

Evangelii Gaudium
Chapter 3
The Proclamation of the Gospel

Para:

110: The Pope indicates the primacy of the proclamation of Jesus Christ in all evangelizing work. Quoting John Paul 2 “patient and progressive preaching of the saving death and resurrection of Jesus Christ must be your absolute priority”

111. The entire people of God proclaim the Gospel. The Church is more than an organic and hierarchical institution: she is first and foremost a people advancing on its pilgrim way towards God.

112-114: Salvation is a free gift of God stemming from his divine mercy. It is not merited by our good deeds, however good they are. The Church is sent by Jesus as the sacrament of salvation offered by God. Through evangelizing activity, she co-operates as an instrument of that divine grace. Salvation is for everyone. The people that God has chosen and called are the Church. They are not an exclusive and elite group. Jesus said”Go and make disciples of all nations”. We are to proclaim and bring God’s salvation into our world, giving encouragement to those who go astray. Everyone should feel welcomed, loved, forgiven and encouraged to live the good life of the Gospel in the Church.

115-118: The human person is always situated in a culture and as the Church includes many peoples it includes many cultures.

Whenever a people receive the message of salvation, its culture is enriched with the transforming power of the Gospel. Christianity does not have one cultural expression but “it will also reflect the different faces of the cultures and peoples in which it is received and takes root.” Cultural diversity is not a threat to Church unity. The Holy Spirit, sent by the Father and the Son, transforms our hearts and enables us to enter into the perfect communion of the Blessed Trinity, where all things find their unity. Christianity is not mono-cultural and monotonous. No single culture can exhaust the mystery of our redemption in Christ.

119-121: Everyone who is baptised is given the power by the Spirit to evangelise. Even though they may lack the wherewithal to give the truths of the faith precise expression, God furnishes them with an instinct of faith-sensus fidei- which helps them to discern what is truly of God. The baptised are all missionary disciples and agents of evangelization. Like the early disciples, who went forth to proclaim him joyfully immediately after encountering the gaze of Jesus, people who have experienced God’s saving love do not

need much time or training to proclaim that love. Growth through training and learning are required so we can give a clearer witness to the Gospel. We cannot wait to be perfect. As St Paul said “Not that I have already attained this or am already perfect; but I press on to make it my own, because Jesus Christ has made me his own.”

122-126: Popular piety is a true expression of the spontaneous missionary activity of the people of God. Each culture and people in the Church translates the gift of God into its own life and in accordance with its own genius and enriches it with new and eloquent expressions. Let us not stifle or presume to control this missionary power.

127-129: All of us can carry out the kind of preaching that consists of bringing the Gospel to people we meet. As conversation develops it may be possible, having listened to the other person's joys, hopes and concerns for loved ones and other heartfelt needs, to bring up God's word, by reading a Bible verse or relating a story always keeping in mind the fundamental message, the unconditional love for us of the God who became man. If appropriate the encounter could end with a brief prayer related to the concerns expressed by the person. These conversations need to be in language appropriate to time and place and not in fixed formulations or specific words. They will reflect the tremendous diversity of God's people in language and culture.

130-131: The Church is enriched by different charisms (Charism: a favour specially vouchsafed by God: a grace or talent). These are gifts of the Holy Spirit integrated into the Church and, when directed at the heart of the Gospel will accord well with the Church

132-134: Proclaiming the gospel also means engaging with professional, scientific and academic circles. A creative apologetics needs to be developed which would encourage a greater openness to the gospel on the part of all. Theologians should engage in a dialogue with other sciences and human experiences to establish how best to bring the Gospel message to different cultures and groups. Schools and Universities are fruitful fields for evangelization.

135-144: The homily is very important to the laity who listens to it, and the priest who preaches it. Through preaching Christ and his apostles brought all nations to the bosom of the Church. The homily is the supreme moment in the dialogue between God and his people which lead up to sacramental communion. To be effective it relies on the preacher knowing the heart of his community. It is not a form of entertainment, but must have life and meaning, and

should be brief –it is not a speech or lecture. It should not overshadow the celebration of faith. The Church is a Mother and preaching should reflect how a Mother speaks to her child, knowing that the child trusts that what she is teaching is for the child's benefit and the child knows that they are loved. Preachers should be warm, unpretentious and reflect the joy and enjoyment that Christ displayed talking with his people. Preachers must speak with their hearts on fire so that the memory of the Faithful should overflow with the wondrous things done by God. Their hearts must be enlightened by the fullness of revelation and by the path travelled by God's word.

145-159: The Pope emphasizes the importance of preparation for the homily including-giving proper attention to the biblical text and understanding it, and relating it to the totality of the bible, having a lively desire to be the first to hear the word we must preach and preachers must practice what they preach, not lay heavy burdens on others and not lift a finger to move them. Christ's message must truly penetrate and possess the preacher, not just intellectually but his whole being. The preacher needs to engage in spiritual reading, especially the scriptures in the context of prayer and thereby getting to the reality of what the text means him. The preacher must listen to the concerns of the people and speak to them in their language. Proper attention must be paid to how to deliver the homily and enliven it with images, use simple and direct language and be positive-telling people how to do better rather than pointing out what shouldn't be done and generally moaning and whingeing.

160-175: We are called to grow in Christ. This is not just growth in doctrinal formation but growth in virtue but also in our observance of the commandment "that you love one another as I have loved you". As St. Paul says "may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all." In support of this growth are education and catechesis. In catechesis we have rediscovered the first announcement or kerygma, which needs to be central to evangelical activity and renewal. (Kerygma- Greek for proclamation). The first proclamation of the early Church was "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 centrality of this proclamation calls for stressing those aspects of the Christian message most needed today; God's saving love freely given and freely received and it should be marked by joy, encouragement, liveliness and balance. The Pope refers to mistagogic initiation. (Mistagogic-the teaching of mysteries). This is reflected in a renewed appreciation of the liturgical signs of

Christian initiation. (Which are baptism, first communion and confirmation). Catechesis should also seek to attend to the way of beauty. Following Christ is not only right and true but is also beautiful. Catechesis in morality, promoting growth in fidelity to the Gospel way of life, should promote a positive message of the attractiveness of that way of life. The catechists should be guardians of the goodness and beauty of a life faithful to the Gospel. We must be able to get close to people so that we can make present Christ's closeness. This cannot work with the self-absorbed who avoid God. We need those who can really listen with an open heart to those whose path will take them to a full appropriation of the mystery. We must correct others who carry out objectively evil actions but judge their responsibility and culpability. All evangelization has to be based on the word of God. We need to be constantly trained in hearing the word. God's word, above all in the Eucharist, will nourish and inwardly strengthen us. We need to provide for serious, ongoing study of the Bible, while encouraging its prayerful individual and communal reading.

Questions for break out groups

1. What are the first things you would do to "go and make disciples of all nations?"
2. What are the opportunities for evangelization thrown up by diversity?
3. What, from your experience, are the components of the perfect homily?
4. Do we do enough to encourage reading the scriptures and Bible study?
5. What is your view of the good and bad aspects of religious education in Catholic schools?