



Praying Advent with Pope Francis'



Part IV

Chapter One: The Church's Missionary Transformation

Part One: A Church Which Goes Forth



In part one of the First Chapter of the Exhortation, Pope Francis begins to make his case for a missionary Church. He said,

In our day Jesus' command to "go and make disciples" echoes in the changing scenarios and ever new challenges to the Church's mission of evangelization, and all of us are called to take part in this new missionary "going forth". [20]

Pope Francis says that the impetus to go forth comes from the joy of the Gospel. And, it is a joy which is continually renewed, sending us forth again and again.

The Holy Father wrote:

In fidelity to the example of the Master, it is vitally important for the Church today to go forth and preach the Gospel to all: to all places, on all occasions, without hesitation, reluctance or fear. The joy of the Gospel is for all people: no one can be excluded.[23]

Taking the first step, being involved and supportive, bearing fruit and rejoicing

The Pope urges us to "try harder" and to take first steps in our mission to be missionary disciples.

The Church which "goes forth" is a community of missionary disciples who take the first step, who are involved and supportive, who bear fruit and rejoice. An evangelizing community knows that the Lord has taken the initiative, he has loved us first (cf. 1 Jn 4:19), and therefore we can move forward, boldly take the initiative, go out to others, seek those who have fallen away, stand at the crossroads and welcome the outcast. Such a community has an endless desire to show mercy, the fruit of its own experience of the

power of the Father's infinite mercy. Let us try a little harder to take the first step and to become involved. [24]

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. Evangelizers thus take on the "smell of the sheep" and the sheep are willing to hear their voice. An evangelizing community is also supportive, standing by people at every step of the way, no matter how difficult or lengthy this may prove to be. It is familiar with patient expectation and apostolic endurance. [24]

Finally an evangelizing community is filled with joy; it knows how to rejoice always. It celebrates every small victory, every step forward in the work of evangelization. Evangelization with joy becomes beauty in the liturgy, as part of our daily concern to spread goodness. The Church evangelizes and is herself evangelized through the beauty of the liturgy, which is both a celebration of the task of evangelization and the source of her renewed self-giving. [24]

In Advent, we can continue to pray for this patient expectation and special mission-filled endurance in the acts of loving and sharing of the Good News to which we are called. The liturgy can become for us the source and the summit of our joy and our missionary zeal.

We can continue to ask ourselves, "To whom are you sending me, Lord, to share the joy I experience over your love for me?"

**What a beautiful day it will be when weapons are destroyed to be transformed into tools for work! What a beautiful day that will be! And this is possible!
Let us bet on hope, on the hope of peace, and it will be possible!**



