

THE CATHOLIC HOUR

ADM0715

772325

---

---

# THE CHURCH AND THE MISSIONS

BY

VERY REV. GEORGE J. COLLINS, C. S. Sp.

Provincial of the Holy Ghost Fathers, Washington, D. C.



The seventh in a series of nine addresses on **THE CHURCH IN ACTION**, delivered in the Catholic Hour, broadcast by the National Broadcasting Company, in cooperation with the National Council of Catholic Men, on October 17, 1943.

---

---

**National Council of Catholic Men**  
**Washington, D. C.**

## THE CHURCH AND THE MISSIONS

In these days probably more than at any other period of history there is a universal appreciation of the blessings of peace. For modern war, much more than its ancient counterpart, inflicts its hardships as much on those who cling to hearth and home, as on those who gird on their armor and march forth to battle. The storied glamor of war makes no appeal to those who must live amid the squalor and havoc it has created. Especially at this time of the year, when the shortening days portend the advent of greater horrors descending from the midnight skies, the tortured heart of humanity in the war torn lands must cry out ever louder in its anguish: "How long, O Lord?" (*Isaias* 6:11). The starving peoples of Europe, living in the ruins of what once were their homes, and in the bleak fields that once were teeming with an abundance of the good things of life, herald the approach of autumn, no longer now as "the season of mists and mellow fruitfulness, close bosom-friend of the maturing sun," but rather as the fateful harbinger of the dark, cold days of another dreary winter. The glorious pageant of every changing color that once stirred their hearts to songs of exultant thanksgiving, now arouses in them

instead the dire forebodings of impending privation and misery.

Is the Lord in heaven forgetful of the miseries of these his children, languishing on the bosom of the once fruitful earth? Does He no longer feel compassion on the multitude, as He did on that occasion when He fed the four thousand with the seven loaves and the few little fishes? No, He does not forget; He is not indifferent to the sufferings of His fellowmen, but He sees these sufferings in their proper perspective. "Not in bread alone doth man live"; said He, "but in every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God" (*Matt.* 4:4). He Himself is the Word of God, and as such He is also the Bread of Life. As He had compassion on the multitude, therefore, because they had "nothing to eat," so likewise "he had compassion on them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd, and he began to teach them many things" (*Mark* 6:34).

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me," He said, "wherefore he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor, he hath sent me to heal the contrite of heart" (*Luke* 4:18). That was His primary objective. He did not come on earth merely to feed the hungry or to heal the sick. He did not come merely to

improve any or all of the conditions of man's material existence. He said specifically: "My kingdom is not of this world" (*John* 18:36). His chief concern was not with the natural relations of man to man or nation to nation, but with the supernatural relation of all men and of all nations to one another and to God. His mission was to reestablish all men in the supernatural relationship of beloved children of His heavenly Father.

The mission of the Church, too, is primarily supernatural. While ever anxious to improve the lot of her children in every possible way, and ever solicitous for the maintenance of friendly relations between the nations, she does not dissipate her energies in pursuing the chimera of a man-made Utopia. Her objective is rather that "all men . . . come to the knowledge of the truth" (I Timothy 2:4), that they "may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God: and that believing, (they) may have life in his name" (*John* 20:31). "No man cometh to the Father, but by me," said Christ (*John* 14:6). He is "the way, and the truth, and the life" (*John* 14:6). He is the Word who "was in the beginning with God," in whom "was life, and the life was the light of men" (*John* 1:2, 4). Only to those who receive Him as such does He give "Power to be made the sons of

God, to them that believe in his name" (*John* 1:12). This is the good tidings—the Gospel—which Christ commanded to be brought to the knowledge of every creature, to be for them a source of consolation and a guide of action. For the Church is commissioned, not only to enlighten the mind, but also to instruct the will: "Going therefore, teach ye all nations: baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (*Matt.* 28:19-20).

There is the command of Christ. How has it been carried out? The Apostles took that command literally, and made their plans to carry the Gospel to every known land. In the Acts of the Apostles we have a written account of the missionary journeys of St. Paul. The labors of the other Apostles in spreading the Kingdom of Christ are known mostly by tradition. Their successors carried on still further the work of extending the domain of the Church. It was particularly, however, the successors of St. Peter, the Prince of the Apostles, who, as they undertook St. Peter's task of governing the Church, also undertook the principal obligation of spreading the Gospel. The peoples of Europe owe the Christian civilization and culture, for the preservation of which they are

now fighting, chiefly to the zeal of the Bishops of Rome in spreading the Gospel of Christ. Thus we see Pope Celestine sending St. Patrick to preach the faith in Ireland and Pope Gregory the Great sending St. Augustine to labor for the conversion of England, and Pope Zachary strengthening the hand of St. Boniface in his labors among the Franks, by investing him with the authority of Papal Delegate. Later we find the Popes St. Nicholas I, Hadrian II, and John VIII laying the foundations of Christianity among the Slavic peoples by their approval and encouragement of the apostolic labors of SS. Cyril and Methodius. The people of the Scandinavian countries are indebted to Pope Gregory IV who sent St. Anschar to bring the knowledge of Christ to their ancestors. Finally, a permanent organization, the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, was established by Pope Gregory XV in 1622, for the express purpose of carrying on the missionary work of the Church in countries that had not yet accepted Christianity.

The last 150 years have witnessed a remarkable spreading of the Church throughout the entire world, and a constant increase in missionary spirit amongst clergy and people alike. Numerous congregations of men and women have sprung up, especially devoted to

work in the Missions, thus providing additional laborers to assist the members of the older religious orders who have borne "the burden of the day and the heats," in gathering the harvest of the Lord. The people have assisted by providing for these soldiers of Christ the material sinews for the spiritual conflict of wresting souls from the grasp of Satan, and by praying the Lord to shed His grace in abundance both on His missionaries and on those for whom they labor. Grouped together in societies such as the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, the Association of the Holy Childhood, and others too numerous to mention, their prayers and their alms have upheld the arms of the missionaries outstretched like Moses' to implore God's blessing on his people.

The history of the missions in these later years shows how God has responded to these unremitting efforts and these untiring prayers, as little by little the Church advances in her work of pushing Satan from his last strongholds on earth, and establishing in his place, the Christ, the Son of God. That this work has advanced beyond mere infiltration into the enemy's lines, is evidenced by the spectacle of Chinese and Japanese, Indian and African, Malayan and Polynesian, offering up now, for their own people in their own lands, the

self-same Sacrifice that Christ Himself offered in time gone by for all mankind on the altar of the Cross. Scattered through these missionary lands are 7,000 native priests and 45 native bishops, with 12,500 native seminarians offering abundant promise for the future. As the Popes have frequently pointed out, the presence of native priests and bishops in a land is an evidence that the Church has been established there on a solid foundation. The day when these pagan countries will be completely conquered for Christ is not here yet, but its sun is slowly beginning to appear above the horizon.

It would be a mistake, however, to look only at the bright side of the picture. The Church is on the offensive, it is true, but the road to final victory is long and tedious. Only a mere handful of souls in these missionary countries have accepted the doctrines of Christ. Millions and millions of others have still never heard of His gracious Personality, and of His yoke that is sweet and His burden that is light. They also must hear His voice and follow Him so that there may be one Fold and one Shepherd. There are thousands of priests, brothers, and nuns laboring in many lands to enlighten these children of God who have gone astray concerning their noble destiny, and to bring them

all to the "Shepherd and Bishop of their souls" (I *Peter* 2:25). But other thousands are needed. There are thousands of faithful souls at home leagued together to assist these missionaries by their prayers and contributions. Other thousands are needed to carry on the work and keep it ever growing.

This is the essential work of the Church, to make Christ's Personality known and His precepts obeyed from one end of the world to the other. Whatever else may have to be accorded attention because of the exigencies of time and place, the extension of Christ's Kingdom on earth must always receive full priority both in the allocation of the human agents who are to be God's instruments in this regard, and in supplying these agents with all the material assistance they require. The Church is animated with the sentiments of the great Apostle St. Paul, who wrote to the Corinthians: "If I preach the gospel, it is no glory to me, for a necessity lieth upon me: for woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel" (I *Cor.* 9:16). Like him she considers herself a "debtor" to preach the Gospel "to the Greeks and to the barbarians, to the wise and the unwise" (*Rom.* 1:14). Those souls have caught the true spirit of Christianity who are animated with a similar zeal to



make Christ known and loved by all men.

"How beautiful upon the mountains," says the prophet Isaias, "are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, and that preacheth peace: of him that sheweth forth good, that preacheth salvation, that saith to Sion: Thy God shall reign!" (*Is.* 52:7). That is the work of the missionary as it was the work of Christ, to bring to all men the good tidings of salvation. If that supernatural message is accepted, in its entirety, by the nations as by individuals, the blessings of the natural order will follow perforce, and in much greater measure than if they were made the primary object of pursuit. It is only when the supremacy of the supernatural is recognized that the natural can come to its full development. It is only when men give glory to God in the Highest that they will have peace on the earth.

In the philosophy of the Christian mind, the improvement of the domestic, political, and international relations of mankind is to be sought, not as an end in itself, but only as the by-product of man's betterment in the supernatural order. "Seek ye therefore first the kingdom of God, and his justice, and all these things shall be added unto you," is the divine guarantee of the truth of that philosophy.

The nations, however, have preferred to be guided by the prudence of man rather than by the wisdom of God. They have persisted in their refusal to accept the philosophy of Christ in this regard, and in their reluctance to carry out the course of action that He advocates. They have rejected the supernatural bond of unity among men, and have placed their reliance instead on the material, on the existence of common interests and common fears. As the Lord said of old to the prophet Jeremias: "My people have done two evils. They have forsaken me, the fountain of living water, and have digged to themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water" (*Jer.* 2:13).

In these days, therefore, when all men of good will are praying for the coming of peace, they should pray also for the coming of the Kingdom of Christ, both in the hearts of those who have not yet heard of Him, and in the hearts of those who have already accepted Christianity in theory, but shrink from putting that theory into practice. The only peace worth having is the peace of Christ secured by the reign of Christ.

Man's dream of everlasting peace among the nations of the world will remain only a dream until the individual nations and their lead-

ers recognize that their power on earth is subject to a greater Power in Heaven; and until they acknowledge that in making their decisions concerning the division

and the regulation of the dominions of the earth, they must ever respect the rights, and obey the laws, of the supernatural Kingdom of Heaven.

---

---

# THE CATHOLIC HOUR

1930—Fourteenth Year—1943

The nationwide Catholic Hour was inaugurated on March 2, 1930, by the National Council of Catholic Men in cooperation with the National Broadcasting Company and its associated stations. Radio facilities are provided gratuitously by NBC and the stations associated with it; the program is arranged and produced by NCCM.

The Catholic Hour was begun on a network of 22 stations, and now carries its message of Catholic truth on each Sunday of the year (and Good Friday) through a number of stations varying from 90 to 107, situated in 40 states, the District of Columbia, and Hawaii. Consisting of an address mainly expository, by one or another of America's leading Catholic preachers, and of sacred music provided usually by a unit of the Paulist Choir, the Catholic Hour has distinguished itself as one of the most popular and extensive religious broadcasts in the world. A current average of 41,000 audience letters a month, about twenty per cent of which come from listeners of other faiths, gives some indication of its popularity and influence.

Our Sunday Visitor Press  
Huntington, Indiana

