F

RONTIER MISSION

In the proposals of the XXI General Chapter appeared the expression *frontier mission[[1]](#footnote-1).* In the documents of the Church the *frontier* is similar or related to *periphery, to margins,* that is to say, where we find those in greater need, the poorest. Pope Francis expresses this as follows: “Go out of your nest toward the peripheries of man and of woman of today! Live in the frontiers”[[2]](#footnote-2).

The etymological significance of ‘periphery’ is circumference, or space that surrounds the nucleus or center. The periphery in a city or the frontier in a country is that which is outside, which usually coincides with the poorest suburbs, and the centers of marginalization. To go to the periphery it is necessary to move away from the center, that is to get out of the center, where one usually lives better. The frontier mission is like beginning an exodus again and not toward the Promised Land, but toward the marginalized land. It means to live in the code of constant exodus, without getting installed.

The Exodus becomes the permanently remembered event throughout the history of the people of Israel, which gave sense to its existence. God revealed himself to Moses in the periphery, in the middle of the burning bush that was not consumed[[3]](#footnote-3). The bush, a thorny shrub, could symbolize the suffering of the poor, a permanent suffering that is not consumed, in the center of which also, in a permanent way, God is there, and He seeks mediators who in His name and with Him go to the periphery, like Moses, called to go and liberate the people[[4]](#footnote-4).

The God of Jesus is the “God of the periphery”, this is why some authors define Jesus as the “marginal Jew”[[5]](#footnote-5). His whole life was surrender for the Kingdom, present among the poorest, the most vulnerable and marginalized. Jesus took his place in a marginalized place, and from there he became the universal Savior. The Spirit which He bequeathed to us, the only theological place of the encounter with God’s will, he also dwells in the margins and tends towards them. Jesus affirms that his mission toward the peripheries of the world is provoked by the Spirit of God[[6]](#footnote-6).

The frontier mission is the one that impels one to go out[[7]](#footnote-7), to places of powerlessness, to places where one breathes and learns about situations, persons and groups to whom everything is denied, every power, even that to be able to live with dignity. As is expressed by an author, in order to have the prophetic force, the Christian needs to have, very alive, in his heart *the inheritance of the margins* and the call of those who seek a new hope. In these peripheral places, in the reciprocal giving and receiving, to us believers is offered a precious gift: the dangerous memory of Jesus is given back to us. “When the Church does not get out of itself to evangelize, it becomes self-referential and then it becomes sick”, Pope Francis would say[[8]](#footnote-8).

The frontier mission is mission beginning at the margins. God’s design for the world is not to create another world but rather to re-create what God has already created with love and wisdom. Jesus began his ministry affirming that to be full of the Spirit is to liberate the oppressed, restore the eyesight to the blind, and to announce the coming of the Kingdom of God[[9]](#footnote-9): He undertook the fulfilment of his mission opting for those who are at the margins of society, in order to challenge and transform everything that denies life, including the cultures and the systems that generate and maintain poverty, discrimination and generalized dehumanization, and exploit and destroy persons and the earth. The mission from the margins invites the Church to go back to think about the mission as a vocation that the Spirit of God inspires us, that Spirit who acts for a world in which the fullness of life may be possible for every person[[10]](#footnote-10).

The Institute, in different ways, is motivating for a mobilization for frontier missions. The Project Ad Gentes was an invitation of Br. Seán to all the Brothers of the Institute to discern, before God, if they felt called to abandon their own country of origin to incorporate themselves into an international community in another place of the world. Brother Emili has renewed this invitation, but addressed to all the Marists of Champagnat; an invitation to dedicate some years to the service of the Marist mission beyond the frontiers of the Province or the country.

In the same way, the General Council decided to create the Secretariat of *“International Missionary Collaboration* (CMI), trying to promote a missionary conscience that goes beyond geographic limits of countries and administrative units, as well as to facilitate the mobility of persons at the service of the mission. It is in the spirit to go there where others cannot or do not want to go, and remain there until we are no longer necessary.

The sense of *internationality* forms part of this beautiful response that the Institute wants to give at this moment. “Like Marist Brothers and Laity living in the globalized world of today, we are called to have an international horizon in mind and heart”, Br. Emili Turú, would say[[11]](#footnote-11). The members of the XXI General Chapter expressed themselves just as clearly, making themselves the echo of those words of our Founder: “All the dioceses of the world form part of our objectives”.

The XXI General Chapter indicates clearly a way of entering in this dynamic of mission when it invites *“to see the world through the eyes of poor children and young people”.*  This means to see the world from below, from the level of the excluded and forgotten of this world, like Mary and Marcellin saw them. To see the world from below demands displacements. The sincere, true presence in solidarity close to poor children and young people favors this personal and institutional conversion. Evangelization and commitment with fullness of life, according to the Gospel, should be in all our frontier mission projects, as well as in our hearts and minds.

1. Cf. Proposals for action, Mission, XXI General Chapter, 2009: To form international and interprovincial communities, open to Marist Brothers and laity, to take care of the *new fields of frontier mission”.*  [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. “Go out of your nest toward the *peripheries* of man and woman of today! For this, allow yourselves to be encountered by Christ. The encounter with Him will impel you to the encounter with others and will take you toward those in greater need, to the poorest. Go to the peripheries that are waiting for the light of the Gospel. Live in the *frontiers*. This will demand vigilance to discover the novelty of the Spirit, lucidity to recognize the complexity of the new frontier; discernment to identify the limits and the adequate manner to proceed; and immersion in reality, “touching the suffering body of Christ in the people” *(Apostolic Letter of His Holiness Pope Francis on the occasion of the Year of Consecrated Life)* [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Cf. Ex 3, 2 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Cf. Ex 3, 7-12 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Cf. Work of John P. Meier,”Un Judio Marginal” (“A Marginal Jew”) A new vision of the historical Jesus. Ed. Verbo Divino (Navarra), Spain [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Cf. “Jesús y la voluntad de Dios, su Padre”, (Jesus and the will of God, his Father) José A. García, Sal Terrae 1993, 10, pp. 675-687 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. “The first name of the Christians in the Acts of the Apostles (Cf. 24, 14) was “those on the road”: those who do not stop, who have a goal, a purpose in mind, who know where to go. The Church, like life, is faithful to itself when it evolves and changes, not when it defends what it has acquired”. Emili Turú, in *Hasta los confines de la tierra. (Up to the end of the earth)*  Rome, January 2013. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. In order to overcome the temptation of looking at the geographical limits of a Diocese or of a Parish, the then Cardinal Bergoglio took as his own the thought of *Aparecida: “*In order not to fall into the trap of closing ourselves in ourselves, we should form ourselves as disciples missionaries without frontiers, ready to go “to the other shore”, the one in which as yet Christ is not recognized as God and Lord and the Church is not as yet present” (n. 376) [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Cf. Luke 4, 16-18 [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Cf. *Juntos por la Vida: Misión y Evangelización en Contextos cambiantes.* (Together for Life: Mission and Evangelization in changing Contexts) Proposal of a new affirmation of CMI on Mission and Evangelization, Nos. 36 and 37, September 2012 [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Br. Emili Turú: We are called “to live going out” , in Montagne, *danza de la misión, (dance of the mission),* March 2015 [↑](#footnote-ref-11)