

## Sharing the Gospel in Asia



Let us look at the reality that confronts Church workers in Asia today. Aside from the trend of secularization in the economy-led globalized world (look at the media, political arena, social life), there is in many Asian countries a strong opposition to what is described as ‘proselytization’. The word ‘conversion’ is identified as the most heinous organized crime in which Christians are systematically engaged.

The first temptation we have in the face of such opposition is to give up sharing the Word and limit ourselves to whatever is acceptable to the forces that control the destinies of communities. But that is not the Christian solution. It is precisely in such situations that people need a Word that gives Life, energy, and motivation. The Apostles in their time acted differently. Many great missionaries in the past had the skill not only of blunting opposition and warding off persecution, but also of continuing their work in creatively new ways.

They remained intelligent and alert. They knew that they should not invite persecution. That is exactly what we forget to do through our own imprudence, lack of cultural insertion, lack of cultural sensitivity, personal arrogance, taking exaggerated stands in justice struggles or in expressions of charismatic zeal. They knew how to elicit support even from opponents. There are always persons with good will even among those who hold opinions radically opposed to ours. If we know how to build bridges, create a common ground and broaden it, we may find an amazing number of helpers even in the hardest circumstances.

We may not be able to do everything that these giants of faith have done, but we can keep alive our missionary fervor, we can build up relationships with people around us, we can be involved with them in various types of human undertakings, we can work toward building a common ground of understanding, we can work toward the common good in society, we can share values that will

enhance human worth and help cooperative effort toward shared goals, we may lead things to such a stage of relationship that we are able to share our inmost motivations, convictions and ... our faith....

Asia is known for a multiplicity of little cultures, even under the shadow of our great and ancient civilizations. Therefore, our eagerness to share God's Message will need to pay attention to the cultural assets of even smaller ethnic groups and tribes, just as we take into account the civilization heritage of the larger societies. This will mean offering the Gospel according to the native genius of each community so that people receive and express their faith in a manner fully in keeping with their own cultural identity.

When this process takes place successfully, the original genius of the community is awakened to new possibilities, culture is further enriched, and Faith finds expression in amazingly new and beautiful ways. In this process the lay faithful evidently play an important role. It is in them that culture is vibrant.

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