

Report to the eleventh annual S.M.E.I. Assembly  
Castellammare di Stabia, June 1st, 2008

- ❑ To the members of the Board of directors;
- ❑ To all members;
- ❑ To all friends and brothers and sisters in Christ present here;

## "To God be the Glory!"

For a while now, I have been pondering on a few things that I have come to consider as very important and that are seriously affecting my relationship with God and my humble ministry for Him. These thoughts form the framework for my ideas regarding missions, and thus regarding SMEI and what it should continue to become.

Some people, after reading last year's report, asked me a few questions concerning some of the expressions I used, such as "I would like all missionary societies as they are conceived today to become an endangered species, because that would mean that local churches in all cities of all nations are in good health", and a few more along these lines. What I am going to say now may surprise you even more and I hope that, beyond surprise, it will generate some important reflections and consequently, which is even more important, a huge desire to praise God and a renewed passion for service. We will postpone the reading of all statistics and the information on the work done in the previous year to a later time, for I want to focus on something completely different at the moment.

Let's begin with the assumption that the Great Commission to go to all nations and proclaim the Gospel was given not only to the disciples of then, but to the Church of all times. The Great Commission is based on three pillars:

1. Christ's permanent authority on all things
2. Christ's intention to build His Church
3. Christ's promise that He will be present and will help advance the mission of the Church until the end of this age.

The NT makes it absolutely clear that the Church has a specific call to carry out her missionary service. Thus, today's questions should be, "What individuals and missionary agencies of various churches and denominations should take on this challenge? Shouldn't every denomination and every church recruit, equip, send and support missionaries like Paul to the nations"?

We must remember, however, the goal of Christ's mission, and therefore our goal too: "That God may be glorified by nations that experience His mercy" The goal of missions in the glory of God. Thus, we come to the conclusion that missions that are an end to themselves ARE NOT the final goal of the Church. The final goal is the worship of God. Missions exist because there is worship. The final goal is God, not humans.

When this age will come to an end, missions will be no more; they are a temporary need. The worship of God, however, will be forever. I want to make sure we all understand that worship is not a meeting; it is not a service where people sing or stay seated. Nor is it an external act or form. Worship is an internal movement of the heart which "attaches to God greater value than all the treasures of the earth." Missions, therefore, should exist in order to give life to communities formed by the redeemed of the Lord who adore and exalt God.

The first and greatest passion of missions, therefore, is to honor the glory of God by giving God the place that belongs to him in the hearts of people, for the most important thing humans ought to do in life is knowing God. Consequently, if we love the glory of God, we cannot be indifferent to missions. If we love that which Jesus came to accomplish we must love missions!

The missionary vision is a vision that belongs to God and at the same time is a basic component of the Christian vision. In a sense all of us are missionaries. Maybe we never considered leaving to a foreign country, and maybe this is not what we ought to do. Yet, this does not make any difference. As those missionaries who labor in foreign lands, we too must let our deepest motivation guide us in what we do. This God - this King - is worthy of being known and proclaimed as He is. Any missionary who announces such God cannot fail; and even if no one should be converted from hearing him or her, this work will not be lost, but will remain as something precious before humans and angels, and even demons, for it will have been an expression of praise to God anyhow.

**II Cor. 2:15-16** - *For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. To the one we are the smell of death; to the other, the fragrance of life. And who is equal to such a task?*

**Psalms 2:7-8** - *I will proclaim the decree of the LORD : He said to me, "You are my Son ; today I have become your Father. Ask of me, I will make the nations your inheritance, ends of the earth your possession.*

Christ asked not only with words, but by laying down his very life and the Father responded with joy and gave Him those He has purchased from every tribe, tongue, people and nation. God sent Jesus to the world with a vision for mission, and Jesus died carrying out this very mission. To this day the same grace sends us with the same vision. Maybe we too may (or should) die carrying out this mission. But whether we live or die is not as important; to a certain extent, we have already died.

God is so concerned with humanity's need that He sent His only Son to die in their place. The heart of God in relationship to poor and afflicted sinners is completely revealed at the cross. Living a life focused on God means having the same compassionate heart. God's love for humankind has sent Christ to die on the cross: this is our model to follow. When we will have loved our neighbor to the point of giving our life in order to share the Gospel, we will have paid our debt. But until then it is quite clear what our job is. The Lord

commands His disciples to "go". We do not really have an option, for the King has spoken and we must obey.

I would like to share a quote by Henry Martyn, a missionary to India who died at the age of 31 without returning to his homeland:

*"I have hitherto lived to little purpose; more like a clod than a servant of God. Now let me burn out for God."*

This is exactly what flowed out of his heart. He knew God and in Him he lived and the result of this knowledge and life was visible fruit. The time we spend getting to know the character of God is never wasted, but we must first burn within at the thought of the glory of God and of service to Him. Even if we lived to the end of our days without seeing anyone being saved, this will not damage us and our reward will be the same in eternity. The cause for which we fight is the cause of grace and truth and thus, even though it may appear impossible, at the end this cause will triumph.

We must pray that God may send His messengers with His message: "Seek happiness in God" - Here is a message for the world! He Himself is the answer to our world's desires. He is our Message! The God of glory must be known. God has lifted the eyes of His Church, has showed her a lost world and taught her compassion. And we have seen this compassion on the face of Christ and have been touched by it. The sight of lost humankind has called the Church to stretch unto the ends of the earth. A divine voice cries, "Save those who are still entangled in the darkness of sin!" What shall we then do? We must proclaim the glory of God to the Nations.

Henry Martyn is gone, and so are those who came after Him. It is our turn now and no longer theirs. They are resting from their labor, which is now our labor. What will we do? May God help us not to waver. If we love our Saviour we must do our best to make Him known. Let us carry His character, His person until the most remote regions of the earth. As long as it is light we must do the work of He who sent us. May all of us at SMEI, as one, make ours the words of Henry Martyn: "...now let me burn for Him..."!

**Ephesians 3:20-21**: "Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen."

To His Glory...

Respectfully submitted,

Vincenzo Paci