



Praying Advent with Pope Francis'



Part III:

The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Faith



In the second part of his exhortation on "The Joy of the Gospel," Pope Francis describes what the Synod on the New Evangelization said,

The Synod reaffirmed that the new evangelization is a summons addressed to all and that it is carried out in three principal settings. [14]

The three settings are:

1. The area of ordinary pastoral ministry, which is “animated by the fire of the Spirit, so as to inflame the hearts of the faithful who regularly take part in community worship and gather on the Lord’s day to be nourished by his word and by the bread of eternal life” [Benedict XVI, Homily at the Conclusion of the Synod, October 2012] [15]

2. A second area is that of “the baptized whose lives do not reflect the demands of Baptism”, [Benedict Homily] who lack a meaningful relationship to the Church and no longer experience the consolation born of faith. The Church, in her maternal concern, tries to help them experience a conversion which will restore the joy of faith to their hearts and inspire a commitment to the Gospel. [15]

3. Lastly, we cannot forget that evangelization is first and foremost about preaching the Gospel to those who do not know Jesus Christ or who have always rejected him. Many of them are quietly seeking God, led by a yearning to see his face, even in countries of ancient Christian tradition. All of them have a right to receive the Gospel. Christians have the duty to proclaim the Gospel without excluding anyone. Instead of seeming to impose new obligations, they should appear as people who wish to share their joy, who point to a horizon of beauty and who invite others to a delicious banquet. It is not by proselytizing that the Church grows, but “by attraction” [Benedict Homily] [15]

Advent can be a great time to reflect on these three groups - from two points of view. First of all, I can ask which group I am in. Secondly, I can ask how I am being called to announce the good news in each of these settings.

The scope and limits of this Exhortation

Pope Francis makes it clear that, while he will take up the themes of the Synod on Evangelization, he will not take up all the questions which are needed to be discussed today, in the Church. He specifically says that the Pope should not solve issues which are best done by local Bishops. He says that he is conscious of a need to promote a sound "decentralization."

He said that this exhortation will promote encouragement and guidance for

"a new phase of evangelization, one marked by enthusiasm and vitality."

Pope Francis names the areas he will discuss in this exhortation:

- a) the reform of the Church in her missionary outreach;
- b) the temptations faced by pastoral workers;
- c) the Church, understood as the entire People of God which evangelizes;
- d) the homily and its preparation;
- e) the inclusion of the poor in society;
- f) peace and dialogue within society;
- g) the spiritual motivations for mission. [17]

All of them help give shape to a definite style of evangelization which I ask you to adopt in every activity which you undertake. [18]

We look forward to this reflection on each of these areas of encouragement and guidance. For now, at this point in Advent, we are asking to be open to the graces of this season, especially to be renewed in our hope and our joy. This is the best preparation to be evangelizers of the Word - to hear it, to come to know Jesus' story as a light in my life. This will prepare me, in my context to be a bearer of that light to others.

"The journey is never finished. Just as in each of our own lives, there is always a need to restart, to rise again, to recover a sense of the goal of one's own existence."

LET US ASK THE LORD
TO HELP US
UNDERSTAND THE LAW
OF *Love*. HOW GOOD
IT IS TO HAVE THIS
LAW! HOW MUCH
Good IT DOES US TO
LOVE ONE ANOTHER,
IN SPITE OF
EVERYTHING. YES, IN
SPITE OF EVERYTHING!
-Pope Francis

