

SYNOD OF BISHOPS

XIII ORDINARY GENERAL ASSEMBLY

**THE NEW EVANGELIZATION
FOR THE
TRANSMISSION OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH**

INSTRUMENTUM LABORIS

VATICAN CITY
2012

The *Instrumentum laboris* can be found on
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PREFACE

“Increase our faith!” (Lk 17:5) is the Apostles’ prayer to the Lord Jesus, when they realize that faith, which is a gift from God, is the only way of having a personal relationship with him and fulfilling their vocation as disciples. Their plea arose from an awareness that their limitations kept them from forgiving others. Faith is also needed in performing signs which illustrate the presence of the Kingdom of God in the world. Jesus used the fig tree, withered to its roots, to encourage his disciples. “Have faith in God. Truly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, ‘Be taken up and cast into the sea’ and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says will come to pass, it will be done for him. Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours” (Mk 11:22-24). St. Mark the Evangelist also emphasizes the importance of faith in accomplishing great works. “Truly, I say to you, if you have faith and never doubt, you will not only do what has been done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, ‘Be taken up and cast into the sea,’ it will be done” (Mt 21:21).

On various occasions, the Lord Jesus admonishes “the Twelve” for their lack of faith. To the question of why they were unable to cast out a demon, the Master responds: “Because of your little faith” (*Διὰ τὴν ὀλιγοπιστίαν ὑμῶν*) (Mt 17:20). On the Sea of Tiberias, before calming the storm, Jesus reproves his disciples: “Why are you afraid, O men of little faith?” (*ὀλιγόπιστοι*) (Mt 8:26). They were to entrust themselves to God and to Providence, and not worry about material things. “But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O men of little faith?” (Mt 6:30; cf. Lk 12:28). A similar situation takes place before the multiplication of the loaves. Faced with the realization that the disciples had forgotten to take bread in crossing to the other side of the lake, the Lord Jesus says: “O men of little faith, why do you discuss among yourselves the fact that you have no bread? Do you not yet perceive? Do you not remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets you gathered?” (Mt 16:8-9).

Matthew’s Gospel gives special attention to the account of Jesus’ walking on the water and reaching the Apostles in the boat. After calming the Apostles’ fear, he accepts the challenge of St. Peter: “Lord, if it is you, bid me come to you on the water” (Mt 14:28). At first, St. Peter walks towards Jesus on the water without any difficulty. “But when he saw the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, ‘Lord, save me!’

Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, ‘O man of little faith, why did you doubt?’” (Mt 14:30-31). Afterwards, Jesus and St. Peter together get into the boat and the wind ceases. The disciples, witnesses to this great happening, prostrate themselves before the Lord and make a full profession of faith: “Truly you are the Son of God!” (Mt 14:33).

In our times, St. Peter’s experience can be reflected in many of the faithful as well as entire Christian communities, especially in traditionally Christian countries. In fact, because of a lack of faith, various particular Churches are witnessing a decline in sacramental and Christian practice among the faithful to the point that some members can even be called “non-believers” (ἄπιστοι; cf. Mt 17:17; 13,58). At the same time, many particular Churches, after initially displaying a great enthusiasm, are now showing signs of weariness and apprehension in the face of very complex situations in today’s world. Like St. Peter, they grow fearful of opposing forces and temptations of various kinds as well as challenges that surpass their human capabilities. But, just as salvation came to St. Peter from Christ alone, so too the faithful, when they become personally involved as members of an ecclesial community, can experience Christ’s saving grace. Only the Lord Jesus can extend his hand and indicate the sure path in the journey of faith.

These brief reflections on faith in the Gospels can help illustrate the topic of the XIII Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops: “The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith”. The importance given to the faith is further emphasized by the decision of the Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI to celebrate a Year of Faith, beginning on 11 October 2012, to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council and the twentieth anniversary of the publication of The Catechism of the Catholic Church. Both observances will take place during the celebration of the synod. Once again, the Lord’s words to St. Peter the Apostle, the rock on which he built his Church, have particular meaning (cf. Mt 16:19): “But I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail; and when you have turned again, strengthen your brethren” (Lk 22:32). “The door of faith” (Acts 14:27) will again be open to all of us.

The goal of evangelization today is, as always, the transmission of the Christian faith. This task primarily concerns communities of Jesus’ disciples which are organized into particular Churches, diocesan and eparchial, whose worshippers gather regularly for liturgical celebrations, hear the Word of God, celebrate the sacraments — especially the

Eucharist — and look to pass on the treasure of faith to the members of their families, communities and parishes. They accomplish this task by proclaiming and bearing witness to the Christian life through the catechumenate, catechesis and works of charity. Evangelization in general is the everyday work of the Church. With the assistance of the Holy Spirit, this so-called ordinary evangelizing activity can be endowed with renewed vigour. New methods and new forms of expression are needed to convey to the people of today the perennial truth of Jesus Christ, forever new and the source of all newness. Only a sound and robust faith, witnessed in a poignant manner in the lives of the martyrs, can give impetus to many short-term or long-range pastoral projects, breathe new life into existing structures and spur a pastoral creativity to meet the needs of people today and the expectations of present-day society.

This renewed dynamism in the Christian community will lead to renewed missionary activity (missio ad gentes), now more urgent than ever, given the large number of people who do not know Jesus Christ, in not only far-off countries but also those already evangelized.

By allowing themselves to be animated by the Holy Spirit, Christians will then be more attuned to their brothers and sisters who, despite being baptized, have drifted from the Church and Christian practice. The new evangelization is primarily directed to these people so that they can rediscover the beauty of their Christian faith and the joy of a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus in the Church and the community of the faithful.

This Instrumentum laboris treats the afore-mentioned subjects and will serve as the agenda for the upcoming synodal assembly. The document is a summary of the responses to the questions in the Lineamenta, which were submitted by the synods of bishops from the Eastern Catholic Churches sui iuris, the episcopal conferences, the departments of the Roman Curia and the Union of Superiors General as well as other institutions and communities of the faithful, who wished to participate in the Church's reflection on the synod topic. Assisted by the Ordinary Council and the valuable contribution of experts, the General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops prepared this document which describes many promising aspects of evangelization reflected in the Church on all five continents. At the same time, it proposes various topics for consideration so that the Church may continue to perform adequately her work of evangelization, while taking into account the many challenges and difficulties of the present moment. Encouraged by the Lord's words, "Let not your hearts be troubled; believe

in God, believe also in me.” (*Jn 14:1*) and clearly guided by the Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI, the synod fathers are preparing themselves to reflect on these matters in an atmosphere of prayer, listening and affective and effective communion. They will not undertake this work alone; they will be accompanied by those continuing to pray for the synod. Looking to the communion of the Church Triumphant, the members of the XIII Ordinary General Assembly trust in the intercession of the saints, in particular the Virgin Mary, who is blessed because “she believed that there would be a fulfilment of what was spoken to her from the Lord” (*Lk 1:45*).

*The All-Good and Merciful God is constantly extending his hand to humanity and the Church and is always prepared to do justice for his elect, who are invited to grasp his hand and, in faith, seek his assistance. This situation should not be presupposed, as indicated by the forceful words of Jesus: “When the Son of man comes, will he find faith on earth?” (*Lk 18:8*). Therefore, at the present time, the Church and all Christians need to repeat the following prayer over and over again: “I believe, help my unbelief!” (*Mk 9:24*).*

*To ensure that this synodal assembly meets these expectations and the needs of the Church in our time, we invoke the grace of the Holy Spirit, whom God “has poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Saviour” (*Titus 3:6*), and again call out to the Lord Jesus, “Increase our faith!” (*Lk 17:5*).*

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*Vatican City, 27 May 2012
The Solemnity of Pentecost*

INTRODUCTION

1. As announced by Pope Benedict XVI at the closing of the Special Assembly for the Middle East of the Synod of Bishops, the XIII Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops will be held from 7 to 28 October 2012 to treat the topic: “The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith”. To facilitate the preparation of this event, the *Lineamenta* was prepared, including questions to be answered by the bishops' conferences, synods of bishops of the Eastern Catholic Churches *sui iuris*, the departments of the Roman Curia and the Union of Superiors General. Observations were also submitted to the General Secretariat by individual bishops, priests, members of the institutes of consecrated life, lay associations and ecclesial movements. The great number of people who participated in the preparation process confirmed the timeliness of the Holy Father's choice of topic in the minds of Christians and the entire Church today. All these observations and comments are collected and summarized in this *Instrumentum laboris*.

THE POINT OF REFERENCE

2. The convocation of the next synodal assembly comes at a particularly significant moment for the Catholic Church. In fact, the time of its celebration will coincide with the fiftieth anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council, the twentieth anniversary of the publication of *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* and the inauguration of The Year of Faith, proclaimed by Pope Benedict XVI.¹ The Synod will therefore provide a good opportunity to focus on the subject of conversion and the necessity of holiness, emphasized by all these anniversaries. The Synod will also be the place to grasp and repropose to people the invitation to rediscover the faith. This invitation was initially made at the Second Vatican Council and restated in The Year of the Faith proclaimed by Pope Paul VI, and again addressed to us in our time by Pope Benedict XVI. All this will serve as the framework for the synod's work of treating the topic of the new evangelization.

¹ Cf. BENEDICT XVI, Apostolic Letter *motu proprio Porta fidei*, proclaiming The Year of Faith (11 October 2011): AAS 103 (2011) 723-734.

3. During the years spanning the previously mentioned occurrences, other essential documentation deserves consideration not only at this time of preparation but also during the Synod itself. Besides a direct and explicit reference to the teachings of the Second Vatican Council, no discussion on evangelization can take place today, without considering what was expressed on the subject by Pope Paul VI in his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii nuntiandi*, and Pope John Paul II in both his Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris missio*, and Apostolic Letter *Novo millennium ineunte*. All these texts have been cited in a number of responses as a point of reference and comparison.

EXPECTATIONS FROM THE SYNOD

4. Many responses stressed the urgency for all of us to consider how the Church today is responding to her fundamental call to evangelize and to assess her resources in meeting today's challenges and avoid any danger of a dispersion of energy or fragmented efforts. Many particular Churches (dioceses, eparchies, Churches *sui juris*) and various episcopal conferences and synods of the Eastern Churches have for the past several years evaluated their programmes in proclaiming and witnessing to the faith. The responses provided an impressive list of initiatives undertaken by various ecclesial realities. Over the last ten years, a number of particular Churches have documented and planned pastoral projects on evangelization and its renewal. Programmes on the diocesan, national and continental levels have been designed to raise awareness and offer support. Training centres were also created for Christians called to engage in these projects.

5. Given the considerable number of initiatives and their reported positive and negative aspects — since not all the initiatives undertaken have produced the desired results — the convocation of the Synod is seen as a timely opportunity for the entire Catholic Church to listen, discern and, above all, give a unified response to what we are called to do. Hopefully, the upcoming synodal assembly will be an event to energize Christian communities and, at the same time, provide concrete answers to the many questions facing the Church today and the resources available in her evangelizing activity. The Synod is expected to be not only a source of encouragement but also the place to compare experiences and share observations on situations and approaches for action.

THE TOPIC OF THE SYNODAL ASSEMBLY

6. In convoking the XIII Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, Pope Benedict XVI wished to remind Christian communities of the primary task facing the Church at the start of the new millennium. Following up on the initiative of his predecessor, Blessed Pope John Paul II, who saw in the Jubilee of the Year 2000, celebrated thirty-five years after the Second Vatican Council, as an occasion to undertake the Church's evangelizing mission with renewed enthusiasm, Pope Benedict XVI gives further emphasis to this mission and stresses its new character. The evangelizing mission received from the Apostles, — to go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them and forming them as witnesses (cf. *Mt* 28:19-20) and the mission which the Church has carried out and to which she has remained true over the centuries — is today facing social and cultural changes that are profoundly affecting a person's perception of self and the world, and consequently, a person's way of believing in God.

7. All these changes are contributing to a widespread disorientation which leads to forms of distrust of all that has been passed down about the meaning of life and to an unwillingness to adhere in a total, unconditional manner to what has been revealed as the profound truth of our being. This detachment from the faith is increasingly being witnessed in societies and cultures which for centuries appeared instilled with the Gospel. Increasingly considered an intimate and individual matter, faith has become a presupposition, even for many Christians, who continue to be justly concerned about the social, cultural and political implications in preaching the Gospel, but have not been sufficiently trained to keep alive their faith and their community, a faith which, like an invisible flame with its charity, nourishes and gives life to all the other actions of life. This situation, running the risk of weakening the faith, and consequently, the ability to bear witness to the Gospel, has unfortunately become a reality in most of the countries where, for centuries, the Christian faith has contributed to the upbuilding of culture and society.

8. From the beginning of his pontificate, Pope Benedict XVI has insisted that this situation needs to be addressed. At that time he said: "The Church as a whole and all her Pastors, like Christ, must set out to lead people out of the desert, towards the place of life, towards friendship with the Son of

God, towards the One who gives us life, and life in abundance.”² The Church feels the responsibility to devise new tools and new expressions to ensure that the word of faith, which has begotten the true life of God in us, be heard more and be better understood, even in the new deserts of this world.

9. The convocation of the Synod on the new evangelization and the transmission of the Faith is part of a determined effort to give new fervour to the faith and to the testimony of Christians and their communities. The decision to focus the synod's deliberations on this topic is, in fact, one element in a unified plan, the most recent occurrences of which have been the establishment of a dicastery for the promotion of the new evangelization as well as the proclamation of The Year of Faith. Consequently, the celebration of the Synod is expected to enliven and energize the Church in undertaking a new evangelization, which will lead to a rediscovery of the joy of believing and a rekindling of enthusiasm in communicating the faith. The question is not simply devising something new or undertaking unprecedented initiatives in spreading the Gospel, but living the faith in the spirit of it being a divine proclamation: “Mission [...] renews the Church, revitalizes faith and the Christian identity, and offers fresh enthusiasm and new incentive. Faith is strengthened when it is given to others!”³

FROM THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL TO THE NEW EVANGELIZATION

10. The idea of renewing the Church's evangelizing activity, expressed most recently in the previously mentioned decisions of Pope Benedict XVI, has a long history. This same idea inspired the teaching and apostolic ministry of Pope Paul VI and Pope John Paul II. In fact, the origin of the idea can be traced to the Second Vatican Council and its desire to respond to a sense of disorientation experienced by Christians facing powerful changes and divisions which the world was experiencing at that time. The Church's response was not characterized by pessimism or resignation,⁴ but

² BENEDICT XVI, *Homily at the Beginning of his Petrine Ministry as Bishop of Rome* (24 April 2005): AAS 97 (2005) 710.

³ JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris missio* (7 December 1990), 2: AAS 83 (1991) 251.

⁴ Cf. SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et spes*, 1, 4.

the regenerating power of the universal call to salvation,⁵ desired by God for each individual.

11. In this way, evangelization became one of the central topics of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council. In Christ, the Light of the Nations,⁶ all humanity regains its original and true identity,⁷ which sin has obscured, and the Church, whose countenance reflects this Light, has the task of continuing and making present and real, everywhere in today's world, the evangelizing mission of Jesus Christ.⁸ From this perspective, evangelization is one of the main demands made by the Council which called for renewal and zeal in this mission. Bishops⁹ and priests¹⁰ as ordained ministers, have the strict duty to evangelize. However, this fundamental mission of the Church is also the duty of all baptized Christians.¹¹ The Decree *Ad Gentes* clearly points out that evangelization is the prime content of the Church's mission and shows how evangelization builds up the composition of particular Churches, and generally speaking, all Christian communities. Seen in this way, evangelization is not simply one activity among many, but, in the dynamic of the Church, evangelization is the energy which

⁵ Cf. SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen gentium*, 2.

⁶ Cf. *ibid.*, 1.

⁷ Cf. SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et spes*, 22.

⁸ Cf. SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen gentium*, 17, 35.

⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, 23; SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Decree on the Pastoral Office of Bishops in the Church *Christus Dominus*, 2.

¹⁰ Cf. SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen gentium*, 28; Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 2, 4.

¹¹ Cf. SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen gentium*, 31; Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 2, 6.

permits the Church to realize her goal, namely, to respond to the universal call to holiness.¹²

12. In the wake of the Council, Pope Paul VI perceptively observed that the duty of evangelization needed to be proposed again with greater force and urgency, because of the de-Christianization of many ordinary people who, despite being baptized, live a life not in keeping with their Christian faith or express some kind of faith but have an imperfect knowledge of its basic tenets. An increasing number of people are sensing a need to know Jesus Christ in a different way from what they were taught as children.¹³ Faithful to conciliar teaching,¹⁴ Pope Paul VI added that the Church's evangelizing activity "must constantly seek the proper means and language for presenting, or representing, to them God's revelation and faith in Jesus Christ."¹⁵

13. Later, Pope John Paul II made the duty to evangelize one of the key points in his vast magisterium, summarizing in the concept of the new evangelization what he systematically developed in many discourses, namely, that this is the task facing the Church today, especially in countries with a Christian tradition. This programme directly affects the Church's relation to the outside world, but presupposes, first of all, an ongoing internal renewal, a continuous passing, so to speak, from being evangelized to evangelizing. The Pope explains: "Whole countries and nations where religion and the Christian life were formerly flourishing and capable of fostering a viable and working community of faith, are now put to a hard test, and in some cases, are even undergoing a radical transformation, as a result of a constant spreading of religious indifference, secularism and atheism. This particularly concerns countries and nations of the so-called First World, in which economic well-being and consumerism, even if coexistent with a tragic situation of poverty and misery, inspires and

¹² Cf. SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen gentium*, 39-40.

¹³ Cf. PAUL VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii nuntiandi* (8 December 1975), 52: AAS 68 (1976) 40-41.

¹⁴ Cf. SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church *Ad gentes*, 6.

¹⁵ PAUL VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii nuntiandi* (8 December 1975), 56: AAS 68 (1976) 46.

sustains a life lived ‘as if God did not exist’ [...] In other regions or nations many vital traditions of piety and popular forms of Christian religion are still conserved; but today this moral and spiritual patrimony runs the risk of being dispersed under the impact of a multiplicity of processes, including secularization and the spread of sects. Only a re-evangelization can ensure the growth of a clear and deep faith, and serve to make these traditions a force for authentic freedom. Without doubt, a mending of the Christian fabric of society is urgently needed in all parts of the world. But for this to come about, what is needed is to first remake the Christian fabric of the ecclesial community itself present in these countries and nations.”¹⁶

14. The Second Vatican Council and the new evangelization are also recurring themes in the teaching of Pope Benedict XVI. In 2005, in his Christmas greetings to the members of the Roman Curia — coinciding with the fortieth anniversary of the close of the Second Vatican Council — he said, a “hermeneutic of discontinuity and rupture”, must be counteracted by a “‘hermeneutic of reform’, of renewal in the continuity of the one subject-Church which the Lord has given to us. She is a subject which increases in time and develops, yet always remaining the same, the one subject of the journeying People of God.”¹⁷ In proclaiming *The Year of the Faith*, the Holy Father hoped that such an event “would provide a good opportunity to help people understand that the texts bequeathed by the Council Fathers, in the words of Blessed John Paul II, ‘have lost nothing of their value or brilliance’.” Furthermore, he stated: “I would also like to emphasize strongly what I had occasion to say concerning the Council a few months after my election as Successor of St. Peter: ‘if we interpret and implement it guided by a right hermeneutic, it can be and can become increasingly powerful for the ever necessary renewal of the Church’.”¹⁸ Therefore, as some responses to the *Lineamenta* point out, the previously mentioned words of Pope Benedict XVI, in keeping with his predecessors, can serve as a reliable guide in addressing the subject of the transmission of

¹⁶ JOHN PAUL II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles laici* (30 December 1988), 34: AAS 81 (1989) 454, 455.

¹⁷ BENEDICT XVI, *Christmas Greetings to the Members of the Roman Curia* (22 December 2005): AAS 98 (2006) 46.

¹⁸ BENEDICT XVI, Apostolic Letter *motu proprio Porta Fidei*, proclaiming The Year of Faith (11 October 2011), 5: AAS 103 (2011) 725; Cf. *Christmas Greetings to the Members of the Roman Curia* (22 December 2005): AAS 98 (2006) 52.

the faith in the new evangelization, in a Church cognisant of the challenges of today's world, but firmly anchored in her living Tradition, of which the Second Vatican Council is a part.

THE FORMAT OF THE *INSTRUMENTUM LABORIS*

15. Synodal discussion is expected to result in a developed and heightened treatment of the work that has taken place in the Church in recent decades. The considerable number of initiatives and documents already produced on evangelization and its renewal indicates that many particular Churches were not so much awaiting word on what to do, as seeking a place to hear about all that has been done so far. More than one response reported that simply the announcement of the topic and that work had begun on the *Lineamenta* caused Christian communities to feel stronger and more committed to the urgent character today of the imperative of the new evangelization, and, as a further benefit, to enjoy a sense of communion which allowed them to approach everyday challenges with a different spirit.

16. Many responses do not overlook the problem the Church is facing in the challenge of the new evangelization, namely, that the changes previously discussed not only affect the world and culture, but also herself in the first person, that is, her communities, her activities and her conception of herself. This situation, therefore, calls for a process of discernment, which can also serve as a way of responding to the current situation with greater courage and responsibility. In keeping with this idea, the *Instrumentum laboris* was drafted in four chapters which are useful in providing the basic content and means for fostering this reflection and discernment.

17. The first chapter is dedicated to a rediscovery of the heart of evangelization, namely, the experience of Christian faith: the encounter with Jesus Christ, God the Father's Gospel to humanity, which transforms us, gathers us together and introduces us, through the gift of the Spirit, to a new life, already experienced by us in the present, precisely in our feeling gathered as the Church. At the same time, this new life is the cause of our joy which compels us, as witnesses and joyful heralds of the gift received, to travel the streets of the world, awaiting the fulfillment of the Kingdom of God. The second chapter seeks to focus attention on discerning the changes which affect how we live our faith and which influence our Christian communities. The reasons for spreading the idea of the new evangelization

are then evaluated as well as the different ways the many particular Churches can feel involved. The third chapter treats the basic places, means, persons and activities in the transmission of the Christian faith — the liturgy, catechesis and works of charity — and how, in the process of transmission, the faith needs to be professed, celebrated, lived and prayed. Finally, in similar fashion, the fourth and final chapter discusses areas of pastoral activity, specifically those dedicated to the proclamation of the Gospel and the transmission of faith. The classic areas are then discussed, with greater development given to the most recent ones which have arisen in response to the impact and concerns arising from a reflection on the new evangelization in Christian communities and the manner in which they live their faith.

CHAPTER I

JESUS CHRIST, THE GOOD NEWS OF GOD TO HUMANITY

“The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the Gospel.” (Mk 1:15)

18. The Christian faith is not simply teachings, wise sayings, a code of morality or a tradition. The Christian faith is a true encounter and relationship with Jesus Christ. Transmitting the faith means to create in every place and time the conditions which lead to this encounter between the person and Jesus Christ. The goal of all evangelization is to create the possibility for this encounter, which is, at one and the same time, intimate, personal, public and communal. Pope Benedict XVI stated: “Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction. [...] Since God has first loved us (cf. *1 Jn* 4:10), love is now no longer a mere ‘command’; it is the response to the gift of love with which God draws near to us.”¹⁹ In the Christian faith, the encounter with Christ and the relationship with him takes place “in accordance to the Scriptures” (*1 Cor* 15:3, 4). The Church is formed precisely through the grace of this relationship.

19. This encounter with Jesus, through his Spirit, is the Father’s great gift to humanity. We are prepared for this encounter through the action of grace in us. In such an encounter, we feel an attraction which leads to our transformation, causing us to see new dimensions to who we are and making us partakers of divine life (cf. *2 Pt* 1:4). After this encounter, everything is different as a result of *metanoia*, that is, the state of conversion strongly urged by Jesus himself (cf. *Mk* 1:15). In a personal encounter with Jesus Christ, faith takes the form of a relationship with him and in remembrance of him, especially in the Eucharist and the Word of God, and creates in us the mind of Christ, through the Spirit, a mentality which makes us recognize our brothers and sisters, gathered by the Spirit in his Church, and, in turn, see ourselves as witnesses and heralds of this Gospel. This encounter equips us to do new things and witness to the transformation of

¹⁹ BENEDICT XVI, Encyclical Letter *Deus caritas est* (25 December 2005), 1: AAS 98 (2006) 217, 218.

our lives in the works of conversion as announced by the prophets (cf. *Jer* 3:6 ff; *Ez* 36:24-36).

20. This first chapter gives particular attention to this fundamental aspect of evangelization, because the responses to the *Lineamenta* reported a need to restate the core of the Christian faith which is unknown by many Christians. Consequently, the theological foundation of the new evangelization should not be overlooked, but forcefully and authentically stated, so as to give energy and a proper framework to the Church's evangelizing activity. The new evangelization must initially be seen as an opportunity to gauge the faithfulness of Christians to the mandate received from Jesus Christ. The new evangelization is also an auspicious occasion (cf. *2 Cor* 6:2) to return, as an individual Christian and a community, to drink from the source of our faith, and so become more disposed to undertake the work of evangelization and testimony. Indeed, before becoming action, evangelization and testimony are two states-of-mind which, as fruits of a faith in a continual state of purification and conversion, result in our lives from an encounter with Jesus Christ, the Good News of God to humanity.

JESUS CHRIST, THE EVANGELIZER

21. "Jesus himself, the Good News of God, was the very first and the greatest evangelizer."²⁰ He revealed himself as being sent to proclaim the fulfilment of the Gospel of God, foretold in the history of Israel, primarily through the prophets, and promised in Sacred Scripture. St. Mark the Evangelist begins his account by connecting "the beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ" (*Mk* 1:1) to a corresponding verse from the Scriptures: "As it is written in the prophet Isaiah" (*Mk* 1:2). In the Gospel of St. Luke, Jesus reveals himself in the synagogue at Nazareth through the reading of Scripture, as one who is able to bring the Scripture to fulfilment by his very presence, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing" (*Lk* 4:21). The Gospel according to St. Matthew has a true and proper series of quotes of fulfilled prophecies, intended to reflect the deeper reality of Jesus, based on what was spoken through the prophets (cf. *Mt* 1:22; 2:15,17, 23; 4:14; 8:17; 12:17; 13:35; 21:4). At the time of his arrest, Jesus sums up all things in his Person: "All this has taken place, that the Scriptures of the

²⁰ PAUL VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii nuntiandi* (8 December 1975), 7: AAS 68 (1976) 9.

prophets might be fulfilled.” (*Mt* 26:56). In the Gospel of John, the disciples themselves attest to this connection. After their first encounter, St. Philip states: “We have found him of whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote.” (*Jn* 1:45). During his ministry, Jesus repeatedly refers to his relation to Sacred Scripture and the testimony associated with it: “You search the Scriptures, thinking they have in them eternal life: it is they that give testimony of me” (*Jn* 5:39); “If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote of me” (*Jn* 5:46).

22. The concurring testimony of the Evangelists affirms that the Gospel of Jesus is the radical summation, continuation and total fulfillment of the Scriptures. Precisely because of this continuity, the newness of Jesus appears both clearly and understandably. Indeed, his evangelizing activity continues a history which was begun earlier. His gestures and words are to be read in light of the Scriptures. In the last apparition recounted by St. Luke, the Risen Lord summarizes this understanding by saying: “These are the words which I spoke to you, that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms must be fulfilled” (*Lk* 24:44). His supreme gift to his disciples will indeed “open their minds to understand the Scriptures” (*Lk* 24:45). Considering the depth of the Jewish people’s relation to the Scriptures, Jesus reveals himself to be the new evangelizer who brings newness and fullness to the Law, Prophets and Wisdom of Israel.

23. For Jesus, the purpose of evangelization is drawing people into his intimate relationship with the Father and the Spirit. This is the primary reason for his preaching and miracles: to proclaim a salvation which, even though manifested through concrete acts of healing, is not meant to indicate a desire for social or cultural change but a profound experience, accessible to each person, of being loved by God and learning to recognize him in the face of a loving and merciful Father (cf. *Lk* 15). The revelation contained in his words and actions are linked to the words of the prophets. In this regard, the account of the signs performed by Jesus in the presence of the messengers of John the Baptist are emblematic, namely, signs which reveal the identity of Jesus as properly aligned with the great prophetic utterances. St. Luke the Evangelist recounts: “In that hour he cured many of diseases and plagues and evil spirits, and on many that were blind he bestowed sight. And he answered them, ‘Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have good news preached to them’” (*Lk* 7:21, 22). The words of Jesus show the full meaning of his actions in

relation to the signs contained in countless biblical prophecies (cf. especially *Is* 29:18; 35:5,6; 42:18; 26:19; 61:1).

The way Jesus treated people is to be considered an essential element of Jesus' method of evangelizing. He was able to welcome everyone, without distinction, and never exclude anyone: first, the poor, then the rich like Zacchaeus and Joseph of Arimathea; outsiders like the centurion and the Syro-Phoenician woman; the righteous, like Nathanael; and prostitutes and public sinners with whom he also sat at table. Jesus knew how to plumb the depths of a person and elicit faith in the God who first loved us (cf. *1 Jn* 4:10,19), whose love always precedes us and is not dependent on our own merits, because he is love itself: "God is love" (*1 Jn* 4:8,16). In this manner, he sets down how the Church is to evangelize, demonstrating for her the heart of the Christian faith, namely, to believe in Love and in the face and voice of this Love, namely, Jesus Christ.

24. Jesus' evangelizing actions leads a person quite naturally to a conversion-experience. Every person is called to conversion and to faith in God's merciful love. The kingdom will grow in the manner in which each person learns to turn, in the intimacy of prayer, to God as Father (cf. *Lk* 11:2; *Mt* 23:9) and, following the example of Jesus Christ, to recognize, in a totally free manner, that the goal of life is fulfilling God's will (cf. *Mt* 7.21). Evangelization and the call to holiness and conversion are intricately bound together, a matter which needs to be proposed to people here and now, if they are to experience the Kingdom of God in Jesus, and, in turn, become the children of God. The Synod is expected to consider to what extent evangelization and the call to holiness and conversion are present in our communities today and how, through their interaction, they nourish the lives of our communities and produce fruit.

THE CHURCH, EVANGELIZED AND EVANGELIZING

25. Those who truly accept the Gospel, precisely as a gift and for the fruits it produces in them, come together in the name of Jesus so as to preserve and nourish the faith which is received and shared, and to continue and grow in this lived-experience. The Gospels recount (cf. *Mk* 3,13-15) that after the disciples had been with Jesus, after they had lived with him, after they had been introduced by him into a new life-experience and after they had been partakers of his divine life, they were, in turn, sent out to continue this work of evangelization: "He called the Twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases. [...]"

Then they departed and went through the villages, preaching the Gospel and healing everywhere” (*Lk* 9:1, 6).

26. After Christ’s death and resurrection, the missionary mandate given to the disciples by the Lord (cf. *Mk* 16:15) makes an explicit reference to proclaiming the Gospel to everyone, teaching them to observe everything he commanded (cf. *Mt* 28:20). St. Paul presents himself as “called to be an Apostle [...] set apart for the Gospel of God” (*Rm* 1:1). The Church’s task is thus to bring about a *traditio Evangelii*, a proclamation and transmission of the Gospel, which is “the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith” (*Rm* 1:16) and which ultimately is identified with Jesus Christ (cf. *I Cor* 1:24). We know now that when it comes to proclaiming the Gospel, we must think of a living, effective Word, which brings about what is stated (cf. *Heb* 4:12; *Is* 55:10) and is a Person: Jesus Christ, the definitive Word of God, who became man.²¹

As in the earthly life of Jesus, the Church’s evangelizing mission is properly the work of God and the Holy Spirit. The gift of the Spirit at Pentecost makes the Apostles witnesses and prophets, confirming them in all they shared with Jesus and learned from him (cf. *Acts* 1:8; 2:17), instilling in them a serene courage which impels them to pass on to others their experience of Jesus and the hope that inspires them. The Spirit gives them the ability to witness to Jesus with *parresia* (cf. *Acts* 2:29), extending their activity from Jerusalem to all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth.

27. What the Church has lived from the very beginning, she continues to live today. By re-proposing these truths, Pope Paul VI recalled their contemporary character: “The command to the Twelve to go out and proclaim the Good News is also valid for all Christians, though in a different way [...] The Church knows this. [...] Evangelizing is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity. She exists in order to evangelize, that is to say, in order to preach and teach, to be the channel of the gift of grace, to reconcile sinners with God, and to perpetuate Christ’s sacrifice in the Mass, which is the memorial of his death and glorious resurrection.”²² The Church exists in the world to continue Jesus’

²¹ Cf. SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum*, 4.

²² PAUL VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii nuntiandi* (8 December 1975), 13, 14: AAS 68 (1976) 12, 13.

evangelizing mission, knowing well that in doing so she continues to share in divine life, because she is compelled by the Spirit to proclaim the Gospel in the world and to experience again within herself the presence of the Risen Christ, who brings her into communion with God the Father. Every action performed by the Church is never closed in upon itself but is always an act of evangelization, and, as such, an action that manifests the triune face of our God. The Acts of the Apostles records those actions most intimately involved in the Church's life: prayer, listening to the Word and the Apostles' teaching, a "lived" fraternal charity and the breaking of the bread (cf. *Acts* 2:42-46). All acquire their full meaning when they become an act of witness, a source of attraction and conversion, and a preaching and proclamation of the Gospel, by the whole Church and each baptized person.

THE GOSPEL, A GIFT FOR EVERY PERSON

28. The Gospel of God's love for us, the call to take part in the life of the Father, through Jesus, in the Holy Spirit, is a gift meant for everyone. We proclaim Jesus himself, who calls everyone to conversion for the Kingdom of God. To emphasize this fact, Jesus drew especially near to those on the margins of society, giving them special favour, when he proclaimed the Gospel. At the beginning of his ministry, he proclaimed that he was sent to preach the good news to the poor (cf. *Lk* 4:18). To those despised and dejected, Jesus declares: "Blessed are you poor" (*Lk* 6:20) and, by standing with them, enables these individuals already to experience a sense of freedom (cf. *Lk* 5:30; 15:2). He eats with them, treats them as brothers and sisters and as friends (cf. *Lk* 7:34) and helps them to feel loved by God, thus revealing his great compassion for sinners and those in need.

29. The freedom and salvation brought by the Kingdom of God touch every human person both physically and spiritually. Two actions are attached to Jesus' work of evangelization: healing and forgiving. Multiple miracles of healing clearly demonstrate his great compassion in the face of human misery. They also indicate that, in the Kingdom, there will no longer be sickness and suffering and that, from the outset, his mission is aimed at freeing people from sickness and suffering (cf. *Rev* 21:4). Jesus' miracles of healing are also a sign of the salvation of the spirit, namely liberation from sin. In performing acts of healing, he invites people to faith, conversion and a desire for forgiveness (cf. *Lk* 5:24). Received in faith, healing leads to salvation (cf. *Lk* 18:42). Deliverance from demonic possession, the ultimate evil and symbol of sin and rebellion against God,

is a sign that “the Kingdom of God has come upon you” (*Mt* 12:28) and that the Gospel, a gift of salvation meant for every person, initiates us into a process of transformation and participation in the life of God, who renews us in the present moment.

30. “I have no silver or gold but I give you what I have; in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk” (*Acts* 3:6). Like St. Peter the Apostle, the Church also continues faithfully to proclaim the Gospel for the good of each person. To the cripple who asks him for something on which to live, St. Peter responds by offering the gift of the Gospel which heals him, thus opening the way to salvation. In this way, in the course of time, in virtue of her work of evangelization, the Church gives flesh and visibility to the prophecy in Revelation: “Behold I make all things new.” (*Rev* 21:5), transforming humanity and history itself from within, so that the faith of Christ and the life of the Church might no longer be foreign to the society in which both humanity and history exist, but can permeate and transform it.²³

31. Evangelization consists in proposing the Gospel which transforms the human individual, his world and his personal story. The Church evangelizes when, in virtue of the power of the Gospel proclaimed (cf. *Rm* 1:16), she takes every human experience and gives it rebirth through the death and resurrection of Jesus (cf. *Rm* 6:4), immersing each one in the newness of Baptism and life according to the Gospel and in the Son’s relationship to his Father, so as to feel the power of the Spirit. The transmission of the faith is the goal of evangelization which, according to the divine plan, is to bring all people through Christ to the Father in the Spirit (cf. *Eph* 2:18). This experience of the newness of the Gospel transforms every person. Today, we can hold to this conviction with greater surety, because history has left us extraordinary examples of courage, dedication, boldness, intuition and reason in the Church’s work of bringing the Gospel to every person, acts of holiness which are displayed in a variety of notable and significant ways on every continent. Every particular Church can boast of persons of outstanding holiness, who have been able to give renewed power and energy to the work of evangelization through their activities and, primarily, through their witness. Their example of holiness also provides prophetic and clear indications in devising new ways to live out the task of evangelization. They have repeatedly left us accounts in their writings, prayers, models and

²³ Cf. SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church *Ad gentes*, 21.

methods of teaching, spiritual journeys, journeys of initiation into the faith, works and educational institutions.

32. While strongly referring to the power of these examples of holiness, some responses also mention the difficulties in making these experiences contemporary and transmissible. Sometimes, it seems that these historical works not only belong to a past age, but are almost confined there, because they lack the ability to communicate the evangelical character of their witness in the present-day. The Synod is asked to discuss these difficulties and attempt to discover the underlying reasons why the activities and witness of various Church institutions lack credibility when they speak as bearers of the Gospel of God.

THE DUTY TO EVANGELIZE

33. Every person has the right to hear the Gospel of God to humanity, which is Jesus Christ. Like the Samaritan woman at the well, humanity today needs to hear the words of Jesus: “If you knew the gift of God” (*Jn* 4:10), because these words elicit the deep desire for salvation which lies in everyone: “Lord, give me this water, that I may not thirst” (*Jn* 4:15). This right of every person to hear the Gospel is clearly stated by St. Paul. Tireless in his preaching, he looks upon his work of proclaiming the Gospel as a duty, because he understood its universal significance: “For if I preach the Gospel, that gives me no ground for boasting. For necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I preach not the Gospel” (*1 Cor* 9:16). Every man and woman should be able to say, like him, that “Christ loved us and gave himself up for us” (*Eph* 5:2). Furthermore, every man and women should be able to feel drawn into an intimate and transforming relationship which the proclamation of the Gospel creates between us and Christ: “It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (*Gal* 2:20).²⁴ To give others the possibility of having a similar experience requires that someone be sent to proclaim it: “How are men to call upon him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without a preacher?” (*Rm* 10:14 which repeats *Is* 52:1).

²⁴ Cf. CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, *Doctrinal Note on Some Aspects of Evangelization* (3 December 2007), 2: AAS 100 (2008) 490.

34. We can therefore understand how every one of the Church's actions has an essential evangelizing character and must never be separated from the duty to help others encounter Christ in faith, the primary goal of evangelization. If as a Church, "we bring people only knowledge, ability or technical skill and tools, we bring them too little."²⁵ The original reason for evangelization is the love of Christ which seeks to bring everyone to eternal salvation. The one desire of genuine evangelizers is to give freely what they have freely received: "From the very origins of the Church the disciples of Christ strove to convert men to faith in Christ as the Lord; not, however, by the use of coercion or of devices unworthy of the Gospel, but by the power, above all, of the word of God."²⁶

35. The mission of the Apostles and its continuation in the primitive Church remain the basic model for evangelization at all times as a mission often marked by martyrdom, which is witnessed not only at the beginning of the history of Christianity but also in the last century, and even in our own times. Martyrdom gives credibility to those who bear witness; they do not seek power or gain, but give their very lives for Christ. They show the world the defenceless yet powerful love for humanity, which is given to those who follow Christ to the point of totally surrendering their lives, as Jesus proclaimed: "If they persecuted me, they will persecute you" (*Jn* 15:20).

However, erroneous beliefs unfortunately exist which limit the duty to proclaim the Good News. In fact, "there is today a growing confusion which leads many to leave the missionary command of the Lord unheard and ineffective (cf. *Mt* 28:19). Often it is maintained that any attempt to convince others on religious matters is a limitation of their freedom. From this perspective, it would only be legitimate to present one's own ideas and to invite people to act according to their consciences, without aiming at their conversion to Christ and to the Catholic faith. It is enough, so they say, to help people to become more human or more faithful to their own religion; it is enough to build communities which strive for justice, freedom, peace and solidarity. Furthermore, some maintain that Christ should not be

²⁵ BENEDICT XVI, *Homily at Neue Messe Esplanade*, Munich , Germany (10 September 2006): *L'Osservatore Romano: Weekly Edition in English*, 13 September 2006, p. 7.

²⁶ SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Declaration on Religious Freedom *Dignitatis humanae*, 11.

proclaimed to those who do not know him, nor should joining the Church be promoted, since it would also be possible to be saved without explicit knowledge of Christ and without formal incorporation in the Church.”²⁷

36. Although non-Christians can be saved through the grace which God bestows in ways known only to himself,²⁸ the Church cannot overlook the fact that each person seeks to know the true face of God and to enjoy today the friendship of Jesus Christ, God-with-us. Adhering fully to Christ, the Truth, and becoming a member of his Church does not diminish human freedom, but rather enhances it and leads it to fulfilment through a selfless love and caring for the welfare of all people. What a priceless gift it is to live in the universal embrace of God’s friends, which comes from communion with the life-giving flesh and blood of his Son, to receive from him the certainty that our sins are forgiven and to live in the love which is born of faith! The Church desires that everyone should partake of these riches, so that they may have the fullness of truth and the means of salvation “to obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God” (*Rm* 8:21). The Church, who proclaims and transmits the faith, imitates God himself who communicates with humanity by giving his Son, who, in turn, pours out the Holy Spirit so that people can be reborn as children of God.

EVANGELIZATION AND CHURCH RENEWAL

37. The Church is an evangelizer, but she begins by being evangelized herself. She is “the community of believers, the community of hope lived and communicated, the community of brotherly love, and she needs to listen unceasingly to what she must believe, to her reasons for hoping, to the new commandment of love. She is the People of God immersed in the world and often tempted by idols, and she always needs to hear the proclamation of the ‘mighty works of God’, which converted her to the Lord; she always needs to be called together afresh by him and reunited. In brief, this means that she has a constant need of being evangelized if she wishes to retain

²⁷ CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, *Doctrinal Note on Some Aspects of Evangelization* (3 December 2007), 3: AAS 100 (2008) 491.

²⁸ Cf. SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church *Ad gentes*, 7.

freshness, vigour and strength in order to proclaim the Gospel.”²⁹ The Second Vatican Council has strongly taken up the subject of the Church who is evangelized by constant conversion and renewal in order to evangelize the world with credibility.³⁰ In this regard, the words of Pope Paul VI still have meaning today as he reaffirms the priority of evangelization and reminds the faithful: “It would be useful if every Christian and every evangelizer were to pray about the following thought: men can gain salvation also in other ways, by God's mercy, even though we do not preach the Gospel to them; but as for us, can we gain salvation if through negligence or fear or shame — what St. Paul called ‘blushing for the Gospel’ — or as a result of false ideas we fail to preach it?”³¹ More than one response has proposed that this subject be specifically treated during the synod’s deliberations.

38. Since her origin, the Church has had to deal with similar difficulties as well as the sinfulness of her members. The story of the disciples of Emmaus (cf. *Lk* 24:13-35) is emblematic of the fact that knowledge of Christ can fail. The two disciples from Emmaus speak of a dead man (cf. *Lk* 24:21-24) and relate their disappointment and hopelessness. These disciples demonstrate the possibility for the Church in every age to be the bearer of a message that does not give life, but stops short in the death of the Christ who is proclaimed, in the announcers themselves, and, consequently, in the recipients of the announcement also. St. John the Evangelist’s account of the Apostles who were fishing (cf. *Jn* 21.1 to 14) describes a similar experience. Apart from Christ, the disciples’ efforts are fruitless. Just as for the disciples of Emmaus, only when the Risen Christ manifests himself to them does their trust and the joy of proclaiming return as the fruits of the work of evangelization. Only in strongly attaching himself to Christ once again, is St. Peter, who had been called “fisher of men” (*Lk* 5:10), able to successfully cast the nets, trusting in the Lord’s words.

39. What is so painstakingly described in the beginning of the Church has sometimes reoccurred in her history. On many occasions, a weakening of

²⁹ PAUL VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii nuntiandi* (8 December 1975), 15: AAS 68 (1976) 14, 15.

³⁰ Cf. SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church *Ad gentes*, 5, 11, 12.

³¹ PAUL VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii nuntiandi* (8 December 1975), 80: AAS 68 (1976) 74.

fervour in one's relationship with Christ has adversely affected the calibre of the life of faith and the experience of participating in the Trinitarian life, which is bound to it. For this reason, we cannot forget that the proclamation of the Gospel is primarily a spiritual matter. The need to transmit the faith, which is essentially an ecclesial, communal event and not singly or done alone, should not result from seeking effective communication strategies or in choosing a certain group of recipients — for example, young people — but must look to who is entrusted with this spiritual work. The Church must question herself in this matter. This allows the problem to be approached not in an extrinsic manner but from within, involving the entire life and being of the Church. Many particular Churches request that the Synod determine whether the lack of effects in evangelization today, as well as in catechesis in modern times, is primarily the result of ecclesial and spiritual factors. This concerns the Church's ability to live as a real community, as a true brotherhood and as a Living Body and not simply a human establishment.

40. In knowing how to maintain the fundamental spiritual character of evangelization, the Church can allow herself to be formed by the action of the Holy Spirit and be conformed to Christ Crucified, who reveals to the world the face of the love of God and communion with him. In so doing, she can become more aware of her vocation as *Ecclesia Mater* by begetting children for the Lord in transmitting the faith and teaching a love which nurtures her children. At the same time, she fulfills her responsibility to proclaim and bear witness to this Revelation of God and gather her people scattered throughout the world, thereby fulfilling Isaiah's prophecy which the Church Fathers understood as addressed to her, "Enlarge the place of your tent, and let the curtains of your habitations be stretched out; hold not back, lengthen your cords and strengthen your stakes. For you will spread abroad to the right and to the left, and your descendants will possess the nations and will people the desolate cities" (*Is* 54:2, 3).

CHAPTER II TIME FOR A NEW EVANGELIZATION

*“Go into all the world and preach the Gospel
to the whole creation” (Mk 16:15)*

41. The missionary mandate which the Church received from the Risen Lord (cf. *Mk 16:15*) has assumed new forms and methods over time, depending on the places and situations where it was realized and various moments in history. Even though proclaiming the Gospel in our day is much more complicated than in the past, the Church’s task is one and the same as from the very beginning. Since the mission has not changed, it can be rightly said that we can make our own, even today, the enthusiasm and courage which characterized the Apostles and early disciples. The Holy Spirit, who moved them to throw open the doors of the Cenacle and sent them forth as evangelizers (cf. *Acts 2: 1-4*), is the same Spirit who guides the Church today and prompts a renewed proclamation of hope to the people of our time.

42. The Second Vatican Council reminds us that “groups among which the Church dwells are often radically changed, for one reason or other, so that an entirely new set of circumstances may arise.”³² With far-reaching perception, the Council Fathers saw on the horizon the cultural change we readily witness today. This change, which has created an unexpected situation for believers, requires special attention in proclaiming the Gospel, if we are to render an account of our faith in the present situation which, unlike in the past, has a variety of new and important aspects.

43. The causes of the social changes which we have witnessed in recent decades are complex, tracing their origins far back in time and radically affecting our perception of the world. The positive aspects of these changes are visible to all and are seen as invaluable contributions which have permitted the development of human culture and increased knowledge in many fields. However, these changes have also caused many to take a critical look at values and some fundamental aspects of daily life which deeply affect people's faith. In this regard, Pope Benedict XVI stated: “If on

³² SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church *Ad gentes*, 6.

the one hand humanity has derived undeniable benefits from these changes, and the Church has drawn from them further incentives for bearing witness to the hope that is within her (cf. *1 Pt* 3:15), on the other hand, there has been a troubling loss of the sense of the sacred, which has even called into question foundations once deemed unshakeable, such as faith in a provident creator God, the revelation of Jesus Christ as the one Saviour, and a common understanding of basic human experiences: i.e., birth, death, life in a family, and reference to a natural moral law. Even though some consider these things a kind of liberation, there soon follows an awareness that an interior desert results, whenever the human being, wishing to be the sole architect of his nature and destiny, finds himself deprived of that which is the very foundation of all things.”³³

44. This critical situation in society — and also in the Christian life — demands a response. At this special moment in history, the Church needs to see how to muster greater energy in rendering an account for the hope we share (cf. *1 Pet* 3:15). The term “new evangelization” calls for a new manner of proclaiming the Gospel, especially for those who live in the present-day situation which is affected by the growing trend of secularization, taking place to a great extent in countries with a Christian tradition. With this in mind, the idea of a new evangelization has come to term in the Church and has been implemented in a great variety of ways in an ongoing study up to now about its precise meaning. Initially, the new evangelization was primarily viewed as a necessity, then as a work of discernment and finally as an impetus for the Church in our times.

THE QUESTION OF A “NEW EVANGELIZATION”

45. What is the “new evangelization”? Blessed Pope John Paul II, in his first discourse to the bishops of Latin America, sanctioned and defined the term which received great resonance in the Church: “The commemoration of this half of the millennium of evangelization will achieve its full meaning, if as bishops, with your priests and faithful, you accept it as your commitment; a commitment, not of re-evangelization, but rather of a new evangelization; new in its ardour, methods and expression.”³⁴ Some time

³³ BENEDICT XVI, Apostolic Letter *motu proprio Ubicumque et semper* (21 September 2010): AAS 102 (2010) 789.

³⁴ JOHN PAUL II, *Discourse to the XIX Assembly of C.E.L.A.M.* (Port au Prince, 9 March 1983), 3: AAS 75 (1983) 778.

later, at a different time, addressing the Church in Europe, the Pontiff made a similar appeal, emphasizing “the urgent need for a ‘new evangelization’, in the awareness that ‘Europe today must not simply appeal to its former Christian heritage: it needs to be able to decide about its future in conformity with the person and message of Jesus Christ’.”³⁵

46. In its initial stage, the new evangelization responds to a demand that the Church have the courage to rise to the occasion in order to take bold steps in revitalizing her spiritual and missionary vocation. Christian communities, affected by the strong social and cultural changes taking place, need once again to find the energy and means to ground themselves solidly in the presence of the Risen Christ, who animates them from within. They must allow themselves to be guided by his Spirit so that they can newly experience the gift of communion with the Father which is theirs in Jesus Christ, and, in turn, offer to others this same experience as the most precious gift that can be possessed.

47. Responses to the *Lineamenta* were in accord with the words of Pope John Paul II. In addressing the specific question — “what is the new evangelization?” — many overwhelmingly indicated that the new evangelization is precisely the Church’s ability to renew her communal experience of faith and to proclaim it within the new situations which, in recent decades, have arisen in cultures. The same phenomenon is taking place in both the North and South and the East and West; in both countries with an age-old Christian tradition and countries which have been evangelized within the last few centuries. The coalescing of social and cultural factors — conventionally designated by the term “globalization” — has initiated a process which is weakening traditions and institutions and thereby rapidly eroding both social and cultural ties as well as their ability to communicate values and provide answers to perennial questions regarding life’s meaning and the truth. The result is a significant

³⁵ JOHN PAUL II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Europa* (28 June 2003), 2, 45: AAS 95 (2003) 650, 677. All the continental synodal assemblies celebrated in preparation for the Jubilee of the Year 2000 treated the new evangelization: cf. JOHN PAUL II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa* (14 September 1995), 57, 63: AAS 85 (1996) 35, 36; 39, 40; Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in America* (22 January 1999), 6, 66: AAS 91 (1999) 10, 11; 56; Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia* (6 November 1999), 2: AAS 92 (2000) 450, 451; Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Oceania* (22 November 2001), 18: AAS 94 (2002) 386-389.

fragmentation of cultural unity and a culture's inability to hold fast to the faith and live the values inspired by it.

48. The effects of such a negative environment on experiencing the faith and on the various forms of ecclesial life are generally described in the same manner in all the responses, namely, a weakening of faith in Christian communities, a diminished regard for the authority of the magisterium, an individualistic approach to belonging to the Church, a decline in religious practice and a disengagement in transmitting the faith to new generations. These effects, found in almost every bishops' conference response, indicate that the whole Church cannot overlook this cultural climate.

49. In this regard, the new evangelization takes the form of an appeal, a question which the Church raises about herself, so that she might muster her spiritual energy and be determined in this new cultural setting to take a clear and active role by acknowledging whatever is good in these new areas, while giving renewed vitality to her faith and her duty to evangelize. The adjective "new" refers to a cultural situation which has changed and the need for the Church, with renewed energy, determination, resourcefulness and newness, to look at the way she lives and transmits the faith. The responses indicate that this appeal has been taken to heart in a variety of ways in many areas of the Church, but not without a certain concern. They seem to show that many Christian communities have not fully perceived the challenge and the magnitude of the crisis generated by this cultural environment, even within the Church. In this regard, synodal discussion can assist in raising, in a timely, in-depth manner, an awareness of the seriousness of the challenges we are facing. Furthermore, the Synod can also take up the phenomenon of secularization, assessing both its positive³⁶ and negative influences on Christianity and the challenges it poses for the Christian faith.

50. Not all indications, however, are negative. Indeed, efforts taking place in many Churches towards renewal are a sign of hope and a gift of the Holy Spirit. These Christian communities, most often religious groups and ecclesial movements, and in some cases, theological and cultural institutions, demonstrate by their activities, the real possibility of living the

³⁶ "One could almost say that history comes to the aid of the Church here through the various periods of secularization, which have contributed significantly to her purification and inner reform.": BENEDICT XVI, *Discourse during the Meeting with Catholics Engaged in the Life of the Church and Society* (Freiburg, 25 September 2011): AAS 103 (2011) 677.

Christian faith through the proclamation of the Gospel, even within this cultural setting. Among these experiences, the particular Churches note, with gratitude and concern, the many young people who contribute a certain newness and enthusiasm to these groups. In acknowledging their many gifts, these same Churches are working to ensure that these gifts are extended throughout the Christian population, and attentively are following their duty of nurturing this experience, from a relatively early age, and, at the same time, highlighting both its strong points and its limitations.

THE SECTORS OF THE NEW EVANGELIZATION

51. The duty of the new evangelization compels the Church to examine the way Christian communities both live and bear witness to the faith today. In doing so, the new evangelization now becomes discernment or the ability to read and decipher the new sectors which have emerged in human history in the last decade, so that, in turn, they might be turned into places for proclaiming the Gospel and experiencing the Church. Once again, the magisterium of Pope John Paul II has shown the way by first providing a description of the sectors of the new evangelization,³⁷ which were used in composing the *Lineamenta* and were further discussed and substantiated in the responses. These sectors include cultures, society, economics, civic life and religion.

52. Given its importance, the *cultural sector* was seen as a priority. Broadly treated in the preceding paragraphs, the cultural sector was mentioned in many responses as the place where secularizing trends are taking place at a rapid pace. Prevalent in a particular way in the West, secularization is the result of certain social and philosophical happenings and movements, which have had a profound effect on its history and identity. Secularization is wrongly perceived in our cultures today as a sign of liberation and the capability of envisaging life in this world, and human life in general, without any reference to the transcendent. In recent years, secularization has not assumed the form of publically or directly speaking out against God, religion and Christianity, despite the fact that, in some instances, it can oftentimes have an anti-Christian, anti-religious and anti-clerical tone, even in these times. Many responses indicate that the rather subdued tone in secularization has allowed this cultural form to invade

³⁷ Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris missio* (7 December 1990), 37: AAS 83 (1991) 282-286.

people's daily lives to the point that some have developed a mentality in which God is effectively absent, in whole or in part, and his very existence dependent on human consciousness.

53. This subdued tone, which gives secularization its charm and seductive character, has also enabled it to enter the lives of Christians and Church communities, becoming not just an external threat to believers, but one inherent to everyday life. Traces of a secular understanding of life are seen in the habitual behavior of many Christians. The “death of God” proclaimed by many intellectuals in recent decades has given way to an unproductive, hedonistic and consumer mentality, which leads to a highly superficial manner in facing life and responsibility. In this way, faith runs the real risk of losing its fundamental elements. The influence of secularization in daily life makes it increasingly difficult to affirm the existence of truth, which, realistically speaking, eliminates the question of God from a person’s examination of self. To respond to religious needs, persons revert to individualistic forms of spirituality or forms of neo-paganism to the point of forcibly spreading a general climate of relativism.

54. These dangers, however, must not overshadow the positive things which Christianity has learned from secularization. The *saeculum* is where believers and non-believers interact and share in a common humanity. This human element is the natural point for faith to enter and, consequently, can become the privileged place for evangelization. In the fully human nature of Jesus of Nazareth dwells the fullness of the deity (cf. *Col 2:9*). Purifying the human through the human nature of Jesus of Nazareth, Christians can create an encounter with people who exhibit a secularized mentality but continue to question what is really and truly human. Encountering these people in search of truth can help Christians purify and develop their faith. The inner struggle of people in search of truth, though not yet possessing the gift of faith, is a real incentive for us in our duty to live and witness to the faith, so that the true face of God can be seen by every person. In this regard, the responses showed great interest in the initiative of the “Courtyard of the Gentiles”.

55. The initial sector of culture is followed by the *social sector* and the treatment of the *phenomenon of the great migration* which is causing an increasing number of people to leave their country of origin to live in urban settings, resulting in a meeting and mixing of cultures and contributing to the erosion of basic reference points to life, values and the very bonds through which people build their identity and come to know the meaning of life. Joined to the spread of secularization, this process causes a situation of

extreme cultural liquidity, which increasingly leaves less room for long-standing traditions, including religious ones. Linked to this sector is the social phenomenon called “globalization”, a not-too-easily-understood reality which requires an intense work of discernment by the Christian. At times, this phenomenon carries a negative connotation, when it is seen as inevitable and linked to the economy and production. However, it can also be viewed as a time of growth, in which humanity can learn to develop new forms of solidarity and new ways of sharing development for the good of all.

56. The responses to the *Lineamenta* refer to a third sector, associated with the subject of migration, which is becoming more and more incisive in society: *the economy*. In great part a direct cause of migration, the economy is highlighted for the tensions and forms of violence related to it, and the inequality it causes within and among nations. Many responses, not simply those from developing countries, decried a clear and decisive increase in the separation between the rich and the poor. On innumerable occasions, papal magisterium has denounced the growing imbalance between the North and South in the access to and distribution of resources, as well as the damage done to creation. Today’s continuing economic crisis is characterized by the problem of the use of both human and natural resources. Particular Churches are invited to live the evangelical ideal of poverty and are expected to do still more in terms of awareness and concrete activity, even if the media does not give sufficient coverage to them.

57. The fourth sector is *civic life*. From the time of the Second Vatican Council to the present, the changes which have occurred in this sector can rightly be called momentous. The division of the western world into two blocks ended with the fall of the Communist ideology, leading to religious freedom and the possibility of reorganizing the Churches of ancient origin. The emergence on the world stage of new economic, political and religious actors from the Islamic and Asian worlds has created an entirely new and unknown situation, rich in potential, but fraught with dangers and new temptations for dominion and power. Many responses have highlighted a variety of urgent situations in this sector, namely, a commitment to peace; the development and liberation of peoples; better international regulation and interaction of national governments; the search for possible areas of listening, coexistence, dialogue and collaboration between different cultures and religions; the defence of human rights and peoples, especially minorities; the promotion of the most vulnerable; and the integrity of creation and a commitment to the future of our planet. Various particular

Churches are engaged in dealing with these issues, which are being diligently pursued and fostered in the daily life of our communities.

58. The fifth sector is *scientific research and technology*. We live in an age that still marvels at the wonders of the continuing achievements which result from research in these fields. Each day, we have the possibility of experiencing the benefits of these advances and are increasingly becoming dependent upon them. Inherent in the many positive aspects is the danger of excessive expectations and manipulation. Today, science and technology run the risk of becoming the new idols of the present. In a digitalized and globalized world, science can easily become “our new religion”. New forms of gnosis are arising which make technology a form of wisdom where an almost magical approach to life leads to concepts of “knowing” and “meaning”, as witnessed in the rise of new cults, which exploit the religious practices of healing, readily followed by people, and are structured as religions promising prosperity and instant gratification.

THE NEW FRONTIER OF THE COMMUNICATIONS’ SECTOR

59. The *Lineamenta* responses also made note of *communications*, the sixth sector, which provide great opportunities today and, at the same time, represent a major challenge for the Church. Initially, communications was a characteristic of the industrialized world only. However, in today’s globalized world, this sector also affects a vast number of developing countries. Every place on the globe, bar none, can be reached by communications, and is therefore subject to the influence of the electronic and media culture. These media are fast becoming the “forum” of civic life and social experience, which is sufficiently illustrated in the widespread use of the internet.

60. The responses refer to the generally-held belief that, today, the new digital technologies have given rise to an entirely new social space where the connections created have the potential of influencing society and culture. The media process, resulting from these technologies, is having an impact on people’s lives and is changing reality itself by incisively entering into people’s experiences and widening human potential. Our perception of self, others and the world are influenced by them. Communication technologies and the space created by them must therefore be viewed positively, without prejudice, as a resource which requires a discerning eye and a wise and responsible employment.

61. The Church is engaged in these areas created by the media and has, from the very beginning, utilized these means as a useful way to proclaim the Gospel. Today, in addition to the more traditional means of communication, especially the printed word and radio, which, according to the responses, have moderately increased in recent years, new *media* are increasingly becoming a major factor in the Church's ministry of evangelization, making interaction possible at various levels: local, national, continental and global. The potential for using both old and new media is clear, as is the need to take advantage of this newly created social space and introduce the vocabulary and forms of the Christian tradition. An attentive and shared discernment process is needed not only to better assess the possibilities of their use in proclaiming the Gospel, but also to understand properly the risks and dangers involved.

62. Indeed, the spread of the culture created by communications undoubtedly brings many benefits. Among them are: a greater access to information; more opportunities for knowledge and dialogue; new forms of solidarity; and the ability to foster an increasingly global culture which leads to a shared heritage of values and the better development of thought and human activity. This potential, however, does not eliminate the dangers inherent in the excessive diffusion of such a culture. Their effects are already being manifested in a deeply, self-centred attentiveness to individual needs only, and an exaltation of emotion in relationships and social ties, thus leading to a diminution and loss of the objective value of deeply human experiences, such as meditation and silence. It equally is leading to an excess in holding to one's individual thinking and a gradual reduction of ethics and civic life to appearance only. These dangers might eventually result in a so-called culture which is short-lived, immediately gratifying and based on mere appearance or a society incapable of looking to either the past or the future. In such a situation, Christians must be bold in entering these "new areopaghi", learning to evaluate them in light of the Gospel and finding the instruments and methods to ensure that, even in these places, the educational patrimony and the wisdom guarded by Christian Tradition is heard today.

CHANGES IN THE RELIGIOUS SECTOR

63. By necessity, the changes treated up to this point influence the way people express their sense of religion. The *Lineamenta* responses recommended adding religion as a seventh sector, thereby providing the

means to more thoroughly understand, in many different cultures, the return of a religious sense and the need for various forms of spirituality, especially among the young. Even though the present process of secularization is leading to a weakened sense of the spiritual in many persons and an emptiness of heart, many regions of the world are showing signs of a significant religious revival. This phenomenon has an impact on the Catholic Church herself in providing resources and opportunities for evangelization which were not present a few decades ago.

64. The responses to the *Lineamenta* gave particular attention to this growing phenomenon, acknowledging both its complex character and undoubtedly positive aspects. In fact, the situation provides the opportunity to restore an element which is part of the human identity, namely religion, thereby going beyond the limitations and impoverishment of an idea of a person viewed only from a horizontal perspective. This phenomenon fosters religious experience and re-establishes its centrality in people's minds, in history, and in the meaning of life itself and the search for truth.

65. Many responses, however, have voiced a concern about the naive and emotional character of this return to a sense of religion. Instead of being a gradual and complex development in a person's search for truth, the return to religion, in many cases, has not been a very liberating experience. Consequently, the positive aspects of rediscovering God and the sacred are viewed as impoverished and obscured by a fundamentalism which frequently manipulates religion to justify acts of violence and, in extreme but fortunately limited cases, even terrorism.

66. According to the responses, this is the framework for treating the pressing problem of the proliferation of new religious groups which can be likened to sects. In this regard, they repeatedly cite the contention in the *Lineamenta* that these groups exercise an emotional and psychological dominance and promote a religion promising prosperity and success in life. At the same time, some responses state that the situation needs to be carefully watched so that Christian communities will not allow themselves to be influenced by these new forms of religious experience and give in to the temptation to imitate their aggressive, proselytizing methods, instead of following the Christian approach to proclaiming the Gospel. On the other hand, the responses insist that Christian communities need to approach proclaiming the Gospel and providing pastoral care in the faith in such a way that the presence of these religious groups could serve as a means for these Christian communities to become more zealous and prepared to work towards giving individuals a sense of meaning in their lives.

67. This situation gives even greater meaning to the Church's encounters and dialogue with the great religious traditions which have grown over the decades and continue to intensify. These encounters are a promising opportunity to better perceive the complexity of the vocabulary and forms of the element of religion in humanity as seen in other religious experiences. Such encounters and dialogue also allow Catholics better to understand the ways in which the Christian faith expresses the religious nature of the human soul. At the same time, they enrich the religious heritage of humanity with the unique character of the Christian faith.

CHRISTIANS WITHIN THESE SECTORS

68. The responses understood the sectors for what they are: signs of actual change which were seen as the context for the development of our religious experiences. Precisely for this reason, the changes in these sectors need to be taken up and purified, through a process of discernment, in their encountering and experiencing the Christian faith. Examining these sectors permits a critical reading of the way of life, the thinking and the discourses which they espouse and can serve as a self-examination which Christians are called upon to do, to see if the manner of life and the pastoral activity of Christian communities are, in fact, suited to the task and avoiding inactivity by attentively considering the future. Many particular Churches expect the Synod to be an opportune time to continue this discernment.

69. Various responses to the *Lineamenta* have attempted to identify the reasons for the decline in Christian practice by many of the Church's faithful, a true "silent apostasy", which would leave the Church in a position of not being able to respond adequately and convincingly to the challenges described in these sectors. In this regard, they recount a weakening in the faith of believers, a lack of personal involvement and experience in the transmission of the faith and insufficient spiritual guidance for the faithful in the process of their formative, intellectual and professional training. Many lament the excessive bureaucratic character of ecclesiastical structures, perceived as far removed from the average person and his everyday concerns, which causes a reduction in the dynamism of ecclesial communities, the loss of enthusiasm at its roots and a decline in missionary zeal. Some responses complained of the excessively formal character of liturgical celebrations, an almost routine celebration of rituals and the lack of a deep spiritual experience, which turn people away instead of attracting them. Despite the counter-witness of some of the Church's members

(unfaithfulness in one's vocation, scandals, little sensitivity to the problems of everyday people and the world today), we are not to underestimate the "*mysterium iniquitatis*" (2 Thess 2:7), the war which the Dragon waged on the rest of the offspring of the Woman, on "those who keep the commandments of God and bear testimony to Jesus" (Rev 12:17). An objective evaluation of the situation must always consider the mystery of human freedom, a gift from God, which a person is free to use, even in a mistaken way, to rebel against God and to turn his back on the Church.

The new evangelization should seek to orientate every man and woman's human freedom towards God, who is the source of truth, goodness and beauty. Renewal in faith should help people overcome the previously mentioned obstacles to an authentic Christian life which is patterned according to the will of God, as expressed in the commandment to love God and neighbor (cf. Mk 12:33).

70. In addition to mentioning some negative aspects, the responses to the *Lineamenta* also highlighted how the Christian experience has undoubtedly benefited from the emergence of these sectors. For example, many responses speak of the positive effects of the continuing migration process in the meeting and exchange of gifts among the particular Churches and in the ability to draw energy and vitality from the Christian faith of immigrant communities. Through contact with non-Christians, Christian communities have been able to learn that mission is no longer a North-South or East-West movement. Therefore, we need to go beyond the present geographic confines; mission, today, extends to all five continents. We must recognize that even in traditionally Christian countries, there are sectors and areas foreign to the faith, because in them people have never encountered the faith and not simply as a result of drifting from the Church. Going beyond continental borders means having the energy to raise the question of God in every step of the process of encountering, interchanging and reconstructing social relations which are taking place everywhere. The Synod could be a place for a fruitful exchange of these experiences.

71. The economic sector, with its changes, has also been seen as a favourable place in witnessing to our faith. Many responses described the efforts of many Christian communities on behalf of the poor, an activity which can boast of ancient origins and a fruitfulness which is still very promising. In today's serious, widespread economic crisis, many responses have mentioned an increase in charitable activity by Christian communities through the establishment of additional institutions dedicated to supporting the poor, and programmes within particular Churches to develop a greater

awareness of charitable work. Many responses wanted the works of charity to be given greater prominence as an instrument of the new evangelization. The dedication and solidarity of many Christian communities towards the poor, the charitable works in which they are engaged and the simplicity of their life-style in a world which places great emphasis on buying and having, are a particularly beneficial means in proclaiming the Gospel and witnessing to our faith.

72. The religious sector had particular resonance in the Church. The responses to the *Lineamenta* first mentioned *ecumenical dialogue*, repeatedly emphasizing how these various changes have fostered the development of major ecumenical endeavours. Realistically speaking, they also recounted difficult times and tense moments which are being addressed with patience and determination. The new situations taking place within the various sectors, where we as Christians are called to live out our faith and proclaim the Gospel, have revealed the necessity for a real unity among Christians, which is not to be seen merely as cordial relations or cooperation in some joint-project, but rather as the desire to let ourselves be transformed by the Spirit, so that we may increasingly be conformed to the image of Christ. This unity is essentially spiritual in nature and must be prayed for, even before it is actually realized. If this ecumenical aspect is to be a part of the conversion and renewal of the Church's members, which is called for by the current crisis, efforts must continue to be made, in a convincing way, to see all Christians as united in showing the world the prophetic and transforming power of the Gospel message. This is an imposing task which can only be met in a communal effort, guided by the Spirit of the Risen Christ, who left us a mandate in his prayer: "That they may all be one" (*Jn* 17:21).

73. Secondly, the religious sector concerns interreligious dialogue, which, in a variety of ways, is a necessity today throughout the world. Interreligious dialogue has already had some positive results. The countries of an ancient Christian tradition see in the expanding presence of the great religions, particularly Islam, an incentive to develop new forms of involvement, visibility and proposing the Christian faith. Generally speaking, interreligious dialogue and discussion with the great religions of the East can be an opportunity for our Christian communities to deepen their understanding of our faith, in virtue of the questions that such a discussion raise in us, questions about the course of human history and God's presence in it. Interreligious dialogue also provides an occasion to

refine the instruments of dialogue and the places of collaboration in developing peace in an increasingly human society.

74. The responses describe a very different situation in those places where the Church is in the minority. In those cases where Churches are free to profess their faith and live their religion, minority status is seen as an opportunity to give Christianity greater visibility, to seek avenues of involvement in the world and to work to bring about change. However, where persecution is part of the minority status, evangelization is more closely aligned to what Jesus experienced in his being faithful, even to the cross. Such a situation reveals the bond existing between evangelization and the cross. These Churches bear witness to this close association as a gift to the entire Church, a fact which these Churches should not overlook themselves. These Churches rightly serve as a reminder that evangelization cannot be measured in quantitative terms of success.

75. The renewal to which we are called is greatly assisted by the Eastern Catholic Churches and those Christian communities which, either in the past or in the present, are hidden, marginalized, persecuted and experiencing intolerance of an ethnic, ideological or religious nature. Their faith-witness, perseverance, resiliency, enduring hope and the intuitive character of certain pastoral practices are a gift to be shared with those Christian communities which, having had a glorious past, are now showing signs of weariness and a dispersion of energy. Churches unaccustomed to practicing the faith in a minority situation can certainly benefit from hearing experiences which can instill the necessary courage required in the work of a new evangelization. Even more spiritual benefits can come from welcoming those who are forced to leave their homelands because of persecution and who bear in their spirit the untold richness of the signs of martyrdom which they have personally experienced.

MISSION *AD GENTES*, PASTORAL CARE AND A NEW EVANGELIZATION

76. Discernment for a new evangelization clearly acknowledges the profound change which is presently taking place in the Church's evangelizing mission. Traditional, established concepts — formally denoted by the terms “countries of ancient Christianity” and “mission lands” — are no longer suitable. At present, these terms seem overly simplified and referring to outdated situations; they fail to provide useful models for Christian communities today. Pope John Paul II observed: “The boundaries between *pastoral care of the faithful, new evangelization and*

specific missionary activity are not clearly definable, and it is unthinkable to create barriers between them or to put them into watertight compartments. [...] The Churches in traditionally Christian countries, for example, involved as they are in the challenging task of new evangelization, are coming to understand more clearly that they cannot be missionaries to non-Christians in other countries and continents, unless they are seriously concerned about the non-Christians at home. Hence missionary activity *ad intra* is a credible sign and a stimulus for missionary activity *ad extra*, and vice versa.”³⁸

77. Despite varying emphasis and factors related to cultures and history, the responses to the *Lineamenta* well understood the different nature of the new evangelization. They see it not as simply replacing older forms of pastoral activity (the first evangelization, pastoral care) with newer forms, but rather as initiating a process of renewal in the Church's fundamental mission. Questioning herself on how to evangelize today, the Church does not exclude examining herself and the quality of evangelization in her communities. The new evangelization is the duty of everyone in the Church (individuals, communities, parishes, dioceses, bishops' conferences, movements, groups and other ecclesial realities as well as religious and consecrated persons) to examine the Church's life and pastoral activity by closely considering, according to the Gospel, the calibre of one's life of faith and the ability to be actively involved in proclaiming the Gospel.

78. According to the various responses, this examination resulted in three basic requirements: 1) the ability to discern or a capacity to place oneself within the present circumstances, unwavering in the conviction that, within this context, the Gospel can still be proclaimed and the Christian faith lived; 2) the ability to live forms of fundamental and authentic adherence to the Christian faith, whose simple character can already serve as a witness to the transforming power of God in our history; and 3) a clear and visible bond with the Church, capable of making her missionary and apostolic character perceptible. These requirements are submitted to the consideration of the Synod Assembly in the hope that, through its deliberations, the Church might receive assistance in following the path of conversion called for by the new evangelization.

79. Many particular Churches, at the time they received the text of the *Lineamenta*, were already engaged in examining and re-planning their

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 34: AAS 83 (1991) 279, 280.

pastoral programmes based on these requirements. Some used the term “missionary renewal” to describe their work; others “a pastoral programme of conversion”. All were in strong agreement that the heart of the new evangelization is the Church’s renewed commitment to her missionary mandate, given by the Lord Jesus Christ, who willed her and sent her into the world, so that she might be guided by the Holy Spirit in bearing witness to the salvation she has received and in proclaiming the face of God the Father, who took the initial step in this work of salvation.

PARISH TRANSFORMATION AND THE NEW EVANGELIZATION

80. Many responses describe a Church strongly engaged in the work of transformation by being present among people and within society. The younger Churches are working to enliven parishes which are oftentimes extensive, animating them internally through a programme, depending on geographic and ecclesial contexts, called “Basic Christian Communities” or “Small Christian Communities”. Their stated purpose is to foster a Christian life which is better capable of sustaining the faith of their members and illuminating, through their witness, various areas of society, particularly in large, sprawling cities. The older, more-established Churches are reviewing their parish programmes which are being administered with increased difficulty as a result of a decrease in the number of the clergy and a decline in Christian practice. They are seeking to avoid the danger that their work become merely bureaucratic and administrative and lead to undesired effects, namely that particular Churches, already too busy with operational problems, might, in the end, become exclusively concerned with themselves. In this regard, many responses refer to the idea of a “pastoral unity” as a means of combining a parish renewal programme with a cooperative endeavour among other parishes, so as to create a more community-minded particular Church.

81. The new evangelization is a call to the Church to rediscover her missionary origins. According to many responses, the new evangelization can devote work in this area to leading Christian communities to be less concentrated on themselves inwardly in the midst of the changes already taking place and more engaged in proclaiming the faith to others. In this regard, much is expected from parishes that are seen as an entryway, open to everyone in every place on the globe, to the Christian faith and an experience of the Church. In addition to their being the place for ordinary pastoral life, liturgical celebrations, the dispensation of the sacraments,

catechesis and the catechumenate, parishes have the responsibility to become real centres for propagating and bearing witness to the Christian experience and places for attentively listening to people and ascertaining their needs. Parishes are places where a person receives instruction on searching for the truth, where faith is nourished and strengthened and where the Christian message and God's plan for humanity and the world is communicated. They are the prime communities for experiencing the joy that comes from being not only gathered together by the Spirit but prepared to live one's proper vocation as a missionary.

82. In this regard, the Church has many resources at her service. The responses agree that the first resource is the great number of baptized lay people who are engaged in and decisively continue their voluntary service of building up the parish community. Many responses refer to the flowering of the vocation of the laity as one of the fruits of the Second Vatican Council and list other resources, namely, communities of consecrated life; various ecclesial groups and movements which, through their fervour, their energy and, above all, their faith, give a strong impetus to renewal in ecclesial settings; and the many devotional shrine-centres, which, in particular Churches, serve to call people to the faith.

83. In recounting these obvious hope-filled signs, the responses to the *Lineamenta* indicate that the path taken is a slow but effective work of reforming our manner of "being Church" among people and avoiding the pitfalls of sectarianism and a "civil religion", all the while retaining the form of a missionary Church. In other words, the Church must not lose her image of being a Church near to people and their families. Even where the Church is in the minority or the victim of discrimination, she must not lose her prerogative of remaining close to people in their everyday lives and, in that very place, announcing the life-giving message of the Gospel. Pope John Paul II stated that the new evangelization means to remake the Christian fabric of human society and the fabric of the Christian communities. It means assisting the Church to continue to be present "in the midst of the homes of her sons and daughters,"³⁹ so as to animate their lives and direct them to the Kingdom that is to come.

84. Separate consideration is given to the question of the lack of priests. All the responses voiced concern about the insufficient number of priests,

³⁹ JOHN PAUL II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles laici* (30 December 2012), 26: AAS 81 (1989) 438; cf. also, 34: AAS 81 (1989) 455.

which negatively affects a calm, effective exercise of the manner of “being Church”. Some responses made a detailed analysis of the problem, treating this crisis alongside that of marriage and Christian families. Many mentioned the need to envision a more integrated organization of the local Church, involving lay people along with priests in the animation of the community. These responses mentioned that synod discussion could bring clarity to the matter and result in prospects for the future. Almost all the responses call for the whole Church to engage in a strong pastoral programme on behalf of priestly vocations, which begins in prayer and calls upon all priests and clerical religious to live in such a way as to bear witness to the attractiveness of their vocation and to seek ways of speaking to young people. The same applies to vocations to the consecrated life, especially those for women.

In view of the new evangelization, some responses also stressed the importance of an adequate formation programme not only in seminaries and novitiates but also in academic institutions.

A DEFINITION AND ITS MEANING

85. The convocation of the Synod and the subsequent establishment of the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization provide still another step in refining the meaning of the term “new evangelization”. Addressing the Pontifical Council for the New Evangelization, Pope Benedict XVI specified its content: “Making my own the concerns of my venerable Predecessors, I consider it opportune to offer appropriate responses so that the entire Church, allowing herself to be regenerated by the power of the Holy Spirit, may present herself to the contemporary world with a missionary impulse in order to promote the new evangelization. Above all, this pertains to Churches of ancient origin. [...] And yet it is not difficult to see that what all the Churches living in traditionally Christian territories need is a renewed missionary impulse, an expression of a new, generous openness to the gift of grace.”⁴⁰ Meanwhile, in the wake of *Redemptoris missio*,⁴¹ the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith further clarified the meaning of the concept of the new evangelization by proposing

⁴⁰ BENEDICT XVI, Apostolic Letter *motu proprio Ubicumque et semper* (21 September 2010): AAS 102 (2010) 790, 791.

⁴¹ Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris missio* (7 December 1990), 33: AAS 83 (1991) 278, 279.

a definition: “In its precise sense, *evangelization* is the *missio ad gentes* directed to those who do not know Christ. In a wider sense, it is used to describe ordinary pastoral work, while the phrase ‘new evangelization’ designates pastoral outreach to those who no longer practice the Christian faith.”⁴² This definition was later taken up in the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Africae munus*.⁴³

86. Consequently, these texts indicate the geographic area for the new evangelization, though not exclusively, as primarily the Christian West and identify the persons to whom it is directed, namely, the baptized in our communities who are experiencing a new existential and cultural situation, which, in fact, has imperilled their faith and their witness. The new evangelization consists in viewing real-life situations, areas of living and pastoral activity in such a way as to allow these people to leave the “interior desert”, an image used by Pope Benedict XVI to represent the current human condition which is caught in a world that has virtually eliminated from view any question of God. The specific task of the new evangelization is having the courage to raise again the question of God in these places and situations and to restore a high quality and motivation to the faith in many of our Churches of ancient origins.

87. This definition, however, serves as an example and is not intended to be exclusive. In other words, the West is one of many places of the new evangelization and is not the only place for its activity. The definition allows us to understand the extensive work of the new evangelization, which cannot be reduced simply to updating certain pastoral practices, but, instead, demands the development of a very serious, thorough examination and understanding of the root causes of the situation in the Christian West.

The urgent nature of the new evangelization, therefore, is not limited to the above situation only. Pope Benedict XVI stated: “In Africa too, situations demanding a new presentation of the Gospel, ‘new in its ardour, methods and expression’, are not rare. [...] The new evangelization is an urgent task for Christians in Africa because they too need to reawaken their enthusiasm for being members of the Church. Guided by the Spirit of the risen Lord, they are called to live the Good News as individuals, in their

⁴² CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, *Doctrinal Note on Some Aspects of Evangelization* (3 December 2007), 12: AAS 100 (2008) 501.

⁴³ Cf. BENEDICT XVI, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Africae munus* (19 November 2011), 160; *Libreria Editrice Vaticana*, Vatican City: 2011, p. 120.

families and in society, and to proclaim it with fresh zeal to persons near and far, using the new methods that divine Providence has placed at our disposal for its spread.”⁴⁴ These same words are to be applied by Christians to particular situations in America, Asia, Europe and Oceania, continents where the Church has long been active in promoting the new evangelization.

88. The new evangelization is also the name given to a spiritual reawakening and the reanimation of a process of conversion which the Church asks of herself, all her communities and all the baptized. Consequently, this reality is not the concern of well-defined regions only, but the means to explain everywhere the teaching of the Apostles and put those teachings into practice in our day. Through the new evangelization, the Church seeks to insert the very original and specific character of her teachings into today’s world and everyday discussion. She wants to be the place where God can be experienced even now, and where, under the guidance of the Spirit of the Risen Christ, we allow ourselves to be transformed by the gift of faith. The Gospel is always a new proclamation of salvation, accomplished by Jesus Christ, to make every human life share in the mystery of God and his life of love, thereby opening human life to a future of hope, which is inspiring and trustworthy. Emphasizing the Church’s call to undertake a new evangelization at this moment in history means intensifying the Church’s missionary activity so as to respond fully to the Lord's mandate.

89. No area in the Church is outside the parameters of this programme; nor should anyone feel exempt. The Churches of a long Christian tradition, above all, have to deal with the practical problem that many have abandoned the faith. To a lesser extent, the same problem also exists in younger Churches, especially in large cities and some heavily influenced areas of society and cultures. The great social and cultural challenges presently being created by rapidly expanding urban centres, especially in developing countries, are certainly fertile ground for the new evangelization. Consequently, the new evangelization also concerns the younger Churches. Their work of inculturation demands continual examination so that the Gospel, which purifies and elevates culture, can be introduced into cultural settings and, in a particular way, open them to its newness. Generally speaking, all Christian communities need a new

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 165, 171, pp. 123, 124, 127.

evangelization simply by being engaged in a pastoral ministry which seems increasingly difficult to exercise and which is in danger of becoming a routine matter, and thus little able to communicate its original intent.

CHAPTER III TRANSMITTING THE FAITH

“And they devoted themselves to the Apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. [...] And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they partook of food with glad and generous hearts and praising God and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved” (Acts 2:42, 46-47).

90. As stated in the topic for the synod, the purpose of the new evangelization is the transmission of the faith. The Second Vatican Council recalls the complex nature of this process which fully involves the Christian faith and life of the Church in an experience of God's revelation: “In his gracious goodness, God has seen to it that what he had revealed for the salvation of all nations would abide perpetually in its full integrity and be handed on to all generations.”⁴⁵ “Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture form one sacred deposit of the word of God, committed to the Church. Holding fast to this deposit the entire holy people united with their shepherds remain always steadfast in the teaching of the Apostles, in the common life, in the breaking of the bread and in prayers (cf. *Acts* 2:42), so that holding to, practicing and professing the heritage of the faith, it becomes on the part of the bishops and faithful a single common effort.”⁴⁶

91. The Acts of the Apostles illustrates that a person cannot convey what is not believed or lived. The Gospel cannot be transmitted in a life which is not modelled after the Gospel or a life which does not find its meaning, truth and future based on the Gospel. Like the Apostles, we, even today, have access to a life of communion with the Father, in Jesus Christ, through his Spirit who transforms us and equips us to not only transmit the faith which we live but also elicit a response in those whom the Spirit has already prepared with his presence and action (cf. *Acts* 16:14). A fruitful

⁴⁵ SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum*, 7.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 10.

proclamation of the Word of the Gospel calls for profound communion among God's children which is a distinguishing sign accompanying proclamation, as St. John the Apostle recalls: "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another"(Jn 13:34, 35).

92. Announcing and proclaiming is not the task of any one person or a select few, but rather a gift given to every person who answers the call to faith. Transmitting the faith is not the work of one individual only, but instead, is the responsibility of every Christian and the whole Church, who in this very activity continually rediscovers her identity as a People gathered together by the Spirit to live Christ's presence among us and discover the true face of God, who is Father.

The transmission of the faith is a fundamental act of the Church, which leads Christian communities to articulate, in a strict sense, the basic works of the life of faith, namely, charity, witness, proclamation, celebration, listening and sharing. Evangelization must be perceived as the process by which the Church, moved by the Spirit, proclaims and spreads the Gospel throughout the world. Compelled by love, evangelization permeates and transforms the whole temporal order, assuming and renewing cultures. Evangelization openly proclaims the Gospel and is a call to conversion. Through catechesis and the Sacraments of Initiation, evangelization guides those who have turned to Jesus Christ, or those who have returned to the road of discipleship, incorporating the former and reinstating the latter into the Christian community. Evangelization constantly nourishes the gift of communion among the faithful through the teaching of the faith, the celebration of the sacraments and the works of charity. Evangelization is a constant stimulus to mission, which sends forth all Christ's disciples to every part of the globe to proclaim the Gospel in word and deed. Through the discernment which is necessary in the new evangelization, the Church is discovering that the process of transmitting the faith needs to be re-awakened in many communities.

THE PRIMACY OF FAITH

93. In proclaiming *The Year of the Faith*, Pope Benedict XVI recalled a similar initiative by Paul VI in 1967 and restated the reasoning which was given at that time, namely, to provide a solemn moment for the whole Church to profess the one faith, a profession which was to be "individual

and collective, free, conscious, inward and outward, humble and frank.”⁴⁷ Fully aware of the serious difficulties of the time, especially regarding professing the true tenets of the faith and its correct interpretation, Pope Paul VI saw this initiative as a way of prompting a profound interior and missionary renewal within the Church.

94. Pope Benedict XVI shares this perspective in insisting that The Year of Faith is an occasion to ensure that the essential elements of the faith, professed by all believers over the centuries, are re-stated and examined, always in a new manner, so as to bear witness to the faith in a coherent way in an entirely different historical situation from the past. The danger exists that the faith, which establishes a life of communion with God and serves as a doorway into his Church, might not be properly understood in its deepest sense, or not actually taken up and lived by Christians as a means of transforming lives through the great gift of divine sonship and fellowship in the Church.

95. The responses to the *Lineamenta* refer to such a danger and point out with regret that many communities lack an instruction programme geared to the growth and development of a mature faith. Despite the efforts made in recent decades, several responses indicate that this work of formation is in its initial stages. The principal obstacles to the transmission of the faith are the same everywhere and arise from within the Church and the Christian life, namely, a faith which is lived in a private and passive manner; a person’s not feeling the need to be instructed in the faith; and a separation of faith from life. The responses also mention obstacles from outside the Christian life, especially from culture, that make it difficult and perilous to live and transmit the faith: consumerism and hedonism, cultural nihilism; and a closure on transcendence which extinguishes any need for salvation. The Synod could provide the occasion to reflect on the above assessment so as to assist Christian communities find the proper remedies for these problems.

96. At the same time, the responses refer to promising signs of renewal in the faith and a return to giving due primacy to the faith through awareness and formation programmes in particular Churches and the good

⁴⁷ PAUL VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Petrum et Paulum Apostolos*, to commemorate the XIX Centenary of the Martyrdom of the Holy Apostles Sts. Peter and Paul (22 February 1967): AAS 59 (1967) 196; cited in: BENEDICT XVI, Apostolic Letter *motu proprio Porta Fidei*, proclaiming The Year of Faith (11 October 2011), 4: AAS 103 (2011) 725.

example of communities of the consecrated life and ecclesial groups and movements.

An increase in the quality of life of the Christian community itself and the development of its members is one of the primary benefits of this transformation. Considering one's faith as a God-experience and the centre of one's life is seen by many particular Churches as a goal of the celebration of the Synod on the new evangelization for transforming people's everyday lives.

THE CHURCH TRANSMITS THE FAITH WHICH SHE HERSELF LIVES

97. The best place to transmit the faith is a community nourished and transformed by the liturgical life and prayer. An intrinsic relationship exists between faith and the liturgy: *lex orandi, lex credendi*. "Without the liturgy and the sacraments, the profession of faith would lack efficacy, because it would lack the grace which supports Christian witness."⁴⁸ "The liturgy, 'through which the work of our redemption is accomplished,' most of all in the divine sacrifice of the Eucharist, is the outstanding means whereby the faithful may express in their lives, and manifest to others, the mystery of Christ and the real nature of the true Church."⁴⁹

In this regard, the responses to the *Lineamenta* recount the many initiatives undertaken to help Christian communities live the profound nature of the liturgy. The liturgy and a life of prayer transform a Christian community from a simple gathering of people into a community which celebrates and transmits the Trinitarian faith in God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The two previous ordinary general assemblies, which treated the Eucharist and the Word of God in the life of the Church, were seen to provide great assistance in fruitfully continuing the reception and development of liturgical reform initiated at the Second Vatican Council through their highlighting the centrality of the mystery of the Eucharist and the Word of God in the life of the Church.

⁴⁸ BENEDICT XVI, Apostolic Letter *motu proprio Porta Fidei*, proclaiming The Year of Faith (11 October 2011), 11: AAS 103 (2011) 731.

⁴⁹ SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum concilium*, 2 and 6.

Within this framework, several responses mention the importance of *lectio divina* (personal and communal) which is seen as the natural setting for evangelization. Prayer provides ample opportunity to listen to the Word of God, thereby bringing the life of faith and prayer to its inexhaustible source. God speaks, calls, questions, guides, enlightens and judges. If “faith comes from what is heard” (*Rm* 10:17), listening to the Word of God is for both the individual believer and the Church a simple but powerful means of evangelization and renewal in the grace of God.

98. The responses refer to the success of Christian communities in rediscovering the profound value of the liturgy, which is, at one and the same time, divine worship, the proclamation of the Gospel and love in action.

Many responses gave particular attention to the Sacrament of Reconciliation, which has almost disappeared from the lives of many Christians, and focussed on the very positive experiences when the Sacrament is celebrated at special moments, e.g., World Youth Day and pilgrimages to shrines. However, even these moments of celebration have been unable to positively affect the overall practice of sacramental reconciliation.

99. The responses to the *Lineamenta* also reflected on the subject of prayer, stressing, on the one hand, some positive elements, namely: a certain diffusion of the celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours (by Christian communities and also persons individually); a rediscovery of Eucharistic adoration as a source of personal prayer; an increase in the number of groups for listening and prayer on the Word of God; and the spontaneous formation of Marian, charismatic and devotional groups. On the other hand, some responses emphasized the complex character between the celebration of the Christian faith and various forms of popular piety. While recognizing some mutual benefits, they also noted the danger of syncretism and a degradation of the faith.

THE PEDAGOGY OF THE FAITH

100. Faithful to the Lord, from the very beginning of her history, the Church has taken the truth in the biblical accounts and has experienced it in ritual, reunited it in a synthesis as a rule of faith, which is The Symbol of Faith, translated it into a guide for living and lives it in a filial relationship with God. This has been summed up by Pope Benedict XVI in his letter proclaiming The Year of Faith. While quoting from the Apostolic

Constitution promulgating *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, he notes that for the faith to be transmitted, it must be “professed, celebrated, lived and prayed.”⁵⁰

Thus, starting from the fundamental elements taken from Sacred Scripture, ecclesial tradition has created a pedagogy for transmitting the faith, which is developed according to the four major divisions of the Roman Catechism: the Creed, the sacraments, the commandments and the Lord's Prayer. On one side are the mysteries of faith in God, One-in-Three, as they are professed (The Symbol of the Faith) and celebrated (sacraments); and on the other, human life in conformity with that faith (a faith which becomes operative through love) which is realized in a Christian way of life (the Decalogue) and filial prayer (Our Father). Today, these four general headings serve as the general format for *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*.⁵¹

101. *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* was given to the Church by Pope John Paul II for a dual purpose, namely, to set forth the basic tenets of the faith and, at the same time, to indicate the pedagogy for its transmission. Its goal is to stir faith to life in the heart of every believer, in its entirety, which is both proposing the truth and adhering to it. Faith is essentially a gift from God which prompts self-abandonment to the Lord Jesus. In this way, adhesion to the content of faith becomes a state of mind, a decision to follow Jesus and to conform one's life to his, a conformity which permits us to enter into the profound pedagogical structure of the faith. St. Paul well describes the experience, in the following manner: “For man believes with his heart and so is justified, and he confesses with his lips and so is saved” (*Rm* 10:10). “In fact, there exists a profound unity between the act by which we believe and the content to which we give our assent. [...] knowing the content to be believed is not sufficient unless the heart, [...] is opened by grace that allows the eyes to see below the surface and to understand that what has been proclaimed is the word of God.”⁵²

⁵⁰ BENEDICT XVI, Apostolic Letter *motu proprio Porta Fidei*, proclaiming The Year of Faith (11 October 2011), 9: AAS 103 (2011) 728.

⁵¹ Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Constitution *Fidei depositum* (11 October 1992): AAS 86 (1994) 116.

⁵² BENEDICT XVI, Apostolic Letter *motu proprio Porta Fidei*, proclaiming The Year of Faith (11 October 2011), 10: AAS 103 (2011) 728, 729.

By attentively considering the format and deep meaning of *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, on the twentieth anniversary of its publication, the synodal assembly can discover the great efforts the Church has made in recent decades in catechetical renewal. The responses to the *Lineamenta* describe the great strides in the process of assessing and planning which was done to improve catechesis and programmes of faith formation. These programmes include editing texts and initiatives for forming catechists to not only use the new instruments available today but also come to a full understanding of the multi-sided nature of their mission.

102. Reports in this area are generally positive and refer to the serious efforts which are being made by various bodies in the Church (the synods of bishops of the Eastern Catholic Churches *sui iuris*, the episcopal conferences, diocesan or eparchial centres, parish communities, individual catechists, and theological and pastoral institutes) to realize and develop in all of her members a faith which is better understood and shared. Furthermore, the responses demonstrate that the Church has at her disposal the necessary means to transmit the faith. A critical assessment of these means and their use is facilitated by the publication of *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, which also provides the Eastern Catholic Churches and episcopal conferences a point of reference in giving unity and clarity to the Church's catechetical activity.

103. The responses also include an evaluation of all the initiatives which have been undertaken for rendering an account of our faith today. Despite the efforts, however, many obstacles still remain in the transmission of faith, especially the very rapid changes in cultures, which have become more incisive on the Christian faith, and the many fronts open to the development of knowledge and technology. The responses insist that catechesis be looked upon more as a part of sacramental preparation in its various stages and not simply ongoing instruction in the faith of Christians.

104. The secularization of culture has also shown that the various methods of catechesis show signs of vitality but are not always allowed to reach full development in transmitting the faith. The synod's deliberations could therefore continue the task begun at the Synod on Catechesis, namely, to devise a way of transmitting the faith today which is based on the fundamental law of catechesis, that is, the principle of faithfulness to God

and the person, done out of love.⁵³ The Synod could discuss how to devise a programme of catechesis which is both basic and complete and able to transmit fully the core elements of the faith, and, at the same time, knows how to speak to people today, in their cultures, while listening to their questions and inspiring their search for truth, goodness and beauty.

THE PERSONS INVOLVED IN THE TRANSMISSION OF THE FAITH

105. The transmission of the faith involves the whole Church which is manifested in the particular Churches, eparchies and dioceses, where the proclamation, transmission and lived experience of the Gospel are realized. Moreover, these particular Churches, in addition to being agents in the transmission of the faith, are also the fruit of this action of proclaiming the Gospel and transmitting the faith, as we recall in the experience of the primitive Christian community (cf. *Acts* 2:42-47). The Spirit gathers believers into communities where they live their faith in a fervent manner, nourish themselves by listening to the word of the Apostles and by celebrating the Eucharist and spend their lives in proclaiming the Kingdom of God. The Second Vatican Council relied on these words to describe the basis of identity for every Christian community, when it stated that “this Church of Christ is truly present in all legitimate local congregations of the faithful which, united with their pastors, are themselves called Churches in the New Testament. For in their locality, these are the new People called by God, in the Holy Spirit and in much fullness (cf. *1 Thess* 1:5). In them the faithful are gathered together by the preaching of the Gospel of Christ, and the mystery of the Lord’s Supper is celebrated, so that by the flesh and blood of the Lord’s body all the brethren might be joined together.”⁵⁴

106. This passage from the Council is being concretely fulfilled and can oftentimes describe the real-life situation of our Churches through their transmitting the faith and proclaiming the Gospel in general. The responses emphasized the fact that, in recent decades, the number of Christians who have spontaneously and freely undertaken this task has been truly noteworthy and has characterized the life of communities as a true gift of the Spirit. Pastoral activity in the transmission of the faith has permitted the

⁵³ Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Exhortation *Catechesi tradendae* (16 October 1979), 55; AAS 71 (1979) 1322, 1323.

⁵⁴ SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen gentium*, 26.

Church to enter different, local, social settings, and from within, display the richness and variety of her ministries, which bring life to everyday existence. In this way, the Church has been able to understand, in a new way, the whole idea of the participation of the various persons in the Christian community (priests, parents, religious, catechists), in union with the bishop, each exercising a proper task and responsibility.

107. As previously stated, the proclamation of the Gospel and the transmission of faith can become a positive impetus in facing the changes which are being closely monitored by parish communities. The responses ask that a central position in the new evangelization be given to the parish, community of communities, not simply as a place for religious services to be celebrated but as a gathering place for families, Bible groups and renewed lay involvement, where a true sense of the Church is experienced through a most authentically lived celebration of the sacraments and their meaning. The synod fathers should examine the vocation of the parish as a point of reference and coordination for a wide range of Church realities and pastoral initiatives.

108. In addition to the irreplaceable role of the Christian community as a whole, the task of transmitting the faith and teaching persons how to live the Christian life involves a variety of Christians. The responses primarily make an appeal to catechists. They acknowledge the gift of faith received by many Christians who, freely and beginning with their own faith, have made a unique and irreplaceable contribution in the proclamation of the Gospel and the transmission of the faith, especially in Churches which have been evangelized in the last centuries. According to some responses, the new evangelization calls for a greater involvement of catechists and, likewise, a greater commitment by the Church on their behalf. Catechists are immediate witnesses and irreplaceable evangelizers, who represent the basic strength of Christian communities. The Church needs to reflect more deeply on their task and provide them with more stable living conditions and greater training and visibility in their service. With this in mind, the Synod Assembly, while taking into consideration the results of the studies already undertaken in recent decades, can raise the possibility of giving the catechist an instituted, stable ministry within the Church. At this great moment of renewal in proclaiming and transmitting the faith, a decision to that effect would be seen as a very strong support and resource in the new evangelization called for in the Church.

109. Various responses highlight the important role and dedication of deacons and many women who are involved in catechesis. In other

responses, these positive findings are followed by ones of concern. In recent years, due to a declining number of priests and their being forced to minister to more than one Christian community, the practice of delegating to lay people their work of catechising is becoming increasingly widespread. The responses want the Synod to help people better understand the present changes in how a priest is called upon to live out his priestly identity today. In this way, the Synod can give some direction to these changes and safeguard what is specifically and uniquely related to the ministry of the priest in the field of evangelization and the transmission of faith. Generally speaking, synod discussion could assist Christian communities to give a renewed missionary sense to the ministry of priests, deacons and catechists, who are presently working among them.

THE FAMILY, THE MODEL-PLACE FOR EVANGELIZATION

110. In treating the persons involved in the transmission of the faith, the responses devote considerable attention to the family. The Christian message on marriage and family is considered a great gift which makes the family the model-place for witnessing to faith, because of its prophetic capacity in living the core values of the Christian experience. Those values include: the dignity and complementary nature of man and woman, created in the image of God (cf. *Gn* 1:27); openness to life; sharing and communion; dedication to the most vulnerable; and a focus on formation and trust in God as the source of love, the basis for family unity. Many particular Churches call for and are engaged in the pastoral care of the family, precisely in view of its missionary calling and witnessing to the faith.

111. At the same time, the Church acknowledges the family's responsibility in the formation and transmission of the Christian faith from the very beginning of human life. The close bond between the Church and the family arise from the assistance which the Church seeks to give to the family and that which she expects from the family. Oftentimes, families are subjected to great stress due to the hectic pace of life, the uncertainty of work, increasing instability and fatigue in the education of children which is becoming more difficult. Aware of these difficulties, the family needs the support which comes from feeling a part of a community and being accepted and listened to. The family likewise needs to be bolstered not only by the proclamation of the Gospel but also by guidance in its work of

education. The commonly shared goal is to give the family an increasingly active role in the process of the transmission of the faith.

112. The responses relate the difficulties and needs facing many families today, including Christian families, namely, the need for support which is increasingly evident in the many situations of pain and failure in faith-formation, especially in children. Various responses speak of organizing groups of families (locally or based on shared experiences and the ecclesial movements), inspired by the Christian faith, which have allowed many couples better to cope with the difficulties they are encountering. In so doing, they also render a clear testimony to the Christian faith.

113. According to many responses, these groups of families are one of the fruits produced in Christian communities by the proclamation of the faith. In this regard, the responses express an optimism concerning: the resilient nature of many Christian communities, even those in passing, precarious situations; the faithfulness with which they communally celebrate the faith; and the availability, however limited, of their resources to relieve the poor and to bear witness to the Gospel in a simple manner each day.

CALLED TO EVANGELIZE

114. The responses look to the consecrated life as a gift to be received with gratitude. In the transmission of the faith and the proclamation of the Gospel, they speak of the important contributions of the great religious orders and the many forms of consecrated life — especially the mendicant orders and apostolic and secular institutes — in their continuing prophetic and evangelizing charisms, despite internal difficulties and moments of renewal in their way of life. From the vantage point of faith, their presence, even if hidden from sight, is seen as a source of many spiritual blessings in the missionary mandate which the Church is presently called to fulfill. Many local Churches recognize the importance of this prophetic witness to the Gospel as a dynamic source of energy in the life of faith of entire Christian communities and a great number of the baptized.

Many responses voiced their hope that the consecrated life will continue to make an essential contribution to the new evangelization, especially in education, healthcare and pastoral activity, primarily among the poor and those most in need of spiritual and material assistance.

While treating this subject of the new evangelization, the responses also wanted to acknowledge the invaluable support coming from the contemplative life, especially monasteries. History has proven that the

relation of monasticism and contemplation to evangelization is strong and the bearer of many fruits. The contemplative life is the core of the Church's existence which keeps alive the essence of the Gospel, the primacy of the faith and the celebration of the liturgy and gives a meaning to silence and all the other activities undertaken for the glory of God.

115. Within the last decade, another gift of Divine Providence to the Church is the flowering of groups and movements, oftentimes in an spontaneous, spirit-filled manner, dedicated primarily to proclaiming the Gospel. In considering these groups and movements, various responses recounted characteristics of a way of life which are essential to communities and individual Christians, if they are to render an account for their faith. These characteristics are related to the calibre of the so-called "new evangelizers", namely: the ability to live out and give reasons for their choice of life and the values they espouse; a desire to profess their faith in a public manner, without fear or false modesty; actively seeking moments of lived communion through prayer and fraternal sharing; an instinctive preference for the poor and the downtrodden; and a zeal in the work of forming succeeding generations.

116. The responses' strong emphasis on charisms as an important resource in the new evangelization deserves further discussion at the Synod for a better understanding of the various aspects of the subject, not only ascertaining where these resources exist, but also asking how their activities can be integrated in the life of the missionary Church. The synod fathers are called upon to discuss the relationship between charism and institution, between charismatic gifts and hierarchical gifts⁵⁵, in the concrete situations of dioceses and their missionary endeavours. This could lead to eliminating the obstacles denounced in some responses which neglect the full integration of the charisms in support of the new evangelization. Various responses also request the treatment of the "coessentiality" of these gifts of the Spirit, in the life and mission of the Church, in light of the new evangelization.⁵⁶ This reflection could then result in more incisive pastoral means which better value the resources provided by the various charisms.

⁵⁵ Cf. SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen gentium*, 4.

⁵⁶ Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Message for the World Congress of Ecclesial Movements and New Communities* (sponsored by the Pontifical Council for the Laity - 27 May 1998), *L'Osservatore Romano: Weekly Edition in English*, 10 June 1998, p. 2.

117. In treating the emergence of these new experiences and forms of evangelization, the responses also refer to the great movements, institutions and associations for evangelization, such as Catholic Action, which have arisen in the course of the history of Christianity. Their works clearly show the radical nature of the Gospel animating these types of experiences and their prophetic vocation to proclaim the Gospel. The admirable and joyous character of their life inspires vocations, a gift to the Church. Several responses relate that some older forms of consecrated life and these new movements have begun a mutual exchange of gifts.

GIVING AN ACCOUNT FOR ONE'S FAITH

118. Present-day situations demand that the task of proclaiming and handing on the faith, incumbent on every Christian, be rendered more visible and operative. Several responses state that the Church's most compelling responsibility today is to re-awaken in all the baptized their baptismal identity so that each can be a true witness of the Gospel and render an account for one's faith. All the faithful, in virtue of their participation in the common priesthood⁵⁷ and the prophetic office of Christ,⁵⁸ have an important role in this task of the Church. The lay faithful, in particular, are called upon to show how the Christian faith is a valid response to the pressing problems of life in every age and culture, problems which necessarily affect every person, even the agnostic and unbeliever. This will be possible only by overcoming the separation of the Gospel from life and reconstructing, in the everyday activities of the home, work and society, the unity of a life which finds its inspiration in the Gospel and, in the same Gospel, the strength to realize it fully.⁵⁹

119. Every Christian needs to feel the call to engage in this task, which comes from one's baptismal identity. Every Christian must seek to be guided by the Holy Spirit, who provides the strength and means to respond to it, each according to one's proper vocation. These times, in which choosing the faith and following Christ is not easy and is little understood

⁵⁷ Cf. SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen gentium*, 10, 11.

⁵⁸ Cf. *ibid.*, 12, 31, 35.

⁵⁹ Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles laici* (30 December 1988), 33, 34: AAS 81 (1989) 453-457.

by the world — if not outrightly resisted and opposed — make it more compelling for communities and individual Christians to be courageous witnesses of the Gospel. The reasons underlying such actions come from St. Peter the Apostle, when he asks us to give an account and respond to anyone who asks us the reason for the hope which is in us (cf. *1 Pt* 3:15). The Spirit indicates for our Christian communities the path to be followed, if they are to bring about a new season of witnessing to our faith and new forms of response (*apo-logia*) to anyone who asks the *logos*, the reason for our faith. These circumstances provide an occasion to renew ourselves, to make the hope and salvation given us by Jesus Christ more effectively present in the world in which we live. This demands learning a new manner of responding — “with gentleness and respect, with a clear conscience” (*1 Pt* 3:16). This task invites us to live life with the gentle power which comes from our identity as children of God, from our union with Christ in the Spirit, and from the newness which this union has created in us, and with the determination of someone who knows that the goal of all living is an encounter with God the Father in his Kingdom.

120. This manner of response must be complete, involving not only a state of mind but personal deeds and public testimony as well as the internal life of our communities and their missionary zeal. This will not only add greater credibility to the Church’s work in education and selfless dedication to the poor but also strengthen the ability of every Christian to engage in the conversation taking place in all areas of living and in the workplace, so as to communicate the gift of Christian hope. This manner of response has to be characterized by zeal, trust and frankness (*parresia*) as seen in the preaching of the Apostles (cf. *Acts* 4:31; 9:27-28). The world must witness this manner of response, based on the logic of our faith, in not only the Church as a whole but the life of every Christian. This manner of responding personally involves each of us, as Pope Paul VI recalls: “side by side with the collective proclamation of the Gospel, the other form of transmission, the person-to-person one, remains valid and important. [...] It must not happen that the pressing need to proclaim the Good News to the multitudes should cause us to forget this form of proclamation whereby an individual’s personal conscience is reached and touched by an entirely unique word that he receives from someone else.”⁶⁰

⁶⁰ PAUL VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii nuntiandi* (8 December 1975), 46: AAS 68 (1976) 36.

121. From this perspective, The Year of Faith's invitation to an authentic and renewed conversion to the Lord, the Only Saviour of the World, is a beneficial opportunity — not to be left unheeded — for each baptized person and entire Christian communities to be the branch which, bearing fruit, is pruned so that “it may bear more fruit” (*Jn 15:2*), and able to enrich the world and people's lives with the gifts of a new life formed by the radical newness of the Resurrection. In freely submitting oneself to the Holy Spirit, a person's thoughts, affections, mentality and conduct are gradually purified and transformed in a way which is never fully completed in this earthly life. This “faith working through love” (*Gal 5:6*) now becomes the new standard for understanding and action, changing every aspect of a person's life (cf. *Eph 4:20-29*) and bearing new fruits.

THE FRUITS OF THE FAITH

122. The fruits of this transformation, made possible by the life of faith and generated within the Church as a sign of the life-giving power of the Gospel, are formed in response to the challenges of our time. In this regard, the responses refer to the following fruits: families which are a true sign of love, sharing and a hope which is open to life; communities equipped with a true ecumenical spirit; the courage to support initiatives for social justice and solidarity; and the joy of giving one's life to the priesthood or the consecrated life. In the new evangelization, the Church transmits her faith in all these areas and manifests the Spirit who guides and transforms history.

123. Just as faith is manifested in love; so love without faith would simply be philanthropy. For the Christian, faith and love are essential to each other; one supports the other. Many responses emphasized the witness-value of many Christians who devote their lives in love to those who are lonely, marginalized or rejected, precisely because the face of Christ is reflected in these people. Faith allows us to see the face of the Risen Lord in all those who ask for our love: “as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me” (*Mt 25:40*). Faith enables us to recognize Christ in others. Christ's own love compels us to offer him help, every time Christ makes himself our neighbour on the road of life.

124. Sustained by faith, we look upon our duty to the world with a spirit of hope, awaiting “new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells” (*2 Pt 3:13*). This same responsibility to evangelize calls us, as Pope Paul VI stated, “to affect and, as it were upset, through the power of the

Gospel, humanity's criteria of judgment, determining values, points of interest, lines of thought, sources of inspiration and models of life, which are in contrast with the Word of God and the plan of salvation."⁶¹ Many responses call for the re-motivation of all those who are baptized so that each can respond with greater dedication to the specific task of evangelizing, through applying the social doctrine of the Church and living the faith in the world by seeking the true good of everyone, by respecting and promoting the dignity of every person, even to the point — especially in the case of the lay faithful — of becoming actively involved in society and civic life.

In the new evangelization, the love shown to those in spiritual and material need, which is expressed in works of fellowship, solidarity and assistance, speaks louder than words.

125. A renewed commitment to ecumenism is another fruit resulting from the Church's allowing herself to be transformed by the Gospel of Jesus and his presence. The Second Vatican Council recounts that the divisions among Christians are a counter-witness: "Such division openly contradicts the will of Christ, scandalizes the world, and damages the holy cause of preaching the Gospel to every creature."⁶² Overcoming these divisions is undeniably a part of a fully credible following of Christ. What unites Christians is much stronger than what divides them. Consequently, we need to encourage each other in seeking to be faithful in witnessing to the Gospel and to learn to grow in unity. In this regard, many particular Churches mentioned that ecumenism is definitely one of the fruits to be expected from the new evangelization, since both of these activities are intended to foster communion in the visible body of the Church, for the salvation of all.

126. Many responses expect that the new evangelization will also be directed towards people's attitude towards the truth. Various areas of contemporary culture display a certain intolerance towards anything claimed to be the truth. Today, the modern idea is that freedom means absolute autonomy from truth, which finds relativism to be the only way of thinking suitable for living in cultural and religious diversity. In this regard, many responses recommend that our communities and individual Christians — precisely in the name of the truth which sets us free (cf. *Jn* 8:32) —

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 19: AAS 68 (1976) 18.

⁶² SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Decree on Ecumenism *Unitatis redintegratio*, 1.

know how to guide people to the truth, to peace and to the defence of the dignity of every person, and work against every form of violence and denial of rights.

127. This approach can surely be tested in interreligious dialogue, which must necessarily treat the subject of the truth, a quality inherent to any religious experience. The search for God clearly involves, in a supreme way, the freedom of the individual. This search, however, is truly free when it is open to the truth which does not impose itself by force but by the power of its own truth.⁶³ The Second Vatican Council states: “Truth, however, is to be sought in a manner proper to the dignity of the human person and his social nature. The inquiry is to be free, carried on with the aid of teaching or instruction, communication and dialogue, in the course of which people explain to one another the truth they have discovered, or think they have discovered, in order thus to assist one another in the quest for truth. Moreover, as the truth is discovered, it is by a personal assent that people are to adhere to it.”⁶⁴ The Synod could serve as an occasion to treat the topic of evangelization and the transmission of the faith from the vantage point of the dual principle of truth-freedom.⁶⁵

128. Finally, discerning the fruits of the new evangelization will also involve the courage to denounce the infidelities and scandals in Christian communities which appear as a sign and consequence of a spiritual decline in the task of proclamation. Courage is necessary to acknowledge faults, while continuing to witness to Jesus Christ and the ongoing need to be saved. According to the St. Paul, in considering our weaknesses, we can come to see the power of Christ which saves us (cf. *2 Cor* 12:9, *Rm* 7:14ff). The practice of penance as conversion leads to purification and reparation of the consequences of our mistakes, trusting that the hope which has been given us “does not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us” (*Rm* 5:5). Such an approach is a result of the transmission of the faith and proclamation of

⁶³ Cf. BENEDICT XVI, *Message for the XLIV World Day of Peace “Religious Freedom, the Path to Peace”* (8 December 2010): AAS 103 (2011) 46-58.

⁶⁴ SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Declaration on Religious Freedom *Dignitatis humanae*, 3.

⁶⁵ Cf. CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, *Doctrinal Note on Some Aspects of Evangelization* (3 December 2007), 4-8: AAS 100 (2008) 491-496.

the Gospel, which never fails to renew Christians and their communities, in the first place, as they witness to the Christian faith in the world.

CHAPTER IV REVIVIFYING PASTORAL ACTIVITY

*“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations,
baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son
and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe
all that I have commanded you (Mt 28:19, 20)*

129. The command to make disciples of all nations and baptize them gave origin, at different times in the history of the Church and pastoral practice, to the will to transmit the faith and the necessity of proclaiming the Gospel in human terms, which are grounded in culture and present within them.⁶⁶ This principle is clearly expressed by the Second Vatican Council: “From the beginning of her history, she [the Church] has learned to express the message of Christ with the help of the ideas and terminology of various philosophers, and has tried to clarify it with their wisdom, too. Her purpose has been to adapt the Gospel to the grasp of all as well as to the needs of the learned, insofar as such was appropriate. Indeed this accommodated preaching of the revealed word ought to remain the law of all evangelization. [...] With the help of the Holy Spirit, it is the task of the entire People of God, especially pastors and theologians, to hear, distinguish and interpret the many voices of our age, and to judge them in the light of the divine word, so that revealed truth can always be more deeply penetrated, better understood and set forth to greater advantage.”⁶⁷

130. An increasingly clear understanding of the forms of transmission of the faith, together with the emerging social and cultural changes which are posing challenges to Christianity today, have prompted the Church to begin a general process of reflection and reassessment of her pastoral programmes, particularly those devoted to initiation into the faith, instruction and the proclamation of the message of Christianity. In fact, “since the Church has a visible and social structure as a sign of her unity in Christ, she can and ought to be enriched by the development of human

⁶⁶ Cf. SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church *Ad gentes*, 15, 19.

⁶⁷ SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et spes*, 44.

social life, not that there is any lack in the constitution given her by Christ, but that she can understand it more penetratingly, express it better, and adjust it more successfully to our times.”⁶⁸ Quoting the words of Paul VI in *Evangelii nuntiandi*,⁶⁹ Pope Benedict XVI states that ““evangelization would not be complete if it did not take account of the unceasing interplay of the Gospel and of man's concrete life, both personal and social.’ [...] Testimony to Christ's charity, through works of justice, peace and development, is part and parcel of evangelization, because Jesus Christ, who loves us, is concerned with the whole person. These important teachings form the basis for the missionary aspect of the Church's social doctrine, which is an essential element of evangelization. The Church's social doctrine proclaims and bears witness to faith. It is an instrument and an indispensable setting for formation in faith.”⁷⁰ These are issues to be explored in the new evangelization, which is “especially concerned with the Church’s service to reconciliation, justice and peace.”⁷¹

CHRISTIAN INITIATION, AN EVANGELIZING PROCESS

131. The *Lineamenta* stated that the way the Church will know how to oversee the ongoing renewal of her baptismal practices will depend on the features Christianity will have in the world in the future, especially in the West, and the ability of the Christian faith to speak to today's culture. The responses speak of a Church very much involved in this examination, which has arrived at certainty on some issues but on others still displays signs of a work yet to be completed and a plan not thoroughly treated.

132. The first certainty deals with the customary form of entrance into the Christian life, namely, infant baptism which normally takes place at a reasonably short time after birth. Most responses based their findings on existing situations and others on a conscious choice to study the matter. The

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 44.

⁶⁹ Cf. PAUL VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii nuntiandi* (8 December 1975), 29: AAS 68 (1976) 25.

⁷⁰ BENEDICT XVI, Encyclical Letter *Caritas in veritate* (29 June 2009), 15: AAS 101 (2009) 651, 652.

⁷¹ Cf. BENEDICT XVI, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Africae munus* (19 November 2011), 169; *Libreria Editrice Vaticana*, Vatican City: 2011, p. 126.

younger Churches view the practice of infant baptism as an indication of the high level of inculturation of Christianity in their lands. Others, on the contrary, voice a deep concern at the choice by some baptized parents to postpone the baptism of their child for various reasons, the most frequent of which concerns the free choice of the child once he reaches adulthood.

133. A second certainty is the rather common practice today of adults and adolescents requesting Baptism. Even though the number of those in this category is significantly fewer than that for infant Baptism, the situation is seen as a gift enabling Christian communities to understand the deep meaning of Baptism. The course of preparation, the pre-baptismal scrutinies and the celebration of the Sacrament are moments which nourish the faith of both the catechumen and the community.

134. Moreover, it seems certain that the structure of the catechumenate, with reference *Ordo Initiationis Christianae Adulorum*,⁷² is an apt means for renewing the manner in which children are initiated into the faith. In recent decades, all particular Churches have worked to give this process of initiation and instruction a character which better displays its witness and ecclesial aspects. A greater consciousness in the celebration of the Sacrament of Baptism is expected to lead to a better participation of the baptized later in their Christian life. Efforts were made to give greater form to the process of Christian initiation, seeking to link the sacraments (Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist) and more actively engage parents and godparents. In fact, many particular Churches have instituted a certain kind of “post-baptismal catechumenate” to renew practices of adherence to the faith and overcome the separation of liturgy and life, so that the Church might really be a mother who raises her children in the faith.⁷³

135. Many responses see the new evangelization as an appeal to consolidate past efforts and reforms introduced to strengthen the faith of catechumens and their families, above all, as well as the community which supports and guides them. Pastoral programmes for Baptism are one of the priorities of the new evangelization.

⁷² Cf. *Ordo Initiationis Christianae Adulorum*, *Editio typica*, 1972.

⁷³ “By its very nature infant Baptism requires a post-baptismal catechumenate. Not only is there a need for instruction after Baptism, but also for the necessary flowering of baptismal grace in personal growth. the catechism has its proper place here.”: *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1231.

136. The responses speak of two points concerning the process of Christian initiation: the great variety of experiences and the harmony in this diversity. Generally speaking, admission to First Communion takes place in elementary school, preceded by a course of preparation, which can also have experiences of mystagogy and guidance in later years. Greater variety is seen in pastoral practice concerning the Sacrament of Confirmation which is administered at very different times in life. Differences in practice are even seen from diocese to diocese.

Drawing on the experience of the Synod on the Eucharist, namely, that the various practices are more pastoral than dogmatic,⁷⁴ those involved do not express any desire for reform in this matter. On the contrary, they insist that the current situation displays a richness which is useful to maintain.

In this regard, the differences in practice between the Eastern Catholic Churches and the Latin Church are not considered so important as to warrant discussion.

137. The Synod is expected to treat the above matter thoroughly. The synod fathers are asked not only to provide a certain orientation to this variety of practices so as to avoid a dispersion of energies, but to do what was requested by the Synod on the Eucharist, namely, to examine “the effectiveness of current approaches to Christian initiation, so that the faithful can be helped both to mature through the formation received in our communities and to give their lives an authentically Eucharistic orientation, so that they can offer a reason for the hope within them in a way suited to our times (cf. *1 Pt* 3:15).”⁷⁵ From a theological point of view, we must better understand the sequence of the Sacraments of Christian Initiation, which culminates in the Eucharist, and reflect on models to be translated into deeply meaningful pastoral practices.

THE DEMANDS OF INITIAL PROCLAMATION

138. On several occasions, the responses expressed the need to help local Christian communities, beginning with parishes, to adopt a more missionary presence within society. The recurring appeal is that our communities, in

⁷⁴ BENEDICT XVI, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum caritatis* (22 February 2007), 18: AAS 99 (2007) 119.

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, 18: AAS 99 (2007) 119.

proclaiming the Gospel, might better know how to attract people's attention today and interpret their questioning and search for happiness. In a society which has done away with many references to and talk about God, our institutions need to adopt a bold and even "apologetic" approach and seek ways of publically affirming their faith, fearlessly and with a clear sense of pastoral urgency.

139. This situation provides the occasion to initially proclaim the Gospel. The *Lineamenta* referred to initial proclamation as a means of making an explicit proposal, even better than other forms of proclamation, of the basic contents of the faith. The initial proclamation of the Gospel is primarily directed to those who still do not know Jesus Christ, to unbelievers and those who, in fact, live in religious indifference. This proclamation is a call to conversion and must be integrated into other forms of proclamation and initiation into the faith. While these latter forms are geared to guiding and developing a faith which is already present, the goal of initial proclamation is a conversion which then remains a constant part of the life of a Christian.

140. The distinction between these different forms of proclamation is not always easy to make nor need it be adhered to in a strict sense. Instead, this distinction simply points to two aspects of a single pastoral action. Initial proclamation compels Christian communities to be attentive to the faith of persons both within and outside the community. Its task is to reanimate the faith or enkindle it so as to keep the community and each baptized person constantly involved and faithful in proclaiming and giving public testimony to the faith they both profess.

141. Initial proclamation therefore requires a form of action, places, initiatives and events which permit the Christian faith to be proclaimed within society itself. In this regard, the responses indicate that general forms of initial proclamation are not lacking. Diverse episcopal conferences have organized national ecclesial events. Along the same line, many responses praise international events, like World Youth Day, as real forms of initial proclamation on a global scale. Even the Pope's apostolic journeys are considered in the same perspective as well as the ceremonies of beatification or canonization of a son or daughter of a particular Church.

142. In contrast, many responses voice a concern on the scarcity of initial proclamation taking place everyday in neighbourhoods and the workplace. Therefore, many share the idea that work needs to be done to raise the awareness of the parish community to this urgent missionary activity. On the basis of the responses, the Synod can provide further information for

comparison and reflection. Several responses mention that initial proclamation can already be inserted into the customary pastoral practices in the day-to-day life of Christian communities, such as preaching, the celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation and popular piety with its many devotions.

143. As regards preaching, the Sunday homily, above all, as well as the many extraordinary forms of preaching (parish missions, novenas and homilies at funerals, baptisms, weddings and festivals) are excellent occasions for initial proclamation. For this reason, the previous ordinary general assembly asked that homilies be carefully prepared and due attention be given to the core elements of the message to be transmitted, their essential Christological character and the use of a language which will inspire listeners and stir the assembly to conversion.⁷⁶

144. The Sacrament of Reconciliation has its fundamental meaning in providing an actual experience of the merciful face of God the Father, which brings about conversion and growth in both the individual penitent and the community which celebrates this Sacrament. Implementing what is in the ritual, in a simple and habitual manner, will be sufficient to ensure that this Sacrament fosters evangelization and instills a sense of sin. In other words, its celebration should begin with the proclamation of a biblical passage which can assist in the act of examining one's conscience and discerning how far one is from following the Gospel and the will of God.⁷⁷ In this way, what was recounted in the Acts of the Apostles would be repeated today, with the proclamation of the Word leading to repentance for the forgiveness of sins (cf. *Acts* 2:14- 47).

145. Finally, popular piety with its devotion to the saints and Mary, in particular, as well as sacred places (shrines) with their opportunities for penance and spirituality, is increasingly being seen as a very timely and original means of initial proclamation. Pilgrimages and devotions can also provide the occasion to introduce a person to a real faith-experience and to respond to the great existential questions which touch upon conversion in one's life. A shared experience of faith opens a person to a world and life of new horizons. Working to well-preserve the richness of Christian prayer

⁷⁶ Cf. BENEDICT XVI, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum Domini* (30 September 2010), 59: AAS 102 (2010) 738, 739.

⁷⁷ Cf. *Ordo paenitentiae. Rituale romanum, Editio typica*, 1974, 17.

in these places of conversion is undoubtedly a challenge for the new evangelization.

With regard to devotion to Mary, the new evangelization must simply enact the teaching of the Second Vatican Council: “This most Holy Synod deliberately teaches this Catholic doctrine and at the same time admonishes all the sons and daughters of the Church that the cult, especially the liturgical cult, of the Blessed Virgin, be generously fostered, and the practices and exercises of piety, recommended by the magisterium of the Church toward her in the course of centuries. [...] Let the faithful remember moreover that true devotion consists neither in sterile nor transitory affection, nor in a certain vain credulity, but proceeds from true faith, by which we are led to know the excellence of the Mother of God, and we are moved to a filial love toward our mother and to the imitation of her virtues.”⁷⁸

146. The responses list other practices which deserve to be considered during synod discussion as a means for the initial proclamation of the Gospel. Firstly, reference is made to popular missions, organized in the past on a regular basis in parishes, as a means of spiritually awakening the local Christian population. Several responses raise the subject of reviving the practice, giving it a new, contemporary form and integrating popular missions in the community’s practices of listening to and proclaiming the Word of God, a widespread occurrence in Christian communities today. Likewise, all pastoral activity in preparing couples for the Sacrament of Matrimony is also considered a golden opportunity for the initial proclamation of the Gospel. These programmes are not considered as simply a preparation for this special Sacrament but can increasingly become true and proper ways to reacquire and grow in the Christian faith. Finally, the responses also ask that the initial proclamation of the Gospel include the care and attention given by the Christian community to those in moments of suffering and illness.

TRANSMITTING THE FAITH, EDUCATING THE PERSON

⁷⁸ SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen gentium*, 67.

147. The proposed link between education and initiation into the faith, mentioned in the *Lineamenta*, greatly resonated in the Church. If evangelization is to be true to itself, it cannot take place apart from education; it is directly related to it. The Second Vatican Council teaches that the encounter with Christ is the true light of the mystery of human existence.⁷⁹ In this regard, the Church possesses a tradition of educational resources, studies, research, institutions and people — consecrated and non-consecrated persons, belonging to religious orders, congregations and institutes — who provide a significant presence in schools and education.

148. Taking into consideration the great differences, due to geography, in societies and the history of Catholicism in each nation, all agree that the Church has expended great energy in the field of education, a work which continues today. Catholic schools and universities are present in practically every particular Church. In this regard, the responses provide detailed information on the work undertaken in education and the fruits which this work has produced in the past as well as what is taking place today. The past and present development of some nations is a direct result of the Church's efforts in education.

149. Today, the work of education is taking place in a cultural context where every kind of educational activity is becoming more difficult and critical to the point that the Pope Benedict XVI has spoken of an “educational emergency.”⁸⁰ With this expression, the Holy Father intends to allude to the special urgency to pass on to future generations the basic values of life and moral conduct. Consequently, many places are increasingly demanding a genuine form of education as well as truly qualified teachers. Such requests are commonly raised by parents who are concerned about the future of their children, by teachers who are sadly experiencing the deteriorating situation in schools and by society itself which sees the very foundations of harmonious living threatened.

150. Similarly, the Church's duty in educating people in the faith, discipleship and witnessing to the Gospel can be seen as a contributing factor in permitting society to emerge from the weight of this crisis in education. When speaking of education, the responses describe a Church

⁷⁹ Cf. SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et spes*, 22.

⁸⁰ BENEDICT XVI, *Discourse at the Inauguration of the Convention of the Diocese of Rome* (Rome, 11 June 2007): AAS 99 (2007) 680.

who has much to contribute and who has a concept of education she has managed to spread throughout the world, namely, that the person and his formation are primary and that she desires to provide a genuine education that is open to the truth, including the encounter with God and a faith-experience.

151. Furthermore, some responses praise the value and emphasis of the educational endeavours of the Church as a way of providing an anthropological and metaphysical basis to today's challenges to education. The basis of the "educational emergency" at present may in fact be a result of the imposition of an anthropology marked by individualism and a dual relativism which reduces reality to something to be manipulated and limits Christian revelation to merely an historical process devoid of its supernatural content.

152. Pope Benedict XVI describes these roots in the following manner: "One essential root I think consists in a false concept of man's autonomy: man should develop on his own, without interference from others, who could assist his self-development but should not enter into this development. [...] I see the other root of the educational emergency in scepticism and relativism or, in simpler, clearer words, the exclusion of the two sources that orient the human journey. The first source would be nature according to Revelation.[...] It is fundamental to recover a true concept of Nature as the Creation of God that speaks to us; the Creator, through the book of Creation speaks to us and shows us the true values. And thus finding Revelation: recognizing that the book of Creation, in which God gives us the fundamental orientation, is deciphered in Revelation."⁸¹

FAITH AND KNOWLEDGE

153. The same bond between faith and education also exists between faith and knowledge. The *Lineamenta* described this relationship by using Pope Benedict XVI's expression of the "ecology of the human person".⁸² While pointing out the consequences of a crisis which could threaten the fabric of

⁸¹ BENEDICT XVI, *Discourse at the LXI General Assembly of the Italian Bishops' Conference* (27 May 2010), *L'Osservatore Romano: Weekly Edition in English*, 27 June 2010, pp. 3, 4.

⁸² BENEDICT XVI, Encyclical Letter *Caritas in veritate* (29 June 2009), 51: AAS 101 (2009) 687.

society as a whole, Pope Benedict XVI described a possible way out of a similar danger by developing a human ecology, which, understood in its proper sense, is a way to understand the world and the development of science that takes into account all the needs of a person, including openness to the truth and the original relationship with God before the Fall.

154. The Christian faith assists intelligence to understand the profound balance governing the various aspects of existence and history. This work of faith is not done in a generic sense or from the outside, but by sharing with reason a thirst for both knowing and seeking and then directs reason towards the good of humanity and the cosmos. The Christian faith provides assistance in understanding the intense content of fundamental human experiences. Many responses referred to this age-old task of Catholicism — that of critical appraisal and orientation — by listing institutions, research centres and universities, resulting from the intuition and charism of certain people and the concern for education in some particular Churches, which have made this critical consciousness one of their main objectives.

155. However, some responses voice concern that the public forum of research and the development of knowledge in various cultures is not easily entered. In fact, some note that Christian reason must make an effort to find those with whom to engage in conversation in the authoritative and decisive areas of world research, especially in the areas of technology and economic development. Consequently, the Church should see this situation as a challenge and a focal area for the new evangelization.

156. In continuity with the Church's Tradition and in the wake of Blessed Pope John Paul II's Encyclical Letter *Fides et ratio*, Pope Benedict XVI has often stressed the complementarity of faith and reason. Faith widens the horizons of reason and reason preserves faith from the danger of drifting aimlessly or manipulating religion. Always attentive to the intellectual content of education exemplified in her many universities and institutes of higher learning, the Church is involved in campus ministry to foster a dialogue with learned people in the various fields of knowledge. Christian people of learning are entrusted with the particular task of bearing witness, in their activities and especially in their lives, to the fact that reason and faith are the two wings with which a person approaches God,⁸³ and that Christian faith and the sciences, properly understood, can mutually enrich

⁸³ Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter *Fides et ratio* (14 September 1998): AAS 91 (1999) 5.

each other for the good of humanity. The only limit to scientific progress is in preserving the dignity of the human person created in God's image, who must always be actively involved in scientific research and technology and never be a mere object of study.

157. Some responses refer to the subjects of art and beauty as places for the transmission of the faith and, therefore, are to be addressed in this chapter dedicated to the relationship between faith and knowledge. Many possible reasons are given to support this request, especially those coming from the Eastern Catholic Churches who have a strong tradition in this area. They have been able to maintain a very close relation between faith and beauty. In these traditions, the relation between faith and beauty is not simply a matter of aesthetics, but is rather seen as a fundamental resource in bearing witness to the faith and developing a knowledge which is truly a "holistic" service to a person's every human need.

The knowledge coming from beauty, as in the liturgy, is able to take on a visible reality in its originally-intended role as a manifestation of the universal communion to which humanity and every person is called by God. Therefore, human knowledge needs again to be wedded to divine knowledge, in other words, human knowledge is to adopt the same outlook which God the Father has towards creation and, through the Holy Spirit and the Son, to see God the Father in creation.

This fundamental role of beauty urgently needs to be restored in Christianity. In this regard, the new evangelization has an important role to play. The Church recognizes that human beings cannot exist without beauty. For Christians, beauty is found within the Paschal Mystery, in the transparency of the reality of Christ.

THE BASIS FOR AN EVANGELIZING PASTORAL PROGRAMME

158. The *Lineamenta* concluded the chapter devoted to analysing pastoral practice by adopting the basic insights of Paul VI, namely, if the Church is to evangelize, she needs to not only renew her programmes, but also increase the calibre of her testimony. The work of evangelization is not so much an organized plan or strategy, as it is, fundamentally, a spiritual matter. "Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses. [...] It is therefore primarily by her conduct and by her life that the Church will evangelize the world, in other words, by her living witness of fidelity to the Lord Jesus, by her witness of poverty and detachment, and by her witness

of freedom in the face of the powers of this world, in short, the witness of sanctity.”⁸⁴ Many particular Churches have recognized themselves in this passage and have understood the necessity of having witnesses who can evangelize primarily through their lives and example. They are certain that, in the final analysis, the key element in the work of the new evangelization is for every Christian to answer the call to holiness. Only those who have been evangelized themselves, and are being evangelized, can evangelize. In other words, only those who are capable of being spiritually renewed by encountering Jesus Christ and living a life of communion with him. Christian witness is an interaction of words and deeds⁸⁵ and is the fundamental element in every act of evangelization, because it creates the relation between proclamation and freedom: “We become witnesses when, through our actions, words and way of being, Another makes himself present. Witness could be described as the means by which the truth of God’s love comes to men and women in history, inviting them to accept freely this radical newness. Through witness, God lays himself open, one might say, to the risk of human freedom.”⁸⁶

THE CENTRALITY OF VOCATIONS

159. The next synodal assembly is expected to clearly state the centrality of the question of a personal vocational calling in the Church today and the hope that the treatment of the topic of the new evangelization will lead to a greater consciousness among all the baptized of their missionary and evangelizing responsibility. If witnesses are to be credible in the various sectors of the new evangelization, they must know how to speak in terms which are understandable today and, in this way, proclaim within these sectors, the reasons for the hope which gives them life. The entire process of preparation and the response to the synod’s work is expected to re-motivate Christians and increase their enthusiasm and dedication in the work in which they are already engaged in proclaiming and transmitting the

⁸⁴ PAUL VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii nuntiandi* (8 December 1975), 41: AAS 68 (1976) 31, 32.

⁸⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, 22: AAS 68 (1976) 20; BENEDICT XVI, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum Domini* (30 September 2010), 97ff: AAS 102 (2010) 767-769.

⁸⁶ BENEDICT XVI, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum caritatis* (22 February 2007), 85: AAS 99 (2007) 170.

faith. At the same time, it is to be a moment of support and encouragement for families and the role they play. More specifically, the Synod Assembly should give particular attention to the priestly ministry and the consecrated life in the hope that one of the fruits of the Synod in the Church might be new vocations to the priesthood and a renewal of her commitment to a clear and decisive programme on behalf of pastoral vocations.

160. In this regard, many responses indicated that one of the most obvious signs of weakening in the Christian experience might be the decline in vocations, which concerns both the decreasing number of vocations of special consecration in the ministerial priesthood and consecrated life and the abandonment by some of their vocations. The same is true in the widespread unfaithfulness of those who make a particular commitment in life, for example, marriage. The responses expect the Synod to discuss this matter, which is closely related to the new evangelization, not so much to confirm that the crisis exists and not only to re-enforce pastoral programmes on behalf of vocations, which has already been done, but rather, in a deeper sense, to foster a mentality in which life itself is looked upon as a vocation.

161. The transmission of faith needs to consider helping people conceive within themselves a vital relationship with the God who calls them. In this regard, Pope Benedict XVI stated: “In stressing faith’s intrinsic summons to an ever deeper relationship with Christ, the word of God in our midst, the Synod also emphasized that this word calls each one of us personally, revealing that *life itself is a vocation* from God. In other words, the more we grow in our personal relationship with the Lord Jesus, the more we realize that he is calling us to holiness in and through the definitive choices by which we respond to his love in our lives, taking up tasks and ministries which help to build up the Church. This is why the Synod frequently encouraged all Christians to grow in their relationship with the word of God, not only because of their Baptism, but also in accordance with their call to various states in life.”⁸⁷ One of the signs of the effectiveness of the new evangelization will be a rediscovery of life itself as a vocation and an increase in the personal call to a radical following of Jesus Christ.

⁸⁷ BENEDICT XVI, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum Domini* (30 September 2010), 77: AAS 102 (2010) 750.

CONCLUSION

“You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you” (Acts 1:8)

162. With his coming among us, Jesus Christ communicated to us the divine life which transforms the face of the earth, making all things new (cf. *Rev 21:5*). All of us are involved in his revelation not simply as the recipients of salvation but also as his heralds and witnesses. Through the outpouring of the Spirit of the Risen Christ our lives can be an effective means of spreading the Gospel throughout the world, thereby reliving the experience of the primitive Christian community, which saw the spread of the Word through preaching and testimony (cf. *Acts 6:7*).

163. Chronologically, the first evangelization began on the day of Pentecost when the Apostles, who were gathered together in prayer with the Mother of Christ, received the Holy Spirit (cf. *Acts 1:14, 2:1-3*). Mary, who in the words of the Archangel is “full of grace” (*Lk 1:28*), is present during apostolic evangelization and at every moment when the successors of the Apostles are moved to proclaim the Gospel.

164. The new evangelization does not mean a “new Gospel”, because “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today and forever” (*Heb 13:8*). The new evangelization means an adequate response to the signs of the times, to the needs of individuals and people of today and to the new sectors with their cultures through which we express our identity and the meaning of our lives. Consequently, the new evangelization means fostering a culture deeply grounded in the Gospel and discovering the “new man” (*Eph 4:24*), which is within us as a result of the Spirit who has been given us by Jesus Christ and the Father. May the celebration of the next Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops be for the Church like a new Upper Room, where the successors of the Apostles, gathered in prayer with the Mother of Christ, who has been invoked as the “Star of the New Evangelization”,⁸⁸ prepare the path of the new evangelization.

165. We again take up the words of Pope John Paul II, who tirelessly worked for the new evangelization. The new evangelization means to

⁸⁸ Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in America* (22 January 1999), 11: AAS 91 (1999) 747; Apostolic Letter *Novo millennio ineunte* (6 January 2001), 58: AAS 93 (2001) 309.

“rekindle in ourselves the impetus of the beginnings and allow ourselves to be filled with the ardour of the apostolic preaching which followed Pentecost. We must revive in ourselves the burning conviction of Paul, who cried out: ‘Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel’ (*1 Cor 9:16*) This passion will not fail to stir in the Church a new sense of mission, which cannot be left to a group of ‘specialists’ but must involve the responsibility of all the members of the People of God. Those who have come into genuine contact with Christ cannot keep him for themselves, they must proclaim him. A new apostolic outreach is needed, which will be lived as the everyday commitment of Christian communities and groups.”⁸⁹

JESUS CHRIST, THE GOSPEL ENGENDERING HOPE

166. In these times, people are yearning for a principle in life that inspires hope, a hope which will permit them to look to the future with eyes filled with faith and not the tears of despair. As a Church, we have this principle and source of hope — Jesus Christ, who was crucified and is risen, living among us through his Spirit, who allows us to experience God. Nevertheless, we oftentimes seem to be unable to make this hope concrete, or “make it our own”, or make it a life-giving word for ourselves and the people we encounter today, or make it the basis for life in the Church and our pastoral activity.

In this regard, we have a clear watchword for the present and future of pastoral activity: the new evangelization, that is, a new proclamation of the message of Jesus which brings joy and liberation. This watchword nourishes the hope for which we yearn, namely, the Church, born to evangelize, discovers in contemplation the deep source of energy for proclaiming the Gospel.

“We had courage in our God to declare to you the Gospel of God in the face of great opposition” (*1 Thess 2:2*). The new evangelization compels us to witness to the faith which oftentimes is like engaging in a battle or a conflict. The new evangelization increasingly strengthens our relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, since only he is the surety for the future and the guarantor of a true and lasting love.

⁸⁹ JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Letter *Novo millennio ineunte* (6 January 2001), 40: AAS 93 (2001) 294.

THE JOY OF EVANGELIZING

167. The new evangelization means giving the reason for our faith, communicating the *Logos* of hope to a world which seeks salvation. People need hope so they can really live the present moment. For this reason, the Church is essentially missionary and offers a Revelation of the face of God in Jesus Christ, who assumed a human face and loved us to the end. The words of eternal life, which have been given to us in our encountering Jesus Christ, are destined for everyone and each individual. Every person in our time, whether he is aware of it or not, needs to hear this proclamation.

168. The absence of this awareness is the cause of loneliness and despair. Among the obstacles to a new evangelization is the lack of joy and hope which these situations create and spread among people today. Oftentimes, this lack of joy and hope is so strong as to wear thin the very fabric of our Christian communities. The new evangelization is proposed in these places as a remedy to bring joy and courage to life and become an imperative invigorating our faith, as called for by Pope Benedict XVI: “Intent on gathering the signs of the times in the present of history, faith commits every one of us to become a living sign of the presence of the Risen Lord in the world. What the world is in particular need of today is the credible witness of people enlightened in mind and heart by the word of the Lord, and capable of opening the hearts and minds of many to the desire for God and for true life, life without end.”⁹⁰

169. Therefore, we approach the new evangelization with enthusiasm. We learn the delightful and comforting joy of evangelizing, even when it seems the proclamation of the Gospel might be a sowing in tears (cf. *Ps.* 126:6). May the world, which seeks answers to the great questions of the meaning of life and truth, experience, with renewed unexpectedness, the joy of meeting witnesses of the Gospel who, through the simple and credible character of their lives, demonstrate the transforming power of the Christian faith. In this regard, Pope Paul VI said: “May it [evangelization] be the great joy of our consecrated lives. And may the world of our time, which is searching, sometimes with anguish, sometimes with hope, be enabled to receive the Good News not from evangelizers who are dejected, discouraged, impatient or anxious, but from ministers of the Gospel whose lives glow with fervour, who have first received the joy of Christ, and who

⁹⁰ BENEDICT XVI, Apostolic Letter *motu proprio Porta Fidei*, proclaiming The Year of Faith (11 October 2011), 15: AAS 103 (2011) 734.

are willing to risk their lives so that the kingdom may be proclaimed and the Church established in the midst of the world.”⁹¹ “Do not be afraid!”: these words of the Lord (cf. *Mt* 14:27) and the Angel (cf. *Mt* 28:5) sustain the faith of those who proclaim the faith and are their source of strength and enthusiasm. May their words also sustain and nurture everyone on their journey towards an encounter with God. May the words, “Do not be afraid!”, be the words of the new evangelization, by which the Church, inspired by the Holy Spirit, proclaims “to the ends of the earth”(Acts 1:8) Jesus Christ, the Gospel of God, so that everyone might have faith.

⁹¹PAUL VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii nuntiandi* (8 December 1975), 80: AAS 68 (1976) 75.

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