

Missions, the New Evangelization, and the Jubilee 2021

Antonio Rosales, OFM

As the celebration in 2021 of the 500th anniversary of the coming of Christianity is just behind the corner figuratively speaking, the preparations are well under way. Different sectors and themes have been designated for each year since 2013, but the underlying theme is gratitude and how to express it in a massive renewal of our faith and its manifestations in our life. With God's grace, President Duterte will still be in good health, as he takes part in the big event that will come towards the end of his term, which ends in 2022. It will be most certainly the "Mother of all Jubilees," as far as our country is concerned, if the nine-year preparation will be an indication. There is no doubt that by then many things shall have changed, with the President – and the rest of us – having grown a bit mellow with age, as well as grown in wisdom. We are in God's gracious hands.

Writing on missions today, one has to be aware of the present realities that involve the changes in the political, economic and technological areas, with which we have grown familiar. Mission is proclaiming the Good News in a concrete historical context. In our national political life, the change has been defined to a large degree by the Marcos regime of 20+ years ending in 1986, when new political chapters were written in our history. With the fall of the dictatorship, changes were expected; even perhaps an overhaul of attitudes and values; but the reality of the succeeding years fell short of our general expectations.

As early as nearly a century ago, the Popes spoke of new methods of bringing the Good News to be launched, because of the rapid changes in society. The efforts were sidetracked by World War II, which brought new levels of awareness, challenges and sensitivities. Many countries practically had to start from scratch, as new national boundaries were made particularly in Europe, and adjustments had to be made with regard to how whole countries coped with the effects of the war. It is an understatement to have to mention that these changes affected the Church and how adjustments had to be made in it as well.

There were efforts to respond to the changes, the most far-reaching and more impacting among such efforts being Vatican II (1962 - 1964), which for many of us today is history. The changes it brought, however, were welcome in most sectors, but there was still work to be done. Discussing problems and writing documents are one thing, seeing them through in the practical life is quite another. The new evangelization was launched yet again by St. John Paul II in the

ten decades (1990 – 2000) before the third millennium (cf the 1999 Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia*, nn 29-31, as an example).