

# Text for the Times: *The Apostolic Mission*

*The apostolic mission of the Church is a continuation of the mission entrusted to Christ by the Father to heal and redeem the world. We have been given the gospel by Christ to preach it to every creature. Thus with the help of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of light and truth, we can drive out all errors of worldly wisdom and share in the renewal of the face of the earth.*

But this Samaritan did not have the leisure to live a long time on the earth; he had to return to the place from which he had come down. And so 'On the next day' – which is the next day? Surely it is the day of the Lord's resurrection about which it is said, 'This is the day which the Lord has made?' – 'he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper and said, take care of him'. What are these two denarii except the two testaments which have impressed on them the image of the eternal Father? By the price of these our wounds are healed. We have been redeemed by the price of blood to avoid the pains of eternal death. These two denarii, though it is not out of place to understand their faces as the four gospels, the innkeeper took. Who? Perhaps he who, that he might care for the wounded man, says, 'I count them as refuse that I may gain Christ', and so the innkeeper is he who said, 'Christ has sent me to preach the gospel'. The innkeepers are those to whom it is said, 'Go into the whole world and preach the gospel to every creature' and 'whoever believes and is baptized, he will be saved'. Yes, saved from death, saved from the wound inflicted by the robbers.

*(St Ambrose, from his commentary on St Luke VII, 78–81)*

The Apostles preached to us the gospel received from Our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ was from God. Christ then was sent forth from God and the Apostles from Christ. Both these things were well ordered by the will of God. And so after receiving their instructions and being fully assured by the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ and being strengthened in their faith through the word of God, after receiving the fullness of the Holy Spirit they went forth preaching that the Kingdom of God was close at hand. They preached in the country and in the towns and set up those from among their first converts who had been tried by the spirit to be bishops and deacons for the future believers. And this

was not something new. For, for a long time before bishops and deacons had been spoken of in the Scriptures. For thus the Scripture says, 'I will establish their overseers in observance of the law and their ministers in fidelity'.

*(St Clement of Rome. Epistle to the Corinthians Ch. 42 P.G. 1  
292–3)*

As the Apostles' story testifies, 'When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly a sound came from heaven like the rush of a mighty wind and filled the whole house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues as of fire, distributed and resting on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them to speak'. How swift is the word of Wisdom and, when God is the teacher, how quickly what is taught is learnt. No interpretation is required to understand, no practised usage, no time for studying, but the Spirit of truth breathing where it will makes the special languages of each nation common property in the mouth of the Church. Thus from that day the trumpet of evangelical preaching sounded forth. From that day showers of graces and rivers of blessing have watered every desert and dry place; because the Spirit of God brooded over the waters to renew the face of the earth and the splendour of new light shone forth to dispel the old darkness.

*(St Leo the Great. Sermon LXXV on Pentecost 1. P.L. 54–401)*

'Going into the whole world, preach the Gospel to every creature'. The disciples were told, 'Preach to every creature'. But was the holy Gospel to be preached to inanimate objects or to brute beasts? But by the words 'every creature', the peoples of all races can be signified. And indeed, before it was said 'Do not go on a mission among the gentiles'; but now it is said, 'Preach to every creature'. At first the Apostles' preaching had been rejected by Judea that afterwards it might come to our help because that proud nation had rejected it in testimony of its own damnation. 'He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned'.

*(Bede the Venerable, from his Commentary on St Mark. P.L. 92–299)*

When the twelve Apostles had received the power of speaking in all tongues through the Holy Spirit and had undertaken to instruct the world in the gospel, they divided the world into parts for themselves. The blessed Peter, the prince of the apostolic order, was appointed to the seat of Roman power; that the light of truth which was manifested for the salvation of all nations, might more powerfully be diffused through the whole body of the world from the head itself. Was there a

nation at that time not represented among the inhabitants of this city? Or what peoples anywhere did not know the learning of Rome? Here philosophical conjectures were to be crushed, here the vanities of earthly wisdom were to be destroyed, here demonic worship was to be put to silence, here the blasphemy of idolatrous sacrifices was to be blotted out, where the most assiduous superstition had gathered together whatever had anywhere been built on various errors.

(*St Leo the Great. Sermon LXXXII on the feast of Peter and Paul.*  
*P.L. 54-421*)

Selected and translated by Bertrand Callaghan, O.P.

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## Communism and Religion

Hitler regarded the power of his madness as a divine power because he felt inspired. The Communists regard the power of their collective obsession as 'divine' (ultimate, or absolute) because it is *not* inspired. All power politicians proceed on the assumption that *their* power is somehow ultimate, an expression of historic, or cosmic, or divine forces, of eternal laws, ultimate principles. And they say they have no religion? Their very religion is their 'absolute corruption' by power.

From the (unpublished) *Journal* of Thomas Merton.

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