

WHAT IS THE WORD OF GOD GOING TO DO?

God's word is unpredictable in its power. The Gospel speaks of a seed which, once sown, grows by itself, even as the farmer sleeps (Mk 4:26-29). The Church has to accept this unruly freedom of the word, which accomplishes what it wills in ways that surpass our calculations and ways of thinking. #22

Questions:

1. When was the last time you heard anyone in the Church describe the Word of God as unruly?
2. When were you surprised by the Word of God in your life? your prayer? your parish?



UNRULY FOR SURE!

Have you ever wondered why the people of the Church have pictured the Holy Spirit as a bird?

The next time you see a flock of sparrows (in great abundance in Saskatchewan) try to imagine that you could herd them? Make them fly to your destination?

No, birds do whatever they want. No one controls them. Could you think of a more fitting image for the Word of God. No wonder Francis speaks of it as "unruly" and it "accomplishes what it wills." Better than that, the Word always surpasses human control; it accomplishes what it wills in ways that surpass our calculations and ways of thinking."

THE FIRST PERSON TO BE EVANGELIZED IS THE CHURCH HERSELF

Paul VI invited us to deepen the call to renewal and to make it clear that renewal does not only concern individuals but the entire Church. Let us return to a memorable text which continues to challenge us. "The Church must look with penetrating eyes within herself, ponder the mystery of her own being... This vivid and lively self-awareness inevitably leads to a comparison between the ideal image of the Church as Christ envisaged her and loved her as his holy and spotless bride (cf. Eph 5:27), and the actual image which the Church presents to the world today... This is the source of the Church's heroic and impatient struggle for renewal: the struggle to correct those flaws introduced by her members which her own self-examination, mirroring her exemplar, Christ, points out to her and condemns". The Second Vatican Council presented ecclesial conversion as openness to a constant self-renewal born of fidelity to Jesus Christ: "Every renewal of the Church essentially consists in an increase of fidelity to her own calling... Christ summons the Church as she goes her pilgrim way... to that continual reformation of which she always has need, in so far as she is a human institution here on earth". # 26

Questions:

1. How have you experienced the call to conversion directed toward the Church herself?
2. What image does the Church portray to the unbelieving world?

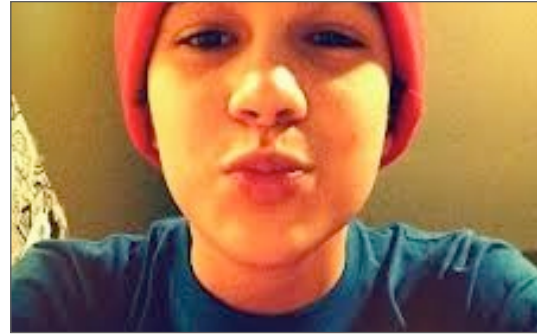


LIVE IN A MISSIONARY CHURCH

I dream of a “missionary option”, that is, a missionary impulse capable of transforming everything, so that the Church’s customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channeled for the evangelization of today’s world rather than for her self-preservation. 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 him. As John Paul II once said to the Bishops of Oceania: “All renewal in the Church must have mission as its goal if it is not to fall prey to a kind of ecclesial introversion.”# 27

Questions:

1. Do you see your faith as an instrument of God’s transforming powers?
2. Are we as a parish interested in self-preservation or are we more interested in sharing our faith with the unchurched and those who are not familiar with Christ?



*Let us not flee from
the resurrection of
Jesus, let us never give
up, come what will.
May nothing inspire
more than his life,
which impels us
onwards!*

SUMMER WITH POPE FRANCIS

July 27, 2014

This is the fourth bulletin on the pastoral letter of Pope Francis. Take each paragraph slowly. Read it and chew it over slowly. What do these sentences spark in your mind? In your soul? How does this apply to our life of faith as a Church? Perhaps you can read it over with a fellow parishioner. What can we learn as we reflect together? *Google the full text at: APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION EVANGELII GAUDIUM*

The word of God constantly shows us how God challenges those who believe in him “to go forth”. Abraham received the call to set out for a new land (cf. Gen 12:1-3). Moses heard God’s call: “Go, I send you” (Ex 3:10) and led the people towards the promised land (cf. Ex 3:17). To Jeremiah, God says: “To all whom I send you, you shall go” (Jer 1:7).

In our day Jesus’ command to “go and make disciples” echoes in the changing scenarios and ever new challenges to the Church’s mission of evangelization, and all of us are called to take part in this new missionary “going forth”. Each Christian and every community must discern the path that the Lord points out, but all of us are asked to obey his call to go forth from our own comfort zone in order to reach all the “peripheries” in need of the light of the Gospel. # 20



Questions:

1. What are the paths that the Lord is showing to us?
2. How is the Lord asking us to move out of our comfort zone as a Church?