

THE PARISH AND THE NEW EVANGELISATION:
A CLOSE LOOK AT *EVANGELII GAUDIUM 27*

I thank Fr. Alexander in conjunction with the School of the Annunciation for inviting me to speak on this day *Go Forth Friends of Christ: The Joy of the Gospel and the Missionary Option*. The title of this paper is “The Parish and the New Evangelisation: A Close Look at *Evangelii Gaudium 27*.” So, first, new evangelisation; secondly, *Evangelii Gaudium*; and thirdly, the parish in this context. I will try to illustrate the paper with some practical, concrete examples from the Diocese of Portsmouth.

1. New Evangelisation

So first, new evangelisation. Over the last three decades, the Church has been calling everyone, clergy and laity, to the work of new evangelisation (NE), an evangelisation Pope John Paul II said, “new in its ardour, new in its methods and new in its expression.”¹ Evangelisation essentially means spreading the Good News, witnessing to the Gospel, proclaiming the *kerygma* of the death and resurrection of Christ. It is a unending activity, and, importantly, one that is two-way: it is about *ourselves* being constantly evangelised, as well as ourselves constantly evangelising others. This two-way mission has been effective since the Lord’s Ascension, when he told us to “go; make disciples of all the nations; baptise them ... and teach them to observe all the commands I gave you” (Mt 28: 19-20). In this 21C, exciting yet daunting, there is a new culture abroad, not least in Europe and North America, that is highly secularised and in which Christianity and its values, once the basis of Western society, is increasingly marginalised. If the Gospel message is to be communicated effectively in this new culture and the Church is to hand on Christ’s message not least to the young, then new methods, new expressions, new means of evangelisation are required.

So new culture – new evangelisation! Yet the term NE means more than new methods and new expressions. St. John Paul spoke of a new ardour. In this sense, NE means a return to the original experience of faith, a transforming encounter with the Person of Jesus Christ, Lord and Saviour, and a renewed sense of being called to discipleship within His Body, the Church. St. Paul said, “life to me is Christ” (Phil 1: 21); the “life I live now in this body I live in faith, faith in the Son of God, who loved me and who sacrificed Himself for my sake” (Gal 2: 20). St. Bernadine of Siena put it like this:

“The Catholic Faith consists in *knowing Jesus Christ* and receiving illumination from Him. He is the light of the world, the door to life, and the foundation of eternal salvation.”²

¹ See John Paul II “The Task of the Latin American Bishop” in *Origins* 12 (March 24, 1983): 659-62. The occasion was a discourse to an assembly of CELAM in Port-au-Prince on 9th March 1983. Cf. R. Fisichella *The New Evangelisation* (Gracewing, Leominster: 2012) 8f

² *Sermo 49, art. 1: Opera Omnia IV, 495*. Extract from the Divine Office, Office of Readings for the optional memorial of The Most Holy Name of Jesus (3rd January) in *ICEL The Liturgy of the Hours Supplement (Grey Book) Optional and Obligatory Memorials added to the General Roman Calendar from 1984 to 2004* (Washington, April 2014)

NE is about the kerygma, a rediscovery of the centrality of the Person of Christ and discipleship of Him, and a new desire to invite others into a transforming relationship with Him. This Christians are meant to do with “new ardour.”

For many Catholics today, this requires a changed mind-set. It is easy to talk about the Church and its institutions, but not about the reality and experience upon which the Church is based. The institutional tail often wags the spiritual dog. In the past, great emphasis was laid on building up the Church, on the parish, on lay ministries and on structures. Clergy became ‘chaplains to the Catholic community,’ the faithful ‘consumers of spiritual goods,’ with parishes focused on meeting parishioners’ needs. NE, however, suggests a shift of focus back from the Church of the Lord to the Lord of the Church and from the Church’s internal life to her apostolate in the world. Every member of the Church is called to be a missionary-disciple, and the clergy are called to be mission-directors, offering inspiration, leadership, formation and support. As JP2 once said, there needs to be a recovery of the secular nature of the mission of the laity.³ Clergy numerically make up less than 0.1% of a diocese; this is about the laity. The laity must witness in the world so that everyone might have a chance to hear the Gospel, to come to faith, to receive salvation.⁴ This is the much talked-of shift from being inward-looking to outward-looking, from maintenance to mission.

For instance, the total population of the area served by the Diocese of Portsmouth is 3M, of which maybe 200,000 are Catholics, of which in turn 40,000 might be termed ‘practising.’ There are about 95 priests. This means motivating the 40,000 with their 95 priests to become missionaries to the 160,000 non-practising and the 2.8M others! A good question to ask: Is my parish community inward-looking or outward-looking? Is it in maintenance-mode or mission-mode? Is it always the same people at Mass, or do parishioners often bring new people, friends and neighbours? Is everyone getting old, or are there lots of youngsters? Is the focus on protecting the community, the holy-huddle, or is it on reaching out to the wider world, the lost, the non-churchgoing? NE may not mean doing new things so much as reviewing the things done and doing them in a new way, so that there is always a clear connection with the Person of Jesus Christ, with the kerygma, and with the original experience of the call to discipleship.

Two elements foster NE. The first is prayer and spirituality, a transforming inward experience of God’s love and salvation. All the resources of the Church, the diocese and the parish need to be put at the service of helping people to pray, to find God, to

³ See John Paul II *Christifideles Laici* 15 (London, CTS: 1998). Cf. Congregation for the Clergy *Instruction on Certain Questions regarding the Collaboration of the Non-Ordained Faithful in the Sacred Ministry of the Priest* (Vatican City, Libreria Editrice Vaticana: 1997) p. 7

⁴ The role of the laity in the Church’s mission is paramount. *Lumen Gentium* notes how it is the laity’s “special vocation . . . to seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and directing them according to God’s will. . . . There they are called by God that, being led by the spirit to the Gospel, they may contribute to the sanctification of the world, as from within like leaven, by fulfilling their own particular duties. . . . It pertains to them in a special way so to illuminate and order all temporal things with which they are so closely associated that these may be effected and grow according to Christ and may be to the glory of the Creator and Redeemer” (LG 31). This task is not for the clergy. Only the laity, because of their skills in the world, culture and everyday life, can do this. As the Vatican II Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity *Apostolicam Actuositatem* puts it: “the effort to infuse a Christian spirit into the mentality, customs, laws, and structures of the community in which one lives, is so much the duty and responsibility of the laity that it can never be performed properly by others” (AA 13).

experience the love of God, to commit to God, to learn the art of praying, to develop a personal-passionate friendship with Jesus Christ, to grasp the meaning of His death and resurrection, and to have a sense of being personally chosen by Him to be His disciple. Catholics have huge resources for this in two millennia of spiritual theology, in the wisdom and lives of the saints, and in a rich, profound and diverse Catholic Tradition.

A second element fostering NE is identifying and releasing charisms and gifts. Ways must be found to help each individual member of the Church reflect on their relationship with God, to have a stronger sense of the centrality of Christ in their lives, to become an intentional or missionary disciple, and to discern the gifts, talents and charisms the Holy Spirit has given them for mission and service. The aim here is not an institution-led approach – discerning who might be called, say, to run Children’s Liturgy - but rather a person-centred approach that identifies and releases the gifts of each disciple for missionary-service in the world, at home, at work, at play.

In summary, 18 months ago, to effect a shift to NE, we established four priorities for the Diocese of Portsmouth: “that each person, each parish community, each Pastoral Area and Deanery, each school and every ministry within the Diocese is called:

1. to seek out and draw in the un-churched and the unbelieving;
2. to develop life-long discipleship, spiritual growth and a living relationship with Jesus Christ, above all, in the Holy Eucharist;
3. to discern the gifts, charisms and vocations God has given; and
4. to form and support existing and new ‘creative apostolates’.”⁵

2. *Evangelii Gaudium* 27

Now to *Evangelii Gaudium* 27. *Evangelii Gaudium* is the Apostolic Exhortation that followed the 2012 Synod on *The New Evangelisation for the Transmission of the Christian Faith*.⁶ In it, Pope Francis freely developed the Synod discussions, adding in his own original style further thoughts and reflections. Its core message is that of NE: how a personal relationship with Jesus Christ in the Church is a cause of joy such that it naturally drives people out to evangelise others. The Exhortation has five chapters. Paragraph 27 is from Chapter One (19-41), on how everything in the Church needs to be transposed into a missionary key, and how Christians must go beyond their comfort zones to take the Good News of Christ to the peripheries. Chapter Two is on the crisis of community in the modern world (50-109) and Chapter Three (110-175) deals with aspects of evangelisation such as inculturation and the role of the homily. In Chapter Four (176-258), Pope Francis discusses the preferential option for the poor. “I want a Church that is poor *for* the poor” (198) he says. He mentions the “homeless, the

⁵ See for instance Bishop Philip Egan *Chaplaincy in the Context of the New Evangelisation*, available online at www.portsmouthdiocese.org.uk (January 2015)

⁶ For text, see Pope Francis *Evangelii Gaudium: The Joy of the Gospel* (London, CTS: 2013). For the 58 Propositions promulgated by the 2012 Synod see Synodus Episcoporum Bulletin: XIII Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops 7-28 October 2012 *The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith* online at www.vatican.va (January 2015)

addicted, refugees, indigenous peoples, the elderly ... migrants ... victims of human trafficking, ... unborn children,” the latter the “most defenceless and innocent” of all (210, 211 and 216). Each “individual Christian and every community is called to be an instrument of God for the liberation and promotion of the poor, and for enabling them to be fully part of society” (187). The Exhortation concludes with Chapter Five (259-288) on the spirituality of being a missionary-disciple.

Evangelii Gaudium is a rich resource for parish life. After its promulgation, I issued a Pastoral Message to the Diocese to highlight some of the key points.⁷ To mention three things, first, I invited clergy and people to ask themselves: Who are the poor in our neighbourhood? What is the meaning of 'poverty' in our local context, our parish? What strategies of assistance and support might we put in place for those in need? It led us to follow up the Year of Faith with a diocesan Year of Faith in Action. In the first place, parishes must truly become centres of charity and outreach to the poor.

Secondly, I asked people to discuss how their parish might become more effectively an evangelising community. In Paragraph 28, Francis says that the parish

“is not an outdated institution ...[It] possesses great flexibility. The parish is the presence of the Church in a given territory, an environment for hearing God’s word, for growth in the Christian life, for dialogue, proclamation, charitable outreach, worship and celebration. In all its activities, the parish encourages and trains its members to be evangelisers.”

Citing the propositions of the 2012 Synod, he adds that the parish “is a community of communities, a sanctuary where the thirsty come to drink in the midst of their journey, and a centre of constant missionary outreach.” The question to ask is: How genuinely mission-oriented are our parishes in practice?

Thirdly, in the Pastoral Message I urged everyone to respond to Pope Francis’s call to keep churches open. The Church, he said

“is called to be the house of the Father, with doors always wide open. One concrete sign of such openness is that our church doors should always be open, so that if someone, moved by the Spirit, comes there looking for God, he or she will not find a closed door” (47).

How good it is, the Holy Father continued

“to stand before a crucifix, or on our knees before the Blessed Sacrament, and simply to be in his presence! How much good it does us when he once more touches our lives and impels us to share his new life! [For the] primary reason for evangelising is the love of Jesus which we have received, the experience of salvation which urges us to ever greater love of him.” (264)

In the Pastoral Message, I said:

“In the Diocese of Portsmouth, I once again urge everyone: keep your church open! Visit Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament! Adore Him and come away renewed, sharing your love and happiness with others!”

There has been a positive response to this, with some churches previously locked, now kept open. *Nightfever* too has been spreading.

⁷ See www.portsmouthdiocese.org.uk

Pope Francis believes the message of *Evangelii Gaudium* has a

“programmatically significant and important consequences. [We] cannot leave things as they presently are. Mere administration can no longer be enough. Throughout the world, let us be permanently in a state of mission” (25).

There are, he notes,

“ecclesial structures which can hamper efforts at evangelisation, [and] even good structures are only helpful when there is life constantly driving, sustaining and assessing them” (26).

Thus, he famously says in Paragraph 27:

“I dream of a ‘missionary option,’ that is, a missionary impulse capable of transforming everything, so that the Church’s customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channelled for the evangelisation of today’s world rather than for her self-preservation.”

We must make our structures “more mission-oriented, [and] ordinary pastoral activity on every level more inclusive and open.”

To give some context here, in the period after Vatican II, in order to establish more participative structures, the Church proposed at many levels the establishment of committees and pastoral councils in which laity and clergy collaborate. But in the Western world, the culture of councils and committees often borrows unwittingly from business practice or from democratic models. These easily lead to factions and friction or an inward-looking bureaucratic mentality. Moreover, at a time of perceived clergy shortage, dioceses have tended to focus attention on involving laity in the day-to-day pastoral ministry of the Church. Many have employed lay administrators and pastoral workers, such as lay chaplains and youth ministers. All these developments are laudable, yet the primary vocation of the laity, as *Lumen Gentium* 31 puts it, is to “seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and directing them according to God’s will”. Mechanisms need to be developed to enable the clergy to sanctify, form and support the laity in their mission to the world.

In the Diocese of Portsmouth I have been trying to address this. Three examples. First, over the last two years, the Diocese has been reorganised and a new curial structure established, called, perhaps uninspiringly, *The Framework for Collaboration*.⁸ The Framework is largely comprised of lay-led volunteer teams, working at diocesan level under the direction of the Bishops Council. They help direct the pastoral life of the diocese, everything from marriage and family life to liturgy, chaplaincy services and interreligious dialogue. A stringent process of discernment, selection and formation of team members is needed for this to work, but so far over 100 volunteers have been recruited, although many more are needed. The Framework teams are organised around three vicariates, representing the three-fold mission of Christ as Priest, Prophet and Shepherd. Their task is to serve parish clergy and laity, inspiring them and helping them undertake projects of mission and evangelisation at local level.

⁸ For more information on this and a diagram, see the diocesan website.

Secondly, the Diocese has 23 pastoral areas or local clusters of parishes, each with a Pastoral Council. Presently, the pastoral areas are being asked to replace their Pastoral Councils with a new model, the Evangelisation Strategy Team. The Strategy Team comprises clergy plus a representative spread of the faithful: young, middle, wise and seasoned, a teacher from school and a religious. Care has to be taken not to enlist ‘bruised apples’ or people with strong agendas, but members able to work together as a team. The Team’s purpose is not to administer, discuss minutes or organise rotas of Readers, but to dream the dream, to think outside the box, to enable and sponsor simple, do-able mission-projects. This requires an assessment of the area, the situation and its needs, an understanding of what is already happening, an identification of priorities and the resources needed. It might be that a parish has a lot of young families: What about organising a family picnic day? Or a lot of retirement homes: Could a young visiting group be set up? Or inactive Catholics: Could new media be used to reach them? Or keeping the church open for prayer and Eucharistic adoration, devising a leaflet with Mass times for a new housing development, running a ‘Theology on Tap’ session in a local pub, or having a stall on a Christmas Market? There can be lots of ideas and new strategies to help re-present the Gospel, meeting people where they are and proposing to them, in a new context and in an unexpected way, the Good News of Christ, the Church’s message, the offer of salvation.

In *Evangelii Gaudium* 27, Pope Francis speaks of making the Church’s structures more mission-oriented. In the Diocese of Portsmouth, to give a third example, we have just re-established deaneries, eight clusters of pastoral areas. What is new here is the rationale: not to bring in another level of bureaucracy, but to address the mission options for a whole region with regard to NE. In his 1990 encyclical on mission, *Redemptoris Missio*, Pope John Paul spoke of evangelising *areopagi*.⁹ The Areopagus was a hill in ancient Athens where civic magistrates and religious leaders gathered. In Acts 17, St. Paul wandered around the Areopagus and saw the various statues, including one *To an Unknown God*. He was then able to proclaim the Gospel: ‘What you worship as Unknown I proclaim to you.’ We might note, most of the intelligentsia laughed at him, but some did listen and wanted to hear more.¹⁰ Today, the task is to identify local and regional *areopagi*, the crossroads, market squares, meeting places, centres and cultural sectors where people gather, work or pass through. Examples include hospitals, medical centres and care homes; schools, colleges and universities; the regional and local TV and news media; Young Offender institutions, immigration and detention centres; sporting venues; shopping malls; libraries; housing developments; transport nodes (stations, ports and airports); hotels and conference facilities; business and industrial complexes. Other *areopagi* include ethnic communities, interreligious dialogue, and relationships with civic leaders and local government. How can the Catholic Church be present in these *areopagi*? How can the Church evangelise? How can the Church serve people’s needs, especially the poor and those in difficulty?

⁹ See John Paul II *Redemptoris Missio*. *On The Permanent Validity of the Church's Missionary Mandate* (London, CTS: 1990) 37

¹⁰ See Acts 17: 23 and 32-34.

An example of a huge *areopagus* is the new Reading station with its extra 8 platforms. It has an annual footfall of 20M passengers. Is there anything the Church can do to engage with it? Could there be a chaplaincy or a leaflet? There are also hundreds of staff working in the station and the depots. What is being done for them? Surely there are Catholics among them to be networked? Are there not other Christians, people of religion and people of good will? *Evangelii Gaudium* urges us to go out onto the margins, proclaiming the Gospel, reaching out person to person to the most needy. In many of these cases, it is possible to act ecumenically or interreligiously.

3. The Parish in the Context of New Evangelisation

Lastly, some thoughts on the parish in the context of NE. We must immediately acknowledge that today the parish is in crisis, despite it being, in the Church's self-understanding, after the family, the basic unit of a diocese. People live extremely busy lives and so faith becomes like a hobby, with Mass yet another activity to be fitted in. Rather than weekly, many Catholics now practice when they can, maybe once a month. The territorial parish with its clergy thus has less claim on their affiliation. People use the parish as required, for a funeral or a baptism. They are also discerning consumers. In urban contexts, they shop around for the type of Mass they prefer, at the time that suits their schedule and ideally for the priest they like.

Two points. First, the *organon* or organising principle for a parish is the three-fold ministry of Christ, the Priest, Teacher and Shepherd. In the Gospels, Jesus is the One anointed by the Father with the power of the Spirit to be humanity's Priest, Prophet and King. The early Church took these three archetypes of priest, prophet and king from the Old Testament. As the *Catechism* says, Jesus fulfilled the Messianic hopes of Israel in His three-fold office of priest, prophet and king (CCC 436).

- As Priest, Jesus is the One Who through His death and resurrection, unites us with God and enables us to become holy.
- As Prophet or Teacher, Jesus is the One Who reveals to us the Truth about God, about being human, and about the meaning of life.
- As King or Shepherd, Jesus is the One Who loves and leads us, Who cares for us, and Who sends us out into the world to work for the Kingdom of God.

Christ is humanity's Priest, Prophet and King. If Jesus has a three-fold mission or ministry - sometimes referred to by the Latin term *munus*, an office or duty, the triple *munera* – so too through baptism does every Christian. Christ has called each disciple to represent Him, to be in Him a priest, a prophet and a shepherd, and to share through the anointing of the Spirit, His priestly, prophetic and shepherding mission.

This three-fold ministry of Christ as Priest, Teacher and Shepherd is a solid organising principle for a parish: that is, administering the sacraments, offering formation, and caring for the needy. The Eucharist is the centre of Christian life, its source and summit, and it is the Eucharist that creates the Eucharistic community of clergy and people. Every parish thus sacramentally *re-presents* Jesus Christ and His band of disciples. The three-fold ministry of Christ expresses the dynamism or dynamic

purpose of a parish: the call to discipleship, the formation of disciples and the sending of disciples on mission. It is Jesus in the Holy Eucharist Who gathers His People, Who forms them with His Word, and Who sends them out on mission. A parish exists to insert people into the life of Christ, to instruct them in Christ's teaching, and to enable them to witness to Christ in everyday life. In this, the Sunday liturgy is the source and summit. Like breathing-in and breathing-out, Sunday Mass is the summit of week to which the disciple is called and also the source of the week, supplying him or her with energy and grace for the week ahead. The Sunday Mass should build up in parishioners a real desire for on-going formation and send them out on mission at work, at home and at play.

But secondly, it seems to me we need to envisage the parish and its facilities more as a chaplaincy-centre than a static community. In the years after Vatican II, pastors have placed great emphasis on forming community, on building the parish as a family, on offering pastoral care. This is a solid foundation, since today many have a real need to belong. Yet in the call to NE, parishes must also be open, outgoing, inviting, serving the needy and this is where the chaplaincy model is helpful. Chaplaincies are places where people drop in, pass through, move on. Chaplaincies see themselves not as an end but as a means. They are staging posts on life's pilgrim journey, multi-ethnic people-places that exist to serve, enable, facilitate. They operate in contexts. Think of a university chaplaincy. University chaplaincies build up core teams of people that enable them to become centres of sacramental refreshment, agencies of doctrinal, moral and spiritual formation, places of discussion yet also places for counselling and support. University chaplaincies are open all hours, not just on Sunday. They enable overseas students to feel at home. For a parish this would have many implications, not least for the way its property is used. Adequate parking and easy access would help. Again, the community facility might benefit from a "Starbucks makeover", a relaxed lounge area with good coffee, tea, cakes, wi-fi, books to read and buy. Again, provision needs to be made for small-group facilities, for counselling and for formation rooms with modern technology. Above all, the chaplaincy-parish must be a power-house of constant prayer and an engine-room of service to the needy.

Chaplaincies are not only for Catholics, although in the first place they are directed to Catholics. Think of a hospital chaplaincy. The Catholic chaplain serves the needs of Catholic patients. Yet chaplaincy services operate in a collaborative context at once ecumenical, interreligious and secular. The services offered are not limited to Catholics but to anyone of good will, seeking them. This is exactly the scope of NE, the Church on mission to all. This is surely too a model for a parish. Indeed, to show this missionary scope, I have asked our new Social Research Unit in next year's Diocese of Portsmouth Year Book to include in parish statistics not only the estimated Catholic population and the number of practicing Catholics, but also the total population figures for that area.

Over the last two or three years, there has been much new literature on the parish in the light of NE. Mention should be made of the outstanding work of Sherry Weddell and the Catherine of Siena Institute, Colorado Springs, especially her 2012 *Forming*

Intentional Disciples.¹¹ Also, the writings of the Maryland parish priest, Fr. Michael White and his lay associate, Tom Corcoran in *Rebuilt: The Story of a Catholic Parish* and its sequel *Tools for Rebuilding: 75 Practical Ways to Make Your Parish Better*, both published in 2013. Meanwhile, in his excellent *Divine Renovation: Bringing your Parish from Maintenance to Mission*, Fr. James Mallon suggests parishes review their budgets, to evaluate whether resources are used mostly on property or on mission-projects.¹² He suggests ten areas that a parish in the context of NE should consider: prioritising the weekend, reviewing hospitality teams, investing in uplifting music from Latin plainchant to contemporary worship, homilies and visual aids, building a meaningful community that rejects what he calls ‘anonymous Christianity,’ setting clear expectations for parishioners, identifying gifts and charisms, creating smaller communities within the larger community, having trust in the action of the Holy Spirit and building an inviting church in which occasional attenders are made welcome.

Speaking as a parish priest, I would say the sacraments present a huge opportunity for evangelisation, when people come to request baptism, First Holy Communion, confirmation, marriage, funerals and in sickness. Traditionally the emphasis has been on catechesis, but today these encounters in the ‘chaplaincy-parish’ are more about primary proclamation. People need ‘words,’ but ‘religion’ even more. New methods need to be found to enkindle the religious sense, to enable people to encounter Christ, to help them meet Him in the Gospels and in the Blessed Sacrament.

On the other hand, any priest or Strategy Team taking forward the NE in a parish needs to be ready for opposition. Think of the criticism Jesus faced from the scribes, who said Beelzebub was in Him; even his own relatives thought He was out of His mind (Mk 3: 20-35). From personal experience, the most challenging criticism comes from some of those who were young adults in the 1960s. Inhabiting a quaintly ecclesio-centric world, they can be highly critical of traditional Catholic teaching and authority, particularly on morals. They often resist innovations in the liturgy, especially if they fail to fit a 1970s stereotype. This is why NE requires strong faith and a vision not to be deflected, but also charity and patience with critics. Feedback is always welcome, even if formulaic, since there is often much to learn from it.

Conclusion

So to conclude. This paper has sought to explore a vision for the parish in the context of the NE through the prism of *Evangelii Gaudium* 27. The foundation of that vision is the Person of Jesus Christ, Our Lord and Saviour. Priest, Prophet and Shepherd, He calls us to discipleship within His Body, the Church. He forms us in His Word and

¹¹ S. Weddell *Forming Intentional Disciples. The Path to Knowing and Following Jesus* (Huntington, Our Sunday Visitor: 2012). Cf. M. Sweeney and S. Weddell *The Parish: Mission or Maintenance* (Colorado Springs, Catherine of Siena Institute: 2000) and S. Weddell *Making Disciples; Equipping Apostles* (Colorado Springs, Catherine of Siena Institute: 2000)

¹² See J. Mallon *Divine Renovation: Bringing your Parish from Maintenance to Mission* (New London CT, Twenty-Third Publications: 2014).

sends us out on mission, to offer to the world the Good News of salvation. St. John Paul II, in *Redemptoris Missio*, said:

“If we look at today's world, we are struck by many negative factors that can lead to pessimism. But this feeling is unjustified: we have faith in God our Father and Lord, in his goodness and mercy. As the third millennium of the redemption draws near, God is preparing a great springtime for Christianity, and we can already see its first signs.”¹³

That new springtime is to me very evident. Already the Spirit is at work in the heart of every child, woman and man, wooing them towards full communion with Christ and His Church. Already genuine creativity is occasioning great developments. Already, people are coming forward, desiring change and placing themselves at Christ's service. So as Catholics, *Duc in altum!* Let us put out into the deep, paying out the nets for a catch (Luke 5: 4)! Let us pray for an even greater outpouring of the Holy Spirit, so that everyone may find in the Heart of Christ that true, genuine, lasting human happiness and fulfilment for which deep-down they long.

Thank you for listening.

¹³ *Redemptoris Missio* 86