

INTEGRAL EVANGELIZATION IN THE FIELD OF POPULAR EDUCATION

Raquel Rangel, Maria de Jesus Richarte, Josefina de la Torre, Martina Perez and
Maria Elena Lopez.

From 1994, the community of Xalpatlahuac, State of Guerrero in Mexico, we live our mission of evangelización with indigenous Nahuatl, na'sa'vi (mixtecos), me'phaa (tlapanecos) sisters and brothers.

Description of the experience:

General objective:

Evangelize integrally from our Nahuatl, na'sa'vi (mixteca) and méphaa (tlapanecos) cultures to grow as a community in conscience and organization, eliminating mechanisms of death and oppression to create a more just society and thus collaborate in the building of the Kingdom of God, here and now.

We fulfill our mission of integral Evangelization educating in a faith that blossoms in works of justice; educating in life and for life; accompanying processes of development in order that they take ownership of their own development in accordance with the ideals of the Kingdom.

Activities

Within the framework of a process that integrates the cosmic vision, structure and organization of the community, diverse activities are carried out:

- Small group community Masses by different districts in the towns, the formation and the organization of coordinators and cantors, prayer leaders, catechists, parents, preparation for the sacraments, youth groups, Guadalupanos.
- Accompaniment and study of the indigenous spirituality, cosmic vision and rituals.
- Accompaniment and preparation for the celebrations of their novenas, their patrons saints, their deceased and raising of the cross according to its uses and customs.
- Support the formation of the community police and the system of teaching a just exercise of the law to protect the security of the towns, according to its customs.

- Search for the promotion, formation and organization of groups that work in productive projects: savings account groups, health, employing alternative natural medicine with herbs and other curative methods derived from indigenous wisdom, sewing and embroidery factories, rainwater storage tanks, homebuilding, the sowing of: sugar, corn, jamaica, chile, tomato, flowers, vegetables, sugar cane, banana, the promotion of poultry and pig growing, etc.

Methodology:

The pastoral work takes place through: Formation workshops in different aspects of life, Encounters, retreats, assemblies.

All is accomplished through the analytical method of **seeing, thinking, acting, celebrating and evaluating**. The same method is used in family visits, neighborhood visitations, in its organization and capacitacion? The method is also used in the participation and accompaniment of the religious and cultural activities that take place according to their uses and customs.

Timeline and Duration of the Experience:

From 1994, the year in which we initiated the presence of the Company of Maria in Xalpatlahuac, we have lived four stages and are currently in the fifth.

- In the first stage we dedicated ourselves to learn, first-hand, the reality of the villages and the families to become acquainted with their outlook on life, including an understanding of its cosmic vision, its organization, its customs, its culture and language.

- In the second stage: we called meetings at which time we appointed Coordinators and Coordinators of the districts and representatives of the towns, and with them we developed the Parochial Pastoral Plan.

- In the third stage: with the people we advanced towards an integral Evangelization employing the four objectives set forth in the Diocesan Evangelization project:

- a) Integral Evangelization,
- b) Organization
- c) Culture and
- d) Human rights

- The time, from its inception, consolidation and implementation, was 8 years (1994 to 2002).

- In the fourth stage: Reorganization, in accordance with the greater poverty, brought on by effects of Neo-liberalism and Globalization.

- In the fifth stage: the Parochial and Community Pastoral plans are adjusted according to the point at which the Evangelization plan has progressed.

Coordination with other groups, organizations... at the internal and external level for the further development of the experience.

At the internal level:

As the Company of Mary's Southern Province of Mexico, we have maintained a continuous process of Encounters, Meetings, Assemblies, workshops and reflections on the processes of Popular Education as a Province, as well as each one of the communities in mission.

At the external level:

We participate in Encounters of Religious Communities serving in needy areas; in Assemblies and Encounter of *Comunidades de Base*.

We consulted the National Center for the Indigenous Missions to give input to our Plan and to support us in our process. We also consulted with the Jesuit Center of Theological Reflection for insight on the organization and the formation of Catechists, and for formation of youth, children, the villages and Parishes.

For the promotion and development of the organization of groups and their production, we have had contact with government organizations, different NGO's (Non-governmental Organizations) and other Christian Churches.

Financing and budgeting.

We have been able to rely several sources:

- For the productive projects, we have relied on the contributions of the members of the Center for Ecumenical Studies, Canada's Mission for Mexico, Cáritas of Mexico, Populorum Progressio, and aid obtained by the Parish of San Felipe de Jesus in the Federal District.
- For Catechesis our contributions come from those who participate in and help Mission for Mexico, the Marists' Solidarity Fund, the Company of Mary Solidarity Fund (FISC), and other individual contributions.
- The school of Music is supported by the National Center for the Indigenous Missions, Mission for Mexico, the Bishop and the contribution of the students.
- For the Assemblies and the Certification and Formation workshops, the people who participate pay their own way, and alternately, the community that offers the workshop, provides food and lodging.

What is considered most valuable from this experience.

- What we considered the most validating was the initiation processes from the grass roots, the simple things and the learning which took place in community, drawing from the wisdom of the indigenous people, and allowing us into their cosmic vision, to be included in their community.
- We are learning new ways "of extending our hands".
- The people are becoming aware of their own reality and becoming hopeful because, by the light of the faith put into practice, they discover new horizons and new hope for another world which is a possibility for them.
- With the deepening of the Word of God the people are becoming aware of and transforming their reality.
- Capabilities are being discovered/developed and new groups are being formed.
- The value and dignity of women is being discovered and women are beginning to take their rightful role in society.
- The people are rediscovering and valuing their cultural roots.

Difficulties encountered and how they have been confronted.

One of the difficulties is that our cosmic vision is very different from that of the indigenous cultures. We have confronted this reality by being open to differences and by valuing and respecting the wealth and contribution of faith of both visions. In the indigenous villages, we discovered its sensitivity and holistic vision, its organization, its culture, its language, its spirituality. We have affirmed the people's values of listening, respect, and the desire to be close to one another, to relate.

The increasing poverty and the lack of work that leave emigration as the only option for survival. We are partially confronting it by fostering their communitarian sense, the productive projects and the groups providing saving's accounts; promoting the appreciation and the development of their cultural identity, facing the threat of the dominant culture that tries to destroy the indigenous world.

As a result of the increase in migration, only women, children, some adolescents and senior citizens are staying behind in the villages. In the face of this situation we are encouraging a growth in the awareness of, the organization, participation and value of the woman to train the new generations.

Since the towns lack any real possibilities for young people to prepare themselves for a worthy future, due to the lack of middle and high schools, and the lack of work, youth who do not emigrate are beginning to use drugs, due to the great influence of drug traffickers. To alleviate this situation, the

initiative has been taken to summon all the active forces of the towns: civilian authorities, health and educational centers, security, indigenous authorities, mayors, to study the reality and to make joint campaigns that have given good results.

The political parties divide the townspeople and pit them against each other for their own political gain. The divisions are usually due to property or ethnicity. In these divisions we worked so that the parties in conflict became aware of and discovered that their differences came from external causes. Why not try to solve these problems according to the Plan of God and seek solutions through dialog and take concrete steps towards reconciliation and unity?

Lessons learned that can help other groups.

If we want to build on firm and lasting foundations, we have to assume that transformations are generated from the small things, and that the processes must be slow in order to truly generate life and that the Indigenous Project solidifies and is in tune with the gospel of Jesus, the one true liberator of all death and the One who generates hope.

We need to pass from a “pyramid” vision to a circular and communitarian vision, in order to make decisions in consensus, where, in dialogue, we learn together on equal terms.

Evangelization must be primary so that it responds to the realities of these times.

The option for the poor is the key element to carrying out this form of Evangelization.

The dynamism of the Charism of the Company of Mary can be made real and is fully recreated in the world of the poor.

Santa Jeanne de Lestonnac’s Educational Project is incarnated harmoniously in the world of the impoverished indigenous people.

Conclusions:

- This way of taking the Company of Mary Mission to the natives from the Diocese of Tlapa in the Parish of Xalpatlahuac, has given meaning to our lives, to our being and work, because we live the Charism that inspired Jeanne de Lestonnac and it continues inspiring us now. It recreates and we recreate it, it gives us life and we give it life, from and with those closest to the heart of our Father-Mother God’s, the poor.

- For the people, the communities, the towns and for us it is a constant reason to renew our certainty and to recreate our hope for a different world. YES that we CAN, when we put all of the means in our reach and we risk all that we are and do.

- To the natives and us it makes us live in the graciousness of his election, only because He wanted it and He invites to us to this place to do what He has wanted us to do.

- We learn that difficulties are opportunities to grow, challenges to unite forces creating synergy, overcoming them in community, hand-in-hand.

- This Mission of the Company of Mary enables us to participate in the same Mission of Jesus *"the Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to announce the good news to the poor; he has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives, to give sight to the blind, to free the oppressed and to proclaim a year of grace in the Lord "(Lk. 4, 18-20).*