

## **MHJ and the Apostolate**

*Jesus in our hands*

*“Our role ought to be a bit like the star which appeared to the Magi in order to lead them to our Lord: once it had shown them the way, it immediately eclipsed itself and disappeared. We must do the same: we must be as stars leading people to our Lord, but we must serve only to show them the way. As soon as we have accomplished this and have helped them experience our Savior, we must disappear; we must withdraw without even wanting them to cast a backward glance at our departure.” Olier*

Our mission is to lead people to Christ by revealing Christ to them. We are called to share the person and the message of Jesus with those who have never before heard the Gospel, as well as with those who need to hear it again. We are dedicated to working toward the renewal of the Church, and the salvation of the world. *‘Evangelism is the Church’s mission, her vocation, her deepest identity,’* and thus it is ours. By our charism we have been imbued with a ‘zeal for the salvation of souls.’ So, whether shouting from the rooftops, or serving in soup kitchens; whether preaching to hundreds, or praying for one; whether mending a broken heart or mending an orphan’s tattered clothes, our apostolate is incarnational evangelism, making Christ manifestly present in the world and establishing His Kingdom in the hearts of all we serve.

Our ways of sharing the Good News are as varied and diverse as our members who communicate it. Some of our members teach; in Catholic schools, in religious education programs, in RCIA classes, in seminars and conferences. Some of us actually preach, in missions both foreign and domestic. Some of us write. Some of us are involved in the propagation of the Gospel through various forms of media. Some of our members work in direct service to the poor. Some of our members spend their days and nights in prayer. But, whether we are distributing the Eucharist in our local parish, or distributing relief supplies in a refugee camp, all of us do so with a profound awareness of the Incarnation. We know that it is Jesus himself who is feeding the hungry and healing the sick. It is Jesus who is rescuing the lost and strengthening the weak. The mystery and the wonder of Christianity is that Emmanuel, God with us, is as real today as it was two thousand years ago – in us! Jesus is continuing his presence and his ministry on earth – through us!

The mission of MHJ is to reveal with our lives and announce with our words the Good News of the Kingdom of God. The distinguishing characteristic of our community is our consciousness of the Incarnation, our resolute focus on the person of Jesus, and his life within us. He is the evangelizer making himself known to others. We are Christ bearers making him present to those who need to experience his love, his acceptance, his compassion, and his touch. Some of us will literally travel to the most distant and remote parts of the earth in furtherance of this mission. Some of us will need to go only as far as our local parish in answer to the Lord’s call. But all of us will serve in the unique capacity and in the particular place that he assigns us with one heart and one, singular intent: that through us others may in a very real and transforming way, in a truly incarnational way, encounter Jesus.

In his great encyclical *Evangelii Nuntiandi* Paul VI reiterated the evangelistic nature of the Church. He reminded us that evangelism is the essential mission entrusted to Her by Jesus. He

reaffirmed that we as Catholic Christians are in our deepest identity, evangelists. It is Paul VI who most clearly explains our vocation, who best describes what we do and, perhaps more importantly, why we do it:

“We wish to confirm once more that the task of evangelizing all peoples constitutes the essential mission of the Church. It is a task and mission which the vast and profound changes of present day society make all the more urgent. Evangelizing is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity. She exists in order to evangelize, that is to say, in order to preach and teach, to be the channel of the gift of grace, to reconcile sinners with God, and to perpetuate the Christ’s sacrifice in the Mass, which is the memorial of His death and glorious resurrection. The Church is linked to evangelization in her most intimate being: She is born of the evangelizing activity of Jesus and the Twelve. She remains a sign--simultaneously obscure and luminous--of a new presence of Jesus, of His departure, and of His permanent presence. She prolongs and continues Him. And it is above all His mission and His condition of being an evangelizer that she is called to continue. For the Christian community is never closed in upon itself. The intimate life of this community—the life of listening to the Word and the apostles’ teaching, of charity lived in a fraternal way, of the sharing of bread—this intimate life only acquires its full meaning when it becomes a witness, when it evokes admiration and conversion, and when it becomes the preaching and proclamation of the Good News. Thus it is the whole Church that receives the mission to evangelize and the work of each individual member is important for the whole.

The Church is an evangelizer, but she begins by being evangelized herself. She is the community of believers, the community of hope lived and communicated, the community of brotherly love, and she needs to listen unceasingly to what she must believe, to her reasons for hoping, to the new commandment of love. She is the People of God immersed in the world, and often tempted by idols, and she always needs to hear of the “mighty works of God” which first converted her to the Lord; she always needs to be called together afresh by Him and reunited. In brief, this means that she has a constant need of being evangelized if she wishes to retain freshness, vigor, and strength in order to proclaim the Gospel. The Second Vatican Council recalled and the 1974 Synod vigorously took up again this theme of the Church which is evangelized by constant conversion and renewal, in order to evangelize the world with credibility. *Evangelii Nuntiandi*; Paul VI.