

EVANGELIZING  
CATHOLIC CHRISTIANS  
By Fr. Emmanuel AkalueSection One:  
Evangelization  
Overview

## SESSION 1:

## Introduction to Catholic Evangelization

*These twelve Jesus sent out, charging them, "Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And preach as you go, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons (Matthew 10:5-8; RSV).*



The Lost Sheep

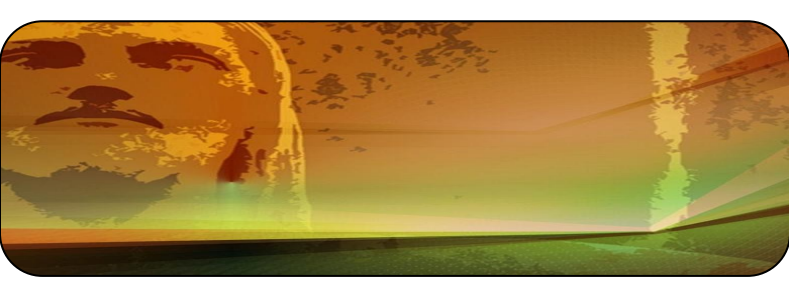
**Preliminary Observation:**

From the above, Jesus gives us a blue print of how to proceed with initial evangelization. The Church is the New Israel. To evangelize as Jesus did and instructed us to do, we must first put our house in order. While we should reach out to bring modern Gentiles (non-Christians) into the fold and to bring modern Samaritans ("Separated Brethren") into Full Communion, the first priority must be to seek out and restore the lost sheep of the house of Israel ("fallen Catholics"). The big question is: Who are fallen Catholics? I would describe them as all those who were baptized Catholic Christians who have left the Church and no longer consider themselves as Catholics Christians. However, we also put our house in order by taking care of those still in the fold but do not know why they are Catholic Christians and could become easy targets to be "tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the cunning of men, by their craftiness in deceitful wiles" (Ephesians 4:14).

**Objective of this Presentation:**

The mandate to evangelize is entrusted to the Church. Evangelization is an *ecclesial act*, meaning we evangelize in the name of Christ and His Church (cf. Pope Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 60). We are baptized to become witnesses to our shared faith and vision. The Scripture, especially the Acts of the Apostles, is filled with numerous references about shared faith. No one is an island; when we share our faith together and give testimonies of what God is doing in our lives, we are strengthened together: "Faith is strengthened when it is given to others!" (Pope John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 2).

Many Catholics feel deficient whenever we talk about evangelization. It should not be that way. Catholics actually know a lot but often do not know how to piece thoughts, ideas and scripture together. In this presentation, I will attempt to present Catholics with some user friendly resources. In future, I will also present sample case scenarios. I hope to gradually produce publications, booklets, leaflets, pamphlets and tracts and make them available to facilitate Catholic Evangelization among Catholics and others: By the grace of God, Catholics Christians will come to greater realization of "the unsearchable riches of Christ" (cf. Ephesians 3:8), appreciate these riches and through them become ever conformed to Christ and His Church.

Section Two:  
Overview

## SESSION 2:

## Overview of Evangelization

Below is a brief overview of the meaning of evangelization, in the Words of Pope Paul VI, in his Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, in 1975. The actual numbers of each passage quoted from the document is retained for easy reference:

14. **[The Primary Mission of the Church]:** Evangelizing is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity. She exists in order to evangelize, that is to say, in order to preach and teach, to be the channel of the gift of grace, to reconcile sinners with God, and to perpetuate Christ's sacrifice in the Mass, which is the memorial of His death and glorious resurrection.

18. **[What is Evangelization?]:** For the Church, evangelizing means bringing the Good News into all the strata of humanity, and through its influence transforming humanity from within and making it new: "Now I am making the whole of creation new."... The purpose of evangelization is therefore precisely this interior change, and if it had to be expressed in one sentence the best way of stating it would be to say that the Church evangelizes when she seeks to convert, solely through the divine power of the message she proclaims, both the personal and collective consciences of people, the activities in which they engage, and the lives and concrete milieu which are theirs.



Jesus Teaching the Apostles to Evangelize

22. **[The Core of Evangelization and the Place of Proclamation]:** There is no true evangelization if the name, the teaching, the life, the promises, the kingdom and the mystery of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God are not proclaimed.... This proclamation – *kerygma*, preaching or catechesis – occupies such an important place in evangelization that it has often become synonymous with it; and yet it is only one aspect of evangelization.

24. **[What is Evangelization?]:** Evangelization ... is a complex process made up of varied elements: the renewal of humanity, witness, explicit proclamation, inner adherence, entry into the community, acceptance of signs, apostolic initiative.

27. **[What Evangelization is and is not]:** Evangelization will also always contain - as the foundation, center, and at the same time, summit of its dynamism - a clear proclamation that, in Jesus Christ, the Son of God made man, who died and rose from the dead, salvation is offered to all men, as a gift of God's grace and mercy. And not an immanent salvation, meeting material or even spiritual needs, restricted to the framework of temporal existence and completely identified with temporal desires, hopes, affairs and struggles, but a salvation which exceeds all these limits in order to reach fulfillment in a communion with the one and only divine Absolute: a transcendent and eschatological salvation, which indeed has its beginning in this life but which is fulfilled in eternity.

42. **[The Place of Proclamation]:** Preaching, the verbal proclamation of a message, is indeed always indispensable.... This is why St. Paul's axiom, "Faith comes from what is heard," also retains its relevance: it is the Word that is heard which leads to belief.

46. **[One-on-One Evangelization]:** For this reason, side by side with the collective proclamation of the Gospel, the other form of transmission, the person-to-person one, remains valid and important. The Lord often used it (for example, with Nicodemus, Zacchaeus, the Samaritan woman, Simon the Pharisee), and so did the apostles.

47. **[Relationship between Evangelization and Sacramental or Liturgical Life]:** Evangelization thus exercises its full capacity when it achieves the most intimate relationship, or better still, a permanent and unbroken intercommunication, between the Word and the sacraments. In a certain sense it is a mistake to make a contrast between evangelization and sacramentalization, as is sometimes done. It is indeed true that a certain way of administering the sacraments, without the solid support of catechesis regarding these same sacraments and a global catechesis, could end up by depriving them of their effectiveness to a great extent. The role of evangelization is precisely to educate people in the faith in such a way as to lead each individual Christian to live the sacraments as true sacraments of faith – and not to receive them passively or reluctantly.

Section Three:  
Preparation for  
Evangelization

## SESSION 3: Preparation for Evangelization:

*In your hearts, reverence Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to make a defense to any one who calls you to account for the hope that is in you, yet do it with gentleness and reverence.... (1Peter 3:15).*

"The Church is an evangelizer, but she begins by being evangelized herself" (Pope Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 15). A Latin adage says, "Nemo dat quod non habet", meaning: "You cannot give what you do not have". Thus, one needs at least some basic training or education in evangelization. In the words of Blessed John Paul II,

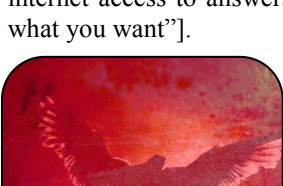
Christian hope sustains us in committing ourselves fully to the new evangelization and to the worldwide mission.... The whole Church is even more committed to a new missionary advent. We must increase our apostolic zeal to pass on to others the light and joy of the faith, and to this high ideal the **whole People of God must be educated** (Pope John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 86).

**Spiritual, Catechetical, and Doctrinal Resources Needed to evangelize Catholics:**

The Bible is the most important resource. According to the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council,

Sacred theology rests on the written word of God, together with sacred tradition, as its primary and perpetual foundation.... For the Sacred Scriptures contain the word of God and since they are inspired really are the word of God; and so the study of the sacred page is, as it were, the soul of sacred theology. By the same word of Scripture ... pastoral preaching, catechetics and all Christian instruction, in which the liturgical homily must hold the foremost place, is nourished in a healthy way and flourishes in a holy way (Vatican II, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, *Dei Verbum*, 24).

The Catechism of the Catholic Church is the next important resource. Other doctrinal resources: Papal documents available online or in bookstores and Religious libraries. There are also Books of Catholic Authors explaining the faith; CDs, DVDs from Lighthouse Media available in many parishes, internet access to answers to Catholic faith and practices [simply "Google what you want"].

**General Principles for Evangelization**

Principles to evangelize fruitfully, it is important to know some vital principles so that one does not "evangelize" contrary to the will of Christ.

1. "The Holy Spirit is the Principal Agent of Evangelization" (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 75; *Redemptoris Missio*, 21). The evangelizing mission of the Church was launched deliberately through the event of Pentecost. The Holy Spirit is indispensable. As Jesus declared,

*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord (Luke 4:18-19).*

*You are witnesses of these things. And behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you; but stay in the city, until you are clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24:48-49).*

*But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth (Acts 1:8).*

2. Evangelization is not arbitrary; it must comply with the order established by Christ. Since the very mission and mandate to evangelize was entrusted by Christ to the Church, "the Pillar and foundation of the Truth" (1Timothy 3:15), evangelization is an ecclesial act. We therefore proclaim the faith of the Church, not individual opinions of theologians or our own opinions. We evangelize in the name of Christ and the Church. In the words of Pope Paul VI,

There is thus a profound link between Christ, the Church and evangelization. During the period of the Church that we are living in, it is she who has the task of evangelizing. This mandate is not accomplished without her, and still less against her.

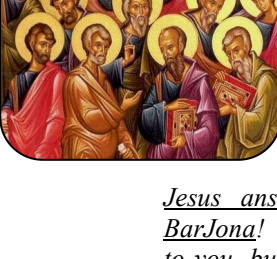
It is certainly fitting to recall this fact at a moment like the present one when it happens that not without sorrow we can hear people – whom we wish to believe are well-intentioned but who are certainly misguided in their attitude – continually claiming to love Christ but without the Church, to listen to Christ but not the Church, to belong to Christ but outside the Church. The absurdity of this dichotomy is clearly evident in this phrase of the Gospel: "Anyone who rejects you rejects me" (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 16).

Therefore, we receive the mandate of the Church through the Catholic





Bishops. This may sound as “baloney” to our other Christian brothers and sisters. Never mind, it is the truth! This is the order or arrangement revealed and mandated by Christ Himself: The Father commissioned Christ in the Holy Spirit; Christ commissioned the Peter and the Apostles in the Holy Spirit; the Apostles commissioned the Elders, Deacons and Lay Evangelizers in the Holy Spirit. As Christ clearly puts it: “*He who hears you hears me, and he who rejects you rejects me, and he who rejects me rejects him who sent me*” (Luke 10:16). Or again, “*Truly, truly, I say to you, he who receives any one whom I send receives me; and he who rejects me receives him who sent me*” (John 13:20). Please, review the following passages of Scripture carefully and see “WHO” Jesus was speaking in the context (underlined):



The Twelve Apostles

Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the powers of death shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Matthew 16:17-19).

When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” He said to him, “Feed my lambs.” A second time he said to him, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” He said to him, “Tend my sheep.” He said to him the third time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, “Do you love me?” And he said to him, “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Feed my sheep” (John 21:15-17).

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee.... And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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 (Matthew 28:16-20).

[Here, Christ commissioned only the Apostles/Bishops].

Afterward he appeared to the eleven themselves; as they sat at table.... And he said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned (Mark 16:14-16).

[Here, also, Christ gave the mandate only to the Apostles/Bishops; not to every “Tom, Dick and Harry.” Therefore, we must listen to our bishops and collaborate with them].

Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I send you (John 20:21) [Christ speaking to His Apostles]

**SEE HOW THE APOSTLES/BISHOPS RIGHTLY CLAIMED THE EXCLUSIVE RIGHT OF THE MANDATE IN THE SCRIPTURE:**

Then it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole church, to choose men from among them and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. They sent Judas called Barabbas, and Silas, leading men among the brethren, with the following letter: “The brethren, both the apostles and the elders, to the brethren who are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia, greeting. Since we have heard that some persons from us have troubled you with words, unsettling your minds, although we gave them no instructions.... (Acts 15:22-24).

For a bishop, as God’s steward, must be blameless; he must not be arrogant ... or greedy for gain, but hospitable ... holy, and self-controlled; he must hold firm to the sure word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to confute those who contradict it. For there are many insubordinate men, empty talkers and deceivers ... they must be silenced, since they are upsetting whole families by teaching for base gain what they have no right to teach (Titus 2:7-11).

**SEE WHERE WE (OTHERS) COME IN** (Being one with and collaborating with our bishops):

“And these signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover (Mark 16: 17-18).

I do not pray for these only, but also for those who believe in me through their word, that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that thou hast sent me” (John 17:20-21). [We are obliged to be in unity with our Apostles/bishops].

3. We evangelize into the Church. Evangelization is not an opportunity to found a “Husband and Wife Church” or your family Church or a Church of a group of friends. The Church Christ FOUNDED is already in place from the time of Christ and the Apostles; it only SPREADS from “*Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth* (Acts 1:8). It does not begin anywhere else. This Church began in Jerusalem (Luke 24:45-47; Acts 1:8); in the Roman Empire, then later established its seat of governance in Rome (Acts 19:21; 23:11; 28:14), the capital of the Empire. From the beginning, people baptized and joined the Church: “*So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls*” (Acts 2:41). They did not baptize and leave to found their personal church. When St. Paul converted, he joined the Church; he did not found his private church. Only Christ can found the Church. In His words, “*You are Peter and on this rock I will build my Church ....*” (Matt. 16:18). Christ had twelve Apostles, obviously reflecting the “foundation stones of the new Israel”, yet only Peter was singled out for the founding of the One Church. Jesus erected the Church on only the rock he chose. Please, always kindly remind our other Christian brothers and sisters about how the personal name, Peter, existed; that will solve a lot of misunderstandings: Christ named only Simon “*Cephas* (Peter)” which means rock (John 1:42).

Christ did not say, “You are my Apostles, on these rocks I will build my churches”. Jesus did not say, “You are James, on this rock I will build my Church”. He did **not** say, “*You are Luke, or Philip, or Thomas ... on this rock I will build my Church....*” Thus, it is historically impossible to see any Church which James, Paul, Matthew, etc, founded different from that founded on the rock, Peter. Do you see a different Apostle James, Thomas, Matthew, or Philip’s Church running through history? In the same way, Christ did not say, “*You are Luther, or Wesley or Calvin, on this rock I will build my Church*”. This is the simple truth about the mystery of one and only one Church from the beginning. Christ prayed to the Father that it should remain one. Do you think the Father did not answer His prayers? Certainly, He did! So some reasons other than God’s will are responsible for the division of God’s Church. Those reasons could be summarized as Ignorance, Human Sins and Human Insubordination. All are called to repent and serve God according to His will for “*one flock and one shepherd*” (John 10:16). Do you love Christ? He says, “*If you love me, you will keep my commandments*” (John 14:15). Surely, we cannot continue to ignore Christ or continue to have it our own way!

The Bible indicates that the only Church Christ founded was already in place since the first century. See how it is recorded in the Bible: “*So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was built up; and walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit it was multiplied. Now as Peter went here and there among them all, he came down also to the saints that lived at Lydda*” (Acts 9:31-32). Think about it: Are these other “local” so-called churches that began in different countries and towns in the world (other than the Roman Empire/Jerusalem root), the Church mentioned in the Bible? Certainly not! This should be common sense. Is there any biblical passage anyone could cite to prove the legitimacy of any division or founding of another church? Surely, there is none!



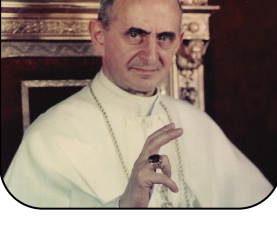
**Section Four: What is the Church**

**SESSION 4: What is the Church?**

What is the Church? Following the teaching of the Bishops of Vatican Council II, the Church is “the People of God” – the New Israel. Accordingly, I now define the Church as follows: “the New Testament (Covenant) People of God united in one faith, one baptism and one Lord” (cf. Eph. 4:5). This description embodies the various images of the Church in Scripture such as the Body of Christ, Bride of Christ, Temple of God, Family of God etc. Christ wants to bring everyone into communion with God and one another. It also shows us the Church has both the visible and the invisible aspects.

The important words in our definition above are *New (Testament) Covenant People*, with *one faith* (same belief and proclamation), *one baptism* (same Sacramental and liturgical dispensation) and *One Lord* (same governance, hierarchically subordinated under Christ’s lordship). These define the specific marks of the Church, namely, it is one, holy, apostolic and universal (Catholic). Indeed, there is only one Church. The concept of more than one church is condemned in scripture. The image of the Church as the Body of Christ teaches us no normal head has two or more bodies in real life situation (cf. 1 Cor. 12:12-26). Similarly, the image of the Church as the Bride (wife) of Christ teaches us that Christ has only one wife, one Church, and we should not make him a “polygamous Lord” in any disguise (cf. Matt. 19: 4-6; Eph. 5:31-32).

To provide a more comprehensive background to this discussion on the meaning of the Church, it is important to consider some selected references from the Church’s magisterial documents. I do this in the context of the following observations by some of our Popes, the authentic successors of Peter, the Apostle:



Pope Paul VI

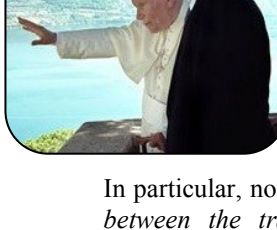
Our appeal here is inspired by the fervor of the greatest preachers and evangelizers, whose lives were devoted to the apostolate.... They have known how to overcome many obstacles to evangelization.

Such obstacles are also present today, and we shall limit ourselves to mentioning **the lack of fervor. It is all the more serious because it comes from within. It is manifested in fatigue, disenchantment, compromise, lack of interest and above all lack of joy and hope.** We exhort all those who have the task of evangelizing, by whatever title and at whatever level, always to nourish spiritual fervor.

This fervor demands first of all that **we should know how to put aside the excuses which would impede evangelization. The most insidious of these excuses are certainly the ones which people claim to find support for in such and such a teaching of the Council.**

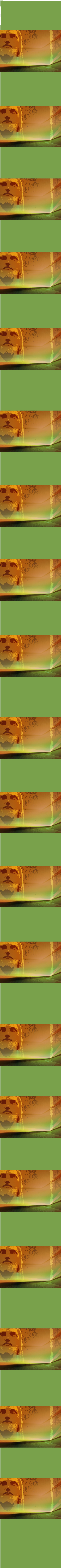
Thus one too frequently hears it said, in various terms, that to impose a truth, be it that of the Gospel, or to impose a way, be it that of salvation, cannot but be a violation of religious liberty. Besides, it is added, why proclaim the Gospel when the whole world is saved by uprightness of heart? We know likewise that the world and history are filled with “seeds of the Word”; is it not therefore an illusion to claim to bring the Gospel where it already exists in the seeds that the Lord Himself has sown?

**Anyone who takes the trouble to study in the Council’s documents the questions upon which these excuses draw too superficially will find quite a different view** (Pope Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 80; bold and underlining mine, for emphasis).

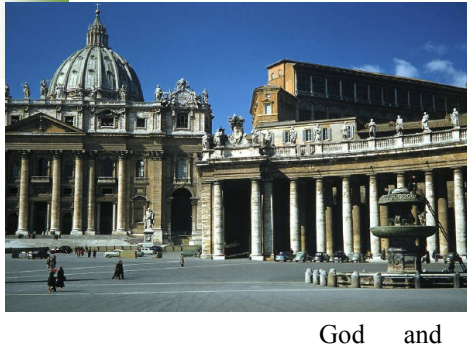


Blessed Pope John Paul II with President George W. Bush

In particular, note should be taken of the *lack of harmony between the traditional response of the Church and certain theological positions*, encountered even in Seminaries and in Faculties of Theology, *with regard to questions of the greatest importance for the Church and for the life of faith of Christians, as well as for the life of society itself.* In particular, the question is asked: do the commandments of God, which are written on the human heart and are part of the Covenant, really have the capacity to clarify the daily decisions of individuals and entire societies? Is it possible to obey God and thus love







God and neighbor, without respecting these commandments in all circumstances? Also, an opinion is frequently heard which questions the intrinsic and unbreakable bond between faith and morality, as if **membership in the Church and her internal unity were to be decided on the basis of faith alone**, while in the sphere of morality a pluralism of opinions and of kinds of behavior could be tolerated, these being left to the diversity of the individual subjective conscience or to the diversity of social and cultural contexts (John Paul II, *Veritatis splendor*, 4; bold mine, for emphasis).

Accordingly, in this area, take a closer look at what is really expressed in the documents. In order to preclude any possibility of the distortion of the facts by me, I shall simply raise the pertinent questions and allow the documents to speak for themselves. The questions are only to facilitate deeper insights into the contents of this beautiful heritage of the Church. Please, the proper reference numbers in the specific documents will be retained, in front of the quotations. I will also insert in block parenthesis some "commentary-like" formulations to provide greater clarity and appreciation of the documents.



Opening Ceremony of Vatican Council II

**Selected Quotes On The Mystery Of The Church**  
**Vatican II: The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium***  
(NOV. 21, 1964)

**When did God's plan for the Church begin? How was it prepared for? When was the Church born? When will the Church attain perfection?**

2. Already from the beginning of the world the foreshadowing of the Church took place. It was prepared in a remarkable way throughout the history of the people of Israel and by means of the Old Covenant. In the present era of time the Church was constituted and, by the outpouring of the Spirit, was made manifest. At the end of time it will gloriously achieve completion... with the Father in the universal Church.

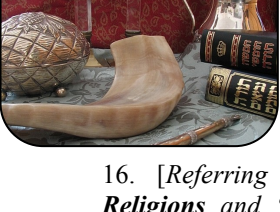
**Is the [Catholic] Church Necessary for Salvation? On what grounds could one be saved "outside this Church"?**

14. This Sacred Council wishes to turn its attention firstly to the Catholic faithful. Basing itself upon Sacred Scripture and Tradition, it teaches that the Church... is necessary for salvation. Christ, present to us in His Body, which is the Church, is the one Mediator and the unique way of salvation. In explicit terms He Himself affirmed the necessity of faith and baptism and thereby affirmed also the necessity of the Church, for through baptism as through a door men enter the Church. Whosoever, therefore, knowing that the Catholic Church was made necessary by Christ, would refuse to enter or to remain in it, could not be saved. (\*Underlining mine, for emphasis).

**What are the different levels of communion (of belonging) and of being related to the Church?**

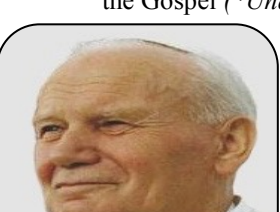
14. [Referring to the Catholic Faithful and also Some of the Eastern Rite: **FULL COMMUNION**] They are fully incorporated in the society of the Church who, possessing the Spirit of Christ accept her entire system and all the means of salvation given to her, and are united with her as part of her visible bodily structure and through her with Christ, who rules her through the Supreme Pontiff and the bishops. The bonds which bind men to the Church in a visible way are profession of faith, the sacraments, and ecclesiastical government and communion.

15. [Referring to [Some Orthodox, Protestants and Evangelicals in General: **PARTIAL OR IMPERFECT COMMUNION**] The Church recognizes that in many ways she is linked with those who, being baptized, are honored with the name of Christian, though they do not profess the faith in its entirety or do not preserve unity of communion with the successor of Peter. For there are many who honor Sacred Scripture, taking it as a norm of belief and of life, and who show a sincere zeal. They lovingly believe in God the Father Almighty and in Christ, the Son of God and Savior. They are consecrated by baptism, in which they are united with Christ. They also recognize and accept other sacraments within their own Churches or ecclesiastical communities. Many of them rejoice in the **episcopate, celebrate the Holy Eucharist** [*\*\*\*this aspect highlighted and underlined refers only to the Orthodox not yet in Full Communion\*\*\**] and cultivate devotion toward the Virgin Mother of God. They also share with us in prayer and other spiritual benefits. Likewise, we can say that in some real way they are joined with us in the Holy Spirit, for to them too He gives His gifts and graces whereby He is operative among them with His sanctifying power. Some indeed He has strengthened to the extent of the shedding of their blood. **In all of Christ's disciples the Spirit arouses the desire to be peacefully united, in the manner determined by Christ, as one flock under one shepherd, and He prompts them to pursue this end.** Mother Church never ceases to pray, hope and work that this may come about. She exhorts her children to purification and renewal so that the sign of Christ may shine more brightly over the face of the earth (\*Underlining and bold mine, for emphasis).



Candlesticks, Etrog Box, Shofar, Torah Pointer, Tanach, Natla

16. [Referring to Judaism, Islam, and Traditional Religions and 'Free Thinkers': **RELATED TO THE CHURCH (AT VARYING DEGREES)** Finally, those who have not yet received the Gospel are related in various ways to the people of God. In the first place we must recall the people to whom the testament and the promises were given and from whom Christ was born according to the flesh. On account of their fathers this people remains most dear to God, for God does not repent of the gifts He makes nor of the calls He issues.; But the plan of salvation also includes those who acknowledge the Creator. In the first place amongst these there are the Mohammedans, who, professing to hold the faith of Abraham, along with us adore the one and merciful God, who on the last day will judge mankind. Nor is God far distant from those who in shadows and images seek the unknown God, for it is He who gives to all men life and breath and all things, and as Savior wills that all men be saved. Those also can attain to salvation who through no fault of their own do not know the Gospel of Christ or His Church, yet sincerely seek God and moved by grace strive by their deeds to do His will as it is known to them through the dictates of conscience. Nor does Divine Providence deny the helps necessary for salvation to those who, without blame on their part, have not yet arrived at an explicit knowledge of God and with His grace strive to live a good life. Whatever good or truth is found amongst them is looked upon by the Church as a preparation for the Gospel (\*Underlining mine, for emphasis).



Blessed Pope John Paul II

**Crossing The Threshold of Hope - John Paul II**  
**Drawing on the above, how are we to understand the teaching: "Outside the Church, there is no Salvation"?**

The Council speaks of *membership in the Church* for Christians and of *being related to the Church* for non-Christian believers in God, for people of goodwill (cf. *Lumen Gentium* 15-16). Both these dimensions are important for salvation, and each one possesses varying levels. People are saved *through* the Church, they are saved *in* the Church, but they always are saved *by the grace of Christ*. Besides formal membership in the Church, *the sphere of salvation* can also include *other forms of relation to the Church*. Paul VI expressed this same teaching in his first encyclical, *Ecclesiam Suam*, when he spoke of the various *circles of the dialogue of salvation* (cf. *Ecclesiam Suam* 101-117), which are the same as those indicated by the Council as the spheres of membership in and of relation to the Church. This is the authentic meaning of the well-known statement "Outside the Church there is no salvation."

It would be difficult to deny that this doctrine is extremely open. It cannot be accused of an *ecclesiological exclusivism*. Those who rebel against claims allegedly made by the Catholic Church probably do not have an adequate understanding of this teaching.

**Ut Unum Sint – Encyclical Letter of John Paul II on the Commitment to Ecumenism**

**Which Church is the true lineage (i.e. the parent stock) of the Church founded by Christ among all the churches today?**

10. The Council states that the Church of Christ "subsists in the Catholic Church, which is governed by the Successor of Peter and by the Bishops in communion with him", and at the same time acknowledges that "many elements of sanctification and of truth can be found outside her visible structure. These elements, however, as gifts properly belonging to the Church of Christ, possess an inner dynamism towards Catholic unity" (Vatican II, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, 8).



Eastern Orthodox Mass

**What should be the guiding principle of the reestablishment of unity between the Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox?**

56. **The structures of unity which existed before the separation are a heritage of experience that guides our common path towards the re-establishment of full communion.** Obviously, during the second millennium the Lord has not ceased to bestow on his Church abundant fruits of grace and growth. Unfortunately, however, the gradual and mutual estrangement between the Churches of the West and the East deprived them of the benefits of mutual exchanges and cooperation. With the grace of God a great effort must be made to re-establish full communion among them, the source of such good for the Church of Christ. ...**The traditional designation of "Sister Churches" should ever accompany us along this path.**

57. ...For centuries we lived this life of 'Sister Churches', and together held Ecumenical Councils which guarded the deposit of faith against all corruption. And now, after a long period of division and mutual misunderstanding, the Lord is enabling us to discover ourselves as 'Sister Churches' once more, in spite of the obstacles which were once raised between us". If today, on the threshold of the third millennium, we are seeking the re-establishment of full communion, it is for the accomplishment of this reality that we must work and it is to this reality that we must refer.

**Vatican II, Decree on Ecumenism, *Unitatis Redintegratio***  
**How many Churches did Christ found? Is the division of the Church a blessing in disguise?**

1. The restoration of unity among all Christians is one of the principal concerns of the Second Vatican Council. Christ the Lord founded one Church and one Church only. However, many Christian communions present themselves to men as the true inheritors of Jesus Christ; all indeed profess to be followers of the Lord but differ in mind and go their different ways, as if Christ Himself were divided. Such division openly contradicts the will of Christ, scandalizes the world, and damages the holy cause of preaching the Gospel to every creature.

**When did the problem of division begin? When did division actually take place? Who are to blame? Is division of the Church a sin? If 'Yes', to whom can we charge with the sin? Are we totally divided or do we have any level of oneness or communion? What areas of division can we identify? What should be our right attitude to ourselves while efforts are still being made towards unity?**

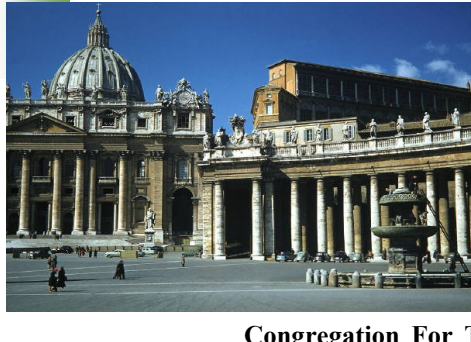
3. Even in the beginnings of this one and only Church of God there arose certain rifts, which the Apostle strongly condemned. But in subsequent centuries much more serious dissensions made their appearance and quite large communities came to be separated from full communion with the Catholic Church—for which, often enough, men of both sides were to blame. The children who are born into these Communities and who grow up believing in Christ cannot be accused of the sin involved in the separation, and the Catholic Church embraces upon them as brothers, with respect and affection. For men who believe in Christ and have been truly baptized are in communion with the Catholic Church even though this communion is imperfect. The differences that exist in varying degrees between them and the Catholic Church—whether in doctrine and sometimes in discipline, or concerning the structure of the Church—do indeed create many obstacles, sometimes serious ones, to full ecclesiastical communion. The ecumenical movement is striving to overcome these obstacles. But even in spite of them it remains true that all who have been justified by faith in Baptism are members of Christ's body, and have a right to be called Christian, and so are correctly accepted as brothers by the children of the Catholic Church.

**Can Catholics learn anything from our 'separated brethren' (Christians of other communions)? If 'Yes', what does this lead us to?**

4. Nor should we forget that anything wrought by the grace of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of our separated brethren can be a help to our own edification.







**Congregation For The Doctrine Of The Faith Declaration "Dominus Iesus" On The Unicity And Salvific Universality Of Jesus Christ And The Church (August 6, 2000).**

*Where does the Church of Christ founded in the First Century fully exist today? Concerning the relationship between the East and West, do we have two 'Churches'? If not, what is the true status of the 'different' Churches of the East? Apart from the Orthodox, are Protestant and Evangelicals "truly or properly Particular Churches" of the One Church of Christ?*

16. This Church, constituted and organized as a society in the present world, subsists in [subsistit in] the Catholic Church, governed by the Successor of Peter and by the Bishops in communion with him". With the expression *subsistit in*, the Second Vatican Council sought to harmonize two doctrinal statements: on the one hand, **that the Church of Christ, despite the divisions which exist among Christians, continues to exist fully only in the Catholic Church**, and on the other hand, that "outside of her structure, many elements can be found of sanctification and truth", that is, in those Churches and ecclesial communities which are not yet in full communion with the Catholic Church. But with respect to these, it needs to be stated that "they derive their efficacy from the very fullness of grace and truth entrusted to the Catholic Church" (*\*Bold and underlining mine, for emphasis*).

17. [Reference to the Orthodox Churches only] Therefore, **there exists a single Church of Christ**, which subsists in the Catholic Church, governed by the Successor of Peter and by the Bishops in communion with him. **The Churches which, while not existing in perfect communion with the Catholic Church, remain united to her by means of the closest bonds, that is, by apostolic succession and a valid Eucharist, are true particular Churches.** Therefore, the Church of Christ is present and operative also in these Churches, even though they lack full communion with the Catholic Church, since they do not accept the Catholic doctrine of the Primacy, which, according to the will of God, the Bishop of Rome objectively has and exercises over the entire Church. [**\*\*NOTE THE DEFINITION OF "PARTICULAR CHURCHES"**: "**Particular Churches, in which and from which the one and only catholic Church exists, are principally dioceses. Unless the contrary is clear, the following are equivalent to a diocese: a territorial prelature, a territorial abbacy, a vicariate apostolic, a prefecture apostolic and a permanently established apostolic administration**" (The Code of Canon Law, 368j; *Bold and underlining mine, for emphasis*).

[Reference to the Protestants and Evangelicals] On the other hand, the ecclesial communities which have not preserved the valid Episcopate and the genuine and integral substance of the Eucharistic mystery, **are not Churches in the proper sense**; however, those who are baptized in these communities are, by Baptism, incorporated in Christ and thus are in a certain communion, albeit imperfect, with the Church. Baptism in fact tends per se toward the full development of life in Christ, through the integral profession of faith, the Eucharist, and full communion in the Church (*\*Bold mine, for emphasis*).

[The Document's Self-Evaluation] "**The Christian faithful are therefore not permitted to imagine that the Church of Christ is nothing more than a collection – divided, yet in some way one – of Churches and ecclesial communities; nor are they free to hold that today the Church of Christ nowhere really exists, and must be considered only as a goal which all Churches and ecclesial communities must strive to reach**". **In fact, "the elements of this already-given Church exist, joined together in their fullness in the Catholic Church and, without this fullness, in the other communities". "Therefore, these separated Churches and communities as such, though we believe they suffer from defects, have by no means been deprived of significance and importance in the mystery of salvation. For the spirit of Christ has not refrained from using them as means of salvation which derive their efficacy from the very fullness of grace and truth entrusted to the Catholic Church" (\*Underlining and bold mine, for emphasis).**

The lack of unity among Christians is certainly a wound for the Church; not in the sense that she is deprived of her unity, but "in that it hinders the complete fulfillment of her universality in history".

**Congregation For The Doctrine Of Faith: Note On The Expression "Sister Churches"**

*Does the One Catholic Church of Christ exist? Is this One Church a 'sister' to any other Church? How can one properly employ the use of the term, "sister churches"? To which 'churches' can the use of the term 'sister churches' ONLY be correctly applied?*

II. Directives on the use of the expression

9. The historical references presented in the preceding paragraphs illustrate the significance which the expression sister Churches have assumed in the ecumenical dialogue. This makes the correct theological use of the term even more important.

10. In fact, in the proper sense, **sister Churches are exclusively particular Churches** (or groupings of particular Churches; for example, the Patriarchates or Metropolitan provinces) among themselves. It must always be clear, when the expression sister Churches is used in this proper sense, that **the one, holy, Catholic and apostolic Universal Church is not sister but mother of all the particular Churches**.

11. One may also speak of *sister Churches*, in a proper sense, in reference to particular Catholic and non-Catholic Churches [**\*\*here is a reference to only non-Catholic Orthodox Churches**]; thus the particular Church of Rome can also be called the *sister* of all other particular Churches [**\*\*That is, the Diocese of Orlando is a sister to the Diocese of Rome; Archdiocese of Miami is a sister to the Diocese of Orlando; Diocese of Orlando is a sister to a Particular Orthodox Church independent jurisdiction**]. However, as recalled above, one cannot properly say that the Catholic Church is the sister of a particular Church or group of Churches. This is not merely a question of terminology, but above all of respecting a basic truth of the Catholic faith: that of the unicity of the Church of Jesus Christ. In fact, there is but a single Church, and therefore the plural term *Churches* can refer only to particular churches.

Consequently, one should avoid, as a source of misunderstanding and theological confusion, the use of formulations such as "*our two Churches*," which, if applied to the Catholic Church and the totality of Orthodox Churches (or a single Orthodox Church), imply a plurality not merely on the level of particular Churches, but also on the level of the one, holy, Catholic and apostolic Church confessed in the Creed, whose real existence is thus obscured.

12. Finally, it must also be borne in mind that the expression *sister Churches* in the proper sense as attested by the common tradition of East and West, may only be used for those ecclesial communities that have preserved a valid Episcopate and Eucharist.

**Summary Of The Official Teachings Of The Church**

In sum, the teaching of the Council and the Post-Conciliar documents are as follows:

- 1) Christ the Lord founded one Church and one Church only (Vatican II, Decree on Ecumenism, *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 1).
- 2) The Church of Christ "subsists in the Catholic Church", and the "many elements of sanctification and of truth" found outside her visible structure are gifts properly belonging to the Church of Christ, and **therefore call all to oneness, to unity** (Vatican II, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium* 8).
- 3) Catholics belong to the Church of Christ through "Full Communion"; that Protestants belong to the Church of Christ through "Imperfect or Partial Communion" (of varying degrees): "For men who believe in Christ and have been truly baptized are in communion with the Catholic Church even though this communion is imperfect" (Vatican II, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium* 15). But God wants all Christians to be **"peacefully united, in the manner determined by Christ, as one flock under one shepherd, and He prompts them to pursue this end"** (Vatican II, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium* 15). [God calls all to Full Communion with His Church].
- 4) The other Religions are "Related to the Church" (in varying degrees).
- 5) The division of the Church at any time in the history of the Church is a SIN of which "men of both side are to blame" [Actually a reference to the problem of the 16th Century divisions]. However, "The children who are born into these Communities and who grow up believing in Christ cannot be accused of the sin involved in the separation," but they are to seek full communion all the same (Vatican II, Decree on Ecumenism, *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 3).
- 6) Finally, on the issue of salvation, Vatican II conditioned it on the fact of INCULPABLE IGNORANCE; namely, that Christ "affirmed the necessity of faith and baptism and thereby affirmed also the necessity of the Church ... **Whosoever, therefore, knowing** that the Catholic Church was made necessary by Christ, would refuse to enter or to remain in it, could not be saved (Vatican II, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium* 14). "Those also can attain to salvation **who through no fault of their own do not know the Gospel of Christ or His Church**, yet sincerely seek God and moved by grace strive by their deeds to do His will as it is known to them through the dictates of conscience. Nor does Divine Providence deny the helps necessary for salvation to those who, **without blame on their part, have not yet arrived at an explicit knowledge of God** and with His grace strive to live a good life (Vatican II, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium* 16).



**Section Five: Recognizing Opportunities**

**SESSION 5: Recognizing Evangelizing Opportunities:**

There are many evangelizing opportunities. A Catholic friend or colleague at work may invite you to come and help prepare for his or her wedding. It could be a condolence visit or a funeral invitation. It could be an invitation for child dedication or baptism celebration and you have lunch or dinner later with them; here, faith discussions at the table could come up. A small faith group which meets from time to time could be the occasion. It could be your neighbors sharing the same apartment complex and you always hang out together. It could be your sports companion: golf, tennis, soccer, football, etc. It could be your children, grandchildren, visiting relatives; your children's friends, etc. Please, always look for an opportunity to discuss faith issues. Let not only secular things dominate our life and worldview.

**The Usual Presumption in encountering a Catholic Christian:**

In reaching out to a Catholic to share the Word of God, once the person says, "I'm a Catholic", there may be the erroneous impression that all is well. It is not always the case. We need, prudently, to find out the person's level of commitment, understanding and practice of the faith. Is this person in the category of those who go through the Church but do not allow the Church to go through them? Is the person a superficial Catholic Christian who only goes to Church at Christmas and/or Easter?

**Proposed methodology:** If the person is not your usual acquaintance, attempt an "ice-breaker", namely getting to introduce yourself, your Catholic parish, some aspects of your Catholic history and background and perhaps get into general life issues of the day (without entering into politically controversial issues). Keep it to the beneficiary's comfortable level. Discernment is very important: through facial language (formtable), voice tone, emotional disposition etc. Prudently introduce faith discussion by relating whatever subject you are discussing to faith. That is, with sensitivity and "apologies" [e.g. saying "Please, hope you do not mind, can we discuss...? Or, Can we continue with ...?"]], move the discussion into faith discussion and try to keep it there. You could say, "Please, if you don't mind, may I ask which parish you belong to?" Ask, "The Pastor is, any associates priests, how many families, what spiritual and social groups are there, how the parish is doing?"



When this outreach is taking place in the home of the "addressee", you may scan the environment; i.e. look around the house and observe any Catholic symbols or icons of faith and which could be used to open up a faith based discussion: "Whooh! I see you have many signs of your Catholic faith all over the house. I really love them. Is there any special history about any of them? When not in a home, it could be a crucifix or rosary the person is wearing on the neck or carrying with him/her you could use to open up a discussion: "Where did you buy this crucifix?" (It could be a medal, scapular, holy picture, etc).

There is the tendency for the addressee to take over the discussion in a home, treat you as the visitor you actually are, begin to show you family pictures and tell you stories of the spouse, children, grandchildren, etc. Go along with the flow but tactfully "exploit" any faith symbol you could see to bring the discussion to what it should be focused on: "Ah, what is that your grandson is wearing? Is it a miraculous medal? I see your family is really faith oriented; your children made their First Holy Communion, etc. What a great Catholic Christian family tradition!" [Always remain prudent and look for an opportunity to focus on the real faith issues]. So, appreciate the items and give compliments to the person for witnessing in that way to his/her faith. Then, immediately share a faith message and possibly cite Biblical passages or a document of the Church about it. The person may take an interest in the Scripture or in the documents of the Church. Then, you are progressing and succeeding. Simply, let the Spirit guide you! (cf. Acts 8:26-35).

You should not get too personal by asking the person, "How often do you attend Mass?" The person will open up on his/her own if the person feels comfortable enough. Prudently and subtly assess the person's level of Catholic faith comprehension. This time, you need to be careful. You may ask, "What do you think about our Catholic faith? Supposing someone







comes to you and asks, "Are you born again? Why do you have a crucifix? Why do you go to confession...?" What would you do? How would you respond? Here, be ready for a spectrum of answers, ranging from, "I've no time for such discussions"; "I've no time such people"; "I won't allow anyone to discredit my Catholic faith"; "I normally not discuss faith issues with anyone"; "I'm a very private person"; "I'll drive them away"; "I'll welcome them and explain to them the issues they want to know and if I'm not prepared for whatever they want to know, I'll give them another appointment, do my research or find out from someone who should know (my Priest, a friend who knows the faith more, etc)."



Section Six: Official Promotion

SESSION 6: Official Promotion of Evangelization

Vatican II gave us new perspectives to evangelization in its Decree on Missionary Activity, *Ad Gentes Divinitus*. But I want to cite its Pastoral Constitution on the Church (*Gaudium et Spes*), it challenged us to seek out new and more efficient ways of bringing the Gospel to modern man:

... theologians are now being asked, within the methods and limits of the science of theology, to seek out more efficient ways – provided the meaning and understanding of them is safeguarded – of presenting their teaching to modern man: for the deposit and the truths of faith are one thing the manner of expressing them is quite another.. (cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, 62).



Statue of Pope Paul VI in Milano, Italy

Following Vatican II, Pope Paul VI in his Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (1975) gave us a systematic teaching on Evangelization. Though he simply used the term "Evangelization," he wrote concerning "A New Era of Evangelization":

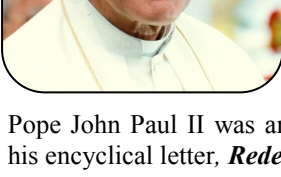
We wish to do so one year after the Third General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, which as is well known, was devoted to evangelization.... In fact...the Fathers decided to remit to the Pastor of the universal Church, with great trust and simplicity, the fruits of all their labors, stating that they awaited from him a fresh forward impulse, capable of creating within a Church still more firmly rooted in the undying power and strength of Pentecost a **new period of evangelization** (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 2; highlighted for emphasis).

Evangelization will never be possible without the action of the Holy Spirit.... In fact, it is only after the coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost that the apostles depart to all the ends of the earth in order to begin the great work of the Church's evangelization....

Techniques of evangelization are good, but even the most advanced ones could not replace the gentle action of the Spirit. The most perfect preparation of the evangelizer has no effect without the Holy Spirit. Without the Holy Spirit, the most convincing dialectic has no power over the heart of man. Without Him, the most highly developed schemas resting on a sociological or psychological basis are quickly seen to be quite valueless.

We live in the Church at a privileged moment of the Spirit. Everywhere people are trying to know Him better, as the Scripture reveals Him. They are happy to place themselves under His inspiration. They are gathering about Him; they want to let themselves be led by Him. Now if the Spirit of God has a preeminent place in the whole life of the Church, it is in her evangelizing mission that He is most active. It is not by chance that the great inauguration of evangelization took place on the morning of Pentecost, under the inspiration of the Spirit.

It must be said that the Holy Spirit is the principal agent of evangelization (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 75).



Blessed Pope John Paul II

Pope John Paul II was an ardent promoter of the New Evangelization. In his encyclical letter, *Redemptoris Missio*, he declared,

The commitment of the laity to the work of evangelization is changing ecclesial life, while particular churches are more willing to meet with the members of other Christian churches and other religions, and to enter into dialogue and cooperation with them. Above all, there is a new awareness that *missionary activity is a matter for all Christians*, for all dioceses and parishes, Church institutions and associations.

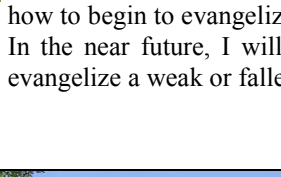
Nevertheless, in this "**new springtime**" of Christianity, there is an undeniable negative tendency, and the present document is meant to help overcome it. Missionary activity specifically directed "to the nations" (*ad gentes*) appears to be waning, and this tendency is certainly not in line with the directives of the Council and of subsequent statements of the Magisterium. Difficulties both internal and external have weakened the Church's missionary thrust toward non-Christians, a fact which must arouse concern among all who believe in Christ....

Twenty-five years after the conclusion of the Council and the publication of the Decree on Missionary Activity *Ad Gentes*, fifteen years after the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* issued by Pope Paul VI, and in continuity with the magisterial teaching of my predecessors, I wish to invite the Church to *renew her missionary commitment*. The present document has as its goal an interior renewal of faith and Christian life. 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!* It is in commitment to the Church's universal mission that the **new evangelization of Christian peoples** will find inspiration and support (*Redemptoris Missio*, 2; highlighted for emphasis).

God is opening before the Church the horizons of a humanity more fully prepared for the sowing of the Gospel. I sense that the moment has come to commit all of the Church's energies to a **new evangelization and to the mission ad gentes**. No believer in Christ, no institution of the Church can avoid this supreme duty: to proclaim Christ to all peoples (*Redemptoris Missio*, 3; underlying for emphasis).

The number of those awaiting Christ is still immense: the human and cultural groups not yet reached by the Gospel, or for whom the Church is scarcely present, are so widespread as to require the uniting of all the Church's resources. As she prepares to celebrate the jubilee of the year 2000, the whole Church is even more committed to a **new missionary advent**. We must increase our apostolic zeal to pass on to others the light and joy of the faith, and to this high ideal the whole People of God must be educated (*Redemptoris Missio*, 86).

Today, as never before, the Church has the opportunity of bringing the Gospel, by witness and word, to all people and nations. I see the dawning of a **new missionary age**, which will become a radiant day bearing an abundant harvest, if all Christians, and missionaries and young churches in particular, respond with generosity and holiness to the calls and challenges of our time (*Redemptoris Missio*, 86).



Conclusion

I hope the above gives you a general view of what you need to know and how to begin to evangelize Catholic Christians. We shall stop here for now. In the near future, I will provide some specific case scenarios of how to evangelize a weak or fallen Catholic Christian.



St John the Baptist Catholic Church, Dunnellon, Florida