

## Remarks on mission

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1. Paul Chang's question and who I am:
  - 1.1 early years as "missionary" – catechism and pity for poor –but no politics!
  - 1.2 later as a pastor of a rural parish – explicit Evangelization in a milieu of cultural Catholicism and popular religiosity, but also a ministry in terms of social justice and search for structural change – finally affected and ended by terrorism and beginning of human rights (HHRR) ministry
  - 1.3 while living in an urban parish among the poor working for CEAS specifically in HHRR ministry (social assistance to victims; "Latin" education courses i.e. the meaning of *habeas corpus*, and juridical accompaniment of innocents – up till the present with the work of the Peruvian Truth and Reconciliation Commission (CVR) and reconciliation.
  
2. What caused the change from explicit Evangelization to Justice Work and specifically the ministry of HHRR?
  - 2.1 I'd like to say "the Gospel" referring to Matthew 25 parable of the last judgment or the whole Biblical perspective of the preference for the poor.
  - 2.2 But the Biblical reading is through the community's tradition: the Church's tradition, and especially the Church's social thought.
  - 2.3 1948 experience of formulation of the UN HHRR Declaration and work of Eleanor Roosevelt, René Cassin, and Charles Malik (see M.A. Glendon) and the story of Cassin's friendship with the apostolic nuncio in Paris – a man who knew how to listen, Angelo Roncalli.
  - 2.4 15 years later John XXIII writes *Pacem in terris* – and incorporates the whole of the UN Declaration, only adding the corresponding duties – and also pushes the slowpoke bishops to get going on the reforms of Vatican II.
  - 2.5 Vatican II: sea change in attitude towards religious liberty and role of the Church on earth.
  
3. Role of that tradition in Latin American Church:
  - 3.1 Little participation of LA bishops in Vatican II (except for Helder Câmara, Manuel Larraín, Marcos McGrath, & Juan Landázuri) but before Council's end Paul VI asks them to meet as a continent.

- 3.2 The experience of Medellín: instead of being a rubber stamp of approval for the Council, something new is born (some would say Theology of Liberation) – but it includes seeing poverty as a structural problem requiring the Church’s commitment and for beginning (without defining it) the preferential option for the poor.
  - 3.3 Meanwhile the grassroots Church experiences HHRR abuses in places like Brazil and Chile and cites *Pacem in terris* and *Gaudium et spes* as their defense and start seeing it as a new ministry: followed later by countries like Peru, El Salvador, Guatemala & Colombia.
  - 3.4 The other CELAM meetings (Puebla 79, Santo Domingo 92, and most recently Aparecida 07) take up and develop the same orientation of mission as Medellín.
  - 3.5 And CELAM – human rights commissions – see their ministry not only as essential (“you have to have such a ministry”) but also as the backbone of all of social ministry (“if you’re doing it, you’re involved in HHRR work”).
4. Conclusion: Work for Justice (and specifically for HHRR) is not just one ministry among others or not just an option which one can assume at one’s own free will, but is essential. Justice is not simply a pre-condition for Evangelization: Justice *is* Evangelization according to those same sources, Latin American and universal Catholic Church.
  5. But then comes the question: ¿Does Evangelization have to be explicit? That is, when you are doing the work of justice, and doing it from a faith perspective, do you need to tell explicitly the story of Jesus Christ? Do you need to invite people to incorporate their stories into Jesus’ story? And, in fact, do we?
  6. Well, in a sense that has been my D.Min thesis-project: to take an organization like CEAS (Bishops’ Social Justice Commission in Peru) and discover if it is doing that or not.
    - 6.1 The answer is a tentative yes, but not well.
    - 6.2 We certainly don’t make being a Christian or even becoming a Christian a requirement for helping victims.
    - 6.3 In the practice, the work for HHRR is so time-consuming that little if any time is left for reflection, and reflection before the fact is useless.
    - 6.4 On the other hand, most of the people who stay in CEAS to work do so because of their Christian commitment, and they do receive and are asked to share the Gospel background and the CST of their work.

- 6.5 The victims of the violence (and the subjects of other HHRR programs) do realize that the people who are helping them are Church people (but they would be hard pressed to see much difference in the way in which Church and secular HHRR groups work), but few would arrive at the structural insight that what was done for them was the defense of their HHRR and should be done for anyone, and fewer still would see the explicit relationship to Church ministry.
7. ¿Can anything more be done?
- 7.1 One can show by example “preach the Gospel; if necessary, use words”.
- 7.2 We can see opportunities – especially in terms of full reconciliation – where the explicit story of Jesus would help the victims, and as Church people we would have the *time* to do this, because that is what is required.
- 7.3 Consider our own experience in Jarpa: 14 years between the events of violence and the celebration of reconciliation!
- 7.4 But, more than an obligation, if one has experienced fire in one’s own belly and love in one’s own heart, then we will *want* to share that story.
- 7.5 Tell James Tunstead Burtchaell’s story from *Philemon’s Problem*.
8. Conclusion: I began this paper (and this thesis-project) thinking of defending the thesis that work for justice and HHRR is itself Evangelization. And I still believe that. But a forum like this one reminds me that that is still not enough. In answer to the question, yes, we do need explicit Evangelization.

*Matt Garr SJ is an experienced missionary and a doctoral student at Catholic Theological Union. These remarks were part of a panel on mission in particular places at a conference on “Resisting Mission: Redefining Engagement,” held January 23, 2009, at the University of Chicago Divinity School. More information on the conference is at <http://divinity.uchicago.edu/programs/mission.shtml>*