

Evangelii Gaudium Paragraphs 14-18

www.vatican.va

III. THE NEW EVANGELIZATION FOR THE TRANSMISSION OF THE FAITH

14. Attentive to the promptings of the Holy Spirit who helps us together to read the signs of the times, the XIII Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops gathered from 7-28 October 2012 to discuss the theme: The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith. The Synod reaffirmed that the new evangelization is a summons addressed to all and that it is carried out in three principal settings.[10]

In first place, we can mention the area of ordinary pastoral ministry, which is “animated by the fire of the Spirit, so as to inflame the hearts of the faithful who regularly take part in community worship and gather on the Lord’s day to be nourished by his word and by the bread of eternal life”.[11] In this category we can also include those members of faithful who preserve a deep and sincere faith, expressing it in different ways, but seldom taking part in worship. Ordinary pastoral ministry seeks to help believers to grow spiritually so that they can respond to God’s love ever more fully in their lives.

A second area is that of “the baptized whose lives do not reflect the demands of Baptism”, [12] who lack a meaningful relationship to the Church and no longer experience the consolation born of faith. The Church, in her maternal concern, tries to help them experience a conversion which will restore the joy of faith to their hearts and inspire a commitment to the Gospel.

Lastly, we cannot forget that evangelization is first and foremost about preaching the Gospel to those who do not know Jesus

Christ or who have always rejected him. Many of these are quietly seeking God, led by a yearning to see his face, even in countries of ancient Christian tradition. All of them have a right to receive the Gospel. Christians have the duty to proclaim the Gospel without excluding anyone. Instead of seeming to impose new obligations, they should appear as people who wish to share their joy, who point to a horizon of beauty and who invite others to a delicious banquet. It is not by proselytizing that the Church grows, but "by attraction".^[13]

15. John Paul II asked us to recognize that "there must be no lessening of the impetus to preach the Gospel" to those who are far from Christ, "because this is the first task of the Church".^[14] Indeed, "today missionary activity still represents the greatest challenge for the Church"^[15] and "the missionary task must remain foremost".^[16] What would happen if we were to take these words seriously? We would realize that missionary outreach is paradigmatic for all the Church's activity. Along these lines the Latin American bishops stated that we "cannot passively and calmly wait in our church buildings";^[17] we need to move "from a pastoral ministry of mere conservation to a decidedly missionary pastoral ministry".^[18] This task continues to be a source of immense joy for the Church: "Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance" (Lk 15:7).

The scope and limits of this Exhortation

16. I was happy to take up the request of the Fathers of the Synod to write this Exhortation.^[19] In so doing, I am reaping the rich fruits of the Synod's labours. In addition, I have sought

advice from a number of people and I intend to express my own concerns about this particular chapter of the Church's work of evangelization. Countless issues involving evangelization today might be discussed here, but I have chosen not to explore these many questions which call for further reflection and study. Nor do I believe that the papal magisterium should be expected to offer a definitive or complete word on every question which affects the Church and the world. It is not advisable for the Pope to take the place of local Bishops in the discernment of every issue which arises in their territory. In this sense, I am conscious of the need to promote a sound "decentralization".

17. Here I have chosen to present some guidelines which can encourage and guide the whole Church in a new phase of evangelization, one marked by enthusiasm and vitality. In this context, and on the basis of the teaching of the Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, I have decided, among other themes, to discuss at length the following questions:

a) the reform of the Church in her missionary outreach; b) the temptations faced by pastoral workers; c) the Church, understood as the entire People of God which evangelizes; d) the homily and its preparation; e) the inclusion of the poor in society; f) peace and dialogue within society; g) the spiritual motivations for mission.

18. I have dealt extensively with these topics, with a detail which some may find excessive. But I have done so, not with the intention of providing an exhaustive treatise but simply as a way of showing their important practical implications for the Church's mission today. All of them help give shape to a definite style of evangelization which I ask you to adopt in every activity which

you undertake. In this way, we can take up, amid our daily efforts, the biblical exhortation: "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say: Rejoice" (Phil 4:4).