
*Redemptoris Missio*, written on the 25th anniversary of *Ad Gentes*, is an encyclical of Pope John Paul II on the urgency and necessity for missionary activities and endeavours in the world. It upholds the universal importance of missionary activity for all Christians. But recognising its negative connotation in the multicultural and religiously tolerant modern world, the pope attempts to revive the missionary vitality of the Christian community while defending its intention. John Paul elaborates that Christian missionary activity does not detract from human freedom, the diversity of culture, or the good within other religions. However, these worthy goods do not lessen the importance of, or mandate for, the Christian spreading of the Gospel or work towards the salvation of souls.

‘From the beginning of my pontificate, I have chosen to travel to the ends of the earth in order to show this missionary concern. My direct contact with peoples who do not know Christ has convinced me even more of the urgency of missionary activity.

‘Difficulties both internal and external have weakened the church’s missionary thrust toward non-Christians, a fact which must arouse concern among all who believe in Christ. For in the church’s history, missionary drive has always been a sign of vitality, just as its lessening is a sign of a crisis of faith.

‘In certain countries missionaries are refused entry. In others, not only is evangelization forbidden but conversion as well, and even Christian worship. Elsewhere the obstacles are of a cultural nature; passing on the Gospel message seems irrelevant or incomprehensible, and conversion is seen as a rejection of one’s own people and culture.

‘Nor are difficulties lacking within the people of God; indeed these difficulties are the most painful of all...Pope Paul VI pointed to "the lack of fervour all the more serious because it comes from within." ...Other great obstacles...include past and present division among Christians, de-Christianization within Christian countries, the decrease of vocations to the apostolate, and the counter-witness of believers and Christian communities failing to follow the model of Christ in their lives. But one of the most serious reasons for the lack of interest in the missionary task is a widespread indifferentism. ...It is based on incorrect theological perspectives and is characterized by a religious relativism which leads to the belief that "one religion is as good as another."

‘Inter-religious dialogue is a part of the church evangelizing mission. Understood as a method and means of mutual knowledge and enrichment, dialogue is not in opposition to the mission ad gentes...In Christ, God calls all peoples to Himself, and He wishes to share with them the fulness of His revelation and love. He does not fail to make himself present in many ways, not only to individuals but also to entire peoples though their spiritual riches, of which their religions are the main and essential expression, even when they contain "gaps, insufficiencies and errors." All of this has been given ample emphasis by the council and the subsequent magisterium, without detracting in any way from the fact that salvation comes from Christ and that dialogue does not dispense from evangelization.

‘The church sees no conflict between proclaiming Christ and engaging in inter-religious dialogue. ...These two elements must maintain both their intimate connection and their distinctiveness; therefore, they should not be confused, manipulated or regarded as identical, as though they were interchangeable.