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# Catholic Deacons in a Culturally Plural World. A Plea for the diaconal primate of a missionary Church

## Katoļu diakoni kultūru plurālisma pasaulē. Prasība pēc diakoniskā primāta misionāriskajā Baznīcā

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Report of *Dr. Klaus Kießling* has been delivered on the International Study Conference of International Diaconate Centre (IDC, Germany) in 2013 at Velehrad near Brno, place of pilgrimage in Moravia (Czech Republic) closely linked to the tradition of the two Apostles of the Slavs St. Cyril and St. Methodius (Velehrad has been the See of the first Archbishop of Greater Moravia, St. Methodius), therefore the First part of the article draws attention to the mission work in the European lands of Apostles of Slavs today, as they in their mission work united the processes enculturation, mission and ecumenism. How can a Church be missionary in a culturally plural world, and to which extent can a missionary Church appear as a diaconal Church, a Church of the poor? Second part shows the transition from Western Church to Universal Church, discussing various Apostolic & Pastoral Constitutions, Decrees on the mission of the Second Vatican Council. Third part discusses the processes of encountering the alterity as a missionary quality, as a diaconal quality, and as a task set by the Council for a diaconate in a culturally plural world. Fourth part presents the historic examples of Protestant and Jesuit activities in the field of mission and diaconia acted together. Fifth part addresses challenges of mission today, showing examples of some deacons in the world, and expanding mission along the path of interreligious dialogue, inculturation, and as the option for the poor. In the context of inculturation, deacons are assigned the role of a bridge-builders between society and Church. Closing part defines mission as indispensable activity today instead of mission impossible – firstly, in solidarity and representation, where Universal Church advocates the poor, and deacons act as incentivators of solidarity, secondly, by virtue of being child of God (baptism), and thirdly, not from itself and not for itself – not out of fear of losing members, but in favor of those whose dignity has been violated and who are in most need of our solidarity. Thus showing the mission as interplay of the option for the poor, challenges of inculturation and interreligious dialogue.

**Key words:** Universal Church, deacons, mission, inculturation, interreligious dialogue, advocating the poor, culturally plural world.

## **I. In the land of the Apostles of the Slavs: “Mission: Impossible”?**

“Mission: Impossible” is the title of an American spy thriller whose plot takes place not far from the venue of our conference<sup>1</sup>: a CIA mole comes across a list of code names of CIA agents in Eastern Europe. However, he does not have a list of their real names, which he wants to steal from the US Embassy in the Czech capital of Prague. This calls for the involvement of a special unit called IMF; IMF stands for “Impossible Mission Force”.

“Mission: Impossible” is not only the title of a well-known movie but also perhaps the conclusion drawn by a person who wants to turn his back on religious zealots imposing their threatening messages – much in the same way as crying market vendors – on those who would otherwise be lost (at least in the eyes of those same “missionaries”).

“Mission: Impossible” is perhaps also the conclusion of a person who wrangles with a mission history tainted by abuse of power, conqueror’s attitude and violence perpetrated on those who – if required – were to be driven to their happiness by force.

“Mission: Impossible” is perhaps the conclusion of a person who, in Central Europe, sees the sanctioning power of the church diminishing and to whom, therefore the very act of thinking, let alone speaking about mission in a religious sense, seems ridiculous. There is a good chance that in doing so he will trigger defensiveness and lack of understanding and that the effects will be painful (*see* Bucher, 1988, 303). It is even more astonishing for me to see the ease with which today every company publishes its “mission statement” on its website and politician’s go on “peace missions”. In those areas at least, the notion of mission lives on without triggering allergic reaction.

“Mission: Impossible” is perhaps the conclusion of a person who does not want to be confused with those who believe in a fundamentalist way in everything under the sun – in this word or that ceremony – but not in the living God who are therefore driven more by their own fears than by an option for the poor, that is, an option for people that they could eventually enter a relationship with – perhaps in such a way that the option for the poor themselves would at last begin to matter. But with that it is an alternative understanding of mission, which suggests itself.

Nevertheless, how can a Church be missionary<sup>2</sup>, without imposing itself upon others, upon those who would like to be left alone from a religious point of view? How can a Church be missionary in a culturally plural world, without becoming guilty of breaking the peace in the house from a religious point of view? (*see* Collet, 2004, 309) Would this not also beg the conclusion of “Mission: Impossible”? Moreover, to which extent can a missionary Church appear as a diaconal Church, a Church of the poor? (*see* Köß, 2003) What is the task of the diaconate in all this? It is these questions that I would like to explore with you – here in this shrine in the jubilee year of the 1150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the mission of the *apostles of the Slavs Cyril and Methodius*. With these two saints, this place of high spirituality also becomes a programme: they started some processes, which we now call inculturation, mission and ecumenism. We are going to address these topics – naturally from a diaconal perspective.

## **II. From Western Church to Universal Church – an epoch making change by the Council’s Church**

Most Christians today live in the southern regions of planet Earth; this fact alone compels the Church to take leave of its former understanding of itself as a Western Church, which would impose its own theology, liturgy and structures as a norm for the whole world. In this sense, we can still speak of “Mission: Impossible”.

For even if, within the context of colonial history Christianity spread worldwide, with this universalization as a Western Church, no Universal Church took shape<sup>3</sup>. For the Catholic Church, the Second Vatican Council represents the first official self-concretion as a Universal Church – and with that the breakthrough towards a Christianity rooted in a plural culture.

### **Apostolic Constitution *Lumen gentium* on the Church**

This epoch making change from a Western to a Universal Church could take place because the Council offers a new outline of a relationship between the Church and the world. For the dogmatic Constitution *Lumen gentium* the Church is “a sacrament or as a sign and instrument both of a very closely knit union with God and of the unity of the whole human race” (*Lumen gentium*, 1). She receives “the mission to proclaim and to spread among all peoples the Kingdom of Christ and of God” (Ibid., 5). The Council also formulates a position on the difference between the Church and the Kingdom of God: “Until there shall be new heavens and a new earth (.), the pilgrim Church (.) has the appearance of this world which is passing and (.) dwells among creatures that groan and travail in pain until now and await the revelation of the sons of God” (Ibid., 48). The Constitution on the Church then goes on to express its missionary claim and gives it a Trinitarian basis: “As the Son was sent by the Father, so He too sent the Apostles (cf. John 20:21), saying: “Go, therefore, make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. And behold I am with you all days even to the consummation of the world” (Matt 28: 18-20). The Constitution specifically says: “The obligation of spreading the faith is imposed on every disciple of Christ, according to his state” (*Lumen gentium*, 17). The Church starts from the universality of the Gospel and cooperates in giving shape to the cultural change (see Sievernich, 2004, 21sq; Collet, 2006a, 117).

### **Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes***

The Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes* is called pastoral because it “seeks to present the Church’s relationship to the world and to the people of today” (Rahner, 1985, 449). In this sense, the text becomes a sort of follow up to the Constitution on the Church and a call “to scrutinize the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel” (*Gaudium et spes*, 4), as well as a signal of a readiness to learn and to dialogue on a worldwide scale, inasmuch as the Church recognises that “all men, believers and unbelievers alike, ought to work for the rightful betterment of this world in which all alike live” (Ibid., 21). If the Council does not only turn to the faithful but to all people, the missionary *habitus* manifests itself as the main attitude of a Church that strive to make valid in practice God’s universal promise of salvation (see Bünker, 2007).

### **Decree *Ad gentes* on the mission**

The Vatican Council’s decree on the Church’s missionary activity *Ad gentes* understands the Church as “a universal sacrament of salvation” (*Ad gentes*, 1). She seizes her sacramentality inasmuch as she lives her universal mission: “The pilgrim Church is missionary by her very nature (i.e., on a journey, to which she was sent)” (Ibid., 2)<sup>4</sup>.

The Council explicitly recognizes means of salvation outside the Church if and because “God in ways known to himself can lead those inculpably ignorant of the Gospel to find (.) faith” (Ibid., 7). The sacramentality of the Church for the world, into which she is sent, is not, therefore, exhausted in the mere increase of the number of her members.

She counts on the mystery of her faith, on the action of God, which escapes the understanding of the Church and at the same time sets free the missionary action of the Church and relieves her from the burden of exaggerated conversion expectations.

### **Apostolic letter *Evangelii nuntiandi***

The Council's intentions regarding the mission are reflected in the Apostolic Letter *Evangelii nuntiandi*, in which Pope Paul VI sets new accents in the notion of the Church's mission with the notion of "evangelization": "Evangelizing is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity"<sup>5</sup>. As bearer of the evangelization the Church is herself borne by the Gospel and she is supposed to evangelize herself. The mission is to be understood also as a moment of the Church's self-criticism, as she has not to set herself above but under the message about the Kingdom of God. A pilgrim Church does not simply "have" the Gospel but is herself a seeking Church.

It is important to notice that *Evangelii nuntiandi* closes with a chapter on the spirit of evangelization. The perspective is thereby widened – by the power of the Spirit whose action is not limited to the boundaries of the Church. From Him comes a valorisation that is given to believers, non-believers and other believers alike, to one's own and to other religions to one's own and to other cultures, to the familiar as well as to the yet unknown.

## **III. Encountering alterity ...**

### **... as a missionary quality**

Encountering foreign people and alterity does not only happen when people are sent out into the wide world – as we are to Velehrad. No, we encounter alterity in the very heart of the Christian faith, in the quest for God (*see* Bucher, 1988, 303). God is the last word, before we become silent, faced as we are with the mystery of our own life, and with the "opening towards the ineffable mystery" (Rahner, 1976, 60) it is something entirely different and entirely unknown which is opened. In faith we do not therefore enter a relationship with alterity in a retroactive fashion, but we are permanently confronted with the "acceptance of alterity" (Bucher, 1988, 304). Whoever denies that, betrays alterity, betrays the people who are different – and in doing so betrays faith and himself.

In this sense the Christian action doesn't acquire a missionary quality only if people go to continents other than their own but also when they look for alterity in their own country, in their own Church and in their own relationship to God and the world (*see* Müller, 2004, 220-228); if they go outside of themselves and find themselves outside, inasmuch as they let themselves be touched by alterity and by other people and they expose that which is their own and the reality which is theirs to alterity and to the risk of alienation; if they allow for the way people change each other thanks to visible and tangible differences, if they allow for the way change adjusts itself and takes place, if they allow for the way in which what is my won becomes strange for the way that which is strange touches me, for the way that which is strange remains so.

### **... as a diaconal quality**

"(..) I was a stranger and you welcomed me" (Matt 25:35 and, with a reversed sign Matt 25:43), we hear in the speech about the last Judgment. "Whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me" (Matt 25:40 and accordingly Matt 25:45).

Moreover, I would add sisters. The love for one's neighbour as a primary act of the love for God refers really to the neighbours and, once you're outside your familiar environment, the farthest become the nearest. Jesus "is already there where we need to bring him but he wants us to find him there among our fellow humans" (Wanke, 2001, 30). But seeking the other does not qualify merely the missionary action, but at the same time with it the diaconal action. Missionary and at the same time diaconal attempts to enter a relationship with alterity and with other people find their radical intensification in the confrontation with God – as mystery of our life. Primarily and ultimately they lead to the incomprehensibility of God who does not allow himself to be appropriated and literally does not allow himself to be grasped, who comes close and escapes, as the one who is near remains at the same time distant and extraneous.

**... as a task set by the Council for a diaconate in a culturally plural world**

Against this background one should not be astonished that it is precisely in the Decree on Mission (*see: Ad gentes*, 16) that the reinstatement of permanent diaconate is referred to<sup>6</sup>. I understand diakonia to mean the ecclesial action, which Christ sets on equal footing with the love for God, i.e., the love for one's neighbour. This is not only the duty of permanent deacons, but they incentivize every Christian to it for "everyone carries everyone else, everyone is responsible for everyone else and everyone matters for everyone else, even in the order of salvation" (Rahner, 1967, 226).

Moreover, from the more recent studies<sup>7</sup>, a closeness emerges between diaconal and missionary tasks. They assign to the deacon some actions of transmission, which suppose a commissioning (Hentschel, 2007, 433<sup>8</sup>) – e.g., the proclamation of the Gospel or the conveying of news or collections as we see in St. Paul's letters (for instance, 1 Cor 3:5; Col 1:7, 23-29; 2 Cor 3:5sq and 8:19; 1 Thess 3: 1-13; Rom 16:1sq). The characteristic activity seems to be one of a messenger who sees himself as bound to carry out a missionary kind of proclamation and, as a *Go-Between* acts as an intermediary as the Australian *John Neil Collins* never ceases to phrase it<sup>9</sup>.

## **IV. Mission and diakonia - the examples of a Protestant and a Jesuit**

### **Johann Hinrich Wichern**

As early as 1848, in the very first Day of the German Evangelical Lutheran Church, held in Wittenberg, Johann Hinrich Wichern (*see Seebaß*, 1999) gave the first impulse to the so-called *Inner Mission* of his Church. This formula would indicate both a missionary and a diaconal responsibility and therefore a connection, which characterizes also the *City Mission*, the *Railway Station Mission* and the *Sailors' Mission*. Others followed this example offered by a Protestant, the first one being that of a Jesuit.

### **Alfred Delp, SJ<sup>10</sup>**

For almost one century later, but in a very impressive fashion, Alfred Delp stresses the connection between missionary and diaconal action, oriented towards the Gospel on the one hand and towards social need on the other hand. In 1944, i.e., in the very year that he was executed by Nazi Germany, he stated: "We became a mission country" and "a mission territory may be entered only with a true wish to be a missionary (..) defensive is a loss and surrender that which is essential to us" (Delp, 1984, 319). Delp urges to a "missionary dialogue with our times" (Delp, 1985, 280) and stakes on

a radically diaconal Church: “Nobody will believe the message about salvation and about the Saviour, as long as we haven’t spent ourselves up to shedding our blood in the service of the physically, psychologically, socially, economically, morally or otherwise ill person” (Delp, 1984, 319).

In his text written in a Berlin prison, Delp writes about a return to diakonia: “By this I mean to follow the human being, to accompany the person’s journey, to be at the side of the human being in the very moments in which he is surrounded by moral corruption and error. ‘Go out into the whole world’ said the Master and not ‘sit and wait here for somebody to come’ (...) it makes no sense to be satisfied with a preaching or religious permit with a parish priest’s or prelate’s salary and to leave humanity to its fate” (Delp, 1984, 320<sup>11</sup>).

Alfred Delp’s warning against ecclesial self-sufficiency applies to all those who arrange themselves with the world in its current state and are quite comfortable with it. Do we carry out our mission in the name of God or in the name of commodity?

## **V. Mission today – the example of some deacons around the world**

I would like to sketch the mission today and explain it by means of some examples taking three different paths.

### **Mission along the path of interreligious dialogue**

The aim of the mission is not to clericalize or to repair an old building but to make effective, across all borders, God’s universal promise of salvation and to fulfil it in a diaconal way. Inasmuch as the Church goes beyond her own borders and at the same time finds herself outside, she remains and becomes herself. She goes beyond herself because her mission does not allow for anything else (*see* John, 2001). In this way mission does not risk being cut to the size of mere internal Church goals, so that the growth of the Kingdom of God be could and should be reduced to the number of Church members. Quite to the contrary, this would lead to the growth in the trust in the fact that God acts before the missionary and that also those who don’t belong to the Church are connected to the Kingdom of God in mysterious ways. This trust turns mission into interreligious dialogue.

In this context, I would like to draw your attention to the *Pro Diakonia* project, with which I was entrusted as I was still a deacon in secret. This project wishes to strengthen the diaconal characteristic of our Catholic Church, as is being done by Pope Francis for the last few months (*see* Fürst, 2013, 14-15), and show the face of the diaconate with very clear features. *Pro Diakonia* went on from Europe to Latin America, from Southern Africa to *India* (*see* Kießling, 2012a; Kießling, 2012b, Kießling & Wagener, 2012) – to the Small Christian Communities (*see* Penha, 2011) in that country. Permanent deacons in a place as religiously diverse as Mumbai aim at a further development of these communities. People of different faiths come together in order to tackle challenges, which they all must face together. Ecumenism here does not only mean dialogue between Christian denominations, but it encompasses the entire inhabited world. The Small Christian Communities are undergoing a change and from exclusively Christian they become spiritually heterogeneous groups – trusting in the fact that also those who don’t belong to the Church are already connected to the Kingdom of God.

### **Mission along the path of Inculturation**

Inculturation (*see* Frei, 2001) does not go as a one-way street from the Gospel into the life of individual communities, for in them the Spirit of God already present. This Spirit speaks to the Church from within those cultures: that is because the very practice of evangelization can be addressed by this “God’s coming to the encounter of people” (Weber, 2002, 356). In this way a possibly unimagined force is developed which goes over restrictive fences and works and acts in a dynamizing way on both sides of those borders. With the risk that the reception of the Gospel beyond the border will go its own unpredictable way and may also lead to conflicts (*see* Scharer, 2002) comes also the opportunity that an unfamiliar belief will not leave our own belief unchanged, but touch it in a creative way and attract it to even more faith. Recently I heard Sister Karolina Meyer from Luxembourg who spent several decades of her life in Chili where she also collaborated with permanent deacons, saying: “I became a missionary because I wanted to convert people but now, I myself am converted!”<sup>12</sup>

Also within the context of *Pro Diakonia*, I remember very clearly how in Southern Africa (*see* Mähr & Kießling, 2011) how much the valorisation of the permanent diaconate is connected to respect towards the deacon as a married man. My explanation for this is that precisely the African culture has a far greater appreciation of the role of the husband and father than of the position of a single man. In this cultural context, the deacon is assigned the role of a bridge-builder between society and Church – thanks to a missionary force that acts as a transforming force in those African communities, which are caught in traditional religious references such as the natives, describe the need for inculturation.

### **Mission along the path of option for the poor**

How does the promise of the Good News for all persons and all nations harmonize itself with the prioritization of the particularly needy? The universality of the Gospel does not undergo any limitations through the biblical option of bringing the Gospel to the poor (Luke 4:18), quite on the contrary: “It is precisely because of its validity for everyone that the weakest are given preference, so that nobody falls short” (Bünker, 2002, 21sq).

I think – again within the framework of *Pro Diakonia* (*see* Mähr & Kießling, 2007) – about the evaluation of some very impressive conversations with brothers in *Latin America*, to the action of an Argentine deacon working with inmates, who are carrying on their existence without dignity whilst at the same time finding themselves in a zone of death. This deacon’s trust in God and in the inmates expresses itself in his description of his mission and his option for the poor and for those deprived of dignity: “(.) I experienced it first-hand – I don’t go in a prison to bring Christ there, but to see him.”

The missionary and the diaconal vocation (*see* Baumann, 2007) work together and their aim is worldwide solidarity. In this sense, “mission” is not only not “impossible”, but also “indispensable”.

## **VI. “Mission: Indispensable” ...**

“Mission: Indispensable” is not the title of another movie, even less so of a spy thriller; it is an alternative to the introductory slogan “Mission: Impossible” – and does not introduce a virtual adventure but a real one. In the movie, IMF was the “Impossible Mission Force”. Are the deacons then, possibly, as incentivators of solidarity, an IMF of their own, an “Indispensable Mission Force”?

### **... in solidarity and representation**

With the Council, solidarity gains in importance<sup>13</sup>, even as a category of redemption: the idea of God's reparation by means of Jesus' death on the Cross gives way to a renewed motivation for solidarity by means of God's incarnation. Jesus reveals himself on the Cross (Matt 27:54; Mark 15:39; Luke 23:47), but *who* is it that acknowledges Jesus as the Son of God and proclaims this revelation? It is the Roman commander, the pagan foreigner. The revelation comes from outside, it cancels the expectations of those who are close to the Crucified. The Cross is the downfall of the wrong expectations from God (*see* Sander, 2012, 649). If the Crucified goes down to the realm of the dead, he enters by his death and resurrection in solidarity with the dead and with their suffering; in this way he gives a basis for human solidarity even beyond that – and opens up the vision of a world-wide community staking on divine solidarity.

With this vision one can oppose a globalization of solidarity to the globalization of profit and misery (*see* Bruhn & Grözinger, 2000): it is part of the mission of the Universal Church to advocate for the poor and it is her duty to act as a representative and to raise her voice in favour of those who have no voice, who are not listened to or who are forced into silence. And if solidarity takes into account the biblical idea of representation, it follows that solidarity will not take the place of the one to whom it is offered; it will give him or her the space needed for his or her own existence. Representation is a kind of involvement that does not replace the other but sets him or her free.

For people are irreplaceable, otherwise they would be betrayed. However, for whom am I irreplaceable? Only for those who love me – for as long as they love me. I will not become irreplaceable by myself, but through the fact that I am in relationship with others. I am irreplaceable for those who put hope in me and who get involved on my behalf without thereby making me into a zero. Such a practical representation has a very important place in my heart as a deacon – and increasingly so. My representative who believes hopes and loves in my place does not hold me up, so that I have no role any more. Instead, he runs ahead, I follow him, and others follow, too, because he looks after them and gives them importance. They gain in importance by the importance he gives them and he suffers for those and because of those who do not follow. In his love, the representative does not force anything but he hopes for everything. The representative gives time to the one he represents to return to his or her place. He does not force him or her to do so, but hopes for him or her. Love is representation as hope. The representative allows himself become dependent, knowing that he cannot effect the object of his hope; but it is precisely in this kind of powerlessness that he is free to love.

### **... by virtue of being a child of God**

In all this, the contents of the message remain the standard by which witnesses will orient themselves (*see* John, 2002, 140): “You can evangelize only that, which you love with all your heart” (Schalück, 2002, 86). After all, faith is also not the condition for God's love. Faith is the notice of the fact that God loves everyone unconditionally – so much so that they can change, become transformed, just as we, when we are in love, feel changed and when we love everything opens up before us in new dimensions, even the things all people we have known for a long time. We do not have to change as a precondition of becoming children of God; we are children of God from the very beginning and as such we have the strength to live differently so that others can live.



But what is then the sense of baptism? After a baptismal remembrance ceremony I asked this question to my son *Simon*, the youngest in our family and he had this to say: “It is important that one doesn’t only think that the child is a beloved child of God, but that one also tells it to him; that all children are told that. Because then the children can be sure of it. And if you love a child you have to tell him that many times and remind him of that so that the child does not forget it, and my baptism, I cannot remember that, can I? That’s why one tells the child not only as a baby that God loves him and that he is God’s beloved child, but also later, over and over again when he can understand it by himself when he isn’t a baby anymore and would not forget it.” I go on to ask him about the unbaptized children and Simon already tired, lying in bed, becomes lucid again “Why Dad, they are also God’s beloved children, all children! With or without baptism! But baptism is important so that they all know it – as a sign! Now you know it, Dad, good night!”

To accept and express the quality of children of God – that is the sense of baptism. Moreover, Mission – on the path of interreligious dialogue, inculturation, and the option for the poor – is about being children of God. Without its spiritual connection and rooting in God’s unconditional love, mission would become a creation of the people and their limitations. In this way, however it profits also those who do not want or cannot believe and to those who believe differently. Then we could consider it a success of the mission if a woman of different faith calls out to her neighbour over the fence, in solidarity: “I cannot believe any more that you will end up in Hell!”

#### **... in the land of the apostles of the Slavs**

In the land of the apostles of the Slavs, it is not only the internationally renowned movie “Mission: Impossible” with its Prague scenes, but also the internationally renowned *Tomáš Halík*, a Czech, a priest, a psychotherapist, a pontifical prelate and a professor in Prague. He seeks a dialogue with those who do not belong to the Church, with the searching Zacchaeus-type person with their possibly timid spirituality. Tomáš Halík asks how can the reeling ship named Europe find its way – amongst religious and national fundamentalisms on the one hand and an equally intolerant but hostile to all religious secularism on the other hand (*see Halík, 2011, 117*). Are Christians not inclined as well to exchange the ineffable God who showed solidarity with us up to the point of death and who in his incredible closeness remains so strange to us – with an understandable God, innocuous and easily brought in harmony with our expectations, so very different from the Crucified one? And “is then part of what we call secularization, criticism and weakening of a religion, atheism etc., a mere break-up with the known gods and therefore a big opportunity for a discernment, purification and opening of the space in which we would be able to hear again Paul’s Gospel about the ‘unknown God’?” (*Halík, 2011, 151*).

God loves those who wrestle with him<sup>14</sup>, and therefore the question about adequate forms of celebration, about inculturation arises in my own homeland: how can our liturgy<sup>15</sup> not appear as closed and excluding towards Zacchaeus-type people, but as open and inclusive? What role can be assigned to the witness of those who are searching, what role should be assigned to the *sensus fidelium*<sup>16</sup>, the faith sense of the believers, and what role also to the *sensus infidelium*? Do we invite to our house only those who believe the same as we? Do we surrender to this “spirit of theological narcissism”<sup>17</sup>, as phrased programmatically by the later Pope Francis before his election? Or do we also look beyond our walls for those who in turn are searching and perhaps cannot believe, hope or love?

### ... not from itself and not for itself

The Church does not carry out the mission from herself, but based on the mandate of Jesus Christ, and accomplishes his mission, according to her capacities. She lives through those who bear witness to what they themselves experience. The experience of being loved and accepted unconditionally can only live on if people do not keep it jealously like a prey, but share it with their fellow men. The aim of the mission is to share the Gospel (*see* Collet, 2006b, 391) and, as such, it becomes a mission of peace.

Not only does the Church not carry out the mission from herself, but also not for herself (*see* Hilberath, 2006); not out of fear of losing members, but in favour of those whose dignity has been violated and who are in most need of our solidarity. The mission is interplay of the option for the poor, challenges of inculturation and interreligious dialogue. It turns “Diakonia in an intercultural context” into reality. In this sense, I make a plea for the diaconal primacy of a missionary Church. For it is not the Church, which is the aim; the aim is the Kingdom of God and the solidarity, which lives from it, also for the Church – or, as the psalmist, says: “May God have mercy on us and bless us. May he shine his countenance upon us, and may he have mercy on us. So may we know your way upon the earth, your salvation among all nations” (Ps. 67:2sq)<sup>18</sup>.

## REFERENCES

- 1 International Study Conference of the International Diaconate Center (*see* <http://www.diaconia-idz.org/>) in June 13-16, 2013, in Velehrad, Czech Republic.
- 2 *See* Sekretariat der Deutschen Bischofskonferenz, 2000, *and* idem, 2003.
- 3 This reminds one at best of the “action of an export company which would sell a European religion worldwide without actually ever considering changing merchandise in any way and the same goes for its culture and civilization, considered to be superior” (Rahner, 1980, 288; *see* also Sievernich, 1996, 186-204).
- 4 Moreover, the principle arising from the *Decree on Mission* is that the bishops are not only ordained for a specific Diocese but for the salvation of the whole world, *see: Ad gentes*, 38. The task of a diocesan bishop is therefore to help transform his Diocese into a missionary Church.
- 5 *See* Sekretariat der Deutschen Bischofskonferenz, 1975, 14 (official English version to be found at: [http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_p-vi\\_exh\\_19751208\\_evangelii-nuntiandi.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_p-vi_exh_19751208_evangelii-nuntiandi.html)). Canon Law also assumes this position: “Since the whole Church is by its nature missionary and the work of evangelization must be held as a fundamental duty of the people of God, all the Christian faithful, conscious of their responsibility, are to assume their part in missionary work” (*see* Codex Iuris Canonici, 1984, Can. 781 (the official English version to be found at: [http://www.vatican.va/archive/cod-iuris-canonici/cic\\_index\\_lt.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/cod-iuris-canonici/cic_index_lt.html)); *see* also Demel, 2006, 435-449).
- 6 “Such a new formation of diaconate can be of the utmost importance for a lot of missions (..) wherever somebody truly exercises (..) the diaconal function in a Church, he should also be given the sacramental force that comes from the imposition of hands.” This is how Karl Rahner phrases it (*see* Rahner, 1966, 79).
- 7 *See* Collins John Neil. (1990) *Diakonia. Re-interpreting the Ancient Sources*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; *and* Collins John Neil. (2002) *Deacons and the*

*Church. Making connections between old and new.* Harrisburg, Pennsylvania/ Leominster, Herefordshire: Morehouse Publishing/ Gracewing; a discussion of both publications is provided by: Pohjolainen Terttu. (2006) Reviews of John N. Collins, *Diakonia. Re-interpreting the Ancient Sources*, and of John N. Collins, *Deacons and the Church. Making connections between old and new.* In: *Diaconia Christi* 41, p. 137; on the discussion about John N. Collins see Kießling Klaus. (2010) Humble waiting-on-tables or missionary going-between? John N. Collins and the nature of “diakonia” in the New Testament. In: *New Diaconal Review*, Vol. 4. S. 34-38.

- 8 Hentschel demonstrates that the action of a *diakonos* does not take place on his own authority, but needs a commissioning, “which situates the commissioned in an existing relationship between originator and the addressee, which in turn is structured hierarchically and often supposes, to that effect, a function of transmission: the person commissioned must carry an object or some news to the addressee” (Ibid., 433).
- 9 In this sense, we know a tradition of the Gospels, which stresses the service character of the diaconal action and, at the same time, a Pauline language that stresses a kind of transmission, having political and provocative qualities as well.
- 10 SJ – The Society of Jesus (in Latin *Societas Iesu*) is a male religious congregation of the Catholic Church; members known as Jesuits.
- 11 See also on this topic: Fuchs, 1986, 131; and Lob-Hüdepohl, 2012, 2-3.
- 12 She used this expression in the celebration of the jubilee “30 Years of Permanent Diaconate in the Luxembourgian Church” on May 25<sup>th</sup>, 2013, in Bettembourg/ Luxembourg.
- 13 See: *Gaudium et spes*, 4, 32 and 90.
- 14 See „Mit den Suchenden auf die Suche gehen.“ Ein Gespräch von Stefan Orth mit dem tschechischen Theologen Tomáš Halík über Glauben heute [“With the seeker to go for seeking”. An interview of Stefan Orth with the Czech theologian Tomáš Halík about faith today] (2013). In: *Herder Korrespondenz* [Correspondence of Herder] 67, S. 69-73.
- 15 Kranemann Benedikt. (2013) [online] *Liturgie und Mission* [Liturgy and mission]. Lecture during the Day of the Departments of Catholic Theology, held on January 28<sup>th</sup>, 2013, in Sankt Augustin [cited June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2013]. Available: <http://www.fakultaetentag.de/kthf/studeintage.html>
- 16 *Lumen gentium*, 35.
- 17 The text was published on March 27, 2013, at: <http://blog.radiovatican.de/die-kirche-die-sich-um-sich-selber-dreht-theologischer-narzissmus>, retrieved on June 6, 2013 (see „Die Kirche, die sich um sich selber dreht: Theologischer Narzissmus“ [The Church that revolves around herself: Theological narcissism] (March 27<sup>th</sup>, 2013). [online] Laudetur Jesus Christus. Radio Vatikan Blog, Vatican, 2015 [cited 03.09.2015.]. Available: <http://blog.radiovatican.de/die-kirche-die-sich-um-sich-selber-dreht-theologischer-narzissmus>).
- 18 See Sekretariat der Deutschen Bischofskonferenz, 2004; and, in addition, a manuscript in the possession of the author and authored by: Sievernich Michael. (2006) *Missionarische Seelsorge in Deutschland: Von der Weltkirche lernen?* [Missionary pastoral care in Germany: Learning from the Universal Church?], a lecture delivered at the International World Mission Congress of Catholic Church held between May 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>, 2006, in Freising, Germany.

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## **Katoļu diakoni kultūru plurālisma pasaulē. Prasība pēc diakoniskā primāta misionāriskajā Baznīcā**

### *Kopsavilkums*

*Dr. Klausa Kīslinga referāts ir ticis nolasīts Starptautiskā Diakonāta Centra (IDC, Vācija) Starptautiskajā studiju konferencē, atklājot to 2013. gadā Velehradā, (netālu no Brno), kas ir svētceļotāju mērķis Čehijas Morāvijā un kas ir cieši saistīta ar slāvu Apustuļu sv. Kirila un sv. Metodija misijas lauku (Velehrada ir bijusi pirmā Lielās Morāvijas arhibīskapa Sv. Metodija bīskapa krēsls), tāpēc raksta pirmā daļa pievērš uzmanību misijas darbam slāvu Apustuļu zemēs mūsdienu Eiropā, ņemot vērā, ka Apustuļi savā misijas darbā apvienoja inkulturācijas, misijas un ekumēnisma procesus: kā Baznīca var būt misionāra mūsdienu kultūru plurālisma pasaulē, un cik lielā mērā misionāriskā Baznīca atklājas kā diakoniska Baznīca, kā Baznīca nabagajiem? Otrā daļa parāda Rietumu Baznīcas misionārisko dabu, analizējot Otrā Vatikāna Koncila apustuliskās & pastorālās konstitūcijas un dekrētus par misijas darbu. Trešā daļa diskutē par sastapšanos ar svešādo kā par misionārisku, diakonisku kvalitāti un kā par uzdevumu, ko noteicis Koncils diakonātam kultūru plurālisma pasaulē. Ceturrtā daļa parāda vēsturisku personu aktivitātes misijas un diakonijas apvienotā darbībā. Piektā daļa diskutē par izaicinājumiem misijas darbā mūsdienās, atklājot mūsdienu diakonu darbību pasaulē un parādot misiju kā starpreliģiju dialogu, inkulturāciju un nabago aizstāvību. Inkulturācijas kontekstā diakoni tiek skatīti par tiltu veidotājiem starp Baznīcu un sabiedrību. Noslēdzošā daļa definē misiju kā nepieciešamu un neatņemamu darbību mūsdienās, vispirms, solidaritātē un Kristus pārstāvēniecībā šajā pasaulē, kur Baznīca darbojas kā nabago aizstāve un diakoni – kā solidaritātes pamudinātāji un stimulētāji, otrkārt, nesot Kristus kristību pasaulē, un treškārt, darbojoties šajā pasaulē ne no sevis un ne dēļ sevis, proti, nevis no bailēm zaudēt draudzes locekļus, bet gan par labu tiem, kuri ir pazemoti un kuriem visvairāk ir nepieciešama mūsu solidaritāte. Tādējādi misija mūsdienās tiek parādīta kā nabago aizstāvības, inkulturācijas izaicinājumu un starpreliģiju dialoga apvienojums.*

***Atslēgvārdi:** Universālā Baznīca, diakoni, misija, inkulturācija, starpreliģiju dialogs, nabago aizstāvība, kultūru plurālisms.*



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