

The Harvest is Abundant but the Labourers are Few” (Lk 10:2): The Challenges of the Evangelizing Mission and the Pastoral Care of Vocations

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Abstract

It is already more than two thousand years since Jesus said, “The harvest is abundant, but the labourers are few.” (Lk 10:2). Over the course of centuries, the Church has risen to this challenge, yet the task is far from being accomplished. In fact, with the increasing world population, growth of other religions, secularism, and even dwindling religious fervour in some Christian territories, the mission of the Church has become even more daunting. The labour is indeed abundant, but where are the labourers? This article examines the nature of the evangelizing mission of the Church in the contemporary world and the agents available for this mission. The article examines the causes of the shortage of agents, reveals the imbalance sometimes present in the distribution of agents and suggests ways for the church to harness the strength of the different groups in the Church. Since the salvation of souls is the mission to be accomplished, this task can be better accomplished when everyone is co-responsible and sees themselves in communion with one another and see the mission of the Church as theirs. The task of pastoral care is to educate all members of the Church to key into the mission of the Church, which is the mission of Christ.

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Keywords: Evangelizing mission, Agents, Contemporary challenges, Vocations, Coresponsibility, Synodality.

Introduction

The history of the world is the story of God's involvement in the life of humanity to redeem people from eternal damnation. "When the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to ransom those under the law, so that all might receive adoption." (Gal 4: 4-5) This purpose, Jesus himself concretized when he said "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord." (Lk 4:18) For three years, Jesus went about actualizing the goal of his life. To accomplish his purpose, among other things the apostles (Lk 9: 1-6) and the disciples (Lk 10:1-12), he established his Church on these men so that they may continue in perpetuity his saving mission. Hence, the mission of the Church today cannot be different from the mission of Christ. Would there always be enough agents to continue the mission of Christ and his Church? This is the focus of the present paper, reflecting on the assertion of Christ about the abundance of the harvest yet with few labourers. In much of Africa, it has been observed that while it is true that the harvest is abundant, it is equally true that the labourers are many. How do we assess the situation and safeguard the blessing of abundant vocations to the Consecrated life and the Priesthood in a world some parts of the world while the harvest has become few, and the field continues to experience dwindling number of labourers in much of Europe and North America.

What is the Evangelizing mission of the Church?

The task of continuing the mission of Jesus in the world is otherwise known as evangelization and is rooted in the words of Jesus "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you." (Mt 28:19-20). This evangelizing mission is not a one-dimensional event, it is multi-faceted. According to Raymond Brown, the term evangelization has been used to designate Christian proclamation of the good news brought about by

Jesus through his redemptive work.² For Paul VI, evangelization is the task of “Bringing the Good News into all the strata of humanity, and through its influence transforming humanity from within and making it new.”³ The Pontiff asserts that evangelization is the special grace and vocation of the Church because “The Church exists to preach the gospel, that is to preach and teach the word of God so that through her the gift of grace may be given to us, sinners may be reconciled to God, and the sacrifice of the Mass, the memorial of his glorious death and resurrection, may be perpetuated.”⁴ To further shed more light on the essentials of evangelization, the Church talks of both primary and secondary evangelization.

Primary evangelization is the task of reaching out to peoples and cultures that have never known Christ and his gospel. This is *missio ad gentes*, mission to non-Christians. Then we can also talk of secondary evangelization or *missio ad intra*, that is mission to people who have already received the good news and the grace of baptism. Through continuing evangelization, such people receive pastoral care that enables them to place their lives ever more fully under the influence of the gospel. In today’s world, third dimension has been added since the emergence of what is called “The New Evangelization.” This deals with the re-evangelization of those who have fallen away or allowed their faith to grow cold.⁵ Evangelization, in essence is the totality of what the Church does to promote and propagate the kingdom of God on earth. It is thus much more than preaching and teaching and to it must be added the Church’s ministry of catechizing, educating, administration of the Sacraments, charitable works, and social justice apostolate in all its dimensions. All these are truly part and parcel of the evangelizing mission of the Church.

The Mission of the Disciples

Since the mission of Jesus must continue as long as there are human beings to be saved, before the end of his mission, he chose various helpers to continue this

² Raymond. E. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, Theological Publications, Bangalore, 1997, 99.

³ Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, *Evangelization in the Modern World*, 8 December 1975, no.18.

⁴ *Ibid*, no.14.

⁵ Cf. John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, *On the permanent validity of the Church’s missionary mandate*, 7 December 1990, no.33.

mission, these are otherwise known as disciples and apostles. While the apostles were his closest collaborators and had lived with him and witnessed his execution of his mission (Mt 10: 1-15, Mk 6: 6-13 Lk 6: 12-16), the disciple is a term usually reserved for a more amorphous group, to designate those who followed him other than the apostles and in Luke, it was used to designate the group of seventy-two⁶ also sent on mission by Jesus. (Lk 10: 1-12, 17-20) The fact that Luke devoted some time to the treatment of the seventy[two] disciples shows that they play a unique role in the early beginning of the Church. They are thus essential agents in the evangelizing mission of Christ. The seventy-two were prepared by Christ to bear witness to him and his ministry.

Since only Luke treated the mission of the Seventy-two, it is important to examine this pericope. The pericope deals with the appointment, sending out and the condition for their ministry. First, there is a lot of work to be done and Jesus alone cannot be expected to do the work. He chose the Twelve, yet he chose the seventy-two thereafter to make us aware that the harvest is indeed abundant (Lk10:2) There is a feeling of urgency! With all harvest, some work had been done of the field, the land has yielded good harvest. The crop must be harvest and brought in, otherwise they may be pillaged, or some may even begin to rot. The harvest is time bound. There is no time to waste. These images Luke used to describe the mission before the Seventy-two, when in actual fact the mission is of spiritual essence. The mission of Jesus is of a spiritual nature, and the agricultural imagery paints for the disciples, the urgent nature of their task, using imagery that they are all too familiar with.

The urgency of the task ahead also presupposes observance of other conditions. The disciples must be single-minded in their disposition to the task entrusted to them, otherwise they will be distracted and unable to focus on the task. Hence, they were to “Carry no money bag, no sack, no sandals; and greet no one long the way.” (Lk 10: 4) In other words, preoccupation with materials things should not be allowed to distract them, otherwise, they will not be efficient or effect in the execution of the task. That the task was urgent cannot be in doubt, because twice Luke had Jesus telling them “The kingdom of God is at hand.” (Lk 10: 9 & 11)

⁶ Important representatives of the Alexandrian and Caesarean text types read “Seventy,” while other important Alexandrian texts and Western readings have “seventy-two.”

The disciples were called to be agents of peace and accommodating. As emissaries of Jesus, they were to continue his mission; hence they were also instructed to “cure the sick in it and say to them, ‘The kingdom of God is at hand for you.’” (Lk 10: 9) That these disciples were successful in their mission is attested to by the fact that they came back rejoicing (v.17). This does not mean that they have finished all the work and there is nothing more to be done. The harvest will always be abundant! The Church, the visible sign of God in the world, is thus commissioned to continue the mission of Christ, and she, in her place, must choose other people, commission them, and empower them to be effective instruments in her evangelizing mission.

Concrete activities in the evangelizing mission of the Church

The mission of Christ is the mission of the Church, and the reverse is true, that the mission of the Church is the mission of Christ. No wonder the Church is said to be missionary in nature; otherwise, it would no longer be the Church of Christ.⁷ The Church teaches that:

Missionary activity flows immediately from the very nature of the Church. Missionary activity extends the saving faith of the Church, it expands and perfects its catholic unity, it is sustained by its apostolicity, it activates the collegiate sense of the hierarchy, and bears witness to sanctity which it both extends and promote.⁸

The expression missionary activity is used to describe “the activity through which, in obedience to Christ’s command and moved by the grace and love of the Holy Spirit, the Church makes herself fully present to all men and peoples in order to lead them to the faith, freedom and peace of Christ by the example of its life and teaching, by the sacraments and other means of grace.”⁹ We can discern the task of preaching, teaching, the administration of the sacraments, engagement in social justice apostolate, promotion of peace and contribution to wholistic development of the human person. While proclamation, teaching and administration of the sacraments are strictly religious in nature and easily

⁷ W. Kasper, *The Catholic Church, Nature, Reality and Mission*, Bloomsbury Publishing, New York, 2015, 292.

⁸ Vatican II, *Decree on the Church’s Missionary Activity*, *Ad Gentes Divinitus*, 7 December 1965, n. 2.

⁹ *Ad Gentes*, n.5.

identifiable with the Church, charitable works also have a religious dimension, since moved by the love the Father has poured into our hearts, members also show forth to the world, the same love by loving their neighbours in the concrete situations of their life. Hence, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, ministry to the sick and imprisoned (Mt 25:35- 45), are veritable parts of the Church's mission in the world. Furthermore, what others may consider completely social, is also an aspect of the Church's mission. Hence we talk of social justice advocacy, through which the Church promotes human dignity and authentic human development in an atmosphere of freedom and justice. Hence the Synod of Bishop in 1971 said that "Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel, or, in other words, of the Church's mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation."¹⁰ This is because the establishment of the kingdom of God necessarily involves working towards a more just and equitable society. The bishops went on to say that:

Listening to the cry of those who suffer violence and are oppressed by unjust systems and structures, and hearing the appeal of a world that by its perversity contradicts the plan of its Creator, we have shared our awareness of the Church's vocation to be present in the heart of the world by proclaiming the Good News to the poor, freedom to the oppressed, and joy to the afflicted. The hopes and forces which are moving the world in its very foundations are not foreign to the dynamism of the Gospel, which through the power of the Holy Spirit frees people from personal sin and from its consequences in social life.¹¹

The scope of the Church's mission is the entire field of the world. Wherever human beings are found, the Church is called upon to be present also. Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appears to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel, or, in other words, of the Church's mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation. Today, this is the totality of the Church's life, and like most organizations, keeping the Church focused on her mission requires an incredible amount of agents. Traditionally, agents for the accomplishment of the Church's goal include bishops, priests, deacons,

¹⁰ Synod of Bishops, *Justitia in Mundo, Justice in the World*, 1971, no.6.

¹¹ *Ibid*, no. 5.

consecrated men and women, catechists and indeed every member of the Church according to their state of life. When we therefore apply Luke 10:2, that is, the harvest is abundant, but the labourers are few, the bible and, by implication, the Church is referring to those specially dedicated to the pastoral office of the Church. Is there a shortage of personnel, and what are the reasons for this state of affairs?

According to the National Catholic Reporter (NCR), based on Vatican statistics, at the end of 2020, “the number of Catholics in the world reached 1, 359, 612,000, an increase of 16 million over the previous year.”¹² The same statistics reveal that the rate of growth for members was highest in Africa with about 2.1%, compared to Asia with 1.8%, Europe with only 0.3%. The Vatican data shows that “globally there is one priest for every 3, 314 Catholics in the World. But the ratio is one priest for 1,746 Catholics in Europe, 2, 086 Catholics per priest in the Americas and 5,089 Catholics per priest in Africa.”¹³ The Catholic percentage versus the priest percentage provided by NCR is insightful and is presented below:

...while just over 20% of the world's Catholics live in Europe, 40% of the world's priests minister there. The Americas have 48% of the world's Catholics, but only 29.3% of the world's priests. The Vatican reported that 18.9% of the world's Catholics live in Africa and are served by 12.3% of the world's priests; 11% of Catholics live in Asia served by 17.3% of the world's priests; and just under 1% of the global Catholic population lives in Oceania where 1.1% of the world's priests live... The Catholic Church also had 5,363 bishops at the end of 2020 with 13.4% of them ministering in Africa.¹⁴

With focus on the subject matter of this paper, the Vatican statistics¹⁵ reveal also that the total number of diocesan and religious-order priests decreased globally to 410,219, because of dwindling vocations in Europe and North America. For religious brothers, the number rose in 2020 to 50,569, especially with noticeable increase in Africa, Asia, and Europe. For women religious, the number increased only in Africa and Asia. There was an increase in the number of

¹² <https://www.ncronline.org> Published February 18, 2022, accessed on July 22,2023.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ VATICAN SECRETARIAT OF STATE, CENTRAL OFFICE OF CHURCH STATISTICS, Pontifical Yearbook, 2021, Libreria Editrice Vatican, 2021.

permanent deacons as it rose to 48,635, which was slightly higher than the previous year. The number of seminarians throughout the world witnessed a decline except in Africa. From the foregoing, it is clear that there is an imbalance; while the harvest is still abundant, personnel are few, and some locations are more affected than others. In the final analysis, “the harvest is abundant, but labourers are few.” (Lk10:2)

These imbalances are a stark reminder that we have not fully lived out our identity as a Synodal Church. In a Synodal Church fully in communion with one another, participating actively in the common mission of the Church, resources, talents, and personnel will be judiciously shared and utilized so that no part lacks what another segment has in abundance.

The Challenges of the evangelizing mission and the pastoral care of vocations

The evangelizing mission of the Church is not an easy task. It is a specialized religious activity. Even when Jesus mandated all his disciples to be engaged in it, the special nature of the enterprise means that not all can be fully engaged in it or that to be effectively engaged in it, it is imperative that such personnel undergo special formation. Thus, among the challenges affecting the evangelizing mission of the Church, we have insufficient trained personnel, poorly trained personnel, and encumbrances of modern life. Others include poor social welfare and secularism.

A recent document of the Church reminds us that pastoral activities of the Church are all-embracing and almost unlimited within a defined territory.¹⁶ Consequently, all members of Christ’s faithful, in a spirit of fraternal communion and co-responsibility, are called to be involved in the mission of the Church. Hence, a change of mentality is required, especially given that many in the Church feel that pastoral activities are the purview of only priests and consecrated men and women. A change of attitude will bring to the fore the necessary roles of each member of the Church and the connectivity of the different segments of the Church. For instance, in a church that has fully

¹⁶ Cf. THE CONGREGATION FOR CLERGY: Instruction “The Pastoral conversion of the parish community in the service of the evangelical mission of the Church, 20th July 2020, n.17.

embraced the co-responsibility of all members, working together comes easy since each responds according to his or her state of life. Hence, the *Congregation for Clergy* calls for a 'culture of subsidiarity', as this opens the way or the assistance of various collaborators in the life of the Church, especially in the administration of the goods of the Church.

Insufficient Trained Personnel

We have noted above that the evangelizing mission of the Church includes preaching and teaching, administration of the sacraments and participation in various efforts geared towards integral human development. To carry out these activities, Church personnel must be adequately trained. While the Church has made great progress in this regard, a lot still exists to be done. For instance, the pastor to parishioners ratio in many parts of the world is still too low for effective pastoral apostolate. It is not just that more hands are needed, but more fully trained ministers of the word and sacraments. Such agents include, priests, catechists, pastoral workers consecrated men and women. To train these personnel, the Church needs enormous amount of resources that are sometimes difficult to come by, especially in poor countries. Support from the bigger and more established Churches must be explored to fund training and other needs of the Church.

Poorly Trained Personnel

Owing to the fact that the Church lacks sufficient trained personnel, volunteers have been embraced to carry out critical apostolates of the Church, such as sharing of the word of God, and teaching of catechism. In many places, these agents have no formal training, or where one is available, it is often not sufficient for maximum productivity. Thus, in many instances, we have members of the Church brimming with goodwill but no special skills to make significant contributions to the task entrusted to the Church. Yet, agents involved in the evangelizing mission of the Church must be trained to be effective and efficient.

Poor Social welfare

The Catholic Church universally is at the forefront of the provision of social welfare packages, but sometimes, at the parish level or in poor dioceses, these needs are not often well attended to. For instance, education of the poor, provision of job opportunities, low-cost housing etc. These are areas where many Pentecostal Churches have carved a niche for themselves. Consequently,

they poach many young people from the Catholic Church. When we lose our young men and women to other Churches, then it may be difficult to meet our personnel needs.

Encumbrances of Modern Life.

It is a known fact that civilization has brought with it many perks that have made life easier and more enjoyable. These include modern means of transportation, social media, etc. In the home, modern gadgets have also made house chores simpler. Consequently, many people pursue the comfort of life and no longer see religious calling as paramount. Thus, it has been observed that the more affluent a society becomes, the less religious it becomes. The pursuit of material comfort takes precedence in their life. We must, therefore, critically evaluate the intentions of the many candidates for the priesthood and religious life. Are these candidates genuinely desirous to work in the Lord's vineyard, or are they looking for a comfortable life? Owing to all these, candidates aspiring to religious life and the priesthood need a programme of true discernment and accompaniment so that true vocation can be discovered, nurtured, and helped to mature and also accompanied, especially during the early years to avoid the many hurdles and develop skills that will help them to persevere and be effective in the ministry.

Discernment of the needs of the Church

Roger Schroeder¹⁷ gives us a clue as to the need for good discernment and guidance for those aspiring to be involved in the evangelizing mission of the Church. He offers three parables from the gospels and a summary of the three will suffice. We find the parable of the Sower in all the Synoptics (Mt 13:4-9; Mk 4:3-9; Lk 8:5-8) Here, we have four types of soil, with various outcomes and the last of the four soils, the good soil can also be differentiated according to level of productivity into three groups. All the Synoptics narrated the parable of the Sower (Mt 13:4-9; Mk 4: 3-9; Lk 8: 5-8) In this parable, Jesus presents his listeners with the scenario of different attitudes to the word of God. In essence we have for types of soil representing four types of dispositions. Three were obviously not conducive for the implantation of the Word of God and

¹⁷ Cf. Roger P. Schroeder, *What is the Mission of the Church: A Guide for Catholics*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York, 2013, 24-25.

unable to elicit any productive outcome. The fourth type of soil or disposition also has within its riches three approaches to productivity. I call these, bare productivity, average productivity, and maximum productivity. When applied to the evangelizing mission of the Church, we can see that efficient Church personnel cannot be sought anywhere but in precise environments and under certain conditions. Many candidates will make themselves available, but it is only through the spirit of discernment by those responsible for the process that some candidates will be identified as not suitable for the mission. Even when found suitable, as is the case with the fourth group, the effort would have to be directed to move candidates from the level of barely producing to maximum productivity. According to Schroeder, "Weeding is a necessary chore in any garden or field if we expect good seed to bear fruit."¹⁸ This is exactly what pastoral care for those in the apostolate of the Church is all about.

A second parable that Schroeder examined is found in Matthew 13: 24-30 and Jesus later explains it (13: 36-43). It is the parable of the enemy sowing weeds among the wheat while the farmer was asleep. On finding out what the enemy had done, the master still allowed both to grow together till harvest time when the weed was gathered and burnt, but the wheat harvested. How does this apply to the evangelizing mission of the Church the choice of workers? According to Schroeder, "Choices for or against the reign of God have consequences. Also, good, and evil does exist side by side, sometimes very closely, as we know all too well."¹⁹ Would the Church today do something in similar situation or do nothing? This parable must be taken with the third of Schroeder's parables, that found in Mk 4:26-29:

This is how it is with the kingdom of God; it is as if a man were to scatter seed on the land and would sleep and rise night and day and the seed would sprout and grow, he knows not how. Of its own accord the land yields fruit, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear.

From these parables, we see that agents are necessary, quality agents are even more desirable, yet the mission belongs to God and only God guarantee the success of the mission to get the kingdom established. The mission remains a mystery that we must leave in God's hands. Our experience of recruitment of

¹⁸ Ibid, 24.

¹⁹ Ibid, 24.

men and women for the mission of the Church has shown that we have to put out into the deep and as we haul the catch ashore, we must be ready for the grim work of sorting out useful materials from less desirable ones. We must do this bearing in mind that the mission belongs to God, and we must always keep him in view as we decide the fate of many.

The Goal of Pastoral Care

Pastoral care is etymologically derived from the Latin word '*pascere*' which means to feed. Pastoral care then is used to describe the totality of the concern of the leader for his flock. Hence, it encompasses the care and services of a pastor to the flock entrusted to his care. Pastoral care is essentially faith-building efforts of the Church to needy persons. The needs of each person or the particular segment of the Church determines what type of pastoral care would be given. For effective and efficient agents for the ministry of the Church, discernment of candidates is crucial and must be ongoing so that only appropriate candidates are selected and helped to embrace this life of love and humble service. Through pastoral counselling, candidates for the ministry of the Church can be nurtured and assisted to make right and confident decisions about their way of life. The special nature of the life and ministry of pastors and other agents of the Church means that candidates must be made aware of the implications of their choices, the availability of alternative state of life and ministry and steps to attain satisfaction in their vocations.

The Way forward

The Church of the Twenty-first century must embrace a missionary outlook. The society around us is becoming increasingly areligious and as such, more effort is required to infuse the world with Gospel values. Since we can no longer take for granted the abundance of workers for the mission, the Church must train, new personnel and equip them with skills necessary for effective missionary apostolate. The Church must invest more in the youth and in youth programmes, so that they can develop more interests in the Church and in the things of God. This is necessary because it is from this pool that agents for the mission of the Church will come from.

Secondly, candidates must be recruited through a process of spiritual discernment to ensure that only appropriate candidates are selected. Those responsible for the process must thus put in place criteria that must be met. Such criteria must be all embracing, yet distinct. These criteria must be geared towards meeting the needs of the Church at this time and also be distinct enough to allow for individual uniqueness and contribution to the mission of the Church. Furthermore, while the Bible admonishes agents not to work for sordid money²⁰, the basic needs of life must also be provided once they have committed themselves to the service of the God. This is particularly more pressing in poor areas where individual churches may not be able to provide all the essentials. In this instance, resources should be pulled from other areas to ensure these agents of the mission do not lack essential resources. Twinning as a policy has been practiced to good effect in some place and should be given serious consideration. Twinning is a pastoral decision and process where wealthy or comfortable churches adopt poor or rural Churches with the goal of helping to meet their financial needs. This is sharing that should always enliven Christian apostolates and a good indication of a Synodal Church, where people journey together and share life.

Thirdly, since all members of the Church are agents for the mission of the Church, it is also necessary that the hierarchy of the Church harness the immense opportunity that the various groups in the Church possess. Hence, there must be a good synergy between the local clergy and the members of the Consecrated life. Ordained members of the Consecrated life can be incorporated into the pastoral life of the diocese in such a way that they bring their vital charisms to bear positively on the evangelizing mission of the Church. Even in those areas where the ordained are not readily available, other consecrated men and women can be empowered to participate in the mission of the Church according to their charisms, professional skills, and individual talents.

Furthermore, in the spirit of synodality, all members of the Church are to be educated to see themselves as being in communion with others and participating in the one mission of the Church. Thus, vocation of lay missionaries should be promoted to inspire many to embrace the mission of the Church. This also means

²⁰ 1 Pet. 5: 2.

that these lay missionaries, must be supported to function effectively. Support for lay missionaries necessarily entails appropriate formation, adequate remuneration, provision of vital emotional support system by ensuring they work collaboratively with others, both lay and cleric. Emotional stability is very important for agents involved in the evangelizing mission of the Church because only emotionally matured persons are able to commit long term to the mission of the Church and are able to bear abundant fruits. The Church should, therefore, invest in the formation of the laity in order to make them effective agents. Their contributions will go a long way to mitigate the shortage of personnel being experienced in the Church.

In addition to the above, it is good to take a cue from the early Church, when a section of the young Church was being neglected, the attention of the apostles was called to it, yet they could not leave their main task to attend to a problem that threatened to splinter the group. They took a bold step and appointed other collaborators known as deacons. (Act 6: 1-15) While all are called to participate in the evangelizing mission of the Church, the task, is no doubt the primary obligation of priests, consecrated men and women and other pastoral agents. These people must be empowered to perform their tasks in such a way that priests are freed to focus on the preaching of the Gospels. The diversity of collaborators is a great source of motivation to pastors of souls and contributes positively to the salvation of souls. This conforms to the principle of subsidiarity that seeks to guarantee a degree of independence for a lower authority in relation to a higher body or for a local authority in relation to central government. In other words, what a lower authority can perform should not be carried out by a higher authority. This ensures the participation of greater number of people in the mission of the Church. This principle must be practiced today more than ever before if we hope to solve the problem of shortage of personnel and the current imbalance in the distribution of agents. Is this not what Pope Pius XI meant when in *Quadragesimo Anno*, he asserts that while a higher body is expected to provide help (*subsidium*) to the lower body, it should never destroy or absorb them.²¹ The mission of the Church today demands that the laity be involved and it is up to the clergy to create a conducive atmosphere that will

²¹ David Hellenbach, *The Common Good and Christian Ethics*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2002, 102; cf. Pius XI, *Quadragesimo Anno*, 1942, no.79.

attract the laity to be involved and also enhance their participation. The participation of all is crucial to the effectiveness of the mission and the Co-responsibility of all inherent in the nature of the Church as being synodal assures us that capable and effective agents will always be available.

While certain aspects of modern life pose great challenges to the spread of the good news, there are many benefits of modern life that can also be utilized for the proclamation of the good news. Such benefits include Information and Communication Technology and modern means of communication. With these resources and opportunities, a labourer today, can achieve much more than ten labourers in the past. Agents involved in the evangelizing mission of the Church must not only work hard, but they must also work smart by appropriating the benefits of ICT and social media for the success of the mission of the Church.

Conclusion

The evangelizing mission of the Church is a task that will be with the Church until the end of time. As each generation gets involved and accomplish the goal, new members are born into the human race and these also become people to be reached with the good news of Jesus. Each era is thus called to respond to the call of Jesus to preach the good news to all creation. As long as the Church is faithful to her identity as a synodal Church and members are educated on their roles in the Church, the mission will gradually move forward. There is no gainsaying the fact that the Church in each era must adapt to the peculiar needs and employ the opportunities and resources that its era presents.