



The Audacity of the Improbable and the Impossible

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Who has not stared at the world helplessly? Who has not worked hard to change oneself and the world around and feel lost? When everything around us seem to be so helpless and unjust, where do we draw hope?

These reflections are based entirely on an inspiring book, *Attempt the Impossible*, which is a carefully selected collection of articles by Archbishop Menampampil on the sharing of the Christian Message in the contemporary world. He acknowledges the uncertainty where the search for meaning and purposefulness is also growing intensely and look for solutions by working hard and trusting harder in the Lord.

In an increasingly secularized world where every tenet of the Faith is being questioned every day, it has become most challenging to explain our religious convictions, remaining always open to newly emerging perspectives on life. “Return to the ways of the Acts of the Apostles”, says Archbishop Thomas. It is an exciting mission to

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‘Attempt the Impossible,’ without which human life itself becomes impossible today!

Rooted in the Sense of the Divine

Our hearts are strongly entrenched in a desire to discover what is beyond our horizon. As a result, the collection’s first article, “The Lure of the Unseen,” lures us into the world of the invisible, the world of Transcendence. A yearning for the unseen has taken root in our hearts. The visionless direction of today has uprooted man from customary security and suffocated his or her inner essence. His frenzied search for any form of; religious experience is a restless attempt to break free from a meaningless materialism. If no one can help him, he will become lost in a sea of curiosities and thrills, as well as fleeting religious experiences.

“The Sense of the Sacred,” the next chapter, builds on the previous chapter’s ideas. Then it emphasizes that our secularized society owes a lot to (tribal) societies that have kept the Sacred Sense alive. In truth, all modern thought and achievements are the culmination and continuance of the quest for meaning.

The following chapter, “Those Who Take Their Commitment Seriously Ought to Act as a Dynamic Force,” examines the current conflict scenario to ensure that religion is not used as an excuse to avoid civic responsibilities. Religious people, on the other hand, should be beneficent and active in working for the general good. Their religious beliefs have helped them to bring authenticity and radical giving to the cause. They should have an informed and well-researched attitude to social issues, as well as a balanced perspective on the situation. Religious Congregations, it should be noted, come into existence with a strong sense of mission and a high level of motivation, and promotion of a Sense of Solidarity and Purpose in Society shows that Church personnel can offer themselves as an intellectual and spiritual renewal of religious commitment, and promotion of a Sense of Solidarity and Purpose in Society shows that Religious Congregations come into existence with a strong sense of mission and a high level of motivation. It is the responsibility of every

member to re-motivate fellow-religious if this zeal wanes. They give back to society in partnership with their fellow believers and all good people.

Sharing one's essential convictions is at the centre of a missionary's ministry to society, according to "Sharing the Gospel Today." As a result, they become living symbols of God's love for His people, willing to lay down their lives if necessary. Their activities, such as education,

health, and social service, gains a sign-value as a result of their status as icons. This also adds to their society's cultural and moral renewal. In a society of godless consumerism and violent extremism, they bear witness to their religious convictions. Believers will benefit from collective self-criticism in order to maintain their principles and stay faithful to their aspirations. Part of this self-criticism is learning to live with problems. Much of the persecution that missionaries endure today stems from simple misunderstandings in the community. Neighbours' sensitivities and concerns must be taken into account. Most problems can be avoided by interacting respectfully with the local community. The importance of cultural incorporation cannot be overstated.

The author believes that a human approach will always win a human response. Religious faith is very much alive in Asia, according to *Whispering the Gospel to the Soul of Asia*, and people are inspired by Jesus' words. The current issue is that religion is tied to Cultural Nationalism in many areas. There is also the widely held belief that religious propagation is an unjustified interference with people's culture. Despite this, every international religion saw conveying its basic message as a primary responsibility. It should be given with the utmost respect for the recipient and his or her freedom, and shared in private. The film "Whispering the Gospel" attempts to capture this image. In this day of warring ideologies, extremism, and violence, the

This book argues that the spiritual can be traced in all activities, earthly, mundane and secular. It assumes that we can only reach the spiritual in and through the secular, the ordinary experiences of normal human beings.

Gospel may bring a sense of fairness to the table, as well as motivation and hope.

“The Origins of Religious Life: An Invitation to a Deeper Commitment to the Gospel,” the next chapter, discusses religious groups trying to witness to the radicality of the Gospel. Religious people have always been effective communicators of the Christian faith, and as spiritual masters, they have had a moral influence on society. They must ensure ‘depth’ in their spiritual exercises in order to be effective. They have the ability to influence society’s ideas and be a blessing to all.

The following chapter, “Taking the First Steps in a New Mission Field: Know and Respect the People You Serve,” encourages readers to recognize the necessity for a missionary to adapt to local traditions, with a focus on Northeast India’s distinct character. Imported ideas that are rushed can be misleading. In terms of culture, one must constantly listen and learn, from all directions!

The focus on serving people leads to the formation of collaborative communities. The Catholic Church’s community-building ministry is discussed in “Community Building: The Central Challenge Before Pastoral Leaders.” Christ’s followers built a family for him. Relationships with people become an important part of a pastor’s spirituality and personal identity. He welcomes everyone’s assistance and listens to everyone’s point of view, including marginalized groups’ fears, unheard opinions, unwelcome comments, unrepresented populations, unhappy sections, and opposing viewpoints. But, above all, he must devote his full attention to his spiritual exercises. He cannot disregard himself and allow his spirit to sag.

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The function of various pastoral agents in Northeast India is described in the next chapter, “Diocesan Plan of Evangelization and Pastoral Reflections.” Because the Catechist performs such an important function, he needs to be well trained and motivated. The Touring Sisters play a unique role in the region, and their commitment to service ensures the

success of their mission. Schools, boarding houses, medical services, the media, lay associations...they all play a part in the overall effort. The Parish Priest and his Assistants are the ones who inspire and encourage all of the parish's activities.

Similarly, "A Second Look at Our Work" provides a critical assessment of our work from several perspectives. For example, our short-term goals may have evolved into long-term goals, or gaps between our claims and actual achievements, promises, and performance may have grown; or people may no longer be the center of our attention, but financial security is; or our un-planning styles, lack of cultural insertion, and poor neighborhood relationships may have resulted in negative outcomes. Our spiritual seriousness will assist us in making changes to our habits and styles.

Fostering Relationship Among All

In the same vein, "Catholic Education and the Church's Concern for the Marginalized" lays out the Church's educational policy: in a nutshell, all-round human development, with a focus on the poorer kids and the marginalized. The most important thing is to teach Catholic youngsters about their faith and to instill ethical awareness in all students. Many dioceses and congregations have created programs in aid of the needy, such as remedial classes, scholarships, interest-free loans, free supply of books, teaching aids, and free tuitions, despite criticism of their objectives. The most important thing is to foster an evangelical environment in all educational settings, as well as a radical commitment to the poor.

The Church places a special emphasis on the needs of families. "When it comes to assisting families in tough situations, it's more important to understand than to be understood." "explores scenarios of great hardship in which many families in our time find themselves, such as intercultural, interreligious marriage and extreme poverty. Working parents are unable to devote as much time as they would like to each other and their

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children. Families that are suffering in such harrowing circumstances deserve sympathy, not condemnation. Members of families who have recently made positive changes in their lives can be of great help to others who are experiencing anxiety.

The living presence of Christ in our midst is central to our lives and missions. In this period of wars, suicide, abortion, communal confrontations, and so on, “The Eucharist the Source of Our Strength: A Presence that Challenges and Strengthens” asserts that Jesus, present to us in the form of Bread and as Word, is the source of life. His social message must reach everyone, including those in politics, economics, education, the media, sports, and entertainment. This pushes us to be spiritually mature individuals. Currently, our communities may be fighting autocratic governments, a discriminatory bureaucracy, and heartless members of the dominant community, among other things. But, because Jesus is beside us, we never give up.

This pushes us to be more productive in our personal and professional lives. “Growing Efficient in God’s Work: Exhortation to Deacons” is a wise chapter that wants for young priests to become tireless apostles, fervent pastors, and helpers of the poor, as well as promoters of good relationships. It is critical to organize one’s work, manage one’s time effectively, manage one’s money wisely, maintain intellectual interests even in later years, and maintain spiritual sincerity.

Finally, “Telling Jesus’ Stories in Today’s India” remembers how the people of Israel continued to retell and learn from their stories. Because his stories addressed universal themes such as justice and peace, love and forgiveness, and provided people a way ahead in the midst of life’s harsh realities, Jesus drew a lot of attention. The stories we tell must aid in the healing of personal and collective wounds, the reconciliation of conflicting communities, and the advancement of society’s future-building efforts. In India and Asia, stories about Jesus are always received. They are intended to improve people’s personal lives as well as the social lives of communities, peoples, and nations. Committed individuals have given their life for such noble causes. Nothing is Impossible warns us against becoming complacent because of our early missions’ success. We may need to consider whether we are losing talents such as persuasion and motivation that we gained from the pioneers. A sense of ‘call’ and mission should follow us at all times. For our administration and personal conduct,

we are answerable to the Church and society. Even today, business consultants take their employees to 'retreats' and self-critiquing exercises, as the author points out. It's all about the spirit. The spiritual perspective makes it possible.

In this context, "Everyone is Looking for You" (Mk 1:37) argues that everyone, including our opponents, who is looking for more serious answers in life is asking for Jesus. It's critical that we focus on Jesus, paying attention to our interlocutors' emotions and tastes, and addressing the fundamental concerns that disturb their minds. Before gently introducing Jesus, one must be attentive to the other person's point of view in our contemporary period of questioning and remembering of terrible events. Your suffering will have fruit of its own, and your words may be rejected at any time. However, what is proper is finally shown right by its internal consistency and veracity. And ('Wisdom is proven correct by her deeds.') " (Mt 11:19). "Leaving Security on the Shore" (EG 10) asserts that all members of society, including leaders and followers, bear equal responsibility. What matters is that you have a powerful mission that produces energy. Today's missionaries travel through large swaths of indifferent forest, not so much across oceans as across psychological mountains of distrust. ... the searing heat of fundamentalists vying for attention necessitates a focus on 'other' problems and shifting moods. To arrive at a solution, discernment is essential. Exaggerations and prejudices should be avoided in any situation. Establishing and maintaining deep human relationships, which assumes our intimate union with the divine, is the most significant value in the missionary environment.

Everything is Possible

The author truly holds that “Everything is possible for the person who has faith’ (Mk 9:23). The 20 specially chosen chapters in this book, including “The lure of the invisible,” “The sense of the sacred,” and “Leaving security on the shore” addresses the innermost concerns of the Church interacting with other religions in the contemporary India. With a forward by Thomas Manjaly, this book is a genuine invitation to reflection and retrospection (p. 12). It affirms the role and significance of tribal religions which have contributed significantly to all world religions (p. 51). It also seeks to elicit support even from opponents (p. 75), without which today’s missionary work is impossible. It invites all readers to tell the stories from their personal and experiential lives “that change mind and heart, transform societies” (p. 148). On the whole, this is a deeply relevant book for our contemporary times beset with conflict. It pleads for enduring peace, enriching dialogue and genuine relationships. Only such an approach can guarantee the relevance of religions and survival of humanity. When religions are in conflict it endangers the very survival of human race, as Pope Francis has been warning us.

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This book, the *magnum opus* of Archbishop Thomas Menamprambil, is a significant contribution both to the Indian Church and the world Christianity. It reminds us of the invitation of Fr. Bruno Cadorè, Master General of the Dominican Order, when he addressed the 36th General Congregation of the Society of Jesus. The then newly elected Jesuit General responded with a call to “the audacity of the impossible!”

As believers with joy and hope, we are truly called to dare the improbable and impossible with faith and trust. After working hard and surrendering ourselves totally to the Lord, we can dare the audacity of the improbable and impossible.

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The Editorial Team wishes all the readers a blessed and bountiful New Year, in spite of....! May it be a year of peace and hope, especially for the marginalised!