The New Evangelization

Overcoming the Obstacles

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Paulist Press
New York/Mahwah, NJ

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The Spirit of the Lord Is Upon Me

The Role of the Holy Spirit in the Work of Evangelization

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INTRODUCTION

St. Luke presented the opening event of Our Lord's public life as taking place in Nazareth (Luke 4:16–30). As a respected member of his former synagogue, Jesus was invited to read a passage from Isaiah, whether assigned to or chosen by him we do not know, and for Luke's purposes it made little difference. As he recorded this text—a combination of two Isaian passages—Luke intended to put the whole of Jesus's ministry under the theme of the Servant whose presence is evident throughout the Book of Isaiah. The beginning and continuance of the Servant's vocation derive from his anointing: the Spirit of the Lord rests upon him.

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
for he has anointed me;
he has sent me to preach the Good News to the poor,
to proclaim release for prisoners
and sight for the blind,
to send the downtrodden away relieved,
and to proclaim the Lord's year of favor." (Luke 4:18–19)[1]

According to this passage, and indeed the whole of the New Testament, all genuine preaching of the good news, including that of Jesus himself, must take place under the anointing power of the Holy Spirit. In order to reinforce this truth, Luke quoted the risen Jesus as summing up the good news for his disciples, commanding them to preach it, and then, using the terms *power* and *promise* to refer to the Holy Spirit, sending them out to witness:

> Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and he said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And see, I am sending upon you what my Father promised; so stay here in the city until you are clothed with power from on high. (Luke 24:45–49)

This same injunction is repeated in the opening lines of the Book of Acts, which thus places the whole of the Church's life under the same power of the Holy Spirit that Jesus received at his baptism and poured out at pentecost (see Acts 2:33).

> While staying with them, he ordered them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for the promise of the Father. "This," he said, "is what you have heard from me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now....You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." (Acts 1:4–5, 8)

In all the texts just cited we can see a rhythm to the work of the Holy Spirit in the Church: the believers must first be acted upon by the Holy Spirit before they are able to bear witness and preach. They must, to use Luke's terminology here, wait to be clothed with power, wait for the promise of the Father; they must be baptized with the Holy Spirit. Then they will be witnesses to the end of the earth.

I wish in this chapter to reflect on this rhythm as we seek to look honestly at the obstacles to evangelization in our time, to learn solu-

tions from the Lord, and, in the power of the Holy Spirit, to bring people into union with him. I will base this reflection on the Johannine writings. First, I will consider how the Church, individually and corporately, receives the action of the Holy Spirit in order to evangelize. Then, in some concluding reflections, I will reflect on what it means to make Christ manifest in our world and bring people to a genuine hope.

Part One
THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME

The baptism of infants concludes with a ceremony that alludes to the healing that Jesus performed for a deaf man whose speech was impeded (Mark 7:31–37). Jesus put his fingers into the deaf man's ears, touched his tongue with his own spittle, groaned, and commanded: *Ephphatha!* The man could then hear and speak clearly.[2] The baptizing minister touches the infant's ears and mouth saying: "The Lord Jesus made the deaf hear and the dumb speak. May he soon touch your ears to receive his word, and your mouth to proclaim his faith, to the praise and glory of God the Father."

The Giver of Life

There is one text in the Johannine writings that briefly describes the role of the Spirit in bringing the work of Christ to life within the spirit of the believer. Within the concluding major section of 1 John 5:1–12, which is dedicated to the theme "faith as the principle of life,"[3] is this:

> He is the one who came through water and blood, Jesus Christ. Not in water only, but in water and in blood; and the Spirit is the one bearing witness, because the Spirit is the truth. Yes, there are three bearing witness: the Spirit and the water and the blood and the three are of one accord. (1 John 5:6–8)

I wish to call attention first of all to the tenses of the verbs used to describe the activity of Jesus Christ and the Spirit respectively. Jesus Christ "came"—literally, he is the "caming one," an impossible expression in English since we have nothing corresponding to the aorist participle (*o elthōn*), while the Spirit is the One "bearing witness" *now in the present* (*to marytoun*); what Jesus has accomplished still exists in his glorified humanity; it becomes alive and life-giving in history by the action of the Holy Spirit.

The activity of Jesus is described as coming "through water and blood." This refers to his baptism and passion. In the first of these events, Jesus irrevocably committed himself to his vocation as the Servant of God. He went to his cousin John and was baptized by him both as a sign of solidarity with a people who stood in need of repentance and as an expression of acceptance of his unique realization of his Israelite vocation. This is surely the way in which the gospel tradition gives us an interpretive narration of Jesus's baptism.[4] The enigmatic phrase in Matthew 3:15 concerning the fulfillment of all justice is best explained as the accomplishment of the Father's plan.[5]

The revelation Jesus received at his baptism confirmed and opened up for him this vocation as Servant of God. By using the opening words of the first servant song, Luke shows us that it was not for *his* sins that Jesus was baptized but for those of the whole people, indeed, those of the whole world.

> This means that Jesus is baptized in view of his death which effects forgiveness of sins for all men. For this reason Jesus must unite himself in solidarity with his whole people, and go down himself to Jordan, that 'all righteousness might be fulfilled.'...Jesus' reply [to the Baptist], which exegetes have always found difficult to explain, acquires a concrete meaning: Jesus will effect a general forgiveness....
>
> Thus the Baptism of Jesus points forward to the end, to the climax of his life, the Cross, in which alone all Baptism will find its fulfillment. There Jesus will achieve a general Baptism. In his own Baptism in the Jordan he received commission to do this.[6]

The insistence here that Jesus's coming was "not in water only" reflects the understanding of the early Church that by his baptism Jesus was oriented to his death for all. Jesus came also "in blood," that is, his passion. It is quite likely that the linking of water and blood in this text is meant to refute the initial stages of a heresy later identified with a certain Cerinthus, who claimed that Jesus received an empowerment at his baptism so that his teaching was of a particular force and wisdom but that this power left him at his crucifixion.[7] Such an approach to Jesus, a selective admiration of his teaching and an avoidance of his death and resurrection, has characterized Gnostic teaching up to our own day, as can be seen in the Jesus Seminar.

The understanding of Jesus's baptism as pointing toward and including his death and resurrection is witnessed to by Jesus's own use of baptismal vocabulary when referring to his vocation.[8] It is the witness of the Spirit that provided the inner and living understanding of this connection between baptism and death in Jesus and in us. The past actions of Jesus are still life-giving today because they are still present to us by the action of the Holy Spirit. Indeed, without this action the words of the sacred text and the liturgical gestures that reenact Jesus's gestures are unable to give rise to a life-giving experience.

A difficult and, at the same time, a most important aspect of the Johannine text we are considering (1 John 5:1–12) consists in the words that follow the statement that the Spirit is the Witnessing One, that is, the One who makes the words and actions of Jesus actually present in the community and in the life of the individual believer (v. 6). The text goes on to say that all of this takes place "because the Spirit is the truth."[9] Ignace de la Potterie correctly identifies this phrase as similar to several such phrases in the Johannine literature: "God is spirit" (John 4:24), for instance, is not a statement about the incorporeal nature of God but a declaration that God makes himself known and shares himself with us in and through the Holy Spirit. Similarly, "God is light" (1 John 1:5) and "God is love" (1 John 4:8, 16) refer to God as God manifests himself to us and acts in our regard ("light"), to the fact that God gives himself to us, and perhaps as well to the manner in which God the Father gives himself ineffably to the Son ("love"). These statements differ from Jesus's self-identification in the phrase "I am (*egō eimi*) the Way and the Truth and the Life," where he is describing himself as the Way to the Father precisely because he

is in his very being not the revealer of the Father but the *Revelation* of the Father and the Life of those who accept that revelation. As Aquinas expresses it in the prologue to the third part of the *Summa Theologiae*: "Our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ,...showed us the *way* of *truth* in himself through which we are able, rising, to arrive at the blessedness of immortal *life*...."

The witnessing action of the Spirit consists in that activity by which he brings us into living contact with Jesus, who, forever fixed in the act of love in which he died, is the abiding Revelation of the Father, and as such is the Truth. This action of the Holy Spirit takes place in the Church through the liturgy and the sacraments, by his direct action in the souls of the believers, and, as we will see, by the "works" of the disciples in their own witness to the truth. In regard to the first mode of witnessing, we have many descriptions in the fathers of the church. Let this statement of St. Leo represent their position: All those things which the Son of God both did and taught for the reconciliation of the world, we not only know in the account of things now past, but we also experience in the power of works which are present.[10]

That Leo intended by this to refer not only to the sacraments of the Church but also to the reading of the scriptures is evident from his oft-repeated notion that the gospel text, when received by faith, *makes present* that which it speaks about. Thus, he says that in the liturgical observance of the feast of the Epiphany,[11] "when the Gospel narrative/event (*evangelica historia*) is ceaselessly repeated, this mystery of salvation, brought about by a striking miracle, is always more profoundly imprinted on the minds of those who understand it."[12]

He Does Not Give the Spirit in Measure

In order to understand the second mode of the Spirit's witnessing, already implied in the above description of the reality mediated by scripture "imprinted on the mind," I will consider another Johannine text, chosen from many that would be apt, to show again the relation between the word of Jesus and the Spirit. By *word*, here I mean his being as expressed in his words and actions:

> "Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father in me; or else believe me for the sake of the works themselves." (John 14:10–11)

The passage in John 3:31–36 is best understood as a Johannine commentary on the preceding section, which records the Baptist's witness to Jesus as the Bridegroom and himself as his friend. The evangelist goes on to declare that "the one coming from above is above all," and because he is from heaven, he speaks of what he has seen and heard though no one accepts his testimony. However, "He who receives his testimony sets his seal to this that God is true." We then find this statement: "For he whom God has sent utters the words of God, for it is not by measure that he gives the Spirit." Some interpret this to mean that this Envoy of the Father declares the words of God in a special way because "he," that is, the *Father,* has given the Spirit to Jesus "without measure," thus contrasting Jesus with a late attested rabbinic description of the prophets who received the Spirit "by weight" *(bmšql).*[13] It is more likely that John is saying that Jesus, the One sent from God, declares *(lalei)* the words of God in a unique way because he, *Jesus,* gives the Spirit without measure *(ouk ek metrou).* He is the One who baptizes in the Spirit (John 1:34), the One from whose "midst" flow rivers of living water, that is, the water of the Spirit that flowed along with the life-giving blood from the side of Jesus at the cross (John 7:37–39, 19:34).[14] In either interpretation the basic position is clear: It is because the words that Jesus speaks are delivered along with the gift of the Spirit without measure that they are in a unique and proper way "the words of God." The role of the Spirit is to stir up faith so that which is said is received for what it is.

> In this text the fundamental structure of revelation according to St. John appears clearly: revelation is constituted formally by the words of Jesus, but these do not actually appear as the words *of God* except through the gift of the Spirit. Faith in the word is the fruit of the Spirit.[15]

When we consider the first quality of an evangelist, then, we must look for a Spirit-conferred experience of the *truth* of the Gospel.

put Christ on trial and killed him: "The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him" (John 13:2).[22] This vision explains the constant use of the verb *to witness* in the Johannine literature and the forensic overtones that it carries. As chapter 9 of the Gospel teaches us, the Christian is a healed blind beggar on trial: "Then I went and washed and received my sight" (John 9:11).[23] The Christian is a witness, driven by his or her own experience of the saving act of God and the conviction that this act is meant to give life to the whole world: "He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:2).

In the Johannine view, testimony follows upon direct knowledge: "Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen; yet you people do not receive our testimony" (John 3:11). Jesus does speak of witnesses to himself (see John 5:31–32, 36, 37, 39; 8:14, 18, etc.). Most of the testimony, however, is given by others: John the Baptist (John 1:7–8, 25) and especially the disciples. The testimony is most often in regard to some historical event, but the object of the testimony has to do with its meaning. Thus, the opening lines of 1 John speak of a physical contact, yet the witness is of a spiritual reality: "What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, *concerning the word of life*...." We encounter the same rhythm, for instance, in regard to the blood and water from Christ's side (John 19:35), though in this passage the full reality of what is witnessed to must be gathered together from the promise of the water to come from the midst of Christ in John 7:38–39. Regarding the "works" of Christ, these are called a witness in John 5:36: "But I have a testimony greater than John's. The works that the Father has given me to complete, the very works that I am doing, testify on my behalf that the Father has sent me." Lucien Cerfaux says of all the "works" of Christ as John understands them: "The miracles of the Son, his 'works,' are in reality the work of the Father, his essential activity of creation and giving life; as we look upon these, we see in one and the same regard the Son and the Father whom he makes known."[24] The witness of the disciples, therefore, reaches its goal in the testimony to the true reality of Jesus.

The synthesis of all this testifying activity is found in John 15:26–27: "When the Paraclete comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who issues from the Father, he will be my

witness. And you too will be witnesses, because you have been with me from the beginning." Outside the New Testament, the Greek term *paraclete* evokes a forensic environment: that of someone called in as a helper, counselor, advocate, and encourager in a legal proceeding—and only John uses the term in the New Testament. The Holy Spirit is called "another Paraclete" in the first of the five Paraclete promises (John 14:15–17, 25–26; 15:26–27; 16:7–11, 12–15) since the Johannine tradition considers Jesus as "the Paraclete" (1 John 2:1).

In the text that I have described as a synthesis of the witnessing activity of the disciples, the Paraclete is also called the "Spirit of truth," thus evoking a theme we have seen earlier. It is important to note that this passage is found in the middle of a long section (John 15:18—16:4) often entitled "The World's Hatred." Obviously, then, what is said here about witnessing is being presented in a context of a conflict sustained by the "demonic universe of refusal and rejection." The striking resemblance of this section to Synoptic passages has often been remarked upon.[25] Although the theme of divine aid in persecution is present in the Synoptic texts, there is never direct mention of the *witness* of the Spirit, which for John is an intrinsic part of the disciples' share in the Messianic persecutions.[26]

Let us look more closely now at the text of John 15:26–27:

> "When the Paraclete comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of Truth who will come forth from the Father, he will witness concerning me. Moreover, you will witness because you are with me from the beginning."

The words that follow immediately upon this passage are significant: "I have told you these things so that you be not scandalized" (John 16:1). In this situation, when the disciples are "on trial" before the tribune of the world and are enduring persecution, either mental or physical or both, the Paraclete, the Spirit of Truth, will witness to them concerning Jesus and will preserve them from falling away, even while they are bearing their own witness. What sustains the disciples of any age, including our own, is the living experience of the reality and majesty of Jesus Christ, who is with the Father.

In a moment we will consider the obstacles to our own witness, but it is important even here to follow the reasoning of the Fourth

Gospel. We must be realistic: Behind the cultural deficiencies and the mental and moral blindness that we may encounter as we witness to Jesus to our families, to our friends and acquaintances, and to groups of people we may be called upon to address, there is another force. When people accept the witness of the Spirit, we rejoice as they experience the truth of Jesus's promise that he will draw all people to himself and offer them salvation. At the same time, we must be aware of what this effort may cost us in terms of disappointment, fatigue, and misunderstanding, especially within the ranks of the Church itself, and even downright opposition. Jesus's promise of the other Paraclete will become an experiential reality at these moments. The Spirit of Truth sent by Jesus, the Divine Son, will come forth from the Father and give us assurance that the One to whom we bear witness is indeed with the Father and with us. In this sense the witness of the Spirit here is first and foremost an interior activity within the believer: "He will bear witness concerning me shining in your hearts and conferring a more perfect assurance."[27]

There is as well an exterior dimension to the witness of the Spirit that he works through the disciples. Jesus promises that the conviction and power of the interior witness of the Spirit will overflow in and through us as well as *we* witness. Paul gives a striking description of this reality in 1 Thessalonians 1:4–5: "For we know, brothers and sisters beloved by God, that he has chosen you, because our message of the gospel came to you not in words only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction." It is most likely that the term *power* in the text refers to extraordinary manifestations of the Holy Spirit: miracles, healings, exorcisms, and so forth, as Paul also says: "The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with utmost patience, signs and wonders, and mighty works" (2 Cor 12:12). There are many accounts of such activity and the ensuing conversions narrated in the Acts of the Apostles. In the Thessalonians text already cited, Paul goes on to describe this process of conversion: "...how you turned to God from idols, to serve a living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath that is coming" (1 Thess 1:9–10).

In the light of the constant New Testament attestation of "signs and wonders and deeds of power," it is to be expected that the interior *martyrion* of the Holy Spirit to the disciple would be the foundation of

Martin makes the case here that signs & wonders are extraordinary manifestations of the Spirit. [need to be careful not to alter the Gospel to accom. modern mindset here]

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a witness through the disciple to the world at large, and that this would include the same type of activity. We find a description of such activity in Jesus's promise: "Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father" (John 14:12). There are at least thirteen places where the term *works (erga)* refers to extraordinary manifestations of divine power.[28] Jesus says in John 14:10 that "the Father who dwells in me does his works," and similar statements are found elsewhere (John 5:36; 9:3–4; 10:25, 32, 37). It is through the "works" that one can be brought to faith that "I am in the Father and the Father is in me" (John 14:11).

disciples are to do it too.

The works of the disciples are, like the works of Jesus, "signs" manifesting the action of Jesus through the Holy Spirit in and through the one believing in him, and thus manifesting the Father. They are "greater" than Jesus's works not because they are more spectacular but because as "signs" they manifest the *completed* plan of God: Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Word of God in glory, acting in and through his disciples by the Holy Spirit, and thus, as the Truth, as the Revelation of the Father, making known his name. We have here another expression of the witness of the Spirit who is "the Truth" (1 John 5:6). In addition to the whole life of the Church, its scriptures, and its sacraments, and in addition to the interior witness within the disciples, the "works" of the disciples are a third mode of the Spirit's witnessing "concerning Jesus" and making him known. The works of the disciples ultimately reveal the Father: "Very truly, I tell you, whoever receives the one whom I send receives me; and whoever receives me receives him who sent me" (John 13:20).

Overcoming the Obstacles

In this last section of this part of my study, I wish to remain at the Johannine level of analysis for one more step: namely, John's understanding of the profound reasons why the world is sinfully wrong and why it is important that the believer understand this in order to have courage and understanding in the task of evangelization. The reflection will be based on the fourth of the Paraclete promises in John 16:7–11. The text is as follows:

> "Nevertheless I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. And when he comes, he will prove the world wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment: about sin, because they do not believe in me; about righteousness, because I am going to the Father and you will see me no longer; about judgment, because the ruler of this world has been condemned."

The essential action of the Paraclete in this passage is to prove that the world is culpably wrong, to establish its culpability as *world*. The difficulty arises when we seek to define the recipient of this action. Is it that the world is brought to acknowledge its sin or that the believers are given irrefutable proof that the world is in sin? Basically, it must be the second. If the world were able to acknowledge its sin, it would no longer be the "world," that is, a place which, despite the fact that there is still room for freedom and choice, is nevertheless at its depths a "demonic universe of refusal and rejection." The "world" would become "kingdom." The Greek verb used here (*elenchein*) evokes the notion of establishing or revealing a fault, often in an unmistakably forensic context.[29] Of the several possible nuances available, only one seems adequate to describe the Spirit's action here: he will afford convincing proof that the world is wrong and in sin.

Once this is established in the heart of the believer, we may allow for the rhythm encountered in the previous Paraclete passage: The Spirit's primary action takes place within the spirit of the believer, proving the world wrong. This, however, can then enable the believers, now free from the illusions offered by the world, to offer to those in the world who will accept their testimony (the Spirit's testimony) a way to Life. In practice, however, the rhythm is not that clear cut. Though the believer has passed from death to life and has the witness of the Spirit within him, there are still areas of darkness that need to be yielded to the action of the same Spirit. In fact, it is in experiencing these in himself that the believer can understand the terrifying dynamics of the struggle between light and darkness and be a credible witness to the lies of the world and the joy of overcoming these and believing the Truth: "And his commandments are not burdensome, for whoever

is born of God conquers the world. And this is the victory that conquers the world, our faith" (1 John 5:3–4).

The remarks of Jesus here are in response to the fact that, when Jesus spoke of his departure, grief filled the hearts of the disciples (John 16:6). But the fact of the matter is that, when Jesus "goes" and is glorified, the disciples will be able to know him in a new way and thus also see the Father in a new way (John 14:9). They should not be grieved or distressed, they are not orphans, and the Spirit will enable them to overcome the obstacles presented by the world. The obstacles, then, are a culpably distorted view of three realities: sin, justice, and judgment. We can touch on each of these only briefly.

"IN REGARD TO SIN, BECAUSE THEY DO NOT BELIEVE IN ME"

The root sin of the world is refusal to believe in Jesus and the place he holds next to the Father as the Revelation of the Father; the root sin is to reject the Truth: "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever disobeys the Son will not see life, but must endure God's wrath" (John 3:36). Also:

> "The one who rejects me and does not receive my word has a judge; on the last day the word that I have spoken will serve as judge, for I have not spoken on my own, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment about what to say and what to speak. And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I speak, therefore, I speak just as the Father told me." (John 12:48–50)

These texts, and others that could be adduced, are speaking of the objective sin of the rejection of the Father's revelation in Jesus. Such rejection is implied in *every* sin and can ultimately lead to outright and explicit rejection.

For example, some people who consistently and vigorously promote abortion run this risk. Implied in the whole issue of abortion is the simple question: Is there a God and does he have the right to tell us what to do? Someone who has personally resolved this question

through the action of the Holy Spirit, and who has thus suffered through to fidelity in other areas of life, sees in the light of the Holy Spirit how what he or she has experienced is a paradigm of what the sin of the world really is. Such a person can then address people with conviction and compassion.

"IN REGARD TO JUSTICE, BECAUSE I GO TO THE FATHER AND YOU NO LONGER SEE ME"

The word translated as "justice" (*dikaiosunē*) can have the usual English meaning of "justice," "uprightness," and so forth, but in the Bible, under the influence of the Hebrew word *ṣedeq*, it can mean "vindication" or "victory," as in the short hymn recorded in 1 Timothy 3:16: "Without any doubt, the mystery of our religion is great: He was revealed in flesh, vindicated [from the root *dikaioun*] in spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among Gentiles, believed in throughout the world, taken up in glory."[30]

The world is culpably in error because it refuses to accept the resurrection of Jesus with all that this implies regarding the identity of God, the dignity of a human existence, the fruit of obedience to God, and goal of human history. The result of this aberration is that life becomes meaningless and we strive to fill the void by following the deception of disordered desire. At this level of human existence, the obstacles to evangelization are evident. They are evident not only in individual lives but in the hopelessness and the depression that result from the trivialization of human existence characteristic of much of Western life in its cultural expression.

Evangelization may often mean offering the light of the resurrection as it is refracted through friendship, love, and community. Thus the Risen Christ meets the person and can make himself known as the Truth, the Revelation of the Father, long before this becomes explicit in a person's perception. Ultimately, Jesus, as risen from the dead, "justifies" his own risk, which every believer must imitate, namely, that ultimately love and sacrifice are more powerful than violence and death. This is to undo the lie and the fear of death hidden in the world's refusal to hear the witness of the resurrection: "Since, therefore, the

children share flesh and blood, he himself likewise shared the same things, so that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by the fear of death" (Heb 2:14–15).

"ABOUT CONDEMNATION, BECAUSE THE PRINCE OF THIS WORLD HAS BEEN CONDEMNED"

The worship of power is a form of idolatry and it is based on the illusion that power is a transcendent reality. The world esteems power as the highest good, and this is especially true of the culture in which we live. Those who would evangelize must neither be attached to power nor afraid of it. When the Church fails to see the lie in a false understanding of power, she falls victim to the three temptations that faced Jesus in the desert, so admirably described by Fyodor Dostoyevsky in the words of the Grand Inquisitor, who accuses Jesus of failing to use the power offered him in the illusion that human response to God must be free:

> *We have corrected your great work and have based it on miracle, mystery, and authority. And men rejoiced that they were once more led like sheep and that the terrible gift which had brought them so much suffering had at last been lifted from their hearts.* You could have taken over all the power, the authority of this world when that spirit showed you the kingdoms and rulers of the world. But you rebuked him, and that power crucified you. *Why did you reject that last gift? By accepting that third counsel of the mighty spirit, you would have accomplished all that man seeks on earth, that is to say, whom to worship (the source of miracle), to whom to entrust his conscience (the possessor of mystery) and how at last to unite all in a common, harmonious, and incontestable ant-hill, for the need of universal unity is the third and last torment of men.*[31]

The world's dream of untrammeled power, the ability to work one's will and overcome all obstacles, lies at the heart of all the totali-

tarian systems that were responsible for the deaths of uncountable millions in our own time: there are few who cannot see the lie of Satan, the enemy of humankind, as the primary actor in this tragedy. The allure of a future utopia as the triumph of human effort has always served as the justification of oppression and murder. It is a failure to see that the prince of this world has already been condemned. As Jesus faced his impending passion he solemnly declared its result: "Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out" (John 12:31). The power of the prince of this world is illusory and not to be feared: "Little children, you are from God, and have conquered them [false prophets]; for the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world" (1 John 4:4).

The role of the Holy Spirit is to bring the spirit of the believer to penetrate the "pomp of power" and see behind it the ultimate powerlessness of the illusions embraced by the world. This can then allow the believer to witness to the truth that frees people from the judgment already laid on darkness.

I will conclude this part of my study with these dramatic words that once again show us where judgment really lies and what the goal of all evangelization is: to eliminate those forces that keep people back from coming to the light, and to help them attain freedom.

> [And Jesus said:] "Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed. But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God." (John 3:17–21)

Part Two
CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

All that I have tried to say here can be summed up aptly in Pope Benedict XVI's observation, during his first homily at the Basilica of St. John Lateran, that Christ is in need of witnesses who know him and have, as it were, actually touched him.[32] To have touched Christ in the force of the Holy Spirit is to have been changed by him in an intimate encounter. This is the foundation of all evangelization. Not only must we know what we are talking about, we must also share the compassion of Christ, which is the source of all gospel preaching:

> When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest." (Matt 9:36–38; see also Mark 6:34; Matt 14:14)

Culture and Evangelization: Brief Remarks

ANALYSIS

The challenge, briefly expressed by John Paul II, is to so live and experience the divine realities mediated to us by the Church that they achieve a cultural expression. A faith that does not become culture, he said, has never fully matured.[33] The first step in enabling a faith to become culture is to look at our own cultural environment in order to understand where it impedes and where it furthers the full expression of faith among ourselves. After all, our own minds are the first audience to which we must preach the gospel. The second step is to effect a correlation between our culture and the faith of the Church, allowing a faith-vision to engage the culture and take up into the gospel all that is

true and positive in the culture, while correcting or even rejecting those aspects that can be seen to be false in the light of faith.[34]

John Paul II also named nonbelief, along with the secularization, religious indifference, and rejection of religion that follow in its wake, as a most urgent matter for reflection and pastoral concern. He urged that its historical, cultural, social, and intellectual causes be sought, and he expressed the conviction that open dialogue with nonbelievers and nonadherents to any religion would be productive.[35]

RESPONSE

The primary response to the problems of our world is a faith that is "fully received, thoroughly thought through, and fully lived out" and thus becomes an alternate culture.[36] Cultures require community on both a familial and a broader level. This points to the need for renewing parishes, and thus to the need for authentic liturgies where there is praise (with music that supports such praise), reverence (including manner of dress), genuine preaching so that, from these Eucharistic liturgies, "the source and summit of the Christian life,"[37] experiential faith may grow and be communicated in the activities of the parish, especially in catechetics, evangelization, and care for the poor.

A particularly important aspect of forging an alternate culture is found in that work of the Holy Spirit raising up new communities and movements that are not meant to be competitors but, rather, collaborators with the parishes. In his discourse to the World Congress of the Ecclesial Movements held in Rome in 1998, Pope John Paul II stated that the institutional and charismatic aspects of the Church are both essential to its constitution. He emphasized the need for living Christian communities and identified his audience as among those capable of originating and sustaining such communities. True charisms, he added, always aim at the encounter with Christ in the sacraments.[38]

In these remarks, John Paul II indicates the direction for the new evangelization. As we have seen, the Holy Spirit's witness to our own human spirits can be direct. Believers are touched and come to a new and more personal experience of the risen Jesus Christ: this is the foundation for a mature faith. In the light of that faith, believers understand the situation of their environment and their culture, and they can see

the spiritual light and darkness that lies behind our developing history. They are able then to address the people of their age: their friends, their neighbors, all their contemporaries. As St. John said of his own preaching: "We declare to you what we have seen and heard so that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. We are writing these things so that our joy may be complete" (1 John 1:3–4).

NOTES

1. Translation is from Joseph Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke (I–IX)*, ed. William Foxwell Albright and David Noel Freedman, Anchor Bible 28 (New York: Doubleday, 1981), 525.

2. The theme of having the ears opened and then speaking/acting is found in the Old Testament: for example, see Isa 50:4–5; Ps 40:7 (MT).

3. Thus, we find in this section 5:1: "Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God"; 5:11–12: "And this is the testimony: God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life"; and 5:13, which is the conclusion of the section and of the letter: "I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life."

4. I refer the reader to the studies of Kilian McDonnell, *The Baptism of Jesus in the Jordan: The Trinitarian and Cosmic Order of Salvation* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1996) and of Joan Taylor, *The Immerser: John the Baptist within Second Temple Judaism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997).

5. "We are inclined to define the 'righteousness' of 3.15 as moral conduct: Jesus, knowing the messianic prophecies of the OT, obediently fulfills them and thereby fulfills all righteousness." W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew: International Critical Commentary* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988), 1:326–27.

6. Oscar Cullman, *Baptism in the New Testament*, trans. J. K. S. Reid, *Studies in Biblical Theology* 1, ed. C. F. D. Moule and H. H. Rowley (London: SCM Press, 1950), 18–19.

7. For a brief discussion, see Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Johannine Epistles: A Commentary*, trans. Reginald and Ilse Fuller (New York: Crossroad, 1992), 233.

8. "I have a baptism with which to be baptized, and what stress I am under until it is completed!" (Luke 12:50); "But Jesus said to them, 'You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?'" (Mark 10:38).

9. For what follows I am indebted to the study by Ignace de la Potterie, *La Vérité dans Saint Jean, Analecta Biblica,* 73/74 (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1977), 315–28.

10. *On the Passion* 12 (*Sources Chrétiennes* 74, 82).

11. Leo is speaking of the liturgical reading. See *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 7: "Christ is present in his word, in that he himself is speaking when Scripture is read in the Church."

12. *On the Epiphany* 5 (*Sources Chrétiennes* 22, 254). See also *On the Resurrection* 1 (*Sources Chrétiennes* 74, 123); *On the Passion* 5, 18 (*Sources Chrétiennes* 41, 74, 112). For the references to these citations, see Dom Marie-Bernard de Soos, "Le Mystère Liturgique d'après saint Léon le Grand" (doctoral thesis, Toulouse, June 10, 1955).

13. *Lev. Rab.* 15, 2. Commentators regularly cite H. L. Strack and P. Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch* (Munich: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1965), 2:431.

14. "The Envoy of God speaks the words of God because he gives the Spirit without measure." Translation of Origen, Fragment 48, 11. 5–7, in *Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftstellar der Ersten Drei Jahrhunderte,* Origenes IV (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1903), 523.

15. Ignace de la Potterie, "Parole et Esprit dans S. Jean," in *L'Évangile de Jean. Sources, Rédaction, Théologie,* ed. M. de Jong, *Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium* 44 (Gembloux: Duculot, 1977), 184.

16. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I–II, 106, 2.

17. *Evangelii Nuntiandi* 41.

18. *Deus Caritas Est* 1.

19. The remarks to follow are indebted to the remarkable essay by Paul Ricoeur, "The Hermeneutics of Testimony," in *Essays on Biblical Interpretation,* ed. Lewis S. Mudge (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), 119–54.

20. The verb does come once in Rev 14:6: "Then I saw another angel flying in midheaven, with an eternal gospel *[euangelion]* to pro-

claim *[euangelisai]* to those who live on the earth—to every nation and tribe and language and people."

21. Donatien Mollat, *St. Jean. Maître Spirituel, Bibliothèque de Spiritualité* 10 (Paris: Beauchesne, 1976), 27.

22. One should also consult the references to the "ruler of this world" in John 11:31, 14:30.

23. See also Luke 21:13, Mark 13:9, Matt 10:18.

24. Lucien Cerfaux, "Les miracles, signes messianiques de Jésus et oeuvres de Dieu selon l'Évangile de saint Jean," in *Recueil Lucien Cerfaux*, 2:48, as cited by Ignace de la Potterie, "La Notion de témoignage dans saint Jean," in *Sacra Pagina* (Paris: Gembloux, 1959), 201, n 2.

25. I give here a partial list of parallel words and themes. "A" in the parentheses refers to the number in Kurt Aland, *Synopsis of the Four Gospels* (Stuttgart: United Bible Societies, 1972). HATED BY EVERYBODY: John 15:18–19, 22–25 (A.100: Matt 10:22), also (A.289: Matt 24:9–10ff); SERVANT NOT GREATER: John 15:20, also 13:16 (A.100: Matt 10:24; Luke 6:40); WILL PERSECUTE YOU: John 15:20c (A.100: Matt 10:23; Luke 21:12); BECAUSE OF MY NAME: John 15:21 (only here in John), Matt 10:22, 24:9ff; SPIRIT FROM THE FATHER: John 15:26 (A.100: Matt 10:20) (also A.289: Mark 13:19–27); SCANDAL: John 16:1 (A.289: Matt 24:10).

26. However, see Acts 5:32, 6:10.

27. Euthymius Zigabenus, commenting on this passage (*PG* 129, 1420A). Cited by de la Potterie, *Verité*, 395, n 189.

28. John 5:20, 36; 7:3; 9:3, 4; 10:25, 32, 37; 14:10, 11, 12; 15:24.

29. For a complete treatment of this word, one may consult de la Potterie, *Verité*, 399–406.

30. Significant for our purposes is a fifth-century Egyptian manuscript known as the Freer Logion, which contains another ending to the Gospel of Mark. Twice it refers to the victory/vindication of Jesus at his resurrection using the term *dikaiosunē*: "This age of lawlessness and unbelief is under Satan, who by means of evil spirits does not permit the true power of God to be apprehended: therefore reveal your righteousness [*dikaiosunē*] now....[Jesus replied,] 'The limit of the years of the authority of Satan has been fulfilled, but other terrible things draw near even for sinners on whose behalf I was delivered up to death, that they might turn to the truth and sin no more, in order that they may inherit the spiritual and incorruptible glory of righteousness *[dikaiosunē]* which is in heaven.'"

Translation by Vincent Taylor, *The Gospel According to St. Mark* (New York: MacMillan & Co Ltd, 1957), 614–15.

31. Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov,* trans. David Magarshack (Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1958), 301–2. The lines in italic are in the original.

32. Pope Benedict XVI, "Homily, Mass of Possession of the Chair: St. John Lateran Basilica," in *L'Osservatore Romano* (English edition) 19 (May 11, 2005), 3.

33. From the letter founding the Pontifical Council for Culture, March 3, 1982, in Michael Paul Gallagher, *Clashing Symbols: An Introduction to Faith and Culture* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd, 1997), 53.

34. Pope John Paul II, "Discourse to the Plenary Assembly of the Pontifical Council for Culture" 3, delivered on January 18, 1983. The English translation of this address can be found on the Vatican website: www.vatican.va. For the original text, see "La Chiesa creatrice di cultura nel suo rapporto con il mondo moderno," in *L'Osservatore Romano* (Italian edition) 123, no. 14 (January 19, 1983), 1.

35. Address of March 18, 1994.

36. This is a positive rephrasing of Pope John Paul II's statement: "The faith that has not become culture is *not* fully received, *not* entirely thought through, *not* faithfully lived." Italics added. The original comes from the pope's March 3, 1982, letter founding the Pontifical Council for Culture.

37. *Lumen Gentium* 11.

38. Pope John Paul II, "Address of His Holiness John Paul II on the Occasion of the Meeting with the Ecclesial Movements and the New Communities, Rome, 30 May 1998," in *Movements in the Church: Proceedings of the World Congress of the Ecclesial Movements, Rome, 27–29 May 1998, The Laity Today* (Vatican City: Pontificium Consilium pro Laicis, 1999), 221–23.

7

From Maintenance to Mission

Evangelization and the Revitalization of the Parish

Robert Rivers, CSP

Introduction

I must confess that I am part of the rare breed, diminished in number but not extinct, of golfing priests. Some years ago I gained great insight into my golf game while playing with one of my parishioners at the prestigious Bel Air Country Club in Los Angeles. I had enough opportunities to play there that my friend Ralph, who is Jerry Ormand's regular caddy, knew me and my game quite well. Ralph was a very wise, gentle, and experienced caddy who was always very positive with his patrons. He would never say, "Don't hit it in the lake," or "Don't slice it into the woods," or "Make sure you avoid the bunkers." Rather, he was always very encouraging: "Padrecito, hit it to me!" or "Put it right down the center!" I was what you might call a "Dickensian golfer": It was either the best of times or the worst of times for this golfing priest; it was never in between. This particular day it was the worst of times. For sixteen holes I slashed and chopped and scraped out a pretty disgraceful path on this beautiful course—at which point Ralph, lovingly and gently, came up to me and said, "Padrecito. You are a good priest." (The unspoken message was: "Don't quit your day job.")

Now I *do* have a reason for beginning with a golf story. I want to offer a golf metaphor for all of us who are trying to move our parishes from maintenance to mission. The metaphor is taken from Tiger Woods, arguably the best professional golfer of this era. It is based upon my conviction that Tiger Woods's incomparable record comes not because he is the best shot maker in the business but because he is a "grinder."

Now, what the sports analysts mean by a grinder is somebody who never gives up, who gives his or her all to every shot no matter what kind of a day they are having. I submit that in this business of evangelization we need to have the virtue of the grinder, rather than the spectacular flash of occasional brilliance. The reason Tiger Woods wins so many tournaments is that he never gives up, he hardly ever shoots himself out of a tournament, and he never depends on having "a good day" as the foundation for being a winner. Rather, he depends upon his virtue of hanging in there, giving it his best shot in whatever circumstances he finds himself, and persevering for the long run.

This quality of being a grinder has won him a lot of tournaments and is essential to understanding his phenomenal success. It is not a virtue that we associate with a great golfer of Woods's stature, nor, perhaps, is it a virtue that is high on *our* list, we who are the Lord's evangelizers. But it should be!

Becoming a grinder like Tiger Woods could take us very far in our efforts to move from maintenance to missionary parishes, which is the subject of my two-part essay. First, let's explore what it means and why we need to move our parishes from maintenance to mission. Second, let's consider how we can do this successfully.

From Maintenance to Mission What Does It Mean? Why Should We Make This Move?

When I use the expression to "move from maintenance to mission," I am simply putting into a practical phrase a profound theological truth that most people already know. Pope Paul VI and his successors have told us that evangelization is the essential mission of the Church and therefore the essential mission of every parish.

Evangelization is part and parcel of the renewal of the Second Vatican Council, which we have been implementing now for the past forty years. In fact, Cardinal Avery Dulles stated, in a talk that he gave on the twentieth anniversary of Paul VI's *On Evangelization in the Modern World,* that the pope gave us a new interpretation of the purpose of the Second Vatican Council—which was evangelization. The pope told us that the purpose of the council was better to prepare the *Church* of the twentieth century to proclaim the good news to the *world* in the twentieth century. In other words, the entire purpose of the council was to do interior renewal for the sake of exterior mission—not a bad definition of evangelization.

So the first point I want to make is that this movement from maintenance to mission at the parish level is simply another way of speaking about the Church's essential mission of evangelization and about mission being an integral part of the renewal of the Second Vatican Council. In fact, one could make the claim, and I do in the opening chapters of my book *From Maintenance to Mission: Evangelization and the Revitalization of the Parish,* that evangelization is the crown jewel of the renewal. It is the integrating perspective that enables us to better understand what we have been doing for these past forty years as we've implemented various aspects of the council's reform agenda.

Now for the even more critical follow-up point: Pope Paul VI, in *On Evangelization in the Modern World,* emphasized that "evangelizing all people constitutes the essential mission of the Church....It is the grace and favor proper to the Church, her deepest identity....[The Church] exists in order to evangelize" (14). We have no option but to become missionary parishes. It is not acceptable for us to assume a maintenance posture. Pope John Paul II also stated this very strongly when he said: "No Christian community is faithful to its duty unless it is missionary: either it is a Missionary Community or it is not even a Christian community, because these are simply two dimensions of the same reality, which is brought about by baptism and the other sacraments."[1]

Given the mandate that we all have, then, to create missionary- rather than maintenance-oriented parishes, what are we talking about? I can zero in on the essence of what I want to say by relating a conversation I had with some of my parishioners at St. Paul the Apostle in Los Angeles. One Sunday after Mass an elderly couple, Joseph and Mary, came up to me and said: "Now, Father, all this talk about evan-

gelization is great. But who is going to take care of us while you're out there taking care of them?" The "them," presumably, are inactive Catholics and people with no church family. Note that behind Mary and Joseph's statement of concern contain several presumptions that we want to examine.

The first presumption is the inclusive/exclusive framework in which Mary and Joseph spoke. They distinguished between "us" and "them." "Us" referred to the faithful folks who come to Mass every Sunday, and "them" referred to all those people who, for various reasons, are not part of "us." As a matter of fact, my friends understood something intuitively that Paulist evangelizers Frs. Frank DeSiano and Kenneth Boyack point out very astutely in their book *Creating the Evangelizing Parish*: parishes typically organize themselves along these exclusion/inclusion lines.[2] The parish *seems* to exist for the sake of the membership. But this is a very questionable premise indeed.

The second presumption of Mary and Joseph's statement is that evangelization is a kind of quixotic, optional activity in which their pastor is choosing to engage. They are concerned that whatever evangelization is all about, the pastor needs to make sure that it doesn't interfere with his primary responsibility, which is to take care of the needs of the membership. Had Mary and Joseph been familiar with the "job description" of pastors given to us in canon 528 of the *Code of Canon Law*, they might have viewed the matter differently. It states that "the pastor is obliged to see to it that the word of God in its entirety is announced to those living in the parish...and he is to make every effort with the aid of the Christian faithful, to bring the Gospel message also to those who have ceased practicing their religion or who do not profess the true faith."[3]

The final presumption is that evangelization obviously has nothing to do with them. Mary and Joseph were the best of the old-school, pre–Vatican II Catholics who, as Fr. Patrick Brennan says, see baptism as entitlement.[4] Brennan calls them "consumer Catholics." They come to church to get what they need to get to heaven. There is no clear sense of baptism as a call to share in the mission and ministry of Jesus, which, of course, is one of the principal teachings of the Second Vatican Council.

A maintenance-oriented parish is one in which the parish is focused on its current members, who absorb most of its time, energy, and

resources. There is a preoccupation with "us" and a general forgetting about "them." Or, to put it another way, our members, in their consumer consciousness, have very little sense of their own missionary calling. As a consequence, our parishes, by and large, are not mission-oriented but maintenance-oriented. Our time and energy as parishes are absorbed by taking care of ourselves.

The picture is clear. Now the questions we might raise are: What's wrong with that? Why should we change? I know some pastors who don't want to create missionary parishes that reach out to those who are absent, because those pastors feel they already have too much to do. You have only so much energy, so much time, so many resources. There is only so much you can do in life.

Taking care of the needs of the membership *is* an important responsibility of the pastor. We *do* need to nurture our faithful Catholics and to strengthen them in their faith through myriad pastoral activities, such as the liturgy, religious education, pastoral visits, and counseling. So what's wrong with that? Our task is *also* to nurture them in the faith so that *they* become active disciples and disciple-makers, not "consumer Catholics." An essential part of our nurturing is to equip *them* to carry out the mission and ministry of Jesus in a community of disciples called the Church.

Next—*why* should we move from maintenance-to mission-oriented parishes? First of all, we need to do so because Jesus said so. Most people are familiar with the bracelet that says *WWJD*, meaning, "What would Jesus do?" Well, it seems pretty clear from his words and actions in the gospels that Jesus would not be content to spend all his energy on the ninety-nine sheep in the fold. He explicitly said, "I have come for the lost sheep. Those who are well do not need the physician; the sick do." How much of Jesus's time and energy was spent defending his practice of reaching out and including those whom the authoritative religion of his day excluded? In some ways, one might say this issue of inclusion/exclusion helps explain why Jesus ended up on the cross.

Evangelization may have entered the Catholic consciousness again as a result of the Second Vatican Council, but evangelization did not begin with the council. It goes back to Jesus himself. Jesus created a missionary Church. *The Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity* tells us that the "Church on earth is by its very nature missionary" (*Ad Gentes* 2). In his magisterial work *Transforming Mission*, David Bosch says, "Without

mission the church cannot be called catholic."[5] All the principal post–Vatican II documents that establish the foundations for a contemporary theology of evangelization make the point that evangelization goes back to Jesus himself. As Pope Paul VI tells us, Jesus is the "Good News of God" and the "first and the greatest evangelizer" (*Evangelii Nuntiandi* 2).

Furthermore, all the documents of the council reinforce the understanding that this missionary character is part of the whole Church, including all the baptized. All of us have a responsibility to proclaim the good news of the kingdom. Prior to the Second Vatican Council, if one inquired about who missionaries are and where the mission is, one would have received the answer that missionaries are the Jesuits, the White Fathers, and the Maryknoll priests and sisters, and that the missions are in Japan, Fiji, India, China, and Africa. Our post–Vatican II perspective tells us that the mission is wherever *we* are and that *we* are the missionaries.

I want to mention briefly two other very important reasons why we cannot content ourselves with being maintenance-oriented parishes. The first reason is obvious. There are 100 million people in the United States with no church family, 21 million of whom are inactive Catholics. Where are people who have no church family going to hear the good news in any convincing way? Many of them are spiritual in their orientation or even very religious in their personal practice, but they have no connection with the Church. Many of them draw their inspiration from religious television. But, of course, as Pope Paul VI pointed out long ago, one cannot separate adherence to Jesus Christ from belonging to a church family. The full gospel can only be lived out in community.

Among the 21 million inactive Catholics, there are countless numbers who need to hear an invitation from active Catholics because they feel unwanted, not missed, rejected, excluded, deeply alienated, or perhaps even excommunicated. How will they know they are missed unless we tell them? How will they know we care about them unless we show them? How will they know they are welcome back into their family of faith without a word from us? Unless our parishes become more mission-oriented, those 21 million inactive Catholics may well go elsewhere for their spiritual nourishment. This is happening in alarming proportions in the Hispanic community and among many

religious seekers who do not feel they are being nourished in the Catholic Church. If Catholic parishes don't begin to focus their energies on the millions of people within their parish boundaries who have no church family, we will have failed miserably in the one thing that we should be about as Church.

Many people will recall many less-than-satisfying homilies about the Mary-Martha story in the gospels. I would like to offer a communal interpretation of that passage, one that challenges our Catholic parishes to stop being busy about many things and get focused on the one thing that really matters. When are we going to get serious about carrying out the mandate we have received from Christ? When are we going to get about the Lord's business? I would rather fail at the one right thing than have a lot of success in something that does not matter at all to the Lord!

There is one additional reason for moving from maintenance to mission, which I can only hint at here but have treated at some length in my book: the obstacles to evangelization. We are going through some difficult times being the Catholic Church right now. In addition to the painful and continuing sexual-abuse saga, we have the difficult aftermath of the implementation of the Second Vatican Council, which I have named a period of disorientation.[6] By that, I mean a period where we are struggling to come to a new equilibrium because our pre–Vatican II paradigm no longer fits. Certainly, this is what happened after the Second Vatican Council. It was a reform council, to use John O'Malley's term, and it challenged our whole way of being Church in many ways. It forced us to rethink and change the way we do things in many different areas. This caused a lot of confusion, displacement, tension, divisions, and disorientation that we are still working through.

I believe that becoming an evangelizing Church and moving from maintenance- to mission-oriented parishes can do an awful lot to bring healing in our present distress. It is easy to exaggerate and inflate our family and community problems when we don't have something outside of ourselves to bring perspective and a healthy sense of balance to our own troubles. We become absorbed by our problems. We engage in a feeding frenzy around our internal divisions and tensions. The Asian tsunami, Hurricane Katrina, and other national and international disasters illustrate very lucidly how we often find a new breadth of life in

reaching out to those in distress. Things suddenly take on a new perspective. We have a new set of glasses with which to view our problems.

Without elaborating unduly on this point, I would simply say this: Evangelization is a very complex and profound reorientation of ourselves as Church. It can move us not only from maintenance to mission, but also from blindness to new levels of conversion, from excessive individualism to new-found solidarity, from fragmentation to deeper unity. Evangelization can be a healing balm for many of our current ills as a Church. To the degree that we stop focusing on ourselves and fix our eyes on Jesus, with a new intent to be faithful to the mission he has given to us, I believe we will be caught up in the goodness of that mission. We will also experience new satisfaction, healing, and joy in the way we ourselves are transformed.

John Paul II made this point, in effect, in *Mission of the Redeemer (Redemptoris Missio)*, when he says that in evangelizing others, we ourselves are evangelized. "[For] missionary activity renews the Church, revitalizes faith and Christian identity, and offers fresh enthusiasm and new incentive. Faith is strengthened when faith is given away" (2). To put it another way, moving from maintenance to mission will bring new revitalization to parish life. How to do it is the second part of this essay.

How to Move from Maintenance to Mission

Now for the more difficult part: *How* do we make the move from maintenance to mission? At this point I need to remind all of us to think of ourselves as Tiger Woods. Some years ago, a commercial featured a number of people saying, "I am Tiger Woods. I am Tiger Woods." Well, let it be so. Let's all be Tiger Woods as we contemplate the challenge of moving from maintenance to missionary parishes, which will require of us both a considerable skill-package, such as Tiger Woods possesses, as well as the quality of being a grinder that I mentioned at the beginning of this article. Both will be necessary. Grinding alone won't do it. We need a new skill-set, a new way of "doing parish." But at the same time, as we acquire that new skill-set, we will need perseverance: a relentless

and tenacious commitment to continue to give it our best shot, day in and day out, and to stay the course—qualities that Tiger Woods manifests in such exemplary fashion. The reason we will need these qualities is because moving from maintenance to missionary parishes is a long-term proposition and there are some serious obstacles.

What steps can we take to build enthusiasm and commitment for evangelization and to sharpen our desire to implement that vision of a Catholic parish and make it real in our local faith communities? Let me offer three very promising strategies.[7]

The first promising strategy came to mind when I was recently making a retreat. The spiritual director from the retreat house asked me how I related to God in my own personal spirituality. When we got to talking about Jesus, I told her that I related to Jesus as a disciple. She was rather surprised and wondered if I didn't think of Jesus as my friend. No, I like the notion that I am his disciple. It set me to wondering how people relate to that notion of themselves as disciples of Jesus. It is, of course, a very prominent metaphor from the gospels and has again grown in prominence in the Catholic Church since the Second Vatican Council, but it is not a dominant theme in Catholic spiritual life. Thomas Rausch, SJ, makes the point that the classic medieval expression of discipleship was *The Imitation of Christ*. This devotional book, along with the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola, best represents a Catholic spirituality of discipleship that gives preeminence to following Jesus and living according to gospel values.[8] Many years ago, when Avery Dulles published his expanded version of *Models of the Church*, he added the Church as a "Community of Disciples" because it was an inclusive model that had great potential for a comprehensive ecclesiology.

So how do people relate to that term? Does the image of themselves as a disciple of Christ have a positive connotation for them? What feelings do they have when they think of themselves as a disciple of Jesus Christ?

Thinking of ourselves as a community of disciples is a first, promising strategy for moving from maintenance to mission and transforming the way we "do church." First of all, a disciple, as the word suggests, is primarily a learner—indeed, a lifelong learner. Imagine a Catholic parish in which more and more people see themselves as lifelong learners. As a Christian, I never graduate from the school of formation.

Furthermore, I realize that as a Christian I am a work in progress. At every stage of life I need to find new ways of seeing myself in Christ to meet the challenge of the particular stage of the journey where I am. My childhood formation in the faith is not going to get me through the challenges of adult life.

The *General Directory of Catechesis* points out that a critical aspect of the formation of disciples is fostering a vital relationship with Christ. A disciple is someone who, first of all, is in relationship with the person of Christ. A personal relationship with Christ is the good soil upon which growth in knowledge of the content of the faith can take place.[9] "The fundamental task of catechesis is, therefore, to form disciples of Christ and to send them forth in mission."[10] This has enormous implications for our ongoing spiritual formation as Catholic Christians. We are on a journey with Christ. We are following Christ through the various stages of our life experience. This way of thinking of ourselves as baptized Christians can help us overcome a major obstacle to Catholic evangelization: inactive Catholics and people with no church family have the perception that Catholics have a religion but not a spirituality. They *see* that Catholics have priests, laws, structures, institutions, sacraments, and rituals, but where is the spirituality? Where is the personal relationship?

Coming to see ourselves as a community of disciples can nurture the kind of spirituality within the Church that will help counteract that perception. It makes the Church—and us Catholics—more attractive to those who are looking in from outside. Religion will be attractive to them only if it can offer them a spirituality for their lives. Thinking of ourselves and modeling ourselves from the beginning as a community of disciples can do a great deal to feed people's spiritual hungers—both those of us who are within the Church and those who are not.

One final word about the metaphor of a disciple. A disciple is someone who lives in a relationship of dependence on Christ, the teacher and master. A person can't be a faithful disciple if he or she doesn't pay attention to what the master says and does. The magisterium is a prominent part of our Catholicism. So the Church is very comfortable being a teaching Church. But we are a little short on being a learning Church. This past year we celebrated the fortieth anniversary of the promulgation of the *Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation (Dei Verbum)*. That great document reminds us that the "Magisterium is

not superior to the word of God, but is rather its servant. It teaches only what has been handed on to it. At the divine command and with the help of the Holy Spirit, it listens to this devoutly, guards it reverently and expounds it faithfully" (10).

What will happen to us as a Church if we continue to listen faithfully to the Word of God in Jesus Christ? We will not be able to ignore his command to go and make disciples of all nations. Nor will we be able to ignore the example he set for us as the first evangelizer, who constantly reached out to people on the margins and sought those who were lost. In summary, we cannot be a Church that is a community of disciples if we don't listen to the word of the master. The Lord Jesus is calling us to create missionary parishes.

A second promising strategy for any parish trying to move from maintenance to mission is to concentrate on becoming more welcoming *and* more inviting. Obviously, the two go hand in hand, for unless we are a welcoming parish, we have nothing attractive to invite people to. Parishes have discovered, in fact, that one of the best ways to become more evangelizing is to become more welcoming. Whether changing the atmosphere at our Sunday Eucharist, or becoming more effective at greeting and receiving newcomers, or transforming the physical facilities to make them more user-friendly and inclusive—efforts to become more welcoming have met with great success. We must continue along that path. Carrie Kemp, in her book *Catholics Can Come Home Again*, offers a model-parish welcoming checklist that parishes can use to monitor their progress in this important area.[11]

Let me say something about this welcoming effort—something that shows how challenging it really is. Welcoming cannot be equated with simply becoming more friendly. To be a parish that is friendly only to its own kind is not the model of the welcoming parish we are talking about. Welcoming is about becoming, first all, more inclusive, more accepting of people, no matter their color, race, ethnic origin, language, social status, or sexual orientation.

When I was pastor of our Paulist parish in Los Angeles, I spent a great deal of time talking to a man named Silver. Silver was part Native American, part Mexican, and full-time alcoholic and resident of the street. He had spent seventeen years in prison for murdering a man. Our conversations always took place in the gathering area at the back of the church. Silver didn't feel worthy to go inside the church because

he couldn't forgive himself for killing another human being. But there was another reason why Silver didn't come into the church. He felt that the people in the parish didn't think he belonged there, either. He didn't feel welcome. So he stayed outside the church and died on the streets of Los Angeles. Welcoming is not about being friendly to your own; it is about becoming a Church that opens itself to all God's people.

So one side of the equation is to become more welcoming. The other, equally challenging, side is to take the risk of becoming more inviting. This is an area where we Catholics can grow a lot. I once was speaking to a seventy-five-year-old gentleman in the Midwest, who told me that he had just come into the Church. I jokingly asked him why he waited so long. He said, "Nobody ever invited me." Then he told me that his son was a Catholic priest.

Now, let's go back to those 21 million inactive Catholics in this country, who feel totally unwanted by the Church. Only a specific and sincere invitation from us will let them know that we miss them and we want them back in the family. I had a high school classmate who married a Jewish woman and raised his two children in the Jewish faith. Years later he began to explore his Catholic roots. However, he was under the impression that he couldn't come back because what he had done irrevocably closed the doors of the Church to him. I had to help him understand that those doors were still open.

Today, it is very exciting to realize that Catholics are becoming less and less reluctant to reach out and invite. There are many signs that we are overcoming our shyness. I am from Minnesota, the land of the chosen, frozen people. We don't talk much in Minnesota, as anyone who has seen the movie *Fargo* knows: "Yup," "Nope," and "You betcha" are the holy trinity of Minnesota-speak. But even in Minnesota, Catholic hearts are beginning to thaw and Catholic lips are issuing invitations.

Some years ago, as dioceses were finishing *Disciples in Mission*, which is the Paulist National Catholic Evangelization Association's formation process for evangelization, they asked for resources to help their churches become more inviting. We had nothing to offer them at that time. I am happy to report that the situation has changed. Recently, PNCEA—as the Association is more widely known—came out with two new brochures that can be given to people with no church family. One is called *Come and See*, part of a new resource called

Invite! The other is *We Miss You,* a brochure for inactive Catholics that is part of a new resource called *Catholics Reaching Out.* These provide some concrete help for parishes that are seeking innovative and effective ways to reach out to people.

Third, and this is perhaps the most challenging of the promising strategies, parishes trying to move from maintenance to mission need to grow in a collaborative style of ministry. Why is this important? Because this style of ministry is the best way for a parish to effectively choose and implement its evangelizing priorities. When a parish knows itself as a community of disciples and all its members have gifts to share, then those members are willing to take responsibility for the identity, character, and direction of parish life. And this includes evangelization.

The inertia of parish life is toward maintenance. If we don't consciously do something to change our way of doing parish, we will instinctively move toward the maintenance mode. It is, to use today's computer language, the default position of every parish. In order to move beyond maintenance, we need to become intentional about our evangelizing priorities.

Parishes are already busy places—too busy. Many parishes operate on the principle that more is better. Pastors are overwhelmed because they are often taking care of two or even three parishes. Unless we find a way to become more collaborative, and get widespread participation in the direction-setting and implementation of our priorities, we will default to that maintenance setting. The same people in the parish will keep doing everything and nothing will change. There will be no energy for outreach because there will be no new bodies to carry it out.

Gallup tells us that 57 percent of the people who volunteer for work in parishes are not using their gifts; they are merely filling slots. If we can find a way to turn our parish priorities over to people who have the passion to get them done and who have the gifts to bring to the task, we will be more successful in getting results. Just as important, we will create a high level of satisfaction among our parishioners, because they will feel they are making a difference. They will be working on priorities they believe in and they will be using their gifts to get the task accomplished.

Parishes that engage in a collaborative style of ministry move from maintenance to mission in the following ways:

- They engage people in shared decision-making processes that heighten parishioners' participation level because they have some say in the overall direction of the parish.
- They overcome the inertia toward maintenance by engaging in some kind of pastoral planning process that enables them to consciously choose evangelizing priorities.
- They elicit higher levels of parishioner involvement by engaging people according to their gifts, rather than by simply filling volunteer slots.
- They get results by turning to people who have the desire, passion, energy, and gifts to get things done—forming new "priority action groups," rather than depending on already existing committees.

Many parishes are reluctant to undertake new evangelizing initiatives because the pastor is already overworked, there is too much going on the parish, and there are no more volunteers to carry out these new tasks. What we don't always realize is that there are many people in our parishes who are just waiting to participate if we can find new ways to engage them. We must involve them, from the very beginning, in setting parish priorities, and we must invite the people who have the gifts and the passion for those priorities to carry them out.

PNCEA has developed such a planning process, called ENVISION. My brother-in-law is a longtime, very active leader in his parish. He reported that he knew the parish had been enormously successful in its efforts to engage parishioners through ENVISION when he saw that 75 percent of the people who had volunteered to carry out the newly identified priority actions were people whose names were unknown to him. Whatever the process we use, we need one that is truly collaborative, mission-focused, and Christ-centered that will get us similar results.

My purpose in this article has been to add flame to the fire of the Spirit that already burns in us, to challenge us to continue our work of carrying on the reform of the Second Vatican Council, and to offer some specific strategies that can enable every one of our parishes to move from maintenance to mission—and to revitalization. Let's keep the evangelizing flames burning!

NOTES

1. Pope John Paul II, "Mission: The Right and Duty of Every Christian," Papal Message for World Mission Day, October 20, 1991.

2. Frank DeSiano and Kenneth Boyack, *Creating the Evangelizing Parish* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1993), 86–91.

3. *Code of Canon Law, Latin-English Edition* (Washington, DC: Canon Law Society of America, 1983), Canon 528.

4. Patrick Brennan, *Re-Imagining the Parish* (New York: Crossroad, 1991), 10.

5. David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996), 372.

6. This term is borrowed from Walter Brueggemann, based upon an earlier work of Paul Ricoeur.

7. These are not meant to be exhaustive. Other promising strategies include offering awakening experiences, fostering small faith-sharing communities, and adopting an evangelizing perspective on all parish activities.

8. *New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*, ed. Michael Downey (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1993), 281–84.

9. *General Directory for Catechesis* (Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1997), 16.

10. *Leader's Guide to the National Directory for Catechesis* (Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2005), 53.

11. Carrie Kemp, *Catholics Can Come Home Again: A Guide for the Journey of Reconciliation with Inactive Catholics* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2001), 75–77.