

Forty Years After

—*Evangelii Nuntiandi* and Mission—

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Abstract

Jesus said to his disciples “go, therefore, make disciples of all the nations; baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to observe all the commands I gave”. (Mt. 28: 19) This great commission to evangelize has been at the heart and existence of Christianity. In a fast changing world what does it mean to evangelize? How evangelization should be undertaken? What are the effective ways and means that could be employed in the evangelization process? This paper tries to answer these questions through a critical reading of the *Evangelii Nuntiandi*. The Apostolic Exhortation on Mission- *Evangelii Nuntiandi*- is a ground breaking document which solely concerns itself with evangelization. Further, this paper, in the first section, lays out the background that gave way to this document namely The Second Vatican Council and its influence on this document. Secondly it explores the implications of *Evangelii Nuntiandi* in modern evangelization and thirdly borrowing principles from this document this paper proposes few concrete proposals for modern day evangelization.

Introduction

The early Christians following the teachings of Jesus took upon themselves to live and spread his message as a command that directly comes from Jesus himself. This act of spreading Jesus’ message is termed as mission in Christian traditions. From the beginning of its inception Christianity to a large extent has been engaged in mission activities throughout the centuries. The methods of mission activities differ depending on the time, place and context. In 1975 on the tenth anniversary of the closing of the Second Vatican Council Pope Paul VI published the Apostolic Exhortation *On Evangelization in the Modern World- Evangelii Nuntiandi*¹ which has since drastically altered the understanding and undertaking of mission. It has been forty years since the publication of this document. To understand the meaning of mission in modern times and to envisage a plausible prospect for future course of action and this paper aims to focus on the following.

This paper is divided into three sections. Section one lays out the background and development of Second Vatican Council and its influence on *Evangelii Nuntiandi*. The second

¹ Pope Paul VI., *Evangelii Nuntiandi On Evangelization in the Modern World*. Libreria Editrice Vaticana. 1975.

section of this paper explores the teachings on mission in *Evangelii Nuntiandi* and its implications on modern evangelization. The third section, while evaluating the implementation of the teachings of *Evangelii Nuntiandi* and its relevance in present evangelization, goes on to offer concrete proposals for future evangelization.

Section One

Mission²

It is already mentioned above that Jesus' disciples followed his direct command to preach his message. This command stems from the 'great commission' as seen in the gospel of Matthew, where Jesus before his ascension commands his disciples "go therefore, make disciples of all the nations; baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to observe all the command I gave you..." (Mt. 28: 18-19). The Church³ on its part tried to be faithful to this commandment over the centuries in all its mission endeavors. The word mission in vogue in all circles of life; hence an explanation is in order to situate the word in Christian context. Mission in religious sense implies the action of sending out and preaching which further implies baptizing, building Christian communities where ever is sent.⁴ As Karl Muller suggests mission can be seen as propagation of faith, expansion of the Kingdom of God, conversion of non- Christians, process of founding new churches, reaching out and service.⁵ In other words mission or Evangelization is preaching Jesus Christ to the whole world and making everyone his disciples. This understanding of mission was the norm until the Second Vatican Council but with the council the hermeneutics of mission has been drastically changed.

Second Vatican Council

The second Vatican Council was the twenty first general council of the Church and as the previous council this council was also governed by same laws and process. On January 25th, 1959 pope John X X III announced his decision to convoke a new council to address the many problems the Church and the world were facing and "come to grips, in a clear and well-defined way, with the spiritual needs of the present time."⁶ Further the pope said that "we are entering upon an age that can be called one of universal mission" and to distinguish the "signs of the times"⁷ a renewal of the Church was indeed necessary. The announcement of the council made two things clear one that the Church was in need of an update and second that a council is the

² Throughout this paper 'Mission' and 'evangelization' are used in the same way and with same meaning.

³ Throughout this paper the "Church" is referred to the Catholic Church.

⁴ Cf. *Sacramentum Mundi An Encyclopedia of Theology.*, (Ed) Karl Rahner (et al). Burns&Oates. London. 1969. P49.

⁵ Cf. Karl Muller., *Mission Theology. An Introduction.* Steyler Verlag, Sankt Augustin. 1987. P. 31-35.

⁶ Joseph A. Komonchak (ed) ., *History of Vatican II Vol. I Announcing and preparing Vatican Council II Toward a new Era in Catholicism.* Orbis Books, NY. 1995. p. 1.

⁷ Ibid., p. 4.

best way to accomplish.⁸ In 1959 May 17th John X X III announced the beginning of the preparation for council and in 1962 the Second Vatican Council was officially inaugurated.⁹

The council began in 1962 and closed in 1965. The council had four sessions. The first session between 1962, October 12th to December 8th; the second session was between 1963 September 23rd to December 24th; the third session was between 1964 September 14th to November 21st; and the final session was between 1965 September 14th to December 8th¹⁰.

The Influence

Richard McBrien notes five unique elements of the council. First, unlike any other council before, this council had the largest participants from all over the world close to 3,000. Second, the participants were from all over the world including the so called mission countries representing various nations and cultures. Third, this council was inclusive and most representative of all as it included other Christian denominations including lay observers. Fourth, this council made use of “modern means of communication and transportation”. Fifth, the purpose of the council was “to eradicate the seeds of discord and promote peace and the unity of all humankind.”¹¹

The Second Vatican Council produced sixteen documents among these four are constitutions, nine are decrees and three declarations. All the documents would radically influence the Church and its activities yet four of these documents viz., Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (*Lumen gentium*), Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium et spes*) influenced *Evangelii Nuntiandi* and evangelization. These four documents reassessed the *raison d’être* of the Church and its relation with different cultures, religions and moving beyond the exclusive position that salvation is possible only through the Church. Further, *Gaudium et spes* includes, “the joy and hope, the grief and anguish of men of our time, especially of those who are poor or afflicted in any way, are the joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the followers of Christ as well (GS. 1).”¹² In other words the Church intrinsically bound with the world and the entire humanity. Time and again this constitution speaks to all humanity (GS. 2) and offers the Church’s service to mankind (GS. 3)

Gaudium et spes for the first time ever makes obvious references to deep-seated changes in social order, attitudes, morals and religion, imbalance in today’s world and broader aspirations

⁸ Cf., *Vatican II 50 Personal Stories.*, (Ed) William Madges (et al). Orbis Books, NY. 2012. p. 2.

⁹ Since it would be out of scope of this paper to detail the preparation and the proceedings of the council only a peripheral overview will be presented. For a well nuanced detail and history of the Second Vatican Council see Josep A. Komonchak (ed) *History of Vatican II* Vol I to IV.

¹⁰ Cf., 『第二バチカン公会議公文書』 Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Japan, 2013.

¹¹ Richard P. McBrien., *Catholicism*. HarperOne, NY. 1994. P. 655–657.

¹² *Vatican Council II The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents.*, (Ed) Austin Flannery. William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. Grand Rapids, Michigan. 1992. p. 903. Hence all the Second Vatican Council Documents, Apostolic Exhortations and Encyclicals will be referred by their Latin initials and with the article numbers, for example *Gaudium et spes* as GS. 1

of humanity (GS. 5–9) and emphasizes that the must be involved in all these aspects. Further chapter one of GS calls for an appropriate action to reinstate the dignity of human person in all its faucets. Chapter two and three of the same constitution calls out to humanity to live as a community indicates what should be man's activity in the universe. Chapter four lays out the role of the Church in the modern world namely the mutual relationship of the Church and world (GS. 40), what the Church offers to individuals (GS. 41), what it offers to the society and to human activity through its members (GS. 42, 43) and finally what it receives from the world (GS. 44). For the first time the Church positively situates itself in the world and in concrete human situations. One of the participants of this council, Cardinal Leon-Joseph Suenens, whose thinking and philosophy greatly influence this and many other documents basically looked at the Church and its' existence in two parts: the church *ad intra* (inner life) and the church *ad extra* (outside world),¹³ that is to say the Church constantly needs to look into its inner life and then translate the experience in relation to the world outside. Basically it means that "the Church must bring Christ to the world. The World has its own problems, and seeks with anguish for solutions; some of these problems are obstacles to the spread of truth and grace. Some of the major problems can be grouped as follows: what do men and woman seek? They seek love in their homes; daily bread for themselves and their families; peace both within each nation and among nations. These are basic aspirations. Does the Church have anything to contribute at these levels."¹⁴ This attitude and outlook together with the directives of documents would later influence how *Evangelii Nuntiandi* was formed, presented and understood the modern world and mission.

The Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation and the Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity do acknowledge God's presence in other cultures and religions giving the church new avenues to maneuver while evangelizing. The Second Vatican Council ushered in a new era of evangelization and showed in concrete terms that the Church's existence is intertwined with humanity.

With the closing of the Second Vatican Council in 1965 the Church set out to introduce and to implement the teachings of the council around the world. Though it was said to be an exciting time to live as Christians yet it was also a time of fear, anxiety and anger. The council also brought in sweeping changes in Church's hierarchy, outlook and began to open itself to the world at large.

With new wind blowing in, the Church celebrated the closing of the Second Vatican Council's tenth anniversary and to commemorate this occasion Pope Paul VI published his Apostolic Exhortation on Evangelization the contents of which will be discussed in the following section.

¹³ Here the basic meaning of *ad intra* and *ad extra* is presented a nuanced expose will be discussed in section three.

¹⁴ Cardinal Leon-Joseph Suenens., *Memories and Hopes*, trans. Elena French., Veritas Publications, Dublin. 1992. P. 78.

Section Two

Evangelii Nuntiandi- The Background

Following the directives of the Second Vatican Council Pope Paul VI established the Synod of Bishops to foster “closer union and greater cooperation” with the bishops and the Pope, which would in turn be a great benefit to the universal Church.¹⁵ To assess this endeavor the General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, with 209 participants, was inaugurated in 1974 and came to an end towards the end of October of the same year. The proceedings and discussions of the synod focused on evangelization in the modern world. *Evangelii Nuntiandi* was the final product of the above mentioned synod which was published on December 8th in 1975 to commemorate the closing of the synod and it is already mentioned above, the Second Vatican Council. This section will examine the articles that directly deal with evangelization and situate them in context.

Before proceeding to the document, a word on the relevance of this document today is in order. Though it has been forty years since its publication the document it has not lost its relevance even today. Of recently Pope Francis said that the document’s words “are as timely as if they had been written yesterday -May 17, 2013- and in the following month of the same year he called it “a very full text that has lost nothing of its timelines” (June 13), on July 27th he referred to the document “that basic point of reference which remains relevant” and on June 22 he described it as “to my mind the greatest pastoral document that has ever been written to this day”.¹⁶ Further Pope Francis in his latest Apostolic Exhortation referred to this document 13 times.¹⁷

Evangelii Nuntiandi- The Document

Since its publications time and again it has been referred to, discussed about, argued on, written about, by different popes, church leaders, by scholars and so on. On the fortieth anniversary of this document it is worthwhile to re-read the document and to establish its relevance in relation to mission and evangelization.

The document is composed of seven sections excluding the introduction and conclusion: the contents of the document are

Introduction

- I . From Christ the Evangelizer to the Evangelizing Church
- II . What is Evangelization?
- III . The Content of Evangelization

¹⁵ Cf. *Evangelii Nuntiandi*: “The greatest pastoral document that has ever been written”, The Catholic World Report., <http://www.catholicworldreport.com> accessed on February 5th 2016.

¹⁶ Cf. Ibid., The Italian original of the last quote is as follows, “per me il documento pastorale piu grande che e stato scritto fino a oggi”. “Pope Francis has cited it at least 31 times on at least 11 different occasions...”

¹⁷ Pope Francis., *Evangelii Gaudium: Apostolic Exhortation on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today's World.*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana. Citta del Vaticano. 2013.

- IV. The Methods of Evangelization
- V. The Beneficiaries of Evangelization
- VI. The Workers of Evangelization
- VII. The Spirit of Evangelization
- Conclusion

A casual look at the table of the content of the document will surprise a reader, the document seems to focus exclusively and purely on evangelization. A deeper reading of the documents' content of the different chapters reveals the real meaning and the importance of evangelization.

The Reason for Evangelization- Introduction

The introduction of the document, which like all other apostolic documents, is addressed to the bishops, clergy and of the faithful of the entire world. The introduction calls for evangelization of people "who are buoyed up by hope but at the same time often oppressed by fear and distress..." and in time of "uncertainty and confusion"¹⁸ (EN. 1) further to "bring Christian message to modern man. For it is only in the Christian message that modern man can find the answer to his question and the energy for his commitment of human solidarity." (EN. 3) Pope Francis too in his *Evangelii Gaudium* refers to the need for evangelization because "today's world, pervaded as it is by consumerism, is the desolation and anguish born of a complacent yet covetous heart, the feverish pursuit of frivolous pleasures, and a blunted conscience." (EG. 2) To a world that is in constant transition and change evangelization must be "simply pointing to the source of authentic personal fulfillment" (EG. 10) that is available in the Good News.

In the document Pope Paul VI raises three questions that are to be part any evangelization process, which by all means has not lost its relevance even today. The first is why the hidden energy of the Good News has not made effect on man's conscience?¹⁹ Second to what extent and way can evangelization transform the people?²⁰ Third what method should be followed so that the Gospel may have powerful effect?²¹ These three questions reveal the motives for mission: for as mentioned above in some way modern man's conscience is affected by the various ailments of the society and Good News can transform and can make powerful effect on people so that they may be led to an authentic personal fulfillment.

Evangelizer to Evangelizing- Ad intra- Chapter One

Chapter one and article 6 to 13 describe the witness and mission of Jesus. He starts his public mission declaring "I must proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom of God"²² through which he witnesses the "fulfillment of the promises and of the Covenant offered by God's

¹⁸ *Evangelii Nuntiandi* No 1. Hence all the references from *Evangelii Nuntiandi* will be referred within the paper itself and will follow the rule of footnote no. 12.

¹⁹ Cf. EN., No. 4.

²⁰ Cf. *Ibid.*, EN., No. 4.

²¹ Cf. EN. 4.

²² Lk. 4: 43.

mission... for Jesus..."(6). Jesus is presented as the first evangelizer who proclaimed the Kingdom of God through the message of liberating salvation which is "great gift of God which is liberation from everything that oppresses man but which is above all liberation from sin and the Evil One..."(8). Jesus the first evangelizer was tireless in his preaching (11) which were accompanied by evangelical sings (12) and eventually paid a price (10) on the cross for evangelizing.

Jesus' death ushers in a new era of evangelization for his disciples who are transformed "from an evangelized community to evangelizing community" which in turn "shared faith therefore gather together in Jesus' name in order to see together the kingdom, bit it up and live it" (13). This, Pope Paul VI says, must be the task of the evangelizing community for "those who have received the Good News and who have been gathered by it into the community of salvation can and must communicate and spread it." (13). The community which received the Good News is called the Church and its vocation is and should be evangelization, for the Church "exists in order to evangelize, that is to say, in order to preach and teach, to be the cannal of the gift of grace..." (14). Thus evangelization is a mission and vocation proper to the Church.

Pope Paul VI says that "the Church is an evangelizer, but she begins by being evangelized herself"(15), which in other words mean that the Church "has a constant need of being evangelize, if she wishes to retain freshness, vigor and strength in order to proclaim the Gospel"(15). This is what the Second Vatican Council called *ad intra*, that the Church looks into itself and evaluates the mode of witness and constantly renews itself by referring to the values of the Kingdom of God.

Evangelization- Ad extra- Chapter Two

Chapter two article 17 to24 define evangelization. Basically evangelization "means bringing the Good News into all the strata of humanity, and through its influence transforming humanity form within and making it anew" (18) and this in the words of the Second Vatican Council can be termed as *ad extra*; the Church going out to bring in interior changes in the "consciences of people, the activities in which they engage, and lives and concrete milieu which are theirs" (18). The act of evangelization must permeate all the strata of humanity especially in "mankind's criteria of judgment, determining values, points of interest, lines of though, sources of inspiration and models of life..." (19). Evangelization cannot avoid the different cultures of people rather it must borrow elements from human culture and in turn rejuvenate the cultures with Gospel.²³

The document goes on to say that any form of evangelization must and, first and foremost, be done through witness. That is "through wordless witness ... Christians stir up irresistible questions in the hearts of those who see how they life" and which in turn raises questions such as "why are they like this? Why do they live in this way? What or who is it that inspires them? Why are they in our midst?" (21). This "initial act of evangelization" leads to explicit proclamation of the Good News and proclamation- *kerygma*- has an important place in

²³ Cf. Evangelii Nuntiandi No. 20.

evangelization. Proclamation of the Good News is not the end of mission rather it “reaches full development when it is listened to, accepted and assimilated and when it arouses a genuine adherence in the one who has thus received it” (23). As a result a person who is evangelized goes out to evangelize and becomes a witness and an evangelizer in turn. Thus evangelization “is a complex process made up of varied elements: the renewal of humanity, witness, explicit proclamation, inner adherence, entry into the community, acceptance of signs, apostolic initiative” (24). These elements on the one hand appear contradictory or mutually exclusive but they are indeed complementary and at the same time mutually enriching.²⁴

The Content- Chapter Three

Chapter three of the document from article 25 to 39 enumerates the contents of Evangelization. Based on this chapter it can be said that there are at least six elements that constitute the content of evangelization? The content of mission is, first, to bear witness to God who is revealed through Jesus yet it is not “a craving for the spread of the Church nor the fulfillment of an arbitrary ‘mission mandate...’.”²⁵ Secondly the central message of mission is salvation in Jesus Christ, not a salvation which is immanent, material or spiritual but which transcends all limits “to reach fulfillment in a communion with the one and only divine Absolute...” (27). Third, mission is a sign of hope in the present situation and “beyond time and history, beyond the transient reality of this world” (28). Fourth, mission touches the whole life of humanity and it is an “interplay of the Gospel and of man’s concrete life, both personal and social” (29). Fifth, mission proclaims liberation and involves in the struggles of humanity: “famine, chronic disease, illiteracy, poverty, injustices in international relations and especially in commercial exchanges, situations of economic and cultural neocolonialism sometimes as cruel as the old political colonialism” (29). Thus the Church as an evangelizer has the duty to proclaim liberation. Sixth, mission is “necessarily linked to human advancement” which is profoundly linked with liberation. Further this human advancement also includes social and economic questions and justice and peace.²⁶ Evangelization cannot disassociate itself from temporal problems of humanity but at the same time should not dilute the central message of the Kingdom of God.²⁷ Further any human advancement should involve a conversion of heart and outlook for without a change in the attitude liberation and advancement are impossible to achieve. The document also emphasizes that violence cannot be employed as an agent of advancement or liberation for “violence always provokes violence and irresistibly engender new forms of oppression and enslavement which are often harder to bear than those from which they claimed to bring freedom” (37).

Methods- Chapter Four

In chapter four, article 40 to 48 lay down the methods through which evangelization is done.

²⁴ Cf. *Ibid.* No. 24.

²⁵ Karl Muller., *Mission Theology. An Introduction.* Steyler Verlag, Sankt Augustin. 1987. P46.

²⁶ Cf. *Evangelii Nuntiandi.* No. 31.

²⁷ Cf. *Ibid.*, No. 33, 34.

First in article 40 the document says that it is always imperative to search for an appropriate tool for evangelization because “evangelizing vary according to the different circumstances of time, place and culture, and because they thereby present a certain challenge to our capacity for discovery and adaptation” (40). The document lists eight elements that constitute the methods of mission. One, authentic witness of Christian life and values is important for “modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses” (41). Second, although “modern man is sated by talk”, is “tired of listening” and has become “impervious to words” yet preaching, the document says “is always indispensable”(42) to evangelization. Third, liturgy of word which is preached through homily penetrates the heart of the listeners “provided that it is simple, clear, direct, well-adapted, profoundly dependent on Gospel teaching and faith to the magisterium, animated by a balanced apostolic ardor coming from its own characteristic nature, full of hope, fostering belief, and productive of peace and unity” (43). Fourth, the document lists catechetics as a method of evangelization for through a “systematic religious instruction the fundamental teachings”(44) can be inculcated in a person’s heart. Fifth, the document calls to out to employ mass media and different social communication techniques while evangelizing. Pope Paul VI says that “the Church would feel guilty before the Lord” if it is does no use “these powerful means that human skill is daily rendering more perfect (45). The basic aim of this method is to pierce the “conscience of each individual” with the Good News (45). Sixth, personal contact is an indispensable method in evangelization and for an effective transmission of the Good News person-to-person contact is a must. In other words a personal faith experience which is shared with someone will in turn effect a change in the listener (46). Seven, the sacraments play an important role in evangelization for they are the visible and living expressions of a supernatural life (47) and through them an intimate relationship is established with the Word. Eighth, popular pious practices do contribute to evangelization because in popular piety one finds the “expression of the search for God and for faith” and “it manifests a thirst for God” (48). These methods if effectively used, the document contends, can advance the process of evangelization

The Beneficiaries- Chapter V

The Good News is addressed to all as Jesus tells his apostles “go out to the whole world; proclaim the Good News to all creation”²⁸ in the spirit of this commission articles 49 to 58 of chapter five lists eight beneficiaries of evangelization. The Twelve and the first generation of Christians made this “into a program of action” (49) to spread the Word to ever more distant regions. In spite of the obstacles, opposition, resistance and persecution the first Christians spread the Word because of the direct commission from Jesus and they believed that it must be spread not to just “one sector of mankind or to one class of people” (50) but to all.

The first beneficiaries of evangelization are those who have not heard the Good News yet: this task is complex and diverse which involves “pre-evangelization” using wide range of means and through “explicit preaching... art, the scientific approach, philosophical research and legitimate recourse to the sentiments of the human heart.”(51) Second beneficiaries are the

²⁸ Mk. 16: 15.

“dechristianized world” namely people who have received the Word but live outside Christian life and hold “an imperfect knowledge of the foundations of that faith...” (52) The Third beneficiaries are people of non-Christian religions: although the Church esteems their religions yet the document contends that “they carry within them the echo of thousands of years of searching for God, *a quest which is incomplete but often made with great sincerity and righteousness*²⁹ of heart”. (53) That is to say that “our religion effectively establishes with God an authentic and living relationship which the other religions do not succeed in doing, even though they have, as it were, their arms stretched out towards heaven” (53). Thus the Church constantly prepares new generation of preachers to evangelize the people of non-Christian religions. The fifth beneficiaries are people who already have received the faith yet their faith needs to be deepened, consolidated and nourished because they live in a world of secularism and militant atheism.³⁰ This kind of evangelization includes Christians who are not in full communion with the Church. The sixth beneficiaries of evangelization are non-believers. In this context evangelization must address the “increase of unbelief in the modern world...” which with its countless “currents of thought, values and countervalues, latent aspirations or seeds of destruction, old convictions which disappear and new convictions which arise are covered by this generic name!” (55). Because of the rise of the “drama of atheist humanism”³¹ and a secularism³² which does not offer a recourse to God even by denying Him.³³ The non-practicing Christians are the seventh beneficiaries of evangelization who in spite of receiving the faith yet are entirely indifferent to it.³⁴ The document teaches that evangelization must also focus on this group of people who because of their close proximity to non-believers, atheism and secularism have lost sight of their faith.³⁵ The last beneficiaries of evangelization are the “small communities” or “Communautes de base” which spring up within the Church: one group of these communities are focused on intense living of the Word and the other are in bitter criticism of the Church. In some cases these communities break away from the Church,³⁶ evangelization can bring together these communities and make them as part of the Church.

The Evangelizers- Chapter VI

Chapter six is the longest in this document and it consists of articles 59 to 73. This chapter can be divided into two parts; the first details the attitude of the Church towards mission and the second lists the active evangelizers.

²⁹ Italics mine.

³⁰ Cf. *Evangelii Nuntiandi* No. 55.

³¹ Cf. Henri de Lubac., *Dram of Atheist Humanism*. Ignatius Press. 1995.

³² *Evangelii Nuntiandi* describes that secularism “in itself just and legitimate and in no way incompatible with faith or religion, to discover in creation, in each thing or each happening in the universe, the laws which regulate them with certain autonomy, but with the inner conviction that the Creator has placed these laws there.” (55)

³³ Cf. *Evangelii Nuntiandi* No. 55.

³⁴ Cf. *Ibid.*, No. 56.

³⁵ Cf. *Ibid.*, No. 56.

³⁶ Cf. *Ibid.*, No. 58.

The first part of chapter six says that the Church is missionary in its entirety because of the direct command of Jesus. Thus evangelization is “for no one individual and isolated act; it is one that is deeply ecclesial” (60) which includes everyone who is a member of the Church. In other words evangelization is universal and is entrusted to the Church (61). Further the document stresses that the “Church is universal by vocation and mission” in co-relation with the local and individual churches (62). Universal outlook of evangelization must take into account the local traditions, cultures, symbols and language “without the slightest betrayal of the essential truth” of the Word (63). By being open to the universal Church the individual churches enter into a full communion “in charity and loyalty” with the “Magisterium of Peter” (64).

The second part of chapter six details that the Church in its entirety is called upon to evangelize and this task is entrusted especially to the following (66). First, the Successor of Peter has the “preeminent ministry of teaching the revealed truth” (67) and the Second Vatican Council reaffirmed this, declaring that “Christ’s mandate to preach the Gospel to every creature (cf. Mk. 16: 15) primarily and immediately concerns the bishops with Peter and under Peter.”³⁷ Second, after the Pope the bishops and priests are described to be evangelizers: bishops “who are successors of the apostles, receive through the power of their episcopal ordination the authority to teach the revealed truth in the Church (68). Priests are “associated with the bishops in the ministry of evangelization” and are invited to evangelize the Word through living and preaching (68). Third, the religious who become evangelizers through their consecrated life and in turn bear witness to Word. Further they become “a challenge to the world and to the Church herself” through their “poverty and abnegation, of purity and sincerity, of self-sacrifice in obedience” are an “eloquent witness capable of touching also non-Christians who have good will and are sensitive to certain values.”(69) The laity are fourth of the evangelizers who by being in the midst of a complicated world have a “special form of evangelization”(70). Through Gospel-inspired living they spread the Word in a particular environ and context.³⁸ Fifth, families are also considered to be agents of evangelization and the document quoting *Lumen Gentium* says that they are “domestic church”³⁹ in which various aspects of entire Church are found. Sixth, “the increasing number and growing presence” (72) young people are also agents of evangelization. Those who are “well trained in faith and prayer” (72) become apostles of other young people. Seventh, various diversified ministries specifically non-ordained ministries contribute greatly to evangelization. The above mentioned agents of evangelization in collaboration with one another and with the universal Church bring about fundamental value change in the society.

The Spirit of Evangelization- Chapter Seven

Chapter seven of the document consists of articles 74 to 80, wherein, the role of Holy Spirit is emphasized and by saying “evangelization will never be possible without the action of the

³⁷ *Decree on the Church’s Missionary Activity Ad Gentes* No. 38

³⁸ Cf. *Evangelii Nuntiandi* No70.

³⁹ *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Lumen Gentium*, No. 11.

Holy Spirit.”(75) Beginning with the ministry of Jesus the Spirit has been always present in evangelization. It is the same Spirit who at Pentecost inspired the disciples to go out the ends of the earth to spread the Word. The Spirit who caused Peter, Paul and the Twelve to speak makes the Church to speak, for the Holy Spirit is the soul of the Church.⁴⁰ The document says that “Holy Spirit is the principal agent of evangelization” and “it can also equally be said that He is the goal of evangelization” for “He alone stirs up the new creation, the new humanity of which evangelization is to be the result, with that unity in variety which evangelization wishes to achieve within the Christian community.” (75) Further, this chapter goes on to insist that reading the “signs of times” and giving true witness to the Word will eventually bear fruit and bring about unity and reveal a “faithful not the image of people divided and separated by unedifying quarrels, but the image of people who are mature in faith and capable of finding a meeting-point beyond real tensions...”(77) The Spirit assists every evangelizer “to have reverence for truth” and as pastors, men of learning, parents and teachers animated by love can sow the “seeds of the Word”. (80)

The document finally concludes invoking blessings on all and pointing to Mary that she is the “Star of evangelization” who on the day of Pentecost watched over the first evangelizers may be with the evangelizers of today.⁴¹

Section Three

In the previous section the content of *Evangelii Nuntiandi* was discussed in detail and in this final section together with the following evaluation remarks newer proposals will be offered to make this document more relevant for today’s evangelization.

Evaluation

First, following the spirit of the Second Vatican Council this document spells out clear definition of evangelization and that it is witness, proclaiming the Kingdom of God together with liberating salvation. For the first time a Church document includes liberation of human being -without violence- including oppression and socio-politico-economic discriminations as an integral part of mission. This radical teaching later gave birth to liberation theologies⁴² and subaltern theologies.⁴³

Second, the *ad-intra* and *ad-extra* of evangelization. Traditionally evangelization has always been an act of *ad-extra*- mission to the ‘pagans’, the ‘gentiles’ and the ‘non-believers’ of Christianity. This document though refrains from using the first two of the three above mentioned terms yet in a subtle way ‘*mission to the other*’ is still at the center of evangelization.

⁴⁰ Cf. *Evangelii Nuntiandi* No. 75.

⁴¹ Cf. *Ibid.*, No. 81–82.

⁴² For example see, Juan Luis Segundo., *The Liberation of Theology*. Orbis Books, NY. 1982. Aloysius Pieris., *An Asian Theology of Liberation*. Orbis Books, NY. 1986.

⁴³ R. S. Sugirtharajah (ed)., *Voices From the Margin*. SPCK, London. 1991.

This attitude is the result of the 'Global North' positioning itself at the center as against the 'Global South.' In recent years there is a repositioning of 'Global South', against the 'Global North' which in turn leads to *ad-intra* of mission. It is true that "the shift in the gravity of World Christianity toward the 'Global South', the needle of the compass of Christian theology can no longer be oriented towards the North."⁴⁴ Thus it is only fitting that the document also for the first time takes up the challenge of re-introducing Christianity to a traditional Christian base.

Third *Evangelii Nuntiandi* spoke of evangelization of cultures not by replacing different cultures with the so called 'Christian culture' but by borrowing, adapting and accepting different cultural elements and making them part of Christian culture. This again was an influence of the Second Vatican Council. This openness to other cultures gave way to adaptations of other cultural resources in theology⁴⁵ and liturgy⁴⁶ which was later termed as 'inculturation.'

Fourth, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* insists preaching and praxis must be intermutual for mission cannot be just preaching or vice versa. Because of this teaching number of social development projects were taken up especially in the poorer parts of the world for human advancement.

Fifth, the documents pronouncement on religious liberty is rather shallow and is limited in its scope. In chapter three and article thirty nine speaks of religious liberty as a fundamental human right yet this fundamental right at least in this article is limited to Christians and Catholics. The document fails to extend the same right to other religions and does not obviously mention or recognize their persecution, which clearly indicates the supremacy of Christianity.

Sixth, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, while valuing the traditional methods of evangelization it also took up new methods of evangelization namely the use of mass media communication. The document in a way opened the way for establishing printing and publishing houses, radio, television stations and at present internet and social networking services.

This documents attitude towards other religions is rather condescending and holds that Christianity has been vested with totality of truth! As already mentioned⁴⁷ the document clearly holds that only Christianity can establish an 'authentic and living relation' with God and efforts of other religions do not succeed in this endeavor. This kind of attitude can be considered as patronizing and insulting, which in present day would lead to conflicts and misunderstanding.

Seventh, traditionally evangelization has been entrusted with the ordained ministers and religious of the church. Second Vatican council opened the door for laity to be part of the decision making process this development led to the inclusion of laity as active evangelizers of the Word. Further this development in spite of being an ongoing process is very important to make the Church relevant in today's society.

⁴⁴ Peniel Jesudason Rufus Rajkumar., *Asian Theology on the Way: Christianity, Culture and Context*. SPCK, London. 2012. p. X III (Introduction).

⁴⁵ Aylward Shorter., *Toward a Theology of Inculturation*. Orbis Books, NY. 1995.

⁴⁶ Paul M. Collins., *Christian Inculturation in India*. Ashgate Publishing Company, England. 2007.

⁴⁷ See page 11, No. 53.

Proposals

It has been mentioned a few times already how timely and relevant *Evangelii Nuntiandi* was after the Second Vatican Council. This document took upon itself to re-launch, as it were, evangelization in an ever changing world yet some of the major shortcomings of this document were also have been pointed out to make this document more relevant to the modern world. Below are some of the proposals that would function complementary to this document.

- ① *Symbiosis of ad extra and ad intra.* As mentioned above the Church can no longer afford to focus *ad extra*- to send, to preach and to evangelize; it has become ever more urgent to turn *ad intra* and bring about a fundamental transformation within the Church's attitude to mission. Traditionally the so called Christian countries sent evangelizers to the non- Christian countries. Now more than ever there is the "shift in the gravity of world Christianity towards the 'Global South', the needle of the compass of Christian theology can no longer be oriented towards the North."⁴⁸ The Church needs to re-evangelize itself in the traditionally Christian areas. It can no longer hold itself immune to evangelization. Further, more Christians live outside Europe especially in the 'Global South' and "Europe does not have a key position in the demographics of Christianity anymore."⁴⁹ Thus a well balanced approach is vital for future evangelization.
- ② *Kerygma-Praxis oriented mission.* Mission cannot be either preaching or practice alone rather it is a well-balanced combination of both kerygma and praxis. *Evangelii Nuntiandi* speaks of witness through action but kerygma without praxis at the most is a self-satisfying soliloquy. Further mission cannot be a well programmed preaching, for any preaching to be effective agent of transformation and conversion it must be accompanied with appropriate action. Again action alone can become social-welfare program if it is not preceded with preaching. The recommendation of this document must be solidified and should be part of any future evangelization.
- ③ *Reading Signs of times.* Mission cannot be undertaken in an isolated or ideal environment rather it takes place in the concrete realities and situations where one lives. The concrete realities are part of a human living condition and the evangelizers "never will mold the world if they do not pay attention to the signs of the times. Christian presence in the world is only possible if Christians are at the same time imbued with the spirit of the gospel and are men of their time."⁵⁰ The world is moving in an accelerated space and the changes are fast and vast including changes in social, political, economic, religious, moral and psychological spheres: and evangelizer must be attuned to these changes- signs of times- and offer a gospel message which is pertinent to the situation.
- ④ *Based on Social Dimensions.* As mentioned above evangelization takes place in concrete situations. *Evangelii Nuntiandi* is shy of pronouncing these social dimensions. Yet one cannot speak of evangelization without taking these into consideration. The above

⁴⁸ Peniel Jesudason Rufus Rajkumar (ed)., *Asian Theology on the Way: Christianity, Culture and Context*. SPCK, 2012. p. X III (introduction).

⁴⁹ *Hope and Joy of Mission in Europe*. SVD Publications, Rome. p. 11.

⁵⁰ Bernard Haring., "Marriage and the Family," in Miller, ed., *Vatican II : An Interfaith Appraisal*, p. 417.

mentioned social realities make up concrete human situation. Pope Francis in his Apostolic Exhortation⁵¹ emphasizes that evangelization while being faithful to the gospel must also be relevant to human realities. Poverty, religious intolerance, discrimination of all sorts, North-South disparity are some of the major social dimensions of today's world; an evangelizer must be sensitive to these and preach the gospel together with concrete practice.

- ⑤ *Religious intolerance and mission.* More than ever there is an extraordinary level of religious intolerance and violence in today's world. Religions vying for supremacy and absolute control employ violence to achieve their sinister motives. One does not need to elaborate on religious violence today as it is paraded almost every day on television and news. Now the challenge that an evangelizer faces today is, can he or she proclaim an absolute truth that is solely entrusted to Christianity? Can an evangelizer ignore other religions which have morally and religiously sustained the believers for thousands of years. Can an evangelizer avoid in meeting other religions? The answer to the above depends on the evangelizers attitude but one thing can be certainly said that if the evangelizer makes efforts to understand others viewpoint certain level of peaceful coexistence will be possible. After the Second Vatican Council there has been an explosion of studies in inter-religious field, unfortunately these have not achieved the desired effects of reconciliation. An evangelizer is not only a preacher and practitioner but should be an avid student of religions and must be open to other religious realities.⁵²
- ⑥ *Kingdom Oriented Evangelization.* It is obvious that evangelization is intrinsically intertwined with the Kingdom of God. It would be out of scope of this paper to detail the convoluted arguments of Kingdom of God here. It would suffice to say that where ever the Gospel Values are found there the Kingdom of God exists. *Evangelii Nuntiandi* for its part directly and indirectly time and again refers that evangelization is invariably done with the sole purpose of establishing God's Kingdom and the realization of the Kingdom values in this world. One of the questions that can be raised here is, how does the Church or the evangelizer work to usher in the Kingdom is not concretely spelled out. As John Fuellenbach rightly points out that "... 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?"⁵³ Both Jesus and the hearers understood that the Kingdom is the inherent values of God that exist within each one and a perfect realization of those values leads one to the Kingdom. In a world of relative value system an evangelizer must first commit himself to the realization of Kingdom values in himself and then work for the same in the world.
- ⑦ *Evangelization in an Unjust World.* Evangelization, as mentioned above, is geared

⁵¹ Pope Francis., *Evangelii Gaudium: Apostolic Exhortation on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today's World.* Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Citta del Vaticano. 2013. For detailed expose see chapter four.

⁵² See for example, Jacques Dupuis., *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism.* Orbis Books, NY. 1997. Michael Barnes., *Theology and the Dialogue of Religions.* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. 2002.

⁵³ John Fuellenbach., *Hermeneutics, Marxism and Liberation Theology.* Manila, Divine Word Publications. 1989. Pp. 83.

towards the realization of the Kingdom and its values. The value system of the world is fundamentally opposed to the Kingdom values, because they are geared to one's gratification which breeds an unjust society. The world is steeped in poverty, injustice, discrimination and dehumanization and it is the task of the evangelizer to work for a just society; for establishing a just society is establishing the Kingdom of God. Evangelization cannot afford to focus solely on the spiritual wellbeing the evangelized but must also focus on socio-psyco-economic wellbeing as well.

Conclusion

Forty years after its first publication, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* still holds relevance in today's world and functions as a guiding principle in evangelization. In spite of its many shortcomings if properly read and understood, it can bring about a fundamental attitude change in mission. Again, though the document is not comprehensive and inclusive in many aspects yet it was ground breaking in its understanding of mission and a pioneer in evangelization. Pope Francis for his part has produced- *Evangelii Gaudium*- a complimentary volume to *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, when both are taken together and put in practice the realization of the Kingdom of God is inevitable. Finally the Church owes its renewed missionary spirit, at least in part, to *Evangelii Nuntiandi*.