

In spring 2011 we in Cork & Ross held two public meetings to discuss the ***Lineamenta*** (consultation document) in advance of the Synod on the New Evangelisation. The contributions of each national conference of bishops were taken into account when the agenda for the Synod was being developed. This has now been published as the ***Instrumentum Laboris***. There is a brief summary below with some extracts in italics. The full text of this document can be found on the Vatican website www.vatican.va.

The New Evangelisation for the Transmission of the Christian Faith ***Instrumentum Laboris***

Summary

Introduction

Expectations from the Synod...

In the scriptures we are told that faith can achieve great things (Mt 21:21), and the disciples are also admonished for their lack of faith (Mt 17:20). Peter started in faith when he went to Jesus on the water, but soon sank and was saved by the hand of Jesus. In our faith communities it is easy to become disheartened – *only the Lord Jesus can extend his hand and indicate the sure path in the journey of faith.*

The goal of evangelisation is the transmission of faith. This task belongs to all of us and the Holy Spirit empowers us. We need to find new forms of evangelisation to reach out to those who have never experienced Jesus and those whose faith has drifted.

The Synod will present an invitation to rediscover faith. Key documents of the Church which have paved the way for this are *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, *Redemptoris Missio*, and *Novo Millennio Ineunte*. It will respond to the urgent and fundamental call to evangelise, and give a unified direction, energising Christian communities and providing concrete answers to questions facing the Church.

The Church must renew enthusiasm for its primary task, in the face of widespread disorientation leading to distrust and reduced commitment. It must
lead people out of the desert, into the place of life, toward friendship with the Son of God..
to a rediscovery of the joy of believing.

The second Vatican council has similar aims and was characterised by the regenerating power of the call to salvation, not pessimism. Since then the need for evangelisation has been recognised – an *ongoing internal renewal, a continuous passing from being evangelised to evangelising.*

Chapter 1

A rediscovery of the heart of evangelisation: the experience of faith, the encounter with Jesus Christ.

The goal of all evangelisation is to create the possibility for this encounter which is at one and the same time, intimate, personal public and communal.

This encounter takes place through the Holy Spirit, and leads to full conversion of the whole person, making us members of the Church and evangelisers in our own right.

There is a need to re-state the core of Christian faith which is unknown by many Christians.

Jesus Christ, the Evangeliser: Jesus was sent to proclaim Good News – with the purpose of drawing people into his intimate relationship with the Father and the Holy Spirit, often by means of concrete acts of healing. He welcomed and included everyone without distinction.

The Synod will consider to what extent evangelisation and the call to holiness are present in our communities and how they nourish people's lives.

The Church has always been entrusted with the task of evangelisation. Each member has a duty to share the Good News.

How are people to call upon him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without a preacher? Rom 10:14 (Is 52:1)

The Gospel is a gift for everyone. Jesus' evangelising is accompanied by healing and forgiveness. The Gospel transforms the person and the world. This has been shown in the lives of outstanding Christians who are an example to all of us. It can also be difficult to communicate Christian experience in today's world. The Synod will discuss these difficulties.

We give what we have freely received – not just knowledge, but the love of Christ. However there is some confusion which leads people to think that the sharing of the gospel is an infringement of human freedom. Adherence to Christ enhances human freedom and everyone has the right to know friendship with him.

The Church must evangelise itself if it is to proclaim the gospel with energy and strength. In that regard it must also deal with the sin of its members.

Many particular churches request that the Synod determine whether the lack of effects in evangelisation today, as well as in catechesis in modern times, is primarily the result of ecclesial and spiritual factors. This concerns the Church's ability to live as a real community, as a true brotherhood and as a Living Body and not simply a human establishment.

Chapter 2

Discerning the signs of the times.

The mission of the Church has not changed but there have been many social changes which must be met with enthusiasm and courage. Some of these changes have been beneficial and others challenging to gospel values. We are called to witness to our hope in new ways – new in ardour, method and expression – guided by the Holy Spirit.

Responses indicated that the new evangelisation is the Church's ability to renew her communal experience of faith and to proclaim it in today's world.

The effects a negative environment include *weakening of faith;*

diminished regard for the authority of the magisterium; and individualistic approach to belonging to the Church; a decline in religious practice and disengagement in transmitting the faith to new generations.

On the positive side, there are signs of renewal, especially through new ecclesial movements, and theological and cultural institutions. These include many young people.

Sectors of the new evangelisation:

Culture:

Secularisation is widespread. This can be anti-Christian in tone and can lead to an atmosphere of the absence of God even among Christians. One effect is relativism, which makes it difficult to affirm truths about God. Secularisation is also the place where we experience common humanity – and there is still a seeking for what is really human. This can be an opportunity for sharing and mutual growth.

Social:

Migration and globalisation. Migration erodes longstanding religious traditions but can be an opportunity for growth and new solidarity for the good of all. It can bring a new exchange across churches and encourage a mission which goes beyond geographical boundaries.

Economic:

Migration can also be connected to violence and poverty – a separation between rich and poor. Particular churches are invited to live the evangelical ideal of poverty. The work of many Christian communities on behalf of the poor and charitable work is a positive witness.

Civic Life:

Changes in Eastern Europe, the fall of Communism and the rise of new regimes in the Islamic and Asian world. Need for

a commitment to peace, the development and liberation of peoples, better international regulation and interaction of national governments; the search for possible areas of listening; co-existence, dialogue and collaboration between different cultures and religions, the defence of human rights and peoples, especially minorities; the promotion of the most vulnerable; and the integrity of creation and a commitment to the future of our planet.

Developments in science, research and technology are beneficial but also run the risk of becoming the new idols. Electronic and media culture are becoming a forum of civic life and culture, impacting people's lives.

Communications technologies and the space created by them must therefore be viewed positively, without prejudice, as a resource which requires a discerning eye and a wise and responsible employment.

There are benefits and drawbacks to the communications culture. Along with benefits in access to information and dialogues, there can also be an individualism. The Church should use media as a way of proclaiming the Gospel. Christians should be bold in entering these new fora and making the Christian tradition known.

Religion:

Along with secularisation there is evidence of religious revival. Some of this is naïve and emotional and brings fundamentalism which might even justify acts of violence and terrorism. Some new groups similar to sects. Christians should dialogue with the great religious traditions.

Such encounters and dialogue also allow Catholics better to understand the ways in which the Christian faith expresses the religious nature of the human soul.

Addressing these sectors, Christians should use discernment and critical thinking.

Lineamenta responses identify reasons for the decline in Christian practice, 'a silent apostasy,' which leaves the Church unable to respond to these challenges. Insufficient guidance in formation of believers and excessive bureaucratic Church structures, removed

from real life, causes a lack of enthusiasm at local church level. Sometimes over-formal liturgies which lack spiritual meaning turn people away instead of attracting them.

These changes have also increased ecumenical dialogue and exchange:

the necessity for a real unity among Christians which is not to be seen merely as cordial relations or co-operation in some joint project, but rather as the desire to let ourselves be transformed by the Spirit, so we may increasingly be conformed to the image of Christ.

Where the Church is in a minority or is persecuted evangelisation is linked with the cross. These churches serve as a reminder that evangelisation cannot be measured in quantitative terms of success. The witness of the persecuted Church can inspire new courage in the churches now suffering from weariness.

Pastoral Care and Evangelisation

The boundaries between pastoral care of the faithful, new evangelisation and specific missionary activity are not clearly definable and it is unthinkable to create barriers between them or to put them into watertight compartments...

There are three basic requirements in the Church's evangelisation:

(i) the ability to discern or a capacity to place oneself within the present circumstances, unwavering in the conviction that within this context, the Gospel can still be proclaimed and the Christian faith lived.

(ii) the ability to live forms of fundamental and authentic adherence to the Christian faith, whose simple character can already serve as a witness to the transforming power of God in our history, and

(iii) a clear and visible bond with the Church, capable of making her missionary and apostolic character perceptible.

Parish Transformation:

Basic Christian Communities can foster faith and Christian life.

Danger that work of overstretched pastors will become overly operational and administrative and the churches may become too concerned with themselves. Parish renewal and co-operation between parishes creates a more community oriented Church.

The missionary call asks the Church to be less concentrated on inward concerns and more engaged in proclaiming the faith to others. As well as liturgy, pastoral life, catechesis parishes should become real centres for propagating and bearing witness to the Christian experience. Resources for this include the ministry of lay people. The Church should be consistently close to people especially in times of need and announce the gospel.

Insufficient numbers of priests indicated a need to envisage a more integrated organisation of the local Church involving lay people as well as priests in the animation of the community. Programme needed on behalf of priestly vocations, and adequate formation programmes in seminaries.

Defining 'New Evangelisation.'

In its precise sense, evangelisation is the missio ad gentes directed to those who do not know Christ. In a wider sense it is used to describe ordinary pastoral work, while the phrase 'new evangelisation' designates pastoral outreach to those who no longer practise the Christian faith.

This not intended to be an exhaustive definition – but a next step in defining new evangelisation. Regional variations require different responses.

The Church wants to be the place where Christ can be experienced and people can be transformed by the gift of faith.

Chapter 3

The places, means, persons and activities in the transmission of the Christian faith. A person cannot convey what is not believed or lived. Communion must accompany proclamation. Basic works of the life of the Church: charity, witness, proclamation, celebration, listening, sharing.

Essential elements of the faith should be re-stated and re-examined.

Communities should make provision for this in a way which connects faith and life – in many places this is in the initial stages.

The Church transmits the faith it lives:

The best place to transmit the faith is a community nourished and transformed by the liturgical life and prayer.

-*Lex orandi lex credendi*. The liturgy is the outstanding means of expression of the faith of a community. Liturgy transforms a group of people into a

community which celebrates and transmits the Trinitarian faith in God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

-Importance of *lectio divina* a simple powerful means of evangelisation and renewal; through the Word, God speaks, calls, questions, guides, enlightens and encourages.

-Sacrament of Reconciliation

-Prayer – liturgy of the hours; Eucharistic adoration; listening and prayer around Word; Marian, charismatic and devotional groups.

Transmission of faith – professed, celebrated, lived and prayed. Four major divisions of the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)– the creed, the sacraments, the commandments and the Lord's prayer. The CCC is to create adhesion to the content of faith as a state of mind.

Serious efforts are being made to develop faith of members. Sometimes there is emphasis on sacramental catechesis but not ongoing faith development of people.

Fundamental law of catechesis:

...faithfulness to God and the person, done out of love. The Synod could discuss how to devise a programme of catechesis which is both basic and complete and able to transmit fully the core elements of the faith and at the same time knows how to speak to people today, in their cultures, while listening to their questions and inspiring their search for truth goodness and beauty.

Persons involved in evangelisation: Evangelisation is the task of the community as a whole. Need for catechists and a commitment from the Church to supporting their lives and work. The Synod can raise the possibility of giving the catechist an 'instituted, stable ministry within the Church.' Deacons and catechists increasingly called on – where the priests is under pressure. The Synod could assist communities to give a renewed missionary sense to the ministry of priests, deacons and catechists.

The Family is the model place of witness to the faith. Need for pastoral care of the family in its missionary calling and support and sense of belonging. Families face many difficulties and could be helped by a group of families getting together.

Many important contributions from religious, apostolic and contemplative.

...prophetic witness to the gospel and dynamic source of energy in the life of faith of entire Christian communities.

Contemplative life is the core of the Church's existence...

There are also groups and movements dedicated to spreading the Gospel in public. Charisms are an important resource in the new evangelisation. The Synod is to discuss the relation between charisms and institution in concrete pastoral settings.

Co-essentiality of these gifts of the Spirit

Each baptised person should be able to give an account of their faith. People and communities should be courageous witnesses of the Gospel by state of mind, personal deeds and public testimony as well as the internal life of communities and through renewed conversion to 'bear more fruit.' 'Fruits' include – families which are a sign of love; communities with a true ecumenical spirit; support for social justice; priesthood or consecrated life. Responses called for the re-motivation of the baptised to evangelise

Through applying the social doctrine of the Church and living the faith in the world by seeking the true good of everyone, by respecting and promoting the dignity of every person, even to the point..of becoming actively involved in society and civic life.

A new commitment to ecumenism is required. Division 'scandalises the world.'

The Synod is to treat the topic of evangelisation from the perspective of the dual principle of truth-freedom.

Finally the fruits of the new evangelisation will also involve the courage to denounce the infidelities and scandals in Christian communities which appear as a sign and consequence of a spiritual decline in the tasks of proclamation.

Church must acknowledge faults while continuing to witness to Jesus Christ.

Chapter 4

Pastoral activity dedicated to the transmission of faith.

Reassessment of pastoral programmes underway.

The unceasing interplay of the Gospel and of man's concrete life, both personal and social...

Initiation: baptism of adults is a gift to communities. The catechumenate is an apt structure for initiation.

The Synod is to reflect on current practices regarding sacraments of initiation, including their sequence.

Initial proclamation: local Christian communities are to adopt a more missionary presence within society. There is a need for a bold and apologetic approach. Call to conversion.

Initial proclamation compels Christian communities to be attentive to the faith of person both within and outside the community. its task is to reanimate the faith or enkindle it so as to keep the community and each baptised person constantly involved and faithful in proclaiming and giving public testimony to the faith they both profess.

Little of this being done – initiatives needed.

Preaching is important and should be renewed.

Also the Sacrament of Reconciliation; popular piety; devotion to Mary; missions; marriage preparation, and the care and attention given in times of sickness.

Evangelisation is directly related to education. Huge efforts already being made in education by the particular churches. Genuine education is open to the encounter with God and faith experience. Faith related to knowledge. There is also a place for witness in intellectual world. Faith and science are mutually enriching. Art and beauty are also places for transmission of faith.

Christian witness is an interaction of words and deeds and creates a relation between proclamation and freedom. Through witness

God lays himself open, one might say, to the risk of human freedom.

Personal vocation a key element. Synod process to support individuals, families, priests, and consecrated persons in renewal of enthusiasm and dedication in transmitting faith. We are all called to holiness through the choices we make, taking up tasks and ministries to build up the Church.

Conclusion

The new evangelisation does not mean a new Gospel, but a response to the times we live in. It can't be left to specialists but must be shared by all. It should be a new proclamation of the message of Jesus which brings joy and liberation.