

24. The Church's Mission – Apostolates & Outreach

The Church's mission is more about helping people to fall in love than about convincing them to fall in line. It is the first proclamation: Jesus Christ has saved you. It is from this proposition that the moral consequences then flow.

Key terms:

Church:	An assembly of the faithful hierarchically ordered.
Catholic:	Derived from a Greek word [<i>katholikos</i>] which means 'universal'. It is universal in two ways: (i) The Church is universal because Christ is present in her. She receives from him "the fullness of the means of salvation." (ii) The Church is Catholic because she has a mission to the whole world.
Roman Catholicism:	is Roman in the sense that it is the branch of Christianity ("the Church") that considers the city of Rome (founded on the tombs of the apostles Peter and Paul) to be its geographical centre. A more accurate title is the Latin Church, whereas the 'Roman' Church technically refers to the diocese of Rome.
Roman Catholic:	A member of the Roman Catholic Church who believes in the authority of the Pope as the successor of the apostle, Peter.
Mission:	The Greek word " <i>apostoloi</i> " means "sent." It refers to Christ's call to the disciples to continue his own mission: proclaiming the kingdom of God throughout the world.
Apostolate:	(i) All the activity of Christ's mystical body which is directed towards: ❖ Spreading the kingdom of Christ throughout the earth for the glory of God the Father; ❖ To enable all people to share in Christ's saving redemption; ❖ That through them the whole world might enter into relationship with Christ (ii) A Christian organisation directed to serving and evangelising the world, i.e. spreading the Kingdom of Christ over all the earth."'. (2Cor 5:20; 1Cor 4:1)
Lay Apostolate:	Lay persons, who are neither consecrated religious nor in Holy Orders who exercise a ministry within the Church which witnesses to Christ and builds up the Body of Christ.

MISSION OF THE CHURCH (Mk.16:15; Mt. 28:19-20)

"The ultimate purpose of mission is none other than to make men share in the communion between the Father and the Son in their Spirit of love" CCC #850

- To make the kingdom of God present in our world
- To open eyes – forgiveness of sins, sanctification of God's people by faith (Acts 26:28)
- Salvation is brought to humanity through Jesus Christ and His Church (Rom 1:16; Mt. 16:18)
- The Church brings salvation to the world as a:

- Light of the world (Mt. 5:14)
- Household or family of God (Eph. 2:19; 1Pet 4:17)
- Mother who nurtures God's sons and daughters (Gal 4:26)
- "Pillar and ground of the truth" (1Tim 3:15)
- Preach the gospel of the Kingdom of God.
- Make disciples throughout the world.
- Teach as Jesus taught.

COMMISSION (Mt. 28:19-20)

Christ gives the commission to us and we go in His authority to build His church.

"Go" (Mk. 16:15; Lk. 24:47; Jn 20:21)

- A participle that expresses a state of being: "As you go....." or "When you go..." The going is assumed – what else do you do with good news?

"Make disciples" (Mt. 28:19-20; Mt. 4:9; Mk.1:17028; Mk. 8:34; Jn. 8:31-32; Acts 1:8.)

- A disciple....one who learns and has made an unconditional commitment to Jesus Christ (Lk. 9:62)
- One who has a relationship with Jesus so that they will become like Jesus.

"of all nations"

- People from every ethnicity and people group on earth.
- Through Jesus, God's relationship with humanity has moved beyond Israel to include people from every corner of the world who come to the Father through the Son.

"Baptising them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit"

- Public baptism is an outward sign of an inward reality.....a public profession of faith.
- Identifies the believer with a local church where they are nurtured and grow in their faith as a disciple.

"teaching them to observe all I commanded you"

- "To observe".....means "to obey, to guard or to keep intact".
- Teaching results in obedience through transformation. (Jn.15:14)

STRATEGY (Lk.24:49; Acts 1:8)

"Jerusalem" – their immediate vicinity (Acts 2:1)

"Judea" – surrounding territory (Acts 8:5)

"Samaria" – neighbouring territory

"all the nations" – new nations (Acts 8:26)

CONTINUING THE MISSION OF JESUS

Recognise God's sovereignty over our lives.

- Jesus came into the world "when the fullness of time came" (Gal 4:4)
- It is by God's plan and purpose that we live where and when we do (Acts 17:24-28; 1Chron 29:11-12)
- God orders our steps to help us understand and fulfil His mission of spreading the gospel. (Prov. 16:9)

Pray often, according to the will of God

- Jesus prayed both publicly and privately. The power of His prayers was such that the disciples asked Him, "teach us to pray" (Lk. 5:16; Lk. 11:1)
- Jesus gave specific instructions about prayer in relation to the mission of sharing the gospel.

- He was filled with compassion - they were like sheep without a shepherd (Mt. 9:36).
- The harvest is rich, but the labourers are few. He asks the Father to “send workers into His harvest” (Jn. 4:35; Mt. 9:38).
- Paul prayed for God to open a door for the gospel so he could proclaim the mystery of Christ (Col. 4:3)
- He asked for prayers that he would open his mouth boldly for the gospel (Eph. 6:19).
- Peter and John filled with the Holy Spirit, began to speak the word of God with boldness (Acts 4:31)

Obey the Holy Spirit in Serving and loving our neighbours

- Jesus’ mission was a mission of mercy....”while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom 5:8)
- Jesus encourages Christians to be the “light of the world”, so their good works will give glory to God” (Mt. 5:14-16).
- ‘In so far as you did it to one of the least of these, you did it to me’ (Mt. 25:40).
- A lawyer asks Jesus what he should do to inherit eternal life. (Lk. 10)
- God created us for good works (Eph.2:10).
- Paul instructed Titus to teach God’s people to “engage in good deeds to meet pressing needs” (Tit 3:14).
- Paul exhorts the Galatians to never grow weary of doing good (Gal 6:9-10).
- Paul reminds the Ephesians that we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works and we should walk in them (Eph 2:10).

Tell what Jesus has done for us

- Jesus warns his disciples that they will be sent out “as lambs among wolves” (Lk. 10:3).
- Peter and John are warned not to speak publicly about Jesus.....”what we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:20).
- As Jesus tells His ‘story’ – sent from God (Jn. 8:42), will return to the Father once His work is done (Jn.17:4). His purpose was to reveal the glory of God in human flesh (Jn. 1:14), and to accomplish salvation through his death, burial and resurrection. We share what God has accomplished in us.

Invite others to believe

- Jesus said, “I am the resurrection and the life.....Do you believe this? (Jn. 11:25-26)

APOSTOLATES IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH

By its very nature the Christian vocation is a vocation to the apostolate because:

- Every part of a living body must actively share in the functions of the whole body.
- The laity share in the priestly, prophetic, and royal office of Christ and therefore in the mission of the whole People of God.
- Because the laity live in the world they must be like leaven in the world, with Christ’s zeal.
- Through baptism and confirmation Christ himself assigns the laity to the apostolate, and through the Eucharist they will receive and nourish the charity which is the soul of the apostolate.
- Charity demands that all the faithful promote God’s glory, by making the message of salvation known to all.
- For the apostolate the Holy Spirit gives the laity special gifts.
- Union with Christ both demands the apostolate and is the source of its efficacy.

EXAMPLES OF LAY APOSTOLATES

Social Media

wordonfire.org; catholicanswers.com; catholic.org;stpaulcenter.com. (Mk. 16:15)

Run by laity to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Care of the Poor

Mary's Meals, St. Vincent De Paul, Crosscare, Missionaries of Charity, Franciscan, Merchant Quay Project)

(Ps. 72:12-14; Ps. 82:3; Lk. 3:10-11; Gal. 2:10; 1Jn. 3:16-18; Jms. 1:27; Mt. 25:35)

Care for prisoners

Provision of chaplaincy services, further education, etc

(Mt. 25:34-40; Mk. 2:17; Rom 8:1-3; Rom 12:10-16)

Care for refugees and migrants

Jesuit Refugee Services; Columban Centre, Crosscare Migrant Project; Doras

(Gen. 23:4; Deut. 10:19; Jer. 7:5-7; Zech 7:9-10; Lk. 10:27; Mt. 25:35; Rom 12:13; Heb 13:1-3)

Persecuted Christians

Aid to the Church in Need; Caritas International; Open Doors International, Church in Chains (Lk. 6:27-31; Mt. 5:10-12; Mt. 5:44; 2Cor 12:10; James 1:12)

Peace

Pax Christi – promotes peace and reconciliation that promotes peace, respect for human rights, justice and reconciliation.

(Mt. 5:9; Rom 12:18; Jms. 3:17-18; Col. 3:15; Heb 12:14; Rom 14:19; Jn. 14:27; 1Thess 5:13; Mt. 5:24; Gal 5:22; Eph 4:1-3; Phil 4:7; 1Pet 3:11)

Developmental Aid, Environmental Programmes, Environmental Protection

Trócaire; Concern, Goal, Columbans

(Gen. 1:28; Gen. 2:15; Ps. 24:1; Rom 1:20; Col 1:16-17; Mt. 6:26; 1Tim 4:4)

Bereavement

Bethany, Irish Hospice Foundation

(Ps. 147:3; Mt. 5:4; Rev. 21:4; Jer 31:13; Jn. 14:27;

Widows & the Elderly

St. Vincent de Paul,

(1Tim 5:8; 1Tim 5:3-4; Jn. 19:26-27; Eph. 6:2; Col 3:20; Acts 20:35;

Care of the Sick

Hospitals, Nursing Homes, Facilities for those with special/advanced care needs

(Jms. 5:13-15; Mt. 24:31-46; 3Jn.1:2; Lk. 10:30-37; Mt. 10:8; Lk. 4:18;Lk. 4:40; Mk.2:3-5; Mt. 8:14-15)

The Church's Mission: Apostolates & Outreach — Suggested Questions for Discussion:

1. Before 'preaching to others, why is the discipline of "preaching to yourself" so important?
2. What are some examples of apostolic works in your church community? How do they reveal the Kingdom of God and build up the Body of Christ?
3. According to Matthew 28:18-20, what would you say the core purpose of the church should be?
4. In what way does the celebration of Sunday Eucharist shape a believer's apostolic works?
5. How do apostolic works reflect the presence of God in your life and the life of those whom you serve?
6. Reflecting on these three broad categories: geographic, network, and marginalised, are there new opportunities for apostolic work in your parish?

PRAYER

Psalm 67 and Psalm 117

or

Gospel Reflection:	Third Sunday of Easter
Year A	Lk. 24:13-35
Year B	Lk. 24:35-48
Year C	Jn. 21:1-19

The following format will be used for all Gospel reflections:

- Read the text aloud.
- Pause for a minute's silence.
- Read the text aloud again.
- Ask everyone to pick a word or a phrase that struck them. They just say the word or phrase without comment or discussion.
- Read the text again.
- Ask those present to comment on their word or phrase. What struck them about it? Why/how is it speaking to them?
- Continue with the discussion.

The following questions may be helpful:

What does this mean to me?

How does it make me feel?

Did I find the text disturbing/hopeful/confusing?

What images of God emerge for me?

What do I think that God is saying in this text?

What impact does this have on my life?

Scripture and Catechism Resources

The Church's Mission: Apostolates and Outreach

Scripture

- Mk. 16:15 Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to all creation.
- Mt. 28:19-20 Make disciples of all the nations.....Jesus is with us until the end of time.
- Acts 2:42-47 The early church remains faithful to the apostles teaching and fellowship, the breaking of bread and prayers.
- 1Tim 3:14-15 The use of 'household' describes the church and its ministry. 'Church of the living God, highlights the church as a gathering where God manifests his presence.
- 2Tim 1:13 The church is charged with the task of preserving the true gospel throughout the ages.
- 2Tim 2:15 Preaching the gospel is central to the church's mission.
- Rom 12:4-5 The church's mission is to live out the gospel through transformed lives, demonstrating love, hospitality, and service to both believers and non-believers, reflecting Christ's character in everyday actions.
- Col. 1:17-20 Christ, is the head of the body, the church. He is the Lord of Redemption through the cross.
- Eph. 2:19-22 Members of the Church are fellow citizens with the saints. Jesus is the cornerstone.
- Eph. 4 The mission of the church is to equip believers for ministry, promoting unity and maturity in Christ, and utilising diverse spiritual gifts.
- Tit 1:19 The church is to faithfully preach the gospel, refute false teaching, and maintain doctrinal and moral purity among its members.
- Gal. 6:1-10 The church is to support and restore believers with love and humility, showing kindness and care.
- 1Thess 5:11 The mission of the church is to help members grow in maturity as followers of Jesus.
- 1Thess 5:12-22 The church should protect against false teaching and build one another up in truth.
- 1Pet 2:4-5 Believers are living stones in God's spiritual house and become a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God.
- 1Cor 12:12-26 The activities of the early church when they gather together as the body of Christ to worship the Lord. The church is called to be a vivid, living witness to the gospel it preaches.
- Heb. 10:24-25 The importance of perseverance in meeting as the family of God. The importance of love and good works as the hallmarks of the 'temple'.
- Rev. 21:2-3 The holy city, the new Jerusalem, where God dwells among his people.

Catechism

- 737-747 The mission of Christ and the Holy Spirit is brought to completion in the Church, which is the Body of Christ and the Temple of the Holy Spirit.
- 849-950 The Church has been divinely sent as "the universal sacrament of salvation" and must preach the Gospel to everyone.
- 851 God desires for all to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth.
- 852 The Holy Spirit is the "protagonist" who guides the Church on her missionary path.
- 853-854 The missionary endeavour begins by proclaiming the Gospel to unbelievers, then by establishing communities of believers, and finally by founding a local church.
- 855-856 Missionary endeavours stimulate efforts to Christian unity. Divisions within the Church cannot manifest One, Holy Catholic Church.
- 863 All members of the Church share in the church's mission, though in various ways.