



Order of Augustinian Recollects

**The Commission
on the Process
of revitalization
and restructuring
of the Order**

Document 4

**Rome
January 2012**

**New Evangelization
and the Process of Restructuring
the Order of Augustinian Recollects**

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The New Evangelization and the Process of Restructuring the Order of Augustinian Recollects¹

1. Introduction

I present to the brothers this reflection on the new evangelization². I have written it at the request of the Prior General of the Order in the context of the restructuring requested by the last General Chapter. The restructuring of the Order is not merely an administrative process but rather an internal renewal which will no doubt manifest itself in administrative changes and formal repercussions, but more fundamentally has ecclesial roots going down to our personal identity as both Christians and religious. One of these is the global reach of the mission and evangelizing of the Christian and the Church. The call for a new evangelization is a call to renew the identity of the Church from the deepest root of the Church's reason to exist: To proclaim Jesus Christ. But this call to a new evangelization is not a call for a merely administrative endeavor. The new evangelization is rooted in that personal experience of the faith, which we call an encounter with Jesus Christ. Therefore, the overall objective of restructuring the Order, is at root, the call to a personal renewal in the faith, in religious commitment, and in priestly vocation, within the process of renewal of the whole Church, that renewal which derives force from, and is described as, the new evangelization.

2. Origin and development of concept

It should be noted that the present call to a new evangelization has a significant background. Pope John Paul II introduced the expression into contemporary pastoral vocabulary. It seems that the first time he used it was during his first trip to Poland in the Mass at Holy Cross Sanctuary on June 9, 1979. The raising of a new cross on the 1,000 year anniversary of the evangelization of Poland was for the Pope a sign that “in

¹ The Commission for the process of revitalization and restructuring of the Order of Augustinian Recollects has requested that Bishop Mario Alberto Molina, OAR (Archbishop of Los Altos, Quetzaltenango – Totonicapán) prepare this document and that it be employed by all the religious of the Order for their personal and community reflection.

² To prepare this reflection I have used the *Lineamenta* for the preparation of the XIII Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops which will take place in October 2012. The theme and title of the Synod will be *Lineamenta: The new evangelization for the transmission of the Christian faith*. I have chosen and adapted some of its themes on the new evangelization. To a lesser extent, I also refer to the Concluding Document of the V General Conference of the Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean, which took place in Aparecida, Brazil, in May 2007. In this way this reflection will allow the members of the Order to both share the same reflection the Church is using to prepare the upcoming Synod Assembly and motivate us to feel united to the Church in this pastoral proposal.

this new era, in new circumstances, the Gospel is proclaimed once again. A new evangelization has begun, as if it were a second announcement, although really it is always the same” (*Lineamenta*, 5, note 11). With this sentence the Pope announced the essential elements of the expression “new evangelization”. It is announcing the unchanging Gospel in the new social and cultural conditions of the contemporary world.

The novelty of the new evangelization is not in the Gospel, which is changeless, but that the social and cultural conditions have changed and require a new manner of proposing the Gospel. The people who lived in former social and cultural conditions were evangelized and they gave their own culture and society a Christian cast. In the transformation of cultural and social conditions the Christian cast has been lost because the people who have given rise to these new social and cultural conditions have lost the sense of belonging to the faith. We must now propose the Christian faith to these people who live in new social and cultural conditions. Why? Because we who are believers have experienced, and are convinced, that the faith offers life and hope which we cannot keep for ourselves without also wanting to share it with others.

It was after this passing reference to the idea of a new evangelization that Pope John Paul II began to develop the concept. Addressing the Latin American bishops at the XIX CELAM Assembly on March 9, 1983 in Santo Domingo he referred to the upcoming fifth centenary of the beginning of the Evangelization of the Americas in 1492. It was in this context that he called for a new evangelization. “Commemorating half a millennium of evangelization will have its full meaning if it is a commitment of you as bishops, together with your presbyterate and the faithful; a commitment not to reevangelization, but instead to a new evangelization. New in its ardor, in its methods, in its expression.” Once again, the originality was not in the content.

The contrast made between the terminology “reevangelization” and “new evangelization” is important. Reevangelization implies disqualifying the first evangelization as if it had not been valid, as if it had not been effective. The new evangelization project does not imply a judgment on the first evangelization. The new evangelization is instead an awareness of people living in social and cultural conditions which require that they be presented the Gospel again. Although he sidesteps mentioning those new social and cultural conditions that call for a new evangelization, the Pope underscores the three characteristic aspects of the new evangelization: The new ardor of the evangelizers animated by motivations, energy, and vision to take on the new task; the new methods of proposing the evangelizing message (perhaps the Pope was thinking of using the new forms of the media); the new expressions to make the evangelizing message pertinent to the new social and cultural conditions.

Pope John Paul II himself, in the encyclical *Redemptoris missio*, December 7 1990, proposes to the universal Church the idea of a new evangelization. “Today the Church should confront other challenges, reaching out to new frontiers, in the first mission *ad gentes*, as well as in the new evangelization of peoples that have already received the announcement of Christ. All Christians, the local Churches, and the universal Church are asked to show the same valor that moved missionaries in the past and the same willingness to listen to the voice of the Spirit” (RM, 30, in *Lineamenta*, 5).

In this case, the difference between the new evangelization and the first mission...that mission directed toward those who have never heard anyone speak about Christ...is clear.

The new evangelization is directed towards those groups of people and individuals with Christian cultural roots, but who have distanced themselves from that root. Although perhaps they have maintained certain elements of Christian origin (practices, notions) they have separated themselves from the faith and the Church. The spiritual root of this project is clearly indicated as well. Those who endeavor to bring about the new evangelization should do so as a result of having heard the voice of the Spirit.

This invitation to the universal Church was synthesized in an outstanding way at the V General Conference of the Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean, which took place in Aparecida, Brazil in May 2007. The Conference called the local Churches of the Americas to a “continental mission”, which implies a renewal of persons, structures, and methods in each one of the Churches, parishes, religious institutes, movements, and associations in order to assume the challenges of the cultural, social, economic, and political changes in which we are immersed, and propose anew the gospel to those people who have distanced themselves from the faith and the Church. The *Lineamenta* itself, which has been set for the upcoming Synod Assembly, explicitly reissues what was a regional challenge now as a universal challenge: “As certain local Churches have striven to affirm, it is now time for the Church to call Christian communities themselves to, in a missionary sense, a conversion of pastoral action and structures.” (*Lineamenta* 10. In a footnote the Aparecida Document, 365-370 is cited.)

The use of the word structures in this paragraph of the *Lineamenta* shows us the type of project restructuring the Order could be understood to be, in light of the renewal of the Order’s evangelization and mission thrust, on a personal level as well as in its communitarian ecclesial dimension.

3. Cultural and social changes

“The new evangelization is a frame-of-mind, a courageous manner of acting and a Christian’s capacity to know how to read and interpret the new situations in human history which, in recent decades, have become the places to proclaim and witness to the Gospel.” (*Lineamenta*, 6).

The *Lineamenta* identifies six social aspects or dimensions which require a special attention for a renewed evangelization.

1° The first of these is the cultural backdrop. Above all, the deep secularization of society stands out. It proposes that one’s personal life and society as a whole may be organized without any reference to God or transcendence. This secularized lifestyle has permeated our lives including Christian communities and even consecrated life. Without a reference point that is an absolute, relativism in reference to the true, good, and beautiful has been introduced. As a consequence society looks for merely the agreement of the majority, not the truth, a society that no longer seeks a basis of objective truth for

its moral decisions, considers free and uncontrolled personal will and pleasure as the norm, and substitutes pleasure for beauty. However this cultural state of affairs leaves people suffering the vacuum of meaninglessness, that cries for a new presentation of the Gospel as that transcendent existential reference point and basis for what is true and good.

2° The second is the phenomenon of migration. For economic and political reasons migration is taking place from rural as well as urban areas as country of origin to permanently or temporarily adopted countries. This migration phenomenon brings the encounter and mixing of cultures and as a consequence the fading of fundamental reference points, moral values, and the ties we use to identity ourselves. As a result, a climate of extreme cultural fluidity and fluctuation is seen, within which room for the great traditions of life, including those of religion, has shrunk. These religious traditions objectively provide structure to the meaning of history and personal identity. Within this environment, to propose the new evangelization is to propose cultural dialogue beyond any particular culture, a dialogue that invokes the common nature and dignity of the human person as an objective reference point provided by the transcendent call of God.

3° The third phenomenon is the development of the means of social communications, upon which the foundation of the phenomenon of globalization is structured. No longer is the reference horizon for individuals and communities their own local or national or even regional community. In one or another aspect, the point of reference is now global. Sport events give the clearest evidence of this phenomenon. They are now viewed live even in the most remote and faraway areas as they are taking place and in those areas become a significant part of the lives of people. And what is seen in the world of sports is just as present in the sectors of commerce and finance, politics, industrial production, and cultural as well as religious interchange. Together with the undeniable benefits of this interconnection—through the sharing of knowledge, solidarity, and material and cultural goods—there also occurs an erosion of perspective towards local cultures, capacity for real interpersonal relations is lost to virtual relations, life is lived as, and is taken for, entertainment meant to be exhibited. Nonetheless, the new evangelization requires that the Christian voice be present in these new public forums, these new *Aeropaghi*, since at heart the Christian evangelization bears the seed of transcultural universality. From the beginning, the Gospel has been seen as a proposal which is valid for all nations and all times because it addresses man as such, all people having an identical nature that underlies the diversity of cultures and ethnic groups.

Together with these three social phenomena, the *Lineamenta* bring to our attention three areas that require special attention:

1° The economic sector. The Church has constantly denounced the unbalanced access to, and sharing of, resources as well as the destruction of the environment. The Church's Magisterium has indicated that the cause of these imbalances and the global economic crisis is the failure to heed fundamental ethics in economic activity.

2° Scientific and technological research. We all benefit from the advances made by furthering the development of scientific and technological discoveries. Our lives

depend more and more upon them. That is why they become a kind of false god which we look to for solutions to all our problems and reduce our horizons of valid knowledge only to what science and technology offer us. We have also given technology complete exemption from ethical criteria. We accept as good whatever technology produces simply because technology has produced it, because it can be done, without evaluating it by the ethical criterion of its reference to the human person and the benefit or harm it brings to mankind. New cults of prosperity and gratification have established themselves and are growing on these foundations.

3° The political sector. In recent decades the struggle between capitalism and communism has been replaced by new protagonists such as Islamic fundamentalism, the growing economic strength of Asian countries, and global migration. These areas must be seen in the light of the Gospel in order to find new ways of living together, defending the rights of individuals and peoples, and striving for world government and peace.

These transformations question to their roots our identity and our faith. This is why we must rethink our faith and find a new way to propose once again the gospel. In this perspective “new evangelization” means that our local Churches faced by these problems and challenges must work to open paths that will work. It is by facing these challenges that the Church builds itself. “New evangelization” also means having the audacious courage to look for God within these problems in order to open inroads that will help us become more human and bring all humanity to salvation.

4. Encounter with Jesus Christ, starting point for the new evangelization

The motivation for the Church’s mission work and a new evangelization stems from Jesus’ final mandate to his disciples and followers: the Gospel must be spread. The Gospel is above all Jesus himself who by his words and works, and above all his death and resurrection, inaugurates a new order called the Kingdom of God. From its beginning, this missionary thrust is rooted in the encounter with Jesus Christ and is intended to make it possible for other men and women to experience this transformative encounter. According to the insightful words of Pope Benedict XVI in the encyclical *Deus caritas est* "Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction. [...] Since God has first loved us, love is now no longer a mere 'command'; it is the response to the gift of love with which God draws near to us." (DCE, 1, quoted in *Lineamenta*, 11)

What is the encounter with Jesus Christ? Where does it take place? How is it recognized? The *Aparecida Document* uses often the expression “encounter with Jesus Christ” but does not specifically describe its content, its identity, or its reality. Nor does the *Lineamenta* offer any help. But we must nonetheless make an effort to clarify this important concept. Otherwise, the reflections in this document will bypass the very point they must address: seeing the new evangelization as the “conversion of structures.”

It is obvious that the expression does not refer to a visual experience nor anything experienced with the senses. It does not take place through an “apparition.” Instead, the expression “encounter” refers to a life experience that changes the way one understands his or her own life and future. Pope Benedict, in the text just quoted points out an important quality of the encounter. It is a personal experience that refers to Jesus as a person, and not only the teachings drawn from the example of his life or the historical consequences of his work. Therefore it requires that one’s totality as a person lives the experience, one’s whole self, and not just his or her emotions or thinking, experiences the encounter with Jesus Christ. Therefore, in some cases it can mean a break, a turning point or at least a change in the emphasis of one’s personal life. It is a global experience, “which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction.”

These two expressions refer to two effects of this “encounter.” Jesus opens, for the person who finds him, a new horizon of reference that allows one to renew one’s self-understanding and one’s understanding of the world. Normally self-understanding, the meaning of one’s own life, comes about through our relation to our own origin, goal, and the surroundings in which we live. Initially we define ourselves by our country and family of origin. That identity we receive. But we also forge an identity by the self-image we create for ourselves and by the actions through which we transform that image into our own personal biography. We identify ourselves with the projects we strive to achieve in life. Our life’s identity is articulated from the relations we establish with the environment in which we live. As a result of the encounter with Jesus, the relation with Jesus Christ becomes our principal and dominant personal relationship, and these vital life relations are reexamined and replanted, to the point that a new understanding of one’s own life and its purpose are generated. That is why the second effect of the encounter with Jesus is the decisive orientation which rises from this encounter. This encounter answers the questions: Why live? Why is life worth the struggle? What can give life that reference which will provide consistency and the definitive reason life is worth living? The answer can be nothing less than a personal relation with God himself who draws near to us in Jesus Christ.

But what is it that is revealed in the encounter with Jesus Christ? It is that Christ allows us to discover that our life is sustained by a love which precedes us and brings us to completeness. The Pope concludes in these words: “Since God has first loved us, love is now no longer a mere ‘command’; it is the response to the gift of love with which God draws near to us.” It is the discovery that one’s own life matters because it is a reference of divine love and that life itself has meaning to the degree in which it is a response to that love which comes from God, who loved us first. It is the discovery that truly it is not we who have encountered God in Jesus Christ. Rather, God himself has come to encounter us in Jesus.

Therefore, one’s encounter with Christ can be encouraged, but it cannot be brought about by human effort because it is the fruit of the grace and love of God. But this encounter is not just a matter of chance either. There is an opening to love and a search for meaning and consistency in the heart of every human being that makes it possible to know him. There Jesus Christ becomes a reference to meaning and joy.

“The goal of the transmission of the faith is the realization of a personal encounter with Jesus Christ, in the Spirit, thereby leading to an experiencing of his Father and our Father. Transmitting the faith means to create in every place and time the conditions for this personal encounter of individuals with Jesus Christ. The faith-encounter with the person of Jesus Christ is a relationship with him, ‘remembering him’ (in the Eucharist) and, through the grace of the Spirit, having in us the mind of Jesus Christ.” (*Lineamenta*, 11) That experience is the key to all personal, ecclesial, and institutional renewal. It is the fountain pouring forth all missionary and evangelizing zeal as well as every effort to renew the Church and community.

5. The Church, place where it is possible to encounter Jesus Christ

Within the context of the faith of the Church one can encounter Jesus Christ. Only there Jesus Christ, a person from the past, is a living presence who offers himself to us, meeting us and allowing himself to be discovered in a person-to-person relationship. The Church is the community of believers, those who have experienced an encounter with Jesus Christ, and by their lives, works, and words, give witness to another way of living that comes from having encountered him. The Church is the visible fruit of the mission of the Son. Because God’s own initiative of loving humanity first gave birth to the Church, the heart of any encounter with Jesus Christ is also the discovery of God who loves us first. The Church is the visible form of the gift of the Spirit, fruit of Christ’s paschal mystery, sent by the Father as a manifestation of his loving design. In this sense the Church is a historical mediation of the Holy Trinity’s mission of love. The Church’s mission is not something secondary, an additional assignment; the mission of Jesus Christ himself, sent by the Father in the Holy Spirit, creates the Church as the place for that mission to come about in history. Therefore, by its essence and constitution the Church and the Christians within it are missionary.

In the Church, Jesus Christ draws near to mankind first of all in its members’ witness of faith, hope, and love. The holiness of the Church, at times in exceptional cases patently, but most often shining in the day to day holiness of so many of its members, offers a first opportunity to encounter Jesus Christ.

Specifically, Jesus Christ draws near to those who allow him to encounter them in Sacred Scripture, --principally the Gospels--, read within the living Tradition of the entire Church, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The liturgical reading of the Word of God, its explanation in the light of the celebration of the Eucharist and the other sacraments, is the privileged place for encountering Jesus Christ in the womb of the Church.

Jesus Christ also comes to meet the faithful in the celebration of the sacraments. In Baptism and Confirmation he gives a new birth to those who turn to him, allowing them to participate in the paschal mystery of his death and resurrection, and through the experience of Pentecost unite themselves more closely to the church community. In the sacrament of penance Christ, always merciful, throughout the believer’s life receives the

sinner and extends the regenerating power of Baptism. In the celebration of the Eucharist Christ really and truly comes to meet the believer, offering himself as food for eternal life, uniting the believer with himself in one body and offers all a glimpse of the eternal banquet in heaven. All these occasions of celebration constitute encounters with the saving power of Christ. Many times popular religious practices prepare for, and are the context of, the celebration of these sacraments. They also create a religious and spiritual context within which it is easier and more likely that people will live these sacramental encounters with Christ.

Lastly, the witness of fraternal charity also offers a personal encounter with Christ. This happens in two ways. One may encounter and experience the mercy of God in times of need when one is helped by the charity of his/her brothers and sisters. But also, the believer can make service to his or her neighbor an act of faith, when s/he helps the hungry, naked, sick, or stranger, knowing that by feeding, clothing, caring for, and receiving a little one in need, s/he feeds, clothes, cares for, and receives Christ himself.

6. The Church, subject of the new evangelization

The Church, that is, the entire community of believers, each according to his or her charism and vocation in the community, is an agent of the new evangelization. “Transmitting the faith [is not] a specialized work assigned to a group of people or specifically designated individuals, but an experience of every Christian and the entire Church. Through this work, the Church continually rediscovers her identity as a People united by the call of the Spirit, who brings us together from the countless areas of everyday living to experience Christ's presence among us and, thereby, to discover God as Father. (...) The Church's fundamental activity of transmitting the faith is the foundation of the model and activity of Christian communities. Proclaiming and spreading the Gospel requires that the Church do everything possible to ensure that Christian communities are capable of intensely manifesting the basic elements of a life of faith, namely: charity, witness, proclamation, celebration, listening and sharing.” (*Lineamenta*, 12)

These affirmations regarding the Church are valid as well for Church communities such as parishes, religious institutes and, maintaining the correct proportions, the concrete expressions of these: the local ecclesial or religious community. Sharing the faith is the object of the new evangelization. If the faith is shared in order to offer an encounter with Jesus Christ, and the proper place for the encounter with Jesus Christ is the Church community, then the members of the community, by their own charism and vocation, are called to the mission task of spreading the faith. They are called to help those around them encounter Christ. If restructuring community is understood as rediscovering the source of one's Church identity, a community must replant its own missionary and evangelizing identity.

The inspirational text for Augustinian monastic life, as it is expressed in our *Constitutions* (2010), 15, brings to life the foundational community, in which everyone

held everything in common, directed their hearts toward God, persevered in the teaching of the Apostles, shared the breaking of the bread and lived together in one heart and one spirit (Acts 2:42-47). This Biblical text continues stating that their testimony was such that each day many more joined the faith and community. That is, by being Church, the community and its members became missionaries and evangelizers. This ecclesial base of our community, inspired by our charism, is the link between the restructuring proposals which the Order and the General Chapter have embraced, and the new evangelization for the transmission of the faith which the papal and episcopal magisterium have called for to renew the Church. We must embrace the reality that our existence as a religious community is a form of being Church. In order for us to be united with the universal Church, as well as live in our Augustinian Recollect communities that renewal of the Church we have been called to bring about, we must see the new evangelization of ourselves as the new evangelization of the entire Church as well.

In the following pages of this reflection I offer some ideas from the *Lineamenta*. These may help enrich from the perspective of new evangelization the three principal areas of the Order's ministry: missions, parish ministry and education.

7. The new evangelization and the missions

Pastoral theology vocabulary distinguishes between mission and evangelization. The mission is directed toward those who have not heard of Christ and speaks to those who do not identify with the Christian message. Today, due to secularization, there are many people that have broken their relationship with the Catholic Church, including not even baptizing their children albeit as fulfillment of social ritual. Surely, too, there is two-thirds of humanity that knows nothing about Christ and his Gospel and what they might know is partial, distorted, or simply wrong.

On the contrary, evangelization is aimed at those baptized, who have some link with the Church, but have not been sufficiently instructed in the faith and only participate occasionally in religious celebrations and rarely are living with the consistency expected of a follower of Jesus. The new evangelization is directed principally to this circle of people that, judging by its vital commitment with the Christian faith, constitute the periphery of the Church. They are people who do not reject God, Jesus Christ, or the Church, but have not been motivated or guided to participate in and experience more intensely the Church's faith. Nonetheless, to speak of a "new evangelization", the Church is not forgetting about its *ad gentes* mission and suggests ways of taking it up. Moreover, the border between "mission" and "new evangelization" is not a definite clearly marked line but an area where shades of both pastoral outreaches overlap and enrich each other.

As opposed to thinking of mission as a proselytizing campaign to gain followers, Pope Benedict XVI has developed a missionary image based on the figure of the "Court of the Gentiles." This phrase refers to the outer most part of the temple in Jerusalem. It was from this place that Jesus expelled those who were selling merchandise for worship

and were getting in the way of using the courtyard for what it had been designed for. It was the place where the gentiles, those people who were not Jews, dissatisfied with their own rites and myths, respectfully approached that place where the God of Israel was worshipped, bringing their intellectual questions as well as those of affect. It was this area that Jesus “cleared of extraneous affairs so that it could be a free space for the Gentiles who wished to pray there to the one God...By this he was thinking of people who know God, so to speak, only from afar; who are dissatisfied with their own gods, rites and myths; who desire the Pure and the Great, even if God remains for them the “unknown God.” They had to pray to the unknown God, yet in this way they were somehow in touch with the true God, albeit amid all kinds of obscurity.” And the Pope continues as quoted in the *Lineamenta*: “I think that today too the Church should open a sort of “Court of the Gentiles” in which people might in some way latch on to God, without knowing him and before gaining access to his mystery, at whose service the inner life of the Church stands” (*Lineamenta*, 5).

It is from here that the method of “giving reason for the faith” is adopted. It is necessary that every Christian feel motivated by Jesus himself to announce the gospel to all nations. At a time when the option of faith in Christ and following him is more difficult and often misunderstood, or even opposed and fought, it is all the more necessary that the community and individual Christians be witnesses and heralds of the Gospel as Jesus was. “St. Peter the Apostle...invites us to give an account and provide reasons, “for the hope that is in you” (1 Pt 3:15)...As Christians, we are to learn a new manner of responding in “gentleness and reverence and a clear conscience” (1 Pt 3:15, 16) with the gentle strength which comes from union with Christ in the Spirit and with the conviction that our goal is a personal encounter with God the Father in his Kingdom” (*Lineamenta*, 16).

A major challenge is finding adequate language to speak about God. In the most extreme cases, where people are immersed in secularized culture, the difficulty consists in re-awakening sensitivity for those questions that open to transcendence. How can one speak of God to those who know nothing of “gods” because culture has excluded from both language and experience all reference to the transcendental? In the majority of the cases, the difficulty arises from false, mistaken, confused, or inadequate ideas in relation to the spiritual world, mixed today with psychologism, astrology, and the resurgence of divinization of the cosmos, as seen in supposedly ancestral religions and different forms of neo-paganism. This cultural situation has taken place including among people who consider themselves part of the Church; there are Catholics whose ideas about God do not correspond to the face of the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

This is why the subject of an “initial proclamation” has become problematic. Not everyone understands the same thing when they hear or speak the word “God.” We must therefore “devise the forms and means for speaking about God, which can then equip them to respond to the anxieties and expectations of people today, showing them how the newness of Christ is the gift which all of us await and for which each of us yearns as the unexpressed desire in our search for meaning and our thirst for the truth. Consequently, the absence of this discourse on God provides an occasion for missionary

proclamation. Everyday life will help us to identify those “Courtyards of the Gentiles” ” (*Lineamenta*, 19).

8. The new evangelization and parish ministry

The new evangelization rests upon and develops along the axis of Christian initiation. The reflection on transmitting the faith in new social and cultural contexts has concentrated its attention on the itineraries of introduction to the faith and access to the sacraments. These activities constitute the heart and bulk of parish activity. Therefore, renewal of parish ministry along the axis of the new evangelization has as its guideline the renewal of the processes of Christian initiation. The *Aparecida Document* dedicates all of Chapter 6 to this topic. One may foresee that the upcoming Synod Assembly and its respective apostolic exhortation will develop inroads from the current weaknesses and deficiencies as well as develop into obligatory pastoral principles some current pastoral intuitions to respond to the urgent pastoral needs of our times.

This attention focuses on two aspects. On one hand we are urged to become conscious of the connection between the three sacraments of initiation: Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist. We must move from a vision which views them separately, looking at the particular meaning of each sacrament, to a vision of the whole which recognizes the relation which these sacraments have with each other, as actualizations of Christ’s paschal mystery and an anticipation of the glory of the Kingdom, in which the person who receives them participates. Also, we are urged to connect the reception of these sacraments with an itinerary of formation in the faith and Christian living. While it should be catechesis leading to the reception of the sacraments it must also be formation which is primarily directed toward achieving development and maturity in Christian living. Naturally all the catechetical process of initiation in the faith is based on the experience of the encounter with Jesus Christ. Without this experience, catechesis is reduced to learning doctrine when it should be, admittedly through doctrine, the experience of opening and deepening one’s experience of the faith, the Church, personal spirituality, and living these in social and family life.

Reflection upon and practice in reference to this topic in many particular Churches has been taking place for many years. Historical, social, and cultural circumstances confront us with a reality in which increasingly more people are seeking baptism as adults. Also, those baptized as children, only as adults, are turning to the Church seeking formation in the faith and completing the process of Christian initiation and formation. While we continue practicing the Catholic tradition of baptizing children with all the richness of that tradition, the pastoral model for faith formation will increasingly be one of Christian initiation of adults, including those children baptized as infants.

Here lies the relevance and appropriate timeliness of the catechumenate which was re-established as a pastoral institution by Vatican II and which later liturgical books have established and structured. The catechumenate has developed into pre-baptismal catechumenate for adults who are seeking admission to the Church and the faith, and a

post-baptismal catechumenate for those who were baptized as children. (It should be noted that, for purposes of the sacraments of Christian initiation, Church law considers adults those who have use of reason, that is, children who are seven years or older.) Often those who were baptized as children still need to follow a formative itinerary to grow and mature in the faith. Frequently we consider that the new evangelization is primarily directed to this vast number of people.

A topic which is receiving particular attention and which pastoral action directives address is the placement of the sacrament of Confirmation (see *Lineamenta*, 18). Christian initiation in itself is directed towards Eucharistic completion, and the authentic Christian life develops through a Eucharistic spirit of union with Christ within his Body which is both the Eucharist and the Church. To make Confirmation the final sacrament of initiation makes Pentecost the goal of the Christian life and emphasizes instead a Pentecostal spirituality. This confuses the fact that the person undergoing initiation already acquired full participation in the Church and in Christ upon beginning full participation in the Eucharist, and that the goal of the Christian life is the fullness of the Kingdom which is anticipated in the Eucharist. It is foreseen that this topic will be debated in the upcoming Synod Assembly and it is not surprising that there has been a call to review the practice which spread in the second half of the 20th century regarding the appropriate age and time for receiving the sacrament of Confirmation.

The *Aparecida Document* (278) lists very clearly the different aspects of growth and formation in the faith. It mentions first the foundational experience of encountering Jesus Christ. The whole formation process rests on this encounter. The encounter with Jesus Christ leads to conversion, understood as a new way of understanding oneself having experienced God's love, an experience that leads to separating from behaviors and lifestyles incompatible with that new planting of life. Discipleship is that process of maturing and consolidating which takes place through lifelong catechesis and the sacramental life, it is the spiritual growth of the person who follows Christ. This discipleship is only possible in communion with the Church. There can be no Christian life except in community: in families, parishes, communities of consecrated life, and all other forms of fraternal life that exist within the Church. And finally, the vocation to discipleship leads to the vocation to mission, to be a witness and share with others the joy of being a disciple, of being sent to proclaim the Jesus who looks for us and finds us.

The *Aparecida Document* (304) points to parishes above all as "special places where most of the faithful have a concrete experience of Christ and his Church. They include inexhaustible communal riches because in them is found an immense variety of situations, ages, and tasks." In order for parishes to be centers from which mission radiates they must also be places where continuous formation takes place. "This requires that a variety of approaches to formation be organized within them, assuring accompaniment and the maturing of all pastoral agents and of laypeople inserted in the world" (DA 306).

9. The new evangelization and educational apostolate

Christian initiation and faith education are processes which have as the subject the whole person in all its aspects. For this reason from ancient times the Church has undertaken the educational apostolate as a necessary form of evangelization. Faith involves the whole person in all of life's dimensions; it is not a partial or isolated piece of knowledge. Therefore, faith education is more than merely a person's religious formation. To the contrary, from a Catholic perspective, a person's education is incomplete if it is limited to culture only. An integral education also includes moral formation and above all formation in Christian faith. Christ is the reference that gives meaning and consistency to human existence; he is the foundation and full meaning of culture and morality. For this reason, it is obvious that new evangelization should look seriously at the Church's educational apostolate, seeking a complete renewal of our education outreach. The educational apostolate is an integral part of the Augustinian Recollect vocation; that is why this facet of the new evangelization is particularly important for us.

“A consequence of the necessity to speak about God is the possibility and necessity of a similar discourse on man, which is demanded of evangelization and is directly linked to it, since a strong bond exists between initiation in the faith and education...It is natural that evangelization and initiation in the faith include educational activity, a work which the Church undertakes as a service to the world.” (*Lineamenta*, 20)

The Church's educational work, particularly that work done by institutes of consecrated life, has been questioned from very diverse positions, including from within the Church itself. At times criticism is raised that the educational work has been limited to transmission of culture marginalizing the aspects of moral education and education in the faith; or that the education offered in the name of the Church is only available to those able to pay for it; or that we have lost sight of the school's evangelizing potential, considering the parish as the only valid center for evangelization. The new evangelization is a call to reexamine these postures. The synthesis of faith and culture achieved by the Church at the end of the Classical Era and the beginning of the Middle Ages was made possible by the education processes offered in European monasteries. The inculturation of the faith in the new culture rising now throughout the world will necessarily involve the educational work of the Church.

This is a huge challenge. “Transmitting to new generations the basic values for living and right conduct is becoming more arduous...Such a situation was somewhat predictable in societies and cultures that are oftentimes dominated by relativism, which lacks the light of truth...As a result, education increasingly tends to be reduced to simply communicating to persons determined skills and teaching succeeding generations to gratify their desire for happiness through the products of consumerism or through a short-lived self-gratification. In light of this, parents and teachers are easily tempted to relinquish their proper educational task and, no longer understanding what their role might be, the mission entrusted to them.” (*Lineamenta*, 20)

The integral formation of the person is the object of Catholic education. Therefore Catholic education consists of three basic elements: Teaching the faith and discipleship of Jesus Christ and knowledge of the truth; moral formation and teaching the personal liberty needed to choose the good; the handing on of culture and the knowledge needed for the growth of the person and society. “The Christian faith assists the intelligence in understanding the profound underlying equilibrium of history and all existence. It accomplishes this not in a general or external way but by sharing with reason a thirst for knowledge and inquiry, directing reason towards the well-being of man and the cosmos. The Christian faith helps us understand the profound content of basic human experiences...Because of her commitment to education and culture, the Church is called to undertake a process of discernment, which is the first step in the "new evangelization", so as to be able to distinguish the critical aspects of these challenges and forces and adopt the strategies which will be a guarantee in the future of not only the Church but also the individual and humanity.” (*Lineamenta*, 21)

This effort requires that educators also be witnesses of the faith. The Catholic educator not only shares knowledge and culture but also faith in Christ. “No matter what the proposal in the new evangelization...there is no escaping the fact that people's lives give force to their efforts at evangelization...Today's educational emergency calls upon educators to know how to be credible witnesses of this reality and of the values which can serve as the basis for personal existence and the shared projects of living together in society.” (*Lineamenta*, 22) These words apply not only to educators who work in schools and universities. These words are valid for all ministers of the new evangelization: bishops, priests, catechists, teachers at all the levels where the Church's work of evangelization is carried out.

10. The joy of being missionary disciples

Heart felt joy, seen on the face and seen in body gesture, emotively expresses the personal experience of having found meaning and solidity in Christ. Joy is the deepest longing of the human heart and experiencing joy makes life with all its pain, adversity, and failure worth living. The search for happiness, pleasure, and joy finds its object in the discipleship of the follower of Jesus. This joy makes the disciples of Jesus Christ both promoters and agents of the new evangelization.

People need hope in order to both live the present and face the future. This hope can only be placed in the God who has a human face and who has loved us to the extreme. This is why the Church is missionary. The words of eternal life we receive through the encounter with Jesus Christ are for everyone. The new evangelization reawakens that hope. One of the obstacles to the new evangelization is the lack of joy and hope which characterizes the lives and the culture of humanity today. That is why the new evangelization is seen as an announcement capable of giving once again joy and life to people who are prisoners of their own fears. (*Lineamenta*, 25).

The magnificent paragraph with which Chapter 1 of the *Documento de Aparecida* (32) ends can also serve as a conclusion to this reflection: “We desire that the

joy that we have received in the encounter with Jesus Christ, whom we recognize as the incarnate Son of God and redeemer, reaches all the men and women wounded by calamity, we desire that the joy of the Good News of the Kingdom of God, of Jesus Christ, conqueror of sin and death, reaches all who lie along the edge of the road begging for sustenance and compassion. The joy of the disciple is the remedy offered to a world terrorized by the future and struggling under the weight of violence and hate. The joy of the disciple is not a self-centered feeling of wellbeing but a conviction which springs from faith, which calms the heart and gives one the ability to announce the Good News of the love of God. Knowing Jesus is the greatest gift any person can receive; having found him is the best thing that has happened in our lives, and sharing that experience with our word and works is our joy.”

11. For community reflection and dialogue

- How can mission and the new evangelization contribute to the revitalization of the Order?

- What are we doing and what should we be doing so that our communities respond better to the Church’s call for new evangelization?

- Missions, parish ministry, and educational apostolate: What can we Augustinian Recollects contribute to the new evangelization? How can we achieve this?