

### **AD GENTES AND THE NEW EVANGELISATION**

I thank Mgr. Jeremy and all of you for inviting me to this prestigious Symposium: "A Sure Compass: The Documents of the Council." I thank you for inviting me to speak about the Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity *Ad gentes divinitus* and new evangelisation. In this paper, I will discuss, the decree itself, then, developments in missiology, the theology of mission, since Vatican II, and lastly, 'new evangelisation' which is, as it were, a logical outcome of the trajectory the Council established.

#### 1. *Ad Gentes*

Although mission has been practised since the Church began, *Ad Gentes* is the first document ever from an ecumenical Council devoted specifically to the Church's missionary activity. As Stephen Bevens, the American Verbiter, points out in a recent study, it was a document with a particularly turbulent history, one that spanned the whole period of the Council from the ante-preparatory phase in 1959, through to its promulgation in the very last session in 1965.<sup>1</sup> This was in part because of the almost irreconcilable tensions among the members of the commission working on the draft. One group favoured a canonical approach, with propositions about practical matters and the reform of Propaganda Fide, the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, whilst another group desired a comprehensive theological exposition of the nature and purpose of the Church's missionary work.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, some of the Council fathers asked whether a discrete tract on mission was necessary at all, arguing instead that the theme of mission should be deeply woven into all the Council's documents. As the various drafts of *Ad Gentes* were batted to and fro, it was the intervention of the pope himself that proved decisive, when Paul VI took the unusual step of attending in person a working session of the commission. The final schema, edited by Yves Congar, Joseph Ratzinger and Joseph Neuner, took shape in early 1965 in a working session at the Verbiter House on Lake Nemi. When at last the decree was adopted by the Council fathers on 7<sup>th</sup> December '65, it represented a radical rethinking of the meaning of the Church's mission in the changed social and political circumstances of the mid-20C.

In the end *Ad Gentes* adopted a thoroughly theological approach, although it does contain many practical ordinances too. The decree is consistent with all the chief documents of Vatican II, especially the four constitutions, *Lumen Gentium* and *Gaudium et Spes* on the Church, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* on the sacred liturgy and *Dei Verbum* on divine revelation.<sup>3</sup> Arguably, *Ad Gentes* applied the theology of these documents to missiology. Indeed, it benefitted from being one of the last documents of the Council to be ratified, precisely because the four major constitutions and the other documents, such as the declarations *Dignitatis Humanae* on religious freedom and *Nostra Aetate* on the non-Christian religions, were already in place. It meant that

<sup>1</sup> S. Bevens "Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity *Ad Gentes*" in S. Bevens and J. Gross *Discovering Vatican II. Evangelization and Religious Freedom* (New York, Paulist Press: 2009) 9-29.

<sup>2</sup> Bevens 2009: 10-12, 14

<sup>3</sup> See A. Flannery ed. *Vatican Council II. The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents* (New York, Costello: 1987).

the new tone that John O'Malley avers was a characteristic of Vatican II – pastoral, positive, inviting and persuasive - is especially evident in this decree.<sup>4</sup>

The forty-two paragraphs of *Ad Gentes* fall into six chapters, the first of which, 'Doctrinal Principles,' lays out a comprehensive theological vision: that "the Church ... is by its very nature missionary, since, according to the plan of the Father, it has its origin in the mission of the Son" and the mission of the Holy Spirit (AG 2). Mission precedes the Church because God is mission. The Father sent his Son to preach the Gospel and to enable humans to become sharers in his divine nature (AG 3) and through the Holy Spirit he established the Church as the universal sacrament of salvation (AG 5). Because God wants all people to be saved, the Church is ever on mission on every continent until the Coming of the Lord at the end of time (AG 7-9). Chapter Two then deals with three key aspects of missionary work: the nature of Christian witness (AG 11-12), the conversion brought about by preaching the gospel (AG 13-15) and the ecclesial dimension, that is, the formation of the Christian community and the role in missionary work that its various members take (AG 15-18). Chapter Three discusses the development and growth of the local churches, especially those that are "young", and how over time these new churches, "adapted to the mentality and character of each culture," should in turn enrich the universal Church (AG 22). The vocation and formation of missionaries is the topic of Chapter Four, interestingly not only those who are priests and religious, but also lay missionaries (AG 23). Chapter Five deals with the organisation of missionary activity, the reform of Propaganda Fide and the relationship of bishops and religious congregations in missionary territories (AG 29) and Chapter Six discusses how bishops, priests, religious and laity might collaborate better in order to contribute to the "work of evangelisation [which] is the fundamental task of the People of God" (AG 35).

Let me highlight two features of *Ad Gentes*: first, its comprehensive presentation of what might be called a *missio Dei* ('mission of God') theology, that all missionary activity originates in the Trinity, in God who is mission. The mission-operator, so to speak, is not you, not me, not the Church, but God. As a discipline, missiology was a twentieth century development, the first Catholic chair being established at Munster in 1911 and held by the Jesuit theologian, Josef Schmidlin.<sup>5</sup> But missiology soon began to take two different routes with divergent pastoral implications visible on the ground: the *conversio animarum* ('conversion of souls') approach of the Münster school and German theology in general, and the *plantatio ecclesiae* ('Church-planting') approach of Louvain, the French theologians and Irish missionary orders. The *conversio animarum* model was a Christocentric theology that emphasised preaching the Gospel and the need for a personal conversion to Jesus Christ in order to gain salvation. It envisaged the task of mission, like St. Francis Xavier, as that of saving souls,<sup>6</sup> whilst the *plantatio ecclesiae* approach, favoured by André Seumois, who worked on an early draft of *Ad Gentes*, was an ecclesiocentric theology that stressed the need to establish the Church, to develop parishes, to build schools, to

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<sup>4</sup> J. O'Malley "Vatican II: Did Anything Happen?" *Theological Studies* 67.1 (March 2006) 3-33.

<sup>5</sup> Bevans 2009: 57

<sup>6</sup> See St. Francis Xavier "Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel", which is the Second Reading of the Office of Readings in the Liturgy of the Hours appointed for 3<sup>rd</sup> December, the Memorial of St. Francis Xavier.

set up the structures, and so on. As Pierre Charles put it: "Once the Church is planted then the mission stops." *Ad Gentes*, by espousing a *missio Dei* approach, a theocentric model, was able to draw into a higher synthesis these two pre-conciliar schools of mission, thus opening the way to new possibilities in the years ahead.

The second feature of *Ad Gentes* to mention was its use of the term 'evangelisation,' from εὐαγγέλιον 'the gospel' (Matthew and Mark) and εὐαγγελίζομαι 'to announce good news' (Luke and Acts). εὐαγγέλιον and εὐαγγελίζομαι occur 97 times in the New Testament, although there is much discussion about their exact meaning, content and scope. Essentially, the 'gospel' means both the good news that Jesus brings, the message he preaches (cf. Mk 1: 14-15), but also, especially in Paul, Jesus himself. Jesus is in Person the Good News of God. These terms, however, dropped out of use over time until the great overseas missionary endeavours of the 18C and 19C. Vatican I used the term *evangelium* once and never 'evangelise' or 'evangelisation'. But Vatican II used the terms frequently: 'evangelise' 18 times, 'evangelisation' 31 times, *evangelium* 157 times, although largely as alternatives for mission and often with an ambiguous or ill-defined meaning. *Ad Gentes* speaks of the purpose of missionary activity as "evangelisation and the planting of the Church" (sic) among peoples in which it has not yet taken root (AG 6). It would only be in the post-conciliar period that 'evangelisation' became a common term, better defined, as the overall process by which a person becomes committed to Christ and a member of his Church.

The decree *Ad Gentes* had a poor reception, in my view, in part thanks to *lacunae* within the document itself but more to the ecclesial and the secular context of the time. Vatican II coincided with the optimism of the 1960s, an era of explosive social change, technological advance, political activism, the sexual revolution, and a range of international developments that led, notably, to the demise of colonialism. Moreover, in the period 1965-75, that is, in the immediate aftermath of Vatican II and Paul VI's 1968 encyclical letter *Humanae Vitae*, the Church underwent much ferment and crisis, absorbed with the internal changes and debates brought about by the Council and its new ways of thinking and acting. To this were added some novel theological currents, especially Karl Rahner's celebrated theory of anonymous Christians.<sup>7</sup> These started to pose radical questions to Catholic missiology: Why be missionary if God can save people of good will *without* explicit faith in Christ or the Church? Is Christianity one way or the one and only way to God? Has anyone the right to disturb another person's belief-system? Should dialogue replace proclamation? How might the core Gospel be proposed without imposing Western forms? How far should indigenous elements be adopted to express and celebrate Christian faith? Subjected to profound questions in a rapidly evolving context, the shortcomings of *Ad Gentes* became apparent. Its vision of mission appeared cloudy and limited; it said little about justice and peace, economic development, the role of women or environmental concerns. Its grasp of the theological meaning and value of culture seemed naive.

## 2. New Paradigms

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<sup>7</sup> For his classic presentation, see K. Rahner "Anonymous Christians" in *Theological Investigations Volume Six. Concerning Vatican Council II* (London, Darton, Longman and Todd: 1965) 390-398.

When in 1959 John XXIII announced Vatican II, he said it would be a 'pastoral' Council, its aim, not to make new definitions of doctrine, but *aggiornamento*, an updating or modernisation of the Church's style, canon law and *modus operandi*, in order to communicate better with the modern world and to spread the Gospel. He also wanted the Council to help to bring about unity amongst Christians. Consequently, the key question addressed at Vatican II was 'What does it mean to be the Church of God in the modern world?' and in the immediate aftermath up to 1975, the issue of internal renewal and the changes it brought, for instance, to the liturgy and other domains of ecclesial life, became a dominant concern. Yet John XXIII sought an *aggiornamento* not for its own sake, but in order to enable the Church to communicate more effectively with the world. It was to underline this that Paul VI chose the topic of evangelisation for the 1974 Synod of Bishops. The apostolic exhortation he wrote afterwards in 1975, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, more than anything else spurred the Church to look outwards. Indeed, in my view, this magisterial document in time transformed the post-conciliar Church with a new mission-mindedness, a desire to reach out to all with the gospel.

*Evangelii Nuntiandi* builds on *Ad Gentes*. Paul VI declares unambiguously that "the Church exists in order to evangelise, that is, to preach and teach, to be the channel of the gift of grace" (EN 14). But in a clear break with pre-conciliar terminology and that of *Ad Gentes* which spoke of the missions and missionary work, the favoured term pervading *Evangelii Nuntiandi* is 'evangelisation'. This term henceforth would be used in the Church to encapsulate the new thinking, and the entire scope and purpose of all her missionary activities: to proclaim the Good News of Christ, to introduce people into discipleship, to unite all peoples in the communion of the Church, and through Christ and his Church to draw them into the life of the Trinity. Paul VI enhanced the *missio Dei* theology of *Ad Gentes* with what might be called a 'regnocentric' approach, that is, a focus, derived from the Gospels, on the *regnum Dei*, the kingdom of God, the account of the concrete ministry of Jesus and his preaching of the kingdom. In adopting this scriptural approach, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* presents the Church as an instrument that orientates the present world to, and unites it with, the future kingdom. This approach was extant in such theologians of the day as Rudolf Schnackenburg, Hans Küng and Richard McBrien.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, these new insights coalesced in the growing concern for justice expressed in the 1968 Medellín Conference of Latin American bishops and the burgeoning liberation theologies of the '70s, which saw the Church's task as one of annunciation and denunciation.

There were two theological developments in the 1970s and '80s with a bearing on missiology that were in part occasioned by *Evangelii Nuntiandi*. First, a shift in the Church's self-consciousness began to occur, that she was no longer a predominantly northern or Euro-American Church, but 'World-Church.' At Vatican II, the majority of bishops were non-European, and so the bishops for the first time experienced tangibly her international character, her catholicity. Walbert Bülhmann, in his 1976 classic "The Coming of the Third Church",<sup>9</sup> argued that a new way of 'being-Church'

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<sup>8</sup> See for instance R. Schnackenburg *God's Rule and Kingdom* (London, Burns and Oates: 1968), H. Küng *The Church* (New York, Doubleday: 1967), and R. McBrien *Do We Need the Church?* (London, Collins: 1968).

<sup>9</sup> W. Bülhmann *The Coming of the Third Church* (Slough, St. Paul Publications: 1976)

was now emerging, the 'third' Church. The first Church comprised Jewish Christianity under St. Peter, but the New Testament records the coming of the second Church, the Church of St. Paul and the Gentiles. The transition from one to the other was painful and hard-won. Yet in espousing a Christianity without its Jewish 'envelope,' the second Church was able to gain radically new perspectives, a new cultural identity, a new language, a new seat of authority and new styles of worship. Bühlmann opined that in the post-Vatican II era, a new phase of world-mission was opening up marked by pluralism and inclusivity, with a welter of new theologies, inculturated moralities, accommodated practices and divergent liturgical customs. In this way, the Greco-Roman second Church was yielding to the third Church, whose arrival involves the same kind of qualitative leap or tectonic shift that can be seen in the New Testament between the first Church and the second Church.

A second theological feature of note came to the fore during the early years of the long pontificate of John Paul II (1978-2005): that is, a deeper awareness of the theological meaning and value of culture, that to proclaim the Gospel effectively, the Church must understand the culture in which she preaches. Later, this would also include an awareness that the Church herself has a culture and that any engagement with secular culture involves a double subjectivity.<sup>10</sup> This had always been self-evident for the missions, say, to Asia and India, and *Ad Gentes*, as with the papal encyclicals on missiology in the earlier decades of the 20C,<sup>11</sup> spoke of the need to understand the local culture, to make adaptations and to develop an indigenous clergy. But now there was a growing concern with the condition of the Church in Europe, where, with secularism on the rise, countries of ancient Christian origin were being rapidly de-Christianised. There, the classical forms of evangelisation seemed no longer to be working. Many Catholics were lapsing from practice, with Baptism, Confirmation and First Holy Communion becoming little more than rites of passage.

In 1986, Pope John Paul announced a 'Decade of Evangelisation' in preparation for the great jubilee year 2000, and as part of the launch of this in 1990, he published an encyclical letter on evangelisation, *Redemptoris Missio*, on the permanent validity and urgency of the mission *ad gentes*. Its aim was to animate and re-animate the whole Church with the confidence and desire to preach the Gospel. The first three chapters articulate a theological vision of mission. Chapter One is entitled, 'Jesus Christ the Only Saviour', Chapter Two 'The Kingdom of God', and Chapter Three 'The Holy Spirit, Principle Agent of Mission'. *Redemptoris Missio* takes its cue from the *missio Dei* approach of *Ad Gentes* and builds on the regnocentric approach of *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, but undertakes a further development of teaching in the light of the new issues that had arisen during the 1980s. In many local churches, there was still a lack of confidence about going beyond dialogue to proclamation. Moreover, the regnocentrism set by *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, with its emphasis on this-worldly justice and liberation, had led some to adopt limited approaches that, for instance, overlooked the eschatological dimension of evangelisation or, in the enthusiasm for interreligious dialogue, displaced the centrality and uniqueness of Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour.

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<sup>10</sup> For more on this, see A. Beards "Christianity, 'Interculturality' and Salvation: Perspectives from Lonergan" in *The Thomist* 64 (2000): 161-200

<sup>11</sup> See Benedict XV *Maximum Illud* (1919), Pius XI *Rerum Ecclesiae* (1926), Pius XII *Evangelii Praecones* (1951) and John XXIII *Princeps Pastorum* (1959)

These trends were occurring at a time when the other world religions, especially Islam, were resurgent. John Paul II wanted to present the Person of Christ as the answer to humanity's problems, and he reiterated this in the controversial CDF Declaration *Dominus Jesus* (2000) on the unicity and salvific universality of Jesus Christ and the Church. John Paul espoused a thorough-going Christocentric theology of mission, and this ran through *Redemptoris Missio* and his other papal magisterium, particularly his 2001 apostolic letter *Tertio Millennio Ineunte*, in which he set out a pastoral plan for the Church for the first decades of the 21C. This Christocentric focus would be developed even further by his successor, Benedict XVI. It also seems to be central to the approach of Pope Francis I.

The new awareness of the theological meaning and value of culture lies behind a theological concept that had begun to gain currency at the time and which *Redemptoris Missio* mentions for the first time in an encyclical: 'new evangelisation' (NE). Back in 1983, on a visit to Haiti, John Paul II had spoken of the need for an "evangelisation new in its ardour, new in its methods and new in its expression".<sup>12</sup> *Redemptoris Missio* 33 and the 1997 *General Directory of Catechesis*<sup>13</sup> develop this and identify the three main socio-religious situations arising and the type of evangelisation appropriate to each:

- for those who had never heard the gospel before, first proclamation;
- for those contexts where the Church is well established, pastoral care; and
- for those "intermediate situations," in countries of ancient Christian tradition where "entire groups of the baptised have lost a living sense of the faith, or even no longer consider themselves members of the Church and live a life far removed from Christ and his Gospel,"<sup>14</sup> these situations, *Redemptoris Missio* says, require new evangelisation.

As John Paul put it, "I sense that the moment has come to commit all of the Church's energies to a new evangelisation" (RM 3), although initially the concept of new evangelisation was watery, and seemed to be used interchangeably with 're-evangelisation' and new efforts at evangelisation. Yet during the pontificate of Benedict XVI, who in 2010 established the Pontifical Council for New Evangelisation, new evangelisation has continued to gain clarity as a theological category. It means a modality of evangelisation for people of good will, for those who are unchurched, and for those who are sacramentalised but not evangelised.

### 3. New Evangelisation

This brings me to the final point. Avery Dulles claims that the single most dramatic shift that has occurred within the Church *since* Vatican II has been the shift from a static, institutional model of being Church to a missionary-minded evangelistic self-understanding.<sup>15</sup> George Weigel speaks of a great paradigm-shift taking place, the

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<sup>12</sup> 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 9<sup>th</sup> March 1983. Cf. R. Fisichella *The New Evangelisation* (Gracewing, Leominster: 2012) 8f

<sup>13</sup> Congregation for the Clergy *General Directory of Catechesis* (London, CTS: 1997) 58.

<sup>14</sup> GDC 58.

<sup>15</sup> See A. Dulles 'John Paul II and the New Evangelisation: What does it mean?' in R. Martin and P. Williamson *Pope John Paul II and the New Evangelisation* (San Francisco, Ignatius Press: 1995).

emergence of 'evangelical Catholicism.'<sup>16</sup> This shift has been brought about by the Council itself, not least by the decree *Ad Gentes*, but also by the various renewal movements that led to the Council, and the provisions that were put in place subsequently during the pontificates of John Paul II and Benedict XVI. In history, the Church has passed through several eras, and taken a distinctive form in each: the Early Church, the Patristic era, the mediaeval period, High-Scholasticism, and then the Counter-Reformation or Tridentine era leading to Vatican II. Now, in this first half of the Third Millennium, the transition from Tridentine Catholicism to what might be called 'Evangelistic Catholicism' is taking shape, and can be seen increasingly among the younger generations, the new ecclesial movements, the World Youth Days and the many efforts to engage in witness and mission now taking place at the local level.

Evangelistic Catholicism arguably has a different spirit from the Tridentine Catholicism that preceded it. At the risk of over-simplifying, Tridentine Catholicism emphasised power and authority, institutions and structures, numbers and tasks to be done: establishing schools, running parishes, raising finance, acquiring property, and so on. By contrast, Evangelistic Catholicism is modest, and in the West, certainly much less numerous. Its focus is less on institutional issues and organisational concerns, and more on networks of disciples engaged in mission and service, with friendship in small support-groups and movements that generate a keen sense of belonging.

The nature of new evangelisation is still somewhat elusive. But it does have distinctive features. First, it is a new way of doing theology, a new attitude, a new way of thinking and acting. The term 'evangelisation' covers a range of activities, but essentially it is a two-way movement: *ad intra* and *ad extra*, that is, *ad intra* oneself being evangelised, growing and deepening in faith, a life-long process, and *ad extra*, reaching out to others with the message of the Good News. New evangelisation, and the theological currents influenced by it, make this two-way movement *ad intra* and *ad extra* central to their pastoral strategy, like a heart-beat, reaching in and reaching out. Another analogy is conversation, in which there is both giving and receiving, a sharing that leads to mutual enrichment. For instance, everything a parish now does is re-viewed in the light of evangelisation.

Secondly, new evangelisation is Christo-centric, biblical and Eucharistic. As John Paul said, evangelisation is never a scheme or programme:

"We are certainly not seduced by the naive expectation that, faced with the great challenges of our time, we shall find some magic formula. No, we shall not be saved by a formula but by a Person, and the assurance which he gives us: I am with you! It is not therefore a matter of inventing a new programme."<sup>17</sup>

So, not a programme, but a Person. New evangelisation is radically Christo-centric, biblical and focused on the presence and activity of Jesus in the holy Eucharist. This invites an 'attitudinal' shift older Catholics may find difficult, the shift from an ecclesio-

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<sup>16</sup> George Weigel calls this new paradigm 'evangelical Catholicism,' although his approach is slightly divergent from that of this author. See his excellent book: G. Weigel *Evangelical Catholicism. Deep Reform in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Church* (New York, Basic: 2012)

<sup>17</sup> John Paul II *Novo Millennio Ineunte* 29 ([www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va))

centric world-view to a Christo-centric world-view. In other words, new evangelisation is an invitation to focus not on the Church, or internal change in the Church or Catholic practices and social activities, but on the Person of Jesus Christ, the gospels, the *kerygma* of his death and resurrection, and the call to discipleship. The catch-phrase might be: less on the Church of the Lord and more on the Lord of the Church. This acknowledges that the questions of the early 21C are different from those asked at Vatican II. Then, it was: 'What does it mean to be the Church of Christ in the modern world?' Today, the issues are more fundamental about the existence of God, the moral life, the need for Jesus Christ.

Thirdly, John Paul spoke of new ardour, new expressions, new methods, although as a paradigm, it is difficult to push the meanings of these overlapping words too hard. Yet the intention is probably clear. It means above all a new passion for the faith, from which comes a new confidence to reach out to others. It also implies the creativity of finding new ways of communicating the Gospel. Going with this is surely a new awareness of the enticing yet often toxic secular culture now in the ascendant. In the Western world, Christians are discovering that they are counter-cultural people, a distinctive community, even aliens in a foreign land.<sup>18</sup>

Finally, new evangelisation as a modality of evangelisation suggests that there are now three types of evangelisation. In the earlier understanding, evangelisation involved two stages: first proclamation to arouse faith, in those who have never heard of Christ ; and then, 'classic evangelization', a gradual insertion into the life of the Church and the sacraments through schooling, involvement in parish life, ongoing catechesis, attending Mass, regular preaching, charitable activity and so on. Now, besides these two types of evangelisation, there is new evangelisation, which is focused on developing a living relationship with Jesus Christ, above all in the Holy Eucharist.

In its recent reorganisation of the curia, the Diocese of Portsmouth, , has tried to take into account the paradigm-shift to Evangelistic Catholicism and the call to new evangelisation. The new diocesan structure or 'Framework for Collaboration' is focused on Christ and his three-fold office of Priest, Prophet and King, the triple *munera* of sanctifying, teaching and shepherding. The curia now comprises three vicariates of vocation, education and evangelisation, each of which is divided into two departments with sets of team-activities. The three vicariates represent three dynamically interrelated strands of Christian discipleship: call, formation and mission. The call of the disciple invites him/her to formation in the life and teaching of Christ, and this in turn leads to them being sent on mission, and so on the structural diagram, the direction of travel is from left to right, with the outcome in new evangelisation. The Department of New Evangelisation has some distinctive features, which will take some time to put into place. These include:

- the NET, the New Evangelisation Team, a think-tank to create new ideas for communicating the faith,
- a Social Policy Unit, to study demographic and social trends,
- a Ministry to Inactive Catholics,

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<sup>18</sup> See Bishop Philip Egan "Message from Bishop Philip about Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act, 29<sup>th</sup> July 2013 ([http://www.portsmouthdiocese.org.uk/bishop/talks\\_and\\_addresses/2013-07-29\\_BoP\\_Message\\_about\\_Same\\_Sex\\_Marriage.php](http://www.portsmouthdiocese.org.uk/bishop/talks_and_addresses/2013-07-29_BoP_Message_about_Same_Sex_Marriage.php))



- a communications team, to train small teams of volunteers, able and willing to engage with the local media,
- a Dialogue With Cultural Sectors Group to network Catholics in the professions and to bring the Catholic Tradition into a critical conversation with those professions,
- a Civic Relations Group, and
- a 'Court of the Gentiles' to find an agreed space where Christians can dialogue with non-believers and others of good will.
- The new Framework will take the next two years or so to put into place.

So to conclude. In this paper, I have tried to show how the Vatican II decree *Ad gentes divinitus* set in train a series of theological and pastoral step-changes within the post-conciliar Church. These led in time to the regnocentrism of *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, the Christo-centricity of *Redemptoris Missio* and latterly to the emergence of new evangelisation. The context of this trajectory has been the historic shift from Tridentine Catholicism to the so-called 'Evangelistic Catholicism' of the 21C and 22C. After an initial period of turmoil, this shift continues to gather pace within the universal Church. Its outcome however remains ambiguous, especially in Western cultures, which appear to be resilient to evangelisation, some even suspecting at work a cultural 'Christophobia.'<sup>19</sup> Moreover, their espousal of philosophies of scientism, pragmatism, secularism and relativism, all arguably imperil religious freedom. Consequently, contemporary British culture can appear to be religiously barren. Yet in other respects and in certain contexts, such as at funerals and on State occasions, religious sentiment frequently comes to the fore, with underground rivers of spirituality irrigating the surface. What is for sure is that in a context like this, Christians need enormous creativity and plasticity if they are to engage effectively with the challenges ahead. On the other hand, a deep faith in God's providence and a glance at Church history would suggest that even here the future of the Church need not be devoid of hope.

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<sup>19</sup> See, for instance, the discussion in the journal *First Things* in November 2012: <http://www.firstthings.com/blogs/firstthoughts/2012/11/29/does-it-make-sense-to-speak-of-christophobia/>