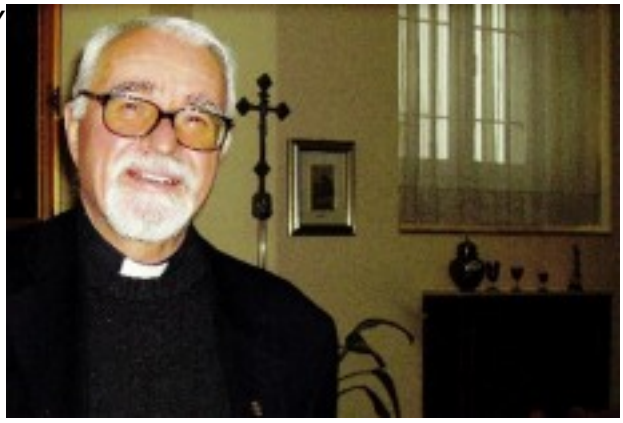
Y
our Holiness,
Venerable Synod Fathers,
Brothers and Sisters,

I come from Asia Minor, now Turkey, and the land of the First Evangelization. After the Golden Age of the Church Fathers and the long period that followed, the vicissitudes of history have radically altered the religious landscape of Anatolia to the point of reducing the Christian presence to less than 1% of the population in the early 20th century. This leads us to think about the factors that interfere with the process of evangelization.

Considering the current state of the population, the recipients of evangelization can be divided up into the following categories:

1 - The little flock of faithful practitioners,
2 – The masses of non-practicing Catholics,
3 - The followers of other Christian denominations,
4 – The quasi-totality of the country's citizens, who are either practicing or 'cultural' Muslims.

For the first 2 categories, the situation is quite similar to that of Christian countries. We must make huge efforts to raise awareness among our Catholic faithful so as to make them realize that they are the primary agents of the New Evangelization. As for other Christians, we strive to promote joint actions while carefully avoiding proselytism.

We feel quite at a loss in the midst of the people among whom we live. The Church, pretty much, is probably quite unaware of its responsibility. No. 74 of the *Instrumentum laboris* describes our particular situation: "We must not only measure evangelization based on the quantitative parameters of success." As it was already pointed out in the encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* of Blessed John Paul II, #55 and #56: "
The interreligious dialogue is part of the evangelizing mission of the Church ... Knowing that for many missionaries and Christian communities, the difficult way and often misunderstood dialogue is the only way of bearing sincere witness to Christ and generous service to man ... the dialogue is a path to the Kingdom ... "

Every day we are witnesses of these humble signs of the Kingdom. As it is not possible here to recount everything in detail, I would like to share with you an isolated event that I consider to be a parable of the Kingdom of God. On the occasion of the opening and closing of the Year of Saint Paul in the city of Tarsus (2008-2009), the local municipality wanted to honor the Apostle by inviting, among others, the famous interreligious choir of Antioch which has no fewer than five different denominations: Jews, Catholic and Orthodox Christians, Sunni Muslims, and Alevis. All the members of the choir have learned some hymns from the other denominations in order to be able to perform together. This example shows that if we could encourage the meeting and the conviviality among different religions, we would be not far from the kingdom of God.

Of course, the explicit proclamation of Jesus Christ, although sometimes discreet, is possible. The Catechism of the Catholic Church has been translated into Turkish with other publications. The Internet is a place easily accessible to the younger generation eager to make contact with the Christian faith. Public radio and television are not so accessible for us but many private organizations are involved in this field in which Evangelical Protestants are much more present than Catholics.

All this brings me once again to draw the attention of our religious Institutes and Church movements to send workers much better prepared and qualified for the harvest that awaits us; our apostolic outreach cannot be satisfied by simple goodwill and improvisation.

+ Louis Pelâtre A.A.
Bishop of Sasimes
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