The Role of the Spirit in the Mission of the Church in the Light of the Teachings of *Dominum et Vivificantem*

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Abstract

The Spirit gave birth to the Church on the day of Pentecost and entrusted her the mission to proclaim the Kingdom of God in this world. The Church has faithfully carried out the mission given to her through the centuries because of the guidance of the Spirit. The role of the Spirit is both fundamental and instrumental in the life of the Church. Pope John Paul II, in his Encyclical, *Dominum et Vivificantem* notes the powerful presence of the Spirit in the missionary activities of the Church. In this paper, we shall study the role of the Spirit in the mission of the Church in the modern world, in the light of the Encyclical *Dominum et Vivificantem*.

1. Introduction

There is a close relationship between the event of Pentecost and the birth of the Church.\(^1\) Jesus instituted her through His redemptive death on the cross and the Spirit brought her to existence on the day of Pentecost. The Church began her missionary activities in the power of the Spirit. Pope John Paul II noted on the vital role of the Spirit in the mission of the Church in his encyclical *Dominum et Vivificantem* (1986).\(^2\) It is almost 3 decades ago Pope John Paul II issued this encyclical but it is still is relevant for our times. This is because even though the mission of the Church remains the same in essence since its birth, the way she carries out this mission changes. She has to adapt herself to changing circumstances in the world. She needs to read the signs of the times, in order to be relevant. To carry out this task she relies on the guidance of the Spirit to make proper choices. In this study, we shall focus on the role of the Spirit in guiding her to carry out her missionary activities in the light of the Encyclical *Dominum et Vivificantem*.

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2. The Birth of the Church on the Day of Pentecost

The Acts of the Apostles gives a vivid description of the birth of the Church on the day of Pentecost (see Acts 2: 1–3). Jesus promised His disciples that they would receive the power when the Holy Spirit comes on them (see Acts 1: 8). The apostles, the other disciples and Mary the mother of Jesus gathered in the upper room, constantly devoting themselves to prayer (see Acts 1: 13–14). On the day of Pentecost, they were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages as the Spirit gave them the ability (see Acts 2: 1–4). Devout Jews from various nations had gathered at Jerusalem for the celebration of the Jewish feast of Pentecost. They were bewildered to hear the apostles and disciples speaking in their native language (see Acts 2: 5–6). The content of the speech was proclaiming the great deeds of God (see Acts 2: 11). Their message was not only for the Jews but also for all people. In this event, we can see the universality of the missionary character of the Church. The Church is for all nations and the mission is to proclaim the Kingdom of God.

Apart from this miracle of speaking in different languages, there was a tremendous change in the lives of the apostles and the disciples. After the death of Jesus, the apostles and the disciples had no courage to go out in public. They were cowards. However, after the coming of the Holy Spirit, they turned into bold witnesses for Christ. Peter fearlessly preached the salvation in Jesus Christ and quoted the various texts of the Old Testament to prove Jesus is the Messiah promised by God (see Acts 2: 14–38). His message had a tremendous effect on the people gathered there. Hearing his sermon around 3000 people repented and accepted Jesus as their Lord (see Acts 2: 41). Thereafter, the Acts of the Apostles records the lives of the early Christians who went to the whole world and proclaimed the good news of salvation. The Church has never ceased proclaiming the salvation in Jesus Christ. However, the modalities of the proclamation have changed. The Spirit continues to guide the Church in all her missionary activities and makes her ‘the light of the world’ and ‘the salt of the earth.’

3. Role of the Spirit in the Mission of the Church

The Spirit is the principal animator of all the missionary work. The Spirit gives life to the Church and guides her in apostolic work. The Spirit dwells in the Church and strengthens her as she leads all the people of good will to God. It is evident from the analysis given in the Acts of Apostles that the early Church community experienced the Spirit in all her activities. The Spirit continues to animate the Church and has a specific role in the mission of the Church. The Father sent the Spirit to be with her and sanctify her. The Catechism of the Catholic Church

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notes that:

The Church’s mission is not an addition to that of Christ and the Holy Spirit, but is its sacrament: in her whole being and in all her members, the Church is sent to announce, bear witness, make present, and spread the mystery of the communion of the Holy Trinity.\(^5\)

Following are some of the prominent features where we can see the role of the Spirit in the Church’s mission:

3.1 Perennial Pentecost

Right from the day of Pentecost, the Church became a powerful witness of the Spirit’s presence in all her missionary activities. Pope John Paul II notes that the era of the Church began on the day of Pentecost and it continues until the end of times. The Church witnesses the birth, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ by faithfully following the written Word of God, celebrating the sacraments and exercising the various charisms bestowed on her by the Spirit.

The era of the Church began with the coming, that is to say with the descent of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles gathered in the Upper Room in Jerusalem, together with Mary, the Lord’s Mother. The time of the Church began at the moment when the promises and predictions that so explicitly referred to the Counselor, the Spirit of truth, began to be fulfilled in complete power and clarity upon the Apostles, thus determining the birth of the Church. The Acts of the Apostles speak of this at length and in many passages, which state that in the mind of the first community, whose convictions Luke expresses, the Holy Spirit assumed the invisible but in a certain way perceptible guidance of those who after the departure of the Lord Jesus felt profoundly that they had been left orphans. With the coming of the Spirit they felt capable of fulfilling the mission entrusted to them. They felt full of strength. It is precisely this that the Holy Spirit worked in them and this is continually at work in the Church, through their successors. For the grace of the Holy Spirit which the Apostles gave to their collaborators through the imposition of hands continues to be transmitted in Episcopal Ordination. The bishops in turn by the Sacrament of Orders render the sacred ministers sharers in this spiritual gift and, through the Sacrament of Confirmation, ensure that all who are reborn of water and the Holy Spirit are strengthened by this gift. And thus, in a certain way, the grace of Pentecost is perpetuated in the Church. As the Council writes, the Spirit dwells in the Church and in the hearts of the faithful as in a temple (1 Cor 3: 16; 6: 19). In them he prays and bears witness to the fact that they are adopted sons (Gal 4: 6; Rom 8: 15–16; 26). The Spirit guides the Church into the fullness of truth (Jn 16: 13) and gives her a unity of fellowship and service. He furnishes and directs her with various gifts, both hierarchical and charismatic, and adorns

\(^5\) *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 738.
her with the fruits of his grace (Eph 4:11–12; 1 Cor 12:4; Gal 5:22). By the power of the
Gospel he makes the Church grow, perpetually renews her and leads her to perfect union
with her Spouse.6

The Spirit has always guided the Church and prepared her to read the signs of the times.
The Church has relied on the guidance of the Spirit to make her relevant in modern times. The
Second Vatican Council (1962–1965) is indeed the working of the Spirit. Pope John XIII
promulgated the Second Vatican Council and prayed for a new Pentecost in the Church. The
Spirit answered the prayer of the Supreme Pontiff, and indeed the Second Vatican Council
brought a revolutionary change in the life of the Church. The Spirit renewed her by bringing
freshness in the areas, which needed renewal and reformation. Pope John Paul II noted that:

The Conciliar Constitution Lumen Gentium tells us that the era of the Church began with
the coming of the Holy Spirit. It also tells us that this era, the era of the Church, continues.
It continues down the centuries and generations. In our own century, when humanity is
already close to the end of the second Millennium after Christ, this era of the Church
expressed itself in a special way through the Second Vatican Council, as the Council of our
century. For we know that it was in a special way an ecclesiological Council: a Council on
the theme of the Church. At the same time, the teaching of this Council is essentially
pneumatological: it is permeated by the truth about the Holy Spirit, as the soul of the
Church. We can say that in its rich variety of teaching the Second Vatican Council contains
precisely all that the Spirit says to the Churches with regard to the present phase of the
history of salvation.7

Even after 2000 years, the Church faithfully perseveres in her mission. Even though the
Church is facing a number of problems both internally and externally, due to rapid spread of
secularization, she is convinced of the Spirit’s assistance for her. The difficulties, which the
Church is facing in the modern world, are not new phenomena for her. She has always faced
the turbulent times right from her birth. The Acts of Apostles describes at length the
persecutions, which the disciples faced because of their faith in Jesus and refusal to take part in
any form of injustice. Pope John Paul II noted that:

In the midst of the problems, disappointments and hopes, desertions and returns of these
times of ours, the Church remains faithful to the mystery of her birth. While it is an
historical fact that the Church came forth from the Upper Room on the day of Pentecost,
in a certain sense one can say that she has never left it. Spiritually the event of Pentecost
does not belong only to the past: the Church is always in the Upper Room that she bears in
her heart. The Church perseveres in preserves, like the Apostles together with Mary, the
Mother of Christ, and with those who in Jerusalem were the first seed of the Christian

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7 Ibid., 835–837.
community and who awaited in prayer the coming of the Holy Spirit.\(^8\)

The Church needs the guidance of the Holy Spirit at all the times. She cannot authentically surge ahead without the power of the Spirit. She is in need of perennial Pentecost. Thus, she continually prays for the fresh outpouring of the Spirit to renew herself constantly.

3.2 Foster Spirituality

One of the primary tasks of the Church is to call upon all to deepen their spiritual lives. A human person is the unity of the 3 components, body, mind and spirit (soul). “The unity of soul and body is so profound that one has to consider the soul to be the form of the body... spirit and matter, in man, are not two natures united, but rather their union forms a single nature.”\(^9\) Just as a human person has to feed oneself in order to nurture one’s physical self, similarly there is a profound need to nurture one’s inner self (soul). There are no products available in the market that can nurture one’s spiritual life. It is the Spirit alone, which enriches one’s interior life. Hence, a person has to be in union with the Spirit of God to grow spiritually. The Church offers sacraments, which are the visible form of God’s invisible grace, as resources to nurture one’s spiritual life. However, sacraments do not have any magical effect. They presuppose faith. “They not only presuppose faith, but by words and objects they also nourish, strengthen, and express it.”\(^10\) The Church helps a faithful to build a healthy spiritual life by seeking the assistance of the Spirit. Pope John Paul II noted that:

The breath of the divine life, the Holy Spirit, in its simplest and most common manner, expresses itself and makes itself felt in prayer. It is a beautiful and salutary thought that, wherever people are praying in the world, there the Holy Spirit is, the living breath of prayer. It is a beautiful and salutary thought to recognize that, if prayer is offered throughout the world, in the past, in the present and in the future, equally widespread is the presence and action of the Holy Spirit, who breathes prayer in the heart of man in all the endless range of the most varied situations and conditions, sometimes favorable and sometimes unfavorable to the spiritual and religious life. Many times, through the influence of the Spirit, prayer rises from the human heart in spite of prohibitions and persecutions and even official proclamations regarding the non-religious or even atheistic character of public life. Prayer always remains the voice of all those who apparently have no voice-and in this voice there always echoes that loud cry attributed to Christ by the Letter to the Hebrews. Prayer is also the revelation of that abyss which is the heart of man: a depth which comes from God and which only God can fill, precisely with the Holy Spirit. We read in Luke: If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him. The Holy Spirit is the gift that comes into man’s heart together with prayer. In

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\(^8\) Ibid., 896-897.  
\(^9\) Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 365.  
\(^10\) Ibid., no. 1123.
prayer he manifests himself first of all and above all as the gift that helps us in our weakness. This is the magnificent thought developed by St. Paul in the Letter to the Romans, when he writes: For we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words. Therefore, the Holy Spirit not only enables us to pray, but guides us from within in prayer: he is present in our prayer and gives it a divine dimension. Thus he who searches the hearts of men knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. Prayer through the power of the Holy Spirit becomes the ever more mature expression of the new man, who by means of this prayer participates in the divine life.\textsuperscript{11}

There is rapid development of science and technology. Our modern world offers gadgets to make our lives more convenient. However, this advancement in the field of science cannot fill the vacuum in one’s spiritual life. Even though science can offer the best means to quench the provisional needs, it cannot do anything to satisfy the inner needs of the person. A human person will always have spiritual needs. Only the Spirit can quench the innermost spiritual needs of a person. The Spirit alone teaches us to pray. “Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words” (Rom 8: 26).

The Church has a rich tradition of saints and holy people who have left behind volumes of treatises on prayer and spiritual guidance. People can learn from the lives of saints to come closer to the Lord.

The Church has also welcomed the birth of new movements like the Catholic Charismatic Movement, Communion and Liberation, the Neo-Catechumenal Way, Focolare and many other movements.\textsuperscript{12} These new ecclesial movements have been instrumental in the spiritual renewal of the Church. They emphasize on the charismatic dimension of the Church. As Karl Rahner noted that:

The charismatic... is new and incalculable and it is not immediately evident at first sight that everything is as it was in the enduring totality of the Church. For often it is only through what is new that it is realized that the range of the Church was greater from the outset than had been previously supposed and so the charismatic features, when it is new, and one might almost say it is only charismatic if it is so, has something shocking about it. It can be mistaken for facile enthusiasm, a hankering after change, attempted subversion, and lack of feeling for tradition and for the well-tried experience of the past.\textsuperscript{13}

The new ecclesial movements have contributed in bringing freshness and vigour in the life of the Church.\textsuperscript{14} A new thirst for prayer, fellowship, meaningful celebration of the sacraments

\textsuperscript{11} Dominum \& Vivificantem, no. 65 AAS 78 (1986), 894–896.

\textsuperscript{12} See Tony Hanna, New Ecclesial Movements (New York: St. Pauls, 2006); 3–33.

\textsuperscript{13} Karl Rahner, The Dynamic Element in the Church (Freiburg: Herder, 1964), 83.

and carrying out work of evangelization are some of the conspicuous fruits of these movements. Pope John Paul II noted about the effects of the ecclesial movements as follows:

Our difficult age has a special need of prayer. In the course of history—both in the past and in the present—many men and women have borne witness to the importance of prayer by consecrating themselves to the praise of God and to the life of prayer, especially in monasteries and convents. So, too, recent years have been seeing a growth in the number of people who, in ever more widespread movements and groups, are giving first place to prayer and seeking in prayer a renewal of their spiritual life. This is a significant and comforting sign, for from this experience there is coming a real contribution to the revival of prayer among the faithful, who have been helped to gain a clearer idea of the Holy Spirit as he who inspires in hearts a profound yearning for holiness. In many individuals and many communities there is a growing awareness that, even with all the rapid progress of technological and scientific civilization, and despite the real conquests and goals attained, man is threatened, humanity is threatened. In the face of this danger, and indeed already experiencing the frightful reality of man’s spiritual decadence, individuals and whole communities, guided as it were by an inner sense of faith, are seeking the strength to raise man up again, to save him from himself, from his own errors and mistakes that often make harmful his very conquests. And thus they are discovering prayer, in which the Spirit who helps us in our weakness manifests himself. In this way the times in which we are living are bringing the Holy Spirit closer to the many who are returning to prayer. And I trust that all will find in the teaching of this Encyclical nourishment for their interior life, and that they will succeed in strengthening, under the action of the Spirit, their commitment to prayer in harmony with the Church and her Magisterium.\(^\text{15}\)

The Church has both the institutional and charismatic dimension. In order to promote the charismatic dimension she has to encourage all the faithful to nurture their spiritual lives by being open to the Spirit, who continually renews the face of the earth (see Ps 104: 30).

3.3 Confront Sin

The Church is not only concerned with the spiritual things but also all matters that affect human life. The modern world is plagued with a plethora of human made problems. The root cause of these problems is sin (both individual and corporate). However, the modern person tries to find solutions without referring to the root cause (sin) and thus, creates superficial methods to alleviate problems that do no good.

In His farewell discourse, Jesus said that the Spirit “will prove the world wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment” (Jn 16: 8). The Spirit has mandated the Church to confront sin in the world. She must not hesitate “to call spade a spade.” She must not fear the “powers and principalities” of this world which seek to twist and trample down truth in order to have unhealthy gains. It is her mission to call all to examine their conscience and repent. The

\(^{15}\) Dominum et Vivificantem, no. 65 AAS 78 (1986), 894–896.
modern world tries to paint evil as good under the garb of relativism. It is trying to distort the true definition of human freedom. It considers an individual’s choice of doing as one pleases without any responsibility as healthy. The Church has the obligation to challenge the dangers of relativism. She must not fear to speak “the truth in love” (Eph 4: 15). She must not be “tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people’s trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming” (Eph 4: 14). The Spirit helps the Church to proclaim the truth with boldness. Pope John Paul II noted that:

The action of the Spirit of truth, which works toward salvific convincing concerning sin, encounters in a person in this condition an interior resistance, as it were an impenetrability of conscience, a state of mind which could be described as fixed by reason of a free choice. This is what Sacred Scripture usually calls hardness of heart. In our own time this attitude of mind and heart is perhaps reflected in the loss of the sense of sin, to which the Apostolic Exhortation Reconciliatio et Paenitentia devotes many pages. Pope Pius XII had already declared that the sin of the century is the loss of the sense of sin, and this loss goes hand in hand with the loss of the sense of God. In the Exhortation just mentioned we read: In fact, God is the origin and the supreme end of man, and man carries in himself a divine seed. Hence it is the reality of God that reveals and illustrates the mystery of man. It is therefore vain to hope that there will take root a sense of sin against man and against human values, if there is no sense of offense against God, namely the true sense of sin. Hence the Church constantly implores from God the grace that integrity of human consciences will not be lost, that their healthy sensitivity with regard to good and evil will not be blunted. This integrity and sensitivity are profoundly linked to the intimate action of the Spirit of truth. In this light the exhortations of St. Paul assume particular eloquence: Do not quench the Spirit; Do not grieve the Holy Spirit. But above all the Church constantly implores with the greatest fervor that there will be no increase in the world of the sin that the Gospel calls blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. Rather, she prays that it will decrease in human souls-and consequently in the forms and structures of society itself-and that it will make room for that openness of conscience necessary for the saving action of the Holy Spirit. The Church prays that the dangerous sin against the Spirit will give way to a holy readiness to accept his mission as the Counselor, when he comes to convince the world concerning sin, and righteousness and judgment.16

Atheism, consumerism and materialism are systematically destroying the place of Christian values in the society. Unabated greed and cutthroat competition is driving people to over-use resources and endanger the ecological balance. The society is ignoring the needs of the weak, the infirm, and the poor. The minority rich are holding all the world’s wealth and resources, depriving the majority poor of their basic needs. The Church needs the courage of the Spirit to be a witness of Christ’s values in the society. She must work for the upliftment of the weak, the poor and the marginalized. She must challenge every political or social structure that deprives

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16 Ibid., 865–866.
a person of his or her dignity. She must identify herself with the weakest in the society. The Spirit leads the Church to be Christ-centred, to cherish and practise the values of Christ in the society. Indeed, it is a difficult task to confront the evil prevalent in the society. Evil in any form tries to crush the forces of good. However, the Church must not be worried because she has the Counsellor (Spirit) with her. The Spirit equips the Church with the internal strength to be the living witness of Christ in this society. Pope John Paul II noted that:

In principle and in fact, materialism radically excludes the presence and action of God, who is spirit, in the world and above all in man. Fundamentally this is because it does not accept God’s existence, being a system that is essentially and systematically atheistic. This is the striking phenomenon of our time: atheism, to which the Second Vatican Council devoted some significant pages. Even though it is not possible to speak of atheism in a univocal way or to limit it exclusively to the philosophy of materialism, since there exist numerous forms of atheism and the word is perhaps often used in a wrong sense, nevertheless it is certain that a true and proper materialism, understood as a theory which explains reality and accepted as the key-principle of personal and social action, is characteristically atheistic. The order of values and the aims of action which it describes are strictly bound to a reading of the whole of reality as matter. Though it sometimes also speaks of the spirit and of questions of the spirit, as for example in the fields of culture or morality, it does so only insofar as it considers certain facts as derived from matter (epiphenomena), since according to this system matter is the one and only form of being. It follows, according to this interpretation, that religion can only be understood as a kind of idealistic illusion, to be fought with the most suitable means and methods according to circumstances of time and place, in order to eliminate it from society and from man’s very heart.

It can be said therefore that materialism is the systematic and logical development of that resistance and opposition condemned by St. Paul with the words: The desires of the flesh are against the Spirit. But, as St. Paul emphasizes in the second part of his aphorism, this antagonism is mutual: The desires of the Spirit are against the flesh. Those who wish to live by the Spirit, accepting and corresponding to his salvific activity, cannot but reject the internal and external tendencies and claims of the flesh, also in its ideological and historical expression as anti-religious materialism. Against this background so characteristic of our time, in preparing for the great Jubilee we must emphasize the desires of the spirit, as exhortations echoing in the night of a new time of advent. At the end of which, like two thousand years ago, every man will see the salvation of God. This is a possibility and a hope that the Church entrusts to the men and women of today. She knows that the meeting or collision between the desires against the spirit which mark so many aspects of contemporary civilization, especially in some of its spheres, and the desires against the flesh, with God’s approach to us, his Incarnation, his constantly

renewed communication of the Holy Spirit this meeting or collision may in many cases be of a tragic nature and may perhaps lead to fresh defeats for humanity. But the Church firmly believes that on God’s part there is always a salvific self-giving, a salvific coming and, in some way or other, a salvific convincing concerning sin by the power of the Spirit.\footnote{Dominum et Vivificantem, no. 56 AAS 78 (1986), 879–881.}

Human life is a gift of God. “Of all visible creatures only man is able to know and love his creator... he alone is called to share, by knowledge and love, in God’s own life. It was for this end that he was created, and this is the fundamental reason for his dignity.”\footnote{Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 356.} However, a philosophy of human alienation and a culture of death are gaining prominence in the modern world. Corrupt and greedy systems have reduced human person to be a tool in the hands of the rich and the powerful, which they may use at their whims and fancies. The society considers the terminally ill and disabled people as burdens. It wants to curtail their right to life, under the guise of new legislations, which legalize active euthanasia. Further, a number of nations have legalized abortion, thus depriving the right to life of an unborn foetus. The Church always stands for right to life. She opposes any non-life giving legislations and forces. Human life is precious and therefore, the Church promotes protection of human life, which includes the unborn foetus. She has always raised her voice against the culture of death, which is spreading in the world. She denounces every form of atrocities or terrorism in the world. She works for the dignity of all human persons. Pope John Paul II noted that:

The Pauline contrast between the Spirit and the flesh also includes the contrast between life and death. This is a serious problem, and concerning it one must say at once that materialism, as a system of thought, in all its forms, means the acceptance of death as the definitive end of human existence. Everything that is material is corruptible, and therefore the human body (insofar as it is animal) is mortal. If man in his essence is only flesh, death remains for him an impassable frontier and limit. Hence one can understand how it can be said that human life is nothing but an existence in order to die. It must be added that on the horizon of contemporary civilization-especially in the form that is most developed in the technical and scientific sense-the signs and symptoms of death have become particularly present and frequent. One has only to think of the arms race and of its inherent danger of nuclear self-destruction. Moreover, everyone has become more and more aware of the grave situation of vast areas of our planet marked by death-dealing poverty and famine. It is a question of problems that are not only economic but also and above all ethical. But on the horizon of our era there are gathering ever darker signs of death: a custom has become widely established in some places it threatens to become almost an institution-of taking the lives of human beings even before they are born, or before they reach the natural point of death. Furthermore, despite many noble efforts for peace, new wars have broken out and are taking place, wars which destroy the lives or the health of hundreds of thousands of people. And how can one fail to mention the attacks...
against human life by terrorism, organized even on an international scale? 

The Church has the difficult task of challenging the unjust social structures. She has to face constantly the danger of secularism and the degradation of moral values that it is bringing. The Church needs the strength of the Spirit to proclaim the gospel of Christ and bear witness to Him.

3.4 Strengthen Christian Unity

In the gospel of John, Jesus prayed: “I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one. (Jn 17: 20–21)” The bitter divisions in the Church are a scandal before the world. The quarrels among Christian denomination are an obstacle in the work of evangelization. After years of separation, the Second Vatican Council aimed for true Christian unity. Pope John XXIII called the Second Vatican Council to work towards ecumenical unity. In response to his prayer, the Council Fathers brought out a document named Unitatis Redintegratio (Decree on Ecumenism), which noted the importance of ecumenical dialogue.

The Spirit calls the Church to work concretely for the “spiritual ecumenism” as envisaged by the Conciliar document. Pope John Paul II noted that:

Jesus himself when he prayed to the Father, that all may be one... as we are one (Jn 17: 21–22)... implied a certain likeness between the union of the divine persons and the union of the children of God in truth and charity. The Council repeats this truth about man, and the Church sees in it a particularly strong and conclusive indication of her own apostolic tasks.

The Church needs the Spirit’s strength to reach out to all Christians belonging to different denominations. The Church must become a place where all Christians can pray together because all belong to the same body (Church), whose head is Christ. “There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all” (Eph 4: 4–6). If Christians irrespective of their denominations can come together in fraternal love to pray together, they can witness their faith and thus become powerful evangelizers in the world.

3.5 Promote Interreligious Dialogue

Religious pluralism is the reality in the modern world. In order to maintain peace and harmony inter-religious dialogue is inevitable. Even though inter-religious dialogue does not

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aim at placing all religions as equal, it aims to promote unity in diversity. The Conciliar documents, *Ad Gentes* (Decree on the Mission Activity of the Church) and *Nostra Aetate* (Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions) emphasize on the need of meaningful inter-religious dialogue. Jesus said, “The wind blows where it wills” (Jn 3: 8). In other words, the wind (Spirit) is free to work in any way it likes. No one can control the Spirit or dictate it to work in a particular way. The Spirit has been actively involved in the world even before Christ was born as a human person. Thus, the Church respects the good found in other religions as works of the same Spirit. Pope John Paul II encourages inter-religious dialogue. He noted that the work of the Spirit, which started from time immemorial, is the basis for inter-religious dialogue. He further noted that:

But as we follow this reason for the Jubilee, we cannot limit ourselves to the two thousand years which have passed since the birth of Christ. We need to go further back, to embrace the whole of the action of the Holy Spirit even before Christ-from the beginning, throughout the world, and especially in the economy of the Old Covenant. For this action has been exercised, in every place and at every time, indeed in every individual, according to the eternal plan of salvation, whereby this action was to be closely linked with the mystery of the Incarnation and Redemption, which in its turn exercised its influence on those who believed in the future coming of Christ. This is attested to especially in the Letter to the Ephesians. Grace, therefore, bears within itself both a Christological aspect and a pneumatological one, which becomes evident above all in those who expressly accept Christ: In him [in Christ] you... were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, which is the guarantee of our inheritance, until we acquire possession of it. But, still within the perspective of the great Jubilee, we need to look further and go further a field, knowing that the wind blows where it wills, according to the image used by Jesus in his conversation with Nicodemus. The Second Vatican Council, centered primarily on the theme of the Church, reminds us of the Holy Spirit’s activity also outside the visible body of the Church. The council speaks precisely of all people of good will in whose hearts grace works in an unseen way. For, since Christ died for all, and since the ultimate vocation of man is in fact one, and divine, we ought to believe that the Holy Spirit in a manner known only to God offers to every man the possibility of being associated with this Paschal Mystery. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth. These words were spoken by Jesus in another conversation, the one with the Samaritan woman. The great Jubilee to be celebrated at the end of this Millennium and at the beginning of the next ought to constitute a powerful call to all those who worship God in spirit and truth. It should be for everyone a special occasion for meditating on the mystery of the Triune God, who in himself is wholly transcendent with regard to the world, especially the visible world. For he is absolute Spirit, God is spirit; and also, in such a marvelous way, he is not only close to this world but present in it, and in a sense


immanent, penetrating it and giving it life from within. This is especially true in relation to man: God is present in the intimacy of man’s being, in his mind, conscience and heart: an ontological and psychological reality, in considering which St. Augustine said of God that he was closer than my inmost being. These words help us to understand better the words of Jesus to the Samaritan woman: God is spirit. Only the Spirit can be closer than my spiritual experience. Only the spirit can be so permanent in man and in the world, while remaining inviolable and immutable in his absolute transcendence. But in Jesus Christ the divine presence in the world and in man has been made manifest in a new way and in visible form. In him the grace of God has appeared indeed. The love of God the Father, as a gift, infinite grace, source of life, has been made visible in Christ, and in his humanity that love has become part of the universe, the human family and history. This appearing of grace in human history, through Jesus Christ, has been accomplished through the power of the Holy Spirit, who is the source of all God’s salvific activity in the world: he, the hidden God, who as love and gift fills the universe. The Church’s entire life, as will appear in the great Jubilee, means going to meet the invisible God, the hidden God: a meeting with the Spirit who gives life.  

The Church needs the guidance of the Spirit to dialogue with other religions to promote peace, harmony and goodness in this world.

4. Conclusion

The Encyclical *Dominum et Vivificantem* notes the dynamic role of the Spirit in guiding the Church to carry out her mission. In the midst of the modern world, the Church finds herself grappling with many problems. The Church is obliged to deal with these problems in the light of the Scriptures and tradition. She needs a perennial Pentecost to be a faithful witness to Christ and foster spirituality of the faithful.

The Church seeks the courage from the Spirit in order to confront and challenge the sin in the world. The Spirit strengthens her to be the voice of the weak and the marginalized. The Church works ceaselessly for promoting peace in the world with the power of the Spirit.

The Church enters into dialogue with other Christian denominations and religions. She does not hesitate to dialogue even with the people having no religious affiliations. This dialogue of life promotes social harmony. The Spirit is the force behind all genuine dialogue.

Thus, we can conclude that the Spirit plays an important role in the mission of the Church and Pope John Paul II, has rightly noted the same in his Encyclical *Dominum et Vivificantem*. Even though Pope John Paul II issued the Encyclical in 1986, it remains relevant because the role of the Spirit in the mission of the Church is relevant for all times.

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