

Looking beyond the Jubilee



“We hear the sound of a multitude rising...”

Most of us, wherever we are, constantly hear the echoes of this song and hold within our hearts the images that these words evoke. It brings an indescribable disturbance into our nights and an unexplainable burden - perhaps the same burden that has driven the lives of the apostles including the great missionary St. Paul - telling us to look beyond the beautiful memories of the Conference. As one who had been working on this project for the last 2 years, I am trying to collect some of the reflections that evolved in the process. From the moment I thought of this reflection, I was certain that I would not be writing anything new. Thus my attempt here is to gather together the strands of reflections that have emerged from the process which the Spirit has been guiding us in the specific context of our future mission. Our Conference, as you all recall, carried within it three central themes:

- 1. Our response to God’s faithfulness**
- 2. Growing deeper in His call**
- 3. Every Jesus Youth is a missionary**

In other words, at the finale of the Conference, we were saying that one can be identified as a Jesus Youth only if one is a missionary. I feel this is a pivotal conviction for the movement that calls us to a much deeper reflection.

“Since the year 2000, the Jesus Youth movement has been using the tagline, ‘A missionary movement at the service of the Church’. This tagline has been the heart and soul of every JY initiative and endeavour. It has also been the moving force behind each creative idea that evolved to make the Good News more relevant to young people.”¹

“Over the last twenty five years and more, the Spirit of God has been moulding and empowering numerous young people, children, families, clergy and religious to renew the youthful mission of Christ and to serve the contemporary generation in a more meaningful way. This Jubilee is a time of recommitment and reorientation for the life of the movement as well as for its mission. May this period of prayer, intense reflection and greater resolve lead Jesus Youth movement to a greater focus on the mission of Christ and help serve the Church and the world better.”²

¹ *Introduction to Mission Month by Manoj Sunny*

² *At the threshold of the Jubilee by Dr. Edward Edezhath*

“Every Jesus Youth is encouraged to discern and work towards that direction. Generally, there are three types of mission that one can have:

1. Personal Apostolate/Mission

This is the primary, basic call that springs up from one’s charisms, strengths and talents. Hence this call varies from person to person. Some examples include personal intercession for others, follow-up of new entrants to assist their integration into the movement, nurturing of leadership, making personal visits to the needy and discipling of others. Although expressions of this call varies from phase to phase, one’s personal mission continues throughout one’s lifetime. This call is expressed within the movement or outside it (in most cases, it is related to the movement). Although this gift is a personal vocation and form of participation in saving work, it also serves others, builds the Church and fraternal communities in various spheres of human life on earth. [Redemptor Hominis, 21]

To be able to discover the actual will of the Lord (personal mission) always involves the following: a receptive listening of the Word of God and Church, fervent and constant prayer, recourse to a wise and loving spiritual guide, and a faithful discernment of the gifts and talents given by God, as well as of the diverse historic and social situations in which one lives (CL 58).

2. Community based Apostolate/Mission

Here, one person joins like-minded people with similar life situations or charisms to minister to others. In fact, most of the community based ministries in the movement have developed from a personal ministry. However, it is not mandatory that all individual ministries become community ministries.

3. Given Apostolate/Mission

Often, the movement asks individuals to take up certain time-bound commitments for its growth and enhancement. These can be office-based, such as Co-ordinatorship or responsibility of certain projects for a specific time. Naturally, these ministries are only entrusted to those who have deepened in the first two areas.

Though given apostolates are often necessary, it is the personal and community centric ministries that essentially form the core of the movement, making it contemporary, relevant, dynamic and alive - driving it into the future. Thus undoubtedly, without undermining the importance of the third mission, we could say that it is the first and second mission options that move the movement forward and keep it alive in the Spirit.”³

What holds us back?

“To many Christians, Paul is a scandal today - “We proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to the Gentiles” (1 Cor 1-23). Jesus’ call to renounce everything and deny one’s own life (Lk 14:26), and His challenge, “He who would save his life must lose it” (Mk 8:35-36), do not make sense to many. They try to disprove these paradoxes that Jesus suggests by saying, “Lord we can be your disciples without losing anything in the world!” A life of compromise and adjustment comes in, even in the rank and file of the Jesus Youth.”⁴

“What is the difference between JY and other movements? There are many differences, but one that has always inspired me is the purpose and motivation.... In many other groups, I find that people go in order to receive something in their life – especially in the form of blessings. But in our groups, people come in order to give themselves to do His will. People are willing to set apart many things; to lose many things in their life in order to follow Him. Some may start this journey to receive blessings, but soon they understand that Jesus Youth is all about losing and giving. However,

³ Introduction to Mission Month by Manoj Sunny

⁴ What next after our JY Conference? by Rev. Fr. Abraham Pallivathukal SJ

all of us know that our Lord will give back a thousand fold, in His time. The Jubilee has taught us again about giving ourselves and losing many things in our lives – money, time, confronting difficulties and making several sacrifices. This is only to be expected and only a true Jesus Youth will be able to make it. At one point of time in our lives, we all set out on an 'Exodus,' blindly trusting Him. He has blessed us with more than we want, definitely more than we deserve. I have a fear that many of us are busy taking care of these blessings. Our Jubilee has thus marked the time for beginning another Exodus – to take up a new mission according to the promptings of the Spirit." ⁵

"When we think back to our own lives in the movement, we may vividly recall those times when we took some great pains, when we made concrete sacrifices and when the struggles were great enough to bring us even to tears. It was tough, but we embraced the pain for the sake of some souls who might profit through our efforts. And it is precisely upon sacrifices such as these that this missionary movement was built up by God over the last 25 years. Today as we look back, we may gladly rejoice but on the other hand, we must also be cautious not to become content here. For surely, we are in danger if we find ourselves merely enjoying and resting upon the fruits of past labours. Indeed, to be open to the Holy Spirit, we must be ready to abandon all earthly securities, even the security of our own establishments. Our hearts must continuously recite, 'Here I am, send me!' But do we not often say to the Lord, 'Here I am, do keep me here'? Are we stuck in a 'maintenance mode' in our missionary efforts? Are we unwilling to suffer all over again? If we find within ourselves even a hint of that unwillingness to suffer for the Kingdom, let us steadily surrender it to the Lord. For He rebuked such unwillingness in Peter with the words, "Get behind me, Satan!" We must gladly surrender this hidden resistance, this subtle but dangerous form of sloth, so that we may welcome the Holy Spirit anew into our lives and into our movement this Pentecost, so that He might bring to us the gift of a new missionary zeal." ⁶

Pope John Paul II's apostolic exhortation *Christifideles Laici* speaks of eight areas of lay mission in today's world:

1. Promoting the dignity of the person
2. Fostering respect for the right to life
3. Defending freedom of conscience and religious freedom
4. Protecting and encouraging marriage and family life
5. Engaging in works of charity
6. Participating in public life
7. Placing the individual at the centre of the socio-economic world
8. The evangelisation of the culture

"The Jubilee Conference has been, at a deeper level, a renewed call to mission, with special reference to contemporary modes and challenges. Having evolved from, being rooted in, and carrying out the mission of the Church, it was repeatedly brought to our attention that the Jesus Youth movement finds its fullness in the Church. The core character of Jesus Youth mission, starting as personal enthusiasm to do something beautiful for the Lord, growing into little initiatives, blooming into well-defined Jesus Youth ministries, should contribute much to the enlivening of missionary zeal in the local churches and awareness of Christ in the wider world. Need for wider dimensions of mission in terms of greater human concern, interventions relating to ecological challenges, Christian presence in public fora as well as ecumenical and inter-religious spheres were also stressed." ⁷

⁵ From a mail sent to country co-ordinators by Manoj Sunny

⁶ Preparing the movement for a new experience of Pentecost: Days of Grace reflection by Thomas Pulickal, USA

⁷ Fostering the Graces of the Jubilee – final statement prepared by Dr. Edward Edezhath after the Jesus Youth Leaders' Colloquium

So how do these reflections translate into concrete actions?

Every Jesus Youth should be helped to begin a post Jubilee Exodus in their lives – breaking the bondages of worldly securities and comforts. They should be assisted to identify or deepen their call as missionaries.

Our movement has been blessed with all the graces we need to grow in His holiness. Yielding to this Grace, accepting our call to live our lives in Holiness, shall we expect a flowering of new initiatives in our movement in the coming years? Imagine more than 19,000 initiatives taking place in the coming years! The one-month mission commitments and other ventures will help us to take organised steps in this direction. But most importantly, the new, spontaneous initiatives spurred by the Holy Spirit should be the natural result of our Jubilee year.

The new challenges make the movement turn to the Lord with greater fervour for guidance and blessings to respond to His call to go to the ends of the earth with the message of love to build His Kingdom.

Let me conclude with a word of prayer:

Lord Jesus, thank you for the missionary call we have received from you through the Jesus Youth movement. We claim the promise you gave us through the prophet Ezekiel: we pray for a new heart – a humble heart which will always thirst for your presence; a shepherd's heart which will always seek the least and the lost; a restless heart which will be at peace only when every brother and sister of ours finds their joy in you; a missionary heart which will help us to abandon the ways of the world and fix our eyes on you until we meet you face to face in eternal glory.

Mary, our dear Mother, be with this little flock of the faithful as we put out our nets into greater depths of communion and mission. Amen!



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