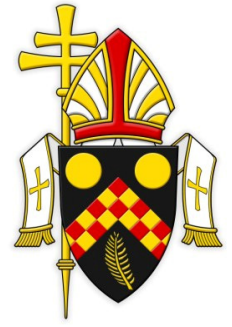


# DIMENSIONS OF THE NEW EVANGELISATION

## NEW WITNESS



In *Evangelii nuntiandi* Paul VI wrote; “People today put more trust in witnesses than in teachers, in experience than in teaching, and in life and action than in theories. The witness of a Christian life is the first and irreplaceable form of mission: Christ, whose mission we continue, is the “witness” *par excellence* (Rev 1:5; 3:14) and the model of all Christian witness. The Holy Spirit accompanies the Church along her way and associates her with the witness he gives to Christ (cf. Jn 15:26 -27).”

Each Catholic is called to be first and foremost a witness to the faith which she/he professes. Archbishop Rino Fisichella argues that ‘the new evangelisation tends to make our sense of personal identity grow in relation to our sense of belonging to the [Catholic] community...A belonging which is without identity [with the Catholic Church] could not be defined as belonging; it would remain always bound to a form of living together which modifies its own coordinates...not true active participation.’

Being Church is not a matter of voluntary association like belonging to a club. The Church and its faith exist prior to the individual believer who is organically incorporated, through baptism, into the Church, which is Christ’s body.

**New  
Engagement**

**New Context**

**New  
Impulse**

*A basic definition of new witness: the formation of courageous and authentic Catholic ambassadors for the Gospel. These ambassadors can engage with contemporary culture.*

*Formation of parishes as communities of prayer, contemplation and action that will equip Catholics for mission and evangelisation.*

‘Above all the Gospel must be proclaimed by witness. Take a Christian or a handful of Christians who, in the midst of their own community, show their capacity for understanding and acceptance, their sharing of life and destiny with other people, their solidarity with the efforts of all for whatever is noble and good. Let us suppose that, in addition, they radiate in an altogether simple and unaffected way their faith in values that go beyond current values, and their hope in something that is not seen and that one would not dare to imagine. Through this wordless witness these Christians stir up irresistible questions in the hearts of those who see how they live: Why are they like this? Why do they live in this way? What or who is it that inspires them? Why are they in our midst? Such a witness is already a silent proclamation of the Good News and a very powerful and effective one. Here we have an initial act of evangelisation.’ Paul VI *Evangelii nuntiandi*, 21

New evangelisation challenges us to examine the witness of our lives. Is the life Catholics live a reflection of the secular acceptable life and values of the day or is it a reflection of a life transformed by the Gospel which embodies the teaching of the Church? Do the moral and ethical choices made by Catholics reflect the secular standard or the Gospel?

Belonging requires identity and identity in the Church is predicated on communion/koinonia which is brought about through baptism. John Paul II, wrote in *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, that ‘to make the Church *the home and the school of communion*: that is the great challenge facing us in the millennium which is now beginning, if we wish to be faithful to God's plan and respond to the world's deepest yearnings.’ He goes on to note that ‘before making practical plans, we need *to promote a spirituality of communion*, making it the guiding principle of education wherever individuals and Christians are formed, wherever ministers of the altar, consecrated persons, and pastoral workers are trained, wherever families and communities are being built up.’

New evangelisation is fostered when Catholics deepen the bonds of communion through shared faith, celebration of the sacraments, and unity with their bishop. These bonds help them witness to a way of living that is consistent with the Gospel as handed on through Church teaching.

### Questions for prayer and reflection

**How can mission and identity formation be developed within your area of ministry?**

**What might authentic Catholic witness look like in terms of ‘life styles’ to borrow a secular term?**

**How can the spirituality and theology of communion/koinonia be integrated into formation in your area?**

**New  
Method**

**New  
Witness**

**New  
Apologetic**

## ***Key ideas***

- ***Witness of a Christian life is indispensable for mission.***
- ***Identity and belonging go together.***
- ***Spirituality of communion/koinonia is at the heart of all Christian formation.***