

Mission: Living God's Gift

In today's first reading Saint Paul speaks about the "free gift of grace" we have received through Christ's redemption. When receiving a gift, we seek to manifest our gratitude. A beautiful way of showing gratitude for gifts received is to engage in mission. A "gift missiology" includes three steps that capture mission-as-gift: **Recognize**, **Receive**, and **Reciprocate**. *Recognize* by being aware of the uniqueness of God's gift. *Receive* by personally appropriating God's gift. *Reciprocate* by sharing God's gift with others.

Recognizing the Gift. The first moment in appreciating "gift missiology" is to become deeply conscious of the depths of God's love. Saint Thérèse of Lisieux expressed her awareness of God's gift when she concluded: "My vocation is Love! In the heart of the Church, my Mother, I shall be Love. Thus, I shall be everything."

Receiving the Gift. A transformed consciousness that fully appreciates God's graciousness will receive the gift of faith with a joyful heart. One is reminded of what the Asian bishops have said: "Without a personal experience of this love received as gift and mercy, no sense of mission can flourish" (FABC V). Saint Paul celebrates God's choice, noting that: "God never takes back *his gift* or revokes *his choice*" (Rom 11:29).

Reciprocating God's Gift. The key New Testament passage that best captures this third moment of "gift missiology" is: "What you have received as a *gift*, give as a *gift*" (Mt 10:8). The logic is simple: if one truly appreciates a *gift*, one wishes to share it with others. In his 1999 apostolic exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia* (EA) John Paul II notes how the Church in Asia is to "reciprocate" (return, repay) the gifts it has received: "The Church's faith in Jesus is a *gift received* and a *gift to be shared*; it is the *greatest gift* which the Church can offer to Asia" (EA 10).