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NEW EVANGELIZATION TODAY

Exploring Key Themes and Asian Links

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In Catholic conversation, the term "new evangelization" appears frequently these days. Pope Benedict XVI, in his message for World Mission Day in October 2011, notes that the Church has the urgent duty to proclaim the Gospel in "new situations" that "require a new evangelization." The pope continues: "This task has not lost its urgency. On the contrary, 'the mission of Christ the Redeemer, entrusted to the Church, is still far from being accomplished …. We must commit ourselves with all our energies in its service (RM 1)'." The pope states clearly the scope of the mission of evangelization: "The universal mission involves all, everywhere, and always."

In an apostolic letter dated October 12, 2010, Benedict XVI established a special Vatican agency for the promotion of "new evangelization." This pontifical council has the task of combating the "de-Christianization" of countries that were first evangelized centuries ago. The pope warns of a progressive detachment from religious faith in a wide variety of countries. The new council is to aim at encouraging a clearer understanding of the faith and helping to "remake the Christian fabric" of human society.

The pope identifies a variety of factors in the weakening of religious faith: advances in science and technology, the widening of individual

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freedom and lifestyle choices, profound economic changes, the mixing of cultures and ethnic groups brought about by migration, and the growing interdependence among peoples. Such changes have brought benefits for many people, but they have often been accompanied by "a troubling loss of the sense of the sacred." Undoubtedly, a "new evangelization" is urgently needed, and Benedict XVI also determined that the topic for the XIII Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops (2012) was to focus on the challenges of the "new evangelization."

This succinct mission catechesis aims at exploring some of the defining traits that characterize the "new evangelization." The topic is extremely broad and rather complex. Thus, this presentation seeks only to describe and present the topic; other discussions are needed to fully analyze the situation and to propose concrete pastoral and mission approaches. To facilitate a clear presentation, this author draws on the writings of several experts (references are found in the bibliography). After a discussion of evangelization in general, ten characteristics of the "new evangelization" will be identified; for each trait the author will show its linkages to three pivotal anchors: a) the Second Vatican Council, b) recent popes, and c) the Church in Asia.

Readers will certainly note that the ten defining traits that characterize the new evangelization (selected by this writer) are very similar to important themes discussed during the Second Vatican Council; this is more than a simple coincidence. In fact, this writer finds himself in *full agreement* with a statement by Benedict XVI (September 20, 2012): "We can say that the new evangelization started precisely with the Council, which Blessed John XXIII saw as a new Pentecost …." Indeed, a lengthy discussion on the interconnections would prove most enlightening; yet, for the purposes of this piece, this presentation is admittedly no more than the briefest of introductions to the broad and multifaceted topic of "new evangelization."

Exploring Evangelization. The term evangelization is a generally unfamiliar and relatively new concept for many Catholics; only recently has it been gaining wider appreciation. Due to the influence of the Second Vatican Council as well as recent popes, evangelization is now located at the center of the Church's identity and mission—at least theoretically

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and theologically. These sources have contributed to an understanding of evangelization in all its rich, complex, multifaceted, and interrelated dimensions. Today, evangelization is necessarily viewed holistically and integrally.

The word "evangelization" is not found in the New Testament; however, *euaggelion* meaning "gospel" or "good news" occurs 72 times, 54 of which are in the Pauline corpus. It has a wide range of meanings: the whole Christian message (Mk. 1:1); the good news of Jesus (II Cor. 4:4); it is for all (Mk. 13:10; 16:15); it is a revelation of God (Gal. 1:11–12) which is to be believed (Mk. 1:15) and proclaimed (I Cor. 9:14, 16, 18). One must risk all for the Gospel (Mk. 8:35; Rom. 1:16), serve it (Rom. 1:1; 15:16), and defend it (Phil. 1:7, 16). *Euaggelion* is the good news of truth (Gal. 2:5, 14), of hope (Col. 1:23), of peace (Eph. 6:15), of immortality (II Tim. 1:10), of the risen Christ (I Cor. 15:1ff; II Tim. 2:8), and of salvation (Eph. 1:13). Pope Francis cites more than a dozen New Testament passages that speak of joy and the Good News (*Evangelii Gaudium* 5).

Vatican II speaks of mission and evangelization in a variety of contexts: it is especially the bishops' task to promote evangelization by the faithful (CD 6); it is associated with the mission of the laity (AA 2, 6, 20, 26; LG 35); priests are to learn the methods of evangelization (PO 19); the Eucharist is the source and summit of all evangelization (PO 5). The Decree on Missions (AG) is replete with references: "the specific purpose of missionary activity is evangelization and the planting of the Church" (6); "the Church has the obligation and the sacred right to evangelize" (7); catechists have an important task to evangelize (17), as do the laity (21); the call to evangelize arises from a charism of the Spirit (23); various roles are fulfilled by missionary institutes (27), Propaganda Fidei (29), the People of God (35, 36), bishops and priests (38), religious institutes (40), and young Churches (LG 17).

Pope Paul VI (1963–1978), who specifically chose the name Paul to indicate his evangelistic vision for the Church, will always be remembered as a modern missionary pope—he made missionary journeys to all continents and authored *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (EN), which became the *magna carta* for Catholic evangelization in the last quarter of the second millennium of Christianity. Without a doubt, EN is one of the most

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important ecclesial documents of the post-Vatican II era. It presents a concise, inspiring, and programmatic challenge for the Church to enthusiastically engage in her God-given mission to preach the Gospel to the contemporary world—to living peoples, with their aspirations and anxieties, their cultures and religions, their hopes and conflicts. Although Paul VI did not use the term "new evangelization," his writings, especially *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, boldly address the topic of evangelization in the modern world.

Karol Jósef Wojtyla was elected pope on October 16, 1978 and took the name John Paul, clearly identifying himself with the two popes of Vatican II. Under his leadership, the papal ministry became focused on evangelization and global mission: he traveled to numerous countries, strengthened local Christian communities, encountered followers of other religions, spoke on the social teachings of the Church, canonized saints and honored blesseds, and met with youth and government leaders. Saint John Paul II asserted that the Second Vatican Council set the direction for his papacy. His eighth encyclical, *Redemptoris Missio* (RM), was issued on December 7, 1990; it celebrates the twenty-fifth anniversary of Vatican II's Mission Decree *Ad Gentes* and the fifteenth anniversary of Paul VI's *Evangelii Nuntiandi*. In RM, the pope sounds a clarion call to all Church sectors to renew their enthusiasm and commitment to evangelize the world.

John Paul II first mentioned the term "new evangelization" in a speech he gave at Port-au-Prince, Haiti, on March 9, 1983. He declared that the fifth centenary of the beginnings of evangelization of the Americas (1492–1992) should be marked by the beginning of a new era of evangelization, an era which is "new in ardor, methods, and expression." Although the term "new evangelization" was originally used in 1968 by the Latin American bishops meeting at Medellín in their "Message to the Peoples of Latin America," it was John Paul II who gave further clarity and precision to the term through his many speeches, encyclicals, and other documents. Indeed, Saint John Paul II (1978–2005) was enormously effective in promoting evangelization through a wide variety of approaches.

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In light of this background from scripture, Vatican II, Paul VI, and John Paul II, this presentation, relying on various authors and sources (especially A. Dulles), now turns to a succinct discussion of ***ten defining traits*** that characterize the new evangelization.

1. Centrality of Christ. The Second Vatican Council sought to link its teachings into the tradition of the Church through *ressourcement* (a return to foundational sources). It employed biblical language and had a clear focus on Christ and the Church. The Council recognized a clear "hierarchy of truths" that placed Christ the Son of God at its highest level (UR 11).

Paul VI spoke clearly of the centrality of Christ: "There can be 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" (EN 22). For John Paul II, the proclamation of the mystery of Christ "lies at the heart of the Church's mission and life, as the hinge on which all evangelization turns" (RM 44).

Pope Francis emphasizes Christ's centrality in *Evangelii Gaudium:* "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 unfailingly each day" (EG 3). "The primary reason for evangelizing is the love of Jesus which we have received" (EG 264). "Mission is at once a passion for Jesus and a passion for his people" (EG 268).

The Church in Asia declares: "To bear witness to Jesus Christ is the supreme service which the Church can offer to the peoples of Asia, for it responds to their profound longing for the Absolute, and it unveils the truths and values which will ensure their integral human development" (*Ecclesia in Asia* 20). The Church in Asia seeks to give credible witness to Christ: "Her one ambition is to continue his mission of service and love, so that all Asians 'may have life and have it abundantly' (Jn. 10:10)" (EA 50).

2. Ecumenism. In its document on ecumenism (*Unitatis Redintegratio*), Vatican II called upon all Christians to bear witness to their common hope (UR 12). The Council also noted that the divisions

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among Christians are a serious hindrance to the preaching of the Gospel and an authentic witness of life (UR 1).

Paul VI wrote of the importance of the search for Christian unity; he sought to emphasize "the sign of unity among Christians as the way and instrument of evangelization" (EN 77). In his encyclical *Ut Unum Sint,* John Paul II noted that it is impossible to authentically proclaim the Gospel which speaks of reconciliation if, at the same time, one is not concerned for reconciliation among Christians (UUS 98). Pope Francis reflects: "Commitment to ecumenism responds to the prayer of the Lord Jesus that 'they may all be one' (Jn. 17:21). The credibility of the Christian message would be much greater if Christians could overcome their divisions" (EG 244).

During the Asian Synod (1998), the Synod Fathers "acknowledged that 'the scandal of a divided Christianity is a great obstacle for evangelization in Asia.' In fact, the division among Christians is seen as a counter-witness to Jesus Christ by many in Asia who are searching for harmony and unity through their own religions and cultures" (EA 30). In Asia, "ecumenical dialogue and interreligious dialogue constitute a veritable vocation for the Church" (EA 29).

3. Interreligious Dialogue. The Second Vatican Council issued an entire document on the relationship of the Church with the followers of other faiths (*Nostra Aetate*).

> The Catholic Church rejects nothing which is true and holy in these religions …. The Church therefore has this exhortation for her sons and daughters: prudently and lovingly, through dialogue and collaboration with the followers of other religions, and in witness of Christian faith and life, acknowledge, preserve, and promote the spiritual and moral goods found among these people, as well as the values in their society and culture. (NA 2)

Popes Paul VI and John Paul II find no essential conflict between proclamation and authentic interfaith dialogue. Perhaps his greatest affirmation of the importance of dialogue is Pope Paul VI's first encyclical letter *Ecclesiam Suam* (1964) which is heavily devoted to dialogue as a pathway for the Church. One decade later in 1975, he reiterated the

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Church's profound respect for other religions, but noted that this respect does not imply that the Church would refrain from the proclamation of Jesus Christ (EN 53).

John Paul II devotes three full sections (55–57) of *Redemptoris Missio* to exploring relations with the followers of other religions. "Interreligious dialogue is part of the Church's evangelizing mission …. Dialogue is not in opposition to mission *ad gentes;* indeed, it has special links with that mission and is one of its expressions" (RM 55). "Each member of the faithful and all Christian communities are called to practice dialogue" (RM 57).

Pope Francis asserts:

> Evangelization and interreligious dialogue, far from being opposed, mutually support and nourish one another …. In this dialogue, ever friendly and sincere, attention must always be paid to the essential bond between dialogue and proclamation, which leads the Church to maintain and intensify her relationship with non-Christians. (EG 251)

"Interreligious dialogue is a necessary condition for peace in the world, and so it is a duty for Christians as well as other religious communities" (EG 250).

In Asia, where less than three percent of the population is Christian, the Church actively promotes interfaith dialogue. "Since the Council the Church has consistently shown that she wants to pursue that relationship in a spirit of dialogue …. The dialogue which the Church proposes is grounded in the logic of the Incarnation" (EA 29). "It is therefore important for the Church in Asia to provide suitable models of interreligious dialogue—evangelization in dialogue and dialogue for evangelization—and suitable training for those involved" (EA 31).

4. Religious Freedom. The promotion of new evangelization actually presupposes a full acceptance of the Council document on religious freedom, *Dignitatis Humanae.* The Church asserts that "free exercise of religion in society" is a value "proper to the human spirit" (DH 1). All persons are encouraged to follow their responsible judgment in conscience without external pressure.

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Paul VI is eloquent on this topic in *Evangelii Nuntiandi:*

> It would certainly be an error to impose something on the consciences of our brethren. But to propose to their consciences the truth of the Gospel and salvation in Jesus Christ, with complete clarity and with total respect for the free options which it presents—"without coercion, or dishonorable or unworthy pressure"—far from being an attack on religious liberty, is fully to respect that liberty, which is offered the choice of a way that even non-believers consider noble and uplifting. (EN 80)

Similarly, John Paul II affirms a respectful proclamation of the Gospel. "On her part, the Church addresses people with full respect for their freedom. Her mission does not restrict freedom but rather promotes it. *The Church proposes; she imposes nothing.* She respects individuals and cultures, and she honors the sanctuary of conscience" (RM 39).

Recalling the 2012 Synod on the New Evangelization, Pope Francis notes: "The Synod Fathers spoke of respect for religious freedom, viewed as a fundamental human right. This includes 'the freedom to choose the religion which one judges to be true and to manifest one's beliefs in public'" (EG 255). "We also evangelize when we attempt to confront the various challenges which can arise. On occasion these may take the form of veritable attacks on religious freedom or new persecutions directed against Christians …. This not only harms the Church but the fabric of society as a whole" (EG 61).

The Church in Asia calls upon governments

> to recognize religious freedom as a fundamental human right … [and she invokes the words of Vatican II, noting that] the human person has a right to religious freedom. Such freedom consists in this, that all should have such immunity from coercion by individuals, or by social groups, or by any human power, so that no one should be forced to act against his conscience in religious matters, nor prevented from acting according to his conscience, whether in private or in public, whether alone or in association with others, within due limits. (EA 23)

5. Evangelization—A Multifaceted Process. Vatican II noted: "The split between the faith which many profess and their daily lives deserves to be counted among the more serious errors of our age"

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(GS 43). Thus, the preaching of the Gospel needs to be tailored to various situations and groups of people. "Indeed, this accommodated preaching of the revealed Word ought to remain the law of all evangelization" (GS 44).

Paul VI constantly promoted a very comprehensive understanding of the evangelization process. He noted: "Any partial and fragmentary definition which attempts to render the reality of evangelization in all its richness, complexity and dynamism does so only at the risk of impoverishing it and even of distorting it" (EN 17). The evangelization process needs constant nuancing so that it will effectively reach people in the concrete situations of their lives. The call for a "new evangelization" reflects the dynamic and ever-changing challenges the Church's mission encounters.

In the thought of John Paul II, one can distinguish three situations of evangelization. There is the "first evangelization" among groups or socio-cultural contexts where Christ and his Gospel are not known. Next, there is the phase of pastoral care of Christians seeking to live their faith more fully. Finally, there is the situation where people have lost their sense of the faith; "in this case what is needed is a 'new evangelization' or 're-evangelization'" (RM 33). Succinctly, the pope affirms that "missionary activity *ad gentes* [is] different from the pastoral care of the faithful, and the new evangelization of the non-practicing" (RM 37).

Francis, our present pope, appreciates the need to view evangelization holistically as he speaks about "the authentic and integral meaning of the mission of evangelization" (EG 176). Evangelization, "the task of the Church" (EG 111), needs to address the entire human family "with all its tragedies and struggles, its hopes and aspirations, its strengths and weaknesses" (EG 183). Francis quotes Paul VI, noting that "evangelization would not be complete if it did not take account of the unceasing interplay of the Gospel and of man's concrete life, both personal and social"; it is directed to "all men and the whole man" (EG 181).

During the Asian Synod it was affirmed:

> The presentation of Jesus Christ as the only Savior needs to follow a *pedagogy* which will introduce people step by step to the full

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> appropriation of the mystery. Clearly, the initial evangelization of non-Christians and the continuing proclamation of Jesus to believers will have to be different in their approach. (EA 20)

The participants of the Asian Synod stressed "the need to evangelize in a way that appeals to the sensibilities of Asian peoples, and they suggested images of Jesus which would be intelligible to Asian minds and cultures and, at the same time, faithful to Sacred Scripture and Tradition" (EA 20).

6. Social Teaching. Vatican II affirmed that Catholics must always be "attentive to the common good as related to the principles of the moral and social teaching of the Church" (AA 31). Christians are called to involve themselves in temporal affairs so that "the social order and its development will unceasingly work to the benefit of the human person" (GS 26). The Church's social teaching and involvement spring from the profound realization that "God's Spirit, who with a marvelous providence directs the unfolding of time and renews the face of the earth, is present within these human developments" (GS 26).

Consistent with an integral vision of evangelization, Paul VI affirms that "the Church links human development and salvation in Jesus Christ, but she never identifies [equates] them" (EN 35).

> The Church considers it to be undoubtedly important to build up structures which are more human, more just, more respectful of the rights of the person and less oppressive and less enslaving, but she is conscious that the best structures and the most idealized systems soon become inhuman if the inhuman inclinations of the human heart are not made wholesome. (EN 36)

Thus, she continually promotes her moral and social teaching.

John Paul II consistently emphasizes Church social teaching and involvement. He notes that there are many places "where action on behalf of integral development and human liberation from all forms of oppression are most urgently needed" (RM 58). The pope affirms: "Authentic human development must be rooted in an ever deeper evangelization" (RM 58). As a force for liberation and development, the Church focuses on the human person, realizing that "*Man is the principal agent of development*" (RM 58).

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Francis seeks to address "certain social issues of great importance for the future of humanity" and to "make explicit once again the inescapable social dimensions of the Gospel message" (EG 258). Francis admits that although "the Church does not have solutions for every particular issue," she continues "to propose in a clear way the fundamental values of human life and convictions which can then find expression in political activity" (EG 241). "It is up to the Christian communities to analyze with objectivity the situation which is proper to their own country" (EG 184).

Church reflection from the Asian context on social involvement is insightful.

> The social doctrine of the Church, which proposes a set of principles for reflection, criteria for judgment and directives for action, is addressed in the first place to the members of the Church. It is essential that the faithful engaged in human promotion should have a firm grasp of this precious body of teaching and make it part of their evangelizing mission. (EA 32)

7. Evangelization of Cultures. One entire chapter of the Vatican II document on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes,* is given to the proper development of culture (53–62). The Council notes:

> There are many links between the message of salvation and human culture. For God, revealing Himself to His people to the extent of a full manifestation of Himself in His Incarnate Son, has spoken according to the culture proper to different ages …. The Church, sent to all peoples of every time and place … can enter into communion with various cultural modes, to her own enrichment and theirs too. (GS 58)

Paul VI, in his exhortation on evangelization, devotes an entire section to the topic of the evangelization of cultures. He asserts:

> What matters is to evangelize human culture and cultures (not in a purely decorative way as it were by applying a thin veneer, but in a vital way, in depth and right to their very roots) …. Therefore, every effort must be made to ensure a full evangelization of culture, or more correctly of cultures. They have to be regenerated by an encounter with the Gospel. (EN 20)

Probably a penetrating evangelization of cultures stands at the heart of the "new evangelization" project.

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In his mission encyclical, John Paul II speaks of various cultural sectors, and he terms them "the modern equivalents of the Areopagus" (RM 37). During the time of Saint Paul, the Areopagus represented the cultural center of the learned people of Athens; "today it can be taken as a symbol of the new sectors in which the Gospel must be proclaimed" (RM 37). In a word, the evangelizing mission of the Church must integrate its message into the "new culture" created by the numerous profound changes in contemporary human society.

For his part, Pope Francis notes: "It is imperative to evangelize cultures in order to inculturate the Gospel"; this will mean "sparking new processes for evangelizing culture" (EG 69). This task demands recognizing that "new cultures are constantly being born" and that "the changes taking place in these great spaces [cities] and the culture which they create are a privileged locus of the new evangelization" (EG 73). Thus, "through inculturation the Church introduces peoples together with their cultures into her own community" (EG 116). In this process, she is aware that "the faith cannot be constricted to the limits of understanding and expression of any one culture" (EG 118).

Once again, mission reflection from Asia on the topic of culture is replete with helpful insights:

> In the process of encountering the world's different cultures, the Church not only transmits her truths and values and renews cultures from within, but she also takes from the various cultures the positive elements already found in them. This is the obligatory path for evangelizers in presenting the Christian faith and in making it part of a people's cultural heritage. (EA 21)

This entire process of evangelizing culture and promoting inculturation "has a special urgency today in the multi-ethnic, multi-religious, and multi-cultural situation of Asia, where Christianity is still too often seen as foreign" (EA 21).

8. Social Communication. Avery Cardinal Dulles has asserted that the key traits which are included in the challenge of "new evangelization" and which are being presented here have roots in the discussions and documents of the Second Vatican Council. Vatican II, in its document on the instruments of social communication *Inter Mirifica*, notes:

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> The Catholic Church has been commissioned by the Lord Christ to bring salvation to everyone, and is consequently bound to proclaim the Gospel. Hence, she judges it part of her duty to preach the news of redemption with the aid of the instruments of social communication, and to instruct humanity as well in their worthy use. (IM 3)

With clarity, Paul VI noted the great influence of mass media on the world today. He writes:

> Our century is characterized by the mass media or means of social communication, and the first proclamation, catechesis, or the further deepening of the faith cannot do without these means …. When they are put at the service of the Gospel, they are capable of increasing almost indefinitely the area in which the Word of God is heard …. In them she finds a modern and effective version of the pulpit. (EN 45)

In his mission encyclical, John Paul II speaks at length about the "world of communication." He asserts:

> Since the very evangelization of modern culture depends to a great extent on the influence of the media, it is not enough to use the media simply to spread the Christian message and the Church's authentic teaching. It is also necessary to integrate that message into the "new culture" created by modern communications. This is a complex issue … [and it involves] new ways of communicating, with new languages, new techniques, and a new psychology. (RM 37)

Pope Francis admits that "we are living in an information-driven society" (EG 64). We appreciate "the steps being taken to improve people's welfare in areas such as health care, education and communications" (EG 52). These changes in the communications media demand two responses. "We need to distinguish clearly what might be a fruit of the kingdom from what runs counter to God's plan" (EG 51). We must also "attempt to put all things in a missionary key" and discern how we can more effectively "communicate the message" in "today's world of instant communication" (EG 34).

The comprehensive vision of evangelization put forth in *Ecclesia in Asia* observes:

> Inevitably, the Church's evangelizing mission too is deeply affected by the impact of the mass media …. The exceptional role played by the means of social communication in shaping the world, its cultures

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> and ways of thinking has led to rapid and far-reaching changes in Asian societies …. The Church needs to explore ways of thoroughly integrating the mass media into her pastoral planning and activity, so that by their effective use, the Gospel's power can reach out still further to individuals and entire peoples, and infuse Asian cultures with the values of the Kingdom. (EA 48)

9. Responsibility of All Christians. An older vision of mission and evangelization often saw that mission responsibility was the special concern of priests and sisters, apostolic associations, or various missionary orders of women and men. While these groups remain committed to their founding charism, the Second Vatican Council insisted that "the pilgrim Church is missionary by her very nature" (AG 2) and that "the work of evangelization is a basic duty of the People of God" and everyone must "do their share in missionary work among the nations" (AG 35). In a word, the Church is missionary "from top to bottom" and involves everyone—bishops, priests, sisters, laity, and youth.

For Paul VI, "it is the whole Church that receives the mission to evangelize, and the work of each individual member is important for the whole" (EN 15). The pope devoted one entire chapter of *Evangelii Nuntiandi* to the "Workers for Evangelization" (59–73). Thus, the commission to spread the Gospel is given to the universal Church (61), the local Churches (62), the pope (67), bishops and priests (68), religious (69), the laity (70), the family (71), and young people (72). One should find in the Church a variety of "diversified ministries" (73)—all at the service of missionary evangelization.

Similar to Paul VI's *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, one finds an entire chapter on "Leaders and Workers in the Missionary Apostolate" in John Paul II's *Redemptoris Missio* (61–76). Several of the same groups noted by Paul VI are mentioned by John Paul II; however, he devotes special sections to "life-long" *ad gentes* missionaries (65–66), diocesan priests (67), contemplatives (69), missionary religious sisters (70), catechists (73), episcopal conferences (76), and the Pontifical Mission Societies (84). Thus, since "all Christians share responsibility for missionary activity," "missionary cooperation" becomes an imperative as diverse communities and individuals share and exercise their "right and duty" of evangelization (RM 77).

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Pope Francis asserts emphatically that as "the whole Church takes up the missionary impulse, she has to go forth to everyone without exception" (EG 48). He says that the 2012 Synod "reaffirmed that the new evangelization is a summons addressed to all" (EG 14) and that "missionary outreach is *paradigmatic for all the Church's activity*" (EG 15). Again, he writes:

> all of us are called to take part in this new missionary "going forth." Each Christian and every community must discern the path the Lord points out, but all of us are asked to obey his call to go forth from our own comfort zone in order to reach the "peripheries" in need of the light of the Gospel. (EG 20)

Ecclesia in Asia recognizes the multiple and diverse contributions of missionaries over the centuries. During the "Asian Synod" (1998), the Synod Fathers took advantage of the occasion

> to express in a very special way their gratitude to all the missionaries, men and women, religious and lay, foreign and local, who brought the message of Jesus Christ and the gift of faith. A special word of gratitude again must be expressed to all the particular Churches which have sent and still send missionaries to Asia. (EA 20)

In the same document, John Paul II noted that the challenge still remains: "I cannot fail to urge the Church in Asia to send forth missionaries, even though she herself needs laborers in the vineyard" (EA 44).

10. Role of the Holy Spirit. Vatican II and its program of *aggiornamento* bring to the fore the role of the Holy Spirit in the Church, a dimension underemphasized in many earlier presentations of mission. *Ad Gentes,* the Council's Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity, pointed out that the Spirit unceasingly accompanies and guides the Church in her apostolic activities. The Spirit "furnishes the Church with various gifts, both hierarchical and charismatic. He vivifies ecclesiastical institutions as a kind of soul and instills into the hearts of the faithful the same mission spirit which motivated Christ himself" (AG 4). This same Spirit often anticipates the evangelizer's action, opening people's hearts to the Gospel message.

Pope Paul VI is eloquent when presenting the role of the Holy Spirit in missionary activity.

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> 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 …. It must be said that the Holy Spirit is the principal agent of evangelization …. Through the Holy Spirit the Gospel penetrates to the heart of the world. (75)

Saint John Paul II devotes an entire chapter in *Redemptoris Missio* (21–30) to the pivotal role of the Spirit in evangelization. All mission is "a sending forth in the Spirit" (22). The Spirit gives assurance that evangelizers "will not be alone in this task" (23). From the Spirit the apostle receives "the ability to bear witness to Jesus with 'boldness'" (24). "The Spirit's presence and activity affect not only individuals, but also society and history, peoples, cultures and religions" (28). "Whatever the Spirit brings about in human hearts and in the history of peoples, in cultures and religions, serves as a preparation for the Gospel" (29). Again, John Paul II reiterates that the Spirit is "the principal agent of mission" (30).

"Keeping our missionary fervor alive," Pope Francis asserts, "calls for firm trust in the Holy Spirit, for it is he who 'helps us in our weakness' (Rom. 8:26) …. There is no greater freedom than that of allowing oneself to be guided by the Holy Spirit …. The Holy Spirit knows well what is needed in every time and place" (EG 280). "The Holy Spirit works as he wills, when he wills, and where he wills …. Let us learn to rest in the tenderness of the arms of the Father …. Let us keep marching forward; let us give him everything, allowing him to make our efforts bear fruit in his good time" (EG 279).

In the multicultural and pluri-religious Asian context, the action of the Spirit is paramount. "The Spirit gathers into unity all kinds of people, with their different customs, resources, and talents, making the Church a sign of the communion of all humanity …. [Thus] the Holy Spirit is the prime agent of evangelization" (EA 17). "The Church looks to the Holy Spirit to continue to prepare the peoples of Asia for the saving dialogue with the Savior of all …. Committed to being a genuine sign and instrument of the Spirit's action in the complex realities of Asia …,

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the Church ceaselessly cries out: Come, Holy Spirit! Fill the hearts of your faithful and enkindle in them the fire of your love" (EA 18).

Conclusion. This presentation of ten defining traits that characterize the "new evangelization" may appear overwhelming to readers. Yes, the task of evangelization in the contemporary world is genuinely complex and awesomely challenging. Indeed, no individual can hope to accomplish any more than a small fragment of the total task. Thus, it is imperative that all segments of the Church collaborate in this beautiful endeavor, believing that, as John Paul II affirmed, "God is preparing a great springtime for Christianity …. Christian hope sustains us in committing ourselves fully to the new evangelization and to worldwide mission" (RM 86).

In 1975, Paul VI issued two interrelated apostolic exhortations: *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (Evangelization in the Modern World) and *Gaudete in Domino* (On Christian Joy). The pope constantly asserted that if the Gospel is not heard from "joyful evangelizers," it will not be heard at all by contemporary humanity. The lack of joy and hope is an obstacle to effective evangelization. Paul VI believed that joy would enable the world of our time

> to receive the Good News not from evangelizers who are dejected, discouraged, impatient or anxious, but from ministers of the Gospel whose lives glow with fervor, who have first received the joy of Christ, and who are willing to risk their lives so that the Kingdom may be proclaimed and the Church established in the midst of the world. (EN 80) [cf. EG 10]

Pope Francis in *Evangelii Gaudium* directly quotes the two interrelated exhortations issued by Paul VI in 1975 (*Gaudete in Domino* receives two quotes and *Evangelii Nuntiandi* is mentioned more than a dozen times). Echoing Paul VI, declared Blessed on World Mission Sunday (October 19, 2014), Francis asserts that "the Joy of the Gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus …. With Christ joy is constantly born anew …. I wish to encourage the Christian faithful to embark upon a new chapter of evangelization marked by this joy" (EG 1). It is only "joyful evangelization" that bears much fruit, and Francis asks

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that this "definite style of evangelization" be adopted by Christians "*in every activity which you undertake*" (EG 18).

The success of the "new evangelization" undoubtedly requires "renewed evangelizers." Jesuit Pierre Teilhard de Chardin wrote: "Joy is the most infallible sign of the presence of God." Joy is convincing; joy evangelizes. All the complex dimensions of the "new evangelization" will not overwhelm those whose lives have been transformed by a joyful encounter with the Risen Lord. We must listen frequently to the admonition of Saint Paul: "Rejoice in the Lord always. I shall say it again: rejoice! Your kindness should be known to all. The Lord is near" (Gal. 4:4). Be transformed by joy. Become a herald of the new evangelization! Surrender to the "Lord of Joy" for he is *Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring*!

Common Abbreviations

AA: *Apostolicam Actuositatem* (Laity)

AG: *Ad Gentes* (Missionary Activity)

CD: *Christus Dominus* (Bishops)

DH: *Dignitatis Humanae* (Religious Freedom)

DV: *Dei Verbum* (Divine Revelation)

EA: *Ecclesia in Asia* (Church in Asia [John Paul II])

EG: *Evangelii Gaudium* (The Joy of the Gospel [Francis])

EN: *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (Evangelization Today [Paul VI])

GD: *Gaudete in Domino* (On Christian Joy [Paul VI])

GS: *Gaudium et Spes* (Church Today)

IM: *Inter Mirifica* (Social Communications)

LG: *Lumen Gentium* (Church)

NA: *Nostra Aetate* (Non-Christian Religions)

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PO: *Presbyterorum Ordinis* (Priests)

RM: *Redemptoris Missio* (Mission of the Redeemer [John Paul II])

SC: *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (Sacred Liturgy)

UR: *Unitatis Redintegratio* (Ecumenism)

UUS: *Ut Unum Sint* (That All Be One [John Paul II])

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