The **Cross** symbolizes Jesus whose missionaries we all are. The cross also reminds us of Jesus' words, "Take up your cross and come follow me." The cross without the corpus also reminds us of the hope that comes from Jesus' resurrection.

The **round image** symbolizes the world, where our response to God's call to mission is lived. It also symbolizes the stone rolled away to reveal to us the empty tomb, a symbol of resurrection, a symbol of hope.

There are varied movements that we can see in the logo:

The **Spirit of God** represented here is beyond the borders of the circle... reminding us that the Spirit of God is much bigger than our own particular world.

The **Spirit** coming out of the water of baptism reminds us of the Spirit that we have received in the waters of baptism.

The **Dove's** position over the water reminds us of the Spirit of God hovering over the waters, an image of the new creation

The **Dove** is also orientated towards the cross reminding each one of us that our orientation as missionaries needs to direct us towards the cross – towards Jesus.

And finally, there is a seeming movement of the whole logo, almost as if, moving and rolling towards the right direction. Two things come to mind:

First, as has been mentioned above, this reminds us of the stone rolled away to reveal the empty tomb – mission born out of the empty tomb.

Second, the seeming movement of the whole logo reminds us missionaries, that our response to mission is not static but dynamic.

Mission calls us to Action!

UPCOMING EVENTS

OCTOBER

Sunday, October 3- Friday, October 8

The Four Seasons of Grace, *Monrovia, CA*, *more information at www.maryknollsisters.org/mmi*

Monday, October 11–Friday, October 15

Nurturing and Educating Transcultural Kids, *more information at <http://www.omsc.org/>*

Monday, October 18–Friday, October 22

Culture, Interpersonal Conflict, and Christian Mission, *more information at <http://www.omsc.org/>*

MISSION CONGRESS 2010:

God's Mission, Many Faces: A Portrait of US Catholics in Mission

Thursday, October 28—Sunday October 31

To register or find more information please go to
www.missioncongress.org or
www.uscatholicmission.org

NOVEMBER

Friday, November 5, 2010:

The 2nd Annual Fr. Bill Dyer Lecture: not EQUAL but COMPLIMENTARY? Gender Relations seen through African eyes 5:30-7:30 pm. at *Busboys and Poets* at 5th and K street NW (Washington, DC). The event is free, but space is limited. Please R.S.V.P. at (202) 884-9780, or e-mail events@afjn.org.

Friday, November 5– Sunday, November 7, 2010:

Green Festival, in San Francisco, CA. 400 exhibitors and 125 well known speakers will provide information and answer your questions about green issues such as sustainable economy, ecological balance, climate

change, social justice and more. To find out more, contact: www.greenfestivals.org.

Thursday, November 18, 2010:

Wage Theft National Day of Action will take place on the Thursday before Thanksgiving with dozens of actions across the country. Find out more from Ted Smukler at tsmukler@iwj.org.

Monday, November 8-Friday, November 12

Ethics and Mission in an Era of Globalization, *more information at <http://www.omsc.org/>*

Monday, November 15-Friday, November 19

The Church on Six Continents: Many Strands in One Tapestry- Part II *more information at <http://www.omsc.org/>*

Monday, November 29– Friday, December 3

Leadership, Fund-raising, and Donor Development for Missions, *more information at <http://www.omsc.org/>*

DECEMBER

Monday, December 6-Friday, December 10

Russian Church- State Relations: Challenges and Opportunities for Mission, *more information at <http://www.omsc.org/>*

Friday, December 10, 2010:

Comboni Missionaries' Annual Pasta Dinner and Christmas Party Comboni Missionaries Mission Center. 645 So. Aldenville Ave., Covina, California, from 4-8 :30 pm. \$10 per plate. e-mail comboni@verizon.net



For a list of current job openings please see our blog at
www.uscma-dc.blogspot.com
or check our website at www.uscatholicmission.org



St. Francis of Assisi

that we receive...

For it is in giving



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