

LITURGY AND THE NEW EVANGELISATION:  
LIGHT FROM LONERGAN

I thank Abbot Martin and the *Institutum Liturgicum* for the kind invitation to give this prestigious St. Bede Lecture, the Fifth, during the summer programme here at St. Michael's Abbey, Farnborough. The title is *Liturgy and the New Evangelisation: Light from Lonergan*. So, first, new evangelisation; then, a methodological principle from Bernard Lonergan; last, a few practical suggestions for the liturgy in a parish.

### 1. New Evangelisation

So first, new evangelisation. Over the last three decades, the Church has been calling its members, clergy, consecrated and lay, to the work of new evangelisation (NE), an evangelisation, in the now well-known words of St. John Paul II, that must be “new in its ardour, new in its methods and new in its expression.”<sup>1</sup> Evangelisation (from εὐαγγέλιον ‘good news’ and εὐαγγελίζομαι ‘to announce good news’) essentially means ‘spreading the Gospel,’ that is, proclaiming the *kerygma* of Christ’s death and resurrection, and its meaning and value for people today, for individuals, groups, institutions and cultures. Evangelisation has been a constant activity of the Church from the beginning; it originates with the missionary mandate of Christ Himself: “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 his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* following the 1974 Synod of Bishops, Paul VI declared that

“evangelising is the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity. She exists in order to evangelise, that is, to preach and teach, to be the channel of the gift of grace.”<sup>2</sup>

In 21C, there is a new situation, not least in Europe and North America, a secularised, pluralist, consumer culture, in which Christianity and its values, once the basis of society, is increasingly marginal. There are now vast sectors of contemporary culture, from politics, business and economics to medicine, the arts and the human sciences, almost entirely ‘unbaptised’.<sup>3</sup> This new culture arguably requires new forms of evangelisation, if the Gospel message is to be effectively communicated.

The term NE, however, is at times complex, even watery. In some of his magisterium, for instance in his 1990 encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* and in the 1997 *General*

<sup>1</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: Responding to the Challenge of Indifference* (Leominster, Gracewing: 2012) 8f

<sup>2</sup> Paul VI *Evangelii Nuntiandi* in H. Denzinger *Enchiridion symbolorum definitionum et declarationum de rebus fidei et morum* (43<sup>rd</sup> Edition) ed. P. Hünermann (San Francisco, Ignatius Press: 2010) DH 4573

<sup>3</sup> Pope Francis *Evangelii Gaudium* (London, CTS: 2013) 176f. The proclamation of the Gospel is meant to reform social and economic structures, to influence culture, to lead to the service of the poor and needy, to baptise the contexts in which people think, act, live and work. As John Paul II once said, the greatest challenge of our age comes from a growing separation between faith and reason, between the Gospel and culture. See John Paul II *Inter Munera Academicarum* 2, available on-line at [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va) (July 2015)

*Directory for Catechesis*, St. John Paul II uses the term NE to mean ‘re-evangelisation,’ particularly the re-evangelisation of those areas of the world such as Europe that had once been evangelised, but where nowadays the home fires seem to be going out.<sup>4</sup> At other times, he uses the term ‘evangelisation’ to refer to a range of activities. Thus in *Catechesi Tradendae*, he differentiates three moments or stages in the process of evangelisation: (1) the initial proclamation of the *kerygma* arousing faith and calling the listener to conversion and discipleship; (2) catechesis and formation, becoming a catechumen; and (3) celebration of the sacraments (baptism, confirmation and Eucharist) and insertion into the community and mission of the Church.<sup>5</sup> Commenting on these three stages of evangelisation, derived from the Early Church and found in the modern RCIA, Scott Hahn uses the image of falling-in-love, engagement - the period when a couple gets to know each other and each other’s families - and finally, marriage and the beginning of family life together.

NE is evidently about using new methods and new expressions. Its proximate goal is the individual, but the ultimate goal is to leaven culture. It is self-evangelisation, that is, Christians themselves being evangelised, a life-long, continuous endeavour, as well as Christians reaching out to people of good-will, open to hearing the Message. NE is also directed to the vast numbers of non-practising Catholics. Yet St. John Paul also spoke of a new ardour. In this sense, NE seems to mean a return to the original experience of faith, a transforming encounter with the Person of Jesus Christ, Lord and Saviour, with 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.”<sup>6</sup>

NE seems to have a notable ‘experiential’ element to it. As Sherry Weddell argues, it is about discovering or re-discovering the centrality of the Person of Jesus Christ and His invitation to discipleship, with a new desire to invite others into that relationship.<sup>7</sup>

NE, then, is markedly Christocentric. For many older Catholics, brought up through the changes of the post-Vatican II period, this requires a changed mind-set. It is much easier arguably to discuss the Church and her institutions, but not the salvific reality and experience upon which the Church is based. The institutional tail can thus often be wagging the spiritual dog. As Pope Francis puts it in *Evangelii Gaudium*,

“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,

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<sup>4</sup> See Fisichella *The New Evangelisation* 20-23. See John Paul II *Redemptoris Missio* 33 (DH 4893) and Congregation for the Clergy *General Directory for Catechesis* (London, CTS: 1997) 58-59.

<sup>5</sup> See John Paul II *Catechesi Tradendae* (London, CTS: 1979) 18-25

<sup>6</sup> *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 (3<sup>rd</sup> 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)

<sup>7</sup> See S. Weddell *Forming Intentional Disciples. The Path to Knowing and Following Jesus* (Huntington, Our Sunday Visitor: 2012)

times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channelled for the evangelisation of today's world rather than for her [own] self-preservation.”

But he goes on, the renewal of structures

“demanded by pastoral conversion can only be understood in this light: as part of an effort to make them more mission-oriented, to make ordinary pastoral activity on every level more inclusive and open, to inspire in pastoral workers a constant desire to go forth, and in this way to elicit a positive response from all those whom Jesus summons to friendship with Himself.”<sup>8</sup>

In the past, great emphasis was laid on building up the Church, on the parish, on lay ministries and structures. Clergy became service providers and chaplains to the Catholic community, the faithful consumers of spiritual goods, with parishes focused on meeting their pastoral needs. NE, however, suggests a shift of focus back from the Church of the Lord to the Lord of the Church, Jesus Christ, and at the same time a shift from concern with the Church's internal life to her apostolate in the world. This is the much-vaunted shift from maintenance to mission, from being inward-looking to outward-looking, with the recovery of the secular mission of the laity, spoken of by John Paul II in *Christifideles Laici*.<sup>9</sup> The faithful are invited to discover their apostolate as missionary disciples, with the clergy their mission-directors.<sup>10</sup>

Practically, NE seems to imply not doing new things, but reviewing the things that are done, in order to do them in a new way. The purpose is to make clearer the connection with the Person of Jesus Christ, with the kerygma and the call to discipleship. To me, this seems to imply four specific emphases.

First, a return to a more Biblical theology and terminology. Just as the texts of the Roman Liturgy are suffused with biblical references, so too the pastoral life of the Church, her language, concepts, structures and focus, may need reorienting, so that a more immediate link with the New Testament and its outlook becomes evident.

Secondly, the discernment of charisms. The renewed focus on discipleship suggests the need to discern more intensely the gifts, talents and charisms given by the Holy Spirit for mission and service. This reprises an element of Pauline ecclesiology, typically in the Letter to the Ephesians, where Paul says:

“Each one of us ... has been given his own share of grace.. To some his gift was that they should be apostles, to some prophets, to some evangelists, to

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<sup>8</sup> Francis *Evangelii Gaudium* 27.

<sup>9</sup> 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

<sup>10</sup> 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).

some pastors and teachers, so that the saints together make a unity in the work of service, building up the body of Christ” (Eph 4: 11-12).

This discernment of charisms is not an institution-led approach – discerning who might be called to a specific ministry, say, assisting with the Children’s Liturgy - but a person-centred approach that identifies and releases the gifts given by God for missionary-service in the world, at home, at work and at play.

Thirdly, an outcome in practical service of the poor and needy. NE must always have a practical outcome in works of service and charity to the poor and needy. This is a characteristic emphasis in the writings of Pope Francis, as seen in Chapter Four of *Evangelii Gaudium* and latterly in *Laudato Si*. NE means for Christians to be counter-cultural not only in doctrine but also in life-style, a change of priorities so as to create a more just world and a culture that cares for the Earth and Mother Nature.<sup>11</sup>

And fourthly, a new attention to liturgy, prayer and spirituality, especially focused on Eucharistic Adoration. This will be the topic of the third part of this paper.

## 2. Light from Lonergan

Helpful here is the notion of conversion developed by Bernard Lonergan, the great 20C Canadian Jesuit philosopher-theologian. In the Catholic tradition, faith and reason work together as the “two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth.”<sup>12</sup> Lonergan’s discussion of conversion comes from his philosophical analysis of the human person as an acting subject. In his writings, which span twenty-five volumes, and in particular in his two monumental works, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding* and *Method in Theology*, Lonergan analyses the operations of the human person in his/her drive for self-transcendence.<sup>13</sup> Every human person is structured to be a knower (oriented towards truth), a chooser and do-er (a moral agent oriented towards the good), and a lover (a spiritual being oriented towards happiness and ultimately God).<sup>14</sup> Lonergan’s ‘intentionality analysis,’ his account of the operations of the human mind, will and heart, is consonant with the classical philosophical tradition of Augustine and Aquinas, that the human soul is restless until it finds rest in God.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> See Pope Francis *Laudato Si* (London, CTS: 2015).

<sup>12</sup> John Paul II *Fides et Ratio* (London, CTS: 1998) 1

<sup>13</sup> Offered here is a global summary of Lonergan’s highly nuanced philosophy. For a brief overview, see B. Lonergan *Method in Theology* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press: 1990) - henceforth referred to as *Method* - 104-105. Lonergan begins that section by stating: “Man achieves authenticity in self-transcendence” (104 top).

<sup>14</sup> B. Lonergan *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan – henceforth CWBL – 3, ed. F. Crowe and R. Doran (Toronto, University of Toronto Press: 1992) and B. Lonergan *Method*. The critical edition of the latter has not yet appeared in CWBL.

<sup>15</sup> The secondary literature on this is vast. For a brief summary from Lonergan himself, see Lonergan *Method* 3-25. St. Augustine famously said “You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you”. See Augustine *Confessions* Lib 1, 1-2, 2.5, 5 (CSEL 33, 1-5). This passage appears in the Liturgy of the Hours Office of Readings for the Ninth Sunday of the Year. The first part of the *Catechism* begins with this innate desire for God, saying that “the desire for God is written in the human heart, because [we are] created by God and for God, and God never ceases to draw [us] to Himself” (*Catechism* 27).

For Lonergan, the mind is not a box into which sensations enter and judgments emerge. The box can be opened and its operational structure retrieved. Human desire, he argues, unfolds through four self-assembling levels or clusters of operations, which for brevity he names experiencing, understanding, judging and deciding, although these are titles for distinctive sets of activities. Beyond these four levels, some Lonerganian thinkers, such as Tad Dunne, speak of a fifth level of consciousness, loving.<sup>16</sup> Besides cognition and volition, beyond the fourth level, deciding, there is the cordial, the heart, the fifth level, loving, although other commentators, such as Michael Vertin and Pat Byrne, dispute this.<sup>17</sup> Meanwhile, in later life, influenced by the work of one of his greatest students, Robert Doran, Lonergan came to accept another level of operation, a kind of ‘level zero’, a psychic level prior to level one ‘experiencing.’<sup>18</sup> This is the realm of the subconscious, of dreams, feelings, dispositions, symbols and images. Consequently, it was as if the four-fold structure Lonergan had outlined was now ‘open at both ends.’<sup>19</sup>

Leaving aside technicalities, for Lonergan, knowing is never a matter of ‘taking a look’ but, in its most sophisticated form, such as in a scientific investigation or a court of law seeking to determine guilt and innocence, a set of three dynamically related operations driven by insight: data to be collected (experiencing), ideas and theories to be investigated (understanding), and true judgments to be formulated (judging).<sup>20</sup> Three levels of operation (experiencing, understanding and judging) constitute human knowing, and empirical science recognises this cognitional process in its *organon* of data, hypothesis, verification. Lonergan’s thesis, however, is that this structure is found variously in *all* spheres of human knowing. Beyond knowing is choosing and the process of moral decision-making, a fourth level of consciousness. Modern science would speak here of the application of results or a law court, having made its judgment on guilt and innocence, on what to do for a just sentence. Volition builds on cognition, but formulating the right decision always involves an accurate knowledge of the situation as well as the consideration of a person’s value-system, with a judgment of value to be made according to a scale of values. With level four deciding, moreover, feelings come to the fore and become intentionally significant.

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<sup>16</sup> See T. Dunne *Lonergan and Spirituality: Towards a Spiritual Integration* (Chicago, Loyola University Press: 1985)

<sup>17</sup> See M. Vertin ‘Lonergan on Consciousness: is there a Fifth Level?’ in *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies* 12 (1994) 1-36 and P. Byrne ‘Consciousness: Levels, Sublations and the Subject as Subject’ in *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies* 13 (1995) 131-150

<sup>18</sup> “Now it is in the realm of symbols and stories, of what he terms the imaginal, that Professor Doran finds a deficiency in my work.” B. Lonergan ‘Reality, Myth and Symbol’ in *Philosophical and Theological Papers 1965-1980*, CWBL 17 ed. R. Croken and R. Doran (Toronto, University of Toronto Press: 2004) 390. For a brief statement of Doran’s position on the psychic level, see R. Doran ‘The Theologian’s Psyche: Notes Towards a Reconstruction of Depth Psychology’ in F. Lawrence ed. *Lonergan Workshop Volume 1* (1978) 109-110.

<sup>19</sup> “Our intentionality analysis distinguished the four levels of experience, understanding, factual judgment and existential decision. We must now avert to the fact that this structure may prove open at both ends. The intellectual operator that promotes our levels of operations from the level of experience to the level of understanding may well be preceded by a symbolic operator that co-ordinates neural potentialities and needs with higher goals through its control over the emergence of images and affects”. See B. Lonergan ‘Philosophy and the Religious Phenomenon’ in CWBL 17, 400

<sup>20</sup> See B. Lonergan ‘Cognitional Structure’ in *Collection*, CWBL 4 ed. F. Crowe and R. Doran (Toronto, University of Toronto Press: 1988) 205-221

In practice, depending on the task at hand, this four-levelled process of self-transcendence works creatively from below upwards (experiencing, understanding, judging and deciding) and receptively from above downwards (deciding, judging, understanding and experiencing). Thus, authentic decision-making requires careful attention to all the data, an airing of every possible hypothesis, idea and viewpoint, a measured judgment of what actually is or ought to be the case, and a wise decision, with sensitive implementation of what is best. This is typical of from-below-up operations such as academic research, which pursues data, hypothesis, verification and application. In other cases, once an authentic decision has been taken, its reception requires a fair and accurate formulation, the systematic unpacking of its meaning and relevance, and its creative communication. This is typical of from-above-down operations. Take, say, a medical practice which decides to open for longer hours. The decision to have longer opening hours leads to new practices, a statement of the principle, an explanation of the benefits and the communication of the development.

Now at the centre of Lonergan's analysis of self-transcendence is conversion. Conversion, and the grace of God that enables it, is not only key to Lonergan's theological method but arguably an organising principle useful to pastoral work, and not least to the work of NE. For the human knower, do-er and lover in his or her four-fold operation finds self-transcendence through three conversions: intellectually to the truth, morally to the good, and spiritually to the love and happiness that ultimately God alone can give.<sup>21</sup> In Lonergan's account, the conversions (intellectual, moral, religious) can work from below up as well as from above down. Indeed, they often work from above down, in that spiritual conversion, falling in love with God, prompts moral conversion, a change of life-style, which in turn prompts an intellectual conversion, a new mind and attitude.<sup>22</sup> The conversions can operate singly or multiply and in different combinations. They can be immediate and sudden, or gradual and long-haul. There can also be reverses and breakdowns.<sup>23</sup> Interestingly, Lonergan notes that in practice a complete intellectual conversion is the hardest conversion to achieve.

Conversion is a highly useful paradigm for pastoral planning. It suggests that in any work of NE, attention needs to be given to developing strategies that enable and support each conversion: the intellectual, the moral and the spiritual. Take, say, adult formation. Due attention needs to be given to doctrinal formation and catechesis (intellectual), to the living-out and practice of the Gospel both personally and socially (moral) and to the expression of love for God in liturgy (spiritual). Parish strategies on doctrine, life and worship are essential to the faith-journey of individual parishioners and the doctrinal, moral and spiritual development of the community as a whole.

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<sup>21</sup> For his own succinct account, see B. Lonergan 'Self-Transcendence: Intellectual, Moral, Religious' in CWBL 17, 313-331.

<sup>22</sup> "Though religious conversion sublates moral, and moral conversion sublates intellectual, one is not to infer that intellectual comes first and then moral and finally religious. On the contrary, from a causal viewpoint, one would say that first there is God's gift of his love. Next, the eye of this love reveals values in their splendour, while the strength of this love brings about their realization, and that is moral conversion. Finally, among the values discerned by the eye of love is the value of believing the truths taught by the religious tradition, and in such tradition and belief are the seeds of intellectual conversion" B. Lonergan *Method* 243.

<sup>23</sup> See B. Lonergan *Method* passim but especially 110-112 and 237-244

For Lonergan, being in love is the fulfilment of human intentionality and that love, he avers, is essentially of three kinds: (1) the love of intimacy, of spouse and family, (2) civic love for one's group, tribe and nation, and (3) Divine love, love for the Other, the love of God poured into the heart by the Holy Spirit, a love in Christ Jesus (cf. Rom 5: 5; 8: 38f). Elsewhere, I have argued for the need to develop Lonergan's account of religious conversion. It seems to me that for a Catholic Christian, being in love with God involves a triple conversion by the Holy Spirit: theistic, Christic and ecclesial. The convert needs to believe in God, and to give themselves to Him as their Father and Creator, a theistic conversion. There is also a need to believe in Christ, to enter into relationship with Him as His disciple, a Christic conversion. This Christic conversion in turn implies an ecclesial conversion, the need to belong to and give oneself to Christ's Body, the Church. The new disciple must love the Church as the community of which intrinsically s/he is part, and with which s/he self-identifies.

### 3. Some Liturgical Reflections

So to turn now to some practical liturgical reflections and considerations in the light of the NE and in the light of Lonergan's account of conversion. Three points.

First, the sacred liturgy and above all the Holy Eucharist, has a central role in NE. As St. John Paul said in *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, the Eucharist is "the source and the summit of all evangelisation."<sup>24</sup> If NE means a new emphasis on a personal relationship with Christ, then its foundation is prayer and spirituality, a transforming inward experience of God's love and salvation. Arguably all the resources of a diocese should be put at the service of helping people to pray, to find God, to experience the love of God, to commit to Him, to learn the art of praying, to develop a personal-passionate friendship with Jesus Christ, to grasp the meaning for themselves 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 Tradition. It seems sad that contemporary Catholics seem to be more aware of yoga, meditation and mindfulness than the teaching and writings of St. Teresa of Avila, St. John of the Cross and St. Francis de Sales. Again, the Ignatian method of imaginative prayer, based on *lectio divina*, would seem ideal for a post-modern culture. On the other hand, for many Catholics, prayer often signifies 'saying prayers' yet somehow without those set-forms facilitating an encounter with the tri-Personal God, with Whom the formulae are meant to effect communion.

A positive development in recent decades has been the spread of Eucharistic Adoration. In his 1980 Holy Thursday Letter to Priests *Dominicae Cenaе*, John Paul II explicitly sought to promote Eucharistic worship outside the Mass:

"The Church and the world have a great need of Eucharistic worship. Jesus waits for us in this Sacrament of love. Let us be generous with our time in going to meet Him in adoration and in contemplation, that is full of faith, and

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<sup>24</sup> John Paul II *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (London, CTS: 2003) 22.

ready to make reparation for the great faults and crimes of the world. May our adoration never cease.”

He went on:

“I wish .. to reaffirm the fact that Eucharistic worship constitutes the soul of all Christian life. In fact, Christian life is expressed in the fulfilling of the greatest commandment, that is to say, in the love of God and neighbour, and this love finds its source in the Blessed Sacrament, which is commonly called the Sacrament of love. The Eucharist signifies this charity, and therefore recalls it, makes it present and at the same time brings it about.”<sup>25</sup>

To enable this, periods of Eucharistic Adoration could be organised with regular catechesis given. Moreover, church buildings need to be kept open, so that the faithful have access to the Tabernacle. Pope Francis has frequently spoken of this:

“The church ... 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.”<sup>26</sup>

Secondly, if parishes are to move from maintenance to mission, then besides a renewed focus on the Eucharist, a thorough review of parish governance and structures is needed. In the period after Vatican II, 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, and these easily lead to factions and friction or an inward-looking bureaucratic mentality. The parish council could be replaced by an Evangelisation Strategy Team to enable and sponsor simple, realisable mission-projects in the local area, whilst paying particular attention to the *areopagi*.

In pastoral planning, Lonergan’s account of three-fold conversion provides a helpful *organon* enabling the parish to see itself as a centre of doctrinal, moral and spiritual conversion, formation and development. To undertake NE with a new ardour, with new methods and new expressions presumes a new expectation in prayer that God *will* pour out afresh the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Spirituality and religion will never go away; as Lonergan demonstrates, the question of God lies naturally within man’s horizon and is raised spontaneously by human consciousness.<sup>27</sup> The task is to create the arena in which people can encounter God and through His gift of intellectual, moral and spiritual conversion, enable them to become intentional disciples of Christ. In this respect, the personal holiness of Christians is key: that non-believers encounter credible witnesses, morally converted, who put their faith into action not least in service of the poor. Another task is to foster intellectual conversion by developing an effective Catholic apologetics, able comprehensively to rebut popular myths about science, so that all can appreciate the interaction of faith and reason, the complementarity of religion and science, and the redemptive role of religion within

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<sup>25</sup> John Paul II *Dominicae Cenae* 6 and 5 respectively. The text can be found on-line at [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va) (July 2015)

<sup>26</sup> Francis *Evangelii Gaudium* 47

<sup>27</sup> B. Lonergan Method 101-103

human living. Such an apologetics should not shy away from addressing today's controversial issues about sex, authority and the dignity of human life.

In this regard, the sacraments and their celebration present a special opportunity for NE, when people request baptism, First Holy Communion, confirmation, marriage, a funeral or a blessing in sickness. Traditionally, the emphasis has been on catechesis, but today these encounters ought to be more about primary proclamation. People do need 'words' and 'meaning' but they need 'religion' even more. New methods need to be found to enkindle the religious sense, to enable people to encounter Christ, to meet Him in the Gospels and in the Blessed Sacrament. Indeed, in his *Divine Renovation: Bringing your Parish from Maintenance to Mission*, Fr. James Mallon suggests parishes review their budgets, to evaluate whether resources are used chiefly on property or on people and mission-projects.<sup>28</sup> He suggests various areas that a parish in the context of NE consider, including prioritising the weekend, identifying people's charisms, creating smaller communities within the community and reviewing hospitality teams. Interestingly, in relation to the sacred liturgy, he proposes investing resources in high quality, uplifting music across the spectrum from Latin plainchant to contemporary worship. Another area that needs careful thought is the homily, although, not to everyone's taste, he advocates the widespread use of visual media.

And thirdly, to foster conversion it would be helpful to use the liturgical calendar more creatively, and in two respects. One would be to give a greater prominence to the early saints and missionaries, such as St. Paulinus, St. Chad and St. Aidan. In a culture that already knew something of Christianity, like today, these holy men still managed to plant the Gospel and foster vigorous growth. They lived 'Eucharistic community' in a radical manner, whilst undertaking *peregrinationes evangelicae*, missionary journeys, to evangelise anyone willing to engage.<sup>29</sup> Perhaps there is much to be learnt from their example, dedication and methods of inculturation? Giving greater prominence to these early saints would also help identify, retrieve and promote Britain's Christian patrimony, its history, art and architecture, its music and literature, its liturgy, theology and ethics, through a better knowledge of Church history.

A second creative use of the liturgical calendar would be to recover a renewed awareness of the 16C and 17C martyrs of England and Wales. The purpose would be not as in the past to underscore the theological differences between Catholicism and Protestantism but rather, to be inspired by their counter-cultural witness in difficult, indeed, penal times. Perhaps the English and Welsh martyrs will become more significant as the ideology of secularism and relativism takes deeper root in British culture? Bodies such as the Equalities and Human Rights Commission seek to impose absolutist and totalitarian views of equality: that equality means sameness, rather than respect for complementarity and difference. Its 2013 document *Religion or Belief and the Workplace* fails to differentiate religious communities from life-style choices and so equates vegetarianism, environmentalism and even wearing a beard with classic

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<sup>28</sup> See J. Mallon *Divine Renovation: Bringing your Parish from Maintenance to Mission* (New London CT, Twenty-Third Publications: 2014).

<sup>29</sup> For an initial exploration of this, see S. Bevans and R. Schroeder *Constants in Context. A Theology of Mission for Today* (Maryknoll, Orbis: 2004) 119-125

religions such as Judaism and Islam<sup>30</sup>. More, since every religion and every life-style choice must be treated identically from a so-called neutral stance, the Commission equates the value of the religion of a tiny minority, Druidism, with the religion of the majority, Christianity. Trends such as these, imposed by government legislation and policy-makers, will surely lead in time to ever more draconian restrictions on religious expression within the public square, and thus make the work of NE more difficult. The witness of the martyrs, who in their own day struggled to remain faithful in an era of analogous State controls on religion, will surely inspire future generations and offer a challenging example to follow.

## Conclusion

To conclude. This paper has sought to explore the concept of NE and with the help of Lonergan's notion of conversion, to propose some pastoral and liturgical considerations. In *Redemptoris Missio*, St. John Paul II, 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.”<sup>31</sup>

That new springtime is surely evident. For Christians believe that the Spirit is at work in the heart of every child, woman and man, wooing them towards full communion with Christ and His Church.<sup>32</sup> Numbers nowadays are smaller, but numbers are not everything. What counts are authentically converted Christians willing to engage in the NE. Already genuine creativity is occasioning great developments. Already, people are coming forward to place themselves at Christ's service. Catholics can do no better than respond to the Lord's command: *Duc in altum!* Let us “put out into the deep, paying out the nets for a catch” (Luke 5: 4)! Indeed, let us pray for an even greater outpouring of the Holy Spirit, so that all might find in the Heart of Christ that true, genuine, lasting human happiness and fulfilment for which deep-down they long.

Thank you for listening.

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<sup>30</sup> See Equality and Human Rights Commission *Equality or Belief in the Workplace: An Explanation of Recent European Court of Human Rights Judgments* (2013) available on-line at: [www.equalityhumanrights.com/uploaded\\_files/RoB/religion\\_or\\_belief\\_in\\_the\\_workplace\\_an\\_explanation\\_of\\_recent\\_judgments\\_final.pdf](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/uploaded_files/RoB/religion_or_belief_in_the_workplace_an_explanation_of_recent_judgments_final.pdf) (July 2015)

<sup>31</sup> *Redemptoris Missio* 86

<sup>32</sup> Cf. John Paul II *Dominum et Vivificantem* 53 in ed. J. Dupuis *The Christian Faith in the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church. Seventh Revised and Enlarged Edition.* (New York, Alba: 2001) 448 (n. 1048)