

The Scope of Evangelization in the Light of the Teachings of *Evangelii Gaudium*

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Abstract

Evangelization is at the heart of the Catholic Church's mission. The Church continues its work of evangelization from the day it was born. The contemporary world is loosing interest in matters of religion. Therefore, pastoral workers need new insights to continue their work. Successive Popes have issued documents on evangelization to guide all the pastoral workers. However, with the passage of time, pastoral workers seek new approaches to do their work. Pope Francis issued Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* to encourage pastoral workers and give them directions in their work of evangelization especially in contemporary times. In this paper, we shall examine the new insights, which the Pope is offering to the pastoral workers involved in the work of evangelization.

Introduction

The Second Vatican Council broadened the scope of evangelization. The Council Fathers brought out remarkable documents like Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, Decree on Mission Activity of the Church *Ad Gentes* and Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity *Apostolicam Actuositatem* to guide all the faithful to rediscover the beauty of their Christian faith and share their joy with others. Since the end of the Second Vatican Council, successive Popes also issued documents on *new* evangelization to put into action the vision of the Second Vatican Council. Following are the prominent papal documents on evangelization: Pope Paul VI's Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (8 December 1975), Pope John Paul II's Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici* (30 December 1988), Pope John Paul II's Encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* (7 December 1990) and Pope Benedict XVI's Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum Domini* (30 September 2010). Pope Francis issued Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (EG) (24 November 2013) to encourage all the faithful to take active part in the Church's mission of evangelization.² Even though the previous Popes dealt with the topic of evangelization in their

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² Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 105 (2013): 1019–1186. Available at <http://>

teachings, EG offers insights taking into consideration the realities of the contemporary world. In this paper, we shall examine the scope of evangelization in the contemporary world in the light of the teachings of EG. We shall examine the scope of evangelization by raising three prominent questions related to evangelization: what, why and how about evangelization.

What is Evangelization?

Evangelization is sharing the joy of Christian faith with others.³ The contemporary person longs for true happiness. He or she seeks happiness in the pleasures, which the world offers. However, the pleasures of this world are not lasting. They are like puff of smoke, which rise for a moment and then disappear forever. People pursuing happiness in the materials things of this world are bound to realize soon that they are pursuing a mirage, which does not exist. This brings a sense of deep emptiness and meaninglessness in a person's inner being. Evangelization is primarily an offer, which God gives gratuitously and unconditionally to all, who seek redemption from the burden of sin and guilt.⁴ "Those who accept [God's] offer of salvation are set free from sin, sorrow, inner emptiness and loneliness."⁵

Christians are bearers of God's infinite love, grace and mercy. Their life needs to reflect their faith in God who saves. The early Christians were a miniscule community but they strongly influenced the people living around them. Their lifestyle bore witness to their faith in Jesus Christ, the son of God, who died and rose for the salvation of the whole humanity. The contemporary world longs to see that joy, which the early Christians experienced in their lives.⁶ Christians too have to face the same problems, which others face in this world. To have faith in Jesus does not exempt them from the sufferings in life. However, they need to radiate joy even in the midst of the most trying situation in their lives.

There are Christians whose lives seem like Lent without Easter. I realize of course that joy is not expressed the same way at all times in life, especially at moments of great difficulty. Joy adapts and changes, but it always endures, even as a flicker of light born of our personal certainty that, when everything is said and done, we are infinitely loved.⁷

w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html (accessed on 14 December 2015).

³ See Dennis Billy, *Gospel Joy: Pope Francis and the New Evangelization* (Hyde Park: New City Press of the Focolare, 2014), 9–12.

⁴ See Donald Arthur Carson, "Athens Revisited," in *Telling the Truth: Evangelizing Postmoderns*, ed. Donald Arthur Carson (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 384–398.

⁵ EG no. 1.

⁶ See David Ray Gutierrez, *Journey to Joy: Living the Christian Life Philippians* (Bloomington: Xlibris Corporation, 2010), 145–152.

⁷ EG no. 6.

Evangelization is possible only when people who have real encounter with Jesus, joyfully share their experience with others.⁸ It is indeed a risk because in spite of the best intentions on the part of the evangelizer there is every chance that the other person may not be willing to accept the message of Jesus Christ. However, people renewed in the Lord will have the courage to go ahead with their mission without wavering. Pope Francis noted about the need of every evangelizer to have a personal encounter with Jesus Christ. He noted that:

I invite all Christians, everywhere, at this very moment, to a renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ, or at least an openness to letting him encounter them; I ask all of you to do this unfailingly each day....The Lord does not disappoint those who take this risk; whenever we take a step towards Jesus, we come to realize that he is already there, waiting for us with open arms.⁹

A deep relationship with the person of Jesus Christ impels a person to get out of one's selfishness and reach out to others even in the face of rejection. Such a person experiences real inner freedom to acknowledge his or her friendship with Jesus and does not hesitate to make this friendship known to others. Pope Francis noted the following about such relationship:

Thanks solely to this encounter or renewed encounter with God's love, which blossoms into an enriching friendship, we are liberated from our narrowness and self-absorption. We become fully human when we become more than human, when we let God bring us beyond ourselves in order to attain the fullest truth of our being.¹⁰

There is freshness in the work of evangelization. The Holy Spirit is the chief protagonist in this mission.¹¹ The Holy Spirit inspires people to take new initiatives to spread the gospel. The Holy Spirit drives away all fear and gives the right direction to people who trust in Jesus as the source of their life and the mission. Pope Francis noted about the freshness, which accompanies a person who is in contact with Jesus. He noted that:

Jesus can also break through the dull categories with which we would enclose him and he constantly amazes us by his divine creativity. Whenever we make the effort to return to the source and to recover the original freshness of the Gospel, new avenues arise, new paths of creativity open up, with different forms of expression, more eloquent signs and words with new meaning for today's world. Every form of authentic evangelization is

⁸ See Ronald Witherup, *Saint Paul and the New Evangelization* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2013), 41–51.

⁹ EG no. 3.

¹⁰ EG no. 8.

¹¹ See James Wehner, *The Evangelization Equation: The Who, What and How* (Steubenville: Emmaus Road Publishing, 2011), 25–26.

always new.¹²

Lay Christians sometimes think that evangelization is solely the work of the clergy and the religious. In the past, the Church did not encourage the laity to involve itself in the work of evangelization. The Church gave a passive role to the laity. They expected the laity to pray for missionaries and provide them with resources to do their job. However, the Second Vatican Council reversed this understanding. The laity along with the clergy forms the people of God.¹³

By divine institution Holy Church is ordered and governed with a wonderful diversity. For just as in one body we have many members, yet all the members have not the same function, so we, the many, are one body in Christ, but severally members one of another. Therefore, the chosen People of God is one: one Lord, one faith, one baptism; sharing a common dignity as members from their regeneration in Christ, having the same filial grace and the same vocation to perfection; possessing in common one salvation, one hope and one undivided charity. There is, therefore, in Christ and in the Church no inequality on the basis of race or nationality, social condition or sex, because there is neither Jew nor Greek: there is neither bond nor free: there is neither male nor female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus.¹⁴

Therefore, all Christians are missionaries.¹⁵ The Church does not exempt any baptized person from his or her obligation to spread the love of Christ in this world. Pope Francis too strongly advocated the involvement of all the baptized in the work of evangelization. He noted that:

All the baptized, whatever their position in the Church or their level of instruction in the faith, are agents of evangelization, and it would be insufficient to envisage a plan of evangelization to be carried out by professionals while the rest of the faithful would simply be passive recipients. The new evangelization calls for personal involvement on the part of each of the baptized. Every Christian is challenged, here and now, to be actively engaged in evangelization; indeed, anyone who has truly experienced God's saving love does not need much time or lengthy training to go out and proclaim that love. Every Christian is a missionary to the extent that he or she has encountered the love of God in Christ Jesus: we no longer say that we are disciples and missionaries, but rather that we are always missionary disciples.¹⁶

¹² EG no. 11.

¹³ Conciliar Document *Lumen Gentium* (LG) no. 30, 31. Available at http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html (accessed on 29 December 2015)

¹⁴ LG no. 32.

¹⁵ See A. Wayne Schwab, *When the Members are the Missionaries: An Extraordinary Calling for Ordinary People* (Essex: Member Mission Press, 2013), 1–11.

¹⁶ EG no. 120.

Evangelization does not mean only to preach the gospel of Christ. It also includes practicing the message of Jesus Christ.¹⁷ Jesus proclaimed in the synagogue that God, His Father had sent Him to bring salvation in every realm of human activity.

The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. (Lk 4: 18–19)

Evangelization also includes every action to challenge the unjust structures in the society.¹⁸ The oppressive political, economic and social structures present in the society are snatching away the resources from the weak and the vulnerable. The weak, the poor and the disabled are facing enormous difficulties because the mighty and the rich trample upon them ruthlessly in their pursuit to gain more wealth and power. Every baptized Christian needs to realize that he or she has the divine calling to be the messenger of Christ and to do everything to make the world more just. Christians firstly need to abstain themselves from any activity, which tantamount to anti-gospel activity. They need to be the *salt of the earth* and the *light of the world*. It is not an easy task to challenge and confront the unjust mighty political, economic and social structures. However, evangelization includes social action and justice. Pope Francis commented the following on the social justice aspect of evangelization.

We also evangelize when we attempt to confront the various challenges which can arise. On occasion these may take the form of veritable attacks on religious freedom or new persecutions directed against Christians; in some countries these have reached alarming levels of hatred and violence. In many places, the problem is more that of widespread indifference and relativism, linked to disillusionment and the crisis of ideologies which has come about as a reaction to any-thing which might appear totalitarian. This not only harms the Church but the fabric of society as a whole. We should recognize how in a culture where each person wants to be bearer of his or her own subjective truth, it becomes difficult for citizens to devise a common plan which transcends individual gain and personal ambitions.¹⁹

There is no monotony in the work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit promotes diversity and plurality in the world. Every person who evangelizes must gratefully accept the gift of diversity and plurality. "Diversity must always be reconciled by the help of the Holy Spirit; he alone can

¹⁷ See Jerry Persha, "Toward Developing an Adequate and Comprehensive Understanding of Evangelization," in *The Study of Evangelism: Exploring a Missional Practice of the Church*, eds. Paul Chilcote & Lacey Warner (Grand Rapids: William B Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008), 313–327.

¹⁸ See Avery Dulles, "Vatican II and Evangelization," in *The New Evangelization: Overcoming the Obstacles*, eds. Steven Boguslawski & Ralph Martin (New York: Paulist Press, 2008), 1–12.

¹⁹ EG no. 61.

raise up diversity, plurality and multiplicity while at the same time bringing about unity.”²⁰ People need not restrict themselves to orthodox ways of evangelization. They need to prepare themselves to accept diverse ways to evangelize.²¹ No one should feel alienated because of his or her unique approach to the work of evangelization. Rather, all need to get the encouragement and support from the Church community in exploring new paths to do the work of evangelization.²² For this, evangelizers need to prepare themselves by taking part in ongoing formation programs. Prayer, study of the Word of God and getting involved in social action are some of the concrete steps that each evangelizer needs to take. Pope Francis noted about the importance of ongoing formation in the life of evangelizers. He noted that:

[T]he first proclamation also calls for ongoing formation and maturation. Evangelization aims at a process of growth which entails taking seriously each person and God’s plan for his or her life. All of us need to grow in Christ. Evangelization should stimulate a desire for this growth.²³

Thus, there are both similarities and differences in the understanding of the work of new evangelization when compared with the traditional ways of evangelization. Previously, the clergy was mainly involved in the work of evangelization. Moreover, evangelization meant converting people to faith. However, the present understanding is that all baptized need to be evangelizers. Further, the content of evangelization includes not only preaching the message of Christ but also working to establish the reign of God concretely, especially in places where there is no justice or peace.

Why Evangelize?

Evangelization is an integral part of a Christian’s life.²⁴ The Holy Spirit impels every baptized Christian to witness the love of Christ to others. Christians evangelize because the Holy Spirit works through them and gives them the courage to proclaim the message of the gospel.

The Holy Spirit also grants the courage to proclaim the newness of the Gospel with boldness (*parrhesia*) in every time and place, even when it meets with opposition. Let us call upon him today, firmly rooted in prayer, for without prayer all our activity risks being fruitless and our message empty. Jesus wants evangelizers who proclaim the good news

²⁰ EG no. 131.

²¹ See Mariasusai Dhavamony, “The Absoluteness of Jesus Christ and of Christianity,” *Studia Missionalia* 48 (1999): 71–122.

²² See Avery Dulles, “John Paul II and the New Evangelization,” *Studia Missionalia* 48 (1999): 165–180.

²³ EG no. 160.

²⁴ See Madeleine Delbrel, “The Joy of Believing,” trans. Ralph Wright (Sherbrooke: Editions Paulines, 1993), 181–234.

not only with words, but above all by a life transfigured by God's presence.²⁵

Christians need the power of the Holy Spirit to live the gospel and effectively proclaim it to others. Evangelization does not depend human techniques and resources but on the power of the Holy Spirit.²⁶

Spirit-filled evangelizers are evangelizers who pray and work. Mystical notions without a solid social and missionary outreach are of no help to evangelization, nor are dissertations or social or pastoral practices which lack a spirituality which can change hearts. These unilateral and incomplete proposals only reach a few groups and prove incapable of radiating beyond them because they curtail the Gospel. What is needed is the ability to cultivate an interior space which can give a Christian meaning to commitment and activity. Without prolonged moments of adoration, of prayerful encounter with the word, of sincere conversation with the Lord, our work easily becomes meaningless; we lose energy as a result of weariness and difficulties, and our fervour dies out.²⁷

Evangelization does not mean that Christians are giving out, whereas all others are at the receiving end. Those who evangelize also receive the benefits of the work of evangelization. Even though there are no direct material benefits, there are infinite numbers of spiritual benefits.²⁸ "When the Church summons Christians to take up the task of evangelization, she is simply pointing to the source of authentic personal fulfillment."²⁹ Evangelization brings true joy and serenity in the heart of the evangelizer. The Holy Spirit, who works through the evangelizer, fills him or her with every grace to live an authentic Christian life. Pope Francis noted about this joy as follows:

The work of evangelization enriches the mind and the heart; it opens up spiritual horizons; it makes us more and more sensitive to the workings of the Holy Spirit, and it takes us beyond our limited spiritual constructs. A committed missionary knows the joy of being.³⁰

Three categories of people, Christians themselves, people those who have lost faith and people those who do not seek faith are in need of evangelization. Churches, which had large numbers of Christians in the past, are losing a large number of their members. There are a number of factors, which have contributed to this decline. Lack of pastoral care, over-

²⁵ EG no. 259.

²⁶ See Avery Dulles, *Evangelization for the Third Millennium* (New York: Paulist Press, 2009), 30–41.

²⁷ EG no. 262.

²⁸ See Tom Cannon, *We Speak to Nations: God Wants to Use You to Reach the Nations* (Gray: Preacher's Kid Press, 2007), 109–112.

²⁹ EG no. 10.

³⁰ EG no. 272.

bureaucratization of the Church and secularization are some of the prominent reasons for the decline of Christianity in the West. One on the hand, rationalism criticizes every doctrine of faith as an article of superstition. Further the mushrooming of new religious movements promotes spirituality, which is godless and self-centered. It stresses on techniques to relax and find material benefits. There is no emphasis on charity or service to the other. Some new religious movements glorify humanism and relativism. Pope Francis noted about this problem as follows:

The Catholic faith of many peoples is nowadays being challenged by the proliferation of new religious movements, some of which tend to fundamentalism while others seem to propose a spirituality without God. This is, on the one hand, a human reaction to a materialistic, consumerist and individualistic society, but it is also a means of exploiting the weaknesses of people living in poverty and on the fringes of society, people who make ends meet amid great human suffering and are looking for immediate solutions to their needs. These religious movements, not without a certain shrewdness, come to fill, within a predominantly individualistic culture, a vacuum left by secularist rationalism. We must recognize that if part of our baptized people lack a sense of belonging to the Church, this is also due to certain structures and the occasionally unwelcoming atmosphere of some of our parishes and communities, or to a bureaucratic way of dealing with problems, be they simple or complex, in the lives of our people. In many places an administrative approach prevails over a pastoral approach, as does a concentration on administering the sacraments apart from other forms of evangelization.³¹

Secularization and relativism has accelerated the problem of the erosion of faith.³² Religion has lost space and relevance in the modern world. People are losing the sense of sin and at times, glorify some sinful practices. People look down upon those who speak against the unethical practices in the society. They label such persons as misfits in the modern world. Popular culture does not want the fine line between good and evil to exist. It wants to promote hedonism and paint religious ethics as monstrous, which wants to curb people's unlimited freedom.

The process of secularization tends to reduce the faith and the Church to the sphere of the private and personal. Furthermore, by completely rejecting the transcendent, it has produced a growing deterioration of ethics, a weakening of the sense of personal and collective sin, and a steady increase in relativism.³³

There is an urgent need to awake the conscience of the people to acknowledge the power of sin present in the world. Christians need to esteem the values of Christ and promote them in

³¹ EG no. 63.

³² See Rob Warner, *Secularization and its Discontents* (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2010), 41–67.

³³ EG no. 64.

their homes and places of work.³⁴ The Church needs to devise new ways to make people realize the importance of the Christian values in their lives.

What is called for is an evangelization capable of shedding light on these new ways of relating to God, to others and to the world around us, and inspiring essential values. It must reach the places where new narratives and paradigms are being formed, bringing the word of Jesus to the inmost soul of our cities.³⁵

Pastoral workers need to take care that they themselves do not fall in the trap of relativism and hedonism. The contemporary world is very attractive. It offers many ways to seek pleasure and indulge in self-centered satisfaction. It is becoming difficult to oppose the lures of the popular culture, which exalts unbridled human freedom without any ethical consequences. Pastoral workers face a great challenge to resist these forces and go ahead with their mission. However, they need to pray constantly and be vigilant of the attacks of the evil.

As a result, one can observe in many agents of evangelization, even though they pray, a heightened individualism, a crisis of identity and a cooling of fervour. These are three evils which fuel one another.³⁶

At times our media culture and some intellectual circles convey a marked scepticism with regard to the Church's message, along with a certain cynicism. As a consequence, many pastoral workers, although they pray, develop a sort of inferiority complex which leads them to relativize or conceal their Christian identity and convictions. This produces a vicious circle. They end up being unhappy with who they are and what they do; they do not identify with their mission of evangelization and this weakens their commitment. They end up stifling the joy of mission with a kind of obsession about being like everyone else and possessing what everyone else possesses. Their work of evangelization thus becomes forced, and they devote little energy and very limited time to it.³⁷

Pastoral workers can thus fall into a relativism which, whatever their particular style of spirituality or way of thinking, proves even more dangerous than doctrinal relativism. It has to do with the deepest and inmost decisions that shape their way of life. This practical relativism consists in acting as if God did not exist, making decisions as if the poor did not exist, setting goals as if others did not exist, working as if people who have not received the Gospel did not exist. It is striking that even some who clearly have solid doctrinal and spiritual convictions frequently fall into a lifestyle which leads to an attachment to financial

³⁴ See Josef Fuchs, *Personal Responsibility: Christian Morality*, trans. William Cleaves et al. (Goldenbridge: Gay and Macmillan Ltd., 1983), 53–57.

³⁵ EG no. 75.

³⁶ EG no. 78.

³⁷ EG no. 79.

security, or to a desire for power or human glory at all cost, rather than giving their lives to others in mission. Let us not allow ourselves to be robbed of missionary enthusiasm.³⁸

The joy of the Gospel is such that it cannot be taken away from us by anyone or anything (see Jn 16: 22). The evils of our world and those of the Church must not be excuses for diminishing our commitment and our fervour. Let us look upon them as challenges which can help us to grow.³⁹

Pastoral workers need to be aware that devising plans would mean nothing, if they do not actualize these plans.⁴⁰ They need to get out of the comfort zone and venture out even in the midst of challenges and opposition. This is because even though the popular culture promotes hedonism there is a deep spiritual hunger in the modern people.⁴¹ Material things can never satisfy the inner needs of a person.

Pastoral workers need to be careful that they do not face identity crisis because of their faith in Jesus Christ. They need to be convinced that God is the ultimate source, who has the power to satisfy the inner needs of a person. Pope Francis noted that:

The return to the sacred and the quest for spirituality which mark our own time are ambiguous phenomena. Today, our challenge is not so much atheism as the need to respond adequately to many people's thirst for God, lest they try to satisfy it with alienating solutions or with a disembodied Jesus who demands nothing of us with regard to others. Unless these people find in the Church a spirituality which can offer healing and liberation, and fill them with life and peace, while at the same time summoning them to fraternal communion and missionary fruitfulness, they will end up by being taken in by solutions which neither make life truly human nor give glory to God.⁴²

Pastoral workers need to take pride in their work. Even though the contemporary world has reduced religion to a matter of superstition, pastoral workers need to show the world that it is wrong in its perception about faith. True faith is not superstitious. It does not fancy an ideal world. It is not magic. Christian faith does not promise magical solutions to life's problems.⁴³ It gives courage to face turmoil in life because Jesus Christ, being the Son of God suffered and died on the Cross. He died but He did not allow death to have the final victory. He resurrected and defeated death. He has given the same hope of resurrection to all who believe in Him.

³⁸ EG no. 80.

³⁹ EG no. 84.

⁴⁰ EG no. 26.

⁴¹ See Joanna Adams, "Hope as the Intractable Resolve of the Spirit," in *Hope for the World: Mission in a Global Context*, ed. Walter Brueggemann (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 59–67.

⁴² EG no. 90.

⁴³ See L. Ann Jervis, *At the Heart of the Gospel: Suffering in the Earliest Christian Message* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 1–8.

Christian faith consists of this firm hope in Jesus, who became a person to save all persons. The Church was born to spread this hope to all people of good will.⁴⁴ Pastoral workers need to carry on their job faithfully because every part of the human society is in need of salvation. Pope Francis noted that:

Consequently, no one can demand that religion should be relegated to the inner sanctum of personal life, without influence on societal and national life, without concern for the soundness of civil institutions, without a right to offer an opinion on events affecting society. Who would claim to lock up in a church and silence the message of Saint Francis of Assisi or Blessed Teresa of Calcutta? They themselves would have found this unacceptable. An authentic faith — which is never comfortable or completely personal always involves a deep desire to change the world, to transmit values, to leave this earth somehow better than we found it. We love this magnificent planet on which God has put us, and we love the human family which dwells here, with all its tragedies and struggles, its hopes and aspirations, its strengths and weaknesses. The earth is our common home and all of us are brothers and sisters. If indeed the just ordering of society and of the state is a central responsibility of politics, the Church cannot and must not remain on the sidelines in the fight for justice. All Christians, their pastors included, are called to show concern for the building of a better world. This is essential, for the Church's social thought is primarily positive: it offers proposals, it works for change and in this sense it constantly points to the hope born of the loving heart of Jesus Christ. At the same time, it unites its own commitment to that made in the social field by other Churches and Ecclesial Communities, whether at the level of doctrinal reflection or at the practical level.⁴⁵

Thus, Christians have a great obligation to share their experience of Jesus Christ to all to promote justice and peace in the world.

How to Evangelize?

The glory of God should be the primary motivation behind all works of evangelization.⁴⁶ A pastoral worker needs to reevaluate his or her motivation in doing the work of evangelization. Pastoral Workers should not reduce evangelization to business or an outward show. If pastoral workers fail to keep their focus on God then all their work will be futile. The work of evangelization is not for self-glory. Evangelization means to share joy of Christ, which one

⁴⁴ See Jurgen Moltmann, "Progress and Abyss: Remembrances of the Future of the Modern World," in *The Future of Hope: Christian Tradition Amid Modernity and Postmodernity*, eds. Miroslav Volf & William Katerberg (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004), 3–26.

⁴⁵ EG no. 183.

⁴⁶ See William McRaney Jr., *The Art of Personal Evangelism: Sharing Jesus in a Changing Culture* (Nashville: B & H Publishing Group, 2003), 197–198.

experiences because of one's relationship to the person of Jesus Christ. Pope Francis cautioned pastoral workers not to fall in the trap of self-glory but to give God all the glory. He noted that:

Spiritual worldliness, which hides behind the appearance of piety and even love for the Church, consists in seeking not the Lord's glory but human glory and personal well-being. It is what the Lord reprimanded the Pharisees for: How can you believe, who receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God? (Jn 5: 44). It is a subtle way of seeking one's own interests, not those of Jesus Christ (Phil 2: 21). It takes on many forms, depending on the kinds of persons and groups into which it seeps. Since it is based on carefully cultivated appearances, it is not always linked to outward sin; from without, everything appears as it should be.⁴⁷

If we wish to commit ourselves fully and perseveringly, we need to leave behind every other motivation. This is our definitive, deepest and greatest motivation, the ultimate reason and meaning behind all we do: the glory of the Father which Jesus sought at every moment of his life.⁴⁸

Evangelization is not an easy job. Pastoral workers need to serve the people whom they evangelize without having any hidden agenda. They need to embrace the tough task, which the Lord assigns them.

Let us try a little harder to take the first step and to become involved. Jesus washed the feet of his disciples. The Lord gets involved and he involves his own, as he kneels to wash their feet...An evangelizing community gets involved by word and deed in people's daily lives; it bridges distances, it is willing to abase itself if necessary, and it embraces human life, touching the suffering flesh of Christ in others.⁴⁹

Pastoral workers need to collaborate with their local parishes to organize effectively the various programs of evangelization.⁵⁰ Parishes too need to be flexible to accept diverse opinions of parishioners to promote the work of evangelization. Parish priests need to be open to all people. They need to accept their parishioners as gifts of God. They need to give every member of their parish community a sense of belongingness to the group.⁵¹

Parishes need to take care that they do not project an exclusivist image. A parish community needs to involve itself in every human activity and bring the reign of God in every aspect of life.

⁴⁷ EG no. 93.

⁴⁸ EG no. 267.

⁴⁹ EG no. 24.

⁵⁰ See Frank DeSiano & Kenneth Boyack, *Creating the Evangelizing Parish* (New York: Paulist Press, 1993), 52–62.

⁵¹ EG no. 28.

This presumes that it really is in contact with the homes and the lives of its people, and does not become a useless structure out of touch with people or a self-absorbed group made up of a chosen few. The parish is the presence of the Church in a given territory, an environment for hearing God's word, for growth in the Christian life, for dialogue, proclamation, charitable outreach, worship and celebration. In all its activities the parish encourages and trains its members to be evangelizers. It is a community of communities, a sanctuary where the thirsty come to drink in the midst of their journey, and a centre of constant missionary outreach.⁵²

Ecclesial movements have a great role in the work of evangelization.⁵³ Parish communities need to work with various ecclesial groups to prepare programs for evangelization. Ecclesial movements are a gift of the Holy Spirit to the Church. They exist to bring spiritual renewal in the lives of the faithful and revive the missionary-spirit in the Church. Pope Francis noted about their importance in the life of the Church. He noted that:

Other Church institutions, basic communities and small communities, movements, and forms of association are a source of enrichment for the Church, raised up by the Spirit for evangelizing different areas and sectors. Frequently they bring a new evangelizing fervour and a new capacity for dialogue with the world whereby the Church is renewed. But it will prove beneficial for them not to lose contact with the rich reality of the local parish and to participate readily in the overall pastoral activity of the particular Church. This kind of integration will prevent them from concentrating only on part of the Gospel or the Church, or becoming nomads without roots.⁵⁴

The rise and growth of associations and movements mostly made up of young people can be seen as the work of the Holy Spirit, who blazes new trails to meet their expectations and their search for a deep spirituality and a more real sense of belonging.⁵⁵

Jesus said to Nicodemus "the wind blows where it wills" (see Jn 3: 8). Jesus referred to the Holy Spirit as the wind, which no one can control. Where there is Holy Spirit, there is always openness and flexibility. The Holy Spirit dares all Christians to think out of box strategies to spread the gospel of Christ. People those who believe that *my way or the highway* bring a great harm to the mission of the Church. Pastoral workers need to be flexible and realistic in devising programs for evangelization. They must be ready to dialogue with other people of good will and engage them in the work of evangelization.⁵⁶ Pope Francis noted that:

⁵² EG no. 28.

⁵³ See Brendan Leahy, *Ecclesial Movements and Communities: Origin, Significance and Issues* (Hyde Park: New City Press, 2011), 166-168.

⁵⁴ EG no. 29.

⁵⁵ EG no. 105.

⁵⁶ See Heinrich Fries, "Evangelization and Dialogue," in *Evangelization, Dialogue and Development*, ed. Mariasusai

Pastoral ministry in a missionary key seeks to abandon the complacent attitude that says: We have always done it this way. I invite everyone to be bold and creative in this task of rethinking the goals, structures, style and methods of evangelization in their respective communities. A proposal of goals without an adequate communal search for the means of achieving them will inevitably prove illusory.⁵⁷

Pastoral workers need to live the message, which they proclaim. If their lifestyle does not match their preaching, all their work will be futile.

We need to remember that all religious teaching ultimately has to be reflected in the teacher's way of life, which awakens the assent of the heart by its nearness, love and witness.⁵⁸

The Lord wants to make use of us as living, free and creative beings who let his word enter their own hearts before then passing it on to others. Christ's message must truly penetrate and possess the preacher, not just intellectually but in his entire being.⁵⁹

Pastoral workers need to deliver the message of Christ in simple words without using any jargons or doctrinal assertions.⁶⁰ Doctrines are important. However, contemporary people who have no understanding of the intricate and complex philosophical or theological terms may look upon Christian faith as a subjective matter of abstract philosophical thoughts. Christian message is not an abstract doctrine but a living encounter with the living Lord, Jesus Christ. Pope Francis urged pastoral workers to preach the message of Christ in simple words. He noted that:

When we adopt a pastoral goal and a missionary style which would actually reach everyone without exception or exclusion, the message has to concentrate on the essentials, on what is most beautiful, most grand, most appealing and at the same time most necessary. The message is simplified, while losing none of its depth and truth, and thus becomes all the more forceful and convincing.⁶¹

Pastoral workers and priests delivering the message of Christ need to take time to prepare their message. They need to understand their audience's requirements. They need to pray before they deliver their message. This is because; their words may not have any effect on

Dhavamony, (Rome: Universita Gregoriana Editrice, 1972), 249–262.

⁵⁷ EG no. 33.

⁵⁸ EG no. 42.

⁵⁹ EG no. 151.

⁶⁰ See C. L. Thomas, *The Four Pillars of Evangelism: Simple Steps to Help Any Child of God Evangelize Just Like Jesus* (Bloomington: AuthorHouse, 2011), 1–3.

⁶¹ EG no. 35.

others, unless the Holy Spirit works through them. Pope Francis noted that:

Preparation for preaching thus becomes an exercise in evangelical discernment, wherein we strive to recognize in the light of the Spirit a call which God causes to resound in the historical situation itself. In this situation, and also through it, God calls the believer.⁶²

Simplicity has to do with the language we use. It must be one that people understand, lest we risk speaking to a void. Preachers often use words learned during their studies and in specialized settings which are not part of the ordinary language of their hearers. These are words that are suitable in theology or catechesis, but whose meaning is incomprehensible to the majority of Christians. The greatest risk for a preacher is that he becomes so accustomed to his own language that he thinks that everyone else naturally understands and uses it. If we wish to adapt to people's language and to reach them with God's word, we need to share in their lives and pay loving attention to them. Simplicity and clarity are two different things. Our language may be simple but our preaching not very clear. It can end up being incomprehensible because it is disorganized, lacks logical progression or tries to deal with too many things at one time. We need to ensure, then, that the homily has thematic unity, clear order and correlation between sentences, so that people can follow the preacher easily and grasp his line of argument.⁶³

Sometimes rivalry and conflicts among missionaries destroys the work of evangelization.⁶⁴ Some missionaries think of their work from a secular point of view. They forget that the apostolate, which they are doing, is primarily for the glory of God. They need to understand that they are mere instruments and not masters of the mission. The scandals among pastoral workers bring harm not only to their work but also to all the missionaries.

Sometimes religious institutions and congregations set up special cells to promote justice, peace and integration in the world but fail to promote the same within their own institutions or congregations. Sometimes mission work suffers because of the spirit of rivalry, competition and jealousy among missionaries. Moreover, it becomes an obstacle in the work of evangelization. Pope Francis notes that pastoral workers need to pray for those among them who are creating problems. Apart from prayers, leaders should take the lead to confront the evil within and do everything to rectify the situation. Pope Francis noted with deep concern about the conflicts among the pastoral workers.

How many wars take place within the people of God and in our different communities. In our neighbourhoods and in the workplace, how many wars are caused by envy and

⁶² EG no. 154.

⁶³ EG no. 158.

⁶⁴ See Edwin Anaegboka Udoe, *Resolving the Prevailing Conflicts Between Christianity and African (Igbo) Traditional Religion through Inculturation* (Zurich: Lit Verlag, 2011), 189–191.

jealousy, even among Christians.⁶⁵

It always pains me greatly to discover how some Christian communities, and even consecrated persons, can tolerate different forms of enmity, division, calumny, defamation, vendetta, jealousy and the desire to impose certain ideas at all costs, even to persecutions which appear as veritable witch hunts. Whom are we going to evangelize if this is the way we act?⁶⁶

To pray for a person with whom I am irritated is a beautiful step forward in love, and an act of evangelization. Let us do it today. Let us not allow ourselves to be robbed of the ideal of fraternal love.⁶⁷

The Church needs to involve the youth in the work of evangelization.⁶⁸ The contemporary world offers many attractive options to the youth. Not all of these options are in tune with the values of the gospel of Christ. The Church needs to tap the energy of the youth for rightful purposes. For this, the Church needs to understand their present reality and respond accordingly. The Church needs to acknowledge that the youth have the capacity to contribute positively to the work of evangelization. Pope Francis noted about the work of the youth as follows:

We should recognize that despite the present crisis of commitment and communal relationships, many young people are making common cause before the problems of our world and are taking up various forms of activism and volunteer work. Some take part in the life of the Church as members of service groups and various missionary initiatives in their own dioceses and in other places.⁶⁹

The Church is catholic (universal).⁷⁰ No one culture can claim dominance in the Church. The Church is present in all cultures. The Church respects all cultures because the Church respects the dignity of every person, belonging to any culture or race. The diversity of cultures enriches the human society. The Church needs to shed off any fixation to any particular culture. The Church needs to take into account the cultural situation of a region while it engages in the work of evangelization. In the past, the Church was Eurocentric. The customs of Rome became a part of the Church's legacy. However, presently the Church needs to revise its understanding about other cultures. Jesus was born as a human in a particular cultural

⁶⁵ EG no. 98.

⁶⁶ EG no. 100.

⁶⁷ EG no. 101.

⁶⁸ See Michelle Garlinski, Mariette Martineau & Dean Woodbeck, *Total Youth Ministry* (Winona: Saint Mary's Press, 2004), 9–12.

⁶⁹ EG no. 106.

⁷⁰ See Evelyn Monteiro, *Church and Culture: Communion in Pluralism* (Delhi: ISPCK, 2004), 77–89.

setting. However, Jesus Christ as true God and true human is present in every culture. Every culture has its own beauty. The Church needs to acknowledge this reality and devise ways to inculturate with the local cultures. Pope Francis noted about the need to inculturate as follows:

When properly understood, cultural diversity is not a threat to Church unity. The Holy Spirit, sent by the Father and the Son, transforms our hearts and enables us to enter into the perfect communion of the blessed Trinity, where all things find their unity. He builds up the communion and harmony of the people of God. The same Spirit is that harmony, just as he is the bond of love between the Father and the Son. It is he who brings forth a rich variety of gifts, while at the same time creating a unity which is never uniformity but a multifaceted and inviting harmony. Evangelization joyfully acknowledges these varied treasures which the Holy Spirit pours out upon the Church. We would not do justice to the logic of the incarnation if we thought of Christianity as monocultural and monotonous. While it is true that some cultures have been closely associated with the preaching of the Gospel and the development of Christian thought, the revealed message is not identified with any of them; its content is transcultural. Hence in the evangelization of new cultures, or cultures which have not received the Christian message, it is not essential to impose a specific cultural form, no matter how beautiful or ancient it may be, together with the Gospel. The message that we proclaim always has a certain cultural dress, but we in the Church can sometimes fall into a needless hallowing of our own culture, and thus show more fanaticism than true evangelizing zeal.⁷¹

We cannot demand that peoples of every continent, in expressing their Christian faith, imitate modes of expression which European nations developed at a particular moment of their history, because the faith cannot be constricted to the limits of understanding and expression of any one culture. It is an indisputable fact that no single culture can exhaust the mystery of our redemption in Christ.⁷²

Evangelization is not monologues. It is dialogical.⁷³ A pastoral worker not only shares his or her experience with others but also is willing to learn from others. He or she listens to the other person and tries to understand him or her. The work of evangelization bears fruit only if the evangelizer has the patience to listen to others and then share his or her experience of Christ. The episode of the two disciples on the way to Emmaus makes the need to listen and then share amply clear (see Lk 24: 13–35). On the way to Emmaus the resurrected Jesus, meets his two disciples but they fail to recognize Him. Firstly, Jesus listens to their story. He does not deliver them a lengthy homily at the start of the conversation. He has patience to listen to their narrative before He shares His thoughts with them. His warmth and tenderness makes him immediate friend with the two disciples. They no longer feel He is a stranger but

⁷¹ EG no. 117.

⁷² EG no. 118.

⁷³ See McRaney Jr., *The Art of Personal Evangelism: Sharing Jesus in a Changing Culture*, 165–168.

welcome Him to stay with them. It is only when Jesus and the two disciples grow in a relationship; He reveals to them His identity through the breaking of the bread. This encounter changes not only their destination (from Emmaus to Jerusalem) but also their destiny (from being doubters to believers in resurrected Christ) in life. Pastoral workers need to learn from Jesus, the art of listening and sharing. Pope Francis noted the following about the importance of dialogue in the work of evangelization. He noted that:

Today, as the Church seeks to experience a profound missionary renewal, there is a kind of preaching which falls to each of us as a daily responsibility. It has to do with bringing the Gospel to the people we meet, whether they be our neighbours or complete strangers. This is the informal preaching which takes place in the middle of a conversation, something along the lines of what a missionary does when visiting a home. Being a disciple means being constantly ready to bring the love of Jesus to others, and this can happen unexpectedly and in any place: on the street, in a city square, during work, on a journey.⁷⁴

In this preaching, which is always respectful and gentle, the first step is personal dialogue, when the other person speaks and shares his or her joys, hopes and concerns for loved ones, or so many other heartfelt needs. Only afterwards is it possible to bring up God's word, perhaps by reading a Bible verse or relating a story, but always keeping in mind the fundamental message: the personal love of God who became man, who gave himself up for us, who is living and who offers us his salvation and his friendship. This message has to be shared humbly as a testimony on the part of one who is always willing to learn, in the awareness that the message is so rich and so deep that it always exceeds our grasp.⁷⁵

Evangelization also involves the path of dialogue. For the Church today, three areas of dialogue stand out where she needs to be present in order to promote full human development and to pursue the common good: dialogue with states, dialogue with society including dialogue with cultures and the sciences and dialogue with other believers who are not part of the Catholic Church.⁷⁶ As believers, we also feel close to those who do not consider themselves part of any religious tradition, yet sincerely seek the truth, goodness and beauty which we believe have their highest expression and source in God. We consider them as precious allies in the commitment to defending human dignity, in building peaceful coexistence between peoples and in protecting creation. A special place of encounter is offered by new Areopagi such as the Court of the Gentiles, where believers and non-believers are able to engage in dialogue about fundamental issues of ethics, art and science, and about the search for transcendence. This too is a path to peace in our

⁷⁴ EG no. 127.

⁷⁵ EG no. 128.

⁷⁶ EG no. 238.

troubled world.⁷⁷

The Holy Spirit continues to give gifts and charisms to do the work of evangelization.⁷⁸ During the Second Vatican Council, Cardinal Ruffini and his supporters held that charisms of the Holy Spirit are neither available nor needed for modern times.⁷⁹ The Holy Spirit distributed charisms to the early Church to do the work of evangelization. However, Cardinal Suenens and his supporters opposed this view.⁸⁰ They held that the Holy Spirit continues to give charisms to the Church. The Church needs to gratefully receive these gifts and use them for the good of humanity. The Council Fathers voted in favor of Cardinal Suenens resolution and inserted a paragraph about the charisms of the Holy Spirit in the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*.

The holy people of God shares also in Christ's prophetic office; it spreads abroad a living witness to Him, especially by means of a life of faith and charity and by offering to God a sacrifice of praise, the tribute of lips which give praise to His name. The entire body of the faithful, anointed as they are by the Holy One, cannot err in matters of belief. They manifest this special property by means of the whole peoples' supernatural discernment in matters of faith when from the Bishops down to the last of the lay faithful they show universal agreement in matters of faith and morals. That discernment in matters of faith is aroused and sustained by the Spirit of truth. It is exercised under the guidance of the sacred teaching authority, in faithful and respectful obedience to which the people of God accepts that which is not just the word of men but truly the word of God. Through it, the people of God adheres unwaveringly to the faith given once and for all to the saints, penetrates it more deeply with right thinking, and applies it more fully in its life.

It is not only through the sacraments and the ministries of the Church that the Holy Spirit sanctifies and leads the people of God and enriches it with virtues, but, allotting his gifts to everyone according as He wills, He distributes special graces among the faithful of every rank. By these gifts He makes them fit and ready to undertake the various tasks and offices which contribute toward the renewal and building up of the Church, according to the words of the Apostle: The manifestation of the Spirit is given to everyone for profit. These charisms, whether they be the more outstanding or the more simple and widely diffused, are to be received with thanksgiving and consolation for they are perfectly suited to and useful for the needs of the Church. Extraordinary gifts are not to be sought after, nor are the fruits of apostolic labor to be presumptuously expected from their use; but judgment as to their genuinity and proper use belongs to those who are appointed leaders

⁷⁷ EG no. 257.

⁷⁸ See Avery Dulles, "The Charism of the New Evangelizer," in *Retrieving Charisms for the Twenty-first Century* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1999), 33–45.

⁷⁹ See *Acta Synodalia Vaticani II*, 2.2 (1972), 629–630.

⁸⁰ Léon Joseph Suenens, *Co-Responsibility in the Church*, trans. Francis Martin (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968), 216–217.

in the Church, to whose special competence it belongs, not indeed to extinguish the Spirit, but to test all things and hold fast to that which is good.⁸¹

Pope Francis too endorses the view of the Council Fathers on charisms. He holds that charisms are relevant for our times. He further notes that pastoral workers need to use these charisms in their work of evangelization. He noted that:

The Holy Spirit also enriches the entire evangelizing Church with different charisms. These gifts are meant to renew and build up the Church. They are not an inheritance, safely secured and entrusted to a small group for safekeeping; rather they are gifts of the Spirit integrated into the body of the Church, drawn to the centre which is Christ and then channelled into an evangelizing impulse. A sure sign of the authenticity of a charism is its ecclesial character, its ability to be integrated harmoniously into the life of God's holy and faithful people for the good of all. Something truly new brought about by the Spirit need not overshadow other gifts and spiritualities in making itself felt. To the extent that a charism is better directed to the heart of the Gospel, its exercise will be more ecclesial. It is in communion, even when this proves painful, that a charism is seen to be authentic and mysteriously fruitful.⁸²

The work of evangelization is not easy. Pastoral workers often have to face disappointments and failures.⁸³ This builds frustration and fatigue in them. The contemporary world looks down on matters of religion and pokes fun at the pastoral workers. Hence, a pastoral worker needs deep conviction of his or her faith in the Lord. Even people ridiculed Jesus and poked fun at him. Jesus died a humiliating death on the cross. Probably, His opponents thought that Jesus was a miserable failure. However, history has proved them wrong. Jesus died a humiliating death but did not allow death to have its final say. He rose again and proved that evil may appear strong for a moment but ultimately good always overcomes evil forever. This should give hope to all pastoral workers to look forward for the glorious day when God "will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away" (Rev 24: 4). Pope Francis noted that:

We can know quite well that our lives will be fruitful, without claiming to know how, or where, or when. We may be sure that none of our acts of love will be lost, nor any of our acts of sincere concern for others. No single act of love for God will be lost, no generous effort is meaningless, no painful endurance is wasted. All of these encircle our world like a vital force. Sometimes it seems that our work is fruitless, but mission is not like a business transaction or investment, or even a humanitarian activity. It is not a show where

⁸¹ LG no. 12.

⁸² EG no. 130.

⁸³ See Frank DeSiano, *The Evangelizing Catholic: A Practical Handbook for Reaching Out* (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1998), 1-5.

we count how many people come as a result of our publicity; it is something much deeper, which escapes all measurement. It may be that the Lord uses our sacrifices to shower blessings in another part of the world which we will never visit. The Holy Spirit works as he wills, when he wills and where he wills; we entrust ourselves without pretending to see striking results. We know only that our commitment is necessary. Let us learn to rest in the tenderness of the arms of the Father amid our creative and generous commitment. Let us keep marching forward; let us give him everything, allowing him to make our efforts bear fruit in his good time.⁸⁴

Thus, pastoral workers need to go ahead with their work in the power of the Holy Spirit without losing hope.⁸⁵ They need to look beyond the present situation, which may appear grim and disappointing. God has not yet given up on the world. There is hope. Hope has the potential to change the pastoral worker and energize him or her to spread joyfully the fragrance of Christ.

Conclusion

The contemporary world has relegated the space of religion and does not attach much significance to it. In this situation, pastoral workers have a difficult task, to live their faith and share it with others. Pope Francis' Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* serves as a valuable guideline to all pastoral workers to understand the content of their work. Further, EG also offers new insights, which can help a pastoral worker in his or her work of evangelization.

⁸⁴ EG no. 279.

⁸⁵ See Edward Dayton & David Fraser, *Planning Strategies for World Evangelization* (Grand Rapids: William B Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990), 175–176.