

Living the Mass in Everyday Life: Part III
- **A Parish Council Focused on the New Evangelization** -

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1. Thanksgiving for Pope John-Paul II

A Happy New Year to you all! This year let's push forward again with Collaborative Ministry for Mission so that all the faithful of Kyoto diocese, including especially those from other countries, may become, as the bishop's motto says "united in a single community".

For the past two years, since 2004, in tackling the theme "Living the Mass in Everyday Life", Kyoto diocese has been reflecting progressively on the life of faith by concentrating on the Mass which is the very foundation of Collaborative Ministry for Mission. Last year we kept the "Year of the Eucharist" designated by Pope John-Paul II. The Year of the Eucharist was brought to a close by Pope Benedict XVI with the eleventh ordinary *Synod* (a meeting of representative bishops from all over the world) held at the Vatican, the theme of which was "The Mystery of the Eucharist – Source and Summit of the Church's Life". Also every parish, block and deanery council carried out some suitable activity to mark this Year of the Eucharist. I would like, once again, to offer prayers of thanksgiving for the late Pope John-Paul II who gave us this special year of grace. Furthermore, I would like, by continuing the important theme "Living the Mass in Everyday Life", to make this cornerstone of Collaborative Ministry for Mission in Kyoto diocese even firmer.

2 A Code of Practice for the Parish Pastoral Council

Well then, we've come to the third and final year of the process of 'making a Code of Practice for the Parish Pastoral Council'. The purpose of making of this code of practice is to establish in every parish a "Parish Pastoral Council". The Parish Pastoral Council, together with the priests appointed to the block, will coordinate, discuss, and make decisions about what is necessary for the smooth running of the parish. ("Let's make a parish code of practice which promotes collaborative ministry for mission" November, 2003)

First of all, the various activities carried out by the parish community will be apportioned to the required activity groups. After that, taking into consideration the actual circumstances of the parish, other groups may freely engage in any activity and it is to be hoped they will do so.

If all goes to plan, by December this year, a parish pastoral council will have been established in every parish. With that in mind I have set up a "Parish Pastoral Council Code of Practice Coordination Committee" to regulate the proposed codes of practice submitted by each parish. I believe that many churches are doing their best to devise an organization which concentrates on activity groups. I know, too, that depending on the size of the community, in some parishes it is proving difficult to conform to the guidelines set out by the diocese. If that is the case, please look to your solidarity with other churches in the block to try to find a way forward. Let's consult with the "Parish Pastoral Council Code of Practice Coordination Committee" to produce a practicable code of practice which conforms to the diocesan guidelines.

3 A Parish Pastoral Council Focused on the New Evangelization

I have chosen as the subtitle to this year's theme "Living the Mass in Everyday Life – Part III" "A Parish Council Focused on the New Evangelization". We have been trying to "experience a community of faith" (Part I), learning about *eucharistia* (the Blessed Sacrament), reflecting on the fact that we are "..called to close fellowship with Christ" (Part II) and now at length, as we continue this journey, I would like to look closely at our vocation to be sent out into "everyday life". This is a commission to evangelize. The Parish Pastoral Council is one element in our becoming an evangelizing community.

The expression 'New Evangelization' was coined by Pope John-Paul II. Pope Paul VI had proposed an 'evangelization ever renewed' (*Evangeliū nuntiandi*¹, 82). Pope John-Paul II received this and re-cast it calling us to a New Evangelization. He characterized the 'newness' of New Evangelization in three ways: it requires, he said, "a **new fervor, new methods** and a **new expression** for the announcing and witnessing of the Gospel." (*Pastores dabo vobis*², 18)

Firstly this new fervor, or passion, for evangelization refers to one's frame of mind. New methods of evangelization means opening up new approaches to apostolic work and making the best use of resources to implement these. New expression means finding ways of handing on the message of the gospel, without losing any of its meaning, in such a way that people of today's society can understand it.

When we say 'new' I think it means both renewing what has been there before but also supplying what has been lacking. I want us to tackle this 'New Evangelization' by means of the collaborative ministry for mission which we are implementing in Kyoto Diocese. I have written below some points and suggestions to help you reflect on, and put into practice, these three aspects of 'new' associated with the New Evangelization. (Cf. Paul VI, "*Evangeliū nuntiandi*¹". References are indicated by the letters 'EN' and a number.)

4 "New Evangelization": the Frame of Mind

I believe the frame of mind appropriate to a person embracing the 'New Evangelization' is, expressed differently, nothing other than the renewed awareness necessary in any modern Christian. With that in mind I will summarize some important points which have been brought to mind as we have been getting to grips with collaborative ministry for mission.

① The Grace of Faith is not Simply for Myself (EN 14)

The gift of faith which we have received is not only for our own individual salvation; it is also a grace given to us by God the Father who planned to save all people "by the folly of the gospel" (1 Cor 1:21) so that we can be used as a means to that end. We must, therefore, rid ourselves of a faith which has "lost its missionary outlook". (cf. my New Year Pastoral Letter for 2001)

② The Entire People of God is made up of Missionary Workers (EN 59)

The Missionary vocation is not reserved to bishop, priests and religious but is the shared responsibility of all believers including children, the elderly, the sick and those who are unable to attend Mass: everyone has duty to support the work of evangelization.

③ Listen to and Obey the Holy Spirit (EN 75)

The Holy Spirit works in the inmost depths of our hearts helping us to accept the Word of God and urges us to spread the Gospel. We listen to the Spirit in our hearts and follow his prompting. It is important that we discern within our hearts as an evangelizing community.

④ Energized by the Love of Other People (EN 79)

The driving force of evangelization is our love for other people. This love entails sharing the truth with others, sparing no effort to promote a unity which respects other people and transcends religion and culture, customs and differences. We must never, therefore, hurt others in any way.

5 “New Evangelization”: New Methods

New Methods for implementing Evangelization are implemented by finding new means of effectively handing on the gospel to the people of present-day society, and having an evangelical influence on that society by using these means to the full. (EN 40)

① Witnessing by our Lives (EN 41)

The gospel is not simply a matter of commandments and ideals but a message which completely changes our lives. The most fundamental element of evangelization, then, is that we must be living the gospel ourselves. Especially in Japan, where the number of people receiving baptism is staggeringly small, it is important that Christians live in the joy and hope of faith and let the gospel have an influence on those around them.

② Sharing the Word (EN 43)

For the gospel to permeate our lives, and to re-examine our experiences in the sight of God, it is very helpful to express our experience of living the faith in our own words. The first step in doing this is to share the words of the scriptures with our fellow Christians; in this way we will enrich the substance of one another's faith.

③ Learning from People and from Society (EN 46)

The Gospel is not just information. More than anything it is something which is passed on by our involvement with people. And then it is not a matter of we, who have the faith, handing it on unilaterally to those who do not; we need to learn about the working of the Holy Spirit, from the seeds of the gospel already present and beginning to grow in the people we meet and in society.

④ Fellowship and Cooperation (EN 60)

Evangelization is the work of the community. The way of doing things which is most incompatible with collaborative ministry for mission is 'deciding alone', or 'a single person acting alone'. Collaborative ministry for mission proceeds by those who make up the community, each

from his own situation, cooperating with one another more and more in fellowship. In other words it is a matter of lay people, religious, and priests building up a system and a shared spirit by praying, talking, deciding together and then working together to put these decisions into practice.

⑤ Making Use of the Mass Media, Especially the Internet (EN 45)

By using the internet people can gain access to huge amounts of information more or less instantly. The Church can make great use of this up to the minute means of mass communication in a variety of ways including publicity and exchange of information (especially through web pages), faith development and ongoing Christian formation.

⑥ Interfaith Dialogue (EN 53)

The gospel is a new life permeating the hearts and minds, sense of values and way of thinking of all people. Whilst recognizing and respecting the right to religious freedom, the Church maintains that all kinds of dialogue which transcend differences of religion and sect are a part of the work of evangelization.

6 “New Evangelization”: New Expressions

In any age the foundation of Evangelization is the proclamation of our faith in the mystery of the incarnation, redemption and resurrection of Christ. Evangelizing means, “bringing the Good News into all the strata of humanity, and through its influence transforming humanity from within and making it new” (EN 18). It is also, “as it were upsetting, through the power of the Gospel, mankind’s criteria of judgment, determining values, points of interest, lines of thought, sources of inspiration and models of life, which are in contrast with the Word of God and the plan of salvation” (EN 19). The “New Evangelization” is, therefore, expressed differently, a matter of adapting the Christian teaching and practice to present day society without losing sight of fundamental Catholic principles and the demands made by the Gospel (EN 63) .

① Inculturation (EN 20)

The Church has an obligation to bring the Gospel to the hearts of people who live in many different cultures. If the gospel is to take root more firmly in Japan it is probably necessary, to flesh out the gospel and to make use of the traditional religious sentiments of the Japanese.

② Evangelical Involvement with Fields such as Peace, Human Rights, Welfare, Environment (EN 29)

The circumstances of present day evangelization are gradually changing. With the “New Evangelization” it is necessary to open new areas of activity. There will probably be more involvement than at present with the poor, the socially disadvantaged, care of the young, the family, the work environment, social justice, welfare, and culture.

③ The Evangelical Message of Liberation (EN 9, 33)

Whilst modern society shows countless signs of denial of God it is, in reality, suffering as it searches for Him. The Church's vocation is to change this inhuman situation by the power of the Gospel.

④ A Simple Way of Life (EN 76)

Each of us, by being accommodated to the Gospel, will re-examine his life and turn his whole life into one of love. If we want to show solidarity with those the Gospel calls "the least of these my brethren" we will look for a simple way of life. A simple way of life is one which involves sharing.

7 The Approach to Pastoral Work in the "New Evangelization"

The most urgent challenge for the promotion of the "New Evangelization" is the approach to pastoral work on the part of the priests. This will come from "a spirituality which promotes fellowship". This pastoral approach requires that as a priests they

- ① cultivate a deep fellowship with Christ and the holiness of an evangelizer through prayer and celebration of the Mass.
- ② ask for the joy of knowing they are servants of the Gospel and share this joy with the faithful.
- ③ be sensitive to signs of the presence and work of the Holy Spirit in people, Society and its culture.
- ④ devise new ways of reaching people with the word of truth so that it may become their strength for life.
- ⑤ behave with humility as they work to build a community.
- ⑥ show a preferential love for the poor and those who need help and always act considerately.

8 Let's Begin to Have Exchanges with Our Sister Diocese of Jeju

On June 7 last year, Kyoto Diocese and Jeju Diocese in South Korea formed an alliance as sister dioceses. From this year has been designated June as "Kyoto-Jeju sister diocese month" in which we pray for interaction between the two dioceses. I ask you to plan visits and exchanges at every level of the diocesan structure. Please use the exchange information which is posted on the diocesan homepage.

9 "Justice and Peace Council": Conference in Kyoto

This year the "Japan Catholic Justice and Peace Council" it is the turn of Kyoto diocese to host the national conference of the "Japan Catholic Justice and Peace Council". This will take place from

October 7 to October 9. As we move towards the “New Evangelization” I would like to promote this conference as an occasion for necessary study and making friends to face the challenge of evangelizing society. I say to all the Christians of Kyoto diocese, as well as the many other people who will participate: let’s help to make this national conference a success.

10 Virgin Mary, “Star of Evangelization”

This year, once again, I dedicate our journey towards collaborative ministry for mission in Kyoto diocese to God the Father, through the intercession of the Virgin Mary. May She be the ever renewed “Star of Evangelization” (EN 82) .

Finally, I would like us, this year, to continue praying at Mass for ‘World Peace’. We will never forget these words of Pope John-Paul II: “If there is a possibility of peace, peace is an obligation”.

Then pray for “Living the Mass in Everyday Life” in the late pope’s final words: “O Lord, we ask you to stay with us; please stay with us. Amen.”

January 1, 2006, Solemnity of Mary the Mother of God

Notes

¹ *Evangelii nuntiandi*, Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Paul VI, December 8, 1975
Published in English as “Evangelization in the Modern World”

² *Pastores dabo vobis*, Apostolic Exhortation of Pope John-Paul II, March 25, 1992
Published in English as “I Will Give You Shepherds”