

# 7.4 Missiological Paradigms

## Aim

- To create an awareness of relationship between communication and missiology.
- To study the paradigms of missionary communication from the 16<sup>th</sup> century to the present day.

## Materials Required

- Pen and Paper

### Procedure

Divide the class into groups of 5-6 and give the following hymns (which represent each of the three paradigms):

#### 1<sup>st</sup> Paradigm:

Come, adore this wondrous presence/ Soul of my Saviour

#### 2<sup>nd</sup> Paradigm:

Guide me, O thou great redeemer/ All you nations sing out your joy in the Lord

#### 3<sup>rd</sup> Paradigm:

Colours of the day/ Lord I Come To You

Let us group sing the song before the whole class

They should make a reflection on the words of the hymns in relation to their missionary focus.

### Share the input

After the Input, let the groups give parishes and missionary congregations that fall under the paradigms.

### Input

#### Paradigms:

A paradigm is a set of assumptions, concepts, values, and practices that constitute a way of viewing reality for the community that shares them, especially in an intellectual discipline. It is the entire constellation of beliefs, values, techniques etc. shared by the members of a given community. Paradigms are not just created by individuals or groups, but rather they grow from a network of diverse social and scientific factors. In many organisations, they refers to a direction or vision that the company shares. Organisations and individuals these days have vision and mission statements.

#### 1<sup>st</sup> Paradigm: The Spiritual Paradigm

This comprises the very onset of mission in the New Testament, the commission of the apostles, the preaching of the apostles and disciples in and out of Palestine, and eventual arrival of Christianity in the Roman empire, the Greek influence, together with the Western tradition and the Middle Ages.

Preaching here was mostly to convert people, to teach doctrines and to combat heresies. Later accepted in the Roman Empire as the official religion, mission activities enjoyed unity and harmony with the State, where the State was directly involved in missionary enterprises. The missionary text was Jn 3, 16.

Dictum of this period: Outside the Church, no salvation.

Crusades and missionary wars to recapture Christian lands and convert pagans occurred to reclaim the followers of Christ. The Church is seen as a dispenser of salvific light. It also acts as the mediator of powers for renewal of life.

The discovery of the new world was an opportunity for mission. Colonization in the religious sense was modern continuation of the Crusades, for though the Crusades project failed, the mentality prevailed: souls needed to be saved.

'Mission' is used by Ignatius of Loyola to refer to an established European church sending delegates to convert people overseas as part of the phenomenon of new world discoveries. These places were termed as 'missionary lands' and were under the



exclusive monopoly of the Roman See, seen as immature and mostly the object of western paternalism. The missionary text was Lk. 14, 23, a seeming attitude of forcing people into the kingdom through forced baptism. The emphasis was on baptism, and the quantity of people in Church. Missionaries were pre-occupied with saving souls, without caring much for social and educational issues, although these received some attention Schools were a means to preparing and announcing the Gospel.

### **2<sup>nd</sup> Paradigm: The Institutional Paradigm**

This period spans from 16<sup>th</sup> to mid 20<sup>th</sup> century. Emphasis now shifted from saving to instituting the Church. Concern today is for the people at large, a sort of continuous evangelization. The missionary text was Acts 16, 9, where the missionaries felt that they were being called by the 'pagan' lands to go to their aid. Therefore, structures mattered a lot and the church saw herself and her missionary activities in the form of built churches, chapels, formulated creeds, liturgy and all the sacraments. Love of Christ for the other was the major motivation for this missionary reawakening period. They saw those they were sent to as brothers and sisters with whom they have to share the blessings received from God. The underlying principals were empathy and solidarity.

This new awareness helped them develop a new comprehensive approach to mission, not just an 'ambulance' service type. It led to a new rediscovery of metaphor, myth, mystery and symbols. Such a development was effected by post modern thinkers who extended rationalism, and discovered that definitions do not prove, but they probe (Gregory Bateson). Missionaries are fraternal workers in already established semi-autonomous churches.

**Pros:** movement from I to We, which consolidates the presence of the Church in the world and initiates indigenous leadership.

**Cons:** danger of the church closing on itself as a group who are well-off salvation-wise and do not see themselves as signs and instruments of the kingdom.

### **3<sup>rd</sup> Paradigm: The Holistic Paradigm**

It is also referred to as Ecumenical Paradigm, mostly after Vatican Council II.

This paradigm dates from 1965 onwards. The aim here is the total and qualitative development of the human person and humanity. The missionary text is 'Jesus Christ is the Good News for the men and women of every time and place in their search for meaning of existence and for the truth of their own humanity'. (Evangelii Nuntiandi 20)

In Lumen Gentium, the Church is no longer a societal entity, but the mystery of God's presence in the world, a sacrament, a sign, an instrument of communion with God and unity among peoples. The Church now describes herself as a body rather than primarily as a divine institution.

In AG 9, the Church is missionary by nature. She is not the sender but one who is sent. The understanding is not church and mission, but the mission of the church; a church where the pastor does not have absolute monopoly and members are seen as objects of pastoral care; a church that welcomes outsiders and makes them feel at home. Here there is a broader and newer understanding of *Missio Dei*. The Trinity sends the Church into the world.

Mission is seen and carried out in an ecumenical spirit, i.e. with and among people of other faith. It is also inspired by Inculturation, where local cultures play an important role. There is a sense of mission as ministry by the whole people of God, where ordained ministry share responsibility with the whole people of God.

The apostolate of the laity has taken a central role after the reforms of VC II, with the ministries of Lector and Acolyte restored to their proper role of lay ministry and also the creation of Eucharistic ministers and other lay ministries.

**Pros:** The shift is laying more emphasis on Jesus' own mission, which involves incarnating the kingdom and its values- justice, peace, freedom, concern for the needy, respect for human rights- in the world.

**Cons:** a danger of reducing the whole Gospel message into a temporal and human- centred message.

## **Review**

1. A paradigm is a set of assumptions, concepts, values, and practices that constitute a way of viewing reality for the community that shares them.
2. The paradigms of the Church through the years are:
  - The Holistic Paradigm
  - The Institutional Paradigm
  - The Spiritual Paradigm



## Reflection

‘Jesus Christ is the Good News for men and women of every time and place in their search for meaning of existence and for the truth of their own humanity’. What does this mean to your Church community?

## Relevant Skills

Analyse the missiological paradigm shifts in your country in the last twenty years.

## Resources

Laurenti Magesa. Rethinking Mission. Kenya: AMECEA Craba Publications, 2006