



STUDY CIRCLE
GUIDE

EVANGELII GAUDIUM
THE JOY OF THE GOSPEL

BY POPE FRANCIS

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OVERVIEW

EVANGELII GAUDIUM: THE JOY OF THE GOSPEL

SUMMARY

This Study Circle Guide provides an avenue for in-depth study of Pope Francis's Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium—The Joy of the Gospel*. This is the Holy Father's programmatic document. To understand it is to understand how he sees his mission as pope – and therefore our mission as Catholic Christians – in this moment of Church history.

CATEGORIES OF INTEREST

Catholic Doctrine; Prayer and Spiritual Growth; Apostolate

RECOMMENDED NUMBER OF SESSIONS

The Study Circle Guide contains 6 sessions. Session #1 corresponds to the Exhortation's introduction, which each subsequent session corresponds to each of the five chapters of the Exhortation.

The Exhortation, however, is a dense document. Your group may want to take more than 6 sessions to go through it. The Study Circle Guide has enough material to spread over more than just 6 sessions.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Copies of the Study Circle Guide for all participants.
- Copies of the Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium* for each participant. Available at the Vatican website here:

<http://www.vatican.va/evangelii-gaudium/en/>
- For groups with members of the ecclesial Movement Regnum Christi, at least one copy of the Regnum Christi Member's Handbook (RCMH).

WHO CAN PARTICIPATE?

Papal documents are usually dense and written from a point of view that assumes a lot of basic knowledge of the faith. Therefore, it's a good idea to study this in a group setting in which the various participants are in a similar place in their own faith journey.

Any Catholic interested in going deeper in their knowledge of the Church and their understanding of Pope Francis's vision will benefit from this Guide. Non-Catholics should understand that the basics of the Catholic faith are assumed by the Holy Father – he does not try to explain them all in the Exhortation.

The sections on "Questions for Personal Reflection or Group Discussion" contain numerous references to the Regnum Christi Member's Handbook. Participants who are not members of (or familiar with) the ecclesial Movement Regnum Christi may find little interest in these questions.

HOW MUCH HOMEWORK?

The moderator should read the relevant sections of the Exhortation in their entirety. The moderator should also read ahead of time the Study and Discussion Questions, the Questions for Personal Reflection or Group Discussion, and the Questions on Living the Teaching. A large number of these questions is offered for the group. The moderator would be wise to choose ahead of time a few from each section that will be most stimulating for the particular needs and interests of the group.

For the rest of the participants, the amount of homework will depend on the way in which the Guide is used. The Study Circle Guide for *Evangelii Gaudium* can be used in two ways:

- I. Individually, it can be used for a profound study of the document in which it is hoped the different parts will help with understanding the document. A dedicated group that is willing to do intensive reading of the document before the Study Circle begins can use it in the same way.



GETTING STARTED

EVANGELII GAUDIUM: THE JOY OF THE GOSPEL

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*—The Joy of the Gospel—was consigned during the Mass to conclude the Year of the Faith on Sunday, November 24, 2013, the Feast of Christ the King. It was announced by Archbishop Rino Fisichella, president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization on Monday, November 18, 2013.

The Vatican considers this to be the first official document of Francis' papacy. It has become traditional for the first encyclical of a new pope to include themes he intends to emphasize during his papacy. Pope Francis did not do that. His first encyclical, *Lumen Fidei*, was inspired by the draft of an encyclical written by Benedict XVI, which Francis rewrote and published under his own name as a conclusion to the trilogy of encyclicals on the theological virtues started by Pope Benedict. As such, he may have wished to signal continuity with Benedict. However, he clearly indicates that he wants this Apostolic Exhortation to be programmatic of his papacy—to have the place in his papacy that the first encyclical has had in recent papacies.

This document is an Apostolic Exhortation. An Apostolic Exhortation is a category of document similar to an Apostolic Letter. Pope John Paul II started the “trend” of using Apostolic Exhortations to communicate to the Church the conclusions he had reached after consideration of the recommendations of a Synod of Bishops (a gathering of bishops from around the world to reflect deeply on some aspect of Church life). He also used it in other circumstances, such as to exhort religious to a deeper evangelical life. This Apostolic Exhortation follows the XIII General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops whose topic was the New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith held in October 2012. The Exhortation's main theme is the proclamation of the Gospel in today's world. It is addressed to bishops, clergy, consecrated persons and the lay faithful.

PURPOSE OF THE EXHORTATION

1. To promote a definite style of evangelization—“*which I ask you to adopt in every activity you undertake*”—Francis is telling us what he wants to emphasize in his papacy.
2. To present the fruits of the Synod of Bishops held in the Vatican in October 2012 on the theme “The new evangelization for the transmission of the faith”.
3. To present some guidelines and themes that he wishes to discuss in depth. He lists seven of these in paragraph 17.

UNDERSTANDING THE EXHORTATION

The Holy Father intends the Exhortation to be the program for a renewal of the Church in the key of evangelization. He wants the Church's main characteristic to be evangelization.

In the Introduction, he reminds us that joy is the constant outcome of our encounter with a merciful God. This message is ever-new and attractive. The natural outcome of our encounter with God is to want to share what we have found. Evangelization is the natural pattern for all the Church's activity.

In Chapter One, the Holy Father reminds us that Christ ordered us to give the Good News to all nations. He wants the Church to be renewed by becoming primarily an evangelizing Church. He goes on to describe how this renewal should take place in different structures in the Church. In presenting the Gospel, it is most important to start with the presentation of the saving love of God, rather than less important truths. In our changing world, it is important to be creative in finding new ways to present the essential truths of our faith. Pastorally, it is important to patiently accompany people as they progress in their faith transformation. The Church should be seen as the Father's house with doors wide open to the materially and spiritually poor.



In Chapter Two, the Holy Father, without wanting to do a sociological analysis of the situation, names a series of challenges presented by today's culture. He goes on to present a series of temptations that can slow down or stop pastoral workers.

In Chapter Three, the Church is described as a diverse people in which all are missionary disciples. The popular piety of a culture is a way in which a people evangelizes itself. This is done person-to-person. It includes charisms raised up by the Holy Spirit and a fruitful dialog with the various sciences and disciplines.

The homily should provide an intense and happy experience of the Spirit, a consoling encounter with God's word, a constant source of renewal and growth.

Preaching should be well-prepared, based on the word of God and done with a knowledge of the lives and needs of the listeners.

Evangelization needs to be based on the kerygma (the preaching of God's merciful love for humanity) and a mystagogical catechesis more than the simple teaching of doctrine. It demands personal accompaniment and is centered on the word of God.

In Chapter Four, we see that the proclamation of the Gospel opens us to each other and to community. Christ redeems not only the individual, but also social relationships. The challenge, then, is to build the Kingdom of God in society. This implies the Church's teaching on social questions. Christians should be committed to building a better world.

Everyone must hear and respond to the cry of the poor. Concern for the common good and the pursuit of it must be the priority. The poor teach us through their experience of suffering. We show concern for their spiritual needs.

Becoming a people in peace requires the practice of four principles. The Holy Father discusses the importance of each one:

- Time is greater than space
- Unity prevails over conflict
- Realities are more important than ideas
- The whole is greater than the part

Evangelization opens the path to dialogue and is the path to peace. The Holy Father discusses many kinds of dialogue, noting the importance of each one and its characteristics.

In Chapter Five, the Holy Father reminds us that as evangelizers filled with the Holy Spirit, we will have our lives transfigured.

We can be as effective as the first Christians in evangelizing if we imitate their life of prayer. This implies a personal encounter with the saving love of Jesus Christ. Drawing near to others out of love for Christ, opens us to the greatest spiritual gifts. The new Evangelization will succeed because Christ is already victorious and his resurrection has become part of the fabric of the world. Everything done for him bears fruit, although not necessarily in the way we expect. Thus we can work with confidence of victory and fruitfulness.

In the work of evangelization, Mary assists us like a real Mother. She is the model of evangelization who leads us on in our labors.

LINKS

You can find the text of the apostolic exhortation here:

<http://www.vatican.va/evangelii-gaudium/en/>

The Vatican's synthesis of the document can be found here:

<http://www.news.va/en/news/synthesis-of-the-apostolic-exhortation-the-joy-of>

NOTES



SESSION I

INTRODUCTION

[In this session, you may want to discuss both the introductory section of the Exhortation, as well as the background information in the Getting Started section of this Study Circle Guide]

SUMMARY OF THE INTRODUCTION

The encounter with Christ is a liberating experience that fills us with joy. Consumerism, marked by a covetous heart, pursuit of frivolous pleasures and a blunted conscience, deafens us to God's voice, robs us of joy and of the desire to do good. We need to return to a personal encounter with Christ. That begins with seeking his forgiveness, which makes it possible for us to lift up our heads and to start anew. The Old Testament is filled with predictions of the joy of messianic times. The New Testament invites us constantly to rejoice. Some Christians live a continual Lent without Easter, although nothing can erase joy from the heart of someone who has experienced the love of Christ. Pleasure cannot give this joy. Someone who has experienced the love of Christ and the joy it brings automatically wants to share it with others.

Good seeks to spread. Joy and fulfillment comes from sharing the good we have in our lives with others. This sharing is not a source of fatigue or losing something because Christ constantly renews us. The Gospel message is refreshing; it is constantly new. The initiative for this evangelization comes from God. It demands our generosity. This freshness does not change the fact that evangelization is based on a remembrance of the relationship of love between Christ and myself, between Christ and his Church.

The new evangelization takes place in three principal settings.

- Ordinary Pastoral Ministry
- The baptized whose lives do not reflect the demands of Baptism
- Those who do not know Jesus Christ or who have always rejected him (this is the first and foremost setting)

The Church does not grow by proselytizing but by attraction. Evangelization is the first mission of the Church. It is the pattern for all the Church's activity.

VOCABULARY NOTE

PARADIGM: A set of basic assumptions that govern how people think or act. If something is *paradigmatic*, it means that it contains the principles for how people will think or act in relation to something.

STUDY AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What does the Holy Father wish to accomplish with this Exhortation? (*Paragraph 1*)
2. What is the great evil that pervades the world? (*Paragraph 2*) What are its three attributes that give birth to desolation and anguish? (*Paragraph 2*) What are the three things that being caught up in our own interests and concerns can bring about, even in believers? (*Paragraph 2*)
3. What does a renewed encounter with Christ consist of—something which he never tires of giving? (*Paragraph 3*)
4. What does the Old Testament predict for messianic times? (*Paragraph 4*) What does the Gospel invite us to do constantly? (*Paragraph 5*)
5. Although joy adapts and changes, what does it always do? (*Paragraph 6*) When all is said and done, what is the source of our joy? (*Paragraph 6*)
6. Although technological society has succeeded in multiplying occasions of pleasure, it has found it difficult to do what? (*Paragraph 7*)
7. What is the necessary fruit of having received the love that restores meaning to our lives? (*Paragraph 8*)
8. How can we have a dignified and fulfilling life? (*Paragraph 9*)
9. What is the task of evangelizing the authentic source of? (*Paragraph 10*)



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SESSION 2

CHAPTER I

SUMMARY

Christ ordered his disciples to spread the faith to every corner of the earth.

I. A CHURCH WHICH GOES FORTH

God's order to go forth often takes us out of our comfort zones, but even when we have accomplished much, we are still urged to go forward and spread the faith to even more people. The power of the word of God always goes beyond our expectations. All people have a right to receive the joy it brings.

Taking the First Step, Being Involved and Supportive, Bearing Fruit and Rejoicing

The evangelizing community has five characteristics:

- *It boldly takes the initiative*, goes out to others, seeks those who have fallen away, stands at the crossroads and welcomes the outcast.
- *It gets involved* by word and by deed in people's daily lives.
- *It is supportive*, standing by people at every step of the way, no matter how difficult or lengthy this may prove to be.
- *It is concerned* with fruit, because the Lord wants it to be fruitful.
- *It is filled with joy*. It knows how to rejoice always.

II. PASTORAL ACTIVITY AND CONVERSION

This Exhortation has programmatic significance.^[1] It has important consequences. A conversion is necessary from a tendency to merely administer the Church to a Church that is permanently in a state of mission. The Church needs to look within herself, seeing the difference between what God called her to be and what she actually presents to the world. She must correct the flaws introduced by her members. The Church needs to be renewed in her fidelity to her own calling.

AN ECCLESIAL RENEWAL THAT CANNOT BE DEFERRED

Renewal means making all Church structures tend more toward evangelization.

Pastoral conversion of Church structures must be understood as:

- Part of an effort to make them more mission-oriented.
- Making ordinary pastoral activity on every level more inclusive and open.
- Inspiring pastoral workers with a constant desire to go forth and elicit a positive response from all those whom Jesus summons to friendship with him.

The parish is a very flexible and essential structure. In its renewal it must come to be:

- The presence of the Church in a given territory.
- An environment for hearing God's word.
- A place for growth in the Christian life.
- A place for dialogue.
- A place for proclamation.
- A place for charitable outreach.
- A place for worship.
- A place for celebration.

Base communities, small communities, Movements and other forms of association have their own areas of action according to what the Holy Spirit has given them and are by their nature sources of renewal; nevertheless, they should seek renewal in contact with the rich reality of the local parish and participate readily in the overall pastoral activity of the particular Church.

[1] This would appear to mean that the Holy Father wants this document to be the plan of action for his papacy.



The diocese is the primary subject of evangelization as the manifestation of the Church in a particular place. Each diocese is encouraged to undertake a resolute process of discernment, purification and reform. The bishop fosters missionary communion, sometimes going before his people, sometimes in their midst and sometimes walking after them, allowing them to strike out on new paths. In developing the means of participation proposed by canon law, the aim should be not primarily organization of the diocese, but missionary outreach.

The Pope and episcopal conferences, while never renouncing what is essential to the mission, need to be open to new situations. Excessive centralization only complicates the Church's life and impedes missionary outreach.

Above all, creativity is necessary in rethinking the goals, structures, style and methods of evangelization.

III. FROM THE HEART OF THE GOSPEL

Our outreach must be in a missionary key. We can't suppose that everyone will understand the background to what we are saying or be able to relate it to the meaning, beauty and attractiveness at the heart of the Gospel. We need to concentrate on the essentials; what is most beautiful, grand, appealing and at the same time most necessary. The Gospel presents different truths and some are more important than others. Above all the core is the beauty of the saving love of God. In presenting moral teaching, follow St. Thomas Aquinas in emphasizing faith working through love. "The foundation of the New Law is in the grace of the Holy Spirit, who is manifested in the faith which works through love."^[2] Without denying the importance of all the truths of our faith, a proportion should be maintained in preaching which emphasizes grace more than law, Christ more than the Church and God's word more than the Pope. In their proper places, all the truths form a harmony and give light to each other. Above all, the Gospel invites us to respond to the God of love who saves us, to see God in others and to go forth from ourselves to seek the good of others.

IV. A MISSION EMBODIED WITHIN HUMAN LIMITS

Within the Church countless issues are being studied and reflected upon with great freedom. Differing

currents of thought in philosophy, theology and pastoral practice, if open to being reconciled by the Spirit in respect and love, can enable the Church to grow, since all of them help to express more clearly the immense riches of God's word. However, rapid cultural changes mean we must seek new ways of presenting these truths that brings out their newness. Holding on to old ways of expressing these truths, even when they are beautiful, runs the risk of failing to help people understand and accept them. Seeking new means is the way to transmit the unchanging meaning of the Gospel to people today.

Faith always contains an aspect of mystery, which makes it obscure. In many cases, only acceptance (assent—which accompanies love) allows us to approach and appreciate the mystery. This acceptance is most easily given by people when they see the truth lived out in a teacher's life. Customs that are not essential to the Gospel and are no longer useful may be safely discarded. St. Thomas Aquinas followed St. Augustine in teaching that the Church's precepts should be insisted on in moderation "so as not to be a burden to the lives of the faithful" and make our religion a form of servitude when "God's mercy has willed that we should be free."^[3] Pastoral practice means accompanying with mercy and patience in order to give room to personal growth without detracting from the evangelical ideal. People are attracted to the Christian ideal by the comfort and attraction of God's saving love. A missionary heart always seeks to do what good it can.

V. A MOTHER WITH AN OPEN HEART

The Church which "goes forth" is a Church whose doors are open – which sees it is better to remain with someone who has faltered than to rush from one thing to another. It is a Church called to be the house of the Father with doors wide open. The doors of the sacraments need to be open, especially Baptism. The Eucharist must be seen primarily as a powerful medicine and nourishment for the weak. The Church's mission is first of all to the poor and sick, the despised and overlooked. There is an inseparable bond between our faith and the poor. At the same time, what should disturb us most is the fact that so many of our brothers

[2] *Summa Theologica*, First Part of the Second Part, question 108, article 1

[3] *Summa Theologica*, First Part of the Second Part, question 107, article 4



and sisters are living in spiritual poverty—without the strength, light and consolation born of friendship with Jesus Christ, without a community of faith to support them, without meaning and a goal in life.

VOCABULARY NOTE

ASSENT: Agreement with a proposition without understanding it. In the case of faith, it is agreeing with a proposition whose truth I cannot conceive, but which I can apprehend. For instance, if someone tells me that God contains three persons while remaining only one God, I can ‘apprehend’ what it means without being able to ‘conceive’ of it (picture it, make sense of it, etc.).

STUDY AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What does the risen Christ send his followers to do? *(Paragraph 19)*
2. What is unpredictable? How does it accomplish what it wills? *(Paragraph 22)*
3. What is no one to be excluded from? *(Paragraph 23)*
4. What are the five characteristics of a community of missionary disciples? *(Paragraph 24)*
5. What is special about this document that the Holy Father wants to emphasize? *(Paragraph 25)*
6. What is the source of the Church’s heroic and impatient struggle for renewal? What does it consist in? *(Paragraph 26)*
7. What are the three characteristics of the renewal of Church structures? *(Paragraph 27)*
8. While parishes are not outdated, what do they still lack in regard to the call to review and renew themselves? *(Paragraph 28)*
9. What do Movements and other Church institutions frequently bring? What would be beneficial to them? *(Paragraph 29)*
10. What is the primary subject of evangelization? *(Paragraph 30)*
11. How does the bishop foster missionary communion in his diocese? *(Paragraph 31)*

12. What is the problem with excessive centralization? *(Paragraph 32)*
13. What demands boldness and creativity? *(Paragraph 33)*
14. How can we help our listeners to grasp the meaning, beauty, and attractiveness of our message? *(Paragraph 34)*
15. Some revealed truths are more important for expressing the heart of the Gospel. What shines forth as its core? *(Paragraph 36)*
16. What counts above all else in expressing the Church’s moral teaching as pointed out by St. Thomas Aquinas? *(Paragraph 37)*
17. Why mustn’t the integrity of the Gospel be deformed? What invitation must never be obscured? *(Paragraph 39)*
18. What helps to express more clearly the immense riches of God’s word? *(Paragraph 40)*
19. What do today’s vast and rapid cultural changes demand? What is the greatest danger? *(Paragraph 41)*
20. What is necessary for some things to be understood and appreciated? *(Paragraph 42)*
21. What does St. Thomas, citing St. Augustine, say about the precepts of the Church? *(Paragraph 43)*
22. What are the characteristics of a missionary heart? *(Paragraph 45)*
23. What is a characteristic of the Church that ‘goes forth’? *(Paragraph 46)*
24. The Church is called to be the house of the Father, not a tollhouse. What is the characteristic of the house of the Father? *(Paragraph 47)*
25. To whom should the Church go first? *(Paragraph 48)*
26. What should rightly disturb us and trouble our consciences? *(Paragraph 49)*

QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION OR GROUP DISCUSSION

1. In part II of this chapter, the Holy Father speaks a lot about renewing the Church. While it may be more intense at some times and less intense in



others, shouldn't the Church be in a constant state of renewal? The Holy Father quotes a document of Vatican II (the Decree on Ecumenism) that says so (cf. paragraph 26). He also mentions renewal as being the 'struggle to correct the flaws introduced by her members' (cf. paragraph 26). Where do I see efforts at renewal in my experience of the Church (my parish, diocese, other Church organization or community...)? Where do I concretely see a need for renewal?

2. In paragraph 24 of the Exhortation, the Holy Father lists the characteristics of the evangelizing community. Is this a good description of my faith community (parish, Movement, association...)? Every community in the Church should have these characteristics—in greater or lesser degree according to their charism. Are there some characteristics my faith community needs to improve on? Are there some characteristics that we emphasize too much?
3. Having read paragraph 20 of The Joy of the Gospel, go and read RCMH 40. How many ideas are common to the two passages?
4. Paragraph 47 of the Exhortation speaks of reaching out to the poor first of all, and paragraph 48 tells us that this also includes the spiritually poor. How are the same ideas reflected in RCMH 46?
5. In fact, the section of the handbook called 'Making Christ's Love Known' (RCMH 40–46) has many parallels with this first chapter of the Exhortation. Can you find more parallels between the two sections?
6. In RCMH 46, it mentions joy as the result of giving ourselves in the apostolate. How does this compare with the way the Holy Father speaks of joy in the Exhortation?

QUESTIONS ON LIVING THE TEACHING

1. The Holy Father says that living the faith requires that we share it. How do I live this in my life? How have I experienced the power of the word of God going beyond my expectations?
2. How have I cooperated in the Church's process of looking within herself at the difference between what God calls her to be and what she actually

is? The Holy Father speaks of renewal on the diocesan level, the parish level and in Movements. What are some ways I am participating in these different levels of renewal? What are some ways I can participate in them in the future?

3. If someone asked me about my faith, how would I begin to explain it? Would my explanation tend towards telling about the rules, or about God's merciful love? How would I explain God's merciful love as a personal experience I have lived, rather than as something abstract?
4. What are some traditional ways of explaining the faith that may have lost their ability to communicate the truth it was devised to communicate? What are some ways of explaining the faith that might be better than the traditional ways?
5. How would I explain to someone that in order to have faith, it is important to start from a position of assent, which is based on love, rather than from a position of dissent?
6. What can I do to help those in my community who live in material poverty? What can I do to help those in my community who live in spiritual poverty—without the strength, light and consolation born of friendship with Jesus Christ?

NOTES



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SESSION 3

CHAPTER 2

SUMMARY

In this section, the Holy Father wants to put us on guard against factors that can restrain or weaken the Church's drive to evangelize. His goal is not to make an in-depth analysis of these factors, but to point them out and give a brief pastoral reflection on each one.

I. SOME CHALLENGES OF TODAY'S WORLD

Advances are being made in many fields that greatly change the lives of people. While some of these changes are good, others threaten the life and dignity of God's people.

NO TO AN ECONOMY OF EXCLUSION

People are treated as consumer goods. Their only worth is their ability to generate wealth. Those who cannot are marginalized. There is no basis for a naïve trust in an economic system or in those running it to tend towards what is best for all.^[4] The culture of prosperity deadens us to the needs of others.

NO TO THE NEW IDOLATRY OF MONEY

There is a tendency to ignore the value of the person in favor of valuing only each one's ability to consume. If the marketplace and financial speculation are given total autonomy, it keeps nations from seeking the common good of their citizens. It also brings about corruption and tax evasion. Fragile things, like the environment, are defenseless before the rules of the marketplace.

NO TO A FINANCIAL SYSTEM WHICH RULES RATHER THAN SERVES

This attitude comes from a rejection of God and ethics. Ethics would lead to God and a more balanced and humane social order. "Not to share with the poor is to steal from them and to take away their livelihood. It is not our own goods which we hold, but theirs," according to St. John Chrysostom.^[5] We need to

return to an ethical approach that fosters solidarity between all human beings.

NO TO THE INEQUALITY WHICH SPAWNS VIOLENCE

Inequality provokes violence from those excluded from the system because the economic system is unjust at its root. Tolerance of evil tends to spread and to undermine any political and social system. Unbridled consumerism combined with inequality damages the social fabric. Improved education for the poor is an inadequate solution for this problem.

SOME CULTURAL CHALLENGES

Confronting the challenges that can arise is evangelization. New ideologies are arising that not only are hostile to religious freedom, but make it difficult for citizens to help society transcend individual gain and personal ambitions. Here is a list of some of these problems:

- Priority given to the superficial destroys cultural roots and causes ethical weakness. Mass media especially promotes this.
- New religious Movements are arising as a reaction to the emptiness of secular rationalism. Some are fundamentalist and some propose a spirituality without God.
- Secularization reduces faith to something strictly personal and private, erodes ethics and increases relativism. To combat it, education in critical thinking and mature moral values are necessary.
- While some positions of the Catholic Church are popular, others are not. People need to be helped to see they proceed from the same convictions.

[4] Some people have found paragraph 54 to be controversial. Please refer to the Philosophical Note on economic systems.

[5] St. John Chrysostom, *De Lazaro Concio*, II, 6: PG 48, 992D.



- Marriage bonds are being weakened because it is seen as a mere form of emotional satisfaction.
- Individualism weakens the development and stability of personal relationships and distorts family bonds. Relationship with the Father reinforces interpersonal bonds.

CHALLENGES TO INCULTURATING THE FAITH

The Christian values contained in Western societies helps resist the advances of secularism. We need to foster and reinforce a richness that already exists. This means promoting Christian piety and renewing the ways Catholics pass on their faith to the younger generations.

CHALLENGES FROM URBAN CULTURES

We need to discover the ways that God dwells in our cities. The daily struggle for survival is often accompanied by a deep religious sense. A new culture is appearing in the cities that demands a new kind of evangelization—capable of shedding light on God, the world around us and essential values—especially to those marginalized from society. The isolation and mistrust of the cities must be overcome if they are to become real Gospel communities.

II. TEMPTATIONS FACED BY PASTORAL WORKERS

In the midst of many difficulties, we need to be lifted up by the witness of so many Christians giving their lives in love.

YES TO THE CHALLENGE OF A MISSIONARY SPIRITUALITY

Missionary spirituality needs to overcome:

- Heightened individualism
- Crisis of identity
- Cooling of fervor

Some missionaries can develop an inferiority complex because Christianity is looked down on. They put less time and energy into evangelization. They can also fall into a practical relativism that makes them live as if God did not exist.

NO TO SELFISHNESS AND SPIRITUAL SLOTH

Selfishness makes some missionaries feel a need to guard their personal freedom as if devoting time to evangelization was an obstacle to personal fulfillment. They take no pleasure in evangelizing. This kind of faith degenerates into small-mindedness. Instead of light and life, they radiate darkness and inner weariness.

NO TO A STERILE PESSIMISM

The evils of our world are challenges, not excuses for diminishing our commitment and fervor. Providence is leading us to the fulfillment of God's superior and inscrutable designs, even in the midst of human setbacks. Today's world contains many signs of the thirst for God and for the ultimate meaning of life. We need to be living fountains where others can drink.

YES TO THE NEW RELATIONSHIPS BROUGHT BY CHRIST

Finding and sharing a mystique of support, while difficult, is good, liberating and hope-filled. The Son of God, becoming flesh, summons us to the revolution of tenderness. We must avoid a spiritual consumerism that leads to an unhealthy individualism. Forms of popular religiosity foster relationships. A personal and committed relationship with God always commits us to serving others. Because it is based on love for God, this kind of relationship with others always contains elements of the sacred – that loves others as Christ loves them.

NO TO SPIRITUAL WORLDLINESS

Spiritual worldliness means seeking human glory and personal well-being instead of God's glory. It can take the form of Gnosticism (a subjective faith that remains imprisoned in its own thoughts and feelings) or Pelagianism (I only trust in myself and feel superior in my fidelity to some past element of faith). It can form closed groups based on different attitudes:

- Preoccupation for the liturgy, doctrine and the Church's prestige.
- A fascination with social and political gain, or pride in ability to manage practical affairs.



- A concern to be seen; a social life full of appearances, meetings, dinners and receptions.
- A business mentality, caught up with management, statistics, plans and evaluations.

People overly involved with these attitudes spend all their time worrying about ‘what needs to be done’—usually to promote their position without actually helping the Church. They distance themselves from others and lose their focus on the one important thing, which is Christ.

NO TO WARRING AMONG OURSELVES

There are too many wars within the people of God and its communities. There are groups that see themselves as being different or special. Instead of pursuing their own well-being, they should focus on caring, encouraging and accompanying one another. The witness of authentically fraternal and reconciled communities is luminous and attractive. “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good” (Romans 12:21).

OTHER ECCLESIAL CHALLENGES

Some other ecclesial challenges include:

- The authentic promotion of the identity and mission of the laity.
- Creating broader opportunities for women in the Church.
- Correct understanding of the priesthood, especially of its power to administer the sacraments as the source of priestly authority, but not of power in general.
- The rise and growth of associations and Movements made up primarily of young people.
- Promoting living, fervent, missionary communities that produce vocations.
- Attention to the contributions of the young and the old.

PHILOSOPHICAL NOTES

Some believe that the Holy Father is overly criticizing certain schools of economics. That is not the case. He is merely pointing out some dangers of an unregulated economy. No economy that runs itself will automatically achieve the common good. Human oversight is necessary. When economic systems have helped increase the common good in the past, were they ever completely unregulated? Didn't they have regulators whose goal was to make the economy a tool for the good for the most people possible? For a good discussion of this, see Michael Pakaluk's article in Zenit:

<http://www.zenit.org/en/articles/how-to-read-the-joy-of-the-gospel>

In this document, the Holy Father quotes St. John Chrysostom, “Not to share with the poor is to steal from them and to take away their livelihood. It is not our own goods which we hold, but theirs.” This is an accurate expression of the Catholic teaching of the universal destination of goods, which holds that God destines the material goods of the earth for the benefit of all. When a few people concentrate the ownership of so many goods in their own hands that others don't have what they need to live with human dignity, it is a grave injustice. It is not a problem for some people to have more than others. It is a problem when some people lack the basic necessities because of it. A good explanation of this is from Dr. Jeff Mirus at Catholic Culture:

<http://www.catholicculture.org/commentary/articles.cfm?id=285>

VOCABULARY NOTES:

DIAGNOSTIC OVERLOAD: not a phrase used in English. The Spanish document has ‘exceso de diagnóstico’ (assuming that Francis wrote the document in Spanish, this is the original), which might be better translated ‘over-diagnosis’. In other words, Francis is speaking about a situation in which problems are analyzed intensely, but no action is taken to solve them. A more colloquial English way of saying this is ‘analyzed to death’.

SACRALIZED: to make something sacred.

FRATERNITY: more commonly expressed in English as ‘brotherhood’.



SOLIDARITY: a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good. It is a technical term from Catholic social teaching.

STUDY AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What does the Holy Father claim to consider in this Exhortation? *(Paragraph 51)*
2. What has our age of knowledge and information led to? *(Paragraph 52)*
3. What should we say “thou shalt not” to? What is the consequence of everything coming under the rules of competition and survival of the fittest? *(Paragraph 53)*
4. What does the assumption that economic growth, encouraged by a free market, will inevitably succeed in bringing about greater justice and inclusiveness in the world fail to take into account?^[6] *(Paragraph 54)*
5. What human crisis caused the financial crisis? *(Paragraph 55)*
6. What is the gap separating the majority from the prosperity enjoyed by the few the result of? What does this system tend to devour? *(Paragraph 56)*
7. What does one of the sages of antiquity (St. John Chrysostom) say about the sharing of wealth? *(Paragraph 57)* What does the Holy Father exhort? *(Paragraph 59)*
8. In what circumstances can no system guarantee tranquility? What does the tolerance of evil tend towards? *(Paragraph 59)* What two things damage the social fabric? *(Paragraph 60)*
9. What are the seven cultural challenges listed by the Holy Father? *(Paragraphs 61–67)*
10. What does an evangelized popular culture contain? *(Paragraph 68)* What should we encourage, foster and reinforce in countries with a Catholic tradition? *(Paragraph 69)* What causes the breakdown of Catholic faith? *(Paragraph 70)*
11. What does the indwelling of God in individuals foster? *(Paragraph 71)* What does the urban struggle for survival often contain? *(Paragraph 72)* What are we challenged to do for city dwellers? *(Paragraph 73)* Who is involved in the difficult dialogue the Church must foster? *(Paragraph 74)* What is the best remedy for the ills of our cities? *(Paragraph 75)*
12. In spite of the pain and shame we feel at the sins of some members of the Church, what must we never forget? *(Paragraph 76)* What would the Holy Father like to call attention to in this part of the document? *(Paragraph 77)*
13. What three things can one observe in many agents of evangelization even though they pray? *(Paragraph 78)* What do many pastoral workers develop? *(Paragraph 79)* What does practical relativism consist in? *(Paragraph 80)*
14. What is the obsession with protecting one’s free time often due to? *(Paragraph 81)* What could the problem be if it is not an excess of activity? *(Paragraph 82)* What is the biggest threat of all? *(Paragraph 83)*
15. What must the evils of the world and the Church not be? What should they be instead? *(Paragraph 84)* What stifles boldness and zeal? *(Paragraph 85)* What do we discover in the spiritual desert? What are we called to be in these situations? *(Paragraph 86)*
16. What do we sense the challenge of in the networks and new means of human communication? What would it be if we could turn them into greater possibilities for encounter and solidarity for everyone? *(Paragraph 87)* What has the Son of God summoned us to? *(Paragraph 88)* What must people infected with spiritual consumerism find in the Church? *(Paragraph 89)* What do genuine forms of popular religiosity entail? *(Paragraph 90)* What is the only way to encounter others with the right attitude? *(Paragraph 91)* What five things is the love of mystical, contemplative fraternity capable of? *(Paragraph 92)*
17. What does spiritual worldliness consist in? *(Paragraph 93)* What are the two ways that fuel it? What are their characteristics? *(Paragraph 94)* What are four ways this worldliness invades or takes over the space of the Church? *(Paragraph 95)* How do these individuals waste their time instead of working? *(Paragraph 96)* What are five characteristics of those who have fallen into worldliness? *(Paragraph 97)*

[6] Once again, please refer to the Philosophical Note about economic systems.



18. What should our witness of fraternal communion cause others to admire? (Paragraph 99) What will the wounded find in the witness of authentically fraternal and reconciled communities? (Paragraph 100) How does St. Paul express the law of love in Romans? What is a beautiful step forward in love and an act of evangelization? (Paragraph 101)

19. What are seven other ecclesial challenges? (Paragraphs 102–108)

QUESTION FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION OR GROUP DISCUSSION

1. However, the following reflections may be of some help. The Holy Father speaks of two kinds of dangers for those who would evangelize—first external dangers, then internal ones. Which of the external dangers affects me the most? There could be more than one. What will I do/am I doing to overcome it? Which of the internal dangers affects me the most? Again, there may be more than one. What will I do/am I doing to overcome it?

QUESTIONS ON LIVING THE TEACHING

1. We live in a consumeristic society. Having to deal with it every day affects the way we think. We tend to pick up consumeristic ideas. After reading the document, which consumeristic ideas do I see as having the greatest hold on me? Would I be content living a simple lifestyle, having only the necessary things for my life? Do I need to travel a lot? Do I need to give myself ‘rewards’ constantly? Do I feel great when I get something new? Do I need to have all the latest things, especially, electronics? Do I realize that many people in the world don’t have these things and manage to live happy, fulfilled lives? How do they do it? When I think of how many people go to bed hungry every night, how do I justify all the things I own? In the moments when I briefly experience hunger or not having something prepared exactly the way I want it, do I feel sorry for myself? Am I capable of saying no to my own inclinations—that is, when I want something, how hard is it for me to say no to myself? Am I even capable of that, or have I given in so much that I can no longer say no when I feel a desire for something?

2. In this document, the Holy Father has said some things that brought a negative reaction from some Americans. Paragraph 54 is an example of this. In the Philosophical Note, we explain that the Holy Father was not condemning a particular economic system that is a favorite of some Americans. But what if he did? How would I react if the Holy Father condemned something that I had always thought of as good? What would I have to do to accept a teaching like that? How deep is my faith that the Pope will always be a reliable guide in anything that has to do with what God has revealed in the realm of faith or morals? If I demand to understand everything fully before I will accept a teaching, is that faith? If the first time something the Holy Father says goes against something I think and I rebel against it, is that faith? What’s the difference between a “difficulty” in making the assent of faith, and actually entertaining a doubt against something God has revealed through the Church’s magisterium? [In reflecting on these challenging questions, you may want to read and discuss the section of the Catechism dedicated to describing faith and its characteristics: #s142–165. Here, for example, is #154:

Believing is possible only by grace and the interior helps of the Holy Spirit. But it is no less true that believing is an authentically human act. Trusting in God and cleaving to the truths he has revealed is contrary neither to human freedom nor to human reason. Even in human relations it is not contrary to our dignity to believe what other persons tell us about themselves and their intentions, or to trust their promises (for example, when a man and a woman marry) to share a communion of life with one another. If this is so, still less is it contrary to our dignity to “yield by faith the full submission of... intellect and will to God who reveals” and to share in an interior communion with him.

NOTES



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SESSION 4

CHAPTER 3

SUMMARY

“... the joyful, patient and progressive preaching of the saving death and resurrection of Jesus Christ must be your absolute priority.” —St. John Paul II

I. THE ENTIRE PEOPLE OF GOD PROCLAIMS THE GOSPEL

The Church is first and foremost a people advancing on its pilgrim way toward God.

A PEOPLE FOR EVERYONE

Salvation is a work of God’s mercy. “It is important always to know that the first word, the true initiative, the true activity comes from God and only by inserting ourselves into the divine initiative, only begging for this divine initiative, shall we too be able to become—with him and in him—evangelizers.”^[7]

Salvation is for everyone. God has found a way to unite himself to every human being in every age. He has chosen to call them together as a people and not as isolated individuals.

Therefore, the Church must be a place of mercy freely given, where everyone can feel welcomed, loved, forgiven and encouraged to live the good life of the Gospel.

A PEOPLE OF MANY FACES

The human person is always situated in a culture. Whenever a community receives the message of salvation, the Holy Spirit enriches its culture with the transforming power of the Gospel. Present in a culture, the Church introduces peoples, together with their cultures, into her own community, for every culture offers positive values and forms which can enrich the way the Gospel is preached, understood and lived. Cultural diversity is not a threat to Church unity—a unity that is never uniformity but a multifaceted and inviting harmony. It is not essential to impose a specific cultural form, together with the

Gospel. The faith cannot be constricted to the limits of understanding and expression of any one culture.

WE ARE ALL MISSIONARY DISCIPLES

As part of his mysterious love for humanity, God furnishes the totality of the faithful with an instinct of faith—*sensus fidei*^[8]—that helps them to discern what is truly of God. All the baptized, whatever their position in the Church or their level of instruction in the faith, are agents of evangelization, and it would be insufficient to envisage a plan of evangelization to be carried out by professionals while the rest of the faithful would simply be passive recipients. In our hearts, we know it would not be the same to live without him. What I have come to realize, what has helped me to live and given me hope, is what I also need to communicate to others.

THE EVANGELIZING POWER OF POPULAR PIETY

One can say that a people continually evangelizes itself. Herein lies the importance of popular piety, a true expression of the spontaneous missionary activity of the people of God. Popular piety manifests a thirst for God that only the poor and the simple can know. It makes people capable of generosity and sacrifice even to the point of heroism, when it is a question of bearing witness to belief. It is a legitimate way of living the faith, a way of feeling part of the Church and a manner of being missionaries; it brings with itself the grace of being a missionary, of coming out of oneself and setting out on pilgrimage. Only through love can we appreciate the value of popular piety. We are called to promote and strengthen it in order to deepen the process of inculturation.

[7] Benedict XVI. Meditation during the First General Congregation of the XIII Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops (October 8, 2012); AAS 104 (2012), 897

[8] See the Theological Note on ‘sensus fidei’.



PERSON TO PERSON

There is a kind of preaching which falls to each of us as a daily responsibility. It has to do with bringing the Gospel to the people we meet, whether they be our neighbors or complete strangers. The first step is personal dialogue. Only afterward is it possible to bring up God's Word—the personal love of God who became man, who gave himself up for us, who is living and who offers us his salvation and his friendship. This fraternal and missionary encounter could end with a brief prayer related to the concerns that the person may have expressed. This communication takes place in many different ways. The ultimate aim should be that the Gospel, as preached in ways proper to each culture, will create a new synthesis with that particular culture.

CHARISMS AT THE SERVICE OF A COMMUNION WHICH EVANGELIZES

Charisms are meant to renew and build up the Church. They are gifts of the Spirit integrated into the body of the Church, drawn to the center, which is Christ, and then channeled into an evangelizing impulse. In communion, even when it proves painful, a charism is seen to be authentic and mysteriously fruitful. Only the Holy Spirit can bring about unity from diversity, plurality and multiplicity.

CULTURE, THOUGHT AND EDUCATION

The Gospel must be proclaimed to professional, scientific and academic circles. A theology which is in dialogue with other sciences and human experience is most important for our discernment on how best to bring the Gospel message to different cultural contexts and groups. Universities are outstanding environments for developing the evangelizing commitment.

II. THE HOMILY

The homily can be an intense and happy experience of the Spirit, a consoling encounter with God's Word, a constant source of renewal and growth.

THE LITURGICAL CONTEXT

The homily takes up once more the dialogue which the Lord has already established with his people. It needs to give life and meaning to the celebration. It should guide the assembly and the preacher to a life-changing communion with Christ in the Eucharist.

A MOTHER'S CONVERSATION

The Church is a mother and preaches in the same way that a mother speaks to her child, knowing that the child trusts that what she is teaching is for his or her benefit. The homily should be characterized by the closeness of the preacher, the warmth of his tone of voice, the unpretentiousness of his manner of speaking, the joy of his gestures. The Lord truly enjoys talking with his people; the preacher should strive to communicate that same enjoyment to his listeners.

WORDS THAT SET HEARTS ON FIRE

In the homily, truth goes hand in hand with beauty and goodness. The challenge of an inculturated preaching is in proclaiming a synthesis, not ideas or detached values. In the homily the people want someone to serve as an instrument and to express their feelings in such a way that afterward, each one may choose how he or she will continue the conversation. To speak from the heart means that our hearts must not just be on fire, but also enlightened by the fullness of revelation and by the path travelled by God's Word in the heart of the Church and our faithful people throughout history.

III. PREPARING TO PREACH

I presume to ask that each week a sufficient portion of personal and community time be dedicated to preparation of the homily, even if less time has to be given to other important activities.

REVERENCE FOR TRUTH

To interpret a biblical text, we need to be patient, to put aside all other concerns, and to give it our time, interest and undivided attention. Preparation for preaching requires love. Our most important goal is to discover the principal message, the message that



gives structure and unity to the text. We need to relate it to the teaching of the entire Bible as handed on by the Church.

PERSONALIZING THE WORD

The preacher needs to approach the Word with a docile and prayerful heart so that it may deeply penetrate his thoughts and feelings and bring about a new outlook in him. The greater or lesser degree of the holiness of the minister has a real effect on the proclamation of the word. What is essential is that the preacher be certain that God loves him, that Jesus Christ has saved him and that his love has always the last word.

SPIRITUAL READING

The spiritual reading of a text must start with its literal sense otherwise we can make the text say what we think is convenient. It is then good to ask, “What does this text say to me?” To avoid applying the text to our own life is a temptation.

AN EAR TO THE PEOPLE

A preacher also needs to keep his ear to the people and to discover what it is that the faithful need to hear. Preparation for preaching thus becomes an exercise in evangelical discernment. We need to develop a broad and profound sensitivity to what really affects other people’s lives.

HOMILETIC RESOURCES

Pay attention to how the homily should be said, the way of constructing a sermon. Concern for the way we preach is a profoundly spiritual concern. Refuse to offer others a product of poor quality. Images help people better appreciate and accept the message we wish to communicate. Simplicity has to do with the language we use. It must be one that people understand. Our language may be simple, but our preaching not very clear. It can end up being incomprehensible because it is disorganized, lacks logical progression or tries to deal with too many things at one time. It should not be concerned so much with what should not be done, but suggesting what we can do better.

IV. EVANGELIZATION AND THE DEEPER UNDERSTANDING OF THE KERYGMA

Evangelization should stimulate the desire to grow in Christ. It would not be right to see this call to growth exclusively or primarily in terms of doctrinal formation, but rather as a way of responding to his love—of growth in love.

KERYGMATIC AND MYSTAGOGICAL CATECHESIS

Education and catechesis are at the service of growth. The first announcement of the faith, or kerygma has a fundamental role. It is as follows: “Jesus Christ loves you; he gave his life to save you; and now he is living at your side every day to enlighten, strengthen and free you.” It is the first announcement because it is the principle announcement. Nothing is more solid than this. All subsequent formation consists in going deeper into this initial proclamation. In proclaiming the kerygma, we should stress three elements that are needed today:

- It has to express God’s saving love that precedes any moral and religious obligation on our part.
- It should not impose the truth but appeal to freedom.
- It should be marked by joy, encouragement, liveliness and a harmonious balance that will not reduce preaching to a few doctrines.

Another aspect of catechesis is mystagogical initiation. It has to do with two basic things:

- A progressive experience of formation involving the entire community.
- A renewed appreciation of the liturgical signs of Christian initiation.

Proclaiming Christ means showing that to believe in and to follow him is not only something right and true, but also something beautiful, capable of filling life with new splendor and profound joy, even in the midst of difficulties. As for the moral component, it is useful to stress again and again the attractiveness and the ideal of a life of wisdom, self-fulfillment and enrichment and our rejection of the evils which endanger that life.



PERSONAL ACCOMPANIMENT IN PROCESSES OF GROWTH

The Church needs to look more closely and sympathetically at others, especially the ‘art of accompaniment.’ It must lead people closer to God. Practice the art of listening—the openness of heart which makes possible that closeness without which genuine spiritual encounter cannot occur. In accompanying others, realize that each person’s situation before God and their life in grace are mysteries that no one can fully know from without. Recognize when there is evil in their actions without making judgments about their responsibility and culpability. Genuine accompaniment happens within the mission of evangelization.

CENTERED ON THE WORD OF GOD

All evangelization is based on the Word of God, listened to, meditated upon, lived, celebrated and witnessed to. It is indispensable that the Word of God be ever more fully at the heart of every ecclesial activity. It is essential that the revealed Word radically enrich our catechesis and all our efforts to pass on the faith.

THEOLOGICAL NOTE

SENSUS FIDEI: the ability of the people of God to discern what is truly of the faith. However, as paragraph 118 of the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith’s document, “Sensus Fidei in the Life of the Church” states:

“the sensus fidei is obviously related to faith, and faith is a gift not necessarily possessed by all people, so the sensus fidei can certainly not be likened to public opinion in society at large. Then also, while Christian faith is, of course, the primary factor uniting members of the Church, many different influences combine to shape the views of Christians living in the modern world. As the above discussion of dispositions implicitly shows, the sensus fidei cannot simply be identified, therefore, with public or majority opinion in the Church, either. Faith, not opinion, is the necessary focus of attention. Opinion is often just an expression, frequently changeable and transient, of the mood or desires of a certain group or culture, whereas faith is the echo of the one Gospel which is valid for all places and times.”

The full document can be found here:

http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_cti_20140610_sensus-fidei_en.html

VOCABULARY NOTES

KERYGMA: refers to the proclamation of the Gospel, especially preaching the Gospel. The kerygma was originally proclaimed at Pentecost. Acts 2:14-40. However, any preaching of the elements of the faith, especially the most important elements, can be called kerygma.

Here is an article about the kerygma that was submitted as a resource for Pope Francis in writing the Exhortation:

<http://www.catholic.com/blog/hector-molina/the-kerygma-enigma>

MYSTAGOGY: refers to the catechesis given to newly baptized Christians in the early Church. The person who gave the catechesis was the mystagogue. Nowadays, it can be said to be roughly equivalent to the word ‘catechesis’. When he speaks of mystagogical catechesis, the Holy Father seems to be asking for a program of formation that starts with the initiation of baptism, but is ongoing, for the entire community.

STUDY AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What did John Paul II tell the Asian bishops their absolute priority should be? (Paragraph 110)
2. First and foremost, what is the Church? (Paragraph 111)
3. What is the beacon that illuminates our reflections on evangelization? (Paragraph 112)
4. What must the Church be? (Paragraph 114)
5. What does the Holy Spirit do when a community accepts the message of salvation? (Paragraph 116)
6. While bringing forth a rich variety of gifts, what does the Holy Spirit create? (Paragraph 117)
7. Why can’t we demand that other peoples imitate the modes of expression developed by European nations in the past? (Paragraph 118)



8. What does God do as part of his mysterious love for humanity? *(Paragraph 119)*
9. What are all the baptized? *(Paragraph 120)*
10. What do we need to do with what we have come to realize, has helped us to live and gives us hope? *(Paragraph 121)*
11. What happens once the Gospel has been inculturated in a people? *(Paragraph 122)*
12. What does popular piety manifest? *(Paragraph 123)*
13. What does the Aparecida document say about the content of faith that popular piety discovers and expresses? *(Paragraph 124)*
14. What are the different expressions of popular piety a manifestation of? *(Paragraph 125)*
15. What fruit of the inculturated Gospel underlies popular piety? *(Paragraph 126)*
16. What kind of preaching falls to us each as a daily responsibility? *(Paragraph 127)*
17. What are the three possible steps in person-to-person preaching? *(Paragraph 128)*
18. What is the ultimate aim of person-to-person preaching? *(Paragraph 129)*
19. What is the sure sign of the authenticity of a charism? *(Paragraph 130)*
20. How must diversity be reconciled? *(Paragraph 131)*
21. What happens when certain categories of reason and the sciences are taken up into the proclamation of the message? *(Paragraph 132)*
22. What is the importance of a theology that is in dialogue with other sciences and human experiences? *(Paragraph 133)*
23. What are universities outstanding environments for? *(Paragraph 134)*
24. What can the homily actually be? *(Paragraph 135)*
25. What is the liturgical proclamation of the Word of God a time for? *(Paragraph 136)*
26. What is the wonderful but difficult task of the preacher? *(Paragraph 143)*
27. What do all of us need? *(Paragraph 160)*
28. How does Paul present the Christian life to his communities? *(Paragraph 161)*
29. What always precedes the process of response and growth? *(Paragraph 162)*
30. What is the first proclamation of the kerygma? Why is it first? *(Paragraph 164)*
31. What are the three elements of the kerygma? *(Paragraph 165)*
32. What are the two things Mystagogical catechesis has to do with? *(Paragraph 166)*
33. What does proclaiming Christ mean? *(Paragraph 167)*
34. What should we stress in the moral component of catechesis? *(Paragraph 168)*
35. What will the Church have to initiate everyone into? *(Paragraph 169)*
36. How does the Holy Father describe listening in communication? *(Paragraph 171)*
37. What must we avoid in recognizing the objective evil of other's actions? *(Paragraph 172)*
38. In the example of Paul's relationship with Titus and Timothy, where does the accompaniment and formation take place? *(Paragraph 173)*
39. What is all evangelization based on? *(Paragraph 174)*
40. What is it essential that the revealed word do? *(Paragraph 175)*

QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION OR GROUP DISCUSSION

1. In paragraphs 119 and 120 of the Exhortation, the Holy Father speaks about baptism as the sacrament that demands every Christian become a missionary of Christ's love. How do you understand this connection between baptism and mission? What elements of life in your faith community (parish, diocese, Movement, apostolate...) best reflect this connection?
2. In paragraphs 127–129, the Holy Father takes up the idea of person-to-person evangelization;



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SESSION 5

CHAPTER 4

SUMMARY

If the social dimension of evangelization is not properly brought out, there is a constant risk of distorting the authentic and integral meaning of the mission of evangelization.

I. COMMUNAL AND SOCIETAL REPERCUSSIONS OF THE KERYGMA

Life in community and engagement with others is the heart of the Gospel proclamation. Charity is the key aspect of morality.

CONFESSION OF FAITH AND COMMITMENT TO SOCIETY

God redeems not only the individual, but also the social relationships between persons. Accepting the Gospel means not only accepting and returning God's love, but to desire, seek and protect the good of others. "Whatever you did to the least of my brothers, you did to me" (Matthew 25:40). There is an absolute priority to go out from ourselves to our brothers and sisters as a basis for every moral rule and the clearest sign for discerning spiritual growth.

THE KINGDOM AND ITS CHALLENGE

The Gospel is about the kingdom of God; it is about loving God who reigns in our world. To the extent that he reigns within us, the life of society will be a setting for universal fraternity, justice, peace and dignity. Christ orders us to go into the entire world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation. Creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God. Here, creation refers to every aspect of human life; so, the mission of proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ has a universal destination.

THE CHURCH'S TEACHING ON SOCIAL QUESTIONS

Religion cannot be restricted to the private sphere. Christian conversion demands reviewing especially those areas and aspects of life related to the social order and the pursuit of the common good. An authentic faith always involves a deep desire to change the world, to transmit values, to leave this earth better than we found it. All Christians should be concerned for the building of a better world, for the Church's social thought is primarily positive—constantly pointing to the hope born of the loving heart of Jesus Christ. There are no universal solutions, but it is up to Christian communities to analyze with objectivity the situation that is proper to their own country—especially the inclusion of the poor in society and peace and social dialogue.

II. THE INCLUSION OF THE POOR IN SOCIETY^[9]

Our faith in Christ, who became poor, is the basis for our concern for the poor.

IN UNION WITH GOD, WE HEAR A PLEA

Each Christian and each community is called to be an instrument of God for the liberation and promotion of the poor. A lack of solidarity toward the poor will directly affect our relationship with God. How does God's love abide in anyone who has the world's goods, and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help? The Church intends to respond to the cry for justice with all its might. Solidarity with the poor presumes the creation of a new mindset which thinks in terms of community and the priority of the life of all over the appropriation of goods by a few. Solidarity is the reaction of those who recognize that the social function of property and the universal destination of goods are realities that come before private property. The property must be used to

[9] We have heard how much the Holy Father loves the poor. Here, he gives his reasons and talks about why we should all love the poor, as well as implications of our love for the poor.



serve the common good.^[10] New convictions and attitudes are necessary in this regard. The fact that some people are born in places with fewer resources or less development does not justify the fact that they are living with less dignity. Christians are called to hear the cry of the poor. More than simply ensuring nourishment for all, we need to work for their “general temporal welfare and prosperity.” This means education, health care and above all employment^[11]—because human beings enhance the dignity of their lives through free, creative, participatory and mutually supportive labor.

FIDELITY TO THE GOSPEL, LEST WE RUN IN VAIN

Mercy to others will vindicate us on the day of God’s judgment. This is such a simple and clear teaching that we should not relativize it. We should be concerned about remaining faithful to this light-filled path of life and wisdom. The main thing the apostles in Jerusalem asked Paul to do was to not forget the poor. This criterion of authenticity remains important today in the face of a new self-centered paganism. Consumerism leads to alienation at every level since a society becomes alienated when its forms of social organization, production and consumption make it more difficult to offer the gift of self and to establish solidarity between people.

THE SPECIAL PLACE OF THE POOR IN GOD’S PEOPLE^[12]

God’s heart has a special place for the poor, so much so that he himself became poor. Not only do the poor share in the *sensus fidei*, but in their difficulties they know the suffering Christ. We need to let ourselves be evangelized by them. The new evangelization acknowledges the saving power at work in their lives and puts them at the center of the Church’s pilgrim way. The poor person, when loved, is esteemed as of great value and this is what makes the authentic option for the poor differ from any other ideology, from any attempt to exploit the poor for one’s own personal or political interest. Only on the basis of this real and sincere closeness can we properly accompany the poor on their path of liberation. Our preferential option for the poor must mainly translate into a privileged and preferential religious care. Spiritual conversion, the intensity of the love of God and neighbor, zeal for justice and peace, the Gospel meaning of the poor and

of poverty, are required of everyone. The Holy Father fears that these words may give rise to commentary or discussion with no real practical effect.

THE ECONOMY AND THE DISTRIBUTION OF INCOME

As long as the problems of the poor are not resolved by rejecting the absolute autonomy of markets and financial speculation and by attacking the structural causes of inequality, no solution will be found for the world’s problems. The dignity of each human person and the pursuit of the common good are concerns that ought to shape all economic policies. Business is a noble vocation when those engaged in it see themselves challenged by a greater meaning in life, enabling them to serve the common good by striving to increase the goods of this world and make them more accessible to all. Politics is one of the highest forms of charity when it seeks the common good. Politicians need to work to ensure that all citizens have dignified work, education and health care. Meaningful economic decisions have global consequences. No government can act without regard for shared responsibility. No Church community can afford to ignore helping the poor. The Holy Father concludes by saying that in all that he has said here, there is no intention of personal interest or political ideology. He is trying to free us from an individualistic, indifferent and self-centered mentality.

CONCERN FOR THE VULNERABLE

Christians are called to care for the vulnerable of the earth—the homeless, addicted, refugees, indigenous peoples, elderly and many others. There needs to be more openness to migrants. We have to be careful that we are not complicit in human trafficking. There continue

[10] So, goods should be managed primarily in a way that benefits the common good rather than in a way that maximizes profits. It isn’t that profits are evil and have to be ignored—rather, the common good is the priority, then seeking profits insofar as it is in harmony with the common good—perhaps hard to accept for those of us brought up in a culture so full of consumerism.

[11] Note that the Holy Father is not promoting one way or another of how these three goals are to be reached. When we assume that the Holy Father is taking a political position we are usually making a mistake.

[12] Anyone interested in the Holy Father’s point of view regarding liberation theology can find some hints here.



to be problems of mistreatment of women, sins against the dignity of human life, abortion, and environmental destruction. Christians are called to watch over the fragile world we live in and all of its peoples.

III. THE COMMON GOOD AND PEACE IN SOCIETY

God's Word also speaks about peace. The dignity of the human person and the common good rank higher than the comfort of those who refuse to renounce their privileges. Peace is fashioned by efforts directed toward the establishment of order and justice. Yet becoming a people demands something more. It is a slow and arduous effort calling for a desire for integration and a willingness to achieve this through the growth of a peaceful and multifaceted culture of encounter. It depends on four principles:

- Time is greater than space
- Unity prevails over conflict
- Realities are more important than ideas
- The whole is greater than the part

TIME IS GREATER THAN SPACE

In building a people, it is more important to work with an eye to the limitless future than surrender to the limits of the present; time is greater than space. This allows us to work slowly but surely, without being obsessed with immediate results. A fault in sociopolitical activity is when spaces and power are preferred to time and processes. Giving priority to time means being concerned about initiating processes rather than possessing spaces. Evaluating a historical period means asking to what extent it fosters the development and attainment of a full and authentically meaningful human existence according to the limitations of that age. In evangelization we give attention to the bigger picture—open to suitable processes and concern for the long run.

UNITY PREVAILS OVER CONFLICT

In the midst of conflict, we can lose our sense of the profound unity of reality. The best way to deal with conflict is the willingness to face it head on, to resolve

it and to make it a link in the chain of a new process. Building communion amid disagreement can only be achieved by being willing to go beyond the surface of the conflict and see others in their deepest dignity, looking for a resolution that preserves what is valid and useful on both sides. Peace is a sign of the unity and reconciliation that Christ brings. It is possible because the Lord has overcome the world and its conflicts. Peace is the conviction that the unity brought by the Spirit can harmonize every diversity.

REALITIES ARE MORE IMPORTANT THAN IDEAS

There is a constant struggle to balance reality with ideas. Reality is where ideas are worked out and so it is more important than ideas. Ideas disconnected from realities are capable of classifying and defining but not calling to action. Realities illuminated by reason call us to action. Formal nominalism must give way to harmonious objectivity. The principle of reality, of a word already made flesh and constantly striving to take flesh anew, is essential to evangelization. It impels us to put God's Word into practice, to perform works of justice and charity that make that Word fruitful.

THE WHOLE IS GREATER THAN THE PART

There is also a struggle to balance globalization with localization. A global view helps avoid narrowness and banality. A local view helps keep our feet on the ground. We live in a world that reflects the convergence of all its parts, yet where each part preserves its distinctiveness.^[13] In the convergence of peoples, each maintains his or her individuality, yet the sum total of persons within the society pursues the common good. The fullness and richness of the Gospel embraces everyone. It has an intrinsic principle of totality. It will always remain good news until it has been proclaimed to all people, until it has healed and strengthened every aspect of humanity, until it has brought all men and women together in God's kingdom.

[13] The exhortation uses the word, 'polyhedron,' as an example of this. The classic visualization of this shape is a soccer ball.



IV. SOCIAL DIALOGUE AS A CONTRIBUTION TO PEACE

Evangelization involves the path of dialogue. There are many different kinds of dialogue, but each involves the light which faith offers. This light transcends human reason, yet it can also prove meaningful and enriching to those who are not believers and it stimulates reason to broaden its perspectives. The Gospel of peace builds consensus and agreement while seeking the goal of a just, responsive and inclusive society. It is the responsibility of the state to safeguard and promote the common good of society. The Church supports those programs that best respond to the dignity of each person and the common good.

DIALOGUE BETWEEN FAITH, REASON AND SCIENCE

Evangelization at the service of peace also includes the dialogue between science and faith. The light of reason and the light of faith both come from God and cannot contradict each other. This dialogue opens up new horizons for thought and expands the possibilities of reason. Whenever the sciences arrive at a conclusion which reason cannot refute, faith does not contradict it. When there seems to be a conflict, the problem is not with reason itself, but with the promotion of a particular ideology that blocks the path to authentic, serene and productive dialogue.

ECUMENICAL DIALOGUE

The credibility of the Christian message would be much greater if Christians could overcome their divisions. We need to trust our fellow Christians and turn our gaze to the radiant peace of God's face. Ecumenism can be seen as a contribution to the unity of the human family. The counter-witness of the division of Christianity is serious. Commitment to a unity that helps non-Christians accept Jesus Christ cannot be a matter of mere diplomacy or forced compliance, but rather an indispensable path to evangelization.

RELATIONS WITH JUDAISM

The Church looks upon the Jewish people and their faith as one of the sacred roots of its own Christian identity. We believe in the same God who acts in

history and accept his revealed Word. Dialogue and friendship with the children of Israel are part of the life of Jesus' disciples. The Church is enriched by Judaism, shares a rich complementarity with it and a conviction and concern for justice and the development of peoples.

INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

A dialogue in love and truth with followers of non-Christian religions demands openness. It is first of all about human existence. It takes up the duty of serving justice and peace. Attention must be paid to the bond between dialogue and proclamation. True openness involves remaining steadfast in one's deepest convictions, clear and joyful in one's own identity, while at the same time being open to understanding those of the other party and knowing that dialogue can enrich each side. Like Muslims, we adore the one, merciful God who will judge humanity. We make time for daily prayer and take part in religious services. We believe our life is from God and for God. We should welcome them in our countries in the same way that we hope to be received and respected in Muslim countries. Authentic Islam is opposed to every form of violence. Non-Christians, living according to their consciences, can live justified by the grace of God and be associated to the paschal mystery of Jesus Christ. Their signs and rites can be channels that the Holy Spirit uses to liberate them from atheist immanentism or from purely individualistic religious experiences.

SOCIAL DIALOGUE IN A CONTEXT OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Religious freedom is to be viewed as a fundamental human right. A healthy pluralism does not entail privatizing religion to the extent that it is limited to the individual's conscience or the insides of churches. Respect for agnostics or non-believers should not be observed in such a way as to silence the conviction of believers. Rationalists frequently descend to crude and superficial generalizations about the shortcomings of religion and seem incapable of realizing that not all believers are the same. Believers are also close to the seekers of truth, goodness and beauty, since these things have their highest source and expression in God. They are allies in the commitment to defending human dignity, in building peaceful coexistence between peoples and in protecting creation.



VOCABULARY NOTES

SOLIDARITY has a specific meaning in Catholic social teaching. Here is the way John Paul II defined it: Solidarity is more than a “feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of so many people, both near and far. On the contrary, *it is a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good. That is to say to the good of all and of each individual, because we are all really responsible for all.*” (Sollicitudo Rei Socialis 38)

IDEALISM/NOMINALISM/REALISM: These are precise terms from philosophy. A full precise definition of each could go on for many pages. In order to understand what the Holy Father is getting at in the Exhortation, it is sufficient to say that Realism says that our ideas correspond to something in reality. We can’t manipulate them to mean whatever we want. Idealism and Nominalism are different ways of saying that our ideas don’t correspond to anything real, but are simply convenient ways our mind classifies things. Therefore, they can be changed at will to mean whatever they want. Unfortunately, such a way of thinking, while it may look good in theory, somehow never works out the way we thought it would in real life.

THEOLOGICAL NOTE

Catholic Social Teaching includes concepts like solidarity. Unfortunately, many Catholics don’t know much about the Church’s social teaching. To get up to speed with concepts like solidarity, subsidiarity, the common good and the universal destination of goods, it might be good to do some background reading. Here are two resources:

<http://www.catholicculture.org/commentary/articles.cfm?id=285>

<http://www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/view.cfm?id=7538>

STUDY AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is the risk of not properly bringing out the social dimension of evangelization? (Paragraph 176)
2. What is at the heart of the Gospel? (Paragraph 177)

3. Why does redemption have a social dimension? (Paragraph 178)
4. What does God’s Word teach us? (Paragraph 179)
5. What two things is the Gospel about? (Paragraph 180)
6. What must evangelization take into account in order to be complete (Paragraph 181)?
7. What does Christian conversion demand? (Paragraph 182)
8. Why can we say that the Church’s social thought is primarily positive? (Paragraph 183)
9. According to Paul VI, who has more responsibility to put forward solutions for social problems? (Paragraph 184)
10. What are the two fundamental social issues at this time in history? (Paragraph 185)
11. What is every Christian and every community called to be? (Paragraph 187)
12. What does solidarity presume? (Paragraph 188)
13. What justifies the private ownership of goods? (Paragraph 189)
14. Who said: “The more fortunate should renounce some of their rights so as to place their goods more generously at the service of others?” (Paragraph 190) *Hint: You need to check the footnote.*
15. What knowledge scandalizes us? (Paragraph 191)
16. What do we need to ensure for the poor beyond nourishment? (Paragraph 192)
17. What will vindicate us on the Day of Judgment according to the apostle James? (Paragraph 193)
18. In paragraph 194, the Holy Father says over and over again that we have to make sure we don’t water down a certain teaching—clearly expressed in the Gospel. What is that teaching? (Paragraph 193)
19. What leads to alienation at every level? (Paragraph 196)
20. What shows the depth of the special place in God’s heart for the poor? (Paragraph 197)
21. What do the poor have besides a share in the *sensus fidei*? (Paragraph 198)



22. What is the consequence when the poor person is esteemed as of great value? *(Paragraph 199)*
23. What is the main expression of our preferential option for the poor? *(Paragraph 200)*
24. What is required of everyone? *(Paragraph 201)*
25. What do we need to reject in order to find solutions for the world's problems? *(Paragraph 202)*
26. What must shape all economic policies? *(Paragraph 203)*
27. What does growth in justice require? *(Paragraph 204)*
28. What is it vital that government leaders and financial leaders do? *(Paragraph 205)*
29. Since economic decisions have worldwide repercussions, what can't governments do? *(Paragraph 206)*
30. What reminds us that Christians are called to care for the vulnerable of the earth? *(Paragraph 209)*
31. What does the Holy Father ask all countries to do with regard to migrants? *(Paragraph 210)*
32. What issue involves everyone? *(Paragraph 211)*
33. What is the defense of unborn life linked to? *(Paragraph 213)*
34. What is it that the Church has done little of? *(Paragraph 215)*
35. What two things rank higher than the comfort of those who refuse to renounce their privileges? *(Paragraph 218)*
36. What fashions peace? *(Paragraph 219)*
37. What does becoming a people demand? *(Paragraph 220)*
38. What are the four principles necessary to build a people in peace, justice and fraternity? *(Paragraph 221)*
39. What does time have to do with? *(Paragraph 222)*
40. What does giving priority to time mean? *(Paragraph 223)*
41. What is the only measure for properly evaluating an age? *(Paragraph 224)*
42. What is an important aspect of evangelization illustrated by the parable of the weeds among the wheat? *(Paragraph 225)*
43. What is the best way of dealing with conflict? *(Paragraph 227)*
44. How can we achieve building communion amid disagreement? *(Paragraph 228)*
45. Why is peace possible? *(Paragraph 229)*
46. What can the unity brought by the Spirit do? *(Paragraph 230)*
47. What are some means of masking reality that we must reject? *(Paragraph 231)*
48. What do ideas disconnected from realities give rise to? *(Paragraph 232)*
49. What is essential to evangelization? *(Paragraph 233)*
50. Why do we need to pay attention to the global? Why do we need to pay attention to the local? *(Paragraph 234)*
51. Even when we work on a small scale, what do we need to maintain? *(Paragraph 235)*
52. In a polyhedron, what is conserved in the confluence of the parts? *(Paragraph 236)*
53. What is the principle that evokes the totality or integrity of the Gospel? *(Paragraph 237)*
54. What three areas of dialogue stand out for the Church? *(Paragraph 238)*
55. What is it a time to seek? *(Paragraph 239)*
56. What is the responsibility of the state? *(Paragraph 240)*
57. What does the Church support? *(Paragraph 241)*
58. Since the light of reason and the light of faith both come from God, what can they not do? *(Paragraph 242)*
59. What is the problem when scientists sometimes exceed the limits of scientific competence by making certain statements or claims? *(Paragraph 243)*
60. What would make the credibility of the Christian message much greater? *(Paragraph 244)*
61. What can ecumenism be seen as? *(Paragraph 245)*



62. What is an indispensable path to evangelization?
(Paragraph 246)
63. What are some beliefs we share with Judaism?
(Paragraph 247)
64. What is part of the life of Jesus' disciples? *(Paragraph 248)*
65. What enriches the Church? *(Paragraph 249)*
66. What should we join with the non-Christian religions to do? *(Paragraph 250)*
67. What does true openness consist in? *(Paragraph 251)*
68. What should we never forget with respect to the followers of Islam? *(Paragraph 252)*
69. What should be the attitude of Christians toward Muslim immigrants? *(Paragraph 253)*
70. What do non-Christians achieve when they live faithful to their consciences? *(Paragraph 254)*
71. What are some characteristics of a healthy pluralism? *(Paragraph 255)*
72. What mistake do intellectuals and serious journalists sometimes make in speaking of the shortcomings of religion? *(Paragraph 256)*
73. What characteristics are necessary for us to consider those who don't consider themselves to be part of any religious tradition for us to consider them allies? *(Paragraph 257)*

QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION OR GROUP DISCUSSION

1. The Holy Father mentions that we need to serve the poor, and that when we do we should let ourselves be evangelized by them? What does he mean? Have I ever experienced that?
2. The Holy Father says, "The Gospel is about the kingdom of God; it is about loving God who reigns in our world. To the extent that he reigns within us, the life of society will be a setting for universal fraternity, justice, peace and dignity. Both Christian preaching and life, then, are meant to have an impact on society." *(Paragraph 180)* In my experience, where have I seen the greatest impact of the Gospel on society?

3. The ideas in this chapter of the Exhortation, ideas like God's kingdom, working to make Christ reign within our hearts, and building the civilization of justice and love, have formed a core part of the charism of the Regnum Christi Movement. What have they meant to me through the years?
4. Meditating on this part of the Exhortation will help me better understand how the Movement's activities to help the poor are a natural and intrinsic part of our charism—not something added on for good publicity. Anyone who genuinely tries to live the charism of the Movement will naturally be moved to want to help those in need. What is my attitude to the poor? How have I served them? How have I been evangelized by them?
5. The Holy Father's concern for the poor leads him to remind us to use material goods responsibly and conscientiously. RCMH 197 and 198 give some orientations as to how a member of the Movement lives these virtues. Was I aware of how the Movement asks me to live in relationship with these virtues? Having read what the Holy Father has to say about them, do I need to live them even more responsibly? How can I do so?

QUESTIONS ON LIVING THE TEACHING

1. A firm, lived commitment to the Gospel message involves love for others and a desire to work to change the world for the better. If I don't see these characteristics in my response to the Gospel, what might be the cause or causes?
2. Does the plight of the poor resonate with me? How do I respond to this call? While economic help is important, love for the poor often demands a more active response. What positive actions characterize my response?
3. The Holy Father speaks about the universal destination of goods—that the goods of the earth are for the benefit of all. Personal ownership is acceptable if it helps all to be able to lead a life of human dignity. However, if it creates a class of people living in conditions that contradict their human dignity, action is necessary to change the unjust system. How does this teaching of the Church fit in with what I believe? If I struggle to accept it, how will I have to change in order to accept it?



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SESSION 6

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY

Evangelizers who are filled with the Holy Spirit will proclaim the good news not only with words, but above all by a life transfigured by God's presence.

I. REASONS FOR A RENEWED MISSIONARY IMPULSE

We need the ability to cultivate an interior space that can give a Christian meaning to commitment and activity—a deep breath of prayer. The early Christians were filled with joy, unflagging courage and zeal in proclaiming the Gospel. Things are not harder today; they are simply different. Let's rediscover some of the reasons that can help us to imitate them today.

PERSONAL ENCOUNTER WITH THE SAVING LOVE OF JESUS

The reason to evangelize is the love of Christ we have received. We need to recover a contemplative spirit that can help us to realize ever anew that we have been entrusted with a treasure that makes us more human and helps us to lead a new life. We forget that the Gospel responds to our deepest needs. The missionary has to be convinced that through the working of the Spirit, there already exists in individuals and peoples an expectation, even if an unconscious one, of knowing the truth about God, about man, and about how we are to be set free from sin and death. Our infinite sadness can only be cured by an infinite love. We need to be convinced that it is not the same thing to have known Jesus as not to have known him. A person who is not convinced, enthusiastic, certain and in love, will convince nobody. If we are missionaries, it is primarily because Jesus told us that "by this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit" (John 15:8).

THE SPIRITUAL SAVOR OF BEING A PEOPLE

Mission is a passion for Christ and a passion for his people. He wants to use us to draw closer to his

people. It is good to contemplate the closeness he shows to everyone. We see how accessible he is. His sacrifice on the cross is the culmination of the way he lived his entire life. It makes us want to enter fully into the fabric of society, sharing the lives of all. He wants us to touch human misery, to touch the suffering flesh of others, to know the power of tenderness. Peter tells us to give reasons for our hope, and to do it with gentleness and reverence. (1 Peter 3:15) When we live a spirituality of drawing nearer to others and seeking their welfare, our hearts are opened wide to the Lord's greatest and most beautiful gifts. My mission of being in the heart of the people is not just a part of my life or a badge I can take off. I am a mission on this earth. Every person is worthy of our giving. If I can help at least one person to have a better life, that already justifies the offering of my life.

THE MYSTERIOUS WORKING OF THE RISEN CHRIST AND HIS SPIRIT

If we think that things are not going to change, we need to recall that Jesus Christ has triumphed over sin and death and is now almighty. The power of Christ's resurrection has permeated the world. It cannot be contained. We can also fail because our hearts can tire of the struggle because in the end we are caught up in ourselves. The Kingdom is here, it returns, it struggles to flourish anew, because the resurrection is already secretly woven into the fabric of history—Jesus did not rise in vain. We may be sure that none of our acts of love will be lost, nor any of our acts of sincere concern for others. We may not see the fruits of our sacrifices because the Lord uses them to shower blessings in another part of the world which we will never visit. We know only that our commitment is necessary. There is no greater freedom than that of allowing oneself to be guided by the Holy Spirit, renouncing the attempt to plan and control everything to the last detail, and instead letting him enlighten, guide and direct us, leading us wherever he wills.



THE MISSIONARY POWER OF INTERCESSORY PRAYER

Intercessory prayer moves us to take up the task of evangelization and to seek the good of others. It becomes a prayer of gratitude to God for others. It makes us free from self-absorption and desirous of doing good and sharing our lives with others. Our intercession achieves that God's power, his love and his faithfulness, are shown more and more clearly in the midst of his people.

II. MARY, MOTHER OF EVANGELIZATION

Without Mary, we could never truly understand the spirit of the new evangelization

JESUS' GIFT TO HIS PEOPLE

From the cross, Jesus gives his mother a special, saving mission. He did not want us to journey without a mother. What is said in a universal sense of the virgin mother, the Church, is understood in an individual sense of the Virgin Mary. Mary also offers her children maternal comfort and love, and whispers in our ear: "Let your heart not be troubled... Am I not here, who am your Mother?" just as she did to St. Juan Diego.

STAR OF THE NEW EVANGELIZATION

Mary is the woman of faith, who lives and advances in faith. We look to her and ask her to help us proclaim the message of salvation to all and to enable new disciples to become evangelizers in turn. However, in the journey of faith, she encountered moments of darkness, a kind of 'veil' though which one has to draw near to the Invisible One and to live in intimacy with the mystery. The Church's work of evangelization as a kind of Marian 'style'; an interplay of justice and tenderness, of contemplation and concern for others, which make the ecclesial community look to Mary as a model of evangelization.

STUDY AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What does the Holy Spirit grant? *(Paragraph 259)*
2. What would the Holy Father like to see a new chapter of evangelization filled with? *(Paragraph 261)*
3. What ability is needed? *(Paragraph 262)*
4. What should we keep in mind about the early Christians? *(Paragraph 263)*
5. What do we need if we want the beauty of the Gospel to amaze us and constantly excite us? *(Paragraph 264)*
6. What is the missionary convinced of? *(Paragraph 265)*
7. What do we need to be convinced of from personal experience? *(Paragraph 266)*
8. What is the primary reason we are missionaries? *(Paragraph 267)*
9. What do we realize when we stand before Christ crucified? *(Paragraph 268)*
10. What does Jesus hope we will do? *(Paragraph 270)*
11. According to Peter, how are we to give reasons for our hope? *(Paragraph 271)*
12. How do we open our hearts to the Lord's greatest and most beautiful gifts? *(Paragraph 272)*
13. What is my mission of being in the heart of the people? *(Paragraph 273)*
14. What justifies the offering of my life? *(Paragraph 274)*
15. What do we need to recall if we think that things are not going to change? *(Paragraph 275)*
16. What power are evangelizers an instrument of? *(Paragraph 276)*
17. Why does it happen that our hearts can tire of the struggle? *(Paragraph 277)*
18. What does Christ's resurrection call forth? *(Paragraph 278)*
19. How may the Lord use our sacrifices? *(Paragraph 279)*
20. What is the greatest freedom? *(Paragraph 280)*



21. What is it that intercessory prayer does not stop?
(Paragraph 281)
22. What happens when evangelizers rise from prayer?
(Paragraph 282)
23. What can't we do without Mary?
(Paragraph 284)
24. What are the words of the dying Jesus?
(Paragraph 285)
25. What does Mary offer her children?
(Paragraph 286)
26. What do we see in the beginning of the Gospel, the joyful good news?
(Paragraph 287)
27. Describe the interplay characteristic of the Marian style of evangelization?
(Paragraph 288)

QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION OR GROUP DISCUSSION

1. In paragraph 279, the Holy Father speaks of a mysterious fruitfulness given to lives of convinced and coherent Christians: "It [faith] involves knowing with certitude that all those who entrust themselves to God in love will bear good fruit (cf. Jn 15:5). This fruitfulness is often invisible, elusive and unquantifiable. We can know quite well that our lives will be fruitful, without claiming to know how, or where, or when. We may be sure that none of our acts of love will be lost, nor any of our acts of sincere concern for others. No single act of love for God will be lost, no generous effort is meaningless, no painful endurance is wasted." How would I express those thoughts in my own words? What does that thought mean to me, and why? What should it mean for me?
2. In paragraph 263, the Holy Father speaks of the zeal of the first Christians. Compare that with RCMH 43. The Holy Father is trying to convince us that we need that same zeal, and in the Movement, we were already attempting to live that because it is part of our charism. How have I experienced this zeal in my own life?
3. In paragraph 264, the Holy Father talks about the gaze of Christ as something that helps us to love him. In RCMH 30–31 it speaks of finding love for Christ in contemplating his face. Many things said in the two passages are similar—for instance, both speak of the Eucharist—one as a source of faith

and the other as a source of love. What is my experience in this regard?

4. In the section called "The Spiritual Savor of Being a People" (paragraphs 268–274), the Holy Father speaks of how our love for Christ should give rise to a love for others. Compare this with the section in the handbook called "Living in God's Love" (RCMH 33–39). Some ideas in common are: love for Christ means serving others with meekness and kindness, service and abnegation, understanding and forgiveness (RCMH 35). The Holy Father expresses this as gentleness and reverence. RCMH 37 states that a Christian without charity loses his essence. The Holy Father says that being in the heart of the people is not an extra—it is something I cannot uproot without denying my very self (paragraph 273). See if you can find more parallels in the two sections. By meditating on what the Holy Father is saying about these important aspects of our own spirituality, we can enrich our understanding of it.
5. The main idea of paragraph 274—that every soul is worth my sacrifice is also contained in RCMH 153. In fact, you might say that this number from the handbook summarizes a lot of what the Exhortation says. Having read the whole Exhortation, try to see how this number summarizes many of the most important ideas. The Exhortation is, in a sense, very much a *Regnum Christi* document, since it contains so much that characterizes the Movement and its mission. How does this deep harmony between the Holy Father's programmatic document on our charism make me feel?
6. The Holy Father closes the Exhortation with a section on Mary. He talks about her dark road of faith (paragraph 287); which is mentioned in RCMH 125 as well as in RCMH 127. He talks about her special mission of motherhood (paragraph 285) which is the subject of RCMH 124 and 131. In the final paragraph, paragraph 288, the Holy Father speaks of Mary as the model of an evangelizer. In RCMH 126, it calls her a model of cooperation in Christ's work of redemption.



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