

TO LIVE IS TO EVANGELIZE

Recent Popes and Integral Evangelization

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Evangelization, for many Catholics, is a generally unfamiliar and relatively new term; only recently has it been gaining wider currency. The Second Vatican Council, as well as recent popes, has placed evangelization at the center of the Church's identity and mission. The goal of this presentation is to focus specifically on the unique contributions of Paul VI and John Paul II to the understanding of evangelization in all of its rich, complex, multi-faceted, and interrelated dimensions. In short, this study explores evangelization viewed holistically and integrally.

The word "evangelization" does not occur in the New Testament; however, *euaggelion*, meaning "gospel" or "good news," occurs 72 times, 54 of which are in the Pauline corpus. It has a wide range of meanings: the whole Christian message (Mk 1:1); the good news of Jesus (2 Cor 4:4); a message for all (Mk 13:10; 16:15); a revelation of God (Gal 1:11-12) which is to be believed (Mk 1:15) and proclaimed (1 Cor 9:14, 16, 18). One must risk all for the gospel (Mk 8:35; Rom 1:16), serve it (Rom 1:1; 15:16), defend it (Phil 1:7, 16). *Euaggelion* is the good news of truth (Gal 2:5, 14), of hope (Col 1:23), of peace (Eph 6:15), of immortality (2 Tim 1:10), of the risen Christ (1 Cor 15:1ff; 2 Tim 2:8), and of salvation (Eph 1:13).

Vatican II speaks of evangelization in a variety of contexts: it is especially the bishops' task to promote evangelization by the faithful (CD 6); it is associated with the mission of the laity (AA 2, 6, 20, 26; LG 35); priests are to learn the methods of evangelization (PO 19); the eucharist is the source and summit of all evangelization (PO 5). The Decree on Missions (AG) is replete with references: "the specific purpose of missionary activity is evangelization and the planting of the Church" (6); "the Church has the obligation and the sacred right to evangelize" (7); catechists have an important task to evangelize (17), as do the laity (21); the call to evangelize arises from a charism of the Spirit (23); various roles are fulfilled by missionary institutes (27), by the Propaganda Fidei (29), by the people of God (35, 36), by bishops and priests (38), by religious institutes (40), and by young churches (LG 17).

Solidly founded in Sacred Scripture and in Vatican II, the pivotal contribution of Paul VI and John Paul II has been to put evangelization on "center stage" in their description of the Church's contemporary mission. An obvious question arises: How does one capture the rich thought of these two popes? This paper takes the path of an extensive presentation of the seminal document of each pope on the subject of evangelization. Thus, this presentation unfolds in three interrelated sections: 1) Paul VI and *Evangelii Nuntiandi*; 2) John Paul II and *Redemptoris Missio*; and 3) a synthetic overview of integral evangelization.

I. Paul VI and *Evangelii Nuntiandi*

Pope Paul VI (1963-1978) will always be remembered as a modern missionary pope: he made missionary journeys to all continents and he authored *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (EN), which became the magna carta for Catholic evangelization in the last quarter of the second millennium of Christianity. Without doubt, EN is one of the most important ecclesial documents of the post-Vatican II era. It presents a concise, inspiring, and programmatic challenge for the Church to enthusiastically engage in her God-given mission to preach the Gos-

pel to the contemporary world—to living peoples, with their aspirations and anxieties, their cultures and religions, their hopes and conflicts. EN boldly addresses the topic of evangelization in the modern world.

BACKGROUND

Evangelii Nuntiandi, a document of 23,000 words, was issued on 8 December 1975; it emerged from several rich sources and antecedents. Very few recent papal documents have been prepared with so much prior consultation with so many different sectors of the Church over so long a time period. To understand the context and content of EN, it is necessary to examine the events surrounding the 1974 International Synod on Evangelization (Paul VI explicitly refers to the Synod over thirty times in EN).

The Synod (27 September-26 October 1974) brought together over 200 bishops from all over the world, along with some priests, religious and laity in a consultative capacity. Prior to the Synod, three full years had been devoted to preparations on local, national, and continental levels. Pastoral experiences and approaches to evangelization were widely shared; the method was decidedly an inductive, not deductive, approach. The churches in the so-called Third World devoted much effort and enthusiasm to the process. One fine example was the dedicated commitment of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences; their First Plenary Assembly (April 1974: Taipei, Taiwan) produced the insightful document, *Evangelization in Modern Day Asia*.

When the 209 bishops arrived in Rome in late 1974, they were well-prepared, ready and enthusiastic to engage in the Synod's work. Pope Paul VI opened the Synod with a eucharist celebrated in the Sistine chapel; he also delivered an opening address, encouraging frank discussion and honest exchange on the burning issues surrounding evangelization. Paul VI had set the stage; he faithfully attended all the general assemblies as a silent but attentive listener.

The Synod proceeded according to its three planned stages: a)

communication of pastoral experiences which included five continental reports and about 175 speeches of Synod Fathers; b) reflection on interrelated theological themes: an attempt was made to integrate theological elements and pastoral experiences; it met difficulties and revealed many lacunae; c) preparation of conclusions: a drafting committee, working with an immense amount of material and items prepared by D. Grasso, C. Wojtyla, and D.S. Amalorpavadass, prepared a 41-page text.

On October 22, just four days before the Synod's conclusion, three-quarters of the text was rejected; it had failed to capture the testimonies and insights, the searchings and propositions that characterized the first three weeks of Synod work. Thus, the final session of the Synod (26 October 1974) was awaited with keen interest. Pope Paul VI addressed the assembly frankly and openly:

The synod of bishops has ended.... We should want to assess its achievements.... We cannot but be genuinely satisfied and optimistic about its outcome.... The theme [of evangelization] is too wide and complex to be dealt with properly in so short a time or to yield all the conclusions to which its discussion might give rise. However, this Synod did again make the following contribution to the Church in our day: it enabled the voices of the local churches to be heard; it facilitated a better diagnosis of the current situation and a delineation of the principal elements of evangelization; it set in train the discussion of the practice and theory of evangelization in our time. For this reason we judge that the Synod as a whole has been fruitful. For it places at the disposal of Peter's successor, for the benefit of the entire Church, an abundance of advice, admonitions and proposals.

EVANGELII NUNTIANDI EMERGES

During a year-long gestation period, Pope Paul VI labored to produce from the rich experience and insights of the Synod a document that is clearly the work of discernment and synthesis. EN is at once synodal and papal and therefore deeply collegial. EN is structured in seven thematic chapters and framed by an introduction and a conclusion. Chapter titles clearly indicate specific content (e.g., "What

is Evangelization?” “The Methods of Evangelization”). The five-paragraph introduction contains several interpretive keys to the document.

Paul VI clearly saw his role in shaping EN to be part of his papal responsibility of “encouraging our brethren in their mission as evangelizers”; this task became for him “a daily preoccupation... and a fundamental commitment of our Pontificate” (1). What emerged as EN has been described as Paul VI’s last and finest apostolic exhortation, a novel and effective form of the magisterium.

Paul VI did not write EN as a tightly-reasoned and carefully-nuanced theological treatise (although excellent theological reflection pervades the document). He notes that his words are designed to be a “meditation on evangelization”; he hopes that they will succeed “in inviting the whole People of God assembled in the Church to make the same meditation” (5). The pope returns to the theme of meditation throughout EN (see 40, 76). It is this very personal, even conversational, style of meditative reflection and exhortation that many have found attractive; it invites a frequent return to EN—even 25 years later. It encourages personal reception and assimilation of the message; it exudes a poetic quality.

Paul VI notes that three key elements converge to highlight the importance of the promulgation of EN (2): the conclusion of the Holy Year (a special time of renewal); the tenth anniversary of the close of Vatican II (renewing the Church for mission); and the first anniversary of the 1974 Synod. The pope again alludes to these anniversaries in the conclusion of EN, adding that the Church stands at “the eve of a new century, the eve also of the third millennium of Christianity” (81). Clearly, Paul VI wishes to focus the entire attention of the Church on the centrality of evangelization. He wishes to launch “a new period of evangelization” (2) so that Christ’s followers “can bring the Christian message to modern man” (3) “with ever increasing love, zeal and joy” (1). Fulfillment of this task is, for the pope, “our heartfelt plea” (81).

Three leitmotifs of EN have already been mentioned: the papal commitment to evangelization, the role of meditation, and the cen-

trality of evangelization in the life of the Church. A fourth theme centers on fidelity, a double fidelity—to God’s message and to people (see 4, 39, 63). This fidelity is “the central axis of evangelization” (4). In numerous places throughout EN, Paul VI carefully defines, nuances, and balances diverse elements within the evangelization process (e.g., local and universal Church, culture and faith, liberation and evangelization, strengths and limitations of popular religiosity, etc.). It is the unique genius of Paul VI to have achieved integration and balance on so many topics. Thus, EN prolongs the reflection on evangelization begun in the 1974 Synod and makes its insights available to the entire Church. Paul VI has gifted the Church with an inspirational and pastoral handbook for modern missionary activity.

DESCRIBING EVANGELIZATION

The understanding of the term “evangelization” found in EN reflects a comprehensive and inclusive view; its use may be described as an “umbrella concept.” This broad and holistic view respects the fullness and complexity of the evangelizing process, aiming to achieve effective evangelization.

Sections 17 and 24 provide a long list of the various elements comprising the evangelizing action of the Church. Both sections also strongly insist upon integrating and balancing all facets of evangelization. “Any partial and fragmentary definition which attempts to render the reality of evangelization in all its richness, complexity and dynamism does so only at the risk of impoverishing it and even distorting it” (17). “Evangelization, as we have said, is a complex process made up of varied elements... [which] are complementary and mutually enriching” (24).

Paul VI explicitly notes that the Synod constantly challenged the Church “to relate these elements rather than to place them in opposition one to the other, in order to reach a full understanding of the Church’s evangelizing activity” (24). The pope has, in fact, set forth in EN a comprehensive presentation which in later years has become widely accepted in the Church; it is diversely termed “integral/holistic” and coupled with “evangelization/liberation/salvation.”

Note the broad and inclusive manner in which Paul VI speaks: “evangelizing means bringing the Good News into all the strata of humanity” (18); “upsetting, through the power of the Gospel, mankind’s criteria of judgment” (19); “what matters is to evangelize man’s culture and cultures” (20) so as to overcome “the split between the Gospel and culture [which] is without doubt the drama of our time” (20). The scope of evangelization extends to the full transformation of humanity and cultures in the light of the Gospel. Additional examples from the pope’s writings could be mentioned, all illustrating Paul VI’s broad and holistic view of evangelization. Here then is a key, a helpful category, a foundational insight, for an integrated interpretation of the entire text of EN.

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

Viewing evangelization holistically and integrally has important practical and pastoral ramifications. It allows Christians to appreciate the myriad manifestations of evangelization: individual gifts, talents, and charisms are desired and treasured (66); no individual or group is master of evangelization (15, 78); everyone acts “in communion with the Church” (60); “the work of evangelization is a basic duty of the People of God” (59).

These practical and pastoral dimensions of an integral approach to evangelization have as their basis solid theological foundations. They are anchored in “the Father’s love” (26), in the entire life, mission, practice, and witness of Jesus, “the first evangelizer” (7, see 6-12). The Church “is born of the evangelizing activity of Jesus and the Twelve”; she “in her turn is sent by Jesus” (15). In the power of the Spirit, “the Apostles depart to all the ends of the earth in order to begin the great work of the Church’s evangelization” (75). A brief look at the footnote references of the first two chapters of EN reveals how closely these theological foundations are linked with Sacred Scripture and the documents of the Second Vatican Council.

EN contains several beautiful descriptions of the Church as an evangelizing community. “Evangelization is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity. She exists in

order to evangelize”; “evangelizing all people constitutes the essential mission of the Church” (14). “The Church is an evangelizer, but she begins by being evangelized herself” (15).

Paul VI makes an important clarification in the first section of the third chapter, “The Content of Evangelization.” He speaks of the distinction between the essential elements and the “living substance” of the Gospel message, and the secondary elements “whose presentation depends greatly on changing situations” (25). Within an integral view of evangelization, one must have a clear mind on the vital substance (26-28) in relation to the secondary aspects (29-39). Once again, the principle of “double fidelity” (4) enters: “evangelization would not be complete if it did not take account of the unceasing interplay of the Gospel and of man’s concrete life, both personal and social” (29). In the mind of Paul VI, this continued nuancing and balanced integration are certainly part of the “drama of fidelity” (39).

DIVERSE SYNOD THEMES

It has been noted that the 1974 Synod on Evangelization ended inconclusively and that the entire documentation of the proceedings was left in the pope’s hands. EN reveals how Paul VI, not wishing the material to be lost, reworked many of the Synod’s major themes into a stirring and unified presentation.

He addresses several questions in the mode of a pastoral synthesis: salvation and liberation (9, 27, 30-38), non-Christian religions (53, 80), religious liberty (39, 80), secularization (55), secularism (55-56), atheism (54-56), ecumenism (54, 76, 77), basic communities (58), diversified ministries (73), popular piety (48), sacraments in evangelization (23, 28, 47, 68), mass media (45, 80), Church as sign and sacrament of salvation (23, 59), violence (37), signs of the times (75-76), the local-universal Church dynamic (60-68), culture (20, 58), and the role of the Holy Spirit (75, 82).

Many of these diverse topics had been identified by Paul VI in his final Synod speech as areas of evangelization which needed to be “better defined, nuanced, completed and subjected to further study.”

Commentators have noted how closely certain passages in EN resemble the actual interventions made on the Synod floor. Thus, EN is a testimony that Paul VI was involved as an intent listener and learner at the Synod; then, through his papal "charism of discernment," he fashioned his insights and reflections into a personal and spiritual testament on evangelization. EN is the fruit of long and profound meditation; it nourishes the spiritual life.

SPECIAL THEMES

This summary overview of the scope of evangelization found in EN presents only the highlights of this dense and rich document. Some special themes deserve additional comment.

In two ways, EN is an important document for the emerging theology of *the local Church*. It presents a basically positive and firm link between the local and the universal Church. It also shows the importance that the local community and its personal witnesses have in the whole process of inculturated evangelization. Basic ecclesial communities (58) have enormous potential to manifest the missionary character of the Church.

EN contains few direct references to *the missions*, as they were traditionally known. Where do missionary societies and organizations find their place in the contemporary world? In the fifth chapter, three specific tasks are mentioned; missionaries are to: a) proclaim the Gospel for the first time to peoples and lands where it has not been heard (51); b) engage and interact with the faithful adherents of other religions (53); and c) assist the young churches and promote missionary consciousness within them (56, 58).

The treatment of *world religions* in EN is not sufficiently developed. This is remarkable in a document authored by Paul VI, whose first encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam* was dedicated to the theme of dialogue and who established the Secretariat for Non-Christians in 1964. Several reasons for respecting and esteeming these religions are mentioned (53), but there is no theological understanding of religions in EN (Are non-Christians saved *in* and *through* their religions? Can these

faith-traditions be called “ways of salvation”?). The openness expressed at the Synod which affirmed the wide action of the Holy Spirit and expressed the desire for interreligious dialogue is not pursued or promoted in EN; the term “dialogue” is not found in all of EN. In any case, one can be grateful for the encouragement given to foster an open and respectful attitude towards the great religions of the world.

The role that EN assigns to *the promotion of justice and human liberation* within the Church’s evangelizing mission is a curious one. Many helpful clarifications on the concept of liberation are presented (29-39). EN notes that “Between evangelization and human advancement—development and liberation—there are in fact profound links” (31). Yet, to say that liberation “is not foreign to evangelization” (30) seems restrictive; this stands in contrast to the 1971 Synod that declared justice to be “a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel.”

IMPACT ON THE CHURCH

The Synod and EN have profoundly influenced the Church; they provided the inspiration, emphasis and methodology to place evangelization on center stage in the Church. National and continental Church gatherings were inspired by EN; “Evangelization at present and in the future of Latin America” (CELAM: Puebla, 1979) is only one of many examples.

EN influenced the methodology of subsequent synods (the synod proper followed later by a post-synodal document) as well as their topics of discussion (e.g., catechesis, family, reconciliation, etc.). EN also affirmed key Vatican II documents (LG, AG and GS) and promoted their reception and implementation in the Church.

The Synod and EN manifested the positive contribution of Third World local churches; they highlighted the benefits of an inductive, collegial, and reflective method of theologizing. The emergence of a truly “world Church” received forward impetus. Missionary journeys, begun by Paul VI, have become a common papal *modus operandi*.

The Church has renewed her commitment to being a community of disciples and evangelizers (13, 15, 21, 24, 59, 66, 80), filled with joy and enthusiasm (73, 80), eager to give authentic witness (41, 76), under the dynamic action of the Holy Spirit, the principal agent of evangelization (75) and guided by Mary, the Star of Evangelization (82).

II. John Paul II and *Redemptoris Missio*

Karol Józef Wojtyła was elected pope on 16 October 1978 and took the name John Paul II. Under his leadership, the papal ministry has become focused on evangelization and global mission as he travels to numerous countries, strengthens local Christian communities, encounters followers of other religions, speaks on the social teachings of the Church, canonizes saints and honors blessed, and meets with youth and government leaders. Pope John Paul II asserts that the Second Vatican Council has set the direction for his papacy; he has enunciated a clear vision for the Church in the third Christian millennium.

GIFT OF A MISSION ENCYCLICAL

John Paul II's eighth encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* (RM) was issued on 7 December 1990; it celebrates the twenty-fifth anniversary of Vatican II's Mission Decree *Ad Gentes* and the fifteenth anniversary of Paul VI's *Evangelii Nuntiandi*. In RM, the pope sounds a clarion and urgent call to all Church sectors to renew their enthusiasm and commitment to evangelize the world. Composed of eight chapters plus an introduction (1-3) and a conclusion (92), RM has a "doctrinal" section (4-30) and a "pastoral" section (31-91), respectively treating the "Why" and "How" of contemporary mission/evangelization.

John Paul II begins by stating his conviction about "the *urgency of missionary activity*, a subject to which I am devoting the present Encyclical" (1). He asserts: "Missionary activity specifically directed *ad gentes* [to the nations] appears to be waning." This fact "must arouse

concern among all who believe in Christ.” Why? Because “in the Church’s history, missionary drive has always been a sign of vitality, just as its lessening is a sign of a crisis of faith” (2).

John Paul II urges a “fresh impulse to missionary activity,” the deepening of “commitment of the particular churches,” and the harnessing of “all of the Church’s energies to a new evangelization” (2-3). In short, his focus is direct and clear: “I wish to invite the Church to *renew her missionary commitment*” (2). All are invited to participate: “*Peoples everywhere, open the doors to Christ!*” (3).

VISION OF EVANGELIZATION

What view of evangelization emerges from a comprehensive analysis of the encyclical? Repeatedly, the document speaks of mission, evangelization and salvation in a holistic fashion: “Jesus came to bring integral salvation, one which embraces the whole person...” (11); “evangelical witness... is directed towards integral human development” (42); “action on behalf of integral development and liberation... is most urgently needed” (58).

Integral evangelization, as repeatedly affirmed in the encyclical (20, 41-60), reflects current missiological thought as well as recent magisterial teaching. As already noted, Paul VI in EN clearly encouraged Catholics to view evangelization holistically; the second chapter of EN speaks of the complexity of the evangelizing action and its various complementary and mutually enriching elements. RM echoes this vision: “Mission is a single but complex reality, and it develops in a variety of ways” (41). Again, “mission is one and undivided, having one origin and one final purpose; but within it, there are different tasks and kinds of activity” (31). This is the vision of evangelization that the pope consistently promotes throughout RM.

FOUNDATIONAL MISSION THEOLOGY

RM clearly affirms the foundations of mission theology and the centrality and urgency of mission in the life of the Church. The years following Vatican II were a golden opportunity to explore and de-

bate, renew and clarify the Church's mission; and, it is true that the Council "has already borne much fruit in the realm of missionary activity.... Above all, there is a new awareness that *missionary activity is a matter for all Christians*" (2). Yet, John Paul II also discerned a need to reaffirm diverse aspects of the Catholic church's foundational theology of Christian mission and evangelization.

At least one third of the encyclical, i.e., three chapters out of eight, deals with theological questions. The first chapter includes core elements of the dogmatic theology of revelation and faith, christology and soteriology, as well as ecclesiology and missiology. The second chapter focuses on biblical theology, particularly the Kingdom of God. And, to the delight of missiologists, the third chapter is completely devoted to pneumatology, examining the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church and her evangelizing mission.

The following are key emphases in the opening chapter: 1) All mission is centered in God's wonderful, generous loving plan of salvation (*mysterion*), made known through Jesus and accepted in faith. Jesus is the "definitive self-revelation of God" and "the fundamental reason why the Church is missionary by her very nature" (5). 2) While affirming with the Scriptures (1 Tim 2:4) the universality of salvation, "the Church believes that God has established Christ as the one mediator and that she herself has been established as the universal sacrament of salvation" (9). 3) The Pope unhesitatingly reaffirms the above basics of Church teaching, noting that "*Mission is an issue of faith*" (11).

The biblical theme of the Kingdom (*basileia*) is the integrating leitmotif of the second chapter. Preaching the Kingdom and promoting its values are the evangelizing tasks of the Church which is "effectively and concretely at the service of the Kingdom" (20). The encyclical offers clarity and interpretation on other dimensions of Kingdom theology: the Kingdom of God and the Christ-event are complementary proclamations (16); the Kingdom necessarily has a transcendent horizon (17); the Kingdom "cannot be detached either from Christ or from the Church" (18); theocentrism and ecclesio-

centrism demand a nuanced critique which is consistent with Church teaching (17-18).

Currently, the theology of the Holy Spirit (pneumatology) is of particular interest to missiologists and missionaries alike. “The Holy Spirit is indeed the principal agent of the whole of the Church’s mission of evangelization. The Holy Spirit’s action is preeminent in mission *ad gentes*” (21). The Spirit’s centrality is emphasized because the Holy Spirit’s “presence and activity affect not only individuals but also society and history, peoples, cultures and religions” (28). Ask any missionary and you will receive an eloquent personal testimony of the presence and power of the Spirit active in peoples, cultures, and religions—renewing the face of the earth! The acts of today’s apostles continuously write the gospel of the Holy Spirit!

TRANSMITTING THE URGENCY OF MISSION

The English subtitle given to RM is: “On the Permanent Validity of the Church’s Missionary Mandate.” Thus, mission is always and everywhere essential; it is “not considered a marginal task for the Church but is situated at the center of her life, as a fundamental commitment of the whole People of God” (32). Mission is “the greatest and holiest duty of the Church” (63). The Pope’s affirmations resonate throughout the work: “I have chosen to travel to the ends of the earth in order to show this missionary concern” (1); “*misión ad gentes* is still in its infancy” (40); “I see the dawning of a new missionary age” (92).

No one seeks to minimize the pope’s assertions about the centrality and urgency of missionary evangelization; however, it is a valid question to ask about strategies for implementation. Words of exhortation must give rise to programs of concrete actualization. In the considered judgment of this author, the encyclical is strong on the *why* of mission, but is only moderately successful on the *how*. Mission animation—the *how* of mission—requires continued discussion. While it is best accomplished locally, one can highlight some creative suggestions found within RM.

The Christian family is a key and irreplaceable force in evangelization (42); this insight is consistent with the teaching of Vatican II which termed the family the “domestic church” (LG 11). Promoting Christian family life should redound to mission awareness and animation. Material and financial donations are gratefully received, yet families are challenged to offer “a special contribution to the missionary cause of the Church by fostering missionary vocations among their sons and daughters” (80).

John Paul II challenges Christians: Do you *wish to promote mission*? True disciples are urged to “carry out a sincere review of their lives regarding their solidarity with the poor” (60). As followers of Jesus, “we should reassess our own way of living” (81); “Fight hunger by changing your lifestyle” (59); “We cannot preach conversion unless we ourselves are converted anew every day” (47).

The role of missionary institutes and societies is crucial in worldwide evangelization; missionaries themselves should continue their “radical and total self-giving,” initiate “new and bold endeavors,” and “not allow themselves to be daunted by doubts, misunderstanding, rejection or persecution” (66). Diocesan seminarians and priests “must have the mind and heart of missionaries” (67). The Church must seek to expand the spheres “in which lay people are present and active as missionaries” (72). Missionary dynamism should become contagious!

Youth involvement is essential to mission and evangelization. They should be offered opportunities to visit overseas missions, to meet and offer hospitality to non-Christians and migrants within their own country (82). The idealism of youth is a potential resource—their rejection of violence and war, their desire for freedom and justice, their rejection of racism and closed nationalism, their affirmation of the dignity and role of women (86). The vision of Charles de Foucauld (as a “universal brother”) can fire the imagination of youth (89), can be a path toward missionary commitment.

ADDITIONAL MAJOR EMPHASES

In composing a popular overview of a papal encyclical, one faces the challenge of providing a balanced presentation. This paper sees several other major emphases on evangelization within the work and thus devotes a paragraph to each theme.

Around the world, *local churches* are the central actors in mission today; all evangelization necessarily is harmoniously accomplished in, with, and through the local Church which is responsible for the totality of mission. This is a sea change in the dynamics of mission; both local churches and missionaries alike must explore the ramifications of this new reality. Many leads are found in the encyclical (26, 30, 39, 48-52, 62-64, 71, 83-85, 92).

Authentic evangelization is a *freely-offered gift*, not an external imposition which violates human dignity and freedom. Or again, witnessing and proclaiming Christ are not at odds with people's dignity as persons or their freedom of conscience (7-8). Genuine mission does not restrict freedom, but rather seeks to advance it. RM is clear: "*The Church proposes; she imposes nothing*" (39).

The Church needs *missionary vocations*. Individuals who receive the permanent, life-long vocation to foreign, transcultural mission are a treasured resource of the Church. Their vocation is: necessary for the Church (32); a unique calling (27, 65); the model of the Church's missionary commitment (66); and to be assiduously cultivated (79, 84), particularly by mission institutes themselves (65-66).

The encyclical looks positively upon *interreligious dialogue*, devoting several sections to a comprehensive presentation (55-57). Interfaith dialogue "is part of the Church's evangelizing mission... is not in opposition to the mission *ad gentes*... [and] *does not dispense from evangelization*" (55). This same section speaks of God's call and presence to all peoples, "of which their religions are the main and essential expression." The Church's reverence for the followers of other faiths and religions is clearly affirmed by the encyclical.

In RM, *women* receive the pope's praise and gratitude for their

outstanding contribution to evangelization: “I extend a special word of appreciation to the missionary Religious Sisters” (70); “How can we forget the important role played by women?” (71). “It is necessary to recognize—and it is a title of honor—that some Churches owe their origins to the activity of lay men and women missionaries” (71).

The process of *inculturation* and its relationship to mission receives extensive treatment (25, 52-54, 76). Authentic evangelization involves the Church in the inculturation process, an “intimate transformation of authentic cultural values through their integration in Christianity and the insertion of Christianity in the various human cultures.” This task is never finished and today it encounters new challenges—especially in large cities, “where new customs and styles of living arise together with new forms of culture and communication” (37). Mission and inculturation demand fresh initiatives and creativity in the techtronic age of the megapolis!

The entire final chapter of RM treats *missionary spirituality* (87-91). Four elements characterize Jesus’ disciple-becomes-missionary: the missionary is to be led by the Spirit, to live the mystery of Christ who himself was sent, to love the Church and humankind, as Jesus did, and to desire the holiness of saints. In a word, mission spirituality is “a journey towards holiness”; and, the success of renewing the urgency of the Church’s missionary impulse “demands holy missionaries.”

PRECIOUS DETAILS—NOT TO BE LOST

In a work as long as RM, one expects to find several details that demand further reflection. This synthesis presentation takes note of five additional themes and their importance for evangelization.

The *personalist philosophy* and orientation of John Paul II is manifested throughout the work. The person is always central in evangelization and all mission apostolates: in working for justice (42), in fostering interreligious dialogue (55-57), in promoting development; the human person “is the principal agent of development, not money

or technology” (58). In uniquely personalist terms, the missionary is described as “a person of the Beatitudes” (91) and it is personal love that is always “*the driving force of mission*” (60).

The encyclical profusely expresses the *Church’s gratitude* to its missionaries (2, 57, 60, 70). The Church’s theologians provide an important service to the cause of evangelization (36) and should promote the study of world religions and science of missiology (83). The Church needs a renewed commitment to ecumenism within mission (50).

In looking at today’s world from the viewpoint of evangelization, the document distinguishes *three situations*: “non-Christian” peoples, Christians requiring pastoral care, and the so-called “post-Christians”; all require special approaches (32-34). Geographically, the pope emphasizes the missionary demands within Asia (37, 55, 91).

Significant and surprising is the fact that *one unique quote* appears verbatim no less than three times in the text (6, 10, 28): “we are obliged to hold that the Holy Spirit offers everyone the possibility of sharing in the Paschal Mystery in a manner known to God.” Certainly, one cannot mistake the pope’s assertion that God’s loving plan for salvation includes each and every person!

Evangelization as “*God’s work*” (24) is clearly affirmed; it is based “not on human abilities but on the power of the Risen Lord” (23). Missionaries are conscious that they owe their faith and vocations “not to their own merits but to Christ’s special grace” (11). They must believe that “it is not we who are the principal agents of the Church’s mission, but Jesus Christ and his Spirit” (36). A missionary’s faith journey “proceeds along *the path* already trodden by the Virgin Mary” (92).

Fifteen years earlier (1975), Paul VI wrote that “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 passage is recalled in RM 42. It must continue to remain a central focus if the Church wishes to respond “with generosity and holiness to the calls and challenges of our time” (92).

III. An Overview of Integral Evangelization

Without doubt, both Paul VI and John Paul II have gifted the Church with a rich understanding of the theology and praxis of evangelization. In presenting the vision of each pope, this study has consciously limited itself to the one pivotal document on mission and evangelization authored by each pope. *Evangelii Nuntiandi* for Paul VI and *Redemptoris Missio* for John Paul II are each a microcosm of their understanding of missionary evangelization. This fact is borne out if one simply recalls the many facets of evangelization presented in each of the two previous sections. Can the discussion be taken further?

Additional insight can be drawn from two documents issued by the Secretariat for Non-Christians (founded in 1964 by Paul VI and renamed in 1988 the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue). On Pentecost Sunday 1984, the Secretariat promulgated the document entitled, "The Attitude of the Church toward the Followers of Other Religions: Reflections and Orientations on Dialogue and Mission" (DM). Hidden in this little-known work on the interrelationship between dialogue and mission is a pivotal statement. This source affirms that mission and evangelization are understood "in the consciousness of the Church as a single but complex and articulated reality" (13).

Later, on Pentecost Sunday 1991, the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, in conjunction with the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, presented the document, "Dialogue and Proclamation: Reflections and Orientations on Interreligious Dialogue and the Proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ" (DP). Once again, the evangelizing mission of the Church is understood as a "single but complex and articulated reality" (2).

Both documents emphasize the unity and integral nature of evangelization, while at the same time affirming that evangelization necessarily comprises many dimensions. It is a complex reality. In addition, this multi-faceted concept can be explained and articulated.

NAMING THE ELEMENTS

Despite the lengthy and complex titles of the 1984 and 1991 documents just mentioned, these two sources have added considerable clarity to a Catholic understanding of missionary evangelization. The clarity results from the fact that the “principal elements” are specifically named. Thus, mission and evangelization are composed of: 1) presence and witness; 2) commitment to social development and human liberation; 3) liturgical life, prayer and contemplation; 4) interreligious dialogue; and 5) proclamation and catechesis (see DM 13 and DP 2). In short, the one evangelizing mission of the Church is comprised of several component elements and authentic forms. This is integral or holistic evangelization; this is—in compact expression—the wide view of evangelization promoted by Paul VI and John Paul II in EN and RM, respectively.

This five-point vision has served the Church well over the past decade; it takes the thought of two popes and two documents and expresses it in a manner that ordinary Catholics can readily grasp and appreciate. At the same time, it does not do violence to the richness and complexity of missionary evangelization. One easily perceives that the thought expressed concerning evangelization in EN and RM is adequately captured in this five-point schema; in turn, employing this helpful schema enables a smooth maneuvering through lengthy papal documents. Viewing evangelization through its five essential dimensions results in clarity, insight and proper integration. This is a Catholic vision of evangelization.

EXPLORING THE FIVE DIMENSIONS

Further insight into the integral nature of evangelization is attained by specifically relating the five principal elements with both papal documents (EN and RM). This exercise illustrates that “evangelizing means bring the Good News into all strata of humanity” (EN 18).

According to Paul VI, *Christian presence and witness* of life form the “initial act of evangelization” (EN 21). Daily activities, duties in

the community, living together in harmony, leading lives of integrity—all these are elements of a basic “faith-witness” that demonstrates how Christian living is shaped by Christian faith and values. Through this wordless witness, “Christians stir up irresistible questions in the hearts of those who see how they live” (EN 21). In today’s world, people desire and respect authentic witnesses (cf. EN 41; RM 11, 42). In Asia, the late Mother Teresa of Calcutta, known for her loving and selfless care of the poorest of the poor, is an “icon” of Christian presence, life, and service.

Living together as neighbors in a faith-community should lead to a *commitment to social development and human liberation* which is a genuine service to humanity. Development and liberation involve serving the most unfortunate, witnessing to justice and defending the integrity of creation. This dimension of evangelization includes the whole area of social concerns, ranging from peace-building, education and health services, to promoting family life and good government. The area of human development or human promotion is a vast area of the Church’s evangelizing mission (see EN 18-19, 29-33; RM 58-60).

Integral evangelization and liberation will necessarily include *liturgical life, prayer and contemplation*. No one can effectively be engaged in the Church’s mission without a strong faith and prayer life. Evangelization needs holy men and women who are themselves on fire with the love of Christ; spreading the fire of the Gospel will be accomplished only by those already burning with an experience of Christ. Holiness is an irreplaceable condition for evangelizers. The “God-experience” achieved in prayer and contemplation, in sacramental and liturgical life, will illumine and transform all other dimensions of evangelization (see EN 23, 43-44, 47; RM 46-49, 87-92).

All evangelizing activities are inserted into specific contexts; particularly in Asia, these activities naturally assume an interreligious dimension. Thus, the Church in Asia, similar to most places in the world of today, accomplishes her mission in pluralistic and diverse cultures; she enters into *interreligious dialogue*, cooperating with the

followers of the great religious traditions. Interreligious dialogue takes many forms; there are the dialogues of daily life, deeds of service, religious experts, and faith experience, as well as other forms. John Paul II asserts: "Interreligious dialogue is a part of the Church's evangelizing mission" (RM 55). This dialogue emerges from one's faith convictions. In contemporary circumstances, dialogue with religions and cultures is the truly appropriate Christian response (see EN 20, 53; RM 52-54, 55-57).

Finally, in mission today, there is the role of *explicit Gospel proclamation and catechesis*. This dimension of evangelization includes preaching, catechesis on Christian life and teaching the content of the faith. In a word, this means "telling the Jesus story." When the Holy Spirit opens the door and when the time is opportune, Christians do tell the Jesus story, giving explicit witness and testimony to the faith. Others are invited, in freedom of conscience, to follow, to come to know Jesus. Through proclamation, Christians themselves are further instructed in their faith; this is the process through which the Christian faith is communicated to the next generation of believers (see EN 22, 27, 42; RM 44-51).

Obviously, these five dimensions of an integral understanding of evangelization complement and reinforce each other. In speaking of the complexity of the Church's evangelizing action, Paul VI gave a timely admonition in EN 17:

Any partial and fragmentary definition which attempts to render the reality of evangelization in all its richness, complexity and dynamism does so only at the risk of impoverishing it and even of distorting it.... It is impossible to grasp the concept of evangelization unless one tries to keep in view all its essential elements.

Thus, an older concept of the Church's mission has been set aside. No longer are the elements of social justice, interfaith dialogue, peace-building, education and health care, life-witness, etc., simply "preparatory" to evangelization [*praeparatio evangelica*]; all five "principal elements" are constitutive of a holistic and integral understanding. Paul VI and John Paul II have expanded the horizons of evangelization;

the more restrictive view, which held that only explicit Gospel proclamation and sacramental life constituted mission, has been superseded.

Concomitant with this expanded vision of evangelization, one finds a renewed emphasis on the missionary nature of the entire Church (see AG 2). Every baptized member of the Church is an evangelizer, whether layperson, ordained or religious. Previously, when evangelization was linked exclusively with explicit Gospel proclamation and sacramental life, the laity often found it difficult to appreciate how they were to be evangelizers. Today, Catholic evangelization engages the entire Church (from top to bottom; especially, all the local churches), all states of life (lay, religious, ordained, married, single), all apostolic activities and forms of witness (the five principal elements). Yes, the totality of Christian missionary evangelization embraces all these aspects.

CONCLUSION

This paper has attempted a panoramic overview of a Catholic vision of evangelization. Through a presentation of the vision of Paul VI in EN and John Paul II in RM (the first and second parts of this study, respectively), the bases for a renewed, holistic, and integral understanding of evangelization were established. The third part presented a focused synthesis, employing the five principal and constitutive elements of evangelization.

When many words have been uttered, when much ink has been spilt, when definitions and categories have been clarified, and when one more presentation has been completed, Catholic Christians must step back and radically affirm that: All mission and evangelization is God's project. The Holy Spirit is always the principal agent of evangelization. For evangelizers, missionaries, catechists, religious and lay alike, mission necessarily means trying to find out what God wills and what he is doing. Then, authentic evangelizers bend their will to God's will, joyfully surrender to God's loving plan, and expend all efforts and energy to become worthy instruments that enable God's design to unfold. Evangelization, at heart and center, is a matter of faith (see RM 11). For a Christian, to live is to evangelize!