

MISSIO DEI

COLLANA DI STUDI MISSIOLOGICI E INTERRELIGIOSI

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L'attività missionaria è un'azione della carità, nella carità e per la carità; esattamente come essa è un'azione di Dio, in Dio e per Dio.

Adam WOLANIN, *Teologia della missione*

Tutta l'esistenza cristiana deve caratterizzarsi come esistenza missionaria o, per dirla con le parole del concilio Vaticano II, "la chiesa che vive nel tempo è per sua natura missionaria" (AG 2). [Di conseguenza,] la chiesa inizia ad essere missionaria non mediante il suo annuncio universale del vangelo, bensì mediante l'universalità del vangelo che annuncia.

David BOSH, *La trasformazione della missione*

L'obiettivo della collana è riportare la missione cristiana al centro della riflessione teologica contemporanea di tutti i cristiani, alla sua dimensione cosmica, in quanto "Missio Dei", al suo profondo valore socio-antropologico. Dio è il primo "missionario", che per amore e nell'amore si auto-comunica, come ricorda il paradigma relazionale trinitario. Ciò comporta un superamento dell'idea di missione come proselitismo.

La missione cristiana non rappresenta un progetto d'espansione delle chiese, quanto il progetto della Chiesa di incarnare e testimoniare nel mondo l'amore di Dio per tutta l'umanità. Nel tempo della globalizzazione cambia il baricentro della missione e con esso anche il concetto di *Missio Ad Gentes*, fino ad ora concepita come movimento dal centro verso la periferia, dalle zone ricche verso le zone emarginate.

La dimensione pluralista — religiosa e culturale — del mondo contemporaneo impone una riflessione più profonda sul rapporto tra missione e dialogo interreligioso e sul ruolo delle altre tradizioni religiose in relazione a Gesù Cristo e al cristianesimo.

La spiritualità missionaria, essendo contemplativa e trasformativa, richiede ai cristiani una testimonianza sempre pronta al confronto e al discernimento dei segni dei tempi. Per tutte queste considerazioni, l'approfondimento missiologico non può considerarsi quale mera specializzazione della teologia ma l'humus di ogni riflessione teologica. Coinvolgendo tutte le altre scienze umane, in particolar modo antropologia, sociologica e filosofia, lo studio missiologico ed inter-religioso si configura quale servizio integrale al mondo, all'uomo e alla Chiesa.





# Mission Makes the Church

1916 – October 31 – 2016

Pontifical Missionary Union

*edited by*

**Fabrizio Meroni**

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# Contents

- II Abbreviations
- 13 Foreword  
*Fabrizio Meroni*
- 17 Address of His Holiness Pope Francis to Participants in the Plenary Assembly of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples
- 21 Address of His Holiness Pope Francis to Participants in the Assembly of the Pontifical Mission Societies
- 25 General Assembly of the Pontifical Mission Societies. Speech of Cardinal Fernando Filoni
- 33 General Assembly of the Pontifical Mission Societies. Report by Archbishop Protase Rugambwa
- 41 The Yearning for a Universal Missionary Spirit. Pope Benedict XV (1914–1922) and the Missionary Union of the Clergy  
*Agnes de Dreuzy*
- 65 Mission and Church  
*Gianni Colzani*

- 131 Religions of the World, Mission, and Dialogue  
*Leo D. Lefebure*
- 165 Towards the Culture of Dialogue. The Significant Role of  
Education  
*Ambrogio Bongiovanni*
- 197 Christ's Salvation, Church and Other Religions in Light of  
Vatican II  
*Fabrizio Meroni*
- 227 The Authors

## Abbreviations

CEP	Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples
CIAM	International Center for Mission and Formation
PMS	Pontifical Mission Societies
PMU	Pontifical Missionary Union
POPF	Pontifical Mission Society of the Propagation of Faith
POSI	Pontifical Mission Society of the Holy Childhood
POSPA	Pontifical Mission Society of Saint Peter Apostle



## Foreword

FABRIZIO MERONI\*

The centennial anniversary of the Foundation of the Pontifical Missionary Union (PUM) on October 31, 1916 gives us the opportunity to pause and reflect on the nature, mission and role of this Pontifical Institution and its service to the Universal Church in her missionary identity. Renewal, rethinking and reform are required if we desire to be faithful to the charismatic original insights of the founders, Pope Benedict XV and Blessed Paolo Manna, a missionary priest of the Pontifical Institute for Foreign Missions (PIME). Manna was born in Avellino on January 16, 1872 and died in Naples on September 15, 1952.

Pope Francis, addressing the members of the Annual General Assembly of the four Pontifical Mission Societies (PMS) gathered in Rome (from May 30 to June 4, 2016), strongly reaffirmed the need for a real conversion and pastoral discernment for the sake of a radical reform of the PMS rooted in the mystical passion and heartfelt ardor of saints and martyrs. Dealing exclusively with bureaucracy, administration and material aid reduces the PMS's work to a mere administration of the existing reality and to a fruitless repetition of the already known. By taking a provocative line (mystical passion and heartfelt ardor), Pope Francis issues a subtle warning that sterile administration and useless bureaucracy can wear down the true meaning of the PMS. "Let us be permanently in a state of mission", is Pope Francis' strong challenge for us in this centennial celebration.

What we offer in the chapters of this book, marking this celebration, is our way to take into serious consideration the papal provocation. Each author attempts to reflect upon this urgency so that the Vatican II renewal can become truly effective for the Church through her missionary identity. The collection of these different approaches is deeply intertwined by a common understanding that mission unfolds the essence of the Church–World relationship inside

\* Secretary General of the Pontifical Missionary Union (PMU), December 1, 2015.

God's loving plan to save all. Being personally responsible for the contents of each chapter, each essayist gives his or her contribution with thought-provoking insights and cultural reflections for the mission of the Church.

In chapter one, Agnes de Dreuzy describes the historical background within which Pope Benedict XV created the Missionary Union of the Clergy. During his short but decisive pontificate, Pope Benedict never ceased calling for acknowledgement of the Church's transnationality and of a universal missionary spirit. Such a spirit would galvanize the Church to spread the Gospel worldwide and thus engender a spirit of unity with other Christians. Both Pope Benedict and Fr. Paolo Manna envisioned this renewed universal missionary spirit as "an essential condition for the total triumph of the gospel in the world." Their common insight endowed the Missionary Union of the Clergy with the privilege of undertaking this momentous task.

In chapter two, Gianni Colzani deals with the provocative affirmation that Mission makes the Church. His essay explores the theological foundation of the Church in her Mission and the pastoral implications for all churches of the precedence and priority of the Mission over the Church. Proclaiming the Gospel and dialogue with World Religions and Cultures represent the core of the Church's Mission. The Church as such is made out of her missionary activity in the Spirit of the Risen Christ. Proclaiming the Gospel lays down the foundation for a Church which is always missionary in everything she loves, preaches, celebrates, does and hopes for. Missionary by nature, the Church always begins and ends by evangelizing herself. The Church is servant of the mission. Therefore, the mission is not the instrument, but the point of departure and the goal of all her pastoral and missionary endeavors.

In chapter three, Leo D. Lefebure reflects on World Religions, Mission and Dialogue shaping the nature and activity of the Church. Vatican II with its ecclesiological renewal, its positive evaluation of Other Religions, and its openness to new interreligious and cultural challenges for the contemporary Church, initiated an ongoing missionary work that looks for deep conversion of the Church as such. Improved relations with the World, including Other Religions, offer to the Church a providential opportunity for a renewed mutual understanding and a growing communion toward common goals and eschatological fullness.

In chapter four, Ambrogio Bongiovanni highlights the significant role of education for the culture of dialogue. Dialogue represents one of the greatest changes in the Catholic Church in terms of language and approach expressed by the Vatican II and built on the active and living experience of the faith of Christians and their communities (lay and religious) in the world, in the midst of people of different religions and creeds. The “culture of dialogue” needs to be nurtured by an appropriate and systematic education grounded on the existential, relational and hermeneutical approach for a better understanding of the “religiously other.” Here, education is not a mere fact-finding process but an actual transformative process. That requires a comprehensive vision of the reality where the Paschal Mystery, through the action of the Holy Spirit, assumes a universal meaning (*Gaudium et Spes*, 22).

Finally, in the last chapter, Fabrizio Meroni develops a theological reflection on the universality of God’s loving will that all should be saved. In light of Vatican II, the universal salvation of Jesus Christ shapes, from her very foundations, the Church as Mission entrusted for the entire World. The whole Church is meant for the whole World, no one excluded. This soteriological universality gives anthropological insights to better understand the Divine Missions, their Church and the world. The divine desire that all may be saved, the unity of all humankind in Jesus Christ and the universal sacramentality of his Church demonstrate how love, and only love, can lead the way to eternal salvation for all. Both Christians, always in need of conversion, and all humanity, encounter in love and in the soteriological reality of divine mercy, the concrete availability of life and life in abundance.

Rome, October 31, 2016