

New Pope, New Evangelization – New Way of Being Church?

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(Slide 1) First and foremost, I would like to thank the organizing committee for the opportunity to come here to Australian Catholic University and offer this presentation to you. I especially thank Fr. Eugene San, Professor Gabrielle McMullen, Pat Heyward, and Mark Brolly for all their work to make this evening possible. Special thanks also to Naomi Wolfe and Dr. John Ballard for their warm welcome. I consider it a great honor to offer these thoughts as a small part of the on-going memorial to my Pallottine confrere, Fr. Walter Silvester, S.A.C. (click)

Your mobile phone rings or vibrates. You look at the number, but don't recognize it. It is a strange country code, 379. You answer and the person says he is Pope Francis. (click) He wants you to work together with him to bring about a new way of being Church.

A pope calling on a mobile, must be a hoax, pure fiction... or pure Francis.

The direct calls to people from a young adult who was having various academic challenges to a single soon to be mother, from a parish priest to discuss some of the difficulties of his pastoral work to a man who was trying to forgive the murderer of his brother. Why would it be so far-fetched to think that he might not call one of us or a few and ask us to work together with him.

These calls and so many other things – his now famous interviews, his daily homilies with many pithy quotes, his joyful wading into crowds, his consultation with a council of Cardinals and who knows who else around the world to examine the functioning of not only the Roman Curia, otherwise known as the Vatican, but also about our functioning as Church – these all give us an indication of his way of evangelizing... (click pause click)

- Simple and Direct (click)
- Pro-active and Outward-focused (click)
- Pastoral and Collaborative (click)
- Merciful and Joyful (click)
- Faith-filled and Witnessing (click)

In short, his words and actions witness Jesus Christ. Many people seem to see it, hear it, and recognize it as faith in action. As Pope Francis says in his first encyclical, *Lumen Fidei*, (click)

“Faith in Christ brings salvation because in him our lives become radically open to a love that precedes us, a love that transforms us from within, acting in us and through us” (n. 20)

(click) And “it is the love of Christ that fills our hearts and impels us to evangelize” as Pope Benedict said in *Porta Fidei*, the document that inaugurated this Year of Faith that we as Church are now experiencing.

Wait, STOP, I just invoked the name of the Pope Emeritus... That's not part of the current, secular narrative. He is past and his tenure was full of darkness and that of Francis is full of light. This presentation is supposed to be about Pope Francis! Well, it is and it is not. And I reject that simplistic narrative just as Pope Francis seems to have done. One example is that his first encyclical is as he says, “written with four hands,” his and Benedict's. Francis also appreciates Benedict's presence and

wisdom. (click) Aside from that, Francis seems to be actualizing very concretely what has been discussed for the last forty years about evangelization right through last October's Synod on the New Evangelization.

Let's take a moment to clarify terms. First, (click) evangelization. Pope Paul VI (click) in *Evangelii Nuntiandi* in 1975 said (click) that "For the Church, evangelizing means bringing the Good News to all the strata of humanity, and through its influence transforming humanity from within and making it new..."

The term, (click) "New Evangelization," comes from the teaching of Bl. John Paul II and goes back to 1979 when he used it for the first time in Poland, but gave it some explanation in 1983 in an address to the Bishops of Latin America, when he said that it was (click) "new" in (click) "ardor, methods, and expressions." Pope Benedict used the term "New Evangelization" often in his papacy and in 2010 spoke of it as "reposing the perennial truth of Christ's Gospel." (click) One way of describing the work of the New Evangelization is that the (click) "baptized are invited to renew their own faith, evangelize *others* and evangelize *culture*." (Meme)

But, how do we do that? (click) Last October's Synod on the "New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith" in one of its 58 propositions that arose from its almost month long deliberations puts forward this mandate:

The New Evangelization requires personal and communal conversion, new methods of evangelization and renewal of pastoral structures, to be able to move from a pastoral strategy of *maintenance* to a pastoral position that is truly *missionary*. The New Evangelization guides us to an authentic pastoral conversion which moves us to attitudes and initiatives which leads to evaluations and changes in the dynamics of pastoral structures which no longer respond to the evangelical demands of the current time (XIII Ordinary Synod of Bishops, Proposition 22).

Or as Pope Francis said in Assisi earlier this month: (click) "Do not allow yourselves to be impeded by prejudice, by habit, by an intellectual or pastoral rigidity, the famous 'We've always done it this way.'"

----- maintenance to mission, new methods (technological and pastoral)

The leadership of the Church then is proposing a new way of being Church. Let's go back those telephone calls and (click)

Simple and Direct

"The proposal of the Gospel must be more simple, profound, radiant" (*Civiltà Cattolica* interview, 29 September 2013)

Words and deeds - the actions of faith and charity, justice and peace – seem very distant – Is what we say matching what we do? Sometime it hasn't and hasn't very badly. Can we pull it together and living in integrity that our words match our deeds. Certainly, Pope Francis actions have struck people. (click)

Pro-active and Outward Focused (click)

“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!” – Pope Francis (General Audience, 16 October 2013)

We are disciples *and* apostles or “missionary disciples” as Pope Francis says. This phrase, “missionary disciples, by the way, comes from the 2007 Latin American bishops plan for evangelization commonly known as the “Aparecida Document,” which as Cardinal Bergoglio he guided the development of. To be a follower of Jesus Christ, a disciple, is not enough for one who is baptized. We are also sent, on mission, as apostles, as St. Vincent Pallotti said. We are always followers, but we are also sent by Jesus Christ into the world to bring the Good News and also to bring healing. To bring the wounded back to the “battlefield hospital” as Francis recently called the Church, a place of healing. (click)

Pastoral and Collaborative (click)

“One Spirit, one Baptism, in a variety of charisms and ministries. What a great gift it is to be the Church, to be a part of the People of God! Together we are the People of God. In harmony, in the communion of gift of harmony in diversity which is the work of the Holy Spirit, because the Holy Spirit is harmony and creates harmony: it is his gift, and we should be open to receive it” (Meeting with Clergy, Consecrated People, and Members of Diocesan Pastoral Councils, 4 October 2013)

We as Church have a great diversity of ministries and apostolates. Everyone has something that she or he can contribute. We cannot continue with the “status quo” and “business as usual.” The way forward is moving beyond polarization, seeing the needs that are present and responding to them. No one person will have all that is necessary to make this response. It must be done in a way that is co-responsible and responds to the needs of people. It also means going outside of our comfortable little church compounds, out into where people are, not waiting for them to come. In very secular cultures the baptized would prefer to stay in the compounds, but those may become our tombs. (click)

Merciful and Joyful (click)

“The joy of God is the joy of forgiveness. It is the joy of the shepherd who finds his lost sheep; the joy of the woman who finds her lost coin; the joy of the father who welcomes home his lost son. This is all the Gospel, here; this is Christianity! But this is not sentimentalism or bland 'do-goodism'; on the contrary, mercy is the true force that can save man and the world from the 'cancer' of sin, from moral and spiritual malaise. Only love can fill the gaps, the negative abysses that evil opens up in our hearts and in history. Only love can do this, and this is the joy of God” (Angelus, 15 September 2013)

Too often Christians and particularly Catholics are presented as dour and judgmental, unless we are at a fete. Mercy is a continual theme of Pope Francis. The merciful approach starts with where people are, is an outward movement toward those who are lost, struggling, suffering, and offers them an experience of the love of God that transforms hearts and minds. The joyful Christian is not a naïve or simplistic, but trusts in Jesus Christ and the experience of Christ in the community of faith called the Church. (click)

Faith-filled and Witnessing (click)

“We accompany, we follow Jesus, but above all we know that he accompanies us and carries us on his shoulders. This is our joy, this is the hope that we must bring to this world of ours. Let us bring the joy of faith to everyone” (Palm Sunday Homily, 2013).

Pastoral leaders and all the baptized must witness Christ in their personal lives and in their way of being Church. The Church can preach, teach, and even serve, but witness is deeper and permeates all of the life choices of one who believes in Jesus Christ. A life of witness lived well by the baptized and the Church evangelizes.

Simple and direct, pro-active and outward focused, pastoral and collaborative, merciful and joyful, faith-filled and witnessing – these are some of the elements of a new way of being Church in the time of a new pope who challenges all the baptized to live more deeply and witness well faith in Christ. The other day, he put it much better than I just did. Imagine him saying this to you when he calls you on your mobile and asks you to work together with him to change “business as usual”... (click)

“People do not take it seriously! Lukewarm Christians: ‘But, yes, yes, but, no, no’. Neither here nor there - as our mothers said, ‘rosewater Christians’ - no! A little touch here and there, of Christian paint, a little ‘paint catechesis’ - but inside there is no true conversion, there is no such conviction as that of St. Paul: ‘Everything I gave up and I consider garbage, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him’” (Daily Homily, 24 October 2013).

How would you respond? (click)