

18

FROM THE ENDS OF THE EARTH:

**‘INTERNATIONAL MINISTER’
OR MISSIONARY?**

**VOCATIONAL IDENTITY AND THE CHANGING FACE OF
MISSION IN THE USA
A ROMAN CATHOLIC PERSPECTIVE**

Margaret Eletta Guider, O.S.F.

It is above all in the actual situation of each local church that the mystery of the one People of God takes the particular form that fits it to each individual context and culture. In the final analysis, this rooting of the Church in time and space mirrors the movement of the Incarnation itself. Now is the time for each local Church to assess its fervor and find fresh enthusiasm for its spiritual and pastoral responsibilities, by reflecting on what the Spirit has been saying to the People of God.... Pope John Paul II¹

Introduction

Since the Second Vatican Council's affirmation of the missionary nature of the Church² and the coming of age of the 'world church' heralded by Karl Rahner,³ the Roman Catholic church has doubled its membership from approximately 665,475,001 in 1970 to approximately 1,128,883,000 in 2006. Projections for 2025 indicate an anticipated growth of 1,334,338,000.⁴ In the light of these statistics and a thirty-five year period of significant devel-

opment, particularly in the Southern hemisphere, this paper raises two questions about the preparedness of Roman Catholics throughout the world to grapple with the implications of the missionary dynamics of the Church? Are they indicators of the rise of what Philip Jenkins describes as the 'Next Christendom'?⁵ Or, do they signify the emergence of what Thomas Fox describes as a 'new way of being church'?⁶ Either way, the phenomenon of expansion presents a clarion call to leaders of the Roman Catholic church as well as Roman Catholic theologians and missiologists.

In this chapter, I take up the challenges of one specific implication of the phenomenon of growth, namely, the reality that presently many local churches throughout the world are *de facto* missionary-receiving *and* missionary-sending churches.⁷ Though demographic statistics and percentages may vary significantly from country to country, these missionary dynamics of the twenty-first century challenge the adequacy and appropriateness of a longstanding ecclesial vision of the *telos* of missionary activity as they reveal the need for a more fitting alternative. In the process, they also alert the universal church to the pressing need to articulate the specific and distinguishing characteristics of various types of ecclesially-recognized 'missionary vocations'⁸ within the framework of a theological vision of the Church in which "by Baptism every Christian is called to be a missionary and witness."⁹

The regnant non-European ecclesial vision of the modern period, paralleling to some degree national movements for independence from European colonial rule, equates the 'coming-of-age' of a local church with its emergence from the ecclesiastical status of a 'mission territory' and hence, its 'liberation' from reliance on 'foreign' missionaries from other lands and cultures.¹⁰ By way of contrast, the alternative vision as articulated by John Paul II in the concluding paragraphs of *Mission of the Redeemer* suggests that in the absence of missionaries from other lands and cultures, a local church is limited in its understanding and experience of what it means to belong to the people of God. It is susceptible to the dangers often associated with isolationism.¹¹ The proclamation of the Gospel message is put at risk by the obvious and subtle forces of cultural domestication. The position taken by Pope John Paul II is reminiscent of the observation attributed to the Sri Lankan ecumenist D.T. Niles, that "the gospel is never safe in any culture unless there is a witness from beyond that culture."¹² Unquestionably, such witness includes that of baptized Christian immigrants or refugees who enter into the life of established faith communities in countries not their own. However, my interest is to probe more deeply into the vocational identity of cross-cultural, ecclesially-recognized ministers – clerical,

Vocational Identity and the Changing Face of Mission

lay and religious – who are planting, building up, and sustaining the local church in a country or culture not their own.

Ultimately, my overarching objective in this paper is to illustrate some of the reasons why rigorous *contextual* reflection on the missionary dynamics of this local church to which I belong, is not a matter of choice or special interest, but an ecclesial exigency.¹³ My conviction is that the aforementioned ‘longstanding vision’ continues to prevail in the local church of the United States over and, at times, against the ‘alternative vision’. My thesis is that until members of the local church of the United States begin to identify and address what is at the root of our failure, refusal or inability to embrace the ‘alternative vision’ and its exigencies, the missionary dynamics of the world Church will tend to be perceived more as a *threat* to our way of proceeding in accord with ‘American exceptionalism’, than as an *opportunity* for the Gospel of Jesus Christ to transform our culture in an age of empire.¹⁴

Following the directives of the Second Congress on Mission in America (CAM-II) in 2003,¹⁵ I seek to take seriously the responsibility incumbent upon every local church to assess, evaluate and make meaning of the interactive dynamics of missionary activity that inform and influence both its missionary nature and its world-church consciousness. By focusing attention on the characterization of priests, religious and lay ministers from other countries and cultural contexts as “international ministers” rather than as ‘missionaries’, I call into question the extent to which our tendency to reserve the title missionary for the ‘national ministers’ we ‘send’ to the ends of the earth, while withholding the title from the ‘international ministers’ we ‘receive’ from the ends of the earth, constrains our ecclesial imagination as the ‘people of God’. Despite the clarity of the alternative vision articulated by John Paul II in *Mission of the Redeemer* and elsewhere, an internal contradiction exists between his repeated emphasis on the ‘missionary nature’ of the universal church as well as each and every local church of which it is comprised¹⁶ and the disciplinary directives issued by the Vatican regarding priests from ‘mission territories’.¹⁷ While recognizing the possibility that priests from any part of the world might be subjects of disciplinary scrutiny, these particular directives engage in a certain kind of ‘mission territory profiling’ that in its tone is suspicious, patronizing, and condescending. Though this inner contradiction reveals an existing ecclesiastical ‘double-mindedness’ that impacts the church throughout the world, it impacts the local church of the United States in a particular way inasmuch as the directives provide a warrant for attitudes and behaviors unbecoming a church that claims to be missionary by its very nature.

Margaret Eletta Guider, O.S.F.

I proceed in discussing these questions in three steps: 1) Setting the Context: Coming to Terms with the Missionary Nature of the Church, 2) The U.S. Catholic Bishops and their Teachings on Mission: A Twenty Year Retrospective, and 3) Warrants for Rethinking the Dynamics of Mission in the Church in the U.S.A.: A Missionary-Sending Church & A Missionary-Receiving Church.

Setting the Context: Coming to Terms with the Missionary Nature of the Church

... the boundaries between *pastoral care of the faithful, new evangelization and specific missionary activity* are not clearly definable, and it is unthinkable to create barriers between them or to put them into watertight compartments. Nevertheless, there must be no lessening of the impetus to preach the Gospel and to establish new churches among peoples or communities where they do not yet exist, for this is the first task of the Church, which has been sent forth to all peoples and to the very ends of the earth. Without the mission *ad gentes*, the Church's very missionary dimension would be deprived of its essential meaning and of the very activity that exemplifies it.¹⁸

In the course of the past forty years, much has changed in the world and in the church. One thing that has remained a constant, however, is that Christian missionaries continue to walk into settings where they are simultaneously welcomed and revered by some, rejected and persecuted by others, or simply tolerated or treated with indifference by still others. Despite the Second Vatican Council's affirmation that the Church is 'by its very nature missionary', missionary activity *per se* continues to be perceived negatively to the extent that local churches consider the presence of missionaries to be an indicator of their incapacity to provide for all of their needs with their *own* resources, whether material or spiritual. To be more precise, in the estimation of local churches, missionaries reveal in obvious and subtle ways the fundamental *relational* dependency of one Christian community upon another.

For local churches influenced by dominant cultures that pride themselves on autonomy, control, and self-sufficiency, as well as local churches shaped by cultures endeavoring to distance themselves from the trappings of colonialism and neocolonialism, signs or suggestions of *dependency* are often viewed as problematic. To the extent that countries and cultures place a high value on autonomy and self-determination, relationships of dependency on foreigners and outsiders are always subject to scrutiny. All too often, however, the shadow-side of unilateralism, along with its capac-

ity to enchant and tempt by means of illusions and seductions, succeeds in preventing, perverting and sabotaging efforts to differentiate dependency from interdependency. As a consequence, any real possibility of making and sustaining authentic relationships of mutuality and reciprocity is predictably undermined. Fears of being duped or manipulated run deep. As a consequence, a local church's capacity for full participation in God's mission – the *missio Dei* – is constrained and limited. The church falls short of being all that it can be. This, I would argue, is the situation in which the Roman Catholic church in the United States finds itself today.

Symptomatic of this posture of unilateralism are two tendencies. The first is that the local church recoils from the language of mission, preferring instead the language of ministry. The second is that the local church resists the identification of individuals as missionaries, preferring instead to identify them as ministers. Each of these tendencies has its particular linguistic, ideological, theological and ecclesiastical rationale. This posture of unilateralism, to the extent that it is assumed by bishops, clergy, religious and laity, forecloses the possibility of any authentic interdependency and discloses the fact that in many quarters the missionary dynamics of the church continue to be understood primarily in terms of an *ad gentes* function rather than the transformation *de ecclesia*. Such a posture also discloses that the local church has difficulty accepting the fundamental exigencies of its missionary nature. In practice, this posture relativizes the universal significance of baptism by effectively suppressing both the desire and the willingness to experience the kind of global solidarity with the people of God to which the baptized have been called as followers of Christ (Jn 17:21).

All of this is to say that if a local church is to be properly understood as 'missionary by its very nature', its full participation in the *missio dei* must be predicated on more than 'sending forth' missionaries *to* the ends of the earth (Mt 28:19). Participation in the *missio dei* also must consist in 'receiving' missionaries *from* the ends of the earth (Jn 13:20) in a spirit of interdependency, receptivity, and reciprocity that contributes to the building up of local churches through mutual concern and mutual correction of one another. Properly understood, the permanent validity of missionary activity consists in recognizing that missionaries, by their very nature, are God's living letters of faith, hope and love, ambassadors of Jesus Christ (2 Cor 3:2-3), to whom responsibility for *translating* the message has been entrusted. To the extent that their literal 'carrying across' the Word of Life from one people to another is the means through which the reception of God's ongoing revelation is brought to ever greater fullness, their witness

Margaret Eletta Guider, O.S.F.

must be properly understood as extending not only to those who have yet to hear the message for the first time, but also to those who precisely because of the missionary in their midst are given new ears with which to hear the message *as if* for the first time.

Seen in the light of my previous observations, impressionistic evidence suggests that Roman Catholic church leaders engaged in efforts to address the complex realities in which their respective local churches find themselves are in need of more insights into the church's missionary nature than those currently being provided by ecclesial pronouncements, broad overviews of global trends, and analyses of international statistics. To this end, Roman Catholic theologians in the United States are in a position to assist the local church in rendering a more adequate and appropriate account of

- ~ how, where and with whom it assesses and interprets its own participation in the *missio dei*,
- ~ how, where and to whom it *sends* missionaries,
- ~ how, from where and for whom it *receives* missionaries, including its own returning missionaries, and
- ~ how, where and with whom it fosters a missionary imagination worthy of the world church.

In this regard, we have much to gain by attending to the ecumenical and missiological insights generated in recent years by Protestant theologians and ecclesial leaders who have contributed greatly to a heightened understanding of what it means to be a part of a missional church in North America.¹⁹

Working with the limits of this paper, I will attempt to offer a brief account, first by examining what the U.S. Bishops have said about missionary activity in recent decades and second by considering how these teachings inform and influence the local church's way of proceeding at this point in time.

2. The U.S Catholic Bishops and their Teachings on Mission: A Twenty Year Retrospective

Pope John Paul II, in his encyclical on missionary activity, summed up the three objectives of mission: to proclaim the Gospel to all people; to help bring about the reconversion of those who have received the Gospel but live it only nominally; and to deepen the Gospel in the lives of believers. (Mission of the Redeemer, no. 33).

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

Vocational Identity and the Changing Face of Mission

Go and Make Disciples: A National Plan and Strategy for Catholic Evangelization in the United States

Twenty years ago, on November 12, 1986, the Roman Catholic Bishops of the United States issued a Pastoral Statement on World Mission entitled *To the Ends of the Earth*.²⁰ The purpose of the Pastoral was twofold: 1) to provide the faithful with a renewed theological and pastoral understanding of the permanent validity of missionary activity and 2) to affirm the missionary vocations of approximately 6,037 missionaries from the United States ministering around the world.²¹ The document built on the Second Vatican Council's *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*, the *Decree on Missionary Activity*, and Pope Paul VI's Apostolic Exhortation, *On Evangelization in the Modern World (Evangelii Nuntiandi)*.²² It was the third in a series of Pastoral Letters issued in a period of two years by the U.S. Bishops that stressed both their concern for the Church's mission in an interdependent world and their commitment to unity with the world church.²³ Unlike the other two pastoral letters, however, the Bishops' Pastoral on World Mission did not leave a lasting impression on the ecclesial imagination of U.S. Catholics.

As a document, *To the Ends of the Earth* held in creative tension multiple theological visions simultaneously. Its promulgation reflected a well-intentioned attempt on the part of some U.S. bishops to cultivate an enhanced understanding of the complex missionary dynamics of the Church. The document's underwhelming reception, however, whether due to resistance, ambivalence, or indifference, disclosed the degree to which the local church's understanding of missionary activity was far from unified. Similar to the bishops, Catholics found themselves in various locations on the theological continuum that informed and influenced their thoughts on mission. In the book *Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today*,²⁴ Stephen Bevans and Roger Schroeder describe the locations on this theological continuum as:

- Mission as the Proclamation of Jesus Christ as Universal Savior,²⁵
 - Mission as the Participation in the *Missio Dei* (Mission of the Triune God),²⁶
- or
- Mission as the Liberating Service of the Reign of God.²⁷

In 1990, four years after the publication of the U.S. Bishops' Pastoral on Mission, Pope John Paul II issued his *tour-de-force* missionary encyclical entitled *Mission of the Redeemer*. In the encyclical, he firmly advanced the permanent validity of all missionary activity and called for a renewed commitment on the part of Roman Catholics to the mission *ad gentes*. In 1992,

the Fourth General Assembly of the Conference of Latin American Bishops (CELAM), meeting in Santo Domingo on the occasion of the 500th anniversary of Christianity in the Americas, echoed the concerns of Pope John Paul II regarding the future of the Roman Catholic church, and set in motion a re-evangelization effort throughout Latin America known as the New Evangelization. In 1994, Pope John Paul II proposed in his Apostolic Exhortation *As the Third Millennium Draws Near (Tertio Millennio Adveniente)*²⁸ the need for the Bishops of the Church in America (North, Central and South) to gather at a Synod to reflect on evangelization. Subsequent to the 1997 Synod of America, Pope John Paul, in his Apostolic Exhortation, *Church in America (Ecclesia in America)*,²⁹ highlighted the importance of evangelization and missionary cooperation among local churches in America. Cooperative initiatives such as the 1999 and 2003 Conferences on Mission in America (COM I and II) endeavored to solidify a new zeal for missionary activity.³⁰ In 2000, the controversial declaration *Dominus Iesus: On the Unicity and Salvific Universality of Jesus Christ and the Church*,³¹ issued by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, reasserted theological claims reminiscent of the exclusivist claims of a pre-Vatican II understanding of soteriology and ecclesiology. Then on January 6, 2001, Pope John Paul II issued the very moving Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte (At the Beginning of the New Millennium)* calling for the purification of memory, a renewed witness to the Gospel, and an exhortation to go forward in hope – ecclesially, ecumenically, inter-religiously, globally, ecologically – as pilgrims into the twenty-first century.³²

In 2005, following two decades of ecclesial discourse on the missionary dynamics of the Church, the U.S. Bishops' Committee on World Mission issued its most recent document entitled *Teaching the Spirit of Mission Ad Gentes: Continuing Pentecost Today* in 2005.³³ This document was issued in part to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the Vatican II decree *Ad Gentes* and in part as a concrete response to an appeal by Pope John Paul II to U.S. Bishops during their 2004 *ad limina* visit during which he asked them to make the recapturing of the missionary spirit of the Church in the United States a pastoral priority. Like its predecessor, *To the Ends of the Earth, Teaching the Spirit of Mission*, also was given an under-whelming reception.

So what can be learned from this twenty year retrospective? Admittedly, the Roman Catholic church in the United States consists in more than its bishops; nevertheless, the bishops are the local church's teachers and for this reason it is important to give their documents due consideration. As such, the mission documents of the U.S. Bishops are reflective of

Vocational Identity and the Changing Face of Mission

the multifaceted missionary dynamics of the Church. However, in following the lead of the Vatican in recent years and by placing a heightened emphasis on the *missio ad gentes*, they have intentionally or unintentionally limited the local church's understanding of missionary activity to that which takes as its focus the 27% of the world's population that has yet to hear the Good News. Viewed from the perspective of church growth, one cannot help but wonder, in light of the statistics that project the Evangelical and Pentecostal Christians will come close to rivaling the numbers of Roman Catholics by 2025, if there is something more is at play in the fields of the Lord than the spread of the Gospel for its own sake.³⁴ [See Table One]

Table One (Approximate Figures)

	1900	1970	2006	2025
Population	1.6 billion	3.6 billion	6.5 billion	7.8 billion
Christians	558 million	1.2 billion	2.1 billion	2.6 billion
Evangelicals	71 million	98 million	254 million	348 million
Pentecostals	981,000	72 million	596 million	798 million
<i>Combined</i>	<i>72 million</i>	<i>170 million</i>	850 million	1.1 billion
Roman Catholics	266 million	665 million	1.1 billion	1.3 billion

Viewed from the perspective of the growth of Islam and efforts at *rapprochement* between the Vatican and the Orthodox churches, the degree to which missionary dynamics are being driven by multiple motives warrants careful examination.³⁵

Table Two (Approximate Figures)

	1900	1970	2006	2025
Population	1.6 billion	3.6 billion	6.5 billion	7.8 billion
Christians	558 million	1.2 billion	2.1 billion	2.6 billion
Roman Catholics	266 million	665 million	1.1 billion	1.3 billion
Muslims	199 million	549 million	1.3 billion	1.8 billion
Hindus	203 million	462 million	877 million	1 billion
Jews	12 million	15 million	15 million	16.8 million

Similarly, it is important to observe how and why the Church, in placing continued emphasis on the New Evangelization throughout the 1990s and into the 21st century, has relied largely on restorationist forms of 'romanized' Catholicism to curb the hemorrhaging of Catholic Christians into other Christian churches and sects, rather than exploring contemporary missionary strategies for revitalizing the faith of Roman Catholics in a local church that is truly a microcosm of the world church. As shepherds of a missionary-

Margaret Eletta Guider, O.S.F.

sending church, it is important that the bishops continue to place emphasis on the permanent validity of missionary activity *ad extra*.³⁶ Yet there is another dimension that also must be taken into account, namely, the extent to which the bishops likewise perceive themselves to be shepherds of a missionary-receiving. To what degree do they possess the desire, ability, courage, and will to simultaneously hold together their *ad extra* commitment with an expressed commitment to the permanent validity of missionary activity *ad intra*? What are the factors contributing to the relative absence of this dimension in their most recent missionary document? And, what are the forces preventing some bishops from acknowledging and embracing more fully the de facto status of the United States as a 'missionary receiving' church?

3. Warrants for Re-thinking the Dynamics of Mission in the Church in the USA:

A Missionary-Sending Church & A Missionary-Receiving Church

The world distrusts us not because we are rich and free. Many of us are not rich and some of us aren't especially free. They distrust us because we are deaf and blind, because too often we don't understand and make no effort to understand; because we know what is best. We have this cultural proclivity that says, 'We know what is best. And if we truly want to do something, whether in church or in society, no one has the right to tell us no.' That cultural proclivity, which defines us in many ways, has to be surrendered, or we will never be part of God's kingdom. That conversion of an entire culture is far more difficult than the personal conversion that is our challenge each time we pick up the gospel. But we know it is necessary -- not only for us, but for every single culture and every single society, poor or rich, in the world today. ... There is always a need for something more, not only more, but for something radically different. And it won't come unless we ask for it as a gift. We cannot achieve it ourselves.

Cardinal Francis George, O.M.I. Homily for Catholic Theological Union
On the Occasion of the Dedication of the New Building
October 29, 2006³⁷

In viewing the contours of the Roman Catholic church in the 21st century, it is unclear to what degree the shift in consciousness regarding the missionary nature of the church as articulated at Vatican II has altered the self-image and self-understanding of the church in the United States. It is no secret that this local church is deeply influenced and affected by complex social realities. The pervasive messages, subliminal and otherwise, communicated by the present-day confluence of national and ecclesiastical

cultures are not new messages. Rather, they are longstanding messages, the origins of which can be traced to the legacies of John Carroll (1735-1815),³⁸ his successors and their collaborators, who by 1908, succeeded in 'ransoming' the church in the United States from the Vatican bondage of its missionary territory status. By means of national vocations, financial resources and the sending forth of missionaries to foreign lands, the bishops of the United States sought to resolve the perceived negative self-image problem associated with dependency upon 'foreign missionaries'.³⁹

Almost a century later, this projected self-image - its lack of correspondence to reality notwithstanding - continues to reinforce a national ecclesial *mythos* that the Roman Catholic church in the United States of America is *not* a local church *in need of missionaries*, whether foreign-born or returned. In other words, this particular local church is not in need of missionaries who are *sent from* another local church for the purposes of being an evangelical presence, calling others to conversion, healing, teaching, preaching, prophesying, raising consciousness, interpreting the Word of God in another language or cultural framework, or holding this local church accountable in love and justice to a *world* church - a microcosm of which exists within the nation's so-called borders. Nevertheless this controlling self-image does allow for acknowledging the openness of the local church in the United States to welcoming *ministers* from other lands as long as they understand the *unilateral and independent* terms of the relationship.⁴⁰

Observers cannot fail to recognize the ways in which over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the church in the United States emerged from being a missionary-receiving church as it came of age, economically, demographically and ecclesiastically, thereby transforming itself into a missionary-sending church. To cross the threshold of the third millennium of Christianity, only to find itself once again in a position of needing others is disturbing. The thought of bishops, religious superiors, and leaders of new lay movements from other countries anticipating the need for missionaries in the United States is even more unsettling. But, like it or not, this local church, like others, has been called by the Spirit for far more than forty years to be and to become a relationally interdependent church that opens itself to missionaries because of its very nature, not simply to 'international ministers' because of its need.

Gradually, ecclesial consciousness regarding this reality is taking hold despite denial, resistance, rage, despair, disbelief, and a generalized lack of preparedness. The church in the United States is no longer, if indeed it ever was, that self-sufficient benefactor church that once welcomed as guests and visitors, priests, religious, seminarians and lay leaders from

Margaret Eletta Guider, O.S.F.

other countries, to study at its universities, colleges, and schools of theology, graciously or begrudgingly inviting them, in the process of their professional training, to share in the ministries of our parishes, our hospitals, our schools, our nursing centers, or our social outreach centers for a year or two. Rather, the church in the United States is now a church in immediate need of the presence, talents, and availability of clergy, religious and laity from other lands and cultures, not only as international ministers, but as committed missionaries. For this reason, it - and we, who are Catholics in the United States must come to terms with our *de facto* status as a missionary-receiving church as well as the trends and movements that have contributed to this status.

For example, the need for pastoral agents from other countries has commonly been associated with either guaranteeing adequate pastoral accompaniment of new immigrants and refugees or the more contentious importation of priests to supply for priestless parishes and chaplaincies. But the needs do not end there. They extend to requests by bishops or heads of religious congregations and institutes of consecrated life for priests, sisters, brothers and lay members to serve in educational institutions, health care facilities, various Catholic social service agencies and relief organizations throughout the country. They further extend to appeals for expatriate clergy, religious and laity to assume positions of administrative leadership in dioceses, religious orders or lay institutes. Though these trends and movements disclose unmet pastoral needs, they also disclose the missionary nature of the church by revealing previously unimagined ministerial possibilities. Mindful of the predictable problems and difficulties associated with acculturation, immigration, ecclesial accountability and personal integrity, it is important to note that these issues and concerns are not unprecedented. They simply go with the territory. If the local churches of India, Brazil, Kenya, and the Philippines have found ways of negotiating these challenges, I suspect that the U.S. church is capable of doing so as well.

All of these missionary dynamics signal a process of ecclesial change and potential transformation that is simultaneously being set in motion by development and demise. These trends and movements reveal countless opportunities for intercultural and transcultural relationships of mutuality, reciprocity and solidarity as well as the scandalous dysfunctions of clericalism, racism and selfishness. They signal growth and vitality in some sectors of the ecclesial arena as well as decline and diminishment in others. To the extent that church leaders may be overwhelmed by the unsettling challenges before them, these trends and movements alert the entire

local church to the urgency and permanent validity of witness, proclamation, dialogue and contemplation --- whether the movement is *to* the ends of the earth or *from* the ends of the earth.

It is important to acknowledge that the Roman Catholic church in the United States is both one and many. While recognizing the complexities of its unity and diversity, it is impossible to ignore those occasions when the church as institution and its representatives have mirrored the kinds of behaviors associated with the unilateralism characterized by much of the world as the *empire* of the United States.⁴¹ To the extent that the church as institution is in any way a direct or indirect beneficiary of the empire's privilege and protection, the church's resistance, slowness or simple inability to enter into genuine relationships of interdependence with the vibrant churches of the two-thirds world surprises few. Further complicating this reality are the external impediments to relationships that are posed by immigration difficulties associated with the Patriot Act following the events of September 11, 2001. Likewise, there are the internal impediments associated with the lack of adequate preparedness on the part of U.S. dioceses, religious orders and lay organizations in the reception, orientation, placement and inculturation of clergy, religious and laity from other countries. Though there may be a willingness to receive men and women as *ministers* from other lands and cultures, those who come with a fully formed consciousness regarding their missionary identity and calling to serve the church in the United States continue to be met with some degree of hesitation or resistance.

Admittedly, the prejudices and fears of the dominant U.S. culture have a part to play in negatively influencing the ecclesial imagination of the church in the United States, but these influences are not the only influences on the church's attitudes and actions. We must not lose sight of the fact that a call to change has been voiced by the world church. Moreover, a response to the call is being made by individuals and communities of faith who are bold and courageous enough to believe that this local church is capable of conversion and exemplifying the prophetic counter-cultural witness of relational interdependence in an age of empire.

Conclusion

Grounded in an incarnational theology of mission, the identity of every missionary is oriented by the example of *Immanuel*, God-with-Us, whose desire to come among us was not predicated on our ignorance, sin or need, but rather moved by love and the desire to be in relationship.⁴² In opening

Margaret Eletta Guider, O.S.F.

ourselves to this theological horizon, the particular significance of missionary activity in the life of the church cannot be rendered indistinguishable from ministry as some would have it, nor can its relevance be exhausted by the *missio ad gentes* as others would have it. In the effort to reaffirm the permanent validity of missionary activity in this new millennium and particularly within the context of the missionary-sending and missionary-receiving church in the USA, an ongoing exploration of the changing face of mission and missionaries is in order. To this end, I would like to conclude by proposing an operating definition:

A missionary is someone who is called to leave her own people so as to make herself available to be sent forth to a people not her own, to bear witness to the Gospel message of Jesus Christ and to do so in two ways. The first way is to experience God's self-communication by allowing oneself to be drawn into revelatory encounters with the people of God. The second way is by allowing God's love, grace, justice and mercy to be drawn out of herself by the people of God so as to become for them a source of revelation through which some yet-to-be-experienced face of God is unveiled and recognized.

This definition articulates the fundamentally relational nature of missionary identity and vocation inasmuch as it emphasizes the interactive and intercultural missionary dynamics of mutual transformation. All too often these dynamics as well as the indispensability of missionaries in the life and renewal of every local church are overlooked, undervalued and deemphasized. This is particularly true when the perceived need for missionaries is associated exclusively with the carrying out of functions or ministries rather than the creation of conditions for mutual relationships that make possible the discovery of God's ongoing revelation and the building up of the Reign of God. In accord with my definition individuals who journey into the lands, cultures and lives of others acting as though the unfathomable mystery of God's revelation already has been fully captured, contained or exhausted are not missionaries in the most complete sense of the word. Sent forth to announce the Good News as they have received it (Matt 28:19), they have yet to grasp the dynamics of the mandate to *know* - through the discoveries of each day and the ongoing revelations of each relationship - the God who is with them always and always doing something new (Matt 28:20; Is 48:6b-7a).

Vocational Identity and the Changing Face of Mission

Appendix One
U.S. Missioners by Region
Statistics of the United States Catholic Mission Association⁴³

	Africa	Near East	Far East	Oceania	Europe	North America	Caribbean	Central America	South America	Totals
1960	781	111	1959	986	203	337	991	433	981	6,782
1975	1065	71	1814	808	37	252	698	734	1669	7,148
1985	986	78	1366	650	31	312	500	692	1441	6,056
1998	714	---9	09--	202	158	2,109	368	----1,	423-----	5,883
2005	636	46	675	150	165	3,165	353	527	678	6,395

U.S. Missioners by Role (outside of U.S. -1960-1985)
U.S. Missioners by Role (Within and Outside of U.S. – 1998-2005)⁴⁴

	Diocesan Priests	Religious Priests	Religious Brothers	Religious Sisters	Seminarians	Lay Persons	Totals
1960	14	3,018	575	2,827	170	178	6,782
1975	197	3,023	669	2,850	65	344	7,148
1985	171	2,500	558	2,505	30	292	6,056
1998	167	1,903	370	2,693	11	739	5,883
2005	136	1,663	366	2,819	9	1,402	6,395

END NOTES

- ¹ Pope John Paul II, *Novo Millennio Ineunte* (6 January 2001) #3. http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_letters/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_20010106_novo-millennio-ineunte_en.html.
- ² See Second Vatican Council, *Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church (Ad Gentes)*, #2 (1965) and Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (*Lumen Gentium*), #1 (1964), in *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, vol. 1, ed. Austin Flannery, O.P. (Northport, NY: Costello Publishing Company, 1998), 814, 350.
- ³ See Karl Rahner, "Toward a Fundamental Theological Interpretation of Vatican II," *Theological Studies* 40 (1979), 716-727.
- ⁴ See David B. Barrett and Todd Johnson, "Status of Global Mission, AD 2006, in Context of 20th and 21st Centuries;" in *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 30:1 (2006):28.
- ⁵ See Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).
- ⁶ See Thomas C. Fox, *Pentecost in Asia: A New Way of Being Church* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2002).
- ⁷ See Pope John Paul II, *Mission of the Redeemer (Redemptoris Missio)*, #85 (7 December 1990). http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encycli

als/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_07121990_redemptoris-missio_en.html (Hereafter, RM). “Cooperating in missionary activity means not just giving but also receiving. All the particular churches, both young and old, are called to give and to receive in the context of the universal mission, and none should be closed to the needs of others.”

- ⁸ See RM, #79-80. Drawing from the reflections of John Piper, it may be helpful to understand and distinguish the respective missionary vocations of “Timothy-type” missionaries and “Paul-type” missionaries. See Pastor John Piper, “Missions and the End of History,” Missions Fest 1997, <http://www.soundofgrace.com/piper97/10-26-97.htm>.
- ⁹ See Pope John Paul II, “Message for World Mission Day 1996”, #3 http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/messages/missions/documents/hf_jp-ii_mes_28051996_world-day-for-missions-1996_en.html.
- ¹⁰ In 1908, the Roman curia removed from the United States its “mission status.” For further discussion of the significance of this move, see Angelyn Dries, O.S.F., *The Missionary Movement in American Catholic History* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1998), 62 ff.
- ¹¹ See Pope John Paul II, RM, #85. “I exhort all the churches, and the bishops, priests, religious and members of the laity, *to be open to the Church's universality*, and to avoid every form of provincialism or exclusiveness, or feelings of self-sufficiency ... The temptation to become isolated can be a strong one.”
- ¹² This familiar statement is attributed to the Sri Lankan theologian and ecumenist, D.T. Niles (1908-1970), former General Secretary of the East Asia Christian Conference. See *Upon the Earth* (New York, McGraw-Hill, 1962). I am grateful to Dr. George R. Hunsberger for this suggestion.
- ¹³ See Stephen B. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2002) 9-15.
- ¹⁴ See William T. Cavanaugh, “Messianic Nation: A Christian Theological Critique of American Exceptionalism,” in the *University of St. Thomas Law Journal* 3:2 (2005) 261-280. In this article, Cavanaugh traces the two types of American exceptionalism. According to the first view “America is the New Israel” in terms of divine election. The second follows a non-theological Enlightenment narrative of America as a nation that “breaks the bond of particularity” by advancing and serving as the model for the “putative universalism of certain concepts of freedom and right” (p. 264-265). In both cases, the United States positions itself in such a way that it is an autonomous actor driven by self-determination and not beholden to other nations by need or law. Such thought is directly relevant to the questions I raise in this paper. I am grateful to Vaughn Fayle for suggesting more investigation of ‘American exceptionalism.’
- ¹⁵ See Conclusions of the Second American Mission Congress (CAM2) and the Seventh Latin American Missionary Congress (COMLA7) as presented at the Fourth Central American Meeting on Mission, Cartago, San José, Costa

Vocational Identity and the Changing Face of Mission

- Rica (February 18, 2004), <http://www.cam2guatemala.org> and <http://www.pom.org.br/Noticias/Eventos/Cam/conclusoesfinais.htm>.
- ¹⁶ See John Paul II, "The Church Is Missionary by her Nature," General Audience, 19 April 1995. http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/audiences/alpha/data/aud19950419en.html.
- ¹⁷ See "Vatican Instructions regarding International Priests" in Dean R. Hoge and Aniendi Okure, *International Priests in America: Challenges and Opportunities* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2006) and the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, *Instruction on the Sending Abroad and Sojourn of Diocesan Priests from Mission Territories* (Vatican City, 2001). http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cevang/documents/rc_con_cevang_doc_20010612_istruzione-sacerdoti_en.html.
- ¹⁸ John Paul II, RM, 34.
- ¹⁹ See Darrell L. Guder and Lois Barrett, eds., *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1998).
- ²⁰ National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *To the Ends of the Earth* (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1986). See <http://www.esccb.org/wm/earth.shtml>.
- ²¹ *To the Ends of the Earth*, #2. See also 1986 Statistics of United States Catholic Mission Association, <http://www.uscatholicmission.org/go/missionersurveystatistics/uscatholicmissionersbyrole>. This figure includes: 206 diocesan priests, 2,473 religious priests, 532 religious brothers, 2,481 religious sisters, 30 seminarians, and 317 lay missionaries.
- ²² See Pope Paul VI, *Evangelization in the Modern World (Evangelii Nuntiandi)*. http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_p-vi_exh_19751208_evangelii-nuntiandi_en.html.
- ²³ See National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and Our Response* (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1984) and *Economic Justice for All: Catholic Social teaching and the U.S. Economy* (Washington, D. C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1986).
- ²⁴ See Stephen B. Bevans and Roger P. Schroeder, *Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2004).
- ²⁵ S. Bevans and R. Schroeder, *Constants in Context*, 323-347.
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*, 286-304.
- ²⁷ *Ibid.*, 305-322.
- ²⁸ See Pope John Paul II, *Tertio Millennio Adveniente* (1994), #38. http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_letters/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_10111994_tertio-millennio-adveniente_en.html.
- ²⁹ See Pope John Paul II, *Ecclesia in America* (1999), #33 http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_22011999_ecclesia-in-america_en.html.
- ³⁰ See CAM-I, "America with Christ, Go Out and Be Salt for the Earth" and CAM-

- II, "Church in America, Your Life Is Mission" http://www.missionsocieties.ca/towards_cam_2.htm.
- ³¹ See Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Dominus Iesus: On the Unicity and Salvific Universality of Jesus Christ and the Church* (2000) http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_2
- ³² Pope John Paul II, *Novo Millennio Ineunte* http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_letters/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_20010106_novo-millennio-ineunte_en.html.
- ³³ See United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Teaching the Spirit of Mission Ad Gentes: Continuing Pentecost Today* (Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2005). <http://www.usccb.org/wm/spiritofmission.shtml>.
- ³⁴ See Barrett and Johnson, "Status of Global Mission, AD 2006, in Context of 20th and 21st Centuries," 28.
- ³⁵ See Pope Benedict XVI, "Faith, Reason and the University: Memories and Reflections," University of Regensburg, 12 September 2006; David Gibson, *The Rule of Benedict* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 2006); Orianna Fallaci, *The Force of Reason* (New York: Rizzoli, 2004), and current events.
- ³⁶ See Appendix One for statistics relating to U.S. foreign and cross-cultural home missionaries.
- ³⁷ See Cathleen Falsani, "Transcript of Cardinal's Homily" *Chicago Sun Times* (31 October 2006) <http://www.suntimes.com/lifestyles/religion/117886,CST-NWS-cardtranscript3.article>.
- ³⁸ Dries, *The Missionary Movement in American Catholic History*, 18.
- ³⁹ See "The Pastoral Letter to the Laity (1829)," in *The National Pastorals of the American Hierarchy 1792-1919*, ed. Peter Guilday (Washington, D.C.: National Catholic Welfare Council, 1923), 23.
- ⁴⁰ See Hoge and Okure, *International Priests in America: Challenges and Opportunities*.
- ⁴¹ See Jon Sobrino, SJ, "The Empire and God," *Where Is God?: Earthquake, Terrorism, Barbarity, and Hope*, trans. Margaret Wilde (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2004) vii-xxi.
- ⁴² See. Margaret Eletta Guider, *Daughters of Rahab* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995) 144-152.
- ⁴³ <http://www.uscatholicmission.org/files/worldwidedistribution.pdf>, p.71.
- ⁴⁴ <http://www.uscatholicmission.org/go/missionersurveystatistics/uscatholicmissionersbyrole>.