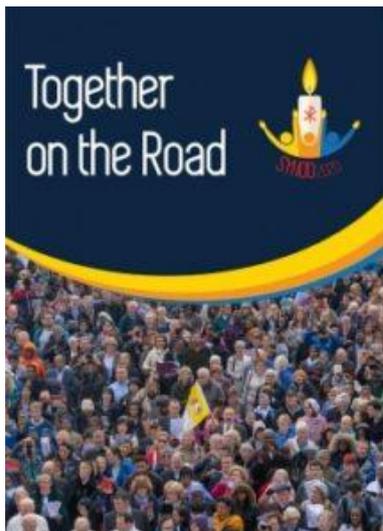


## REFLECTING ON THE SYNOD RECOMMENDATIONS (1)



### What is evangelisation?

We use the word but we often don't know what it means. We may think it means making everyone a Catholic. Or maybe we think of those people who go about knocking on doors and offering unsolicited advice about eternal salvation. Or maybe we think it means quoting Scripture at people as though pelting them with holy words will save them!

To evangelise is simply "to invite and welcome people in Jesus' name." It is to invite people to be part of the family of God. We believe that within each of us is an inborn hunger for God, for the one who made us (Catechism #27). When we invite someone to God's family, we're inviting them to "come home to their own heart." The chief task of all who minister in the Church—ordained priests, deacons, religious, and lay ministers—is to invite people in this way and to welcome them into the Church.

Evangelisation is, therefore, both a scriptural and an ecclesial mandate. In Matthew's Gospel, for example, Jesus instructs us to "Go and make disciples of all nations" (Mt 28). Likewise, Church documents call us with one voice to embrace this work throughout the world. This Synod loudly echoes this call! Pope Francis reminds us, for example, in *The Joy of the Gospel* that "In our day Jesus' command to go and make disciples echoes in the changing scenarios and ever new challenges to the Church's mission."

God calls each of us to take part in this new missionary going forth. "Each Christian and every community," he goes on to say, "must discern the path that the Lord points out, but all of us are asked to obey his call to go forth from our comfort zone" to do this critical work.

The Synod now calls us to embrace such evangelisation and each parish must do this discernment: how and to whom are you being called?

We must remember in this that knowing Jesus is not merely about being a "member" of the Church. Much more is expected of us if we are to follow Jesus together on the road of life. Jesus invites us to offer forgiveness, for example. When we suggest to a friend that he forgive his ageing father who has never shown him much love, we're inviting that friend to the way of Jesus who forgave even his killers on the cross. When we invite someone to support the poor, we're inviting them to the way of Jesus who taught "Blessed are the poor..." When we invite a friend to love one's enemies, to make peace, to hold no grudges, to withhold judgement, or to die to him or herself with self-giving love, we're evangelising them. And yes, when we invite people to join us in worship and in the work of Jesus as done in our parishes, we invite them to a lifetime of faith.

We cannot presuppose faith in members of the Church. Baptism itself is no guarantee that people have come to encounter Christ and adhere to him and the Church with their whole hearts. It does not guarantee deep communion with Christ. Therefore, our goal in evangelisation is not to target others but instead, it's to look first into our hearts, and be converted ourselves, and then to live so convincingly that others see Christ in us. And for our friends and neighbours who've stepped away from the Church for now, we want to nudge them toward the way of Jesus gently whether or not they profess his name or believe in him.

Recent Church teaching profoundly echoes this. *The Joy of the Gospel* gives us a wonderful invitation in article #3: "I invite all Christians, everywhere, at this very moment, to a renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ, or at least an openness to letting him encounter them; I ask all of you to do this unflinchingly each day. No one should think that this invitation is not meant for him or her, since 'no one is excluded from the joy brought by the Lord.' The Lord does not disappoint those who take this risk; whenever we take a step towards Jesus, we come to realise that he is already there, waiting for us with open arms."

### Synod Recommendation #1 Evangelisation

We, the people of the Archdiocese, recommend that the pastoral plan heed the call of the Church to be courageous in guiding all Catholics to deepen their relationship with Jesus, and to engage in our mission to help make Jesus known and loved in our world.

# REFLECTING ON THE SYNOD RECOMMENDATIONS (2)

## Lay Ministry

In the first centuries of the Church, every baptised person was a minister and had a role in the Church. Church communities relied on the gifts of everyone; clergy and laity acted together to do the work of Jesus. What emerged in the 4th century, however, was the sacramental priesthood, and almost all pastoral ministry became connected to "receiving" the sacraments. By this time, almost all pastoral ministry in the Church was enacted by the ordained. Many lay Christians were nominal members of the Church. What had been an early bond of shared ministry shifted to a system in which the sacraments were simply "administered" by the clergy. Now, rather than participating in the liturgy lay people became mere spectators.

To this day, sadly, when lay people speak of the Church or of what the Church teaches, they often mean the hierarchy. Lay people generally do not see themselves as the people of God. They may not see any role for themselves in the ministry of the Church, outside of "helping Father" as though only Father has a real vocation and lay people must share in that rather than experiencing a calling of their own.

## Women and Men Religious

When we speak of "the baptised" we also include the large number of people who serve the Church as members of religious communities. The *Constitution on the Church* at Vatican II reminds us that these women and men hold a place of honour among us as we see in this paraphrase of article 43: **"All [members of religious communities] seek to embody the ideals of their founders and the Spirit of Jesus. The religious state of life is not an intermediate state between ordination and lay life. Instead, it holds a place of its own in the Church and includes members of both clergy and laity."**

These dedicated men and women serve alongside lay people, but they have always been out front working for justice and peace, serving the poor, sick, and vulnerable, and providing Catholic education for us all. When we describe the various roles of the laity, we include women and men religious who are not ordained.

## Vatican II: a New Dawn in Lay Ministry

A well-defined theology of the laity for both women and men emerged quickly after the Second Vatican Council. Vatican II restored an understanding of the baptised which was common in the early Church. In 1 Peter 2: 9, for example, the author wrote, **"But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, so that**

**you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light."**

The author here isn't speaking about ordained priests and deacons but about all the baptised people of the early Church. Indeed, the *Constitution on the Church* lays this out plainly in article 33. **"The lay apostolate, however, is a participation in the salvific mission of the Church itself. Through their baptism and confirmation, all are commissioned to that apostolate" by the Lord Himself.** In other words, lay people have their role of helping to do the work of the Church as a summons from God, not from their parish priests.

## One Priesthood in Christ

We do not confuse the ordained with the common priesthood. There is but one priesthood in Christ, but each expression of it plays a vital role in the work of Christ today. The *Constitution on the Church* defines and makes it clear as we see in this paraphrase of Article 10: **"The baptised members of the Church, because the Holy Spirit consecrates them, share in the priesthood of Jesus Christ."**

In the broadest sense, a priest is anyone who makes the world and its people holy by sacrificing and praying on its behalf. Article 10 goes on to say, **"In this sense, every single baptised person is a priest. As priests, therefore, all the faithful are called to offer themselves to God and to provide the hope of God to one another. They should, therefore, be faithful in prayer and live as part of the household of God."** Can you see the connection between your call to be a part of the common or ministerial priesthood and the work of evangelisation?

The *Constitution on the Church* calls on all in the ministerial and common priesthoods to work together. They share responsibility for the work of pastoral ministry. Today we understand that the ministerial priesthood works in a fully integrated fashion with the common priesthood of the baptised. This co-responsibility has not caused any confusion in the Church. Leaders and parishioners have not blurred or merged their roles within the Church's ministry. Quite the opposite is occurring where the ministry of both ordained and baptised lay people are gratefully acknowledged and received in the parish.

## Synod Recommendation #2

### Lay Ministry

We, the people of the Archdiocese, recommend that the pastoral plan must include honouring the many vocations of all the baptised, women and men alike. This will also include a strong commitment to lay ministry including training employed ministers, supporting volunteer ministers, and coordinating their work alongside the clergy.