

# THE PURPOSE, FUNCTION AND CHARACTERISTICS OF MARYKNOLL

## THEOLOGICAL INTRODUCTION

### I. THE PURPOSE OF MARYKNOLL

### II. THE FUNCTION OF MARYKNOLL

- A. The Function of Maryknoll as Determined by the Nature of Missionary Activity.
- B. The Function of Maryknoll as Determined by Maryknoll's Place Within the People of God.
- C. The Function of Maryknoll as Determined by the Decision of the Society in Its Origin and Historical Development.

### III. FUNDAMENTAL CHARACTERISTICS OF MARYKNOLL AS A SOCIETY

- A. The Maryknoll Society is a community response to the missionary vocation of the Church.
- B. The Maryknoll Society is a distinctly servant response to the missionary vocation of the Church.
- C. The Maryknoll Society is a professional response to the missionary vocation of the Church.
- D. The Maryknoll Society is a contemporary response to the challenge of missionary activity and is orientated to the future.

#### Theological Introduction

The object of this document is to formulate the purpose and function of Maryknoll in a manner coherent with the spirit of renewal in the post-conciliar Church and to affirm, in light of this purpose and function, certain fundamental characteristics of the Society. The analysis undertaken here combines fidelity to the spirit of Maryknoll's founders with a readiness for certain adjustments of outlook which are required by contemporary developments in theology and changing circumstances in the world. The meaning of Maryknoll is expressed in terms which provide sound guidelines for missionary policy and planning and for critical evaluation of current attitudes and norms of action. For purposes of clarity and emphasis the presentation is brief. More space is given to the statement of conclusions than to elaborations of the theology on which the conclusions are based. The present introduction, however, will provide a perspective on that theology.

The contemporary theology of missions has developed under the influence of three closely related insights: (1) The idea of the Church as People of God; 2) the idea of the Church as sign or sacrament of salvation; and 3) a new consciousness of the Church's role in the salvation of those who never reach explicit faith in Christ.

(1) authentic in an institutional manner: "overwhelmed" by God

(2) excellent reduction!

1) The Church as the People of God

To define the Church as the People of God is to place more emphasis on its communal nature than on its institutional and hierarchical aspects. Before all else the Church is the whole community of Christians gathered together in faith and love as the first fruits of the Kingdom committed to serve the saving purpose of God in the world. Special offices, functions and structures within the Church exist to enable the whole community to accomplish this God-given mandate. Hence in missionary activity, as in all the activities of the Church, the primary subject or agent is the whole community, the faithful with their pastors, sharing responsibility and working together.

2) The Church as Sign or Sacrament of Salvation

A second major influence on the development of missionary thought is the idea of the Church as sign or sacrament of salvation. Conceiving itself in this way, the Church recognizes its essential mission as the revealing and communicating of God's love to the world for the purpose of salvation. This saving sign which the Church raises up before the nations is simply Christian love addressed to all men in their genuine needs whatever they may be. Confronted with this sign men are both challenged and strengthened to return love for love. Within this setting the essential dialogue of salvation takes place, although it is also an occasion for judgment. The sign of God's love which the Church strives to place before all men is not a mission method or technique for bringing men to formal membership in the Church, rather, the making of this sign by the Church is self-explaining, self-justifying and self-fulfilling. The Church as sign is rightly preoccupied with sign-making rather than with convert-making. But new members will be added to the Church wherever this sign of salvation is made truly present through the active charity of Christians. This leads to a third formative element of contemporary mission theory.

3) A Broader Concept of the Church's Role in Salvation

A new optimism reigns in theology today regarding the salvation of those who never attain explicit faith in Christ and His Church. The saving invitation and power of God reach out to all men through the events and circumstances in which they normally live. This broader view of God's saving activity has given rise to an evaluation of the Church's role in the salvation of these multitudes of men and hence to a reassessment of priorities in mission work itself. If salvation is considered entirely or even especially in terms of entrance into the visible community of Christ, the saving mission of the Church has to be conceived almost exclusively as a procedure for bringing men to the font of Baptism or, in areas where people are baptized in infancy, as a procedure for bringing them back to regular sacramental practice. Whereas, with greater confidence in the real availability of salvation beyond the visible confines of the Church, missionary activity must be viewed in broader perspective.

The Christian community exists to mediate salvation not only to its own members or to those who will become its members, but also and even especially to all who will live and die without attaining a knowledge and acceptance of Christ. Unable to know the manner in which God disposes of its energies, the Christian community must concentrate on raising the sign of God's love before the nations. Christians themselves will be saved by making the sign; others will be saved by receiving it. Some who receive it will be drawn by the Spirit to full membership in the Church; others will be guided by the same Spirit to find salvation in their own religious worlds. On the other hand, some will reject the sign and the salvation which it offers.

(3) All men need not enter the Church visibly in order to be saved; nevertheless, missionary activity remains truly urgent, since all men need the presence of the Church as sign to confront them with the challenge of God's love, to tell them of their own deepest selves, to purify and illumine their own deepest values, and to provide them with a pattern of life and unity which points to and prepares for the gathering of all the elect in Christ on the last day.

An important corollary derived from the theological principles just considered is that missionary activity is a service of mankind. The Church, like its Master, seeking not to be served but to serve, must put aside all devices and institutions which are incompatible with this role and embrace the way of the cross in poverty, humility and self-sacrifice. The service of men which the missionary community accomplishes and which expresses itself in active brotherly concern is, at the same time, an authentic realization of the glory of God; for God is glorified best when men manifest and communicate to each other the blessings He has bestowed upon them.

## THE PURPOSE, FUNCTION AND CHARACTERISTICS OF MARYKNOLL

### I. THE PURPOSE OF MARYKNOLL

The purpose of Maryknoll is "to establish the Church as the sign or sacrament of salvation where the Church as sign is absent, and to assist the development of the Church as sign where it is not yet endowed with its own maturity, or its restoration as sign where it is in a condition of relative obscurity."

### II. THE FUNCTION OF MARYKNOLL

The function is the action by which the purpose is carried out. The function of Maryknoll is here determined by a consideration of (A) the Nature of Missionary Activity, (B) Maryknoll's Place Within the People of God, and (C) by the Decision of the Society in its Origin and Historical Development.

(3) interesting how the need is felt to belabour this point!

A. The Function of Maryknoll as Determined by the Nature of Missionary Activity

The nature of missionary activity comprises a threefold function: (1) To initiate or develop Christian witness; (2) to proclaim the Gospel verbally and to initiate new members into the Christian community, and (3) to promote the continuing formation of the Christian community.

1. To initiate or develop Christian Witness:

Christian Witness is the charity of Christ made incarnate and continually operative in all areas of human life and activity. This, in turn, requires:

- a) an effective presence in the community of men, a presence in which human suffering is shared, and human values and the world are affirmatively embraced as they are in the incarnation of the Word;
- b) A Gospel-illuminated sensitivity to those human concerns, moral, cultural, psychic, socio-economic and political, currently most urgent in the community, e.g.:
  - problems of meaning, unbelief, alienation and despair;
  - problems of hunger, poverty and ignorance;
  - challenges in urbanization and rural development;
  - self-development needs among minority groups;
  - the increasing role of the university;
  - challenges offered by increasing leisure;
  - the development of education, social communications, the arts, and the like;
- c) responsible and courageous action in collaboration with the community of men in alleviating human need and advancing human dignity and freedom.

Christian witness, understood as an embodiment of the charity of Christ in human love, is an end in itself. Hence it is pre-eminent in missionary activity, independently of its evoking a desire for verbal evangelization, because:

- (1) it is the salvation of God. It is a sign whereby God works a transformation of heart in those who experience and accept it: Men, realizing that they are being respected and valued in themselves are made progressively open to others, their selfishness undergoing dissolution; religious and moral values may be illuminated and purified, and a turning toward God effected, however God may be perceived. Thus salvation is advanced: Christ really present in His charity is saving those who do not know His name;

- (2) Charity is the necessary expression of authentic Christian living, independently of any response it might evoke.

A fundamental characteristic of Christian witness is dialogue, involving a desire not only to impart to others, but to learn from and understand them on their own terms, to respect their freedom, and to honor the workings of the Spirit already present in their hearts or in their culture. The principle of dialogue excludes any unilateral impositions, paternalism, any attitude of manipulation or of conquest of men.

In addition to being salvational in itself, the witness of Christian charity is likewise creative of a context in which men may inquire into the mystery of this witness and find it credible.

2. To proclaim the Gospel verbally and to initiate new members into the Christian community:

- a) Verbal Proclamation of the Gospel (Evangelization)

The presentation of the Good News of salvation in Christ as a call to faith for those who, under the impetus of the Holy Spirit, manifest positive interest in the Gospel. Two steps are here distinguished:

- (1) determination of how the Gospel is to be meaningfully proclaimed through an understanding and appreciation of the personal background of inquirers, their religious attitudes, their convictions or lack of them, their prejudices, interests and hopes, evangelization builds on the foundation already supplied by the Spirit;
- (2) proclamation and explanation of the Good News of salvation as the restoration of full human dignity to men through the love of Christ, a love which members of the Christian community are called to manifest and mediate to the world.

Verbal proclamation of the Gospel achieves its goal in the initial conversion of the inquirer to an explicit faith in Christ.

- b) Initiation into the Christian Community (Catechumenate, catechesis)

The incorporation of the newly converted into the Christian community through:

- (1) immediate introduction into active Christian witness with other Christians as the basis and focal point of Christian initiation;
- (2) introduction into Christian prayer as indispensable in a life of Christian witness;
- (3) admission into the catechumenate and progressive public incorporation into the community of the faithful by appropriate pre-baptismal, liturgical rites;
- (4) instruction on the basic themes of salvation-history centering on the saving love of God as embodied in Christ and in the Christian community;
- (5) formation in the fundamental values, ideals and morals of the Gospel with special emphasis on the Christian's responsibility to express the love of God by love and service of men in the world;
- (6) careful selection and acceptance of candidates for Baptism by the Christian community, pastor and laity, based especially on evidence of the candidates' charitable action.
- (7) full incorporation into the worshipping community through reception of the sacraments of initiation which confirm the new Christian's radical decision to engage permanently in Christian witness and pledge him to that commitment.

3. To promote the continuing formation of the Christian community

The continuing formation of the Christian community is the organized effort of the Christian community to strengthen or restore itself as a community in order to grow to full stature in Christ and to accomplish more effectively its mission of witness, verbal evangelization and initiation of others into the community. This entails:

- (1) active cooperation in Christian witness, this life of charity being the chief formative principle of the Christian community; such cooperation fosters the development of those mature personal relationships between the Christian and Christ, among Christians themselves, and between Christians and non-Christians, which characterize a community in the service of others;
- (2) active participation in the Eucharist as a celebration of what Christ has done in the community in its efforts of witness; shared in this way, the Eucharist becomes a source of life and strength through which the community continually forms and sustains itself;

- (3) structuring the membership of the community according to a distinction of roles both in witness and in worship; these roles, determined by the state of life (clerical and lay) and the gifts of the Spirit, support and complement each other;
- (4) development of institutions within the community which serve the requirements of Christian life and witness in a manner appropriate to local cultural demands;
- (5) reduction of oversized, so-called "communities" into smaller witnessing and worshipping communities with genuine face-to-face relationships which promote truly personal involvement, adaptability and efficiency;
- (6) concentration of the energies of the whole community in the direction of Christian witness even at the possible cost of losing members who may find this requirement a "hard saying";
- (7) evangelization and catechesis of the Christian community itself to the extent that this may be necessary for deepening its awareness of the full dimensions of Christian life and especially the demands of witness;
- (8) ecumenical formation of the community through participation with all Christians in programs for common witness to God's love of the world in Christ, common and public profession of this faith, common worship, not excluding prudent cooperation in preaching the Gospel;
- (9) formation of the community in positive attitudes of respect for what is true and good in other traditional and new religions in order to appreciate common ideals and values and to promote efforts for human solidarity, dialogue and ready collaboration in the political, social, economic and cultural domain and in works of mercy;
- (10) cultivation of missionary responsibility in the local community, leading as soon as possible to the sharing of personnel and resources for establishing new Christian communities and assisting developing Churches.

B. The Function of Maryknoll as Determined by Its Place Within the People of God

As a servant of the Church, Maryknoll carries out its missionary work within relationships linking it to the manifold structure of the Catholic Church itself and to other religious, civic and community organizations which are dedicated to the advancement of human welfare. In this light the function of Maryknoll is:

1. To serve as a missionary instrument of the universal Church under the direction of the Episcopal College and the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide;
2. To serve as an embodiment of the missionary concern of the Church of the United States and as a means for the concrete expression of that concern;
3. To cooperate with the developing Churches in their fulfilling of the demands of their domestic and foreign missionary responsibilities;
4. To cooperate with other missionaries and missionary institutes of the Catholic Church on all levels of planning and policy-making and in the execution of missionary activity;
5. To cooperate as far as possible with Christian Churches and ecclesial communities separated from the Roman Catholic Church in the planning and execution of missionary enterprises;
6. To cooperate as far as possible with non-Christian religions and groups in the promotion of religious and cultural values;
7. To cooperate with all organizations and institutions, whether local, national or international, in activities which promote the true welfare and unity of mankind to the extent that such cooperation is consistent with missionary activity.

C. The Function of Maryknoll as Determined by the Decision of the Society in Its Origin and Historical Development

As a Society committed to missionary activity within limitations of personnel and means, Maryknoll gives further specification to its function. By its own determinations it establishes its own proper contribution to missionary work and the priority of values to be observed. Its function, therefore, has been specified as follows:

1. To dedicate its personnel and resources exclusively to missionary concerns;

2. To work outside the United States with people culturally different from those of the United States. The work of Maryknoll, therefore, has been called foreign missionary work and requires professional competence in adapting to diverse ethnic and cultural demands;
3. To enable Catholics of the United States to exercise their missionary responsibility of sharing actively in making the Church an effective sign of salvation in mission regions. To this end Maryknoll maintains a program of mission education and appeal:
  - a) Mission education: To build a knowledge of the peoples of mission lands, their problems and aspirations for truth, freedom, justice and peace; and to evoke Christian solidarity and cooperation with these peoples as cherished brothers; and to foster a knowledge and love of Maryknoll and its missionaries;  
(Department of Social Communications)
  - b) Mission appeal: To offer the opportunity for participation in the mission work of the Church in general, and of Maryknoll in particular through offerings of prayer, personnel, and funds for the advancement of the missionary task;  
(Department of Development)
4. To prepare Society personnel for the missionary work committed to Maryknoll;
5. To cooperate in the preparation of others who wish to devote themselves to missionary activity;
6. To serve as a stimulus and channel for exchange in ideas, services, experiences, and values between the local Churches and the Church in the United States for their mutual enrichment;
7. To promote contacts with visitors from other lands currently residing in the United States which contribute to the advancement of missionary work in those lands.

### III. FUNDAMENTAL CHARACTERISTICS OF MARYKNOLL AS A SOCIETY

A. The Maryknoll Society is a community response to the missionary vocation of the Church:

1. Individual talents and other gifts of the Spirit are brought together and shared for mutual, familial support and for closeknit cooperation in missionary activity, which calls for teamwork.

2. In forming a community its members recognize their dependence upon one another and the need for ordered collaboration; they thus strive to become a living sign of the brotherhood in Christ which they are seeking to further among men.
  3. The Society appropriately comprises both clerical and lay members, thus joining under the same Spirit varying ministries forms of service and personal endowments.
  4. Maryknoll is a community of secular priests and lay Brothers not Religious.
- B. The Maryknoll Society is a distinctly servant response to the missionary vocation of the Church:
1. Maryknoll acknowledges the primary responsibility of the bishops and their clergy for mission activity.
  2. Maryknoll seeks as the fulfillment of its task the self-sustaining maturity of the local Churches in the areas of its work.
  3. Maryknoll recognizes that it is carrying out its task properly only when it is fostering the development of a laity committed to home and foreign missionary witness and evangelization, and adequately served by its own clergy.
  4. Since Maryknoll is an embodiment of the missionary concern of the Church of the United States, it does not recruit Society personnel from local mission areas; it promotes the development of institutions of the local Churches for implementing their own foreign missionary concern.
- C. The Maryknoll Society is a professional response to the missionary vocation of the Church:
1. The Society does not regard itself as simply a source of personnel and means for the mission Church; but of personnel and means committed to the special problems involved in bringing mission communities into existence for the first time or in leading them to be effective missionary signs in new or problematic circumstances.
  2. The preparation of its members comprises theological, professional and humanistic studies especially adapted to the challenge of missionary work, language and cultural studies ordered to developing a capacity for the fluent personal communication demanded in Christian witness and in the verbal proclamation of the Gospel; the continuing education of its members at appropriate intervals during their careers is recognized as necessary for continued missionary competence.

3. Its members recognize their vocation to be a special one in the Church and one to which they make a lifetime commitment affirmed by perpetual oath.

D. The Maryknoll Society is a contemporary response to the challenge of missionary activity and is orientated to the future:

1. Maryknoll recognizes the importance of "searching the signs of the times" as indispensable in determining priorities within its overall task.

2. Its members recognize the growing challenge presented in modern atheism and the need for giving serious study to its casual factors, and, in general, the need for preparation for dialogue with unbelievers.

3. Maryknoll recognizes adaptive change as necessary for the Church's growth, and to this end makes use of research, planning, prudent experimentation, and suitable technical media.

COLLEGE LEVEL SEMINARIES

MOTION I: The Chapter recommends that the faculty at Glen Ellyn continue to develop a strong religious formation program, and endorses the ideal of a trained spiritual counselor's being made available eventually for each of the four years. (Vote: 37-0)

MOTION II: The Chapter recommends that the faculty at Glen Ellyn investigate the seminary's possible participation in federation of small colleges. (Vote: 38-0)

Comment: This would go far in improving the faculty, facilities, and curricular offering of Glen Ellyn. Such a federation is not uncommon: Recently a Catholic college in Los Angeles joined the predominantly Protestant Federation of Claremont Colleges for the above mentioned reasons. Membership in such a federation would make the realization of other developments more possible.

MOTION III: The Chapter recommends that the faculty at Glen Ellyn investigate the possibilities of hiring lay educational experts to administer the academic side of the seminary. (Vote: 38-0)

Comment: Such positions as dean of studies and registrar could be filled expertly by laymen. Our priests, trained as scholars, are not ordinarily specifically trained for administrative posts. Such a step would reduce the number of priests tied up in educational work in the U.S.

MOTION IV: The Chapter recommends that the Superior General and Council approve the hiring, as full time college level faculty members, women as well as men in areas in which they are competent. (Vote: 35-0)

Comment: Maryknoll Sisters, as sharers in our mission vocation are one possibility. This would create a healthy balance, giving the seminarians opportunities to relate with mature women, and is in accord with present trends in seminary education.

MOTION V: The Chapter recommends that the faculty at Glen Ellyn consider how best the seminary can serve the local community and to implement appropriate programs.

Comment: The seminary should be of service to the community in a Christian manner, as an expression of genuine charity. Such programs as CCD training, the teaching of theology, conciliar documents, etc., will reflect the missionary spirit and concern of Maryknoll for the priests and people who support us and look to us for help.

MOTION VI: The Chapter recommends that the faculty at Glen Ellyn explore the possibilities of centering the seminary in a pastoral outlook. This should include association and involvement with mission-like parishes in or about Chicago. (Vote: 37-0)