



October 2016

## LAY-SALVATORIANS MISSION

*Dear sisters and brothers,*

after a well deserved break and a rest period in September, we are back with our monthly letter to the units.

Here in Belgium, October is the month for Missions and that gave me the idea to try to about our mission as Salvatorians and specifically as Lay Salvatorians.

When we talk about Mission at once thought is of development in countries where material poverty prevails or of preaching in countries where a religion other than Christianity predominates.

When Father Jordan has talked about saving souls, we must situate it at the time when he wrote this. For people to know Christianity is important, but we all know that for someone who has physical needs it is difficult to focus hard on the mental ones. Of course all this is included in mission, but it is important that we understand mission is much more than that.

Every human being on this earth has its own mission in life. As Christians and more specifically as Salvatorian Christians to live this assignment, this task, this mission, has to do with Jesus Christ as expressed in John 17.3: *"This is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God and Him whom Thou have sent, Jesus Christ."*

This was the first mission of the apostles. Therefore it isn't surprising that Father Jordan called his first foundation "Apostolic Teaching Society." He writes in his rule from 1884: *"... proclaim the Word of God, love always, rebuke with all patience and instructing. Go and speak with patience all the words of eternal life to the people..."* Blessed Mary of the Apostles notes in her letter of June 28, 1900: *"Yes, this apostolic spirit we, all of us, more and more are trying to acquire."*

As Salvatorian Christians we have therefore the intention to act in the footsteps of the apostles. How did they fulfill their mission? We find some answers in the Book of Acts as well as the letters which follow in the New Testament. Here we find four emphases: proclaim Christ, form community, prayer and celebrate each other "diakonia".

### 1. Proclaim:

This means in the first place continue to say that Jesus is alive. With his death all is not finished. As Risen Lord his spirit lives further in and between us. The first people who experienced this were the apostles at Pentecost. In Acts 2 we read that the early Christians responded to this faith. We read: *"They devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles who relied on their belief in the resurrection of Jesus, the Messiah."*

### 2. Form Community:

Also in Acts 2 we read: *"They were faithful to the common life"* and in Acts 4: *"They were of one heart and soul."* In addition to the Word (see proclaim) community life is a fundamental TESTIMONY of Christian life. However, this does not mean that we have to be clones of each other.

It is important that we take into account different cultures and the time in which we live. Yet it is very important that we try to find points of unity in all this diversity which makes us distinct from other groups.

### 3. To pray and celebrate:

In Acts 2 we read: *"They were diligent in the breaking of bread (Eucharist) and their visit to the temple (prayer)."* We must assume that we can't do this on our own, the help of our Lord and Savior is needed. That is why it is so important that we remember him regularly in the Eucharist and pray to him for courage and strength to keep this up.

### 4. Servitude or diakonia:

One last point in our mission is service. Acts 2 says, *"They were united in the sharing of their goods"* and Acts 4: *"They had everything in common."* This means for us to share has to be one of the important points in our daily lives. Sharing what we have, not only in material terms, but also our knowledge and especially our spiritual life.

Here I would like to mention that the old Europe is suffering particularly at this time of spiritual poverty. So it is important that we do not write off the "rich" Europe from mission territory. In this connection it can be noted that we are confronted with the challenge to proclaim the gospel in a world that provides similar challenges as that of Fr. Jordan's times but the language has turned into another one. There are people everywhere still searching for answers on the burning questions of their life and time. Cute phrases or fine words alone will not help - they sound antiquated and unrealistic and do not touch the hearts. Therefore if we think on "mission", a listening ear and a sensitive conversation is needed, so that Christian values do not continue to disappear. In principle "Mission" follows the same goal everywhere. But it depends on the region, mentality, history, education and so on which tool is needed that campaigns are effective and targeted in order to reach the general public and particularly young people.

In closing, I would like to come back to the theme of this letter: How do we see our mission as Lay Salvatorians today and how we can fulfill this mission?

Wherever we live and work in this world, we will always have to take into account the spirit of the times and the culture in which we live. There is no ready answer for each of us individually, but what we certainly can do is support each other's projects running all over the [planet] world and keep contacts alive so that community can grow around the world.

Yours sincerely,

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