

Challenges of Contextual Mission in « a world torn apart »

African perspective

My task is to present an African perspective on the topic “Challenges of Contextual Mission in a world torn apart”. This perspective will be based on the African Christology.

I would like to thank Oberkirchenrat Dr. Ulrich Möller and the entire organizing committee for the invitation to contribute to the discussion on the Mission today in view of the challenges of the 21st century.

From its beginnings in the 15th century to the present, the mission of churches in Africa has been contextual and holistic. It has been confronted with the tears that have caused cries, tears and suffering on the continent and elsewhere.

Today, mission is constantly seeking credibility by responding to the many challenges, namely the issue of enculturation, bad governance, the weak rule of law, the critique of globalization-driven neoliberalism and modern slavery, the issue of environmental protection and sustainable development, diseases (Covid-19, Ebola, HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis, . . .), the situation of refugees and internally displaced persons, economic wars, sexual violence and rape as a weapon of war, the deployment of children in armed conflict, agricultural production and mining, the fight against corruption, violations of human rights, limitations of freedom, poverty and unemployment, social inequalities, etc. and by advocating for a fairer, more sustainable world and a world close to the spirit of the Gospel.

Christology at the Service of contextual Mission

African Christology has made a significant contribution to the development of contextual mission and has helped it to meet the challenges of a divided world. Churches in Africa and the interest in Christianity are growing. However, the challenges remain. How can faith in Christ be used to meet the many and persistent challenges?

Many Christological images have developed in Africa. I chose five of them, namely: - Jesus, the priest and the prophet; Jesus, the therapist; Jesus, the leader; Jesus, the guest, and Jesus, the liberator.

Jesus, the Prophet and Priest (Douglas Waruta/Kenya) is sent by God. Through his words and his wisdom, he maintains the cohesion of society. As a prophet, Jesus encourages people by His word and leads them to an optimal life. As a priest, he communicates his wisdom to bring people together, to reconcile them with each other, to forgive and to pray for them.

This image inspires the churches in their prophetic mission by denouncing in their preaching or declarations situations of injustice and oppression. At the same time, they developed the ministry of comfort, hope and prayer that mentions the real needs of people, their sufferings, and their hopes. Also emotions have a place in worship.

Jesus, the Therapist (Cécé Kolie/Guinée) is the image that is supported by the many biblical accounts. It sharpens the conviction to recognize the power of Jesus to heal the sick, together with the gift of healing in the community. The Church is experienced as a healing community, through liturgical, pastoral and diaconal ministries that focus on those who suffer, are sick and weak so that they may experience healing in the name and through Jesus Christ.

The mission for the holistic health of people explains the association of evangelization with the construction of hospitals and the fight against diseases. Wars and armed conflicts and sexual violence, rape and other traumas that accompany them have led to the intensification of mission, accomplished by Dr. Mukwege, Nobel Peace Prize (2018) with passion and self-sacrifice.

Jesus, the Leader (F. Kabasele/DR Congo) symbolizes the identity and unity of the people. He makes God's people a family, which he leads with love, compassion and responsibility. This image is a mandate against dictatorship, bad governance and any oppressive system, for responsible, democratic, transformative leadership that promotes justice, peace, human rights and sustainable development, protects the environment and serves life.

Jesus, the Guest par excellence (Enyi Benn) Udoh/Nigeria) is the image that has boosted the acceptance of Christ in Africa. The guest is received with honor and special attention. This image, which is based on African solidarity and hospitality, is the basis of mission to solidarity with the weak, the integration of the marginalized and the inclusion of the excluded. It serves as an attitude in the fight against discrimination and exclusion. Churches have long provided assistance to refugees, internally displaced people and offered shelter to the homeless.

Jesus, the Liberator (Jean-Marc Ella/Cameroon). Mission as liberation through Christ has enabled the Church to speak out, act and accompany the various movements for liberation, political independence, women's emancipation, anti-apartheid and dictatorships, against violence, etc. and to commit itself to the promotion of human rights, economic justice, climate justice, sustainable development, health promotion, and social justice, education, advocacy on behalf of the marginalized,

Conclusion

Let me come to an end with this quotation from the Archbishop Desmond Tutu:

"The God whom Jesus came to proclaim was anything but neutral. He took the side of the oppressed, the poor, the exploited, not because they were more holy or morally better than their oppressors. No, he was on their side only because they were oppressed. "

Considering the tears in the world, the cries and the suffering by which they are caused, gives credibility and guarantees the quality of mission. It is a theological and ecclesiological model that provides a framework for practice in order to receive, thematize, express and pass on these cries caused by the torn beings of the world.

Through its theology, its preaching, its liturgy, its prayers, its songs, actions and institutions, the church becomes the catalyst for liberation, in solidarity and unity. And for the glory of God and the well-being of all and all creation.