Landas 32:2 (2018) 91–107

DISCOVERING THE PROFOUND WISDOM OF POPE PAUL VI'S *EVANGELII NUNTIANDI*

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St. Pope Paul VI (1963-1978), canonized forty years after his death on October 14, 2018, 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 Christianity's second millennium and without a doubt one of the most important ecclesial documents of the post-Vatican II era. It presents a concise, inspiring, and programmatic challenge for the Church to engage enthusiastically 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. EN boldly addresses the topic of evangelization in the modern world.

Cited on thirteen different occasions, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* is the most quoted document in Pope Francis's 2013 apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium;* indeed, one finds that Francis began to regularly quote and praise EN early in his pontificate. He said in 2013 that EN includes words that "are as timely as if they had been written yesterday" (May 17) and called it "a very full text that has lost nothing of its timeliness" (June 13). In describing evangelization, he asserted that EN was "that basic point of reference which remains relevant" (July 27), and even went so far as to describe it as "to my mind the greatest pastoral

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document that has ever been written to this day" (June 22). EN is undoubtedly the fertile soil from which Francis drew much as he authored *Evangelii Gaudium* (in addition to using other material from Paul VI). He clearly appreciates Paul VI, affirming that the latter's testimony "feeds us the flame of love for Christ, love for the Church, and gives us the momentum to announce the Gospel to the people of today, with mercy, patience, courage, and joy" (June 22).

Pope Francis reiterated his profound admiration for Paul VI and EN on June 16, 2014 when he opened the pastoral convention for the Diocese of Rome. In reference to EN, Francis stated:

> Still to this day it is the most important post-Conciliar pastoral document, which hasn't been surpassed. We should always go back to it. That Apostolic Exhortation is a great source of inspiration. And, it was the work of the great Paul VI, of his own hand. Because after that Synod, they couldn't decide whether they should do an Exhortation or not … and finally the *relator* (it was St. John Paul II) took all the papers and just handed them to the Pope, as if to say: "You handle this, brother!" Paul VI read them all and, with that patience of his, began to write. To me that is truly the pastoral testament of the great Paul VI. And, it hasn't been surpassed. It is a wealth of resources for pastoral life.

Background. *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, a document of 23,000 words, was issued on December 8, 1975, having emerged from several rich sources and antecedents. Very few other papal documents in recent times have been prepared after so much prior consultation with so many different sections of the Church over so long a period of time. To understand the context and content of EN, it is necessary to examine the events surrounding the 1974 International Synod on Evangelization (Paul VI explicitly refers to the Synod over thirty times in EN).

The Synod (September 27-October 26, 1974) brought together over 200 bishops from all parts of the world along with some priests, religious, and laity in a consultative capacity. Three full years had been devoted to preparations on local, national, and continental levels. Pastoral experiences and approaches to evangelization were widely shared through a method that was decidedly inductive (rather than deductive) in its approach. The Churches in the so-called Third World

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devoted much effort and enthusiasm to the process; one fine example was the dedicated commitment of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC)—their First Plenary Assembly (in Taipei, Taiwan in April 1974) produced the insightful document *Evangelization in Modern Day Asia*.

When the 209 bishops arrived in Rome in late 1974, they were well-prepared, ready, and enthusiastic to engage in the Synod's work. Pope Paul VI opened the Synod with a Eucharist celebrated in the Sistine Chapel and delivered an opening address, encouraging frank discussion and honest exchange on the burning issues surrounding evangelization. He had set the stage and faithfully attended all the general assemblies as a silent but attentive listener.

The Synod proceeded according to its three planned stages: **a)** *communication of pastoral experiences*—these included five continental reports and about 175 speeches from the Synod Fathers; **b)** *reflection on interrelated theological themes*—an attempt was made to integrate theological elements and pastoral experiences; this met with difficulties and revealed many *lacunae;* and **c)** *preparation of conclusions*—working with an immense amount of material and items prepared by D. Grasso, K. Wojtyla, and D. Amalorpavadass, a drafting committee prepared a 41-page text.

On October 22 (just four days before the Synod's conclusion), three-quarters of the text was rejected—it had failed to capture the testimonies and insights as well as the searching and propositions that characterized the first three weeks of Synod work. The final session of the Synod (October 26, 1974) was thus awaited with keen interest. Pope Paul VI addressed the assembly frankly and openly: "the synod of bishops has ended.… We should want to assess its achievements.… We cannot but be genuinely satisfied and optimistic about its outcome."

The pope continued:

> The theme [of evangelization] is too wide and complex to be dealt with properly in so short a time or to yield all the conclusions to which its discussion might give rise. However, this Synod did again make the following contribution to the Church in our day: it enabled the voices

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> of the local churches to be heard; it facilitated a better diagnosis of the current situation and a delineation of the principal elements of evangelization; it set in train the discussion of the practice and theory of evangelization in our time. For this reason we judge that the Synod as a whole has been fruitful. For it places at the disposal of Peter's successor, for the benefit of the entire Church, an abundance of advice, admonitions and proposals.

***Evangelii Nuntiandi* Emerges.** During a year-long gestation period, Paul VI labored to produce a document from the rich experience and insights of the Synod, one that is clearly the work of discernment and synthesis. EN is at once synodal and papal, and therefore deeply collegial. It is structured in seven thematic chapters framed within an introduction and conclusion, with chapter titles clearly indicating specific content (e.g., "What is Evangelization?", "The Methods of Evangelization"). The five-paragraph introduction contains several interpretive keys to the document.

Paul VI clearly saw his role in shaping EN as part of his papal responsibility of "encouraging our brethren in their mission as evangelizers." This task became for him "a daily preoccupation … and a fundamental commitment of our Pontificate" (1). What emerged as EN has been described as Paul VI's "last and finest apostolic exhortation, a novel and effective form of the magisterium."

EN, moreover, was not written as a tightly reasoned and carefully nuanced theological treatise (though excellent theological reflection pervades the document). Paul VI notes that his words were designed to be a "meditation on evangelization," and hopes that they will succeed "in inviting the whole People of God assembled in the Church to make the same meditation" (5). Indeed, the pope returns to the theme of meditation throughout EN (cf. 40, 76). It is this very personal, even conversational, style of meditative reflection and exhortation that many have found attractive. It invites a frequent return to EN—even more than forty years later—as Pope Francis promotes. It encourages personal reception and assimilation of the message. It exudes a poetic quality.

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Paul VI notes that three key elements converge to highlight the importance of the promulgation of EN (2): the conclusion of the Holy Year (a special time of renewal); the tenth anniversary of the close of Vatican II (renewing the Church for mission); and the first anniversary of the 1974 Synod. The pope alludes to these anniversaries once again in the conclusion of EN, adding that the Church stands at "the eve of a new century, the eve also of the third millennium of Christianity" (81). It is clear that Paul VI wishes to focus the entire attention of the Church on the centrality of evangelization. He wishes to launch "a new period of evangelization" (2) so that Christ's followers "can bring the Christian message to modern man" (3) "with ever increasing love, zeal and joy" (1). Fulfillment of this task is, for the pope, "our heartfelt plea" (81).

Three leitmotifs of EN have already been mentioned: the papal commitment to evangelization, the role of meditation, and the centrality of evangelization in the life of the Church. A fourth theme centers on fidelity, a double fidelity—to God's message and to people (cf. 4, 39, 63). This fidelity is "the central axis of evangelization" (4).

Paul VI, in numerous places throughout EN, carefully defines, nuances, and balances diverse elements within the evangelization process (e.g., local and universal Church, culture and faith, liberation and evangelization, strengths and limitations of popular religiosity, etc.). It is his unique genius to have achieved integration and balance on so many topics. *Evangelii Nuntiandi* thus prolongs the reflection on evangelization begun in the 1974 Synod and makes its insights available to the entire Church. Paul VI, as Pope Francis emphasizes, has gifted the Church with an inspirational and pastoral handbook for modern missionary activity.

Describing Evangelization. Evangelization for many Catholics is a generally unfamiliar and relatively new term; only recently has it been gaining wider currency. Indeed, the Second Vatican Council and recent popes have placed evangelization at the center of the Church's identity and mission. One key goal of this presentation as such is to focus specifically on the unique contribution of Paul VI to the understanding of evangelization in all of its rich, complex, multi-

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faceted, and interrelated dimensions. This piece, in a word, explores evangelization viewed holistically and integrally.

The word "evangelization" itself does not occur in the New Testament; *euaggelion*, however, 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 (2 Cor 4:4), that it is for all (Mk 13:10; 16:15), and that it is a revelation of God (Gal 1:11-12) which is to be believed (Mk 1:15) and proclaimed (1 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 (2 Tim 1:10), of the risen Christ (1 Cor 15:1ff; 2 Tim 2:8), and of salvation (Eph 1:13).

Vatican II speaks of evangelization in a variety of contexts: it is especially the bishops' task to promote evangelization by the faithful (*Christus Dominus* 6), it is associated with the mission of the laity (*Apostolicam Actuositatem* 2, 6, 20, 26; *Lumen Gentium* [LG] 35), priests are to learn the methods of evangelization (*Presbyterorum Ordinis* [PO] 19), and the Eucharist is the source and summit of all evangelization (PO 5). The Decree on Missions (*Ad Gentes*) 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); to evangelize is an important task for catechists (17) as it is for the laity (21); the call to evangelize arises from a charism of the Spirit (23); and 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).

The pivotal contribution of Paul VI, following upon a solid foundation in Sacred Scripture and in the documents of Vatican II, has been to locate evangelization on "center-stage" in describing the Church's contemporary mission. An obvious question thus arises: How does one capture the rich thought of Pope St. Paul VI? This author takes the path of an extensive presentation of the pope's *seminal document* [EN] on the subject of evangelization; a concluding section is then composed of a synthetic overview of "integral evangelization."

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Evangelization is Integral and Holistic. The understanding of the term "evangelization" as found in EN reflects a comprehensive and inclusive view; its use may be described as an "umbrella concept." This broad and holistic perspective respects the fullness and complexity of the evangelizing process which aims to achieve *effective* evangelization.

Sections 17 and 24 of EN provide a long list of the various elements that comprise the evangelizing action of the Church. Both sections also strongly insist on integrating and balancing all facets of evangelization: "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 distorting it" (17); "evangelization, as we have said, is a complex process made up of varied elements … they are complementary and mutually enriching" (24).

Paul VI explicitly notes that the Synod constantly challenged the Church "to relate these elements rather than to place them in opposition one to the other, in order to reach a full understanding of the Church's evangelizing activity" (24). The pope, in fact, set forth a comprehensive presentation in EN which has become widely accepted in the Church in later years; it is diversely termed "integral/holistic" and coupled with "evangelization/liberation/salvation."

Note the broad and inclusive manner in which Paul VI speaks: "evangelizing means bringing the Good News into all the strata of humanity" (18), "upsetting, through the power of the Gospel, mankind's criteria of judgment" (19); "what matters [thus] is to evangelize man's culture and cultures" (20) so as to overcome "the split between the Gospel and culture [which] is without doubt the drama of our time" (20). The scope of evangelization extends to the full transformation of humanity and cultures in the light of the Gospel. Indeed, additional examples from the pope's writings could be mentioned, all of them illustrating his broad and holistic view of evangelization. Here, then, is a key, a helpful category, a foundational insight, for an integrated interpretation of the entire text of EN.

Theological Foundations. Viewing evangelization holistically and integrally has important practical and pastoral ramifications.

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It allows Christians to appreciate the myriad manifestations of evangelization, where individual gifts, talents, and charisms are desired and treasured (66), no individual or group is master of evangelization (15, 78), everyone acts "in communion with the Church" (60), and "the work of evangelization is a basic duty of the People of God" (59).

These practical and pastoral dimensions of an integral approach to evangelization have solid theological foundations as their basis. They are anchored in "the Father's love" (26) and in the entire life, mission, practice, and witness of Jesus, "the first evangelizer" (7; cf. 6-12). The Church "is born of the evangelizing activity of Jesus and the Twelve"; she "in her turn is sent by Jesus" (15). In the power of the Spirit, "the Apostles depart to all the ends of the earth in order to begin the great work of the Church's evangelization" (75). A brief look at the footnote references of the first two chapters of EN reveals how closely linked these theological foundations are with Sacred Scripture and the documents of the Second Vatican Council.

EN contains several beautiful descriptions of the Church as an evangelizing community. "Evangelization is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity. She exists in order to evangelize"; "evangelizing all people constitutes the essential mission of the Church" (14). "The Church is an evangelizer, but she begins by being evangelized herself" (15).

Paul VI also makes an important clarification in the first section of Chapter III: "The Content of Evangelization." He speaks of the distinction between **a)** the *essential* elements and the "living substance" of the Gospel message and **b)** the *secondary* elements "whose presentation depends greatly on changing situations" (25). Within an integral view of evangelization, one must have a clear mind about the vital substance (26-28) in relation to the secondary aspects (29-39). Here the principle of "double fidelity" (4) enters once again—"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" (29). In the mind of Paul VI, this continued nuancing and balanced integration are certainly part of the "drama of fidelity" (39).

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Diverse Synod Themes. It has been noted that the 1974 Synod on Evangelization ended inconclusively, and that the entire documentation of the proceedings was left in the pope's hands. EN thus reveals how Paul VI, not wishing the material to be lost, reworked many of the Synod's major themes into a stirring and unified presentation. In the mode of a pastoral synthesis, the pope addressed several questions pertaining to salvation and liberation (9, 27, 30-38), non-Christian religions (53, 80), religious liberty (39, 80), secularization (55), secularism (55-56), atheism (54-56), ecumenism (54, 76, 77), basic communities (58), diversified ministries (73), popular piety (48), sacraments in evangelization (23, 28, 47, 68), mass media (45, 80), the Church as sign and sacrament of salvation (23, 59), violence (37), the signs of the times (75-76), the local-universal Church dynamic (60-68), culture (20, 58), and the role of the Holy Spirit (75, 82).

In his final Synod speech, Paul VI identified many of these diverse topics as areas of evangelization that needed to be "better defined, nuanced, completed and subjected to further study." Indeed, commentators have noted how certain passages in EN closely resemble the actual interventions made on the Synod floor. EN is a testimony, therefore, that Paul VI was involved at the Synod as an intent listener and learner who then, through his papal "charism of discernment," fashioned his insights and reflections into a personal and spiritual testament on evangelization. EN is the fruit of long and profound meditation that nourishes the spiritual life, just as Pope Francis enthusiastically affirms!

Special Themes. This summary overview of the scope of evangelization found in EN presents only the highlights of this dense and rich document. Some special themes deserve additional comment.

EN is, in two ways, an important document for the emerging theology of the *local Church*. It presents what is basically a positive and firm link between the local and the universal Church, and shows the importance that the local community and its personal witnesses have in the whole process of inculturated evangelization. Basic ecclesial communities (58) have enormous potential to manifest the missionary character of the Church.

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The document also contains a few direct references to the *missions* as they were traditionally known. How do missionary societies and organizations find their place in the contemporary world? Three specific tasks are mentioned in the fifth chapter: missionaries are to **a)** proclaim the Gospel for the first time to peoples and lands where it has not been heard (51), **b)** engage and interact with the faithful adherents of other religions (53), and **c)** assist the young Churches and promote missionary consciousness within them (56, 58).

The treatment of *world religions* in EN, however, is not sufficiently developed. This is remarkable for a document authored by Paul VI whose first encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam* was dedicated to the theme of dialogue and who in 1964 established the Secretariat for Non-Christians (which was renamed the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue in 1988). There is no theological understanding of religions in EN (e.g., Are non-Christians saved *in* and *through* their religions? Can these faith-traditions be called "ways of salvation"?) even though several reasons for respecting and esteeming such religions are provided (53). The openness expressed at the Synod which affirmed the wide action of the Holy Spirit and manifested the desire for interreligious dialogue is not pursued or promoted in the document; indeed, the term "dialogue" is not even found in it at all. Nevertheless, one can be grateful for the encouragement given to fostering an open and respectful attitude toward the great religions of the world.

The role that EN assigns to the promotion of *justice and human liberation* within the Church's evangelizing mission is a curious one. Many helpful clarifications on the concept of liberation are presented (29-39), and the encyclical notes that "between evangelization and human advancement—development and liberation—there are in fact profound links" (31). To say that liberation "is not foreign to evangelization" (30), however, seems restrictive, and stands in contrast to the 1971 Synod that declared justice to be "a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel."

Impact on the Church. The Synod and EN have profoundly influenced the Church. They have provided the inspiration, emphasis, and methodology for placing evangelization in the center spotlight.

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EN, for one, has inspired national and continental Church gatherings; "Evangelization at Present and in the Future of Latin America" (Puebla: CELAM, 1979) is only one of many examples. It has influenced the methodology of subsequent synods (a post-synodal document following a synod proper) as well as their topics of discussion (e.g., catechesis, family, reconciliation, youth, etc.) and affirmed key Vatican II documents (*Lumen Gentium, Gaudium et Spes,* and *Ad Gentes*) while promoting their reception and implementation in the Church.

The Synod and EN have also manifested the positive contribution of "third-world" local Churches and highlighted the benefits of an inductive, collegial, and reflective method of theologizing. The emergence of a truly "World Church" thus received forward impetus. Paul VI, for instance, began missionary journeys which became a common papal *modus operandi*, one which Pope Francis vigorously continues to this day. The Church has thus renewed her commitment to being a community of disciples and evangelizers (13, 15, 21, 24, 59, 66, 80) who are filled with joy and enthusiasm (73, 80), eager to give authentic witness (41, 76) under the dynamic action of the Holy Spirit, the principal agent of evangelization (75), and be guided by Mary, the Star of Evangelization (82).

Synthetic Overview of Integral Evangelization. Pope Paul VI without a doubt has gifted the Church with rich insights into the theology and praxis of evangelization. Indeed, simply recalling the many facets of evangelization presented in the previous sections of this paper bears out the fact that *Evangelii Nuntiandi* is a microcosm of his understanding of missionary evangelization. Can the discussion be taken further though?

Additional insight can be drawn from two documents issued by the Secretariat for Non-Christians (which, as noted earlier, was founded in 1964 by Paul VI and renamed in 1988 as the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue). On Pentecost Sunday in 1984, the Secretariat promulgated the document entitled "The Attitude of the Church toward the Followers of Other Religions: Reflections and Orientations on Dialogue and Mission" (DM). Hidden in this little-known work on the interrelationship between dialogue and mission

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is a pivotal statement which affirms that mission and evangelization are understood "in the consciousness of the Church as a single but complex and articulated reality" (13).

Seven years later, the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue presented the document "Dialogue and Proclamation: Reflections and Orientations on Interreligious Dialogue and the Proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ" (DP) in conjunction with the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples on Pentecost Sunday in 1991. Once again, the evangelizing mission of the Church is understood therein as a "single but complex and articulated reality" (2).

Both documents emphasize the unity and integral nature of evangelization while affirming at the same time that evangelization necessarily comprises many dimensions; it is indeed a complex reality. One notes, nevertheless, that this multi-faceted concept (evangelization) can be explained and articulated.

Naming the Elements of "Integral Evangelization." Despite their lengthy and complex titles, these two documents just mentioned have added considerable clarity to a Catholic understanding of missionary evangelization. This results from the fact that "principal elements" are specifically named, with mission and evangelization being composed of: **a)** presence and witness, **b)** commitment to social development and human liberation, **c)** interreligious dialogue, **d)** proclamation and catechesis, and **e)** liturgical life, prayer, and contemplation (cf. DM 13 and DP 2). In a word, the one evangelizing mission of the Church is made up of several component elements and authentic forms. This is integral or holistic evangelization; this is—in compact expression—the wide view of evangelization promoted by Paul VI in EN.

Taking the thought of Paul VI in EN and expressing it in a manner that many Catholics can readily grasp and appreciate, this five-point vision has served the Church well over the past decades. At the same time, it does not do violence to the richness and complexity of missionary evangelization; indeed, one easily perceives that the thought expressed in EN is adequately captured in this helpful schema.

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Employing it thus enables a smooth maneuvering through lengthy papal documents. It is a Catholic vision that views evangelization through its various essential dimensions, thereby resulting in clarity, insight, and proper integration.

Exploring the Five Elements. Further insight into the integral nature of evangelization can be attained by specifically relating its five principal elements with EN. Such an exercise illustrates that "evangelizing means bringing the Good News into all strata of humanity" (EN 18). Readers should note, however, that while this overview is centered on the content of EN, specific references will also be given to two other papal documents on evangelization: St. John Paul II's *Redemptoris Missio* (RM; 1990) and Pope Francis's *Evangelii Gaudium* (EG; 2013).

According to Paul VI, *Christian presence and witness of life* form the "initial act of evangelization" (EN 21). People desire and respect authentic witnesses (cf. EN 41; RM 11, 42; EG 14, 20, 119-121, 149-151). As such, daily activities, living together in harmony, lives led with integrity, duties in the community—all these are to be elements of a basic "faith-witness" that demonstrates how Christian living is shaped by Christian faith and values. Through this wordless witness, "Christians stir up irresistible questions in the hearts of those who see how they live" (EN 21). Mother Teresa of Calcutta (canonized in 2016), for instance, who is known for her loving and selfless care of the poorest of the poor, stands as an "icon" of Christian presence, life, and service (EA 7).

Living based on faith convictions as good neighbors in community should naturally issue in a *commitment to social development and human liberation*, in a genuine service of humanity. This means serving the most unfortunate, witnessing to justice, and defending the integrity of creation. It is a dimension of evangelization that includes all areas of social concern ranging from peace-building to education, health services, and promoting family life and good government. Areas of human development or human promotion are vast domains of the Church's evangelizing mission (cf. EN 18-19, 29-33; RM 58-60; EG 50-109, 181-185, 197-216).

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All evangelizing activities are inserted into specific contexts, and they naturally assume an interreligious dimension particularly in Asia. As is the case with most places in the world of today, the Church in Asia accomplishes her mission in pluralistic and diverse cultures; she enters into *interreligious dialogue*, cooperating with the followers of the great religious traditions. John Paul II asserts that "interreligious dialogue is a part of the Church's evangelizing mission" (RM 55). It emerges from one's faith convictions and takes many forms, including but not limited to dialogues of daily life, deeds of service, religious experts, and faith experience. Indeed, dialogue with religions and cultures is the truly appropriate Christian response in contemporary circumstances (cf. EN 20, 53; RM 52-54, 55-57; EG 115-118, 238-243, 250-254).

In mission today, there is the role of *explicit Gospel proclamation and catechesis*. This dimension of evangelization includes preaching, catechesis on Christian life, and teaching the content of the faith; in a word, this means "telling the Jesus story." When the Holy Spirit opens the door and when the time is opportune, Christians do tell the Jesus story, giving explicit witness and testimony to the faith. Others are invited, in freedom of conscience, to follow and to know Jesus. Christians themselves, moreover, are further instructed in their faith through proclamation, the process by which the faith is communicated to the next generation of believers (cf. EN 22, 27, 42; RM 44-51; EG 3, 12, 24, 110-111, 246).

Finally, no one can effectively be engaged in the Church's mission without a strong faith- and prayer-life. Integral evangelization and liberation will necessarily include *liturgical life, prayer, and contemplation*. Evangelization needs holy women and men who are themselves on fire with the love of Christ, for only those already burning with an experience of Christ can spread the fire of the Gospel. Holiness is an irreplaceable condition for evangelizers. The "God-experience" achieved in prayer and contemplation, in sacramental and liturgical life, will illumine and transform all other dimensions of evangelization (cf. EN 23, 43-44, 47; RM 46-49, 87-92; EG 47, 173, 259-288).

These five dimensions of an integral understanding of evangelization obviously complement and reinforce each other. Paul VI, in speaking

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of the complexity of the Church's evangelizing action, gives a timely admonition: "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." He continues on to say that "it is impossible to grasp the concept of evangelization unless one tries to keep in view all its essential elements" (EN 17).

An older concept of the Church's mission has thus been set aside. No longer are the elements of social justice, interfaith dialogue, peacebuilding, ecology initiatives, education and health care, life-witness, etc. simply "preparatory" to evangelization (*praeparatio evangelica*); all five "principal elements" are constitutive of an integral understanding. Popes Paul VI, John Paul II, and Francis have expanded the horizons of evangelization; the more restrictive view, which held that only explicit Gospel proclamation and sacramental life constituted mission, has been superseded.

One finds, concomitant with this expanded vision of evangelization, a renewed emphasis on the missionary nature of the *entire* Church (cf. AG 2; EN 14, 59; RM 61-76; EG 14, 20, 119-121). Previously, the laity often found it difficult to appreciate how they were to be evangelizers when evangelization used to be linked more exclusively with explicit Gospel proclamation and sacramental life. Today, every baptized individual, whether layperson, ordained, or religious, is an evangelizer. Catholic evangelization now engages the entire Church (from top to bottom, and especially all the local churches), all states of life (lay, religious, ordained, married, single), and all apostolic activities and forms of witness (the five principal elements). Indeed, the totality of Christian missionary evangelization embraces all these aspects.

Conclusion. This piece has attempted to present a panoramic overview of Pope Paul VI's *Evangelii Nuntiandi* as well as a Catholic vision of evangelization. After many words have been uttered, after much ink has been spilt, after definitions and categories have been clarified, and after one more presentation has been completed, Catholic Christians must step back and radically affirm that *all mission and evangelization is God's project, that the Holy Spirit is always the principal agent*

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of evangelization. For evangelizers, missionaries, catechists, religious, and laypersons alike, mission necessarily means trying to find out what God wills and what he is doing. The authentic evangelizer then bends her/his will to God's own, joyfully surrenders to God's loving plan, and expends all efforts and her/his energy to become a worthy instrument that enables God's design to unfold. Evangelization, at heart and center, is an issue of faith (cf. RM 11). For Christians, to live is to evangelize, to truly become "missionary disciples" (EG 120)!

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