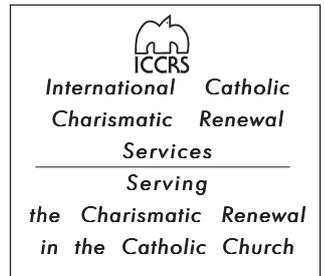


LEADERSHIP FORMATION

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The New Evangelization: The Challenge of the 3rd Millennium

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TEACHING OUTLINE

Introduction: Go and make disciples

1. **Why "new" evangelization?**
2. **Evangelization has never been easy**
3. **A vision of an expansive community**
4. **No immediate success**
5. **Based on prayer**
6. **Where and how will this "new" evangelization take place?**
7. **The contents of the "new" evangelization.**

Introduction

The call of Christ to his followers is to, "Go and make disciples of all nations..." This divine mandate from our Lord Jesus has been re-emphasised in the Catholic Church since the Vatican II Council, in the 1960's.

Since 1983 John Paul II has repeatedly called for the commitment of all the Church's energies to a new evangelization. At the beginning of the third millennium of Christianity, it is more urgent than ever, he holds, to demonstrate the importance of the Christian message for all the peoples of the world and to revitalise Christian faith in parts of the world where it has become feeble or inert.

Summarising the main orientation of his pontificate, he declared in Mexico City on May 6, 1990: "The Lord and master of history and of our destinies has wished my pontificate to be that of a pilgrim pope of evangelization, walking down the roads of the world, bringing to all peoples the message of salvation."

He constantly called all Christians to join in what he calls "a new evangelization and mission to the nations." A call that he states, "no believer or institution of the Church is exempt from, to proclaim Christ to all people." (See Mission of the Redeemer, 3)

1. Why "new" evangelization?

Way back in 1983 in Haiti, John Paul II spoke of "a new evangelization which is new in its zeal, new in its methods, new in its expression." This means that:

- (i) we do not presume and act as if our baptised people are already committed Catholics;
- (ii) the new situation determined by the radical changes in society demands:
 - a new language,
 - a new style,
 - a new way of living and announcing the Gospel and
 - a new way of giving the witness the Church is called to give.

2. Evangelization is not and never has been easy

Today we tend to blame the prevalent culture for our lack of success. We denounce its individualism, secularism, relativism, hedonism, and other vices - which do indeed render the environment unfriendly to the proclamation of the gospel.

But we too easily overlook the deep religious hunger that continues to stir in the hearts of contemporary men and women. Discontented with a civilisation of gadgets and entertainment, many are looking for some overarching meaning in life.

There is also the phenomenon of the nominal Christians. One can describe a nominal Christian as "someone baptised but with no serious commitment, one who has never taken ownership of his faith."

There could be many reasons for this occurrence. But the main cause, in my opinion is the fact that nominal Christians have a faith which is not deep enough to combat this new age where the influence of the material and the secular is so powerful.

Nevertheless, many of these kinds of people are looking for a faith that gives meaning to life, even though they are no longer satisfied with religious practice.



One wonders why, with all the official encouragement given to evangelization by Vatican II and the recent popes, Catholics are for the most part are reluctant to be in the forefront of the evangelistic task.

3. A vision of an expansive community

A quick look at the New Testament is enough for us to notice that the vision of the Church is of an expansive community, divinely commissioned to extend to all peoples the saving message of Jesus Christ. Jesus is the content and the principal bearer of the gospel. Dwelling in the hearts of those who are baptised into his body, and actively present in their preaching and testimony, by the powerful presence of His Holy Spirit, he inwardly moves and assists the faithful to carry on his work.

In biblical terms the gospel may be described as (i) the saving power of the risen Christ, and (ii) exercised in and through the Church by means of word, sacrament, and personal witness.

Evangelization does not end with the first proclamation of the gospel. It is a lifelong process of letting the gospel transform all our ideas, our attitudes, and our whole lives. It will seek to renew the entire life of believers, of the Church, and of society itself through the leaven of the gospel.

4. No immediate success

As Cardinal Ratzinger recently emphasised, "New evangelization cannot mean immediately attracting the large masses that have distanced themselves from the Church by using new and more refined methods. This is not what new evangelization promises."

New evangelization means never being complacent. The great tree of the Universal Church which grew from a mustard seed and in which different birds may find a place is not enough. We must dare with the humility of a scattered seed to allow God to choose how and when new growth for a new harvest may sprout up from our work in His name (Mark 4:26-29).

5. New Evangelization is based on prayer

Jesus preached by day, by night he prayed. Jesus had to acquire the disciples from God. The same is always true. We ourselves cannot gather men. We must acquire them by God for God. All methods are empty without the foundation of prayer. The word of the announcement must always be drenched in an intense life of prayer.

I see here a great contribution that the Catholic Charismatic Renewal has given and will continue to give to the whole Church: evangelization and all pastoral work has to be built on and drenched in prayer. There can be no spiritual revival if it is not the result of fervent and spirit-filled prayer life.

6. Where and how this "new evangelization" will take place?

(i) **The Family** has to be the cradle of the faith, where the spouses evangelise each other and together announce the Gospel message to their children. This is where faith is acquired, where it grows, and where it is shared.



(ii) **New movements & ecclesial groups.** These will primarily offer support and encouragement to the families to help them to fulfil their mission. The movements will be centres for Christian formation and missionary outreach (Redemptoris Missio, 51)

The foundations of every movement is the coming together for prayer, Scripture reading and catechesis. "These communities decentralise and organise the parish community to which they always remain united" (RM 51)

(iii) **The parishes** continue to play a vital role in the mission of the new evangelization. They are a support and offer assistance to these movements & ecclesial groups and they will be "food" for their faith.

7. The contents of the new evangelization

In my opinion, we have to keep in mind two very important aspects of the contents of the Gospel message.

(i) **Conversion:** The Greek word for converting means: to rethink—to question one's own and the common way of living; to allow God to enter into the criteria for living; to not merely judge according to the current opinions.

Therefore, to convert means: not to live as all the others live, not do what all do, not feel justified in dubious, ambiguous, evil actions just because others do the same. Begin to see one's life through the eyes of God; thereby looking for the good, even if it is uncomfortable; not trusting in the judgement of the majority, of men, but in the justice of God—in other words: to look for a new style of life, a new life.

(ii) **The Kingdom of God** is the keyword of the proclamation of Jesus. This Kingdom is not a social or political structure or just a utopia. The Kingdom of God is God's presence among us, it is: God is alive in my life, in our life. The New evangelization has to witness to this powerful and loving presence of God amidst his believers. There will be no evangelization without an authentic living of the Kingdom values. 

Questions for discussion

1. *In what ways can the Catholic Charismatic Renewal that the family will be the centre of the new evangelization?*
2. *How can the new evangelisation satisfy "the deep religious hungers that continues to stir in the hearts of contemporary men and women"?*
3. *In the face of a growing indifference to God, how can the person and the message of Jesus Christ be proclaimed with new zeal, new methods and new expressions?*

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