

NEW EVANGELIZATION AND MISSIONARY OUTREACH DRAFT WHITE PAPER

The Commission on the New Evangelization and Missionary Outreach came from listening to the people of God during the initial phase of the Synod process. From them we heard the challenge of the Prophet Micah (6:8) “He told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?”. St. Paul, by example, notes: “I have become all things to all people, so that I might by any means save some. I do all for the sake of the Gospel, so that I may share in its blessings. (Corinthians 9:22-23), and no matter how I present “...if I do not have love, I gain nothing” (1 Corinthians 13:1-3).

We heard the people say, we want “to see the other, and to invite them to share a relationship with God; to build the Church together. We want them to come, as the banquet of the Lord is not complete until everyone is there.” Flowing from the Synod’s overall theme of Disciples: Established, Anointed and Sent in Christ – they expressed a desire to be a Church where everyone can be at home, a church in permanent formation, a church building a common story of hope, and a Church that is willing to extend to the farthest reaches.

In this spirit we affirm the call of the Archbishop to take our rightful role in relation to the threefold ministry of Jesus Christ, as Priest, Prophet, and King. After Vatican II the Popes expressed their desire for a new evangelization. We heard: “the task of evangelizing people is the essential mission of the Church, her deepest identity; “ the Church exists in order to evangelize,” “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations...” (EN, 14). We were invited as Church to renew our missionary commitment...to open the doors to Christ (RM, 2-3); to be Church that is missionary in nature. We are inspired by the simplicity of the message of Pope Francis in his vision of a Church that goes forth, uninhibited in its expression of joy. In responding to the call from the Spirit he reminds us not to get bogged down by documents that don’t draw the attention they may have in the past. (EG, 25) He also acknowledges the concern that we not be limited by ecclesial structures but remain faithful to our call to renewal in Jesus Christ. Pope Francis sees the importance of expressing the essentials without being caught up with having to articulate a multitude of doctrines. (EG, 35) Being faithful to what the Lord has given us will bear fruit.

The following recommendations flow from consultations to date:

That the Church of the Archdiocese of Winnipeg becomes a Church where everyone can be at home, where there is a sense of welcome, invitation, and acceptance of differences. The theme of welcome would permeate parish gatherings, encouraging the participation of baptized Catholics who no longer embrace a parish community, and those who have yet to hear the Good News.

This is a Church that embodies the Good Samaritan (Lk 10:25-37), that knows who is ‘neighbour’. A Church that lives and breathes Catholicity in the challenges our diverse society. A Church that realizes that listening is more than hearing - “It is a mutual listening in which everyone has something to learn” (Synod of Bishops, 50th Anniversary).

In broad terms some suggestions were made that within our Archdiocesan Church:

- That there be a communication strategy that introduces a church that lives the “Joy of the Gospel” in a less judgmental, more welcoming way. In this sense, the language, images, colours, and format all have to be carefully selected. The strategy cannot come from experts only but from people who are able to express their basic beliefs with simple and down to earth methods. This strategy is an opportunity for formation and also to listen deeply to what the young people think and can do as full members (baptized and confirmed) of that Church.
- That social media and technology can be used to attract the youth and to develop a stronger sense of community.
- That we are cognizant of the importance of “walking the walk” in order to be credible in the eyes of the world.
- That pastoral workshops are held focused on how to deal with delicate topics ..lest anyone will be forgotten. In the parable of the Good Samaritan, God sees us as we are, and loves us just the same. Our formation calls us to recognize those around us who have been away from us. They are not to be passed by or ignored. Instead we are called to cross the road to care for them, to tend to their wounds and invite them to heal.

That the Church of the Archdiocese of Winnipeg become a Church in permanent formation. This Church in permanent formation would be involved in networking, articulating stories, sharing traditions and Tradition, with recognition that diversity is Catholicity. Space would be provided for dialogue and conversation, at parish and inter-parish levels, the archdiocesan level and in the broader community.

In broad terms some suggestions were made that within our Archdiocesan Church:

- That there be formulation of an initiative to provide an opportunity for Catholics not involved in a listening session, Catholics who may be in the fringes or have wandered away from the church to give their input into what the Archdiocese would be for them, what would be an action, something or some attitude that would welcome them home.
- That there would be Archdiocesan gatherings for conversations about individual parish initiatives.
- That there would be opportunities for articulating Tradition and tradition coming to know by first hand experience the diversity that is the Archdiocese of Winnipeg.
- That there would be the development of an Archdiocesan clearing center for resources.

That the Church of the Archdiocese of Winnipeg build a common story by celebrating individual stories of pain and success to create a story of hope with new commonality and community.

The Emmaus Journey (Luke 24:13-35) lends itself to reconnect people with their faith journey. When Jesus encounters the disciples on the road to Emmaus their grief is so profound that they have left Jerusalem. People who are away from the faith may find themselves at varying distances from the life of the Church. Reaching out we would make ourselves available, asking them to share their stories. It is in the sharing...that they come to recognize Christ.

In broad terms some suggestions were made that there is a need within our Archdiocesan Church:

- To promote spaces in our parishes in which we can know the story of everyone ... stories of migration, rural to urban, vocations, mixed marriages, etc. Create places where people can come together without fear of judgement to share their stories and be truly heard.

- To receive formation about how to tell and how to listen to the story ... by acknowledging the human dignity of everyone. A process of active listening, intentional presence to one another, an experience of being heard and in the process healing.
- Work towards the openness to listen to the 'hard stories'; of those ostracized by church's people, those who think and live differently, those who are coming out from prison, etc.

That the Church of the Archdiocese of Winnipeg become a Church that is willing to go forth in mercy, not limited to geography, to extend to the farthest reaches...to open ourselves in new ways not yet discovered...

Evangelization has no perimeter, no borders, boundaries, or limits. The Church extends beyond itself. Pope Francis calls us to "step outside herself". He calls us the Church to go to "the outskirts of existence, whatever they may be, but to step out" (The Church of Mercy, 99). Like the Father in the parable of the Prodigal Son, we are called to welcome those who come to us from far away...not just in geographical distance...but distance of the heart. Unfortunately, sometimes, we can be like the older son, who resents the mercy shown by the Father, and fails to recognize the generosity that he is offered. We too, can be like that, in limiting our outreach. The effort is not about us. It is about the Church of which we are called to play a part. To become part of the whole every part of the body is necessary (1 Cor 12:27). Pope Francis reminds us that being part of the Church means, "to understand each other better, to harmonize the variety and the richness of each person" (General Audience of 19 June 2013).

In broad terms some suggestions were made that within our Archdiocesan Church:

- That we map all the initiatives throughout the Archdiocese that reach out to the disenfranchised and are open to receive volunteers from the Catholic Church.
- That we conduct activities for welcoming the "other" into our churches and institutions with cultural sensitivity.
- That we promote a non judgmental attitude in all our parishes and institutions. For example, as is done nowadays in academia with the statement of 'treaty one'. We also can begin all our activities by saying "we are son and daughters of God the Father" ...no discrimination.
- That we recognize and act upon the understanding that outreach to the disenfranchised does not need to be a solitary effort on our part. Ecumenical efforts can be very effective.
- That we initiate formation in evangelization - what it means to go forth, to meet people where they are, etc.

The call to listen and learn has just begun. Are there missing pieces to the puzzle? No doubt! To say the least, the work of discipleship is a communal effort. It requires the entire Church to become engaged. Inviting people forward, welcoming those who have been away, calling others to join us for the first time will call us to "smell like the sheep" indeed!

The Church of the Archdiocese of Winnipeg has a unique opportunity as it journeys in the early years of its second century. As we prepare for the next phase of the Synodal process we hope that the Church truly can become what it has set out to be - as it realizes its capacity to be a place everyone can call home; with permanent formative opportunities; where stories are told, respected and become one; and a place that will reach out to all. Then maybe then we can say that, "We have listened and invited, we have called others forward to the banquet and now the table, our table, is complete."

Presented on the Feast Day of St. Catherine of Siena, April 29, 2017, by,

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