

PROCLAIM
2016



On a Mission of Mercy: Evangelising Parishes



A PARISH RESOURCE - PART 1

**Keynotes & Reflection
Questions**



Office for
Evangelisation

CATHOLIC
DIOCESE OF
BROKEN BAY

Acknowledgements

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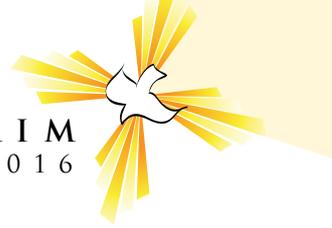
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CELEBRATING PROCLAIM 2016

Over three energising days in September 2016 over 520 delegates came together in Chatswood, NSW, to share insights and exchange best practices on parish evangelisation. The third turn of this national Conference, PROCLAIM 2016 was hosted and organised by the Office for Evangelisation, Diocese of Broken Bay, on behalf of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference. The unique character of the PROCLAIM Conference is its focus on the local parish and its life and mission, serving as a gathering point for those working and serving in the midst of these 1,300 parish communities across the nation.



The conference was formally opened by Bishop Peter A Comensoli, who announced that the gathering had received the apostolic blessing of the Holy Father himself. In his correspondence to Bishop Comensoli, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Secretary of State at the Holy See, shared:

The Holy Father asks you kindly to convey his cordial greetings to all assembled in the Diocese of Broken Bay for the third National Conference on Evangelisation, Proclaim 2016: Mercy. He trusts that in this Holy Year devoted to the preaching and practice of mercy, the Conference will contribute to a more effective proclamation of the Gospel message of forgiveness, redemption and interior renewal . . . With these sentiments, His Holiness commends the Conference to the loving intercession of Mary, Mother of the Church, and cordially imparts his Apostolic Blessing as a pledge of joy and peace in the Lord.

Following morning prayer His Eminence Donald Cardinal Wuerl, Archbishop of Washington, shared his learnings from Pope Francis with Conference delegates, confirming that the 'new evangeliser' in the parish requires four qualities to lead renewal: courage, confidence, a sense of urgency, and joy. The Cardinal encouraged our boldness as evangelisers, a boldness that emerges from our own dedication to personal prayer in the Spirit, our confidence in the glorious truth that we have received, and the desire or passion to be an evangelising disciple in the midst of an often challenging culture.

In her own keynote address Dr Susan Timoney, also of the Archdiocese of Washington, underlined that our parish boundaries do not determine where a person goes to church but rather who the parish is called to serve. Dr Timoney emphasised that the local parish serves everyone, Catholic and otherwise, who lives and works within its boundaries and that our parishes are called to be flexible and creative in engaging this local community with the Gospel. This is the meaning of an embedded and missionary parish.

I was privileged to address participants on the cultural tensions and challenges of change within the life of Australian parishes, the need for vision, bold proclamation, personal witness and a constant orientation outwards to the world, while the final keynote of the conference was delivered by Bishop Nicholas Hudson of Westminster, UK, who spoke beautifully of the potential of parishes to express Christ's mercy. In a moving reflection, Bishop Hudson recalled St John XXIII's description of the parish as "a village fountain to which all have recourse in their thirst", a metaphor extended by Pope Francis in his own image of the parish as an "oasis of mercy". The inclusive and transformative potential of our parishes, when they express the tenderness of God's love, was affirmed also by the concluding panel discussion of the Conference, facilitated by Vicar General of Diocese of Broken Bay, Very Rev Dr David Ranson.

Conference participants also enjoyed daily liturgies hosted by Fr Paul Finucane and Chatswood Parish, and facilitated by Fr Robert Borg, a 'Praisefest' event on the second night of the Conference led by Catholic Youth Broken Bay with over 350 participants both young and 'young at heart', and numerous workshops across the three days, canvassing a range of topics that sought to speak to the lived situation and evangelical mission of parishes today. The response from Conference delegates has been overwhelming and we trust that participants from across Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific have returned home inspired to renew the face of their parishes and communities.



To support the ongoing mission of our parishes, the Office for Evangelisation has assembled the four Conference keynotes from PROCLAIM 2016 and supplemented these with reflection questions to support local discussion and implementation of the insights of the Conference. Select workshops have also been chosen to provide additional resources for your community's reflection, covering themes such as parish engagement, the best practices in parish evangelisation drawn from Australian research, and the formation of evangelisation teams. We hope this resource enriches your parish life in its mission.

With every blessing in Christ,

Daniel Ang
Director, Office for Evangelisation
Catholic Diocese of Broken Bay



HOW TO USE THIS PARISH RESOURCE

For those able to attend PROCLAIM 2016, the three days of the Conference offered fresh insights and practical strategies to the task of developing an increasingly missionary focus for our parishes. This parish resources aims to make these insights and strategies more widely available and to assist parishes in their discernment and implementation of those learnings.

Part 1 of this resource contains:

- Text of all four keynote addresses, with accompanying guided questions
- Material from the 'Praisefest' youth event, with a sample run sheet

Part 2 of this resource contains:

- Five workshop presentations with accompanying handouts

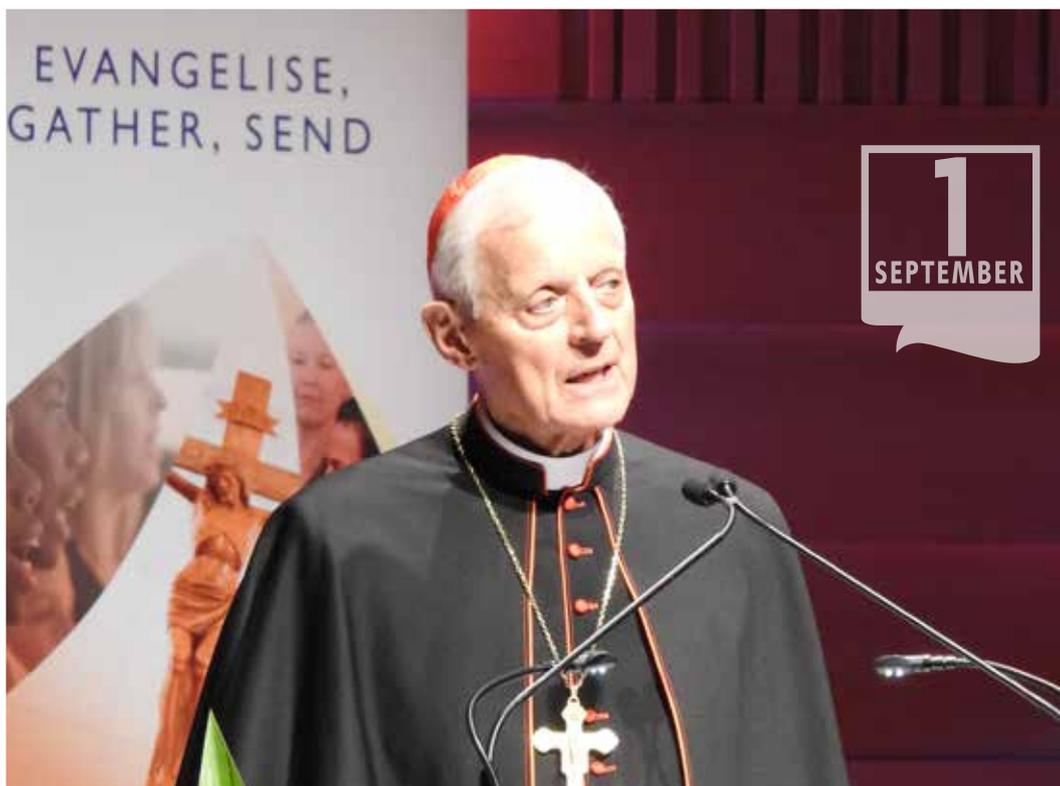
Whilst this resource can be used for personal reflection, it is best used within a parish setting by a parish group, for example, a Parish Pastoral Council. The guided questions are offered to facilitate the process of parish discernment, and it is hoped that by engagement with this resource, parishes will be able to consider fresh ways to develop a growing missionary outlook and to become ever more effective in the mission of evangelisation.

Note that PROCLAIM 2016 keynotes and many of the workshop presentations were recorded and can be accessed at www.xt3.com/proclaim2016 (video of keynotes) and www.xt3.com/proclaim (audio).

PROCLAIM
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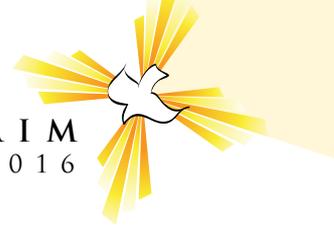


**POPE FRANCIS,
FRESH PERSPECTIVES ON RENEWAL,
AND THE NEW EVANGELISATION**

Keynote Address by
His Eminence Donald Cardinal Wuerl
Archbishop of Washington



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Before beginning these reflections, I want to thank Bishop Peter Comensoli, the Bishop of Broken Bay, for his thoughtful invitation to participate in this important conference that addresses the impact of Pope Francis on the Church and wider society and particularly how it is a source of renewal in our parishes today.

So much of the renewal, revitalisation and new evangelisation that we see in the Church today finds its lived experience in the parish, the place where the sacramental, pastoral, spiritual, educational, social service and evangelising action take place.

Our Holy Father, Pope Francis, speaks of parishes in his apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*. He says, “The parish is not an outdated institution; precisely because it possesses great flexibility, it can assume quite different contours depending on the openness and missionary creativity of the pastor and the community. [...] In all its activities the parish encourages and trains its members to be evangelisers. It is a community of communities, a sanctuary where the thirsty come to drink in the midst of their journey, and a centre of constant missionary outreach” (EG 28).

The Holy Father underlines the importance of parishes also in his most recent apostolic exhortation, *Amoris Laetitia*, “The main contribution to the pastoral care of families is offered by the parish, which is the family of families, where small communities ecclesial movements and associations live in harmony” (AL 202).

With this glowing appraisal of the potential and capacities of parish life, how do we see that each parish carries out its many missions – and in a spirit of communion and solidarity?

No small part of the impetus driving the new spirit of welcome that we find in the Church and particularly in our parishes and evangelising programs derives from the impact in ministry of Pope Francis.

We can follow the Pope’s thought, beginning with his apostolic exhortation, ‘The Joy of the Gospel’ (*Evangelii Gaudium*), that followed on the 2012 Synod on the New Evangelisation and continuing through his encyclical letter, ‘On Care for our Common Home’ (*Laudato Si*), and culminating most recently in his post-synodal apostolic exhortation following on the 2014 and 2015 Synods, ‘The Joy of Love’ (*Amoris Laetitia*).

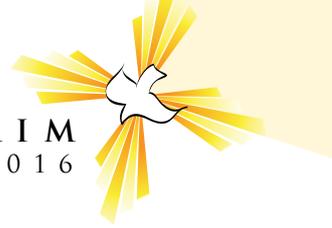
Pope Francis sets out for us, from the perspective of a pastor of souls, the elements of the Church’s answer to the perennial question, what does the Church, and the more radical question, what does Christ offer us, all of us, today?

What the Church Offers

A number of years ago I was invited to speak at the Catholic Center at Harvard University. The designated theme was “The Role of Faith in a Pluralistic Society.” At the conclusion of my presentation, a man who self-identified as an atheist and who taught in the law school was the first to present a question. He asked, “What do you people think you bring to our society?” The reference to “you people” was to the front row of the audience that was made up of representatives of a variety of religious traditions all of whom were in their appropriate identifiable robes.

Since he was a lawyer, I asked if he would mind if I answered his question with a question of my own. When he nodded in agreement, I asked: “What do you think the world would be like if it were not for the voices of all of those religious traditions represented in the hall?”

What would it be like if we did not hear voices in the midst of the community saying, you shall not kill, you shall not steal, you shall not bear false witness? What would our culture be like had we not heard religious imperatives such as love your neighbor as yourself, do unto others as you would have them do to you? How much more harsh would our land be if we did not grow up hearing, blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, blessed are the merciful, blessed are the peacemakers? What would the world be like had we never been reminded that someday we will have to answer to God for our actions?”



To his credit, the man who asked the question smiled broadly and said, “It would be a mess!”

The Church brings what it has always brought: an invitation to faith, an encounter with Christ, and a whole way of living

Yet the Christian way of life and the Gospel vision of right and wrong, virtue and God’s love all seem to be eclipsed by a strong secular voice that comes even from some within the Church that find the Church’s perennial teaching somehow passé.

It is against this background – a diminished appreciation of the faith – that the Pope calls all of us to a Year of Mercy and the New Evangelisation.

The New Evangelisation

To understand the present energy and focus, the new invitational outreach and engaging openness at so many levels in the Church, we need to appreciate the New Evangelisation and its impact.

‘The New Evangelisation’ is a term that has become very familiar in the Church today. Saint John Paul II began, more than three decades ago, to speak of the need for a new period of evangelisation. He described it as announcement of the Good News about Jesus that is “new in ardor, method and expression” (Address to the Latin American Episcopal Conference (CELAM), March 9, 1983). Pope Benedict XVI has affirmed that the discernment of “the new demands of evangelisation” is a “prophetic” task of the Supreme Pontiff (*Caritas in Veritate* 12). He emphasized that “the entire activity of the Church is an expression of love” that seeks to evangelise the world (*Deus Caritas Est* 19).



Likewise, in continuity with his predecessors, Pope Francis calls us to the work of the New Evangelisation. We can see as a hallmark in this papacy the emphasis that the Church “go out” into the world, to not stay wrapped up within herself, but to go out to give to people the beauty of the Gospel, the amazement of the encounter with Jesus. I think we are going to have, as we move forward, a time of blessing, a time of renewal, of looking to the future to bring that New Evangelisation to the hearts of people we know.

Today our outreach, especially involving all of the various parish ministries, is as much the witness of action as it is in our words. What Pope Paul VI said about teachers is also applicable to any evangelising disciple – anyone of us. “Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses.”

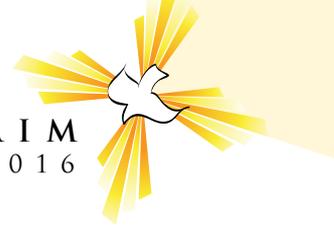
Before a recent Easter Vigil Mass as I greeted those who were to receive the Sacraments of Initiation, I said to one of the young candidates for reception into the Church, “I thought you were Catholic because I see you so often at Mass.” She replied, “I have often come to the Cathedral for Mass but I never began the process to become Catholic because no one asked me.”

The New Evangelisation and parish life renewal include three elements on our part: to renew our faith in mind and heart, to stand confident in its truth, and then to share it.

Hermeneutic of Continuity and Renewal

Since the evangelising disciple must both know and be confident in the message, I want to step back and have us look briefly at recent examples of the continuity and integrity of the Church’s message and its unity with the Gospel.

Over 50 years ago in 1962 when Pope, now Saint, John XXIII opened the Second Vatican Council he highlighted that it had, as its goal and purpose, to support “the Church’s apostolic and pastoral mission



by making the truth of the Gospel shine forth to lead all people to seek and receive Christ's love which surpasses all knowledge (cf. Eph. 3:19)" (Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Constitution, *Fidei Depositum*, 1992).

The principle task entrusted to the Council by Saint Pope John XXIII was in the words of his discourse at the opening of the Council, October 11, 1962, "to guard and present better the precious deposit of Christian doctrine in order to make it more accessible to the Christian faithful and to all people of good will." He went on to say for this reason the Council was not first of all to condemn the errors of the time but above all to strive calmly to show the strength and beauty of the doctrine of the faith. The Pope said, "The Church...will become greater in spiritual riches and gaining the strength of new energies therefrom, she will look to the future without fear...to that work which our era demands of us, thus pursuing the path which the Church has followed for 20 centuries" (Pope John XXIII, Discourse at the Opening of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, October 11, 1962).

I had the experience of being a student of theology in Rome during the Council. It was a time of excitement and there was a palpable sense of new life and energy in the Church. It is precisely into that Spirit guided life and energy that Pope Francis is calling us today.

However, much happened between the close of the Council in 1965 and the election of Pope Francis in 2013. It is only in understanding those intervening five decades that we can, I believe, appreciate the guidance the Holy Spirit continues to give the Church and the place of Pope Francis in God's Providential plan.

Immediately following the Council in the late 60s and a greater part of the 70s, there emerged pathways of renewal and development totally consistent with the direction of the Council and, on the other hand, ways that diverged dramatically from what the Council said and the received tradition of the Church. This was particularly evident in the areas of liturgy and catechesis where the so-called "spirit" of the Council was invoked to override the actual words in its texts and the tradition of the Church which provided both the context and the continuity for understanding the Council and its future impetus.

What emerged was a new hermeneutic or principle of interpretation often invoked to support liturgical aberration and catechetical misrepresentation. The "hermeneutic of discontinuity" was also used to justify new theological directions that disengaged from the received tradition and were barely recognisable as part of the Catholic heritage.

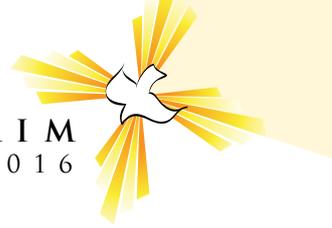
It was Pope Benedict XVI who began explicitly to point out the failings and unacceptability of the hermeneutic of discontinuity which he contrasted with the true hermeneutic of renewal or reform.

Precisely in order to understand what Jesus is revealing to us, we turn to his Church and the continuous apostolic tradition in the Body of Christ to clarify, reaffirm and assure us of what it is Jesus says to us.

A deepened appreciation for our faith should lead us to a new level of confidence in its truth. The words of the Gospel are the words of everlasting life (John 6:69). The teaching of the Church is God's Word applied to our day. We need to be confident that we stand in the truth so that we are not shaken by every challenge to the Gospel message.

From the days of the Council until today, the Church has been greatly blessed by a series of pontiffs, Successors to Saint Peter who have so well served the Church.

I think first of Pope, now Blessed, Paul VI (1963-1978) who dealt with the tensions and challenges of the post-conciliar Church with a goal always to maintaining the unity of the Church. One of my favourite quotations from Pope Paul VI is a comment he made when asked what one could do in the face of so many challenges to the Church and her Gospel. Pope Paul VI said: "You know the Gospel, we all know the Gospel, we must simply say it and say it and say it again." Pope Francis tells us that doing the Gospel is a very persuasive way to say it.



On to the world stage, next came Pope, now Saint, John Paul II. The world watched on Sunday, October 22, 1978 as Karol Wojtyła, now Pope John Paul II, the 264th Bishop of Rome and Vicar of Christ, stepped out of Saint Peter's Basilica to celebrate the Eucharistic Liturgy before tens of thousands of people filling Saint Peter's Square.

It was an exciting day – one that I will always remember – as I sat there with so many others awaiting what the new Pope would have to say in his first *urbi et orbi* message. “Open wide the doors for Christ” he announced. The image was a dramatic one – the doors being broken off their hinges to make way for Christ into our hearts and into our world.

What we see in the nearly 27 year pontificate of Saint John Paul II, the third longest pontificate in the history of the papacy, is a refocusing of the energy and vision of the Church, once again, on to the Council and its reform.

For a quarter of a century, he worked to lift up the role of Peter in the Church and to provide clear teaching in the wake of the Council. All of Pope John Paul II's writings, whether encyclicals or exhortations, reflect his first words addressed to the College of Cardinals in Conclave immediately following his election. He said that he envisioned the work of his papacy as the implementation of the Second Vatican Council.

There is an encyclical or an apostolic exhortation that touches on just about every one of the documents of the Second Vatican Council. Saint John Paul II refocused the attention of the Church on the proper recognition of the reform in the life of the Church and provided that stability and platform on which all of us now stand.

Following the death of Saint John Paul II, Joseph Ratzinger, now with the name Benedict XVI, assumed responsibility for the direction of the Church (2005-2013). One of the Church's most gifted theologians who himself had been present at the Second Vatican Council and who stood by the side of Pope John Paul II for most of his pontificate, he provided now in his encyclicals and apostolic exhortations, writings and books the deep and profound theological certification for the Church's perennial teaching. He simply reminded all of us that there is an extraordinary theological richness to what you and I each day proclaim in the Creed and share through our teaching.

In March 2013, guided by the Holy Spirit, the Cardinals of the Church chose Jorge Mario Bergoglio, to fill the Chair of Peter. He took the name Francis.

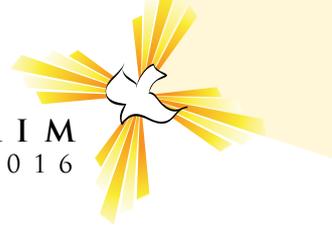
It seems to me that in God's Providential design and in light of all that has transpired over the past 50 years, we now are able to reconnect again in an authentic manner with the renewing energy of the Council. This time our continuity and ongoing implementation is in a renewed and purified sense having moved from the hermeneutic of discontinuity to, as Pope Benedict called it, the hermeneutic of reform.

Fresh Perspectives

The fresh perspective for renewal rooted in the Council and in his predecessors that Pope Francis brings includes: an emphasis on the role of the laity in the life and mission of the Church (cf. *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, and the Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People*), the collaboration of bishops with the Pope in an active, lively sense of collegiality or synodality (cf. *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, Decree on the Pastoral Office of Bishops in the Church*); and a reawakening of the understanding of both God's mercy, and the significance of conscience in making moral judgments (cf. *The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, the Declaration on Religious Liberty, and the Decree on Ecumenism*).

The Role of the Laity

Pope Francis highlights the role of the laity in what the Second Vatican Council explained was their responsibility for the sanctification and transformation of the temporal order (cf. AA 6, 7).



The understanding of the distinctive role of the laity in the mission of the Church was developed further, beyond the insights of the Second Vatican Council, by Pope Saint John Paul II. In his Apostolic Exhortation, *Christifideles Laici*, he connected the vocation of the laity in the world to the living out of the universal call to holiness spoken of in *Lumen Gentium*: “The vocation of the lay faithful to holiness implies that life according to the Spirit expresses itself in a particular way in their *involvement in temporal affairs* and in their *participation in earthly activities* . . . Therefore, to respond to their vocation, the lay faithful must see their daily activities as an occasion to join themselves to God, fulfill his will, serve other people and lead them to communion with God in Christ” (*Christifideles Laici*, no. 17, emphasis in original).



Building on the work of his predecessor and the Council, Pope Benedict XVI would assert in his first encyclical that the creation of “a just society must be the achievement of politics, not of the Church” (*Deus caritas est*, no. 28).

Pope Francis has consciously echoed these themes of the Council and his predecessors in his own teaching. Like Pope Benedict, he has insisted on the autonomy of politics and religion: “I say that politics is the most important of the civil activities and has its own field of action, which is not that of religion. Political institutions are secular by definition and operate in independent spheres. All my predecessors have said the same thing, for many years at least, albeit with different accents” (Interview with *la Repubblica*, 1 October, 2013).

In a May interview with the French paper, *La Croix*, the Holy Father spoke about the legitimate distinction between Church and state, the role of laity in the world, and the correct sense of understanding secularity or, as he names it, laicity. But he also pointed out that the emphasis on the secular to the exclusion of religion and faith values has been disproportionately exaggerated in Europe, particularly France. The same can be said of the English speaking nations as well.

In every circumstance but particularly in a pluralistic society we need to be active agents of evangelisation. Otherwise, the Good News will not be heard or its values will simply be considered of no importance in public life. When asked what do we bring to the public debate over national identity and policy, we reply – our faith values.

In Pope Francis’ words it is very easy to hear the echo of Jesus’ command that we are to “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit and teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you, and behold I am with you always until the end of the age.”

In the mantra of Pope Francis we hear, go out, encounter people and accompany them on the journey that we all hope brings them and us closer to the Lord Jesus.

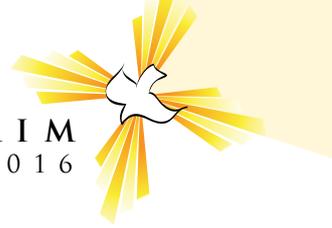
Collegiality

Ecclesialogically what Pope Francis has done is to refocus, once again, on the ministry of the College of Bishops as was the case in the Second Vatican Council particularly in the document *Lumen Gentium*.

In considering the new perspectives on renewal that Pope Francis brings, we do well to turn to his recently published apostolic exhortation, *Amoris Laetitia*. The very content of the letter shows the Holy Father’s desire to listen. His exhortation reflects the consensus of the bishops who were a part of the 2014 Synod, the material provided to the Office of the Synod by episcopal conferences around the world following that meeting, and the discussions and material of the 2015 Synod.

At the end of all of the discussions and all of the reflections carried out over two full years, there emerges now this apostolic exhortation that I would call a “consensus exhortation.”

Another element of this exhortation is its continuity with the teaching of the Church expressed in so many



Magisterial documents and most recently in the teachings of Saint John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI.

All of the hallmarks of post-conciliar renewal are carried forward in *Amoris Laetitia*: the focus on the human person, the primacy of love, the deep engagement with scripture, and the turn to virtue and grace rather than just law and obligation as the primary categories of Catholic moral teaching.

But the document clearly sounds important notes of its own, and significantly contributes to and applies these hallmarks of post-conciliar renewal. The focus on the person and his or her dignity is carried forward in the Holy Father's critique of what he calls "a culture of the ephemeral" (see *Amoris Laetitia* 39)—a culture which views and treats others as sources of affective or sexual pleasure to be discarded when this pleasure runs dry. This pursuit of a shallow happiness falls short of the joy of which the Exhortation speaks. As was true for the Council, the dignity of the human person is fully disclosed in Christ but in this case especially in Christ's embrace of families with their struggles, in children and other vulnerable persons, and in sinners. The Church's teaching on the indissolubility of marriage and its moral teaching, Pope Francis writes, should not be treated as "dead stones to be hurled at others" (*AL* 49), but as a summons to conversion to all of the Church's members.

As I noted, Pope Francis approaches his teaching ministry first and foremost as a pastor of souls. Indeed, in many places in the document one hears the voice of a pastor speaking directly to members of his flock, sharing his own experience and wisdom formed from many years of service to God's people.

God's Mercy and Our Conscience

For the Holy Father the pastoral mission of the Church, focused on the lived expression of mercy and love and the significance of conscience in our moral life, is founded on four principle activities: *listening, accompanying, discerning, and evangelising*.

One can say that *Amoris Laetitia* is itself the fruit of very intensive LISTENING on the part of Pope Francis. The two synods on family called by the Holy Father were themselves preceded by consultation of local churches throughout the world on the lived situation of families, their challenges, and their experience. The Extraordinary Synod of 2014 prepared the agenda for the 2015 general assembly. Pope Francis modeled this listening activity by his attentive presence in the Synod assembly hall. Indeed, he comments on this experience at the outset of the apostolic exhortation (*AL* 7).

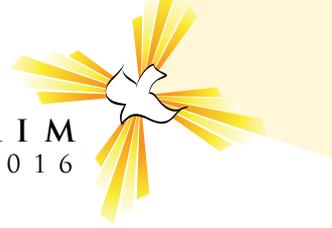
Pope Francis understands this process of listening to the faithful and to his brother bishops to be a key part of his own teaching and pastoral ministry. It is part of the "synodality" or "journeying together" which he sees as essential to the Church at every level.¹ The fruit of this listening is reflected in the generous citation and engagement of the reports of the two synods in this Exhortation.

The second activity on which the document focuses is ACCOMPANYING, the pastoral accompaniment of all who seek to find a way closer to God. In many ways this is an extension of listening and of the synodality to which it gives rise. The journeying together of all of the members of the Church implies this accompaniment. But it also calls for a change in pastoral style and intensity.

The action of accompanying has special significance for our parish life and all of its various manifestations. It is in this personal contact that renewal of interest and re-awakening of faith can take place.

Pope Francis calls pastors to do more than teach the Church's doctrine—though they clearly must do that. Pastors must "take on the 'smell of the sheep' whom they serve so that "the sheep are willing to hear their voice" (*EG* 24). This requires a more careful and intensive formation of all who minister – all who invite people to renew their faith. The many manifestations of parish ministry, in this view, take on the dimension of both invitation and listening.

¹ See Pope Francis, "Address at the Ceremony Commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the Institution of the Synod of Bishops" (October 17, 2016).



The Church's pastoral ministry is intended to help the faithful to grow in the art of DISCERNING. A key part of discernment is the formation of conscience. The Holy Father insists that the Church's pastors must "make room for the consciences of the faithful, who very often respond as best they can to the Gospel amid their limitations, and are capable of carrying out their own discernment in complex situations. We have been called to form consciences, not to replace them" (AL 37).

Part of this formation is presenting the teaching of the Church in its fullness and without compromise (cf. AL 307) though in language which is welcoming rather than defensive or one-sided (cf. AL 36, 38).

Pope Francis further elaborates Saint John Paul II's distinction in *Familiaris Consortio* between the law of gradualness and the gradualness of the law. The "law of gradualness" refers to the progressive nature of conversion, enabling a person to grow in holiness in living out their faith convictions. When they fall short they need to return to the mercy of God poured out in the cross of Christ and made accessible in the sacraments of the Church. The "gradualness of the law" on the other hand, is the erroneous idea that there are "different degrees or forms of precept in God's law for different individuals and situations" (*Familiaris Consortio* 34).

Even in the midst of our challenges and imperfections, we are called to respond to the Holy Spirit's promptings to grow more fully in the Gospel mandate, not emptying it of its meaning.

Admittedly, this individual process of discernment may not be easy. A person may know full well Church teaching, Pope Francis notes, yet have great difficulty in either understanding its inherent positive value, or in being able to fully embrace it right away because of circumstances (*Amoris Laetitia* 301). Yet, the underlying moral principle which should inform both that personal discernment and the priest's ministry is that a person whose situation in life is objectively contrary to moral teaching can still love and grow in the faith, he or she can still take steps in the right direction and benefit from God's mercy and grace while receiving the assistance of the Church (*Amoris Laetitia* 305).

Amoris Laetitia is not a list of answers to each individual human issue. Rather, it is a call to compassionate accompaniment in helping all to experience Christ's love and mercy. To the extent that our ministry does this, it is also an evangelising action. As we recall the challenge to go out, to encounter, and to accompany, we also recognize that this is at its heart an act of the evangelising disciple.

In the action of going, encountering, sharing and accompanying, we also recognise that in the journey we, ourselves, are also drawing closer to the Lord. In all of our action of evangelising, teaching, catechising, counselling, admonishing, instructing, we also remember both God's liberating truth and saving mercy. None of us can claim yet to be perfect as is our heavenly Father. But we can grow closer to the Lord who will by his grace heal us so that we can have the life he wants for us.

At the conclusion of the 2015 Synod on the Family, one of the priest delegates invited by Pope Francis gave a beautiful intervention with this memorable reminder: When the love of God that brought all things into being encounters the human condition that we have created, the love of God becomes the mercy of God.

As we talk about bringing renewed energy to our efforts, particularly in the light of the example and focus of Pope Francis, I think it is worthwhile concluding with a description of some of qualities of the evangelising disciple.

Qualities of the Evangeliser

The evangelising disciple has to have a number of unique characteristics. I would list here four that stand out: boldness or courage, connectedness to the Church, a sense of urgency, and joy.

In the Acts of the Apostles, the word that describes the Apostles after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at



Pentecost is “bold.” Peter boldly stands up and preaches the Good News of the Resurrection. Paul boldly announces the Word in frenetic movement around the world. Today, the New Evangelisation must show a similar boldness born of confidence in Christ. We cannot be lukewarm, but must be on fire with the Spirit. Other examples abound: Saint Thomas More, Saint Maximilian Kolbe, Blessed Teresa of Kolkatta(now Saint), Blessed Miguel Pro, and the various martyrs and missionary saints.

The evangelising disciples also need a connectedness with the one Church, her one Gospel and her pastoral presence. The authentication of our message of everlasting life depends on our communion with the Church and solidarity with her pastors.

Another needed quality is a sense of urgency. It is our turn now. We see in Mary’s visitation to Elizabeth how the Gospel recounts that Mary set off in haste on a long and difficult journey. There is no time to be lost because the mission is so important.

Finally, when we look around and see the vast field waiting for us to sow seeds of new life, we must do so with joy. Our message should be one that inspires others to follow us along the path to the kingdom of God. Ours is a message to *Rejoice! Christ is risen, Christ is with us!*

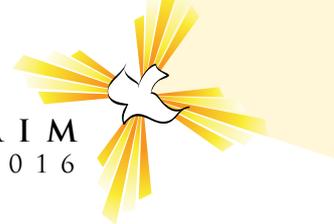
Conclusion

This is a new moment in the life of the Church, a new Pentecost. It is our turn now. We are called to reinvigorate our faith, not only today in this Year of Mercy, but every day and every year, and to share it with others.

We must always be open to the gift of the Spirit. It is the movement of the Spirit that has led us along this path, it is the nudging of the Spirit that brings us to this moment and it is in the outpouring of the Spirit that we will continue to walk united with Christ at the service of his Bride the Church.

It is our turn in the long history of the Church simply to believe, to say and, in our parishes, to live the announcement: Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again.

Thank you.



Reflection Questions

1. Cardinal Wuerl opens his keynote address by noting Pope Francis' impact on the Church and wider society. He notes that Pope Francis' pontificate is a "source of renewal for our parishes." In what way does Pope Francis witness to the renewal and revitalisation to which our parishes are called? What words, gestures and actions of Pope Francis call your community to renewal, and how?

2. In quoting Pope Francis' Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*, Cardinal Wuerl speaks of the great dynamism and flexibility of parishes when they are open to missionary creativity. In what way is your parish flexible and creative? What role might you play in engendering a more responsive and dynamic parish for the purpose of missionary outreach?

3. We are called to carry out our mission "in a spirit of communion and solidarity". How does your parish seek to nurture a common faith, hope and love of Jesus Christ? What are the concrete signs in your parish of communion and solidarity? What are the opportunities that you see to strengthen this connection and commitment among those who share faith?

4. "The Church brings what it has always brought: an invitation to faith, an encounter with Christ, and a whole way of living." Call to mind a recent "invitation to faith" and "encounter with Christ" that you have experienced within your parish. How might this be extended to others?

5. Cardinal Wuerl mentions three elements of the New Evangelisation: to renew our faith in heart and mind; to stand confident in the truth, and then to share it. Where do you see the greatest opportunity to advance the New Evangelisation within your parish life?

6. "Pope Francis tells us that doing the Gospel is a very persuasive way to say it." How best might we "do" the Gospel as a faith community? What shape might this action take?

7. Cardinal Wuerl highlights the role of the laity and collegiality in Pope Francis' vision for the mission of the Church. Do you see yourself as being co-responsible for the mission of the Church? How might this sense of co-responsibility grow within your local community? What changes need to take place for such growth to come about?

8. "For the Holy Father the pastoral mission of the Church, focused on the lived expression of mercy and love and the significance of conscience in our moral life, is founded on four principle activities: listening, accompanying, discerning, and evangelising." How would you summarise Cardinal Wuerl's remarks on these principles, and why are they essential to mission?

9. Cardinal Wuerl closes by enumerating the ideal qualities of the evangeliser. How are these qualities expressed in your life and in the members of your parish? If you were invited to suggest an additional quality to this list, what would you offer and why?
