



Missionary Prayer Intention - March 2006 Holy Father's missionary prayer intention: "For Catholics in the world: may they grow in mission awareness and offer support and collaboration to missionary work Comment by Cardinale Giacomo Biffi, emeritus Archbishop of Bologna Italy

Bologna (Fides Service) - The Catholic Church, from the point of view of organisation is the most decentralised reality in the world. Every diocese, indeed every parish, has its own amply autonomous life, administrative independence, patrimony of assets in line with an inalienable principle.

"Outsiders" often fail to realise this and when a problem appears, especially economic, even in outlying bodies, they are also tempted to involve the 'Vatican' (which vice versa should see to its own affairs). A man who has served correctly as a parish priest knows otherwise: he will never forget that when a problem arises he has to solve it alone, and rightly so with his own local forces.

However paradoxically this highly decentralised reality is the one which is most "one" on the whole earth. "I believe in the one...Church." we say in the Creed. It is so closely knit as to form one "body", or "Christus totus" ("the whole Christ"). Every diocese, every parish, every legitimate gathering, is itself and will live its identity only if it is aware of this substantial connection. Every Christian community is legitimated the moment it feels the weight, responsibility and apostolic impulse which throb and pulse in the heart of the one Bride of the Lord; every Christian community - within its possibilities - must strive to respond to this ineluctable prompting.

This is particularly true with regard to the command to evangelise, in the most intense acceptance of the term. It is a question of making known the Lord Jesus the only Saviour of humanity, the only one who gives meaning to life; a question of making the light, grace and the fortune of baptismal regeneration reach every human being; a question of establishing in every corner of the universe the "Kingdom", that is the holy Church as we are taught by the Second Vatican Council: "The Church is the Kingdom of Christ already present in the world" (Lumen gentium 3: "Ecclesia seu Regnum Christi iam praesens in mysterio"). The fact that God (we are certain) does not let those who through no fault of their own are not reached by the 'proclamation of the Good News' be lost, is up to Him (and he will certainly achieve his will for universal salvation also in them). But our task remains and cannot be shirked: the task to "proclaim"; and "woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel!" (cfr 1 Cor 9.16).

Every group of Christians - indeed every individual Christian who loves Our Lord Jesus Christ - is therefore called to attend to this missionary duty and to the best of his or her ability: being concerned, offering all sorts of concrete help, giving one's time and labour and (if the Father in Heaven so desires) dedicating one's whole life. The generosity of our communities, if it is persevering and systematic, will not be simply a one way donation: most probably and most happily it will become an "exchange": from mission territories reached by our brotherly charity, there will arrive in Christian societies of early date, many of which have grown numb and almost lifeless, the aid of a young, new faith and a culture rich in many human values, which in our countries (Europe) may have waned or even disappeared. This will restore vitality to "the whole Christ" and increase the joy of the heavenly hosts. (Cardinal Giacomo Biffi) (Agenzia Fides 24/2/2006; righe 38, parole 563)