Recenzja


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Introduction

The book “New Evangelization in Africa”, authored by Richard J. Quinn and others, is a practical guide for Parish Evangelizing Teams. The authors concentrated on four basic elements of evangelization synonymous to Christ ministry of Preaching, Teaching, Healing and Deliverance. The inspiration about this book springs from the request of some groups of Catholic laymen and women in response to the call of His Holiness Pope John Paul II for a New Evangelization in the Third Millennium.

Chapter one: The church calls for a new evangelization

This chapter dwells primarily on the entire invitation of the Church for a New Evangelization, drawing from its offshoots in the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) where the Church is called to recognize her essential identity as missionary, called for a new dialogue with non-Christian religions with the definitive task of the Church as the Sacrament of Salvation for the world. Two things are involved: 1. The first Evangelization: this is ongoing by those who will hear the gospel message from the Christian afresh. 2. The continuous deepening Evangelization: dwelling on cultures who have already embraced the Gospel. However, this narrative has been changed through the call from the Council to throw open the windows of the Church in order to engage the human community constructively, through a new dialogue with even non-Christian religions and the salvation of all people of goodwill.

Chapter two: What is evangelization?

The authors try to put into perspective the various definitions of Evangelization vis-a-vis the summary of the Apostolic Exhortation of
Pope Paul VI “Evangelisation in the Modern World.” The admonishment St. Paul to the Philippians’ community (Phil 4:15) stood as a springboard in the sense that, Evangelization is seen as moment that goes beyond the Gospel which is the sum total of words written in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Evangelization is rather the rich, complex, dynamic reality, linked with St. Paul’s missionary activity, which sees the Gospel essentially alive, as the Risen Christ communicating to his people through his own preaching and life of loving service.

Chapter three: Mission is the church’s greatest concern

The main preoccupation of this chapter concerns those saddled with the preaching of the Gospel and those who were hearers. By mere reading the Acts of the Apostles cannot do but pigeon-holed the reminiscent of the African Church through the fundamental equality of all believers, where Catholics and non–Catholics based upon the gift of baptism (cf. Lumen Gentium, No. 32). The authors displayed various Christian vocations inspired by the Holy Spirit without ambiguity or conflicts. The Clergy as well as the Laity, each discharging responsibilities complementarily just like the Theology of St. Paul on ‘One Body’ (The Church), but ‘Many Parts’ (different gifts or vocations), (cf. 1 Cor. 12:28). As the Clergy are called to active and administrative vocation, the Laity is equally called to active participation in the Mission of the Church and Evangelization by deepening the faith of others through catechesis, faith and bible sharing, social communication, participation in the sacred liturgy as well as preparing those among the faithful who desire to receive the sacraments.

Chapter four: Practical hints; helps and suggestions for effective evangelization

In this chapter, the authors tried to settle with the question: “How exactly does the ordinary person begin to engage in the work of Evangelization?” It is pertinent to note that efforts were established by the Church as seen from its early beginning to proclaim the reign of God by her method of evangelization in several ways: training of missionaries, making contact with foreign cultures, conversation of communities, publication of literatures in local languages and the building of infrastructures like: schools, hospitals and churches. Good as it may be, however, the continuity and sustainability besides the human capacity is the concern of this chapter. Owing to the multi-religious setting of our modern world, the authors were also conscious of knowing the Religious Environment we live in. They listed Churches and Movements to
be encountered in Evangelization as Catholics in Africa, ranging from Islam, New Age Movements, Pentecostal Churches, Catholic Charismatic Renewal, Evangelical Churches as well as Mainline Protestant Churches, etc.

**Chapter five: Two biblical meditations on healing**

This last chapter sums the whole idea on the Church’s involvement or participation in Evangelization with reference to “healing”. The authors see Jesus’ miraculous healing as recorded in the New Testament is not a magic, rather, the power of God at work in the human person. He (Jesus) possesses tremendous powers; he does not tightly control its uses, rather, he makes it available to whosoever in need. The authors also noted that, Jesus’ mission to save us from personal sin, ignorance, weakness of the will, disordered desire, illness, deformity and death was God’s original intention for humanity given to us at the first moment of creation. Healing therefore, is given to us not to merely relieve pain and anguish but to remove any obstacle in the way that hinders our reception of the new life promised in the kingdom.

**Critique and Conclusion**

Although this book was published about 13 years ago, the authors did justice to the subject matter. I believe this book will stand the test of time following the quality of the research, most especially in our contemporary African society where there are religious extremists, violence militancy, insurgency, trans-regional agitations. However, there are some grey areas this book fails to address. Africa is a multicultural and religious society, this book was written within the context of Kenya as a country. Its content does not necessary represent the entire continent of Africa, especially with regards to culture and religion. In the area of media too, the authors were so reluctant in shedding more light, forgetting the fact that our contemporary world has gone visual; where images and pictures (Media) speak and transmit messages faster than words. Finally, as I commend the authors of this book, there is a sense in which Diocesan Bishops, Heads of Religious Congregations, Parishes, Rectors of Seminaries and Catholic Universities, Lay Apostolate should embrace and utilize this Practical Guide as a working document. It is obvious that this book despite some few areas of observations, it has all it takes to assist in a concrete witness and formation programmes for Catholic Evangelists, not only in Africa but the world at large.