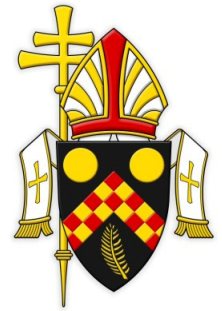


DIMENSIONS OF THE NEW EVANGELIZATION

NEW ENGAGEMENT



The Church, and the Gospel that it proclaims, is not tied to any one culture. The Good News of the Gospel spread very quickly and had reached as far as India and Northern Africa by the second century. The universal message of the Gospel enriches, transforms and transcends human culture.

The New Evangelisation is directed towards churches in all cultures. However it is particularly directed towards what is known as “churches of ancient origin”. This includes the churches of Europe, where Christianity has been a foundation stone of the development of western culture. Recent centuries has seen a significant decline in the religious sentiment and participation in many European countries. Pope Benedict XVI saw western culture as facing a “crisis of faith”. This “crisis” is not isolated to Europe, and is a challenge for all western societies, including Australia.

We can think of “culture” as the fine arts or refined behaviour or social manners. This is an element of culture, but in reality, culture is the air that we human beings breathe. As water is to fish, so too is culture to human societies.

**New
Engagement**

**New
Context**

**New
Impulse**

*Paul VI
(Evangelii
Nuntiandi, 20):
What matters is
to evangelise
human culture
and cultures not
in a purely
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by applying a
thin veneer, but
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taking the person
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point and always
coming back to
the relationships
of people among
themselves and
with God.*

The Church, of course, does not exist for its own sake, but is the bearer and witness to the Good News of Jesus Christ in and to the world. Christianity's cultural expressions and engagement have continually enriched and dignified ordinary human existence. At the same time, we also know from our history that sadly this has not always been the case, particularly when Christianity has been associated with a conquering force. Nevertheless, the message of the Christ is one that inherently promotes the worth and dignity of every human being. At its core, Christianity cultivates a culture of life, of hope and Divine possibility for every person, in every age, in every cultural setting.

Culture is about the way we think and feel, speak and sing, relate and imagine, work and play. It is only by encountering other cultures that we truly understand our own. For example, we sense ourselves most unmistakably as "Australian" when we encounter those of other nationalities. It is then that we can recognise both the virtues and the limits of our cultural identity. But more than being "Australian", we are firstly citizens of the Kingdom by virtue of our baptism. We are simultaneously inheritors and evangelisers of our culture.

We speak of a "New Evangelisation" and not a "re-evangelisation" of western societies. That is because the Church recognises that the old patterns of evangelisation struggle to connect with the contemporary mind, and that the place of the Church within western cultures has profoundly changed. Something has shifted and a new impulse, new methods and a new witness is needed today. The Church's vocation is to evangelise; that is, to proclaim the Good News in word and deed in every situation and circumstance. Each of us is called through baptism to be part of the evangelising mission of the Church. And this call is not only a call to evangelise individuals but to evangelise culture itself, in and through the language and imagination of the people.

As Paul VI wrote: "What matters is to evangelize human culture and cultures, not in a purely decorative way by applying a thin veneer, but in a vital way, in depth and right to their very roots." That's the hope of the New Evangelisation.

Questions for prayer and reflection

What words would you use to describe Australian culture?

What contributions can you name that the Church has made to Australian society?

What have you learnt about yourself from contact with other cultures?

What does the Gospel message offer contemporary Australian culture?

How might the Church be an authentic voice of evangelisation in Australian culture today?

**New
Method**

**New
Witness**

**New
Apologetic**

Key ideas

- ***The Church exists in order to evangelise.***
- ***The Gospel is not tied to any one culture.***
- ***The Church has been a foundation stone in the development of western culture.***
- ***Western culture faces a "crisis of faith".***
- ***We are called to evangelise culture itself.***