

Selected Statements of the Church and Popes on Evangelization and the Mission Ad Gentes

Highly recommended reading for this topic:

- Pope Paul 6 On Evangelization in the Modern World (EN)
- Pope John Paul II: Mission of the Redeemer(MR).
- See also the new General Directory of Catechesis

The number of those who do not know Christ and do not belong to the Church is constantly on the increase. Indeed, since the end of the Vatican II Council it has almost doubled. When we consider this immense portion of humanity which is loved by the father and for whom he sent the Son, the urgency of the Church's mission is obvious. Mission of the Redeemer (MR) #3

I sense the moment has come to commit all of the Church's energies to a new evangelization and to the missions ad gentes. No believer in Christ, no institution of the Church can avoid this supreme duty: to proclaim Christ to all the peoples. MR #3

I wish to invite the Church to renew her missionary commitment. For missionary activity renews the Church, revitalizes faith and Christian identity, and offers fresh enthusiasm and new incentive. Faith is strengthened when it is given to others!

What moves me even more strongly to proclaim the urgency of missionary evangelization is the fact that it is the primary service which the Church can render to every individual and to all humanity in the modern world.

24. a) Evangelizing constitutes the Church's grace and her very vocation, her deepest identity. Evangelization, as we know, is the witness which the Son of Man bears to himself, perpetuated in the mission of the Church.
Evangelii Nun & MR

b) The Church, born from the evangelizing activity of Jesus, is "sent" by him, in her turn, to evangelize. From being evangelized she becomes an evangelizer, light of the nations and sign of the presence of Christ himself.

"As the third millennium draws near, God is preparing a great springtime for Christianity, and we can already see its first signs. As she prepares to celebrate the jubilee of the year 2000, the whole Church is even more committed to a new joy of the faith, and to this high ideal the whole People of God must be educated for each believer, as for the entire Church, the missionary task must remain foremost, for it concerns the eternal destiny of humanity and corresponds to God's mysterious and merciful plan.

It is necessary to set priorities, placing all resources at the disposal of what is essential, that is, renewal of faith in Christ who is the Way, the Truth and the Life of people and of the world.

OR Jan. 22, 1990, pg. 11. Discourse to second group of bishops of Colombia on their ad limina visit, Dec. 4, 1989.

The Church cannot prepare for the new millennium in any other way than in the Holy Spirit. What was accomplished by the power of the Holy Spirit "in the fullness of time" can only through the Spirit's power now emerge from the memory of the Church."

The Holy Spirit gives life to the profession of faith in Christ.... After the beginning of faith, all of its succeeding development occurs under the action of the Holy Spirit.

OR May 13,1991. General audience, May 8,1991

The task which awaits you - the new evangelization - demands that you present, with fresh enthusiasm and new methods, the eternal and unchanging content of the heritage of our Christian faith. As you well know, it is not a matter of merely passing on a doctrine, but rather of a personal and profound meeting with the Savior. OR Jan.14,1991 pg. 4
Commissioning of families of the Neo- Catechumenal Way, Jan. 3,1991.

"Sometimes even Catholics have lost or never had the chance to experience Christ personally; not Christ as a mere 'paradigm' or 'value', but the Living Lord: 'the way, and the truth, and the life' (John 14:6)."JP2 to American Bishops

I hope that at the vigil of the Third Millennium the Church ... will spread the Good News of Christ with renewed energy through a life-giving encounter of the Savior ... I earnestly invite everyone to enter into this general mobilization of the spiritual forces of ...Catholicism.

OR, Feb. 19, 1990, pgs. 11, 12; Homily at Bamako, Mali, Africa, Jan. 28, 1990

John Paul has said that, "everything ought to focus on the primary objective of the Jubilee: the strengthening of faith and of the witness of Christians. It is therefore necessary to inspire in all the faithful a true longing for holiness, a deep desire for conversion and personal renewal ".

19. At the threshold of this last decade before the year 2000, I ask you to bear witness in a spiritual way to Christ who is the Lord of the coming century. I ask you to bear witness to him everywhere, in every part of this planet.

Before going up to heaven the risen Lord entrusts his disciples with this missionary mandate: "Go into the whole world and proclaim the Gospel to every creature" (Mk.16:15). This command of Christ is so urgent and contemporary today!

OR May 13,1991. Homily for Ascension, St. Peter's, Rome.

The Lord Jesus calls us to "Go and proclaim", be heralds of my truth, be witnesses of my love, give my teachings to everyone! He[Jesus]calls every believer to work with him and to continue this same mission of his.

OR May 13,1991. Homily for Ascension, St. Peter's, Rome.

"Do not be afraid to go out on the streets and into public places, like the first Apostles who preached Christ and the Good News of salvation in the squares of cities, towns, and villages. This is no time to be ashamed of the Gospel. It is the time to preach it from the rooftops.

"Do not be afraid to break out of the comfortable and routine modes of living in order to take up the challenge of making Christ known It is you who must 'go out into the byroads' and invite everyone you meet to the banquet which God has prepared for His people."
World Youth Day, Denver Colorado, 1993

Christians cannot confine their activity merely to human development and social renewal, necessary as these are, as they are called to give their life so that every person may meet

Christ and love him with all their heart.

OR Apr.22,1991. Address to university students in San Damaso Courtyard, Easter Sunday, 1991

33. a) Evangelization is marked by the sign of the Cross, the True Cross. The work of proclaiming the Gospel to all nations is a responsibility which falls to all and to each one of those who by the Lord's grace are and call themselves Christians. Five centuries after the beginning of this ecclesial mission on the new continent (America), Christ risen and exalted at the Father's right hand, sends us again to evangelize all peoples.

b) To evangelize means to announce the Good News. And the Good News which the Christian communicates to the world is that God, who alone is Lord, is merciful towards all his creatures, loves man with limitless love, and has sought to intervene personally in his history by means of his Son Jesus Christ.

OR, May 14, 1990, pgs. 4 and 10; Address at Vera Cruz, Mexico, May 7, 1990.

I would like to stress another aspect of today's mission which closely touches the Churches, both young and old: the evangelization of non-Christians who are present within the sphere of a diocese or of a parish is the primary duty of the respective pastor. For this reason, priests should become personally involved and should involve the faithful in preaching the Gospel to those who are still outside the ecclesial community.

I urge everyone to pray the Lord of the harvest with great insistency that he send laborers to announce the Good News of salvation in Christ.

O.R. June 11, 1990, pg. 9. Message for World Mission Day, Oct. 21, 1990 from Rome.

The difficulty man has in accepting Christ and his word should not be feared. The action of the Holy Spirit...is still at work today in the hearts of human beings, in cultures, and in religion.

OR, Apr. 29,1991. Talk at the Urbanian University, Rome, April 11,1991.

Dear young people, know that you are sent on an urgent assignment: to proclaim the Gospel to all around you. Christ knows your frailty and limitations, but at the same time he says to you: Courage, do not fear! "I am with you always even to the end of the world" (Mt. 28:20).

OR May 21, 1990, pgs. 5, 6. Address to young people of Mexico, San Juan de los Lagos, May 8, 1990.

Since the work that awaits everyone in the vineyard of the Lord is so great, there is no place for idleness. With even greater urgency the "householder" repeats his invitation: "You go into my vineyard, too."

OR Jan.7,1991 pg.14, Lineamenta. Taken from Aposolic Exhortation, Christifidelis Laici.

May each one be able to feel this "urgent necessity" of which St. Paul spoke, and make their own the words of the Apostle: "Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel!" (1 Cor 9: 16).

OR, Feb. 18,1991. To a group of bishops from Argentina, ad limina visit, Jan. 18,1991.

Since, like all the faithful, lay Christians are entrusted by God with the apostolate by virtue of their Baptism and Confirmation, they have the right and duty, individually or grouped in associations, to work so that the divine message of salvation may be known and accepted by all men throughout the earth. This duty is the more pressing when it is only through them that men can hear the Gospel and know Jesus Christ. Their activities in ecclesial communities is so necessary that, for the most part, the apostolate of the pastors cannot be fully effective without it.

CCC900 LG 33

I recently wrote to the bishops of Asia: "Although the Church gladly acknowledges whatever is true and holy in the religious traditions of Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam as a reflection of that truth which enlightens all people, this does not lessen her duty and resolve to proclaim without fail Jesus Christ who is 'the way, and the truth and the life.'...The fact that the followers of other religions can receive God's grace and be saved by Christ apart from the ordinary means which he has established does not thereby cancel the call to faith and baptism which God wills for all people." [100] Indeed Christ himself "while expressly insisting on the need for faith and baptism, at the same time confirmed the need for the Church, into which people enter through Baptism as through a door." [101] Dialogue should be conducted and implemented with the conviction that the Church is the ordinary means of salvation and that she alone possesses the fullness of the means of salvation. [102] JPII

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