

PREFACE

This book traces the evolution of the American Catholic paradigm of mission of Jesus Christ in the context of the Dominican preaching mission, American history and the history of the Roman Catholic Church in the twentieth century. In keeping with the Dominican motto *contemplata aliis tradit*,¹ Dominican preaching is continually updated by regular daily reflection on mission experiences. Through adherence to this motto the Order has adapted through centuries of violent upheaval and turmoil as well as in times of peace and prosperity.

Although this history has implications for all religious missionaries, it is limited to the missions of the Dominican and Maryknoll Sisters in the United States who were sent to fifty other nations. Each paradigm evolves within the historical framework of the foreign policy the United States and the Vatican's foreign agenda. Resources were gathered from congregational leadership, historians and/or archivists and the McGreal Center for Dominican Historical Studies at Dominican University in River Forest, IL. Accounts by Sisters and others with first-hand experience of the mission are used wherever possible.

Dominican missionaries are guided primarily by the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the charism and heritage of the Dominican Order, the lives of the Saints, and the teachings of the Catholic Church, but political movements within the United States and the local regions where they served played an important secondary role in shaping new paradigms of mission. Dominican missionaries were sent from many nations to many nations.

This work focuses on the missionary activity of Sisters sent from congregations in the United States whose members, themselves, come from a variety of cultures and nationalities.

The book examines the ways in which American Catholic Women Religious belonging to the Dominican Order were influenced by the foreign agenda of the Vatican, the foreign policies of the United States and the historical events that took place in the nations where they served. It demonstrates how the Sisters' motives and actions were sometimes aligned with, and sometimes orthogonal to, the foreign policies of the Vatican and the White House. When they found themselves at cross purposes, they returned to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the spirit of Saint Dominic and the founding charism of their congregation to contemplate, reflect and move forward with faith, hope and charity.

In *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, David Bosch, one of the foremost experts in Christian missiology, identified distinct paradigm shifts that occurred in the concept of the Christian mission over the centuries. He defines models of mission that are based on Scripture and the early Church, and new paradigms that emerged during the Medieval, Reformation, Enlightenment, Modern and Post-modern periods. According to Bosch the three most common approaches to a Scripture-based mission are: making disciples (Matthew); practicing forgiveness and solidarity with the poor (Luke); and inviting others to join a community preparing the way for the Kingdom of God that is to come (Paul). These three approaches are not mutually exclusive.

The missions are organized chronologically according to the first arrival of women from the Dominican Order in the United States in a particular country. Congregations that sent Sisters to a country after another group already had established a presence there are included chronologically in the story line of the first foundation. This history does not include all of the missionary efforts of the Dominican Friars or the Maryknoll Fathers whose contributions have been chronicled by other authors. A few significant collaborations between them and the women of the Dominican Order from the United States have been noted.

The story of each mission is located in the chapter corresponding to the paradigm that was operative at the time of the first arrival of Sisters in the mission. The earliest missions continued through several paradigm shifts and subsequent paradigms influenced the way the mission was lived

and perceived in later decades. Paradigm shifts happened gradually and not everyone perceived them at the same time. Some members of the mission envisaged the future and operated out of a paradigm that had not yet become emblematic.

The reader will find evidence of later paradigms in earlier decades. Thus, descriptions of paradigms that are developed more fully in later chapters are foreshadowed in earlier missions. Conversely, the effects of earlier paradigms continued to influence the way some individuals perceived what the mission was about in a later decade. Therefore, the reader will also find evidence of earlier paradigms in missions established later.

The Catholic definition of the Christian mission continually undergoes re-examination because of some inherent paradoxes imbedded in the concept itself. For example, missionaries are an itinerant people, but they are united in a commitment to live interdependently in community. Missionaries are called to mediate salvation, yet they claim Jesus Christ as the one true Savior and Mediator. Salvation takes place within the human quest for justice, but there is constant tension between justice and compassion.

The Christian mission is identified with evangelization, but evangelization has a plethora of definitions. Missionaries always consider the generational and cultural contexts in which they are situated, yet these are multivalent and in a state of constant flux. Reflection on the ministry of Jesus reveals that the Christian mission is about preaching, teaching, healing, liberating captives, prophesy, exorcism and raising the dead to new life. However, all of these works are done in contexts that are dependent on personal and cultural perspectives that are prone to biases and misinterpretations.

Members of the Dominican Order are best suited to a theology of mission that is rooted in Scripture because preaching is the special charism with which they have been entrusted. Although the preaching of Dominicans has strong intellectual underpinnings, it always has been about more than proclaiming from the pulpit or inculcating Church teaching. A life well-lived in community is the example by which Dominicans preach. How community functions, how it is built and sustained, what it conveys to the world when it thrives, and what it reveals to the world when it divides and diminishes is the message of Jesus Christ.

For this reason Saint Dominic, the founder of the Order of Preachers, spoke of community as the “Holy Preaching.” Thus all members of the Dominican Order learn that the mission they are called to by Saint Dominic is fundamentally about a way of being in community that is transformative. Though the context of the preaching changes over the decades this aspect of the Dominican mission remains constant through the centuries.

Although it is true that legendary feats were accomplished in the foreign missions and many individual Sisters were truly heroic, this is neither a glossy legend nor a sentimental family history. It is an objective account of what American women of the Dominican Order did on behalf of the Church for the people they went to serve, how they understood what they were about in the name of Jesus Christ, and what happened to them as a result. This history traces their active engagement in political processes both at home and abroad in order to bring about social change in accordance with their interpretation of the teachings of Jesus Christ and their understanding of the will of God.

Changes in the Sisters’ understanding of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the founding charisms of their congregations had a significant influence on the missions described in this book. Various external political and social factors played an important role in the shaping of that understanding. The extent to which the Vatican’s foreign agenda and the foreign policy of the United States influenced the operative paradigm in a particular decade in a particular country varies according to individual interpretation. However, the governments of nations where American missions were founded typically understood Catholic Women Religious to be foreign emissaries of the Vatican and/or United States, and this fact had unforeseen, sometimes tragic, repercussions.

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NOTE

1. “to hand on to others the fruit of contemplation”.



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