

Evangelii Gaudium

The Joy of the Gospel

Exhortation by Pope Francis

Introduction

Sets out main themes and scope

Necessity to preach the Gospel

Need for an inclusive attitude to the poor

Need for Joy and a positive attitude

Sets out scope of exhortation(Para.17)

- The reform of the Church in her missionary outreach
- The temptations faced by pastoral workers
- The entire people of God(the Church) have the task of evangelization
- The homily and its preparation
- The inclusion of the poor in Society
- Peace and dialogue within society
- The spiritual motivations for mission

Chapter One

The Church's Missionary Transformation

Main Themes

Para:

20. God has commanded us to go forth from our own comfort zone as he commanded the Old Testament prophets and as Jesus commanded his disciples.

21. We should take up the missionary task with joy; the joy Jesus expressed, the joy of the first converts and the joy of the disciples.

22. Francis notes the unpredictability of the power of God's word. We must accept its unruly freedom which accompanies its will in ways that are often beyond our understanding.

23. The joy of the Gospel is inclusive- it is for all people. From the earliest years of the Church the apostles reached out to all peoples they encountered.

24. Francis describes an evangelizing community that goes forth and gets involved and is supportive of people in difficulties and

24. suffering. "the goal is not to make enemies but to see God's word accepted and its capacity for liberation and renewal revealed. An evangelizing community is a joyful community.
25. "Mere administration" is not enough". We need to be "permanently in a state of mission".
26. He stresses the Church's constant need for renewal and reform."Even good structures are only helpful when there is a life constantly driving, sustaining and assessing them."
27. We need "a missionary impulse capable of transforming everything, so that the Church's customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules can be suitably channelled for the evangelization of today's world rather than her self-preservation."
28. Francis stresses the importance of the Parish- it has great flexibility and it can adapt itself to circumstances; "in contact with the homes and the lives of its people" and be "a centre of constant missionary activity".
29. Other institutions and communities serve the Church well but they should not lose contact with the rich reality of the local parish".
- 30/31. The Bishop and the Diocese are the local Church in a specific place. It must also be subject to the process of "discernment, purification and reform". The Bishop must foster missionary communion in his Diocese, following the ideal of the first Christian communities.
32. Francis talks about the conversion of the Papacy. He quotes John Paul 2's request for help to find a way "of exercising the primacy" but be "nonetheless open to a new situation."Francis says "excessive centralization, rather than proving helpful, complicates the Church's life and her missionary outreach".
33. Catholics need to rethink "the goals, structures, styles and methods of evangelization in their respective communities".
34. Get across the main message. Understand what "the heart of Christ's message" is and what is secondary. Don't overestimate what the audience understands.
35. Keep it simple. Do not be"obsessed with the disjointed transmission of a multitude of doctrines to be insistently imposed".
36. Francis refers to the hierarchy of truths mentioned in Vatican 2. This does not mean that some things are truer than others but that some truths are more important than others "for giving direct expression to the heart of the gospel".
37. "Faith working through love". Works of love directed to your neighbour are the most perfect external manifestation of the interior grace of the spirit. Mercy is the greatest of the virtues.

38. There must be a sense of proportion and balance in preaching and teaching. For example, there should be more emphasis on Charity and Justice than on Temperance. We should not “speak more about law than about grace, more about the Church than about Christ, and more about the Pope than God’s word”.
39. “When preaching is faithful to the Gospel, the centrality of certain truths is evident.”
40. Variety is the spice of life. Francis applauds different currents of thought, if open to being reconciled by the spirit in respect and love. The Church is not a rigid monolith.
41. We need to use modern technology appropriately, and new language to communicate the authentic gospel of Jesus Christ.
42. Practice what you preach.
43. Do not be afraid to examine old customs.
44. “The confessional is not a torture chamber”. Remember the things that reduce culpability. A small step for one dysfunctional person may be more pleasing to God than lives that are in order but don’t confront great difficulties.
45. We are limited by language and circumstance. Do what good you can, even if, in the process, your shoes get soiled by the mud in the street.
46. We need openness:”going out to others in order to reach the fringes of humanity”. But don’t rush about like a headless chicken-“slow down, put aside your eagerness in order to see and listen to others”.
47. One aspect of openness is access to the sacraments for people in irregular circumstances. Pastoral consequences need to be considered with prudence and boldness.
48. Whose first for evangelization? The poor and the sick, the despised and overlooked-as the gospel says-“those who cannot repay you”.
49. **Conclusion.**
Francis wants to see “A Church which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out in the streets rather than a Church which is unhealthy from being confined and clinging to its own security.”
“At our door people are starving and Jesus does not tire of saying to us-Give them something to eat.

Questions for break-out groups

What do we understand by joy and when have we experienced it in our spiritual lives?

Is our view of the Church, something “confined and concerned with our security”? Are we anxious to open some doors and windows? What aspects of the Church would we like to transform and renew?

What aspects of ecclesial structures possibly get in the way of the Gospel?

Do we have any thoughts what sort of missionary activity we can carry out?

What are the difficulties in getting over the Gospel message in today’s society?