

Pope Francis and the Missionary Transformation of the Church

- Introduction
 - We began this retreat on Friday night pondering what Cardinal Bergoglio said six days before the conclave that elected him about what type of reform the Church most needed and what was the job description of the type of pope needed to lead that reform.
 - He said that the renewal most needed was not the extirpation of various forms of corruption in the Vatican, but rather it was to go from a sick and “worldly Church that lives within herself, of herself and for herself,” to “an evangelizing Church that comes out of herself.” He said that the next pope had to be a man who would “help the Church get out of herself and go to those on the outskirts of existence,” who would guide the Church on an exodus from ecclesial introversion and narcissistic self-preservation to bold, joy-filled evangelization. The Cardinals not only accepted their Argentine colleagues’ challenge to put mission above maintenance, but elected him as the one they believed most capable of bringing about that type of deep missionary transformation of the entire Church.
 - Since his earliest days as the 266th Peter, just over a year ago, Pope Francis has been carrying out this task, preaching with words and with his example the type of renewal he’s calling on all Catholics to help him bring about.
 - In this last conference I want to ponder Pope Francis’ thoughts on the new evangelization he is calling all of us to carry out. I’ll depend fundamentally on three sources. First, I will focus heavily on his great manifesto laying out his vision for Church renewal that he published in November, *Evangelii Gaudium*, “The Joy of the Gospel.” Second, as I’ve been doing throughout the retreat, I’d like to consider what he’s said in various homilies, Angelus meditations and speeches over the course of the last year. And then third I’d like to ponder at some length what is probably his greatest pre-papal achievement, what’s called the Aparecida document, the fruit of his work leading all the bishops of Central and South American (CELAM) in coming up with a plan for the New Evangelization of that continent. It’s perhaps the greatest document in the history of the Church blending profound theology and concrete practice. I’d like to focus on one section where Cardinal Bergoglio, the principal author of the document, sets out the paradigm both for the transformation of institutions and of individuals, so that we can see if the Church institutions with which we’re involved — parishes, dioceses, schools, hospitals, food pantries, chaplaincies and families — stack up to what’s needed as well as to see if as individual Christians we ourselves are experiencing the type of overall formation we need to be able to assist Pope Francis in the total reform of the Church.
- Pope Francis’ dream for the Missionary Transformation of the Church
 - Preaching the Gospel is the “first task of the Church” (EG 15)
 - The Church doesn’t just have a mission but *is* a mission and missionary outreach must become “paradigmatic for all the Church’s activity.”
 - “I dream of a ‘missionary option,’ that is, a missionary impulse capable of transforming everything, so that the Church’s customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures, can be suitably channeled for the evangelization of today’s world rather than for her self-preservation.” (EG 27)
 - This requires pastoral conversion to make ordinary pastoral activity more mission-oriented, seeking to invite others to friendship with Jesus. Otherwise there’s the danger of “ecclesial introversion.”
 - He specified several areas where that needs to take place:
 - (28) Parish is not outdated, but must really be in contact with homes and lives, and not a useless, out-of-touch structure, the self-absorbed cluster of the chosen few. The parish trains and encourages members to be evangelizers. It’s a sanctuary for the thirsty to come to

drink and the center of constant missionary outreach

- 29) Smaller Church communities, movements and associations frequently bring new evangelizing fervor and capacity for dialogue, but they need contact and integration with local parish and participation in overall pastoral activity of diocese to prevent their becoming “nomads without roots.”
- (30) Every diocese is called to missionary conversion. It’s the primary subject of evangelization. Must preach him in areas of greater need, outskirts of territory and new sociocultural settings. Francis encourages every Diocese to a “resolute process of discernment, purification and reform.”
- (31) Bishop must foster a dynamic, open missionary communion, sometimes going before his people, sometimes at their side, sometimes behind them, helping those who lag behind. Must listen not for organizational purposes but to fulfill missionary aspirations.
- (32) Conversion of the papacy also needed to make papacy more faithful to Jesus’ commission and to needs of evangelization. Vatican structures must have pastoral conversion. Excessive centralization complicates Church’s life and missionary outreach.
- (33) Missionary pastoral ministry will abandon the “We have always done it this way” complacency. It’s a call to be bold and creative in rethinking goals, structures, styles and methods of evangelization with communal search for means. He encourages everyone to apply the guidelines in this document “generously and courageously without inhibitions or fear.
- The New Evangelization is desperately needed
 - (July 12, 2013 audience) What is this people’s mission? It is to bring the hope and salvation of God to the world: to be a sign of the love of God who calls everyone to friendship with Him; to be the leaven that makes the dough rise, the salt that gives flavour and preserves from corruption, to be a light that enlightens. Look around us — it is enough to open a newspaper, as I said — we see the presence of evil, the Devil is acting. However, I would like to say out loud: God is stronger! Do you believe this, that God is stronger? Let us say it together, let us say it all together: God is stronger! And do you know why he is stronger? Because He is Lord, the only Lord
 - (With young of Umbria, Oct 4, 2013) The Gospel is God's message of salvation for mankind. When we say “message of salvation”, this is not simply a way of speaking, these are not mere words or empty words like so many today. Mankind truly needs to be saved! We see it everyday when we flip through newspapers or watch the news on television; but we also see it around us, in people, in situations; and we see it in ourselves! Each one of us needs to be saved! We cannot do it alone! We need to be saved! Saved from what? From evil. Evil is at work, it does its job. However, evil is not invincible and a Christian does not give up when confronted by evil. And you young people, do you want to give up in the face of evil, injustice and difficulty? Do you want to or not? The Gospel, then, this message of salvation, has two destinations that are connected: the first, to awaken faith, and this is evangelization; the second, to transform the world according to God’s plan, and this is the Christian animation of society. But these are not two separate things, they form one mission: to carry the Gospel by the witness of our lives in order to transform the world! This is the way: to bring the Gospel by the witness of our lives. Let us look to Francis: he did both of these things, through the power of the one Gospel. Francis made faith grow and he renewed the Church, and at the same time he renewed society, he made it more fraternal, but he always did it with the Gospel and by his witness. Do you know what Francis once said to his brothers? He said: “Always preach the Gospel and if necessary use words!” But how? Is it possible to preach the Gospel without words? Yes! By your witness! First comes witness, then come words!
- It’s a command of the Lord
 - (October 16, Audience) The Church is apostolic because she is sent to bring the Gospel to all the world. She continues in history the mission which Jesus entrusted to the Apostles: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age” (Mt 28:19-20). This is what Jesus told us to do! I insist on this missionary aspect, because Christ invites all to “go out” and encounter others, he sends us, he asks

us to move in order to spread the joy of the Gospel! Once again let us ask ourselves: are we missionaries by our words, and especially by our Christian life, by our witness? Or are we Christians closed in our hearts and in our churches, sacristy Christians? Are we Christians in name only, who live like pagans? We must ask ourselves these questions, which are not a rebuke. I ask myself as well: what kind of Christian am I, is my witness true?

- And there's an urgency to it
 - (Angelus July 7) Jesus is not a lone missionary, he does not want to fulfil his mission alone, but involves his disciples. And today we see that in addition to the twelve Apostles he calls another 72, and sends them to the villages, two by two, to proclaim that the Kingdom of God is close at hand. This is very beautiful! Jesus does not want to act alone, he came to bring the love of God into the world and he wants to spread it in the style of communion, in the style of brotherhood. That is why he immediately forms a community of disciples, which is a missionary community. He trains them straight away for the mission, to go forth. But pay attention: their purpose is not to socialize, to spend time together, no, their purpose is to proclaim the Kingdom of God, and this is urgent! And it is still urgent today! There is no time to be lost in gossip, there is no need to wait for everyone's consensus, what is necessary is to go out and proclaim. To all people you bring the peace of Christ, and if they do not welcome it, you go ahead just the same. To the sick you bring healing, because God wants to heal man of every evil. How many missionaries do this, they sow life, health, comfort to the outskirts of the world. How beautiful it is! Do not live for yourselves, do not live for yourselves, but live to go forth and do good!
 - (June 15 daily homily) He based his reflection on the day's readings and in particular on St Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians. Christ's love possesses us, impels us, drives us on. **This speed is Paul in fourth gear: when he sees Christ's love he cannot stand still**. Paul's hurrying "reminds me of Mary the Pope said, setting out with haste to help her cousin. "This is the haste of the Christian message.... Here the message is, precisely, reconciliation". "Christian peace impels us and this is the beginning, the root of apostolic zeal". The Pope concluded : "the love of Christ possesses us, impels us, urges us on with the emotion we feels when we see that God loves us".
- What is evangelization? Evangelization is about sharing our joy with others
 - Salvation of history is one great stream of joy (EG 4-5)
 - OT predicted joy of Messianic Times. Isaiah, Zechariah, Zephaniah all announce it. This is a joy we're meant to experience daily in the little things of life in response to love of God the Father. (EG 4)
 - Gospel constantly invites us to rejoice. Annunciation. Visitation. Jesus' ministry to bring his joy to us and make ours complete. He is the first and the greatest evangelizer (EG 12). Our Christian joy "drinks of his brimming heart." The disciples rejoiced at his resurrection, even in persecution. "Why shouldn't we also enter this great stream of joy?," Pope Francis asks (EG 5)
 - Not all Catholics have this joy. Some Christians' lives, he said, "seem like Lent without Easter." Joy flows from being infinitely loved. Even in suffering, we have to let the joy of faith slowly revive as a quiet yet firm trust. (EG 6).
 - EG 10: An evangelizer "must never look like someone who has just come back from a funeral!" World won't hear "dejected, discouraged, impatient, anxious" evangelizers but those whose lives glow with fervor and Christian joy.
 - Francis warns us not to give in to the "tomb psychology" and pessimism of the "prophets of doom" who think that the life of faith is on an inexorable decline. Rather, he urges us to rely on the power of the same Holy Spirit who helped Christians in generations before us spread the faith, even during ages of persecution.
- That joy comes from the personal encounter with Christ
 - (264) The primary reason for evangelizing is the love and salvation of Jesus that we have received, urging us to greater love of him. "What kind of love would not feel the need to speak of the beloved, to point him out, to make him known?"
 - (265) Evangelization responds to that expectation. "We have a treasure of life and love that cannot

deceive, and a message that cannot mislead or disappoint.” It ennobles us and is never out of date. This infinite love cures our infinite sadness.

- (266) Must sustain this conviction through savoring Christ’s friendship and message. It’s impossible to persevere in fervent evangelization “unless we are convinced from personal experience that it is not the same thing to have known Jesus as not to have known him, not the same thing to walk with him as to walk blindly, not the same thing to hear his word as not to know it, and not the same thing to contemplate him, to worship him, to find our peace in him, as not to. . . . We know well that with Jesus life becomes richer and that with him it is easier to find meaning in everything. This is why we evangelize.” A true missionary doesn’t evangelize alone, but with Jesus. This helps us not to lose enthusiasm, passion and vigor.
- (7) Sometimes we’re tempted to complain because we’re addicted to pleasure. But joy doesn’t come when conditions are met, but from an encounter with Christ, something the poor can teach us. (8) This (renewed) encounter alone can free us from self-absorption and God and bring us beyond ourselves to full truth of who we are. This inspires our evangelization. “If we have received the love that restores meaning to our lives, how can we fail to share that love with others?”
- Evangelization should show our participation in Jesus’ joy (
 - Dec 6, 2013 Homily) Pope Francis then observed that, while we are accustomed to think of Jesus preaching, healing, walking through the streets speaking to people, or even being raised upon the Cross, “we are not accustomed to think of Jesus smiling, or joyful”. However, he said, “Jesus was full of joy”.
 - Jesus’ joy finds its source in intimacy with the Father, Pope Francis said. “His inner joy comes precisely from this relationship with the Father in the Holy Spirit. And this is the joy he gives to us, and this joy is true peace. It is not a static, quiet, tranquil peace: Christian peace is a joyful peace for Jesus is joyful, God is joyful”.
 - “A Church without joy is unthinkable”, the Pope said, since “Jesus has desired that his bride, the Church, be joyful”. “The joy of the Church is to announce the name of Jesus, and to proclaim: My spouse is the Lord, he is God who saves us and accompanies us”
- Every Christian is called to be a missionary disciple, a believer with an apostolic heart.
 - (120) Through baptism, all, “without exception,” are missionary disciples and agents of evangelization, whatever the position in the Church or level of education. Evangelization is not the task of professionals while others are “passive recipients.” The new evangelization calls for “personal involvement on the part of each of the baptized.” Actively engaged here and now. “Anyone who has truly experienced God’s saving love does not need much time or lengthy training to go out and proclaim that love.” We are not disciples *and* missionaries, but always “missionary disciples.” First disciples immediately told others. “What are we waiting for?”
 - Just like the Church, none of us has a mission, but each of us *is* a mission. “I am a mission on this earth; this is the reason why I am here,” Pope Francis asserts each of us should be able to say. To be a disciple at all is to be a missionary disciple. The apostolate is not optional or additional to our faith but essential and constitutive.
 - Our consciences should be justly disturbed, he says, that “so many of our brothers and sisters are living without the strength, light and consolation born of friendship with Jesus Christ, without a community of faith to support them, without meaning and a goal in life.”
 - What’s needed is for all of us throughout the Church to stop living “as if people who have not received the Gospel did not exist.”
 - Sharing the faith is essential to our faith
 - (Catechists, Sept 27) The heart of a catechist always beats with this systolic and diastolic movement: union with Christ – encounter with others. Both of these: I am one with Jesus and I go forth to encounter others. If one of these movements is missing, the heart no longer beats, it can no longer live. The heart of the catechist receives the gift of the kerygma, and in turn offers it to others as a gift. What a little word: “gift”! The catechist is conscious of having received a gift, the gift of faith, and he or she then gives that gift in turn to others. This is something beautiful. We don’t keep a percentage for ourselves! Whatever we receive, we give! This is not commerce! It is not a business! It is pure gift: a gift received and a gift

given. And the catechist is right there, at the centre of this exchange of gifts. That is the nature itself of the kerygma: it is a gift that generates mission, that compels us to go beyond ourselves. Saint Paul says that “the love of Christ compels us”, but this “compels us” can also be translated as “possesses us”. And so it is: love attracts us and sends us; it draws us in and gives us to others. This tension marks the beating of the heart of the Christian, especially the heart of the catechist. Let us all ask ourselves: Is this what causes my heart to beat as a catechist, union with Christ and encounter with others? With this movement of “systole and diastole”? Are we being fed by our relationship with the Lord, so that we can bring him to others, and not to keep it for ourselves? I’ll tell you, I don’t understand how a catechist can remain stationary, without this movement. I don’t understand!

- We need formation to mature as missionary disciples
 - (121) Called to mature in work as evangelizers. Need for better training, deepening love and clearer witness. We need others to evangelize us, but shouldn’t postpone mission. Called to offer others an “explicit witness of the saving love of the Lord.”
 - On the one hand, he insists, there’s a need for better “formation” of the laity in general and “training” in evangelization in particular, especially at the level of parishes, so that people are equipped to share the faith more confidently and effectively at work, school and in their neighborhoods and social networks. At the same time, he adds, “Anyone who has truly experienced God’s saving love does not need much time or lengthy training to go out and proclaim that love!”
 - We’ll talk more about this below.
- The Message we give must be kerygmatic. It must focus first on the transmitting the joy of our faith.
 - EG 34: “If we attempt to put all things in a missionary key, this will also affect the way we communicate the message. In today’s world of instant communication and occasionally biased media coverage, the message we preach runs a greater risk of being distorted or reduced to some of its secondary aspects. In this way certain issues which are part of the Church’s moral teaching are taken out of the context which gives them their meaning. The biggest problem is when the message we preach then seems identified with those secondary aspects which, important as they are, do not in and of themselves convey the heart of Christ’s message. We need to be realistic and not assume that our audience understands the full background to what we are saying, or is capable of relating what we say to the very heart of the Gospel which gives it meaning, beauty and attractiveness.”
 - (35) Pastoral ministry in missionary style has a message concentrating on the essentials, simplifying the message without losing depth or truth, rather than “disjointed transmission of a multitude of doctrines.”
 - (36) Some truths give more direct expression to the heart of the Gospel: beauty of the saving love of God manifest in Jesus who died and rose. Hierarchy of truths in dogma and morals.
 - (164) In catechesis, there’s the fundamental role of the kerygma, or first announcement. Kerygma is Trinitarian. Catechists must proclaim: “Jesus Christ loves you; he gave his life to save you; and now he is living at your side every day to enlighten, strengthen and free you.” Kerygma is first not just at the beginning, but also because it’s principal.
 - In a 2010 book length interview with Sergio Rubin entitled *El Jesuita*, the future Pope stressed that conversion has to begin with making Jesus come alive in people’s lives, rather than with particular moral issues. “The most important thing in preaching,” he emphasized, “is to proclaim Jesus Christ, what in theology is called the kerygma, that Jesus Christ is God, became man to save us, lived in the world like any one of us, suffered, died, was buried and rose. ... [This] provokes astonishment, and brings one to contemplation and to faith. ... After the encounter with Jesus comes reflection, ... where one can deduce the principles of religious and moral behavior.” He expressed his concern that sometimes there can be a “degrading reductionism” in the preaching of the Church, focusing above all on sexual morality and what’s licit and illicit. “When this happens,” he stated, “we bury the treasure of the living Jesus, the treasure of the Holy Spirit in our hearts, the treasure of the project of Christian life that has many other aspects beyond sexual questions. We push to the side a rich catechesis, with the mysteries of faith and the Creed, and we center ourselves on whether we should organize a rally against a political proposal to legalize condoms.”

- (165) Formation involves entering more deeply into the kerygma, which stresses those elements most needed today: God’s saving love before any moral and religious obligation on our part. It appeals to freedom, doesn’t impose the truth. It’s marked by joy and doesn’t reduce preaching to a few doctrines that are more philosophical than evangelical.
- We need to work on this message:
 - (38) Fitting proportion needs to be maintained in frequency of subject matter. Must speak about justice and charity more than temperance, grace more than law, Christ more than the Church, God’s word more than the Pope.
 - (39) Can’t deny a truth either or deform integrity of the Gospel, but relate each truth to harmonious totality of Christian message. Christian morality is not stoicism, self-denial, a catalogue of sins and faults, but a response to God’s saving love going forth to seek good of others.
 - (168) In moral catechesis, we should show the attractiveness of a life of wisdom, self-fulfillment and enrichment, which can help people better understand the rejection of evil that endanger life. We should be joyful messengers of challenging proposals, guardians of goodness and beauty of a life of fidelity rather than experts in dire predictions and dour judges.
 - This is the Greek word for “proclamation” but it refers to the basic initial proclamation that Christ is the Savior, the incarnate Word of God who came into the world to save us our sins, who suffered, died and rose.
 - Pope Francis himself phrased the kerygma very powerfully in his exhortation on the Joy of the Gospel: “Jesus Christ loves you; he gave his life to save you; and now he is living at your side every day to enlighten, strengthen and free you.”
- The need to be positive
 - (May 8, 2013 daily homily) The example given by the Pope was from the Apostle Paul in the Areopagus (Acts 17:15-22, 18-1) proclaiming the name of Jesus Christ among the worshipers of idols. It is the way in which he did this, said the Pope, that is so important: “He did not say: Idolaters! You will go to hell...”. No, he “tried to reach their hearts”; he did not condemn from the outset but sought dialogue. “Paul is a Pope, a builder of bridges. He did not want to become a builder of walls”. Building bridges to proclaim the Gospel, “this was the Paul’s outlook in Athens: build a bridge to their hearts, and then take a step further and proclaim Jesus Christ”. Paul followed the attitude of Jesus, who spoke to everyone, “he heard the Samaritan woman... ate with the Pharisees, with sinners, with publicans, with doctors of the law. Jesus listened to everyone and when he said a word of condemnation, it was at the end, when there was nothing left to do”. But Paul, too, was “aware that he must evangelize, not proselytize”. The Church “does not grow by proselytizing, as Benedict XVI has told us, but grows by attracting people, by its witness, and by its preaching”. Ultimately, “Paul acted because he was sure, sure of Jesus Christ. He had no doubt of his Lord”.
- In order to proclaim that kerygma, we have to be aware of the wounds that are present:
 - “I see clearly,” the pope said in the Sept. 19 interview with Jesuit publications, “that the thing the church needs most today is the ability to heal wounds and to warm the hearts of the faithful; it needs nearness, proximity. I see the church as a field hospital after battle. It is useless to ask a seriously injured person if he has high cholesterol and about the level of his blood sugars! You have to heal his wounds. Then we can talk about everything else. Heal the wounds, heal the wounds... The church’s ministers must be merciful, take responsibility for the people and accompany them like the good Samaritan, who washes, cleans and raises up his neighbor. This is pure Gospel. God is greater than sin.”
- The Church must first be a house with open doors, a mother with an open heart
 - (46) An evangelizing Church, the house of the Father of the Prodigal Son, has open doors.
 - (47) One concrete sign of this openness is that Church doors should be opened. Doors of the sacraments shouldn’t be closed for simply any reason, especially baptism. These convictions have

“pastoral consequences” that we have to consider with prudence and boldness, so that we are facilitators rather than arbiters of grace. Church is not a tollhouse, but a place for everyone with all their problems.

- But that Church must also go for those on the peripheries, not just waiting for them to come and knock.
 - (48) Church should go first not to our friends and wealthy neighbors but to the poor and sick, the despised and overlooked, who can't repay. No room for weakening this message. Can't mince words: there is an inseparable bond between our faith and the poor.
- In going out, the Church must be willing to take some risks in spreading the faith
 - (49) “I prefer a Church that is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a Church which is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its own security.” More than fear of going astray, we should fear remaining shut up in structures, within rules making us harsh judges, habits that make us feel safe, while people are starving. We should be disturbed that “so many of our brothers and sisters are living without the strength, light and consolation born of friendship with Jesus Christ, without a community of faith to support them, without meaning and a goal in life.”
 - (259) We need Spirit-filled evangelizers are fearlessly open to the Holy Spirit, like the apostles. *Parrhesia*. Must pray for Holy Spirit's help to proclaim Gospel not just with words but by a life transfigured by God's presence.
 - (261) Spirit-filled evangelization is not dutifully carrying out tasks against one's wishes and inclinations, but enthusiasm, but “enthusiasm for a new chapter of evangelization full of fervor, joy, generosity, courage, boundless love and attraction!” It's one guided by the Holy Spirit, who renews the Church, and stirs and impels her to go forth boldly to evangelize all peoples.
 - (263) Early Christians were filled with joy, unflagging courage and zeal in proclaiming the Gospel. Some say things aren't as easy today, but we know “that the Roman empire was not conducive to the Gospel message, the struggle for justice, or the defense of human dignity.” Every age faces challenges of weakness, selfishness and complacency. Saints always confront the day's difficulties.
- Evangelizers needs to draw close to people
 - (268) Evangelizers need to be close to people's lives. Mission is a passion for Jesus and for his people. Jesus burns with love to embrace all people and wants to use us to draw closer to others. Our deepest identity involves being called from among his people and sent to his people. (269) Jesus is the model of evangelizing closeness. See it with rich young man, blind man, his meals with sinners, the forgiving of the woman in Simon's house, Nicodemus. Moved by his example, we want to share the lives of all, listen to their concerns, help them materially and spiritually in their needs, rejoice and weep with them and build a new world with them. This is not an obligation as a personal decision bringing joy and giving meaning.
 - (270) Sometimes Christians keep the Lord's and others' wounds at arm's length. Jesus wants us to touch human misery with the power of his tenderness.
 - Pope Francis gave the greatest application of this in a talk to the Bishops in Brazil toward the end of World Youth Day (July 27).
 - Let us read once again, in this light, the story of Emmaus (cf. Lk 24:13-15). The two disciples have left Jerusalem. They are leaving behind the “nakedness” of God. They are scandalized by the failure of the Messiah in whom they had hoped and who now appeared utterly vanquished, humiliated, even after the third day (vv. 17-21). Here we have to face the difficult mystery of those people who leave the Church, who, under the illusion of alternative ideas, now think that the Church – their Jerusalem – can no longer offer them anything meaningful and important. So they set off on the road alone, with their disappointment. Perhaps the Church appeared too weak, perhaps too distant from their needs, perhaps too poor to respond to their concerns, perhaps too cold, perhaps too caught up with itself, perhaps a prisoner of its own rigid formulas, perhaps the world seems to have made the Church a relic of the past, unfit for new questions; perhaps the Church could speak to people in their infancy but not to those come of age. It is a fact that nowadays there are many people like the two disciples of Emmaus; not only those looking for answers in the

new religious groups that are sprouting up, but also those who already seem godless, both in theory and in practice.

- Faced with this situation, what are we to do? We need a Church unafraid of going forth into their night. We need a Church capable of meeting them on their way. We need a Church capable of entering into their conversation. We need a Church able to dialogue with those disciples who, having left Jerusalem behind, are wandering aimlessly, alone, with their own disappointment, disillusioned by a Christianity now considered barren, fruitless soil, incapable of generating meaning...
 - Since there is no one to accompany them or to show them with his or her own life the true way, many have sought shortcuts, because the standards set by Mother Church seem to be asking too much. There are also those who recognize the ideal of man and of life as proposed by the Church, but they do not have the audacity to embrace it. They think that this ideal is too lofty for them, that it is beyond their abilities, and that the goal the Church sets is unattainable. Nonetheless they cannot live without having at least something, even a poor imitation of what seems too grand and distant. With disappointed hearts, they then go off in search of something that will lead them even further astray, or which brings them to a partial belonging that, ultimately, does not fulfill their lives.
 - From this point of view, we need a Church capable of walking at people's side, of doing more than simply listening to them; a Church which accompanies them on their journey; a Church able to make sense of the "night" contained in the flight of so many of our brothers and sisters from Jerusalem; a Church which realizes that the reasons why people leave also contain reasons why they can eventually return. But we need to know how to interpret, with courage, the larger picture. Jesus warmed the hearts of the disciples of Emmaus.
 - I would like all of us to ask ourselves today: are we still a Church capable of warming hearts? A Church capable of leading people back to Jerusalem? Of bringing them home? Jerusalem is where our roots are: Scripture, catechesis, sacraments, community, friendship with the Lord, Mary and the apostles... Are we still able to speak of these roots in a way that will revive a sense of wonder at their beauty?
 - Let us recover the calm to be able to walk at the same pace as our pilgrims, keeping alongside them, remaining close to them, enabling them to speak of the disappointments present in their hearts and to let us address them. They want to forget Jerusalem, where they have their roots, but eventually they will experience thirst. We need a Church capable of accompanying them on the road back to Jerusalem! ... We need a Church that kindles hearts and warms them. We need a Church capable of restoring citizenship to her many children who are journeying, as it were, in an exodus
- The new evangelization seeks to bring about communion
 - (May 22, 2013 Audience) This is one of the first important effects of the action of the Holy Spirit who guides and brings to life the proclamation of the Gospel: unity, communion. It was in Babel, according to the Biblical account, that the dispersion of people and the confusion of languages had begun, the results of the act of pride and conceit of man who wanted to build with his efforts alone, without God, "a city, and a tower with its top in the heavens" (Gen 11:4). At Pentecost these divisions were overcome. There was no longer conceit with regard to God, nor the closure of some people to others; instead, there was openness to God, there was going out to proclaim his word: a new language, that of love which the Holy Spirit pours out into our hearts (cf. Rom 5:5); a language that all can understand and that, once received, can be expressed in every life and every culture. The language of the Spirit, the language of the Gospel, is the language of communion that invites us to get the better of closedness and indifference, division and antagonization.
 - This communion happens by means of a double-encounter with God and with others
 - In his May 18 meeting with the members of the new movements, Pope Francis stressed how important he deems the concept and reality of encounter for the whole Church. "In this 'stepping out' it is important to be ready for encounter. For me this word is very important. Encounter with others. Why? Because faith is an encounter with Jesus, and we must do what Jesus does: encounter

others. We live in a culture of conflict, a culture of fragmentation, a culture in which I throw away what is of no use to me, a culture of waste. Yet on this point, I ask you to think — and it is part of the crisis — of the elderly, who are the wisdom of a people, think of the children... the culture of waste! However, we must go out to meet them, and with our faith we must create a “culture of encounter”, a culture of friendship, a culture in which we find brothers and sisters, in which we can also speak with those who think differently, as well as those who hold other beliefs, who do not have the same faith.”

- In Rio on July 27, he stressed that all of us are “called to promote the culture of encounter” and wants us to become “obsessed” about it in a good way. “In many places, generally speaking, due to the economic humanism that has been imposed in the world, the culture of exclusion, of rejection, is spreading. There is no place for the elderly or for the unwanted child; there is no time for that poor person in the street. ... Encountering and welcoming everyone, solidarity – a word that is being hidden by this culture, as if it were a bad word – solidarity and fraternity: these are what make our society truly human. Be servants of communion and of the culture of encounter! I would like you to be almost obsessed about this.”
- There are two dimensions of this encounter, he told seminarians and novices on July 6 in Rio: vertical and horizontal that are intrinsically united: “I would like to tell you: come out of yourselves to proclaim the Gospel, but to do this you must come out of yourselves to encounter Jesus. There are two ways out: one towards the encounter with Jesus, towards transcendence; the other towards others in order to proclaim Jesus. These two go hand in hand. If you only take one of them, that is no good! I am thinking of Mother Teresa of Calcutta. She was a fantastic sister.... She was not afraid of anything. She went about on the roads.... This woman was not even afraid of kneeling for two hours before the Lord. Do not fear to step out of yourselves in prayer or in pastoral action. Be brave, in order to pray and in order to go and proclaim the Gospel.”
- We have to bring about that encounter especially with those who are marginalized, who are on the outskirts (Assisi October 4 to Clergy, Consecrated and Diocesan PCs)
 - Therefore: to listen, to walk, and the third aspect is missionary: to proclaim even to the outskirts. I also borrowed this from you, from your pastoral plan. The Bishop spoke recently about it. However, I wish to emphasize it, because it is something I also experienced a great deal when I was in Buenos Aires: the importance of going out to meet the other in the outskirts, which are places, but which are primarily people living in particular situations in life. This was true in my former diocese, that of Buenos Aires. The outskirts which hurt me a great deal was to find children in middle class families who didn't know how to make the Sign of the Cross. But you see, this is an outskirts! And I ask you, here in this diocese, are there children who do not know how to make the Sign of the Cross? Think about it. These are true outskirts of existence where God is absent.
 - In one sense, the outskirts of this diocese, for example, are the areas of the diocese that risk being left on the margins, beyond the street lights. But they are also people and human realities that are marginalized and despised. They are people who perhaps live physically close to the “centre” but who spiritually are very far away.
 - Do not be afraid to go out and meet these people and situations. Do not allow yourselves to be impeded by prejudice, by habit, by an intellectual or pastoral rigidity, by the famous “we've always done it this way!”. However, we can only go to the outskirts if we carry the Word of God in our hearts and if we walk with the Church, like St Francis. Otherwise, we take ourselves, not the Word of God, and this isn't good, it doesn't help anyone! We are not the ones who save the world: it is the Lord himself who saves it!
- But we have to confront and overcome fear and selfishness that hinders our spreading the faith
 - “At a time when we most need a missionary dynamism that will bring salt and light to the world, many lay people fear that they may be asked to undertake some apostolic work and they seek to avoid any responsibility that may take away from their free time,” whether as volunteer catechists, door-to-door evangelizers, or participants in the Church’s institutional charities.
 - Francis encourages each of us to set out on this missionary transformation with such achievable goals in mind. “Every person is worthy of our giving,” he affirms. “If I can help at least one person

to have a better life, that already justifies the offering of my life!”

- That’s the type of missionary reform he’s trying to bring about in each of us.
- Aparecida Document and the Formation to be Missionary Disciples in Communion
 - The greatest pastoral achievement of Cardinal Bergoglio before his election to the papacy was the Aparecida document from 2007.
 - Cardinal Bergoglio was the chairman of the team of CELAM bishops to put together the 2007 concluding document of the Aparecida Conference, the fifth General Assembly of the Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean, which is one of the most significant documents ever published by the Church. It’s the master plan for the New Evangelization in Latin America. But it also gives crucial insights for the new evangelization anywhere.
 - Everyone is called to be a “missionary disciple in communion.” Everywhere is mission territory and everything in the Church is mission-driven. Focused on the encounter with Jesus Christ. It doesn’t blame the problems on money from the North, sheep stealing or other things, but on something missing in the preaching and living of the Gospel among Catholics. The answer is a “permanent catechesis,” an ongoing encounter with Jesus, deepened spiritually through the Bible and the Eucharist.
 - It was, as George Weigel said, a document of a Church that intends to go on “evangelical offense: it will be all Gospel, all proposal, all evangelism, all the time.”
 - It a classic passage it sums up the problem and the response:
 - The church is called to a deep and profound rethinking of its mission and relaunch it with fidelity and boldness in the new circumstances of Latin America and the world. It cannot retreat in response to those who see only confusion, dangers, and threats, or those who seek to cloak the variety and complexity of situations with a mantle of worn-out ideological slogans, or irresponsible attacks. What is required is confirming, renewing, and revitalizing the newness of the Gospel rooted in our history, out of a personal and community encounter with Jesus Christ that raises up disciples and missionaries. That depends not so much on grand programs and structures, but rather on new men and women who incarnate that tradition and newness, as disciples of Jesus Christ and missionaries of his Kingdom, protagonists of new life for a Latin America that seeks to be rediscovered with the light and power of the Spirit..
 - A Catholic faith reduced to mere baggage, to a collection of rules and prohibitions, to fragmented devotional practices, to selective and partial adherence to the truths of faith, to occasional participation in some sacraments, to the repetition of doctrinal principles, to bland or nervous moralizing, that does not convert the life of the baptized would not withstand the trials of time. . . . We must all start again from Christ, recognizing [with Pope Benedict XVI] that “being Christian is . . . the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction.”
 - We Christians must start over from Christ, from contemplation of Him who has revealed to us in his mystery, the complete fulfillment of the human vocation and its meaning. We need to become docile disciples, to learn from Him, in following him, the dignity and fullness of life. We likewise need to be consumed by missionary zeal, to bring to the heart of the culture of our time that unifying and full meaning of human life that neither science, nor politics, nor economics, nor the media can provide. In Christ the Word, God’s Wisdom (cf. 1 Cor. 1:30), culture can again find its center and depth, from which reality may be viewed with all its aspects together, discerning them in the light of the Gospel and granting to each its place and proper dimension.
 - The point is to configure disciples to Jesus, the Master, the Way, the Life, by the power of his Holy Spirit, to the acceptance of his commandment to live, to practice the Beatitudes, his own style of life, including sharing his fate, and living as members

of his body in communion, nourished by God's word and the Eucharist.

- In our Church we should work along four lines:
 - *Religious experience.* In our Church we must offer all our faithful “a personal encounter with Jesus Christ,” a profound and intense religious experience, a *kerygmatic* proclamation and the personal witness of the evangelizers that leads to a personal conversion and to a thorough change of life.
 - *Community life.* Our faithful are seeking Christian communities where they are accepted fraternally and feel valued, visible, and included in the Church. Our faithful must really feel that they are members of an ecclesial community and stewards of its development. That will allow for greater commitment and self-giving in and for the Church.
 - *Biblical and doctrinal formation.* Along with a strong religious experience and notable community life, our faithful need to deepen knowledge of the word of God and the contents of the faith, because that is the only way to bring their religious experience to maturity. Along this strongly experiential and communal path, doctrinal formation is not experienced as theoretical and cold knowledge, but as a fundamental and necessary tool in spiritual, personal and community growth.
 - *Missionary commitment of the entire community.* is concerned about their situation so as to attract them once more to the Church and invite them to return to it.
- Necessary aspects of the formation of missionary disciples in communion
 - *The Encounter with Jesus Christ:* Those who will be his disciples are already seeking him (cf. Jn 1:38), but it is the Lord who calls them: “Follow me” (Mk 1:14; Mt 9:9). The deeper meaning of the search must be discovered, and the encounter with Christ that leads to Christian initiation must be fostered. This encounter must be constantly renewed by personal testimony, proclamation of the *kerygma*, and the missionary action of the community. The *kerygma* is not simply a stage, but the leitmotiv of a process that culminates in the maturity of the disciple of Jesus Christ. Without the *kerygma*, the other aspects of this process are condemned to sterility, with hearts not truly converted to the Lord. Only out of the *kerygma* does the possibility of a true Christian initiation occur. Hence, the Church should have it present in all its actions
 - *Conversion:* It is the initial response of those who have listened to the Lord in wonder, who believe in Him through the action of the Spirit, and who decide to be His friend and go with him, changing how they think and live, accepting the cross of Christ, conscious that dying to sin is attaining life. In Baptism and the sacrament of Reconciliation Christ's Redemption is actualized for us.
 - *Discipleship:* The person constantly matures in knowledge, love, and following of Jesus the master, and delves deeper into the mystery of His person, his example, and his teaching. Ongoing catechesis and sacramental life are of fundamental importance for this stage; they strengthen initial conversion, and enable missionary disciples to persevere in Christian life and mission in the midst of the world that challenges them.
 - *Communion:* There can be no Christian life except in community: in families, parishes, communities of consecrated life, base communities, other small communities, and movements. Like the early Christians who met in community, the disciples take part in the life of the Church, and in the encounter with brothers and sisters, living the love of Christ in solidarity, in fraternal life. They are also accompanied and encouraged by the community and its shepherds as they mature in the live of the Spirit.
 - *Mission:* As they get to know and love their Lord, disciples experience the need to share with others their joy at being sent, at going to the world to proclaim Jesus Christ, dead and risen, to make real the love and service in the person of the neediest, in short, to build the Kingdom of God. Mission is inseparable from discipleship, and hence it must not be understood as a stage subsequent to formation, although it is carried out in different ways, depending on one's own vocation and on the moment in human and Christian maturation at which the person stands.

- When Pope Francis returned to Brazil for World Youth Day, he had a special session with the leaders of CELAM to focus on following through on the Aparecida document.
 - There he said that the new evangelization is not just a new program but a new paradigm to impact everything the Church is and does. It points to the type of reform he's seeking to do in the Vatican and throughout the Church.
 - The Continental Mission is planned along two lines: the programmatic and the paradigmatic. The programmatic mission, as its name indicates, consists in a series of missionary activities. The paradigmatic mission, on the other hand, involves setting in a missionary key all the day-to-day activities of the Particular Churches. Clearly this entails a whole process of reforming ecclesial structures. The "change of structures" (from obsolete ones to new ones) will not be the result of reviewing an organizational flow chart, which would lead to a static reorganization; rather it will result from the very dynamics of mission. What makes obsolete structures pass away, what leads to a change of heart in Christians, is precisely missionary spirit. Hence the importance of the paradigmatic mission. The Continental Mission, both programmatic and paradigmatic, calls for creating a sense of a Church which is organized to serve all the baptized, and men and women of goodwill. Christ's followers are not individuals caught up in a privatized spirituality, but persons in community, devoting themselves to others. The Continental Mission thus implies membership in the Church.
 - He also pondered more how the Church needs to become the mystery of the moon, reflecting Christ's light.
 - The Church is an institution, but when she makes herself a "center", she becomes merely functional, and slowly but surely turns into a kind of NGO. The Church then claims to have a light of her own, and she stops being that "mysterium lunae" of which the Church Fathers spoke. She becomes increasingly self-referential and loses her need to be missionary. From an "institution" she becomes a "enterprise". She stops being a bride and ends up being an administrator; from being a servant, she becomes an "inspector". Aparecida wanted a Church which is bride, mother and servant, more a facilitator of faith than an inspector of faith.
 - And he describes the need for a Church that is close to the people and facilitates the encounter of people with Christ:
 - In Aparecida, two pastoral categories stand out; they arise from the uniqueness of the Gospel, and we can employ them as guidelines for assessing how we are living missionary discipleship in the Church: nearness and encounter. Neither of these two categories is new; rather, they are the way God has revealed himself to us in history. He is the "God who is near" to his people, a nearness which culminates in the incarnation. He is the God who goes forth to meet his people. In Latin America and the Caribbean there are pastoral plans that are "distant", disciplinary pastoral plans that give priority to principles, forms of conduct, organizational procedures... and clearly lack nearness, tenderness, a warm touch. They do not take into account the "revolution of tenderness" brought by the incarnation of the Word. There are pastoral plans designed with such a dose of distance that they are incapable of sparking an encounter: an encounter with Jesus Christ, an encounter with our brothers and sisters. Such pastoral plans can at best provide a dimension of proselytism, but they can never inspire people to feel part of or belong to the Church. Nearness creates communion and belonging; it makes room for encounter. Nearness takes the form of dialogue and creates a culture of encounter. One touchstone for measuring whether a pastoral plan embodies nearness and a capacity for encounter is the homily. What are our homilies like? Do we imitate the example of our Lord, who spoke "as one with authority", or are they simply moralizing, detached, abstract?

- Conclusion
 - We finish with some thoughts with which Pope Francis finished World Youth Day in Brazil last July, which are a fitting summary of everything he's said tonight:
 - (WYD July 28) The experience of this encounter must not remain locked up in your life or in the small group of your parish, your movement, or your community. That would be like withholding oxygen from a flame that was burning strongly. Faith is a flame that grows stronger the more it is shared and passed on, so that everyone may know, love and confess Jesus Christ, the Lord of life and history (cf. Rom 10:9) Careful, though! Jesus did not say: "Go, if you would like to, if you have the time", but he said: "Go and make disciples of all nations." Sharing the experience of faith, bearing witness to the faith, proclaiming the Gospel: this is a command that the Lord entrusts to the whole Church, and that includes you; but it is a command that is born not from a desire for domination, from the desire for power, but from the force of love, from the fact that Jesus first came into our midst and did not give us just a part of himself, but he gave us the whole of himself, he gave his life in order to save us and to show us the love and mercy of God. Jesus does not treat us as slaves, but as people who are free, as friends, as brothers and sisters; and he not only sends us, he accompanies us, he is always beside us in our mission of love. Where does Jesus send us? There are no borders, no limits: he sends us to everyone. The Gospel is for everyone, not just for some. It is not only for those who seem closer to us, more receptive, more welcoming. It is for everyone. Do not be afraid to go and to bring Christ into every area of life, to the fringes of society, even to those who seem farthest away, most indifferent. The Lord seeks all, he wants everyone to feel the warmth of his mercy and his love.
 - Let's ask the Lord to fill us with that warmth as we prepare to receive his blessing and then to go out with him to bring the fire of his love to all those we meet!