

THE IMPLICATION OF THE MAGISTERIUM ON THE GROWTH OF INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini merujuk pada pertanyaan utama yakni apa ajaran Magisterium yang dapat diaplikasikan untuk membangun interreligious dialog, mengapa perlu mewujudkan ajaran Magisterium untuk membangun interreligious dialog demi membangun persaudaraan universal dan adakah tantangan yang dihadapi untuk mewujudkan interreligious dialog. Berdasarkan pertanyaan tersebut, objectives dari penelitian ini adalah meneliti isi Magisterium yang berkaitan dengan interreligious dialog secara mendalam, sehingga penelitian ini berdaya guna untuk menemukan ajaran Magisterium. Dengan demikian, penulis menggunakan studi kepustakaan melalui pendalaman terhadap dokumen resmi Gereja yang secara eksplisit dan implisit menyerukan ajaran tentang interreligious dialog. Penulis akan mengikuti kerangka kerja yang merupakan dorongan besar bagi komitmen dan keterlibatan Gereja dalam dialog antaragama. Penulis berharap akan menemukan hasil utama dalam penelitian ini yakni ajaran Magisterium tentang interreligious dialog yang signifikan untuk mewujudkan persaudaraan universal. Penulis meyakini bahwa kedamaian yang autentik tidak mengecualikan siapa pun dan misi Gereja yang harus dijunjung tinggi. Dengan demikian, rencana Allah Bapa yang memanggil semua umat manusia hidup sebagai saudara dan saudari dapat diwujudkan. Segenap umat manusia dipanggil untuk bekerja bersama tanpa kekerasan dan tanpa tipu daya untuk membangun dunia dalam semangat damai yang sejati.

Kata-kata Kunci: *interreligious dialog, persaudaraan universal, magisterium, misi Gereja*

Abstract

This research addresses the main questions: what magisterial teachings can be applied to building interreligious dialogue, why it is necessary to realize these teachings to build interreligious dialogue and universal brotherhood, and what challenges are faced in realizing interreligious dialogue. Based on these questions, the objectives of this research are to examine the Magisterium's teachings on interreligious dialogue in depth, so that this research is effective in uncovering magisterial teachings. Thus, the author will use a literature study through an in-depth study of official Church documents that explicitly and implicitly call for teachings on interreligious dialogue. The author will follow a framework that provides strong impetus for the Church's commitment and involvement in interreligious dialogue. The author hopes to find the main result of this research, namely the magisterial teachings on interreligious dialogue that are significant for realizing universal brotherhood. The author believes that an authentic attitude of peace through dialogue, one that does not exclude anyone,

is a mission of the Church that must be upheld. Thus, the plan of God the Father, who calls all human beings to live as brothers and sisters, can be realized. All human beings are called to work together without violence and without deceit to build a world in the spirit of true peace.

Keywords: *interreligious dialogue, universal fraternity, magisterium, mission of the Church*

INTRODUCTION

We live in the modern world, where the realities of specialization, mobilization, and technology prevail. The context of "globalization" makes the regions of our world and their events more and more closer to people, but, at the same time, the gaps between them are becoming wider.¹ In this situation, the Church has constantly practiced the mandate of the risen Lord, Jesus Christ, to proclaim the Good news to all creation. Pope John Paul II called for a new evangelization, not only encouraging dialogue but also frequently engaging in dialogue with people of different faiths and religious traditions. The process of dialogue interaction with others requires an attitude of willingness to listen to the call of the conscience.²

In the reality of increasingly widespread cultural and religious pluralism, the need for interfaith collaboration and interreligious dialogue will be crucial in building a solid foundation of brotherhood. The problems and failures in building a good life also show an awareness of the need for character development from an early age.³ The long history shows that failure to foster dialogue has led to various problems, including wars based on religion and belief. The name of one God must become a name of peace and a summons to peace increasingly.⁴

Interreligious dialogue is an important and essential task of the Church in modern times. This research is dedicated to being a humble contribution to the study of the Magisterium's value in interreligious dialogue. At the same time, it hopes to contribute to achieving peace and harmony in a pluralistic religious society. The way of harmony in life can be realized through an attitude of compassion and respect for women.⁵ The Christians have a greater awareness and understanding of God's amazing power and wisdom and of his wonderful love for people and creation. This will lead to a greater knowledge, understanding, respect, and collaboration among brothers and sisters of different faiths and religious traditions as the image of God.⁶

The Church of Asia strives to carry out its mission by striving to be guided by the Magisterium. The teaching of the Church regarding the Asian Church was recently declared by Pope John Paul II. The document enlightened the researcher about the difficulties of dialogue in our time and about the way to proclaim Jesus Christ in this

¹ John Paul II, *Tertio Millennio Adveniente* (Pasay: Pauline Publishing House, 1997), no. 40.

² Megawati Naibaho, Pankrasia Niasti Sarumaha, dan Alexius Poto Obe, "Keadaan Suara Hati dalam Mengambil Suatu Keputusan," *Magistra Jurnal Pendidikan Kateketik-Pastoral* I, no. 1 (2023): 15, <https://doi.org/doi.org/10.62200/magistra.viii.42>.

³ Dominikus Doni Ola, Megawati Naibaho, dan Blasius Superma Yesse, "Proses Penanaman Nilai-Nilai Moral Kristiani Melalui Kegiatan Ekstrakurikuler di Asrama Putri St. Anna Gunungsitoli dan Asrama Putri Bintang Laut Teluk Dalam," *DIDAKTIKA: Jurnal Kependidikan* XIII, no. 1 (2024): 530, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.58230/27454312.389>.

⁴ John Paul II, *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, no. 50.

⁵ Megawati Naibaho, "The Investigating the Oppression of Toba Batak Women: Call for Empowerment and Woman Leadership," *Studia Philosophica et Theologica* 23, no. 1 (2023): 162, <https://doi.org/10.35312/spet.v23i1.518>.

⁶ Michael Welker, *In God's image: an anthropology of the spirit*, trans. oleh Douglas W. Stott (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2021), 112.

part of the world.⁷ It links dialogue and communion to mission in a profound way. It clearly presents the Holy Spirit as the principal agent in dialogue, inculturation, and mission. The place and role of the local Church are emphasized in the task of dialogue. One important aspect to create collaboration and dialogue can also be implemented in catechesis before the marriage takes place.⁸

Interreligious dialogue is the communication and sharing of life, experience, vision, and reflection among believers of different religions as they search together to discover the work of the Spirit among them.⁹ It grows towards mutual understanding and enrichment, towards a discerning and common witness, and towards commitment to promote and defend human and spiritual values. The form of religion is culture.¹⁰ Dialogue must be conducted without following the legacy of hostile cultures that existed in the time of Jesus.¹¹

The Second Vatican Council (1962 – 1965) has given great impetus to the Church's commitment and involvement in interreligious dialogue. In fact, the Council opened the door to receive the wind that comes from the Holy Spirit. Pope John Paul II underlined that:

The council opened itself to Christians of all denominations, to the followers of other religions, and to all the people in our time. No Council had ever spoken so clearly about Christian unity, about dialogue with non-Christian religions, about the specific meaning of the Old Covenant and of Israel, about the dignity of each person's conscience, about the principle of religious liberty, about the different cultural traditions within which the Church carries out her missionary mandate, and about the means of social communication.¹²

Furthermore, Jacques Dupuis stated that the Second Vatican Council "was the first in the history of the Church to speak of other religions in a positive way."¹³ And the Church "recognizes the positive values present in other traditions and enters into a relationship of dialogue and collaboration with their adherents."¹⁴ However, since Vatican II, the concerns of the local Churches have centered on the Church's mission.¹⁵ The Church is a mission of bearing God's mission in Christ within history, a sacrament of Christ and his redeeming task in the world.¹⁶

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Discussion

Dialogue in the Teaching of the Vatican II Council

The Church is open to the world, and Vatican II showed that the Church no longer sees itself apart from the world, and certainly not as standing in opposition to it. The Church is aware that it exists in the world and identifies deeply with it. However,

⁷ John Paul II, "Apostolic Exhortation: *Ecclesia in Asia*" (Pasay City: Daughters of Saint Paul, 1999), no. 12.

⁸ Megawati Naibaho et al., "Pre-Wedding Education for Teenagers: Science Literacy, Character and Morals," *Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan IPA* 11, no. 7 (2025): 464.

⁹ John Gnanapiragasam dan Felix Wilfred, ed., *Being Church in Asia 1* (Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 1994), 16.

¹⁰ Paul Tillich, *Theology of Culture* (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), 47.

¹¹ Megawati Naibaho, "Sheds Light on the Meaning of Brotherhood through the Samaritan Woman an Integrated Exegetical Approach to John 4: 1-42," in *Forum*, vol. 54, 2025, 46.

¹² John Paul II, *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, no. 19.

¹³ Jacques Dupuis, *Jesus Christ at the Encounter of World Religion* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1991), 4.

¹⁴ Dupuis, 4.

¹⁵ Gnanapiragasam dan Wilfred, *Being Church in Asia 1*, 34.

¹⁶ Gnanapiragasam dan Wilfred, 34.

"the Church now sees it not as something to be decried and shunned, but rather as a worthy dialogue partner."¹⁷ The Vatican II expressed that the Church's joy and hope need to enter into the dialogue of life. It shows the Church recognized that moderns are to be fulfilled and Christ, through his Church, offers a way to that fulfillment.¹⁸ The Vatican II documents emphasized the need for dialogue in carrying out the Church's mission, such as *Nostra Aetate*, *Gaudium et Spes*, *Lumen Gentium*, and *Ad Gentes*, which sanctioned the dialogue method in the Church's theology and practice.

Reasons for Dialogue

At its most fundamental level, the purpose of dialogue is to preserve life. The Church is aware that the unity of the human family in both the biological and theological senses is a basic reality that needs to be realized. The Church document, especially the *Dignitatis Humanae*, clearly states that all nations are moving toward closer unity, and people of different cultures and religions are being bound together by closer links.¹⁹ Furthermore, Doni ola refers to the document *Nostra*, which underlined that the Church sees her role as one of fostering this unity of humanity, its cultures and religions, because this unity ultimately comes from God, who wills that unity and that all humanity shares God as its mutual final destiny.²⁰ Priority is given to people with good intentions who promote friendship and unity.

In the document *Gaudium et Spes* states that human brotherhood embraces both a human and divine vocation. All men and women are created in God's image and have been redeemed by Christ. Hence, all human being shares the divine calling and destiny.²¹ The one human family shares a common origin and a common destiny. In his mercy and compassion, God cares for all men and women as one family and deals with each other in a spirit of brotherhood. All, in fact, are destined to the very same end, namely God himself, since they have been created in the likeness of God.²²

The call to universal fraternity is a significant spirit for dialogue, cooperation, and true progress in the attitude of authentic peace. The Church's eagerness for dialogue that excludes no one is based on the fact that God the Father is the beginning and end of all things. All human being is all called to create space as brothers and sisters. Hence, human beings ought to work together without violence and deceit in order to build up the world in a spirit of genuine peace.²³

The Church opens and respects the truth which enlightens all men. According to William Larousse, the idea of the ray of truth is also presented and expressed as the presence of the seeds of the Word or Gospel that God has already sown, elements of goodness, truth, and grace, and the help needed for salvation to those who do not have an explicit knowledge of God and who try to lead a good life.²⁴ In fact, whatever good or truth is found among them is considered by the Church as preparation for the Gospel

¹⁷ M. Basil Pennington, *Vatican II: We've Only Just Begun* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing, 1994), 110.

¹⁸ Pennington, 112.

¹⁹ Konsili Vatikan II, "Konsili Vatikan II Pernyataan tentang Kebebasan Beragama (*Dignitatis Humanae*)," in *Dokumen Konsili Vatikan II*, trans. oleh R. Hardawiryan (Jakarta: Departemen Dokumentasi dan Penerangan KWI-Obor, 1993), no. 15.

²⁰ Dominikus Doni Ola, *Resiprositas Antarumat Beragama Dalam Terang Nostra Aetate*, ed. oleh Anselmus D Atasoge (Semarang: Yayasan Drestanta Pelita Indonesia, 2023), 23.

²¹ Vatican II, "Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*," in *Documents of Vatican Council II*, ed. oleh M. M. James H. Kroeger (Pasay City: Paulines, 2011), no. 29.

²² Megawati Naibaho, Sitepanus Zebua, dan Rosmeidar Laia, "Semangat Pelayanan Santa Teresa dari Calcutta Menjadi Inspirasi Bagi Katekis Masa Kini," *Jurnal Magistra* 2, no. 3 (2024): 130.

²³ Vatican II, "Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*," no. 92.

²⁴ William Larousse, *Walking Together Seeking Peace* (Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 2001), 215.

and given who enlightens all men and women that they may at length have life.²⁵ Furthermore, the document *Ad Gentes* recognizes the existence of traditions of asceticism and contemplation, the needs of which have been sown by God in certain ancient cultures.²⁶

The Church is a Universal Sacrament of Salvation

The document *Lumen Gentium* declares: The Church is a sacrament, a sign and instrument, that is, of communion with God and the unity among the whole world.²⁷ Thus, all men and women are called to this catholic unity which prefigures and promotes universal peace. And in different ways, to it belong, or are related: the Catholic faithful, others who believe in Christ, and finally all mankind, called by God's grace to salvation.²⁸ Henceforth, the Church is in duty bound to proclaim and witness to Christ and to proclaim the cross of Christ, but it "does not mean that the Church sees dialogue as merely another approach to proclaim and conversion."²⁹

The People of God Need Dialogue

Dialogue is a method and means of mutual knowledge and enrichment.³⁰ Especially, the modern world sees technology making the human family closer and more interdependent.³¹ *Gaudium et Spes* underlined that, "brotherly and sisterly dialogue among women and men does not reach its perfection on the level of technical progress but on the deeper level of interpersonal relationships".³² Furthermore, through their dealings with others, through reciprocal duties, and through brotherly and sisterly dialogue, women and men develop all their gifts and are able to rise to their destiny.³³

In order to nurture dialogue, people need to recognize the spirituality of dialogue, such as respect and love, witness and service, collaboration and cooperation.³⁴ When Christians are open to brothers and sisters of other religions, they should show respect for what God has done in their cultural, national, and religious traditions. They should be familiar with their national and religious traditions and uncover with gladness and respect those seeds of the Word which lie hidden among them.³⁵

Respect and love should be extended to those who differ in thought and action

²⁵ Vatican II, "Dogmatic Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Lumen Gentium*. In Austin Flannery. ed. *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents New Revised Edition*" (Pasay City: Paulines, 2006), no. 15.

²⁶ Vatican II, "Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity *Ad Gentes*. In Austin Flannery. ed. *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents New Revised Edition*." (Pasay City: Paulines, 2006), no. 18.

²⁷ Vatican II, "Dogmatic Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Lumen Gentium*. In Austin Flannery. ed. *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents New Revised Edition*," no. 1.

²⁸ Vatican II, no. 13.

²⁹ Larousse, *Walking Together Seeking Peace*, 217.

³⁰ Cornelius F. Murphy, *Beyond Feminism: Toward a Dialogue on Difference* (United States of America: The Catholic University of America Press, 1995), 112.

³¹ Pennington, *Vatican II: We've Only Just Begun*, 116.

³² Vatican II, "Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*," no. 23.

³³ Vatican II, no. 25.

³⁴ Megawati Naibaho, Blasius Superma Yese, dan Bartolomeus Sihite, "Evangelizing Mission in Biblical and Magisterial Teachings," in *PROCEEDINGS International Conference on Catholic Religious Education and Philosophy*, vol. 1, 2024, 58.

³⁵ Vatican II, "Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity *Ad Gentes*. In Austin Flannery. ed. *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents New Revised Edition*," no. 11.

in religious matters. They cover innumerable 'seeds of the Word' and create a true 'preparation for the Gospel'.³⁶ On the other hand, Christians should respect human life and freedom.³⁷ Dialogue is a method to help each other explore and discover the truth in freedom. The truth cannot be required of anyone; it must be discovered and drawn into a person to themselves.³⁸ In fact, if human beings come to understand their ways of thinking through kindness and love, then they are more easily able to enter into interreligious dialogue with others.³⁹

The personal witness a vital aspect of dialogue with others' faith. While others witness the difficulty in their own faith and way of life, they should acknowledge, preserve, and encourage the spiritual and moral truths found among non-Christians, but they should also engage in social life and culture.⁴⁰ They have to witness at any time and from anywhere. They are obliged to do so by their life and their words, in family, in social groups, and in their profession.⁴¹ However, their witness must keep with the traditions of their own land so that it will be intelligible.⁴² The Christian's witness is effective and renders service in every field of society. In this work of faith, after due consideration, all Christians should be eager to collaborate on projects initiated by private, public, state, or international bodies, or by other Christian or even non-Christian communities.⁴³

The value of collaboration and cooperation in the modern world faces many problems and challenges, such as deadly famines, jobless people, and the tragic and chaotic ethnic war.⁴⁴ Therefore, interreligious dialogue takes place when Christians cooperate and collaborate in projects for the betterment of the world, the relief of human suffering, and integral development. They should be given in a spirit of generosity and without greed on one side, and accepted with complete honesty on the other.⁴⁵

Dialogue in the Teachings of Pope Paul VI

Paul VI was elected Pope during the Second Vatican Council. From the early days of his pontificate, he made great efforts to foster a positive dialogue environment for better relations between Christians and non-Christians. In doing so, he established the Secretariat for non-Christians and then issued his first encyclical, *Ecclesiam Suam*, to determine the Secretariat's policy in its relation to people of other religions, which led to the promulgation of *Nostra Aetate*. He also issued an exhortation, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, in 1975 and made a number of visits to various countries to promote interreligious dialogue. In order to appreciate his contribution to the development of dialogue, these events will be examined by following their chronological order.

³⁶ Pope Paul VI, "Apostolic Exhortation: *Evangelii Nuntiandi*" (Pasay: Daughters of St. Paul, 1993), no. 53.

³⁷ Konsili Vatikan II, "*Konsili Vatikan II Pernyataan tentang Kebebasan Beragama (Dignitatis Humanae)*," no. 2.

³⁸ Larousse, *Walking Together Seeking Peace*, 224.

³⁹ Vatican II, "Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*," no. 29.

⁴⁰ James H. Kroeger, *Asia-Church in Mission: Exploring Ad Gentes Mission Initiatives of The Local Churches in Asia in the Vatican II Era* (Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 1999), 39.

⁴¹ Vatican II, "Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity *Ad Gentes*. In Austin Flannery. ed. Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents New Revised Edition.," no. 2.

⁴² Vatican II, no. 2.

⁴³ Vatican II, "Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*," no. 12.

⁴⁴ Dan Egonsson, *Dimensions of Dignity: The Moral Importance Being Human* (Sweden: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1998), 118.

⁴⁵ Vatican II, "Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*," no. 85.

Ecclesiam Suam

This encyclical of Pope Paul VI was issued in 1964, three months after the establishment of the Secretariat, in order to outline the theological and pastoral bases for entering into dialogue with people of other faiths. Dupuis states that this encyclical urged the Council Fathers to adopt a more positive attitude towards followers of other religions and that, because of its character, the Pope became known as the "Pope of Dialogue".⁴⁶

In this encyclical, all humanity was described in terms of four concentric circles, the innermost of which was represented by the Roman Catholic Church. The outermost circle represented those who did not believe in the existence of God.⁴⁷ The third circle was made up of those who were worshippers of God through the great world religions of Asia and Africa, namely, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism.⁴⁸ The second circle from the outside and directly surrounding the Roman Catholic centre characterized those who were Christians but were not subjects of the Holy See. It seems that this description implies that the Pope regarded the Catholic Church as the centre of the spiritual world and that the further any group deviated from its teachings and practices, the further away they were from the centre. This description also implies that the purpose of dialogue between Catholic Christians and others is to draw them into the centre. It would seem that the aim of the dialogue was to bring members outside the Catholic Church into the Catholic Church.⁴⁹

The motive of dialogue between Christians and non-Christians was expressed by the Pope as the Church's love for all humankind, since he says that this is itself an expression of God's own love for all men and women.⁵⁰ In the encyclical, the Pope also encourages Christians to enter into dialogue with non-Christians to preserve and promote religious freedom, human brotherhood, social welfare, and civil order.⁵¹ These points were highlighted later in *Nostra Aetate* as noted above.

As far as the methodology of interreligious dialogue is related *Ecclesiam Suam* speaks of two types of dialogue. The first concerns the preaching of the gospel directly. In this type, dialogue is described as "a method of accomplishing the apostolic mission" and as a "way of making spiritual communications" with the followers of other religious traditions. The second type of dialogue is considered a form of pre-evangelization. Concerning this type, the Pope indicates that by working with others within the context of a common effort to solve the problems of humanity, feelings of goodwill toward the Christian faith can be engendered in the dialogue process among the followers of other religions who will then become more open to the missionary proclamation of the church.⁵²

Concerning the objective of dialogue, too, the Pope emphasizes that he is not interested in religious discussion with the members of other religions for its own sake. He says the Church's main purpose in this process is to win souls, not to definitively settle questions.⁵³ The Pope also clarifies the above intention of the Catholic Church regarding the aim of dialogue by maintaining that, in the process of dialogue, the Church's main objective is not to discuss religious issues but to prepare non-Christians

⁴⁶ Dupuis, *Jesus Christ at the Encounter of World Religion*, 240.

⁴⁷ Paus Paulus VI, "Ecclesiam Suam," in *Seri Dokumen Gerejawi*, trans. oleh Thomas Eddy Susanto, Benedicta (Jakarta: Departemen Dokumentasi dan Penerangan Konferensi Waligereja Indonesia (KWI), 1964), f. 23.

⁴⁸ Paus Paulus VI, no. 107.

⁴⁹ Paus Paulus VI, no. 69.

⁵⁰ Paus Paulus VI, no. 70.

⁵¹ Paus Paulus VI, no. 108.

⁵² Paus Paulus VI, no. 83.

⁵³ Paus Paulus VI, no. 66.

to be receptive to the Christian faith.

In *Ecclesiam Suam*, for the first time in the history of the Papacy, Muslims and their religion, Islam, were praised by the Pope, who declared that "the Muslim religion especially, is deserving of our admiration for all that is true and good in its worship of God."⁵⁴ Finally, the Pope warned Christians not to change their missionary policy toward those who belonged to other religions in the process of dialogue, pointing out: "The desire to come together as brothers must not lead to a watering down or whittling away of the truth." Our dialogue must not weaken our attachment to our faith. Our apostolate must not make vague compromises concerning the principles that regulate and govern the profession of the Christian faith, both in theory and in practice.⁵⁵

In short, according to *Ecclesiam Suam*, the main aim of the interreligious dialogue was to preserve and promote religious freedom, human brotherhood, social welfare, and civil order. And by understanding their ways of thinking through kindness and love, we will be more easily able to enter into dialogue with them.

Evangelii Nuntiandi

After the close of the Second Vatican Council, the conciliar statements on the importance of dialogue between Christians and non-Christians raised some problems regarding the relationship between dialogue and evangelization. While some Christians regarded the dialogue as a new tool for converting non-Christians through preaching the gospel, others thought that the Church was about to give up on evangelization. To address this confusing situation regarding the relationship between evangelization and dialogue, a Synod of Bishops was convened in Rome in 1974. At the end of it, the participants could not produce a proper statement and handed the matter to the Pope. He issued an exhortation titled *Evangelii Nuntiandi* in response to the synod's decision in 1975. Although it mostly concerns the need for evangelization in the modern world, the Pope speaks of the world's religions in one passage within the context of the Church's evangelizing mission.

The Pope urges Christians to esteem and respect non-Christians for the following reasons: They represent the living expression of the spiritual lives of millions of peoples; they embody the human search for God for thousands of years and, although imperfect, they do so with deep sincerity and righteousness; they have taught generations of people how to pray; they contain innumerable "seeds of the Word"; they constitute a true "preparation for the Gospel".⁵⁶

The Apostolic Exhortation speaks of evangelization. The essential mission of the Church is to evangelize all people. "Evangelizing is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity. She exists in order to evangelize."⁵⁷ Each individual member of the Church participates in and contributes to the mission of evangelization.⁵⁸ Evangelization is expressed as "a complex process made up of varied elements: the renewal of humanity, witness, explicit proclamation, inner adherence, entry into the community, acceptance of signs, apostolic initiative. These elements are complementary and mutually enriching. Each one must always be seen in relationship with the others."⁵⁹

Even though dialogue is not specifically mentioned as an element of

⁵⁴ Paus Paulus VI, no. 107.

⁵⁵ Paus Paulus VI, no. 88.

⁵⁶ Pope Paul VI, "Apostolic Exhortation: *Evangelii Nuntiandi*," no. 53.

⁵⁷ Pope Paul VI, no. 14.

⁵⁸ Pope Paul VI, no. 15.

⁵⁹ Pope Paul VI, no. 24.

evangelization, the pope reiterates the complementarities of all the elements.⁶⁰ "Any partial and fragmentary definition which attempts to render the reality of evangelization in all its richness, complexity, and dynamism does so only at the risk of impoverishing it and even of distorting it. It is impossible to grasp the concept of evangelization unless one tries to keep in view all its essential elements." The scope of evangelization is all strata of humanity, to transform and renew humanity from within. This interior change is described as the purpose of evangelization.⁶¹ "The Gospel must impregnate the culture and the whole way of life of man. This work must always take the human person as its starting point, coming back to the interrelationships between persons and their relation with God."⁶²

Pope Paul offers some themes to be developed in relation to interreligious dialogue. Some of these are: one of the basic Christian attitudes is that of respect and dialogue; the Church exists in order to evangelize in the complete sense of the word, and any partial approach would distort it; the human person is the starting point; witness in solidarity is the initial act of evangelization, and the Holy Spirit is the principal agent of evangelization.⁶³

Dialogue in the Teachings of Pope John Paul II

Redemptoris Missio is an important missionary encyclical that takes as its starting point the contact and dialogue with other religions. It is the most significant missiological document of Pope John Paul II and central to his teaching.⁶⁴ This encyclical was issued in 1990 to express the validity and universality of the Church's evangelizing mission. The Magisterium perceives interreligious dialogue within the context of the Church's missionary activities.

The Pope urges both Christians and non-Christians to develop the "dialogue of life" by sharing their spiritual experiences and trying to build "a more just and fraternal society".⁶⁵ This means living with people of other faiths as neighbors, establishing mutual respect and understanding. *Redemptoris Missio* clearly affirms that dialogue is "an integral part of the evangelizing mission of the Church."⁶⁶ This enables an understanding of the Church's identity and its mission to always include dialogue as one part of its being. The dialogue is the starting point for the encyclical.

Furthermore, Pope John Paul II in *The Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Ecclesia in Asia* sent to Asia, begins by expressing the hope "that 'just as in the first millennium the Cross was planted on the soil of Europe, and in the second on that of the Americas and Africa, we can pray that in the Third Christian Millennium a great harvest of faith will be reaped in this vast and vital continent'."⁶⁷ The new millennium presents a great opportunity for interreligious dialogue. "Contact, dialogue and cooperation with the followers of other religions is a task which the Second Vatican Council bequeathed to the whole Church as a duty and a challenge."⁶⁸

⁶⁰ Pope Paul VI, no. 17.

⁶¹ Pope Paul VI, no. 18.

⁶² Pope Paul VI, no. 20.

⁶³ James H. Kroeger, *Living Mission: Challenges in Evangelization Today* (Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 1994), 210.

⁶⁴ Marcello Zago, "Commentary on *Redemptoris Missio*," in *Redemption and Dialogue: Reading Redemptoris Missio and Dialogue and Proclamation*, ed. oleh William Burrows (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1993), 56.

⁶⁵ Pope John Paul II, "Redemptoris Missio On the Permanent Validity of the Church's Missionary Mandate" (Rome: St. Peters', 1990), no. 57.

⁶⁶ Pope John Paul II, no. 25.

⁶⁷ John Paul II, "Apostolic Exhortation: *Ecclesia in Asia*," no. 1.

⁶⁸ John Paul II, no. 31.

Dialogue is the fundamental way of being church in Asia. Ecclesia in Asia mentions that "dialogue is a characteristic mode of the Church's life in Asia."⁶⁹ In this process, the Holy Spirit is identified as the primary agent in dialogue.⁷⁰ In Asia today, the Holy Spirit strengthens the witness of Christians in the context of dialogue among the continent's peoples, cultures, and religions.

In the Asian context, there are many tensions, divisions, and conflicts arising from ethnic, social, cultural, logistical, economic, and religious differences.⁷¹ So, dialogue is the path of the Church on the way to peace and reconciliation.⁷² Furthermore, essential elements in the Church's evangelizing mission are "building unity, working for reconciliation, forging bonds of solidarity, promoting dialogue among religions and cultures, eradicating prejudices and engendering trust among peoples."⁷³

CONCLUSION

In a "globalization" context, people need to listen to one another; to know, understand, respect, and love one another. The People's desire is to come together; it is a sign that dialogue must be imperative in the present times, not a choice. People in the world need to join hands and work together in the same direction, for the benefit of our brothers and sisters. Dialogue is a process by which people of various cultures, nationalities, and social levels use as a means to exchange ideas, feelings, and experiences in life and in faith. Interreligious dialogue goes deeply into the profound knowledge of God.

The theology of interreligious dialogue must open to the immense mystery of God, who, throughout the history of the world, has been and is present to all his children in different cultures and religions. The Church pursues the way of dialogue because that is the way God has dealt with people and because the Church still has much to learn from our brothers and sisters of other faiths.

Therefore, interreligious dialogue is a journeying together with minds and hearts towards the Kingdom to which God calls all people. Each member of the Christian faithful communities is called to practice dialogue, although not always to the same degree or in the same way. The dialogical way of being Church calls for an adequate formation for dialogue for priests, laity, and religious persons.

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⁶⁹ John Paul II, no. 3.

⁷⁰ John Paul II, no. 15.

⁷¹ John Paul II, no. 24.

⁷² John Paul II, no. 38.

⁷³ John Paul II, no. 24.

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