

EVANGELIZATION

THE ESSENTIAL MISSION OF THE CHURCH



“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. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:19-20)

EVANGELIZATION

A Pastoral Letter in gratitude to God for the founding of the Diocese of Santa Rosa on February 21, 1962, in anticipation of the 50th Anniversary of the Opening of the Second Vatican Council and in anticipation of the 20th Anniversary of the publication of the text of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

“We wish to confirm once more that the task of evangelizing all people constitutes the essential mission of the Church. It is a task and mission which the vast and profound changes of present-day society make all the more urgent. 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.”

— Pope Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 14

Given in Santa Rosa, on the Birthday of the Blessed Virgin Mary, September 8, 2012



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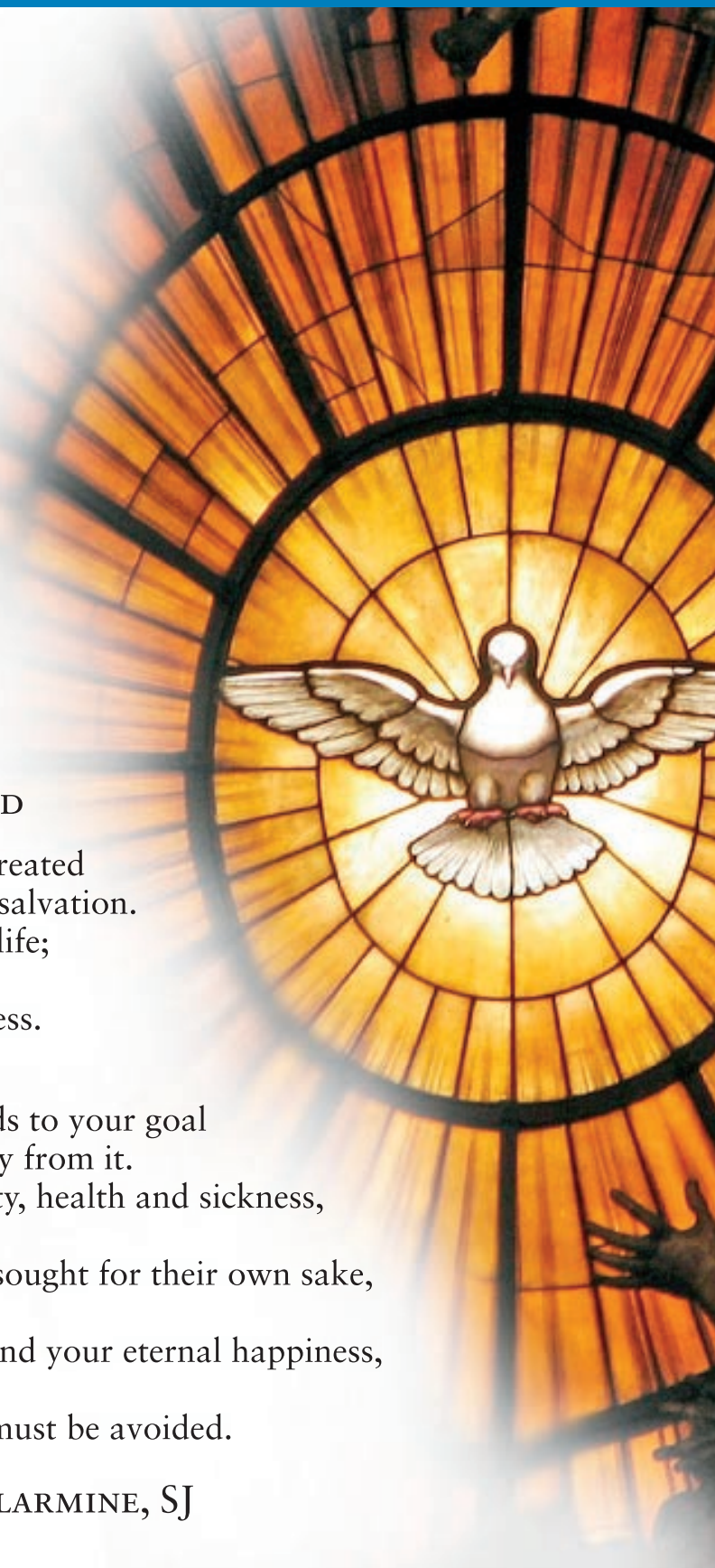
INTRODUCTION:

ON THE ASCENT OF THE MIND TO GOD

If you are wise, know that you have been created for the glory of God and your own eternal salvation. This is your goal; this is the center of your life; this is the treasure of your heart. If you reach this goal, you will find happiness. If you fail to reach it, you will find misery.

May you consider truly good whatever leads to your goal and truly evil whatever makes you fall away from it. Prosperity and adversity, wealth and poverty, health and sickness, honors and humiliations, life and death, in the mind of the wise man, are not to be sought for their own sake, nor avoided for their own sake. But if they contribute to the glory of God and your eternal happiness, then they are good and should be sought. If they detract from this, they are evil and must be avoided.

— SAINT ROBERT BELLARMINE, SJ



Dear Fathers, Deacons, Consecrated Women and Men, Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

In the statement cited above, “If you are wise, know that you have been created for the glory of God and your own eternal salvation,” Saint Robert Bellarmine provides us with a succinct, challenging and comforting message. It is a message of great hope, it is a message which appeals to our hearts and it is a message which resonates with the deepest longings of our souls. We know, beyond knowing, that we have been created by God and ultimately for union with God. Achieving this goal of union with God, in the final analysis, is the definition of success. I want to be successful and I want all of you to be successful in the one way that matters. It is this goal which I hope and believe all of us can work together to achieve. This goal is likewise a most succinct summary of what the Church has been established to help accomplish. Maintaining a clear vision of this spiritual goal is essential for our progress in the spiritual life. Maintaining a clear vision of this spiritual goal is essential for the proper application of Christian principles to our society. The Church exists to help us maintain this vision and to help spread this vision.

Another way to express this spiritual reality is to say that the Church exists to evangelize. Pope Paul VI in *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, emphasizes that the mission of the Church is to bring the Gospel to the world and to bring people to Christ, that is, to evangelize. This is Her reason for existence. He wrote: “We wish to confirm once more that the task of evangelizing all people constitutes the essential mission of the Church. It is a task and mission which the vast and profound changes of present-day society make all the more urgent. 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” (EN, 14).

Christ commissioned His disciples to “Go out into the whole world and proclaim the good news” (Matthew 28:19). It is Christ Himself who not only established this Church but also gave to it the evangelizing mission. According to *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, “[T]he Church evangelizes when she seeks to con-

vert, solely through the divine power of the message she proclaims, both the personal and collective consciences of people, the activities in which they engage, and their lives and their environment” (EN, 18). This is not different from the Gospel mandate for all of us to be salt, light, and leaven in the world. The Second Vatican Council teaches that this evangelizing role is filled, not only by bishops, priests, and religious but rather by every baptized Christian. All share in the evangelizing mission. Yet, the laity especially are called to be “leaven and salt” in the world, infusing its structures and practices with the spirit of the Gospel (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, 31-33). This is a role which can be led and promoted by priests and bishops, but it is a responsibility which falls most appropriately to the laity. The voices of a few bishops are easily drowned out. The voices of priests in the pulpits are heard by a few. The voices of our Christian laity in our society, provided these voices are properly evangelized and well-catechized themselves, are a force for good,

a force for the spread of the Gospel, which is still largely untapped. There has been an abundance of discussion about the apostolate of the laity but we still lack clarity, among clergy, religious, and laity, about how to actualize this apostolate.

The purpose of this Letter is to reflect upon several very important aspects of the evangelizing mission of the Church as these touch the Diocese of Santa Rosa and to begin a discussion about how this evangelizing mission might progress in individual Parishes over the course of many years. While this Letter mentions some practical recommendations, it will be necessary for local pastors and parishes to study and to determine the specific ways in which this mission of the Church can more effectively be implemented. I want to explore and clarify the link between evangelization and catechesis and to state clearly the source for the content of the catechizing message. The Universal Church recognizes the need to reinvigorate zeal for the evangelizing mission of the Church and I believe that we, in the Diocese of Santa Rosa, likewise have this need. The need exists to proclaim the kingdom of God but the need is more personal than this. Our own faith and spiritual well-being require that we come into deeper contact with Jesus and become the proponents of Him Who

To be an effective evangelizer one needs first to be evangelized.

is the Way, the Truth and the Life. I see this Letter as a partial response to the call of Pope Paul VI, in *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, for Bishops in their own Dioceses to direct the evangelizing mission: “On us particularly, the pastors of the Church, rests the responsibility for reshaping with boldness and wisdom, but in complete fidelity to the content of evangelization, the means that are most suitable and effective for communicating the Gospel message to the men and women of our times” (EN, 40).

In accord with this mandate and in accord with a general outline found in *Evangelii Nuntiandi* I propose five broad sections. First, the Meaning of Evangelization. Second, the Important Role of the Laity. Third, Sacred Liturgy: Our Central Evangelizing Moment. Fourth, Preaching and Evangelization. Fifth, the need for a solid, systematic Youth and Adult Catechesis.

THE MEANING OF EVANGELIZATION

The Church, and thus the People of God, is not only commissioned to be a proclaimer of the Word, introducing the world to Christ and Christ to the world; it is also to be first a hearer of the Word. To be an effective evangelizer one needs first to be evangelized. Thus, the Church must begin by evangelizing Herself (cf. EN, 15). But what does it mean to be “evangelized”? There are a number of places in the Scriptures where we could go to look for an answer to this question. We could look at the conversion of Zacchaeus as an evangelizing event in his life (Luke 19:1-10). We could look at the proclamation of Thomas, “My Lord and my God”, as he encountered the Risen Lord after having previously proclaimed his skepticism (John 20:28). We could consider the conversion of Saint Paul on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1-19). A reflection on any of these would be fitting and suitable, for each event concerns individuals who already know all about Jesus, what He claimed to be, what He did, and, except for Zacchaeus, that there were reports that He had risen from the dead. Yet, in each case, something blocked the movement of grace until the Lord was personally encountered.

It is this “personal encounter” with the living Lord which constitutes the core of what it means to be “evangelized”. For Zacchaeus, Thomas, and Paul the moment of encounter was life-changing. After that encounter nothing was ever the same for any of them again. Once they had experienced this personal encounter with Jesus, they were ready, indeed eager, to learn more about Jesus and His teaching. They were eager for catechesis. They were eager to evangelize others. They were even eager to give their lives for the sake of the Gospel.

A similar experience is that of the disciples who left or perhaps fled from Jerusalem after the death of Jesus. They were on their way to Emmaus. Jesus joined them and they had a lengthy discussion about the things that had occurred in Jerusalem. Here too, they received data and a kind of catechesis but for them it was largely “information”. The transforming event occurred for them when Jesus blessed and broke bread for them and “their eyes were opened and they recognized Him, but He vanished from their sight. Then they said to each other, ‘Were not our hearts burning within us while He spoke to us on the way and opened the scriptures to us?’” (Luke 24:13-35).

Catechesis plays an invaluable role in our overall formation in the Catholic Faith but unless it is founded on a living encounter with the Risen Lord it lacks both life and substance. The experience of having “our hearts burning within us” is more than an emotional experience. It is more than the temporary “high”, which can be achieved as a result of some liturgical or musical experience. These are memorable and positive experiences but they do not carry the same life changing

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impact as an encounter with Jesus, the Living Lord.

Blessed Pope John Paul II called for a new evangelization, which was to be new in its ardor, methods, and expression. Many Catholics identify “evangelization” with a form of aggressive recruitment which seems to desire to impose the Gospel on others. This is not, in my view, what Blessed John Paul II envisioned. The Church has taken up a more systematic and serious study of evangelization in the 2012 Synod on the New Evangelization. The papal document

which will flow from this Synod will warrant careful study and implementation. I believe such a study, engaged in by the people of God of the Diocese, can be a suitable means for us in the Diocese of Santa Rosa, who have just marked our 50th Anniversary as a Diocese, to begin our next 50 years. Furthermore, such a study can complement a diocesan celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Second Vatican Council, which had as one of its preeminent objectives “to strengthen whatever can help to call the whole of mankind into the household of the Church” (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 1). Obviously, the essence of such a mission is evangelization.

There are a number of very positive apostolates which incorporate the notion of “encounter” in their work. Perhaps, for example, we immediately think of Marriage Encounter, Engaged Encounter, Cursillo, or some form of Charismatic Renewal. Each of these relies on an intense encounter with one’s spouse, future spouse, the Holy Spirit, or a community, and these are all good and even transforming. The necessary encounter with Christ, however, can neither be replaced by nor presumed in these wonderful “encounters”. Such an encounter with Christ needs to be an integral and intentional part of these other “encounters” if they are to be suitably grounded in the Gospel. Without a strong Christ-center, these activities can devolve into wonderful cathartic, emotional events which require no essential connection with Christ, the Gospel, the Eucharist, or the Church.

For our youth, too, there are “encounter” types of retreats or camp experiences which are energizing and Spirit-filled. National Catholic Youth Council sponsors events, World Youth Day is impactful because of the encounters with the Holy Father and with a broader Church. Teens Encounter Christ (TEC), Summer Camp Faith Experiences, Diocesan RAD (Religious ADventure) Retreats and a variety of localized versions of a similar outline, give to youth marvelous and memorable experiences. These, too, are commended and even recommended. Some may even achieve the goal of providing a graced opportunity to young people, like that offered to the disciples at Emmaus, to feel their hearts burning within them. I believe that this can only happen if Christ, in the Most Holy Eucharist, stands explicitly at the center and pinnacle of these events. Without a convicted Christ-centered focus, the events, while energizing and even exciting for our youth, become events of connections with peers, which are very valuable, but which can fall short of their true evangelizing potential.

It is my hope and goal to continue to foster and to promote these various forms of encounter but to do so with a greater consciousness of the centrality of their evangelizing mission. The fundamental question which needs to be at the forefront of these activities is how they foster or facilitate a deepening of one’s personal relationship to Jesus. The importance of planning for and celebrating Holy Mass at each day of a Retreat or Encounter cannot be underestimated. Reserving time in the course of the Retreat for a significant period of silent adoration before our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament is crucial. At the same time carefully planned and structured time for communal and personal prayer as well as an appropriate catechesis on the meaning and purpose of prayer need to be emphasized. Offering sufficient time for all on Retreat to utilize the Sacrament of Reconciliation, that moment of healing encounter with the Risen Lord, cannot be neglected.

Like the disciples who were walking toward Emmaus, Jesus walks with us, but we do not take sufficient time to stop and listen to Him, to see Him, to greet Him or to allow Him to touch our hearts directly. If this happens, then lives begin to change. If this happens, then relationships begin to change. If this happens, then we, too, “feel our hearts burning within us” and we are eager to “set out at once” on the road back to Jerusalem, back to our homes with a new found and lasting enthusiasm and joy. In the words of Pope Paul VI: “In brief, this means that she [note: meaning the Church — the people of God immersed in the world] has a constant need of being evangelized, if she wishes to retain freshness, vigor and strength in order to proclaim the Gospel” (EN,15).

GOALS:

- Make the centrality of Christ more obvious in all Parochial and Diocesan Apostolates.
- Engage Parishioners in a process of being evangelized. There are a number of Evangelizing Programs suitable for parishes which could be pursued. One program which I wish to explore and promote is *America Says Yes!*
- Follow closely the Synod on Evangelization and provide opportunities to study it in every Parish.
- Ask of every apostolate: In what way does this activity explicitly manifest Christ?

THE IMPORTANT ROLE OF THE LAITY

“By reason of their special vocation it belongs to the laity to seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and directing them according to God’s will ...” (LG, 31, cf. CCC 898). The mission of evangelizing in secular society and in the workplace belongs almost exclusively to the laity. It is the Catholic laity who “rub elbows with” their Christian and non-Christian counterparts and who, in that context, are to find suitable means and opportunities to inject a “Gospelizing” or Evangelizing moment into those interactions. The Synodal Fathers recognized this and thus Pope Paul VI was prompted to write: “it is appropriate first of all to emphasize the following point: for the Church, the first means of evangelization is the witness of an authentically Christian life, given over to God in a communion that nothing should destroy and at the same time given to one’s neighbor with limitless zeal” (EN, 41). While this “witness” is critical, it does not fulfill the entirety of the mission. “There is no true evangelization if the name, the teaching, the life, the promises, the kingdom and the mystery of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God are not proclaimed” (EN, 22). The old axiom that actions speak louder than words is certainly appropriate here with the caveat that Jesus must be mentioned specifically. The Holy Father reiterated the central importance of the witness of life by adding: “Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses” (EN, 41).

This same sentiment is hinted at in *Lumen Gentium*: “They live in the world, that is, in each and in all of the secular professions and occupations. They live in the ordinary circumstances of family and social life, from which the very web of their existence is woven. They are called there by God that by exercising their proper function and led by the spirit of the Gospel they may work for the sanctification of the world from within as a leaven. In this way they may make Christ known to others, *especially by the testimony of a life resplendent in faith, hope and charity*” (LG, 31; emphasis added).

I am extremely grateful to the great number of Catholic lay faithful who are already engaged in various ministries of service whether these are di-

rectly connected to the Church itself or carried out privately. Anyone engaged in any kind of work, provided that work is approached from a spiritual perspective and is consistent with the Church’s mission, is doing the work of Christ. Thus, Christians in the medical profession serve Christ and promote the Gospel. Those who work in social services, serve Christ. Those who minister to the pre-born, poor, the lost, the lonely, the indigent, the immigrant, the most vulnerable or the most forgotten, minister to Christ. Those who serve and participate in Church societies and organizations promote the Gospel and serve Christ. In a particular way, those who administer or teach in our Catholic Schools or who offer their talents for the catechetical instruction of our youth engage themselves in an evangelizing mission. Those who volunteer so generously with their time and talent as catechists and liturgical ministers provide an invaluable service to the ecclesial community and thereby serve Christ. Those who support the work and mission of the parochial, diocesan, and universal Church with their generous contribu-

tions, the fruit of their labors, are in this way participating in the evangelizing mission of the Church. Those who pray ardently for the success of apostolic activities or for the well-being of souls carry on, by these prayer efforts, the mission of Christ and His Church.

However, like the disciples on their way to Emmaus, it is possible that even those deeply engaged in Christ-connected apostolates may fail to see or recognize Jesus as He walks with them. For these active Catholics I pray there can be, for there really must be, the possibility of an evangelizing or re-evangelizing moment which is life-changing. Even if the depth of their commitment draws them to Mass every Sunday or even to daily Mass, these commitments can take on new life as they renew Christians’ encounter with Christ as did our Emmaus friends. It is not necessary that we actually “feel our hearts burning within us” at each Eucharist but there must at least be the remembrance of that moment when we did. Each Eucharistic celebration would then become more than “remembering” some vague historical event involving Jesus. Each Eucharist would involve the “remembering” of our own personal encounter with this living Lord and an expression of profound

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(EN, 41)

gratitude and praise to Him who has been so good in giving Himself to us. Imagine the memory of the Emmaus disciples each time they participated in the Eucharistic celebration. In order to “remember” the Lord at Mass, one needs to have met the Lord in an intimate encounter. This is my understanding of an evangelized heart.

Our fellow Evangelical Christian brothers and sisters may sometimes identify this experience as the moment when they were “saved” or when they “accepted Jesus as their personal Lord and savior”. While we differ on the finer points of the theological significance of that moment, I suspect that each of us would treasure the opportunity to remember the precise date and time when we “encountered Jesus” as if for the first time in an experience in which “our hearts burned”.

Those who have positively “encountered Jesus” instinctively feel the need to express that encounter in the lived reality of their lives. Since their faith is a genuinely “living faith” it will be translated into Christ-like and Christ-centered activity. This is reflected in the Commissioning Rite for those who proclaim the Word of God in the Christian assembly: “Believe what you read, teach what you believe and practice what you teach” (*Rite of Institution of Lectors*, Roman Pontifical). Proclaiming the Word in the Assembly is a noble task, assigned to some, but the proclamation of the Word of God in the lived reality of one’s life is likewise a noble task and this is assigned to all without exception. Thus, it is suitable to envision every Catholic, by virtue of his or her Baptism, as having been commissioned: “Believe what you read, teach what you believe and practice what you teach.”

Our Catholic faith is always, of necessity, a lived reality. It is never a question of teaching or believing or living but rather it is always a case of teaching, believing, and living the Faith. This is made clear in the Letter of James: “What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him?” (James 2:6). I suspect that for James the question arises not so much as a conflict between faith and action as a puzzlement over how someone, having encountered the living Lord, and thus pos-

sessing a vibrant, living faith, could somehow fail to translate that faith into concrete action. It is as if Saint James is saying: A faith which does not express itself in committed, faithful action cannot be rooted in an Emmaus encounter with the Lord.

Some ministries or modes of ecclesial service, by their very nature, are more visible and thus receive greater attention than others but this does not in any way diminish the necessity or value of the participation of others. The mission of Christ requires all disciples to put their gifts at the disposal of the mission of Christ, whether one’s gift is teaching, administration, bookkeeping, plumbing, carpentry, art, prayer, or making essential financial contributions. Whatever the gift or the talent offered to the Church, it needs to flow out of the beauty and memory of this intensely personal and intimate encounter with the living Lord. When that encounter is regularly reinforced by prayer and meditation, it becomes a beautiful source of energy for the apostolate. Then even the duty common to all Catholics of attending Holy Mass, especially on Sunday, flows not so much from “obligation” externally imposed but lovingly from a deep interior conviction, and interior “obligation”, to make return, a response, to the Lord for all He has done for us, for all He is to us. The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass assures access to the grace and spiritual nourishment which Christ provides through His Church, but it is also an expression of our intense gratitude to the Lord for being “our” Lord. In order for this to be the reality of our lives, we need that knee-dropping encounter of Saint Thomas when he affirmed a heartfelt, intensely personal relationship with Jesus, “My Lord and my God!” (John 20:28).

On May 26, 2009, Pope Benedict XVI addressed the members of a pastoral convention in the Diocese of Rome. The conference had as its theme, Church

Membership and Pastoral Co-responsibility. What the Holy Father had to say entails a great challenge for all of us. He noted: “At the same time, it is necessary to improve pastoral structures in such a way that the co-responsibility of all the members of the People of God in their

entirety is gradually promoted, with respect for vocations and for the respective roles of the consecrated and of lay people.”

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What he said next involves an even greater challenge: “This demands a change in mindset, particularly concerning lay people. They must no longer be viewed as ‘collaborators’ of the clergy but truly recognized as ‘co-responsible’, for the Church’s being and action, thereby fostering the consolidation of a mature and committed laity” (Pope Benedict XVI, to open the pastoral convention of the Diocese of Rome, May 26, 2009 at St. John Lateran). The Holy Father used the term “co-responsibility” very deliberately but he also used it very cautiously. I cite this passage with some trepidation for it risks being seen as a blurring of the distinction between the baptismal priesthood of the laity and the ordained ministerial priesthood. Seemingly anticipating this, the Holy Father adds: “This common awareness of being Church of all the baptized in no way diminishes the responsibility of parish priests.” Thus, while emphasizing the fact that a baptismal commitment requires of every Catholic a degree of responsibility for the well-being and promotion of the Church, the Holy Father also preserves the necessary distinction between the baptismal priesthood of the laity and the ministerial priesthood of the ordained. At the Parish level it is clear that not everything must or even should be done by the Pastor but it is also clear that nothing should be done without the Pastor’s knowledge, consent, or involvement. The formal structures established by the Church to help assure a proper level of “co-responsibility” include Finance Councils and Pastoral Councils. These need to be better understood and utilized.

One of the regular elements of our Sunday worship is our Profession of Faith. At the Easter Vigil, those coming into full communion with the Catholic Church make the same Profession of Faith while making the additional statement: “I believe and profess all that the holy Catholic Church teaches, believes and proclaims to be revealed by God.” Ultimately the motive for such a bold profession must rest on an extreme and personal confidence in the goodness and love of the Lord for us. In part, the profession can be made because the tenets of that profession “make spiritual sense to us” but this is not enough, for it is a profession of “faith”. Our faith has firm

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and rational foundations but believing that Jesus is our Risen Lord requires more than a rational conviction. It requires a living encounter with the One who is risen so that our profession resembles that of the disciples returning from Emmaus and shouting, “We have seen the Lord!” Thus, our profession of faith is intended to be an unconditional entrusting of our entire selves into the hands of God, not because it seems like a prudent thing to do but because of our underlying conviction that He who has been raised from the dead and promised that He would “be with [us] all days until the end of the world” is worthy of our trust. This entails an abandonment of our own fears, doubts, or reservations, and a total and trusting embrace of that which our Lord has entrusted to His Body, the Church.

Those who participate in the RCIA catechesis (*Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults*) have the advantage of studying, in a thorough, systematic, and reflective fashion, a significant portion of the content of Catholic doctrine and morals while encounter-

ing the Lord in many positive ways. Then, having studied and reflected upon that content, and hopefully having embraced the Lord Himself in a personal encounter, they present themselves to the Bishop at the Rite of Election and are welcomed into a more intense period of prayer and study in anticipation of that day when, after further serious discernment, they make a personal and abiding commitment to Christ and to the teachings of His Church and are then welcomed into full communion with the Catholic Church and full communion with Christ in the Most Holy Eucharist.

The period of study and reflection experienced by those seeking full communion in the Catholic Church is a manifestation of the Church’s expectation that those who become members of the Catholic Faith as adults, as well as those born into it, make a deliberate, definitive, and well-informed commitment to Christ and to “all that the holy Catholic Church teaches, believes, and proclaims to be revealed by God.” It is here that, of necessity, one looks to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* to discover the explicit content of that profession of faith. In the Prologue of that great work we read: “This catechism aims at presenting an organic synthesis of

the essential and fundamental contents of Catholic doctrine, as regards both faith and morals, in the light of the Second Vatican Council and the whole of the Church's Tradition. Its principal sources are the Sacred Scriptures, the Fathers of the Church, the liturgy, and the Church's Magisterium. It is intended to serve 'as a point of reference for the catechisms or compendia that are composed in the various countries'" (Prologue, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 11).

The impression may be given from the previous paragraph that the *Catechism* is intended solely as a reference work for experts and not as a text for the faithful in general. Blessed Pope John Paul II, continuing in that same Prologue, makes the matter clearer: "This work is intended primarily for those responsible for catechesis: first of all the bishops, as teachers of the faith and pastors of the Church. It is offered to them as an instrument in fulfilling their responsibility of teaching the People of God. Through the bishops, it is addressed to redactors of catechisms, to priests, and to catechists. It will also be *useful reading for all other Christian faithful*" Prologue, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 12; emphasis added).

The *Catechism* then has become for the Church a benchmark for what the Catholic Church teaches. As noted above, it presents "an organic synthesis of the essential and fundamental contents of Catholic doctrine, as regards both faith and morals, in the light of the Second Vatican Council and the whole of the Church's Tradition." It presents to us the teachings of Jesus Christ, with whom we are to foster a deep personal relationship. The *Catechism* becomes for us the explication of what we ask for when, in the Lord's Prayer, we say, "Thy will be done." This "will of God" is presented in the Scriptures but it is also manifest for us in the Church founded by Jesus Christ, and that Church expresses this "will" in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and in its other approved catechetical texts. Thus, an exposition of the "content" of what we profess to believe in when we make our weekly Creedal Profession is precisely the goal and mission of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. This text becomes for us a very significant part of "all that the holy Catholic Church teaches, believes, and proclaims to be revealed by

God." One responsibility that adult Catholics have is to know the faith. Knowledge of the content of the *Catechism* is a very good means of coming to know the faith. In reality, it allows us to come to a better knowledge of Jesus.

Admittedly, at first glance the *Catechism* can appear to be rather intimidating. Yet, it is a wonderful tool and an invaluable resource for anyone serious about knowing and more deeply understanding their Catholic Faith. The study of the *Catechism* is an exercise of faith and, as such, it is not to be entered into lightly. The content of the *Catechism* requires the adoption of a fresh "spiritual way of thinking" (cf. Romans 12:2) and this can only be accomplished in conjunction with heartfelt, humble prayer. There are any number of additional guides and resources

available to make personal access to the Catholic treasures found in the *Catechism* more accessible. Our Diocesan Office is able to offer assistance in finding suitable study guides and catechetical materials. Even without this aid, however, every Catholic home should have a copy

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of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* as a primary source to seek out answers to questions about the faith. Since one of the major duties of a Bishop is to teach, and since our Diocese has some remote and scattered locations, there is an ongoing need to continue to explore the use of electronic media as a means of helping to fulfill that mission. While there are already a number of internet-based catechetical materials available, one of the challenges and thus a possible goal for the Diocese is to make these materials more readily accessible to all in the Diocese. Parish-based adult catechetical opportunities likewise need to be expanded, fostered, and strengthened.

The reason for this emphasis on the truths of our Catholic faith and the need to be properly informed and instructed is also found in the Prologue: "The *Catechism* emphasizes the exposition of doctrine. It seeks to help deepen understanding of faith. In this way it is oriented towards the maturing of that faith, its putting down roots in personal life, and its shining forth in personal conduct" (Prologue, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 23). In order for the progression from reading to believing to practicing to begin, it is first necessary to read or study and this

is the essential role of the *Catechism*. The admonition to “believe what you read”, quoted above from the *Rite of Institution of Lectors*, certainly does not mean that we are to believe everything we read in the secular press, on the internet, or in various journals. Such an admonition most certainly applies, as its context clearly manifests, to the Word of God; but it also applies to the content of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, which “is a sure norm for teaching the faith and thus a valid and legitimate instrument for ecclesial communion” (Apostolic Constitution, *Fidei Depositum*, 3). If the content of the *Catechism* is to be believed and lived, it must first be read.

What we believe of necessity touches how we live as this “maturing of faith” leads to “its putting down roots in (our) personal life” and, especially as we advance and grow in holiness and in knowledge of and love for the Lord, it leads to our profession of faith “shining forth in personal conduct.” What is studied in the *Catechism* helps to assure this “maturing of the faith” and to assuring that this faith “puts down roots” in the personal lives of its readers so that it might give rise to a “shining forth” in public, Catholic witness. In this way, one gives witness to the Risen Lord, to Him who is “our Lord”.

Pope Paul VI’s Apostolic Exhortation affirms that same message: “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—the witness of poverty and detachment, of freedom in the face of the powers of this world, in short, the witness of sanctity” (EN, 41). The reactions to the scandals in the Church show how much we all rightly expect something more of those committed to ministry in the Catholic Church, especially the clergy. We rightly expect “the witness of sanctity”. Yet, despite scandalous and disturbing behavior, there is still a substantial “witness of sanctity” displayed by the vast majority of individuals associated with the Church, laity and clergy alike, as well as by an abundance of ecclesial organizations.

The various promoters of spiritual retreats have their hearts set on the kingdom of God. Our local and Diocesan Pro-Life advocates recognize and witness to a profound reverence for the dignity of all human life, born and pre-born. Faithful married men and women witness to the authenticity of the teachings of the Church regarding a proper respect for human sexuality, including its essential procreative aspect. Young people witness to their faith in their willingness to engage in ecclesial and community service projects.

They also witness the Gospel to an overly sexualized culture by committing to and maintaining chastity. Each of these is a witness of faith, a witness to the Risen Lord, a witness of sanctity.

Further, the Church’s maintenance and promotion of various social services, particularly through Catholic Charities, manifests a commitment to the poor and underserved consistent with the Gospel of Christ. Catholic medical institutions likewise witness to the dignity of human life by offering medical interventions fully consistent with the teachings of the Catholic Church which are in turn consistent with an ethic of life and with the nature of the human person. These beautiful examples of witness are rarely acknowledged and it is good for us to affirm with an appropriate pride the fact that the Church, despite the sinfulness of Her members, continues to strive to live out and fulfill Her evangelizing mission. Yes, there are even shameful scandals but these do not define us. Those scandals shake us but they shake us precisely because they stand in direct opposition to the Gospel values which define the Catholic Church and which need to define everyone in the Church.

GOALS:

- Encourage the reading and study of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.
- Provide opportunities for Parishioners to engage in a study of the *Catechism*.
- Make copies of the *Catechism* more readily available in English and Spanish for our laity.
- Explore and implement suitable vehicles for the proper exercise of lay co-responsibility.
- Make certain that Parishes and the Diocese properly establish and utilize Finance Councils and Pastoral Councils.
- Make certain that all laity who exercise any form of ministry in the name of the Church are properly evangelized and catechized for the task.

SACRED LITURGY: OUR CENTRAL EVANGELIZING MOMENT

While a significant number of the faithful are laudably committed to attending daily Mass, a much greater portion of the people of God attend only on Sunday. Unfortunately, a significant portion attend even less frequently. Nevertheless, the experience of Sunday worship serves, for a very large number of our Catholic faithful, as the only direct contact with their Catholic Faith and with Christ. Many, if

they do not have an experience or an encounter with Christ at Sunday Mass, may remain faithful to their “duty” but may consistently find something lacking. What we need is an encounter with the living Lord and our Sunday Liturgy has the power to provide just that. Since the Sunday Sacred Liturgy is that privileged moment when the greatest number of our Catholic people are available, it is incumbent upon us to recognize the tremendous evangelizing potential of this liturgical moment.

Pope Benedict XVI rightly points out: “The Eucharist ... is the center of parish life, and particularly the Sunday celebration. Since the unity of the Church is born from the encounter with the Lord, the great care given to adoration and celebration of the Eucharist, enabling those who participate in it to experience the beauty of Christ’s mystery, is no secondary matter” (Benedict XVI, May 26, 2009 at St. John Lateran to open the pastoral convention of the Diocese of Rome).

There is a need for us to “re-vision” our understanding of the meaning and purpose of the Sacred Liturgy. Here, I find it necessary to quote at length from Pope Benedict’s Apostolic Exhortation, *Sacramentum Caritatis* (SC, *The Sacrament of Charity*). He writes:

... the liturgical action can never be considered generically, prescinding from the mystery of faith. Our faith and the Eucharistic liturgy both have their source in the same event: Christ’s gift of himself in the Paschal Mystery (SC, 34).

This relationship between creed and worship is evidenced in a particular way by the rich theological and liturgical category of beauty. Like the rest of Christian Revelation, the liturgy is inherently linked to beauty: it is *veritatis splendor* (splendor of truth). The liturgy is a radiant expression of the paschal mystery, in which Christ draws us to himself and calls us to communion. As Saint Bonaventure would say, in Jesus we contemplate beauty and splendor at their source. This is no mere aestheticism, but the concrete way in which the truth of God’s love in Christ encounters us, attracts us and delights us, enabling us to emerge from ourselves and drawing

There is a need for us to “re-vision” our understanding of the meaning and purpose of the Sacred Liturgy. Pope Benedict XVI, I believe, identifies for all of us what it is that we are all really looking for in the Sacred Liturgy, namely *beauty*.

us towards our true vocation, which is love. God allows himself to be glimpsed first in creation, in the beauty and harmony of the cosmos (cf. Wisdom 13:5; Romans 1:19-20). In the Old Testament we see many signs of the grandeur of God’s power as he manifests his glory in his wondrous deeds among the Chosen People (cf. Exodus 14; 16:10; 24:12-18; Numbers 14:20-23). In the New Testament this epiphany of beauty reaches definitive fulfillment in God’s revelation in Jesus Christ: Christ is the full manifestation of the glory of God. In the glorification of the Son, the Father’s glory

shines forth and is communicated (cf. John 1:14; 8:54; 12:28; 17:1). Yet this beauty is not simply a harmony of proportion and form; “the fairest of the sons of men” (Psalm 45:3) is also, mysteriously, the one “who had no form or comeliness that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him” (Isaiah 53:2). Jesus Christ shows us how the truth of love can transform even the dark mystery of death into the radiant light of the resurrection. Here the splendor of God’s glory surpasses all worldly beauty. The truest beauty is the love of God, who definitively revealed himself to us in the paschal mystery.

The beauty of the liturgy is part of this mystery; it is a sublime expression of God’s glory and, in a certain sense, a glimpse of heaven on earth. The memorial of Jesus’ redemptive sacrifice contains something of that beauty which Peter, James and John beheld when the Master, making his way to Jerusalem, was transfigured before their eyes (cf. Mark 9:2). Beauty, then, is not mere decoration, but rather an essential element of the liturgical action, since it is an attribute of God himself and his revelation. These considerations should make us realize the care which is needed, if the liturgical action is to reflect its innate splendor (SC, 35).

There is much discussion in the Church about the direction that a renewal of liturgical life in the Church needs to take. Pope Benedict XVI, I believe, identifies for all of us what it is that we are all really looking for in the Sacred Liturgy, namely beauty. In our

celebrations of the Sacred Liturgy, we must strive to make evident the “splendor of the liturgy”. There are many valiant attempts to generate greater activity and participation in the Sacred Liturgy and this is both necessary and commendable. Unfortunately those attempts, which are really attempts to generate a type of “beauty”, more closely resemble the “decoration” of which Pope Benedict speaks, than a deepening of our appreciation of the “innate splendor” of the Sacred Liturgy. Achieving this deeper appreciation of the innate splendor of the Eucharist is much more challenging than simply improving the music, although improving the quality of the music, too, is a part of it. Achieving this deeper appreciation of the innate splendor of the Eucharist is much more challenging than simply improving the translation but improving the quality of the translation is a part of it. Most significantly, the Holy Father notes, this deepened appreciation can be the fruit of simply celebrating the rites with reverence, devotion, and attention to the liturgical norms. In his words:

In the course of the Synod, there was frequent insistence on the need to avoid any antithesis between the *ars celebrandi*, the art of proper celebration, and the full, active and fruitful participation of all the faithful (*actuosa participatio*). The primary way to foster the participation of the People of God in the sacred rite is the proper celebration of the rite itself. The *ars celebrandi* is the best way to ensure their *actuosa participatio*. The *ars celebrandi* is the fruit of faithful adherence to the liturgical norms in all their richness; indeed, for two thousand years this way of celebrating has sustained the faith life of all believers, called to take part in the celebration as the People of God, a royal priesthood, a holy nation (cf. 1 Peter 2:4-5, 9) (SC, 38).

The common perception may be that such careful celebration amounts to “ritualism”, which will redound to a cold, sterile, and impersonal liturgy. Nothing could be further from the truth. When the liturgy is properly celebrated, in full accord with liturgical norms, then the people of God are given the opportunity of entering into that sacred time and sacred space which is, in many ways, outside of the scope of their normal daily routine and which enables it to be consecrated to God. It becomes a sacred moment of encounter with the living Christ. It is this encounter, unencumbered by frivolous decoration, which has the power to draw people to genuine conversion of heart and to transform lives. For this

reason, the evangelizing effort of the Diocese must include a more thorough training and formation of all who minister in any way at or around the table of the Lord. Those who serve in these capacities need to properly understand the importance of the role they play in helping the congregation worship God more ardently. Again, as Pope Benedict XVI points out: “The primary way to foster the participation of the People of God in the sacred rite is the proper celebration of the rite itself” (SC, 38).

GOALS:

- Work with priests and deacons to assure an understanding of the *ars celebrandi*, the art of proper celebration.
- Work with congregations to encourage and facilitate a proper understanding of full, active, and fruitful participation of all the faithful (*actuosa participatio*).
- Work to enhance the appreciation of the sacredness of the Liturgy and the importance of suitably sacred music.
- Explore ways in which the Sunday Liturgy can be an event of greater reverence and dignity.
- Explore ways in which Catholics who do not regularly attend Mass might be attracted to the beauty of the Mass and to the Lord who is made present there.

PREACHING AND EVANGELIZATION

In keeping with the outline proposed by *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, we now move to the specific form of teaching known as preaching. The Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Paul VI recalls the words of Saint Paul: “And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without a preacher?... So faith comes from what is heard and what is heard comes by the preaching of Christ” (Romans 10:14, 17).

Preaching, the verbal proclamation of a message, is indeed always indispensable. We are well aware that modern man is sated by talk; he is obviously often tired of listening and, what is worse, impervious to words... These facts should certainly impel us to employ, for the purpose of transmitting the Gospel message, the modern means which this civilization has produced. Very positive efforts have in fact already been made in this sphere. We cannot but praise them and encourage their further development. The fatigue produced these days by so much empty

talk and the relevance of many other forms of communication must not however diminish the permanent power of the word, or cause a loss of confidence in it. The word remains ever relevant, especially when it is the bearer of the power of God. This is why St. Paul's axiom, "Faith comes from what is heard," also retains its relevance: it is the Word that is heard which leads to belief (EN, 42).

The form of preaching which most readily comes to mind is that linked with the Sacred Liturgy or with some other para-liturgical service and yet, in its broader meaning, preaching is much more extensive than this. Pope Paul VI in his Exhortation notes: "This evangelizing preaching takes on many forms, and zeal will inspire the reshaping of them almost indefinitely. In fact there are innumerable events in life and human situations which offer the opportunity for a discreet but incisive statement of what the Lord has to say in this or that particular circumstance. It suffices to have true spiritual sensitivity for reading God's message in events" (EN, 43). While homiletic preaching is reserved to those in Holy Orders, the "evangelizing preaching" mentioned above is the responsibility of all the baptized. Every Catholic, every Christian, is called to reflect upon the teachings of Christ and to apply these to the "innumerable events in life and human situations" which call out for spiritual insight.

Proper catechesis and prayerful reflection should inform all preaching—whether it is homiletic or more general evangelizing preaching. It is and must be, ultimately, Christ who is preached. Putting forth personal impressions or opinions or views which are not consistent with those held and promoted by the Magisterium of the Catholic Church, may find sympathetic hearers, but what is heard may not be "confirmed in truth". Even when individual Catholics express personal opinions in the public arena it may be necessary for bishops and others to assert, for clarity and accuracy sake, that these views "do not represent the views of the sponsor". However, when a member of the laity teaches in some "official capacity", for instance as a catechist, then his or her views are no longer recognized as "personal" but

rather as those belonging faithfully to the Church. It ultimately falls to the Bishop, relying on the Pastor, to determine who is authorized to teach in this capacity and under what circumstances.

For this reason, it is incumbent upon the Bishop, who is accountable before God, to properly oversee the messages of those who provide instruction in the RCIA Programs, Adult and Youth Catechesis, Retreats, and Seminars when these are done as a part of the mission of a parish or the diocese itself. This in no way undermines an openness to the Holy Spirit but may, in fact, help assure that what is thought to

be somehow "personally inspired" is tested against the teachings and traditions of the Catholic Church. Saint Paul rightly observes that the world cannot hear the message unless someone preaches but Saint Paul certainly expects that the one who preaches does so with a profound fidelity to the truth of the message.

It must be remembered that those who hear the word have

a right to hear that word as it is handed down through the Magisterial teachings of the Church. In this sense, I, as Bishop, am also accountable to the People of God to ensure that the teaching they receive corresponds to the authentic teaching of the Church. There is a place for speculative thought and conjecture but great care must be exercised to assure that opinions, conjectures, or speculations are presented against the backdrop of what the Church actually teaches. Such things must be presented against the backdrop of the truth. Moreover, the context in which conjecture or speculation occurs should be carefully considered, even when the teaching of the Church is also clearly presented. It is one thing for theologians to discuss speculative matters among themselves; it is quite another to do so in the midst of those whose grasp of the Faith is not yet adequate to deal with speculative matters without serious risk of misunderstanding or error.

Here again, I would propose the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* as that sure guide against which all teaching and preaching must at some point be measured. The Bishops of the United States (USCCB)

Homiletic "preaching, inserted in a unique way into the Eucharistic celebration, from which it receives special force and vigor, certainly has a particular role in evangelization, to the extent that it expresses the profound faith of the sacred minister and is impregnated with love" (EN, 43).

have, in fact, made this the norm by offering a review of all catechetical texts for youth showing their conformity with the *Catechism*. While it is certainly important that the texts of catechetical material be evaluated for their proper correlation with the *Catechism* it is all the more important for catechists to properly present those same teachings and to demonstrate a “personal” consistency with the *Catechism*. The consistency of the preaching given by their personal witness is as important as the consistency of the catechetical texts. The catechists are the living texts by which students are evangelized. These catechists are to be both teachers and witnesses.

Homiletic preaching in the context of the Sacred Liturgy occupies a privileged place. As indicated by Pope Paul VI: “This preaching, inserted in a unique way into the Eucharistic celebration, from which it receives special force and vigor, certainly has a particular role in evangelization, to the extent that it expresses the profound faith of the sacred minister and is impregnated with love” (EN, 43). There is a grace associated with homiletic preaching which deepens both regard and responsibility. Precisely because homiletic preaching receives “special force and vigor” from the fact that it is inserted into the Eucharistic celebration, this moment carries with it significant responsibility. Those commissioned to preach must do so with seriousness and attention.

The responsibility of the homilist to prepare well stems not only from the sacredness of the moment but also from the rightful expectations of the hearers. *Evangelii Nuntiandi* affirms: “The faithful assembled as a Paschal Church, celebrating the feast of the Lord present in their midst, expect much from this preaching, and will greatly benefit from it provided that it is simple, clear, direct, well-adapted, profoundly dependent on Gospel teaching and faithful to the magisterium, animated by a balanced apostolic ardor coming from its own characteristic nature, full of hope, fostering belief, and productive of peace and unity” (EN, 43).

The list of characteristics foreseen in homiletic preaching is most challenging and implies a suggest-

ed mechanism for self-evaluation. The list bears repetition and comment. The first three characteristics of evangelizing preaching is that it be “simple, clear, direct”. These are characteristics in which every parishioner in the pews would rejoice implying as they do that such a homily would also lean toward brevity. While these three characteristics are attractive they are not easily attained. They are the byproduct of diligent and thorough preparation.

Homiletic preaching needs to be well-adapted to the particular audience being addressed. This is determined, in part, by the characteristics of the audience such as age and nationality but care must be taken that the homily is not excessively adapted to the secularity of our American culture. For this reason the next characteristic stands as a counterbalance to any tendency or temptation to water down the truth. This preaching must be “profoundly dependent on Gospel teaching and faithful to the magisterium”. This characteristic does not stand alone but it is an essential characteristic. Being “faithful to the magisterium” assures that the message is not excessively accommodated to the doctrinal and moral errors present in our secular culture.

Preaching which seeks to be faithful to the Magisterium also implies that preaching is not only to be inspirational but also instructive. Here again a strong utilization of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* is important so that the preacher is assured that he is handing on the message of the Church’s faith.

The last set of characteristics refers to the spirit of the preacher as well as to the spirit of the message. The preaching pastor must speak from a solid and faith-filled base. He is to be “animated by a balanced apostolic ardor” and not just his own enthusiasm or his own zeal for a particular topic. Rather, his is to be an “ardor” which comes from the characteristic nature of apostolic ardor itself. This ardor will, of its own nature, be “full of hope”. This is not to say that the message glosses over the very real trials and challenges of life but that it holds out the hope born of Christ’s resurrection which centers hearts on a deeper hope. It is this hope, manifested in evangeliz-

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(cf. EN, 43)**

ing preaching which “fosters belief” and is “productive of peace and unity”.

The Church’s recognition of the “privileged place” held by homiletic preaching acknowledges that the personal faith and witness of the homilist is something which touches people on a very personal level. However, an excessive emphasis on the “person” of the homilist or the celebrant at Mass can lead to a “cult of personality”, which is not at all beneficial. The ease with which phrases are used such as, “I really love Fr. X’s Masses”, or, “Fr. Y’s Masses are boring”, may indicate a serious misplacement of emphasis. It is understandable that we find certain people or personalities more appealing than others, but these externals do not change the essential value or beauty of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Any tendency to link the value of the Mass with the effervescence of the celebrant must be resisted.

Further, the identification of a particular Mass with the celebrant also sends a conflicting message. The Mass does not belong to any single priest. In fact, the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (GIRM) states very clearly: “However, the Priest will remember that he is the servant of the Sacred Liturgy and that he himself is not permitted, on his own initiative, to add, to remove, or to change anything in the celebration of Mass” (GIRM, 24).

The *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, while itself a legislative document, has many instructive and edifying sections. Its description of the meaning of the celebration of Holy Mass is one of these edifying sections: “The celebration of Mass, as the action of Christ and of the People of God arrayed hierarchically, is the center of the whole Christian life for the Church both universal and local, as well as for each of the faithful individually. For in it is found the high point both of the action by which God sanctifies the world in Christ and of the worship that the human race offers to the Father, adoring him through Christ, the Son of God, in the Holy Spirit. In it, moreover, during the course of the year, the mysteries of redemption are celebrated so as to be in some way made present. As to the other sacred actions and all the activities of the Christian life, these are bound up with it, and are ordered to it” (GIRM, 16).

Sadly, this description of the Sacrifice of the Mass finds little resonance in the hearts of many people in the Church. In recent years, great emphasis has been placed on the centrality of building up relationships among the faithful—building “community”—

which is certainly important. At the same time, such an emphasis has led many people to lose sight of the fact that the Mass is preeminently an “action of Christ” and “the high point of the worship that the human race offers to the Father”. The new Roman Missal, with the latest translation of the texts for the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, is aimed, at least in part, toward recapturing a deepened sense of the otherness of the Sacred Liturgy. This is not intended to separate it from the people but rather to help us all reclaim our appreciation for the fact that the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is foremost about giving worship to God.

This approach to the Sacred Liturgy helps us to understand why the Church would insist that the priest “is not permitted, on his own initiative, to add, to remove, or to change anything in the celebration of Mass”. The Mass, because it does not belong to any individual priest or any individual congregation, is not subject to their alterations or modifications. There are areas where individual congregational preferences can be accommodated but in general the congregation is to accommodate itself to the Sacred Liturgy and not vice versa. In this there is need to accept the spiritual reality that the Liturgy itself, properly and reverently implemented, has the power to touch people more effectively than any creative innovations devised by a local congregation. This requires an act of faith and it requires a setting aside of our desire to do things “our way”, both of which hold great potential for spiritual fruitfulness. Indeed, it requires us to allow ourselves to be more fully evangelized by the Sacred Liturgy, rather than to reshape the Sacred Liturgy to suit our preferences.

The importance of the proper celebration of the Sacred Liturgy in a Diocese is emphasized by the GIRM. “The celebration of the Eucharist in a particular (i.e. Diocesan) Church is of the utmost importance” (GIRM, 22).

The *General Instruction* also makes the role and responsibility of the diocesan Bishop very clear. “For the Diocesan Bishop, the prime steward of the mysteries of God in the particular Church entrusted to his care, is the moderator, promoter, and guardian of the whole of liturgical life. In celebrations that take place with the Bishop presiding, and especially in the celebration of the Eucharist by the Bishop himself with the Presbyterate, Deacons, and the people taking part, the mystery of the Church is manifest. Hence, solemn celebrations of Mass of this sort must be exemplary for the entire diocese” (GIRM, 22).

The Sacred Liturgy, particularly Sunday Mass,

is the sacred time and place where most Catholics gather for an experience and renewal of their Catholic faith. One of the goals of the Second Vatican Council was to encourage a fuller, more active, and more fruitful participation in the Sacred Liturgy. The GIRM phrases this desire in a slightly different fashion: “The Bishop should therefore be determined that the Priests, the Deacons, and the lay Christian faithful grasp ever more deeply the genuine significance of the rites and liturgical texts, and thereby be led to the active and fruitful celebration of the Eucharist. To that end, he should also be vigilant in ensuring that the dignity of these celebrations be enhanced and, in promoting such dignity, the beauty of the sacred place, of the music, and of the art should contribute as greatly as possible” (GIRM, 22).

The role of “chief steward of the mysteries of God” is one portion of the life and work of a diocesan Bishop and it is a responsibility which I intend to take very seriously. I believe that the Sacred Liturgy prayerfully prepared and reverently, attentively, and devoutly prayed has the graced power to touch the lives of the faithful in wonderfully dramatic ways. Thus, the new translation of the Roman Missal presents a great evangelizing opportunity. It is an opportunity for each of us to step back from our usual mode of attending or celebrating Mass and allow ourselves to be filled “with a spirit of wonder and awe” in the Lord’s presence. Liturgy is that sacred time and place when we are to be filled with wonder and awe. I would propose that the terms “wonder and awe” are not generally used to describe our experience of Sunday Liturgy. Yet, if we more fully understand that which we do, then “wonder and awe” would not be the exception but rather the common expectation. Our prayer: Fill us with a spirit of wonder and awe in your presence! (cf. *Rite of Confirmation*).

The grace, beauty, and dignity of our Sunday celebrations are evangelizing tools which rely much more God’s direct communion with the soul than on human personalities. We have experienced fifty years of attempts to render the sacred more accessible but as a result we have in many ways inadvertently replaced the sacred with the secular, called the secular “sacred” and have actually moved further from that which is truly sacred. Where the sense of the sacred has been diminished it needs to be reclaimed.

GOALS:

- Assist Priests and Deacons to continue to review their own *ars celebrandi*.
- Expend more time and energy on Liturgical celebrations of a more solemn nature, i.e. Christmas, Easter, Confirmation, Ordination.
- Explore Homily and Sermon outlines for use in the Diocese which are strongly catechetical in nature.
- Recommend that priests and deacons use the free resources of *Homiletic and Pastoral Review* online at www.HPRweb.com.

SOLID AND SYSTEMATIC YOUTH AND ADULT CATECHESIS

The need for emphasis on solid and systematic catechesis has been repeatedly mentioned to me by priests and laity alike in each diocese where I have been privileged to serve. This need was likewise referenced by Pope Paul VI in his Exhortation: “A means of evangelization that must not be neglected is that of catechetical instruction. The intelligence, especially that of children and young people, needs to learn through systematic religious instruction the fundamental teachings, the living content of the truth which God has wished to convey to us and which the Church has sought to express in an ever richer fashion during the course of her long history” (EN, 4).

In our culture, our young people are increasingly exposed to a form of secular individualism with a consequence that reliance on interpersonal bonds is diminished and the sense of belonging is eroded. These young people have a right to an opportunity to taste the beauty and joy of belonging to Christ and to His Church. They have a right and a need to know the truth. Our evangelization efforts must recognize and respond to this need. It is my founded belief that Youth Ministry can and must be intimately linked with evangelizing catechesis. This will require effort, creativity and additional resources. Without these things our young people will lack the solid foundation which we have an obligation to provide.

There can be a perception that catechesis is primarily concerned with the imparting of information. While imparting of “information” is important, it is not the entire purpose of catechesis. If catechesis is to fulfill its fuller function then it must, as noted by Pope Paul VI, “be given to form patterns of Christian living and not to remain only notional” (EN, 4). When catechesis is translated into active Catholic liv-

ing then it begins to reach its evangelizing goal. Pope Paul notes this in beautiful language: “they must seek always to fix in the memory, intelligence and heart the essential truths that must impregnate all of life” (EN, 4). It is not only the fixing of catechetical notions in the memory and intelligence of students - and we are all students—but also fixing them “in the heart” from which they can then “impregnate all of life”. This “fixing in the heart” is the point at which catechesis touches evangelization. If catechists are to fulfill this mission, then they themselves must first be women and men of deep ecclesial faith. They must be evangelized women and men of prayer.

The concerns voiced about the need for renewed efforts in catechesis often stem largely from concerns about the content of the catechesis. Pope Paul VI insisted on two key components of catechesis which, while already implemented in the Diocese, are in need of ongoing renewal. The first is the need for “suitable texts, updated with wisdom and competence, under the authority of the bishops” (EN, 44). The other very practical element is the need “to prepare good instructors—parochial catechists, teachers, parents—who are desirous of perfecting themselves in this superior art, which is indispensable and requires religious instruction” (EN, 44).

The breadth of our Diocese and the meagerness of resources, both in terms of personnel to train catechists and the finances needed to accomplish this very important task, require that we, as a Diocese, unify as much as possible both catechetical texts and catechist training. After review of a variety of texts and upon consultation with experts in the field it has been determined that *Faith and Life* series published by Ignatius Press is a most suitable text for our Diocese. Recognizing that immediate use in all locations would not allow for individual Parish circumstances, this standardized Diocesan Religious Education text for the Schools and CCD Programs of the Diocese of Santa Rosa will be implemented over the course of several years. The reasons for choosing this text include the fact that the catechetical content of the text is clear and well ordered. The catechist materials are easily adapted to either weekly classes in our CCD Programs or daily classes in our Catholic Schools. Ignatius Press already has a strong presence in the Diocese and this makes catechist training and support much more vi-

able. The Publishers are actively engaged in making bi-lingual materials much more available. In addition, the availability of online catechetical aids will be of great benefit to parents and catechists alike. Diocesan unity and consistency in catechist training seem to me to be goods which can more easily and readily be achieved with unified texts. This is as true for the High School Level as it is for the Elementary Level. The *Didache* series is a high school text which would be consistent with *Faith and Life* series and is something which needs to be explored in the near future.

I do not at all underestimate the challenge to individual catechists who may be very comfortable with the texts which they presently use. I have found, however, that comfort can also lead to complacency and with a renewed emphasis on evangelizing catechesis I pray it is a grace to be moved from one’s “comfort zone”. Ultimately our concern must be for the well-being of the children who are being catechized. A new text can be an impetus for ongoing conversion for each of us. A new text offers us a graced opportunity to look afresh at who

we are catechizing, why we are involved in the work of catechesis, how we have approached this ministry, what our level of weekly spiritual and intellectual preparation has been, and where we envision ourselves in relation to this ministry in the future. Change can be both challenging and exciting. I pray

that a renewed spirit of evangelizing catechesis can be exciting for all in the Diocese.

While the evangelization and the catechizing of our Youth must be a priority, the provision of ongoing catechetical instruction for all the adults of the Church is equally important. It is my belief that a concerted and systematic effort aimed at comprehensive adult catechesis in the Diocese needs to be undertaken. Such a program, while not necessarily as extensive as that deemed suitable for catechists, needs to be thorough, engaging, and practical. There are a number of national catechetical programs such as the ten-hour video series by Father Robert E. Barron, *Catholicism*, which show great promise and which may serve as the core for an ongoing program of adult catechesis. There are also other parish-based evangelization programs which need to be explored. It will be incumbent upon Pastors to participate actively in the sponsorship of evangelizing possibilities

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in our Parishes. For the sake of the unity of the Diocese and consistency of catechesis, it may be desirable for all parishes of the Diocese to embark upon such catechetical ventures in a coordinated fashion covering the same material in a given year. It is further desirable, where feasible, that Parishes partner in providing shared catechetical experiences. It is my conviction that there is a hunger in the hearts of all to know the truth, to understand the faith more deeply, and to be more secure in our faith convictions. It is my hope that, using committees already existing in the Diocese, we can offer to pastors and to Parish Adult Education Committees suggestions each year for a suitable catechetical series of six to ten hours in length. Comprehensive and sustained adult catechesis is another way of keeping the evangelizing spirit alive in our hearts. In terms of our faith we are all called to be life-long learners.

GOALS:

- Utilize *Faith and Life* series for all Elementary Youth Catechesis in the Diocese.
- Explore the feasibility of using the *Didache* series for High School Youth Catechesis.
- Make *America Says Yes!* by Dr. Christine Mugridge, SOLT, material available to parishes and encourage its use.
- Make Father Robert Barron's *Catholicism* DVD series available to Parishes and encourage its use.
- Seek out and preview other Adult Catechetical materials for use in Parishes.
- Strengthen and enhance the present Catechist Formation Program.
- Explore greater utilization of *The NorthCoast Catholic* and other social media.
- Make the Year of Faith announced by Pope Benedict XVI a Year of Evangelization for the Diocese.

CONCLUSION

Evangelization is the mission of the Church. It is Her essential mission. This theme of evangelization touches every aspect of our Catholicism. This theme touches and affects each of us. The old *Catechism* definition of why God made us still holds true. God made us to know Him, to love Him, and to serve Him in this life so as to enjoy eternal happiness with Him in eternity. This is the same thought offered to us by Saint Robert Bellarmine: "If you are wise, know that you have been created for the glory of God and your own eternal salvation. This is your goal; this is the center of your life; this is the treasure of your heart. If you reach this goal, you will find

happiness." In Jesus Christ God has called all human beings to communion with Himself. The mission the Lord has entrusted to us is to be His instruments to deepen our own communion with Him and to bring others into communion with Him, through an encounter with Jesus Christ. Recognizing our need to be more deeply evangelized and then recognizing our responsibility to engage in this essential mission of the Church can be an exciting venture. We believe in the power of the Gospel and God's grace to transform our society but we must first allow the Gospel and God's grace to transform us.

I conclude with the words which Pope Paul VI used toward the end on his Apostolic Exhortation:

Let us therefore preserve our fervor of spirit. Let us preserve the delightful and comforting joy of evangelizing, even when it is in tears that we must sow. May it mean for us—as it did for John the Baptist, for Peter and Paul, for the other apostles and for a multitude of splendid evangelizers all through the Church's history—an interior enthusiasm that nobody and nothing can quench. May it 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 fervor, who have first received the joy of Christ, and who are willing to risk their lives so that the kingdom may be proclaimed and the Church established in the midst of the world (EN, 80).

I pray that we the clergy, religious, and laity of the Diocese of Santa Rosa can work together to become ever more deeply evangelized so that we may bring the light and beauty of the Truth, the Truth who is our Lord, more effectively to the world that "the kingdom may be proclaimed and the Church established in the midst of the world."

Mary, Mother our Queen, Star of Evangelization, pray for us.

Given in Santa Rosa, on the Birthday of the Blessed Virgin Mary, September 8, 2012, in gratitude to God for the founding of the Diocese of Santa Rosa on February 21, 1962, in anticipation of the 50th Anniversary of the Opening of the Second Vatican Council and in anticipation of the 20th Anniversary of the publication of the text of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

+Robert F. Vasa, Bishop of Santa Rosa



The Apostles Going Forth to Evangelize