

Zeal for the Salvation of Souls

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Introduction

Zeal is a fundamental virtue in the life of the Vincentian missionary. It gives a distinctive touch to a person who is in love with God and who is desirous that He be known, loved and served by all.

Zeal for the salvation of souls, today as yesterday, has powerful enemies: the comfortable life of the missionary, individualism and spiritual apathy.

The comfortable life is agreeable, middle class; in a word, selfish; and we justify it by saying we live a culture of wellbeing. The contrary sounds like the dark ages, savage and uncultured. Another enemy is the fear of mortification. For many, just hearing the word “mortification” sounds old fashioned and unsuited to a civilized modern person. Zeal in our days is very much like an eagle that is afraid to launch itself skyward because its vision is blurred and its wings folded in by fear and the lack of hope, of ideals, of faith and love.

Individualism is another enemy. It puts the brakes on communal efforts and can go so far as to damage our apostolic dynamism. It ties the missionary down by reducing him to the space of his own self, and it closes the doors and windows to the Holy Spirit.

Some consecrated people suffer from spiritual apathy which prevents them from moving forward in the way of Jesus with audacity and confidence. A solid interior life is necessary: *“Without an interior life of love, which attracts the Father, the Word and the Spirit towards one (John 14:23), there can be no eyes of faith; life gradually loses its sense, the face of the brothers becomes blurred and it becomes impossible to recognize the face of Christ in them. The events of history remain ambiguous when not hopeless, the apostolic and charitable mission degenerates into a diffuse activity.”*¹

¹ CONGREGATION FOR THE INSTITUTES OF CONSECRATED LIFE AND SOCIETIES OF APOSTOLIC LIFE, *Instruction Walking with Christ: A Renewed Commitment to the Consecrated Life in the Third Millennium*, Editrice Vaticana, Vatican City 2002, no. 25.

But turning the coin over we find missionaries who are lively, generous, filled with lofty ideals, with the keen look of Jesus, able to detect the greatness of every person and what Jesus has done for that person and the goal to which he wishes to lead him. Like St. John, they realize how much the Father has loved the world, so much as to hand over his own Son to save it... how much each person is worth, insignificant as he may seem, for the very Son of God became man to make him happy, even at the cost of shedding his blood, of feeling rejected and suffering death itself at the hands of those He loved so much.

We have in the Congregation missionaries in love with their vocation who live in difficult situations in order to evangelize the poor. Generous missionaries who hand over their lives in order to go wherever their superiors tell them. Missionaries who, each day relight the fire of their zeal for the salvation of souls in the Eucharistic celebration, firing themselves with the words of Christ: *“Do this in memory of me.”*

“We are all witnesses of the lives lived in the interest of charity of many of our brothers; their conformity to the will of God and the joy which they radiate is the best testimony of their faithful love of the crucified Lord and of their collaboration in the spreading of his kingdom. In the infirmaries of our houses are hidden veritable treasures and models of dedication to the evangelizing mission of the church. Previously they worked, perhaps with great acceptance by the people, in the mission fields to which they were assigned; now they share the sufferings of Christ confined to their beds or seated in a wheel chair. From there they demonstrate their faith in Him Whom they themselves once taught, Jesus Christ and Him crucified.”²

Terminology

Meaning of the word “zeal”: etymologically it comes from the Greek word *zelos* or *zeal*; *zeloo* or *to be zealous* or *to be jealous*; *zelotes* meaning *enthusiastic* or *fanatical*.

From the time of the Greek tragic authors, the word *zelos* has meant the *affective inclination towards a person, idea or thing*. Depending on the object desired, we can distinguish two concrete meanings: in the positive sense, *zelos* has the idea of *vehement aspiration, emulation or enthusiasm, admiration* and at times, *praise or glory*. In the negative sense, *zeal* takes on connotations of *jealousy, envy*. According to the context, the verb *zeloo* can be translated to *watch over, to praise, to aspire to, to envy, to be jealous*.

² ANTONIO ORCAJO, *Caminar desde Cristo*, in *Annals* (2002), pg. 443.

In the Septuagint, this group of words describes human feelings only in the later writings, as in Prov. 6:34: “*A husband is never angrier than when he is jealous*”. More frequently the zeal of God himself is spoken of, i.e. the intensity, the seriousness of the commitment God has acquired with human beings. In Ex. 20:5 God presents himself as *jealous*: “*Do not bow down before any idol, because I am the Lord your God, and I tolerate no rivals I am a jealous God.*” In the context of this passage the twofold way of acting of the divine zeal is brought out: on the one hand, it is directed at evil doers, to punish them; on the other hand, it is directed toward those who fear God, to show them his mercy (Is. 63:15). The exclusive character of God’s relationship with Israel is manifest in that he feels *jealous* in the face of Israel’s infidelity (Ez. 16:38; 23:25) which is often presented under the image of adultery.

The New Testament does not just criticize reprehensible zeal from an ethical point of view, but also zeal for the Law. So St. Paul distances himself from his former zeal “*devoted to the traditions of our ancestors*” (Gal. 1:14). It was precisely his zeal for God (Acts 22:3) that made him a persecutor of the church (Phil. 3:6). Looking backwards, he recognizes that in acting like a pious Israelite, he acted wrongly, as did the majority of the Jews of his time (Rom. 10:2).

So then, what is condemned is not zeal itself. On the contrary, Paul himself urges people to be zealous because zeal is good if it is for Christ; Christ himself was zealous for God: “*His disciples recalled that it was written: zeal for your house devours me*” (John 2:17). Thus missionary zeal that concerns itself for others is explicitly praised: “*It is good to have such deep interest if the purpose is good*” (Gal. 4:18). And in II Cor. 11:2 Paul shows a jealous love for the church of Corinth, analogous to Yaweh’s for Israel (Deut. 4:24). He affirms: “*I am jealous for you just as God is; you are like a pure virgin whom I have promised in marriage to one man only, Christ himself.*” There is also another kind of zeal which concerns itself with the welfare of others (II Cor. 7:7, 9:2), and for their good behavior and good works.

Zeal in St. Thomas Aquinas

To understand it we will study the three elements that make it up according to St. Thomas: its cause, its formal reason (essence) and its effect.

Its **cause** is charity itself or the love of God and the neighbor, for zeal has to do with both. But not all charity or love produces zeal as its fruit: this divine plant only produces flowers and fruit when its life is vigorous and brimming with sap. Or as Thomas says: the intensity, the fervor and the strength of love are the cause of zeal.

Its **formal reason**, or its essence, is the sadness which that fervent affection causes us when we see the goods that are lacking when love is so deep-to God or to the neighbor. Thus the soul of zeal, its great suffering which increases as zeal grows, is not seeing in the loved one all the goods and interior perfections which our love so strongly desires for it.

Zeal considered as the **effect** of that great charity and of that sadness can be defined as: "*A movement of the irascible appetite against that which the good of the other entails.*" It is resolved in the struggle to acquire for the beloved those goods desired for it, and therefore, in the combat against all those who offend or despise the goods and perfections of the loved one.

There is no variety of love, if it is strong and passionate, that does not produce zeal: *concupiscent or carnal love* produces jealousy, the unleashed fury which enters into a fight to the death against those who dispute the total possession of the heart where you have placed your delights and pleasures. *Self-love*, love of one's own glory and excellence, engenders its own brand of jealousy. The serpent of envy which poisons and corrodes the heart with the dark pain of seeing another triumph and achieve the happiness and honors which you do not have, but ardently wish for. The *noble love of benevolence and friendship* is crowned by the royal diadem of true zeal: the generous sorrow of seeing a friend, a loved one, deprived of some good or prerogative, or something owed to him by right.³

Truly Christian love of God and neighbor is not the movement of the sensitive appetite toward a useful or desirable earthly object, nor the mere tending of the rational will toward an honorable good of God or man. It must be pure affection, i.e. we love God and our fellow man because of the previous choice of our intelligence; we have chosen to love these two objects because of the appreciation and the high esteem we have for them, both for them and for the goods we desire for them. It is not a question, then, of wishing for them goods or temporal or earthly advantages, in themselves so worthless that charity does not apply to them; but rather divine goods and treasures whose value is immense and infinite.

For God, the external good of his glory and honor among his intellectual and free creatures and the fulfillment of his most holy will-both of which things are frequently lacking among men who offend and insult him. And for man, eternal life and grace, goods which he may not possess or lose.

The different functions of zeal consist in extending among men the glory of God and the accomplishment of his holy will and leading

³ Cf. ST. THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa Theologica*, 1, 2, question 28, Article 4.

souls to their ultimate end. Jesus Christ condensed all these ideals in the "Our Father": cause God's name to be sanctified, his reign to come to us, his will to be done on earth as in heaven, that he forgive our sins as we forgive others, and that he not allow us to fall into temptation.

There is in the gospel no event, word, gesture or step of the Redeemer that is not directed to these ends. The infinite activities of the God-man, summed up in saving souls and extending the reign and glory of the eternal Father. And today, seated at the right hand of God in the highest "*he intercedes for us*" (Rom 8:34), and he will only abandon this work after having placed the enemies of God and of souls as the footstool under his feet.

Zeal needs initiative, attack, the ability to face different kinds of situations, to understand a world that thinks differently, to interpret the need of those who seem far off, to enter into the profound desire for truth, justice and God there is in every person and make it explicit. This activity is specified here and there in the New Testament.⁴

Zeal springs up from the recognition of de-Christianization, from the desire of Jesus Christ who came to bring fire to the earth and wishes that it spread.

Zeal comes from being illumined and on fire with the love of Christ. That light radiates rays. A person illumined by the doctrine and life of Christ can arouse in another person the desire to know and to live as the other lives.

Zeal is dynamism. Being a witness of the faith is making known our own relationship to Jesus Christ to the person we are speaking to.

Zeal comes from appreciation one has of the other person and from the power used in defending and protecting him above any situations. Zeal makes talents and gifts of God more powerful and fruitful.

Zeal is not to be confused with ambition or exhibitionism. The person who is zealous for the glory of God and the salvation of people is grounded in love and humility.

"Zeal gives rise to the energy to promote the reign of God; it awakens an affective and effective enthusiasm to evangelize the poor."⁵

⁴ Cf. CARLO MARIA MARTINI, *El evangelizar en San Lucas*, Paulinas, Bogota 1983, pg. 18.

⁵ CONGREGATION OF THE MISSION, *Instruction on Stability, Chastity, Poverty and Obedience*, in *Vincentiana* (1996), 6.

Zeal in St. Vincent de Paul

If it is true that in the early years of his youth, Vincent de Paul was not seeking the glory of God and the salvation of souls, but rather his own and his family's interest, it is also clear that once he entered upon the road of ongoing conversion, he progressed in such a way that he reached the greatest heights in his transformation into "another Christ."

He kept the example of Our Lord Jesus Christ always before him. It was his rule, the measure of his thoughts, words, actions, omissions, feelings, loves, intentions, etc. He used to say to his missionaries: *"What a great enterprise it is to put on the spirit of Christ."* And he added that the Spirit of Christ is the Holy Spirit poured into the hearts of the just, who lives in them and creates in them the dispositions and inclinations that Christ had on earth: *"When it is said: 'The spirit of Our Lord is in this person or those works', how should we understand this? Does it mean the Holy Spirit has poured himself out upon them? Yes, with regard to his person, he pours himself out on the just and dwells personally in them. When it is said the Holy Spirit acts in a person, that means that this Spirit, while residing in him, gives him the same inclinations and dispositions that Jesus Christ had on earth, and these help him act, I don't say with the same perfection, but according to the measure of the gifts of this divine Spirit."*⁶

The zeal born from the love for God moves us to hand over our life: *"Whoever wishes to save his life, my brothers, will lose it: Jesus Christ himself assures us of that when he tells us there is no greater act of love than giving one's life for a friend. And what? Do we have a greater friend than God? Are we not to love all that he loves, and have, for love of him, our neighbor as our friend? Would we not be unworthy of the life God gives us, if we refused to use it for so worthy a motive? Surely, as we recognize that we owe our life to his generous hand, we would commit an injustice if we refused to use it and consume it according to his designs, in imitation of his Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ..."*⁷

"St. Vincent learned from de Berulle that his priesthood was much more than a way to guarantee himself an easy life. But later he learned, led by the Spirit and its demand, something that never passed through Berulle's learned head: that the priest, participating in the eternal priesthood of the Incarnate Word, is, just as the Incarnate Word was, responsible for man's material and spiritual redemption. Or, in other words, that the priest is not just the man for the liturgy, common

⁶ SV XII, 108; ES XI, 411.

⁷ SV XI, 49; ES XI, 739.

prayer and the sacraments, but rather he is responsible for the true material and spiritual good of society.”⁸

St. Vincent writes to the Canon of Saint-Martin: “The priests of this age have every motive to fear the judgments of God, because, aside from their own sins, he will hold them responsible for the sins of the people; for they have not tried to appease his justice as they were obliged to do. And what’s worse, he will hold them responsible for the punishments he sends because they do not oppose the plagues that afflict the church such as the epidemics, war, hunger and heresy.”⁹

In a conference St. Vincent praised the zeal of Fr. Jean Le Vacher. He had been expelled from Tunis; and when it was known that he had returned he says: “He has returned, and the poor went out to meet him. Those poor people did not know what to do to show him their joy. He is their savior; he is their savior. And if there are angels the Lord sends to purgatory to console the souls, in the same way, etc.... Fathers, whoever says missionary says savior; we have been called to save souls. That is why we are here. Are we fulfilling this obligation as we should? Are we saving souls?”¹⁰

For St. Vincent, zeal consists in imitating Christ the Redeemer: “Whoever says missionary, says a man called by God to save souls; because our purpose is to work for their salvation in imitation of Our Lord Jesus Christ who is the only true redeemer who perfectly fulfilled the meaning of that sweet name of Jesus which means Savior. He came from heaven to earth to carry out that task; and he made it the purpose of his life and death, continually exercising the quality of Savior by the communication of the merits of the blood he poured out. While he lived on earth, he directed all his thoughts to the salvation of men, and still has these same sentiments for that is where God’s will lies. He came and he comes for this every day; and by his example he has taught us all the virtues necessary to his quality as Savior. And so let us hand ourselves over to Him, so He might continue that same quality in us and through us.”¹¹

St. Vincent insists on living a zeal which means being disposed to lose everything and give one’s life: “Here is a beautiful field of endeavor which God opens for us both in Madagascar and in the Hebrides as well as other places. Let us ask God to inflame our hearts with the desire to serve Him; let us give ourselves to Him to do whatever He wants. St. Vincent Ferrer was encouraged thinking that

⁸ JAIME CORERA, *Diez estudios vicencianos*, CEME, Salamanca 1983, 302-303.

⁹ SV V, 568; ES V, 541.

¹⁰ SV XI, 321; ES XI, 217.

¹¹ LOUIS ABELLY, *La Vie du Venerable Serviteur de Dieu Vincent de Paul*, Book III, ch. 8, sec 2, pgs. 89-90.

priests would come who, with the fire of their zeal, would inflame the whole world (Luke 12:49). If we do not deserve that God grant us the grace to be those priests, let us beg him that at least he make us their images and precursors; but, come what may, let us be certain that we will not be true Christians until we are willing to lose everything, and to give up even our lives for the love and glory of Jesus Christ, determined with the holy apostle to choose torment and death ahead of being separated from the love of our Divine Savior” (Rom. 8:35-39).¹²

Praise of Missionary Work

“Our Lord, with the words ‘Seek first the kingdom of God’ (Mat. 28:19) recommends to us that we have God reign in us and then cooperate with Him to extend and broaden his reign for the conquest of souls. Is it not a great honor for us to have been called to carry out such a great and important work? Is it not doing the work of angels who work only and continually to make God’s kingdom grow? Is there a condition more desirable than ours since we are to live and work for no other reason than to establish among us and to increase and make grow the kingdom of God? What reason could there be, my brothers, for not responding worthily to such a holy and sanctifying vocation?”¹³

In the conference of August 22, 1659 which treats of the five fundamental virtues of the missionary, he speaks of zeal in this way: “Zeal is the fifth maxim and it consists in the pure desire to become pleasing to God and useful to our neighbor. Zeal for extending God’s kingdom, zeal for procuring the neighbor’s salvation. Is there anything in the world more perfect? If the love of God is a fire, zeal is its flame; if love is a sun, zeal is its ray. Zeal is what is purest in God’s love.”¹⁴ And he added: “Let us place our hand on our heart. Do we feel this desire within us? If we do, what happiness! If we do not feel it, let us be ashamed and recognize that we are not missionaries, for true missionaries are simple, humble, mortified and full of zeal for the work”¹⁵

Vices Contrary to Zeal

For St. Vincent, the vices that go against zeal are many: insensibility, comfort, laziness, idleness and half-heartedness.

In the conference of August 29, 1659 on the maxims contrary to the gospel maxims, he says: “Insensibility means that the corporal and

¹² LOUIS ABELLY, *op. cit.*, Bk. III, ch. 10, pg. 101.

¹³ LOUIS ABELLY, *op. cit.*, Bk. III, pg. 32.

¹⁴ SV XII, 307.

¹⁵ SV XII, 308.

spiritual miseries of our neighbor make no impression on us; one has no charity, no zeal; one does not feel the offenses against God. Let us not be among those missionaries who have no zeal. When they send them to the missions, they go. When they must work with ordinands, they work. When they work with retreatants, they do so. But how do they do it? Where is their zeal? Their zeal is extinguished by insensibility. Let us strive, then, to fill ourselves with the spirit of zeal; let us carry out all the works of our institute and let us do so with zeal, with courage, with fervor. Let us be compassionate to so many souls who are perishing and let us not permit insensibility and laziness be the cause of our perdition.”¹⁶

To a cleric of the Congregation, Jean De Fricourt, who wrote to St. Vincent telling him he was full of doubts and had no feeling either for the rules or the exercises, he answers: *“To my way of thinking, this is cowardice of the will and laziness of the spirit for the things God asks of us. This does not surprise me since all men are naturally in this situation. And if you ask me: what is the difference between them, since some are zealous and others slack, my answer is that the former overcome better than the latter the repugnance of nature, and that the latter do not make the effort to overcome them; that the former live in peace since their heart is not divided because they have given it all to God, while the latter are restless since, while wanting to love God, do not cease loving other things that are not God; and these other things are the satisfactions of the body which make the soul resistant to the practice of virtue. This is what produces and nourishes laziness which is the vice of ecclesiastics. It is the state which most appalls God. Surely half-heartedness is a state of condemnation. My dear brother, how many motives do we not have to tremble, you and I, knowing that he is damned who negligently does God’s work. So decide once and for all, my dear brother, to overcome your lack of interest. Frequently ask God for the grace to subjugate your lower nature. Retreat time is coming; I hope yours helps you to distance yourself completely from the pleasures of the present life and motivate yourself to reach eternity.”¹⁷*

After his experience in Folleville-Chattillon, St. Vincent feels the joy there is in evangelizing the poor. Zeal for him is the joy of sharing. *“What happiness, Fathers, what happiness! To do that which Our Lord came from heaven to earth to do.”¹⁸* *“We have been chosen by God as instruments of His great and fatherly love, which is to reign and grown in souls. If we but knew what this holy surrender is! We will*

¹⁶ SV XII, 321.

¹⁷ ST. VINCENT, *Lettre*, Vol. 4 (1658-1660), Imprime par Pillet et Domoulin, Paris 1880, Sp. 100-101.

¹⁸ SV XIII, 4 324.

*never fully understand it in this life, for if we understood it, we would act very differently, at least I, miserable as I am, would! Therefore our vocation consists in going not just to one parish or one diocese, but to the entire world. What for? To inflame the hearts of all men, to do what the Son of God did, who came to bring fire to the earth and inflame it with his love. What more could we desire but that it burn and consume everything? My dear brothers, reflect upon this a little. It is true that I have been sent not just to love God, but to make Him loved. It is not enough for me to love God, if my neighbor does not love Him.”*¹⁹

Zeal's burning love has no limits because it imitates the heart of Jesus Christ: *“Fathers and Brothers, we are to have within us this disposition and this wish to suffer for God and for the neighbor, to consume ourselves for them. How happy are those to whom God gives these dispositions and desires! Yes, Fathers, it is necessary to place ourselves totally at the service of God and the service of the people... consume ourselves for this, give our lives for this, strip ourselves to clothe ourselves anew.”*²⁰ *Let us ask God to give the Company this spirit, this heart that will make us go anywhere, this heart of the Son of God, this heart of Our Lord which disposes us to go as He would go and as he would have gone if his eternal wisdom had judged it necessary, to go to preach conversion to the poor nations. That is why he sent the apostles and he sends us to them, to bring his fire everywhere.... Let us all ask God for this spirit for the Company, a spirit that carries us everywhere, so that when one sees one or two missionaries, he can say: ‘Here are apostolic men willing to go to the four corners of the world to bring the word of God.’”*²¹

The Heart of Zeal

Entering into the heart of people full of zeal for the salvation of all, people like Vincent de Paul, Louise de Marillac, Francis Xavier, Therese of the Child Jesus, Francis Regis Clet, Jean Gabriel Perboyre, Frederick Ozanam, Mark Antonio Durando, etc., we find something common to all of them: the missionary spirit. This is the spirit Jesus promised to his disciples: *“Remain in the city until you are clothed with the power from on high”* (Luke 24:49). He told them to await the promise of the Father *“... you will receive the force of the Holy Spirit which will come upon you and you will be my witnesses... to the ends of the earth”* (Acts 1:4-8). Jesus explained his power with these words: *“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me; He has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor”* (Luke 4:18). *“Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned*

¹⁹ SV XII, 262; ES XI, 553.

²⁰ SV XI, 402; ES XI, 281.

²¹ SV XII, 286-287; ES XI, 190.

to the banks of the Jordan and let himself be lead by the Spirit through the desert... Jesus returned to Galilee with the power of the Spirit" (Luke 4:1-14). John the Baptist carried out his mission with great zeal because "he was full of the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb" (Luke 1:15). On Pentecost morning the apostles were filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:4-41). Paul of Tarsus became the apostle of the Gentiles after Ananias imposed hands on him and prayed that he be filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 9:17).

The Second Vatican Council began to work after Blessed John XXIII asked the whole church to open the windows to the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the soul of the church, the one who keeps the flame of zeal alive and burning in the hearts of missionaries and urges them on to carry out the work of the integral evangelization of all. It is he who gives the courage, the decision, the generous action, the strong and constant impulse to be in the vanguard of evangelization in the church. And so zeal can be called courage to evangelize, missionary impulse, love capable of everything, creative spirit, love without limits. "Zeal gives rise to the energy to promote the kingdom of God, it awakens an affective and effective enthusiasm for the evangelization of the poor."²²

Zeal has to do with celibate love. "By celibacy, the missionary renounces sharing his life with just one person, so in that way he can dedicate himself more fully to the mission: 'In this way we open the heart more fully to God and the neighbor'" (C 29 & 2). "In this way we are freer to fulfill the demands that the evangelization of the poor supposes. The commitment to chastity consists in using that freedom to dedicate oneself fully to the end of the Congregation, for (that commitment) helps us to channel our physical, spiritual and affective energies towards an effective dedication to the preaching of the gospel and a closer personal relationship with the poor."²³

Evangelii Nuntiandi warns us about the ties that can hold back apostolic zeal: "Do not let the bonds of flesh and blood, nor the affection you justly feel for the homeland where you were born and learned to love Christ become ties which diminish your freedom."²⁴

Apostolic zeal leads to the acceptance of the pain which the loving solidarity with our brothers who suffer brings about, making us one with them and bringing the gospel to them even to the giving of our life, working for the kingdom of God. "In the light of revelation and Christian experience, spiritual formation possesses the

²² CONGREGATION OF THE MISSION, *Instruction on Stability, Chastity, Poverty and Obedience*, in *Vincentiana* (1996), pg. 6.

²³ CONGREGATION OF THE MISSION, *op. cit.*, pg. 23.

²⁴ PAUL VI, Apostolic Exhortation. *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, December 8, 1975, no. 69.

unmistakable originality which derives from evangelical 'newness.' Indeed, it 'is the work of the Holy Spirit and engages a person in his totality. It introduces him to a deep communion with Jesus Christ, the good shepherd, and leads to the total submission of one's life to the Spirit, in a filial attitude toward the Father and a trustful attachment to the Church. Spiritual formation has its roots in the experience of the cross, which in deep communion leads to the totality of the paschal mystery.'"²⁵

Meditative and prayerful reading of the word of God. It is humble and loving listening that becomes eloquent. Indeed, in the light of and with the power of the Word of God one discovers, understands, loves and is able follow his own vocation and also fulfill his own mission.²⁶

Communion with God is a gift and a fruit of the sacraments; and, at the same time, it is a duty and responsibility the sacraments entrust to the freedom of the believer, so that he may live that communion in the decisions, options, attitudes and actions of his daily life. In this sense, the "grace" which makes Christian life "new" is the grace of Jesus Christ, who died and rose, who continues to pour out his Holy and Sanctifying Spirit in the sacraments.²⁷ The Spirit moves us to draw inspiration for our missionary life from the example, first of all of Jesus, and afterwards, to imitate the example of so many brothers, near and far, who have lived and are living their missionary zeal without hypocrisy in the simple, humble, faithful and persevering exercise of their missionary ministry wherever obedience has sent them. Prayer is the oxygen for the missionary's lungs. It leads him to contemplate the face of Christ, the missionary of the Father, and to receive from the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit, the love which warms his missionary soul.

(JOSEPH V. CUMMINS, C.M., translator)

²⁵ JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Exhortation. *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, March 25, 1992, no. 45.

²⁶ Cf. *Ibidem*, no. 47.

²⁷ Cf. *Ibidem*, no. 48.